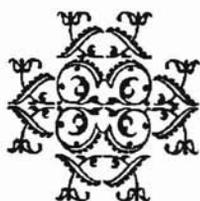


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SETH SHALER ARNOLD (1788-1871):
VERMONTER

By GLADYS GAGE ROGERS

We have been trying to suggest in recent issues of the Proceedings aspects of our belief that the sturdiness and steadiness of Vermont institutions and character do not represent the achievement of brilliant leadership and political innovations of the past, but are the result of a sound foundation laid long ago by men and women of sturdy beliefs, firm convictions, all resting in turn upon Anglo-Saxon conceptions of obedience to duty, faithfulness to ideals, loyalty to civic obligations, recognition of the necessity and dignity of labor, a belief in "Some One in the shadows keeping watch above His own." We believe that the text you are about to read is part of the story; and it will be suggestive to our readers of angles of contemplation beyond the one we mention. We are able to print the text through the courtesy and coöperation of the Honorable Seth Newton Gage and his daughter, Gladys Gage Rogers, of Ascutney, Vermont. The manuscript is a family possession and was edited by Mrs. Rogers for their personal use; it was submitted for publication at our request. The original introductory note by Mrs. Rogers reads: "A feeble attempt to portray from a few letters and documents, the life of my great-grandfather, Seth Shaler Arnold. Though born just one hundred years before my birth, he has always been to me a living personality, held in admiration and affection. For my father, Seth Newton

Gage, with deep love and best wishes for a happy birthday, April 2, 1938." In spite of Mrs. Rogers' reference to her editing, it seems to us charmingly and effectively done. Additional comment will be found in the Postscript. Editor.

IN reality, I know very little about my great-grandfather, Seth Shaler Arnold. I know that he was born in 1788, in a large white house, built by his father, Seth Arnold, which still stands on the highway in Westminster, Vermont. I know that he prepared for college at Deerfield Academy, and graduated from Middlebury in 1812. From there he went to Maryland to take part in the War of 1812. After returning to New England, he went into the ministry, and in 1817 married Ann House, the daughter of a merchant shipowner, in Haddam, Connecticut. The story is that his salary was never more than four hundred dollars a year, but that his four daughters always wore silk dresses and gloves to church on Sunday, and that he always drove fine horses. His journals and account books have many entries of money given to charities and education, including a gift to Middlebury College to found a scholarship. These are the bare facts, but it seems to me that these few letters tell the whole story of his life; his youthful seriousness and earnestness of purpose, his stern principles, his patience and tenderness, and his views on life, death and marriage.

Some of his letters and his book, "The Intellectual Housekeeper," have been read and laughed over many times by his descendants. Although we smile at the stilted tone of these letters, and the conversations which Great-Grandfather Arnold deemed suitable for young females, I must confess that my own amusement is considerably tempered with pride and admiration, and that I feel very grateful for this intimate record of the lives of my forebears. To me, the thought of them has been a never-failing well of courage from which I have drawn many times.

This is a letter written to Esther Arnold of Westminster, Vt., by her brother, Seth Shaler Arnold, a member of the Senior Class of Middlebury College.

Middlebury, April 6, 1812

Dear Sister:

I intrude on my study hours, to write you, rather than delay writing any longer. I do not write to Ambrose, because I do not know

that he is at home. I write to you in preference to my father, because I am fully impressed, that my kind, forgiving parents would overlook it, even if it were a fault in me. But I am persuaded, that my parents will as gladly hear from an unworthy son, through the medium of their daughter, as if directed particularly to them. Yes; and I think more gladly; because they have a strong desire for the happiness and improvement of their children, and my father seldom writes himself, he would wish that you might have pleasure in receiving a letter, and cheerfully improve your mind and writing by returning an answer.

