

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

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To the Publisher of the MARYLAND GAZETTE.

*Curse on the Coward, or perfidious Tongue,
That darts not, ev'n to Kings, arrows the Truth:
Let Traitors wrap them in a dusky Innocence,
On Flattery Flatter: Foll'ood Fullblood
Truth is the living Breath of Heaven,
That sweeps these Fogs away, with all their Vermin.*
Thompson's AGAMEMNON.

S I R,

Flattery is now become a very common Vice, and *misplaced Compliment*, through a depraved Taste, has acquired the Name of *Politeness*, and *Good Manners*, to prevent the Public with some Thoughts on the Subject, will, I hope, not be judged improper.

WHEREVER this Vice prevails, a Degeneracy of Manners follows. In an arbitrary Government it may bear some use, as it serves to sweeten Slavery; but in a free Constitution, where *Liberty* and *Equity* are understood, it is a mean cowardly Vice. When this Practice becomes the Mode of conversation, Merit and true Desert are sure to be neglected; few are regarded, but such as have acquired the servile Art ofawning and Cringing: In Time they become so habitual, that no one are deemed worthy without them; which tempts many, whose natural Genius would perhaps give them a better Turn, to sacrifice their Honesty and Ingenuity to their present interest. I should think, that this Humour would never take with a man of Sense, tho' pretty artfully laid on, but in Fact we find otherwise. Flattery is universally swallowed down, and Vanity and Self conceit are so ingrained in human Nature, that the most penetrating Wits cannot discover the Deceit, when directed to themselves; tho' they can easily observe, and laugh when exercised on others: In short, most Men are so besotted with the Charms of Flattery, as to be engaged in a Connection and Friendship with the meanest Parasites and abandoned Sycophants; hence we have too often just cause to be offended, when we see downright Impudence presented to real Merit and Ingenuity, and *Scoundrels*, who have no other but this creeping Art to recommend them, bear all before them, by the Force of Assurance; and in consequence of being preferred, and highly distinguished for Politeness and civility, whilst Worth, Learning, and Modesty lie neglected and despised, because the Possessor, conscious of his own inferiority, scorns to stoop so low, or cares not to buy Preferment at a Rate.

It is therefore to accumulate Praise upon a worthless Person or Action, is a more mischievous Practice, than to withhold a just Praise from what deserves it. Praise bestowed upon an unworthy Person, swells the Vanity of it's ignorant Author, he is satisfied with the Notion of his being a very accomplished Person; and this Piece of ill applied Humour helps him

forward to the compleat Character of a Rogue or Coxcomb for Life; but should we deny just Praise to a good Action, it will surely some Time or other meet with the general Applause of Men, besides the inward Pleasure and Satisfaction, which it excites in the Breast of the Performer.

AMONG the antient Greeks and Romans, Praise justly bestowed pushed them on in the Paths of Vertue and Honour. The Simplicity of those Times is admirable, when a *green Wreath* could be productive of such noble and heroic Actions, and without the Allurements of Gold and sounding Titles, could operate so effectually upon their generous and disinterested Minds. These Republics we find gradually degenerating, and coming at last to Ruin; when, instead of this pure and primitive Integrity, nothing prevailed but Luxury and a slavish Complaisance; this set Men upon the Pursuit of Riches, grand Titles, and a Train of Parasites to pamper their Vain-glory; hence the Substance of a Nation became in Time the Property of a few ambitious Men; and the Nerves of the State, or Body of the Populace, being oppressed and debilitated, they became an easy Prey to some more hardy or warlike People, and their Name and Glory were at once extinct.

THE Desire of being particularly distinguished from the common Herd, makes us in general susceptible of Flattery; we are ambitious to appear in Favour with Men in a high Station, — whatever *My Lord* demands, is eagerly complied with; — To appear in public with such a Person, or even to have a Smile or a Look from him, is deemed a mighty Honour: Thus we make ourselves the Tools of that Power, which will despise and reject us, when we can no further serve it's purposes. Thus we relinquish our firmest Friends, and by such Company and Advice, sacrifice our present Character, and future Quiet and Satisfaction.

DID Men but argue from Experience, were they persuaded of the Narrowness of their own Abilities, Flattery would never gain Ground. Should a Flatterer, for Instance, highly compliment us for our Prudence and Discretion; upon a very short Recollection, we could tell him, That many *useless Trifles* we desire, and many *hurtful Things* we wish for. *Alexander* of Macedonia, while he ravaged the barbarous *Indians* at the Siege of one of their Towns, was struck in the Thigh with an Arrow; he slighted the Wound at first, 'til the Blood stopping, a Tumour ensued, with excessive Pain; which made the Conqueror cry out, *Men by Flattery have persuaded me that I was the Son of Jupiter, but this Anguish makes me know I am only a mortal Man.* There are many such Occurrences in Life, which demonstrate to a vain Man his Insignificance and Littleness.

FLATTERY is particularly dangerous when applied to Youth, which is naturally vain, credulous, and ignorant; it is still more so, when bestowed upon such Youth, as, from their high Birth, have a prospect of making a Figure in the World. It raises their Vanity above their Judgment, makes Men of them before the proper Time, and exposes them to the Whim and Extravagance of every idle sawing Fool, who has Baseness and

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