

THE EXCITEMENT OF FRIENDSHIP

BY RANDOLPH S. BOURNE

My friends, I can say with truth, since I have no other treasure, are my fortune. I really live only when I am with my friends. Those sufficient persons who can pass happily long periods of solitude communing with their own thoughts and nourishing their own souls fill me with a despairing admiration. Their gift of auto-stimulation argues a personal power which I shall never possess. Or else it argues, as I like to think in self-defense, a callousness of spirit, an insensitiveness to the outside influences which nourish and sustain the more susceptible mind. And those persons who can shut themselves up for long periods and work out their thoughts alone, constructing beautiful and orderly representations of their own spirits, are to me a continual mystery. I know this is the way that things are accomplished, that 'monotony and solitude' are necessary for him who would produce creative thought. Yet, knowing well this truth, I shun them both. I am a battery that needs to be often recharged. I require the excitement of friendship; I must have the constant stimulation of friends. I do not spark automatically, but must have other minds to rub up against, and strike from them by friction the spark that will kindle my thoughts.

When I walk, I must have a friend to talk to, or I shall not even think. I am not of those who, like Stevenson, believe that walking should be a kind of vegetative stupor, where the sun and air merely fill one with a diffused sense of

well-being and excluded definite thought. The wind should rather blow through the dusty regions of the mind, and the sun light up its dark corners, and thinking and talking should be saner and higher and more joyful than within doors. But one must have a friend along to open the windows. Neither can I sympathize with those persons who carry on long chains of reasoning while they are traveling or walking. When alone, my thinking is as desultory as the scenery of the roadside, and when with a friend, it is apt to be as full of romantic surprises as a walk through a woodland glen. Good talk is like good scenery — continuous yet constantly varying, and full of the charm of novelty and surprise. How unnatural it is to think except when one is forced to do it, is discovered when one attempts to analyze one's thoughts when alone. He is a rare genius who finds something beyond the mere visual images that float through his mind, — either the reflection of what he is actually seeing, or the pictorial representations of what he has been doing or what he wants or intends to do in the near or far future. We should be shocked to confess to ourselves how little control we have over our own minds; we shall be lucky if we can believe that we guide them.

Thinking, then, was given us for use in emergencies, and no man can be justly blamed if he reserves it for emergencies. He can be blamed, however, if he does not expose himself to those crises which will call it forth. Now a friend is such an emergency,

perhaps the most exciting stimulus to thinking that one can find, and if one wants to live beyond the vegetative stupor, one must surround one's self with friends. I shall call my friends, then, all those influences which warm me and start running again all my currents of thought and imagination. The persons, causes, and books that unlock the prison of my intellectual torpor, I can justly call my friends, for I find that I feel toward them all the same eager joy and inexhaustible rush of welcome. Where they differ it shall be in degree and not in kind. The speaker whom I hear, the book that I read, the friend with whom I chat, the music that I play, even the blank paper before me, which subtly stirs me to cover it with sentences that unfold surprisingly and entice me to follow until I seem hopelessly lost from the trail, — all these shall be my friends as long as I find myself responding to them, and no longer. They are all alike in being emergencies that call upon me for instant and definite response.

The difference between them lies in their response to me. My personal friends react upon me; the lecturers and books and music and pictures do not. These are not influenced by my feelings or by what I do. I can approach them cautiously or boldly, respond to them slowly or warmly, and they will not care. They have a definite quality, and do not change; if I respond differently to them at different times, I know that it is I and not they who have altered. The excitement of friendship does not lie with them. One feels this lack particularly in reading, which no amount of enthusiasm can make more than a feeble and spiritless performance. The more enthusiasm the reading inspires in one, the more one rebels at the passivity into which one is forced. I want to get somehow at grips with the book. I can feel the

warmth of the personality behind it, but I cannot see the face as I can the face of a person, lighting and changing with the iridescent play of expression. It is better with music; one can get at grips with one's piano, and feel the resistance and the response of the music one plays. One gets the sense of aiding somehow in its creation, the lack of which feeling is the fatal weakness of reading, though itself the easiest and most universal of friendly stimulations. One comes from much reading with a sense of depression and a vague feeling of something unsatisfied; from friends or music one comes with a high sense of elation and of the brimming adequacy of life.

