

A Mutual Admiration Society.

ONE OF THE RIGHT KIND.

(By Leander S. Keyser.)

Three women were sitting in Mrs. Hilton's parlor one afternoon discussing church matters. A fruitful subject for discussion, sometimes pleasant and sometimes otherwise. In the present instance it belonged to the 'otherwise' class; at least, that was partially the case.

Mrs. Hilton was the hostess, and her two visitors were Mrs. Leyday, a member of the same church, and Mrs. Lee, who lived in another city. This is what Mrs. Hilton was saying when the story-writer chanced to overhear her remarks from his magician's corner of the room:

'Yes, the Franklin street church is a great church.' There was a good deal of scorn in her tones.

'Ha! ha!' laughed Mrs. Leyday, in a patronizing way. 'It's a peculiar church; indeed it is!'

'In what respect is it peculiar?' inquired Mrs. Lee.

'Why, the members spend a large part of their time in saying nice things about one another,' Mrs. Hilton replied, with a curl of her lips.

'Ah! indeed?'

'Yes, they've formed a kind of "mutual admiration society,"' scoffed Mrs. Leyday.

'Well, that may be a good thing or a bad thing, according to the motives of the people who form it,' moralized Mrs. Lee, her fine, womanly face breaking into a smile. 'If it is real admiration and love that move them, there could be no objection to such a church or society. Of course, if the object is mere flattery and the passing of pretty compliments, the purpose is not a worthy one. You see, everything depends upon the intention.'

By this time the other ladies were looking rather sober.

'Well, one thing is sure,' snapped Mrs. Hilton; 'we don't have any "mutual admiration society" in our church.'

'No, indeed!' echoed Mrs. Leyday.

'By the way,' said Mrs. Lee, as if introducing a new theme, 'how do the members of the Franklin street church get along with one another? Are they harmonious?'

'Oh, yes,' replied Mrs. Hilton. 'They admire one another so much, you see; that's the kind of a church it is. The people are always and forever passing compliments on one another. Of course, that makes them chummy and affectionate.'

'Like kittens in a nest,' put in Mrs. Leyday.

'And do they do much Christian work?' Mrs. Lee asked.

'Well, yes, a good deal, I should say. Their church is building up, and they're giving a great deal to benevolent objects. I can't deny that.'

'And how about your own congregation?' Mrs. Lee went on, having begun to catechize her friends. 'You are not a mutual admiration society, you say. Are your members harmonious?'

'Well—ah—not exactly,' admitted Mrs. Hilton, reluctantly. 'There's a good deal of wrangling among our members. Several families are at sword's points, and there's more rivalry than there ought to be. Our minister, I'm afraid, has a hard time keeping the peace.'

Mrs. Lee merely smiled and suggested: 'Perhaps, then, you had better organize your church into a mutual admiration society.'

Both of the other ladies grew silent and thoughtful, and Mrs. Lee wisely refrained from pressing the moral too far. After her visitors had gone, Mrs. Hilton found the suggestion recurring again and again to her mind.

'I do believe that it would be a good idea,' she said to herself. 'In our church the spirit of criticism and nagging prevails. It destroys all our peace and love, and interferes with our activity. I wonder how it would be if we'd cultivate the spirit of appreciation a little more.'

The lesson sank deep into her heart, proving that a bow drawn at a venture may be effectual. During the afternoon she made a firm resolve, which she proceeded to carry out the next day when she went calling. Instead of joining in caustic criticisms of her fellow-members, she made apology for them, and tried to think of some commendable trait in their character, and spoke of that. One woman began to find fault with the president of the missionary society.

'She's as domineering as she can be,' averred the critic. 'I can't work with her any longer.'

'She may be a little headstrong,' Mrs. Hilton replied; 'but then think how faithful she is to the cause. Always working, always planning, always giving. There isn't another woman who does so much for St. Paul's as Mrs. Cushing does.'

'Why, you are quite a champion, Mrs. Hilton. But that's true; Mrs. Cushing is a very devoted woman. I don't know what St. Paul's would do without her.'

'And if she is sometimes a little domineering, her plans are always good, and she never fails to carry them out successfully.'

'Yes, that's true. I suppose we'd better help her more and criticise her less.'

At the next house Mrs. Hilton found a woman who was dissatisfied with her pastor.

'He hasn't called on me for six months,' she complained. 'I don't believe he cares for some of his people. I don't feel at home in the church any more.'

