



Principle Approach® Education

TALES FROM A GRANDMOTHER

by Pearle Henriksen Schultz

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This story begins, as so many good stories do, with a little one sitting on a grandparent's lap and begging for a story. I call her my Saturday Child, this youngest grandchild of ours, for that day is specially Charlotte's. She has been coming up to us on Saturdays for many years now. We make sandwiches together and talk of a multitude of things, and then after lunch comes storytelling time. I remember the first time she made the trip all by herself, trudging along the half-mile of subdivision road from her parents' house to our summer home here in Wyoming, with her mother watching through binoculars at one end and I out on our deck with binoculars at the other end, safeguarding her progress. She was not quite five, and jubilant to have come all that way alone. Years are on the wing since then, and my Saturday Child has made her short trip between our houses in many ways—on foot, with snowshoes, by bicycle, with friends, and, recently, driving herself. But one thing remains the same: Saturdays are story days.

My stories have all been told before, and they will, I know, be retold again and again in future years—by our own three children; by granddaughter Anne, a chemist now; by grandson Carl, graduating soon from St. Olaf College; and by the Saturday Child. And by their children, and by their children's children. That's the wonderful thing about family stories: they endure down through the generations, and new stories are added along the way.

"Pick a favorite," I say to Charlotte one Saturday at storytelling time. "Which story do you want today?"

She looks out toward the mountains, thinking hard, her blue eyes bright. After a long minute she makes her choice. "Tell me the one about little Karen Bolette saving her small pet pig from the foraging soldiers, Gram."

I smile, remembering the day long, long ago when I was home from school with measles, and my own Grandmother Jacobson came to tell stories to a sick child. Karen Bolette was Grandma Jacobson's mother; the tale took place on her grandparents' small farm in Langesund, Norway, in the aftermath of a long war. How proud I was of little Karen Bolette who stood up to the five hungry soldiers and demanded that they give back her very own pet pig! "Karen Bolette grew up to be my great-grandmother," I remind Charlotte, and she pauses to figure and announces proudly, "And my three-greats gram."

Both of my granddaughters love my story of "The Little White Pitcher," and they have insisted that I write it down in their books to keep forever. I first told it to Charlotte on a windy Wyoming day, with



embellishments of sound and fury. The Saturday Child snuggled deep in my lap, holding the small enamel pitcher as I described its adventures. My mother had told me about coming to Montana as a bride and being greeted by the dreadful tornado of 1915 which overturned their little house and scattered all their belongings to the wind. Pots, pans, and petticoats went sailing away. Kindly neighbors came to help them gather up what could be found after the terrible wind had passed. Weeks later the little white pitcher was brought back to them, safe and sound except for a bump the size of a nickel. It had been found over two miles away in the yard of an old man who saddled his horse and came riding over the prairie, holding the little white pitcher.

My mother used that pitcher during all my childhood years, and I have it now. Sometimes I put early roses in it, sometimes it holds cream for our morning oatmeal. Charlotte thoughtfully fingers the bump on the enamel as I speak. I have promised her that someday she shall have the well-traveled little white pitcher.

Sometimes Charlotte wants to hear stories about her mother when she was a little girl, and about our life in South Florida then. An only child herself, she listens with great interest to stories about our three children, all so close in age, and comments sagely that her mother Stephanie really had “built-in” playmates. She chuckles over the tale of her ten-year-old Uncle Tor’s train trip to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and wonders aloud if he still likes hot chocolate topped with heaps and heaps of whipped cream. Her eyes grow wide with admiration when she hears about Tor’s twin sister Alison soloing a plane shortly after her sixteenth birthday. “Cool,” she comments. She likes to hear about girls and women doing brave things.

