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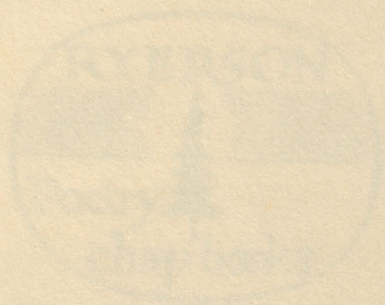
ON  
FRIEND-  
SHIP

W. Sherwood Fox

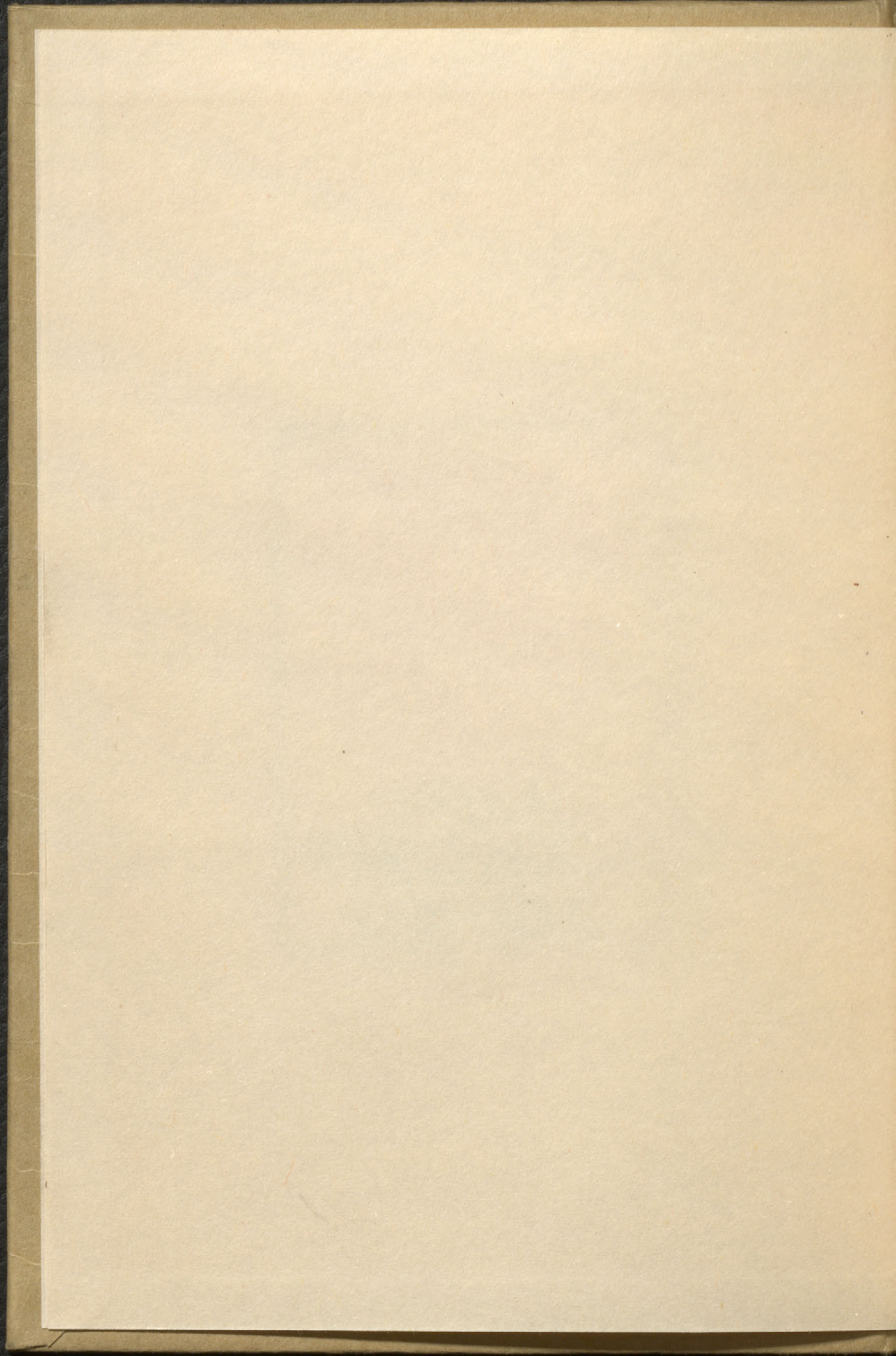


# ON FRIENDSHIP

By WILLIAM ROBERTSON FOSTER

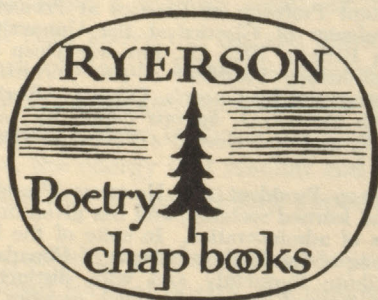


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# ON FRIENDSHIP

by William Sherwood Fox



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IN FRIENDSHIP

To

THE HONOURABLE RAY LAWSON

Canadian Consul General, New York  
Former Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario

WILLIAM SHERWOOD FOX was born in Throopsville, N.Y., and moved to Canada with his parents while still a small boy. After attending Harbord Collegiate, Toronto, he entered McMaster University, from which he graduated with his M.A., continued postgraduate studies at Johns Hopkins for his Ph.D., and did further graduate work at the University of Chicago and the University of Geneva, Switzerland. He was Instructor in Classics at Brandon College, then Fellow in Classical Archaeology at Johns Hopkins, Assistant Professor of Classics at Princeton University, and finally Professor of Classics at the University of Western Ontario. From 1919 to 1927 Dr. Fox was Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and ultimately President of the University, 1927-1947. He has been honoured by Queen's, Ottawa, Alberta and Toronto universities with the LL.D. *honoris causa*, by Laval University with the Litt.D., and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Dr. Fox has been President and Honorary President of various professional and learned societies, and has given much time to the pressing affairs of administration. In spite of the heavy demands upon him as one of the leading citizens of Canada, he has found time to contribute frequently and with distinction to various transactions of learned and professional societies, as well as to edit and write several books, among which are *The Letters of William Davies, Toronto, 1854-1861*; *'T Ain't Runnin' No More; St. Ignace, Canadian Altar of Martyrdom*; and *The Bruce Beckons*.

*On Friendship* is a free paraphrase in Tennysonian quatrains of the *Laelius*, or *de Amicitia*, in which Cicero, availing himself of the recent death of Scipio, and obviously inspired by Aristotle, sets forth in the form of a dialogue with his sons-in-law his ideas regarding friendship. It is reprinted from *The Johns Hopkins Alumni Magazine*, January, 1926.

