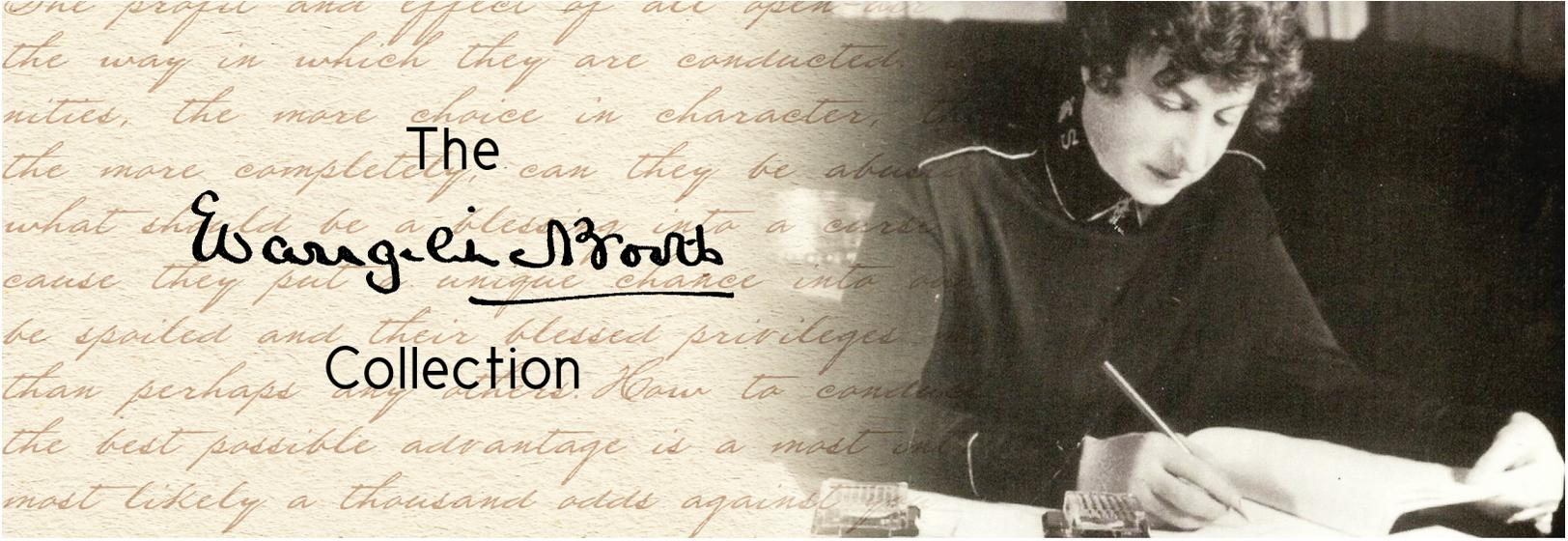


LET US FORGIVE.

Brothers! But only brothers and name. Less than that the casual observer would have thought them, for in the stern, hard expression which covered their faces when they met; in the quick changing of the subject if the name of one was by chance mentioned to the other; in the separate interests which like atoms in space never touched, it was touched, it was hard to discern anything so indissoluble let alone so precious, as a blood tie. They had quarreled in early manhood and middle age found them still at enmity. So deep was the wound that even time, life's great healer, had not extracted its sting; the breach had but widened, until their feud was open and avowed. They cursed the business connections which compelled their residents in the same town, each refused dealings with people who had any transactions with the other, and mutually sought to do each other evil. So life's current tossed them down it's harrying stream, each little realizing how the dark grudge was embittering their hearts and shadowing their lives.

