

FRIENDLY GREETING

TEST WHEREBY WE MAY DISTINGUISH THE TRUE FROM THE FALSE.

THE QUALITIES OF FRIENDSHIP

Old Word "Friend" Means "One Who Was Bound to Us by Self-Sacrifice"—
Man Who Is True to Himself Cannot Be False to Any Man—How One Can Know the Truth of Men.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1903, by William Baily, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Chicago, Dec. 18.—In this sermon the preacher defines the qualities of friendship and points out the test whereby we may distinguish the true from the false. The text is III John, 14, "Greet the friends by name."

Etymology is the historian of language. It is the huge wardrobe in which are hung up the verbal garments, ancient and modern, with which thought has been and is accustomed to clothe herself. It is the international and inter-racial laboratory in which the alphabet is seen to a more or less extent to be in harmony with all other alphabets, the same as the study of biology proves that the physical structures of all living creatures, both animal and vegetable, have been evolved primarily from the same plan. Thus we find that as social styles in dress change so the verbal garments for one thought are sometimes discarded, and new thoughts are found to be wearing the castoff verbal clothes of other thoughts.

The ancient word "barbarian" had an entirely different significance from its meaning in the present day. When I say to you, "He is a barbarian," you immediately picture a savage, a brutal cannibal, a black skinned roamer of the African forest or a Malay murderer, who would as willingly cut out your heart as a hawk might plunge his crooked beak into the vitals of a dove or a helpless fawn. But when Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans, "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians," he meant he was a debtor to those who were not living under Caesar's jurisdiction. He used the word "barbarian" in the same sense as the Chinese now use it. "Among the Chinese," writes the lexicographer, "one who is not a Chinaman, and especially a European or an American, is commonly spoken of as a 'western barbarian.'" The ancient word "wit" was originally derived from the old Saxon very "witan," which meant "to know." In ancient language "a wit" meant "a knower," one versed in knowledge, an erudite man. The modern word "wit" signifies a humorous entertainer, a "funny" man. The ancient word "heathen" meant one who lived outside the intellectual cities. The modern word "heathen" is now applied to a person ignorant of the gospel.

Thus we also find that the word "friends" of my text has an entirely different meaning from what the casual reader might at first suppose. The modern word "friend" in popular discourse means an acquaintance, one with whom we can socially pass a pleasant hour, one who is upon our calling list, one who invites us to his home as we may invite him to our daughter's wedding party for his company. But in ancient times the Biblical word "friend" had a deeper, holier meaning. It meant one who in the trust and purest sense had his life wrapped up in our life. As John Wesley gave the definition, "It meant one who was bound to us by self sacrifice and the blood relation of the atoning cross." It meant a Christian brother.

The modern definition of the word "friend" is as different from the Biblical as a wolf traveling around in sheep's clothing is at heart different from a lamb. "The friendship of most men in these days," wrote John Spencer, "is like some plants in the water which have broad leaves on the surface of the water, but scarce any root at all; like balloons and trumpets and ensigns in battle, which make a noise and a show, but act nothing." Therefore, O man and woman, in this sermon I would try to describe for you who are your true friends and also show you whether you are true friends to others.

ers. From among the scores and hundreds of your acquaintances I would single out a few noble spirits whose love you ought to cultivate and whose affections you should treasure in the holy of holies of your most innermost heart.

The true friend, in the first place, is always the one who loves the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and mind before he tries to love his brother as himself. He is the one who would translate into his own life in a spiritual sense the oft quoted advice which Polonius gave to his departing son Laertes, "To thine own self be true, and it must follow then as the night, the day thou canst not then be false to any man."

A true earthly friend must, in the first place, be a true friend to his Heavenly Friend, as was Isaac Newton. He so impressed every one with whom he came in contact with his noble loyalty to his Divine Master that when his friend, the great philosopher, Gottfried Leibnitz, was dying he cried out again and again in his last sickness, "O thou God of Isaac Newton, have mercy upon me!" And yet, strange to say, there are scores of us who seem to think that our true friends can be true to us while being untrue to their better selves. If they drink with us because we get drunk and gamble with us because we gamble and sinfully fritter away their lives because we, as spendthrifts, are squandering ours, we call them friends—true friends. As Lord Melbourne, the British Prime Minister, once brutally expressed this sentiment: "I do not call a man a friend who merely stands by me when I am right. But I want a friend who is willing to stand by me and uphold me in political life even when he knows that I am wrong."

A true friend in the Biblical sense is never untrue to his God or to his better self. "Well," says some one, "how am I to know whether a friend is true to God before he is true to me?" Oh, my brother, you need never have put that question to me. You know intuitively those among your associates who are always true to God without my telling you. A prominent eastern newspaper man who for years was detailed as the Albany correspondent of a great New York daily told me that every year the lobbyists divided the New York legislators into three distinct classes—first, there were those who, like Caesar's wife, were above suspicion. They were honest through and through. No man would dare approach them with the idea of offering them a bribe. They would not dare to approach them with a dishonorable proposal any more than they would dare to ask the president of the United States to appoint a minister plenipotentiary to England for the consideration of a \$5,000 check or they would dare ask King Edward to create William Waldorf Astor a member of the House of Lords for a bribe of \$1,000,000. The second class at Albany were the "doubtful legislators." They might be bribed if the money offered was big enough and they thought they would not be found out. The third class were the men who were there to sell their votes to the highest bidder, no matter who those bribers might be or how much the iniquitous railroad corporation might desire to defraud the common people, whose interests those legislators had taken a solemn oath to protect. Likewise in everybody's life each man comes in contact with three distinct classes of associates. First, there are those men and women who, like Caesar's wife, are above suspicion. They are true men; true to themselves and true to their God. You would no more dare tell a vile story before them than you would dare tell such a filthy story to your Christian mother. Next, there are the "doubtful friends." They might or might not be open to a wrong proposition. Then there is the third class of men—those whom you know to be what they ought not to be and who make a boast of their sins.

