

THE ANTIDOTE

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EARLY RISING.

The causes of the revulsion of style by which the obsolete virtue (See "Antidote" of 8th April instant), now so disused and venerated, became a theme for reprobation and derision, seem to have been severally and widely dissimilar. One, and perhaps the most important, doubtless, the spirit of earnestness, which, though already on the wane, was predominantly manifest among us a few years back, persons who had decided on earnestness could not be content with what is called lip-service; it could never be to their mind to recognize a duty, to praise a virtue, without strongly putting it into action; they said early rising was wrong. Another cause was the spirit of levity of these latter days, that mocking spirit which rejoices in exhibiting time-honored respectabilities in a comic light and making, as it were, Aunt Sallies of the venerable idols of a didactic past.

Yet another was that, which, for want of name in classic English, must be called the spirit of topsy-turvyness, that spirit which moves us to eulogise the modest merits of a Nebuchadnezzar, the first vegetarian, and the votary of a proud simplicity in days of effeminacy and luxurious apparel, and to despise the selfish cowardice of a Boadicea, taking with her in her chariot her two young daughters to face the missiles of the enemy, while she, safely ensconced behind them, displayed her skill in rhetoric, intelligently deaf to any side but the other side, and vivaciously blind to whatever sin is not concealed by a milestone. Much, also, was due to the fact that there was nothing left to say in honor of early rising—no similes, no sums, no eloquence—all had been used up by that obtrusive class of person, which in spite of malediction, has persevered through centuries in saying our good things before us. Obviously, when an object has got to a stage in which nothing

new can be said in its favor, the next thing for authors to do is to write against it.

Early rising, then, has become known among us as an act of arbitrary asceticism—a vain glorious piece of Phariseism to be abhorred of modest souls who sleep late and make no boast over their neighbors—a disorderly caprice and an infringement of the uniformity of domestic routine. It is impertinent, it is ridiculous frequently, alas, too frequently—for "sweet is sweet, and a duke is a duke," but while a little strange—frequently it is observed that the early wren would not have been got out by the early bird if he had staid in his hole. It is asked why we should be set to imitate the lark and the lamb, rather than the owl, the very bird of wisdom, and the victorious lion. How we can rise with the dawn, when the dawn varies from 4 a. m. in summer to almost noon, or, occasionally, not at all in winter; why we should lengthen our lives by getting up early more than by sitting up late; and, if it has not been added, it might be—what is the use of getting an appetite for breakfast, when you cannot get the breakfast!

And whatever amount of argument there may be in the questions with which it is now customary to answer the ancient problems and precepts, who shall deny the irrelevancy of this last? In it he who runs may read the monumental farewell of early rising. It is simply an anachronism. In 1898 servants like a long night's rest, and they like it to begin late and they do not like masters and mistresses getting up before them; they do their best to discourage it.

Whatever other guilt there may be in early rising, the reproach that it is Pharisaic, is now in itself an anachronism. There is no pomp of conscious virtue about early rising now; if we commit it we are abashed and secret; should some ill chance require avowal we admit the practice timidly, we are humbled by our malefeasance, we make haste to forestall the coming ridicule by laughing at ourselves; we say the things about the early wren; we put forward our excuses deprecatingly, as who would lie as late as the latest if we could have our will; we hug ourselves when we hear a fellow-culprit, and endeavor anxiously to make out that he is a quarter of an hour the sooner. The

pickpocket may be proud in—fitting company—but not the early riser.

And yet, something might be said in favor of lengthening our forenoons, or rather, of having forenoons at all, for that part of the day, more and more curtailed, would seem to be fast disappearing from our practical existence. Much of the hurry that worries the lives of business and professional men is due to that crowding the appointments of the day into three or four hours, to which, if they do not condemn themselves, others condemn them; they are perpetually striving their energies to get in 420 minutes between mid-day and five o'clock. Seamstresses lie in bed late because they sit up late, but would it not be better for them to use the early daylight than to work on wearily at night and blind themselves over their needles by nightlight. And so with other callings, both men's and women's; might not the work, both with advantage to the work and the workers, be begun sooner in the day and end sooner? It will come to that in the end; meals, occupations, amusements, grow later hour after hour, till at last custom will have gone round the clock and passed on from rising at sunset to beauty-sleep and eight o'clock breakfast, but that will take a generation or two.

Meanwhile a large number of persons follow the fashion of lateness after Charles Lamb's style of measuring his office time, "they get up late, but then they go to bed early." To have legislated all night, or to have danced all night is full reason for sleeping away the next morning; and after all, it is only keeping good hours for the antipodes; but there are households by the million which having neither duty or amusement to keep them up get into bed at a punctual or even a premature ten, and barely manage to get up in time for breakfast at a lagging nine. In ancient times these people would have been exposed to unpleasant references to the ways of the ant; but there are no sluggards now, only people too wise to waste the precious hours by being out of bed earlier than they can help.

A CLOSE GUESS.

"Speaking of ages, Miss Flypp, when do you suppose I was born?" said young Mr. Gilley.

"On the first of April, I imagine, Mr. Gilley," replied the maiden.