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THE SENTIMENT OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

BY ELIZABETH OKES SMITH, AUTHOR OF "THE SILENT CHILD," ETC.

"Bear each other's burdens."

"It is so easy to make sacrifices for those we love," said one of the most gifted and noble-minded women of the country, the other day. I heard her with amazement. It is not easy, it is not desirable; it is a foolish fraud upon one's self; a cruel injustice to those we love, making them the occasions of our virtue; placing them as stumbling blocks before us, that we may ambitiously jump at a goal.

Are not those that we love a part of ourselves, and by rejecting what we would regard as good, do we not in effect cause a dismemberment, or, at best, put a part of ourselves to do penance for the other; receiving a monkish sentiment of self-denial, and self-inflicted torture? Is it not always painful to those who love to feel that a sacrifice *has* been made? Would it not be more in accordance with the true affinity of soul to know that there *could* be no contrariety of feeling? that no good *could* be resigned, because none would be desired other than what is mutual, and hence there would be no sacrifice?

Besides, every act of self-sacrifice, I have observed (such is the weakness of humanity) to be succeeded by an exceedingly meek, much enduring sort of aspect, which operates as a tacit reproof to the other party, and which never fails to produce a reaction; and thus the real virtue slips away, leaving nothing but a flimsy garment in place of the stern ascetic intended to be grasped.

For myself, I feel a certain remorse of conscience in making such sacrifices: the complacent sense of resignation resulting therefrom seems wrongfully obtained. I have, for the time being, separated myself from those I love and made them a part of my discipline, in view whereof, I yearn over them with redoubled tenderness; the step thus taken upon the symbolic ladder of the Patriarch has been at their expense; and I would fain return that we may mount side by side. I blush at my superior virtue; I blush that I should have availed myself of a weakness or a perversity on their part to make myself a shade better.

We have no right to dismember ourselves in this wise; it is selfishness, it is cruelty. It is leaving our friends behind us, from a heartless ambition to excel them in perfection. It is appalling them with a sense of inferiority. It is challenging them to admiration. It is a triumphant self-assertion under the garb of humility.

I reverence the virtue itself. I reverence the beauty and the holiness of the sentiment of self-sacrifice. It is a part of the *duty* of life. But love

is spontaneous and instinctive. Such as love do the "will" of duty "and know it not." Its perfect oneness precludes the idea of a sacrifice. We say, "it is my duty to do thus and so," because love has ceased to be the high priest at the altar, and we cling for protection to the form, though, alas! the divine spirit has departed.

No, it is not those we love for whom we make sacrifices, or ought to make them; otherwise the good so attained would become evil in the eye of our tenderness. We heap kindness upon the forward, and, without hesitation, appropriate the healthfulness of spirit that ensues as having been legitimately secured. We deny ourselves pleasures, and gratifications of all kinds, in behalf of those who are indifferent to us, because we feel these become an atonement for that indifference.

We sacrifice our own desires, pursuits, and expectations to those with whom we have little sympathy, because it does not vex us that they should exact it; we do not claim their recognition of our nature; and we take, without remorse, the good our sacrifices may bring to our spirits, albeit a meek compassion mingleth therewith, in that "they know not what they do" in dooming us to bear the cross that is to lift us above the earth.

We quietly yield that which in justice might be our own, to those who have never sat in the sanctuary of our hearts, because we will not indulge them by contention. They cannot understand us, we do not desire that they should. We were not made to "hold sweet counsel together," we were not made to plough, as it were, "in the same furrow" in the great husbandry of life, any more than the "ox and the ass" prohibited by the Jewish lawgiver.

To such we are scrupulously just; to such we are dignified, and properly sustained; to such we are, if need be, self-sacrificing; for these are they whom we meet only upon the broad highway of humanity, nor turn aside to the "delectable gardens" of love and congeniality. These are they whom we may rightfully use as the occasions of our virtue. We may grow weaned from the world through their instrumentality. We may learn that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, for they were designed to teach us the truth. We may grow meek through their forwardness; gentle and forbearing, earnest, and truthful, and loving, in that they suggest the need of these things.

