

COMMENDATION VS. CONDEMNATION

The Rosicrucian Fellowship lays stress upon actual service to our Fellowmen, and very often the question is asked, "How can I serve my Fellowmen? I do not seem to have the opportunity." It may therefore be well to point out that service does not necessarily mean a great and spectacular deed, such as getting in front of a runaway horse and carriage and saving the lives of the people in it, or going into a burning building to rescue those who would otherwise burn to death. Such opportunities do not come to every one, of every day, but all without any exception whatever, have opportunity to serve no matter what is their environment, and the line of service that we shall indicate in this article is of even greater value than any one single act of saving someone from a death which must sooner or later be the portion of all, for surely it is of greater value to help people to live well than to help them merely to escape death.

It is a deplorable fact that the greatest majority of us are selfish to a degree. We seek the best there is in life with an almost entire disregard of our neighbor and one of the ways this selfishness expresses itself most frequently is in maintaining an attitude of self satisfaction. We are too prone to compare our efforts, our belongings, our faculties, with those of others, and where it is manifest that they have more than we, that they are more accomplished, etc., there is a feeling of jealousy and envy that prompts us to speak slight of them or in some way to minimize their success or attainments under the delusion that by this comparison we arise to their level, or above it. If, on the other hand, it is manifest that they have not as much as we, if it appears that their social standing is beneath our own, and it seems easy to establish their inferiority, we may adopt the supercilious attitude, we may speak patronizingly or condescendingly of them, thinking that by such comparison we raise ourselves greatly above our actual position.

If we hear some one speak evil of another, we are always ready and prone to believe the very worse because then, by comparison, we seem to be so much better, so much holier, and so far exalted above the culprit in the case. And where merit is so manifest that praise cannot be withheld we generally give it in a most grudging manner, for we feel as if the praise given to them takes away from ourselves, or perhaps even exalts them above ourselves.

That is the general attitude of the world. However deplorable or lamentable the fact may be, it is a fact, among the great majority of mankind everybody seems concerned to keep everybody else back. This is one of the greatest items of man's inhumanity to man, which makes countless thousands mourn, and causes them to make other countless thousands mourn in return.

What greater service can any one render to everyone else than that of adopting a systematic attitude of encouragement and commendation? There is nothing more true than the sentiment of the doggerel: "There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, that it scarcely behooves any of us to find fault with any of the rest of us." In the home, in the shop, in the office, everywhere, we meet, day by day, with different people, every one of them amenable to a desire for encouragement. As the sunshine is to the flower, so is an encouraging word to everybody in the world. If someone has done well and we speak a word of appreciation that word will help him or her to do even better the next time. If someone has done wrong, or failed, a word of sympathy and confidence in their ultimate ability to achieve, or retrieve, will encourage

him or her to try again and to win, just as surely as the attitude of discouragement will wither and make a wreck out of the life that might have been saved by a word of cheer. When someone comes along with a tale of evil about someone else, be very slow to believe and be slower still to tell anyone else. Endeavor by every means of persuasion to stop the one who came to you with the tale from repeating it to others. No good can ever accrue to you or to anyone else from listening to and believing in such tales.

This line of service may seem to be very easy at the first thought, but you must bear in mind that it will very often require a very great deal of self abnegation to carry on the work because we are all so imbued with selfishness that it is next to impossible for most of us to always put that self away entirely, and place ourselves in the position of others and give to them the encouragement and commendation for which we ourselves so earnestly long.

But if we persist in this attitude, and carry it out consistently with everyone in our environment, always making it a point to speak a word of encouragement wherever we can possibly find an opportunity, we shall presently find that people come to us not only with their sorrows, but also with their joys, and that thus we may gain some recompense. We shall feel then that we have had a large share in their attainment, and in all these successes of other people there will be a joy and a success that legitimately belongs to ourselves, a success moreover that no one can take from us, something that will go with us beyond the grave as treasure in heaven. Let it not be forgotten that every single little act is engraved upon the seed atom in our hearts, that the feeling and emotion which accompanies that act will react upon us in the post-mortem existence, and that all the joy, all the pleasure, all the love that we pour out toward other people will react upon us in the first heaven and give us a sublime experience, will inculcate in us a wonderful faculty of giving more and more joy to others, of being of greater and greater service. And let us remember that this is the only true greatness, the only greatness that is worth working for—the greatness that helps us to be of service. Above everything, even more than encouraging others in their work, let us remember the part of the service outlined that deals with stopping tales. When anyone comes to us with a tale concerning someone else, no matter what we may think ourselves, no matter what may be the justification, repetition does not do any good; it does harm, and as a snowball that rolls down a mountain, accumulates more and more snow, grows larger and larger, so also the tale which is carried from one mouth to another becomes exaggerated and much sorrow and suffering is caused by the tongue of the gossip. Therefore we can render no greater service to the parties involved or the community than endeavoring to get those who carry tales of evil to stop the habit. Home have been wrecked, communities have been disrupted, men have gone to the gallows time and again, or to a lifelong servitude in some institution, which is far worse, because of idle tales carried about. Therefore we can render as great a service by refusing to listen to gossip, as by encouraging those who have failed in their ambition, or commending those who have succeeded. Every day opportunities are knocking at our door, no matter where we are or what is our station in life.