If one could only retain those moments! What a tragedy it is that our periods of stimulated thinking should be so difficult of reproduction; that there is no intellectual shorthand to take down the keen thoughts, the trains of argument, the pregnant thoughts, which spring so spontaneously to the mind at such times! What a tragedy that one must wait till the fire has died out, till the light has faded away, to transcribe the dull flickering remembrances of those golden hours when thought and feeling seemed to have melted together, and one said and thought what seemed truest and finest and most worthy of one's immortalizing! This is what constitutes the hopeless labor of writing, — that one must struggle constantly to warm again the thoughts that are cold or have been utterly consumed. What was thought in the hours of stimulation must be written in the hours of solitude, when the mind is apt to be cold and gray, and when one is fortunate to find on the hearth of the memory even a few scattered embers lying about. The blood runs sluggish as one sits down to write. What worry and striving it takes to get it running freely again! What labor to

reproduce even a semblance of what seemed to come so genially and naturally in the contact and intercourse of friendship!

One of the curious superstitions of friendship is that we somehow choose our friends. To the connoisseur in friendship no idea could be more amazing and incredible. Our friends are chosen for us by some hidden law of sympathy, and not by our conscious wills. All we know is that in our reactions to people we are attracted to some and are indifferent to others. And the ground of this mutual interest seems based on no discoverable principles of similarity of temperament or character. We have no time, when meeting a new person, to study him or her carefully; our reactions are swift and immediate. Our minds are made up instantly, — ‘friend or non-friend.’ By some subtle intuitions, we know and have measured at their first words all the possibilities which their friendship has in store for us. We get the full quality of their personality at the first shock of meeting, and no future intimacy changes that quality.

If I am to like a man, I like him at once; further acquaintance can only broaden and deepen that liking and understanding. If I am destined to respond, I respond at once or never. If I do not respond he continues to be to me as if I had never met him; he does not exist in my world. His thoughts, feelings, and interests I can but dimly conceive of; if I do think of him it is only as a member of some general class. My imaginative sympathy can embrace him only as a type. If his interests are in some way forced upon my attention, and my imagination is compelled to encompass him as an individual, I find his ideas and interests appearing like pale, shadowy things, dim ghosts of the real world that my friends and I live in.

Association with such aliens — and how much of our life is necessarily spent in their company — is a torture far worse than being actually disliked. Probably they do not dislike us, but there is this strange gulf which cuts us off from their possible sympathy. A pall seems to hang over our spirits; our souls are dumb. It is a struggle and an effort to affect them at all. And though we may know that this depressing weight which seems to press on us in our intercourse with them has no existence, yet this realization does not cure our helplessness. We do not exist for them any more than they exist for us. They are depressants, not stimulators, as are our friends. Our words sound singularly futile and half-hearted as they pass our lips. Our thoughts turn to ashes as we utter them. In the grip of this predestined antipathy we can do nothing but submit and pass on.

But in how different a light do we see our friends! They are no types, but each a unique, exhaustless personality, with his own absorbing little cosmos of interests round him. And those interests are real and vital, and in some way interwoven with one’s own cosmos. Our friends are those whose worlds overlap our own, like concentric circles. If there is too much overlapping, however, there is monotony and a mutual cancellation. It is, perhaps, a question of attitude as much as anything. Our friends must be pointed in the same direction in which we are going, and the truest friendship and delight is when we can watch each other’s attitude toward life grow increasingly similar; or if not similar, at least so sympathetic as to be mutually complementary and sustaining.

The wholesale expatriation from our world of all who do not overlap us or look at life in a similar direction is so fatal to success that we cannot afford to let these subtle forces of friendship

and apathy have full sway with our souls. To be at the mercy of whatever preordained relations may have been set up between us and the people we meet is to make us incapable of negotiating business in a world where one must be all things to all men. From an early age, therefore, we work, instinctively or consciously, to get our reactions under control, so as to direct them in the way most profitable to us. By a slow and imperceptible accretion of impersonality over the erratic tendencies of personal response and feeling, we acquire the professional manner, which opens the world wide to us. We become human patterns of the profession into which we have fallen, and are no longer individual personalities. Men find no difficulty in becoming soon so professionalized that their manner to their children at home is almost identical with that to their clients in the office. Such an extinction of the personality is a costly price to pay for worldly success. One has integrated one's character, perhaps, but at the cost of the zest and verve and peril of true friendship.

