CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

MOTHER

"All that I am or hope to be," said Lincoln, after he had become President, "I owe to my angel mother."

"My mother was the making of me," said Thomas Edison, recently. "She was so true, so sure of me; and I felt that I had some one to live for; some one I must not disappoint."

"All that I have ever accomplished in life," declared Dwight L. Moody, the great evangelist, "I owe to my mother."

"To the man who has had a mother, all women are sacred for her sake," said Jean Paul Richter.

The testimony of great men in acknowledgment of the boundless debt they owe to their mothers would make a record stretching from the dawn of history to to-day. Few men indeed, become great who do not owe their greatness to a mother's love and inspiration.

How often we hear people in every walk of life say, "I never could have done this thing but for my mother. She believed in me, encouraged me, when others saw nothing in me."

"A kiss from my mother made me a painter," said Benjamin West.

A distinguished man of today says: "I never could have reached my present position had I not known that my mother expected me to reach it. From a child she made me feel that this was the position she expected me to fill; and her faith spurred me on and gave me the power to attain it."

It is a strange fact that our mothers, the molders of the world, should get so little credit and should be so seldom mentioned among the world's achievers. The world sees only the successful son; the mother is but a round in the ladder upon which he has climbed. Her name or face is never seen in the papers; only her son is lauded and held up to our admiration. Yet it was that sweet, pathetic figure in the background that made his success possible.

Many a man is enjoying a fame which is really due to a self-effacing, sacrificing mother. People hurrah for the governor, or mayor or congressman, but the real secret of his success is often tucked away in that little unknown, unappreciated, unheralded mother. His education and his chance to rise may have been due to her sacrifices.

The very atmosphere that radiates from and surrounds the mother is the inspiration and constitutes the holy of holies of family life.

"In my mother's presence," said a prominent man, "I become for the time transformed into another person."

How many of us have felt the truth of his statement! How ashamed we feel when we meet her eyes, that we have ever harbored an unholy thought, or dishonorable suggestion! It seems impossible to do wrong while under that magic influence. What revengeful plans, what thoughts of hatred and jealousy, have been scattered to the four winds while in the mother's presence! Her children go out from communion with her, resolved to be better men, noble women, truer citizens.

The greatest heroine in the world is the mother. No one else makes such sacrifices, or endures anything like the sufferings that she uncomplainingly endures for her children.

I know a mother who has brought up a large family of children under conditions which, I believe, no man living could possibly have survived. She had a lazy, worthless husband with no ambition, no force of character; a man extremely selfish and exacting, who not only did practically nothing to help his wife carry her terrible burden, but also insisted upon her waiting upon him by inches.

They were too poor to afford a servant, and the good-for-nothing husband would not lift a finger to help his wife if he could avoid it; yet he was cross, crabbed, and abusive if meals were not on time, and if they were lacking in any respect, or if the children annoyed him or interfered with his comfort. Although the mother worked like a slave to keep her little family together and to make a living for them, her husband would never even look after the children while she was working, if he could sneak out of it. When the children were sick, he would retire without the slightest concern, and leave the jaded mother, who had worked all day like a galley slave, to nurse them. This man never seemed to think that his wife needed much sleep or rest, a vacation, holiday, or any change; he seldom took her anywhere, and was never known to bring her home a flower or a nickel's worth of anything. He thought that anything was good enough for his wife. She made her clothes over and over again, until they were worn out, but he always had to have a natty suit, which his wife must keep pressed. He insisted upon having his tobacco and toddy, and would always take the best of everything for himself, no matter who else went without.

Yet, in spite of the never-ending drudgery, the lack of comforts and conveniences in her home, and the fact that her health was never good; no matter how much her rest was broken by attendance upon the sick children, or how ill she might be, this woman never complained. She was always cheerful, always ready to give a helping hand and an encouraging word, even to her ungrateful husband. Calm, patient, and reassuring, she never failed to furnish the balm for the hurts of all her family. This woman saw her beauty fade, and the ugly lines of care, anxiety, and suffering come into her face. She saw no prospects of relief from care for herself in the future; nothing but increasing poverty, homelessness, and not a cent in the savings-bank. Yet she never complained. No one heard her denounce her shiftless husband, the real cause of all her sufferings. She literally gave up her life to her family, until there was nothing left but the ashes of a burned-out existence, nothing but the shell of a once enchantingly beautiful and noble woman.

