

**EARLY  
FRIENDSHIPS,  
A TALE**

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Early Friendships, a Tale by Mrs. Esther Copley & Mrs. R. Valentine

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**MRS. ESTHER COPLEY & MRS. R. VALENTINE**

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# EARLY FRIENDSHIPS

A Tale.

By Mrs. COPLEY.



With a Preface.

By Mrs. R. VALENTINE.

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## PREFACE.

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THE authoress of the pretty tale now offered to the juvenile public has entered into her rest. She can no longer instruct or amuse the many who read and liked her writings. But, "being dead, she yet speaketh," in every word of admonition or holy counsel contained in the following pages; the aim of, which is to enforce judgment and circumspection in one of the most important acts of life—the choice of an early friend.

Her excellent Publisher, who was also her friend, has requested another to write a few words of introduction to her story; and perhaps they had better (if possible) be such as may point more fully the moral of her tale.

This most important act of our early lives—the choice of a friend—is, on the whole, less guarded by counsel and admonition than most of our minor morals; yet, in no step of our

pilgrimage on earth are circumspection and judgment more required. The future destiny of an individual is frequently influenced, in no common degree, by early companionship. Its great influence on moral character no one will dispute. The national proverbs of both ancient and modern times concur in declaring how much the disposition and reputation of every one are affected by association. "Tell me who are your friends, and I will tell you who you are," said the popular voice of ancient Rome. "Birds of a feather, &c. &c.," says the homely English proverb; and if our readers will recall even so much of life as may have presented itself to their young experience, they will acknowledge how true this judgment is. The idle drawn by the attraction of sympathy to the idle—the studious to the lover of study—the mischievous to his fellow in mischief.

Of how much importance, then, must it not be to have a wise and good friend as the guarantee to our own hearts, of our wishes to be wise and good also? And then, the influence of example and of habit—the moral infection of good and evil—who can calculate? No marvel, therefore, that friendship is of such vast moment in

the drama of life ; and that history, sacred and profane, has given it, when true and perfect, as great and just a fame as that bestowed on the heroic acts of the warrior, or the genius of the poet. One of the most beautiful Bible stories is that of the perfect friendship of Jonathan and David. The Prince of Israel chooses the faithful Shepherd for his friend ; watches over his safety ; warns him of every danger ; soothes his sorrows ; and, without one repining thought, resigns to David the heritage of his father's throne. And in return, David bewailed his loss, and immortalised his love in one of the most beautiful poems ever written, and took tender care of his only descendant, the poor lame Mephibosheth. Of how much comfort must these two noble friends have been to each other ! What sweet converse they must have held together about that great Jehovah, to whose will Jonathan was so entirely resigned, and of whose providence David could tell such wonders ! How they must have talked of those green pastures, where David's happy and holy youth had been spent, and which he had left only to find so much trouble and danger and suffering on his road to a throne ! and how often both must have wished to



exchange the court of the fierce and capricious Saul for such a life as that had been! But under all their trials God gave them the comfort of their mutual friendship and trust in each other.

Amongst the Greeks, we read of Damon and Pythias—of Epaminondas and Pelopidas, as celebrated friends.

The tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius, had condemned Damon to death, and he was anxious to go and take a last farewell of the dear friends he might never see again. This absence the tyrant permitted, on condition that Pythias should remain in his place, and die for him if Damon did not return on the appointed day. It was possible for Damon to have betrayed his friend, and saved his own life, by remaining in his safe and happy home; but each loved the other better than himself, and both were alike honourable and faithful. So, at the appointed hour, Damon returned to release his friend from peril, and accept his own doom. Happily, their virtue met its due reward. The tyrant's soul was touched; he pardoned the friends, and begged to share in their affection and friendship. We think it must have been in allusion to this exquisite story, that St. Paul

says: "Yet for a good man, perhaps, some would even dare to die."

Happily, the friendships of our age are not likely to be put to such fearful tests; but in order that they may really be friendships, they must possess the same internal qualifications: self-denial and constancy and the love which can prefer another to one's self, being as necessary for the preservation of friendship in this day of "little things," as they were in the old times of Hebrew and Greek devotion.

Not long since, we visited the beautiful valley of Llangollen, and saw the pretty cottage where the celebrated "Ladies" lived from early youth to old age—true and stedfast friends. We can scarcely recommend this exclusive friendship for general imitation—it is impracticable; but the principle on which they acted deserved the admiration, and even the homage, they received from foreigners. Satisfied with each other's affection, they withdrew from the world at the early ages of seventeen and twenty, and took a pretty cottage in the lovely Welsh valley of the Dee. Here they spent their innocent and happy years in quiet contentment; devoted to study, good works, and the society of each other. Their solitude was

occasionally broken in on by visits from literary and distinguished persons from other lands, and thus their constant and unobtrusive friendship gained for them a renown which will be, perhaps, coeval with their dwelling-place, as no one ever visits the Vale without hearing of the "Ladies of Llangollen."

It is not given to many of us to be able to realise this Arcadian dream of friendship, but we can all give an unselfish and sincere affection to some good and gentle friend; and in proportion as that friend is good, truthful, and intelligent, may we hope to attain the same high standard of character. With one more anecdote of early and touching self-devotion to a friend we will close this preface.

A young midshipman—a bright happy boy, known to us in early youth—had formed a warm friendship with another lad of the same age. Their ship was sailing on its homeward voyage, but had anchored in Tampico Bay. It was a wild day; the wind howled mournfully through the cordage, and the surf dashed high and white upon the coast.

A boat was ordered to go on shore, on pressing business; and it was the latter youth's duty to take charge of it and the men; or, as