

# TO THE OLD CHUMS LIVING AND THE OLD CHUMS DEAD

"Friendship" wrote Jeremy Taylor, "is like the rivers and the strand of the seas, and the air, common to all the world; but tyrants and evil customs, wars and want of love have made them proper and peculiar. Some friendships are made by nature, some by contract, some by interest and some by souls."

It is difficult to account for some friendships. Years ago a man nearly twice my age called me to account for a newspaper article. The acquaintance that then began in heated controversy grew into a pleasant relation and ripened into an intimate friendship that has thrived without interruption for twenty years. This friendship may have begun at the point when it dawned upon both of us that neither intended injustice to the other, and the ripening process probably went into operation when it developed that we held views in common on political questions. He was a man little understood by his neighbors generally. Some regarded him as a selfish man with no kindly impulses, but in common with all others who knew him well I knew him as a tender-hearted man, exact in requiring his portion in a business deal but generous in responding to the wants of deserving people in distress. I know that when this good old man shall pass away his epitaph will be written in words of love upon the hearts of many men, women and children, to whom, in an unostentatious way, he has given relief, even as his name is engraved indelibly upon the tablets of my own heart.

For nearly twenty years I have had a personal acquaintance with a gentleman distinguished in his country's service, famous as a stalwart republican, and now the faithful attorney for a great corporation. He has frequently gone so far as to refer to me—in my presence, of course—as an anarchist. Sometimes I have felt that he really believes that my simple faith in democracy as it was written at Chicago in 1896 justifies the appellation he has put upon me, although I do not think he ranks me among the life-destroying variety, because I have been the beneficiary of many kindnesses at his hands; and he has often taken the trouble to speak well of my work where it did not relate to politics. I can only approach a description of the poor opinion this gentleman has of my political views by saying that it will measure up fairly well with the contempt I have for the party which he has served so faithfully. But in spite of our differing views on these questions he has been my friend for many years; and now as he lies upon a bed of pain I understand better than ever before the deep affection I have felt for him during the twenty years of our acquaintance.

Another gentleman whom I have for many years been proud to claim as friend, recently wrote to me: "I can do nothing with your fatal incorrigibility in politics. Yours is a hopeless case, indeed." This is a mild statement compared with some of the blunt remarks with which this gentleman has often seen fit to characterize my politics. For many years he was a democrat; indeed, he still lays claim to that title, although with, perhaps, the exception of 1904, he has not in recent years "worked much at his trade." He insists that those who remained at their posts in 1896 and 1900 were the deserters, while he and others who went away were "doing business at the old stand." So far as political views are concerned, an inseparable gulf lies between this gentleman and myself. So confident is he in his position that he has regularly chastised me for my shortcomings, yet I have "borne it calmly, though a grievous woe, and still adore the hand that gave the blow." This is so because I have found that while he may not seem to have great concern for men in masses, he keenly sympathizes with the sufferings of individuals. He is one of the men who would literally surrender their last dollar to give aid to a fellow creature. The sufferings of a bird or beast would move him to tears; he delights in the companionship of little children, who, in their turn, are instinctively drawn to him. His loving kindness toward his fellows and his appreciation of the higher things that make life worth living have kept his heart young; and although now past the seventieth mile post, he is an active man and loses no opportunity—aside from politics—to render aid to helpless men and women.

These illustrations—perhaps of an all too personal nature—are used because they doubtless represent the common experience and serve

to show that the most enduring friendships often spring up in unaccountable ways and between men of radically differing and uncompromising views.

Real friendships do not depend upon the obligations of a secret order, upon communion in church circles or association in politics. Just as it was written "I do not love thee, Doctor Fell, the reason why I cannot tell, but this I know full well, full well, I do not love thee, Doctor Fell," so these friendships are often inexplicable and in many cases seem to grow even as the gulf between the friends, on some questions, seems to widen.

Did it ever occur to you as strange that although as we grow older we grow weaker physically and mentally, nevertheless our friendships grow stronger? "Friendship is the shadow of the evening which strengthens with the setting sun of life." The Indians understood at once what William Penn meant when in addressing them he said: "The friendship between me and you I will not compare to a chain; for that the rains might rust or the falling tree might break."