When I first came to Middlebury my moments rolled heavily along, till the beginning of the term. Then I had so much to do, that time flew apace, till the exhibition was past and gone. Since that time I have been busily employed; but I begin to feel poor; and my spirits languish. I thought when I came from home, that I would take an academy and so be enabled, to afford some assistance to my father, to lighten his burden in declining years.—That I might make some return of gratitude for the unwearied care of infancy, and the support of my College life. But alas! my hopes are blasted.

I made application to the President for permission to teach an academy; but he was unwilling that I should be absent. He told me, I should lose the best time in College for improvement in composition, of which I was very sensible. Yet if I could have engaged the school at Walpole I should have taken a dismission and returned again before commencement for admission to the same standing.

But now I know of no school or academy which I could engage. I am left in indigent circumstances. I am drained of money and a flood of expences before me. I must leave College where I am! Twelve weeks more to study. But if I do I can not pay up to the present day. Must I be in debt? Unwelcome thought.—Can I be trusted?—When and how shall I pay?—Can I ask my father for a cent?—Already has he bestowed on me the earnings of a moistened brow, under the scorching of a summer's sun.—How then, can I ask him to borrow for me, a hundred and thirty one dollars, even if I pay it myself?—I am now a debtor for my former support, and poorly prepared to return a reward for paternal kindness.—O! Let not my heart be callous to parental affection.

May Jesus our Saviour, with blessings descending,
Grant peace, love and plenty, with smiles ever blending.

I have time only to inform you that Mrs. Aikins is dead. She was Mrs. Spencer's daughter.

Remember my affectionate regards to all the family and enquiring friends.

Adieu my sister. Let us feel dependent on God and content with his providence.

Miss Esther Arnold. Your's Seth Arnold

N.B. I here place before you the least expence at commencement.

<i>Clothes</i>	\$28.50
<i>Tuition</i>	30.00
<i>Board</i>	48.00
<i>Washing</i>	2.86
<i>Wood & candles</i>	2.50
<i>The Expences of exhibition and other</i>	
<i>Commencement charges</i>	20.00
	<hr/>
<i>The least total expences</i>	131.86

Other expences continually occur—horse keeping is very high. You all know that I am no hand to trade horses.

We do not know whether the earnings of a moistened brow under the scorching of a summer's sun were sufficient to cover the "expences" of Commencement, or whether the money came from another source. We do know that young Seth was graduated with his class in 1812.

There are many letters written by the four daughters, during their teens, but none give a clue as to why Mary Ann, the eldest, did not go to college, or rather, to a Female Seminary. Perhaps because of her mother's ill health the duties of the household fell upon her shoulders. Sophia, the second daughter, went to Mount Holyoke Female Seminary in 1840. She contracted typhoid fever there in 1842 and died after a long illness. Mary Ann went down to nurse her, and her letters speak of the "kindness of the young ladies of the Seminary" in taking their turn at nursing in the sickroom! Because of Sophia's death, my grandmother, Olivia, did not attain higher education, though these letters show that she had hoped to be admitted to the Seminary.

Although many of these letters are full of the gossip of the time,

of parties, attentions from young gentlemen, and of visits received and returned, there is also much moralizing, some poetry, and invariably in closing the recipient is commended to God's care. It seems a pity to transpose the beautiful flowing script of the letters into cold print. Even one written by little Caroline at the age of ten is a marvel of perfection.

These two letters written by Sophia have been chosen because of the picture they give of college life a hundred years ago.

South Hadley, Nov. 26, 1840

Dear Sister Mary Ann:

It is Thanksgiving here to-day, and I, of course, have rather more leisure than usual. I knew not how to improve it better than in writing to you. I received father's letter in due time and was happy to learn that you were well. You don't know what a gratification it is to me to hear from home, indeed if you did I think I should hear from you oftener. I did not intend that you should infer from my letter that I was homesick, or discontented for I have not been really so at any rate, I am quite happy now. I am much obliged to father for the sympathy he expressed, and think I shall be amply repaid for adhering to the rules of the family, and following the sound of the bell; if I acquire in any degree his habit of promptness, and regularity.

