

CHAPTER XI

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

The Citadel of Superstition—Athanatism and Thanatism—Individual Character of Death—Immortality of the Unicellular Organisms (Protists)—Cosmic and Personal Immortality—Primary Thanatism (of Uncivilized Peoples) — Secondary Thanatism (of Ancient and Recent Philosophers)—Athanatism and Religion—Origin of the Belief in Immortality—Christian Athanatism—Eternal Life—The Day of Judgment—Metaphysical Athanatism—Substance of the Soul—Ether Souls and Air Souls; Fluid Souls and Solid Souls—Immortality of the Animal Soul—Arguments for and Against Athanatism—Athanatist Illusions.

WHEN we turn from the genetic study of the soul to the great question of its immortality, we come to that highest point of superstition which is regarded as the impregnable citadel of all mystical and dualistic notions. For in this crucial question, more than in any other problem, philosophic thought is complicated by the selfish interest of the human personality, who is determined to have a guarantee of his existence beyond the grave at any price. This "higher necessity of feeling" is so powerful that it sweeps aside all the logical arguments of critical reason. Consciously or unconsciously, most men are influenced in all their general views, and, therefore, in their theory of life, by the dogma of personal immortality; and to this theoretical error must be added practical consequences of