

LAELIUS
OR, AN ESSAY ON FRIENDSHIP

by Cicero

translated by W. Melmoth

LAELIUS

TO TITUS POMPONIUS ATTICUS.

QUINTUS MUCIUS, the Augur, used to relate, in a very agreeable manner, a variety of particulars which he remembered concerning his father-in-law, the sage Laelius, as he constantly styled him. My father introduced me to Mucius as soon as I was invested with the manly robe, and he so strongly recommended him to my observance that I never neglected any opportunity in my power of attending him. In consequence of this privilege I had the advantage to hear him occasionally discuss several important topics, and throw out many judicious maxims, which I carefully treasured up in my mind, endeavouring to improve myself in wisdom and knowledge by the benefit of his enlightening observations. After his death I attached myself in the same manner, and with the same views, to his relation, Mucius Scaevola, the chief pontiff; and I will venture to say that, in regard both to the powers of his mind and the integrity of his heart, Rome never produced a greater nor more respectable character. But I shall take some other occasion to do justice to the merit of this excellent man; my present business is solely with the Augur.

As I was one day sitting with him and two or three of his intimate acquaintance in his semi-circular apartment where he usually received company, among several other points he fell into discourse upon an event which had lately happened, and was, as you well know, the general subject of conversation; for you cannot but remember (as you were much connected with one of the parties) that when Publius Sulpicius was Tribune, and Quintus Pompeius Consul, the implacable animosity that broke out between them, after having lived together on the most affectionate terms, was universally mentioned with concern and surprise. Mucius having casually touched upon this unexpected rupture, took occasion to relate to us the substance of a conference which Laelius formerly held with him and his other son-in-law, Caius Fannius, a few days after the death of Scipio Africanus, upon the subject of Friendship. As I perfectly well recollect the general purport of the relation he gave us, I have wrought it up, after my own manner, in the following essay. But that I might not encumber the dialogue with perpetually interposing "said I" and "said he," I have introduced the speakers themselves to the reader, by which means he may consider himself as a sort of party in the conference.

It turns on a subject upon which you have frequently pressed me to write my thoughts, and, indeed, besides being peculiarly suitable to that intimacy which has so long subsisted between us, it is well worthy of being universally considered and understood. I have the more willingly, therefore, entered into the discussion you recommended, as it affords me an opportunity of rendering a general service at

the same time that I am complying with your particular request.

In the treatise I lately inscribed to you on Old Age, I represented the elder Cato as the principal speaker, being persuaded that no person could, with more weight and propriety, be introduced as delivering his ideas in relation to that advanced state than one who had so long flourished in it with unequalled spirit and vigour. In pursuance of the same principle, the memorable amity which, we are told, subsisted between Laelius and Scipio rendered the former, I thought, a very suitable character to support a conversation on the subject of Friendship, and the reasoning I have ascribed to him is agreeable to those sentiments which Mucius informed us he expressed.

This kind of dialogue, where the question is agitated by illustrious personages of former ages, is apt, I know not how, to make a stronger impression on the mind of the reader than any other species of composition. This effect, at least, I have experienced in my own writings of that kind, as I have sometimes imagined, when I was revising the essay I lately inscribed to you, that Cato himself, and not your friend in his name, was the real speaker. As in that performance it was one veteran addressing another on the article of Old Age, so in the present it is a friend explaining to a friend his notions concerning Friendship. In the former conference, Cato, who was distinguished among his contemporaries by his great age and superior wisdom, stands forth as the principal speaker; in this which I now present to you, Laelius, who was no less respected in the times in which he flourished for his eminent virtues and faithful attachment to his friend, takes the lead in the discourse. I must request you, therefore, to turn your thoughts a while from the writer and suppose yourself conversing with Laelius.

For this purpose you are to imagine Fannius and Mucius making a visit to their father-in-law soon after the death of Scipio Africanus, and from that circumstance giving occasion to Laelius to enter upon the subject in question. I will only add that in contemplating the portrait of a true Friend, as delineated in the following pages, you cannot be at a loss to discover your own.

FANNIUS.- I agree with you entirely, Laelius, no man ever possessed more amiable or more illustrious virtues than Scipio Africanus. Nevertheless, let me entreat you to remember that the public eye is particularly turned towards you upon the present occasion, and extremely attentive to observe how Laelius, the sage Laelius (as, by a very singular distinction you are universally both called and acknowledged) behaves under the great loss he has sustained. When I say "by a very singular distinction," I am not ignorant that the late Marcus Cato, in our own times, and Lucius Atilius, in the days of our forefathers, were generally mentioned with the same honourable addition; but I know, too, that it was for attainments somewhat different from those which have so justly occasioned it to be conferred on you. To the latter it was given in allusion to his eminent skill in the laws of his country, as it was to the former on account of the wonderful compass and variety of his

knowledge, together with his great experience in the affairs of the world. Indeed, the many signal proofs that Cato gave, both in the forum and the senate, of his judgement, his spirit, and his penetration, produced such frequent occasions to speak of his wisdom with admiration, that the epithet seems, by continually recurring, to have been considered in his latter days as his original and proper name. But the same appellation (and I cannot forbear repeating it again) has been conferred on you for qualifications not altogether of the same nature; not merely in respect to the superior excellency of your political accomplishments and those intellectual endowments which adorn your mind, but principally in consequence of the singular advancement you have made in the study and practice of moral wisdom. In short, if Laelius is never named without the designation I am speaking of, it is not so much in the popular as in the philosophical sense of the term that this characteristic is applied to him, and in that sense I will venture to say there is not a single instance throughout all the states of Greece of its ever having been thus attributed to any man by the unanimous consent of a whole people. For as to those famous sages who are commonly known by the general denomination of "the seven wise men of Greece," it is asserted by the most accurate inquirers into their history that they cannot properly be ranked in the class of moral philosophers. One celebrated Grecian, however, there was, a native of Athens, whom the oracle of Apollo declared to be the wisest of the sons of men, and believe me, Laelius, it is the same species of wisdom which this excellent moralist displayed that all the world is agreed in ascribing to you; that wisdom, I mean, by which you hold virtue to be capable of fortifying the soul against all the various assaults of human calamities, and are taught to consider happiness as depending upon yourself alone.

In consequence of this general opinion I have been frequently asked (and the same question, I believe, has no less often, Scaevola, been proposed to you) in what manner Laelius supports the loss he has lately sustained. And this inquiry was the rather made, as it was remarked that you absented yourself from our last monthly meeting in the gardens of Brutus the Augur, where you had always before very regularly assisted.

SCAEVOLA.- I acknowledge, Laelius, that the question which Fannius mentions has repeatedly been put to me by many of my acquaintance, and I have always assured them that, as far as I could observe, you received the wound that has been inflicted upon you by the death of your affectionate and illustrious friend with great composure and equanimity. Nevertheless, that it was not possible, nor indeed consistent with the general humane disposition of your nature, not to be affected by it in a very sensible manner; however, that it was by no means grief, but merely indisposition, which prevented you from being present at the last meeting of our assembly.

LAELIUS.- Your answer, Scaevola, was perfectly agreeable to the fact. Ill, certainly, would it become me, on account of any private

affliction, to decline a conference which I have never failed to attend when my health permitted. And, indeed, I am persuaded that no man who possesses a proper firmness of mind will suffer his misfortunes, how heavily soever they may press upon his heart, to interrupt his duties of any kind. For the rest, I consider the high opinion, Fannius, which you suppose the world entertains of my character, as an obliging proof of your friendship; but it is an opinion which, as I am not conscious of deserving, I have no disposition to claim. As little am I inclined to subscribe to your judgement concerning Cato; for if consummate wisdom, in the moral and philosophic idea of that expression, was ever to be found in the character of any human being (which, I will confess, however, I very much doubt), it certainly appeared throughout the whole conduct of that excellent person. Not to mention other proofs, with what unexampled fortitude, let me ask, did he support the death of his incomparable son? I was no stranger to the behaviour of Paulus, and was an eye-witness to that of Gallus labouring under an affliction of the same kind; but the sons whom they were respectively bereaved of died when they were mere boys. Whereas Cato's was snatched from him when he had arrived at the prime of manhood and was flourishing in the general esteem of his country. Let me caution you, then, from suffering any man to rival Cato in your good opinion, not excepting even him whom the oracle of Apollo, you say, declared to be the wisest of the human race. The truth is, the memory of Socrates is held in honour for the admirable doctrine he delivered, but Cato's for the glorious deeds he performed.

Thus far in particular reply to Fannius. I now address myself to both; and if I were to deny that I regret the death of Scipio, how far such a disposition of mind would be right, I leave philosophers to determine. But far, I confess, it is from the sentiments of my heart. I am sensibly, indeed, affected by the loss of a friend whose equal no man, I will venture to say, ever possessed before, and none, I am persuaded, will ever meet with again. Nevertheless, I stand in want of no external assistance to heal the wound I have received. My own reflections supply me with sufficient consolation. And I find it principally from not having given in to that false opinion which adds poignancy to the grief of so many others under a loss of the same kind. For I am convinced there is no circumstance in the death of Scipio that can justly be lamented with respect to himself. Whatever there is of private misfortune in that event consists entirely in the loss which I have sustained. Under the full influence of such a persuasion, to indulge unrestrained sorrow would be a proof not of a generous affection to one's friend, but of too interested a concern for one's self. It is evident, indeed, that the colour of Scipio's days has, in every view of it, proved truly bright and glorious. For tell me, my friends, is there a felicity (unless he wished never to die- a wish, I am confident, he was too wise to entertain), is there a single article of human happiness that can reasonably be desired which he did not live to attain? The high expectations the world had

conceived of him in his earliest youth were more than confirmed in his riper years, as his virtues shone forth with a lustre superior even to the most sanguine hopes of his country. He was twice, without the least solicitation on his own part, elected consul; the first time before he was legally qualified by his age to be admitted into that office, and the next although not prematurely with respect to himself, yet it had well-nigh proved too late for his country. In both instances, however, success attended his arms, and having levelled with the ground the capitals of two states the most inveterately hostile to the Roman name, he not only happily terminated the respective wars, but secured us from all apprehension of future danger from the same powers. I forbear to enlarge upon the affability of his manners, the affection he showed to his mother, the generosity he exercised towards his sisters, the kindness with which he behaved to the rest of his family, and the unblemished integrity that influenced every part of his conduct. They were qualities in his exemplary and amiable character with which you are perfectly well acquainted. It is equally unnecessary to add how sincerely he was beloved by his country; the general concern that appeared at his funeral renders it sufficiently evident. What increase, then, could the addition of a few more years have made to the glory and happiness of his life? For admitting that old age does not necessarily bring on a state of imbecility (as Cato, I remember, maintained in a conversation with Scipio and myself about a year before his death), it certainly impairs, at least, that vigour and vivacity which Scipio still possessed at the time of his decease.

