

The Canadian Independent.

ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST, AND ALL YE ARE BRETHREN.

Vol. 32.]

TORONTO, THURSDAY, DEC. 8, 1881.

[New Series. No 22

LIFE'S OBJECT.

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The subject I have chosen for this short paper is, "The Object of Life." "A dry subject," I hear some one whisper; but do not be afraid, I am not going to treat you to a philosophical disquisition on the origin of man, *a la* Darwin, nor yet on the why and wherefore of his existence. We will for this evening acknowledge the fact that man does exist that he is a vast improvement on the tadpoles and monkeys from which, according to some very enlightened modern philosophers, he has been evolved; and that he possesses great, aye, marvellous powers. Our object will be to enquire to what use these powers should be put, what the aim of that marvellous life should be, and to gather up the opinions of others as to that aim; therefore, like Diogenes of old, we light our lantern and sally forth, not as he did, in quest of an honest man, but seeking for an answer to our question, what is the object of life? Ah, here comes some one who will perhaps enlighten us: look at him, he's a nice young man; patent leather boots, rather tight; pants without a wrinkle, a coat that fits like a glove; a faultless shirt-front, with, well, we will charitably call them diamond studs; a hat of the latest style, which, as he lifts it to some lady friend, reveals a head of hair very carefully parted in the middle; well-gloved hands swinging an apology for a cane—surely he, the man of lustre and of fashion, can solve our enigma. "Ho! stop a moment, my friend, we are in search of some important information, can you tell us what the object of life is?" "Aw, well, weally now, did'nt know it had any object." "Well, to make it plain, what do *you* live for?" "Live for? well, I suppose because I can't help it, aw, aw, aw, don't live for anything in particular." No, no, my friend, that's it, and I am sorry to say you have hundreds and thousands of companions who, like yourself, don't live for anything in particular, so pass on, Mr. walking tailor's-block.

Who comes next. Ah, a lady, a young lady, dressed to kill, hat turned down one side and up the other; dress, an indescribable compound of buttons, gimps, laces, knife plaitings and flounces. We will ask her. "Pray, miss, can you tell us the object of life?" She stares in utter amazement and replies, "Well, sir, I consider that an impertinent question. What do I live for? why, to have a good time, to be sure; to flirt and show off my dress and figure, to be admired and to read all the French and dime novels I can." Pass on, miss, you belong to the same class as our male friend and are a good match for him—you both belong to the butterfly class who flit from flower to flower, the only object you have to sip the sweets of pleasure, and kill the time that hangs heavily on your hands. Poor creatures, what will you do when the winter comes, as come it will, with all its chilling blasts of adversity and its storms of sorrow. You belong to the class of whom Spurgeon speaks when he says "Some individuals appear to have a brain case that was never properly filled. Look at the life of many who pass their existence in dressing and undressing, distributing bits of cardboard, riding in

carriages, bowing and scraping and eating and drinking; these notable do-nothings remind me of a set of butterflies flitting about a field of poppies." But we must proceed in our search. Who is this hurrying along. Knit brows, small mouth, thin lips, keen, sharp, small eyes, very close together, bald head and rather careless dress, certainly a contrast to our first friend. Stop him. "My friend, may I ask you a question?" "Yes, if you will not detain me long, the Board of the Grind-em-hard Building and Loan Company meets in half an hour and I must be there." Well, my friend, we will be brief, can you inform us what is the object of a life?" "Yes, sir, I can; get money, get it honestly if you can, but get it, and when you've got it keep it, sir, that's what life is for—anything else to say?" "Well, yes, what of others? Ought we not to share our gains." "Share? no, sir, let others gain for themselves, every one for himself, is my motto." "But the poor?" "No business to be any poor; if I had the making of the laws I'd shut every poor beggar up in jail for life; no, sir, make money and keep it." "Do you mean to say you never give?" "Oh yes, my dear sir, of course I do, when I expect to get it back with interest; looks well, you know, and gives you a good name, helps business, you know, and brings custom to have your name printed in large letters before a handsome sum in a subscription list. Oh yes, I give, certainly I do, I'm no miser; but take my advice, make money and keep it, unless you can by giving gain more, but hark! there's three o'clock, I must go." Go, poor man, I think I hear a voice like the echo of an indignant sigh, saying, "Thou fool! thy soul shall be required of thee, and then whose shall these things be." Ah well, we certainly are wiser than when we started, but surely life has some other object. Can no one help to solve the riddle? Here's some one at last looks as if she could tell us. Brisk and bustling she hurries up; a little body, neatly dressed, hair brushed on each side of the face, hair that once was black as jet, but in which the streaks of silver now mingle, a brow that begins to show cares, embroidery of wrinkles and a face that speaks of anxiety, speak to her. "Madam, we are seeking information, can you tell us what we live for?" In a voice that has a ring of weariness and a touch of sadness, she replies, "Live for? I live for my household, my name is Martha Careful, all my care is to feed and clothe those dear to me, I know no other object, pleasure has no charms for me. Music? Ah well! I did play once, but my music now is that of the sewing-machine, and the only concerts I have consist of solos and duets, and choruses of juvenile voices that make the house ring, till my head reels again. Read? I have no time for reading, no time for anything." "Do you not grow weary?" "Weary? I should think I did, but what's the use, the work must be done; it's stitch, stitch, mend, mend, mend, truly woman's work is never done; one consolation, there will be no mending in heaven." Poor Martha, careful and troubled about many things, we feel for you, the word of blame shall be gently spoken, but is there not something higher than this mere earthly toil? All honour to the thrifty housewife, to the careful mother, aye, to the ambitious mother too; all honour to the woman who makes home her palace, who finds more pleasure within, it may be, its four square walls, than in the lofty castle of

the titled dame. But be not careful over much, ye Marthas; a man's life (or a woman's either) consisteth not in eating and drinking, or in looking after these things; they are all right and proper, but should be associated with some things higher. We hear a divine voice in tones of gentle remonstrance saying, "Take no anxious thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for the body what ye shall put on."

