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THE FARM AND RANCH REVIEW

PRINTING DEPARTMENT

CALGARY

ALBERTA

Other People's Troubles An Antidote for Your Own

By Winnifred Reeve (Onoto Walanna)

Author of "A Japanese Nightingale," "Heart of Hyacinth,"
"Wisteria," "Marion," "Me," "Delia," etc., etc.

"Oh, please don't joke about it, Uncle Dan."

"Why not? May as well be cheerful about it, as I tell a friend of mine whose been through a worse experience than yours, Laura. And the chap is beginning to buck up a bit. Comes to an old dried-up fossil like your Uncle Dan, who matches his troubles with others that make his seem like mere shadows. And what's more, he lets your old uncle Dan give a hand to the still more wretched ones, and then trots back to his own daily treadmill of pain and bears it like a man?"

She sighed and shook her head helplessly, as if to say that she knew just what panacea her uncle had to offer, but in her case at least his "medicine" would fail. Unmindful of her little motion of despair, he continued:

"You know, dear child, we've all got to bear our share of sorrow in this world of ours. We can't evade it. I believe God meant us, each, to have his individual portion of pain. We cannot fathom his design in the matter, but that it was his design I think is proven by the tortures of His own Son."

"But people to-day are denying the very existence of pain. The new religions tell us there is no pain—no real sorrow or trouble in the world. Its all an error—that's what they call it. That everything is good and right, and its only our wrong thinking that forces this—"error" which we call pain or trouble, or what not. Its a philosophy I should think you might understand—and believe."

"It's a lame philosophy," said her uncle gently. "By our own pain we can understand and feel that of others, and we must feel the pain of others. It is that alone will soften the hard heart of the world. When we deny or ignore the existence of suffering and sin, we lose our ability and heart to pity, and therefore help. We become selfish, inhuman. It's a much better, a much even brighter philosophy I am preaching to you, and I wish I could shout it aloud to the whole world. I know your griefs and feel for them. Could I help them, if I denied their existence? No. As it is, I am going to treat you—just like the rest of my patients. I'm going to give you my chief and universal prescription."

"I know what that is," she said softly, and again she sighed.

"It is," said he, solemnly, "to show you other griefs greater than your own, and in the contemplation, and, if possible, alleviation of which you may, in time, forget your own."

She rested with her cheek against his hand, her eyes closed.

"I don't deny there are worse troubles than mine," she said, "but, oh, indeed, dear Uncle Dan, the mere knowledge of them will not cure my own pains."

"That's because you are still at the primary—the selfish stage; still drowning yourself in your own tears. You have not been aroused—interested in other people's troubles yet, because your own case is still acute; but, mark my words, the medicine I offer you works slowly, but surely!"

"Slowly—but surely!" she repeated, and then suddenly sobbed, her face pressed against her uncle's hand. She spoke with her face still hidden:

"If you knew all that I have suffered! The waiting—waiting—the terrible waiting. I think that was the worst of all. And then—"

She uncovered her face and looked up at him with a tragically, piteous expression.

"Aunt Marthy died of nothing else but—a broken heart. Just that—call it by any other medical term you please. It was that that killed her. And old Mary—our old Mary—died in the poor-house. Oh, think of it!"

She wrung her hands desperately together.

"I want to pull him down, Uncle Dan! I want to pull him down. There is murder in my heart!" she cried.

"I expect your lawyer to-morrow night, Laura. You shall have your wish. I'll have a talk with him first. There's a slight doubt whether he'll take the case."

"You think then there's a question of my—"

"No, no. You've a clear case. No doubt of that. But Holt has been out of professional harness for a year or more. He was—or thinks he was—forced to retire. He's the man I was speaking to you about a few minutes since. Life has been a hard battle for Holt, and he has had to fight with his back to the wall. He's practically a recluse now; but I'm inclined to think that the very thing to save the man from his own dark broodings would be to interest him anew in his work. If he takes your case, it will be a re-entry into his old field. Once there, I believe he will stay."

"A good lawyer?" she asked dubiously.

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"But he is a—murderer!" she gasped, sitting back and regarding her uncle aghast.

"No, no, my child. He is reputed to be a murderer you mean."

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"And I," said the doctor, "had the personal confidence of the man himself. He was quite young when he married the woman. She was of questionable origin and beneath him in every way. I remember the wedding very well, for the reason that I was called in to attend the bride. She told her husband she was subject to fainting spells. I diagnosed her case as dipsomania."

