

SERMON VIII.

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HOW MAY WE BEST CURE THE LOVE OF BEING FLATTERED ?

A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it ; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.—Proverbs xxvi. 28.

It was the Psalmist's complaint of that age [which] he lived in, that "there was no faithfulness in their mouth ;" that while "they flattered with their tongue, their throat was an open sepulchre," (Psalm v. 9, 10,) equally devouring and insatiable. In these words we may take-up as mournful a complaint of our own age, or in the words of the Psalmist, xii. 1 : "The faithful fail from among the children of men ;" whilst lying tongues first afflict the innocent, and then hate those [whom] they afflict ; which is the method that opener enemies do observe, and is the subject of the former part of the verse. Among these men truth and justice have no place, nor bear sway ; but is it any whit better among pretended friendships ? "Flattering mouths work ruin ;" such smooth and oily tongues do more sily, and yet not less surely, undo us. The former ruin us by others ; the latter ruin us by ourselves : and these [are] the more dangerous and cruel, because they do destroy under the covert of abused friendship, making that which should be sacred among men, a means to effect the most barbarous tragedies. Of this the latter part of the verse speaketh, which doth present us with a picture that in different positions sets forth the counterfeit of the greatest and most amiable beauty. The counterfeit of friendship appears in the face and at first view ; but if you change your place, and view it at nearer distance, it presents to your view a secret, dangerous, and destructive enemy,—one that "worketh ruin." With this I must entertain you who either hear or read me, and make it, as I suppose Solomon designed it, a preservative against the ruin which loved and affected flattery draws upon men. There are few—I think, none—but have been, some time or other, more or less wounded with the sting of this scorpion : I beg you will patiently suffer me to bruise the head on the wound [which] the sting hath made ; that you may be healed,—at least, the deadliness of the venom may be prevented. This I am to endeavour while I state this case, *How may we best cure the love of being flattered ?*

Solomon in our text tells us what the flatterer is, and what he does ; and leaves us to conclude what ought to be our deportment and affection toward him : whether our heart should be toward him that hath no heart for us, but is all mouth ; or whether we should love

his flattery which designs and effects our ruin; or whether we ought not to hate his flattery with perfect hatred, and fly from it as from a hellish fiend; if I may allude to that of the poet:—

Εχθρος γὰρ μοι κείνος ὁμοῖς αἰῶσιν ἀνθρώπων,
Ὅς ἄ' ἕτερον μὲν κευθεῖ ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ βαζει.—HOMERI *Iliad*. ix. 312.*

The case put into my hand, and the text assigned for the foundation of this discourse, do fairly offer an occasion to me to acquaint you with these following remarks, which will, as clear the reason, so justify the choice, of the method I observe in my discourse. The text tells you what flattery is, what it doeth: and the case proposed doth take it for granted, that love of this flattery is a disease [which] if not cured, will kill; that there is some cure [that] may be had; and hereupon inquires what is the best way of curing this love of being flattered. In compliance with both text and case, I shall cast my discourse into this method:—

THE GENERAL METHOD OF THE DISCOURSE.

- I. *Inquire what flattery is, which we ought not [to] love.*
- II. *Love of it is a malady, a disease of the soul.*
- III. *Where not cured, it is pernicious and destroys.*
- IV. *What the best method for our cure in this case.*

WHAT FLATTERY IS.

I. To begin, then, with the first, *what flattery is*.—Might we guess at it by the signification of the words used to express it, we should not much err in our notion of it. Solomon, in the text, calls it פֶּה חֲלָק “a mouth, that flatters.” All that comes from the flatterer is complaisant, as softness to the touch, sweetness to the taste, prettiness to the eye, and harmony to the ear; only heartiness and sincerity are wanting: and the whole is framed in hypocrisy,† and designed to ensnare or deceive,‡ (as Psalm v. 9,) by glozing, alluring, tickling, delighting, and lulling asleep the mind and affections of the persons flattered. All that appears is “a fair semblance,” yet very falsehood; as it is expressed, Psalm lxxviii. 36,§ and is elegantly and fully comprised in the character and deportment of a “strange woman,”|| (Prov. ii. 16,) who, Delilah-like, dandles Samson, that she may make him think how much, and ere long know how little, she loved him. For all these sugared words do cover sublimated poison, which “worketh ruin:” מְרַחֵם מְרַחֵם it will certainly end in the fall or dangerous stumbling of the deceived: so the word implieth. One thing more I may add to this,—that the actor in this tragedy never forgets himself

* “Who dares think one thing, and another tell,
My heart detests him as the gates of hell.”—POPE'S Translation.