'Oh, Mrs. Bates, I hope you won't give up to that feeling,' said Mrs. Hilton, persuasively. 'Our pastor is kept very busy, I know he is. He has so much pastoral work to do in such a large congregation. Then think of the excellent sermons he preaches. Such sermons must require a great deal of study.'

'But hasn't he called on you oftener than once in six months?'

'He hasn't been in my house for nine months, but I wouldn't find fault with him on that account. He's a conscientious man, our pastor is, and I know he'll do all the pastoral work he can find time to do.'

'Well, maybe that is the best way to look at it,' the woman conceded.

'Yes, indeed,' said Mrs. Hilton, in her earnest way. 'If we want to get along harmoniously in our church we must look on the best side of everybody's character. Good-day, Mrs. Bates.'

'Thank you for your call; it has done me good,' was Mrs. Bates's parting word.

In another of her afternoon calls Mrs. Hilton found a man who felt grumpy about the official board of the church because, as he charged, they were not doing their duty. They failed to conduct the matters of the church on business principles, he said.

'They may not be perfect,' Mrs. Hilton admitted; 'but all of them, I believe, are good, honest and devoted men.'

'Oh! they're good men enough,' said the critic; 'but they're too slow and unbusiness-like.'

'I'll tell you what we'll do next year,' said Mrs. Hilton, smilingly; 'at the election we'll put you into the official board, and then we shall have church matters attended to in a businesslike way.'

'Me? Oh—ah—ahem! I couldn't accept such an office, Mrs. Hilton. I'm kept too busy with my own work. No, I couldn't think of it.'

'Are not all the members of the present board busy men?' questioned Mrs. Hilton, with sparkling eyes.

'Well—yes—I suppose they are.'

'Are they not as much pressed for time as you are, Mr. Bancroft?'

'Well—probably they are.'

'Suppose, then, that we try to appreciate and cheer their efforts, and help them all we can. That would be better than to find fault, don't you think so. Mr. Bancroft?'

'I believe you're right, Mrs. Hilton. I never looked at matters in that way. It's so much easier to criticise than to perform. Good-bye. Call again.'

Later in the afternoon Mrs. Hilton met Mrs. Leyday, who had also been calling on several of the members of the church.

'I've had a most delightful afternoon,' broke out Mrs. Leyday, her face beaming with smiles.

'Pleasanter than usual?' asked Mrs. Hilton, whose own face was aglow.

'Yes, indeed! You would scarcely believe me if I should tell you what I've been doing. Well, why don't you ask? I've been trying to form St. Paul's church into a "mutual admiration society!" Think of that for a morbid old critic like me, Mrs. Hilton!'

'Why, that's just what I've been doing myself, and I've had the richest blessing of my life.'

'Oh! I'm so glad for what Mrs. Lee said yesterday. It was a deserved rebuke. We've been destroying our church's harmony and our own spiritual life by our caustic criticisms. Isn't it wonderful how much you can find to admire in everybody if you only look for good traits?'

'It's a fine art to do that, but it need not be a lost art in our church work,' said Mrs. Hilton, earnestly.

The two women continued their hopeful efforts, and a few days ago the story-writer, ensconced in his magician's corner, overheard the following dialogue:

'How is St. Paul's church prospering now?' asked one.

'Oh! St. Paul's?' replied the other, with a significant smile. 'St. Paul's is a genuine mutual admiration society; but she's prospering, no one can deny that. She seems to have taken on a new lease of life.'—Presbyterian Banner.

Spurgeon's Sermon In a Letter-Box.

In the 'Sword and Trowel' Mr. T. G. Owens remarks: 'While distributing Mr. Spurgeon's sermons, illustrated tracts, and cards, I dropped one of the sermons into a house letter-box, when the door was opened by a gentleman, who carried a small tray, on which stood two tumblers of smoking hot liquor, for two cab-men who stood by with their cabs. "Good-morning, sir," said I. "What is it?" he asked. "I was putting one of Mr. Spurgeon's sermons into your letter-box, sir," I replied. Taking the sermon out of the box he read a few lines, and exclaimed, "Who ever saw a man putting sermons in letter-boxes at six o'clock in the morning?" "Oh, sir," I rejoined, "the devil's servants are busy at their evil work night and day, and Christ's servants should be equally active." A lady came to the door, to whom he handed the sermon, and repeated my words as if impressed with them. "I gave the lady one of the cards entitled, "Trust Jesus," and proceeded with my work at the neighboring houses. The result of that conversation was, the intoxicating liquor was taken back into the house, and each of the cabmen received one of the sermons from me.'—Christian Herald.