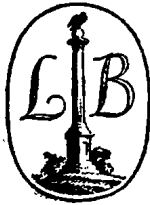


Three Saints *and a Sinner*

JULIA WARD HOWE,
LOUISA, ANNIE AND SAM WARD

by
LOUISE HALL THARP



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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To my father
Newton Marshall Hall

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

— BROWNING

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Three Saints and a Sinner

CHAPTER ONE

This Was New York

“HEAVEN save the ladies, how they dress!” Charles Dickens, seated in an upper window at the Carleton House, looked down upon “the best part of Broadway” and made this observation for the record. He was visiting New York City, and the year was 1842.¹

“The beautiful metropolis of America” was “not so clean as Boston,” Mr. Dickens observed. His hotel was at the corner of Frankfort and William Streets and his view of Broadway included the tip of City Hall Park. He deplored the droves of marauding pigs that patrolled the gutters, acting as unpaid although official garbage collectors. And the New York traffic was also disconcerting. “No stint of omnibuses here!” exclaimed Dickens. “Half a dozen have gone by in as many minutes. Plenty of hackney cabs and coaches too; gigs, phaetons, large-wheeled tilburies and private carriages — rather a clumsy make, and not very different from the public vehicles but built for the heavy roads beyond the city.”

Casting an appreciative eye at the ladies, “What various parasols! what rainbow silks and satins!” Dickens remarked. If the Ward family carriage had come by at that moment, he might have added a paragraph to *American Notes*. Built for heavy roads it certainly was, but it was canary-yellow in color, with sky-blue cushions. And the three enchanting Ward sisters had been known to dress alike — in yellow bonnets and sky-blue pelisses to match the carriage!

“The three Graces of Bond Street,” their friends called these Ward sisters — the eldest of whom Charles Dickens was soon to meet. They were Julia, Louisa and Annie — young, unmarried and each an heiress. Even if the girls had been unattractive, Bond Street would have been a Mecca for fortune hunters, now that their father, Samuel Ward, the

banker, had died. Their uncle John Ward, and their brother Sam, would have no enviable task helping the Ward heiresses to choose husbands from among their many suitors. Uncle John and brother Sam were further hampered by the fact that the girls had minds of their own.

Julia, the eldest, was so brilliant that it was not her fault if she often seized the center of the family stage. She was a little thing, just a quarter of an inch over five feet tall — all flash and fire. She had red hair, the lovely cream complexion that was more admired than almost any other form of beauty — and blue eyes that laughed when she seemed most serious. She spoke and read French, Italian and German; wrote poetry and sang arias from the operas. "Diva Julia," they called her when she sang, and she was indeed the leading lady in her own and everybody else's drama.²

Personally, Julia Ward disliked the perfect oval of her face, calling it merely "round." Her white shoulders, well-developed bosom and tiny waist were assets which she used well. But her red hair — called unfashionable — she chose to like, in defiance of fashion's decree. When she met a man who collected "Rossos" — red-haired friends, sure to prove congenial — she agreed that here was a good idea. Perhaps Julia Ward was not actually what could be called a beautiful young girl; but, like a fine actress, she gave the impression of beauty whenever she chose. One thing Julia Ward could not do. She could not pass unnoticed.

Louisa, second of the Ward sisters, would soon be known as "the beautiful Miss Ward." And this time, the description was strictly true. Louisa was as dark as Julia was fair. She parted her thick, dark hair above her serene brow, looped long locks over her ears — a style as hideous as it was fashionable, except that to Louisa it was most becoming. Her high-bridged nose gave character to a face that might otherwise have been merely pretty, while Louisa's lovely dark eyes deluded many a young man into thinking she would melt into his arms. It was true that she was gentle, getting herself engaged to more than one man at a time, rather than breaking hearts by saying no. And it was true that her Uncle John promptly disengaged her. But the proud tilt of her head, the firm chin line, should have given warning. Louisa Ward would show strength of purpose when faced with adversity.

With two such sisters, how could Anne Eliza Ward be anything but "little Annie"? The youngest of seven children, Annie's birth had been the cause of her mother's death. She was shy and self-effacing, as

though possibly some overzealous relative had told her how, at first, her father had rejected her. Yet surely she knew her father had loved her dearly. She was a sort of elfin child, with big dark eyes, pointed chin and wistful smile. At Newport, during her childhood's summer days, it was little Annie who knew where the wild flowers grew and where the birds had hidden their nests. It would take all of an artist's skill to paint little Annie's subtle smile — the flowers braided in her hair.

In 1842, when Charles Dickens visited New York, Annie and Louisa were just out of school and always close companions. Their sister Julia shone before their dazzled eyes like the bright star that she really was. Who but Julia Ward could have stolen a scene at a dinner given for that greatest of dramatic personalities — Boz himself? When this astounding event happened, Annie and Louisa were impressed, of course — but not surprised.

Julia might not have been at the Dickens dinner at all, however, if it had not been for her brother Sam. That Sam and Julia should work together with spectacular results was already a well-known phenomenon in the Ward family. Sam was the eldest of the banker's children. Upon his father's death, Sam had inherited not only a good-sized fortune but his father's place as head of the firm of Prime, Ward and King. He was trying hard to fill his father's shoes. But Nature had fashioned Sam in a different mold. He had outstanding talents when it came to spending money, rather than earning or conserving it. A worse banker than Sam could hardly be imagined — nor a better friend maker.

Sam Ward would have liked to be tall and handsome. He was not. He was short and slightly bandy-legged. When he was a child, his mother had begged him to wear a nightcap lest the family trait of baldness overtake him. He must have let the warning go unheeded for his bald head was the delight of cartoonists when his fame, as King of the Lobby, Forty-niner, follower of the turf and Wall Street plunger, brought him several fortunes, briefly enjoyed. Sam would have liked to be a good banker. In his own way he was a genius, nonetheless.

Applying his unique ability not to banking but to friendship, Sam Ward "did more than any one man to make Charles Dickens's stay in New York memorable." Sam said so himself.

He also achieved the impossible for his sister Julia. Four days after the Boz Ball, that "tallest compliment ever paid a little man,"³ Sam

got an invitation for Julia to go to the Dickens dinner at the City Hotel. This was a much more exclusive affair than the ball — with only two hundred and thirty people attending; Washington Irving being master of ceremonies. And it was for men only.

No one could have been more pleased than Sam to execute such a *coup d'état* — unless it were Julia, bidden to accompany Mrs. Charles Dickens and “a group of ladies” to the City Hotel. There, in an anteroom at the end of the banquet hall, the novelist’s wife was to be installed where she would be neither heard nor seen. Equally in purdah for the occasion were Mrs. Brevoort, New York’s leading society matron, Miss Catharine Sedgwick, American novelist, and other noted ladies.

It was a man’s world and Mrs. Dickens’s unseen ladies-in-waiting knew it. They were grateful when they were allowed to have the door of their anteroom ajar. By craning their necks, they could see Washington Irving, handsome and elegant but obviously nervous. They saw him slip the memorized manuscript of his remarks under his dinner plate and someone whispered to Miss Julia Ward, “He’ll break down — he always does.”⁴ Julia could only agree, for she knew Irving well. He had been one of only two guests outside the immediate family at her brother Sam’s wedding. But Julia regarded Mr. Irving as old — for he was the friend of John Jacob Astor, grandfather of Sam Ward’s young bride.

It is to be hoped that Miss Julia Ward and the other ladies had already dined. But if not, they were privileged to peek through the door and watch the gentlemen eat. They could even see the guest of honor, Mr. Charles Dickens, with his “rings and things and bright array.” And when the long meal with its multitude of courses was over at last, the fortunate ladies could hear applause and see Mr. Dickens being led to the platform.

But just before the speech began, the unprecedented happened. To put it in the words of Philip Hone, former mayor of New York, famous diarist and neighbor of the Ward family, somehow the ladies “got possession of the stage behind the president.” Mr. Hone would not have believed it if he had not seen it and his choice of words conveyed his horror. Miss Julia Ward, recalling the scene long later, said that “someone brought a whispered invitation.”

Could that someone have been her brother Sam? Julia Ward did not say, but it would have been like him.⁵ His eyes (sometimes so like his sister’s) must have gleamed with mischief — and with pride also, for

Julia surely looked enchanting — whether she wore the pale-blue satin looped with lace; whether she wore camellias or white roses “à la victime” in her hair! Stepping politely aside and walking demurely behind the formidable Mrs. Brevoort, Miss Julia Ward nevertheless drew men’s admiring glances — all two hundred and thirty of them.

“Heaven save the ladies, how they dress,” Charles Dickens might have said again if he had looked behind him. Or he might have said something less charitable, for he cared little for sharing the limelight, even for a moment.