† As פֶּה חֲלָק notes in Isaiah and Jeremiah. ‡ *Amadouer*.—Galic. § *Ils fuissent beau semblance de leur bouche*. “They made a fair appearance with their mouth.”—EDIT. ¶ *Qui mignarde de ses paroles*. “Who fondles with her words.”—EDIT. ¶ *Impulit, depulit, expulit, evertit*. “To impel, cast down, expel, or overthrow.”—EDIT.

and his own advantage, stripping the novice he hath coaxed, and living on him whom he deceived. So that the blunt Schoolman spake not amiss, describing flattery to be "a sin wherein any one, in word or deeds, for obtaining some advantage, doth study to please in their ordinary converse by praises above the desert of virtue."* It is certainly a specious, but deceitful, praise,† laid as a train to ensnare and hurt the unwary, and to profit him who laid the train: like a concealed robber, [who] first promiseth to be a convoy and defence; then persuades the unthinking traveller to appear like himself,—rich and splendid, in his richest attire; which shall be the robber's prey in convenient time and place, when and where none can relieve him.

It is the basest counterfeit of friendship and justice. It seems to do you right as justice binds, but it is with design to injure you. It seems to do it with love and endeared affection, but as the crocodile which weeps over the skull of the man [whom] he hath devoured. If you will consult the scriptures, you will find it variously expressed, but ever in a character that includes its notorious falsehood and mischievous tendency. (Psalm lii. 1—4.) While the flatterer "croucheth and humbleth himself," it is that you might fall a prey to him as to a lion. (Psalm x. 9, 10.) David describeth him, Psalm xii., as one who "speaketh vanity with his neighbour, with flattering lips and with a double heart," purposing by such words to "prevail:" and the next you hear is, the poor [are] oppressed, the needy sigh; both are in danger. (Verses 2—5.) Which words of the prophet contain the definition that the Schoolman gives of flattery, and superadd the mischievous consequents of it; whose foundation is in a formed lie; whose aim is to please, for an advantage by, a "neighbour," one [whom] we ordinarily converse with, whose good is unduly magnified, whose vice or defects are unduly lessened. In brief: it is the greatest cheat that wit, dissimulation, and covetousness can put on mankind; a false glass, that represents every thing untruly, much fitter to be broken in pieces and trod under foot, than to be kept by any. If you will know it in its particular branches, there is,

THE KINDS OF FLATTERY.

1. *A self-flattery*: "I am not as other men." (Luke xviii. 11.) "I am rich, and increased in substance." (Rev. iii. 17.) "They shall find none iniquity in me." (Hosea xii. 8.) So "they flatter themselves in their own eyes." (Psalm xxxvi. 2.)

2. *A flattery from others*: who represent our good or evil very untruly, by making the good seem better than it is, and making the evil seem less than it is, and deceiving in both for advantage; as the false prophets, false teachers, Romish priests, covetous clergymen, seducing heretics, factious dividers, hungry courtiers, and sneaking

* *Peccatum quo quis supra debitum virtutis verbis vel factis in communi conversatione, alicujus commodi consequendi intentione, alium delectare studet.*—THOMAS AQUINAS, *Secunda Secunda*, ix. 115. † Ἠδίστον ἀκούσμα εἶπαι. "No sound is sweeter than praise."—EDIT.

parasites. If you look to the qualities of flattery, and would range it according to these, you will find:—

THE QUALITIES OF FLATTERY.

1. *A hellish flattery*: that tends to an ensnaring us in sin. Such are the enticings of sinners; (Prov. i. 10;) such was that of Jonadab to Amnon. (2 Sam. xiii. 5.) Such was that of Satan: "Ye shall be like God," אֱלֹהִים כְּמִצְחָה (Gen. iii. 5;) which ruined our protoplasts: such was that of Satan to Christ: "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee," &c. (Matt. iv. 6.)

2. *A revengeful flattery*: kisses of an enemy; the treaty of Simeon and Levi with the Shechemites, and Joab's embraces of Abner or Amasa. Such flattery entertains you with milk in a lordly dish first; but, when you sleep, there is the nail and hammer to be feared.

