

**Department of English**

**Lesson Notes**

**General English**

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| **Course Code** | **24ENG12L** |
| **Year** | I |
| **Semester** | 1 |

**Syllabus**

**Part – II : English -I**

**( All the Undergraduate Programmes)**

**Semester - 1**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Course Code** | **Course Name** | **Category** | **Hours / week** | **Credits** |
| **24ENG12L** | **English - I** | **Part - II** | **4** | **3** |

**Course Objectives**

The course intends to cover

∙ Various genres of literature.

∙ Active and passive vocabulary.

∙ Usage of Grammar and Communication.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

On the successful completion of the course, students will be able to

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| **CLO** | **CLO Statements** | **Knowledge Level** |
| CLO1 | Identify aesthetic sense and appreciate poetry, enhancing creativity and  understanding relevant to professional environments. | K1 |
| CLO2 | Understand diverse styles of prose, facilitating versatility in writing and  inculcating interpersonal skills. | K2 |
| CLO3 | Apply the characters and the narrative techniques in creative writing and  content creation ethically. | K3 |
| CLO4 | Employ vocabulary and grammatical proficiency in communication to  enhance clarity in workplace interactions. | K3 |
| CLO5 | Enhance overall communication competence. Practicing these skills in  combination reinforces learning and provides students with opportunities to  use the language in authentic contexts. | K3 |
| **K1** - Remember; **K2** - Understand; **K3** - Apply | | |

**All the Undergraduate Programmes 1**

**1 KG College of Arts and Science (Autonomous) st Academic Council 2024 - 2025**

**Part - II: English - I**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Unit** | **Content** | **No. of**  **Hours** |
| I | **Poetry** : Nature  1. I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud - William Wordsworth  2. The Sparrow - Paul Laurence Dunbar  3. Stopping by woods on a snowy Evening – Robert Frost | 12 |
| II | **Prose** : Friendship  1. The Man in Black - Oliver Goldsmith  2. Of Friendship - Francis Bacon  3. The Blessing of Friends - Sir John Lubbock | 12 |
| III | **Short Stories:** Morality  1. The Necklace – Guy de Maupassant  2. The Lottery - Shirley Jackson  3. The Monkey’s Paw - W. W. Jacobs | 12 |
| IV | **Language Competency:** Vocabulary  1. Vocabulary : Synonyms, Antonyms, Word Formation  2. Appropriate use of Articles and Parts of Speech  3. Error correction | 12 |
| V | **English for Communication**  1. Listening for General and Specific Information.  2. Self - Introduction, Introducing others, Greetings.  3. Reading a prose passage, Reading a poem and Reading a short story 4. Descriptive writing – writing a short descriptive essay of two to three paragraphs. | 12 |
| **Total Hours** | | **60** |
| **Text Books** | | |
| 1. | Zama, M. (2004). Poetry Down the Ages. Orient Blackswan. | |
| 2. | Goldsmith, O. (1869). The Works of Oliver Goldsmith. J. Dicks | |
| 3. | Bacon, F., & Montagu, B. (1857). The Works of Francis Bacon (Vol. 1). Parry & McMillan. | |
| **Reference Books** | | |
| 1. | Kumar,V. T. Bhavani, Durga.K. Srinivas.YL. (2018). English in use - A textbook for College Students. (English, Paperback). | |
| 2. | Swan, M. (2005). Practical english usage (Vol. 7). Oxford: Oxford university press. | |
| **Web Resources (Swayam / NPTEL)** | | |
| 1. | https://nptel.ac.in/courses/109105205 | |

**UNIT - I**

**POETRY -Nature**

**I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud**

**by**

**William Wordsworth**

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is one of the most famous and best-loved poems written in the English language. It was composed by Romantic poet William Wordsworth around 1804, though he subsequently revised it—the final and most familiar version of the poem was published in 1815. The poem is based on one of Wordsworth's own walks in the countryside of England's Lake District. During this walk, he and his sister encountered a long strip of daffodils. In the poem, these daffodils have a long-lasting effect on the speaker, firstly in the immediate impression they make and secondly in the way that the image of them comes back to the speaker's mind later on. "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is a quintessentially Romantic poem, bringing together key ideas about imagination, humanity and the natural world.

**“I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” Summary**

The speaker walks alone, similar to a solitary cloud in the sky floating over hills and valleys. Suddenly, the speaker sees a long and bustling row of daffodils. They are near the lake and the trees and flutter and shift as they are blown by the breeze.

Comparing the daffodils to stars in the sky, the speaker notes how the flowers seem to go on without ending, alongside a bay. The speaker guesses there are ten thousand or so daffodils, all of their heads moving as if they were dancing.

Near the daffodils, the waves are glinting on the bay. But the daffodils seem more joyful to the speaker than the waves. A poet couldn't help being cheerful, says the speaker, in the cheerful company of the daffodils. The speaker stares at the daffodils lingeringly, without yet realizing the full extent of the positive effects of encountering them.

After the experience with the daffodils, the speaker often lies on the couch, either absentminded or thoughtful. It is then that the daffodils come back to the speaker's imaginative memory—access to which is a gift of solitude—and fills the speaker with joy as his mind dances with the daffodils.

“**I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” Themes**

**Nature and Humanity**

Considered one of the most significant examples of Romantic poetry, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” explores the relationship between nature and humanity. In doing so, it makes two key points. Firstly, it argues that humanity is not separate from nature, but rather part of it. And secondly, it suggests that the natural world—and a strong bond with it—isessential to human happiness. Though the reader might be fooled by the suggestion of solitude in the title, this is an optimistic poem with a positive outlook on the world. This happiness is drawn from the speaker’s interaction with nature, in turn encouraging the reader to appreciate the natural majesty that is all around them.

The poem introduces the idea of loneliness in the first line, but the speaker is not really alone at all. The speaker is in the presence of “a host of golden daffodils,” whose delicate “dancing” in the wind has a long-lasting effect on the speaker’s mind. This set-up introduces a sense of togetherness between humanity (represented by the speaker) and nature (represented by the daffodils). And though this togetherness is partly rendered by the personification of the daffodils that runs throughout the poem—they are “dancing” in every stanza—the speaker pre-emptively flips this personification on its head in the very first line. Here, the speaker compares himself to a natural element: a cloud. So, the human component of the poem is like nature, and the natural component is like humanity. They are, in a word, together.

The poem suggests that this togetherness is something instinctive, and sometimes obvious only in hindsight. It’s clear that the beauty of the daffodils had an instant impact on the speaker— which is why the speaker “gazed and gazed”—but it was only later, when the experience “flashed” again in the speaker's mind, that the speaker realized its full significance. In this quiet moment, the speaker draws on the experience of the daffodils as an avenue to happiness. That is, everything that the daffodils represent—joy, playfulness, survival, beauty—"fills” the speaker with “bliss” and “pleasure.” In the speaker’s mind, the speaker is again dancing “with the daffodils.” The poem, then, is arguing that communion with nature is not just a momentary joy, but something deeper and long-lasting. The reader is left with the distinct impression that, without these types of experiences with nature, the speaker would be returned to a genuine loneliness only hinted at by the title.

Stanzas 2 and 3 also make it clear to the reader that the togetherness described above is, of course, not solely about daffodils, but rather about nature more generally. “The stars” and “the sparkling waves” are both mentioned, suggesting a series of links between the smaller, less noticeable elements of the natural world (like the daffodils), humankind (like the speaker), and the wider universe (the stars). All are presented as a part of nature; though they are different, they are all in communion with one another. However, people have to make an effort to notice this and to engage with the natural world like the speaker does. The poem, then, is an argument for active engagement with nature—a message perhaps even more important now than it was at the time, given humanity’s wide-ranging effects on the planet it inhabits.

**Memory and Imagination**

“I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” argues for a strong connection between experience, i magination, and language. The poem itself is a memory, focused on bringing the speaker's experience of seeing daffodils back to life on the page through the concentrated power of the imagination. Like nature, the imagination was an integral part of the poetic universe of the Romantics, and in this poem, the speaker shows the way in which a strong imagination—using the “inward eye” of the mind—can bring back pleasant memories, create joy in the present, and even pass joy along to others.

The poem is told retrospectively, with all the verbs up until the final stanza in the past tense: the speaker is looking back on an experience from the past. It is, then, an effort on the speaker’s part not just to recall an experience, but to breathe new life into it through the imagination. The speaker doesn’t only want to acknowledge the experience, but somehow give it life again and, in turn, conjure that same joyful feeling.

The success of this goal depends on the speaker and the reader working together. The speaker strives to bring their experience with the daffodils into life on the page, and the reader is asked to use their imagination to make this work. The reader, then, is called on to use their own “inward eye,” just as the speaker describes in the final stanza. Primarily, this interplay between the speaker's imagination and the reader's imagination is dependent on the personification of the daffodils that runs throughout the poem. The speaker describes the daffodils as having human characteristics, which are not meant to be taken literally but instead imaginatively. For example, the “dancing” of the daffodils, referenced in every stanza, is actually just the effect of the wind. But dancing, of course, is an inherently joyful activity. The speaker perceives visual similarities between the daffodils’ movement and dance, and this imaginative leap deepens the speaker's own connection to the experience. In essence, imagining the daffodils are dancing makes the speaker feel more alive by witnessing the life in everything else.

The speaker also projects human emotion onto the daffodils: “jocund company” (jocund means cheerful). Of course, the daffodils don’t experience the world in this way—the speaker is seeing their own state of mind reflected back in the visual effect of the flowers. That imaginative leap heightens the experience, arguably making the speaker feel a stronger connection to nature. The poem in turn asks the reader to go through the same process. The reason for doing so is clear from the final stanza. Here, the speaker describes being in a “vacant” or “pensive” mood— in other words, these are times in which the speaker feels disengaged and detached from the world. Of course, the imagination is the speaker's salvation—the image of the daffodils comes rushing back, and even further, the speaker imaginatively goes back to the daffodils and “dances” with them. The poem, then, argues that such imaginative acts can have positive effects for the reader, too. Encouraging the reader toward imagination becomes the justification for the use of personification, conceptualization, and poetic language that has come before. These choices weren't just about describing the daffodils, but about engaging the reader’s imagination in experiencing them. Throughout, the speaker links imagination to happiness, particularly in its capacity to bring memories, if not back to life, into new life. The experience of the daffodils lives on in the speaker’s and then the reader’s imagination. “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” is, then, an imaginative attempt to not just recreate the speaker's experience, but to extend it into the mind of the reader. The poem argues that this process is an important part of what it means to be human and, moreover, happy.

**Line-by-Line Explanation & Analysis of “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”**

**Lines 1-2**

The poem begins by establishing a sense of isolation—the set-up that the visual shock of the daffodils will later break through. Whereas the rest of the poem functions through personifying nature, the first line actually does the reverse. The speaker likens themselves—or specifically, their "lonely" way of wandering—to a cloud. The effect of this simile is similar to that of the later personification of the daffodils: both serve to link the speaker and nature together. The speaker is a stand-in for humanity more generally, so this first line establishes that the poem is about the relationship between mankind and the natural world. The comparison suggests that the speaker is walking about without any particular purpose, building on the idea that clouds are aimless (which in itself is a kind of built-in personification that often occurs when people look up at the sky).

The language of the first line is delicate and simple, establishing a sense of calm that is disrupted by the ecstatic joy of the daffodils' sudden appearance. The iambic tetrameter suggests a steady but not urgent walking pace, and the consonance of /l/ sounds links "lonely" and "cloud" together, reinforcing the idea of clouds as somehow isolated figures (of course, this is very weather-dependent!).

The second line continues this airiness, with the enjambment at the end of line 1 allowing the two lines together to breathe easily. The /l/ sounds are picked up again in "floats," "vales," and "hills," but as this is a gentle sound, it only serves to underscore the calm atmosphere of the opening. This is, of course, a short lull that is soon to be interrupted.

**Lines 3-6**

Lines 3 and 4 introduce the central focus of the poem—the daffodils. Daffodils are bright yellow flowers that herald the beginning of spring in Britain (which is part of a weather area called the temperate climatic zone that includes four distinct seasons). Their sudden entrance into the poem—"all at once"—is in itself a way of representing the way they suddenly bloom and mark a distinct change between the seasons.

The speaker uses two different collective nouns to describe the daffodils, both of which are examples of personification. From first sight, the speaker perceives something human—or, more accurately, something relevant to humanity—in the daffodils. Initially, the speaker describes the daffodils as "a crowd," emphasizing their abundance and how they seem to be jostling for sunlight and space. The speaker then modifies, perhaps clarifies, the use of "crowd" by employing "host." Essentially, this word means "a large number," but it also occurs in biblical usage to describe a group of angels. With angels being human-like creatures, the use of "host" both adds to the personification of the daffodils and gently suggests a sense of divinity. The use of assonance in lines 3 and 4 underscores the sheer number of daffodils—the words are dominated by /o/ sounds, reinforcing this idea of abundance and crowdedness.

The final two lines of the stanza demonstrate that the daffodils, having appeared from nowhere, suddenly seem to be all over the place, wherever the speaker looks. Line 5 uses caesura to allow the speaker to point the reader's imagination towards the daffodils by setting them against the images of the "lake" and then the "trees."

Line 6 presents the first major variation in the meter, with a first-foot substitution that replaces the steady iambs that have come before with a dactyl:

Flu-tter-ing | and danc | -ing in | the breeze

The rhythm here creates the sense of dance that is so important throughout the poem, lending the daffodils delicate but noticeable movement. The first foot here has an almost waltz-like feel— ONE-two-three.

**Lines 7-12**

Like the first, the second stanza begins with a simile. This time, the speaker compares the daffodils with the stars in order to emphasize their sheer number. Just as on a good night the stargazer's view is full of stars, the daffodils seem never to end. Essentially, then, this stanza's main purpose is to expand on the sight of the daffodils. But the association with the stars also lends the daffodils a cosmic quality, supporting the idea that the speaker is witnessing something essential to existence itself—in this case, the natural world and its connection to humankind.

Both meter and sound contribute to this mind-bending sense of the universe in lines 7 and 8. The word "continuous" adds an extra syllable to the line, making the line read iamb-anapest-iambiamb:

Con-tin | u-ous as | the stars | that shine

The first word, then, embodies the idea of abundance, of thriving nature, through the extra syllable.

The combination of sibilance in line 7 and assonance in lines 7 and 8 develops the "twinkling" quality of the stars. The /s/ sounds across "continuous as," "stars," "shine," and the /i/ sounds of "continuous," "shine," "twinkle" and "milky" flash on and off like the stars in the night sky. This sonic effect mirrors the way the light is catching on the heads of the daffodils.

Lines 9 and 10 restate the seemingly never-ending sight of the daffodils, this time using assonant /e/ sounds to conjure the idea of the view being "stretched." Likewise, the enjambment at the end of line 9 allows the continuous line of daffodils to be matched by the continuation of the poetic line.

Line 11 represents the speaker's hyperbolic attempt to guess at the number of daffodils in view. It is, of course, not a precise number, but one readily available in the speaker's mind that generally represents a large quantity.

Line 12 returns to the personification running throughout the poem, and reinstates the "dance" of the daffodils. The use of "tossing" personifies the daffodils by suggesting agency, in that it is a deliberate movement (rather than an effect of the wind). Likewise, the reference to dancing again gives the daffodils a degree of conscious decision-making. Of course, the speaker doesn't really think the daffodils are deliberately dancing. But the personification allows the speaker to read their own being into that of the daffodils--that is, to find common ground between their existence as a human and the lively existence of the flowers.

**Lines 13-18**

The third stanza mentions dancing in its first line, setting it apart from the others, in all of which dancing comes in the final line. It makes sense, because here the dancing belongs not to the daffodils, but to the waves. It is, then, another personification, indicating that the speaker is reading intention and agency into everything they see in nature. The caesura in line 13 interrupts the image of the waves dancing and allows the speaker to state that the daffodils are superior in "glee" to the "sparkling waves." That is, though the waves seem joyful, the daffodils are even more so.

Lines 15 and 16 are seemingly light but actually contain the crux of the whole poem. That is, they state categorically the link between the daffodils and the speaker's happiness. The daffodils seem cheerful, and this mood passes on to the speaker. It's interesting, though, that the speaker uses the word "poet" rather than "person." The daffodils have the capacity to imbue a person with happiness, but, as the word choice implies, that person needs to have a certain sensibility and way of perceiving the world. In short, they need to be engaged with nature and ready to receive its sudden wonders, like the daffodils. Remember that the speaker is out for a walk in the countryside—the speaker has already chosen to place themselves in a more natural environment than a city or town. The poem, then, is an argument for this effort at connection with nature; it seems to suggest that any person must take on the sensibility of a poet in order to experience this kind of joy.

In line 17, the repetition of "gazed" emphasizes the length of time the speaker spends looking at the daffodils. The speaker is in no hurry at all. As this poem is told in the past tense, the rest of line 17 and line 18 can be read as an interjection from the poem's present, as the speaker offers commentary on their experience with the daffodils. It's an interesting moment, because it isn't as if the speaker hasn't made clear already that the daffodils had an important effect. The speaker here implies that the experience of the daffodils became even more important afterwards, and amounted to a kind of "wealth" (which calls back to the use of "golden" in line 4). The irresolution of this thought sets up the final stanza, with the colon suggesting that what follows will explain what the speaker is trying to say.

**Lines 19-24**

The fourth stanza contextualizes the three that have come before. It aims to make sense of them, and to show the reader the deeper purpose behind the discussion of the daffodils. This stanza brings the poem into its present moment, with the speaker offering context for the memory that has come before. It makes clear that the experience of the daffodils was important for reasons beyond the immediate boost to the speaker's mood. The daffodils have a lingering positive effect.

As in the first stanza, the speaker is alone. Here, the speaker talks of being in either a "vacant" or "pensive" mood. "Vacant" can be taken to mean disconnected or absent-minded, whereas "pensive" is more akin to worry—both seem to be undesirable states. In these moments, the memory of the daffodils returns to the speaker, coming to visual life in the speaker's mind (the "inward eye"). As a result, the speaker is joyful and feels a deep, spiritual connection with the daffodils—the speaker figuratively joins them in their "dance" (which once again returns in the final line of the stanza).

Some context about Wordsworth's poetic practice is vital here. In the preface to the Lyrical Ballads, which set out Wordsworth's early ideas about poetry, he writes: "I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind."

The "spontaneous overflow" was the original experience with the daffodils. But this experience gains its fullest value in the "solitude" mentioned in line 22, when these emotions— joy, cheerful abandon, connection to nature—can be "recollected" and "contemplated." For Wordsworth, this process makes the emotion return in a kind of pure, spiritual form, to the point that it "actually exists in the mind." The poem, then, emphasizes the importance of the imagination to human experience. Here, the speaker draws upon the sensory joy of the daffodils and feels a union with nature through the act of imaginative contemplation. This adjusts the meaning of what has come before. Just as the experience outlined in the final stanza depends upon memory, the poem itself is a product of that active, imaginative remembering. That is, the beauty of what has come before is a way of showing the importance of imaginative interaction with the world.

**“I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” Setting**

The poem is, on the one hand, set outdoors in the countryside. It's well-documented that the poem was inspired by one of Wordsworth's walks in England's Lake District, but the text of the poem doesn't state that explicitly. Accordingly, the poem's outdoors doesn't have to be limited to the specific place that gave Wordsworth the idea. The reader gets a clear sense that the countryside scene is well away from any other sign of humanity—hence the speaker's isolation—and is in a landscape with "vales and hills." Likewise, it is a pleasant climate and is early spring. Daffodils in fact, are often the herald of spring in places like England, and their sudden shock of yellow is a remarkable sight.

On the other hand, the poem's setting is also the speaker's psyche, what the speaker describes as an "inward eye." The poem is told in the first-person past tense until the final stanza, which situates the reader within the speaker's memory. This figurative setting is clarified at the end when the speaker discusses the merits of this kind of imaginative memory which, the reader now understands, they have been witnessing at work and even participating in.

**The Sparrow**

**by**

**Paul Laurence Dunbar**

**Paul Laurence Dunbar** (June 27, 1872 – February 9, 1906) was an American poet, novelist, and short story writer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Dunbar began writing stories and verse when he was a child. He published his first poems at the age of 16 in a Dayton newspaper, and served as president of his high school's literary society. Dunbar's popularity increased rapidly after his work was praised by [William Dean Howells](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Dean_Howells), a leading editor associated with [*Harper's Weekly*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harper%27s_Weekly). Dunbar became one of the first African-American writers to establish an international reputation. In addition to his poems, short stories, and novels, he also wrote the lyrics for the musical comedy [*In Dahomey*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_Dahomey) (1903), the first all-African-American musical produced on [Broadway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broadway_theatre) in New York.

**Summary of the Poem**

In the first stanza the poet describe a little bird that flutters down beside the speaker’s window. The bird chirps its song and taps on the window pane to get the speaker’s attention. However, the speaker is too focused on their work and doesn’t pay attention to the bird’s call. As a result, the bird eventually flies away due to the speaker’s neglect. It highlights the idea of missed opportunities and the importance of being present and attentive to the beauty and messages of nature.