To those of us, then, who have not been tempted by success, or who have been so fortunate as to escape it, friendship is a life-long adventure. We do not integrate ourselves, and we have as many sides to our character as we have friends to show them to. Quite unconsciously I find myself witty with one friend, large and magnanimous with another, petulant and stingy with another, wise and grave with another, and utterly frivolous with another. I watch with surprise the sudden and startling changes in myself as I pass from the influence of one friend to the influence of some one else. But my character with each particular friend is constant. I find myself, whenever I meet him, with much the same emotional and mental tone. If we talk,

there is with each one some definite subject upon which we always speak and which remains perennially fresh and new. If I am so unfortunate as to stray accidentally from one of these well-worn fields into another, I am instantly reminded of the fact by the strangeness and chill of the atmosphere. We are happy only on our familiar levels, but on these we feel that we could go on exhaustless forever, without a pang of ennui. And this inexhaustibility of talk is the truest evidence of good friendship.

Friends do not, on the other hand, always talk of what is nearest to them. Friendship requires that there be an open channel between friends, but it does not demand that that channel be the deepest in our nature. It may be of the shallowest kind and yet the friendship be of the truest. For all the different traits of our nature must get their airing through friends, the trivial as well as the significant. We let ourselves out piecemeal it seems, so that only with a host of varied friends can we express ourselves to the fullest. Each friend calls out some particular trait in us, and it requires the whole chorus fitly to teach us what we are. This is the imperative need of friendship. A man with few friends is only half-developed; there are whole sides of his nature which are locked up and have never been expressed. He cannot unlock them himself, he cannot even discover them; friends alone can stimulate him and open them. Such a man is in prison; his soul is in penal solitude. A man must get friends as he would get food and drink for nourishment and sustenance. And he must keep them, as he would keep health and wealth, as the infallible safeguards against misery and poverty of spirit.

If it seems selfish to insist so urgently upon one's need for friends, if it should be asked what we are giving our

friends in return for all their spiritual fortification and nourishment, the defense would have to be, that we give back to them in ample measure what they give to us. If we are their friends, we are stimulating them as they are stimulating us. They will find that they talk with unusual brilliancy when they are with us. And we may find that we have, perhaps, merely listened to them. Yet through that curious bond of sympathy which has made us friends, we have done as much for them as if we had exerted ourselves in the most active way. The only duty of friendship is that we and our friends should live at our highest and best when together. Having achieved that, we have fulfilled the law.

A good friendship, strange to say, has little place for mutual consolations and ministrations. Friendship breathes a more rugged air. In sorrow the silent pressure of the hand speaks the emotions, and lesser griefs and misfortunes are ignored or glossed over. The fatal facility of women's friendships, their copious outpourings of grief to each other, their sharing of wounds and sufferings, their half-pleased interest in misfortune, — all this seems of a lesser order than the robust friendships of men, who console each other in a much more subtle, even intuitive way, — by a constant pervading sympathy which is felt rather than expressed. For the true atmosphere of friendship is a sunny one. Griefs and disappointments do not thrive in its clear, healthy light. When they do appear, they take on a new color. The silver lining appears, and we see even our own personal mistakes and chagrins as whimsical adventures. It is almost impossible seriously to believe in one's bad luck or failures or incapacity while one is talking with a friend. One achieves a sort of transfiguration of personality in those moments. In the midst of the

high and genial flow of intimate talk, a pang may seize one at the thought of the next day's drudgery, when life will be lived alone again; but nothing can dispel the ease and fullness with which it is being lived at the moment. It is, indeed, a heavy care that will not dissolve into misty air at the magic touch of a friend's voice.

Fine as friendship is, there is nothing irrevocable about it. The bonds of friendship are not iron bonds, proof against the strongest of strains and the heaviest of assaults. A man by becoming your friend has not committed himself to all the demands which you may be pleased to make upon him. Foolish people like to test the bonds of their friendships, pulling upon them to see how much strain they will stand. When they snap, it is as if friendship itself had been proved unworthy. But the truth is that good friendships are fragile things and require as much care in handling as any other fragile and precious things. For friendship is an adventure and a romance, and in adventures it is the unexpected that happens. It is the zest of peril that makes the excitement of friendship. All that is unpleasant and unfavorable is foreign to its atmosphere; there is no place in friendship for harsh criticism or fault-finding. We will 'take less' from a friend than we will from one who is indifferent to us.

Good friendship is lived on a warm, impetuous plane; the long-suffering kind of friendship is a feeble and, at best, a half-hearted affair. It is friendship in the valley and not on the breezy heights. For the secret of friendship is a mutual admiration, and it is the realization or suspicion that that admiration is lessening on one side or the other that swiftly breaks the charm. Now this admiration must have in it no taint of adulation, which will wreck a friendship as soon as suspicion will.