But Julia Ward, if she blushed at all, blushed with pleasure at the sensation she and her fellow partners in crime were making. In years to come, all she would get at first was just “a whispered invitation” — but she would step right up to the platform, wherever she might be. She would gladly share the platform with other women. But if called upon to step to the center of the stage, she would never hesitate.

At last a day would come when the honors would all be for her — for Julia Ward Howe. She would be equal to any occasion, her quick wit sparking out in repartee during debate — never a line forgotten when she read her poems. The applause of both men and women would be hers one day, and many an ovation. But there were long years between, and tears as well as joys to come. Meanwhile, with blue eyes flashing in appreciation of the scene, Miss Julia Ward listened and learned.

CHAPTER TWO

Three Graces of Bond Street

“WHEN Broadway ended at Union Place and the Astor House was new, when water was peddled in barrels at a cent a gallon . . . Bond Street was one of the best known streets in the city and none stood higher as a place of residence.” So said *Valentine’s Manual*, referring to the golden days of nineteenth-century New York. Leading into Broadway just below Washington Square, Bond Street was country property when Samuel Ward the banker bought newly laid-out lots for himself and his family. Bond Street might as well have been called Ward Street for, at one time or another, as many as twelve houses were occupied by members of that remarkable family. No wonder Julia, Louisa and Annie sometimes complained that they never saw anyone except their relatives. No wonder visitors from Boston were a welcome diversion.

Colonel Samuel Ward, patriarch of the family, lived at Number 7 Bond Street¹ with his bachelor sons, Richard, John and William. His son Henry lived at Number 18, and after the old Colonel died, John and Richard made Number 8 a family meeting place.

The Ward sisters had other neighbors, of course, in spite of their half-humorous, half-serious complaints. At Number 12 lived James Gore King,² their father’s partner at Prime, Ward and King. He was the son of Rufus King, minister to Great Britain, president of the New York and Erie Railroad. His brother Charles was editor of the *New York American*, and it was Charles King who published Julia Ward’s first literary efforts — much to her joy and to the displeasure of some of her Bond Street relatives. “The Royal Family,” the Ward sisters affectionately called the Kings. There were four daughters and three sons of a suitable age to become playmates of the younger Wards.

Then there was Albert Gallatin,³ at Number 5 Bond Street. He had been Secretary of the Treasury under Jefferson, had reduced the national debt and had been thrown out of office for his pains. Gallatin was the first president of the council of the University of the City of New York, and Samuel Ward the banker was first secretary. But Albert Gallatin must have seemed old to the Ward sisters, for he was a contemporary of their grandfather, Colonel Ward.

On Bond Street lived judges, bank directors, merchants and clergymen. The neighborhood was restricted to the extent that purchasers from Samuel Ward the banker promised to build no "slaughter house, smith shop, forge or furnace . . . or any manufactory of glue or gunpowder . . . or any brewing distillery."⁴ In view of the fires that devastated downtown New York, Bond Street residents promised to build in brick or stone.

The finest house on Bond Street was The Corner, built by Samuel Ward the banker, in the spring of 1831. He had held the land since 1826, having bought (with his older brother Richard) part of a farm once owned by de Peysters, Kips and others, then by a Jones family, for whom "Great Jones Street," a block north of Bond, was named. Samuel Ward paid \$11,000 for 130 feet on Bond Street and 57½ feet on Broadway; and only six years later, when he decided to buy land north to Great Jones Street, the additional 140 feet of Broadway frontage cost \$40,000. But Samuel Ward bought when values had just begun to rise, and by selling small plots (one to Philip Hone) on Broadway and Great Jones Street, his profits more than covered the cost of building his mansion.

"Mr. Ward, you are moving out of town," his friends told the banker in 1829 when the family left Bowling Green for their first Bond Street home, at Number 16. This was true, for beyond Bond Street lay open fields, with "a wilderness of rocks, bushes and thistles with here and there a farm house." Twenty years later an afternoon's drive to see the Croton Reservoir, at what is now 42nd Street, would still be a country excursion. The Ward children saw from their nursery windows at 16 Bond Street "the gradual building-up of the street." A fascinating scene it must have been, as huge horse-drawn drays brought brick and marble; as carved marble mantelpieces came packed in straw from the "yard" of Frazee and Launitz.

