

GRANDFATHER, GRANDMOTHER AND GRACE



Charles Coolidge Parlin



Grace Elizabeth Parlin
Aged 6 months



Daisy Blackwood Parlin



Grace Elizabeth Parlin



Grace Elizabeth Parlin
Aged 4 years



Grace Elizabeth Parlin

CHAPTER III

GRACE AS A BABY

By Charles

May 30, 1911 was a holiday in Wausau and George, Ruth and I had no school that day. As perhaps you know from the date, it was Memorial Day. Grandpa woke us up a little earlier than usual that morning. How would we all like to get up quickly, have our breakfast and go down to Mrs. Crocker's to play for the day? We could have our lunch there and stay all day. Mother was not feeling very well and would not get up for breakfast.

We all thought that was fine, so we jumped into our clothes, had a hasty breakfast and the three of us went down to Mrs. Crocker's to play with Calvin, Fred, Donald and Jean. I was then twelve, George was ten and Ruth was six.

We had dinner there at Mrs. Crocker's and late in the afternoon I suggested going home, but Mrs. Crocker said it would be all right for us to stay for supper, and we did. After supper Mrs. Crocker talked on the telephone and then told us that we could all go home and that there was a wonderful surprise there for us. Mrs. Crocker lived on First Street and we lived on Seventh Street, but I think the three of us ran all the way. George and I secretly thought we knew what it was, but Ruth couldn't think what it could be.

Grandpa was waiting for us when we got home. Yes, sir, George and I had guessed right! Grandpa told us there was the most wonderful surprise for us - a baby sister - and if we would be very quiet we could look at her just a minute before we went to bed. So we tip-toed in to

Grandma's bedroom and there in bed beside Grandma was a cute little rosy baby, fast asleep. We asked Grandma in a whisper what her name was and she told us it was "Grace Elizabeth". And then we all went off to our own rooms and to bed. Yes, that's right. That little baby was your Aunt Grace.

If you are interested, you might ask Grandma sometime to show you Grace's "Baby Book". Grandma kept a book and it tells how much Grace weighed when she was born, how much when she was one month old, when she cut her first tooth and all that sort of thing. I can't remember all those details, but I do remember that George and Ruth and I agreed that Grace was the cutest and nicest baby any of us had ever seen.

That next summer was a very important one for all of us. Grandpa was the principal of the high school in Wausau, but he had decided to quit teaching and go in with The Curtis Publishing Company, and we were moving to Boston as soon as school closed at the end of June. Perhaps Grandpa will tell you about that. We would have to pack up all our furniture and things and either sell or rent our house that summer.

Toward the end of June and about the time the schools were closing for the summer, Grandpa asked me to come into his study as he wanted to talk to me. He said the doctor thought that the baby was too young to travel so far, particularly in such hot weather (you see she was only about three weeks old then) and that it would be too much for Grandma to have all the packing to do. So the only thing, it seemed to him, was for him to go on to Boston; then I could come on to Boston in the fall in time to enter High School (because I was graduating from eighth grade that June); and then the rest of the family could follow later when the doctor thought it would be safe. Meanwhile, he told me, he would expect me to

be more or less in charge of the family. He said it was very important that I make every effort to see that things went smoothly during the summer in his absence; that Grandma should have no trouble from me or George or Ruth and that this would depend very largely on how I behaved; and, last and most important, inasmuch as Grandma was not strong and would need lots of rest and sleep during the summer, I would have to assume much of the responsibility for the care of the baby.

Grandpa was very serious and I could see that he did not like to go to Boston and leave Grandma with so much work and responsibility, so I told him that I would help Grandma all I could, and that I thought I could take care of the baby a great deal of the time and give Grandma a chance to rest and get back her strength.

So that was the agreement, and I suppose that is why Grandpa assigned the task of writing this chapter about "Grace As a Baby" to me. Because from that time on I took care of Grace a great deal of the time.

In those days they took care of babies very differently than they do now. For example, when it is time for Camilla or Johnnie to go to bed, someone just takes the baby to the nursery and puts it in its crib and fastens the bed covers and then comes out and shuts the door, and the baby goes to sleep and that is all there is to it. But when Grace was a baby, we used to sing her and rock her to sleep. If the baby was fussing and Grandma thought she ought to go to sleep, I would sit in a rocking chair and rock and sing or whistle until the baby was asleep and then carefully put her into her baby buggy or bed.

The diapers were different then, too. Now we have long, narrow ones that are pinned snugly on both sides, but the old ones were square. You folded them into a triangle and brought the three corners around in

front and pinned them all together with one big safety pin right in the middle. But there are other things that haven't changed. For example, little Gracie got her bath every morning and she splashed and sucked the wash cloth and tried to catch the slippery piece of soap exactly as I have seen every one of you do when you were babies and were being given your bath.

Perhaps the funniest thing about the old system was that instead of having a separate room and bed for the baby the way we do now, it was considered necessary that the baby sleep in the bed with some adult. I suppose the theory was that the adult could see that the baby was covered up at night and wouldn't kick the covers off and catch cold. Perhaps these fasteners for bed clothes had not been invented then. At any rate, little Gracie generally slept with her mother. This is, of course, your Grandma, but many nights she was with me. I think the system was worse for the babies than the adults. In winter it is a pleasant sensation to feel a little nudge of a baby snuggling up to you for warmth. The dampness is something you get used to.

The only accident we had with Grace was when she was about two years and when we were living in Boston. Grandpa had the rheumatism very badly and he and Grandma had gone to Porto Rico on doctor's orders. Baby Gracie was just about as tall as the dining room table and she could see the dishes on the table, but she could not see what was in them. It was breakfast time and a cup had just been filled with boiling hot coffee and Gracie, thinking she would like to see what was in it, went to the edge of the table and tipped the cup up toward her, spilling the entire cup of coffee over the side of her face and shoulder and arm. The skin all came off and it was a frightful burn.

Someone telephoned for the doctor and I started to take off the wet clothes. I should have taken scissors and cut them off quickly because there was a little tight-fitting wool undershirt with long sleeves. This shirt apparently held the heat in because the burns on the shoulder and arm were the worst, and whereas Gracie's face and neck healed very quickly and left no scars, the scars on her arm lasted for years and even when she was in high school, she hated to wear an evening gown on that account.

But it seemed as though the doctor would never get there. I got the clothes off as fast as I could and put lots of oil on all the burned parts and tied the baby's hands so that she could not scratch them. This is what they had taught us at the Boy Scouts to do in case of bad burns and the doctor said later it was the right thing to have done.

Miss Anderson, one of the ladies who worked for The Curtis Publishing Company, was staying with us while Grandpa and Grandma were gone. She went to work in Boston every day and I went to school and the maid had enough to do without taking care of a sick baby besides, so we accepted the offer of two of our neighbors, Mrs. Ravinius and Mrs. Youker, and they took care of Gracie during the day and then I took her at night. Grandma and Grandpa got back about three days later, and I was certainly glad to see them because I had been awfully worried about the baby.

That, I believe, is the only time she ever worried me. Grace was an uncommonly good baby. Never once did I have to spank her. Now it just seems to me as though it can't be so, but the fact is that ever since Grandpa asked me to write this chapter - and that was about four months ago - I have been thinking and thinking about this and about Grace when she was a baby and how I took care of her and I can't recall one single time when she was naughty.