

# THE ANTIDOTE

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## VOCATIONS & AVOCATIONS.

Vocation in its primary meaning, the call to some special career or work, is in its secondary and more frequent meaning, the career or work to which their is this call. It is, or it should be, the business to which a genuine sense of fitness has dedicated us and which we carry on steadily as our main task in life.

Avocation, the call off—a word significantly rare in the singular—means any demand on us which takes us away from the main task and spends our time and attention coercively on affairs irrelevant to it. Yet so many persons use avocation as but a lightly modified synonym of vocation, that the two words bid fair to become merely interchangeable; and even educated persons, not unaware of etymology, will speak of a man's avocations in reference to the central duties of the profession to which he has given himself.

There is the irony of truth in the wrested meaning sometimes; for in only too many lives the calls aside, the minor intruding occupations that hinder and perhaps mar the essential one, take so large an importance, that the duties of the vocation may more fitly be described as avocations from them, than they as avocations from those duties.

Apart from cases, where it is a man's fault that he lets his time and zeal be lost from the work he has undertaken, or ought to undertake, as that of his vocation, it is the misfortune of many professions—professions which especially require concentration of the faculties and consecutive energy—that the exoteric world had never been able clearly to comprehend that unimpeded freedom to work is needed by those who exercise them as much as it is by any handicraftsman whose time no one

would think of claiming from him for unwaged labor or mere gossiping.

If a man has an office or a counter he is safe; his acquaintances perceive him to be labelled "business man," and a "business man's time," they will say "is money"—as if everyone's time were not, rightly looked on, money, or some higher coin—and they will think even his leisure hours sacred to his own refreshment from labor, and not to be needlessly hampered.

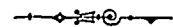
But occupations of study, scientific research, literary production—of brain work; in sum, of any kind that is carried on in the worker's private home, with no visible reminder of customer or client—are taken to be such as can lightly be done at one time as well as another, and resumed after no matter what interruptions, like a lady's embroidery which she can take up again at the very stitch she left her needle in, and if the lost time should matter at all, sew at a little the faster. Professions of this sort not only admit, but in many instances require considerable variation in the amount of daily time directly bestowed on them—directly, for the true student, the true artist, is not at his work only when he is ostensibly employed, but whenever and wherever he may have his head to himself—and there is no measure of visible quantity for the more or less results of application.

Often, too, the best successes of the student or artist seem, as it were, born of a moment, flashed on without forethought and half unaware. It is but seeming; for thoughts, however suddenly they burst into light, must have had their sowing and their germinating time—if, that is, they were flowers, not fungi but the seeming gives confirmation to the popular idea of the unexacting, haphazard nature of the work whose triumphs come by what, whether it be called genius or talent or skill, is in fact but favoring chance, or to take what with many is but the more flattering synonym for chance in such matters, inspiration. And so it comes about that persons with only the protection of these professions to keep them their time for themselves, are liable to have it used by others as open property of no value to any one in particular,

which it would be mere churlishness to grudge to all comers.

The painter, to some extent, fares better than the other brain workers—for it is plain to his acquaintances at large, that though ideas may come to him by chance and between whiles, 'said interruptions, or may be done without, paint will not dab itself into shapes on the canvas with the painter out of the way, and thus some necessity for his sticking to the easel is appreciated.

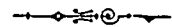
The literary man probably fares the worst of them all. He is not merely protected by the manual part processes, but it is his danger. It is so easy—what everybody can do at any time. Even people who rarely write a letter think nothing of putting pen to paper at need, and what can it matter to a man who half lives pen in hand, to have a few additional letters or articles to write in the course of his "avocations"? What trouble is there worth counting in a little gratis exercise of his literary skill, to oblige an acquaintance's acquaintance? But whoever fares best and whoever fares worst, the assumption is that men belonging to such professions as are here spoken of, are able to accomplish their works in odds and scraps of broken time, and have for their primary duty to society, all the docilities which idle acquaintances lawfully claim of idlers.



### Personal.

Mr Wentworth J. Buchanan, late general manager of the Bank of Montreal, is the owner of one of the best violins in the city, and he plays on it too.

Our courtly and popular fellow-citizen, Baron Hugel, has returned from the winter resorts on the New Jersey coast, whither he went on a trip some time ago with his "vera brither," Sir William Stephen.



### FORCE OF HABIT.

Beggar (at the surgery door)—"Doctor, might I be so bold as to ask you for a little relief; I am very badly off. I've got four little children, and—" Doctor.—"Hum—show me your tongue?"

### AN ANCESTOR IN FLESH AND BLOOD.

Baron (to renowned savant)—Have you any ancestors, Herr Professor?

Savant—"No; but my grandchildren have one."