In the second stanza the poet highlight the idea that birds symbolize peace, hope, and love. They come from above to bring solace and alleviate the burdens of earthly troubles. However, the speaker suggests that people are often too caught up in the rush and noise of daily life to notice or appreciate the presence of these uplifting elements. As a result, they continue on their path without realizing the loss until these positive influences are gone. It emphasizes the importance of being mindful and receptive to the small moments of beauty and goodness that can bring joy and comfort to our lives.

**Analysis of the Poem**

The poem “The Sparrow” captures the powerful force of natural world. The poem gives insight into the theme of nature, materialism of the world and a social message. The poem gives a social message to an individual to live in a present moment that entails opportunities. The poem also focuses on the decreasing relationship between the world of man and nature and the solipsism of modern world.

The poem gives a thematic concern on nature versus modernity. The poet suggest that the speaker’s neglect of the bird is a reflection of solipsism that is increasing in the modern world. The modern world creates a man who are becoming machinations and ignorant of the surroundings around them. The poet is hinting at the very idiosyncratic behaviour of man’s solipsism who invest their energies on their work that they often forget the opportunities that are lying ahead for them yet they fail to recognise so. In the poem, the bird chirps and sings to get the speaker’s attention yet the speaker is self centred and busy in his own world. It reflects man’s failure to recognise opportunities due to the stressful world of modernity.

The bird symbolizes an opportunity in the poem who arrives near the speaker but the speaker neglected the bird while the bird leaves. This showcases the a tussle within the world of modernity and it also shows man’s anthropocentric attitude the world of nature. The neglectful behaviour of man towards the flow of nature suggest his anthropocentric attitude who is inconsiderate of the existence of the world of nature. The poet is subtly hinting at the man’s behaviour who tends towards the modern life and modernity has seized the senses of man to feel, listen and enjoy the songs of the birds.

The poem gives an allegorical nature to the bird whorepresents hope, peace and love. The poet suggest that they bring solace and comfort for the man’s worldly burdens accompanied by the modern life. Man often are blinded by their work that they fail to receive these natural comforts of joy and happiness that nature brings to them. It showcases that man often looses the positive influences in their life once it is gone and the poet is suggesting to be mindful of the surroundings and not to lose any opportunities in life due to the heavy work.

The poem also has a social message where the poet gives a message to the world. The message is to be mindful about one’s surroundings and to be present in the moment of time to catch any opportunities that entails to a person. The poem also has a message on man’s anthropocentric attitude where the world of nature brings comfort and joy to man yet man is ignorant of it due to his stressful life of modernity.

**Theme**

The theme of the poem The Sparrow is that nature is all around us, beautiful and prosperous, but people nowadays are so wrapped up in their own lives, they do not appreciate all that nature has to offer.

**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**

**by**

**Robert Frost**

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" was written by American poet Robert Frost in 1922 and published in 1923, as part of his collection *New Hampshire*. The poem is told from the perspective of a traveler who stops to watch the snow fall in the forest, and in doing so reflects on both nature and society. Frost claimed to have written the poem in one sitting. Though this is likely apocryphal, it would have been particularly impressive due to the poem's formal skill: it is written in perfect [**iambic**](https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/iamb) tetrameter and utilizes a tight-knit chain rhyme characteristic to a form called the Rubaiyatstanza.

**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening Summary**

In the well-known poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost, a traveller stops by the woods on a stormy, snowy night. The peaceful beauty of the forest and snow leaves the tourists spellbound, and he is tempted to stay right here and feel it all in. He comes to the realization that he must complete other tasks before he may rest, so he keeps travelling. The tone of the poem is tranquil and reflective, which captures the traveller's mood. In contrast to the traveller's sense of urgency to continue, the vision of the snowy woods conveys a sense of quiet and serenity. The poem is made more beautiful and powerful by Frost's use of language and literary elements like alliteration, repetition, and metaphors.

Given the reader's viewpoint, the poem can be read in various ways and can be pursued from two completely different points of view. Some would see it as a straightforward account of a specific point in time. In contrast, other individuals might discover a deeper significance in the traveller's internal struggle between the need for quiet reflection and the demands of daily life. Overall, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is a lovely and thought-provoking poem that perfectly depicts the mood of a tranquil winter night and the human effort to balance our needs and responsibilities.

**Stanza 1**

Robert Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" has a meditative and serene tone that is established in the opening stanza. The narrator mentions passing a lovely scene of snow falling and the woods being enveloped in a serene quiet while walking through woodland on a winter evening. The narrator praises the scene's beauty and says he wants to stop and observe it but must continue his journey since he has duties.

***Line-by-line Analysis:***

o **"Whose woods these are, I think I know"** - The speaker is wondering who the owner of the woods might be as he wanders through that forest.

o **"His house is in the village, though"** - However, the speaker is aware that the owner of the woods lives in a close-by community and is therefore likely to have already visited that area and that he most likely knows the owner too.

o **"He will not see me stopping here"** - The speaker pauses briefly in the woods but is sure that the owner of the woods won't be keeping an eye on him.

o **"To watch his woods fill up with snow."** - The speaker is enjoying the tranquillity of the moment as well as the beauty of the snow falling on the trees and surrounding scenery.

The first stanza's rhyme pattern is AABA (enclosed rhyme). The second and fourth lines of the poem rhyme with one another. The stanza makes use of alliteration, which is the repeating of starting consonant sounds. The repeated "w" sounds in "Whose woods these are, I think I know" and "To watch his woods fill up with snow" are examples of alliteration.

The opening stanza introduces the ideas of temptation and responsibility and establishes a serene and peaceful tone for the poem as a whole. These topics will be further developed in the succeeding stanzas.

**Stanza 2**

In the second verse, the speaker imagines how his horse must be experiencing as they come to a stop on the darkest night of the year, in the middle of emptiness and isolation, particularly between some trees and a frozen lake. It's rare for the horse to stay in such a remote location because it most frequently stops close to a farmhouse or other shelter. The speaker and his horse are the only living things in a vast, snow-covered wilderness, which is conveyed by the depiction in this stanza.

o ***Line By Line Analysis:***

**"My little horse must think it queer",** which is the second verse's first line, indicates that the speaker is aware of his animal's discomfort with stopping in the middle of the woods. This line demonstrates the link between the speaker and his horse as well as the speaker's concern for his animal's feelings.

o The speaker's seclusion in the woods is underlined in the sentence that follows, **"To stop without a farmhouse near",** which also emphasizes the absence of any other people in the area and puts an emphasis on the unlikeliness of any other person stopping by at such an isolated place and that too at such an odd hour of the day.

o The following line, **"Between the woods and frozen lake",** gives the reader a clearer picture of the surroundings of the poet and the horse and makes a better picture of the landscape in the reader's mind. It also tries to show that the place where they are resting is completely isolated, far away from the madding crowd.

o The last line of the stanza, **"The darkest evening of the year",** clearly gives the impression that the poet has decided to look at this beautiful landscape after a long and tiring journey and wants a moment's rest to appreciate nature. Some readers also contemplate this line as an emphasis on the extremely cold and harsh weather the poet is travelling in.

This stanza uses the rhyming scheme BBCB, with the first, second, and fourth lines all rhyming together and the third line standing alone. In this verse, the phonetic elements used are imagery and assonance in the words "queer" and "near".

