

Friendship

THERE are few subjects that have been more written upon and less understood than that of friendship. To follow the dictates of some, this virtue, instead of being the assuager of pain, becomes the source of every inconvenience. Such speculators, by expecting too much from friendship, dissolve the connection, and by drawing the bands too closely, at length break them. Almost all our romance and novel writers are of this kind; they persuade us to friendship, which we find it impossible to sustain to the last; so that this sweetener of life, under proper regulations, is, by their means, rendered inaccessible or uneasy. It is certain, the best method to cultivate this virtue is by letting it, in some measure, make itself, a similitude of minds of studies, and even sometimes a diversity of pursuits, will produce all the pleasures that arise from it. The current of tenderness widens as it proceeds; and two men imperceptibly find their hearts filled with good nature for each other, when they were at first only in pursuit of mirth or relaxation.

Friendship is like a debt of honor; the moment it is talked of, it loses its real name, and assumes the more ungrateful form of obligation. From hence we find that those who regularly undertake to cultivate friendship, find ingratitude generally repays their endeavors. That circle of beings, which dependence gathers round us, is almost ever unfriendly; they secretly wish the terms of their connections more nearly equal; and, where they even have the most virtue, are prepared to reserve all their affections for their patron only in the hour of his decline. Increasing the obligations which are laid upon such minds, only increases their burden; they feel themselves unable to repay the immensity of their debt, and their bankrupt hearts are taught a latent resentment at the hand that is stretched out with offers of service and relief.

Plautinus was a man who thought that every good was to be brought from riches; and as he was possessed of great wealth, and had a mind naturally formed for virtue, he resolved to gather a circle of the best men round him. Among the number of his dependents was Musidorus, with a mind just as fond of virtue, yet not less proud than his patron. His circumstances, however, were such as forced him to stoop to the good offices of his superior, and he saw himself daily among a number of others loaded with benefits and protestations of friendship. These, in the usual course of the world, he thought prudent to accept; but, while he gave his esteem,



be a centurion under the famous John, who headed a particular part of the Jewish malcontents. From this moment, their former love was converted into the most inveterate enmity. They attached themselves to opposite factions, and sought each other's lives in the conflict of adverse party. In this manner they continued for more than two years, vowing mutual revenge, and animated with an unconquerable spirit of aversion. At length, however, that party of the Jews, to which the man soldier belonged, joining with the Romans, adherents into the temple. History has given us more than one picture of the dreadful conflagration of that superb edifice. The Roman soldiers were gathered around it; the whole temple was in flames; and thousands were seen amidst their within its sacred circuit. It was in this situation of things, that the now successful soldier saw his former friend, upon the battlements of the highest tower, looking around with horror, and just ready to be consumed with flames. All his former tenderness now returned; he saw the man of his bosom just going to perish; and unable to withstand the impulse, he ran, spreading his arms, and cried out to his friend to leap down from the top, and find safety with him. The centurion from above heard and obeyed; and, casting himself from the top of the tower into his fellow-soldier's arms, both fell a sacrifice on the spot; one being crushed to death by the weight of his companion, and the other dashed to pieces by the greatness of his fall.

"I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven." — does—springing—back—musical hinges before the discouraged wanderers of earth, inviting them to hospitalities glimpsed beyond, inconceivable to the heart of man. A door? Those are not unfolding portals, they are outspread arms, and above them is the glory of a Face, and from within there floats the tenderness of a Voice—"I am the Door!" It is He, the Lord of Life Himself; and we, who were so weary of our vain efforts to conquer evil, the pettiness and unlovingness of our nature, are uplifted, upborne to His heart, and its mighty throbbings become the inspiration of our own. He does for us what we could not do for ourselves, and we are saved. Henceforth, there is no life for us but His—"I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." To every soul of man this message comes; and the soul that turns at the call of the angel who brings it, will bear witness that the message is true. Only we ourselves can shut ourselves out of heaven. The door of a Heart, as human in its sympathy as it is divine in its love and power, stands always open and waiting with welcome for the repentant child, who would fain return to his Father's house. "By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."—Lucy Larcom.

