

## PRIZE ESSAY.

## What Constitutes Happiness? Does it Depend on Ourselves or Our Surroundings?

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"But foolish mortals still pursue  
False happiness in place of true;  
A happiness we toil to find,  
Which still pursues us like the wind."

Writers of every age have endeavored to show that pleasure is in us, and not in the object offered for our amusement. If the soul be happily disposed, everything becomes capable of affording entertainment, and distress will almost want a name. The fountain of content must spring up in the mind, and he who seeks happiness by changing anything but his own disposition will waste his life in fruitless efforts, and multiply the griefs which he purposes to remove. Man is, in all respects, constituted to be happy; hence it is that he sees goodness around him in proportion to the goodness that is within him, and it is also for this reason: That when he calls the evil that is within him outside of him it also appears so. If man, therefore, chooses that which does not seem to him good, he can in a measure enjoy it. One of the most evident differences between the enjoyment of what is good and true, and that which is false and evil, is that the first leaves something to be reenjoyed in memory and in after life, while the latter leaves only regret, disappointment and suffering.

Great part of the infelicity of man arises, not so much from situations and circumstances, as from his pride, vanity and ambitious expectations. In order to be happy these dispositions must be subdued. We must always keep before our eyes such views of the world as shall prevent our expecting more from it than it is designed to afford, we destroy our joys by devouring them beforehand with too eager expectations, we ruin the happiness of life when we attempt to raise it too high. Menedemus being told one day that it was a great felicity to have whatever we desire, replied: "Yes, but it is much greater to desire nothing but what we have."

The idea has been transmitted from generation to generation that happiness is one large and beautiful precious stone—a single gem, so rare that all search after it is all vain efforts, for it is fruitless and hopeless. It is not so. Happiness is a mosaic, composed of many smaller stones; each taken apart and viewed singly may be of little value, but when all are grouped together and judiciously combined and set, they form a pleasant and graceful whole—a costly jewel.

Trample not under foot the little pleasures which a gracious Providence scatters in the daily path while in eager search after some great and exciting joy. We are so apt to overlook little things and our own mind, and look for happiness in large external matters, but not find it.

How closely allied to happiness is cheerfulness, that social trait which stand over and above every other. What the sun is to nature, what the stars are to night, what God is to the stricken heart who knows how to lean on Him, are cheerful persons in the home and by the wayside. Man recognizes the magic of a cheerful influence in woman more quickly and more willingly than the potency of dazzling genius of commanding worth, or even of enslaving beauty.

If we are cheerful and contented all nature smiles with us, the air seems more balmy, the skies more clear, the ground wears a brighter green, the trees have a richer foliage, the flowers are more fragrant, the birds sing more sweetly, and the sun, moon and stars all appear more useful. There are a few noble natures with whose very presence comes sunshine wherever they go; a sunshine which means pity for the poor, sympathy for the suffering, help for the unfortunate, and benignity toward all. How such a face enlivens every other face it meets, and carries into every company vivacity, joy and gladness.

Look at the bright side, keep the sunshine of a living faith in the heart, don't let the shadow of discouragement and despondency fall on your path. However weary you may be, the promises of God will never cease to shine like the stars of night to cheer and strengthen. Let us learn to wait as well as labor. How far borrowing of trouble tends toward unhappiness we cannot tell. But we know this looking into the future and foreseeing calamity, predicting ill which in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred never comes, and doubting and despairing of what to-morrow may bring—all this burden-bearing is a sin, and most sinful in its results. A hopeful spirit will discern the silver lining in the darkest cloud, for back of all planning and doing, with its attending discouragements and hindrances, shines the light of silver promise and help. Be cheerful, for it is the only way to be happy. It is the sunshine and not the cloud that makes the flower. The sky is blue ten times while it is black once. You have troubles, you say; so have others. Perhaps it is well that none are free of them. They give sinew and tone to life, fortitude and courage to man. That would be a dull sea, and the sailor would never get skill, where there was nothing to disturb the surface of the waters. It is the duty of every one to expect all the happiness and enjoyment he can without and within him, and above all he should look on the bright side. Half of our trouble is not real trouble at all. It is only a whim harbored and petted in the heart until it assumes astonishing proportions. There is more virtue in one sunbeam

than in a whole hemisphere of cloud and gloom. Cultivate what is warm and genial, and not the cold and repulsive, dark and morose. Don't neglect your duty, live down prejudice.

The cheerful are the busy; when trouble knocks at your door or rings your bell, he will generally retire if you send him word, "engaged," and a busy life cannot be otherwise than happy. Frogs do not croak in running water, and active minds are seldom troubled with gloomy forebodings. They come up only from the stagnant depths of a spirit unstirred by generous impulses or the blessed necessities of honest toil.

If you go to the creature to make you happy, the earth will tell you that happiness is not found in the furrows of the field; the sea that is not in the treasures of the deep. Crows will say: "It is too precious a gem to be found with us; we can adorn the head, but we cannot satisfy the heart." Happiness is in us, not in things about us.

If happiness consisted in things only, there is no end to the numberless kinds of it. It was in this point of view the erudite Roman writer, Barro, enumerated seven hundred kinds of happiness. So also the learned Turkish doctor, Ebn Abbas, maintained that the number of grievous sins is about seven hundred, thus balancing the accounts between good and ill. Le Droz, who wrote a treatise on happiness, describes the conditions necessary for it as consisting of the greatest fortitude to resist and endure the pains and ills of life, united with the keenest sensibility to enjoy its pleasures and delights.

"Health, peace and competence" is a popular definition of happiness. Yet thousands and tens of thousands possess these great blessings, and are not happy. Many will not allow that they have the means to be happy. Madame de Staël, in her "Delphire," defines happiness to consist in absence of misery. How many human beings are without any real evil, and yet complain of their fate?

There is so little real happiness on earth, because we seek it not aright—seek it where it is not, in outward circumstances and external good, and neglect to seek it where alone it dwells, in the close chambers of the bosom. We would have a happiness in time, independent of eternity; we would have it independent of the Being whose it is to give, and so we go forth each one as best we may to search out the rich possession for ourselves. But disappointment attends every step in the pursuit of happiness until we seek it where alone it can be found. The cherubims with flaming swords still guard the gates of paradise, and no man enters therein.

If you would be happy, if you would enjoy the deepest depth of happiness, live to make others happy. Selfish happiness is a sin. There is no joy so sweet as that which comes from the kindly deed to make others happy, by casting a ray of sunshine in their pathway, and reflecting the divine light in soul mirrors, which light will change others into the "same image."

## Patience Pays.

If you want a good appetite, don't worry. If you want a healthy body, don't worry. If you want things to go right in your homes or business, don't worry. Nervousness is the bane of the race. It is not confined to the women by any means, but extends to the men as well. What good does fretting do? It only increases with indulgence, like anger, or appetite, or love, or any other human impulse. It deranges one's temper, excites unpleasant feelings towards everybody, and confuses the mind. It affects the whole person, unfits one for the proper completion of the work whose trifling interruption or disturbance started the fretful fit. Suppose these things go wrong to-day, the to-morrows are coming in which to try again, and the thing is not worth clouding your own spirit and those around you, injuring yourself and them physically for such a trifle. Strive to cultivate a spirit of patience, both for your own good and the good of those about you. You will never regret the step, for it will not only add to your own happiness, but the example of your conduct will affect those with whom you associate, and in whom you are interested. Suppose somebody makes a mistake, suppose you are crossed, or a trifling accident occurs: to fly into a fretful mood will not mend matters, but help to hinder the attainment of what you wish. Then, when a thing is beyond repair, waste no useless regrets over it, and no idle fretting. Strive for that serenity of spirit that will enable you to make the best of all things. That means contentment in its best sense, and contentment is the only true happiness of life. A pleasant disposition and good work will make the whole surroundings ring with cheerfulness.

## Plain.

Said James Whitcomb Riley the other day to a group of reporters: "I wish you newspaper men wouldn't be quite so careless in your remarks about my looks. I was served with a notice several years ago that I wasn't very handsome, but the reporters take a kind of delight in reminding me of it. It seems to me that you might at least be as considerate as the old auntie who went to the menagerie and saw the hippopotamus. She was staggered for a moment, but her breeding got the better of her impulses. She didn't want to say the animal was ugly, so she turned to one of her friends with the exclamation, 'Sakes a massy, but aint' he plain!'"

New York Tribune.

## UNCLE TOM'S DEPARTMENT.

## The Child Musician.

He had played for his lordship's levee,  
He had played for her ladyship's whim,  
Till the poor little head was heavy,  
And the poor little brain would swim.

And the face grew peaked and eerie,  
And the large eyes strange and bright;  
And they said—too late—He is weary;  
He shall rest for at least to-night!

But at dawn when the birds were waking,  
As they watched in the silent room;  
With the sound of a strained cord breaking,  
A something snapped in the gloom.

'Twas a string of his violincello,  
But what's the good of wishes?  
Make room for a tired little fellow,  
Kind God—! was the last he said.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

H. St. Clair, Jellett.

## A Morning Grievance.

I like to dust, and I like to sew,  
And I like to water the fishes;  
I like to weed, and I like to hog,  
But, oh, how I hate to wash dishes!

I wish a dish had never been made!  
But what's the good of wishes?  
Mamma is calling, and—I'm afraid  
I must do those breakfast dishes!

—Youth's Companion.



DEAR FATHER.—I have found work at last—even sooner than I expected, and with a friend that sticks to me always, and with whom I spend many hours.

My work is a little confining, but I have my evenings to myself. You will be pleased to hear that I am thrown with men who have been in the custom of handling money and valuables, and also that my presence was earnestly sought after. Your loving  
SON.

P. S.—My friend has a well-rounded character. —[Brooklyn Life.

## His Curiosity Gratified.

"Travel on this road party often?" inquired the passenger with the long, slender, pointed nose.  
"Yes," replied the sleepy-looking passenger on the same seat.

"Come to town most every day, I reckon?"

"Yes."

"In business of some kind, like as not?"

"No. I work for another man."

"Dry goods business?"

"No. Wet goods."

"Saloon?"

The inquisitive passenger was quiet a moment. Then he came at him again.

"Find it cheaper to live out o' the city?"

"No; dearer."

"Rent's are cheaper, ain't they?"

"Yes."

"Groceries and things don't cost any more, do they?"

"No; cost less."

"Have to pay out too much for railroad fare?"

"Railroad fare don't cost me \$75 a year."

"Then what makes it dearer?"

"Running for trains. Wear and tear of shoe leather."

The long-nosed man ruminated on this a few moments, and then said:

"They pay bigger wages in the city than they do in the suburbs, don't they?"

"Yes."

"What might it be worth, now, to hold a job like yours?"

"The man I'm working for pays me \$20.00 a week."

"Always makes the exact change?"

"Always."

"What's the idea of makin' it just \$20.00?"

"He pays me \$20 for my work, and the ninety-nine cents for minding my own business."

And the sharp-nosed man went to the other end of the car and took a seat on the coal box. —[Chicago Tribune.

## TWO MISCHIEVOUS BOYS.

"You and Jack sit next to each other in school don't you, Wallie?"

"Part of the time."

"Only a part?"

"Yes, sir. Jack's standing in the corner most of the time."

"And what do you do then?"

"Oh, I generally stand in the other corner."

Harper's Young People.