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SUNDAY AFTERNOON DR. ARCHER WALLACE

THE SHADOWS OVER OTHERS... In that story, in the Book of Acts, which tells of the lame man, healed at the door of the temple, there is one brief sentence often overlooked. After mentioning the man who had been lame since birth it tells of those who carried him daily and laid him at the temple gate. Who were these people that, through the long weary years, gave him what service they could? Were they members of his own family or just friends whose sympathies were touched? In any case they shared his burden and the shadows of his affliction fell across their lives. Perhaps they suffered as much as he did. His wretchedness and misery became theirs. No one stands alone. We are like trees in a forest. When a tree falls it crashes other trees and underbrush. When sorrow cuts men down there are others whose lives are interlocked and interwoven with theirs, who also suffer. Hardly a day passes but the newspapers tell of shared happiness or suffering. A boy distinguishes himself and every friend and forty-second cousin feels the glow of pride. A boy gets himself into trouble, and shame and anxiety beset his people.

A friend of mine has just buried an eighteen year-old son. The child was an imbecile. It is questionable whether he ever recognized those who loved him and attended to his wants every day since his birth. His parents never mentioned it — in fact only intimate friends knew anything about the shadow which fell so heavily over their lives. And their situation is one of a vast number of similar ones. A leading psychiatrist says that there are sixty-five thousand patients in Canadian hospitals, and probably twice as many mentally ill in their own homes. It would require a lively imagination to conjure up the stress and strain which others endure, to say nothing of the afflicted. I never pass a hospital without thinking, not only of those who suffer within its walls, but of those — parents, children, husbands, wives and others, who share the suffering. I learned recently of a man whose married life started out full of promise. He and his wife were supremely happy. Then there came an unexpected illness and his wife became a lifelong invalid. It was hard to tell who suffered most. For years she could only lie still — often fretting; always helpless. His life had to be different from most men. He could no longer be one of the boys. But his love never faltered; if anything it became more gentle and tender. That blessed partnership came to an end not long ago; now they have both passed to that longer life, "Of which this is so small a part."

If the truth were known it would probably be found that these trouble-sharers have the key to happiness. The Journal of John Wesley bears evidence that whenever he was active in leading others into the kingdom, he was happy. On his voyage home from Georgia he wrote: "Being sorrowful and very heavy and utterly unwilling to speak to my little flock, I was in doubt whether my neglect of them was not one cause of my heaviness. In the evening I began to instruct the cabin-boy, after which I felt much easier." I have just finished reading an extraordinary book: "Death be not Proud" by John Gunther. The author tells of his own boy, a most lovable lad, who, at the age of seventeen was stricken with a brain tumour. He lived for fourteen months, fighting a losing battle. It is a fascinating book due in no small part to the way in which Gunther and his wife felt the blow almost as much as did their son. Yet they both knew the experience had done something for them; it was a trial out of which they came forth purified. Our quotation to-day is a Scandinavian proverb: "Go often to the house of thy friends, for weeds soon choke up the unused path."

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