Such, then, was the course of his happy and honourable days, that neither his felicity nor his fame could have received any farther increase. And as to his death, it was much too sudden to have been attended with any sensible degree of pain. By what cause that unexpected event was occasioned is by no means indeed clear; the general suspicions concerning it you well know. One circumstance, at least, is unquestionable: that of all the many brilliant days he had enjoyed, the last of his life was the most completely illustrious. For it was on the very evening which preceded his death that he received the singular honour, at the breaking up of the senate, of being conducted to his house by all the members of that august assembly, attended by the several ambassadors both from Latium and the allies of the Roman Commonwealth. So that he cannot, it should seem, so properly be said to have descended into the regions of the infernal deities as to have passed at once from the supreme height of human glory to the mansions of the celestial gods. For I am by no means a convert to the new doctrine which certain philosophers have lately endeavoured to propagate; who maintain that death extinguishes the whole man, and his soul perishes with the dissolution of his body. Indeed, the practice of our ancestors alone, abstracted from the opinion of the ancient sages, weighs more with me than all the arguments of these pretended reasoners. For certainly our forefathers would not so religiously have observed those sacred rites which have been

instituted in honour of the dead if they had supposed that the deceased were in no respect concerned in the performance of them. But the conviction arising from this consideration is much strengthened when I add to it the authority of those great masters of reason, who enlightened our country by the schools they established in Magna Graecia during the flourishing ages of that now deserted part of Italy. And what has a still farther influence in determining my persuasion is the opinion of that respectable moralist who, in the judgement of Apollo himself, was declared to be the wisest of mankind. This incomparable philosopher, without once varying to the opposite side of the question (as his custom was upon many other controverted subjects), steadily and firmly asserted that the human soul is a divine and immortal substance, that death opens a way for its return to the celestial mansions, and that the spirits of those just men who have made the greatest progress in the paths of virtue find the easiest and most expeditious admittance. This also was the opinion of my departed friend: an opinion which you may remember, Scaevola, he particularly enlarged upon in that conversation which, a very short time before his death, he held with you and me, in conjunction with Philus, Manilius, and a large company of his other friends, on the subject of government. For in the close of that conference, which continued, you know, during three successive days, he related to us (as if he had been led into the topic by a kind of presentiment of his approaching fate) a discourse which Africanus delivered to him in a vision during his sleep concerning the soul's immortality.

If it be true, then, that the souls of good men, when enlarged from this corporeal prison, wing their flight into the heavenly mansions with more or less ease in proportion to their moral attainments, what human spirit can we suppose to have made its immediate way to the gods with greater facility than that of Scipio? To bewail, therefore, an event attended with such advantageous consequences to himself would, I fear, have more the appearance of envy than of friendship. But should the contrary opinion prove to be the fact should the soul and body really perish together, and no sense remain after our dissolution, yet death, although it cannot indeed, upon this supposition, be deemed a happiness to my illustrious friend, can by no means however be considered as an evil. For if all perception be totally extinguished in him, he is, with respect to everything that concerns himself, in the same state as if he had never been born. I say "with respect to himself," for it is far otherwise with regard to his friends and to his country, as both will have reason to rejoice in his having lived so long as their own existence shall endure.

In every view, therefore, of this event, considering it merely as it relates to my departed friend, it appears, as I observed before, to be a happy consummation. But it is much otherwise with regard to myself, who, as I entered earlier into the world, ought, according to the common course of nature, to have sooner departed out of it. Nevertheless, I derive so much satisfaction from reflecting on the

friendship which subsisted between us, that I cannot but think I have reason to congratulate myself on the felicity of my life, since I have had the happiness to pass the greatest part of it in the society of Scipio. We lived under the same roof, passed together through the same military employments, and were actuated in all our pursuits, whether of a public or private nature, by the same common principles and views. In short, and to express at once the whole spirit and essence of friendship, our inclinations, our sentiments, and our studies were in perfect accord. For these reasons my ambition is less gratified by that high opinion (especially as it is unmerited) which Fannius assures me the world entertains of my wisdom, than by the strong expectations I have conceived that the memory of our friendship will prove immortal. I indulge this hope with the greater confidence as there do not occur in all the annals of past ages above three or four instances of a similar amity. And future times, I trust, will add the names of Scipio and Laelius to that select and celebrated number.

FANNIUS.- Your expectations, Laelius, cannot fail of being realised. And now, as you have mentioned Friendship, and we are entirely disengaged, it would be extremely acceptable to me (and I am persuaded it would likewise be so to Scaevola) if, agreeably to your usual readiness upon other occasions of just inquiry, you would give us your opinion concerning the true nature of this connection, the extent of its obligations, and the maxims by which it ought to be conducted.

SCAEVOLA.- Fannius has prevented me in the request I was intending to make; your compliance, therefore, will equally confer an obligation upon both of us.

LAELIUS.- I should very willingly gratify your desires if I thought myself equal to the task, for the subject is interesting, and we are at present, as Fannius observed, entirely at leisure; but I am too sensible of my own insufficiency to venture thus unprepared upon the disquisition of a topic which requires much consideration to be treated as it deserves. Unpremeditated dissertations of this kind can only be expected from those Grecian geniuses, who are accustomed to speak on the sudden upon any given question; and to those learned disputants I must refer you, if you wish to hear the subject properly discussed. As for myself, I can only exhort you to look on Friendship as the most valuable of all human possessions, no other being equally suited to the moral nature of man, or so applicable to every state and circumstance, whether of prosperity or adversity, in which he can possibly be placed. But at the same time I lay it down as a fundamental axiom that "true Friendship can only subsist between those who are animated by the strictest principles of honour and virtue." When I say this, I would not be thought to adopt the sentiments of those speculative moralists who pretend that no man can justly be deemed virtuous who is not arrived at that state of absolute perfection which constitutes, according to their ideas, the character of genuine wisdom. This opinion may appear true, perhaps, in theory, but is altogether inapplicable to any useful

purpose of society, as it supposes a degree of virtue to which no mortal was ever capable of rising. It is not, therefore, that notional species of merit which imagination may possibly conceive, or our wishes perhaps form, that we have reason to expect and require in a friend; it is those moral attainments alone which we see actually realised among mankind. And, indeed, I can never be persuaded to think that either Fabricius, or Coruncanius, or Curius, whom our forefathers justly revered for the superior rectitude of their conduct, were sages according to that sublime criterion which these visionary philosophers have endeavoured to establish. I should be contented, however, to leave them in the undisturbed possession of their arrogant and unintelligible notions of virtue, provided they would allow that the great persons I have named merited at least the character of good men; but even this, it seems, they are not willing to grant, still contending, with their usual obstinacy, that goodness is an attribute which can only be ascribed to their perfect sage. I shall venture, nevertheless, to adjust my own measure of that quality by the humbler standard of plain common sense. In my opinion, therefore, whoever (like those distinguished models I just now mentioned) restrains his passions within the bounds of reason, and uniformly acts, in all the various relations of life, upon one steady, consistent principle of approved honour, justice, and beneficence, that man is in reality, as well as in common estimation, strictly and truly good; inasmuch as he regulates his conduct (so far, I mean, as is compatible with human frailty) by a constant obedience to those best and surest guides of moral rectitude, the sacred laws of Nature.

In tracing these laws it seems evident, I think, that man, by the frame of his moral constitution, is disposed to consider himself as standing in some degree of social relation to the whole species in general; and that this principle acts with more or less vigour, according to the distance at which he is placed with respect to any particular community or individual of his kind. Thus it may be observed to operate with greater force between fellow-citizens of the same commonwealth than in regard to foreigners, and between the several members of the same family than towards those among whom there is no common tie of consanguinity. In the case of relations, indeed, this principle somewhat rises in its strength, and produces a sort of instinctive amity; but an amity, however, of no great firmness or solidity. The inferiority of this species of natural connection, when compared with that which is the consequence of voluntary choice, appears from this single consideration: that the former has not the least dependence upon the sentiments of the heart, but continues the same it was in its origin, notwithstanding every degree of cordiality between the parties should be utterly extinguished; whereas the kind affections enter so essentially into the latter, that where love does not exist friendship can have no being. But what still farther evinces the strength and efficacy of friendship above all the numberless other social tendencies of the

human heart is that, instead of wasting its force upon a multiplicity of divided objects, its whole energy is exerted for the benefit of only two or three persons at the utmost.

Friendship may be shortly defined, "a perfect conformity of opinions upon all religious and civil subjects, united with the highest degree of mutual esteem and affection;" and yet from these simple circumstances results the most desirable blessing (virtue alone excepted) that the gods have bestowed on mankind. I am sensible that in this opinion I shall not be universally supported- health and riches, honours and power, have each of them their distinct admirers, and are respectively pursued as the supreme felicity of human life; whilst some there are (and the number is by no means inconsiderable) who contend that it is to be found only in the sensual gratifications. But the latter place their principal happiness on the same low enjoyments which constitute the chief good of brutes, and the former on those very precarious possessions that depend much less on our own merit than on the caprice of fortune. They, indeed, who maintain that the ultimate good of man consists in the knowledge and practice of virtue, fix it, undoubtedly, upon its truest and most glorious foundation; but let it be remembered, at the same time, that virtue is at once both the parent and the support of friendship.

I have already declared that by virtue I do not mean, with the philosophers before alluded to, that ideal strain of perfection which is nowhere to be found but in the pompous language of enthusiastic declamation; I mean only that attainable degree of moral merit which is understood by the term in common discourse, and may be exemplified in actual practice. Without entering, therefore, into a particular inquiry concerning those imaginary beings which never have been realised in human nature, I think myself warranted in considering those persons as truly good men who have always been so deemed in the general opinion of mankind- the Pauli, for instance, and the Catos, the Galli, the Scipios, and the Phili; for with such characters the world has reason to be well contented.

When Friendship, therefore, is contracted between men who possess a degree of virtue not inferior to that which adorned those approved personages I have just named, it is productive of unspeakable advantages. "Life would be utterly lifeless," as old Ennius expresses it, without a friend on whose kindness and fidelity one might confidently repose. Can there be a more real complacency, indeed, than to lay open to another the most secret thoughts of one's heart with the same confidence and security as if they were still concealed in his own? Would not the fruits of prosperity lose much of their relish were there none who equally rejoiced with the possessor in the satisfaction he received from them? And how difficult must it prove to bear up under the pressure of misfortunes unsupported by a generous associate who more than equally divides their load? In short, the several occasions to which friendship extends its kindly offices are unbounded, while the advantage of every other object of

human desires is confined within certain specific and determinate limits, beyond which it is of no avail. Thus wealth is pursued for the particular uses to which it is solely applicable; power, in order to receive worship; honours, for the sake of fame; sensual indulgences, on account of the gratifications that attend them; and health, as the means of living exempt from pain and possessing the unobstructed exercise of all our corporeal faculties. Whereas Friendship (I repeat again) is adapted by its nature to an infinite number of different ends, accommodates itself to all circumstances and situations of human life, and can at no season prove either unsuitable or inconvenient- in a word, not even fire and water (to use a proverbial illustration) are capable of being converted to a greater variety of beneficial purposes.

