

McGill, Mary E.

"Rare is the ...

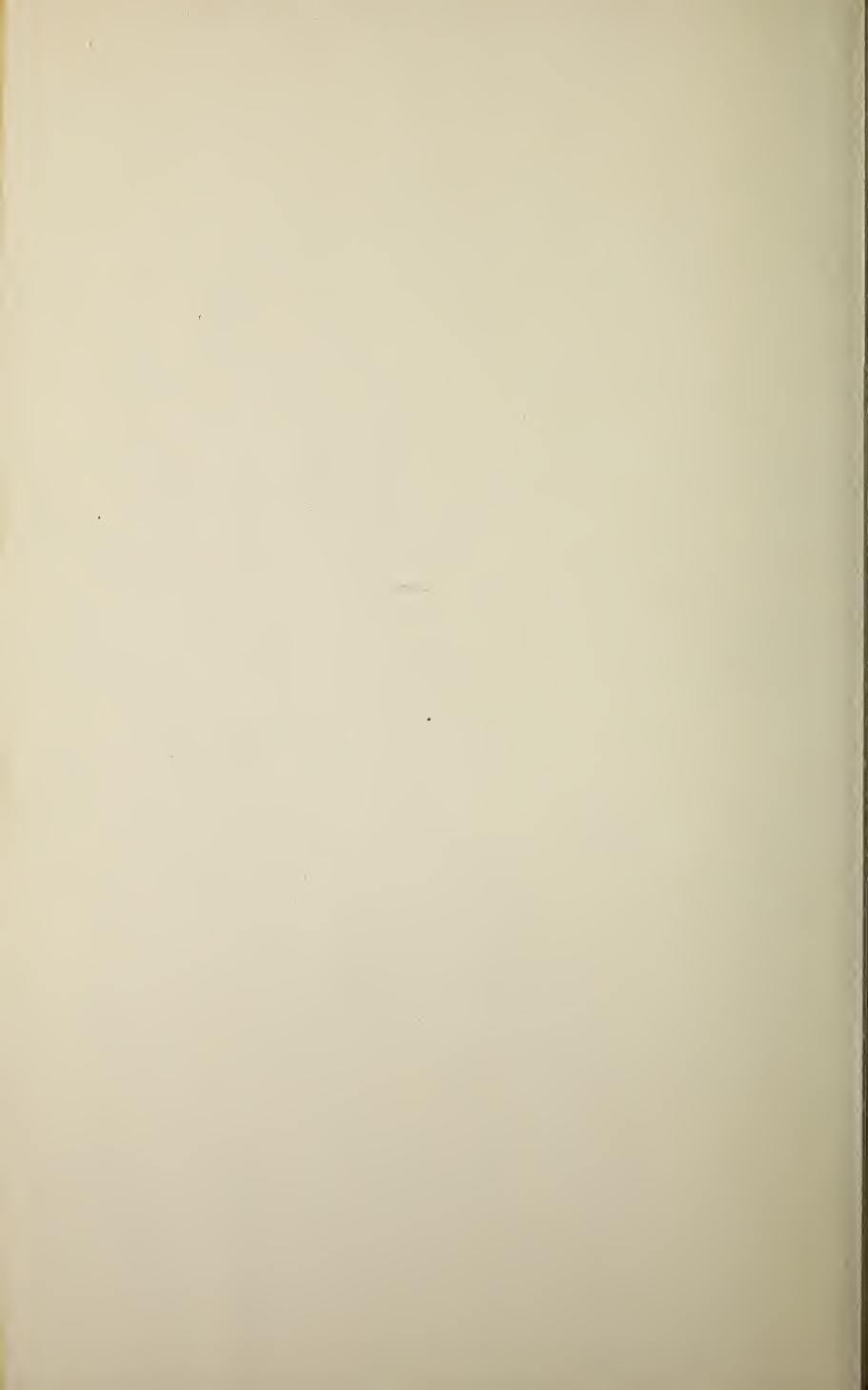
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"RARE
IS THE
FRIEND..."



