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EC5584 Observing Mother's Day

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OBSERVING MOTHER'S DAY

An Appreciation of Mother

"An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy", runs an old Spanish proverb. And, true to the spirit of all proverbs, the statement is as true today as it was when first uttered centuries ago."

"Mother" - there is magic in the word, a charm which calls up tender memories from the hearts of mankind the world over. And the older a man grows, the finer and deeper becomes his appreciation of his mother. It was W. D. Howells who said, "A man never sees all that his mother has been to him until it is too late to let her know that he sees it."

Other men have voiced similar sentiments. Some of those which have had sufficient universal appeal to be preserved through generations are:

"Even he that died for us upon the cross, in the last hour, in the unutterable agony of death, was mindful of his mother, as if to teach us that this holy love should be our last point on earth, our last worldly thought, the last point on earth from which the soul should take its flight for heaven." Longfellow.

"Unhappy is the man for whom his mother has not made all other mothers venerable." Richter.

"Men are what their mother make them." Ralph Waldo Emerson.

"I think it must somewhere be written that the virtues of the mothers shall be visited on their children, as well as the sins of the fathers." Charles Dickens.

"The Fatherhood of God, the motherhood of nature, and the consequent brotherhood of man," is an expression giving motherhood almost coordinate rank with God. Charles Dickens.

"It is the general rule that all superior men inherit elements of their superiority from their mothers." Mechelet.

"All that I am or hope to be I owe to my angel mother." Abraham Lincoln.

"All that I am my mother made me." John Quincy Adams.

"The future of the child is always the work of the mother" and "Let France have good mothers and she will have good sons." Napoleon.

"If I were asked to name any one principle which seems to have an almost universal application it would be this one - show me the mother and I will show you the man." Rev. Theodore Cuyler.

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It was such noble thoughts as these which finally inspired the founders of our present Mother's Day. Many people began to feel that it would be only fitting to set aside a special time in which to pay tribute to mothers. Very little has been written of the pioneers in this field, and it is difficult to trace the idea to its very beginning. The custom of observing Mothers' Day is really a very old one, brought over to this country from England. Among many English people in the early days, there existed a practice of going "a-mothering" on the mid-Sunday in Lent, and taking small gifts. It is said, too, that in those days the Catholic church encouraged the mother Sunday.

There is considerable difference of opinion as to who is responsible for the founding of our present mother's day. Available evidence tends to show that the idea was not that of a single individual but rather developed gradually from a number of sources. The American War Mothers credited Frank E. Hering of South Bend, Indiana, with the inspiration of the day. Mr. Hering is a writer and public speaker, and is often called upon to make addresses sponsoring movements for the benefit of home and mother. It is claimed that Mr. Hering began his campaign for the establishment of Mother's Day in Kansas City in the fall of 1904. In 1911 Mr. Hering, designated as "Father of Mother's Day", appeared on the program of a pretentious Mother's Day celebration in Kansas City. In 1912, at a National convention of Eagles, over which he presided, he introduced a resolution that the day be celebrated by all Eagle organizations.

Other records show that in 1892 in Baltimore, a Sunday School memorial service was held on May 22, in honor of Mrs. Emily C. Pullman, mother of the Rev. Royal H. Pullman, then pastor of the Universalist Church. The story is that the superintendent proposed that the Sunday nearest that date be observed every year in honor, not only of Mrs. Pullman, but of universal motherhood. Mother's Day was thus observed annually afterward in that church.

But probably the person most generally credited with the conception of our National Mother's Day, is Miss June Ann Jarvis of Philadelphia. She originated the plan in 1908 and it is her name that is embodied in the issues of the Congressional Record setting the second Sunday in May as the official date. She is also the founder of the Mother's Day International Association.

Miss Jarvis is quoted as saying: "The sacrifice of the mothers during the Civil War and the cherished memories of my own mother, who reared four orphans in addition to her own seven children, suggested to me a day set aside for honoring all mothers". She chose the white carnation as an emblem because its whiteness typified purity, fidelity, and sacrifice.

When Miss Jarvis first proposed such a national institution as Mother's Day, the public laughed at her - spoke of sentimental nonsense and sob-stuff. She then went to A. R. Talbot of Lincoln, who was the head consul of the Modern Woodmen of America. He was in accord with her movement and issued in 1908 a Mother's Day proclamation which touched the hearts of members everywhere. A similar proclamation has been issued every year since that time. The International Mother's Day Association recognizes this as the first general observance of the day.