Ah, this is heroism—to see all the dreams of girlhood fade away, nearly everything of value go out of the life, and yet to bear up under it all with a sublime courage, heavenly patience, superb dignity, a wonderful mental poise and optimism. If this is not heroism, there is none on this earth.

What is the giving of one's life in battle or in a wreck at sea to save another, in comparison with the perpetual sacrifice of a living death lasting for half a century or more? How the world's heroes dwindle in comparison with the mother heroine!

Who but a mother would make such sacrifices, drain her very life-blood, all her energy, everything, for her children, and yet never ask for or expect comprehension?

There is no one in the average family, the value of whose services begins to compare with those of the mother, and yet there is no one who is more generally neglected or taken advantage of. She must always remain at home evenings, and look after the children, when the others are out having a good time. Her cares never cease. She is responsible for the housework, for the preparation of meals; she has the children's clothes to make or mend, there is company to be entertained, darning to be done, and a score of little duties which must often be attended to at odd moments, snatched from her busy days, and she is often up working long after everyone else in the house is asleep.

No matter how loving or thoughtful the father may be, the heavier burdens, the greater anxieties, the weightier responsibilities of the home, of the children, always fall on the mother. Indeed the very virtues of the good mother are a constant temptation to the other members of the family, especially the selfish ones, to take advantage of her. If she were not so kind, so affectionate and tender, so considerate, so generous and ever ready to make all sorts of sacrifices for others; if she were not so willing to efface herself; if she were more self-assertive; if she stood up for and demanded her rights, she would have a much easier time.

But the members of the average family seem to take it for granted that they can put all their burdens on the patient, uncomplaining mother; that she will always do anything to help out, and to enable the children to have a good time: and in many homes, sad to say, the mother, just because of her goodness, is shamefully imposed upon and neglected. "Oh, mother won't mind, mother will stay at home." How often we hear remarks like this from thoughtless children.

It is always the poor mother on whom the burden falls; and the pathetic thing is that she rarely gets much credit or praise.

Many mothers in the poor and working classes practically sacrifice all that most people hold dearest in life for their children. They deliberately impair their health, wear themselves out, make all sorts of sacrifices, to send a worthless boy to college. They take in washing, go out house-cleaning, do the hardest and most menial work, in order to give their boys and girls an education and the benefit of priceless opportunities that they never had; yet, how often, they are rewarded only with total indifference and neglect!

Some time ago I heard of a young girl, beautiful, gay, full of spirit and vigor, who married and had four children. The husband died penniless, and the mother made the most heroic efforts to educate the children. By dint of unremitting toil and unheard of sacrifices and privations she succeeded in sending the boys to college and the girls to a boarding-school. "When they came home, pretty, refined girls and strong young men, abreast with all the new ideas and tastes of their times, she was a worn-out commonplace old woman. They had their own pursuits and companions. She lingered among them for two or three years, and then died, of some sudden failure of the brain. The shock woke them to consciousness of the truth. They hung over her, as she lay unconscious, in an agony of grief. The oldest son, as he held her in his arms, cried: 'You have been a good mother to us!' Her face colored again, her eyes kindled into a smile, and she whispered: 'You never said so before, John.' Then the light died out, and she was gone."

Who can ever depict the tragedies that have been enacted in the hearts of mothers who have suffered untold tortures from neglect, indifference, and lack of appreciation.

What a pathetic story of neglect many a mother's letters from her grown-up children could tell! A few scraggy lines, a few sentences now and then, hurriedly written and mailed—often to ease a troubled conscience—mere apologies for letters, which chill the mother's heart.

There are plenty of wealthy men in this country who owe everything to the mothers who made all sorts of sacrifices for their rearing and education. When they became prosperous, these men neglected their devoted mothers, but came to their senses at their funerals. Then they spent more money on expensive caskets, flowers, and emblems of mourning than they had spent on their poor, loving, self-sacrificing mothers for many years while alive. Men who, perhaps, never thought of carrying flowers to their mothers in life, pile them high on their coffins. There is nothing which pains a mother so much as ingratitude from the children for whom she has risked her life, and to whose care and training she has given her best years.

I know men who owe their success in life to their mothers, who have become prosperous and influential, because of the splendid training of the self-sacrificing mother, the education secured for them at an inestimable cost to her, and yet they seldom think of taking her flowers, confectionary, little delicacies, or taking her to a place of amusement, or of giving her a vacation, or bestowing upon her any of the little attentions and favors so dear to a woman's heart. They seem to think she is past the age for these things, that she no longer cares for them, that about all she expects is enough to eat and drink, and the simplest kind of raiment.

These men do not know the feminine heart which never changes in these respects, except to grow more appreciative of the little attentions, the little considerations, and thoughtful acts which meant so much to them in their younger days.

Not long ago I heard a mother, whose sufferings and sacrifices for her children during a long and terrible struggle with poverty should have given her a monument, say, that she guessed she'd better go to the old ladies' home and end her days there. What a picture that was! An old lady with white hair and a sweet, beautiful face; with a wonderful light in her eye; calm, serene, and patient, yet dignified, whose children, all of whom are married and successful, made her feel as if she were a burden. She had no home of her own, not a single piece of furniture, or any of the things which are so dear to the feminine heart. Think of the old woman, who, in order to bring up and educate and fit for successful, careers, half a dozen ungrateful selfish children, had made sacrifices that were simply heart-rending receiving, in her old age, only a stingy monthly allowance from her prosperous sons. They live in luxurious homes, but have never offered to provide a home for the poor, old rheumatic, broken-down mother who for so many years slaved for them. They put their own homes, stocks, and other property in their wives' names, and while they pay the rent of their mother's meagrely furnished rooms and provide for her actual needs, they apparently never think what joy it would give her to own her own home, and to possess some pretty furnishings, and a few pictures.

I know a mother whose children are in easy circumstances who is obliged to ask them for everything she has in the way of clothing. She is so sensitive, and feels so humiliated because of her dependence, that she waits just as long as she can before she asks for anything; waits until her own sense of decency and self-respect forces her practically to beg from her children.

In many cases men through thoughtlessness do not provide generously for their mothers, even when well able to. They seem to think that a mother can live most anywhere, and most anyway; that if she has enough to supply her necessities she is satisfied. Just think, you prosperous business men, how you would feel if the conditions were reversed, if you were obliged to take the dependent, humiliating position of your mother!

Whatever else you are obliged to neglect, take no chances of giving your mother pain by neglecting her, and of thus making yourself miserable in the future.

The time may come when you will stand by her bedside, in her last sickness, or by her coffin, and wish that you had exchanged a little of your money for more visits and more attention and more little presents to your mother; when you will wish that you had cultivated her more, even at the cost of making a little less money.

There is no one else in this world who can take your mother's place in your life. And there is no remorse like that which comes from the remembrance of ill-treating, abusing, or being unkind to one's mother. These things stand out with awful vividness and terrible clearness when the mother is gone forever from sight, and you have time to contrast your treatment with her long suffering, tenderness, and love and her years of sacrifice for you.

One of the most painful things I have ever witnessed was the anguish of a son who had become wealthy, and in his prosperity neglected the mother, whose sacrifices alone had made his success possible. He did not take the time to write to her more than twice a year, and then only brief letters. He was too busy to send a good long letter to the poor lonely mother back in the country, who had risked her life and toiled and sacrificed for years for him! Finally, when he was summoned to her bedside in the country, in her last sickness, and realized that his mother, had been for years without the ordinary comforts of life, while he had been living in luxury, he broke down completely. And while he did everything possible to alleviate her suffering, in the few last days that remained to her on earth, and gave her an imposing burial, what torture he must have suffered at this pitiful picture of his mother who had sacrificed everything for him!

No man worthy of the name ever neglects or forgets his mother.

I have an acquaintance, of very poor parentage, who had a hard struggle to get a start in the world; but when he became prosperous and built his beautiful home, he finished a suite of rooms in it especially for his mother, furnished them with all conveniences and comforts possible, and insisted upon keeping a maid specially for her. Although she lives with her son's family, she is made to feel that this part of the great home is her own, and that she is as independent as though she lived in her own house. Every son should be ambitious to see his mother as well provided for as his wife. Really great men have always reverenced and cared tenderly for their mothers.

The first act of Garfield, after he was inaugurated President, was to kiss his aged mother, who sat near him, and who said this was the proudest and happiest moment of her life.

