

THE ANTIDOTE

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DULL PEOPLE AGAIN.

The crediting of dullness with abilities of which it is the only evidence, is a very favourite exercise of discernment among people who know that it is wise not to be misled by superficial circumstances. Thus, if, of two schoolboy brothers, one is a vivacious lad who likes his studies, learns quickly, and always brings his lesson perfect, and the other learns with toil and distaste only because he must, and as often as not prefers the dunce's place or the risk of reprimand or a flogging, as the case may be, to the tedious effort, there will always be some of the more covertly sagacious of their kinsfolk to shake their heads over the facile progress of the clever lad, and to predict the success of the future of the dull boy, on the ground that he is a dull boy.

The fable of the hare and the tortoise has a wise moral, but that moral, well weighed, is a warning to hares not to go to sleep instead of running, rather than according to the interpretation frequently fitted to it—a disapprobation of the natural speed of the hare as compared with the sober making haste which an anxious tortoise can achieve, and still less as compared with the pace of a tortoise indisposed to racing at all. It is probable, to say the least of it, that a hare who did not go to sleep would be at the winning-post before the staidest of tortoises; and one may venture to doubt whether diligent dullness can match diligent aptness. But a great many Mentors and guardians of youth are possessed of the idea that all hares must, by the nature of them, take naps, and all tortoises be somehow or other plodding on; and with similar confusion of inference they have a reverence for dullness in itself as far safer and squander than aptness. Many

bright children, fond of their books and using their young abilities to all advantage, are unwisely discouraged by admonitions that what they acquire must be superficial, and soon to be forgotten, because they are able to acquire it so easily, with assurances that their dull comrades will in later grown-up days be solidly their superiors. The old hare and tortoise story, thus applied dashes the energy of many a hare for the one tortoise that it spurs on.

But the respect for dullness as a sign of sound capacity is not extended to the ripening intellect only. A discreet amount of dullness will pass off any sane man for the possessor of great practical judgment; and if his face be of the shape that smiles, he will be understood to be a shrewd and cautious observer, and he can have a reputation for deep success in any department of learning art, science, or connoisseurship to which his taste may lead him; or he may wear the character of a general philosopher with thoughts that lie too deep for words.

Dullness is not so good a certificate for a woman's intelligence—it is understood that speaking to the point by guess-work, with a promptness in answering questions rightly on wrong grounds is the particular merit of a woman's mind; and the soundness which dullness infers is incompatible with this more ethereal quality—but the dull woman is pretty sure to be held to have a great deal more in her than she shows; and the brilliant woman will as surely be accused of not being nearly so clever as she seems.

The dull man, like the poet in this respect, is born, not made; yet just as by the imitation of good models and much taking pains, many a versifier has arrived at all the honours of the poet, a careful disciple might emulate the dull and secure their privileges.

Few arts could be more conducive to the enjoyment of their possessor than the art of dullness; not to have it is to be liable to be bored and fatigued by dull people wherever you go; be simply dull yourself, and you are master of the witty and the wise wherever you find them, to make your diversion.

A Word in Season.

To the Editor of the "Antidote."

Sir,—Many of your readers, myself included, feared for some weeks during the early winter that the spicy little "Antidote" was falling away. I must now, Mr. Editor, congratulate you that our fears were ungrounded. The "Antidote" has become one of the brightest papers of the kind on either side of the Atlantic. Let anybody compare it with "Life" or "Pick-me-up," and I don't think it need fear for the result. The original matter is good, the selections are admirable, while the engravings, with a few exceptions, here and there, will hold their own with the best. Montreal may well be proud of the apparent success to establish a paper of the kind here—when so many have fallen by the way. The man or woman, the young people of society, who cannot find amusement in the columns of the "Antidote," must be lacking what Tom Hood the elder called a "funny-bone." Not least is the "Antidote" deserving of praise that it is not thrust into our faces in the streets and public places, and bawled at us 'till we suffer and are likely to lose our good will towards wits and gamins. With best wishes from myself and three young lady friends who prompt me to write this letter,

I am, Mr. Editor,

Applaudingly yours,

VALENTINA.

Sherbrooke street, Montreal,

14 February, 1893.

P. S.—Don't forget to give us a couple of those nice short stories every week. Two of them are worth more than the dollar it costs a year.—V.

(The foregoing was unfortunately received too late for insertion last week,—probably delayed on the way. The editor sincerely thanks his appreciating young lady readers for the compliment, and hopes always to merit the too high praise bestowed upon his efforts.



For months he had tried to coax

The papers to print his joax,

But 'twas all in vain;

So his mammoth brain

In alcohol now he soaks.

A good many ill-natured remarks are being made about hoops, but when they come the doors will be opened wider to receive them than for any fashion for years.