In 1914, the United States Congress passed a joint resolution setting aside the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day, and requesting and authorizing the president to order the display of the flag on all government buildings on that day. The following is President Wilson's Proclamation:

"Whereas, by a joint resolution approved May 3, 1914, designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day, and for other purposes, the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation calling upon government officials to display the United States flag on all government buildings, and the people of the United States to display the flag at their homes or other suitable places on the second Sunday in May as a public expression of our love and reverence for mothers of our country. Whereas, it is made the duty of the President to request the observance of the second Sunday in May as provided for in the said joint resolution.

Now, therefore, I, Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority invested in me by the said joint resolution, do hereby direct the government officials to display the United States flags on all government buildings and to invite the people of the United States to display their flags at their homes or other suitable places on the second Sunday in May as a public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of the country.

In witness whereof, I have set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be hereunto affixed.

Done at the city of Washington this ninth day of May, in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and fourteen, and the independence of the United States one hundred and thirty-eight."

By the President:
William Jennings Bryan,
Secretary of State.
(SEAL)

WOODROW WILSON

Believing that actions speak louder than words, many sons and daughters have sought to express their appreciation for mother by means of gifts and home visits on Mother's Day. This is a commendable custom, if sincerely carried out. But as at Christmas, there is danger of falling into the habit of feeling obligated to send a gift. It would be well to remember that "The gift without the giver is bare". After all, it is not the expense of the gift, but the spirit back of it, which measures its value to the mother. The average mother would rather receive a personal visit, or at least an intimate letter, than the most gorgeous of gifts.

Since Mother's Day is full of very tender memories, of happy associations, loyalty and of love, on that day special services are held throughout the country. All join on this day to honor the mothers of the world. Naturally these programs call for music and poems appropriate for the occasion. Some songs which might be used are:

"O Mother Dear, Jerusalem" - an old hymn.
"Little Mother of Mine" - Harry T. Burleigh.
"Mother Machree" - Ernest Bill and Chauncey Olcott.
"That Wonderful Mother of Mine" - Walter Goodwin.
"Little Mother O'Mine" - Jane Sterling.
"Mother, My Dear" - Bryceson Threharne.
"Mother" - Ambrose Wyrich.
"Old Folks at Home" - Stephen Collins Foster.

The following poems are suitable for use as readings during a Mother's Day program.

OUR MOTHER

Our mother's lost her youthfulness,
Her locks are turning gray,
And wrinkles take the place of smiles--
She's fading every day.
We gaze at her in sorrow now,
For though we've ne'er been told
We can but feel the weary truth--
Our mother's growing old.

Our mother's lost her youthfulness,
Her eyes grow dim with tears,
Yet still within her heart there shines
Some light of other years;
For oft she'll speak in merry tones,
Smile as in youth she smiled,
As o'er her heart some memory steals
Of when she was a child.

Our mother's lost her youthfulness,
The light step has grown slow,
The graceful form has learned to stoop,
The bright cheek lost its glow.
Her weary hands have grown so thin,
Her dear hand trembles now;
"Passing away," in sad, deep lines,
Is traced upon her brow.

Our mother's lost her youthfulness,
Her smiles are just as kind,
Her tones to us are soft as erst,--
Where should we dearer find?
But as we note the trembling tongue,
And mark the stopping form,
A sad voice whispers to our hearts,--
"Ye cannot keep her long."

Our mother's lost her youthfulness,
We see it every day,
And feel more drearily the truth,
She soon must pass away.
Ah! even now the "boatman pale"
We hear is hovering nigh;
Waiting with white sails all unfurled,
He will not heed our cry.

But gently bear the wearied form
Into the phantom bark,
She will not fear--Christ went before,
The way will not be dark;
And safe beyond the troubled stream,
Her tired heart's strife o'er,
Our angel mother, glorified,
Will grow old nevermore.

ROCK ME TO SLEEP

By Elizabeth Akers

Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight,
Make me a child again just for to-night!
Mother come back from the echoless shore,
Take me again to your heart as of yore;
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care,
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair;
Over my slumbers your loving watch keep;--
Rock me to sleep, mother,--rock me to sleep!

MOTHER PATCHING

Mrs. Jack Burton

Mother sits beside the window
Fixing up the children's clothes,
Mending overalls and dresses,
Darning holes in stocking toes,
Pressing here a little wrinkle,
Patching there a little tear,
Sewing up each rended garment
For the boy and girl to wear.

