



One could perhaps make a case for declaring that obedience is the first of all the virtues. At any rate, it is certainly true that if one renders true obedience to a mistress in themis — that is to say, one who is God's indirect representative within the earthly order of things — one will, *ipso facto* be practising the other virtues also.

All, it may be protested, with the exception of one, & that one, the virtue governed by Madria *TEIXIS*. For Love, it will be said, may never be commanded; and this, we will allow, is truly said — yet true obedience is the fruit of Love & where-soever one is to be found, there most surely must you find the other.

That obedience which giveth what she must for fear or for advancement — this is what the profane call obedience, yet in truth, she is not more than a counterfeit and a

false adulteress. For true obedience binds not the body only but the soul, & tho' we may like the task we are set to no better than the willow-rod that is set upon our shoulders, yet we would not have it any wise other than as our mistress wills it.

For if we love our LADY, then we willingly obey HER, & in obeying HER, obey also the Ranya that SHE has set over us on the earth. Obedience is the chain that bindeth earth to Heaven, & tho' there be them that say they will love but not obey, yet in such case the love endures not long, & this is proven both by the words of holy Scripture & by the examples of maids & of nations.

So truly we may say, if obedience be not the first among

the virtues, yet Love is, & obedience is not the fruit of love merely, but her daughter — & like to God's own beloved DAUGHTER ★, is not her child only, but her very self.

Writ by the maid Althea
in loving obedience
to hir mistress.