



**Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality the  
Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of St.  
Andrews, in the Year (Classic Reprint)**

*Lewis Richard Farnell*

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Excerpt from Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality the Gifford Lectures Delivered in the University of St. Andrews, in the Year

The work has been long delayed by other literary tasks and the cares of official life. And delay, whether chosen or enforced, gives a writer the advantage of living through many temporary phases of theorizing and of chewing the cud of long reflection before making up his mind. I was glad to find that the settled conviction that at last I had reached concerning Greek heroic saga and saga-personages was the same as that which inspires Mr. Chadwick in his admirable treatise *The Heroic Age*. For a general exposition of my views on the right and wrong methods of mythologic interpretation I may be permitted to refer to my paper published by the British Academy on 'The Value and the Methods of Mythologic Study' in 1919. If this treatise is censured as a revival of Euhemerism', it will only be censured on this ground by those who have not followed recent researches in anthropology and the comparative study of saga. And if, though that is not its main intention, it helps to corroborate Mr. Chadwick's contention that saga is imperfect history, I shall be content; for I have long felt the unreality of the distinction between the 'prehistoric' and the 'historic' periods. But my main task has been to track and collect the evidence of the worship of the dead, the apotheosis of the human being, from the earliest days of Greece to the latest, and my interest in this religious phenomenon has been sustained by the light that it throws upon much of the religion, the history, and the mentality of the Hellenic race. A serious and systematic treatment of this theme has long been a desideratum in our literature; it is for criticism to pronounce whether this treatise supplies it.

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