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A LECTURE ON LIFE.¹

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To all of us mortals presents itself the question, why are we?—what is the meaning of this state of living?—what is life?—to none more often than to the physician. His duty it is to tend the lamp of life. Time and again, as day follows after day, he sees it burning low; now in danger of being blown out rudely by some all-unexpected gust; now guttering down with weak and weaker flame, flaring up momentarily, but it may be only momentarily, until the cold blue flame, scarce giving light, ushers in the darkness of death. His duty it is to keep the lamp alight and burning brightly as long as possible—to prevent that darkness. Is it surprising that he asks himself, again and again, what is life?—what is this flame to which we minister?

Think of it! Think of the countless ages—for we cannot count them—since man first became capable of abstract thought, and so became truly man! Think of the generations that have come to life, have grown up, and had their day, and passed! To each in turn this question has presented itself—to each. And direct answer has been found by none of all of them. And the generations have consoled themselves by the thought that this infinite mystery of existence, abysmal, dark, is purposeful; that it is the God who has created life, that He knows, and that suffices; He knows and we, His creatures, cannot attain unto His knowledge. The generations have had those of robust mind, those whom this philosophy did not wholly satisfy, those who have asked why this should be. Solomon has succeeded Job, Goethe has followed Kit Marlowe, the author of the "City of Dreadful Night" has followed the author of the "Rubaiyat," and Herbert Spencer, Lucretius; but no one has lifted the veil.

To-night I wish to range myself anew among the enquirers. I would not say we can lift the veil, for in such inquiries, as in all other investi-

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