

CHAPTER XXXV

FRIENDSHIPS AND INCIDENTS

This chapter will be a "scrap bag" containing "pieces" belonging in Grandmother's first chapters.

The Best Beloved of Grandmother's life, aside from her immediate home circle, has always been Cousin Susa. It has always been the contention of Grandmother and Cousin Susa that double cousins (their mothers were sisters and their fathers brothers) are as near as sisters. In reality, very few sisters have as strong a bond of loving accord as has, quite literally, always dominated their relations. During the years their love has been put to test and emerged triumphant.

Grandmother need but give one instance to prove her point that, like David and Johnathan, their souls are knit in such love that nothing can sunder their affection. Their children are approximately the same ages and, sad to relate, when they were youngsters, these children did not always get on together as well as their mothers had. During this period, the two families lived together for weeks at a time during the long summer vacations - once in a cottage at the chain-o-lakes and twice at seashore resorts. Grandmother is proud to say that never once did Susa and she have any words or any feeling even of irritation toward each other, because of the "scrapping" of their offspring. On the contrary, these summers only seemed to strengthen the bond between them and they parted in the Fall with greater reluctance than ever to spending so much of their lives apart.

For quite a period they wrote each other every day. Unfortunately in their moves this voluminous correspondence was destroyed or they would probably get a lot of fun out of it now. It is probably unnecessary for Grandmother to say that she and Susa always had grand times when they got together in their youth, for you all know that they do right up to the present time. Grandmother will tell you only one or two of the amusing things that occurred in their youth.

One summer, when Susa was visiting Grandmother in Oshkosh, the Christian Endeavor Society was having an excursion by train to the Dells of the Wisconsin River. (This is a very interesting and pretty place. Grandmother hopes you may all go there.) It so happened that there was a Missionary Convention at Waupun, half way between Oshkosh and the Dells, at this same time.

Grandmother and some of the other young people had put on a skit in the Auxiliary of the Algoma M. E. Church and they were asked to repeat it at this convention. They figured out that they could spend the day at the Dells and stop off at Waupun on the return trip. It was arranged that one of Grandmother's classmates who lived in Waupun should meet their train there in the morning and, during the stop, relieve them of their baggage during the day. A bright idea occurred to Grandmother. She would not increase her baggage by a second pair of shoes. Wearing her fine new shoes, bought expressly for the convention, to climb around in the Dells was out of the question, so this is what she decided to do. She would wear some old, old shoes and carry her new ones in their box. After leaving the Dells and before boarding the train for Waupun she would discard the old shoes and don the new ones.

As the excursionists were requested to bring lunches sufficient for the entire day, one more shoe box would not matter, and when they reached Waupun that night there would be no encumbering boxes. It was a red letter day in their experiences. The weather, the scenery, the company - everything about it was glorious until at sunset they returned to Kilbourn where the train awaited them. Then ensued a bad hour. They were tired and oh! so hungry. What do you think had happened? All the lunch boxes, including the box with shoes, had been stolen!

Thirteen trainloads of excursionists from different sections had poured into Kilbourn that morning and dire confusion reigned. The Oshkosh train was scheduled to leave early in the evening but, as a matter of fact, it did not leave until long after midnight. However, no one could get assurance from the train officials that he could go uptown and get something to eat without getting left, so there the excursionists stayed in the coaches.

After a time, the situation began to assume a humorous side. My! the wit and humor that was brought out. Grandmother's shoes were an especial target. The day had not improved these shoes. One sole had nearly parted company with the rest of the shoe. Amid much laughter, prophecies were made as to what Grandmother's hostess would think on the arrival of the delegation.

Well! they were all wrong as the train did not reach Waupun until 4 a.m. and there were no greeting hostesses on the platform, although they had thoughtfully provided escorts who had waited all night to pilot the delegates to their rooms. These delegates had time for only a brief but

much needed rest before breakfast. Grandmother hid herself to a shoe shop and outfitted with new shoes was ready for her part in the program at 9:30 a.m.

Later, that same summer, Susa and Grandmother went by train for a week's visit with a friend in Fond du Lac, Mrs. W. H. Bryant. As you will see a little later, Mrs. Bryant was old enough to be their mother, but she was a mere child for fun and "carrying on."

The day of the train ride was one of those exceedingly hot, sultry August days that occasionally strikes the Middle West. Every window in the coach was raised. As we rounded a curve, a sudden draft took Susa's hat from her head in spite of the long hat pins used at that time, and out the window it went.

Mrs. Bryant met two girls almost hysterical with laughter and one of them bareheaded. The girls had expected much merriment during this visit, and it started with a bang right on the depot platform. The shoes and the hat incident furnished Mrs. Bryant excellent "spoofing" material throughout the visit.

One afternoon when the girls were uptown with Mrs. Bryant, the latter said she wished to buy some safety pins - the heaviest she could possibly find. All unsuspecting, Susa and Grandmother helped her shop around for some. They selected some huge ones, such as farmers use to pin blankets on their horses and cattle. That evening, when Mr. Bryant was at home, his wife brought out the pins.

She claimed to have a strong superstition that bad luck and accidents went by threes:

- (1) The shoes
- (2) The hat
- (3) She feared would be the loss of both girls.

Hence, she proposed to pin the girls to the seat on the return trip and wire Great-Great-Grandmother to meet them in Oshkosh.

Mrs. Bryant was Great Grandmother's bridesmaid. As the former never had but one child, who died in infancy, Grandmother as the child of her closest friend, became very dear to her. She was a veritable fairy godmother to Grandmother. Christmas, birthdays and when she came to visit us, there was always a gift that would delight the heart of any child. How Grandmother, as a child, did enjoy Mrs. Bryant's visits at the farm! What continuous laughter, what joy there was in those visits!