Mother knows that they are near her,
Knows that every care or pain
She can soothe in just a moment,
Making smiles come back again.
So she does not heed the patter
Of their feet upon the floor,
Does not hear their childish clatter,
For she thinks of something more.

She is thinking, as she patches,
Of the dreaded future day
When the boy she loves and watches
Will be gone from her away;
When the girl she guards and blesses
Will have met the stress of life,
Far from mother's fond caresses,
In the world's unfeeling strife.

So with every little button
That she fastens on the clothes,
There's a thought most sad and tender,
And a little prayer that goes
To the God of good, who's near her,
To the king of love and joy,
Asking that He guide and cheer her
As she rears her girl and boy.

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MY MOTHER'S HANDS

Anonymous

Such beautiful, beautiful hands!
They're neither white nor small,
And you, I know, would scarcely think
That they were fair at all.
I've looked on hands whose form and hue
A sculptor's dream might be,
Yet are these aged, wrinkled hands,
More beautiful to me.

Such beautiful, beautiful hands!
Though heart were weary and sad,
These patient hands kept toiling on
That children might be glad.
I almost weep, as looking back
To childhood's distant day,
I think how these hands rested not
When mine were at their play.

Such beautiful, beautiful hands!
They're growing feeble now;
For time and pain have left their work
On hand, and heart, and brow.
Alas! alas! the wearing time,
And the sad, sad day to me,
When 'neath the daisies, out of sight,
These hands will folded be.

But O, beyond this shadowy damp,
Where all is bright and fair,
I know full well these dear old hands
Will palms of victory bear;
Where crystal streams, thro' endless years
Flow over golden sands,
And where the old grow young again,
I'll clasp my mother's hands.

(from "Golden Thoughts on
Mother, Home and Heaven")

OVERWORKED
by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Up with the birds in the early morning --
The dewdrop glows like a precious gem;
Beautiful tints in the sky are dawning,
But She's never a moment to look at them.
The men are wanting their breakfast early;
She must not linger, she must not wait;
For words that are sharp and looks that are surly
Are what the men give when meals are late.

Oh, glorious colors the clouds are turning,
If she would but look over hills and trees;
But here are the dishes and there is the churning --
Those things always must yield to these.
The world is filled with the world of beauty
If she would but pause and drink it in;
But pleasure, she says, must wait for duty --
Neglected work is committed sin.

The day grows hot and her hands grow weary;
Oh, for an hour to cool her head,
Out with the birds and the winds so cheery!
But she must get dinner and make her bread.
The busy men in the hayfield working,
If they saw her sitting with idle hand,
Would think her lazy and call her shirking
And she never could make them understand.

They do not know that the heart within her
Hungers for beauty and things sublime,
They only know that they want their dinner
Plenty of it and just "on time."
And after the sweeping and churning and baking,
And dinner dishes are all put by,
She sits and sews, though her head is aching,
Till time for supper and "chores" draws nigh.

Her boys at school must look like others
She says as she patches their pants and hose,
For the world is quick to censure mothers,
For the least neglect of the children's clothes.
Her husband comes from the field of labor;
He gives no praise to his weary wife;
She's done no more than her neighbor,
'Tis the lot of all in country life.

But after the strife and weary tussle,
When life is done and she lies at rest,
The nation's brain and heart and muscle --
Her sons and daughters -- shall call her blest.
And I think the sweetest joy of heaven,
The rarest bliss of eternal life,
And the fairest crown of all will be given
Unto the wayworn farmer's wife.

SHE WAS MY MOTHER
Mrs. Jack Burton

DEAR LITTLE lady in lavender dress,
Spirit of smiling loveliness;
Snow-white hair; her well-earned crown,
White where once was golden brown,
Deep blue eyes, whose glances told
Of tender love that ne'er grows old.
Soft smooth cheeks, with a rose tint brushed,
Sweet kind lips--that have long been hushed--
Oh, there never could be such another
Dear little lady--she was my mother.

Dear little lady in lavender gowned,
Hers a dignity most profound,
Hers a gentle and kindly mien,
Hers the poise of a gracious queen,
Hers a touch that soothed the pain,
Lifting the bowed head up again,
Hers an arm that could reach and bring
Storm tossed ones to the fold again,
Oh, there never could be such another
Dear little lady--she was my mother.

Dear little lady, I see her tonight,
Emblem of all that's good and right,
Worthy example of what should be,
Angel of love and purity,
Kind and gentle, yet firm and strong;
She made of discord the sweetest song.
Into a day made dark with woe
She brought the sun, tho' the clouds hung low.
Oh, there never could be such another
Dear little lady--she was my mother.

OH, LITTLE MOTHER
Mrs. Jack Burton

OH, LITTLE mother, don't you know
That tho' you're often tired,
A great big world depends on you?
By you we're all inspired
To do the things that come our way,
To meet life's daily bothers,
And what we do and what we say
Lies largely with our mothers,

Why, don't you know that every day
As through your tasks you're going
A million prayers are said for you?
A million hearts are growing
More kindly for the love of you,
Better, for knowing 'bout you;
So little mother don't be blue,
We couldn't do without you.

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THE LIGHT THAT FAILED
Rudyard Kipling

If I were hanged on the highest hill,
MOTHER O'MINE! O MOTHER O'MINE!
I know whose love would Follow me still,
Mother o'mine, O mother o'mine!

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
Mother o'mine, O mother o'mine!
I know whose tears would come down to me,
Mother o'mine, O mother o'mine!

If I were damned of body and soul,
Mother o'mine, O mother o'mine!
I know whose prayers would make me whole,
Mother o'mine, O mother o'mine!

BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE
George Bancroft Griffith

If you have a gray-haired mother
In the old home far away,
Sit you down and write the letter
You put off from day to day.
Don't wait until her weary steps
Reach Heaven's pearly gate,
But show her that you think of her.
Before it is too late.

If you have a tender message,
Or a loving word to say,
Don't wait till you forget it,
But whisper it to-day.
Who knows what bitter memories
May haunt you if you wait?
So make your loved one happy
Before it is too late.

The tender word unspoken,
The letters never sent,
The long forgotten messages,
The wealth of love unspent;
For these some loved ones wait;
Show them that you care for them
Before it is too late.

OLD MOTHERS
Charles S. Ross

I love old mothers--mothers with white hair,
And kindly eyes, and lips grown softly sweet,
With murmured blessings over sleeping babes.

There is a something in their quiet grace
That speaks the calm of Sabbath afternoons;
A knowledge in their deep, unfaltering eyes,
That far outreaches all philosophy.

Time with caressing touch, about them weaves
The silver-threaded fairy-shawl of age,
While all the echoes of forgotten songs
Seemed joined to lend a sweetness to their speech.

Old mothers!--as they pass with slow-timed step,
Their trembling hands cling gently to youth's strength.
Sweet mothers!--as they pass, one sees again,
Old garden walks, old roses, and old loves.

The following Mother's Creed is quoted from an article by "Jeff" McDermid:
"If there were published a who's who for mothers, the Congressional Library could hold only an index."

"Set down the sacred word, 'Mother.' Let M stand for mercy, O for obedience, T for tenderness, H for humanity, E for energy, and R for resignation.

"Of what good are our protestations of devotion and our worshipful reverence to an Ideal if we do not blend into our own lives in some degree those inherent attributes of maternal majesty!

" 'The quality of mercy is not strained; it droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven upon the earth beneath,' says the old Thespian. He shows us that mercy is not a weakness in all cases and that if we would have mercy shown to us, we must ourselves acquire it.

" 'Obedience is the first law of the land,' remarks an old Saxon sage. Too many of us are behaving like children these days. Those who take high command must first learn to obey, and liberty is secured only through respect for law--even though you didn't make it, like the law of Moses.

"Tenderness is not the spiritual opposite of endurance, but it is the antithesis of cruelty and intolerance. It is the crowning gift of motherhood to her children, and is often more startling and appealing in men than it is in women. When I see a sober man try to hide a tear of compassion, he is my friend.

"Humanity is the art of remembering that this world has held few angels since quack-grass sprouted in Eden. It is the intricate art of discrimination in judging our fellow passengers and making allowance for some who seem to have forgotten their tickets. That's why we ought to take as much pains picking our judges and policemen as we do golf clubs and bridge partners. But we can't all be as wise as our mothers, and so our criminal trials and punishments may take a little more time for adjustment.

"Energy is the attribute of which a mother must have nothing else but. It is the main spring of her entire works and the chief element of success in her managerial ability.

"Resignation does not simply mean sitting with folded hands on an urn. Resignation means being willing to finish what you started if there is anybody depending upon you or it. It means doing the little dishwashing obscurity jobs as nicely and bravely as you hit a home run with the bases full. It means cheerily forgetting that your great aunt predicted you would be president."

(Prepared by Ruth Davis Hill.)
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