I desire it may be understood, however, that I am now speaking, not of that inferior species of amity which occurs in the common intercourse of the world (although this, too, is not without its pleasures and advantages), but of that genuine and perfect friendship, examples of which are so extremely rare as to be rendered memorable by their singularity. It is this sort alone that can truly be said to heighten the joys of prosperity, and mitigate the sorrows of adversity, by a generous participation of both; indeed, one of the chief among the many important offices of this connection is exerted in the day of affliction, by dispelling the gloom that overcasts the mind, encouraging the hope of happier times, and preventing the depressed spirits from sinking into a state of weak and unmanly despondence. Whoever is in possession of a true friend sees the exact counterpart of his own soul. In consequence of this moral resemblance between them, they are so intimately one that no advantage can attend either which does not equally communicate itself to both; they are strong in the strength, rich in the opulence, and powerful in the power of each other. They can scarcely, indeed, be considered in any respect as separate individuals, and wherever the one appears the other is virtually present. I will venture even a bolder assertion, and affirm that in despite of death they must both continue to exist so long as either of them shall remain alive; for the deceased may, in a certain sense, be said still to live whose memory is preserved with the highest veneration and the most tender regret in the bosom of the survivor, a circumstance which renders the former happy in death, and the latter honoured in life.

If that benevolent principle which thus intimately unites two persons in the bands of amity were to be struck out of the human heart, it would be impossible that either private families or public communities should subsist- even the land itself would lie waste, and desolation overspread the earth. Should this assertion stand in need of a proof, it will appear evident by considering the ruinous consequences which ensue from discord and dissension; for what family is so securely established, or what government fixed upon so firm a basis, that it would not be overturned and utterly destroyed were a general spirit of enmity and malevolence to break forth amongst

its members?- a sufficient argument, surely, of the inestimable benefits which flow from the kind and friendly affections.

I have been informed that a certain learned bard of Agrigentum published a philosophic poem in Greek, in which he asserted that the several bodies which compose the physical system of the universe preserve the consistence of their respective forms, or are dispersed into their primitive atoms, as a principle of amity, or of discord, becomes predominant in their composition. It is certain, at least, that the powerful effects of these opposite agents in the moral world is universally perceived and acknowledged. Agreeable to this general sentiment, who is there, when he beholds a man generously exposing himself to certain danger, for the sake of rescuing his distressed friend, that can forbear expressing the warmest approbation? Accordingly, what repeated acclamations lately echoed through the theatre at the new play of my host and friend Pacuvius, in that scene where Pylades and Orestes are introduced before the king; who being ignorant which of them was Orestes, whom he had determined to put to death, each insists, in order to save the life of his associate, that he himself is the real person in question. If the mere fictitious representation of such a magnanimous and heroic contention was thus universally applauded by the spectators, what impression must it have made upon their minds had they seen it actually displayed in real life! The general effect produced upon this occasion, clearly shows how deeply nature hath impressed on the human heart a sense of moral beauty; since a whole audience thus unanimously conspired in admiring an instance of sublime generosity in another's conduct, which not one of them, perhaps, was capable of exhibiting in his own.

Thus far I have ventured to lay before you my general notions concerning friendship. If aught remain to be added on the subject (and much there certainly does), permit me to refer you to those philosophers who are more capable of giving you satisfaction.

FANNIUS.- That satisfaction, Laelius, we rather hope to receive from you. For although I have frequently applied to those philosophers to whom you would resign me, and have been no unwilling auditor of their discourses, yet I am persuaded you will deliver your sentiments upon this subject in a much more elegant and enlightening manner.

SCAEVOLA.- You would have been still more confirmed in that opinion, Fannius, had you been present with us at the conference which we held not long since in the gardens of Scipio, upon the subject of government; when Laelius proved himself so powerful an advocate in support of natural justice, by confuting the subtle arguments of that very acute and discerning thinker Philus.

FANNIUS.- To triumph in the cause of justice could be no difficult task, certainly, to Laelius, who is, confessedly, one of the most just and upright of men.

SCAEVOLA.- And can it be less easy for him who has deservedly acquired the highest honour by his eminent constancy, affection, and

fidelity to his friend, to explain, with equal success, the principles and duties of friendship?

LAELIUS.- This is pressing me beyond all power of resistance; and, indeed, it would be unreasonable, as well as difficult, not to yield to the desires of two such worthy relations, when they request my sentiments upon a point of so interesting and important a nature.

Having frequently, then, turned my thoughts on this subject, the principal question that has always occurred to me is, whether Friendship takes its rise from the wants and weaknesses of man, and is cultivated solely in order to obtain, by a mutual exchange of good offices, those advantages which he could not otherwise acquire? Or whether nature, notwithstanding this beneficial intercourse is inseparable from the connection, previously disposes the heart to engage in it upon a nobler and more generous inducement? In order to determine this question, it must be observed that love is a leading and essential principle in constituting that particular species of benevolence which is termed amity; and although this sentiment may be feigned, indeed, by the followers of those who are courted merely with a view to interest, yet it cannot possibly be produced by a motive of interest alone. There is a truth and simplicity in genuine friendship, an unconstrained and spontaneous emotion, altogether incompatible with every kind and degree of artifice and simulation. I am persuaded, therefore, that it derives its origin not from the indigence of human nature, but from a distinct principle implanted in the breast of man; from a certain instinctive tendency, which draws congenial minds into union, and not from a cool calculation of the advantages with which it is pregnant.

The wonderful force, indeed, of innate propensities of the benevolent kind is observable even among brutes, in that tender attachment which prevails during a certain period between the dam and her young. But their strongest effects are more particularly conspicuous in the human species; as appears, in the first place, from that powerful endearment which subsists between parents and children, and which cannot be eradicated or counteracted without the most detestable impiety; and in the next, from those sentiments of secret approbation which arise on the very first interview with a man whose manners and temper seem to harmonise with our own, and in whom we think we discover symptoms of an honest and virtuous mind. In reality, nothing is so beautiful as virtue; and nothing makes its way more directly to the heart: we feel a certain degree of affection even towards those meritorious persons whom we have never seen, and whose characters are known to us only from history. Where is the man that does not, even at this distance of time, find his heart glow with benevolence towards the memory of Fabricius or Curius, though he certainly never beheld their persons? On the contrary, who is there that feels not emotions of hatred and detestation when he reflects on the conduct of Tarquin, of Cassius, or of Maelius? Rome has twice contended for empire upon Italian ground, when she sent forth her armies to oppose the respective invasions of Pyrrhus and

of Hannibal; and yet, with what different dispositions do we review the campaigns of those hostile chiefs! The generous spirit of the former very much softens our resentment towards him; while the cruelty of the latter must render his character the abhorrence of every Roman.

If the charms of virtue, then, are so captivating, as to inspire us with some degree of affection towards those approved persons whom we never saw; or, which is still more extraordinary, if they force us to admire them even in an enemy; what wonder is it that in those with whom we live and converse they should affect us in a still more irresistible manner? It must be acknowledged, however, that this first impression is considerably strengthened and improved, by a nearer intercourse, by subsequent good offices, and by a general indication of zeal for our service- causes which, when they operate with combined force, kindle in the heart the warmest and most generous amity. To suppose that all attachments of this sort spring solely from a sense of human imbecility, and in order to supply that insufficiency we feel in ourselves, by the assistance we hope to receive from others, is to degrade friendship to a most unworthy and ignoble origin. Indeed, if this supposition were true, they who find in themselves the greatest defects would be the most disposed and the best qualified to engage in this kind of connection, which is contrary to fact. For experience shows that the more a man looks for his happiness within himself, and the more firmly he stands supported by the consciousness of his own intrinsic merit, the more desirous he is to cultivate an intercourse of amity, and the better friend he certainly proves. In what respect, let me ask, had Scipio any occasion for my services? We neither of us, most assuredly, stood in need of the other's aid; but the singular virtues I admired in his character, together with the favourable opinion which in some measure, perhaps, he had conceived of mine, were the primary and prevailing motives of that affectionate attachment which was afterwards so considerably increased by the habitudes of intimate and unreserved converse. For although many and great advantages accrued to both from the alliance that was thus formed between us, yet sure I am that the hope of receiving those reciprocal benefits by no means entered into the original cause of our union. In fact, as generosity disdains to make a traffic of her favours; and a liberal mind confers obligations, not from the mean hope of a return, but solely from that satisfaction which nature has annexed to the exertion of benevolent actions, so I think it is evident that we are induced to form friendships, not from a mercenary contemplation of their utility, but from that pure disinterested complacency which results from the mere exercise of the affection itself.

That sect of philosophers who impute all human actions to the same motive which determines those of brutes, and refer both to one common principle of self-gratification, will be very far, I am sensible, from agreeing with me in the origin I have ascribed to friendship. And no wonder, for nothing great and elevated can win the esteem and approbation of a set of men whose whole thoughts and

pursuits are professedly directed to so base and ignoble an end.

I shall take no further notice, therefore, of their unworthy tenets, well convinced as I am that there is an implanted sense in man, by which nature allures his heart to the charms of virtue, in whomsoever her lovely form appears. And hence it is, that they who find in themselves a predilection for some particular object of moral approbation are induced to desire a nearer and more intimate communion with that person, in order to enjoy those pure and mental advantages which flow from an habitual and familiar intercourse with the good,- I will add, too, in order to feel the refined satisfaction of inspiring equal and reciprocal sentiments of affection, together with the generous pleasure of conferring acts of kindness without the least view of a return. A friendship placed upon this, its proper and natural basis, is not only productive of the most solid utility, but stands at the same time upon a firmer and more durable foundation than if it were raised upon a sense of human wants and weakness. For if interest were the true and only medium to cement this connection, it could hold no longer than while interest, which is always fluctuating and variable, should continue to be advanced by the same hand; whereas genuine friendship, being produced by the simple efficiency of nature's steady and immutable laws, resembles the source from whence it springs, and is for ever permanent and unchangeable.

This may suffice concerning the rise of friendship, unless you should have anything to object to the principles I have endeavoured to establish.

FANNIUS.- Much otherwise. I will take the privilege, therefore, of seniority to answer for Scaevola as well as for myself, by requesting you in both our names to proceed.

SCAEVOLA.- Fannius has very justly expressed my sentiments, and I join with him in wishing to hear what you have further to observe on the question we have proposed.

