Somerset Maugham on Epicureanism over one hundred years ago

Post by “Jon M” of May 23, 2020 at 10:25 PM

Maugham clearly likes Epicurus. He mentions him now and again in all sorts of places.

Much later in the novel is this line:

> Quote
>
> [Philip's] reason was someone looking on, observing the facts but powerless to interfere: it was like those gods of Epicurus, who saw the doings of men from their empyrean heights and had no might to alter one smallest particle of what occurred

And on Maugham's ninetieth birthday in 1964 he wrote in the *Sunday Express* newspaper (January 26, 1964):

> Quote
>
> I have had such a full life – but I face what will come calmly. I still do not fear death; in fact, I look forward to death with no apprehension for I do not believe in a hereafter and so, if I have sinned in men’s eyes and have not been punished, I have no fear of punitive treatment when I cease to remain on this planet.
>
> I do not know whether God exists or not. None of the arguments that has been adduced to prove His existence carries conviction, and belief must rest, as Epicurus put it long ago, on immediate apprehension. That immediate apprehension I have never had...
>
> I have been a hedonist always and now there are so few pleasures left to me.