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[ORIGINAL.]  
**WHAT IS LIFE?**  
BY THE EDITOR.

I REMEMBER the time when quite a child—  
Ere the world on me had frowned or smil'd—  
Tired with the heat of a summer's day,  
Listless on my mother's lap I lay,  
By the light of reason nearly blind,  
For it just was dawning on my mind;  
But my tiny hands, as I lay there,  
Were clasped with love in her raven hair;  
When she gave me a look with fondness rife,  
And said, "My child, pray *what is life?*"

I remember not the reply I made—  
Perchance no words came to my aid;  
For a child who can scarcely speak I wot  
May have his thoughts and explain them not!  
But I gazed with joy on her lovely face,  
And I sprung to meet her fond embrace,  
Gently my arms round her neck entwined,  
As her fervent lips are pressed to mine;  
And I felt—whilst to prove the same I strove—  
"What's life to me but a mother's love?"

I remember the first of my school-boy hours,  
When the task was laid on my young mind's powers—  
When the ferule, rod, nor Usher's frown  
Th' elastic spirit's mirth could drown.  
But when confined the live-long day,  
Where the sunbeams shot no glad'ning ray,  
Monotonous tasks waxed dull and drear,  
And I sighed to be free—with a falling tear,  
(For soon will the infant mind despair  
If deprived of the sweet and bracing air)  
For what to me was the scholar's lore  
If I must range the fields no more!  
Must I all sylvan scenes forego—  
No joys of the chase or the sportsman know?  
How vain to me is the scholar's strife!  
Tell me my soul "Oh! what is life?"

What's life? What is it but to be  
From cares exempt, from Mentor's FREE!—  
Freedom—of body and of soul—  
Mind—Action—all without control!  
Freedom—to range the river's side  
And plunge into the sparkling tide—  
To stray through solitary groves  
And hear the turtles coo their loves,  
Where Philomel with rapt'rous strain  
Makes the glad welkin ring again!—  
To wander in the early morn  
Where pearls bedeck the ripening corn,  
Till pausing with wild rapture—Hark!  
Mounts in the air the singing lark,  
First harbinger of the bright day;  
Though lost in morning's mist so grey  
O'er every vale and every hill  
Her music comes with glad'ning thrill!  
The feathered tribe, waked by the sound,  
Takes up the chorus all around,  
Till every bush, and spray, and tree  
Seems bursting into harmony.

Again—to range where (free from tithe)  
The mower plies his ringing scythe—  
To follow o'er the well-sheared glades,  
And sport with joyous rustic maids,  
Who—though at first they're cold and shy—  
In tossing up the hay to dry  
Soon flings a portion in your face  
And runs; when you of course give chase,  
While others shout, "a race! a race!"  
Till tired, the maid soon turns to bay;  
You tumble her in youthful play,  
And kiss her 'mongst the fragrant hay.

Again—'mong stubble fields to roam,  
When farmers shout the harvest home—  
To accept with joy the proffered cheer,  
The crisp plumb-cake, the harvest beer,  
The cheerful tale, the pleasant jest,  
Given and taken with a zest  
By th' simple children of the soil  
Which none can feel who do not toil.  
Then thrill to hear each song commence  
With grateful thanks to Providence.  
Ah! who like these so pure and free?  
A rural life's the life for me!

I remember the days of my early youth,  
Ere the young mind knew aught but truth—  
'Twas ere distrust had caused a fear  
That friendship pledged was not sincere—

New hopes, new plans, new joys, new schemes,  
Had lent their shadows to my dreams,  
And as they woke the ardent mind  
Which sweet content no more could bind  
Its irksome fetters—some were broke,  
The rest I sever'd at a stroke,  
Then far behind me hurled the knife,  
And asked myself, "Oh! what is life?"

'Tis life to join the arduous race,  
Each stripped and eager in his place,  
With "foot to foot and knee to knee,"  
Like falcons panting to be free;  
No sounds but half-drawn breaths are heard;  
They wait but for the starting word,  
Then bounding free without control  
Each nerve is strained to gain the goal.

'Tis life to rush across the ring  
And clear the barriers at a spring;  
With tightened belt and loose cravat  
Prepare to seize the cricket-bat,  
And, while to "bowl you out" they strain,  
Strike the swift ball across the plain.

'Tis life to wrestle, hurl the bar,  
Or imitate the feats of war,—  
'Tis life, when yellow autumn's blush  
Has tinged the leaves of every bush,  
To mark the setter's bristled hair,  
As rise the covey from their lair,  
While sharp re-echoes down the vale  
The death-notes of the timid quail.  
Or, ere the dew has left the ground,  
With mettled barb and deep-mouthed hound,  
Drive sneaking reynard from his rest,  
By hound and horse and rider prest,  
He dashes o'er the heather plains  
To seek another lord's domains;  
In vain th' attempt—the beagles' peals  
Come close and closer on his heels;  
He turns—is seized—"Dead, Dead!" they hail;  
The foremost huntsman takes his tail—  
A proof his courser out-stript all—  
A trophy for his stable-wall!

