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## Remembrance Day

### Staying in touch with family and friends

Valentine's Day is around the corner, a time to pay particular attention to that one special person. Cards will be exchanged between lovers already in a relationship; others living in hopes of fostering a new liaison send theirs in a bid to win the affection of a prospective partner. Traditionally, these billets-doux are anonymous, perhaps to add an air of mystery regarding the senders; but in the main, the majority of recipients know who they are from. Those who don't must be cheered by the knowledge that they have a secret admirer; although not all are genuine. The odd joker might use the occasion for mischief, while match-makers try to spark what they believe to be a desirable union that is never likely to happen without a little outside help. In general, however, the day is a tribute to friendship and good intentions. Being a sentimentalist, I would like it to stand for something more.

Relationships formed over the years can be anything from casual to meaningful; some lasting, others only fleeting. Even short-term associations can be re-kindled along the journey, and though many tend to fade once again as circumstances change and there is another parting-of-the-ways, all are important. They make us what we are and are reminders that we need people in our lives. When we are children, parents take centre stage, caring for us, teaching us, guiding and loving us in the way that only parents can. They accept the responsibility whereas, at the time, we neither understand the concept, nor appreciate its significance. Eventually, we leave home to set out on our own and many of us make the pledge to stay in touch on a very regular basis. Pretty much like the new car that gets washed every week, after a month or two that resolution begins to die a natural death. Before long, contact with the ones who prepared us for the world takes second place to socialising. If it weren't for Mum and Dad, we wouldn't be here to have a special friend we could send a card to. Maybe not in the same way, but don't we love them too; enough, surely, to give them a call, or take our Valentine to meet them? For most of us, it's not that hard.

Staying in contact with our own family means a great deal to them; but others we have met and befriended are just as deserving. They may have living relatives who continue to be a part of their lives; or they may be quite alone and relying on the odd visit to brighten up an otherwise grey existence. Admittedly, there might be good reasons not to cultivate a continuing friendship, especially if the person in question irritates or annoys us; but where would be the harm in tendering a few words of kindness anyway? As for old acquaintances with whom we can be comfortable over an extended period, an hour or two of reminiscing would be time well spent on both sides.

Whatever our age, most of us have older friends, some that we haven't seen for years. Wondering how they are faring is really a nudge that they are in our minds and requiring something more than just a brief thought. Are they still alive? Even those who are younger are not guaranteed to outlive us. How would we feel if we discovered they hadn't? I heard a pertinent story the other day that exemplified this. A man had lost touch with his younger brother. The cause of their separation doesn't matter; what does though is that the brother died and no-one in the family knew until almost a year later when a friend mentioned it in passing.

It was a sad tale that I, personally, wouldn't want to repeat; and I don't imagine you would either. So, I am begging you to make an effort. The 14<sup>th</sup> of February is special, no doubt of that; but every day should be Remembrance Day. People need to know that others are thinking about them, from the very old to the very young. How recently have you gone to the trouble of contacting an ageing friend? Leave it too long and they won't be there anymore. What about a relative, old or young? When did you last visit your parents or grandparents, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews? Catch up with them now while you can, for their sake and for your own peace of mind.

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