

My Mother.

(Translated from the French by Marie Lindsay.)

Yesterday, in trying to bring out of me that which I had buried in my library, I came across the old, faded book in which my mother taught me to read.

This souvenir of my mother's childhood is filled with memories of my own childhood days. I glanced through the faded yellow leaves in which I learned—oh! so slowly, and with what effort—to spell the words she pointed to with her halting mouth, and in gazing at this relic of the past, I suddenly realized that a little girl had bent her studious head over these same pages long ago, and that little girl was my mother.

A strange thing! this thought that my mother had been a child. It comes to me for the first time with a feeling of wonder and deep emotion.

My mother was born forty years of age when I was born. In her youth, so I have been told, she had great beauty and freshness of complexion, but the only portrait of her that exists today was taken a few years before her death, and as far back as I can remember her beloved face seemed to me already touched by age. Those who remember their mother as beautiful and young, do they experience a certain astonishment in calling her then? It may be. However, I think these are the privileged ones whose first look beheld a face leaning over their cradle marked with the stress of life; and to whom their mother was ever old.

The memory they cherish of her, if not dearer, will be more sacred, and all that is venerable in age will be added to the grandeur of motherhood.

This old worn book in which my mother taught me the difficult art of reading; this book which belonged to her in her school days, brings back to me the fact that she was once a little girl. But I find it hard to picture her games, her childhood tasks, her girlish dreams, or the joys of her married life. I wish to see in her only my mother, my dear old mother.

It seems to me that I should fail in that command of God, "Honor thy father and thy mother," and that some of the tender respect with which her dear image is enshrined in my memory would vanish, did I think of her for one instant out of her maternal role, without the first shows that touched her hair, and the wrinkles that lined her face when I was a little boy.

It needs a pen more delicate than mine, and words the choicest and most ethereal, to express reverent and joyous feeling, this delicate scruple, this "unus animum." I can give but the faintest idea of it in recalling the touching and profound mystery of Christian faith, the mystery that shrouds the Mother of Christ in an ideal of purity.

Yes, for him whose heart is truly filled his mother is immaculate. Moreover, it is not natural that I should evoke only under the guise of motherhood her for whom I was always a little child.

When she died she was seventy-one years of age and I was thirty-three. I was then a man—a man who had lived, worked, enjoyed, suffered; who had passed many times through the flames of his passions; a man who had remained faithful to his earthly principles, but guilty, alas! of many faults, and who had lost his innocence.

And my mother knew it. She knew my strivings and encouraged me; my weaknesses and crossed them. She shared my joys and comforted me in dark hours. A woman of great strength of mind and pure judgment, who spoke to me as a man would when I sought her counsel, yet, I became once more for her her child, her little child when I needed her protecting love.

Not only do I recall her thus, when crushed by sorrow I could find no comfort save in embracing my mother and drying my weeping tears on her cheek, as I used to when she carried me in her arms. No, it was in the little solitudes of daily life that my good mother treated me as she did in my childhood, sweetly attributing to me thoughtlessness and ingratitude.

So careful of that step at the foot of the stairway. Do not take cold. Have you a headache? I pity those who do not realize with a tender smile these childish recommendations. But perhaps more than another was I the object of these loving attentions, for in my youth I had many serious illnesses. My mother was ever anxious about me, not with the ordinary solicitude that surrounds a child, but with the anxiety that keeps guard over a delicate child.

One winter the physicians sent me south, and on my return after an absence of some months I found my mother so changed that the following year I remained in Paris, where I lived a prisoner during the bad winter months. She was then failing and very weak, but never faithful

Aching Joints

In the fingers, toes, eyes, and other parts of the body, my joints that are stiffened and swollen by rheumatism—that acid condition of the blood which affects the muscles also.

But when I tried to move, especially after sitting or lying long, and their condition is especially when in wet weather.

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I recall those sweet hours; hours of perfect satisfaction in an atmosphere of maternal tenderness, while I turn over the leaves of the book in which my mother taught me my letters, in looking for, and kissing her finger prints; and yet, what anguish, what sorrow, I ceased that admirable woman!

Not that she ever for one moment doubted my respect and my love. O God! let one be young; one rushes through life swept by the wind of desire, and one forgets that at the family fireside, also I too often shrouded, there sits an old and lonely indulgence, who scarcely dares address a timid big son, who is alarmed at the dangers he is running, who suffers in seeing him lose his honor and purity, and who weeps.

Should these pages fall into the hands of a young man, may they stop him on the brink of some serious fall. The deepest bitterness his soul can know in his declining years will be the thought that while he had not been a bad man, not a man who could reproach himself with having failed in the essential things of life, yet—he made his mother weep.

It is thirty years since I lost mine, and I had always the heart of a son. On that day my youth fled, and something was taken from me that can never be given back. Never before have I so often gone back in memory to my dear mother as during this illness and this long convalescence; a time filled for me with grave meditations. In repeating after so many years the prayers she taught me in my childhood my soul struggles to lift itself toward God.

The hope of seeing again my mother made me long ago believe in eternal life. Oh, how I thought of her when to merit the recompense of finding her in Heaven I vowed that the time that remains to me should be filled with pious dreams and better actions.

Christ who has placed His Mother so high in the Divine Kingdom will bless the prayer of a son and a Christian.

Many pretend that our feeble intelligences are incapable of conceiving the extent and perfection of the joy reserved for the elect. But it seems to me, an humble-minded man and a poor sinner, that I have already glimpsed Paradise, when as a child I slept in my mother's arms.

