

EXCLUSIVE FRIENDSHIPS.

An excellent and gentle man of my acquaintance has said, "When fifty-one per cent of the voters believe in coeoperation as opposed to competition, the Ideal Commonwealth will cease to be a theory and become a fact."

That men should work together for the good of all is very beautiful, and I believe the day will come when these things will be, but the simple process of fifty-one per cent of the voters casting ballots for socialism will not bring it about.

The matter of voting is simply the expression of a sentiment, and after the ballots have been counted there still remains the work to be done. A man might vote right and act like a fool the rest of the year.

The socialist who is full of bitterness, fight, faction and jealousy is creating an opposition that will hold him and all others like him in check. And this opposition is well, for even a very imperfect society is forced to protect itself against dissolution and a condition which is worse. To take over the monopolies and operate them for the good of society is not enough, and not desirable either, so long as the idea of rivalry is rife.

As long as self is uppermost in the minds of men, they will fear and hate other men, and under socialism there would be precisely the same scramble for place and power that we see in politics now.

Society can never be reconstructed until its individual members are reconstructed. Man must be born again. When fifty-one per cent of the voters rule their own spirit and have put fifty-one per cent of their present envy, jealousy, bitterness, hate, fear and foolish pride out of their hearts, then socialism will be at hand, and not until then.

The subject is entirely too big to dispose of in a paragraph, so I am just going to content myself here with the mention of one thing, the danger to society of exclusive friendships between man and man, and woman and woman. No two persons of the same sex can complement each other, neither can they long uplift or benefit each other. Usually they deform the mental and spiritual estate. We should have many acquaintances or none. When two men begin to "tell each other everything," they are hiking for senility. There must be a bit of well-defined reserve. We are told that in matter solid steel for instance the molecules never touch. They never surrender their individuality. We are all molecules of Divinity, and our personality should not be abandoned. Be yourself, let no man be necessary to you. Your friend will think more of you if you keep him at a

little distance. Friendship, like credit, is highest where it is not used.

I can understand how a strong man can have a great and abiding affection for a thousand other men, and call them all by name, but how he can regard any one of these men much higher than another and preserve his mental balance, I do not know.

Let a man come close enough and he'll clutch you like a drowning person, and down you both go. In a close and exclusive friendship men partake of others' weaknesses.

In shops and factories it happens constantly that men will have their chums. These men relate to each other their troubles they keep nothing back they sympathize with each other, they mutually condole.

They combine and stand by each other. Their friendship is exclusive and others see that it is. Jealousy creeps in, suspicion awakens, hate crouches around the corner, and these men combine in mutual dislike for certain things and persons. They foment each other, and their sympathy dilutes sanity by recognizing their troubles men make them real. Things get out of focus, and the sense of values is lost. By thinking some one is an enemy you evolve him into one.

Soon others are involved and we have a clique. A clique is a friendship gone to seed.

A clique develops into a faction, and a faction into a feud, and soon we have a mob, which is a blind, stupid, insane, crazy, ramping and roaring mass that has lost the rudder. In a mob there are no individuals all are of one mind, and independent thought is gone.

A feud is founded on nothing it is a mistake a fool idea fanned into flame by a fool friend! And it may become a mob.

Every man who has had anything to do with communal life has noticed that the clique is the disintegrating bacillus and the clique has its rise always in the exclusive friendship of two persons of the same sex, who tell each other all unkind things that are said of each other "so be on your guard." Beware of the exclusive friendship! Respect all men and try to find the good in all. To associate only with the sociable, the witty, the wise, the brilliant, is a blunder go among the plain, the stupid, the uneducated, and exercise your own wit and wisdom. You grow by giving have no favorites you hold your friend as much by keeping away from him as you do by following after him.

Revere him yes, but be natural and let space intervene. Be a Divine molecule.

Be yourself and give your friend a chance to be himself. Thus do you benefit him, and in benefiting him you benefit yourself.

The finest friendships are between those who can do without each other.

Of course there have been cases of exclusive friendship that are pointed out to us as grand examples of affection, but they are so rare and exceptional that they serve to emphasize the fact that it is exceedingly unwise for men of ordinary power and intellect to exclude their fellow men. A few men, perhaps, who are big enough to have a place in history, could play the part of David to another's Jonathan and yet retain the good will of all, but the most of us would engender bitterness and strife.

And this beautiful dream of socialism, where each shall work for the good of all, will never come about until fifty-one per cent of the adults shall abandon all exclusive friendships. Until that day arrives you will have cliques, denominations which are cliques grown big factions, feuds and occasional mobs.

Do not lean on any one, and let no one lean on you. The ideal society will be made up of ideal individuals. Be a man and be a friend to everybody.

When the Master admonished his disciples to love their enemies, he had in mind the truth that an exclusive love is a mistake. Love dies when it is monopolized. It grows by giving. Your enemy is one who misunderstands you why should you not rise above the fog and see his error and respect him for the good qualities you find in him?