

# HOURS AT HOME;

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## MORAL USES OF DARK THINGS.

X.

### OF INSANITY.

THE subject of insanity is by no means fresh or inviting. But since the fact itself is the darkest of all dark things in the catalogue of the world's suffering allotments, I do not feel at liberty to decline it. Enough is said of it, but not all that most needs to be said. The topic is in the hospitals and the courts—expounded and re-expounded—handled pathologically, therapeutically, statistically, philanthropically, and, so far, exhaustively. All the natural phases and conditions appear to be fully explored. And yet there is a particular point in the higher relations of the subject which I do not remember ever to have seen referred to. I mean the strong anti-moral look it seems to carry; presenting facts that, as far as they go, appear to be almost unreducible to the supposition of a moral purpose, or even to cloud the more general confidence of a moral government concerned in the rougher allotments of life. I do not feel obliged, of course, to surrender to this kind of impression. I even hope to throw some partial light upon the question, such as I believe the case permits. The frowning anti-moral aspects it presents are these:

1. That it is not as distinctly retributive on the subjects as we should naturally expect, where there is a treatment

so terribly severe; being often hereditary, often a calamity befalling the most saintly persons, invading often the most amiable dispositions, and not seldom associating impressions of some wild possession by evil spirits, of whose presence and agency we scarce know what to make.

2. That it puts a full stop always to the uses of the moral life, causing the subject to exist in a way that cuts off the benefits of existence, and forbidding him thenceforward any possibility of improvement, in that which was the principal and almost only errand of his mission as a human creature. He cannot even do such a thing as duty, of which, perhaps, he sometimes fondly talks.

3. Almost nothing can be learned by others from his vagaries. Being out of the moral life, there is no moral lesson to be drawn from his discourse or his action.

4. Where there is a recovery and even complete restoration, the whole space covered by the interregnum of the insanity is a blank; so that he can get back nothing to remember from it, but can only start again, at the point where his reason left him. He has lost so much, grown old by just so many months or years, and gets no compensation. Probably he has lost what stood him in much higher consequence, the confidence of his nature in

cidents arising from explosion very rare ; still the infernal powers that are dormant in the powder, antimony and fulminating mercury, are terrible enough. If you want to get an idea of it you only need look at the mutilated limbs of the old foreman, who, notwithstanding his great age and the many scratches that he has received from explosions, still retains his wonted cheerfulness."

In conclusion, we give an anecdote of Dreyse, which is very characteristic, and goes to show the simplicity and modesty of his character.

Besides the son above mentioned, Dreyse has two daughters, one of whom is married to a colonel in the Prussian army, the other was married to a captain

that fell in the battle of Sadowa. At the receipt of this sad news, the young widow, with her children, retired to her father at Sœmmerda. Every moment the old man has to spare he will spend with his mourning daughter and his grandchildren. Now it so happened one day that he was asked by his daughter to send her a locksmith to repair a lock in one of her bureaus, which was out of order. Dreyse answered with a smile, "Why send for a locksmith, my daughter? That is my own profession." And thus speaking, he set to work, and after a few minutes the lock was all right again. That was, indeed, the same Dreyse who, fifty years ago, had returned from Paris to assist his father in the locksmith trade.

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#### VOIR NAPLES ET MOURIR.

\*\*\* "Jetant au loin mes regards sur ce miroir éclatant et limpide de la mer Tyrrhénéene, je me demandais, à part moi, d'où pouvait venir un si triste proverbe, dans le pays le plus gai, le plus insouciant et le plus heureux qui soit au monde: *Voir Naples et mourir.*"

## I.

As I was walking on the strand  
Of Gaeta's sheltered sea,  
A stranger with a fervent eye  
Stopped and accosted me ;  
A melancholy smile he wore ;  
In accents sweet and clear,  
With mournful gentleness he said,  
" Voir Naples et mourir ! "

## II.

The work was true: search every clime  
From Thibet to the Pole :  
Where sultry wildernesses blaze,  
Or icy torrents roll ;  
Seek rest in autumn's scarlet shade,  
In vernal blooms find cheer :  
Thy cup is not yet full ; and now,  
Voir Naples et mourir !