Perhaps that’s why she wants to be sure that I’ve included “The Littlest Lake Captain” among the family stories written down in the grandchildren’s books. It’s the favorite tale of our grandson Carl, too. My grandfather, Andrew Jacobson, graduated from a Marine School in Norway and came to America in 1884 as young man. The second ship he owned in America was the “Minnie Mueller,” a large three-master schooner with a crew of three plus a cook. Grandfather was a Great Lakes captain, sailing in and out of all the Lake Michigan ports for commercial purposes. During the summers he would take his children, one at a time, along on the “Minnie Mueller.” My mother adored those trips, some of which lasted three weeks or more. One time, when she was twelve, something very exciting happened. Loaded with oak bark from northern Michigan forests, the “Minnie Mueller” set sail for Kenosha, the southern Wisconsin port where they delivered bark for the tanneries. Near her home port of Racine, the “Minnie Mueller” received a message from a passing ship that the pilots were on strike at the Kenosha port so no tug would come out to help them. Grandfather Jacobson considered his possible actions. The entrance to Kenosha harbor definitely needed a pilot—or the keen eyes of an experienced captain. And that was how it happened that twelve-year-old Anne steered the “Minnie Mueller” into safe harbor while her father, her captain, sat up on top the wheel house where he could see everything ahead and call down directions to the young girl below him while the two-man crew handled the sails and stood by with boat hooks.

As the “Minnie Mueller” came carefully in, cheering people lined up along the bridges, hailing the littlest lake captain. My mother often told me this story, reliving the excitement of that day, and always ending with the words her beloved father spoke as the “Minnie Mueller” tied up: “I knew you could do it, Annie-my-girl.”



My grandchildren know all about the books I have written. Sometimes they ask me to retell them parts that they specially enjoy—like the time that Sir Walter Scott found the long-lost Scottish crown jewels. “But you can read about that in the biography itself,” I remind them, and they counter with, “But we like to watch your face when you talk the story.”

And so, once again, I take them back to Scotland. The year is 1818, and Scott has finally convinced the Prince Regent, soon to be George IV of Great Britain, that it would be a fine gesture of friendship to permit the Scots to once again display their crown jewels, the famous Honors of Scotland. But where are the jewels—that splendid gold crown, the silver and gilded Sword of State, the magnificent Scottish Scepter? These symbols of Scotland have not been seen since 1707 when the Union of England and Scotland took place. Missing for more than one hundred years . . . And only someone like Walter Scott, who knew every inch of Scotland’s history, was wise enough to direct the search for the lost Regalia.

I can imagine Scott, surrounded by his four children—Sophia, Walter, Charles, and Anne—and his wife Charlotte, as he came to this part of the story. He would look down at Charles, sitting at his feet, and the lad would chant:

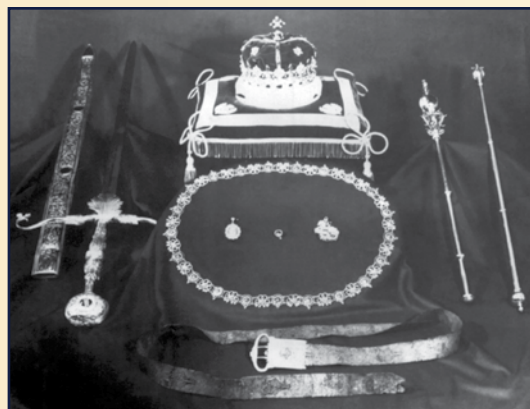
On Tintock tap there is a mist,
And in the mist there is a kist,
And in the kist there is a crown!

“Aye, young Charles,” Scott would reply. “That old nursery rhyme holds the clue for all who would believe. Atop the hill in Edinburgh Castle is a forgotten room, sealed so many years ago. The Crown Room, I call it. And in that room, stored safely away in a locked chest, I know we will find our Scottish Honors.”

And so it happened that on a dreary January day in 1818 Walter Scott and the members of the Prince Regent’s Royal Commission climbed the many steps to a small locked room at the top of Edinburgh Castle, watching while workmen broke through the sealed doors of oak and iron, and, as Scott told his children later, “We stood in that doorway, peering into history.

“There across the floor with a heavy, undisturbed coating of dust, stood a chest thick with the dust of a hundred years. And inside the chest—the Honors of Scotland!”

Scott’s voice would have trembled as he came to this part of the story. I imagine he would have stared into the glowing fire on his hearth, the children silent at his feet. “Aye,” Scotland’s wonderful storyteller would have said then, “the Honors of Scotland, the Royal Regalia of our Scottish kings in perfect preservation there—aye, bairns, there they were, our crown, all gold and glistening, our worn Sword of State, and our Royal Scepter, but Scotland’s kings long, long gone.”