3. *A servile, hungry flattery*: when the flatterer "croucheth for a morsel of bread," (as 1 Sam. ii. 36,) and magnifieth the gift of a meal's meat to the skies; such, as in Rom. xvi. 18, is "serving the belly by fair words."

4. *A cowardly flattery*: when men dare not tell what is, and what they think, the truth concerning the virtues or vices of men.

5. *A covetous flattery*: which aims at gain and increasing our wealth by advantage on the flattered.

6. *An emulous and envious flattery*: wherein the good, virtuous, praiseworthy qualities or practices of any one of our own party are extolled and magnified above all measure. So the old heretics; so the present dividing parties in the world exclude others from the number of virtuous, wise, learned, pious, and loyal. This is a kind of flattery which prevails at this day; loved too much by all, and dangerous to all. Were that true which such factious flattery suggests, how very small a remnant should escape with their life! In all these there is an officiousness, or pretence of kindness, honour, and zeal for your good, your credit, your advantage and right; which draws your affection and love to these undue courses, and which is the disease to be cured. And what this is, we are to inquire in the second place.

WHAT LOVE TO BE FLATTERED IS.

II. *Love to be flattered, a disease of human nature*, I would rather call, "a love to be praised in good, or excused in evil, more than justly may be." I cannot conceive [that] any one, who understands the falsehood of a flatterer and his foul designs, can love the flattery; but yet we all are prone to love the praises and apologies [which] are made on our behalf by those that indeed do flatter, and unduly praise or excuse. So that, in the general, an affecting and liking of men's praises and apologies above the nature and circumstances of our good and evil, is the "love to be flattered" in our case. I will present it to you in its distinct parts. It is,

IN IMMODERATE DESIRE OF PRAISE.

1. *An immoderate desire that our best and worst might be represented in fairer colours than those that are native.*—That, where good, we may seem better,—where evil, we may seem less evil,—than we are. As other species of love first appear in our desire, so here,—a great weakness and distemper of our nature thus to desire the forbidden fruit. When this desire prevaleth, we,

IN BLIND CREDENCE OF ALL THAT IS SAID FOR US.

2. *Believe what the flatterer saith.*—Though he believeth not himself, in the praise or apology he makes for us. A blind, secure, unsearching credence and belief of what is glosingly and deceitfully said by this deceiver, makes a part of this love. As other love, so is this credulous and in a high degree confident; [it] believes a stranger's mouth in bar to our own eyes, and in affront to our own senses [will] credit a lying elogy. And then,

IN VALUING OURSELVES BY THEM.

3. *Set the value on ourselves by what such affirm of us.*—The valuation and love [that] mankind hath for any thing, are inseparable: indeed love is an appreciating affection. And so it is here: when the false coiner hath been suffered to stamp the base alloyed metal of our imperfect virtues with the impress of divine perfection, we, deceived mortals, prize and love them as if they really were what they seem to be. So did Alexander of Macedon think [that] his extract was divine, and valued himself on his supposed divinity. So did Herod the Great, when he believed their flattery: "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." (Acts xii. 22.)

AFFECTING OCCASIONS TO SET FORTH OUR PRAISE.

4. Another branch of love to be flattered, is *an affected seeking to ourselves, or giving unto others, unnecessary occasions of setting forth the worth of our persons, actions, and qualifications, according to the standard of flatterers.*—He loves flattery, who loves to search out his own praise. We know, *he* dotes on the person *who* unseasonably breaks out into their commendation, and would have every mouth, as he* fancied every wood did, "echo the praises of his love."

ACQUIESCENCE IN WHAT IS GIVEN AS OUR PRAISE.

5. *A well-pleas'dness to hear the great and good things by dissembling flatterers ascribed to us, which either we never did, or did in manner much below what they report them.*—It is a disease of the mind that thus is pleased with vanity, with a lying vanity; yet sick of this disease are the besotted cullies. How sick were the pigmy's mind who should be persuaded to think his stature and strength equal to Goliath's, and his feats against the cranes equal to the great

* VIRGILIUS, *Ecl. i. 5*:—*Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida sylvas.*

achievements of David, the Maccabees, or those mighty captains who purchased to themselves the surname of "Great!"

CHOICE OF SUCH FOR OUR COMPANY.

