

**SCIENCE AND A
FUTURE LIFE, WITH
OTHER ESSAYS**

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Science and a Future Life, with Other Essays by Frederic W. H. Myers

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FREDERIC W. H. MYERS

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BY
FREDERIC W. H. MYERS

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THE Essays here reprinted, with due acknowledgment, from the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Fortnightly Review* were not composed as a consecutive series. They have, however, a certain unity of purpose, which I have emphasised by placing first the Essay in which this purpose is most plainly expressed. The Essay on "The Disenchantment of France" is now five years old, but I have let it stand unaltered, leaving my readers to decide how far its diagnosis has been justified by subsequent history.

SCIENCE AND A FUTURE LIFE

To the question, "What has science to say as to man's survival of death?" the chief spokesmen of modern science are inclined to answer, "Nothing at all." The affirmative answer she holds as unproved, and the negative answer as unprovable.

Nevertheless, in spite of, and by reason of, her studied neutrality, the influence of science is every year telling more strongly against a belief in a future life. Inevitably so; since whatever science does not tend to prove, she in some sort tends to disprove; beliefs die out, without formal refutation, if they find no place among the copious store of verified and systematised facts and inferences which are supplanting the traditions and speculations of

pre-scientific days as the main mental pabulum of mankind.

And the very magnitude of the special belief in question renders it, in one sense, the more easily starved. Men feel that, if it were true, there would surely be far more to be said for it than they have ever heard. The silence which surrounds the topic is almost more discouraging than overt attack. At first, indeed, in the early days of the scientific dominion, *savants* were wont to make some sort of apology, or disclaimer of competence, when their doctrines seemed too obviously to ignore man's hope of a future. Then came open assaults from audacious and confident *savants*—to whom the apologetic and optimistic *savants* seemed to have nothing particular to reply. And gradually the educated world—that part of it, at least, which science leads—is waking up to find that no mere trifles or traditions only, but the great hope which inspired their fathers aforetime, is insensibly vanishing away.

Now it is important that a question so momentous should not thus be suffered to go by default. There should be an occasional