But it must consist of the conviction, subtly expressed in every tone of the voice, that each has found in the other friend a rare spirit, compounded of light and intelligence and charm. And there must be no open expression of this feeling, but only the silent flattery, soft, and almost imperceptible.

And in the best of friendships this feeling is equal on both sides. Too great a superiority in our friend disturbs the balance, and casts a sort of artificial light on the talk and intercourse. We want to believe that we are fairly equal to our friends in power and capacity, and that if they excel us in one trait, we have some counterbalancing quality in another direction. It is the reverse side of this shield that gives point to the diabolical insight of the Frenchman who remarked that we were never heart-broken by the misfortunes of our best friends. If we have had misfortunes, it is not wholly unjust and unfortunate that our friends should suffer too. Only their misfortunes must not be worse than ours. For the equilibrium is then destroyed, and our serious alarm and sympathy aroused. Similarly we rejoice in the good fortune of our friends, always provided that it be not too dazzling or too undeserved.

It is these aspects of friendship, which cannot be sneered away by the reproach of jealousy, that make friendship a precarious and adventurous thing. But it is precious in proportion to its precariousness, and its littlenesses are but the symptoms of how much

friends care, and how sensitive they are to all the secret bonds and influences that unite them.

Since our friends have all become woven into our very selves, to part from friends is to lose, in a measure, one's self. He is a brave and hardy soul who can retain his personality after his friends are gone. And since each friend is the key which unlocks an aspect of one's own personality, to lose a friend is to cut away a part of one's self. I may make another friend to replace the loss, but the unique quality of the first friend can never be brought back. He leaves a wound which heals only gradually. To have him go away is as bad as having him pass to another world. The letter is so miserable a travesty on the personal presence, a thin ghost of the thought of the once-present friend. It is as satisfactory as a whiff of stale tobacco smoke to the lover of smoking.

Those persons and things, then, that inspire us to do our best, that make us live at our best, when we are in their presence, that call forth from us our latent and unsuspected personality, that nourish and support that personality, — those are our friends. The reflection of their glow makes bright the darker and quieter hours when they are not with us. They are a true part of our widest self; we should hardly have a self without them. Their world is one where chagrin and failure do not enter. Like the sun-dial, they 'only mark the shining hours.'

THE NEW SCIENCE

BY SAMUEL GEORGE SMITH

THE dream of a perfect race in a perfect world is both Greek and Hebrew. It has furnished material for philosophy, beauty for poets, and — best of all — noble visions for the prophets of the race. Plato, in the *Republic*, proposed to make a better race, founded upon a new organization of society. The Book of Deuteronomy was written with the same end in view, but, noblest of them all, Isaiah painted pictures of a better time, the finest message of faith and hope this weary world has ever heard.

The *Republic* was a new exhibition of Socratic irony, and was probably never meant to be taken seriously; but the victory of righteousness and faith was the only real thing in all the world to the old prophet. Many interpretations have followed these ancient teachings, and from the island of *Utopia* to the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, through a widely extended company of lesser rank than More and Burton, the subject has continued its fascination. It has remained for our time to make a definite effort to take the dream of the nations, rob it of its poetry and its hope, and interpret it in terms of biology. The modern movement declares that it is quite worth while to produce a better man, and this is to be done by making him an animal of a finer breed. See, the new teachers say, what Mendel did with sweet peas, and from his observations learn also the laws of human growth. What wonders have been accomplished with pigs and cattle; try the same methods, have patience, and

you will produce a race of saints and heroes. The boldness of the programme is equaled only by the naïve faith, which has a certain charm.

It is only fair to add that no movement of recent times has spread so rapidly, has been so prolific in suggestion, so daring in social proposals.

It was in 1904 that Francis Galton introduced to the notice of the London Sociological Society the word 'Eugenics,' in an arresting address proposing a study of race-conditions, an effort for better control of racial tendencies, and expressing the hope that 'it might be introduced into the national conscience like a new religion.' Later he furnished a definition of what is called 'National Eugenics': 'The study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally.'

Numbers of disciples were won to the leader, and students of Eugenics were soon found, not only in England, but in all the principal countries of the world. The caution of the master has not always been imitated by his followers, and the impression of the movement upon the public is that it contains a belief that the perfect race may be obtained upon rather easy terms. All the defects of personality are found in the germ-plasm, and society has only to select and kill off the unfit for a single generation and the world will be happy ever after. The programme does not promise that we shall be rid of the danger of accidents and some few