

## Friendship by Emerson 1841

Friendships are gifts and expressions of God; they form when the divine spirit in one individual finds the divine spirit in another, and "both deride and cancel the thick walls of individual character, relation, age, sex, and circumstance." I do not wish to treat friendships daintily, but with roughest courage. When they are real, they are not glass threads or frostwork, but the solidest thing we know. The sweet sincerity of joy and peace, which I draw from this alliance with my brother's soul, is the nut itself whereof all nature and all thought is but the husk and shell.

Happy is the house that shelters a friend! It might well be built, like a festal bower or arch, to entertain him a single day. Happier, if he know the solemnity of that relation, and honor its law!

A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him, I may think aloud. I am arrived at last in the presence of a man so real and equal that I may drop even those undermost garments of dissimulation, courtesy, and second thought, which men never put off, and may deal with him with the simplicity and wholeness with which one chemical atom meets another. Sincerity is the luxury allowed, like diadems and authority, only to the highest rank, that being permitted to speak truth as having none above it to court or conform unto. Every man alone is sincere. At the entrance of a second person hypocrisy begins. We parry and fend the approach of our fellow man by compliments, by gossip, by amusements, by affairs. We cover up our thought from him under a hundred folds.

To most of us society shows not its face and eye, but its side and its back. To stand in true relations with men in a false age is worth a fit of insanity, is it not? We can seldom go erect. Almost every man we meet requires some civility, requires to be humored; he has some fame, some talent, some whim of religion or philanthropy in his head that is not to be questioned, and which spoils all conversation with him.

But a friend is a sane man who exercises not my ingenuity, but me. My friend gives me entertainment without requiring any stipulation on my part. A friend, therefore, is a sort of paradox in nature. I who alone am, I who see nothing in nature whose existence I can affirm with equal evidence to my own, behold now the semblance of my being in all its height, variety, and curiosity reiterated in a foreign form; so that a friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature.

Proverbs 17:17 A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

Proverbs 18:24 A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Proverbs 27:9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

Proverbs 27:14 He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.

Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.