6. *A choice of such for our intimate and inseparable companions, with licence given them without control to lie for us.*—He is deeply in love, who cannot live without what is loved. Many thousands among great ones and rich ones cannot live without such extravagant applauders of their persons and *manages* [conduct]: and we justly wonder how they bear with patience the extravagant, notorious, and incredible falsities of these parasites. This I have made the last part of this culpable love of flattery, which, as other love, discovers itself by its choice. Summarily: every part of this love is a particular weakness and distemper of the mind wherein it is, and the whole is much more its disease. This love of being flattered is a very immoderate affection, longing after, and delighting in, ungrounded praises; a feeding upon lies; the effect of a secreter disease,—self-love; and cause of many culpable distempers in our life. It is, to conclude this point, originally, formally, and effectively a malady of mankind, and, unless cured, proves pernicious and destructive; * which is the thing proposed.

LOVE TO UNDUE PRAISE IS PERNICIOUS.

III. Solomon tells you in our text, that it "*worketh ruin;*" and beside the unaccountable multitudes of those who have perished by it already, the scriptures assure us that where it is not cured, it doth kill. Where "there is no faithfulness in the mouth," that is, where flattery and glozings are, "the inward part is wickednesses," destroying wickednesses. "An open sepulchre" and a flattering "tongue" are inseparable. (Psalm v. 9.) If the glutton diggeth his own grave with his teeth, the designing flatterer digs other men's with his tongue. In Psalm xii. 1, 2, 5, you find ruin attending on prevailing flattery: the poor [are] oppressed, the needy sigh, when such unfaithful tongues are successful.

Words that "drop as a honey-comb, and mouth smoother than oil:" (Prov. v. 3:) which is an accurate description of the visible part of flattery; but what is concealed from our eye is bitterness and wounds. (Verse 4.) And though this place speak of the flattery of "a strange woman," whose flattery in some cases may be more dangerous and deadly; yet the flatteries of others, "strange" sons, is dangerous and destructive also: "The words of" such are "smoother than butter, but war is in their heart; softer than oil, yet drawn swords;" (Psalm lv. 21;) wherewith "others are first slain, and which doth first or last enter their own bowels."† God doth in his own season send forth commissioned officers to destroy "a hypocritical nation;" as Isai. x. 6. In a word: wheresoever you find flattery

* *Nullum animalium genus assentatoribus perniciosius.*—LUDOVICUS GRANATENSIS.
 "No kind of living creatures is more hurtful than that of flatterers."—EDIT. † *Perniciem atis ac postremo sibi inveniunt.*—TACITI *Annales*, lib. i.

predominant and culminating, it presages an approaching ruin, whether in kingdoms and states or in church, in families or particular persons. Flattering and fawning counsellors ruin princes and principalities; flattering clergy ruin the church; flattering captains, their general; lawyers, their clients; physicians, their patients; and flattering companions destroy those that keep them company. For fuller declaration of this, I will tell what is ruined by that flattery which becomes predominant by our love to it under the notion of praise and friendship due to our virtues. Uncured love of such praise and smoothing us, is pernicious,

AFFECTION TO UNDUE PRAISE DESTROYS, I. VIRTUOUS PRINCIPLES.

1. *To good moral principles and virtuous habits, implanted by the care and wisdom of such as had the educating of us.*—So we may observe men and women too often degenerate, and wear out the impressions of virtuous habits, and imbibe the quite contrary vices:—of modest, become impudent; of chaste, become unclean, adulterers and adulteresses, &c. How many in our age have by the help of flatterers conquered their virtuous education, and triumphed over it in a debauched bravery, which is to “glory in their shame!”

II. NATURAL INCLINATIONS TO GOOD.

2. *To all the remainders of any tolerable, innate, and congenite capacity of receiving good advice, examples, and helps for their recovery.*—“The very stock is corrupted, [so] that no graft of virtue can be planted on them: they become “reprobate to every good work.” There is in many from the birth a promising receptivity; we look on them as more susceptible of virtue than others: now, love to vicious flatterers, and hearkening to them very frequently, overthrow these very foundations on which we might build, [so] that the person remains for ever a cage of unclean birds, and leave such hopeless.

III. ESTATES.

3. *To their wealth and estates.*—So many an imprudent and unexperienced heir is gulled out of his estate and inheritance. The flatterer by his wiles derives the substance and labours of the deceased father, from the children, to himself and his. Solomon notes this as the consequence of love to be flattered: “Strangers are filled with the wealth” of such. (Prov. v. 10.)

IV. REPUTATION.

4. *To their honour and reputation.*—A vicious seducer hearkened to, and his flatteries yielded to, will blast all the credit of those that are seduced, how great soever their reputation might have been before their turning aside. Solomon proposeth this as [an] argument to dissuade us from hearkening to flatteries. (Prov. v. 9.)

V. SAFETY AND LIFE.

5. *To the safety, peace, and life of the imprudent lover of flattery.*—When nothing else remains, nor surviveth the wasting and consumptive mouth of a flatterer, but the disgraced, impoverished, and miserable life of the deceived, this is made a prey too; and the unthankful, unsatiate, and unmerciful seducer hunts for the precious life also.

VI. SOUL AND ITS HAPPINESS.

6. *To the soul and its happiness.*—The flatterer is too powerful and too successful an instrument in promoting sin and ruining of souls; he draws into sin, into remissness and neglect of good. Such seduced ones call evil good, and then do it; think great evil little, and repent not of it; are persuaded [that] their good is great enough already, and are surprised in a sinful and impenitent state.

Thus pernicious is flattery loved. A dangerous disease, you see; yet curable, if proper means be applied. And,

IV. *What those means are which may best effect this cure, is the last, but chiefest, of our inquiry.* These, in the fourth place, we must speak of. And here I propose that,

ILL NAME OF FLATTERY.

1. You would *impartially consider the bad name that flattery hath ever had, and still hath, and ever will have, among all sorts of men.*—How all condemn it as unworthy of the least degree of their love, as worthy of their utmost hatred and abhorrence. It is “sugared poison, a bewitching cup;” * the “greatest plague in societies,” and the most barbarous torturers; † for they pick out the eyes, and flay off the flesh, of the living: worse than hungry crows, as Antisthenes observed; like corroding worms, which eat out the substance, verdure, and life of the root [that] they were bred in. That very man who too soon was perverted by flattery to think himself greater than to be Philip’s son, yet in soberer temper judged a flatterer “worthy to be thrown into that river in which” his flattering history was cast and drowned. ‡ Though, as Sigismund the emperor observed, we affect pleasant, flattering companions, yet he professed he hated them like as he hated the plague. § Would you look on the flatterer as condemned and most worthy to be cut off from human society, you would neither over-love him nor his flatteries. It is but rarely that a foolish virgin falls in love, begs the life, and chooseth the most intimate converse, of a condemned felon: let us look on this condemned vice as most do on the handsomest condemned felon and murderer; a fair and goodly outside, but not worthy to live.

* *Mellitum venenum, Circes pocula.*
assentatio, &c.
De Dictis Sigismundi.

† *Nulla in amicitiis pestis est major quam*
§ ÆNEAS SYLVIUS,

‡ *Dignior eras qui eodem precipitareris.*

[LOVE OF PRAISE] ILL BECOMES OTHER MEN.

2. *Look how ill an uncured love of praise becomes another.*—See how great a blemish and stain it is to them, how it lessens all other commendable qualities. It is to dote on our own shadow, and perish in the love of it, as the mythologists report of Narcissus. Such [an] one is the most unfit of all men for human society, whether in a converse of friendship, service, or command; a most untractable and useless piece: not fit to rule others, who wants a prudence to rule himself; nor fit to receive commands, while he admires himself, and dotes on his own contrivance; not fit to be a friend, since all his love runs waste on himself. The emblem of such persons is ingeniously drawn from the ape, the ugliest, as the Lord Bacon observes, of creatures, the most mischievous in his pranks, useless, and saucy: and are such worthy to be loved? How comely a sight do you think [that] an ill-shaped ape, grinning on his own features in a flattering glass, would be? Such is the man that loves to see himself in flattery's mirror. How glorious was Alexander of Macedon while he rejected fawners! how lovely! But how eclipsed, how despicable, when he believed and loved them! which the Athenians did generously enough witness, when they fined their envoy ten talents for calling him a "god," and put to death Evagoras for adoring him. There was more than ordinary in Herod, which gave him the name of "Great;" but when he over-loved the praise of men, God left him a monument and warning to all posterity, giving up so contemptible a slave of his own vain-glory to the most contemptible, loathsome, and shameful death. Lice, bred in his own bowels, destroy his body, as the vermin of self-love and self-admiring reflections had destroyed his mind. Look first on the deformity of a self-admirer, next on the beauty of a self-denying humility; and this will cure this distemper. As the sight of the putrid carcass once cured the fond desire of friends, who doted on their own fancy for his picture whilst living; or as the sight of the loathsomeness in Serapis's temple cured the superstitious Egyptians; so the sight of the deformity of our love of the undue praise of men would cure this disease. But,

DEPLORABLE MISERIES OF IT.

3. Thou who lovest to be unduly praised, come with me, *view the many, great, deplorable miseries [which] it hath filled the world with.*—Read the tragedies [that] it hath acted, and all these mostly upon its friends. As it would cure the excessive praises men bestow on the great commanders of conquering armies, if they would recount with themselves how many fair and goodly countries they laid desolate, how many cities they razed, how many millions of souls innocent and peaceable they sacrificed to their ambition; so here, the bloody paws of the disguised lion would cure us of our dotage on the fox's skin. It hath ever proved "a mortal and deadly cup."* If you

* *Θανασιμον μελικρατον.* "A honied, but fatal draught."—EDIT.

travel through waste and desolate kingdoms, and inquire who ruined them, you will find the flatterers about prince and court : so true is that known observation of the historian, "Flatterers do more frequently overthrow a kingdom than open enemies."*

But did flatterers find such great ones' ears stopped, and their minds fortified against, or alienated from, their flatteries, the danger were not considerable. The flatterer can but attempt; our love to the flattery gives the success: the head and shaft of the arrow cannot fly to endanger the eagle; it was his own feathers that contributed to his wound and death. Scarce a city, family, or person whose calamities were fit to be noted in the world, but you may find some parasites, some close undermining flatterers, charged as a great occasion of those calamities; and the love, affection, and delight [which] those flatterers found, much more the cause of those fatal calamities. Ahab fell more by his own love of flattery, than by the artifices of the son of Chenaanah and his accomplices. (1 Kings xxii. 1—36.) So, in the parable, (Ezek. xiii. 10—16,) the wall fell; for the builders built it "with untempered mortar," and the people loved to see the building thus go forward; [there] was scarce one that disliked it, as Ezekiel observeth: (Ezek. xxii. 28—30 :) the consequence of which is: "I," saith the Lord, "have poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath," &c. (Verse 31.) When "prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. v. 31.) In a word: can you love that flattery which never had extorted a tear, a sigh, a grief, or complaint from you, if you had hated it; which hath filled you or yours, whole families, cities, kingdoms, yea, the whole world in all ages, with the complaints and sorrows which treachery, loved and trusted, could bring upon those that were so much over-seen? We show you the scattered bones about the den's mouth, and desire to ask whether you think fit to love the couching lion which lurks in it.

4. Would you be cured of immoderate love of an undue praise? Then, so often as you perceive any one soothing you therewith, *suspect there may be [some design], and search who likeliest is the design such have, upon you.*—We may with good manners question the integrity of his purpose who doth, on our knowledge, transgress the rules of truth in the words we hear from him: such men lie for advantage. The discovery of this designing, wheedling projector will, if you have any spirit of a man in you, take off your love, yea, turn it into hatred. No man can love to be imposed upon: be assured there is a snare hid; search after it, keep a watchful eye upon it; in time you will discover what you prevented, and never love what endangered you. "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird:" and there is much in that of Diogenes to a flatterer.†

* *Regnum sapinus ab assentatoribus quàm ab hostibus everti solet.*—QUINTUS CURTIUS *De Rebus gestis Alexandri Magni.* † *Nihil proficis cum te intelligam.*—SENECA in *Epist.* "Since I completely understand thy verbiage, its effect on me is unavailing."—EDIT.

It is the great care of these lurkers to lie concealed, and to hide their purposes, and to blindfold those [whom] they lead ; for it is but one labour to expose them to our view and to our hatred. Could weeping parents give their seduced children eyes to see the seducing projects of corrupt flatterers, they need be no further solicitous ; their children would find hearts to hate them. There is nothing truly amiable in flattery, and none that know it approve or love it. Solomon, therefore, takes so much pains for discovery of the designs of a flattering mouth, and then counselleth us to decline and reject it. (Prov. v. 3—14.) The monster in the dark doth not, but in the light he will, make us recoil with abhorrence.* Find him out, then ; view him exactly ; and, I know, it will do much toward your cure.