Julia was the only one of the Ward sisters who really remembered any other home but Bond Street. Yet Bowling Green had been the

Ward children's first playground, little pink ices at tables in Castle Garden their treat for good behavior. Julia and her brother Sam were born on nearby Marketfield Street; Louisa and Annie, at Number 5 Bowling Green. Even after she had lived in Boston fifty years, "I am a New York woman," Julia Ward Howe would often say. She was apt to be annoyed when people seemed unduly surprised.

The Wards had New England roots, nonetheless. Their first American ancestor, John Ward, "sometime cavalry officer in Cromwell's army," had settled in Newport, Rhode Island, soon after the Restoration in 1660. The first American John Ward quite rightly judged that a new land would be more healthy for him and his family after Charles the Second came to the throne. In 1724, his son Richard, having prospered, married a great-granddaughter of Roger Williams and bought himself a splendid house in the center of Newport.⁵ The house was not new. Richard might have remembered seeing the cellar dug, the massive beams set and the pilastered chimney rising like a fortress. This was a many-chambered house suitable for a man who fathered fourteen children. Though not the newest house in Newport, this "Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House" survived to become the oldest.

Richard Ward became Royal Governor of Rhode Island. His son Samuel became Revolutionary Governor and one of the framers of the Constitution. But the Ward sisters were rarely told stories of this illustrious ancestor. They were merely given to understand that they had a great deal to live up to and that there would be no excuse for them, if they were lazy or incompetent. All the Wards knew about their great-grandfather's public life. Three times chosen Governor of Rhode Island, he was also a member of the First Continental Congress. It is sometimes said that the leaders of the American Revolution were a mob of have-nots, motivated primarily by greed and the desire to seize land and wealth from Tory neighbors. Proof to the contrary lies in the quality of the members of the Continental Congress, of whom Governor Samuel Ward was an outstanding example. His wealth before the Revolution was estimated at "between fifty and sixty thousand pounds." Much of this, however, was in credit extended to farmers; and after the Revolution debts proved uncollectable. This he foresaw. The large farm was profitable only when properly manned and supervised but when his son Samuel joined Washington's forces the Governor was proud and happy — experiencing only that inner anxiety which every loving parent has to face.

Governor Ward became a leader in the American Revolution, with

regret nonetheless. "The Idea of taking up Arms against the parent State is shocking to Us who still feel the strongest Attachment to our Sovereign," he said, "and warmest affection for our Brethren in Britain, and may God in his infinite Mercy grant that We may never be driven to that fatal Extremety but if We must either become Slaves or fly to Arms, I shall not (and hope no American will) hesitate one Moment which to chose, for all the Horrors of Civil War and even Death itself . . . is infinitely preferable to Slavery." ⁶ This letter was written in December, 1774. By May 26, 1775, Governor Samuel was writing from Philadelphia to his son Samuel who had just become a Captain in the Rhode Island Army of Observation — at the age of eighteen.

Said Governor Ward: "... That Love of Liberty and your Country, which you sucked in almost with your Mother's Milk, I flatter myself will excite you to the most noble Exertions, and support you under the most arduous Labours. . . . but remember my dear Son, that besides Bravery — Prudence, Wisdom and Economy are necessary; when your Country calls for your Life, risk it freely — but never wantonly expose yourself or your men. Let Sobriety, Temperance and Virtue direct your whole Conduct . . . be extremely careful of your Men, see as much as possible in Person that they have good Provisions, — compel them to be clean, to dress their provisions well and suffer as little Debauchery and Drunkeness to take footing amongst them as possible. . . ." And at the end of his letter, Governor Ward gave his son a text of scripture to be his guide:

"Remember my Son that unless the Lord keep the City, in vain do the Watchmen watch."⁷

A month later, Governor Ward wrote to Captain Samuel, and his opening sentence goes to the heart of every parent who has been in the same situation: "This is the first Time that I ever wrote to a Person whom I did not know whether to consider as one of this World or of the next." But Governor Ward devoutly hoped that "Heaven had spared" his son — and he was right, though news was slow in coming. Young Captain Ward had joined Arnold's expedition to Quebec and on November 27, 1775, had reached the St. Lawrence River.

"Good God! how various are the scenes I have passed through since I left You the 29th of last May," wrote Captain Samuel, adressing his whole family. "But the wise Men say that life is a Journey. . . . As a summary of the whole, We have gone up one of the most rapid