At last something happened right up on the path of their malice of which I need not speak, but one night one man saw the wrong and foolishness of their unnatural and cruel difference. With a sudden awakening of conscience which was convincing as it was painful , he hastened to the home of the other, stood up on the threshold he had not crossed in years period so touched and taken back was the brother by the unexpected confession and appeal for forgiveness, that old chords vibrated with so sudden a strain that his heart broke, and grasping each other's hands, the two strong men, each laying claim to all the blame, wiped out the old score with tears. One suggested that they celebrated burying the hatchet by a day at Atlantic City. In the light and joy of a new love the following day found the two brothers rattling over the rail track side-by-side. One was heard to say something like this, "The most wrong, self-blinding happiness-robbing thing a man can carry about him is enmity." The other answered, "I wish we could get behind the years that are gone."

Early next morning the throbbing wires shocked the world with tidings of a horrible railway disaster. Passing over a long trestle bridge, the seaboard express had jumped the track, and plunged headlong to her fate. Out of her hundreds of passengers but a small number were rescued, and the brothers were not among them. Many hours afterward, when the waters began



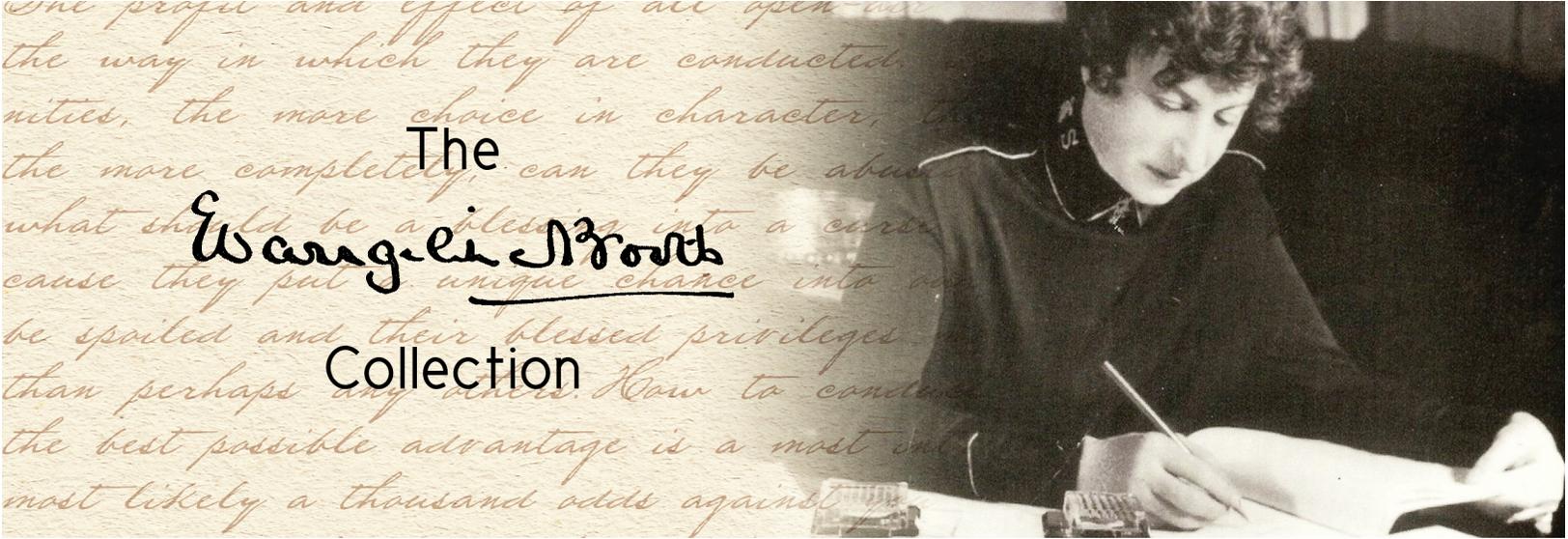
to yield up there dead, the two were found locked in each other's arms amid the wreckage. Blessed be God that the injustice they had done each other, and all the hard feelings they had indulged in were forgiven and blotted out just in time. When I heard the story I said -truly:

Life's too short to quarrel, hearts too precious
to break;
Let us be friends and forgive, for old time's
sake.