Mrs. Bryant would don an old straw hat and go off to the river with her little friend to spend hours. She would roll her eyes, pretend to be afraid of the animals and even the croaking of the bullfrogs. In her fright (?) she would climb a fence, stumble over a root or stump or do anything to make Grandmother laugh.

The act that perhaps best shows her devotion occurred at bed time. Naturally Grandmother just hated to go to bed during this wonderful visit. To make it easier for her, Mrs. Bryant would go in and lie down with her for a time.

Every evening and sometimes twice in one evening, Mrs. Bryant would pretend to fall asleep, snore and fall off the bed to the floor with a resounding thud. Grandmother thought that was the most fun of the whole merry day, but now she thinks it must have been very hard on an adult person.

Beginning when they were very young girls, the "Jolly Four" as they called themselves - Lyda Nichols, Lola Woodford, Emily Davis Cowham and Grandmother - spent two delightful weeks of the summer vacation together. While Grandmother lived at Cherry Grove Farm, one of those weeks was spent there, the other week at Lola's. Later all the reunion was at Lola's. There was a stated program, followed more or less closely, each summer, ending with a trip to the photographer for a "tin type". You may see a collection of these tin types in one of the old albums.

It would require a whole book to record the doings of those reunions, and they might not seem very exciting to you. At Lola's, they played along the river bank and visited her father's shop. At the farm, for some reason, they rarely went to the river, but played in the grove back of the house and in the barn. The barn was the greatest rendezvous. They jumped from the high beams on to the freshly stowed, sweet-smelling hay until they were tired and then sat on the hay, told stories and propounded conundrums.

Each summer they made one article of wearing apparel alike. One summer it would be an apron, another a petticoat, etc etera. (Your mothers can tell you what a petticoat is. The word is now obsolete.) The last summer they were all together as girls they made themselves gingham dresses with some help from Mrs. Woodford and Great-Great-Grandmother.

Cora Wescott and Abbie Huntington were two girlhood friends with whom Grandmother had many happy times. As a little girl Cora was quite a "tomboy" and afraid of nothing. A few years ago when they crossed Lake Michigan together to visit Abbie, Grandmother decided that her courage now surpasses Cora's.

Susa and Grandmother were young ladies when the former's youngest sister, Ruth, was born. There is an old saying that "pretty babies make homely grown-ups" and vice versa. Ruth disproved this statement, for she has been beautiful from the day she was born.

Grandmother and Susa were very proud of her and loved to take her around with them. She was as nearly perfect as a child could be and they could take her to church or any place with no resulting disturbance to anyone. Ruth would not talk, but she was not afraid of people and would smile, showing her adorable dimples, at anyone who looked her way.

Susa brought Ruth at least twice and spent the summer with Great-Great-Grandmother and Grandmother. The first time was in Oshkosh and Ruth was only two years old.

Grandmother had a Sunday school class of high school boys at this time. One Sunday she had Ruth sitting on a chair beside her while she taught the class. Suddenly Grandmother saw the oldest boy, a very bashful fellow, blush furiously and the other boys began to laugh. Grandmother turned to look at Ruth and here this baby with a flirtatious smile was winking at Roy, first one eye and then the other.

When Ruth was four, she and Susa spent the summer at Great-Great Grandmother's in West DePere. The first night after they arrived, Susa and Grandmother put Ruth to bed and were slipping quietly down the front walk to go downtown when they heard a little voice from an upper window: "Susa, come back, I want to speak to you." When Susa reached her, Ruth said: "I don't care if you and Daisy go out, but I don't want you to sneak away." They acted on her suggestion after that and Ruth never made

a bit of fuss about their going.

One day that same summer, unexpected company arrived for dinner and there was not sufficient bread. They had no 'phone and Susa suggested that Ruth had been with us to the bakery, less than two blocks away, and she could get the bread. Grandmother gave Ruth money to pay for the bread, telling her she could have the change for candy.

Susa and Grandmother were so busy getting the rest of the meal they did not notice how time was passing until things were almost ready. Then, panic stricken, realizing little Ruth had not returned, they made a simultaneous dash for the street. To their great joy and relief, they saw her coming in charge of a high school girl.

Ruth had bought her bread at the right place, but instead of getting her candy at the bakery, she had walked some distance down Main Street, carrying the two loaves of bread, where we had once bought her some candy. Planking down her 3 cents, she asked for "a nickle's worth of candy!" On the long walk back, she passed the post office and decided she would get the mail. The postmaster was much amused when she said: "I'd like a letter for Miss Blackwood, please." It was here that Helena saw her with the big package, decided something was wrong, and piloted her home.

You may be interested to know what Susa and Grandmother planned for that Summer. They planned to take boarders from the six weeks summer school for teachers held in DePere. With their profits, they expected to take a two weeks trip on the Great Lakes the latter part of August. As they had but one boarder, this dream was not realized, but they had a fine summer.

They were making custard for ice cream one day. It got lumpy and they did not dare freeze it. It tasted very good and they decided to use it as a pudding, giving it a high sounding name. Their boarder was very fond of it, asked for a second helping and wanted the receipt!

Grandfather's Concluding Note to Part II

If you have had the patience to read the various chapters of Parts I and II, you will see that boys and girls amuse themselves in quite different ways, but that in their youth Grandfather and Grandmother, each in his and her own way, without movies or automobiles or radio, had a lot of fun, that each aspired to scholastic success and felt some measure of satisfaction in the degree of accomplishment attained and that each made friendships which many years later were a joy to recall.

We both hope that all of you may have a happy childhood, that you may aspire to do well in school, that you may have a large measure of success in your scholastic endeavors and that you may make among yourselves and with worthy companions, friendships which will remain a source of pleasure and helpfulness throughout life.