OUR MOTHER
MARY GILBERT JACKSON

By

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Our mother was a great lady, a great pioneer and a true friend to all who knew her.

She played a very strong and spiritual part in helping Colorado to become the glory which it enjoys today.

She had many talents which she developed and used to better herself, her family, her church and her community. Her talents developed with the demands of her activities. She always maintained a high moral and spiritual standard in everything she did or said.

She was orderly and quiet and always did everything well. She said, "If it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well."

These verses from Ephesians 6:10-13 remind me of her: "Finally, my brethern, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

She obeyed the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Our mother never stooped to gossip, criticism or malpractice of any kind. Her thought was clean and pure. I never heard her repeat or tell an ugly story. When criticism was aimed at her, she stepped aside, and let the darts fly by, and loved all the more.

She loved everyone; age or nationality had no meaning for her. She stood on principle. She loved and taught us to love, and to know others as she would have liked to be known.

Jesus' words always reminds me of the strong firm stand she took against malpractice. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." (John 21:22)

She didn't know the meaning of selfishness, self-pity, domination or ill temper.

She obeyed the command, "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matt. 10:8) Her generosity reached far beyond her home, family and church; she was a friend to the community and throughout the San Luis Valley. She was bilingual and understood the Spanish American people and many of them came to her for advice, for financial help, for food and clothing, as well as a friend. Not only the Mexican people but there were many poor white families she helped as long as she lived--widows with children, lonesome widowers, and it was a usual thing that we would have a half dozen unexpected guests for dinner. Her concern for manking is brought out in Jesus' command: Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (Matt. 22:37-40).

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. She loved and had compassion for her neighbors.

Being president of the "Relief Society" brought her in line for numerous demands and activities for her church and community, and it also brought her children into service.

She cared for the sick, sent hot food to those who couldn't care for themselves, made floral arrangements for funerals, etc.

The Jacksons were the first people to have electric lights in our town. The electricity was generated by a Delco engine which was kept in Grandpa Jackson's garage along with his Model T Ford.

We had lights in our new house, and we had electric irons, refrigerators and stoves and many other lovely modern conveniences. We even had street lights.

This was well and good for the Jacksons but not enough to satisfy our mother. What about the town? Manassa should also have electricity. The wires were as near as Romeo, three miles away, but Manassa had no money to bring the electricity into town. Right ideas always came from God and this was no exception.

It was a woman who came up with the idea that the way to get the money for wiring energy into Manassa would be by everyone in town who could and had chickens to bring the "Sunday eggs" to brother Sellers' store on Monday morning;

he would buy them and give the Relief Society the money for this great project.

So every Monday morning for the next three years at least, we children took the Sunday eggs to brother Sellers. Eggs were at least twenty-cents per dozen, so it took a while to build up the electric fund. Finally the goal was reached and our town had electricity to read by and streets with lights and all the other luxuries this energy brings.

About the time the wiring for electricity was finished in town, the Delco engine in Grandpa's garage caught fire and burned to the ground--car, garage and all. Dad had just been over to check the engine before he retired for the night. Soon after he was home the fire broke out. There was fear that Grandpa's house would also go up in flames, but the good neighbors with hose and the "water bucket" system controlled the flames.

Keeping the church and church grounds clean and especially for "State Conference" was again up to the women, and our mother was always the first to take the lead to be out there cleaning and raking the yard as well as cleaning the church.

She then entertained conference visitors from Salt Lake, Bountiful, La Jara, Sanford, Romeo or from wherever they came, always for dinner and some to spend the night, especially the Salt Lake visitors.

She helped the poor, the sick and the needy, widowers, and the animals, our own as well as the stray cats, dogs and donkeys. Our dear "Old Nell" was healed many times through Mamma's loving gentle care. I remember especially the time when

Dad was in England, and those cold, cold winters. Nell had some sort of swelling infection on her face (jaw). Mamma would bring Nell up to the house to have hre close by so she could put warm poultices on this infected place and wrap her with a warm blanket. The poultices were changed throughout the day and night until she was well.

The barn was down on the far corner of Warren's lot. It was a long way down there to leave four little children alone in the house while she went down there to milk the cow and feed the stock.

The hardest of it all was when Dad was in England and baby, Little Lenard, died. He was just over a year old. Pneumonia was much to be feared. His death was very painful for her. The work was nothing compared to her grief. She must have suffered. With Dad in England, she was alone with the three of us left.

She was an artist and if any of us have any artistic talent, we surely came by it naturally. She did beautiful hand work, drawn work, silk quilts and with beautiful silk thread stitching. She did beautiful burned wood work. Her home was the most beautiful in the Valley or any place that I know of.

She grew flowers and a vegetable garden second to none. The vegetables were so delicious just as they are now, grown in the cool dry climate and plenty of sunshine and water and a very short season. The asparagus was delicious, and she had other good things in her garden; e.g., an abundance of apples, currants, gooseberries, raspberries, strawberries, rhubard. She canned

for the winter months all that we did not use fresh in the summer.

Another way she helped the Relief Society raise money for their various projects was with home-made ice cream. Every two weeks on Friday night, there was a dance sponsored by the church. Everyone was invited and it was a social event to look foward to and a lot of fun. But there was more to it than that, Mamma furnished the ice cream. We would hurry home from school to make the custard and freeze five gallons of ice cream. Then we would take it to the dance hall and the Relief Society would sell it in cones, five cents a scoop, until it was all gone, and, of course, the money went into the electricyty fund or some other project. It was clear profit, for the eggs, cream, milk ice, etc. were all ours given free to a worthy cause.

Mother was fond of people and went out of her way to seek and make friends of the unusual. She said "she did it for us as much as herself."

The Salt Lake Conference people, as well as the high school teachers, were at our house frequently--the teachers for the school year at times.

She had other special friends in for "Afternoon Tea" once or twice a year, and this was a big project to have the house speck and span, the children clean and dressed, herself beautiful and the most delivious pies made. These events were very impressive (I think it is referred to now as a gracious time). It was something special that lifted us beyond the humdrum of daily living.

In the spring we always felt so free and happy after a long, cold winter indoors, and we always had lots of beautiful white snowflakes. When the snow and ice would melt on the south side of the house, the grass would be green and the dandelions (I love them to this day for they meant spring) would be in full bloom and it would be time for us to go to the "Adobe Ranch" for the lambing and shearing season.

Dad would have to be there and Mamma was always ready for a change, even if it did mean cooking for the men who helped with lambing and shearing. We all loved it. We would have our supper about 5 o'clock--no later. We would wash the dishes quickly and then ride through the meadows with Mother and Dad in the buggy to pen up the sheep in the wire fences.

The lambs would be playful and happy, running and leaping, but when it was time to go to bed they know it and would all scramble to find their mothers, the ewes just as anxious to find their own lamb. When they were in the pen Dad would put a scarecrow out. The scarecrow would resemble a man and a lantern was lighted to keep the coyotes away.

These were happy days. Aunt Jessie was always with us. Mamma and Aunt Jessie were very good friends. Also Aunt Fanny and Aunt Vida. They were very good friends to all of us, and especially when Dad was away. They must have been a great comfort to our mother when Lenard died.

Mamma, Aunt Jessie and the three of us were at the Ranch doing the cooking one year when Dad was in England. Uncle Sam was in charge. Uncle Sam was a good man, but always gruff and

pessimistic. Mamma and Aunt Jessie told Uncle Sam it was necessary to go to town for supplies, like eggs, meat, flour, butter, sugar, etc. Of course, Uncle Sam said, "Well, if you must go, do so but be careful and be back here in time to have supper for these shearers by four-thirty."

We were off in the big buggy and with a prancing, spirited team of horses. All went well in gathering the supplies and we were ready to start back to the ranch to get the supper ready for the men by four-thirty when BANG! They saw someone's house on fire at the other end of town. So, of course, they couldn't let any excitement pass them by, and we all went to the fire, at least part way, until the horses became frightened of the fire, and they broke into a swift, hard run. The horses were "running away." Completely out of control, the buggy was bouncing all over the road and into the ditch. The children were thrown from the buggy along with the eggs, butter, flour, meat, sugar and everything else. It was a mess! Finally some men caught the "run-away team," brought them under control, miles from the fire and children.

Men helped put the horses' harnesses and buggy into shape so that we could go limping back to the ranch, much, much later, in fact it was after dark, and Uncle Sam was furious!! I think this was mostly because he had had to cook supper for the men. He told Aung Jessie "off" but restrained himself from speaking out of order to Mamma.

We loved the Ranch. Mamma would see that we had picnics and swimming in the San Antone. We loved playing in the soft

white sand and she saw to it that some of it was taken for us to have in a "sand box." This sand was along the edge of the water.

If there was no other way to go, we would walk to the Ranch for our picnic. Aung Jessie and Mamma would load Will's little wagon with our picnic things and we would be gone for the day.

When Mother was a little girl, Grandmother and Grandfather Gilbert moved to Colorado from Utah. Their first home up on the Conejos River, a ranch house built of lumber, was struck by lightening and burned. They built another and remained there until the children were in their teens.

Most of their neighbors were Spanish Americans and good friends. Mamma and the other children went to school with the Spanish children and soon became bilingual. The family was often invited to the various fiestas, a good Latin custom of the Spanish to celebrate lavishly every occasion; e.g., birthdays, weddings, and funerals. Mamma loved these parties, but most of all she loved the "red hot chile" which they served.

During Lent she would watch the penitenties whip themselves on cold moonlight nights, and the next morning they could follow their path on the blood-stained snow.

Life was primitive and the only way they could bring the cows to the corral at night was for Mamma and Aunt Annie to ride their horse and bring the cows back from across the river. In the spring the snow would melt and with added rain there was

a great amlunt of flooding, so much so that they often didn't know when the land ended and the river began. It was impossible to direct their horse, so they gave him the reins and let him swim across. They held on for dear life, closed their eyes and prayed, and were always protected.

Mother always had time to read and rest in the afternoons.

We would do our work in the morning, and after the lunch dishes were washed and everything tidied up, Mamma would go to her room to read and rest. And we children could do the same thing or use the time to practice our piano lessons, see friends or do anything else we wished until time to cook supper and do the chores.

She always had flowers blooming in the bay window in the dining room --ferns, Christmas cactus and geraniums, usually. It was a joy to see these beautiful flowers against a blanket of snow outside the window.

Mother's life could be summed up this way:

"I have fought a good fight
I have finished my course
I have kept the faith." (Tim: 4:7)