If the comparatively young man of today would obtain some conception of the way old friendships lay hold upon the aged, let him when nearing the meridian of life move from the place where the greater number of his years have been spent. When a man gets along in years he finds it more difficult to make new acquaintances. The difficulty is largely within himself, of course; he feels such a reverence for the time honored friendships that he is reluctant to admit strangers to the sacred precincts inhabited by them. He begins, long before his time, to live in the past. He appreciates, as others may not, the reverence gray-haired men have for the old-time ties and the pleasures they find in reviving the tender memories of the long ago by pilgrimages, as it were, through the Kingdom-of-Never-Forget. He better understands the words of the gray-haired poet written for the benefit of his gray-haired classmates:

"Fast as the rolling seasons bring  
The hour of fate to those we love,  
Each pearl that leaves the broken string  
Is set in Friendship's crown above.  
As narrower grows the earthly chain,  
The circle widens in the sky;  
These are our treasures that remain,  
But those our stars that beam on high."

There are many men and women—even some who do not regard themselves as aged—who take, occasionally, a journey into the Kingdom-of-Never-Forget. "Oft in the stilly night ere Slumber's chain has bound me, fond memory brings the light of other days around me; the smiles, the tears, of boyhood's years, the words of love then spoken; the eyes that shone now dimmed and gone, the cheerful hearts now broken." And sometimes, then, we "feel like one who treads alone some banquet hall deserted, whose lights are fled, whose garlands dead, and all but he departed."

These pilgrimages into the Kingdom-of-Never-Forget remind us that every friendship cultivated in life yet holds a niche in our hearts. Some of the parties to those friendships may be dead; a few may have proved unworthy; miles of land and leagues of sea may separate us from others; from many we may not have heard for years; but the tender memory is there and needs but to be revived by "the light of other days" in which we traverse the Kingdom-of-Never-Forget.

How these familiar figures come trooping in review, marshalled to very life by a wave of memory's baton. There is the little girl in pinafores with whom we made our first mud pies; here the rosy cheeked lad with whom we took our first swim; then the fallow faced youth with whom we had our first fight (we can feel his swift punches even now) and then the first teacher to win us by her tender devotion to her pupils; the first sweetheart of our boyhood days, perhaps now the mother of stalwart sons of her own, but always to hold a place of honor in our hearts, and, although now a matron, always to be remembered as the brown-haired girl arrayed in calico and sun-bonnet and one whose beauty was adorned the most because it was adorned the least; the woman who was the first to teach us of the laws of God; the man who was the first to

tell us of the governments of men and at whose knee we first learned the principles of democracy. Then there is "Tom," sensitive as a girl but in his friendships faithful unto death; and "Jim," rough on the exterior but polished like a diamond within. We all have our "Toms" and "Jims." Perhaps the one is dead and the other far away, but the mysterious forces of friendship keep the living and the dead ever at our side, for those who taught us of love and loyalty to one's friends are immortal in our hearts.

What an army of boys and girls, and men and women—friends of the long ago—come, even without beck or call, once fond memory brings the light of other days around us!

It is with smiles, as well as sighs and tears, that we conclude our pilgrimage through the Kingdom-of-Never-Forget; and when we emerge from the shadows and the sunbeams of that domain we feel like writing upon its outer walls this sign of loyalty and of love to the old chums living and the old chums dead:

"From the wreck of the past, which hath perished,  
Thus much I at least may recall,  
It hath taught me that what I most cherished  
Deserved to be dearest of all;  
In the desert a fountain is springing;  
In the wide waste there still is a tree,  
And a bird in the solitude singing,  
Which speaks to my spirit of thee."

RICHARD L. METCALFE.

### A VETERAN EDITOR

After thirty-three years of continuous service as editor of the Butler County (Neb.) Press, Charles D. Casper has retired and will spend the remainder of his time on a government claim in the northwest. When Mr. Casper first located in Butler county there were not enough democrats in the county to furnish candidates for all the offices. He presided over the first democratic convention ever held in the county, and by his diligent efforts as a democratic missionary he wrought material results, not only in his home county but throughout the state. Under his management the Press became a power for good. He has served four terms in the legislature, one as senator and three as representative, and represented his district as a delegate to the St. Louis convention in 1904. Earnest, able and courageous, Mr. Casper has been a leader among Nebraska democrats for upwards of a quarter of a century, and he will be missed.

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