EMMAUS.

The best things of life are gone before we appreciate them. They are figures in a dream that is a reality, but a reality that is past before we can appreciate it intelligently. Then in our souls we build shrines for sweet and noble memories—but memories after all, not living, present joys. Whatever recalls them only intensifies our loss. Great moments are unconscious and realized only in the retrospect. The parable is spoken. We reverse the speaker, the magic of his voice, the beauty of the story. Long afterward we grasp the lesson, for which the parable was but the shell.

The sad disciples went out of Jerusalem talking together "of all these things which had happened." The risen Lord appeared to them as they were on the road, walking with them and raised their drooping spirits. They were glad, they knew not why. The evening came. The three sat at table. In the breaking of the bread "their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight." Their hearts were burning within them as that beloved voice told them the things that were for their peace. They knew Him and He was gone.

As one goes on through life, and the twilight grows fainter and companions drop out of the line of march and are left behind, the past grows more precious. At first we were enthusiastic and thoughtless, excitedly pressing forward to the beckoning horizon. But later when we knew our quest to be the search for the

end of the rainbow, we trudge listlessly, looking back, rather than forward. Every child of Adam craves during the life upon the great dreary tragedy of the first man. When his eyes are opened to the delights of Paradise, he must leave them and the other Paradise, the lasting City, is veiled in the mist of the future and seemingly set on an inaccessible crag.

The gem knows naught of its own beauty of the sunlight of his own glory. The child senses not its happiness. All these things are clear only to the eyes of him who looks upon them and feels only a vicarious thrill. The meaning of joy is a reflection, like the brilliancy of the moon, which shines not by its own light, but in the borrowed rays of the sun. Man is the real Tantalus. Happiness is all about him but not in him. What time he has it, he is in a dream. The cup is brimming, and tortured by thirst himself, he has the added pang of seeing others quaff it—drink unknowing. The spectacle of power sweeps by him and he appreciates its value far better than those who have the power. It is only the shivering newby who knows the sweetness of the heaped-up viands in the brilliant shops because they are not for him, who can weigh the bliss in the laughter of rich men's children, because there is no laughter in him. It is only the poor man who can measure the might of wealth. If perchance the wealth came to him, it would lose the charm. Understanding lies in loss or want.

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"The flesh must be crucified." (Gal. v. 21.)

The second pearl is obedience. Obedience consists in submitting to what is commanded by superiors and willingly fulfilling their behest. The son who has a docile heart will cheerfully comply with his parents' wishes; the employee with those of his employer; the servant with those of his master; and the young man obeys in all that is not contrary to conscience.

"My son, hearken the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. i. 8). Obedience and docility are a shining pearl in the young man's crown. The Spirit of God, speaking of obedience, says, "It will be grace to his head and a chain of gold to his neck" (Prov. i. 9). Obedience is the summary of perfection and of the whole Christian life.

The third pearl is humility. Humility consists in not desiring that preference be shown to one's self, but rather choosing the lowest place, and yielding precedence to others. A humble man does not boast of his talents, nor talk of the creditable actions he has performed; he does not laugh at another or hold him up to ridicule because he is less gifted by God than himself. "Let another praise thee, and not thy own mouth; a stranger and not thy own lips" (Prov. xxvii. 2). Such is the counsel of the Wise Man. Humility is a brilliant pearl. "Glorious shall uphold the humble of spirit" (Prov. xxix. 23). Humility gives its due place and its due measure to every other virtue; it imparts beauty and durability to all. It is the teacher of morals.

The circle of gold in which the pearls are set is the love of God. This is the sum total of all that is beautiful, of all that is an ornament to man in the sight of God. Obedience gives value to all the other virtues. Where charity is lacking every other virtue loses its brilliancy. Here what the Apostle says: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2). On the other hand, in the light of charity every virtue shines brightly, especially the three pearls that form your crown, purity, obedience, and humility; for it is only when you practice these virtues out of love of God that they acquire a heavenly value. What the sun is to the planets that charity is to the other virtues. The planets obtain their light from the sun, and charity, makes perfect the deeds of virtue.

This is the crown, the crown of virtues, which should adorn the Christian young man, it is composed of the three pearls, purity, obedience, and humility, set in the golden circle of divine charity. Ask yourselves if you possess this crown. Do you each and all possess it? Are you chaste, obedient, and humble; does the love of God dwell in your heart and prompt your actions? Happy indeed are you if this be the case.—Exchange.

What great value men attach to a prize! What will they not do and risk for the sake of it! "Brevity one," says the Apostle, that striveth for the mastery, "refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may obtain a corruptible crown." St. Paul takes his illustration from the ancient games, where the prize consisted of a wreath. What efforts those men made for a wreath that would soon be withered and gone! Even the more durable crowns of a monarch, made of gold and precious stones, is but a corruptible crown. Many a ruler retired at night as a mighty king and woke up in the morning with all his regal splendor gone. Witness Louis Philippe of France, and Napoleon III. There is, however, a crown which is incorruptible, and which should adorn the brow of every Christian young man, a crown which glimmers in the sight of God and of His holy angels, which no power in the whole world, not even the hand of death, can wrest from you.

The crown which should adorn a Christian young man consists of three pearls set in a circle of gold. The first pearl is purity. Purity consists in overcoming the concupiscence of the flesh, and in preserving the body as well as the soul from every stain of uncleanness. Concupiscence of the eye must be pure, the hands must be pure, the thoughts must be pure, the tongue must be pure, the heart itself must be pure.

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