Other People’s Troubles
An Antidote for Your Own
By Winnifred Reese (Onoto Watane)

She wrung her hands desperately together.
“T’ain’t much I’d want to know her name, Uncle Dan. Perhaps you’d better not speak of it,”

She sighed and shook her head helplessly, as if to say that she knew just what panacea her uncle had to offer, but in doing so, at least his “medicine” wouldn’t fail. Unmindful of her little motion of despair, he continued:

“Now, 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 our individual portion of pain. We cannot fasten his origin in the right place, but I believe it was his design I think is proven by the tortures of his own Son.”

“But you don’t deny the existence of very existence of pain. The new religious us tell us there is no pain—no real, no 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. What, or what cause is this 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 which softens the hard heart of the Old Man.”

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 speaking 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 I am going to treat you—just like the rest of my patients. I’m going to give you my chief and universal prescriptive:

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

“That’s because you are still at the primrose—the selfish stage; still drowning yourself in your own tears. You have not been tried—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.”

“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.”

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

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She covered her face and looked up at him with a tragic, piteous expression.

“Aunt Martha died of nothing else but—a broken heart. Just that—all it by any other medical term you please. It was that that killed her. She was out of the poor-house. Oh, think of it!”

“Ah, yes,” said the doctor, “had the personal confidence of the patient. He was quite young when he married the woman, and he was quite handsome. His name was for a spin 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 certain spells. I diagnosed her case as dyspepsia. She was a light, foolish thing, and like many of her kind as she was weak and frail. He saw only her beauty, which was of a sort alluring that baffle one to know 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 a small degree of irritation and contempt the devastating effect upon him of his uncle’s hand. He seemed interested in only one thing on earth. His profession, his friends, his few relatives even the very woman for the man he had married and upon whom he lavished a soul that overflowed with a bonedless love. His was an unsuspicous, trusting nature—like your own, my child—and possibly the revolting 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 told me, he was fore-warned, a moment. Such impulses
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By Winnifred Reece (Onoto Watanase)

Author of “A Japanese Nightingale,” “Heart of Hypatia,” “Wisteria,” “Marion,” “Me,” “Deila,” etc., etc.

“Oh, please don’t joke about it, Uncle Dan.”

“Why not? May as well be cheerful about it,” was the answer, and the smile on the old man’s face touched with a twinkle that seemed to indicate that there was a good deal of truth in the statement.

Uncle Dan’s age was about fifty-five years, and he was the acknowledged head of his family, which consisted of two married daughters and a son.

“I don’t see why you shouldn’t joke about it,” he said. “After all, it’s only a joke.”

Uncle Dan was a man of many parts, and his mind was full of knowledge. He was a good judge of character, and he knew how to select the right kind of people for his family.

“Shall we go to the dance?” asked one of the daughters.

“I don’t see why not,” replied Uncle Dan. “It’s only a little matter, and it won’t do any harm.”

Uncle Dan’s influence was great in the neighborhood, and he was respected by all who knew him.

“I think we’d better not go,” said one of the daughters. “It’s not the proper thing to do.”

Uncle Dan was silent for a few moments, and then he said:

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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 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 unassuming of the truth, though alarmed for her safety, he started for Boston. You see he found one of his own letters at the hotel, 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 some 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.

"It is one of the curiosities of life that we often blindly injure those we love the most. This was the case with this weak woman. She did love her husband, in spite of her hopeless inanity of character, but 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 town. But I don't believe he ever saw the woman. What he did see was her past and future—the former glowing with hope and promise; the latter stinging the mind of a black desert, dark and without a dawn. He saw the woman as others had seen her always, shallow, weak, wicked and wanton. Even her beauty had a tarnished glint, which now irredesced him.

"He spent his hours pondering over how he had ever come to love so mean a thing as 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 on purpose. 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 elaborate absence in Europe at the time of the trial, however, had a damaging 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 he has become monomaniac with him (To be continued)