5. If you would be cured, you must *resolutely and peremptorily reject the friendship of the man who turns due praises into flattery.*—Let such know, they please least when they praise most ; and that you make their first offence an opportunity to inform them, that the second offence in this kind is and shall be unpardonably punished with loss of your friendship. I know not any reason why I may not interpret that of flatterers, which David speaks of liars : “He that telleth lies shall not come into my house.” (Psalm ci. 7.) This, he did know, was the way to prevent love of flatteries and flatterers,—to keep them out of his presence. This tympany is never cured, while sycophants are suffered to blow-up weak minds with conceits of worth greater than is due to their persons. It is not unfitly resembled to those distempers which increase on us by our indulgence. It is an itching humour [that] runs in our blood, as Sigismund the emperor observed ; and when it breaks out, the tickling flatterer doth increase it : if you would cure, you must let none such have the stroking of it. It is a tetter that is never cured with sweet and pleasing applications ; a sharp and drying medicine is best : so the angry countenance of a resolved hater of flattery is both a good preservative and a good healing receipt against this disease. You lose nothing, if you part with such ; you get a dangerous disease, if you retain them.

6. *Look on flattery and your love to it in their diametrical opposition and irreconcilableness to God in the truth of all his word, and in the righteousness of all his judicial sentence on men and things.*—To call evil good, or to make those seem consummate which are defective, are an “abomination” to God : “A just balance is his delight,” and he abhors the false balance. (Prov. xi. 1.) When a parasite, extols thy good or extenuates thy evil, he weighs thee in a false balance ; when thou art pleased with this, thou weighest thyself in the same false balance ; and God, who stands by, abhorreth both of you. Now, methinks, this should affect your hearts : dare you love what God hateth ? Will you not henceforward cease to love the undue praises of men, lest you fall under the dreadful, but just, abhorrence of God ?

* *Adulatio periculosa est quæ latet.* “That flattery which lies concealed is very dangerous.”—EDIT.

He will never lessen truth, to magnify any; he will never intrench on justice, to gratify any; he is a God of truth and righteousness; what your good or evil is, he will impartially declare, and abhorreth such who love a lie and unrighteousness in their valuing of themselves and actions: will it be "good that God should search you out?" "Truth is divine; whence, as from a fountain, all good, divine and human, flows: so that the flatterer appears an enemy to God." * This was the philosopher's argument long since; and it is not less cogent because so very ancient. None so hateful to God as these deep, ravening, and insatiable impostors; nothing is more contrary to Him who is all truth and goodness. Let flatterers and besotted lovers of flattery read well that, Psalm lii. 2—4: "Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness," &c. Here is the black character of the flatterer; and his miserable end you have, verse 5: "God shall destroy thee for ever," &c. The "sharp arrows of the mighty, and the coals of juniper," are prepared for the "lying lips and false tongue." (Psalm cxx. 2—4.) Since this is one of the things [which] God hateth, (Prov. vi. 16—19,) let it not be one of the things [that] you love.

7. *Get such a prevailing degree of generous and pure love to all that is good, and such a degree of hatred unto evil, that you may want neither the good word of men to be a spur to doing good, nor the sharp reproofs of men to restrain from evil.*—[He] who hateth evil, will not need [that] any one should put a colour on it, to lessen the apparent evil: we are glad that what we hate appears so evil that it justifies our hatred. Get an antipathy to all that is vice, or looks like it; and then you cannot but dislike all that would commend it to your choice, or excuse it to your judgment. Get that frame of heart [which] David had: "I hate every false way;" (Psalm cxix. 104, 128;) and then you are safe from this disease. And, to make the cure complete, add that pure, generous, universal, and divine love of good, for its own sake, that will account it a rich recompence and praise enough to have done it: there will be little need of man's just praises. Where our love to doing good is set on it for its own sake, there will need none of the undue praises of any. None need praise the person of Rachel to Jacob; he would have scorned the flatteries of any who should have lessened her real loveliness by false colours. How should we disdain the labour, and condemn the folly, of a madman that would persuade us [that] he could add loveliness to the light of a glorious morning! Open your eyes, ye lovers of virtue; look on all her daughters; they are "all glorious:" if any are veiled, it is because you cannot bear the lustre of their excellency. Awake, ye dreaming mortals; you will see enough in naked virtue to fall in love with it; as all would, if they saw it, according to Plato's judgment. *They are weak stomachs that must be allured by superadded*

* *Quòd si divina quædam res sit veritas, ex quâ, cœu fonte, diis pariter ac hominibus omnia bona proficiscuntur; videndum ne adulator diis omnibus sit hostis, &c.—Ex Plutarcho LUDOVICUS GRANATENSIS.*

saucers to eat of good viands ; there is no need of them, where food is loved, and the appetite in right order : so here, when you love good for the goodness that is in it, you will desire flatterers to forbear their labour, lest they mar what you love by adding of their own, which you hate and suspect. When God would put us in a sure way of keeping his commandments and persevering in a praiseworthy life, he does not direct us to encourage ourselves by the large praises of men, but commands [that] we should love his law with all our heart : this will cure indeed.

