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The Ideal Friend

            The Victorian novel *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens tells Pip’s story of growing up to be a gentleman and his encounters with good-natured as well as snobbish, selfish people. The symbol of a true friend was represented through Herbert Pocket, a faithful companion to Pip during his times of success and struggle.

            Pip is a young man who effortlessly falls into the lap of luxury by inheriting the property of a mysterious benefactor in London. Being previously of lower class and an inhabitant of a small village, he is unfamiliar with the new town he will now call home and the customs of a man of his class.  Herbert, the son of Pip's tutor, receives Pip with open arms and displays “a natural incapacity to do anything secret and mean” (Dickens 176).  In Pip's strive to attain knowledge in the proper manners of a gentleman, Herbert supports his efforts by offering friendly suggestions to avoid making Pip feel embarrassed at his own ignorance. In contrast, the reaction of some of Herbert's relatives is to hate Pip "with the hatred of cupidity and disappointment" (Dickens 203). Out of great envy from Pip's progress, they would “[fawn] upon [Pip] in [his] prosperity with the basest meanness” (Dickens 203). Pip's condescending uncle known as Pumblechook, spontaneously starts treating Pip with deep respect to mask his intentions of benefiting from Pip's fortune by gaining recognition as his benefactor or receiving money. The people that resent Pip for his luck or try to form false friendships to feed off his fortune soon become his enemies. Herbert proves himself to be a reliable ally by giving successful Pip a warm welcoming to his first visit to London and in aiding Pip in his pursuit towards self-improvement.

            Pip's world collapses as he drags himself and Herbert into debt and then discovers that his benefactor is a convict. The realization threatens his life, reputation, and leaves him with no expectations. In Pip's greatest hour of need, Herbert devotes himself to pulling his friend through these frustrations at the risks of his own reputation in plotting and carrying out plans of escape for a convict. He tends to Pip's wounds, saves his life, and “[receives] [Pip] with open arms, and [Pip] had never felt before so blessedly what it is to have a friend” (Dickens 340).

As soon as Pumblechook heard of Pip's failure in becoming a gentleman, Pip soon notices the “wonderful difference between the servile manner in which he had offered his hand in [Pip's] new prosperity… and the ostentatious clemency with which he now exhibited” (Dickens 479). To imposters like Pumblechook, Pip does not even deserve respect if he is no longer is a possible source of income. Herbert is clearly the dependable person to go to during struggles since he never turns his back on Pip, blames him for causing trouble, or rejects Pip for no longer prospering.

Imposters cannot be trustworthy confidants because they treat people the way they think they will benefit from them the most. The unfailing companion values a friend more than money and believes friendships are worth taking risks in order to save them. Whether one is advancing or stumbling through life, a true friend will not leave one’s side. Herbert showed all the qualities and is a great representative of what a real friend should be. The ideal friend is a loyal companion like Herbert, who will stand by one’s side no matter what happens.