But, time which waits for none, is hurrying us along, and we have not reached the end of our journey yet. Once more stop the passing stranger, this time a tall man, with thin and pale face, large and thoughtful eyes, hair thrown back from a massive brow and flowing behind, long limbs and firm, set mouth. He strides along taking notice of none, and will pass us unless we stop him; we arrest his course, and with the look of one waking from a dream, he demands the reason why. We put our oft-repeated question, and, gazing on us thoughtfully, in deep tones he replies, "Life's object? Life's object? Yes, I can tell you," and as he speaks, an unnatural fire lights those large and lustrous eyes, and a flush passes the pale face. "Life's object is to dive deep into the hidden recesses of nature, to endeavour to solve the unsolvable and to fathom the unfathomable; to dissect the rocks and unfold the hidden treasures buried there long before man woke the forest with the echoes of his voice, to resuscitate the ancient worthies and make them speak again, to tame the lightning, and make sound a captive. Study, sir, is life's grandest object; the pursuit of science, and the grasping of the unknowable, its goal," and with a sigh, and resuming his absent look, he passes on. True, friend, to comprehend science is a noble aim. What does the world not owe to the noble army of astronomers, geologists and scientists of every class who, from the time of Job, who sang of Pleiades and Orion, to the time of Tyndall and Agassiz, have in a vast and continual procession been passing across its stage. Immortal are the names of Watt, Stevenson and Arkwright, Newton, Herschel and Paley. Never to be forgotten is Hugh Miller, the hero of the old red sand-stone, but scientific discovery is *not* the goal of life without something higher; it leaves an aching void, and much that passes to-day for science is falsely so called, and is a sham, a delusion and a snare. We turn away sorrowful from our intellectual friend, for we feel we have not yet reached the true answer to our question. Going home, we take up an o'd, well-thumbed, dog-eared volume, that has been in the family for generations, handed down as an heirloom, from grandmother to grandchild; and opening it we seem to be brought into contact with the spirits of the departed, and the writers who penned its magic pages, replete with glowing imagery and stirring appeals, seem to surround us and hold converse with us. We ask one, an aged man, small in stature, weather-beaten and seared-looking, with the mark of great suffering seaming his brow with furrows, and yet with the fire flash of enthusiasm lighting up his eyes—we ask him, "Paul, what is your object?" Straightening himself up and raising one hand, with a look of intense earnestness and reverence, he replies in firm tones, "For me to live is Christ." "Explain yourself, Paul. What do you mean?" Again the same ringing

tones respond, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." And again, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Grand old man! *You* have given us the true answer, God first, my fellow-men next, self last. No wonder you could, when near death, triumphantly exclaim as you glanced backward, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day." What a ring of assurance and joyful confidence these words have.

Live for God, your highest aim to serve Him. Live for your fellows, to help and cheer them, put all thoughts of self in the background, let wealth and pleasure be subordinate. Listen to a heathen, Socrates, one of the wisest of heathen writers, he says: "The end of life is to be like God, and the soul finding God will be like unto Him, He being the beginning, middle and end of all things."

And now, in concluding this brief paper, may I ask what is your object in life, is it pleasure? Let me tell you of a picture I once saw: Over a common or field a vast crowd of old, middle-aged and young, was pressing—students in their caps and gowns, maidens with the blush of youth on their cheeks, old men with gray hairs—middle-aged men—all eagerly pursuing a fairy-like form floating before them in the air, decked with flowers, and beckoning them on with a bewitching smile, but always eluding their grasp. All along the way were pitfalls and snares into which one after another of the intoxicated pursuers of pleasure would drop out of sight, or fall only to be trodden to death by the mad throng. Away beyond was a thick, black cloud, hiding everything, and those that escaped the pitfalls would soon find themselves beguiled into the blackness and darkness of despair for ever—you can draw the moral, I need not. Is your object fame? She is a fickle goddess and as hard to seize as her sister pleasure, and often when her votaries have seized the fruit she held out they have found it to be apples of Sodom, full of bitterness. Are you living to be rich? Riches take to themselves wings and fly away: we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out of it. Oh! live not for self, live not for pleasure, live not for fame, live not for riches, but live for God and for man; live so that when you are gone your epitaph may be written on the hearts of those your leave behind. Let me in closing quote the Poet Longfellow's well-remembered lines:

"Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.
Dust thou art, to dust shalt return,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Trust no future, how'er pleasant,
Let the dead past bury its dead;
Act, act in the living present,
Heart within, and God o'erhead.

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait."