

**THE HAPPY LIFE.
[NEW YORK]**

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CHARLES W. ELIOT

**THE HAPPY LIFE.
[NEW YORK]**

The Happy Life

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The Happy Life

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The Moral Purpose of the Universe



Y subject is "The Happy Life." I address here especially young people who have passed the period of childhood, with its unreflecting gayety, fleeting shadows, gusty griefs, and brief despairs, and have entered, under conditions of singular privilege, upon rational and responsible living. For you happiness must be conscious, considerate, and consistent with habits of observing, reading and reflecting. Now reflecting has always been a grave business,

"Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;"

and it must be confessed that our times present some new obstacles to a life of thoughtful happiness. Until this century the masses of mankind were almost dumb; but now their moans and complaints have become audible through telephone, telegraph and rotary press.

**The
Happy
Life** The millions are now saying what the moody
poets have always said:

“The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies,
All that we wish to stay
Tempt, and then flies.
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.”

The gloomy moralist is still repeating: “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold! all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

The manual laborers of to-day, who are much better off than the same classes of laborers have been in any earlier times, are saying just what Shelley said to the men of England in 1819:

“The seed ye sow another reaps,
The wealth ye find another keeps,
The robes ye weave another wears,
The arms ye forge another bears.”

They would adopt without change the words in which that eminent moralist, Robinson Crusoe, a century earlier, described the condition of the laboring classes: “The men of labor spent their strength in daily struggling for bread to maintain the vital strength they labored with; so liv-

ing in a daily circulation of sorrow, living but to work, and working but to live, as if daily bread were the only end of wearisome life, and a wearisome life the only occasion of daily bread." *The Happy Life*

Matthew Arnold calls his love to come to the window and listen to the "melancholy, long-withdrawing roar" of the sea upon the moonlit beach at Dover; and these are his dismal words to her:

"Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and
flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

The poets are by no means the only offenders; the novelists and scientists take their turn. The fiction of this century deals much with the lives of the wretched, dissolute, and vicious, and with the most unjust and disastrous conditions of modern society. A fresh difficulty in the way of natural happiness is the highly speculative opinion, lately put forward by men of science