**Stanza 3**

In this stanza, the speaker's horse shakes the bells on its harness as if to inquire whether stopping in the middle of the woods on such a gloomy, snowy evening was a mistake. The "sweep" of the "easy wind" and "downy flake"?a soft rustling of the snow and wind?is the only other sound in the scene that emphasizes the fact that the poet and his horse are quite alone there in the middle of a cold forest.

This stanza emphasizes the speaker's bond with his horse and the horse's sensitivity to the beats and expectations of their voyage. This also reflects the poet's humbleness in listening to his horse's instincts and ability to communicate smoothly with the horse.

***Line-by-Line Analysis:***

o **"He gives his harness bells a shake"** - In this line, the speaker describes that the horse shakes his harness bells to awaken its owner from his hypnotic state of staring at the snow-covered woods because it was quite unusual for the horse and the poet to stop in the middle of nowhere and that too on a very chilled night.

o **"To inquire whether there is a mistake."** - The speaker wonders if stopping in this isolated location at this time of the day is the right choice because his horse's behaviour and response to it were quite the opposite.

o **"The only other sound's the sweep"** - In the third line, the poet is trying to convey the absolute stillness and quietness of their surrounding, which gives an eerie vibe; the level of quietness is apparent because the only sound they can hear is of the wind sweeping through the snow.

o **"Of easy wind and downy flake."** - In the last line, the speaker talks more about the winds and the flakes around them and describes the wind's sound as "easy", which denotes a mild or gentle vibe, and the snowflake's as "downy", which denotes gentle and fluffy vibes.

This stanza uses the rhyming scheme CCDC, with the first, second, and fourth lines all rhyming together and the third line standing alone. The first line of this stanza sees personification. Robert Frost personifies the horse as a human being aware of his owner's wants and can ask if they need to halt in such weather. Alliteration is used in the third line "The only other sound's the sweep". The repeated 's' sound in this line is an example of alliteration.

**Stanza 4**

In this stanza, the speaker continues to describe the peacefulness and beauty of the woods. He acknowledges that the woods are "lovely, dark, and deep" but recognizes that he cannot stay there because he has "promises to keep". These promises could be responsibilities or obligations that he must fulfil. He repeats the final line, "And miles to go before I sleep", which emphasizes his recognition that he still has a long journey ahead of him before he can rest.

The fourth stanza serves as a turning point in the poem, where the speaker's thoughts shift from the calmness of the woods to the reality of his responsibilities. The repetition of "miles to go before I sleep" creates a sense of urgency and reminds the reader that the speaker cannot linger in the woods for too long.

***Line-by-Line Analysis:***

o **"The woods are lovely, dark and deep,"** - In the first line, the poet repeats the imagery of the woods being described as "lovely, dark and deep". He continues to admire the scenery he has in front of his eyes and continues to submerge in its beauty.

o **"But I have promises to keep,"** - In the second line, the speaker acknowledges his responsibilities, his duties, and the promises he has made, indicating that he must keep on going and that he cannot stay in the woods forever.

o **"And miles to go before I sleep,"** - In the third line, the poet describes that he has a very long journey that is yet to be completed and cannot stay there as it might affect his daily routine and objectives.

o **"And miles to go before I sleep."** - The final line is a repetition of the previous line, which serves to emphasize the speaker's sense of duty and responsibility. The repetition also adds a sense of finality, as if the speaker has come to terms with the fact that he must leave the woods and continue on his journey.

**UNIT - II**

**PROSE: FRIENDSHIP**

**THE MAN IN BLACK- OLIVER GOLDSMITH**

Summary of The Man in Black.

The essay Man in Black by Oliver Goldsmith is an excellent display of exemplification.

In this essay, the author talks of a man who is remorseful of his charitable actions. The man is an obvious philanthropist, but he is ashamed of it. Goldsmith lays out the ways, and gives examples, of how "he is the only man I ever knew who seemed ashamed of his natural benevolence."

The man is a charitable man. He cares about others, gives to others, and shares with others, but he pretends to not care about the well-being of others. He is "ashamed of his natural benevolence." While he pretends to have a disliking for mankind, he's not very good at pretending to be. The author reveals that his poker face is not up to par.

... While his looks were softened into pity, I have heard him use the language of the most unbounded ill-nature."

The "Man in Black" is so concerned with the place of the poor, that he complains to the author of how ignorant the countrymen, or wealthy, are to the state of living of the poorer people. He says that the poor only want a few things - food, housing, clothes, and warmth but cannot obtain those things due to the negligence of the fortunate.

The man in black gives a beggar a piece of silver, but when doing so, he appeared

"ashamed" to present his weakness to the author; the man has too much pride to show his soft spot for the less fortunate.

When a man with a wooden leg passed the author and the man in black, the author ignored him. The man in black showed much attention to him, but instead of giving him alms, he called him out to be a poser of the needy. But once hearing the sailor's story of fighting in defence of the country while others "did nothing at home", the man gave alms to him.

The man in black and the author ran into a woman who was an obvious example of helpless, but he had no money to give her. He became shameful, as it was presented in his face, but once he found a "shilling's worth of matches", and placed it in her hands, he was pleased with himself seeing the smile in the woman's face. This anonymous man, the Man In Black, is a man of benevolence, and is bluntly shameful of it. There is no understanding of why.

The man is one who cannot exhibit generous behaviour without being ashamed of it.

He wants the world to see him as a man who does not care too much about the wellbeing of others; much less, the unfortunate. He is the "Man In Black", because he hides his benevolence. He does not want to be noticed for it. He is, the Man in Black.

“Man in Black” by Oliver Goldsmith: A Detailed Plot Summary

Oliver Goldsmith’s “Man in Black” is a charming narrative that follows the adventures of an enigmatic character known as the Man in Black. Set in 18th-century London, the story provides a glimpse into the life of the Man in Black as he navigates the bustling streets, encounters various individuals, and shares his unique observations and insights.

**Introduction to the Man in Black**

The story begins with the introduction of the Man in Black, a mysterious figure dressed in a somber attire. He roams the streets of London, observing the diverse range of people and situations around him. The Man in Black is known for his eloquence and wit, often engaging in conversations with those he encounters.

**Encounters and Observations**

As the Man in Black moves through the city, he encounters a series of intriguing characters and witnesses interesting events. He interacts with individuals from different walks of life, including beggars, street vendors, and wealthy socialites. Through his interactions, the Man in Black offers keen observations and reflections on human nature, society, and the complexities of everyday life.

**Stories and Anecdotes**

The Man in Black regales his audience with captivating stories and anecdotes that provide further insights into the human condition. He shares tales of love, loss, ambition, and deception, drawing from his own experiences and observations. These stories serve as a means to entertain, provoke thought, and shed light on the intricacies of human behavior.

**The Man in Black’s Philosophical Musings**

Amidst his encounters and stories, the Man in Black engages in philosophical musings and contemplations. He reflects on the fleeting nature of life, the pursuit of happiness, and the follies of human existence. Through his introspective monologues, the Man in Black imparts wisdom and offers a unique perspective on the complexities of the world.

