

## GIVING AND RECEIVING ADVICE

In every human being there is a certain spirit of independence which implants in its possessor a desire, using a common phrase, to "paddle his own canoe." It is true that in some people this spirit is less noticeable, in some it may be almost wholly effaced, but in others it is strong and assertive. Therefore in everyone, and particularly in the last-named class, there is a peculiar aversion to receiving advice, and it was probably an individual of this class who first gave utterance to the assertion that advice is similar to abuse, in that it is easier to give than to receive.

The reception of advice, however, is influenced by two factors, quality and quantity, and these depend, not upon the matter of the advice, but upon the wisdom and judgment of the adviser. Let us, therefore, discuss briefly the different types of advisers and their methods of giving advice.

Perhaps the most common and also, I may say, the most unpopular, is he who poses as a know-it-all. Who has not had the very unpleasant experience of being chosen the victim of such a bore? He approaches with such disgusting self-assurance and, apparently assuming that the person to whom he is speaking knows absolutely nothing of the subject at hand, commences, with a patronizing air, to give that person the doubtful benefit of his views. Moreover, such a person rarely gives any thought to brevity in his exhortations, but continues at great length, until the long-suffering recipient cannot help wishing him consigned to a warmer climate, where he would find innumerable perverted beings, for the reformation of whom he might make use of his powers of persuasion for all time to come.

Another type of adviser is the hypocritical moralist, one of the kind whose lessons are for all but himself. This type is equally undesirable, but is sometimes amusing. The typical character of this kind is one of those, who, judging from his pose and discourse, one would be led to believe, is the incarnation of virtue, did not his actions, upon closer observance, give the lie to his assertions. The advice of such a person, to my mind, deserves about the same degree of attention as one would bestow upon the ravings of a lunatic. In every community one or



more of these persons may be found, and rarely do their counsels serve for any other purpose than as a butt for the witticisms of punsters and for the exploitation of the critical. These persons are regarded by some as annoying, but by most of us as ridiculous.

Not all advisers are of this nature, however, for, besides the types mentioned, there are some, who, in giving advice, really have the benefit of the recipient at heart, and whose advice is prompted by pure unselfishness. I consider such characters to be worthy, not only of gratitude, but also of the highest honor and esteem, for the motive of their advice-giving elevates it high above the sordid level of that of the vain or pseudo-virtuous. Their advice may be to many of us boring, for such is human nature. It may not be followed, in spite of its evident merit, but the motive of the giver has such effect that we cannot resent his action as interference.

Among the recipients, the officious or ostentatious adviser has a counterpart in the person who refuses, under any consideration, to receive advice. Such a self-sufficient character might be admirably adapted to existence in a location where he would have to rely entirely upon his own ability, but in a community he is a misfit. Self-sufficiency is praiseworthy, but it must be supported by a due amount of commonsense, and, sad to relate, that valuable commodity is distinctly shown to be lacking in a person who is impatient of advice, for his very impatience advertises the deficiency.

A different type, and one which is perhaps more deserving of sympathy than censure, is that of the individual who accepts the advice of everyone as gospel truth. What could be more ridiculous than to see a person, who is very well able to judge for himself, at least in some matters, vacillating among a dozen different decisions, prompted by the advice of as many persons? Then one is forcefully reminded of the homely tale, "Taking the Donkey to Market," and how frequently we see such "donkey marketers" in our every day life, whose efforts are usually crowned with a success parallel to that of the original.

The person, therefore, who is capable of choosing the happy medium between these two extremes, is to be admired and respected. To follow Kipling, the man with whom "all men count, but none too much," is selecting the sane course between high-handed independence and



pitiful indecision. Using his own judgment, as well as choosing the best of what he hears from others, he is traversing the surest road to success.

We see, therefore, that the utility of advice is dependent upon the motive of the giver and the attitude of the receiver, and though these two may not always, perhaps rarely, see eye to eye upon the subject, nevertheless, that is no reason why all advice should be tabooed. How strange would be the world in which every individual is so perfect, so omniscient, as to require no assistance from, or no intercourse with his fellow man. How correct everything would be, and, alas, how monotonous!

—D. MacI., '32

