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# Half an Hour with Canadian Mothers

L. M. Montgomery

First published *Ladies' Journal*, November 1901.



MISS L. M. MONTGOMERY.

## Mother's Mending Basket.

Now when the day's work is over and done  
    Mother sits down by the door  
In the soft light of the low setting sun  
    Turning her basketful o'er.  
So many worn little garments to mend,  
    So many rents to repair—  
Who but a mother has patience to spend  
    So much of time and of care?

Wee Neddie's stockings are out at the knees—  
    That is what marbles have done—  
Bobby, his jacket has torn on the trees  
    Which he was climbing "for fun."  
Willie's new trousers, just worn once, and yet  
    See, what a terrible tear!  
Will with contrition avows his regret,  
    But "doesn't know how it got there."

Kitty is out at the elbows and sleeves,  
    Molly has tatters galore,  
Bess is in fringes and Baby Nell grieves  
    Over holes in her new pinafore.  
Each one has something for mother to do,  
    Deeming with consciences light,  
No matter what may be wrong or askew,  
    "Mother will fix it all right."

Swiftly the dear patient fingers must move,  
    Swiftly the bright needle gleams,  
As she sits there at her labor of love  
    Dreaming her motherly dreams.  
Smiling o'er memories happy and bright,  
    Sighing o'er some that are sad,  
Mother will breathe o'er her basket to-night  
    A prayer for each lassie and lad.

## The Children's Garden.



ome with me and see the children's garden," said a dear old lady, with lovely silvery puffs of hair and bright, dark eyes, to me once.

I knew that all her own children were long ago grown up and scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and even further; but I also knew that she had many grandchildren who loved to spend the vacation days at the old homestead, and I went with her, expecting to see, perhaps, a little plot of ground, somewhat untidily cultivated by childish hands, with straggling beds of gay-hued annuals.

So that when I really found myself in the garden I stared.

"Is this it?" I said.

Mrs. Adair nodded.

"Don't dare to tell me you don't think it is a lovely place," she said.

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It was a lovely place. Had it been in front of the house one might have called it a lawn; but, being where it was, it was just a garden—a lovely, quaint, unworldly old garden, where trees and flowers and shrubs grew at their own sweet will in orderly confusion.

Just inside the gate, which was arched over by twin lilac trees, were two huge clumps of tiger lilies, like gorgeously bedight sentinels on guard. All around the enclosure—which was about two acres in extent—ran a double row of trees of all kinds—apples, pears and plums, mixed up with white birches, branching willows, tall poplars and even a big pine in one corner.

Trees were scattered here and there all over it, and between them ran winding paths, bordered by shrubs and old-fashioned perennials—peonies and hollyhocks, foxgloves and "bride's bouquet," sweet William and "bleeding hearts," and a score of others.

It was like no garden I had ever seen before—it was quite the sweetest and most delightful, with all the charm and distinction of really lovely old, old things.

"It's a place one might dream of, or in," I said. "It has grown through the years—I hate brand new things. But a children's garden!"

Mrs. Adair smiled.

"You expected something different, didn't you? But this is really my children's garden. Let us sit down and I will tell you about it."

We found an old stone bench under a couple of big willows, where lilies of the valley crept about our feet, with their spikes of fragrant bells.

"You are quite right in thinking this a garden that has grown," said Mrs. Adair. "Forty-eight years ago my little first-born son was laid in my arms, and his father said:

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"I've just bought the two-acre lot from Moore, wife. We can have it for a garden, and I'll go out and stick a tree down in honor of the heir."

"You see that magnificent willow across from us? That was Frank's birth tree, and the beginning of our garden. It just went on from that. For every baby that came to us a new tree was planted here. That big apple tree over there is Lama's tree. The rowans on the slope are Allan's. The hedge of cherry trees on the west side were planted by his father on the day Rodney was born. Each of my ten children has a birth tree here.

"Then, whenever, the anniversary of a birthday came round it was commemorated by a tree. Of course, some of the birthdays were in winter, and we had to wait until spring came to plant the tree, but it was always selected on the day itself.

"As soon as the children grew old enough they did their own planting. Little Tom was only three years old when he toddled home from the woods with a pine sapling and put it in the corner there. It was a few inches high. Look at it now.

"Twice death came to our home and took one of our babies away. But we always remembered their birthdays just the same.