8. *Get and keep that humble frame of heart, which, being ever sensible of its present condition, seeth so great defects in all its good, that it dares not think there is a sufficient ground for any praise beyond the ordinary laudable temper.*—"The good that I would I do not." (Rom. vii. 19.) And as to what may be culpable, let no man's flattery pervert your judgment ; but humbly acknowledge, you better know your own inclinations than any glozing, fawning hypocrite in the world : and so long as you can maintain such an humble sense of your imperfections, your humility will be your antidote against the infection and danger of this disease. The flies blow, when the sun is warm and gotten high ; so, when we are high in our own opinions of ourselves, these flesh-flies—base colloquers [flatterers]—blow us. In a cold season, and [when] the sun—that is, our opinions—[is] low, and in the brumal solstice,—when we have colder thoughts of our own goodness,—these flies are numbed and impotent, &c. It is our own pride that gives these creatures an opportunity to hurt us. Whilst Alexander of Macedon kept a sense of his human original, he kept himself from this disease : as pride grew on him, he opened his ears to seducing flatteries, and at last fell into the highest frenzy ; in the height whereof he dreams of a divine original, and will be better than a man, whilst he is lower than a beast. I know no better prophylactic to "keep from" [being], nor better therapeutic to "cure" us if, tainted, than that of Christ :—if we had "done all," yet *δουλοι αχρειοι εσμεν* ["we are unprofitable servants"]. (Luke xvii. 10.) When you have done good, and it is praised, remember what humility would say both of the praise and the praiser : "Did the praiser know you as you know yourselves, he had never spent so many words, and put you to the blush : and since the praise is but a mistake, you may not account it to your gain ; for it must be discounted, when the reckoning is stated aright." Whoso owns [that] it is candour in our neighbour, and grace in our God, that covers the faults we are guilty of, and accepts the good we are doers of and humbly acknowledgeth, is in great measure cured of this loathsome disease.

9. *Remember, what degree of this love you permit, whether greater or lesser, the more you abate of your future reward.*—And he that pays you more respect than is due for your good done, and you accept it,—this man makes you spend on, and lessens your future reward ; as, Matt. vi. 1 : "Ye have no reward of your Father."

10. It will contribute to your cure, if you will remember, that *this love of the praise of men is a sacrilegious robbery of God.*—It is not

possible to love this flattery, but you will, with Herod, take to yourselves the whole or part of that glory [which] is due to God; and who knows what the danger of such sacrilege will be? Remember Herod's fault and punishment, and have it often before your eyes, that they may not look for,—much less dote on,—but abhor, the undue praises of men. It is scarce possible [that] you should affect an overgrown praise, and keep yourselves from robbery against God. As, therefore, you would abhor open and notorious sacrilege, because of the greatness of the sin; so, watch against the secret sacrilege which God so remarkably revenged on Herod, thereby telling us, it was no little sin that received so great a punishment.

To conclude: you that heard me, you that read these lines, think not [that] you are little concerned in these counsels: they give you those directions which will, if well followed, deliver you from the paths of the destroyer. You who are, more than others, in danger of this disease,—such are superiors, rich, unexperienced, haughty ones, and self-lovers, and if there be any other such-like,—take more heed to these cures prescribed, and at least keep some of them by you as antidotes against this poison. In the use of these prescribed, because they are our duty as well as means, forget not this word [which] I close with: 1. Your great Exemplar, Christ Jesus, refused great praises: “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one.” (Matt. xix. 17.) 2. The scriptures condemn and threaten flatterers, and such as love them. 3. Pray for the Spirit of wisdom, holiness, humility, and self-denial; that wisdom received may discover the snare, holy principles may set you above vain praises, and humble self-denial may content you without them. And, 4. Then a gracious providence will deliver from them.