

**OF FRIENDSHIP: AN ESSAY
FROM A WEEK
ON THE CONCORD
AND MERRIMACK RIVERS**

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Of Friendship: An Essay from a Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers by Henry David Thoreau

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HENRY DAVID THOREAU

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OF FRIENDSHIP

*An Essay from
A Week on the Concord and
Merrimack Rivers*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU



The Riverside Press

1901

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE Essay here printed is drawn from Thoreau's first book, *A WEEK ON THE CONCORD AND MERRIMACK RIVERS*. Thoreau, in Lowell's words, left the door of his portfolio cage open, and the thoughts flew out of themselves. He made the journey which the book celebrates in 1839, but the essays and poems which are counter currents and back eddies in the stream of his narrative were written at various times before 1849, when the book was published.

Mr. Alcott notes in his diary, under date of January 13, 1848: "Henry Thoreau came in after my hours with the children, and we had a good deal

of talk on the modes of popular influence. He read me a manuscript essay of his on Friendship, which he had just written, and which I thought superior to anything I had heard."

Here, then, is the Essay, with the poem which was printed as a postlude, and the verses which are interspersed, all of them having been printed in *The Dial* eight years before the Essay was written. Thus the whole was thrust bodily into the WEEK and may be withdrawn without any loss, for there is nothing in the book that leads up to it, nor aught that follows depending from it. Taken out of its setting, this finely cut stone may be enjoyed for what it is, an independent bit of literature.

Of Friendship



OF FRIENDSHIP *∞* AN
ESSAY FROM *A WEEK*
ON THE CONCORD &
MERRIMACK RIVERS
BY HENRY D. THOREAU



WHILE we float here,
far from that trib-
utary stream on
whose banks our
Friends and kindred dwell, our
thoughts, like the stars, come out
of their horizon still; for there cir-
culates a finer blood than Lavoisier
has discovered the laws of, — the
blood, not of kindred merely, but of
kindness, whose pulse still beats at
any distance and forever.

**True kindness is a pure divine affinity,
Not founded upon human consanguin-
ity.**

**It is a spirit, not a blood relation,
Superior to family and station.**

After years of vain familiarity, some distant gesture or unconscious behavior, which we remember, speaks to us with more emphasis than the wisest or kindest words. We are sometimes made aware of a kindness long passed, and realize that there have been times when our Friends' thoughts of us were of so pure and lofty a character that they passed over us like the winds of heaven unnoticed; when they treated us not as what we were, but