**The Revelation**

Towards the end of the narrative, the Man in Black reveals his true identity and purpose. He discloses that he has been observing and studying humanity, seeking to understand the intricacies of human nature and the human experience. The Man in Black’s revelations leave his audience pondering the profound truths he has shared and the impact of his encounters and stories.

“Man in Black” by Oliver Goldsmith is a captivating tale that takes readers on a journey through 18th-century London alongside the mysterious and insightful Man in Black. Through his encounters, stories, and philosophical musings, the Man in Black offers a glimpse into the human condition, leaving his audience with a deeper understanding of life and society. Goldsmith’s narrative serves as a timeless exploration of human nature and the power of observation and storytelling.

**OF FRIENDSHIP- FRANCIS BACON**

Summary of “Of Friendship”

**Introduction**

The essay Of Friendship by Francis Bacon celebrated the intimacy between friends which is subjected to both prosperity and adversity without succumbing to the clouds of doubt and jealousy. The essay was written on the request of his friend Toby Matthew.

**Human need for company**

Bacon introduces the text with thoughts of Aristotle on companionship. He posits that human nature demands company and social contact. Isolation and solitude are traits of either wild beast or heavenly god.

Human beings require other human beings and anyone who avoids such interaction is not doing justice to his natural state. Bacon does not criticize people who feel shy in a crowd and head for therefore seek isolation in the wild.

Such people find great value in peace and it aids their mental processes to contemplate of profound issues. Through their extensive analysis, they journey on a path of self-discovery. Such hermits search for truth and knowledge in continued social sequestration.

However, the consequences of such isolation can be like a double-edged sword, desirable or detrimental. Bacon points to philosophers like Epimenides the Candian, Numa the Roman, Empedocles the Sicilian, and Apollonius of Tyana, who postulated theories unique to their age and contemporaries.

Their works are of immense philosophical wealth. Even several spiritual men find great benefit and progress through prolonged abstention from public life. Therefore, voluntary retreat from society can have positive consequences too.

Bacon attempts to differentiate between kinship and general crowd. For him, there is a big difference between strangers of society and known friends. A person can feel lonely in a crowd too. People may become transient glimpses which are lost if a person does not interact with them.

If a person does not feel passionate or interested in a conversation then it becomes an exercise in futile monologues and is similar in meaning to the undecipherable notes of musical instruments like cymbals.

Bacon uses a Latin adage which means that a big city is filled with great solitude. In a large city, people are separated and encamped in distinct areas that are difficult to bring closer together. These long distances cause separation between friends and relatives. Therefore, for cultivating friendship a small city or town is more conducive. In smaller townspeople live closer by and mingle a lot more regularly. Thus, these small cities have strong and united communities. According to Bacon, a friendship demands the involvement of passions and feelings. They form the foundation of any friendship. Emotions are the threads that bind the hearts together.

**A cure for ailing hearts**

Bacon points to the ailments of the heart that it suffers if it stops or is suffocated. A healthy heart required vigour and the same is provided by an intimate and friendly conversation with one’s pals. The bonhomie is the cure for depression and various diseases of the heart. Friendship is the panacea for heartaches. A true friend acts a secondary valve for the heart to pump life into a sick person.

Amusing and pleasant badinage acts as a stress reliever for the burdened and ailing heart. It elevates the mood of gloom and deathly isolation that a patient feels and makes him feel good again. Patients take medicines like sarza for the liver, steel for the spleen, flowers of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum for the brain etc, but for the issues of the heart, the love and affection of a friend is the best cure.

**Friendship can be bought**

The elite of society like kings and leaders are really adept at making friends. They understand the value of friendly ties with worthy people. The rich and the powerful often try to buy friendships of noble and influential people through gifts, badges of reverence and their wealth. But such friends lack emotional attachment with their patrons or benefactors. Their loyalty or friendship is tied to generous rewards and they are susceptible to corruption and greed. Friendship requires a quantum of parity if not equality. Therefore, the massive chasm between the king and his subjects cannot be bridged that easily.

Even if the princes admire certain ordinary individuals they find it difficult to befriend them. The only solution is to elevate such individuals so that they come nearer to the monarch in terms of power and influence. But such trade in friendship is often problematic. The intentions of someone whose friendship can be bought are not reliable and subject to greed and wickedness. The people who do enter the caucus of such powerful elite become favourites to them. Bacon tells us that the Romans had a special name for such individuals, ‘participes curarum’ meaning people who share one’s fears, doubts and worries.

This sharing of one’s burdens is a true quality of friendship and a strong tie of camaraderie. These favoured individuals gain the confidence of the elite and offer advice to them. This practice and ploy of befriending individuals have been prevalent throughout history, from able and proud monarchs to weak and cloying rulers. The empowered elite has used their political wits and acumen to enlist such friends at par with the ranks of nobility and governance.

**History teaches the toughest lessons**

Now, Bacon comments on some historical examples. He says that Roman ruler Sylla gave Pompey the moniker of ‘the Great’. However, consumed by arrogance Sylla’s friend Pompey reprimanded and rebuked him in public when they had some disagreement.

Pompey derided Sylla as the setting sun while calling himself the rising sun of Roman power. Similarly, Decimus Brutus gained Julius Ceaser’s friendship and became his most trusted advisor. Ceaser was so entrenched in his devotion to Brutus that he made him his heir apparent as well. His blind trust in Brutus caused Caesar’s final downfall. Ceaser, fearing a calamity owing to his wife Calpurnia’s bloodied nightmare, had decided to dissolve the Senate.

Brutus, however, convinced him to delay his decision. He had such powerful hold over Ceaser that Antonius would call him an enchantress (venefica) with evil machinations.

Even though Agrippa was from an ignoble birth, Augustus befriended him and honoured him with royal commendation. Agrippa was showered with praise, privilege and power.

When Augustus decided to marry his daughter Julia, his counsellor Maecenas suggested marrying her to Agrippa. According to Maecenas Agrippa was the best man for her and in the emperor decided otherwise, Agrippa had to be killed. Bacon gives the example of friendship between Tiberius and Sejanus. Tiberius was charmed by Sejanus they became inseparable companions. This brought great stature and honour to Sejanus.

Their friendship was considered as venerated as a goddess. Even an altar was attributed to their companionship by the Senate. Bacon then praised the friendship between Septimus Severus and Plautianus. Septimus’s son and Plautianus’ daughter were married against Plautianus’s wishes. Even when irate Plautianus condemned Septimus’ son, their friendship did not weaken. On the contrary, Septimus praised his friend beyond reason and logic. He even wished Plautianus a longer and more fulfilling life than his own. Bacon reiterated that all the historical figures he mentioned were hard and practical men. They did not have the noble heart or compassion like Trajan or Marcus Aurelius.

**A valuable blueprint**

Every decision they made was strategic and careful and not impulsive or emotional. However, it was their longing for friendship that made them gush in praise of their friends.

Even with all the power in the world, luxuries of life, doting families, they were dependent on the whims of their friends. In the end, these favoured individuals became their nemesis and cause for their demise. Bacon goes on to highlight the requirement of a friend to share joys and sorrows, successes and failures with. He gives the example of Duke Charles Hardy and French king Louis XI through their diplomat Comineus.

He says that in their last years both of them became reclusive and isolated themselves from others. They grew suspicious of everyone and were afraid of divulging any information that could bring their empires to a collapse. Bacon points at the parable given by Pythagoras i.e. ‘Cor ne edito’, meaning ‘eat not the heart’. Pythagoras had his suspicions of who can be called as true friends. He felt that a worthy friend who can be trusted with one’s intimate secrets and even then there would be chances of his trust being broken. He likened it to cannibalizing one’s own heart.

**Two sides of a coin**

Becoming intimate and excessively dependent on a friend can be a double-edged sword. It can help unburden the baggage of the heart and weight of worries. But on the flipside, it can all be just an illusion of comfort. Realistically no such friend exists who can reduce one’s own grief and pain. Palliation and reduction of pain through such miracle friends are all but fool’s gold. He goes on again reaffirm the ability of true friendship to comfort one’s ailing heart but at a risk of hurt. Even Nature testifies to the fact that when two elements combine, they form a better and improved thing. Even if there is an element of faith and risk, human friendship can cure and soothe the injuries of the heart.

Personal bonds can have an embalming impact that enhances one’s quality of life, strengthens mental prowess and. They provide cover in the midst of a storm. Friendship is like the glorious sunlight after that turbulent storm has passed over the horizon. Bacon proffers a caveat that friends will not guarantee great advice all the time.

But when a person does not have clarity of thoughts and emotions or biases cloud his/her judgment, a friend can be a sounding board or even an enlightened perspective. This can be more productive than hours of contemplative meditation in isolation. He quotes Themistocles who thought speech can be appreciated only if heard. It was similar to the rich textiles of Arras that needed to be seen to be appreciated and admired for their beauty and craftsmanship.

In the same vein, human thoughts when shared can unlock cluttered minds. Packs of folded tapestry lie underappreciated and overlooked until it is unravelled. Even a not so clever and witty can have an illuminated opinion when one propagated his thoughts to him. This puts them under a different light. Bacon gives the analogy of the thinker as tool sharpened on the obtuse friend acting as the whetting stone.

**Self vs others**

Bacon sage advice from well-meaning friends often leads to desirable consequences. Sometimes intuition, instincts, and emotions can tint and obfuscate one’s own judgment.

Our inherent biases can create complexities that can be eased by wise friends. Bacon points at Heraclitus who considered such invaluable advice as ‘dry and pure light’ enlightening and comforting. Bacon warns against cultivating sycophants and men of tact. He considers the counsel of such cloying individuals as more dangerous and lethal and even vain judgments. Notwithstanding that one should be aware of one’s own limitations of value judgment. It is very rare that men are adequately self-critical and inherent weakness should not cause us to reject the sound advice of able and well-intentioned men.

Such advice can have two purposes. Firstly, personal i.e. out of the goodness of one’s heart and secondly, conduct for the preservation of self-interest i.e. for business. Such criticism acts as a check on one’s pride and a cure for vanity. Bacon says that reading books on good conduct and morality is uninspiring and learning through observation of other people’s behaviour is not always advisable or even possible. In such condition having a friend who is willing to evaluate and criticize our flawed judgments act as a remedy. History is replete with examples of powerful men who committed the biggest of blunders and damaged their name and position only for a want of some good advice from good friends.

Bacon quotes St. James who warned people against the blindness induced by self-deception regarding one’s own faults and limitations. People often cannot see their own flaws, especially when met with some success. To them, another set of eyes sees the same things and they do not need other’s advice. Similarly, a gambler thinks he sees better than the onlookers or a gun can be fired as efficiently from a rest as from the arm. These musings reflect an arrogant and conceited mind which can lead to dire consequences for the individual. Any good business advisor always weighs the pros and cons and extends the best counsel without hesitation. A man can ask different advice from different friends and it is better than always gunning by one’s own instincts.

However, there could be an element of envy or complacency on the part of anyone advisor if there are multiple advisors. Only loyal and principled advisor the intention behind the advice remains questionable. Bacon says that every counsellor is limited by his own ability to analyze and study the matter, even if he intends well. Therefore, there always exists a risk that the outcome of such advice is undesirable. Bacon gives the analogy of a well-meaning but incompetent doctor who gives the wrong medicine to the patient without enquiring about his medical history. Instead of getting a cure, this could lead to more damage and even death.

**To conclude**

To conclude the essay Of Friendship, Bacon claims that every businessman must have a single reliable counsellor. A confidant who understands every little detail of his work and proffers correct advice based on sound judgment and analysis of the business. Multiple counsellors might lead to multiple and often conflicting paths be. The two main advantages of friendship are emotional support and good advice. Bacon enlists the third benefit too. He explains it in terms of the pomegranate fruit. He says that a good friend has many parts for different occasions just like the many kernels inside the pomegranate. Every human being is faced with things that he cannot accomplish on his own. It is here, a friend is more than one body. He is more than his own self. As discussed in ancient times, a friend is a replica of one’s self.

Bacon feels that a loyal and self-sacrificing friend is a friend not just for life but even in death. A true friend will honour is departed friend’s wishes and take care of his responsibilities like taking care of his family, finish all the unfinished things like repayment of debts etc. Another advantage is of the delegation of authority. At any given point of time, a friend can fill in for any person. Be it running a business or defending the house or safekeeping secrets, a loyal friend is a true blessing.

He is the best deputy anyone can ask for. There are numerous things for which a man requires another set of hands, a pair of eyes and even different perspective. It is here a true friend becomes invaluable. Bacon feels that when someone is trying to convince others of his value and qualities, he tends to be consumed with haughtiness and thus is easily ridiculed by them. On the other hand, sometimes people become too self-aware and shy and find it difficult to praise themselves.

They feel awkward in asking for a favour or even something they deserve or merit. These problems can be obviated through the agency of a loyal friend who has more social utility and functions that people normally assume. A trustworthy friend acts a great arbiter or intermediary. He becomes a conduit for messages when it is to be relayed to a pugnacious child or disgruntled spouse or even avowed enemy. Thus, friends bring a lot easy in such difficult situations and help break barriers of communication. Bacon ends the essay condemning an unsociable man without friends as an aloof being not fit to belong to society.

**The Blessing of Friends- Sir John Lubbock**

*“They seem to take away the sun from the world who withdraw friendship*

*from life; for we have received nothing better from the Immortal Gods,*

*nothing more delightful."*–CICERO.

Most of those who have written in praise of books have thought they could say nothing more conclusive than to compare them to friends.

“All men,” said Socrates, “have their different objects of ambition–horses, dogs, money, honor, as the case may be; but for his own part he would rather have a good friend than all these put together.” And again, men know “the number of their other possessions, although they might be very numerous, but of their friends, though but few, they were not only ignorant of the number, but even when they attempted to reckon it to such as asked them, they set aside again some that they had previously counted among their friends; so little did they allow their friends to occupy their thoughts. Yet in comparison with what possession, of all others, would not a good friend appear far more valuable?”

“As to the value of other things,” says Cicero, “most men differ; concerning friendship all have the same opinion. What can be more foolish than, when men are possessed of great influence by their wealth, power, and resources, to procure other things which are bought by money–horses, slaves, rich apparel, costly vases–and not to procure friends, the most valuable and fairest furniture of life?” And yet, he continues, “every man can tell how many goats or sheep he possesses, but not how many friends." In the choice, moreover, of a dog or of a horse, we exercise the greatest care: we inquire into its pedigree, its training and character, and yet we too often leave the selection of our friends, which is of infinitely greater importance–by whom our whole life will be more or less influenced either for good or evil–almost to chance.

It is no doubt true, as the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table says, that all men are bores except when we want them. And Sir Thomas Browne quaintly observes that “unthinking heads who have not learnt to be alone, are a prison to themselves if they be not with others; whereas, on the contrary, those whose thoughts are in a fair and hurry within, are sometimes fain to retire into company to be out of the crowd of themselves.” Still I do not quite understand Emerson’s idea that “men descend to meet.” In another place, indeed, he qualifies the statement, and says, “Almost all people descend to meet.” Even so I should venture to question it, especially considering the context. “All association,” he adds, “must be a compromise, and, what is worse, the very flower and aroma of the flower of each of the beautiful natures disappears as they approach each other." What a sad thought! Is it really so; need it be so? And if it were, would friends be any real advantage? I should have thought that the influence of friends was exactly the reverse: that the flower of a beautiful nature would expand, and the colors grow brighter, when stimulated by the warmth and sunshine of friendship.

It has been said that it is wise always to treat a friend, remembering that he may become an enemy, and an enemy, remembering that he may become a friend; and whatever may be thought of the first part of the adage, there is certainly much wisdom in the latter. Many people seem to take more pains and more pleasure in making enemies, than in making friends. Plutarch, indeed, quotes with approbation the advice of Pythagoras “not to shake hands with too many,” but as long as friends are well chosen, it is true rather that

*“He who has a thousand friends,*

*Has never a one to spare,*

*And he who has one enemy,*

*Will meet him everywhere,”*

and unfortunately, while there are few great friends there is no little enemy.

I guard myself, however, by saying again–As long as they are well chosen. One is thrown in life with a great many people who, though not actively bad, though they may not wilfully lead us astray, yet take no pains with themselves, neglect their own minds, and direct the conversation to petty puerilities or mere gossip; who do not seem to realize that conversation may by a little effort be made most instructive and delightful, without being in any way pedantic; or, on the other hand, may be allowed to drift into a mere morass of muddy thought and weedy words. There is hardly anyone from whom we may not learn much, if only they will trouble themselves to tell us. Nay, even if they teach us nothing, they may help us by the stimulus of intelligent questions, or the warmth of sympathy. But if they do neither, then indeed their companionship, if companionship it can be called, is mere waste of time, and of such we may well say, “I do desire that we be better strangers.”

Much certainly of the happiness and purity of our lives depends on our making a wise choice of our companions and friends. If our friends are badly chosen they will inevitably drag us down; if well they will raise us up. Yet many people seem to trust in this matter to the chapter of accident. It is well and right, indeed, to be courteous and considerate to every one with whom we are brought into contact, but to choose them as real friends is another matter. Some seem to make a man a friend, or try to do so, because he lives near, because he is in the same business, travels on the same line of railway, or for some other trivial reason. There cannot be a greater mistake. These are only, in the words of Plutarch, “the idols and images of friendship.”

To be friendly with every one is another matter; we must remember that there is no little enemy, and those who have ever really loved any one will have some tenderness for all. There is indeed some good in most men. “I have heard much,” says Mr. Nasmyth in his charming autobiography, “about the ingratitude and selfishness of the world. It may have been my good fortune, but I have never experienced either of these unfeeling conditions.” Such also has been my own experience.

*“Men talk of unkind hearts, kind deeds*

*With coldness still returning.*

*Alas! the gratitude of men*

*Has oftener left me mourning.”*

I cannot, then, agree with Emerson that “we walk alone in the world. Friends such as we desire are dreams and fables. But a sublime hope cheers ever the faithful heart, that elsewhere in other regions of the universal power souls are now acting, enduring, and daring, which can love us, and which we can love.”

No doubt, much as worthy friends add to the happiness and value of life, we must in the main depend on ourselves, and every one is his own best friend or worst enemy.

Sad, indeed, is Bacon’s assertion that “there is little friendship in the world, and least of all between equals, which was wont to be magnified. That that is, is between superior and inferior, whose fortunes may comprehend the one to the other.” But this can hardly be taken as his deliberate opinion, for he elsewhere says, “but we may go farther, and affirm most truly, that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness.” Not only, he adds, does friendship introduce “daylight in the understanding out of darkness and confusion of thoughts;” it “maketh a fair day in the affections from storm and tempests:” in consultation with a friend a man “tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words; finally, he waxeth wiser than himself, and that more by an hour’s discourse than by a day’s meditation.”... “But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth, for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal where there is no love.”

With this last assertion I cannot altogether concur. Surely even strangers may be most interesting! and many will agree with Dr. Johnson when, describing a pleasant evening, he summed it up–"Sir, we had a good talk.”

Epictetus gives excellent advice when he dissuades from conversation on the very subjects most commonly chosen, and advises that it should be on “none of the common subjects–not about gladiators, nor horse-races, nor about athletes, nor about eating or drinking, which are the usual subjects; and especially not about men, as blaming them;” but when he adds, “or praising them,” the injunction seems to me of doubtful value. Surely Marcus Aurelius more wisely advises that “when thou wishest to delight thyself, think of the virtues of those who live with thee; for instance, the activity of one, and the modesty of another, and the liberality of a third, and some other good quality of a fourth. For nothing delights so much as the examples of the virtues, when they are exhibited in the morals of those who live with us and present themselves in abundance, as far as is possible. Wherefore we must keep them before us.” Yet how often we know merely the sight of those we call our friends, or the sound of their voices, but nothing whatever of their mind or soul.

We must, moreover, be as careful to keep friends as to make them. If every one knew what one said of the other, Pascal assures us that “there would not be four friends in the world.” This I hope and think is too strong, but at any rate try to be one of the four. And when you have made a friend, keep him. Hast thou a friend, says an Eastern proverb, “visit him often, for thorns and brushwood obstruct the road which no one treads." The affections should not be mere “tents of a night.”

Still less does Friendship confer any privilege to make ourselves disagreeable. Some people never seem to appreciate their friends till they have lost them. Anaxagoras described the Mausoleum as the ghost of wealth turned into stone.

“But he who has once stood beside the grave to look back on the companionship which has been for ever closed, feeling how impotent then are the wild love and the keen sorrow, to give one instant’s pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart which can only be discharged to the dust.”

Death, indeed, cannot sever friendship. “Friends,” says Cicero, “though absent, are still present; though in poverty they are rich; though weak, yet in the enjoyment of health; and, what is still more difficult to assert, though dead they are alive.” This seems a paradox, yet it there not much truth in his explanation? “To me, indeed, Scipio still lives, and will always live; for I love the virtue of that man, and that worth is not yet extinguished.... Assuredly of all things that either fortune or time has bestowed on me, I have none which I can compare with the friendship of Scipio.”

If, then, we choose our friends for what they are, not for what they have, and if we deserve so great a blessing, then they will be always with us, preserved in absence, and even after death, in the “amber of memory.”