

IN MEMORY OF  
MONSIEUR CAMILLE FLAMMARION.

WE have to record with great regret the loss of another former President of the Society, also a well-known man of science, in the death of Monsieur Camille Flammarion, which occurred at Juvisy on June 4, 1925, at the age of eighty-three. In the forty-three years of its existence the Society has had four Presidents who were distinguished citizens of foreign countries; one American, William James, and three Frenchmen, Professor Charles Richet, Professor Henri Bergson, and lastly Camille Flammarion, whom we welcomed not only for his own sake, but as strengthening the ties that already bound us to our fellow-workers in France.

Monsieur Flammarion has already described in his Presidential Address (*Proc., S.P.R.*, Vol. XXXIV., p. 1) how it was in 1861, sixty-four years ago, that his interest in psychical research was first stimulated by seeing on a Paris book-stall Alan Kardec's *Le Livre des Esprits*. From that time till the end of his life his interest never flagged and he became the author of several widely-read books on the subject. It was, however, to the study of astronomy that his life was mainly devoted. He excelled especially in setting forth the results of astronomical research in a lucid and attractive style, intelligible to those who have little or no technical knowledge of the subject. The writer of the Obituary Notice in the *Times* said of him: "He was indeed aptly named 'The Poet of the Heavens,' and was regarded with real affection by immense numbers of readers, both in France and England, who owed to him all their knowledge of the wonders of astronomy." Something of his power of bringing within the vision of the ordinary man the

immense vistas which astronomy opens out may be felt in his Presidential Address to this Society. An English translation of the Address was, as many of our members will recollect, read at a General Meeting of the Society on June 26, 1923, by Sir William Barrett, who had been for many years on terms of personal friendship with Monsieur Flammarion.

To the Society's *Journal* for March, 1923 (Vol. XXI., p. 45), shortly after the election of Monsieur Flammarion as President, Sir William Barrett contributed an account of his work, from which the following passages may be quoted here :

In spite of his great age, he will be 82 years old in a few weeks, his intellectual activity is undiminished. Few, if any, scientific men have written so many books, each characterised by great and wide learning and that wonderful lucidity in which French *savants* excel. His last treatise, now in course of publication, is on psychical research, and entitled *La Mort et son Mystère*, and is divided into three volumes, viz. 1. *Avant la Mort* ; 2. *Autour de la Mort* ; and 3. *Après la Mort* . . .

On the fly-leaf of *Après la Mort* is given a list of some of the many psychical works M. Flammarion has published. His best-known book is *L'Inconnu et les problèmes psychiques*, . . . But although M. Flammarion has been studying psychical phenomena for fifty years his life work has been astronomy, and his papers and books on this subject have had an immense circulation ; e.g. his small volume entitled *Lumen* has reached a circulation of 70,000, and his *Rêves Étoilés* no less than 142,000. Besides these he has published at least twenty works on astronomy, most of which are intended to bring the wonders of the heavens and the results of modern astronomical research within the comprehension of the general public. In addition he has published sixteen books on general science, of which his *L'Atmosphère*, a popular treatise on meteorology, is the best known. Then he has written at least half-a-dozen books on speculative science and philosophy, such as *La pluralité des mondes habités*, *La fin du monde*, etc.

But all this monumental labour has been subsidiary to his work at the Observatory of Juvisy, which he founded in 1883 and still superintends. The *résumé* of his astronomical observations and papers fills two pages of the memorial to him in the *Bulletin de la Société Astronomique de France*, and to these labours must be added the editing of a monthly astronomical review which M. Flammarion founded in 1882. With such a wonderful record of scientific work there is little wonder that last year the Council of the French Astronomical Society held a public meeting to celebrate the 80th anniversary of M. Flammarion's birth. At this meeting the great amphitheatre of the Sorbonne, which holds 3000 persons, was found too small for the multitude who wished to join in this magnificent celebration. . . .

Owing to his great age and to his other pre-occupations Monsieur Flammarion was not able to attend any meetings of the Society during his year of Office as President, and but few of our Members can have had any personal acquaintance with him. But an impression of his vigorous and alert personality can be gathered from the photograph which was reproduced as a frontispiece to Vol. XXXIV. of the *Proceedings*.