We are to have a vacation, of four days, in which time we are released from all restrictions except retiring at the usual time. More than half of our number have left, to visit their friends. Miss Lyon's absent on account of her mother being very sick. She regretted leaving very much for fear that we should not enjoy ourselves, however, I think we shall have a good time although Miss Lyon's presence conduces much to our happiness. She is so cheerful and makes everything pass off well.

It is a most beautiful morning. I have just returned from a walk. The snow is about an inch deep. I imagine that it is good sleighing with you, but I shall lose all the pleasure of riding this winter, the church is so near Miss Lyon thinks it better for the character to walk, but we can ride once a week if we choose, about two miles out by paying a ninepence each, but very few have been as yet. The vehicle is an open waggon with two horses and an elderly gentleman for a driver.

As there are so few of us we have much more than usual to do,

and as there is some one at our door giving us a very polite invitation to assist in preparing the dinner I must defer the remainder of my letter until some other time.

Dec. 5th—After so long a delay I will again attempt to complete this letter. I suppose you would like to know something of the manner in which Thanksgiving Day was spent. Rev. Mr. Condit and family also Rev. Mr. Kawks and family spent the day with us. The meals were wholly prepared by the young ladies. For dinner we had roasted turkey, boiled chickens, squash, turnip, and potatoes, and cranberry sauce. Second course, tapioca pudding and custard pies. For tea we had cold water, biscuits and butter, and cake. In the evening we were all invited by the teachers to assemble in the parlor, had quite a pleasant family party, for refreshment had apples and raisins.

Miss Lyon returned home (to S.H.) the 28th, her mother was buried Thanksgiving Day. Miss Lyon's health is quite poor.

Had quite a snow storm Sabbath day and it begins to seem something like winter. We suffer but little with cold and could hardly realise it at all were it not for our walks.

I have such pleasant room mates and each a snug little room that we enjoy ourselves very much. We had the privilege of choosing our own room, and mates. It is the same room that R. Reed occupied about as large as our lobby at home. A closet in one corner takes about a third of the room, the furniture consists of a large bedstead, good size table, a wash stand, with a broken bowl and two broken pitchers, and fire proof rug, a pleasant open stove with grate, fender, shovel, tongs, and bellows. A large basket for wood, which to economise space we keep under the bed. We have four chairs and two crickets. In one corner is a row of shelves for our library. Suspended over the table is the frame of a broken mirror; behind the stove a line of clothes. I took one of my sheets which makes quite a genteel window curtain, and now after giving you a description of the furniture of our room with the exception of three or four large trunks, I should be very happy to have you call on me, Oh! how I wish father would take a journey this winter and bring some of you down here, if he only will and calculate to be here just before the January vacation, and then there would be a fine chance to take another passenger home with you. We have to pay extra board during vacations, beside the wood which is five dollars a cord together with

oil would more than defray the expenses of a short journey. I have had three invitations to spend the week in January, Mrs. Averill of Springfield sent an invitation by Miss Dickinson one of our ladies, who told her that I was here. A Miss Parker from Boston is very desirous that I should go home with her, and Fanny and Phebe expect their father down to carry them to Munson, Springfield, etc. They have invited me to go with them. There are so many strings to my bow I hardly know which to draw, but I would much prefer going home to any of them were not the time so short that it would hardly pay the way to go by stage. Do write and tell me what father thinks I had better do.

I received a paper from Phebe and last week also two from Sarah Cobb. I hope you will pardon my neglect in writing, and write me very soon and mention all the news. How is mother's health? I hope she will not work so hard, but give up the care to her capable daughters. I was happy to learn that grandmother had a stove. I think they will be much more comfortable this winter.

If Olivia wishes to enter the seminary next year it will be necessary to make application soon. It will be a good place for her.