For even if the time were all, and its shoals and shallows, its sorrows and storms, were hard enough without carrying the burden of a grudge through the tide.

Surely forgiveness is the first principle of Christianity — pardon is its foundation rock. With the bells of Easter in our ears, ringing fresh recollections of Calvary and its Christ, we realize anew that it was the forgiving of a whole world, its sins which called forth that divine expression of ineffable love and supreme sacrifice. More than 4000 years the deadly feud had existed; parents had handed it down to their children from generation to generation; millions had lived and died beneath its curse. Between the infinite and the finite a chasm yawned, so wide so deep that only pardon could bridge its gulf. The world was stubborn in its rebellion, sodden in its guilt, black in its darkness, but blameless purity put in the plea, divine pity offered the victim, and when Christ cried, "It is finished!" The foundation stone of a race's pardon was laid, proving to all ages past and to come that when hatred did its worst, it was no match for love.

And through the 19 centuries which Christianity has glorified by its presence, this beautiful attribute has been always in the hearts and lives of its followers into their blackest surroundings reaching the choicest perfection. The Spirit declared in Christ's dying words. "Father, forgive them!" Has been uttered by the lips of his persecuted people in every age. Beneath the shower of stones which crushed out his life, Stephen was heard praying, "Lay not this sin to their charge." Confronting Lions teeth and mad bull's horns, the martyrs of the Colosseum with their last gasp forgave their murderers, and Anne Askew with every bone dislocated by the rack, when carried to the stake, with uplifted hands and a tenderness that broke the heart of stone spoke pity and pardon everlasting and complete for those that lit the faggots.



The
Wangeli Booth
Collection

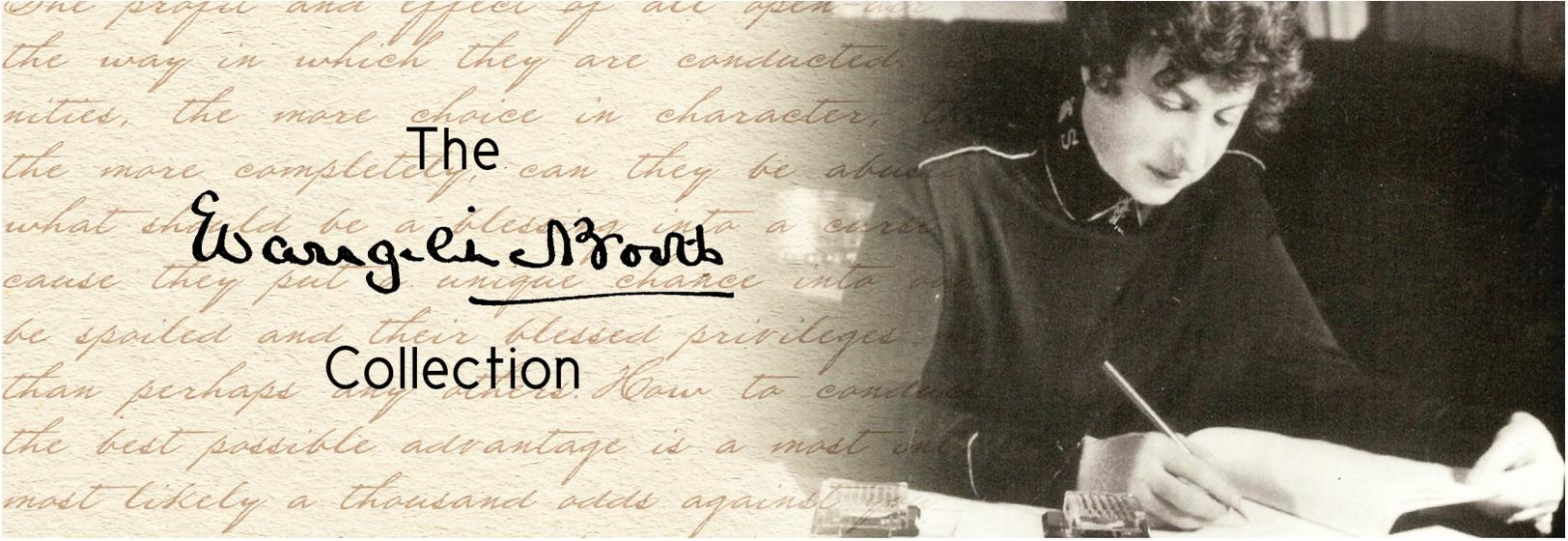
The capacity to forgive — that dear, generous spirit has even been an indispensable factor in the soul's search for and hold of peace. It is so still.

