

## Is Life Worth Living?

HERE is a question which has been asked, under many different forms, and answered in different ways, for centuries. "My soul is weary of my life," said the Patriarch of old; and again, "I would not live always." And, we believe, he was quite sincere. And so was St. Paul when he expressed "a desire to depart." But we greatly doubt the sincerity of many who give expression to such sentiments. The originator of modern Pessimism, Leopardi, regarded Life as an evil; but when cholera invaded the city, in which he dwelt, he fled from it, lest he should contract the disease. Schopenhauer, the German Apostle of the same belief or unbelief, had certain episodes in his history which would make one doubtful of his sincerity. And we wonder, when we behold some rubicund songster declaring,

"O Paradise, O Paradise,  
I'm weary waiting here,"

what he would think if he were taken at his word, and told that he must forthwith depart for Paradise!

We have been led to these remarks by a lecture by Professor James, of Harvard University, who bids men hesitate before they declare that Life is not worth living.

We all remember the joker — was it the joker of Punch? — who answered the question by the answer: "That depends upon the liver;" and the answer was not only comical, but even instructive. But this is only one side of the subject, and a very superficial aspect of it.

When people speak of the insufficiency of human life in the days in which we live, they can hardly have considered the difference between these times and those which have gone before. In these days we have at least a large amount of liberty of thought and action which our forefathers did not possess. We can believe what we like, and express our belief without fear of the consequences. We can very nearly do what we like, so long as we don't interfere with the liberties of our neighbours. We need not go back very far to find a time when men were imprisoned and put to death for exercising the rights which we now enjoy without question. It is very wonderful that we should not think life desirable, where they found it endurable.

Is life, then, so miserable that we cannot endure it? There are a certain number of suicides in this country, and a very much larger number in the United States. But most of them are insane. Shall we judge of life by the conduct of madmen?

Dr. James seems to us to hit the point when he says "that life is worth living to men who have religious faith." By this he does not mean merely what used to be said by certain representatives of Christianity, when they said that life was very miserable, but there was a happy life beyond. According to this theory, the present world was under the dominion of the devil, and Christian men and women must expect to live a life of misery, but there was a happy land beyond, where there was compensation for the miseries of life. That was a view of existence which made an appeal to the faith and patience and hope of the human race.

But there is another way of viewing the subject — the conviction that this world, the life we are now living, is under the dominion of God. If there are no other than material goods, if there is nothing worth living for but enjoyment, and sensuous enjoyment, then we can quite understand that life is *not* worth living, that this view should be adopted by many of our fellow men. We can quite understand that a man should say, "I cannot endure the troubles of life, and I will end them." But there is another and truer view of life,

the view of the man who says, "I am here to do my duty, to fill my place in the world, and there is a satisfaction in thus fulfilling my destiny which is independent of mere enjoyment." In that case life is worth living, because there is in it a sense of human dignity and worthy effort.

We have no objection to the introduction of the idea of a future life. That may reasonably counsel patience and perseverance to the toiler. But there is no necessity for postponing the greatness of life to an unknown future. The present life has a dignity, a power, a force, which makes it well worth living.

\* \* \*

## The Recompense of Love.

The Vaunt of wealth : the arrogance of pow'r ;  
The vain man strutting on his haughty way !  
The scoff of hate ; these last to-day an hour :—  
Tomorrow Love will wake at break of day.

Tomorrow love will wake when sweet birds sing,  
And take my hand and lead me to a stream,  
Where willows lave their arms and flow'rs of spring  
Gaze sadly on their faces, for they seem

Too lovely to themselves to last for aye :  
(And nothing cares to know that it will die)  
Tomorrow Love will wake, I said, and stay  
Beside me while we watch the thrushes fly :—

Beside me, while we watch the winter go  
With age-stooped form and white clouds round his head,  
And husky voice that calleth for the Snow,  
The pale-robed snow, sad priestess of the dead.

But hope has come again with Gold, and fear  
Of Mammon, venal God-of-gold, is flown ;  
For Love is here, and Love will stay a year ;  
What dread of boastful Pride ! new joys have grown.

For Love will stay a year ; yea, Love ! stay two !  
When winter reigns again we'll sing of May ;  
I'll raise a birchen wigwam here for you,  
'Twill be thy wild-wood castle, silver-gray.

We'll build a fire of scented cedar chips ;  
We'll laugh when north winds blow ; we'll dance when light  
Of crescent moon sows diamonds thick ; our lips  
Will whisper raptures of our dreams at night

We'll wait till May, when rainbows spring in flow'rs :  
We'll sit again beside this prattling stream  
That shuts the world out with its tale ; the hours, —  
That have so much to win that it would seem

They speed by all together in a race ;—  
'Twill leave us golden moments full of joy ;  
We'll pluck the daisy-flow'rs of downcast face,  
And reading petals will be our employ.

New York

JOHN STUART THOMSON.

\* \* \*

## "Wanted."

IN these days of business stagnation there is no column in the advertising space of daily papers that is more anxiously scanned than that headed as above, but the wants of a community are varied and thousands of them never appear as "ads." The great and unadvertised want of this city is Public Spirit. Not that we are wholly destitute of the article, as witness the deeds of a Howard, a McMaster, a Ross Robertson, and a Massey, but these are prominent chiefly as oases in the great desert. So far as they go, they are good, but they are still far from "filling the bill." We can boast of no McGill, Molson, Redpath, Stephen, Workman, Smith or McDonald as in Montreal; no Carnegie, Lick, Armour, Field, Lenox, Smithsonian and scores of others such as numerous cities have had in the United States; and if we go to Great Britain for examples, we find many places utterly insignificant in comparison with Toronto, but which have to thank the generosity of public-spirited individuals for the possession of benefactions tending to elevate the masses physically and intellectually.