There is no caste in the Kingdom of Heaven. We must free the truth or the truth will not free us. If the world could forget Jesus, it would not; if it would forget him, it could not. Are the pure in heart happy because Jesus said so? No, but because they are pure in heart. There is nothing sacred but those things into which we carry the Spirit of Love and reverence and moral beauty. We are too ready to think that to do right is better than to try to do right, that success is better than character as shown in faithful effort. Thus Jesus demonstrated the fact that mere diplomacy and strategy always fail, that nothing ever wins in this life or in any other, but direct, honest, pure and true living, and this always wins and never fails. Had not each Hebrew mother and, especially had not Mary, greatly desired to give birth to the perfect man, Jesus would not have longed to be the Messiah, a fact which should give every modern parent food for thought.



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The full particulars were wired to Dubbs with instructions to make necessary arrangement for the adoption of the two children. Dubbs answered: "Will meet you with Edith at Winnipeg." The Colonel's business settled, he took charge of Dora while the nurse purchased toys and trimmings to decorate the car for the return trip. In one of the vacant sections we placed a Christmas tree which was artistically trimmed and well loaded with many of the beautiful things genius can devise for the pleasure of children. The porter lunged curtains about the tree so that Dora might not see it until we should meet Edith, Christmas morning, at Winnipeg.

Now we began the long journey across the Sierras, across to Utah desert, the Rockies, and then empty or partially settled section called the "Great American Desert," now known as the Middle West.

The mountain over, the cheerful companionship, good food and the joyful anticipation of the coming meeting with her sister, all helped to heal the wounded little heart, and give the child a new and hopeful outlook upon the world.

She would sit for hours gazing at the ever-changing panorama of nature unfolding before her as we climbed over the range, and then, when we were rolling across the level lands she would watch with the same unflinching interest the sagebrush wheel into place as we passed, and the twin ribbons of steel that were ever racing, racing day and night from under our car. It was all very interesting to her, and our car, common enough to-day, was something extravagant in the eyes of the child.

And when the Colonel had weaned of his work, his papers, and periodicals, he would sit by Dora, and they would watch in silence the ribbons racing out at the rear. Indeed it were difficult to say, watching them as I did, which showed the greater pleasure, the younger one or the elder child, for the Colonel was manifestly growing younger every day. He was rich—immensely rich for his day and generation—and I fancy he got more real pleasure out of that trip than the modern multi-millionaire would get out of a trip to Monte Carlo, to Cairo, or to Hongkong.

Our last day was a great day, for the memory of her sister was still fresh in Dora's mind, and now, almost hourly, she asked how far it is to Winnipeg. In a little while she would put her thin hand on the Colonel's, and ask: "How far is it now to Winnipeg?"

At last, when weary of watching the rails racing out in the moonlight, she suffered the governess to tuck her in for the night. She was barely dressed the next morning when the train stopped and there upon the platform stood the faithful, efficient Dubbs, and by his side, Edith.

Such a meeting—those two sweet children! They wept and kissed, and kissed and wept.

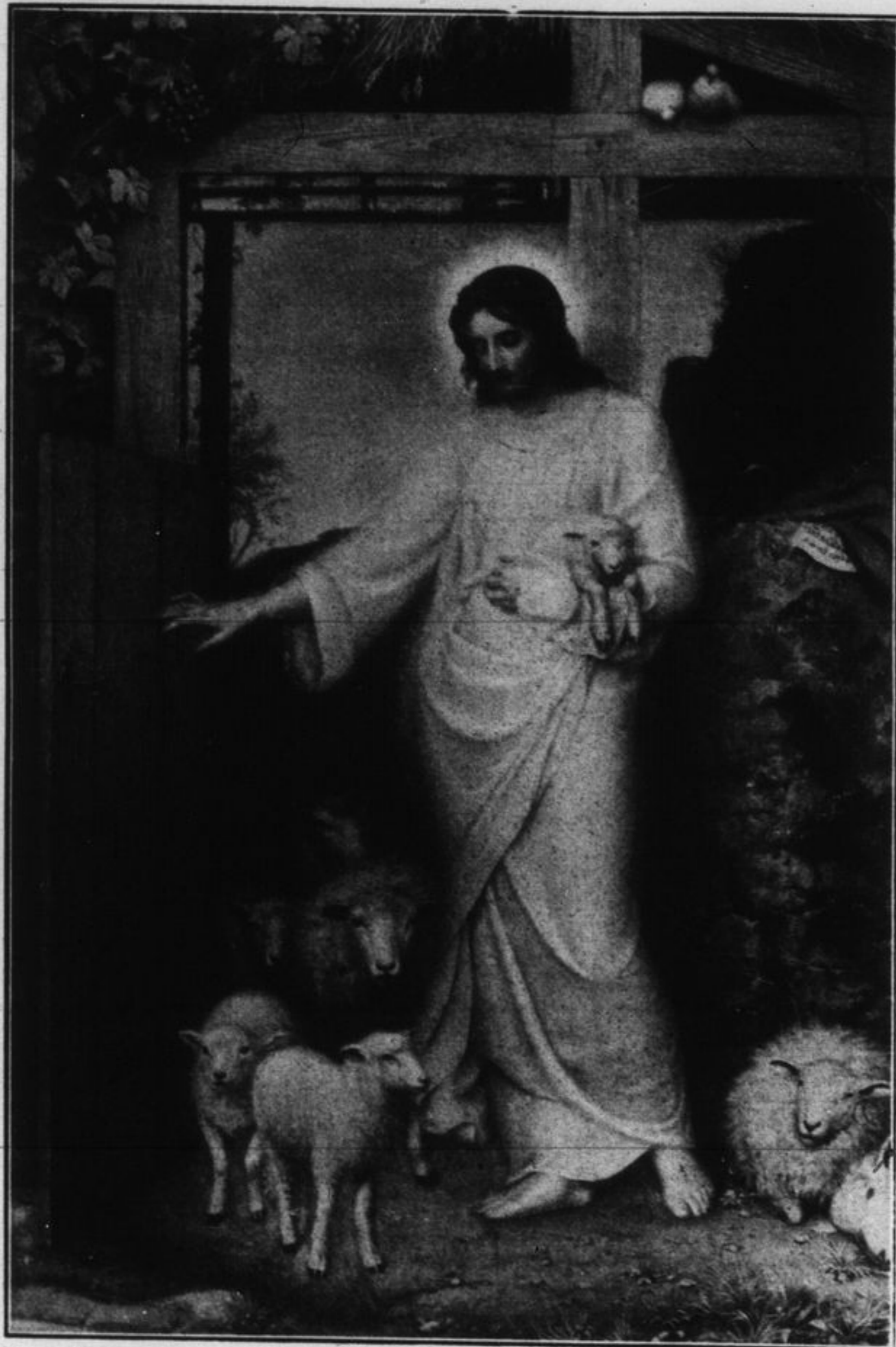
After the train had started on the journey eastward, the porter drew the curtains back, and the Colonel told the children that Santa Claus had put the tree there for their Christmas. They were amazed. Such dazzling beauty their little eyes had never seen.

When the tree was "over," Edith whispered to Dora, and Dora went to the Colonel and told him that Santa Claus had forgotten him, and they were going to give him some of their presents.

"Santa Claus has not forgotten me, dear children," he said, taking one under each arm. "He has given me two little girls, and for many years I have not known such a happy Christmas."

Nothing can satisfy the human heart; nothing can satisfy the heart of God; nothing can solve the problems of the ages; nothing can abolish corruption from politics; nothing can remove the restlessness of labor and capital; nothing can destroy the greed of wealth, the arrogance of power, no living but love, nothing but sacrifice. There is no other way.

Jesus seldom laid much stress on the past or the future. Sometimes he spoke as from the past, and laid all stress upon the past, but by that past he meant the everlasting now, the eternal present, when all life's burdens must be carried and all God's work must be done. The past with its frivolties, and the future with its anxieties, are the burden of unpractical minds.



He could not give his heart. A want of affection breaks out in the most trifling accents, and Plautinus had skill enough to observe the minutest actions of the man he wished to make his friend. In these he even found his aim disappointed; Musidorus claimed an exchange of hearts, which Plautinus solicited by a variety of claims, could never think of bestowing.

It may be easily supposed that the reserve of our poor, proud man was soon consumed in gratitude; and such, indeed, in the common expectation of the world it was. Wherever Musidorus appeared, he was remarked as the *magnum opus* man; he had accepted favors, it was said; and still had the insolence to pretend to independence. The event, however, justified his conduct. Plautinus, by misplaced liberality, at length became poor, and it was then that Musidorus first thought of making a friend of him. He flew to the man of fallen fortune, with an offer of all he had; wrought under his direction with assiduity; and, by uniting their talents, both were at length placed in that state of life from which one of them had formerly fallen.

To this story, taken from modern life, I shall add one more, taken from a Greek writer of antiquity—Two Jewish soldiers, in the time of Vespasian, had fought many campaigns together, and hearts. They were remarked through the whole army, as the two friendly brothers; they felt and fought for each other. Their friendship might have continued, without interruption, till death had not the good fortune, of the one alarmed the pride of the other, which was in his promotion to

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