Motherhood: A Short List of Six Books & Manuscripts

This week, we present a short list of six books and manuscripts in which women focus on the joys and struggles of motherhood. From a homemade baby book celebrating the infancy of a daughter to a manuscript documenting a child’s death; from advice directing sons to think carefully about their choice of spouse to instructions to daughters educate themselves and form friendships outside marriage, the pieces capture individual women’s attempts to memorialize their roles and connect with others in similar positions.

Peruse, and reach out if there is something that is a complement to your collection – we are always happy to work on terms that fit libraries’ fiscal year needs, and are particularly flexible on invoicing and shipping given the closures affecting some acquisitions departments. In the event that you have specific collecting goals and would like to discuss them with us, we invite you to reach out via phone or email Tuesday-Saturday when our liaison to institutional clientele is on site.

All items subject to prior purchase.

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Jennie Richmond's excitement over each of the early moments of her first daughter's life is lovingly documented in this unique manuscript. Detailed and lovely half and full title pages open the piece, with Jennie using red ink to create floral and cupid motifs, and lines for manuscript text; to this she adds in dark ink and entries about Geraldine's infancy. These are no less detailed than the illustrations. "Born at Lacon, Ill on Tuesday the 18th Day of April 1893 at the hour of 1.20 O'clock A.M. unto Mr. and Mrs. Richmond," this initial entry also includes the autographs of the parents as well as the attending physician and nurse. She weighed "five pounds and one half." Geraldine's "first picture was taken at five and one half months by Grant Rose. Oil painting made by Jennie L. Fitch...First tooth when ten months old. Learned to creep forward when the metronome was put before her. First step July 7 when almost 13 months old. Plaster of Paris hand taken when 3 months old." Geraldine's first bath, a lock of her hair, her first ring -- these and so many other tiny moments are made monumental in this book. It becomes clear not only that Geraldine is adored, but also that she is surrounded by art, music, and intellectual activity. Jennie's husband Elijah, an attorney, afforded them a comfortable lifestyle that could allow all this. Census records show that Jennie and Elijah went on to have three more children -- all sons. And on being widowed, Jennie took up living with Geraldine in a single household. Geraldine, by 1940, had become a music teacher with her own studio.

A lovely, unique and research rich piece touching on the history of maternity, the history of infant education, women's domestic lives, women's education and art, and genealogy among other fields.

U.S. Census 1900, 1910, 1920, 1930, 1940.
(5648) $1,650
Using her own marital and maternal status to quash complaints from men, Mrs. Budden presents lessons drawn from Miss Hamilton, Miss Edgeworth, and Miss Chapone.

2. [Budden, Maria Elizabeth Halsey] A Mother. Thoughts on Domestic Education; The Result of Experience.

London: Charles Knight, 1826. First edition. Contemporary full calf with gilt and morocco to spine, and boards ruled in gilt. All edges marbled. Marbled endpapers. Front joint professionally strengthened. Externally square and attractive. Bookseller's stamp to verso of front flyleaf. Internally a fresh, clean, unmarked copy. Measuring 180 x 110mm (pages) and collating viii, 366, [2, adverts]: complete. A scarce women's education book written by the prolific didactic novelist Maria Budden, OCLC reports only five copies in U.S. libraries and it does not appear in the modern auction record. The present is the only copy on the market.

"Little is known of the life of Maria Elizabeth Budden, but in the early years of the 19th century she gained a reputation as a writer for children, both via her didactic fiction and her True Stories series of history books intended for the young. Her books promote home precepts of obedience, industry, humility, and striving for self-improvement, invariably insisting that these are the only way to virtue and therefore to happiness" (Course). Her books were in such demand that for a time she was producing a minimum of one novel a year for her publisher.