There was no one of Walter Scott's equal in the telling of the tales of Scotland's unparalleled past, no one to equal his gruff voice as he spun his magic web. His listeners sighed with the wonder of it.

My listeners sigh too, regretting the end of the story.

I tell them how Sir Walter Scott wanted his children, and his grandchildren, and all of Scotland to hear the story of the Regalia, and to know about brave Robert the Bruce, and William Wallace, the Highlanders,



SOPHIA SCOTT LOCKHART

Bonnie Prince Charlie, and the battles of Flodden and Culloden. Scott's pen was never more glorious than when he was writing of Scotland and her glorious past. Scott the storyteller served his country also as Scott the historian.

But it is as a grandfather that I like best to think of Scott. Sophia's eldest child, little John Hugh Lockhart, was specially dear to this heart. The boy was often ill during his early years, and both Scott and Sophia would keep him well entertained with stories and books as he lay abed. All the heroes of Scotland's remarkable past lived again in the colorful tales told by his grandfather. Little Johnnie loved every one of them. Visits from his grandfather were highlights in his grandson's life.

Back home in Edinburgh, Walter Scott had just completed his consummate biography of Napoleon. After many weary months of labor, the definitive work was finally finished—nine volumes covering every aspect of the life of Bonaparte and showing how his battles and political struggles affected the world of that time. "I write," Scott explained, "not just to tell how things happened, but also why things happened as they did." The massive work was immediately a huge success with readers everywhere.

And Scott needed that success. His world was all awry: business ventures had gone sour and financial ruin threatened; his lame leg gave him constant pain, and his general health was poor; popular new writers were competing now in the field of historical fiction, a genre which Scott had first pioneered. But saddest of all was the death of his wife Charlotte—Charlotte who had given him hope and encouragement when his writing seemed blocked, Charlotte who had been his loving companion of many years. Without her, Scott felt lost.

He turned for comfort then to his little grandson and the stories he composed for him. The morning after the completion of the prodigious *Life of Napoleon*, Scott awakened with an idea. He entered in his journal these words: "The good thought came into my head to write stories for little Johnnie Lockart from the history of Scotland." Scott would, he decided, tell the tales with all the accuracy of historical fact, beginning far back in time with the story of Macbeth, narrating the superb legends and stories of Scotland and its heroes—men and women alike—all the way well into the eighteenth century.

"The grandfather tales I write with your little Johnnie in mind," he told his daughter Sophia. "I am persuaded that it is a mistake to be childish because you write for children. And these stories I compose,



to tell the history of our land, pour out with ease. This morning was damp and dripping, so I set to work like a dragon. I murdered Maclellan at Thrieve Castle. I stabbed the Black Douglas in Stirling. I stifled the earl of Mar in his bath at the Canongate. Och, a wild world this Scotland of ours must have been.”

It was a work that claimed his heart, and the first volume of *Tales of a Grandfather* appeared before the year was out. These historical stories, written for a beloved grandchild, held a special magic. The instant success of the volumes rocked the publishing world. Britain’s greatest storyteller had done it again!

My edition is over one hundred years old. The pages are yellow and brittle, and the print is egregiously small. So, when I want to reread one of the grandfather-stories or check an item for research, I use a wonderfully attractive series of four paperbacks, a 2001 edition of *Tales of a Grandfather* brought out by George Grant. Titled by him *Tales of a Grandfather* series, each of these four volumes boasts a cover design in color and a very informative introduction by Mr. Grant, as well as a good index—all in easy-on-the-eyes print size. Sir Walter Scott would have applauded this edition.

The sun is just setting over the Big Horns now. Sunset drops swiftly, here in the mountains. I look up from my computer and see those ragged strands of coral, orange, and flame sweep across the sky, so briefly there, so suddenly gone. I find myself thinking of the family stories I have known, the many stories I’ve been told and that I have retold to others. Like me, Grandfather Walter Scott wrote for three grandchildren: for little Johnnie, for Walter Scott Lockhart, and for small Charlotte Harriet Lockhart, whom he called his “Whippity Stourie.” Grandparents and grandchildren—the stories come down through the years, generation after generation, like a blessing.