But, ah, not to those who are life of our life must we look for these things. Not to those with whom

we have a spiritual assimilation; for these are fellow passengers with whom we divide the scrip, leaning upon the same staff, and our eyes instinctively resting upon the same objects; others are but guide-stones, or mounds of warning erected for our security along a path that to us is forever brightening.

As we build up the temple of God in our own souls, we do not use the things of the altar like the tools of the crafts-men, to joint mortice and balance arch, to rear column and adorn capital; no more should we put to unhallowed purposes the priest-offering of sympathy.

It is those who love us most that have need to pardon most in us; and a new love is born by the very process of forgiveness. "To whom much is forgiven the same loveth much," saith the blessed Savior, recognizing the tenderness springing from weakness, the purity of the well-springs of sympathy, even, although embittered and turned astray in the progress of life.

Those who love us most endure most from our infirmities, our waywardness, and perversities, simply because they do love us, and we them. We are revealed to them heart and life. We sit side by side with them in the very sanctuary of truth, and they "know our thoughts afar off," for, present or absent, we are revealed to them. Self-sacrifice is unheard of here. The cloaking of a thought, the evasion of a desire would assume the nature of a falsity in the light of this oneness of spirit.

We have a right to the forbearance of those who love us; "for love suffereth long and is kind." We have a right to their faith, for "love hopeth all things." We throw ourselves defenceless upon the armor of their mercy. We affect no perfectionism, we plead nothing but the love which ever "covereth a multitude of faults." We may weep and lament over our weaknesses, but it is always with the sweet assurance of pardon clinging like a balm to the heart.

In this way it is that the little peculiarities, the foibles, and weaknesses of true friends become

sources of endearment. The virtues are for public admiration, for the good of society at large, and the individual in particular; but the dear little faults are the exclusives; they are the sweet, coy things that shun general observation, and, "leaning to the side of virtue," still nestle away in the cosy corner entirely our own, and often startle and mutually endear by the contrast of weakness and strength; folly and wisdom; shades of waywardness and gleams of magnanimity; tenderness and meekness linked with perversity; flashes of sentiment galloping with the whimsical and grotesque—these are for us, and for us only, and go to make up the sum of the creatures of our affection.

With these we lay aside the mask and domino with which we masquerade the world, and in simple vestments, and with uncovered brow, and eyes that read the soul, we wander along the stream of life, in sportful seriousness, watching the bubbles that rise upon its surface, sometimes perversely breaking a pet bubble of the other, yet only to mingle tears at its bursting, and to smile again as others arise of larger size and more radiantly colored.

We must make sacrifices in life, it is necessary from the nature of things; it is a part of our discipline and duty so to do; such being the fact, let us make them where the greatness so achieved shall not shame us; where the glory will not reproach us. Let us yield the way to the indifferent, the unsympathizing and repulsive; but keep our little perversities, our whimsicalities, our self-assertions, for those only who have a right to them; who are dear enough to us to be quarreled with; who love us well enough to take us as we are; who do not expect to always find us *prepared for reception*; "at home" to stilted proprieties, dignities, virtues in costume, and duly labeled; but who see our true selves, neither through a microscopic nor magnifying lens; but relying upon our intrinsic worthiness, love us because we are *ourselves*.

TO LIVE TOO LONG.

BY CHARLES W. BAIRD.

It is sad to lie down in the cold, cold grave,
When the mind is strong, and the heart is brave;
It is sad to leave all that is lovely and fair
And go the tomb, to be mouldering there.
But oh! 'tis bitter to leave the world's throng,
It is sadder, far sadder, to live too long.

To see all that once we had doted upon
Before us to rest and to happiness gone,
And to stand, like a wither'd oak, blighted and weak,
The sole tree that survives the mad hurricane's wreck,
O talk not of life, earth's bright dwellings among,
For nothing can soothe him who lives too long.

To know that the once echoing trumpet of Fame
Shall never more mention that valueless name;
To know that none care for his bliss or his doom;
O rather I'd ask the cold rest of the tomb.
When glory has died, and the spirit of song
Has vanished, 'tis bitter to live too long.

And I would lie down in my deep repose
Ere my bosom no longer with poetry glows;
And I would arise to the mansions on high,
Ere the thoughts that now live in my spirit shall die;
Ere the moments have fled, that to manhood belong,
And I feel that 'tis bitter to live too long.