"When the children, one by one, grew up and went away to school, we marked their vacation home-comings by some addition to our garden. When they married we did the same thing. And to this day, whenever they come back to visit the old home, they bring something for the garden in memory of their visit. Charles is a missionary in Japan, you know; he brought and set out those Japanese maples the last time he was home.

"Many of them bring rare trees and shrubs now, and they are very beautiful; but I think I love best the old-fashioned things which my boys and girls planted and tended here long ago, when they were little lads and lasses in blouses and pinafores.

"Nowadays the grandchildren have a share in it, too, and every vacation visit leaves its souvenir here. We have never tried to keep up any formal arrangement. It was an unwritten law that anyone who planted anything here should just stick it in where he pleased.

"We fell into the habit of commemorating our children's successes in this way. For instance, when ten-year-old Teddy carried off the prize for general proficiency in his class he planted one of those clumps of tiger lilies at the gate, and, twelve years

later, when he graduated from college, leader of his class, he came home and planted the other clump.

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“So you see, my dear, this old garden is just our family history, written out in a script of leaf and blossom. Everything in it has some treasured memory attached to it —sweet or sad or merry.

“Edith planted these lilies of the valley here on the very first day she was able to come to the garden after a long and dangerous illness. Millicent planted the honeysuckle by the trellis on her graduation day, and that big white rose bush came from a little slip in Sara’s wedding bouquet of bride roses.

“Do you see that big circle of snowball trees over in the centre of the garden, with the two tall silver poplars behind them? My husband and I planted the poplars on our silver wedding day, and the children planted a snowball each.

“Next year we hope to have our golden wedding, and something more will be added to our garden.

“Last year, when our eldest grandson came home with the soldier boys from South Africa he planted the ‘Paardeberg tree’—you see it—that little maple sapling behind the poplars. The boys ran mostly to trees, you know, and the girls to flowers. When I come here all the past seems to live again for me. I wouldn’t exchange this rambling old garden for the most beautiful lawn in the world, my dear.”

“I shouldn’t think you would,” I said. “Why, it’s sacred! And the whole idea embodied in it is one of the most beautiful I’ve ever heard of.”

## What to Teach Your Son.

Teach him to be true to his word and his work.

To respect religion for its own sake.

To face all difficulties with courage and cheerfulness.

To form no friendship that can bring him into degrading associations.

To respect other people's convictions.

To reverence womanhood.

To live a clean life in thought and word, as well as in deed.

Teach him that true manliness always commands success.

That the best things in life are not those which can be bought with money.

That to command he must first learn to obey.

That there can be no compromise between honesty and dishonesty.

That the virtues of punctuality and politeness are excellent things to cultivate.

That a gentleman is just what the word implies—a man who is gentle in all his dealings with the opinions, feelings and weaknesses of other people.

## What to Teach Your Daughter.

Teach her to be true and honorable in all her relationships.

To have a solid base for her life, to cultivate fixed habits and the strength of repose.

To have high ideals and live up to them.

To mean what she says and say only what it is right to mean.

To think clearly and judge wisely.

Teach her that the best part of all pleasures is sharing the enjoyment with somebody else.

That work is always worthy when it is well done.

That happiness is living in harmony with God and His laws.

That the more she gives to her friends of her love, her confidence and her loyalty, the more she will receive from them in return.

That everyone's life is a part of God's plan.

That the finest manners are born of unselfishness and loving kindness.

That nobility of character and womanliness are not dependent on education, appearance or social station.

That a woman should be proud of her womanhood and never desecrate it by aping manliness.

## One Mother's Opinions.

The "Little Mother," who was serving, and the Schoolma'am, who was curled up in an armchair, were talking. The Schoolma'am always said she got many a hint from the "Little Mother" which helped her wonderfully in ruling her motley little subjects in the brown schoolhouse.

Presently five-year-old Winnie ran in, bubbling over with excitement about an accident that had befallen her doll. The "Little Mother's" sewing had to be laid aside while she listened to Winnie's story, sympathized and comforted the little maid, and finally saw her run happily off to her play again.

"How could you stop your work and listen to it all so interestedly, when you were in a hurry to finish your sewing?" asked the Schoolma'am. "I'm sure I wouldn't have had the patience."

The "Little Mother" smiled.