TO CHERISH HARD FEELINGS TOWARD OTHERS
COURTS INJURY TO SELF.

Enmity is a double-edged sword, and its sharpest side is always directed toward him who bears it. It is a thousand times better to be hated than to hate. More than half the darts that are aimed against people fall wide of their mark, and when they hit, if the soul is pure and the life right, they fall harmless but no power in earth or heaven can stave off the injury a man does himself when he nurses a grudge. To think or feel or act with unjust condemnation against any party incurs a very dangerous risk. It sours the whole character it is useless to try and cultivate a sweet disposition, if indulging in grudge bearing to friend or foe. Enmity is the fly in the ointment. It is the poison to the blood. It is the eclipse of the heart's sun from which the life takes all its coloring and natural warmth.

It destroys confidence, and this to a very dangerous degree. People fight shy of the acquaintance of a man who hates another, neither do they feel easy in reposing in him their trust. They never know when his evil eye, and bitter humor and sarcastic tongue may be switched off their present object and aimed in their direction. Enmity is like some deadly disease which once rooted in the heart must find an outlet, and if its activity seems checked, in one place, we watch for it to spring out somewhere else. Hence what an inestimate folly it is for any of us for the sake of indulging in revengeful feeling toward one to jeopardize our reputation with all.

It is the greatest foe of true religion. Our penitent forms are constantly visited by people who have tried to hold on to their religion and their grudge bearing. They have found it to be an unequal contest, for neither will brook a rival. Love and hate will not grow in the same heart. No spiritual life can exist without continual communion with God, and prayer is impossible where the soul is enslaved by a chain of enmity. Such petitions fall back upon the lips that utter them unanswered nay, more unheard! We cannot commune happily with God, when we are breaking his laws, and he has said we are to love our enemies, no matter how gross and great an enemy they may be, for we are to do good to them that despitefully use us, and turn the other cheek



for the blow. We must forgive to keep right in our own heart, to love God as we should, to be of service to those who around about us, to benefit by the multitude of mercies with which heaven has blessed us, and to keep our garments unspotted. Oh, it is a cruel, blighting curse, upon one's own heart to harbor one ill feeling toward another.