Ex-President Loubet of France, even after his elevation to the presidency, took great pride in visiting his mother, who was a humble market gardener in a little French village. A writer on one occasion, describing a meeting between this mother and her son, says: "Her noted son awaited her in the market-place, as she drove up in her little cart loaded with vegetables. Assisting his mother to alight, the French president gave her his arm and escorted her to her accustomed seat. Then holding over her a large umbrella, to shield her from the threatening weather, he seated himself at her side, and mother and son enjoyed a long talk together."

I once saw a splendid young college graduate introduce his poor, plainly dressed old mother to his classmates with as much pride and dignity as though she was a queen. Her form was bent, her hands were calloused, she was prematurely old, and much of this deterioration was caused by all sorts of drudgery to help her boy to pay his college expenses.

I have seen other college men whose mothers had made similar sacrifices, and who were ashamed to have them attend their graduating exercises, ashamed to introduce them to their classmates.

I know of one peculiarly ungrateful son whose mother slaved for him for years, taking in washing, and going out to work by the day in order to send him to college, and who looked forward as a reward for all her labors to seeing him graduated. When the time came, just before commencement, she told her son how she longed to hear his commencement address, but he said that that would be impossible, because she did not have proper clothes to wear; that everybody at that fashionable college commencement would be elegantly dressed. In other words, he tried to discourage her from going because he was ashamed of her and did not want to introduce her to his classmates and teachers. But she was determined to go, and, keeping carefully out of her son's sight, she gained entrance to the rear of the hall. The young man's address was a good one; and so proud of her son was the poor old woman and so overjoyed at his success that when he finished speaking, in the very midst of the applause, she rushed up to the platform and tried to throw her arms around his neck. He repulsed her, and afterwards told her that he was ashamed that at his graduation she should have made such a scene! That was all the mother got for years of sacrifice and efforts to help her ungrateful son, and she went home alone and broken-hearted.

I have never known a man who was ashamed of his mother to make a real man. Such men are invariably selfish and mean.

But no matter how callous or ungrateful a son may be, no matter how low he may sink in vice or crime, he is always sure of his mother's love, always sure of one who will follow him even to his grave, if she is alive and can get there; of one who will cling to him when all others have fled.

One of the saddest sights I have ever seen was that of a poor, old, broken-down mother whose life had been poured into her children, making a long journey to the penitentiary to visit her boy, who had been abandoned by everybody but herself. Poor old mother! It did not matter that he was a criminal, that he had disgraced his family, that everybody else had forsaken him, that he had been unkind to her—the mother's heart went out to him just the same. She did not see the hideous human wreck that crime had made. She saw only her darling boy, the child that God had given her, pure and innocent as in his childhood.

Oh, there is no other human love like this, which follows the child from the cradle to the grave, never once abandons, never once forsakes it, no matter how unfortunate or degenerate it may become.—O. S. M. in Success.

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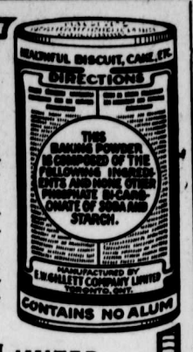

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OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

EARNING THE FIRST DOLLAR

John D. Crimmins, Catholic banker and philanthropist, in an interview given the associated Sunday Magazine, gives the following account of how he earned his first dollar. "It was in 1856," he said. "I recollect it more distinctly because of the stirring times and martial parades existing then. It was in the summer or early fall that I discovered how I might earn some money carrying water to the soldiers drilling in the section called Hamilton Square, in New York City. In those days every voter was conscripted to drill one day in the year, and, being a boy, I loved to watch them drill like the awkward squad that they were. Suddenly it occurred to me that the regular soldiers, who were also drilling, might pay me for drinking water.

"I got two big tin buckets and sold them water from a tin cup at the rate of a cent a cup. They were glad to get it at that price. I carried the water from a well on Boston road to the site of what is now Normal college.

"I don't remember what that dollar helped me to buy; for I saved it with the other money earned that way during the summer. There were not the temptations to spend money in those days that there are now, so it was not difficult to save.

THE UGLY GIRL

"What an exceedingly plain girl!"

It had been on the tip of my tongue to say "ugly," but a second glance at the tall girl going down the veranda steps had made me change the word.