## FOREWORD

CICERO'S famous dialogue *On Friendship* is only on the surface a prose composition. Beneath its entire fabric lies at varying heights and levels a tangible substratum of poetry. This may be traced as the prospector traces the vein of precious metal by its sequence of outcroppings across hill and valley, under lakes and rivers. Beneath the rise and fall of the conversation, beneath the sheer gaps of honest difference of opinion, runs the poetry of the dialogue, sometimes pure, sometimes in a natural alloy. Now it sinks deep—almost too deep for the drill of criticism—beneath the drift of the perfunctory commonplaces, “the decent praise, the due regret.” Yet it is the intentional obscuring of this element of poetry which gives the document its appeal to all classes of humanity, for “each banality prescribed of old” is not to be counted a blemish solely of the plebeian mind. Now it rises above the surface, showing its true worth in a flash of deeply human sentiment, or with a sustained richness of suggestion, or with a full outburst of lyric enthusiasm. Here is stored the essential energy of the dialogue, the energy that reaches and inspires the reader along the line of the primary appeal.

These few quatrains are but an attempt to map in verse, the outward form of poetry, the sinuous course of the element of poetry that interpenetrates this composition. No claim is made that these verses are a translation. Nevertheless, every idea they present is to be attributed to the original. The same is true, with only two or three exceptions, of the order of these ideas. It cannot be gainsaid that many of the thoughts have become to us moderns mere platitudes. But that they are such is due

mainly to two reasons: first, the wide currency given to them centuries ago by this same work of Cicero and by his Stoic and Peripatetic models; secondly, the fact that we of today are such mongers and cataloguers of the epigrams and proverbs of all ages that the old ideas have lost their savor for us and the new produce the illusion of being old before they are even shopworn. All of us occasionally need the reminder that a platitude may be true.

The freedom I have exercised in employing the ideas of Cicero has been extended to include phrases and mannerisms from other sources. In short, the drafts made on the Bible, on Fitzgerald, and on Tennyson, are deliberate.

