

## THE ANTIDOTE

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### AN OBSOLETE VIRTUE.

There was once a virtue that everybody said was the most useful, and wholesome, and sensible, and self-rewarding virtue that ever was, everybody loved and respected it, even those who never thought of practising it. But so much was written and talked in its favor that there were few people who at some time or other did not make up their minds to practise it, and just as the good books told them they would do, they always felt a glow of satisfaction whenever they had carried out their intention, though some of them only carried it out once or twice and then gave it up again till the next time arrived for the making of good resolutions. That virtue, now so long forgotten that many of the present generation have never heard of it, was Early Rising. Its history was simple and sad, it was for a few centuries a habit, then, becoming rare, it was promoted to a virtue, in which honorable dignity it was suffered to remain long after it had lost all influence; finally, it was declared guilty of arrogance and of keeping unseasonable hours, and, falling in to disrepute, vanished ashamed into obscurity. Persons of archaic disposition, especially school-mistresses with a turn for inditing advice to youthful female minds, and getting it published, have, within the memory of man tried to re-suscitate the legendary honors of the fallen virtue; but such attempts were about as practicable and as successful as if they had aimed at the revival of knight-errantry, and their main result was to arouse damaging attention, and to suggest to lively but lie-a-bed writers of small talk essays, a palpable theme for sarcasms.

The change in the literature of early rising is indeed an indisputable phenomenon. During the epoch of mediæval

superstition and barbarity, when everybody got up early, it seems to have almost completely escaped the attention of poets and moralists; and such tributes to it as have been handed down to us are contained almost if not altogether exclusively in those pithy summaries of practical ethics called proverbs—terse axioms of experience which combine a whole code of policy into a few dozen words, but which do not concern themselves with virtues from an unremunerative point of view. When the proverb tell us that—

He that would thrive,  
Must rise at five;  
He that has thriven,  
May rise at seven—

it ascribes no moral superiority to the five o'clock over the seven o'clock riser; it simply recommends a line of conduct serviceable towards getting on in the world; and so with other matutinal proverbs, we cannot in any way draw from them the inference that early rising was, in the time that gave birth to those proverbs, classed among the abstract virtues, neither can we draw from them the inference that it was not. They are economical recipes of the character of our own pet cut and dried phrases about small profits and quick returns, buying in a cheap market and selling in a dear, and so forth; phrases which would long since have been crystallized by rhyme, or alliteration, or homely metaphor into such familiar views as those which made the proverbs of our ancestors gospel to Hob and Wat and their babies, but for the disappearance of the gift of proverb-making from a spelling book-reading and grammar-haunted generation. One of the greatest iconoclasts of the old notion of mediæval times was the late John G. Saxe who, to the surprise of a people not yet emancipated from old time persecutions, denounced early rising in verses more forcible than elegant.

The time came, however, when early rising met with higher recognition than that of the few utilitarian proverbs. It is an invariable consequence of civilization that mankind comes to prefer being awake in the hours of artificial light and asleep by daylight; and thus as civilization progressed, early rising

became less and less customary, until at last it assumed that degree of rarity which is essential to virtue. The day of its triumph had arrived, the poet racked his brains for many-hued pictures of the dawn, and sang of the virtues of getting damp with the early morning dew; the social philosopher expatiated on the righteous joys of being up before everybody else, the strengthening of the moral tone, the improvement of the complexion, the increase of acquaintance with nature, and of appetite for breakfast. The arithmetician did inspiring sums about the decades which would be added to life by rising only a few hours before fires are lit, and sitting-rooms swept and dusted; and we all remember the joyous lilt of that beautiful ballad of the late tender-hearted Claribel, "Five o'clock in the morning," made so popular by the singing of the gifted soprano, Madame Parepa. From the round text copy-slips of our fathers to epics, early rising was the theme of every pen. And then without transition and without premonitory signs the reaction came—which it shall be our duty to refer to in another issue.

### Social and Personal.

Mr. Hugh A. Allan and Mrs. Allen will leave next week by the "Parisian," via Halifax, on a short visit to England.

Mr. G. W. Stephens, accompanied by Mrs. and Miss Stephens, spent Easter week in New York.

Mrs. Henry Birks, who has spent the winter in Ashville, N. C., has returned to town.

Mr. James O'Brien and Mrs. O'Brien left town on Saturday last on a visit to Lakewood, New Jersey.

Mrs. Pangman, of Phillips Square, who has been suffering from an attack of la grippe, is now convalescent.

Mrs. Bell, wife of Dr. Bell, of the Geological Survey, Ottawa, is in town on a visit to Sir Donald and Lady Smith.

The Hon. Wilfred Laurier and Mrs. Laurier have arrived in town on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. T. C. David.

Mr. Bruce Campbell, Ste. Hilaire, is again confined by illness to Strong's Hospital.

Sir William Dawson and Lady Dawson, who as spring advances, have been moving gradually northward, are now at Ashville, N. C. Sir William's health being now completely restored.