

An Old Lady's Poem

Sharon W. Better

Today's Treasure

But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Peter 5:8

One of the most popular posts on my old blog was "An Old Lady's Poem". My mother-in-law's physical ailments force us to confront the ravages of aging, as she has spent time in nursing homes after repeated falls. She is a stubborn, strong woman who refused to surrender her home and live with one of her children or even to downsize. And so, we continued to try to make her comfortable and safe in her own home. She falls more frequently and those visits to the nursing home are painful, a stark reminder that even if our good genes and the jars of anti-wrinkle cream protect our faces from the marks of aging, our bodies will one day wear out. The hallways are filled with elderly people who remind us - sometimes our minds will surrender to the toxins of life and break down as well.

I cry every time I leave Chuck's mom at the rehab center. So often I look into her eyes and remember the beautiful young woman Chuck introduced me to over forty years ago. We are only one family in the line of millions of others who, facing the same circumstances, need to know she is in good hands, that the caretakers see beyond the wrinkles and the helplessness. The calling of elder care is priceless to families who cannot care for their family members by themselves. We learned to recognize those who care deeply and handle her with respect and compassion. We cannot adequately thank them for their tenderness. Those are the ones who don't need to read this poem that a friend sent to me many years ago. Whether you are involved in elder care or not, there may be someone who needs a special tender touch from you, someone to remember the value of his or her life. I cannot express the heart of an elderly woman any better than this anonymous author.

LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

An Old Lady's Poem

By Anonymous

Background: When an old lady died in the geriatric ward of a small hospital near Dundee, Scotland, it was felt that she had nothing left of any value. Later, when the nurses were going through her meager possessions, they found this poem. Its quality and content so impressed the staff that copies were made and distributed to every nurse in the hospital. One nurse took her copy to Ireland. The old lady's sole bequest to posterity has since appeared in the Christmas edition of the News Magazine of the North Ireland Association for Mental Health.... And now this little old Scottish lady, with nothing left to give to the world, is now the author of this simple, yet eloquent, poem traveling the world by Internet. Goes to show that we all leave "SOME footprints in time".....

What do you see, nurses, what do you see?
What are you thinking when you're looking at me?
A crabby old woman, not very wise,
Uncertain of habit, with faraway eyes?

Who dribbles her food and makes no reply
When you say in a loud voice, "I do wish you'd try!"
Who seems not to notice the things that you do,
And forever is losing a stocking or shoe.....
Who, resisting or not, lets you do as you will,
With bathing and feeding, the long day to fill...
Is that what you're thinking? Is that what you see?
Then open your eyes, nurse; you're not looking at me.

I'll tell you who I am as I sit here so still,
As I do at your bidding, as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of ten ...with a father and mother,

Brothers and sisters, who love one another.
A young girl of sixteen, with wings on her feet,
Dreaming that soon now a lover she'll meet.

A bride soon at twenty -- my heart gives a leap,
Remembering the vows that I promised to keep.
At twenty-five now, I have young of my own,
Who need me to guide and a secure happy home.
A woman of thirty, my young now grown fast,
Bound to each other with ties that should last.
At forty, my young sons have grown and are gone,
But my man's beside me to see I don't mourn.

At fifty once more, babies play round my knee,
Again we know children, my loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me, my husband is dead;
I look at the future, I shudder with dread.
For my young are all rearing young of their own,
And I think of the years and the love that I've known.
I'm now an old woman ...and nature is cruel;

But inside this old carcass, a young girl still dwells,
And now and again my battered heart swells.
I remember the joys, I remember the pain,
And I'm loving and living life over again.
I think of the years ... all too few, gone too fast,
And accept the stark fact that nothing can last.
So open your eyes, nurses, open and see,
...Not a crabby old woman; look closer ... see ME!!
'Tis jest to make old age look like a fool.
The body, it crumbles, grace and vigor depart,
There is now a stone where I once had a heart.

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