To some it may possibly seem a sort of sacrilege that I have ventured to appropriate the verse of *In Memoriam*; but against this criticism may be justly urged the plea that the verse is sacred not to the poem itself but to the immortal friendship which it hallows. It is in the service of this very type of friendship that the aid of the verse is now invoked.



# On Friendship

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CHARACTERS: *Caius Laelius*, called the Wise, the friend of Scipio; *Caius Fannius*, a son-in-law of Laelius; *Quintus Mucius Scaevola*, the augur, a son-in-law of Laelius.

TIME: B.C. 129, a few days after the death of the younger Scipio, the conqueror of Carthage and Numantia.

PLACE: The house of Laelius in Rome.

## FANNIUS

WISE art thou, Laelius, know we well,  
As Roman Cato; aye, the same  
As Athens' son who gained the name  
Of Wisest from the oracle.

Yet much it pains us that 'tis said,  
"Where now his wisdom, calm, discreet?  
Behold, he grieveth more than meet  
That Scipio is dead, is dead."

## SCAEVOLA

And Fannius saith truly so;  
For thou wert not in Brutus' hall,  
When all in wonder ask'd of all:  
"So great his love for Scipio?"

But I chid every doubt of thee:  
"The grief of Laelius, like his soul,  
Is vast, yet lordly in control;  
Is deep, yet hides no frailty."

LAELIUS

Good friends, your praise is sweet, for thus  
To bow the heart alone to Chance,  
But face the world with iron glance,  
This hold I to be virtuous.

Call me no Cato! Nay! To share  
His stern dominion over sense  
Would be a victor's recompense  
Beyond my hope, beyond despair.

And yet, and yet, though no tears flow,  
I cannot own Death hath no sting,  
Nor parting is an idle thing  
From such a friend as Scipio.

But this my balm—no more I crave—  
That he, Rome's noblest son of war,  
Yet driveth in his thund'ring car  
Through the mute republic of the grave;

Yet wears the purple blazonry  
He never lusted to assume,  
And shines undimm'd across the gloom  
The golden Self he us'd to be.

For I do hold with seer and sage  
That when the body yields to Death,  
Like to a ransom'd serf the Breath  
Fareth to its own heritage;

The baser, to its sort below;  
The finer—Ah, how rarely swift  
To join its kin divine would lift  
The Breath that is our Scipio!

How full and how emancipate  
His being now! No more a prey  
To pitfalls by our human way,  
To discord of the notes of state.

And rich am I, though widow'd thus,  
For knowing him was treasure-trove.  
Lo! age from age will learn the love  
Of Scipio and Laelius!

FANNIUS

Aye, Laelius, that needs must be;  
But now the word is on thy lip,  
Pray teach us in this Fellowship,  
Its store of sweet philosophy.

LAELIUS

IP? What am I, that I should weave  
Into the web of speech, off-hand,  
This pattern rare, completely plann'd,  
Such as but masters can conceive?

Yet, friends, I would that ye did know  
How Friendship is of all things best,  
The one firm rock that holds its crest  
Over Life's restless ebb and flow.

First, now, that man must learn who would  
Both have and be a friend in fact,  
The striking of the tender pact  
In chief consists in being good;

Not in that sublimated mode  
Preach'd by the moon-struck moralist,  
Who plots our way across the mist  
Nor heeds that earth is man's highroad:

But simply good—replete with grace  
For fault, kind, true, and nobly fair,  
Unsparring, eke content to wear  
The sober mask of commonplace.

Then is he temper'd so he might  
His soul into another's weld,  
(Neither as kin to kin is held  
Nor as base commoners unite)

To be one life, whence vanisheth  
The lust of pow'r, the lust of pelf,  
The lust that would enthrone the self,  
All, saving the one common breath;

A life whose strength is prov'd well-knit,  
Not by proud props of eloquence,  
But that the shocks of world and sense  
Never prevail to shatter it.

O happy state! It hangeth fruit  
Upon Good Fortune's spreading tree;  
A charm against Adversity,  
It saves the will indissolute.

It spreads to earth's remotest reach,  
Lavish of benefits sublime;  
An ever seasonable clime  
Is this rare Friendship I would teach.

It is a mage whose word doth turn  
The absent from his distant quest;  
The halting run, the poor are blest,  
And ashes quicken in the urn.

It is that law which doth cement  
The elemental whirl of things  
Into this steadfast whole, as sings  
The prophet-bard of Agrigent.

