

***SARAH'S CHOICE***

Written By:  
Shauna Balls  
Great, Great, Great Granddaughter  
of Sarah Keep Buttars

October, 1996

I dedicate this story to my mother, Sarah Ann Balls, who without the true spirit of Elijah and telling me the stories of my ancestors, this story would not have been possible.

Copyright Pending

## "Sarah's Choice"

It was early spring in 1866. There was still a cool chill in the London, England air. I bundled Lucy up into my arms as I left the home of my parents to quickly walk home. I scurried down the narrow cobble road that led to my home in fear I wouldn't reach it before my husband, Robert, got home from work. Robert forbid me to spend time with my parents during the day while he was away at work. He wanted Lucy and I to only visit my parents in the evening when he could accompany us.

As I neared my home, tears welled up in my eyes. I could hear Robert scolding me for taking Lucy and visiting my parents without him. I had married Robert at the age of twenty-five against my father and mother's wishes. Robert was not an active member of the Church my family and I had joined. When I was eight the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints came and stood outside my father's gate and preached. My mother was brought up as a staunch baptist and my father belonged to the Church of England. My mother didn't understand the teachings of the Elders as quickly as my father did. One Sunday morning the Elders came to preach in front of our home and my father took a bench out for all of us to sit on. Father believed in their teaching and one Sunday morning, July 23, 1848, he crept out of bed and was baptized without any of us knowing. When father returned home after being baptized, mother somehow knew. She came running upstairs and told us children that when father comes in, call out to him "You have been dipped by the Latter-Day Saints haven't you". Father told mother if she would go to the Latter-Day Saints Church with him, he would go to the Baptist Chapel with her.

One day they were too late for the Baptist meeting and father asked mother to go to the Latter-Day Saint meeting instead. Soon after that day, mother was baptized. Now they were going to leave England and go to the new valley. I wanted so much to join them. However, I knew I had made a commitment to Robert when I married him.

I wiped my eyes as I went around the corner. I looked down the narrow road leading to my home to see if Robert had arrived before Lucy and I. There were no

lights on in our house as I hurried down the road. Robert worked as a silversmith with his father in a tiny store located on the other end of London. He sometimes would stop off with his father to fetch a piece of his mother's newly baked bread. I was holding my breath as I quickly took Lucy up the five stairs leading into our brick home. Soon after I laid Lucy into her cradle, I heard Robert coming up the front steps. Oh, how I hoped he would not notice the chill in the house and that supper was not warm and ready on the table. My mind raced with what I could tell him. I could tell him that Lucy was sleeping and I got so caught up in a book and that the time had gotten away from me. When I heard Robert's voice, I knew I couldn't lie to this man whom I loved enough to marry against my parent's wishes and kept secret from them for six weeks. Besides, I have been taught all my life to always tell the truth no matter what the consequences.

"So how is my little Lucy Ann tonight," Robert said as he bent down to kiss her on her cheek. "Sarah, why is Lucy's face so cold and pink, and why is the house so cold? Haven't you been stoking the fire today? Oh, Sarah, don't tell me you have been to visit your parents. I told you I didn't want you to visit them without me. Your parents are so full of that Church and they are filling your mind with silly thoughts about this new valley where you will live in peace and live only among those who belong to your church. You remember, I told you if you even think of going with your parents to the new valley, I will come and push you off the ship into the ocean."

"Oh, Robert, I'm sorry. I only wanted to spend more time with my family before they leave for the new valley. I didn't want to go against your wishes. I love you so much Robert, but when my family leaves, I don't know when, or if ever, I will see them again." My heart started pounding with a feeling of fear. What was I to do? I loved my husband, but I also love my family. This was a choice I never wanted to make in my life. Turning to Robert I asked in a very quiet but loving voice, "Robert, have you done what I asked? Have you thought about your own baptism? Didn't you have a feeling you have never felt before?"

"No Sarah, and I wish you would stop asking me."

"Robert, remember the other night when I told you I was having a hard time with my parents leaving for the new valley and staying here with you where I would have to go to Church by myself and try to teach Lucy what I believe to be true when you don't even believe or respect my beliefs?"

"Yes Sarah, but can we please change the subject. I have had a long day and tomorrow my father wants me to go with him to Berkshire to do some business and you know what that means. We will have to work more hours for the rest of the week to make up for the time we spend traveling."

"But Robert..."

"Sarah, please not tonight."

I turned away from Robert, not wanting him to see my tears. I looked at little Lucy, only four weeks old. What was I to do? I want so much for her to grow up learning and living the commandments. I just knew Robert would have his way with Lucy and teach her the prayers and chants he learned in his Church. Why couldn't this man I loved feel the same feeling I feel about this Gospel?