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"I'm afraid I wouldn't have, either, always. But last summer I learned a lesson one day, when I was calling on Mrs. Clifford. You know her daughter, Edith Clifford, that bright, handsome girl, who is so clever and ambitious. Mrs. Clifford was talking to me about Edith. She said that Edith never confided in her—never talked to her of her plans and hopes, her failures and successes, as she did to her own girl friends, or as other girls did to their mothers. She said she felt completely shut out of her daughter's inner life. The tears were in her eyes as she spoke. I felt so sorry for her, and yet I couldn't help thinking she was greatly to blame herself for it, although I am sure she would have been much surprised had anyone told her so, for she has always been a most affectionate and self-sacrificing mother. But often when I was there, when Edith was a tiny girl, I have seen her come to her mother, just as Winnie came to me now, eager to tell some little incident or plan which seemed very trifling to a busy woman, but of great importance in the eyes of a child. Mrs. Clifford would push her away, sometimes impatiently, saying: 'Edith, dear, mother is too busy,' or 'There, there, I haven't time to bother now.' Edith's face would cloud over and she would go away with quivering lips. What wonder if, after repeated repulses, the child came to think that none of her little interests mattered to her mother? She has grown up with that impression, and it can never be effaced. I thought of all this while Mrs. Clifford was speaking, and I made a compact with myself never to risk the loss of my child's confidence in like manner. I believe that if Winnie, when she comes to me in her small trials and triumphs now, always finds me ready to listen and sympathize or suggest, she will continue to do so when she grows into young girlhood."

"You are right, 'Little Mother,'" said the Schoolma'am. "I haven't forgotten how grieved and hurt I used to be when I was a wee mite, and found that grown people took no interest in what seemed so wonderful to me, or, what was even worse, laughed at or ridiculed some of my childish thoughts when I tried to express them. Oh, it cut right to the bone and marrow! It is a pity that most folks never seem to realize how sensitive the blossom of a child's confidence is! At the first rude touch it shrinks and closes, never to re-open. By the way, 'Little Mother,' what are you doing?"

"Little Mother" laughed.

"Something foolish, I dare say you'll think. You know I made these two print aprons for Lilian to wear to school. They were, long, full, high-necked and long-sleeved—very neat and nice, I thought, besides being very serviceable. Well, when Lilian came home from school yesterday there were tears on her face. When I asked her what the trouble was, she said that the girls in her class had laughed at her aprons and called them 'baby dresses.'

"So I am taking out the sleeves and cutting down the necks. I suppose many people would think me very foolish, indeed, but I don't think I am. Of course, I think a mother should stand firm if a real principle were involved, and I don't believe in humoring mere whims, or vanity either. But neither do I think that a mother ought to inflict unnecessary discomfort on a child. Lilian is very sensitive, and would really suffer if she had to go on wearing those aprons, at which her little world laughed. This seems very trifling to me, of course. But suppose I myself were compelled to wear abroad some garment, no matter how serviceable it might be, which my acquaintances ridiculed. I know how I would feel. So I didn't try to scold or ridicule Lilian—and I'm fixing over the aprons."

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"I know," nodded the Schoolma'am, "when I was a little tot, an uncle brought me home a pair of embroidered deerskin moccasins from the west. My parents made me wear them to school, and I'll never forget how I suffered. Looking back now, I know that the moccasins were really very sweet and pretty, and I wish somebody would give me a pair like them nowadays. But nothing like them had ever been seen in my small world before, and they seemed to me very odd and bizarre. Nobody else wore such things, and I felt as if everybody were looking at my feet. How I loathed and detested those poor little, gay little moccasins!"

They both laughed. Then the "Little Mother" said:—

"I'm going to 'fess to something else, so that you'll not get too much of a shock when you see him. I had Teddy's curls cut off to-day."

"Oh, 'Little Mother!'" protested the Schoolma'am. "Why did you do it? I've approved of you right along, but I can't—no, I can't—approve of this. His lovely, long, golden curls!"

"Well, I discovered that his lovely, long, golden curls were so many thorns in my little son's soul. Oh, I hated to let them go. They did look so sweet and picturey when I combed them out over his velvet suit and lace collar. But poor Ted's heart was broken. He said the other boys laughed at him and called him 'girl-baby,' and offered him curl-papers; and he just couldn't stand it. I had a bit of a struggle with myself. Then I thought I had no right to make Ted's life a wilderness of woe, just to gratify my maternal vanity. So I took Ted to the barber's, and he is a shorn lamb now, bless his dear little round, close-clipped pate! He isn't half so pretty, but he's a great deal happier."

"What a wise Teddy to choose you for his 'Little Mother,'" said the Schoolma'am, with a resigned sigh.