"She was a light, foolish thing, and like many of her kind as sly and cute as she was weak and frail. He saw only her beauty, which was of a sort alluring sort that baffles one as to why it should be associated with mean qualities of mind and heart."

"At this time, for a young man, he was really at the top of his profession. His friends watched with no small degree of irritation and contempt the devastating effect upon him of marriage. He seemed interested in only one thing on earth. His profession, his friends, his few relatives even—all were slighted for the woman he had married and upon whom he lavished a soul that overflowed with a bondless love. His was an unsuspecting, trusting nature—like your own, my child—and possibly when the revelation came, that was the reason he saw fire and blood, as perhaps you do now, and his hands leaped forth to perform the will of his brain. In desire, at least, so he has told me, he was for a moment, a murderer. Such impulses

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come to us all, Laura, at the crucial moment. We are all sons of Cain, but not all of us are tempted!"

"They were in Boston at the time—she and her lover. that is. She had trumped up some plausible excuse for her absence. Her mother, I believe she claimed, was dying. She even produced a telegram to that effect, and strenuously and virtuously she opposed his going with her. She was supposed to be in Westland, Mass., and, indeed, she managed to have letters sent to him daily from this town. He told me, at the time, he had not the slightest suspicion of her, and his sudden determination to go to Westland was due simply to an overwhelming impulse to see her—his wife!"

"At Westland, of course, he found she was not there, and still unsuspecting of the truth, though alarmed for her safety, he started for Boston. You see he found one of his own letters at the house redirected to the Boston address. What took place in Boston had been pretty well threshed out in the papers. The argument was that finding his wife with his friend, he shot and killed the man in the presence of his wife and with the man's own revolver. He was tried twice, and finally acquitted.

"There was one point in dispute. Did, or did he not fire the shot that killed his betrayer? Only one person besides himself, could answer that question and she had set a price upon her testimony. Can you guess what that price was? No, not mere money, but the pardon of herself by her husband.

"Its one of the curious ironies of life that we often blindly injure those we love the best. This was the case with this weak woman. She did love her husband, in spite of her hopeless vileness of character, but she did not realize how much she loved him until she had lost him.

"At first she sought to win him back by cajolery and tears, and previous to the trial was quite a figure in the papers and about the toms. But I don't believe he even saw the woman. What he did see was his past and future—the former glowing with hope and promise; the latter stretching out like a black desert, dark and without a dawn. He saw the woman as others had seen her always, shallow, vain, weak, wicked and wanton. Even her beauty had a tarnished glitter, which now irritated him.

"He spent his hours pondering over how he had ever come to love so mean a thing, he who had set his ideals so high. The one bit of comfort was the thought that if freedom should come to him he would be—alone!

"It was a hard fight they made, and harder because his attorneys knew of the eye witness' knowledge of his innocence. That there had been a struggle between the men, with Holt as aggressor was admitted; but it was the other man who seized the revolver from the drawer of a table, where he must have kept it for just such an emergency, and it was he who shot himself, accidentally or otherwise. The only thing that saved Holt from the chair was public opinion and the fact that the revolver was not Holt's. It showed at least he had come unprepared. The wife's deliberate absence in Europe at the time of the trial, however, had a damning effect, since, having loudly proclaimed her lover and repentance it was taken as proof of her knowledge of his guilt that she did not testify in his behalf.

"Stupid and weak as I have said she was, it was natural for her to make this false step. Had she gone upon the stand, and freely told the truth, which would have removed from her husband the last suspicion of guilt, his heart might have been touched; but she sought to force him to take her back by withholding the truth; by threats, since tears had failed.

"Now that's Holt's tragedy, Laura. You, like every one else who have heard of the case, believe him guilty. I do not. I am sure, in fact, he is not. But Holt is aware of the fact that the world, like you, still holds him in suspicion, and although the law has set him free, it has not taken the blot from his name and fame. There is nothing harder to bear than injustice. Holt is smarting under a sense of the cruel injustice of his situation. He has brooded over it so much, in fact, that it has become monomania with him (To be continued)



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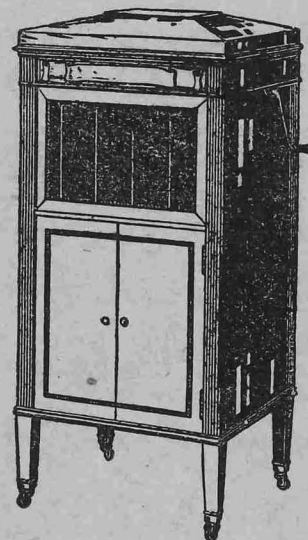
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