

THE ANTIDOTE

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DULL PEOPLE.

It sounds like a paradox, and is almost a pun, to say that dull people never feel dull. Yet, let it seem paradox or pun, it is but a matter of fact in truth. The people we call dull are those who have little but their own tediousness to bestow on others. But this tediousness does not weary themselves, and when they are in society it becomes the business of brisker minds to amuse them.

The hostess sorting her dinner guests with a view to the cheerfulness of the greater number, perceives that there is a risk of dull Lady Monosyllables making an impassible barrier of silence at her corner of the table, and she straightway allots to her the most brilliant of the agreeable gentlemen on her list. He will amuse Lady Monosyllables, and, she fondly hopes, will have time and energy to keep up a conversation with his other-hand neighbour and around him. And Lady Monosyllables is amused; we can't say as much, however, for her brilliant cavalier; he is sacrificed to the single entertainment, for she listens with a placid exactitude, and omits no necessary yes or no to keep the tete-a-tete continuous.

The monosyllabic man is better off than the monosyllabic woman. He has all her accustomed advantages of being paired off at table with the cleverest conversationalist of the other sex available, and he has above her at other entertainments, his advantages of freer locomotion.

The difficulty of getting her dress along with her through a crush, the politenesses which commit her to chairs to find herself wedged in for the rest of the evening, her lurking doubts of the propriety of moving about independently in a room full of people, all leave a woman little choice about the

companionship she will have for the time being. She is stationary, much like a sea-anemone on its rock when the tide is high, waiting for what drifts towards her, accepting it of necessity, and clutching it tenaciously, or letting it drift on again partly according to wish, and partly according to power. But a man has, with the pains, the privileges of his normal chairlessness. He moves about and selects the person or group wherever his pleasure for the moment may lead.

If he is a dull man he has only to select, unless the temporary obstacles of human bulk and pieces of furniture to be slipped between and navigated through can delay him of his object, and he will invariably arrive at the people he covets to make his evening pleasant for him. Nobody looks to him for amusement and he may go his own way unmolested and may use whom he will for his own entertainment. The man who is not dull is hindered on his way a hundred times, he sees the group of talkers he has been struggling to join all break up; the person with whom of all others he wanted to exchange a few words with, go away. He is button-holed and forced to talk his best to some bore, while a discussion which he is longing to join in is going on within ear-shot; he is cut at unawares and introduced to dull people who are dummies and to dull people who he heartily wishes were dummies. And at last going away empty of recollection he believes that he has somehow conduced to a good many people's entertainment, while he has only been very lively, and dismally dull.

In society if wit is silver, dullness is golden. Wit is the bee that works; dullness is the drone that waits snugly for the honey to come to its mouth, and dullness pledges you for nothing. If you define yourself as a talker, a sayer of good things, or clever at the give-and-take of recreative conversation, you are bound to keep up to your level or you will be set down as wanting. For mere civility's sake you might have exerted yourself a little, it would be said, even if you have been overtaken by a stupid fit. You may have headache, or heartache, or both, but you ought to

have been constant; once clever you must always be clever; and there will be dire hopes that there is nothing wrong with your affairs, or your brain, or your conscience, and people who have met you for the first time will say of you,—that they had expected to find you agreeable and entertaining, that they found you less than commonplace, quite hopelessly stupid, unless indeed you were giving yourself airs.

Here comes the advantage of dullness—that it is no condemnation; it is not even called dull, for nothing was expected of it. If you firmly take up the judicious position of being a dull person, that is the person to be amused and never betrayed into amusing, you will go free of criticism and incur no suspicions, excepting perhaps suspicions which incline to credit you with a hidden fund of all kinds of abilities.

JOB.

Dr. Parry's oratorio of "Job" is the great musical attraction of the day in England. The critics raise it highly; perhaps our own philharmonic Society will put it on the boards some day. Mr. Browning the secretary has nearly doubled the subscriptions to the Philharmonic concerts during the season. Mr. Browning can boast of the quality of modest assurance, although to talk a little "shop," fire insurance is more in his way.

NO DIFFICULTY.

A bit of feminine dialogue overheard at a cooking lecture:

Lady (talking to herself)—Now she has got it cooked, I wish she'd tell us how to use up cold mutton.

Next lady (in a sympathetic tone)—I have six first-rate recipes.

First lady (opening her note book)—Will you favor me, please?

Second lady—Six boys.

JUDGMENTS.

"Tis with our judgment, as our watches; none

Go just alike, yet each believes his own.

—Pope.

A NINE-INCH OMELET.

Diner—"Waiter, how long will my omelet be?"

Waiter—"I can't tell exactly, sir; but they average about nine inches."