

PASTIME PAPERS

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Pastime papers by Frederick Saunders

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FREDERICK SAUNDERS

PASTIME PAPERS

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Salad for the Solitary and the Social," etc.

Fred. Daniel Whittaker, 1857-1885



*"Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow."*

NEW YORK:
THOMAS WHITTAKER,
2 AND 3 BIBLE HOUSE.
1885.

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THE APOLOGY.

“THE prevalence of melancholia, mild or intense, among the cultivated classes, and especially among educated and reflective men, in these days, would, there are good grounds for believing, seem portentous, could it only be faithfully set forth. Could the secrets of some case-books be revealed, it would be found that men in high places, professional men in active employment, business men in prosperous circumstances, literary men who are delighting the world with their wit and genius, artists who are illuminating life with glowing colors, students who are gaining prizes and distinctions, tradesmen who have climbed to success on the ruin-heaps of competition, and idlers who have only to amuse themselves, all are visited by melancholy, — revealed only to their doctors, and sometimes to their domestic circles, — which darkens existence as with terrible storm-clouds now and then, or robs it persistently of brightness, reducing it to a monotonous leaden gloom.” †

This strange and ominous statement, emanating

† London Medical Times.

from such an authority, is certainly worthy of attention. So severe and exacting are the demands made upon the mind in the various departments of professional and mercantile life, that it is not difficult to believe the above portraiture to be no exaggeration of our condition in these boasted days of advanced civilization.

Mind, like muscle, cannot be overworked with impunity: both alike require relaxation and rest, and rest means recuperation. But the mind diseased cannot be ministered unto so easily as the muscle; and the nervous system is, for the most part, the man. For a jaded and overtaxed brain, recreation is the specific; and a little mirth and merriment may prove an excellent alterative.

"Mirth is the medicine of life;
It cures its ills, it calms its strife:
It softly smooths the brow of care,
And writes a thousand graces there."

Shakspeare indorses this in his *Taming of the Shrew*, where we read, "Frame your mind to mirth and merriment, which bars a thousand harms, and lengthens life." While some find their highest enjoyment in the magic of music, others may prefer "the dainties that are bred in a book:" and, certes, literary

recreation is at once inspiring and energizing to an appreciative and cultivated taste ; for such, indeed, what nobler entertainment could be devised? It is a good thing to be able to boast that we "have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation ; nor the musician's, which is fantastical ; nor the courtier's, which is proud ; nor the soldier's, which is ambitious ; nor the lawyer's, which is politic ; nor the lady's, which is nice ; nor the lover's, which is all of these." Surely no one can fail to indorse the healthful sentiment, that "a single burst of mirth is worth a whole season of sighs and cries with melancholy ;"¹ or dispute the verity of that excellent aphorism, that "a cheerful philosophy is the best in all seasons, especially in dull weather, since it beguiles one of its gloom."

A thoughtful writer² has well said, "While reason expands the mind of the philosopher, and imagination glorifies that of the poet, wit and humor, with their flashes and gleams, light up our every-day life, and minister most bounteously to the innocent pleasures of mankind." Should any one, then, who may chance to read these lines, have caught the contagion above referred to, be he valetudinarian or moody monomaniac, be he in quest of some literary tonic or restorative,

¹ Hood.

² Hare.