## Bright Sayings.

Once upon a time there were mothers together, and they were telling the bright things their children had said. There was also a listener, who listened with interest because these were real speeches of real children, and not simply funny column emanations of grown-up brains.

“Yesterday,” said Mrs. Wise, “I was giving my little boy a lesson in arithmetic. He is rather dull at figures and addition seems to be a sad stumbling block to him. ‘Now, Harry,’ I said, ‘if you had four candies in one hand and five in the other, how many would you have altogether?’ ‘A mouthful,’ promptly answered Harry.”

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“That reminds me,” said Mrs. Milner, who had once been a schoolteacher, “of some answers that my pupils used to give me. One little chap, on being asked what a glacier was, said it was ‘a man who put in window frames’.”

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“Gladys wanted to know the other day,” said Mrs. Campbell, “if her kitty had a soul, and if so, would he have a little heaven all to himself when he died.”

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“Last summer,” said Mrs. Price, “my sister’s little Mary, a small mite who had never been in the country before, spent a month with us on our farm. One day she said to me, ‘Oh, Aunt Lina, I feel so much gooder here than in town. Why, I feel so good that I say my prayers two or three times through the day.’”

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“The real humor of children’s sayings consists in their earnestness,” said Mrs. Haye, laughing. “They are always so very solemn. Last summer we spent a fortnight at a farmhouse, where they had several of those monstrosities known as ‘curly’ hens. Just as soon as four-year-old Henrietta caught sight of one of them, she exclaimed: ‘Oh, mamma, that hen has put on its feathers wrong side out.’”

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“There was another small boy in the second primer class who could not learn to spell! All his grey matter went into the theory and practice of mischief apparently. One day I was trying to get him to spell ‘speckled,’ but he could not get it right at all. At last after trying every combination of letters you could imagine, besides several you couldn’t, he said, ‘Well, teacher, I can’t spell it but I know what it means.’ His impish grin might have warned me, but I was inexperienced, and said, rashly, ‘Well, Arthur, what does it mean?’ ‘George Howatt’s face, ma’am.’ George was celebrated in the school for his freckles. I had to laugh myself, and so did all the

scholars. But I think George paid Arthur up for his joke at recess."

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"Since we are on this subject," said Mrs. Sutherland, "I must tell you our latest family joke. The other day a gentleman, who gave his name as Mr. Lord, called to see Robert. I showed him the parlor and went out to find Robert. As I crossed the hall my little three-year-old Jack said 'Mamma, who is in there?' 'Mr. Lord,' I responded, as I hurried out. Mr. Lord himself told me what happened after that. Jack pattered away to the parlor, pushed open the door softly, and tiptoed in, looking at the caller with an expression of mingled awe and curiosity. Mr. Lord held out his hand and said: 'Well, little chap, come here.' So Jack sidled up, put one grimy little hand on Mr. Lord's knee, and said, very reverently, 'Are you God?'

"It took Mr. Lord some seconds to grasp the situation. Then he couldn't help laughing so heartily that I fear poor Jacky's ideas of Divinity got a rude shock. The tears welled up in his eyes and he ran indignantly away. When I heard the story I had to laugh, too. But it took me a good hour to comfort Jacky and straighten out his theology a bit."

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After the laugh which greeted Mrs. Sutherland's story had subsided, Mrs. Norton said:

"That makes me think of what Dottie said the other night. She is just three years old, too. That seems to be the worst age for visitations of acuteness. I had put her to bed at dusk and said to her, 'Now, Dottie, you won't be frightened to go to sleep here alone, will you? Just remember that God is right here with you all the time.' 'All right,' responded Dot, cheerfully. I went down, but in a few minutes heard her calling me. Going to the foot of the stairs, I asked her what she wanted. 'Oh, mamma,' said a tearful voice, 'won't you come up here and stay wif God, and let me go down and stay wif papa?'"

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"Now," said the minister's wife, "I'm going to tell you what one of my Sunday School class said last Sunday. The lesson was on the translation of Elijah, and the falling of the mantle on Elisha. 'Now.' I said, at the end, 'what was it Elijah left to Elisha when he went to heaven?' At once a tiny maiden of five lisped out, gravely and reverently, 'His old clo'es.'"

The mothers' meeting broke up at this point, and the listener laughed and scribbled in her notebook.

## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been fixed.

[The end of *Half an Hour with Canadian Mothers* by L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery]