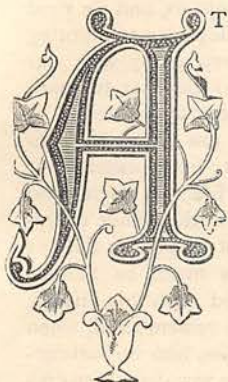


ON GOING TO BED AT NIGHT.



Every moment of time people are getting up and going to bed somewhere, just as the stars are constantly rising and setting all the world over. This variety is unavoidable with both from the very nature of things. For the same reason it must needs be that at the same place the stars should rise and set at very different and constantly varying times; but it is not a necessity, but rather an evidence of the world's moral obliquity, that men should imitate the stars,

and be getting up and going to bed at such very different and irregular hours of the same day and night. Indeed, in one respect human beings are more variable and uncertain than the stars, for with the latter there is always a law which unfailingly regulates the proportion of time they are below the horizon, while there is often no sort of method in the period during which we remain beneath the bed-clothes.

This is the point on which we are going to make a few remarks—the relation, that is, between the time of going to bed and the time of getting up. The inquiry will be very uninteresting to those who care but little about the due employment of their time, but to those who really wish to make the most of it the question is one of practical economy well worth considering.

We will begin, then, with assuming that life is to us not merely an alternation of day and night, of labour and rest, of getting up and going to bed, but that we have the good sense to wish that these should so have their due proportion that our life may be laid out to the best advantage. At the same time we will not assume anything so ridiculous as that this proportion can be determined exactly for all alike or for any one in particular. We shall deal only with the principle on which each may determine this proportion for himself—with algebraic symbols rather than with concrete numbers.

The difficulty that confronts us at the outset is a practical one. Many people regularly get up and go to bed early. Many more regularly get up and go to bed late. Some rise early and take rest late, regularly. Some as regularly get up late and go to bed early. With others all these variations occur, only irregularly. They are sometimes late and sometimes early, sometimes in one way, sometimes in the other, sometimes in both. The early riser may spend more time in bed than he who gets up late, and the man who goes to bed with clock-work regularity may have a shorter day for work than he who goes to bed and gets up at all hours. Where shall we find, amidst all this shifting and confusion, a stationary point from which we may get a clear view of what should be the relation between the time of getting up and the time of going to bed?

Now there can be little doubt that as a general rule—and therefore setting aside all exceptional cases, some of which are sufficiently startling, we know—the time at which we go to bed is not nearly so important to the welfare of the day as the time at which we get up. A person may go to bed punctually, and even keep nursery time, but if he be uncertain or systematically late in the morning he will not, as a rule, make so much of the day as he would if he got up regularly in the morning whatever be the hour he went to bed at night. We are not speaking of children, or of invalids, or of any exceptional cases, as we have said, but of men and women in ordinary health and working trim, and of men and women who have a mind to do their work—ay, and enjoy their work, and their whole being too, to the best of their ability. And we say that there is a gain to the whole day in bodily and mental power, in tone, in temper, and in the quality if not the quantity of time—an advantage which can better be experienced than described—in regular if not early rising, which no early hours at night can make up for, and which not even late hours at night can entirely take away. The old rhyme, it is true, makes the two things of co-ordinate importance—“Early to bed, and early to rise, is the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise;” but however true this may be, it is equally true, and of much greater width of practical application, that, of the two, early or at least regular rising is the one which alone is *essential* to our true prosperity.

We take this, then, for our stationary or starting-point, that nothing will make amends for the want of, at least, regularity in rising in the morning: other things may vary, and may diminish or increase the benefit, but this must be a constant quantity. No one, as a rule, can live as he might and ought to live except he is regular in the morning.

And if we are thus regular—that is, if we can habitually depend on ourselves to get up in the morning when we know we ought—then a good deal of latitude may be allowed us both as to the time we go to bed and as to the regularity with which we adhere to it. Such latitude can never become licence so long as it is thus rigidly attached to the condition of unflinching regularity in the morning.

In that case the time for going to bed will simply be the time that will give us the quantity of sleep we require before getting up. That quantity each must judge of for himself. Happily, with healthy persons the hours between going to bed and rising are the measure of sleep. Probably most people take a larger measure of sleep than they absolutely require, though it is not easy to determine what it should be, and we do not all want the same.

