

A FRIEND

A friend is a person who is for you under any suspicion. He never investigates you when charges are made against you. He does not ask proof. He asks the accuser to clear out. He likes you just as you are; he does not want to alter you. Whatever kind of coat you are wearing suits him; whether you have on a dress suit or a hickory shirt with no collar, he thinks it's fine. He likes your moods and enjoys your pessimism as much as your optimism. He likes your success, and your failure endears you to him the more. He is better than a lover, because he is never jealous. He wants nothing from you except that you be yourself. He is the one being with whom you can feel safe. With him you can utter your heart, its badness and its goodness; you don't have to be careful. In his presence you can be indiscreet, which means you can rest. There are many faithful wives and husbands; there are few faithful friends.

Friendship is the most admirable, amazing and rare article among human beings. Anybody may stand by you when you are right; a friend stands by you when you are wrong. The highest known form of friendship is that of the dog to his master. You are in luck if you can find one man or one woman on earth who has that kind of affection for you and fidelity to you. Like the shade of a great tree in the noonday heat is a friend. Like the home port with your country's flag flying, after a long journey, is a friend. A friend is an impregnable citadel of refuge in the strife of existence. It is he who keeps alive your faith in human nature; who makes you believe it is a good universe. He is the antidote to despair and elixir of hope; the tonic for depression; the medicine to cure suicide. When you are vigorous and spirited, you like to take your pleasure with him; when you are in trouble, you want to tell him. When you are sick, you want to see him; when you are dying you want him near. You give to him without reluctance and borrow from him without embarrassment.

If you can live fifty years and find one absolute friend, you are fortunate, for the thousands of human creatures that crawl the earth, few are made of such stuff.