After a very quiet dinner, I took Lucy up to her cradle for the night. I stayed in the dark room for awhile just looking out the window at London. How I loved London! Especially in the evening when the sun had gone down and the night dew was just starting to settle in.

"Sarah, where are you? I need to talk to you."

"Upstairs Robert, I'll be right down."

As I slowly walked through the parlor into the room in the front of our house, I saw Robert sitting in front of a warm fire in his favorite chair. I looked at this handsome man sitting by the fire. He was, for the most part, such a kind man and I loved being with him so much. The fire from the fireplace was lighting up the left side of his face. I thought about all the nights we had set together in this room talking about our life together and what we wanted for our children. As Robert looked up at me with those piercing blue eyes, my heart sank for I knew he was going to say something I didn't want to hear.

"Sarah, I have been thinking about you not seeing your parents for a long time and I thought about how I would feel if I thought I couldn't see my parents for awhile." Robert leaned forward and asked me to come and sit by him. I walked over to him and sat down on the floor in front of him just looking at this man whom I have always thought was the most handsome man I knew. He was tall and straight with broad shoulders. His hair was black and his eyes were blue. My hair was brown with a red cast to it and I also had blue eyes. I thought about the times Robert and I sat in this very room and wondered what our children would look like. Who would they favor? Then my mind went quickly back to the moment.

"Sarah," he said, " I will give you permission to go with your parents to the ship when they leave for the new valley. But remember, I promise I will push you overboard if you try to go with them."

"Oh, thank you Robert! Thank you so much!"

My heart was filled with joy at his permission to go with my parents.

"But Sarah," he said, "you must promise me that you will not try talking me into going. We are staying here and that's final."

Robert bent down and kissed me as he had done so many times before, then he looked at me and said, "I know you would never take my daughter, my own little girl away from me." Leaning back in his chair, he closed his eyes as if he had finally felt peace about what was going on. I, however, had never felt so alone and confused in my life. I leaned back against Robert's leg until I could find a comfortable spot, then rested my eyes. I must have fallen asleep because Robert was nudging me, "Sarah! Sarah, wake up. It's time to go bed." I leaned forward and stretched out my legs as Robert laughed.

"Sarah, you are so tiny I'll bet your legs wouldn't even go to my knees."

I laughed also as I pictured my own mother who was not even five feet, and I had taken after her and didn't grow to be very tall. Robert then hugged me saying,

"Even if you're small, you are still more woman than anyone I have ever known."

"Robert," I said, "you go ahead up to bed. There are a few things I would like to put away before retiring." As I went through the house blowing out the lights and putting the dinner dishes away, I knew the only way I could find peace in my heart was to turn to my Heavenly Father in prayer. As I went back into the front of the house, I knelt down in front of the fire Robert had built.

"Father," I asked, "please help me to know what choice I should make."

I remembered the missionaries telling me if you need to know the Lord's will, you can always find it in the scriptures. I jumped up from my prayer and went for my Book of Mormon. The book fell open to The Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ. The page it opened to was a revelation given through Joseph Smith to Oliver Cowdery in April of 1829.

"Behold, you have not understood; you have supposed that I would give it unto you, when you took no thought save it was to ask me."

I thought, "But Father, I have asked many times". I read on.

"But behold, I say unto you that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right. But if it not be right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong."

My mind was so clear now as to what I was to do. The Lord couldn't take my free agency away from me, however, through the scriptures He had given me the way. I need to study it through and then make up my mind as to what I wanted and then go to Him in prayer and ask Him if it be right.

I closed my prayer by giving the Lord thanks for giving me a modern day revelation through the power of the Priesthood and through ancient and modern day prophets. As I climbed up the narrow stairs to our room, I knew I had a big day in head of me. I have a choice to make and I need to think it through.

Robert had already fallen asleep when I retired. I went to bed feeling more peace than I had in a very long time, knowing the Lord had and would continue to answer my prayers.

The dawn broke without even a stir from Lucy. I awoke in a startle. Why hadn't I heard her cry in the night? She was only four weeks old and was still waking up two or three times in the night wanting to be fed. I leapt to my feet grabbing my robe from the bottom of the bed. Lucy was lying in her bed just waving her arms and kicking her feet. She was such a good baby and she brought me such joy.