## III.

Leave Erin's green and dewy isle—  
Bright emerald of the waves ;  
Shun storied Strasbourg's minster pile,  
Cologne's cathedral naves ;  
From England's gray and humid skies  
Thy wandering pinnacle steer,  
Forget Loch Kattrine's purple vales ;  
Voir Naples et mourir !

## IV.

The Switzer's pinnacles of gold  
And opal riso afar ;  
The Jungfrau's steeps in glory veiled  
Await the evening star ;  
The lake is crimson, and the brow  
Of Wetterhorn is near ;  
But stay not in the Switzer's home,  
Voir Naples et mourir !

## V.

Seek not the many-sparkled gleam  
Of Rio's star-lit bay ;  
Nor gorges of the Pyreneos  
With bold Gustave Doré ;  
From Athens turn (Pentelicus,  
Hymettus crave a tear):  
Enchantment lingers in the tone  
Voir Naples et mourir !

## VI.

Fond souls who dream gay dreams among  
The castles of the Rhine,  
And who are wont with zest to praise  
*La belle France* clad with vine :  
Neglect the plains of Brittany,  
And while the leaf is sere,  
Or when the frost is on the bough,  
Voir Naples et mourir !

## VII.

From Genoa, where Milton sang,  
 From Florence, and from Rome—  
 Where Michael Angelo hath poised  
 St. Peter's awful dome;  
 Get thee in haste; Italian skies  
 Are to Italians dear,  
 But microcosm of the whole  
 Voir Naples et mourir!

## VIII.

Sweet terraces and colonnades  
 Spring from a glassy bay;  
 Chateaux and castle-pictured heights  
 Bloom in an endless May;  
 Lemon and orange groves and spires,  
 Bask listless: in the rear  
 Vesuvius in shadow glares,  
 Voir Naples et mourir!

## IX.

A queen among her vassal lords—  
 The darling of the wave—  
 Constantinople with her towers  
 And minarets looks brave:

Let haughty Turk approach with joy  
 The mighty old world's bier;  
 Go, Christian, to Pompeii's tomb:  
 Voir Naples et mourir.

## X.

Red death is blushing on thy fruits,  
 And in thy sunset skies;  
 Thy ruddy plain—thy violet hills,  
 Were oft the victor's prize;  
 The lake Avernus, Acheron,  
 Make the descent look sheer,  
 Though easy, to the nether world:  
 Voir Naples et mourir!

## XI.

My soul, the world is vanity;  
 Thy pilgrim shroud prepare!  
 E'en could'st thou stay the hand of time,  
 Thou would'st not linger there.  
 The mournful riddle now is plain,  
 The gentle proverb clear:  
 The earth hath *one* thing worth the sight;  
 Voir Naples et mourir!

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 LANG-SYNE SKETCHES.

## NO. III.

## MY FIRST TEACHERS.

It has been said that even a common life, adequately rehearsed, would possess all the charm and more than the value of the most interesting novel. Indeed, the nearer the novel approaches our ordinary life, the more interesting it becomes. Certainly it is not your grandiose, or even your proper historic character, except in the very things common to all, which awakens the profoundest sympathy. No, it is often some poor, quaint or homely original, whose history every now and then touches you at the quick. The best dramas in the world are those which make "all men kin." For, at bottom, all are pretty much alike. Endlessly diversified on the surface of their natures, they are one in the deeper recesses of their being.

Nothing, therefore, in any life, would be more curious and instructive than to know the teachers and other influences, social, intellectual, and moral, which have aided in the formation of that life.

Teachers may be classified as direct or indirect, constant or occasional, and, we might add, visible or invisible.

What a marvellous influence, for example, educational and otherwise, comes from our ancestors. Carrying them along with us, in the very depths of our souls, and in the tissues of our flesh, we come into strange affinity with what we know of their notions and ways, receiving what is kindred to us as good, and rejecting what is antagonistic as bad. Nature, in this, is working out her grand processes and preparing her far-off, wondrous issues. Because, Nature, which is the art of God, is behind and before us, as well as in us and around us, a teacher of inscrutable power and amazing skill.

Most persons on this account, as well as some others, are supposed to take a deep interest in their forefathers. Some are especially proud of their pedigree. I take it, however, that many, on strict in-