'Tis life to thread the mazy dance—  
The Waltz, or Cotillion from France;  
Or for the lover sweeter still  
To tread the sociable Quadrille,  
Where soft-hand pressures bid you speed,  
And time is given your cause to plead.  
'Tis life to roam joyous and free  
O'er the trackless and unbounded sea;  
To visit distant shores and climes,  
And view the wreck of other times—  
Of wars and elemental strife,—  
"Surely," I whispered, "this is life!"

I remember the time, in manhood's flush,  
Ere disappointment quite could crush  
The burning hopes—elastic—wild—  
That made me still warm nature's child:  
(With daring soul and maddening brain  
I fell but still to rise again)  
When th' spirit throbs prolonged their length  
And pressure but increased their strength!  
And every throb was one the less  
Which made me seek for happiness;  
(An impulse truly little worth,  
To seek for happiness on earth!)  
But while in this tumultuous mood,  
And struggling with my passions rude,  
For war, love, and adventure rife,  
Again I cried, "Oh! what is life?"

What is it but the love which binds  
Two similarly constructed minds,  
Accommodating each to other  
Dearer than sister to a brother;  
When hand meets hand and eye meets eye,  
True—tender—clear—confidingly;  
While each tongue breathes the other's name—  
Religion—sentiments the same—  
Till passion reigns on reason's throne,  
And knits them firmly, ever one!  
What though the buffets of the world,  
Though slander's shafts are 'gainst them hurled!  
"Till Death! Till Death!" each lover cries;  
"Till Death! Till Death!" each voice replies;  
And clasped unto each other's heart,  
Determined that they ne'er will part,  
They cast aside the world's control,  
And commune sweetly soul with soul!

What is it but, when nations rage  
And war against our country wage,

With well-trained thousands to combine  
And meet the foe in battle-line!  
To wield the broadsword or the spear,  
Unhorse the steel-clad Carassier,  
Beat their proud Phalanx to the ground,  
And death and terror deal around:  
Pour on their ranks the leaden hail:  
To make them falter, swerve and quail,  
When with stout hearts and threatening yell,  
Bright, shining, irresistible,  
A wall of bristling bayonets dance,  
While the loud bugle sounds "Advance!"  
With iron nerves onward we rush,  
And all before us drive or crush.  
To storm the well-defended breach,  
Where, ere the top one foot can reach,  
Missiles are met of every shape,  
And cannons belch their murderous grape,  
Till thousands weltering fill the moat,  
Where vultures on them soon will gloat;  
Fresh ranks on others still are pressed,  
While "Onward" echoes every breast—  
Undaunted we march over all  
And plant our colours on the wall!  
Then, when "A Peace" once more's proclaimed,  
We leave behind the halt, the maimed,  
To seek the well-known dear alcove,  
And meet the smiles of those we love,  
Forgetting there each battle-strife,—  
Aye, "Love and Glory," this is life!

I remember the days in middle age  
When time perchance did much assuage  
The force of passion's torrent; when  
Forced back upon the mind again  
Came rushing aspirations wild,  
All I had hoped for from a child—  
Blighted and seared, uprooted, torn,  
Of elasticity all shorn—  
My mother dead, and left behind  
Each charm which pleased the boyish mind:  
Left too my home—each social band,  
Whilst lonely in a foreign land  
I roamed a stranger. Yes,  
All I once thought was happiness  
Had failed me! Rural joys and scenes,  
Which so delighted in my teens,  
Were destined to be mine no more;  
But poring books and records o'er;  
Confined in some close study, high,  
I viewed the green fields with a sigh.  
But still the mind so often blighted,  
By love rejected—friendship elighted—  
(Like some fond ivy's tender spring  
Longs for an oak round which to cling,  
Or like recruits, long for the life,)  
Once more demanded, "What is life?"

'Tis life politic war to wage,  
Still mindful of the quaint adage,  
"Knowledge is power!" with heart and tongue  
T' espouse the right, eschew the wrong:  
To rouse the fire within your breast,  
Till one thought swallows up the rest;  
The intellect to cultivate,  
Until it scorches, where'er you hate,  
With biting sarcasms—truths well told,  
And weak minds in abeyance hold.  
To scourge corruptionists with the pen,  
Until they tremble in their den!  
To meet the demagogue half-way,  
And force him there to stand at bay:  
Snatch the thin veil from off his face,  
And show the blackness of his case;  
Confute his tinselled sophistry,  
Expose his base hypocrisy,  
His selfish views, his lack of worth,  
Driving him back to Mother Earth,  
Until his partizans as they pass  
Wonder they followed such an ass!—  
To conquer in this glorious strife,  
AMBITION! Surely this is life!

I remember no more, for it is not mine  
Yet to experience life's decline;  
But I met a man whose locks were grey  
Who once was "gayest of the gay,"  
And aye in politics or war  
Ascendant still arose his star:  
And aye (what some value no less,)  
In love he met with strange success.

\* "They heard us here in our very den!" vide Mr. Boyd's  
Speech on the "privilege" question.