After dressing myself, I dressed and fed Lucy then ate a quick breakfast. I went to the front of the house once again and sat in the same chair my beloved Robert had been sitting in the night before. What was I to do? My mind wandered back through my life and the choices I had made. I knew this would be the greatest decision of my life. I closed my eyes and was starting to doze off. My mind took me back to a dream I had when I was only eighteen. In my dream I was shown the route to the valley. I saw high mountains and plains. As I was walking through the valley, I came to a beautiful green meadow. I heard Heavenly music and singing. I saw on the top of the high mountain a very elderly looking man. He was dressed in a long robe. His beard and hair was long and white. He was winding some silver piping on top of the mountain. The sun shone on him so bright that it dazzled my eyes. Just at that time a woman passed by me. Then I saw a gate leading into the meadow. There was a gate keeper standing by the gate. The woman went up to the gate keeper. He told her she would have to have a blessing before letting her through the gate. He beckoned to the man on top of the mountain. He then came down and gave her a wonderful blessing. I then went up to the gate. The gate keeper beckoned the man to come and give me a blessing. He came down and laid his hands upon my head. He told me to honor my father and my mother that my days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. He then said "Go thy way and obey thy parents in all things." I was saddened because I didn't think I had as good of a blessing as the woman before me had. For this reason I did not want to go into the meadow. The gate keeper then said, "You had what you deserved," so I went back into the valley and I came upon a house. In this house there was dancing and I could hear music. I thought I heard my sister's voice, so I started walking to the door. There were two door keepers standing by the doorway. When I walked up to



them they gave me a push and said, "You can't come in here." I fell down the steps onto the ground. When I got up, I turned back to the meadow. Then I sat down and cried bitterly.

When I awoke, my face and dress was wet, just as my pillow was when I had this same dream at the age of eighteen. I knew I had done something wrong and I knew what it was. I had married Robert against my parents will. Then later, only to my sorrow, I found that Robert had joined the Church only to get me. My father had told us older girls not to marry anyone out of the Church. This was his counsel and I had disobeyed him.

I now knew what I must do. I must honor my father and mother. I knew I was to leave Robert and go to the valley. My bosom burned within me with a spirit of peace as I asked the Lord in prayer if I had made the right choice.

I knew I only had two weeks to prepare before sailing to the new world. My thoughts raced as to all of the things I must do to prepare. How was I to do this without Robert knowing? My heart sank when I realized I could not take anything with me. Lucy and I had to go with only the clothes on our backs. If I took anything away from our home, Robert would know I was up to something.

There were so many people in England I loved. How could I see all of them in two weeks? How could I not let on to anyone what I was going to do? There was my best friend Camilla whom I had known since childhood. How I wished she would join the Church and come to the new valley with her family. Oh how I would miss her!. I felt saddened by the thought that I couldn't even say goodbye.

The next two weeks flew by. It was the evening before I was to sail and Robert was to return home soon. Oh how I dreaded the thought of leaving him behind and also feeling I may never find love again. "Sarah, you have to be strong," I told myself. Within my soul I was blessed with a peace I had never felt before. I knew all would be well.

That night as Robert lay next to me sleeping, I laid awake all night just watching him sleep, studying his face. I never wanted to forget what he looked like.

When morning came, I arose and had breakfast with Robert. Somehow he seemed even kinder that day than ever before. He asked if he should come over to my parents to carry the baby home. I told him it may be late when we return so I may stay the night at my parents home. As he walked to the door, I followed him wanting so much to kiss him goodbye. I watched as he walked away, down the pathway to the road. He stopped, turned and looked at me for a moment, then he turned and walked away.

"Goodbye Robert," I said under my breath. I walked down the path and continued watching him until he disappeared into the distance. I then returned to the house. I walked through it preparing everything as to look like I would return the next day. I bundled Lucy up, holding her close to my breast, as I walked through the house taking one last look. I took a deep breath, straightened my shoulders and left for my parents home not stopping to look back.

When I arrived at my parents home I found they were already packed and ready to go. Within moments we left my parents home and started our journey to the new world together. We reached London Harbor and found the ship we were to sail on. We were to board the ship the night before leaving so they could get everything packed, everyone situated and prepared for the long voyage.

The next day when Robert returned home to find I had not come home yet, he hurried to my parents. When Robert found that I was not there, he went for the police to come and find me.

