

CUS417/100.91

May 16, 1904

The lecture series reviewed and commented upon. The Athenaeum refers to the Dugessall Lectureship

with such lecturers as S. M. Chard Carollans
William James
Joseph Royce
Hugo Münsterberg
William Osler

Can hardly see how sense is an agreeable

occurred to the life of Harvard University. They have all been important & among the best of lecturing. "Of all Osler is the most common sense and at the same time the most literary of the five"

Science and Immortality Osler.

¹⁶
3, Queen's Elms,
Belfast.

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Aug. 31. 18.

Dear Osler,

I have twice read carefully your booklet on "Science and Immortality", and I should like to tell you with how much pleasure and sympathy I have perused it. It is altogether admirable, and the sincere and pungent thought is as conspicuous, as the wealth of illustration and the felicity of style. What a loss to good literature, but a gain to science, when you chose the latter for your life work!

As regards the great subject with which you deal, I am very much at your point of view. *Malo cum Platone errare*, but the after life remains to me only the Great Perhaps. I feel no certainty, and I fear the doctrine has much less weight with me than it had twenty years ago. Sometimes I fell inclined to agree with Spinoza that "there is nothing the wise man thinks so little of as of death", or with Ruskin, that as regards the future life, "fate can be bravely met and conduct wisely ordered on either expectation". You do not allude to the contention of J. G. Frazer that the belief in a future life has wrought little but mischief to man, as tending to sacrifice the interests of the living to those of the dead. This is certainly a limited view of the question.

I have two great difficulties in relation to this question first, The immense paradox that the casual erotic impulse of the "average sensual man" should suffice to confer the immense gift of immortality, and secondly, the doubt whether many of our fellow men are worthy of it. As regards the large majority of the departed one is inclined to say, let them sleep on, why wake wake them to a second existence, perhaps as futile as the former one?

The Christian Church seems to point the personal survival of everybody, but it is by no means certain that this was the belief of its Founder. In Luke x. 35 he is recorded as saying "they

that are accounted worthy to attain to that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage", which seems to involve the implication that some, perhaps many, will not be accounted worthy to attain to it.

I wonder if you familiar with the following passage of Anatole France on this subject "Que la mort nous fasse périr tout entiers, je n'y contradis point. Cela est fort possible. En ce cas il ne faut pas la craindre. Je suis, elle est, je ne suis plus. Mais si, tout en hors frappant, elle nous laisse subsister, Soyez bien sur que nous nous retrouverons au delà du tombeau tels absolument que nous etions sûr la terre. Nous en serons sans doute fort penands. Cette idee est de nature à nous gêter par avance le paradis et l'enfer."

Why don't you write something in this line of Moralia or the philosophy of life? I am certain you are as much at home with Epictetus, Seneca, M. Aurelius, Pascal, Sir Thos. Browne, or Plutarch, as with Harvey, Sydenham, Lister or Pasteur. You could give the world something that would live.

I greatly enjoyed my stay at Oxford, and it was a great pleasure to meet you again.

With best regards,

I am,
Very truly yours,

James A. Lindsay.