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Love Thrives on Judicious Flattery.

By Helen Oldfield.

Failings sometimes lean to virtue's side. Violent poisons, used in infinitesimal doses, are among the most potent remedies known to medical science, and, even so, there are occasions not a few in the conduct of life when what are ordinarily vices in excess, in moderation are not only desirable but take on the semblance of virtue. Indeed, it is an old saying that many vices are merely virtues run to seed. "Enough is enough, and too much is too much, be the enough or the much what it may," George Arnold wrote one of his best poems in praise of laziness:

"Yet, why not preach up laziness?
I think it would be well:

If some who cry it down a sin could
only feel its spell!

Those hard, ascetic natures who
look for naught but Use
In everything one says and does."

false praise, adulation, which in turn is defined as excessive praise; and commendation bestowed to accomplish some purpose, which last may well include Mrs. Wiggs' regimen of compliments instead of switches upon her children, a regimen which, wisely practiced, would go far to increase the peace and happiness of many a home. Rigid moralists are too prone to condemn all pretty speeches, all graceful compliments which can be classed as unnecessary, not to say untrue; under which rule almost all common politeness, as practiced in society, is flattery. Matthew Arnold, in "Literature and Dogma," states over and over again "that conduct is three-fourths of life." To which proposition might well be added the corollary that flattery, or unnecessary politeness, is three-fourths of conduct. In the first place, who shall



"The Virgin and her child."

After the painting by E. Goolall, R. A.

Such people argue upon the well known formula that "things which equal the same thing are equal to each other," deduce the proposition: Rest—idleness; idleness—laziness; ergo rest—laziness, and thus one of the cardinal requisites of nature is brought into disrepute. Few things are wholly bad when used intelligently; it is the abuse which works the evil, usually, at least.

Upon this principle an essay, if not a poem, might well be written in praise of flattery, which by no means deserves the opprobrium cast upon it by sticklers for truth and candour, which last is too frequently but another name for rudeness.

The same definition of flattery as given by standard dictionaries

decide what praise is justly merited and how much? One does not pause to measure drop by drop the oil which one puts upon a machine to insure its smooth running; and he was a wise man who called politeness the machine oil of every day life. And nowhere is that oil more needed than in the daily intercourse between husband and wife; the closer the connection between surface, the more danger of friction is.

"A fact well known and often shown.

In manners as well as mechanics."

Strictly speaking, the finished politeness which well bred people

for the feelings and practices of others is neither more nor less than flattery judiciously employed. If "Language was framed but to hide the thought, moral as deep as the proverb is old," then also "manners" were invented as a cloak to conceal opinions and feelings which it is wise to suppress, and that not only from motives of self-interest. People who have been taught from their youth up to "behave properly" yield precedence to another in entering a room or in serving at table. Why? Because they really think that in a world of absolute justice the other man would have the right to the first place as being their superior in any respect? Not at all. The usages of polite society ordain it, that is all, and one is anxious to show himself a gentleman in breeding. "Place aux dames" was the motto of chivalry, not of right, and the ancient saying "After you is manners for me," as applied in the conduct of a host to his guest, is as a thing as the convention which causes the Spanish don to assure the stranger within his gates that the house and all within it are his to command, an assurance upon which the stranger had best not presume.

The whole structure of civilized society is based upon suppression of truth and false suggestion—in other words, flattery. Be polite and you will make others happy; besides you will gain their good opinion, which may or may not be worth something to you. It is matter beyond contradiction that the abnormally polite man, the man who never misses an opportunity to say pleasant things, to pay little attentions, who, in short, devotes some brains, much good will, and yet more unflinching patience to the business of making other people satisfied with themselves, always gets along in life. It is extraordinary what an atmosphere of gaiety and kindness he carries about with him and how popular he is. Of course, one may overdo it. Too much sugar sickens; fulsome flattery overreaches itself and disgusts sensible people; which, however, does not in the least alter the fact that those who think the best and see only the good, and who, finding the object of their search, hasten to proclaim it, are they who make life pleasant for themselves and others.

The fact is that absolute frankness between people (the remark applies still more to two people than to twenty) who desire to dwell together upon terms of peace and unity is a social impossibility. Outspoken people, unless they are largely gifted with the charity which thinketh no evil, are invariably unpopular. It is almost always best to think well before one speaks; one so often has cause to change one's opinion, to regret the hasty word which, once spoken, may not be recalled.

In occultism speech is regarded as an act. "The tongue is a fire, and, like fire, it scorches as well as warms." The rule for speech given to the fifth Root Race by its Manu, to be committed to memory and repeated the first thing in the morning, the last thing at night, and whenever thought of during the day, is: "Let him say what is true, let him say what is pleasing; let him utter no disagreeable truth, let him utter no agreeable falsehood. That is the eternal law." A shorter form of this is: "Let him say what is true, let him say what is useful, let him say what is pleasant."

Some people go through life pouring out truth as though it were essence of violets, whereas in most cases it should be kept in a small vial, marked "for external use only," and administered only when necessary. There is no reason for the common theory that truth is admirable simply because it is truth. Besides it is a difficult question what the truth really is, and, moreover, who has the right to decide it for others? Between unmerited praise and unmerited blame the choice may be safely said to be always in favor of the former. With those who have good in them the