In fine, who knows this amity  
Hath in his friend a pattern clear,  
Wherein the lineaments appear  
Of the great soul that he would be.

But now I cease, lest my words throw  
A blight across the thing I prize.  
Far rather, learn ye from some wise  
Old wrangler of the Portico.

FANNIUS

Nay, Laelius, nay; we would hear thee!  
Oft do we listen to their screed,  
And just so oft to thee concede  
The magic voice of mastery.

SCAEVOLA

O hadst thou heard his brief of late  
On Justice, Fannius, so thou  
The more wouldst urge him argue now  
As Friendship's chiefest advocate.

LAELIUS

Comrades, ye scourge me to the suit,  
Yet with so kind a whip and light,  
And in so fair a cause, I might  
Not, even though I would, stand mute.

Some minds do hold that Friendship springs  
From the same soil as usury,  
And fattens on the frequent fee  
Of mutual grace in temporal things;

Some, that it is of nobler seed,  
Akin to Nature, Truth, and Love,  
Burgeoning in the tender dove,  
Even in brutes of fiercer breed;

That, last of all, in man it finds  
Its richest bloom, its fruitage mild—  
The tie of parent and the child,  
The singleness of wedded minds—

Aye, fruitage mild and white and full  
As Virtue's sun which mellows it—  
Ambrosial fruitage truly fit  
For the supernal gods to pull;

Fit for the gods, and yet man's own  
To take and live to more and more.  
And whoso takes not, dieth, for  
Man shall not live by bread alone.

Such Friendship's birth, and such her goal;  
Sprung thus from Nature's family,  
Herself, like Nature, then must be  
A pure indissoluble soul.

FANNIUS

Why, Laelius, dost thou cease thy plea  
So soon? Speak yet a fuller word,  
For Scaevola and I have heard  
But thy fair client's pedigree.

LAELIUS

Then, brothers, I'll unfold the chain  
Of sweet discourse, which, link by link,  
We twain were wont to forge. Pray, think  
'Tis Scipio speaks with you again.

Oft did he say with many sighs,  
Even Friendship hardly doth await  
The hour of death, for she, like Hate,  
Hath her peculiar tragedies.

The boy becomes the man: apart  
He casts his boyish garb and shout,  
And starves his early friendship out  
Of the asylum of his heart.

The man matures; despite his fears,  
His friendships (yea, despite his will)  
Are crushed out slowly in the mill  
Of strait'ning circumstance and years.

Some with the gilded hands of greed  
Strangle their friendships in their dreams,  
And know not till the morning gleams  
How black the marks, how black the deed.

Some, in the mad concourse for pow'r  
And chair and rod, their friendships slay  
With envy's rabid knife by day,  
Lest they defer their famous hour.

But saddest yet that tragedy,  
Where friends ask favors false of friends,  
And murmur when the friendship ends,  
Aye, murmur long and wonder why;

Deaf to that law which bids man woo  
The true in private aim and thought,  
And thus by Nature's art be wrought  
To friend and state more truly true;

Nor yet that other law do heed  
    (A sweet and pleasant law withal),  
    That friend should grant when friend doth call  
With the long hollow cry of need—

Should even hear within the breast  
    The hollow cry long ere it start;  
    Else, what is Friendship but a mart  
Of give-and-take with interest?

How passing strange! Yet it is writ  
    That certain babblers of the schools  
    Of Hellas said (Poor venal fools!):  
“Be on your guard, lest Friendship sit

Too heavy on your gen'rous soul.  
    Why ought we alien burdens bear  
    When each man finds his stone of care  
Too great for him alone to roll?

Hold Friendship as a steed; throw free  
    The reins and give her fancies flight,  
    Or, if it please you, draw them tight—  
All, so you prove *your* liberty.”

Liberty! To be self-decoy'd,  
    To filch from Life her brightest worth,  
    Her very sun, and make of earth  
A darkness without form and void!

Who flees from Care, flees Virtue too,  
    For Care is Virtue's staunchest blade,  
    An ever-girded arm to aid  
'Gainst Malice and her harpy crew.

Who flees from Virtue, Friendship flees,  
    For she is Friendship's pioneer,  
    And lonely, friendless men are mere  
Co-brothers of the rocks and trees.



Cleave fast to Care—it is no stone  
Of Sisyphus to crush thee back—  
And shoulder set against the pack  
Thy comrade cannot fend alone.