Practical advice for this classification: From the bad men turn away your face with firm resolve. You cannot associate with scoundrels without you yourself becoming a party to their iniquities. "No, no," says some one; "I do not agree with you at all. I believe it is an enemy whose mission is to point out faults. The true mission of a friend is to encourage and commend virtues. Alas, by bitter experience I have found out the truth

of this statement. Some years ago three of my friends and I entered into an agreement. They were at that time my dearest friends. We decided that we would meet at least once a week, and for mutual benefit we would tell each other all the criticisable things we had seen or heard about each other. We entered into this agreement purely for the purpose of correcting each other's faults. We had just two such proposed meetings and then broke up in a big row. We have never been the same to each other since. No talking to me about a friend's faults! If my friends have faults they must be told about them by some one else." O my brother, you are wrong; you are entirely wrong. A friend, a true friend, should be able to come to a brother as a loving mother could to her wayward child and tell him of the moral mistakes he is making. This does not mean, as some people suppose, that the true mission of friendship is to gather up all the mean and contemptible sayings which have been spoken about one and then retell them to his brother. No bouquet of fragrant beauties can be collected from among the stinging nettles and the poisonous ivies growing knee deep in the stenchful swamps.

But though the mission of true friendship consists not in peddling evil reports it does have a mission in lovingly and tenderly correcting the wrongdoing of our dear ones. Johann Goethe, the most famous poet and dramatist of German literature, once expressed this beautiful thought: "When we are young we think we shall build palaces for the gods, but at last we are glad if we have dug away some of the rubbish that is our fate." Ah, that statement is true! When we are young we have an ambition to reform the whole universe, but when we grow older we have narrowed down the hope of our life to this simple desire: We hope that we may live right ourselves. We hope that we may be able to remove from our friends' paths some of the impediments over which we ourselves have stumbled. We hope to do the same as Forbes Mitchell did during the awful siege of Lucknow. After he was nearly blown to pieces by a powder magazine concealed within the residency by the Sepoys he immediately warned his English friends lest they might heedlessly run into the same danger. And, my brother, mark this: If you are not gratefully willing to be corrected in a moral fault by a true friend then you are not fit to have any Christian man for a close associate.

The true friend is one who rejoices with us in our successes as well as sympathizes with us in our failures. "Oh," you say, "that is a universal, self-evident desire. There is no danger of any friend not rejoicing with us when we succeed in life. The only danger is that these friends will turn their backs upon us when we are defeated." Steady, brother, steady. I am surprised at your answer. I am amazed, first, that you are such a poor analyzer of human character, and, secondly, that you have not found out the error of your belief by personal experience.

Ready are you to grant that enemies rejoice at our overthrow and are sorry at our triumphs. But in one sense many of our acquaintances are actuated by the same motives. When tripped up in the race of life many of our friends are ready to say: "Poor fellow! Is it not too bad that my friend So-and-so failed in business? Is it not too bad that John lost all his money? He has not lost all his father? But they often sympathize with us in the self complacent way which, translated in the ordinary language of life, means: 'It is too bad, but if John had only been as smart as I am he would never have lost his money. Now he is just as poor as the rest of us, and he has no longer a home, no money, no home, no daughter taking music lessons or his son going to college.' But let a man make a success; let him strike a big profit in a real estate investment; let him have a \$5,000 income when we have only \$1,000 and it will take a mighty onslaught of Christian grace in our hearts to throttle the demon of envy gnawing within our breasts. Jonathan was a true friend of David. He loved the post-statesman, the shepherd boy warrior, in spite of the fact that David and not he, the natural heir, was to sit upon Saul's throne. Many a poor man ceases to love his brother merely because that brother can now ride while he himself is compelled to walk. Why do I state this truth? Because, my brother, I want you to realize the reason you dislike some of the friends of your youth. It is not because they are untrue to you, but because you are untrue to them. It is not because you have made a failure that they refuse to have anything to do with you. It is because they have made a success that you refuse to have anything to do with them. Oh, the poisonous fangs of Satanic envy! It is a fiendish enemy, which does its deadly work in the poor man's but as well as in the rich man's palace.

The true friend is never "out of sight, out of mind." His love can be likened to the trembling movements of the magnetic needle. No matter which way the ship turns, that needle always turns toward the North Pole. No matter which way the true friend goes, the heart's needle always points toward his absent brother. No matter what we do or how we should be absent from our friends, we should still be able to hear the old voices and, as in a family album, be able to see the dear, loving lips just ready to speak. But, oh, how easy it is to forget our absent friends! How easy to get careless about sending the tender salutations of affection which St. John sent to his beloved Galat when he wrote, "Greet the friends by name!" How easy when sickness comes or death comes into the home to forget the "written words" of sympathy! When we are afar off, how easy amid pressing cares not to send the letter of affection and love.

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