

INTRODUCTION.

OF all the gifts that proceed from the Divine hand, the gift of life is one of the most valuable. It is a glorious manifestation of infinite benevolence and power. And, as none of the gifts of God are given without some end in view, we cannot suppose, for a moment, that a gift, of such transcendent excellence as this, is without an object. On the contrary, as the gift stands so high in respect of its worth, it is reasonable to conclude that the object contemplated by the giver stands equally high in respect of its importance. To know that *object*, and the *means* by which it may be attained, is the first lesson which we ought to learn; to employ these means is the sum of our duty.

When we look back on the manner in which the life of man has been spent in past times, or around us on the manner in which it is spent at the present day, we find that but few of our race display a proper knowledge of the end of their being. There are few who seem to be at the trouble of taking even a moment's thought upon the subject, and fewer still whose speculations arrive at any practical result. Indeed, were we to infer the opinions of mankind from their conduct; and this