How do you succeed in music? Does Mr. Rusk board with you? Does Caroline go to school? Who keeps the school in our street? What is father doing this winter? I thought of you much the third of this month, as we understood it was Thanksgiving in Vermont. Do write me soon and tell me how you spent the day. I suppose O. is assisting Sarah in rearing her tender charge. Is it a pretty baby? Give my love to grandfather and grandmother and all my dear friends. In haste from your affectionate Sister Sophia

P.S. If you don't write soon I shall think you don't care anything about me. Did Caroline and Claudius receive a paper from me? Miss Adams, teacher in the Oberlin Institution is here for the purpose of taking lessons in drawing and learning calisthenics. I have had the unspeakable pleasure of reading a composition before all the teachers to day. I had a paper from Mr. Rusk, but don't be jealous. Do you have any good apples I wish you could send me some. We can't have any here without paying half a cent a piece. This is the afternoon for the family meeting. We all carry our work into the Sem. hall, where Miss Lyon gives us a lecture, and reads all manner of criticisms in regard to the young ladies, and the differences in performing the domestic work. A specimen; dust seen floating in the

ers, that the Holy Spirit may not leave us, until every impenitent soul is brought into the fold of Christ. The number which indulge no hope as christians is thirty. I feel condemned when reviewing my past life, which has been led in such a manner as not to deserve the name of christian. I hope that with the assistance of God I shall be enabled to live more devoted to his service. We cannot be too careful of our example before the world. Miss Lyon continues feeble, has placed herself under the care of a physician. She attends but few of the school exercises, has not met with us at table for nearly two weeks. She attends some of the religious meetings. Her health has declined so much for a few weeks that she sometimes says she thinks she has not long for this world. I fear that a second Miss Lyon will never supply her place in this institution. Miss More the first assistant teacher, is a niece of Miss Lyon. She reminds one of Mrs. James.

But to return to the prospect of your coming here sometime. You cannot be too thorough in your preparation. Quite a number of the young ladies have not yet got through the examinations, but prefer rather than go home to remain without their name inserted in the catalogue. I think with your present attainment in Arithmetic you would pass well, but you would need to be more thoroughly prepared in History, and Geography, in the letter, beside the situation of different places, etc., it will be necessary to be well acquainted with the religion and government of every nation. The standard of education is very high, and many who fancied themselves quite learned before they came here find they have just commenced climbing the hill of science.

Fanny and Phebe enter the junior class. I have about decided to spend the next vacation at Springfield, if the traveling is good. As yet we have had no sleighing.

Miss Parker was disappointed that I did not decide to go with her, insists upon going home with her in the Spring. She resides in Tremont Street. I know nothing in regard to the standing of her friends. She is a member of the Rev. Mr. Adams' church. Is quite an accomplished lady. I wish you would inquire of Helen Eaton about her (but not as by my request) for Helen corresponds with Miss Parker.

If Mr. Hitchcock comes down here this winter I would like to have you send if convenient that delaine dress I had in the Spring, also a pair of black woolen stockings, and anything else mother thinks proper, will be acceptable.

We have to pay the remainder of the tuition which is thirty dollars, together with many extra expenditures the first of January.

Where's Phebe Jennison this winter? I have long expected a letter from her. My love to her. I think you deserve much credit for answering my letter to sister Mary Ann so soon. How is Caroline? Her name is hardly ever mentioned. I hope she will write me. I often think of her and would like to see her improvement in writing.

Is our new house done? I like all the particulars when I hear from home.

Fanny and Phebe send love. Phebe says tell Olivia that she has become quite reconciled to the discipline of the family. Please give my love to all, and kiss little William Henry for me. I have much more to write should time permit. Write often.

I remain your ever affectionate Sister Sophia

P.S.

I have just received a paper from you. Much obliged.

Westminster, Vermont

Jan. 30, 1841

To Miss S. Arnold,

My dear daughter,

Your mother has failed very fast for a week, and we expect every day, and every hour will be her last.

I wish you to take the first stage on receiving this and come directly home.

I should be glad if you could see her before she dies. She is in a happy frame of mind; and I hope you will pray, that the Lord will sustain and comfort her in her last moments.

If there be sleighing Mr. Hitchcock is expecting to go down next week.

Your affectionate

Father

Seth S. Arnold

(Signed)

*I enclose \$10.00
for expences home.*

Perhaps you can borrow a small trunk, or bag to bring what few things you will want till you return.

Ann House was born in the same year that her husband was, 1788. That would make her an elderly spinster of twenty-nine at the time of her marriage. Perhaps at that age it was harder to make the adjustment from the life of luxury in her father's house to that of one of poverty as a poor minister's wife. Judging by the fine needle-work which has come down to us through the generations, Nancy House must have spent all her days before marriage in embroidering and sewing fine seams. From the severity of her countenance it would seem very doubtful that she sat upon a cushion. Possibly the perfection of the exquisite, tiny "A.H.'s" cross-stitched on the finely woven sheets, which we prize so highly, are indicative of her demand for exactness and perfection in all things, for which her husband apologizes, in such a sweet and tactful manner in his letter to Sophia. The marriage must have been the culmination of a long friendship. There are a number of letters written by Ann House to Seth's sisters several years before her marriage. These show a rather playful spirit and the interests of a society belle. There are also in this treasure chest of old letters several written to her by an older cousin, one Colonel House. These are all very gallant; one addressed to her at the age of fifteen is couched in language befitting an epistle to Queen Victoria.

Westminster, Vermont April 1, 1841

To Sophia Arnold, Mount H. F. Sem.

My dear daughter:

I intended to have written to you sooner than this after your return to the Seminary. I hope your health is good, and your life cheerful and happy. My time has been variously occupied, so that my thoughts have been taken off from our affections somewhat more than I expected, yet there are times when I feel lonely indeed, especially when the girls are gone, and I have no other company. I hope you will ever cherish a grateful and affectionate remembrance of your departed Mother. Trials pass from my mind apparently like a vapor—favoured and happy periods come up fresh to my recollection.

There was one thought I felt it my duty to communicate to you, while your mother was living, which I have hesitated to mention since her death. Yet it would be false delicacy to be restrained on that account if it would be for your good. It is this: I feared lest my

daughters should sometimes have thought, that their mother was too particular and gave herself unnecessary labor, anxiety, fatigue and unhappiness about her domestic concerns; and, therefore, that you might fall into the opposite extreme—without considering impartially the medium that should be taken. Yet I must say, I think, that the extreme of care is more virtuous, than the extreme of carelessness—if it be proper to apply the term virtue to either. That contentment and patience which we ought to exercise are not inconsistent with those industrious tidy and prudent habits which stand opposed to indolence, and to indifference concerning our persons and property. All I desire in these remarks is to lead your thoughts to suitable reflections on this, and kindred subjects—leaving you to make your own application and improvement—hoping at least, that they will be harmless if not useful.

I believe I expressed a favorable opinion of Mr. Hopkins address when you was at home. My mind has often turned on some of the topics on which he discoursed. A few thoughts have suggested themselves to me this morning as flowing from them, (at this length of time since reading,) which I will put down for your consideration whenever you may have a leisure moment.

Seek not to be greatly admired.—by fanciful ornaments—by gaity—or any means to excite mirth. (This is transitory, unsubstantial, unsatisfying)

Seek first to glorify God—Seek to be respected and beloved—by avoiding all that is light, trifling, vain, indelicate, or inconsistent with your age, sex, and profession, and maintaining a sedate, but cheerful and kind deportment—above all by a spiritual improvement. For this purpose, give yourself to prayer, meditation and reading, especially, the Holy Scriptures, “which are able to make you wise into salvation through faith in Christ.” Be not elated with present success; but hope in God, and be patient, content and reconciled under all his dealings. Be ready for Heaven, and you will be prepared for usefulness enjoyment on earth.

“Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” (This is enduring substantial satisfactory.)

While I am writing this letter the bell tolls for the death of George Dinsmore. The consumption has preyed upon him, till he is gone. We see that youth is no security against the king of terrors. I hope you will bear in mind the uncertainty of life, and let your life be hid

with Christ in God—so, that when he who is the believer's life shall appear, you may appear with him in glory.

While I would not wish you to be fastidious, complaining, dropping your book and resorting to medicine, or some nostrum every time you feel unpleasantly, I would nevertheless, have you take good care of your health. If you find yourself permanently unwell let me know it in season.

Have independence to act from principle, and to resist the encroachments of pride and fashion; and, at the same time, let not your decision appear like perverseness—a determination to have your own way. Consult duty, and rather condescend, oblige and accommodate others than to gratify yourself, where duty and usefulness will allow.

Your Sisters—Grandfather and Grandmother send love—and I suppose I should have quite a budget from our neighbours and friends if they knew of this letter.

Our regards to Misses H. and all inquiring friends.

Your affectionate father,

Seth S. Arnold

This letter, written in answer to Doctor Hitchcock's request for Olivia's hand in marriage, seems particularly touching in the endeavor to caution the younger man that one must not hope for too much happiness in this world.

Doctor Hitchcock was a physician, and was killed in a railroad accident soon after his marriage. Several years later, the young widow's hand was again sought in marriage—this time by a farmer, my grandfather, Newton Gage. Grandfather Arnold gave his consent gladly and is quoted as saying that he had always hoped one of his daughters would marry a farmer. They had all married professional men; Mary Ann married a minister, Olivia, a physician, and Caroline, a lawyer. Possibly he felt that farmers were better prepared to withstand the disappointments of this life.

Westminster, Vt. Aug. 11, 1843

To Mr. H. D. Hitchcock.

Dear Sir:

I received your letter today and am happy to return a seasonable answer. You ask my consent to a connexion with my daughter, Olivia, for life. The marriage relation is one of the highest impor-

tance to the happiness of this life, and, by its influence on character, of that which is to come. The contemplated union is not new to me; yet I know so many changes in the circumstances and feeling of individuals, that I am never very sanguine as to the results of early acquaintances. I trust however that you have both made up your minds deliberately and prayerfully; and that you will not see cause to change them. I have long been acquainted with your father, and family; and cheerfully grant your request in giving my consent to the union which you propose. I hope you will not expect too much of the joys of this world, so as to be disappointed and unhappy, if you should meet with a common share of crosses and trials of time.

Seth Shaler Arnold

Grandfather Arnold must have felt keenly the tremendous responsibility of rearing his four daughters in the paths of righteousness. To aid in guiding their youthful steps, he wrote a little book which he called "The Intellectual Housekeeper,—A Series of Practical Questions to his Daughters by a Father or Hints to Females on the Necessity of Thought in Connexion with Their Domestic Labors and Duties, with an Album." This was published in Boston in 1835, by Russell, Odiorne & Co. A few of these "hints to females" may be of interest here, and serve to throw light on Grandfather Arnold's standards for an intellectual housekeeper. In his preface he gives his reasons for writing the book. In view of a footnote to his preface which says, "The daughters are four, the initials of whose names are given in the order of their several ages—the last being quite young. M.A.—S.—O.—and C.," it is interesting to note that their respective ages at that time were, Mary Ann, eighteen, Sophia, fifteen, Olivia, thirteen and Caroline, eight.

In addition to the dialogues of each day's routine work, there are chapters on "Seasonal Work for Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter"; one on "Sickness, Wounds and Burns"; "Raiment and Furniture," and much "Moralizing."

The "Album" seems to have been a blank appendix, which has been filled in with recipes and advice of all sorts, in different hand-writings. The recipes vary from those for lemon pie to hair tonics.