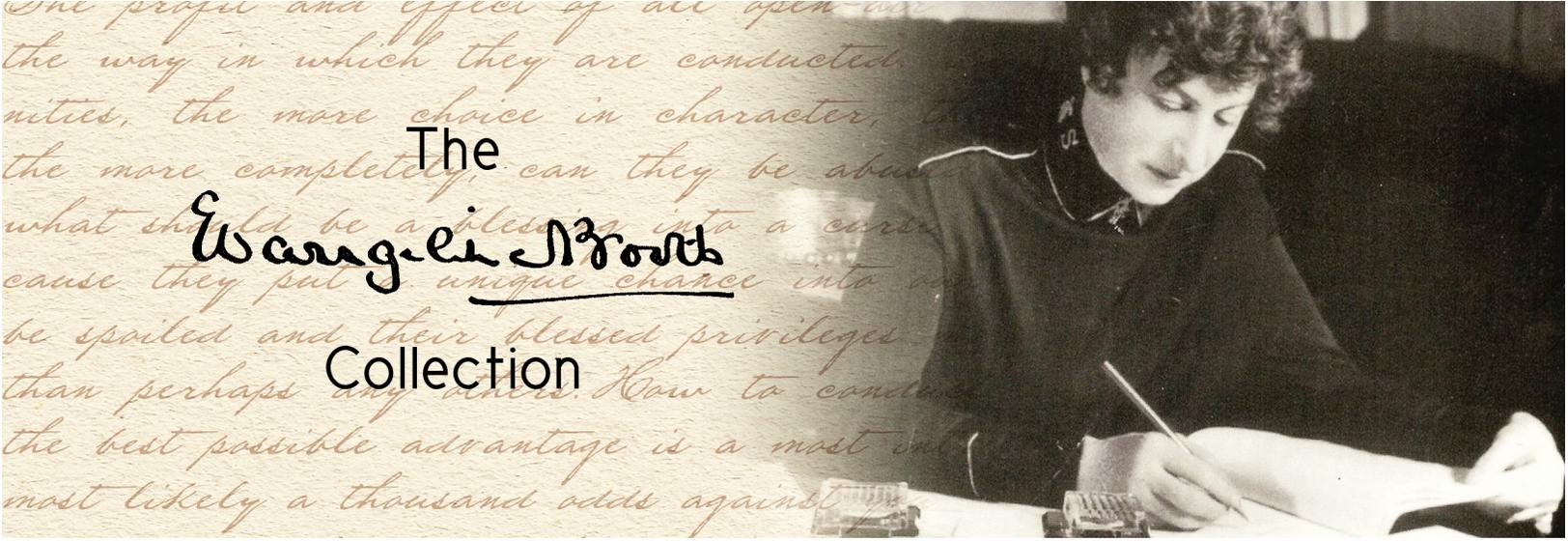
FORGIVE AS WE HOPE TO BE FORGIVEN.

Who is there in sincerity can say that they have never done anything for which they need forgiveness? In the gentlest character, the most upright dealing the kindest speech there come things which might be misunderstood or perhaps all unintentionally, might wound, we hear people sometimes boastfully declare that all they ask is justice. From man such would be impossible, for full justice can only be done where there is all knowledge, and even if in its completion this could be shown would it suffice?

Would justice suffice the prodigal boy or girl who lays a broken heart at the old home door? Would it suffice the husband who has shattered every vow made at the altar as he seeks reunion with her he has wronged? Would it suffice the willful child who after some disobedient act buried its tear stained face in its mother's lap? Would it suffice the overtures of a lifelong friendship which some thoughtless act or word has ruthlessly destroyed? Ah, no! From earth and from heaven we must have forgiveness, or life would be too terrible to live and eternity too dark to meet.

The saying, "To err is human, to forgive, divine," is but a one-sided old saw after all. For blessed be Jesus, His pardon has made it possible for mortals with all the frailties and shortcomings of our mortality to exercise this most gracious of all gifts, and fulfilling his own command forgive, and yet again forgive, not once but seventy times seven.

Many people excuse themselves from forgiving by saying, "he was in the wrong," "she was to blame;" "the quarrel was of their making;" "the injury was done to me," etc, etc. But is it not because of these facts that forgiveness is necessary and claimed? Can we forgive where there is no cause? Can we pardon where no wrong has been done? If we are innocent all the more reason to bridge the gulf, for clean hands build the bridge so quickly.



Let us make haste, and gather up our differences and throw them into the love which covers all. Let us go out of our way to make peace, where there is discord, and make a straight path where there have been thickets of misunderstanding and doubt. Let us mend the rents which disputes have torn, and heal the sores which harsh words have opened. Let us sweep away the clouds which may have arisen between ourselves and others, no matter if they have not been our bringing, and let us do it quickly. Let us do it now, for as with the brothers today may hold in its kind hands our last opportunity. And tomorrow may already be laden with the messages of death.

LET US FORGIVE.