Robert arrived at the ship with the police. As they separated to make their search, one of the policemen came and asked me where I was going with such a young baby. I told him I wasn't going anywhere. I was just saying goodbye to my parents. I knew I had lied and would have to repent for that later. For now I had to get my baby to safety. I knew of a young couple on the other side of the ship so I passed Lucy to them. Knowing the policemen were looking for us to be together. I knew I had to hide myself somewhere. I hurried along the deck and I found a couple and asked them if I could hide in their berth. I was tiny so I crawled behind their feather bed. The policemen were checking every berth and every corner. It seemed

to take forever for them to complete their task and leave the ship. I sighed a sigh of relief when they left the ship without seeing me, but I knew I wouldn't feel completely safe until we were away into the waters.

Several hours passed after we set sail before I left the berth of this good couple. My first task was to find Lucy and get settled in with my parents. We set sail May 23, 1866 on the American Congress.

While at sea, we were tossed about and suffered with sea sickness. One morning I awoke to find Lucy sick with the whooping cough having caught cold being passed about on the deck when the policemen were after us. I prayed and asked the Lord to heal Lucy. To my delight He spared her life.

We landed in New York July 4, 1866 after sailing for nearly two months. The ship anchored in the harbor. We watched as America celebrated July 4th. There were celebrations and beautiful fireworks lighting up the Statue of Liberty. How wonderful we all felt. This was the new world.

We had been in New York for only three weeks when my father came to me and said, "Sarah, I'm so sorry. It seems we haven't enough money left to take you to the new valley."

Knowing the Lord would help me if I first helped myself, I went down into the main part of New York and sold my wedding ring. I bought Lucy a pair of shoes, a coat and hat then I paid for an advertisement to be a wet nurse. I would send Lucy with my parents to the new valley and after I had made enough money to pay my way I would join them. I knew I could do it. I had faith. If the Lord had brought me this far I knew He would help me complete my journey.

I was called back on my advertisement. I was to take a job as a wet nurse for twenty dollars a month. I was walking home trying to figure out my expense and how I could save as much money as possible so I could join my baby and family as soon as possible. On my way home, I met my father and he said he had been to see Brother Bullock and Thomas Taylor who were looking after the immigrants and told them of my plight. They told my father not to leave me behind. If I had left my husband for the gospel and for the future of my baby, then I should go with her to the

new valley. Brother Taylor told my father the Church had set up a fund to pay the way for immigrants to go to the new valley. He said they would pay my way from this fund and when I reached the new valley I could pay the Church back.

I was so filled with emotion and wanted so much to go with them but I thought I could eventually save enough money to pay my own way. My father told me it was my choice. I knew it would be so hard to part with Lucy and it had been only three months since I parted with my husband, so in haste I decided to travel with them. I was so happy when it was time for the boat to leave.

While crossing the plains we suffered great trials. We were chased by Indians and many died from cholera. We buried our dead knowing as we did so that the wolves were waiting.

The journey was long and walking was hard. The Captain put Lucy on his horse with him and asked me to walk along side him and sing for them all. This made the time go faster for I loved to sing and everyone would gather around to listen. I sang many of the songs I sang when travelling with my father and his missionary companion when I was a child.

I arrived in Salt Lake City with my father, mother and two sisters at conference time October 6th, 1866. What a joy to attend the Church Conferences. We never felt so blessed.

The next week Lucy and I settled in with an elderly woman who needed someone to live with her and nurse her because her health was failing. One Monday morning I awoke with red swollen eyes. I felt I shouldn't attend this woman as a nurse with my eyes hurting so bad. I travelled to my sister Mary's home in Lehi to nurse them well. Mary was busy getting a wedding ready for a Brother David Buttars' daughter Marjorie. I asked Mary If I could be of any help in my condition. Mary asked me to help with the decoration for Sister Buttars' wedding.

I heard a knock on Mary's front door. Mary turned away from decorating Marjorie's wedding cake to answer it. I heard Mary say, "Oh, Brother Buttars please come in. My sister Sarah is here from Salt Lake City. Please come in and meet her". I was stooped over putting some wood into the fire when I heard the gentleman say,

"Mary, the reason I stopped by today was to check and see how the preparations for Marjorie's wedding are going." I looked up to see this man who had just come in the door. When I turned around and my eyes met his I found my breath taken away. In the parlor there stood a very tall handsome man with broad shoulders and golden skin. His hair was black with just a touch of gray starting to sprinkle through it.

"How do you do Miss Keep" he said.

Mary quickly corrected Brother Buttars saying, "Oh, my sister's name is Mrs. Francis. She and her daughter have left England to come to the valley with my parents and I."

"Oh, I see," said Brother Buttars. "Where is your husband?"

I felt my face starting to flush when he asked me this question.

"I left him in England," I quipped. "He didn't want to come to the valley and so I left him there without telling him where I had gone."

Brother Buttars smiled and said, "Oh, I see."

Mary told Brother Buttars I was having problems with my eyes and came to stay with her until they healed. Brother Buttars told me to go dig down a little over a foot deep into the soil and mold the soil and lay it on my eyes at night in a fine cloth. He said this remedy came from Brigham Young, so I did what Brother Buttars told me to and sure enough after a week my eyes were healed.

Brother Buttars invited my sister Mary and I to join them at his daughter Marjorie's wedding supper. Mary and I accepted the invitation to join them.

When we arrived I noticed that Brother Buttars was greeting the guests without anyone beside him. I asked Mary why Sister Buttars wasn't accompanying him. Mary told me she had died not too long ago leaving Brother Buttars to raise their five children alone. I told Mary about my strong attraction to Brother Buttars. Mary turned and smiled at me and I could see in her eyes that somehow she already new.

Throughout the evening I was very aware of Brother Buttars' presence. I knew that there was something very special about this man. I knew it the first time I looked into his bright blue eyes that he was a very good man. I could tell he loved the Lord and lived all of his commandments.

"Sarah, I'm ready to go home, are you ready?" Mary asked. I knew she had noticed my far away look because she said, "Sarah, are you alright?"

"Yes, of course I'm alright Mary, I'm just enjoying this beautiful evening."

I knew it was time to get Lucy home to bed, but I just didn't want to leave. Just as Mary and I started to leave, Brother Buttars came over and asked me if he could accompany me home to carry the baby. I of course accepted. Brother Buttars said he needed to tie up some loose ends at the supper and he would join us in just a moment.

I turned to Mary and said, "You go ahead and we'll be along shortly." Mary smiled at me when she left saying, "You'd better be careful Sarah. This man is forty-four years old and looking for a wife."

I smiled and my heart started pounding. I was hoping he was looking for a wife and I wanted it to be me. Why was I feeling so strong about this man who I hardly knew? I had felt the spirit of the Holy Ghost burning a feeling of peace within my bosom before and this evening I was feeling it even stronger than before. Can this be? Could this be one of the reasons I came to this valley and then on to Lehi?

I turned back to where the crowd was finishing up with the wedding supper and I noticed Brother Buttars just standing there looking at me. Oh, how I wondered if he was feeling the same feelings I was. He walked over to me and said, "Sarah Francis, are you ready to go home now?"

I picked Lucy up from the blanket she was laying on and put her into his arms and then we started walking the half mile to Mary's house.

We talked and laughed along the way. He told me the story of his conversion and then I told him mine. Just before we turned the corner to start down to Mary's house, he bore his testimony to me. I was so filled with the spirit of joy. I nearly burst. I know I fell in love with David the first time I saw him standing in Mary's parlor. As we walked, a little closer to Mary's, David stopped again. He took my hand with one hand and held Lucy with the other. David looked down at me.

"Sarah, there is something I want from you as payment for curing your eyes."

Half laughing I replied, "Yes, and just what do you have in mind Brother Buttars?"

David leaned down closer to me, "Sarah, I want you to be my wife."

I knew it was right and I knew I wanted to be his wife so I told him I would give him the payment he asked. We then walked the remainder of the way to Mary's home arm in arm cuddling together. David, I and Lucy.

Sarah Keep Buttars died 7 October 1935 in Clarkston, Utah, at the age of ninety-five after raising David's five children, Lucy, and then nine of their own.

She was active until a few days before her death. It is not known what conditions existed regarding her marriage to Robert which allowed her to marry David Buttars. She attended the Cache County Fair in September 1935 and won a prize for her fancy hand work and the honor of being the oldest pioneer in Cache Valley attending the Fair.

### **Be Careful What You Say**

In speaking of another's faults pray  
don't forget your own  
Remember those in homes of glass  
should seldom throw a stone  
If we have nothing else to do  
but talk of those who sin  
Tis better we commence at home  
and from that point begin.

We have no right to judge a man  
until he's fairly tried  
Should we not like his company  
we know the world is wide  
Some may have faults and who has  
not the old as well as young  
Perhaps we may for ought we know  
have fifty to their one.

I'll tell you of a better plan  
and find it works full well  
To try my own defects to cure  
before of others tell.

And though I sometimes hope to be  
no worse than some I know  
My own shortcomings bid me let  
the faults of others go.

Then let us all when we commence  
to slander friend or foe  
Think of the harm one word may go to  
those we little know.  
Remember curses sometimes,  
like our chickens roost at home  
Don't speak of others faults until  
we have none of our own.

Written by:  
Sarah Keep Buttars  
June 1914