

FRIENDS.

SOME people have a perfect mania for confidences; a friend is not worth having who is not full of secrets and diffidencies; I am inclined to think they are for the most part void of feeling, and might seek the same excitement more harmlessly in a sensation novel. They are not the dear unobtrusive friends we trust, who guess half our trials before we tell them, and when told hide them in their hearts. Those are the true friends, the quiet, silent, watchful ones; when you find one of them, thank God.

But while we require and accord a certain decent reserve in friendship, it would be a great mistake to conceal our faults or opinions from those whose love we covet. Even if the attempt were successful, which it can seldom be, the object of admiration would be an ideal personage, and not ourselves. Nor is true friendship compatible with constant deference to the opinion of others; this may be hero-worship—lovable and touching to look upon, but not friendship, though it is often mistaken for it. Friendship sees faults and corrects them, sometimes even loves them, guesses sorrows and soothes them, sees secret joy and shares it. And pray, why is your friend not to disagree with you? Do what you will, and some people try very hard, he is himself, not you; an inscrutable being to your eyes and you to his; when you find points of union cultivate them, do not try to make them where they do not exist.

This selfish view makes some people so jealous of their friends as to wish to appropriate them entirely to their own use, and impatient of their having other friends; which is as much as to say they consider their own attractions so great as to cast all others into the shade, or so small as to dread any competition. But, in the lowest point of view, it is surely more flattering to have the regard of one who has many friends, than of a solitary being who clings to us merely because there is no one else to lean upon. When we say that we prefer having a friend all to ourselves, we just mean that we dare not trust the friend to gauge us with others. In this case, and this alone, I would rather be one amongst many; for to have many friends implies an amount of mercy and consideration from which I could well hear reproof when it came, as it inevitably must between friends.

Two words sum up all I have to say on the subject—mercy and consideration. To remember that our friends are human, and have trials and vexations of their own, some of which we know and try to alleviate; some more bitter, which we cannot know; have doubts and fears, dark days and bright, irrespective of us; neither forcing our sympathy on them, nor demanding theirs by force; not grudging to others what we profess to value and esteem so much; above all, to show mercy to faults, however incomprehensible to us who have not exactly the same temptations, and respect religiously those dark seasons (for every soul has its own troubles, and every heart knoweth its own bitterness), is the science of friendship—a thing more hard to attain to than is supposed. Happy are those who can find such friends and can treat them thus.

TACT.

I SPENT a few days on a steamboat journey last spring, and in the evenings the passengers would gather in the cabins, and each contributing something to the general entertainment, we had very pleasant times. One young man gave a recitation, not much of a piece, perhaps; one of the old-time school-boy declamations, and in the midst of it he forgot how it went, got confused, and broke down, feeling immensely mortified. But one of the ladies sitting near him spoke: "Thank you for that piece. It was particularly pleasant to me to be reminded of it, for I used to hear it years ago, and it brings to mind those pleasant old times when I went to school in the country. But I have not heard it, nor thought of it, for a long time." The man's embarrassment was half taken away by such thoughtful acknowledgment that he had given pleasure by his attempt, and the lady proved herself a "real lady." But, unfortunately, nine out of ten would not have thought to say anything of the kind.

A lady said to me, "I hate to carry round a subscription-paper and go begging, but when I do go, there is just one man

I like to go to. Mr. A— always thanks me for coming, just as though I had done him a favour by giving him a chance to subscribe. Sometimes he says he can't give me anything, but he always thanks me for coming." How easy for Mr. A— to do so; yet, in one point at least, it makes him regarded as the most agreeable person whom she knows.

The impressions left by these little things last so long, too. I remember well how an old gentleman, a stranger to me, gave me a luscious-looking pear one day, when I was an errand-boy in Boston. I was waiting in one of the banks, and he slipped it through the wire-grating to me without saying a word. Why, that little thing has been a pleasure to me every time I have thought of it, all these years.—*Exchange.*

A SOLDIER'S COVENANT.

[The following extract from a soldier's diary,* written while on the march in India, is worthy of attention and emulation.]

AT a conference of the pious soldiers of the various regiments at Peshawur, on the 20th June, 1860, we made the following solemn Covenant with God and each other:—

I. Resolved that, seeing our own poverty and leanness, by the grace of God we will strive to revive the work of God in our own souls, by lifting up our hearts in secret prayer to Almighty God at twelve o'clock noon.

II. That we will use every means in our power to promote a revival of pure and undefiled religion in the hearts of our companions, who are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, and urge upon them to flee from the wrath to come, and resolve to do nothing without first asking God's blessing upon it.

III. That Wednesday evening shall be set apart for special prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon our army, and especially that portion of it now stationed at Peshawur.

IV. That all the brethren shall attend every meeting (when duty does not interfere) convened for Divine worship, whether in the Church, Freemason's Hall, or Soldiers' Chapel, to encourage the hands of those who are labouring among us, both by our presence and prayers, and to cheer each other on our pilgrimage to Zion.

V. That, knowing that we cannot reasonably hope to obtain those special blessings without special effort, we resolve by God's grace to consecrate ourselves, our souls, our bodies, our *all*, to Him who gave Himself for us; and as prayer is the soul of religion, we will, as God enables us, be often in secret communion with God, remembering that it is bold, holy, importunate prayer which moves the hand that moves the world, and as it were wrings from God those blessings of His Holy Spirit, which alone can impart and maintain the spiritual life of the soul.

VI. That we be not unmindful of His past mercies, but render unto Him our heartfelt thanks for the many tokens of His favour, and the rich blessings we have received at His hands, deeply lamenting and mourning over our sins and unfaithfulness, but for which we should doubtless have been blessed more abundantly. We will therefore humble ourselves in the very dust of self-abasement before Him, asking Him to wash us from all our sins in His precious blood; and praying for grace to enable us to serve Him more faithfully in the future. These mercies, with every unspeakable favour, we ask in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be honour and glory for ever and ever, world without end. Amen.

Signed on behalf of the Christian soldiers of Peshawur, this 20th day of June, in the year of our Lord 1860.

A. LAVERACK,
Colour-Sergeant, H.M.'s 98th Regiment.

With the prayer, "Lead me not into temptation" on your lip, choose for the right and God, though the choice make you confront a solid rock. God shall render it accessible, and cover it with brighter greenness, and make it more radiant with flowers.

* "A Methodist Soldier in the Indian Army." London: Longley.