Here may'st thou Friendship's fulness know—  
A ministry that asks no toll  
Of ministry, in part or whole.  
And such was mine with Scipio!

For 'twas my joy to help him draw  
The creaking wheels of state at home,  
And hurl the ranks and rams of Rome  
On Carthage and Numantia.

See now that man who seems to be  
So sad amid his gems and gold,  
Like to a gaunt gray isle and cold  
Fretting amid a golden sea;

Not all his gems and gold can lend  
A look of trust unto his' eye,  
Not all his gold and gems can buy  
The fealty of half a friend.

And now the lord of power scan,  
Who hath about him like a crown  
A host of vassals bowing down—  
And yet, and yet, a lonely man.

The very rod that bows the knees  
Strikes from the lips loud oaths of trust,  
And raises like to incense-dust  
The breath of pleasing flatteries.

But lo, he falls, he falls! And worse,  
He learns what exil'd Tarquin knew—  
That fear makes plighted faith untrue  
And public praise an inward curse.

And then behold the fool: 'tis he  
Who lendeth out his zeal and thought,  
And seeketh as his profit, what?  
Vesture and slaves and pottery,

Toys that a little hour may end;  
And never toileth for that wage  
Which neither thief nor flame nor age  
Can ever take away—a friend.

The toil, the toil! Ah, from that bowl  
Alone is drained the subtle wine  
Which clears the eye so to divine  
The artless nature of a soul.

Drink deep and deep; then canst thou say:  
“This soul is wing'd and bides not long,  
But that is basic rock and strong;  
This soul's a' dry and desert way,

Whilst that is fat and fruitful soil.  
This soul doth thirst for gold and fame,  
But that one's meat is Friendship's name.”  
Choose thou, and earn the wage of toil—

A friend whom senates cannot move  
Out of the orbit of his trust;  
Who stills the whisperings of lust  
Hinting a price upon his love;

Who loves thee whether Fate doth score  
Her tally for thee low or high,  
And counts it all of life to die,  
If that but win thee honour more.

“But ah!” you ask, “must never more  
Than one friend pass into the fane,  
The while all others call in vain  
Without the door, without the door?”

I answer, aye and aye; the zest  
Of the true love of many years  
Cloys not, and like old wine appears  
Ever the sweetest and the best.

Aye, like old wine and all things else  
To which those charmers, Wont and Use,  
With bonds we cannot, would not, loose,  
Have bound us by perennial spells.

The horse so docile to our rein,  
The woods we played among, the slopes  
That rimm'd our world of boyish hopes—  
Lo, these are round us like a chain!

But yet, nay, nay, I answer; for,  
Just as the boy doth grow more wise  
'Mid alien hills and woods and skies,  
But loves his native scenes the more;

So thou, if when without thy fane  
Some worthy voices make their plea  
To enter in its sanctity  
And live with thee, and thou dost deign

To leave the door ajar—so thou  
Thyself wilt slowly bring to birth  
A fuller wisdom, learn the worth  
Of that one friend whom thou hast now.

How true this word, well do I know,  
For I am one who in my heart  
Have bred this wonder, part by part.  
'Twas in our youth that Scipio

And I first lov'd; but as the years  
Went tallying by, and human things  
Awed me with their swift vanishings  
And rang their counsels in my ears,

Then open'd I my heart more wide,  
Welcoming there Rupilius,  
Aye, Cato too, and Mummius,  
With other noble souls beside;

And with this ampler love did grow  
An ampler knowledge of my kind,  
But chief, there burst upon my mind  
The full true worth of Scipio.

From day to day I learned to rate  
Myself as rich in his great love,  
Rich in enduring wealth above  
The golden census of the state.

'Tis nought to me, that, though we two  
Began the race together, he  
Fell out before he scarce could see  
The goal and left me to pursue

The course alone and all afraid—  
'Tis nought! I only *seem* alone,  
For with me goes more than mine own  
Vain memory of him and a shade.

'Tis Scipio's Self that travelleth  
With me, for Virtue is the man  
And Virtue lives beyond the span  
Between the first and latest breath;

And as we fare we discourse still  
Our old old thoughts of Hearth and State,  
Of Freedom of the Mind, of Fate,  
But most, of Friendship and Goodwill;

Praying that you and Rome may know  
How Friendship is of all things best,  
The one firm rock that holds its crest  
Over Life's restless ebb and flow.

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