Thoughts on Domestic Education is both a logical addition and an outlier within her oeuvre, for it picks up the same didactic thread but in a more overt manner. Rather than tuck lessons within narratives, here she speaks directly to the best methods of training girls and young women in an array of rigorous subjects, from the classical and modern languages, literature, history, and geography. Drawing on the works of Hester Chapone, Maria Edgeworth, Elizabeth Hamilton and Jane Marcet, Budden advances the value of the Bluestockings' advice on education. She also uses her own position as a wife and mother to defend the women's work from misogynistic attacks she herself had overheard from men: "I would read them, were they the compositions of a Mrs. Hamilton and a Mrs. Edgeworth." Thus Budden uses her positions to advantage, to fill a gap in the market and to create a frame that surrounds the ideas of "Misses" so they can enter into spaces previously banned.

(4255) SOLD
A mother advises her son -- and all sons by proxy -- on avoiding hasty sexual relationships and strategically finding a companionate marriage

3. [Champion de Crespigny, Mary]. Letters of Advice from a Mother to Her Son.

London: W. Cadell and T. Davies, 1803. First edition. Contemporary tree calf, recornered and rebacked to style with gilt and morocco label to spine. All edges speckled blue. Original endpapers, with contemporary notation of the author's name to the front pastedown. Small thumbprint to lower title page, and pinpoint wormhole to far outer margin until page 112 never affecting text, else internally about flawless. Wide margined and measuring 210 x 120mm (pages) and collating xii, 452: complete. A scarce and early example of an educated woman advising her son in print, OCLC locates 12 copies in the U.S.

From the 17th to 18th century, "the appearance of printed advice literature...signaled a profound historical change in the social distribution of knowledge" (Mechling). Traditionally an oral method of sharing information, as parents and grandparents spoke to rising generations about the beauties and dangers of the world, "the appearance of this printed genre suggests the increased physical mobility of families (who might move away from extended family)...and certain social conditions (such as social class aspirations)" (Mechling). Early on, it was common for such works to be written by professional authority figures -- physicians, educators, religious leaders and the like -- before parents themselves began entering the field. Even then, while fathers as heads of family might author advice literature to children of either sex, mothers were often relegated to printing only that advice which would guide young women into their adult roles.

Drawing on her roles as a wife and mother, Mary Champion de Crespigny carves out a wider space for women in the advice genre. After all, who better to inform a son -- a future husband and father -- on sexual relationships, marital partnership, the treatment of household staff, and effective parenting than a woman? In gathering private letters for publication, de Crespigny further asserts that sons other than her own should heed her wisdom. In addition to urging young men against the vices of gambling and drinking and toward the virtues of public worship, she touches on the critical importance of finding the right partner for their lives. As a woman, it is a subject that "may be particularly difficult to discuss -- though in some respects I may be the more competent to guard you against the dangers of forming hasty and improper connexions." Thus, she provides the men insight that will help them as well as the women around them: beauty and attraction are insufficient for an equal bond, and men must seek someone truly companionate in their values, ideas, interests, and temperaments.

(4256) $2,250
A woman begins a family register with her marriage and ends it with the death of her only child.

4. **[Child Mortality] [Grief] Belinda Axtell Draper.**

Register

[Massachusetts]: [1821]. Beautifully hand-colored manuscript on one sheet with all text to recto. Measuring 245 x 215mm. Retaining its bright colors; with chipping and loss to all edges, not affecting images or text. A unique tribute by a mother to her late daughter.

The bright colors and floral arrangements of the present piece suggest that it was originally intended to document joyful family milestones. Titled "Register," its first section declares that it is of "the Family of Adolphus Draper who was born August & Married Belinda Axtell Sept. 18th 1816, who was born July 9th 1797." Below this is added less happy news, however. "Sacred to the memory of Rebeckah Draper, only child of Adolphus & Belinda Draper who was born Oct. 5th 1817 & departed this life August 26th 1821." In contrast to the piece’s visual vibrancy, Belinda adds a final verse to the piece’s foot: "Rebeckah, tho thou art in heaven and we on earth, May this one hope delight us, That thou will hail our second birth, When death shall unite us. Where worlds no more can sever Parents & child forever."

A unique and tragic piece of maternal history, available for further research into family genealogy, child mortality rates and causes of death, the symbolic significance of illustrated flowers, and maternal mourning practices of the period.

(5560) $1,200
Three views on a landmark international custody case concerning the rights of mothers facing emotional abuse


Three volumes bound in one. Finely bound by Bradstreet's in half morocco over marbled boards with gilt to spine. Top edge gilt. Marbled endpapers. Armorial bookplate of Samuel F. Barger to front pastedown. Measuring 225 x 135mm and collating complete including titles: 295, [1, blank]; 124, [2, errata]; [2], 44. A just about Fine copy, with some inoffensive pencil annotations and corrections to volume I and occasional faint foxing; overall a pleasing copy of three scarce legal works related to women's custody rights according to international and interstate law.

Three scarce tracts documenting the international custody battle that became highly publicized and debated in its time. In 1837, American citizen Ellen Sears married Daniel Gonsalve d'Hauteville, a member of the Swiss nobility. During their brief union, Ellen survived emotional neglect and mental cruelty from her husband, whose "self-image as paterfamilias conflicted with Ellen's growing sense of herself as a mother tormented by an unfeeling spouse" (DiFonzo). Pregnant and unhappy, she left her husband for the U.S., giving birth to her son after her arrival. Under Common law doctrine, d'Hauteville demanded that his wife and child return to his household in Switzerland. "But Sears and her Philadelphia lawyers devised a strategy that would challenge the accepted legal formulation along its emerging cultural fault line...leveraging mental cruelty into an accusation that d'Hauteville had violated the standards of the changing American family" (DiFonzo). This strategy, combined with gains that the women's movement had made in the U.S. and Europe marital property laws within the century, helped bolster her position and win her custodial rights.

"The d'Hauteville case was not a single event in a courtroom, but a set of multiple legal experiences that exposed timebound and timeless realities of American legal culture. The case began in an insular way, as a domestic drama must, with the rapid rise and equally rapid fall of the d'Hauteville marriage. But as the fight for the son Frederick displaced their marriage as the central focus of Ellen and Gonsalve's relationship, the law assumed a greater and greater presence in their lives. The pair not only confronted contradictions between their own ideas about justice and the legal rules they had to learn, they also experienced the transformation of their domestic tragedy into a legal event with innumerable participants, from lawyers, judges, and legislators, to courtroom spectators, newspaper reporters, and diarists" (Grossberg).

(4910) $1,950
The mother of literary daughters compiles advice for her youngest, guiding her to pursue education and fulfill her duties


Best known as an author of conduct books, Ann Martin Taylor showed early intellectual promise; upon her marriage to a minister with a mutual love of learning, she raised and educated five children who all went on to successful writing careers. "The Taylors provided an excellent education to their large family, devising an original method of teaching which used materials they wrote themselves. When the children were away from home, Ann wrote to them often with advice on proper conduct and religious observance" (Encyclopedia). Training her girls in literature, art, mathematics, and the sciences, it was her hope that her "daughters be able to support themselves" even without husbands, given the limited funds for dowries (Encyclopedia). While her two eldest, Ann and Jane, forged successful, best-selling literary careers, she felt concern for her youngest, Jemima, lest she lose her aging mother's guidance too soon. To this end, Taylor wrote Maternal Solicitude, a text through which she could share lessons, give advice, and be present in her teenage daughter's life. "I assure you that not one of these Meditations was the work of merely an hour or two...I would hope that you will read them deliberately and with attention." The result is an incredibly intimate compilation of meditations and letters, from a mother to a daughter, guiding her through some of the most complex questions women must face in their lives. Such a tone resonated with contemporary readers, and Taylor's book went through no fewer than fifteen editions by 1830.

(3924) **SOLD**