LAELIUS.- I will lay before you, then, my excellent young man, the result of frequent conversations which Scipio and I have formerly held together upon the subject. He used to say that nothing is so difficult as to preserve a lasting and unbroken friendship to the end of life. For it may frequently happen not only that the interest of the parties shall considerably interfere, or their opinions concerning political measures widely differ, but age, infirmities, or misfortunes are apt to produce very extraordinary changes in the tempers and dispositions of men. He illustrated this general instability of common friendships by tracing the revolutions they are liable to undergo from the earliest period in which this kind of connection can commence. Accordingly, he observed that those strong attachments which are sometimes formed in childhood were generally renounced with the puerile robe. But should a particular affection contracted in this tender age happen to continue to riper years, it is nothing unusual to see it afterwards interrupted, either by rivalry in a matrimonial pursuit, or some other object of youthful competition, in which both

cannot possibly succeed. If these common dangers, however, should be happily escaped, yet others no less fatal may hereafter rise up to its ruin, especially if they should become opposite candidates for the same dignities of the state. For as with the generality of mankind, an immoderate desire of wealth, so among those of a more liberal and exalted spirit, an inordinate thirst of glory is usually the strongest bane of amity; and each of them has proved the occasion of converting the warmest friends into the most implacable enemies.

He added, that great and just dissensions had arisen also in numberless instances on account of improper requests where a man has solicited his friend to assist him, for example, in his lawless gallantries, or to support him in some other act of equal dishonour and injustice. A denial upon such occasions, though certainly laudable, is generally deemed by the party refused to be a violation of the rights of amity; and he will probably resent it the more, as applications of this nature necessarily imply that the person who breaks through all restraints in urging them is equally disposed to make the same unwarrantable concessions on his own part. Disagreements of this kind have not only caused irreparable breaches between the closest connections, but have even kindled unextinguishable animosities. In short, the common friendships of the world are liable to be broken to pieces by such a variety of accidents, that Scipio thought it required a more than common portion, not only of good sense, but of good fortune, to steer entirely clear of those numerous and fatal rocks.

Our first inquiry therefore, if you please, shall be, "How far the claims of friendship may reasonably extend?" For instance, ought the bosom friends of Coriolanus (if any intimacies of that kind he had) to have joined him in turning his arms against his country; or those of Viscellinus, or Spurius Maelius, to have assisted them in their designs of usurping the sovereign power?

In those public commotions which were raised by Tiberius Gracchus, it appeared that neither Quintus Tubero, nor any other of those persons with whom he lived upon terms of the greatest intimacy, engaged in his faction, one only excepted, who was related to your family, Scaevola, by the ties of hospitality: I mean Blossius, of Cumae. This man (as I was appointed an assessor with the two consuls Laenas and Rupilius) applied to me to obtain his pardon, alleging, in his justification, that he entertained so high an esteem and affection for Gracchus, as to hold himself obliged to concur with him in any measure he might propose. What! if he had even desired you to set fire to the Capitol? "Such a request, I am confident," replied Blossius, "he never would have made." But admitting that he had, how would you have determined? "In that case," returned Blossius, "I should most certainly have complied." Infamous as this confession was, he acted agreeably to it; or rather, indeed, his conduct exceeded even the impiety of his professions, for, not contented with encouraging the seditious schemes of Tiberius Gracchus, he actually took the lead in them, and was an instigator as well as an

associate in all the madness of his measures. In consequence of these extravagant proceedings, and alarmed to find that extraordinary judges were appointed for his trial, he made his escape into Asia, where, entering into the service of our enemies, he met with the fate he so justly merited for the injuries he had done to the commonwealth.

I lay it down, then, as a rule without exception, "that no degree of friendship can either justify or excuse the commission of a criminal action." For true amity being founded on an opinion of virtue in the object of our affection, it is scarcely possible that those sentiments should remain, after an avowed and open violation of the principles which originally produced them.

To maintain that the duties of this relation require a compliance with every request a friend shall offer, and give a right to expect the same unlimited concessions in return, would be a doctrine, I confess, from which no ill consequences could ensue, if the parties concerned were absolutely perfect, and incapable of the least deviation from the dictates of virtue and good sense. But in settling the principles by which our conduct in this respect ought to be regulated, we are not to form our estimate by fictitious representations, but to consider what history and experience teaches us that mankind truly are, and to select for our imitation such real characters as seem to have approached the nearest to perfection.

Tradition informs us that Aemilius Paulus and Caius Luscinius, who were twice colleagues in the consular and censorial offices, were united also in the strictest intimacy; and that Manius Curius and Titus Coruncanius lived with them, and with each other, upon terms of the strictest and most inviolable friendship. It may well, therefore, be presumed (since there is not even the slightest reason to suspect the contrary) that none of these illustrious worthies ever made a proposal to his friend inconsistent with the laws of honour, or that fidelity he had pledged to his country. To urge that "if any overtures of that nature had ever been made, they would certainly have been rejected, and consequently must have been concealed from public notice," is an objection by no means sufficient to weaken the presumption, when the sanctity of manners which distinguished these venerable persons shall be duly considered; for to be capable of making such proposals would be no less a proof of depravity than actually consenting to them. Accordingly, we find that both Carbo and Caius Cato, the friends of Tiberius Gracchus, did not refuse to take a part in his turbulent measures, as his brother Caius, although he was not indeed a very considerable actor in the scene at first, is now most zealously engaged in the same unworthy cause.

Let it be established, therefore, as one of the most sacred and indispensable laws of this connection, "never either to make, or to grant, a request which honour and virtue will not justify." To allege, in any instance of deviation from moral rectitude, that one was actuated by a warmth of zeal for his friend, is in every species of

criminal conduct a plea altogether scandalous and inadmissible, but particularly in transactions that strike at the peace and welfare of the state. I would the more earnestly inculcate this important maxim, as, from the present complexion of the times, it seems peculiarly necessary to guard against introducing principles which may hereafter be productive of fatal disturbances in the republic; and, indeed, we have already somewhat deviated from that political line by which our wiser ancestors were wont to regulate their public conduct.

Thus Tiberius Gracchus, who aimed at sovereign power- or rather, indeed, who actually possessed it during the space of a few months- opened a scene so totally new to the Roman people that not even tradition had delivered down to them any circumstance in former times which resembled it. Some of the friends and relations of this man, who had concurred with him in his lifetime, continued to support the same factious measures after his death; and I cannot reflect on the cruel part they acted towards Scipio Nasica without melting into tears. I will confess, at the same time, that, in consideration of the punishment which Tiberius Gracchus has lately suffered, I have protected his friend Carbo as far as it was in my power. As to the consequences we have reason to expect from the tribunate of Caius Gracchus, I am unwilling to indulge conjecture; but this I do not scruple to say, that when once a distemper of this kind has broken out in a commonwealth, the infection is apt to spread, and it generally gathers strength the wider it extends. In conformity to this observation, the change which was made by the Gabinian law in the manner of voting was, two years afterwards, you know, carried still farther by the law which Cassius proposed and obtained. And I cannot but prophesy that a rupture between the people and the senate will be the result of both, as the most important affairs of the commonwealth will hereafter be conducted by the caprice of the multitude. It is much easier, indeed, to discover the source from which these disorders will arise, than to point out a remedy for the mischief they will occasion.

I have thrown out these reflections, as well knowing that no public innovations of this pernicious kind are ever attempted, without the assistance of some select and confidential associates. It is, necessary, therefore, to admonish those who mean well to the constitution of their country, that if they should inadvertently have formed an intimacy with men of a contrary principle, they are not to imagine themselves so bound by the laws of amity as to lie under an indispensable obligation to support them in attempts injurious to the community. Whosoever disturbs the peace of the commonwealth, is a just object of public indignation; nor is that man less deserving of punishment who acts as a second in such an impious cause than the principal. No person ever possessed a greater share of power, or was more eminently distinguished among the Grecian states, than Themistocles. This illustrious general, who was commander-in-chief of the Grecian forces in the Persian War, and who by his services upon

that occasion delivered his country from the tyranny with which it was threatened, having been driven into exile by the jealousy his great talents had raised, did not acquiesce under the ingratitude of his fellow-citizens with the submission he ought; on the contrary, he acted the same traitorous part under this unmerited persecution as Coriolanus did amongst us about twenty years before. But neither the one nor the other found a coadjutor among their respective friends, in consequence of which just dereliction, they each of them perished by their own desperate hands.

It appears, then, from the principles I have laid down, that these kinds of wicked combinations under the pretended obligations of friendship, are so far from being sanctified by that relation, that on the contrary they ought to be publicly discouraged by the severest punishments; lest it should be thought an allowed maxim, that a friend is to be supported in every outrage he may commit, even though he should take up arms against his country. I am the more earnest to expose the error of this dangerous persuasion, as there are certain symptoms in the present times which give me reason to fear that at some future period the impious principle I am combating may actually be extended to the case I last mentioned; and I am no less desirous that the peace of the republic should be preserved after my death than zealous to maintain it during my life.

The first and great axiom therefore in the laws of amity should invariably be- "never to require from a friend what he cannot grant without a breach of his honour; and always to be ready to assist him upon every occasion consistent with that principle." So long as we shall act under the secure guard of this sacred barrier, it will not be sufficient merely to yield a ready compliance with all his desires; we ought to anticipate and prevent them. Another rule likewise of indispensable obligation upon all who would approve themselves true friends, is, "to be ever ready to offer their advice, with an unreserved and honest frankness of heart." The counsels of a faithful and friendly monitor carry with them an authority which ought to have great influence, and they should be urged not only with freedom, but even with severity, if the occasion should appear to require it. I am informed that certain Greek writers (philosophers, it seems, in the opinion of their countrymen), have advanced some very extraordinary positions relating to the subject of our present inquiry; as, indeed, what subject is there which these subtle geniuses have not tortured with their sophistry? The authors to whom I allude dissuade their disciples from entering into any strong attachments, as unavoidably creating supernumerary disquietudes to those who engage in them, and as every man has more than sufficient to call forth his solicitude in the course of his own affairs, it is a weakness, they contend, anxiously to involve himself in the concerns of others. They recommend it also in all connections of this kind to hold the bands of union extremely loose, so as always to have it in one's power to straiten or relax them as circumstances and situations shall render most expedient. They add, as a capital article of their doctrine, that

"to live exempt from cares is an essential ingredient to constitute human happiness, but an ingredient, however, which he who voluntarily distresses himself with cares in which he has no necessary and personal interest, must never hope to possess."

I have been told, likewise, that there is another set of pretended philosophers of the same country, whose tenets concerning this subject are of a still more illiberal and ungenerous cast, and I have already, in the course of this conversation, slightly animadverted upon their principles. The proposition they attempt to establish is that "friendship is an affair of self-interest entirely, and that the proper motive for engaging in it is, not in order to gratify the kind and benevolent affections, but for the benefit of that assistance and support which is to be derived from the connection." Accordingly they assert that those persons are most disposed to have recourse to auxiliary alliances of this kind who are least qualified by nature or fortune to depend upon their own strength and powers; the weaker sex, for instance, being generally more inclined to engage in friendships than the male part of our species; and those who are depressed by indigence, or labouring under misfortunes, than the wealthy and the prosperous.