Practically, however, the difficulty is to *keep* to this time. It is a difficulty many never in the least experience. They are always ready for bed when the time comes. They can hardly keep their eyes open as the clock points to the accustomed hour for

rest. But it is a real difficulty with others, and from the very opposite reason to that which makes it so difficult for some to get up in the morning at the proper time. The reason why many cleave to their bed in the morning as if it were rubbed with a loadstone and they were made of steel, is because they are hardly more than half alive; but the reason why others almost shun their bed at bed-time and feel no sort of attraction to it, is just the reverse of this; it is because they feel so *much* alive, so wide awake, so sensible to enjoyment, so much *more* alive, perhaps, than at any other time of day. And when this difficulty is experienced a good deal of latitude, we think, may reasonably and wisely be allowed, because the relation between the times of going to bed and getting up is such that where the latter is constantly and inviolably adhered to, the former may vary in some degree without serious prejudice to the day's work.

It is simply a question of health. No one has any right to curtail his hours of rest habitually so as to injure that. But sleep, though "tired nature's sweet restorer," is not the only recreative agency that fits us for our work, and it is quite possible that at least occasionally the curtailment of the period of rest may be more than compensated from other sources of refreshment and renovation. For when we speak of health we mean health of mind as well as health of body. A man may sleep the clock round and not be so invigorated for duty as another who has slept scarce half the time, because one has lain down in an unhealthy frame of mind, while the other has gone to bed with a mind cheerful and contented—refreshed, it may be, with some wholesome intercourse. And for the same reason, because what is really healthy must be healthy for the mind, it is miserable compensation for encroaching on the needful hours of rest to close the day with amusements that tend to dissipate and enervate the mind, even though, which is sometimes but not generally the case, we never allow them to interfere with our regularity in the morning.

But there are amusements, and sources of refreshment, and means of enjoyment, that are healthful to

the mind, and to be used with thankfulness. It would be better, perhaps, if not even these were allowed to tempt us to irregularity in the time we give ourselves for sleep; but when they do so tempt us, and we yield to the temptation, but retain our allegiance to morning punctuality, then may we deal very gently with our frailty, we repeat, and not be too extreme to mark what is done amiss in this respect by ourselves or others. We cannot, indeed, be too severe in condemning or avoiding any departure from principle, or any habit which tends to make life less useful and real. Yet, after all, business and work are not everything. Earnest minds are too apt to picture duty as interfering with their enjoyments much as Sancho Panza's court physician interfered with his dishes. That renowned squire, it may be remembered, when he sat down to his first royal repast, had no satisfaction, but only bitter vexation, as he saw dish after dish ordered off before his longing eyes as being unwholesome for him. So, in like manner, it is possible to look with too much suspicion on our lawful enjoyments, as if there were something in them necessarily antagonistic to the real business of life, instead of regarding them as some of the "all things" which are given us "to enjoy," being jealously on our guard only lest "inordinate affection" should instil its poison into what is otherwise healthful and good.

We must sum up our suggestions thus:—Be to the virtue of regularity in the morning "very kind;" be to the fault of irregularity at night "a little blind."

Doubtless there are many to whom they cannot apply. These do well in life, and prosper in almost entire opposition to what we have been suggesting. We remember an old Cambridge professor who for years had sat up reading till two and got up at seven, and was still tough and hearty. Men have done good work in their day who nevertheless have loved their bed at the wrong time. There is no end to the vagaries which men and women of energy and mark have carried on in regard to this simple matter of going to bed. But they are exceptions to the rule; and the broad rule we venture to lay down for ordinary folk to try and follow is—Make sure of your morning, and get to bed as soon as you comfortably can.

A. BROWN, B.A.

AN EVENING PICTURE.

WINDY and dark fell the noon's dreary mood;
Then settled in a darker calm till night
Followed us down the mountains, from
whose height
In dusky distance the strange landscape showed
Its sombre tracts of stony barrenness—
Dark wood, cold river winding less and less,
Like the saturnine disk of some dead world,

Toward the murky muffled west that glowed
A moment, from its low skirts, vapour-furled—
Till the sun dropped beneath the ground: then
flowed
Through the gloom-levelled scene, the uncertain breath
Of clouds, where hung the thin moon, hush as death,
And, round the vague shores, swooning desolately,
Dark mutterings of the horizontal sea.

