

LIFE AND WHAT IT MEANS TO OPTIMISTS

Here follows one of the best pages that has ever been turned out by the members of the Optimist Club; full of high thoughts and comfortable doctrine. Among such a wealth of fine contributions it was hard, indeed, to select any two as the best, but after much consideration I have awarded the prizes to Alice MacFarland, of 1919 Calvert street, and S. E. Adkins, of 261 F street.

And may I add a personal word. One of our prize winners to-day wrote his contribution on "Life" just before he was carried to the hospital to go travel for a space in the very shadow of the valley of death. In a beautifully optimistic letter which accompanies his contribution to the club he mentions the trial that is before him quite incidentally. But armed with optimism he faces what he has to with hope and courage and cheerfulness. If there had been no justification for The Washington Herald Optimist Club but this, we should be content.

From sick beds, from poverty, from distress in many forms we have had letters thanking us for the hope and cheer this page has given—and in that fact, fellow-members, lies our greatest reward. And that, too, is the finest commentary on our subject of to-day—"Life." For that is what real life means; to be of service to others; to do that which we do, what we think, what we are, better than the world by so much. As Stevenson says: "Mankind is not only the whole in general, but every one in particular. Every man or woman is one of mankind's dear possessions; to his or her just brain and kind heart and active hands, mankind intrusts some of its hopes for the future, he or she is a possible wellspring of good acts and source of blessings to the race."

THE PRIZE WINNERS.

This transitory life is given us in order that we may be fruitful and fitted to become heirs of unending life. The spirit of man descends to earth from the hand of God. Houses of clay are given us to dwell in which we may fashion as we will and convert into a palace or a prison. We may lay aside the talents we possess until they become rusty and useless, or we may cultivate them until out of the eyes, which are true mirrors of the soul, the bright rays of intelligence, truth, and beauty shine like stars and irradiate the whole countenance. Shall we be like the barren fig tree, "nothing but leaves?" fair indeed to look upon, but with no sterling qualities, no fruit to feed the hungry when they come to search for it amid the heavy foliage. This life may be for a few short days, or months or years, but it is to be spent in preparation for a larger, better life which is to come and which is the gift of God. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I presume everybody has known some one whose life was just radiant. Joy beamed out of their eyes, joy bubbled over their lips; joy seemed to fairly run from their finger tips. You could not come in contact with them without having a new light come into your own life. If you look into the lives of such radiantly happy persons, you will find that every one is a man or woman who is a Christian optimist who takes time for fellowship with God and man. When you have a real living God, you will have a radiant life. Optimism teaches us that we must put the glory of love, of best effort, of sacrifice, of prayer, of upward looking and heavenward reaching, into the routine of our lives every day, and then the most burdensome and uneventful life will be made splendid with the glory of God and full of usefulness to our brothers. We will then remember and practice this optimistic verse:

Let us be kind,
The way to some is long and lonely,
And human hearts are asking for this blessing only—
That we be kind.
We cannot know the grief that men may borrow,
We cannot see the souls storm-swept by sorrow,
But love can shine upon the way to-day, to-morrow;
Let us be kind.
Let us be kind,
This is a wealth that has no measure,
This is of heaven and earth the highest treasure—
Let us be kind.
A tender word, a smile of love in meeting,
A song of hope and victory to those retreating;
A glimpse of God and brotherhood whose life is fleeting—
Let us be kind.
S. E. ADKINS.

Lines selected from thirty-eight authors:
Why all this toil for triumphs of an hour?—Young.
Life's a short summer—man is but a flower.—Johnson.
By turns we catch the fatal breath and die.—Byron.
The cradle and the tomb, alas! so nigh.—Prior.
To be is far better than not to be.—Sewall.
Though all man's life may seem a tragedy.—Spencer.
But light cares speak when mighty griefs are dumb.—Daniel.
The bottom is but shallow whence they come.—Kaleigh.
Your fate is but the common fate of all.—Longfellow.
Unmingled joys can here no man befall.—Southwell.
Nature to each allots his proper sphere.—Congreve.
Fortune makes folly her peculiar care.—Churchill.
Custom does not often reason overrule.—Rocheater.
And throw a cruel sunshine on a fool.—Armstrong.
How long we live, how long or short permit to heaven.—Milton.
They who forgive most shall be most forgiven.—Bailley.
Sin may be clasped so close we cannot see its face.—French.
Vile ignorance where virtue has no place.—Somerville.
Then keep each passion down, however dear.—Thompson.
That pendulum betwixt a smile and tear.—Byron.
Her sensual snares let faithless pleasure lay.—Smollett.
With craft and skill to ruin and betray.—Craabe.
Soar not too high to fall, but stoop to rise.—Massinger.
We masters grow of all that we despise.—Crowley.
Oh, then, renounce that impious self-esteem.—Beattie.
Live well—wings, and grandeur is a dream.—Cowper.
Think not ambition wise because 'tis brave.—Darenaut.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.—Gray.
What is ambition? 'Tis a glorious cheat.—Willis.
Only destructive to the brave and great.—Addison.
What's all the gaudy glitter of a crown?—Clarke.
How long we live, not years but actions, tell.—Watkins.
The man lives twice who lives the first life well.—Herrick.
Make them, while yet ye may, your God your friend.—Mason.
Whom Christ's worship, yet not comprehend.—Hill.
The trust that's given, guard, and to yourself be just.—Dana.
For live we how we may, yet die we must.—Shakespeare.

Life is the falling of a star,
Or as the flutes of eagles are,
Or like the fresh spring's sandy hue,
Or silver drops of morning dew,
Or like a wind that chafes the food,
Or bubbles which on water stood,
E'en such is man, whose borrowed light is straight called in, and paid to-night.
The wind blows out, the bubble dies,
The spring ebbs in autumn lies;
The dew dries up, the star is shot,
The flight is past—and man forgot!—H. King.
Life is what we are alive to. It is not length, but breadth. To be alive only to appetite, pleasure, pride, money making, and not to goodness and kindness, purity and love, "history, poetry, music, orators, stars, God, and eternal hope, is to be all but dead."
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The optimistic life consists in useful, hopeful, cheerful, faithful service. Purity of hope, desire, and purpose leads us to the things that are reasonably intended for us to do and to be. We should study to show ourselves approved unto God, laborers worthy of our hire. This, then, is

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And let us go upon our way forgetting
The joys and sorrows of each yesterday.
Between the swift sun's rising and its setting
We have no time for useless tears or fretting,
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Life is too short for any bitter feeling—
Time is the best avenger, if we wait;
The years spin by, and on their wings bear healing,
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This solemn truth the low mounds seem revealing,
That thick and fast about our feet are stealing,
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Life is too short for aught but high endeavor—
Too short for spite, but long enough for love,
And love lives on forever and forever,
It harks the worlds that circle on above,
'Tis God's first law, the universe's lover,
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LIFE.

He liveth long who liveth well,
All else is but life flung away!
He liveth longest who can tell
Of true things truly done each day.

Then all each hour with what will last;
Buy up the moments as they go.
The life above when this is past,
Is the ripe fruit of life below.

Sow love and taste its fruitage pure!
Sow peace, and reap its harvest bright!
Sow sunbeams on the rock and moor,
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Think truly and thy thoughts
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Life is one continuous state of earthly existence from the cradle to the grave; and no one is able to calculate its duration or number its changes, for the vicissitudes of life are many.

How wonderful is life! How can we understand it in all its fullness and beauty? Yes, it is not for man to solve and understand its mysteries, for it is beyond his power of comprehension.

To some the journey of life is rugged and steep and hard to travel; to others, smooth and inviting; but to all there are difficulties to remove and obstacles to overcome before the goal of life is reached.

For a few fleeting years man is permitted to live, rising to the zenith of his earthly glory, then declining years bear him back to the dust from whence he came, and then he is no more.

Go count the posts at every mile
On toward life's setting sun;
'Twill not be long 'till all are past—
The task of counting done.
VICTOR P. HAMMER.

Wouldst thou live long? The only means are these:
'Bove Galen's diet, or Hippocrates,
Strive to live well, tread in the upright ways,
And rather count thy actions than thy days;
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Live well, and then, how soon see'er thou die,
Thou art of age to claim eternity.
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In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!
Trust no future, how'er pleasant,
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Heart within and God's overhead!

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime;
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THE PSALM OF LIFE.

Tell me not in lines so solemn
All about life's awful dream,
Light it up with tales of humor,
Let the star of action gleam.
Unite all the knots and tangles,
Lead a thread of sweet romance,
And a little drop of fiction
Hold it up and take a glance.

Do not doubt that life has pleasures,
Even when it darkest looks,
Search the pages of its volumes,
All the chapters of its books,
Learn the lesson they will teach thee,
Eagerly the truth will reach thee,
"Seek and ye shall find."

Buried in the deepest darkness,
Let the solemn thoughts so lie,
Keep the spark of joy and gladness
Ever burning in thy eye.
"Rejoice and be glad!"
TALLELAIH DE S. SMITH.

Journey will help us to our good; every happy child will be an inspiration to us; every fragrant flower will add to the fragrance of our life, and every grand old forest tree that lifts its arms upward toward the sunshine will help us toward the heights.

We seem to be a trinity of body, mind, and spirit; and if we use these aright we have health, wealth, and love. "Seek ye first"—God; "seek ye first" the kingdom of God, the power of God, the consciousness of God's abiding presence; and seek righteousness—right thinking, right belief, right living—spiritual righteousness, moral righteousness, physical righteousness, and life becomes a blessing and benediction.

Banish forever all thoughts of sickness, failure, poverty, unhappiness. Fill our minds with visions of health, wealth, and love. Make our ideals as high as Heaven, as broad as earth, and as bright as the stars in the midnight sky. Then we shall do all in our power to cheer human endeavor and to exalt human life, and in blessing others we shall have showers of blessing.

Comrades in the journey, do not let the song go out of your life!
"Out of the shadows of night
The world moves into light,
'Tis daybreak everywhere."
F. M. BRADLEY.

A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,
A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,
And never a laugh but the moans come double.
And that is life!

A crust and a corner that love makes precious,
With a smile to warm and the tears to refresh us,
And joy seems sweeter when care comes after,
And a moan is the finest of foils for laughter.
And that is life!
—Paul Laurence Dunbar.
C. E. DUDLEY.

Forenoon, afternoon and night; forenoon, afternoon, and night, and what? No more. The empty song repeats itself; yes, that is life.
Make this forenoon sublime, "this afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer, and time is conquered and thy crown is won. The deeper men go into life the deeper is their conviction that this life is not all. It is an unfinished symphony. A day may round out an insect's life, and a bird or a beast needs no to-morrow. Not so with him who knows that he is related to God, and has felt "the power of an endless life."
Mrs. A. E. M. AVERILL.

Life is like a game of cards,
Which at birth does begin;
At first diamonds are trumps,
With hearts to play and win;
Sometimes clubs chance to turn,
And life begins to fade;
Joy and trouble, a cut and shuffle,
At last turns up the spade.
LAWRENCE A. WIDMAYER.

'Tis not for man to trifle, life is brief,
And sin is here;
Our age is but the falling of a leaf—
A dropping tear.
We have no time to sport away the hours,
All must be earned in a world like ours.
Not many lives, but only one have we—
One, only one.

How sacred should that one life ever be—
Day after day filled up with blessed toil,
Hour after hour still bringing in new spoil!
—Anton.
Mrs. MARY S. YEATMAN.

Life is a vast riddle, an unfathomable mystery. The only solution is love, for love is the fulfilling of the law.
"I shall pass this way but once; any good thing, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." Life is truly a day torn from eternity and given to man to work out his eternal salvation. It brings, it is true, the petty round of irritating concerns and duties. But help us, Lord, to play the man; help us to perform them with laughter and kind faces; let cheerfulness abound with industry. Give us to go blithely on our business all this day of life; bring us to our resting weary and content and undisturbed, and grant us in the end the gift of eternal sleep.
(Adapted from Stevenson's "Morning Prayer.")
THOMAS V. MURTO.

Life could be well separated into two distinct periods or divisions; the first to be devoted to achievements—to the consummation of our ideas, and attending to the demands for a physical existence; the second should be spent since it is no longer necessary to turn the attention to the accumulation of things, to the finer elements in the mind and in the soul, which alone can give real superiority to the being of man. In brief, when the mental faculties are no longer needed in making a living they should be used in making a life. Every one should have an object in life—something that he is working for, and in the striving for this a period of wearing out should not be experienced, but in its stead a period of mental and physical growth, which will fit him to dispense among his fellow-men the richness which he has stored up from this extended period of attainments and experiences. In this the real life will be experienced. The man who is ever trying to do things does not have the real enjoyment that comes from the

living of a life. The pursuit of things, however, is necessary for a period in the life of every man. It is necessary, both to the progress of the world and to the expression of those forces in him that later are to ripen into superior manhood. And here let it be remembered that no person can enter into the superior enjoyments and the greater riches of a ripened personal existence until he has passed through the period of achievement.
H. SILVESTER WILLSON.

Thackeray says "Life is a mirror; if you frown at it, it frowns back; if you smile, it returns the greeting." Life is full of changes and glitters in all colors. To the day files of fashion life is short. To the melancholic each hope is strangled in its birth to the enthusiast two hopes spring from the grave and a cruel unending struggle; but to the optimist it is a joy unaffable. And so each sees life as what he has it in him to perceive. All wish to be happy, but all are not equally clear-sighted to perceive exactly what it is that makes life happy. The happy life consists in a mind which is free, upright, undaunted, and steadfast before the influence of fear or desire, and thinks nothing good except honor. "He lives most who thinks most, feels noblest, acts the best; for life is but a means unto an end—that end, beginning, mean, and end to all things—God." M. T. HANLON.

A sacred burden is this life ye bear;
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly;
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly;
Fall not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win.
—Kemble.
KATHERINE O'BRIEN.

Why this longing, this forever sighing,
For the far-off unattained and dim;
While the beautiful all around thee lying
Offers up its low perpetual hymn?
Wouldst thou listen to the gentle teaching,
All the restless yearning it would still,
Leaf and flower and liden bee are preaching,
Thine own sphere, the' humble, first to fill.
Poor, indeed, thou must be if around thee
No ray of light and joy canst throw;
If no silken chord of love hath bound
To some little world th' woe and woe,
If no dear eyes thy fond love can brighten,
No fond voices answer to thine own;
If no brother's sorrow thou canst lighten
By daily sympathy and gentle tone.
Not by deeds that gain the world's applause,
Not by works that win the world's renown,
Not by martyrdom nor vaunted crosses,
Canst thou win and wear the immortal crown.
Daily struggling th' unloved and lonely,
Every day a rich reward will give,
Thou wilt find by hearty striving only,
And truly loving thou canst truly live,
Dost thou revel in the rosy morning,
When all nature hails the God of Light,
And His smile nor low nor lofty scorning
Gladden hall and hovell, vale and height?
Other hands may grasp the field and forest,
Proud proprietors in pomp may shine;
But with fervent love if thou adorest,
Thou art wealthier—all the world is thine.—Sewall.
—M. JANE MOOR.

Life is full of joys, if we wish to seek forward to them. Every one has their sooner or later, younger or older.
When you haven't anything to do, don't sit and think ever your troubles; think about something grand that is going to happen.
KATHERINE O'BRIEN.

Let me but live my life from year to year
With forward face and unrepentant soul;
Not hankering to nor turning from the goal.
Not mourning for the things that disappear
In the dim past; nor holding back in fear
From what the future veils, but with a whole
And happy heart, that pays its toll
To youth and age, and travels on with cheer!

So let the way wind up the hill or down,
Though rough or smooth, the journey will be joy;
Still seeking what I sought when but a boy—
New friendship, high adventure, and a crown.
I shall grow old, but never lose life's zest,
Because the road's last turn will be the best.—Henry Van Dyke.
—Mrs. J. H. GLOTT.

Life is a constant and earnest appeal for strength; the power which worketh to will and to do. Our weaknesses know not life and often fall in the attempt to overcome the smallest obstacles. Life gives of its substance a better knowledge to all human beings. It shows forth health and works well. It is abundant life that lives and creates the best in us all. Life is eternal. The one source from whence we move and have our being. Life is an essence which fills all space, for God is life, and through Him love is made manifest, and so must be an earnest thought to all believers. One who strives to satisfy his longings for greater love will manifest greater life, and through his life or example we may see and feel the necessity of helping others to be more steadfast to the one great purpose.
Thoughts are the shuttle of life's works, experience the warp, and life the woof.
—Mrs. EMMA HUGHES.

Life is a perpetual motion; a continual circulation of action, gathering up itself throughout its course.
We desire, we pursue, we obtain, we are satisfied. We desire something else and begin a new pursuit. Such are the changes that keep the mind in action.
Life is but another name for action; and he who is without opportunity exists, but does not live.
—Miss A. B. FITZGERALD.

Life—that God-given lease of time; that limited span of existence; that state of being and action accountable to the Almighty for every deed and thought; an opportunity to do good or evil, to make the world better or worse.
But to those whose minds and hearts have been cultivated in the garden of true optimism, life appears to them not as a myth or shadow, not as something that struts and frets upon the stage, and then is no more—but as a fixed purpose of life to be glorified; the great Divine propagating garden where the seed of love, hope, faith, and charity are sown to the glory of the Almighty and the mutual betterment of the world.
Life should mean to us a probation
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