Excellent and obliging sages these, undoubtedly. To strike out the friendly affections from the moral world would be like extinguishing the sun in the natural, each of them being the source of the best and most grateful satisfactions that the gods have conferred on the sons of men. But I should be glad to know what the real value of this boasted exemption from care, which they promise their disciples, justly amounts to? an exemption flattering to self-love, I confess, but which, upon many occurrences in human life, should be rejected with the utmost disdain. For nothing, surely, can be more inconsistent with a well-poised and manly spirit, than to decline engaging in any laudable action, or to be discouraged from persevering in it, by an apprehension of the trouble and solicitude with which it may probably be attended. Virtue herself, indeed, ought to be totally renounced, if it be right to avoid every possible means that may be productive of uneasiness; for who that is actuated by her principles can observe the conduct of an opposite character, without being affected with some degree of secret dissatisfaction? Are not the just, the brave, and the good necessarily exposed to the disagreeable emotions of dislike and aversion when they respectively meet with instances of fraud, of cowardice, or of villainy? It is an essential property of every well-constituted mind to be affected with pain, or pleasure, according to the nature of those moral appearances that present themselves to observation.

If sensibility, therefore, be not incompatible with true wisdom (and it surely is not, unless we suppose that philosophy deadens every finer feeling of our nature) what just reason can be assigned why the sympathetic sufferings, which may result from friendship, should be a sufficient inducement for banishing that generous affection from the human breast? Extinguish all emotions of the heart and what

difference will remain, I do not say between man and brute, but between man and a mere inanimate clod? Away then with those austere philosophers who represent virtue as hardening the soul against all the softer impressions of humanity. The fact, certainly, is much otherwise; a truly good man is upon many occasions extremely susceptible of tender sentiments, and his heart expands with joy or shrinks with sorrow, as good or ill fortune accompanies his friend. Upon the whole, then, it may fairly be concluded, that as in the case of virtue, so in that of friendship, those painful sensations which may sometimes be produced by the one, as well as by the other, are equally insufficient for excluding either of them from taking possession of our bosoms.

There is a charm in virtue, as I have already had occasion to remark, that by a secret and irresistible bias draws the general affection of those persons towards each other in whom it appears to reside, and this instantaneous goodwill is mutually attended with a desire of entering into a nearer and more intimate correspondence; sentiments which, at length, by a natural and necessary consequence, give rise to particular friendships. Strange, indeed, would it be that exalted honours, magnificent mansions, or sumptuous apparel, not to mention other splendid objects of general admiration, should have power to captivate the greater part of our species, and that the beauty of a virtuous mind, capable of meeting our affection with an equal return, should not have sufficient allurements to inspire the most ardent passion. I said "capable of meeting our affection with an equal return;" for nothing, surely, can be more delightful than to live in a constant interchange and vicissitude of reciprocal good offices. If we add to this, as with truth we may, that a similitude of manners is the most powerful of all attractions, it must be granted that the virtuous are strongly impelled towards each other by that moral tendency and natural relationship which subsists between them.

No proposition therefore can be more evident, I think, than that the virtuous must necessarily, and by an implanted sense in the human heart, receive impressions of goodwill towards each other, and these are the natural source from whence genuine friendship can only flow. Not that a good man's benevolence is by any means confined to a single object; he extends it to every individual. For true virtue, incapable of partial and contracted exceptions to the exercise of her benign spirit, enlarges the soul with sentiments of universal philanthropy. How, indeed, could it be consistent with her character to take whole nations under her protection, if even the lowest ranks of mankind, as well as the highest, were not the proper objects of beneficence?

But to return to the more immediate object of our present consideration. They who insist that "utility is the first and prevailing motive which induces mankind to enter into particular friendships," appear to me to divest the association of its most amiable and engaging principle. For to a mind rightly composed it is not so much the benefits received as the affectionate zeal from

which they flow, that gives them their best and most valuable recommendation. It is so far, indeed, from being verified by fact, that a sense of our wants is the original cause of forming these amicable alliances; that, on the contrary, it is observable that none have been more distinguished in their friendships than those whose power and opulence, but above all, whose superior virtue (a much firmer support) have raised them above every necessity of having recourse to the assistance of others. Perhaps, however, it may admit of a question, whether it were desirable that one's friend should be so absolutely sufficient for himself, as to have no wants of any kind to which his own powers were not abundantly adequate. I am sure, at least, I should have been deprived of a most exquisite satisfaction if no opportunity had ever offered to approve the affectionate zeal of my heart towards Scipio, and he had never had occasion, either in his civil or military transactions, to make use of my counsel or my aid.

The true distinction, then, in this question is, that "although friendship is certainly productive of utility, yet utility is not the primary motive of friendship." Those selfish sensualists, therefore, who lulled in the lap of luxury presume to maintain the reverse, have surely no claim to attention, as they are neither qualified by reflection nor experience to be competent judges of the subject.

Good gods! is there a man upon the face of the earth who would deliberately accept of all the wealth and all the affluence this world can bestow if offered to him upon the severe terms of his being unconnected with a single mortal whom he could love or by whom he should be beloved? This would be to lead the wretched life of a detested tyrant, who, amidst perpetual suspicions and alarms, passes his miserable days a stranger to every tender sentiment, and utterly precluded from the heartfelt satisfactions of friendship. For who can love the man he fears? or how can affection dwell with a consciousness of being feared? He may be flattered, indeed, by his followers with the specious semblance of personal attachment, but whenever he falls (and many instances there are of such a reverse of fortune) it will appear how totally destitute he stood of every genuine friend. Accordingly it is reported that Tarquin used to say in his exile, that "his misfortunes had taught him to discern his real from his pretended friends, as it was now no longer in his power to make either of them any returns." I should much wonder, however, if, with a temper so insolent and ferocious, he ever had a sincere friend.

But as the haughtiness of Tarquin's imperious deportment rendered it impossible for him to know the satisfaction of enjoying a faithful attachment, so it frequently happens that the being advanced into exalted stations equally proves the occasion of excluding the great and the powerful from possessing that inestimable felicity. Fortune, indeed, is not only blind herself but is apt to affect her favourites with the same infirmity. Weak minds, elated with being distinguished by her smiles, are generally disposed to assume an

arrogant and supercilious demeanour; and there is not in the whole compass of nature a more insufferable creature than a prosperous fool. Prosperity, in truth, has been observed to produce wonderful transformations even in persons who before had always the good sense to deport themselves in a modest and unassuming manner; and their heads have been so turned by the eminence to which they were raised, as to look down with neglect and contempt on their old friends, while their new connections entirely engaged all their attention and favour. But there cannot surely be a more flagrant instance of weakness and folly than to employ the great advantages of extensive influence and opulent possession in the purchase of brilliant equipages, gaudy raiment, elegant vases, together with every other fashionable decoration which wealth and power can procure; and yet neglect to use the means they afford of acquiring that noblest and most valuable ornament of human life, a worthy and faithful friend! The absurdity of this conduct is the more amazing, as after all the base sacrifices that may have been made to obtain these vain and ostentatious embellishments, the holding of them must ever be precarious. For whoever shall invade them with a stronger arm, to him they will infallibly belong; whereas a true friend is a treasure which no power, how formidable soever, can be sufficient to wrest from the happy possessor. But admitting that the favours of fortune were in their nature permanent and irrevocable, yet how joyless and insipid must they prove if not heightened and endeared by the society and participation of a bosom friend.

But not to pursue reflections of this sort any farther, let me rather observe that it is necessary to settle some fixed standard or measure, by which to regulate and adjust the kind affections in the commerce under consideration. To this intent, three different criterions I find have been proposed. The first is, "that in all important occurrences we should act towards our friend precisely in the same manner as if the case were our own:" the second, "that our good offices should be exactly dealt out, both in degree and value, by the measure and merit of those we receive from him;" and the last, "that our conduct in relation to all his concerns should be governed by the same kind of sentiments with which he appears to be actuated in respect to them himself."

Now there is not one of these several rules to which I can entirely give my approbation. The first is by no means I think just; because there are many things I would undertake on my friend's account, which I should never prevail with myself to act on my own. For instance, I would not scruple on his behalf to solicit, nor even to supplicate a man of a mean and worthless character, nor to repel with peculiar acrimony and indignation, any affront or injury that might be offered to him. And this conduct, which I could not hold without blame in matters that merely concerned myself, I very laudably might in those which relate to my friend. Add to this that there are many advantages which a generous mind would willingly forego, or suffer himself to be deprived of, that his friend might enjoy the

benefit of them.

With regard to the second criterion, which determines the measure of our affection and good offices, by exactly proportioning them to the value and quality we receive of each, it degrades the connection into a mere mercantile account between debtor and creditor. True friendship is animated by much too liberal and enlarged a spirit to distribute her beneficence with a careful and penurious circumspection, lest she should bestow more abundantly than she receives: she scorns to poise the balance so exactly equal that nothing shall be placed in the one scale without its equivalent in the other.

The third maxim is still less admissible than either of the two former. There are some characters who are apt to entertain too low an opinion of their personal merit, and whose spirits are frequently much too languid and depressed to exert themselves with proper vigour and activity for the promotion of their own interest or honours. Under circumstances of this kind shall the zeal of a friend rise no higher than one's own, but cautiously be restrained within the same humble level? On the contrary, he ought to endeavour by every means in his power to dispel the gloom that overcasts the mind of his desponding associate, and animate his hopes with livelier and more sanguine expectations.

And now, having pointed out the insufficiency of the several criteria I have mentioned, it is necessary I should produce some other more adequate and satisfactory. But before I deliver my opinion in respect to this article, suffer me previously to observe that Scipio used frequently to say there never was a caution advanced more injurious to the principles of true amity than the famous precept which advises, "so to regulate your affection towards your friend as to remember that the time may possibly come when you shall have reason to hate him." He could never, he said, be persuaded that Bias, a man so distinguished for wisdom as to be ranked among the seven celebrated sages of Greece, was really the author, as he is generally supposed, of so unworthy a precaution. It was rather the maxim, he imagined, of some sordid wretch, or perhaps of some ambitious statesman, who, a stranger to every nobler sentiment of the human heart, had no other object in forming his connections but as they might prove conducive to the increase or establishment of his power. It is impossible certainly to entertain a friendship for any man of whom you cherish so unfavourable an opinion as to suppose he may hereafter give you cause to become his enemy. In reality, if this axiom were justly founded, and it be right to sit thus loose in our affections, we ought to wish that our friend might give us frequent occasions to complain of his conduct, to lament whenever he acted in a laudable manner, and to envy every advantage that might attend him, lest unhappily he should lay too strong a hold on our heart. This unworthy rule, therefore, whoever was the author of it, is evidently calculated for the utter extirpation of true amity. The more rational advice would have been, as Scipio remarked, to be always so cautious in forming

friendships as never to place our esteem and affections where there was a probability of their being converted into the opposite sentiments. But, at all events, if we should be so unfortunate as to make an improper choice, it were wiser, he thought, not to look forward to possible contingencies than to be always acting upon the defensive, and painfully guarding against future dissensions.

I think, then, the only measures that can be properly recommended respecting our general conduct in the article of friendship is, in the first place, to be careful that we form the connection with men of strict and irreproachable manners; and, in the next, frankly to lay open to each other all our thoughts, inclinations, and purposes without the least caution, reserve, or disguise. I will venture even to add that in cases in which the life or good fame of a friend is concerned it may be allowable to deviate a little from the path of strict right in order to comply with his desires; provided, however, that by this compliance our own character be not materially affected. And this is the largest concession that should be made to friendship; for the good opinion of the public ought never to be lightly esteemed, nor the general affection of our fellow-citizens considered as a matter of little importance in carrying on the great affairs of the world. Popularity, indeed, if purchased at the expense of base condescensions to the vices or the follies of the people, is a disgrace to the possessor, but when it is the just and natural result of a laudable and patriotic conduct, it is an acquisition which no wise man will ever contemn.

But to return to Scipio. Friendship was his favourite topic, and I have frequently heard him remark that there is no article in which mankind usually act with so much negligence as in what relates to this connection. Everyone, he observed, informs himself with great exactness of what numbers his flocks and his herds consist, but who is it that endeavours to ascertain his real friends with the same requisite precision! Thus, likewise, in choosing the former much caution is commonly used in order to discover those significant marks which denote their proper qualities. Whereas, in selecting the latter, it is seldom that any great attention is exerted to discern those moral signatures which indicate the qualifications necessary to constitute a friend.

One of the principal ingredients to form that character is a "steadiness and constancy of temper." This virtue, it must be confessed, is not very generally to be found among mankind, nor is there any other means to discover in whose bosom it resides than experience. But as this experience cannot fully be acquired till the connection is already formed, affection is apt to take the lead of judgement, and render a previous trial impossible. It is the part of prudence, therefore, to restrain a predilection from carrying us precipitately into the arms of a new friend before we have, in some degree at least, put his moral qualifications to the test. A very inconsiderable article of money may be sufficient to prove the levity of some men's professions of friendship; whilst a much larger

sum in contest will be necessary to shake the constancy of others. But should there be a few, perhaps, who are actuated by too generous a spirit to suffer any pecuniary interest to stand in competition with the claims of amity, yet where shall we find the man who will not readily surrender his friendship to his ambition when they happen to interfere? Human nature is, in general, much too weak to resist the charms which surround these glittering temptations; and men are apt to flatter themselves that although they should acquire wealth or power by violating the duties of friendship, the world will be too much dazzled by the splendour of the objects to take notice of the unworthy sacrifice they make to obtain them. And hence it is that real, unfeigned amity is so seldom to be met with among those who are engaged in the pursuit or possession of the honours and the offices of the commonwealth.

To mention another species of trial which few likewise have the firmness to sustain. How severe is it thought by the generality of mankind to take a voluntary share in the calamities of others! And yet it is in the hour of adversity, as Ennius well observes, that Friendship must principally prove her truth and strength. In short, the deserting of a friend in his distress, and the neglecting of him in one's own prosperity, are the two tests which discover the weakness and instability of most connections of this nature. To preserve, therefore, in those seasons of probation, an immovable and unshaken fidelity is a virtue so exceedingly rare that I had almost called it more than human.

The great support and security of that invariable constancy and steadiness which I require in a friend is a strong and delicate sense of honour; for there can be no reliance upon any man who is totally uninfluenced by that principle, or in whom it operates but faintly. It is essential also, in order to form a permanent connection, that the object of our choice should not only have the same general turn of mind with our own, but possess an open, artless, and ingenuous temper; for where any one of those qualities are wanting, vain would it be to expect a lasting and faithful attachment. True friendship, indeed, is absolutely inconsistent with every species of artifice and duplicity; and it is equally impossible it should be maintained between persons whose dispositions and general modes of thinking do not perfectly accord. I must add, as another requisite for that stability I am speaking of, that the party should neither be capable of taking an ill-natured satisfaction in reprehending the frailties of his friend, nor easily induced to credit those imputations with which the malice of others may asperse him.

These reflections sufficiently confirm that position I set out with in this conversation, when I asserted that "true friendship can only be found among the virtuous;" for, in the first place, sincerity is so essential a quality in forming a good- or, if you please, a wise- man (for they are convertible terms), that a person of that character would deem it more generous to be a declared enemy than

to conceal a rancorous heart under a smooth brow; and in the next the same generous simplicity of heart would not only induce him to vindicate his friend against the accusation of others, but render him incapable of cherishing in his own breast that little suspicious temper which is ever apt to take offence and perpetually discovering some imaginary violation of amity.

Add to this that his conversation and address ought to be sweetened with a certain ease and politeness of language and manners, that wonderfully contribute to heighten and improve the relish of this intercourse. A solemn, severe demeanour may be very proper, I confess, in certain characters, to give them their proper impression; but friendship should wear a more pleasing aspect, and at all times appear with a complacent, affable, and unconstrained countenance.

And here I cannot forbear taking notice of an extraordinary question which some, it seems, have considered as not altogether without difficulty. It has been asked, "Is the pleasure of acquiring a new friend, supposing him endued with virtues which render him deserving our choice, preferable to the satisfaction of possessing an old one?" On the same account I presume, as we prefer a young horse to one that is grown old in our service, for never, surely, was there a doubt proposed more unworthy of a rational mind! It is not with friendships as with acquisitions of most other kinds, which, after frequent enjoyment, are generally attended with satiety; on the contrary, the longer we preserve them, like those sorts of wine that will bear age, the more relishing and valuable they become. Accordingly the proverb justly says that "one must eat many a peck of salt with a man before he can have sufficient opportunities to approve himself a thorough friend"- not that new connections are to be declined, provided appearances indicate that in due time they may ripen into the happy fruits of a well contracted amity. Old friendships, however, certainly have a claim to the superior degree of our esteem, were it for no other reason than from that powerful impression which ancient habitudes of every kind naturally make upon the human heart. To have recourse once more to the ludicrous instance I just now suggested- who is there that would not prefer a horse whose paces he had been long accustomed to before one that was new and untrained to his hand? Even things inanimate lay a strong hold on the mind by the mere force of custom, as is observable in that rooted affection we bear towards those places, though never so wild and uncultivated, in which a considerable part of our earlier days have been passed.

It frequently happens that there is a great disparity between intimate friends both in point of rank and talents. Now, under these circumstances, "he who has the advantage should never appear sensible of his superiority." Thus Scipio, who stood distinguished in the little group, if I may so call it, of our select associates, never discovered in his behaviour the least consciousness of his pre-eminence over Philus, Rupilius, Memmius, or any other of his

particular connections, who were of subordinate abilities or station. And with regard to his brother, Q. Maximus, who, although a man of great merit, and his senior, was by no means comparable with Scipio, he always treated him with as much deference and regard as if he had advanced as far beyond him in every other article as in point of years; in short, it was his constant endeavour to raise all his friends into an equal degree of consequence with himself, and his example well deserves to be imitated. Whatever excellences, therefore, a man may possess in respect to his virtues, his intellectual endowments, or the accidental favours of fortune, he ought generously to communicate the benefits of them with his friends and family. Agreeably to these principles, should he happen to be descended from an obscure ancestry, and see any of his relations in distressed circumstances, or that require the assistance of his superior power or abilities, it is incumbent upon him to employ his credit, his riches, and his talents, to supply their respective deficiencies, and reflect back upon them every honour and advantage they are capable of receiving. Dramatic writers, when the fabulous hero of their play, after having been educated under some poor shepherd ignorant of his true parent, is discovered to be of royal lineage, or the offspring, perhaps, of some celestial divinity, always think it necessary to exhibit the noble youth as still retaining a grateful affection for the honest rustic to whom he had so long supposed himself indebted for his birth; but how much more are these sentiments due to him who has a legitimate claim to his filial tenderness and respect!- In a word, the most sensible satisfaction that can result from advantageous distinctions of every sort is in the pleasure a well-constituted mind must feel by exerting them for the benefit of every individual to whom he stands related, either by the ties of kindred or amity.

But if he who, on account of any of those superiorities which I have mentioned, appears the most conspicuous figure in the circle of his friends, ought by no means to discover in his behaviour towards them the least apparent sense of the eminence on which he stands, so neither should they, on the other hand, betray sentiments of envy or dissatisfaction in seeing him thus exalted above them. It must be acknowledged, however, that in situations of this kind the latter are too apt to be unreasonable in their expectations; to complain that their friend is not sufficiently attentive to their interest, and sometimes even to break out into open remonstrances, especially if they think they are entitled to plead the merit of any considerable services to strengthen their respective claims. But to be capable of reproaching a man with the obligations you have conferred upon him is a disposition exceedingly contemptible and odious; it is his part, indeed, not to forget the good offices he has received; but ill, certainly, would it become his friend to be the monitor for that purpose.

It is not sufficient, therefore, merely to behave with an easy condescension towards those friends who are of less considerable

note than oneself; it is incumbent upon him to bring them forward, and, as much as possible, to raise their consequence. The apprehension of not being treated with sufficient regard sometimes creates much uneasiness in this connection; and those tempers are most liable to be disquieted by this suspicion that are inclined to entertain too low an opinion of their own merit. It is the part therefore of a generous and benevolent mind to endeavour to relieve his friend from the mortification of these humiliating sentiments, not only by professions, but by essential services.

The proper measure by which these services ought to be regulated must be taken partly from the extent of our own power, and partly from what the person who is the object of our particular affection has abilities to sustain. For how unlimited soever a man's authority and influence might be, it would be impossible to raise indiscriminately all his friends by turns into the same honourable stations. Thus Scipio, although he had sufficient interest to procure the consular dignity for Publius Rutilius, could not perform the same good office for Lucius, the brother of that consul. But even admitting that you had the arbitrary disposal of every dignity of the state, still it would be necessary well to examine whether your friend's talents were equal to his ambition, and sufficiently qualified him to discharge the duties of the post in question, with credit to himself and advantage to the public.

It is proper to observe that in stating the duties and obligations of friendship, those intimacies alone can justly be taken into consideration which are formed at a time of life when men's characters are decided, and their judgements arrived at maturity. As to the associates of our early years, the companions and partners of our puerile pleasures and amusements, they can by no means, simply on that account, be deemed in the number of friends. Indeed, if the first objects of our affection had the best claim to be received into that rank, our nurses and our pedagogues would certainly have a right to the most considerable share of our regard. Some degree of it is unquestionably due to them, but of a kind, however, far different from that which is the subject of our present inquiry. The truth is, were our early attachments the just foundation of amity, it would be impossible that the union should ever be permanent. For our inclinations and pursuits take a different turn as we advance into riper years; and where these are no longer similar, the true cement of friendship is dissolved. It is the total disparity between the disposition and manners of the virtuous and the vicious that alone renders their coalition incompatible.

There is a certain intemperate degree of affection towards one's friends which it is necessary to restrain, as the indulging of it has frequently, and in very important situations, proved extremely prejudicial to their interest. To exemplify my meaning by an instance from ancient story: Neoptolemus, would never have had the glory of taking Troy had his friend Lycomedes, in whose court he had been educated, succeeded in his too warm and earnest solicitations not

to hazard his person in that famous expedition. There are numberless occasions which may render an absence between friends highly expedient; and to endeavour, from an impatience of separation, to prevent it, betrays a degree of weakness inconsistent with that firm and manly spirit, without which it is impossible to act up to the character of a true friend. And this is a farther confirmation of the maxim I before insisted upon, that "in a commerce of friendship, mutual requests or concessions should neither be made nor granted, without due and mature deliberation."

But to turn our reflections from those nobler alliances of this kind which are formed between men of eminent and superior virtue, to that lower species which occurs in the ordinary intercourse of the world. In connections of this nature, it sometimes unfortunately happens, that circumstances arise which render it expedient for a man of honour to break with his friend. Some latent vice, perhaps, or concealed ill-humour, unexpectedly discovers itself in his behaviour either towards his friends themselves, or towards others, which cannot be overlooked without participating his disgrace. The most advisable and prudent conduct in situations of this kind is to suffer the intimacy to wear out by silent and insensible degrees; or, to use a strong expression, which I remember to have fallen from Cato upon a similar occasion, "the bands of friendship should be gradually untied, rather than suddenly cut asunder;" always supposing, however, that the offence is not of so atrocious a nature as to render an absolute and immediate alienation indispensably requisite for one's own honour.

As it is not unusual (for I am still speaking of common friendships) that dissensions arise from some extraordinary change of manners or sentiments, or from some contrariety of opinions with respect to public affairs, the parties at variance should be much upon their guard, lest their behaviour towards each other should give the world occasion to remark that they have not only ceased to be cordial friends, but are become inveterate enemies, for nothing is more indecent than to appear in open war with a man with whom one has formerly lived upon terms of familiarity and good fellowship.

Scipio estranged himself from Quintus Pompeius, you well know, solely upon my account; as the dissensions which arose in the republic alienated him also from my colleague Metellus. But in both instances he preserved the dignity of his character, and never suffered himself to be betrayed into the least improper warmth of resentment.

Upon the whole, then, the first great caution in this commerce should be studiously to avoid all occasions of discord; but if any should necessarily arise, the next is to manage the quarrel with so much temper and moderation that the flame of friendship shall appear to have gently subsided, rather than to have been violently extinguished. But above all, whenever a dissension happens between the parties, they should be particularly on their guard against indulging a virulent animosity; as a spirit of this exasperated kind, when unrestrained, is apt to break forth into expressions of the most malevolent contumely and reproach. In a case of this nature, if

the language should not be too insulting to be borne, it will be prudent in consideration of their former friendship to receive it without a return, for by this forbearance the reviler, and not the reviled, will appear the person that most deserves to be condemned.

The sure, and indeed the only sure, means to escape the several errors and inconveniences I have pointed out is, in the first place, "never hastily to engage in friendships;" and, in the next, "not to enter into them with those who are unworthy of the connection." Now, he alone is worthy whose personal merit, independent of all other considerations, renders him the just object of affection and esteem. Characters of this sort, it must be confessed, are extremely rare, as indeed every other species of excellence generally is, nothing being more uncommon than to meet with what is perfect in its kind in any subject whatsoever. But the misfortune is that the generality of the world have no conception of any other merit than what may be turned to interest. They love their friends upon the same principle, and in the same proportion, as they love their flocks and their herds; giving just so much of their regard to each as is equal to the profits they respectively produce.

Hence it is they are for ever strangers to the sweet complacencies of that generous amity which springs from those natural instincts originally impressed upon the human soul, and is simply desirable for its own abstracted and intrinsic value. To convince them, however, of the possible existence at least and powerful efficacy of an affection utterly void of all mercenary motives, they need only be referred to what passes in their own bosoms. For the love which every man bears to himself does not certainly flow from any expected recompense or reward, but solely from that pure and innate regard which each individual feels for his own person. Now, if the same kind of affection be not transferred into friendship, it will be in vain to hope for a true friend; as a true friend is no other in effect than a second self.

To these reflections we may add that if two distinct principles universally prevail throughout the whole animal creation, in the first place, that love of self which is common to every sensitive being, and, in the next, a certain degree of social affection, by which every individual of the same species is led to herd with its kind, how much more strongly has nature infused into the heart of man, together with a principle of self-love, this herding disposition! By the latter he is powerfully impelled not only to unite with his species in general, but to look out for some particular associate with whom he may be so intimately blended in sentiments and inclinations as to form, I had almost said, one soul in two bodies.

The generality of mankind are so unreasonable, not to say arrogant, as to require that their friends should be formed by a more perfect model than themselves are able or willing to imitate. Whereas the first endeavour should be to acquire yourself those moral excellences which constitute a virtuous character, and then to find an associate whose good qualities reflect back the true image

of your own. Thus would the fair fabric of friendship be erected upon that immovable basis which I have so repeatedly recommended in the course of this inquiry. For what should endanger its stability when a mutual affection between the parties is blended with principles that raise them above those mean passions by which the greater part of the world are usually governed? Being equally actuated by a strong sense of justice and equity, they will at all times equally be zealous to exert their utmost powers in the service of each other, well assured that nothing will ever be required, on either side, inconsistent with the dictates of truth and honour. In consequence of these principles they will not only love, but revere each other. I say revere, for where reverence does not dwell with affection, amity is bereaved of her noblest and most graceful ornament.

It is an error, therefore, that leads to the most pernicious consequences to imagine that the laws of friendship supersede those of moral obligation, and justify a participation with licentiousness and debauchery. Nature has sown the seed of that social affection in the heart of man for purposes far different; not to produce confederates in vice, but auxiliaries in virtue. Solitary and sequestered virtue is indeed incapable of rising to the same height as when she acts in conjunction with an affectionate and animating companion of her generous efforts. They who are thus leagued in reciprocal support and encouragement of each other's moral ambition may be considered as setting out together in the best company and surest road towards those desirable objects in which nature has placed the supreme felicity of man. Yes, my friends, I will repeat it again. An amity ennobled by these exalted principles, and directed to these laudable purposes, leads to honour and to glory, and is productive, at the same time, of that sweet satisfaction and complacency of mind which, in conjunction with the two former, essentially constitute real happiness. He, therefore, who means to acquire these great and ultimate beatitudes of human life must receive them from the hands of Virtue; as neither friendship or aught else deservedly valuable can possibly be obtained without her influence and intervention. For they who persuade themselves that they may possess a true friend, at least, where moral merit has no share in producing the connection, will find themselves miserably deceived whenever some severe misfortune shall give them occasion to make the decisive experiment.

It is a maxim, then, which cannot too frequently nor too strongly be inculcated, that in forming the attachment we are speaking of "we should never suffer affection to take root in our hearts before judgement has time to interpose;" for in no circumstance of our lives can a hasty and inconsiderate choice be attended with more fatal consequences. But the folly is that we generally forbear to deliberate till consideration can nothing avail; and hence it is that after the association has been habitually formed, and many good offices perhaps have been mutually interchanged, some latent flaw becomes visible, and the union which was precipitately cemented is no less

suddenly dissolved. Now this inattention is the more blameworthy and astonishing, as friendship is the only article among the different objects of human pursuit the value and importance of which is unanimously, and without any exception, acknowledged. I say the only article, for even Virtue herself is not universally held in esteem; and there are many who represent all her high pretensions as mere affectation and ostentatious parade. There are, too, whose moderate desires are satisfied with humble meals and lowly roofs, and who look upon riches with sovereign contempt. How many are there who think that those honours which inflame the ambition of others are of all human vanities the most frivolous! In like manner throughout all the rest of those several objects which divide the passions of mankind, what some admire others most heartily despise. Whereas, with respect to friendship, there are not two different opinions; the active and the ambitious, the retired and the contemplative, even the sensualist himself (if he would indulge his appetites with any degree of refinement) unanimously acknowledge that without friendship life can have no true enjoyment. She insinuates herself, indeed, by I know not what irresistible charm into the hearts of every rank and class of men, and mixes in all the various modes and arrangements of human life. Were there a man in the world of so morose and acrimonious a disposition as to shun (agreeably to what we are told of a certain Timon of Athens) all communication with his species, even such an odious misanthropist could not endure to be excluded from one associate, at least, before whom he might discharge the whole rancour and virulence of his heart. The truth is, if we could suppose ourselves transported by some divinity into a solitude replete with all the delicacies which the heart of man could desire, but secluded at the same time from every possible intercourse with our kind, there is not a person in the world of so unsocial and savage a temper as to be capable under these forlorn circumstances of relishing any enjoyment. Accordingly, nothing is more true than what Archytas of Tarentum, if I mistake not, is reported to have said, "That were a man to be carried up into heaven, and the beauties of universal nature displayed to his view, he would receive but little pleasure from the wonderful scene if there were none to whom he might relate the glories he had beheld." Human nature, indeed, is so constituted as to be incapable of lonely satisfactions; man, like those plants which are formed to embrace others, is led by an instinctive impulse to recline on his species, and he finds his happiest and most secure support in the arms of a faithful friend. But although in this instance, as in every other, Nature points out her tendencies by a variety of unambiguous notices, and proclaims her meaning in the most emphatical language, yet, I know not how it is, we seem strangely blind to her clearest signals, and deaf to her loudest voice!

The offices of friendship are so numerous, and of such different kinds, that many little disgusts may arise in the exercise of them, which a man of true good sense will either avoid, extenuate, or be contented to bear, as the nature and circumstances of the case may

render most expedient. But there is one particular duty which may frequently occur, and which he will at all hazards of offence discharge, as it is never to be superseded consistently with the truth and fidelity he owes to the connection; I mean the duty of admonishing, and even reproving, his friend, an office which, whenever it is affectionately exercised, should be kindly received. It must be confessed, however, that the remark of my dramatic friend is too frequently verified, who observes in his *Andria* that "obsequiousness conciliates friends, but truth creates enemies." When truth proves the bane of friendship we may have reason, indeed, to be sorry for the unnatural consequence; but we should have cause to be more sorry if we suffered a friend by a culpable indulgence to expose his character to just reproach. Upon these delicate occasions, however, we should be particularly careful to deliver our advice or reproof without the least appearance of acrimony or insult. Let our obsequiousness (to repeat the significant expression of Terence) extend as far as gentleness of manners and the rules of good breeding require; but far let it be from seducing us to flatter either vice or misconduct, a meanness unworthy, not only of every man who claims to himself the title of friend, but of every liberal and ingenuous mind. Shall we live with a friend upon the same cautious terms we must submit to live with a tyrant? Desperate indeed must that man's moral disorders be who shuts his ears to the voice of truth when delivered by a sincere and affectionate monitor! It was a saying of Cato (and he had many that well deserve to be remembered) that "some men were more obliged to their inveterate enemies than to their complaisant friends, as they frequently heard the truth from the one, but never from the other;" in short, the great absurdity is that men are apt, in the instances under consideration, to direct both their dislike and their approbation to the wrong object. They hate the admonition, and love the vice; whereas they ought, on the contrary, to hate the vice, and love the admonition.

As nothing, therefore, is more suitable to the genius and spirit of true friendship than to give and receive advice- to give it, I mean, with freedom, but without rudeness, and to receive it not only without reluctance, but with patience- so nothing is more injurious to the connection than flattery, compliment, or adulation. I multiply these equivalent terms, in order to mark with stronger emphasis the detestable and dangerous character of those pretended friends, who, strangers to the dictates of truth, constantly hold the language which they are sure will be most acceptable. But if counterfeit appearances of every species are base and dishonest attempts to impose upon the judgement of the unwary, they are more peculiarly so in a commerce of amity, and absolutely repugnant to the vital principle of that sacred relation; for, without sincerity, friendship is a mere name, that has neither meaning nor efficacy. It is the essential property of this alliance to form so intimate a coalition between the parties that they seem to be actuated, as it were, by one common spirit; but it is impossible that this unity of mind should

be produced when there is one of them in which it does not subsist even in his own person, who, with a duplicity of soul which sets him at perpetual variance from himself, assumes opposite sentiments and opinions, as is most convenient to his present purpose. Nothing in nature, indeed, is so pliant and versatile as the genius of a flatterer, who always acts and pretends to think in conformity, not only to the will and inclination, but even to the looks and countenances of another. Like Gnatho in the play, he can prevail with himself to say either yes or no, as best suits the occasion; and he lays it down as his general maxim, never to dissent from the company.

Terence exposes this baseness of soul in the person of a contemptible parasite; but how much more contemptible does it appear when exhibited in the conduct of one who dares usurp the name of friend! The mischief is that there are many Gnathos, of a much superior rank and consequence, to be met with in the commerce of the world; and it is from this class of flatterers that the greatest danger is to be apprehended, as the poison they administer receives additional strength and efficacy from the hand that conveys it. Nevertheless, a man of good sense and discernment, if he will exert the requisite attention, will always be able to distinguish the complaisant from the sincere friend, with the same certainty that he may in any other subject perceive the difference between the counterfeit and the genuine. It is observable in the general assemblies of the people, composed as they are of the most ignorant part of the community, that even the populace know how to discriminate the soothing insidious orator, whose only aim is to acquire popularity, from the firm, inflexible, and undesigning patriot. A remarkable instance of this kind lately appeared, when Caius Papirius proposed a law to enable the Tribunes, at the expiration of their office, to be re-elected for the ensuing year, upon which he employed every insinuating art of address to seduce and captivate the ears of the multitude. Not to mention the part I took myself upon that occasion, it was opposed by Scipio with such a commanding flow of eloquence, and invincible strength of reason, that this popular law was rejected by the very populace themselves. But you were present at the debate, and his speech is in everybody's hands. I cannot forbear giving you another instance likewise, although it is one particularly relating to myself. You may remember that in the consulate of Lucius Mancinus and Quintus Maximus, the brother of Scipio, a very popular law was moved by Caius Licinius, who proposed that the privilege of electing to the sacerdotal offices should be transferred from the respective colleges to the general assemblies of the people; and let me remark, by the way, it was upon this occasion that Licinius, in complaisance to the people, first introduced the practice of addressing them with his back turned upon the Senate-house. Nevertheless, the pious reverence which is due to every circumstance that concerns the worship of the immortal gods, together with the arguments by which I exposed the impropriety of

his motion, prevailed over all the specious colourings of his plausible oratory. This affair was agitated during my Praetorship, and I was not chosen Consul till five years afterwards, so that it is evident I owed my success more to the force of truth than to the influence of station.

Now, if in popular assemblies, a scene, of all others, in which fiction and fallacious representations have the greatest scope, and are usually employed with the most success, Truth, when fairly stated and properly enforced, could thus prevail, with how much more reason may she expect to be favourably heard in an intercourse of friendship, the very essence whereof depends upon sincerity! In a commerce of this nature, indeed, if you are not permitted to see into the most hidden recesses of your friend's bosom, and do not with equal unreserve lay open to him the full exposure of your own, there can be no just ground for confidence on either side, nor even sufficient evidence that any affection subsists between you. With respect, however, to that particular deviation from truth which is the object of our present consideration, it must be acknowledged that, noxious as flattery is, no man was ever infected by it who did not love and encourage the offering. Accordingly, there is no turn of mind so liable to be tainted by this sort of poison as a disposition to entertain too high conceit of one's own merit. I must confess, at the same time, that conscious virtue cannot be void of self-esteem, as well knowing her own worth, and how amiable her form appears. But the pretenders to virtue are much more numerous than the really virtuous, and it is of the former only that I am now speaking. Men of that character are particularly delighted with adulation, as confirming their title, they imagine, to the merit they so vainly claim.

It appears then that genuine friendship cannot possibly exist where one of the parties is unwilling to hear truth and the other is equally indisposed to speak it. Friends of this kind are by no means uncommon in the world, and, indeed, there would be neither propriety nor humour in the character of a parasite as exhibited by our comic writers, were a vain-glorious soldier, for example, never to be met with in real life. When the braggart captain in the play asks Gnatho, "Did Thais return me many thanks, say you?" An artless man would have thought it sufficient to answer "many," but the cunning sycophant replies, "immense, innumerable;" for a skilful flatterer perfectly well knows that a pleasing circumstance can never be too much exaggerated in the opinion of the person upon whom he means to practise.

But although flattery chiefly operates on those whose vanity encourages and invites the exercise of it, yet these are not the only sort of men upon whom it may impose. There is a delicate and refined species of adulation, against which even better understandings may not improperly be cautioned. Gross and open obsequiousness can deceive none but fools, but there is a latent and more ensnaring manner of insinuation, against which a man of sense ought to be

particularly on his guard. A flatterer of this insidious and concealed kind will frequently gain his point even by opposition; he will affect to maintain opinions which he does not hold, and dispute in order to give you the credit of a victory. But nothing is more humiliating than to be thus egregiously duped. It is necessary, therefore, to exert the utmost attention against falling into these covert snares, lest we should have reason to say, with one of the characters in the Heiress, "Never was old dotard on the stage so finely played upon as I have been by you to-day." This, indeed, would be to exhibit the mortifying personage of one of those ridiculous old men in our comedies, who listen with easy faith to every specious tale contrived to impose on their credulity. But I have insensibly wandered from the principal object I had in view, and instead of proceeding to consider Friendship as it appears in perfect characters (perfect, I mean, as far as is consistent with the frailty of human nature), I am talking of it as it is seen in the vain and frivolous connections of the world. I return therefore to the original subject of our conversation, and which it is now time to draw towards a conclusion.

It is virtue, yes, let me repeat it again, it is virtue alone that can give birth, strength, and permanency to friendship. For virtue is a uniform and steady principle ever acting consistently with itself. They whose souls are warmed by its generous flame not only improve their common ardour by communication, but naturally kindle into that pure affection of the heart towards each other which is distinguished by the name of amity, and is wholly unmixed with every kind and degree of selfish considerations. But although genuine friendship is solely the offspring of pure goodwill, and no motive of advantage or utility has the least share in its production, yet many very beneficial consequences result from it, how little soever those consequences are the objects primarily in view. Of this disinterested nature was that affection which, in the earlier season of my life, united me with those venerable old men, Paulus, Cato, and Gallus, as also with Nasica and Gracchus, the father-in-law of my late honoured and lamented friend. That the principle I have assigned is really the leading motive of true friendship becomes still more evident when the connection is formed between men of equal years, as in that which subsisted between Scipio, Furius, Rupilius, Memmius, and myself. Not that old men may not also find a generous satisfaction in living upon terms of disinterested intimacy with the young, as I have the happiness to experience in the friendship I enjoy, not only with both of you and Q. Tubero, but even with Publius Rutilius and Aulus Virginius, who are much your juniors. One would wish, indeed, to preserve those friends through all the successive periods of our days with whom we first set out together in this our journey through the world. But since man holds all his possessions by a very precarious and uncertain tenure we should endeavour, as our old friends drop off, to repair their loss by new acquisitions, lest one should be so unhappy as to stand in his old age a solitary, unconnected individual, bereaved of every person whom he

loves and by whom he is beloved. For without a proper and particular object upon which to exercise the kind and benevolent affections, life is destitute of every enjoyment that can render it justly desirable.

As to the loss I have myself sustained by the death of Scipio, who was so suddenly and so unexpectedly snatched from me, he is still present in my mind's eye, and present he will ever remain; for it was his virtues that endeared him to my heart, and his virtues can never die. But not by me only, who had the happiness to enjoy a daily intercourse with them, will they be held in perpetual remembrance; his name will be mentioned with honour to the latest posterity, and no man will hereafter either meditate or execute any great and laudable achievement without proposing to himself the conduct of Scipio as his brightest and most animating exemplar. For myself, among all the blessings for which I am indebted either to nature or to fortune, there is not one upon which I set so high a value as the friendship in which I lived with Scipio. In him I found a constant associate in public affairs, a faithful counsellor in private life, and upon all occasions the confidential friend from whom my soul received her truest and most solid satisfactions. I am not conscious of ever having given him even the slightest cause of offence; and sure I am that I never heard a word proceed from his lips which I had reason to be sorry he had uttered. We not only lived under the same roof, and ate at the same frugal table, but advanced together through the several military services; and even in our travels, as well as during our recess into the country, we were constant and inseparable companions- not to mention that we were equally animated with the same ardent love of science, and jointly passed every hour of our privacy and leisure in one common pursuit of useful knowledge. If the power of recollecting these pleasing circumstances had become extinct in me at the same time that he expired, it would have been impossible that I could have supported the loss of a man whom I so tenderly loved, and with whom I was so intimately united; but they are indelibly stamped upon my mind, and the oftener they recur to my thoughts the more lively is the impression they leave behind them. But, were I totally deprived of these soothing reflections, my age, however, would afford me great consolation, as I cannot, by the common course of nature, long be separated from him, and short pains, how severe soever they may prove, may well be endured.

I have thus laid before you all that occurs to me on the subject concerning which you desired my sentiments. Let me only again exhort you to be well persuaded that there can be no real friendship which is not founded upon virtuous principles, nor any acquisition, virtue alone excepted, preferable to a true friend.

THE END OF LAELIUS OR, AN ESSAY ON FRIENDSHIP