Mary E. McGill



Francis A. Fink

Managing Editor

Dear Sunday Visitor

Wishing you a long, happy
and useful life, with
growing editorial achieve-
ments even to your
Golden Jubilee of fruitful
service.

Sincerely

Mary E. McLaughlin

Christmas

1949.

**"RARE
IS THE
FRIEND.."**



Mary E. McGill

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By Mary E. McGill

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To

Most Reverend John F. Noll, D.D.

Bishop of Fort Wayne

Founder and Editor of Our Sunday Visitor

In grateful appreciation and with reverent esteem

and to

The Readers of Our Sunday Visitor

and

To The Staff and personnel of this great

Religious Weekly

In memory of inspirational associations, in gratitude for seventeen years of privileged service on the **Visitor's** staff, and in happy recollection of the generous encouragement received from Readers of my page throughout the United States, Canada, and in foreign countries, this simple little book is loyally dedicated.

“Rare is the friend who remains faithful through all his friend’s distress. But You, Lord, and You alone, are entirely faithful in all things; other than You, there is none so faithful.”

Imitation of Christ

"Rare is The Friend...."

by Mary E. McGill

LIKE wine properly made from grapes best suited for the purpose, and which has been permitted to stand until age has ripened its flavor and put in its rich pour the alluring aroma of matured fragrance, is the seasoned gift of a noble friendship.



COLERIDGE visualized the protective comfort in true friendship when he compared it to "a sheltering tree."



TIME does not weaken the bond of gold that anchors the heart of a true friend to another. Sorrow tests the bond and proves its durability. Joy brushes against its burnished glory only to find loyalty rejoicing in the happiness or the success of the one esteemed. Someone has said: "There is no man so poor that he is not rich if he have a friend; there is no man so rich that he is not poor without a friend." Robert Louis

Stevenson sensed the selflessness in true friendship when he wrote:

“So long as we love, we serve; so long as we are loved by others I should say that we are almost indispensable; and no man is useless while he has a friend.”



BUT no one is without a friend, therefore, no one can ever be classified “useless.” Christ is the Friend of everyone. The most abandoned man or woman is lovingly sheltered in the great Heart of Christ. And on the soul of each is stamped God’s protective seal, for all men are made to His image and likeness. Then why, oh friends, are we so slow in perceiving Christ in others?



SOMEONE has said that love and esteem are the first principles of friendship; it is always imperfect if either of these two ^{are} are wanting. These principles are sound for the reason friendship should ennoble, not de-throne. All good and honorable friendships elevate the soul; base friendships muddy the thought stream, contract the heart, and paralyze the spirit. But avoidance of unworthy friendships should not lead to hatred of sinners. We who strive to follow Christ love sinners and hate their sins. Loving sinners for their good, not for our selfish designs, we pray for them, we are kind to them, we give them encouragement and good example. Yet since pitch defiles, and evil friendships act likewise, there is no point in seeking the companionship of those who *will* to follow sin; particularly, would it be pointless for youth to go into the habitats of evil-doers and associate with the vicious. But the innocent should pray often, earnestly and compassionately for sinners. God’s

justice will be appeased through prayer. Only in eternity will we know how many have been saved through *selfless* prayers and sacrifices!



ONE way to keep your friends is not to give them away, thus a modest anonymous sage warns. For have we not all known men and women who take delight in exposing the weaknesses, faults, peculiarities, infirmities, and even grave, hidden sins of others? Yet these same people pretend they have love for those they belittle or expose. The question arises: Why do acquaintances, much less friends, so betray? The answer is simple: All such seek to climb out of their own insufficiencies as they pull down others. Also, envy and jealousy frequently are the instigators. Whatever the motive, it is unworthy. Only small souls stoop to uproot the good standing and the reputation of others. When they stoop, they fall. It is not always a grave injury to the spirit, but it is character deforming to lessen the esteem in which others are held even in small ways. Pride is back of most of such conduct. No wonder humility supports every virtue!



Robert Louis Stevenson has something to say that should give men and women who are afraid to defend another a serious moment. Here are his words:

“The cruelest lies are often told in silence.—
A man may have sat for hours and not opened his teeth, and yet have been a disloyal friend or a vile calumniator.”

A true soldier of Christ will give his life in defense of His teachings. A sincere friend will speak out for his friend in his absence and he will be loyal to him

in the presence of others. An honorable man or woman will put his tongue to good use in defense of anyone when the occasion warrants. No one with any moral stamina will remain silent when friend or foe is unjustly attacked, whether that friend or foe be present or absent. It is wrong to lie for another; it is charitable to look for the spark of good in everyone!



SIDNEY, in a moment of loneliness, called out: "My friend, that oft saw, through all masks, my woe, come, come, and let me pour myself on thee."



BLESSED Henry Suso warned, however, against wastefulness when he advised:

"Give not thyself too much to any one. He who gives himself too freely is generally the least acceptable."



IT is recorded that a young man in conversation with St. Augustine observed that "Whoever has a pure soul has God." It is in line with the Beatitude: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." To have God—possess sanctifying grace—is to have All. Consider the perception of the youth who understood that a pure soul attracts even Infinite Purity!



It is not surprising then that human friendship has been likened to "sunshine on a cliff of snow." Oh, what a heaven-sent blessing is a true friend! Sunshine

warms a chilled heart. When congenial minds meet and when an understanding friend expresses interest or sympathy, a refueling of strength occurs. Only true friends are thus mutually comforting. Their friendship is pure, *it is selfless*, it radiates, and it lights up the heart to a moment of illuminating revelation. Thus in lesser way, a friend sees another, as the pure soul senses God's presence. Indeed, noble friendships lead souls to God.



THERE is preserved a caution from Socrates: "Be slow to fall into friendship, but when thou art in, continue firm and constant."



TACT is important between friends in highly sensitized moments. Balzac realized this when he wrote,— "In certain circumstances in life we can bear no more from a friend than to feel him beside us. Spoken consolation irritates the wound and reveals its depth." There is a Chinese proverb to the same effect. It runs: "A sorrow is like an itching, made worse by scratching."



PASCAL'S words may prove disconcerting but they bear repetition, even though there is a tinge of cynicism that will sting the memory.—"I lay it down as a fact that if all men knew what they say of one another, there would not be four friends in the world."—

ONE perceives so much disloyalty in the world between relatives and friends and is so frequently confronted with the ghastly wreckage of broken friendships that strew life's highway, Pascal may be forgiven his harsh conclusion. In fact, though I myself have a

cheerful disposition and though I have been blessed with friends far beyond my merits as I have walked over a large number of bridges leading from time to eternity, and though I optimistically anticipate crossing many others, I have come to reckon true friends and inspiring friendships the greatest strength and the sweetest joy that God bestows other than His protective power and sustaining grace. This thought embraces family affection. For natural ties of blood relationship could well weaken if friendships did not reinforce the links binding such loyalties. Pascal and his sister Jacqueline well understood each other. Theirs was a noble friendship as well as a natural brother and sister tie.



GOD being the supreme and truest friend any one can have, friendship Divine lifts friendship itself to the highest blessing.



SINCE friendship is sacred, since it is beyond price, and since only the very fine in character make true friends, mortal friendship is rare in its noblest form. La Bruyere wrote, "Pure friendship is something of which men of an inferior nature can never taste." It is folly, then, for a person to confuse people of good will, or mere acquaintances, with tried friends, and from such confusion to open the heart unwisely to the untried.



EVERYONE who has a friend should desire to keep that friend. There is a simple rule for friendship's insurance. Be true yourself.

IF one is a true friend one will not lose a friend who has given witness to friendship. The principle works something like this. If you are true yourself, you will not permit your friendship to break. You will go out of your way to support the weakening dam that has contained the noble regard you and your friend have had for each other. By look, by word, by generous deed, and by a magnanimous gesture you will again invite wavering loyalty to your heart and there heal a bruised affection. A friendship on the verge of destruction will thus be reclaimed.

IF you have understanding and compassion you will love not less but more the one redeemed from dishonor. For to "let down" a friend would be a dishonor, small or large, according to the provocation, unless that friend had betrayed you. Under the white heat of a spiritual affection it is possible to anneal to the heart more strongly than ever before a treasured one whose allegiance was gravely threatened.



THE Chinese have a saying that expresses well the void created by a lost friendship. It is this. "A true friend is best known by his loss." Another from the same source that should produce meditation before shooting a barb in pique that may strike a vulnerable spot,—"Friendship once broken, though rejoined, the knot will always remain." Fortunate the man or woman who has not encountered "the knot."



FRIENDSHIP IN MARRIAGE. If more marriageable youths had the judgment to plan their marriages on a noble congeniality, on lofty spiritual aspirations that are akin, on mental outlooks that will meet in the

far vistas, i.e., the years in the making, and on reciprocal affection that seeks the happiness of the one loved more than the happiness of self, the divorce mills would run out of human grain to grind, and the indissolubility of valid marriages would give outward testimony to a blind world of that which they are in fact, because so ordained by God, though in our day, because of the hardness of the hearts of men and women and their materialistic evaluations, they seemingly are as easily dissolved as ice under a warm sun.



BECAUSE the resilient, forgiving type of Christian friendship which heals disturbed relations between married couples has deteriorated into the brittleness of ice, the non-breakable quality of true marriage has assumed a false aspect. Dead passion—not the passion of noble love, but lust—can no longer draw fighting spirits and rebellious humanity together. But a deep friendship, warmed by understanding and true compassion and sustained by a determined Christian affection, the combination of which attributes can and will take care of natural love, would tenderly salvage the broken threads that human weakness had created and would tie these threads with an enduring, selfless devotion that would entertain no thought of making human flotsam of two who had become one, with perhaps the children of such union society's jetsam.



THE finest kind of love lives on through the years. J. C. and A. W. Hare analyzing friendship, wrote: "Friendship is love, without either flowers or veil." But why not extend friendship to include married love, *with* flowers and veil?

THE reason for sharp insistence on friendship in marriage, and as a basis for marriage lies in the ephemeral nature of orange blossoms. Marriage in flower encounters weeds which must be uprooted. Rocks cut the feet of the wedded couple. Briars scratch. Sorrows choke the heart. Fears grip the mind. Trials test the spirit. Yet if the husband and wife have for each other a deep friendship, which is mutually consoling, they have the finest kind of love. The passion incident to married love will be balanced and sustained by this friendship. From it will develop a love that will accompany to the grave the first to answer the Divine Call, there to water the cold earth with burning tears and there to pour forth to the Merciful Judge prayers for the companion who will no longer keep watch on earth with the one made desolate.



HUMAN love and humanity's friendships find solace in God. Someone whose name is hidden from me learned the way to cover pain. In verse the method is revealed. I quote:

BURY THY SORROW

Bury thy sorrow;
 hide it with care;
Bury it deeply;
 the world has its share.
Think of it calmly
 when curtained by night;
Tell it to Jesus,
 and all will be right.
Tell it to Jesus;
 He knoweth thy grief.
Tell it to Jesus;
 He'll send thee relief.

Hearts grown aweary
 with heavier woe,
Drop into darkness;
 go, comfort them, go—
Bury thy sorrow;
 let others be blest.
Give them the sunshine—
 tell Jesus the rest.



THROTTLED FRIENDSHIP.—Hazlitt grasped the fact that friendship must not be throttled by exactitudes. He said there are no rules governing it. This is not quite true, for honor must always be the norm, and the beginning and the end of a real friendship.



A friend merits trust, whether the friendship is that of one man for another, or between women, or whether the friend be your wife or husband; or, shall I go further,—of course!, and say whether that friend be a man or a woman other than your wife or your husband (but of the opposite sex), who is honorable and who is honored by you? In this latter instance, though, honor must sternly guard that the inalienable rights of husband or wife (before God) are in no sense violated. These inalienable rights should be more generally recognized in society, and public opinion should protect marriage vows by discountenancing rampant practices of fornications and adulteries. It is an eternal misfortune for multitudes that modern *mores* make of the Divine law a travesty to titillate spoiled imaginations and sated pleasure-seeking materialists and sensualists.



IF there is one thing more than another that wounds the delicate sensibility of a man or a woman who loves Divine Beauty and whose pure heart seeks good in others and dwells not on evil, it is, I think, the experience of daily encountering in the worldling a writing of sex expression (unsanctified by marriage) into every word, gesture, or act of associates. Yet the atmosphere of our times is so heavily laden with the fumes of materialism and sensuality that condition prevails more widely than a wholesome mind can perceive without pain.

The early Christians were martyred for their Faith or because they would not surrender chastity. In our day, two thousand years later, Christ's followers are similarly tested in many countries, where thousands have suffered martyrdom. But fortunately for us persecution has not yet come to Americans. Yet our Faith is challenged by the godless. Morality is at low tide. Everywhere there is a grave disregard of Christian standards and a scoff at Christian ideals. The materialist, the gross sensualist, the mad seeker of pleasure, has no congeniality with religion. The apostate Catholic, the indifferentist to religion, or the atheist, can never be trusted in a dark hour! One who is not God's friend should not even be expected to be man's friend. A good pagan is a far better risk.—

TODAY'S urgency is militancy for God, not frenzied manufacture of atom bombs. Youth introduced to Christ—Men and Women openly professing Christianity by a brave living of Jesus' teachings—*These* are the friends that humanity needs in our crucial times. Through prayer and sacrifice, an army of such Godward marching friends can bring peace to the world. Through virtuous practise Christians can create a clean society. Purified hearts and washed minds speak to a sinning world clamorously, and even without words. For no

worldling can look into chaste eyes without realizing there is a light of greater luminosity shining forth than in bold headlights glowing with a sparkle drawn from hell's fire. *And this heaven-lighted friendship it is the destiny of Christians to cast over the whole world.*



Returning to Hazlitt, to whom I have heretofore referred, and quoting him: "There are no rules for friendship. It must be left to itself. We cannot force it any more than love." It is a long admitted fact, proven by humanity's experience, that neither love nor friendship can be forced. Each is a gift! The gift reciprocated becomes a fused offering. The noblest friendship *is* love. The love type depends on whether it is destined to lead to marriage, whereupon it assumes a oneness of heart, mind *and* body; or whether it is to exist in the form of a noble regard. Platonic friendship between man and woman, however, requires strong character. It must be sustained by great prudence. It of necessity is dependent for continuation in *status quo* on deep spiritual rootings. Then it becomes, as Johnson declared,—

Friendship, peculiar boon of Heav'n,
The noble mind's delight and pride . . ."

The sensualist cannot understand this kind of friendship. But platonic friendship has existed throughout the ages. It does exist today. It has glorified in history man's nobility, manifesting anew the truth that he is made to the image and likeness of God. Like a most precious jewel, platonic friendship is to be guarded. Like an exquisite flower, the species that grows best in high altitudes, it is to be accepted and held in sacred trust. Indeed, for the majority it had better be left blooming alone, lest its beauty drug prudence. God's

beauty alone is absolute proof against intellectual blindness.



COUNSEL with God before you choose a friend. Then you will choose your friends in honor. Let honor keep watch over your devotion, and to a good friend never turn your back. Refuse to judge a friend harshly. The Sioux is said to have prayed: "Great Spirit, help me never to judge another until I have walked two weeks in his moccasins."



"The best mirror is an old friend," an old proverb runs. And in the Scripture, Prov. 27, 6, one reads—"Better are the wounds of a friend, than the deceitful kisses of an enemy." From the same source is taken the injunction: "Practice no evil against thy friend, when he has confidence in thee."

NEW FRIENDS: It is wise to widen the field of acquaintances and to make a few new friends, but the Scripture informs for man's stability: "Forsake not an old friend for the new one will not be like him." Again, "He that feareth God, shall likewise have good friendships; because according to him shall his friend be." And there is the following from the *Imitation of Christ* (Thomas à Kempis) that contains a kernel of wisdom: "Do not open your heart to every man, but discuss your affairs with one who is wise and who fears God."



The following lines were sent to me by a good Franciscan Padre several years ago. Ministering in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in New York, this son of the holy Francis knows well the hunger souls have

for peace. For this church, located in a busy section of America's greatest metropolis, literally elbowing the ingoing and outgoing throngs crowding the Pennsylvania Station, welcomes thousands who daily come to adore Christ in His tabernacle of love. There lonely, tired, anxious hearts go for understanding. There joyous souls enter to give thanks. There sinners find their way seeking forgiveness. There men, women, and children learn to "love each other better." Quoting the promised lines, it is regretted the author's name cannot be given, for like many others who have beautiful thoughts, in humility he wears a mask—*anonymous*.

IF WE ONLY UNDERSTOOD

Could we but draw back the curtains
That surround each other's lives;
See the naked heart and spirit,
Know what spur the action gives,
Often we would find it better,
Purer than we judge we would:
We would love each other better,
If we only understood.

If we knew the cares and trials,
Knew the efforts all in vain,
And the bitter disappointment,
Understood the loss and gain,
Would the grim external roughness
Seem, I wonder, just the same?
Would we help where now we hinder?
Would we pity where we blame?

Ah! We judge each other harshly,
Knowing not life's hidden force;
Knowing not the fount of action
Is less turbid at its source;
Seeing not amid the evil,
All the golden grains of good:
Oh, we'd love each other better
If we only understood!



May God bless you with a few friends. If you should be destined to marriage, may your best friend next to Him be an understanding, faithful husband or wife. But whether you are consecrated to God in virginity, or similarly dedicated though living in the world, or married, it is God's will that you should have friends and be a faithful friend to others. With Herder I agree that,—“Friendship with the good is like the evening shadows, increasing till the sun of life sets.”



The believer in God, the lover of Christ, should never feel altogether alone. The Paulist priest, Reverend J. J. Burke, reveals admirably the solace companionship with Christ brings:

“I plod not lonely through the night
I have a partner in my pain;
Yoke-fellows in the selfsame plight
Though he be Christ, yet we are twain.”



Now I pray that each of you may have this Divine partner in pain and that you may love Christ, your Best Friend, with all your heart. For this Best Friend is also God, Who knows your every thought, yearning, joy and sorrow, and understands you as no one else can or ever will. All this because He made you for Himself, to love Him in time and to adore Him forever and ever in a bliss no man can comprehend. This is the happiness meant for *you*. This is the peace won for you, This is the joy so desired for you, that your Best Friend died on the Cross so that He could give it to you.

All this your Best Friend—Jesus!—gives with His final sigh of love. Living eternally, the God-Man asks only your love in return. He wants you to give Him

your heart and be true to Him. If you do this, without cheating, He will stand by you forever, and you may have all the good human friendships your heart desires.



Jesus must come first in your heart. He knows you are human. Better than any human friend, He will forgive your failures and heal your wounds, if you are sincerely sorry. But Jesus is God. He is all Beauty, Love, Mercy, Justice. He must rest deeper in your heart than any other loved one . . . deeper than father, mother, sister, brother, friend, even than a husband or a wife. So tenderly covered in your love, Jesus will send out His holy fire to warm, bless, and make happy you and all those others you love for Him and in Him.



In this wondrous loving of Jesus and of your friends and all others for Him, you will become an unusual person. You will grow to resemble the Divine Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Like that One, Whose love fills Heaven and encircles the earth, and Whose protective mercies and gentle love the sad, cold world is starving for, without realizing its terrifying helplessness and its hungering quest, you will glow into a (little) living flame of love. Like Jesus, but in an infinitely lesser manner since He is infinitely greater, you will be *a rare friend*. Then you will radiate Christ.



Oh, the joy of becoming Christ's mirror! What foretaste of Heaven, this,—to have friends see Him through you and then hasten to adore and love not reflected effulgence but the Light Itself—the Lord Jesus,—Rarest of Friends, of whom “there is none so faithful.”