"Yes," agreed my companion as we settled out of the way of others on the veranda of the summer hotel. She certainly is plain-looking, but she hasn't allowed her ugliness to mar her happiness, and that is saying a good deal for a young girl with such a handicap. She came here with a lot of Dresden-China cousins, whose prettiness emphasized the ugly girls, swarthy skin and coarse features. But somehow before a week was over most of us had forgotten about her plain face. She was so unselfish and cheery and helpful that she became popular at once. One rainy evening when the others had gone off to a function she came out here where I was sitting alone watching the rain drip off the piazza eaves. She dropped down on a chair beside me, and by and by I heard her sigh, 'Oh, how I envy pretty girls!" There was something in her voice that told me she was putting up a hard fight against the discontent that such a handicap breeds. 'Please don't tell me that beauty is only skin deep! I know better. It is no easy matter to keep down the evil spirit when I watch pretty girls winning love and esteem without any effort by the mere power of beauty. I know it myself, too,' she cried. 'It is the pretty child that attracts me rather than the unfortunate, ugly one. It is human nature, I suppose. We can't very well help it.'

"There was no gainsaying the truth of her assertion. 'But you are having your innings, too,' I said. 'You are quite as popular as the pretty girls; you are in all the good times; and more than that, you help along the old and the diffident souls who hover on the edge of the good times.'

"'Perhaps so,' she admitted, 'but I've worked so hard and have had so many discouragements.'

"'You must count that work as a God-given privilege accorded to you, along with the chance to be unselfish and courteous and kind, and with it the opportunity to write the beauty of His spirit into the plain features which He bestowed upon you. Don't worry about your plain face, child; His beauty is growing there.'"

INTRODUCTIONS

Such a usual thing as introducing one person to another is so often done in a bangling, unsuccessful wrong way that one cannot speak too often about this very necessary social occurrence.

There are two or three points to emphasize. First, remember that the simplest, most straightforward introduction is the best: second, do not mumble your words; make clear the names of the persons introduced by saying them slowly and distinctly. Do not rush through an introduction as if you disliked it or were ashamed of it.

A gentleman always asks permissions of a lady to bring a stranger to be presented. After securing this he presents the gentleman to the lady. This order is the general rule. The woman's name is used first except in the case of an elderly person or one of note, in which case the order is reversed.

The accepted form is "Miss Blank may I present Mr. Wood?" or "Miss Blank, I wish to introduce my friend Mr. Wood, who is very eager to meet you."

Never make a mistake of leading a lady around the room and introducing her. Bring the ones already present to her in twos or threes and gradually make her acquainted. Needless to say a man is always taken around to the ladies in the party and presented to them.

A younger woman is introduced to an older one. An unmarried one is always presented to a matron. The one to whom an introduction is made has the name mentioned first, the one introduced coming next.

The distinctions are not so finely drawn in the introduction of men to each other. Of course any well-known man is considered first. It is deemed an honor to be introduced to him.

When you introduce your relatives be sure to remember that every one does not know that your aunt is married. The words "my aunt" are not sufficient. Supplement them with the name by which strangers should know and address her. If your mother has been married twice or if your married name is different from hers give it, so that no embarrassing mistake will be made,

So much for the introducing of persons. Be sure to speak so that there will be absolutely no misinterpretation on the part of strangers who meet each other for the first time.

The graceful introduction is a test of social poise. There is really no reason for the awkward attempts at it that we encounter every day. Indeed, the successful introduction is the unusual thing. Why this condition exists is attributable to the ease with which an introduction is made. It seems so simple that you do not give it a thought until circumstances force the role of introducer on you.

Well, you owe a good introduction to all your friends. Practice the forms given until they come naturally, unhesitatingly and redound to your credit.

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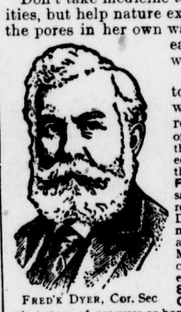

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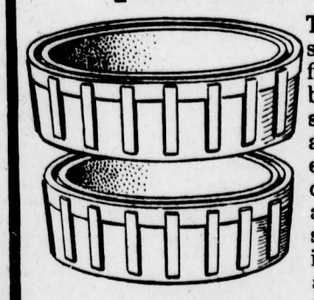

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