

Cakes and ale

One of the difficulties that a man has to cope with as he goes through life is what to do about the persons with whom he has once been intimate and whose interest for him has in due course subsided. If both parties remain in a modest station the break comes naturally, and no ill feeling subsists, but if one of them achieves eminence the position is awkward. He makes a multitude of new friends, but the old ones are inexorable; he has a thousand claims on his time, but they feel that they have the first right to it. Unless he is at their beck and call they sigh and with a shrug of the shoulders say:

"Ah, well, I suppose you're like everyone else. I must expect to be dropped now that you're a success."

That, of course, is what he would like to do if he had the courage. For the most part he hasn't. He weakly accepts an invitation to supper on Sunday evening. The cold roast beef is frozen and comes from Australia and was over-cooked at middle day: and the burgundy -ah, why will they call it burgundy? Have they never been to Beaune and stayed at the Hôtel de la Poste? Of course it is grand to talk of the good old days when you shared a crust of bread in a garret together, but it is a little disconcerting when you reflect how near to a garret is the room you are sitting in.

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W. Somerset Maugham.

QUESTIONS

1. Could you explain what is courage necessary for?
2. What do they have for dinner?
3. Is it pleasant to talk about the past? Is there anything pleasant at all about it?
4. Write down 5 or 6 lines about friendship.
5. Take out from the text all the conditional sentences and classify them.
6. Vocabulary:
 - Garret:
 - Crust:
 - Burgundy:
 - To be dropped: