

The Atlantic

There would be no need for All
In the best of all possible worlds, the nursing home would not exist. We would have big houses with spare bedrooms ~~we would have~~ for our elderly parents, ~~we~~ *and* we would have the money to pay from their care ~~at home~~, or such care would be provided by tax money, or we would provide ~~the care~~ *it* ourselves, working in shifts, Dad from midnight to 6 Am, Junior from 6 to 9, Mom from ~~6~~ 9 to 3, little Sister from 3 to ~~6~~ 6. The thing could be done; it's possible. And, as the *reception* series *son caring for the elderly at home* has brought home to us, ~~it pro~~ caring for the elderly by their own families ~~at home~~ *care* would give depth and meaning *now* to life. ~~It would~~ Junior, missing his early morning soccer practice, would grasp the meaning of Flaubert's hard doctrine that "Life is nothing if not sacrificial." Mom and Dad would have perspective restored to their marriage. There would be no more arguing about where to spend their vacation, for there would be no *more* vacation. The remodelling plans would be permanently shelved. But on the other hand, a pound the pound gained, the wrinkle discovered, the hair greying or disappearing altogether—these ~~irritants~~ *the* petty irritants would lose their ~~power to sting~~ *F*. Perspective would be restored to ~~our~~ *the* inner lives, as well. *Caring for your own parent, you would be like* Like the sensitive young speaker in Wordsworth's great poem, "Resolution and Independence confronted by the wizened leech gatherer on the lonely moor, who says of *the Leeches!* his ~~yearning~~ work, "Once I could meet them on every side; but they have dwindled long by slow decay; Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may." Yet still I persevere"—those words echo in the young poet's mind, ~~so~~ full of ennui, discontent, ~~my~~ nameless longing. "I could have laughed myself to scorn ~~in~~ he says, "to find in that decrepit Man a mind so ~~so~~ firm." God" said I, "be my help and stay secure; I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!" Caring for your ~~own~~ infirm parent ~~at~~ in your own home ~~would~~, seeing the fortitude with which she bears up under burdens of body and spirit that would crush a saint, one would feel something like that all the time—something *that* we ~~we~~ one, all helplessly *one* calls wisdom.

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But very few of us can afford to pay the price for that wisdom, so the nursing home
flourishes. I tip my hat to it, or at least to the one ^{where} ~~in which~~ my mother lives. It
is clean, the food is plentiful and nutritious, the rooms ^{are} ~~pleasant~~, but it is the
care givers who ^{give} ~~make~~ it ^{its} ~~such~~ a special character. Ever cheerful in the face of
scenes that would drain ^{the} ~~every~~ cheer from your dreams, ever-ready to offer a kind
word, a caress, the broad smile or wink that acknowledges the personality of their
elderly—these people are ~~beyond~~ ^{among the heroes of this world} praise. They are in the dignity & business, and
~~and~~ ^{and} what they do is beyond price, ~~beyond~~ praise alike.

own
find
find
sell
VA
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P.P.
A.C.