

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

degeneration of the brain. The *phylogenetic* argument derives its strength from palæontology, and the comparative anatomy and physiology of the brain; co-operating with and completing each other, these sciences prove to the hilt that the human brain (and, consequently, its function—the soul) has been evolved step by step from that of the mammal, and, still further back, from that of the lower vertebrate.

These inquiries, which might be supplemented by many other results of modern science, prove the old dogma of the immortality of the soul to be absolutely untenable; in the twentieth century it will not be regarded as a subject of serious scientific research, but will be left wholly to transcendental "faith." The "critique of pure reason" shows this treasured faith to be a mere *superstition*, like the belief in a personal God which generally accompanies it. Yet even to-day millions of "believers"—not only of the lower, uneducated masses, but even of the most cultured classes—look on this superstition as their dearest possession and their most "priceless treasure." It is, therefore, necessary to enter more deeply into the subject, and—assuming it to be true—to make a critical inquiry into its practical value. It soon becomes apparent to the impartial critic that this value rests, for the most part, on fancy, on the want of clear judgment and consecutive thought. It is my firm and honest conviction that a definitive abandonment of these "athanatist illusions" would involve no painful loss, but an inestimable positive gain for humanity.

Man's "emotional craving" clings to the belief on immortality for two main reasons: firstly, in the hope of better conditions of life beyond the grave; and, secondly, in the hope of seeing once more the dear and