

## What is the purpose of life

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All was plain again. The Snark was in 19° south latitude. The world wasn't as big around there as at the equator. Therefore, every mile of westing at 19° south was more than a minute of longitude; for sixty miles were sixty miles, but sixty minutes are sixty miles only at the equator. George Francis Train broke Jules Verne's record of around the world. But any man that wants can break George Francis Train's record. Such a man would need only to go, in a fast steamer, to the latitude of Cape Horn, and sail due east all the way around. The world is very small in that latitude, and there is no land in the way to turn him out of his course. If his steamer maintained sixteen knots, he would circumnavigate the globe in just about forty days. "It will give you greater freedom," he had suggested with fine assumption of propounding a mere business proposition; "enabling you to choose your work entirely for its own sake. I have always wanted to take a hand in helping things on. It will come to just the same, your doing it for me." All the foregoing is by way of preamble to the statement that the horrors of Molokai, as they have been painted in the past, do not exist. The Settlement has been written up repeatedly by sensationalists, and usually by sensationalists who have never laid eyes on it. Of course, leprosy is leprosy, and it is a terrible thing; but so much that is lurid has been written about Molokai that neither the lepers, nor those who devote their lives to them, have received a

fair deal. Here is a case in point. A newspaper writer, who, of course, had never been near the Settlement, vividly described Superintendent McVeigh, crouching in a grass hut and being besieged nightly by starving lepers on their knees, wailing for food. This hair-raising account was copied by the press all over the United States and was the cause of many indignant and protesting editorials. Well, I lived and slept for five days in Mr. McVeigh's "grass hut" (which was a comfortable wooden cottage, by the way; and there isn't a grass house in the whole Settlement), and I heard the lepers wailing for food—only the wailing was peculiarly harmonious and rhythmic, and it was accompanied by the music of stringed instruments, violins, guitars, ukuleles, and banjos. Also, the wailing was of various sorts. The leper brass band wailed, and two singing societies wailed, and lastly a quintet of excellent voices wailed. So much for a lie that should never have been printed. The wailing was the serenade which the glee clubs always give Mr. McVeigh when he returns from a trip to Honolulu. The old fanatic's eyes passed from face to face. There was almost the suggestion of a smile about the savage mouth. "Tell me," said Joan. "What was my mother like? I can only remember her as more or less of an invalid."