

FAITH IN A FUTURE LIFE.

*A. W. Martin. D. Appleton & Co., New York and London, 1916.
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This, in the best sense a popular discussion by one of the leaders of the Ethical Culture Movement in the United States, will doubtless be welcomed by many who have been led by the terrible events of the last three years to consider anew the perennial problem of human immortality. Mr. Martin is on the side of the believers, but in no easy-going way. He is well aware of the misuses of faith. He gives no support to the undisciplined research that is being actively carried on at the present time into certain obscure phenomena. He discusses comprehensively and critically the possibility of a definite answer, either of a negative or affirmative character; and only towards the end does he seem to lay himself open to a charge of undue assumption.

In a brief opening chapter the arguments for immortality, derived from the alleged universality of the belief, from instinctive desire, and from transcendent intuition, are considered and dismissed as insufficient. The dicta of materialism and evolution, which exclude survival of conscious personality, are then dealt with. A discussion follows of the contrary claims of spiritism and allied forms of occultism and mysticism, which purport to offer experimental evidence therefor. This evidence is examined and declared to be inconclusive. The author shows, however, a certain sympathy with the spiritistic hypothesis when he declares that it explains certain irreducible phenomena better than any other and has established a modicum of probability of its correctness (p. 110); a statement which appears to go beyond what is tenable, since it is difficult to understand—and Mr. Martin has not entered into details to show—how an unknown something acting in an unknown manner can serve to explain anything. Moreover, spiritism, even if true, would find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prove that mind is independent of bodily association; a most important point in its bearing on the question of immortality. The author, who recognizes this difficulty, attempts to escape it later by saying, "it is conceivable that some form of matter may exist, imperceptible to us, and which, associated with spirit, fulfils the seeming requisite for the latter's persistence" (p. 159), which he considers demanded on other grounds. These grounds consist in certain aspects of moral experience (Chap. viii).

At first sight, the moral arguments for immortality appear to be strong. They have been considered the strongest by some of those most competent to pronounce a judgement and best entitled to be regarded as amongst the individuals, if any, worthy to survive. The author discovers in a twofold moral experience, which is in reality one, "the surest and most satisfying