Two considerations that have been borne in upon my mind while following this controversy may be worth mentioning, though neither can be called exactly helpful. One is that we find the most confident, unquestioning, dogmatic belief in heaven (and its correlative) in those whose heaven is the most unlikely and impossible, the most entirely made up of mundane and material elements, of gorgeous glories and of fading splendours*—just such things as uncultured and undisciplined natures most envied or pined after on earth, such as the lower order of minds could best picture and would naturally be most dazzled by The higher intelligences of our race, who need a spiritual heaven, find their imaginations fettered by the scientific training which, imperfect though it be, clips their wings in all directions, forbids their glowing fancy, and annuls that gorgeous creation, and bars the way to each successive local habitation that is instinctively wanted to give reality to the ideal they aspire to; till, in the effort to frame a future existence without a future world, to build up a state of being that shall be worthy of its denizens, and from which everything material shall be excluded, they at last discover that in renouncing the 'physical' and inadmissible they have been forced to renounce the 'conceivable' as well; and a dimness and fluctuating uncertainty gathers round a scene, from which all that is concrete and definable, and would therefore be incongruous, has been shut out. The next world cannot, it is felt, be a material one; and a truly 'spiritual' one even the saint cannot conceive so as to bring it home to natures still shrouded in the garments of the flesh.

The other suggestion that has occurred to me is this:—It must be conceded that the doctrine of a future life is by no means as universally diffused as it is the habit loosely to assert. It is not always discoverable among primitive and It existed among pagan nations in a form so vague and hazy as savage races. to be describable rather as a dream than a religious faith. It can scarcely be determined whether the Chinese, whose cultivation is perhaps the most ancient existing in the world, can be ranked among distinct believers; while the conception of Nirvana, which prevails in the meditative minds of other Orientals, is more a sort of conscious non-existence than a future life. With the Jews, moreover, as is well known, the belief was not indigenous, but imported, and by no means an early importation. But what is not so generally recognised is that, even among ourselves in these days, the conviction of thoughtful natures varies curiously in strength and in features at different periods of life. In youth, when all our sentiments are most vivacious and dogmatic, most of us not only cling to it as an intellectual creed, but are accustomed to say and feel that, without it as a solace and a hope to rest upon, this world would be stripped of its deepest fascinations. It is from minds of this age, whose vigour is unimpaired and whose relish for the joys of earth is most expansive, that the most glowing delineations of heaven usually proceed, and on whom the thirst for felicity and knowledge, which can be slaked at no earthly fountains, has the most exciting Then comes the busy turmoil of our mid career, when the present curtains off the future from our thoughts, and when a renewed existence in a different scene is recalled to our fancy chiefly in crises of bereavement. And finally, is it not the case that in our fading years—when something of the languor and placidity of age is creeping over us, just when futurity is coming consciously and rapidly more near, and when one might naturally expect it to consciously and rapidly more near, and when one lingur naturally expect it to occupy us more incessantly and with more anxious and searching glances—we think of it less frequently, believe in it less confidently, desire it less eagerly than in our youth? Such, at least, has been my observation and experience, especially among the more reflective and inquiring order of men. the hour absorbs us most completely, as the hours grow fewer and less full; the pleasures, the exemptions, the modest interest, the afternoon peace, the gentle affections of the present scene, obscure the future from our view, and render it, curiously enough, even less interesting than the past. To-day, which may be our last, engrosses us far more than to-morrow, which may be our FOREVER; and the grave into which we are just stepping down troubles us far less than in youth, when half a century lay between us and it.

What is the explanation of this strange phenomenon? Is it a merciful dispensation arranged by the Ruler of our life to soften and to ease a crisis which would be too grand and awful to be faced with dignity or calm, if it were actually realised at all? Is it that thought—or that vague substitute for thought which we call time—has brought us, half unconsciously, to the conclusion that the whole question is insoluble, and that reflection is wasted where reflection can bring us no nearer to an issue? Or finally, as I know is true far oftener than we fancy, is it that threescore years and ten have quenched the passionate desire for life with which at first we stepped upon the scene? We are tired, some of us, with unending and unprofitable toil; we are satiated, others of us, with such ample pleasures as earth can yield us; we have had enough of ambition, alike in its successes and its failures; the joys and blessings of human affection on which, whatever their crises and vicissitudes, no righteous or truthful man will cast a slur, are yet so blended with pains which partake of their intensity; the thirst for knowledge is not slaked, indeed, but the capacity for the labour by which alone it can be gained has consciously died out; the appetite for life, in short, is gone, the frame is worn and the faculties exhausted; and—possibly this is the key to the phenomenon we are examining—age CANNOT, from the very law of its nature, conceive itself endowed with the bounding energies of youth, and without that vigour both of exertion and desire, renewed existence can offer no inspiring charms. Our being upon earth has been enriched by vivid interests and precious joys, and we are deeply grateful for the gift; but we are wearied with one life, and feel scarcely qualified to enter on the claims, even though balanced by the felicities and glories, of another. It may be the fatigue which comes with age—fatigue of the fancy as well as of the frame; but somehow, what we yearn for most instinctively at last is rest, and the peace which we can imagine the easiest because we know it best is that of sleep.

THE FUTURE LIFE.

A correspondent, "Quartus," in a good and temperate letter which appeared in the last issue of the Spectator suggests that the columns should be open to a discussion of the grave questions now troubling the public mind with regard to the future life. I agree with him that the "true meaning of the Word God" is what we must carefully search for. I am also at one with him when he says "many would like to see the subject thoroughly discussed by competent writers," and that "we should not be afraid of it." Of course we should not: neither for ourselves nor for our young people. We should let our sons and daughters get accustomed to look these serious matters in the face; if not, they will come upon them as a surprise by and by, and disaster must follow. that some parents raise strong objections, and think their family should be kept in ignorance of any theories that appear heterodox. Roman Catholicism has long been carrying out in practice, and what Protestantism has always condemned. But Roman Catholicism is consistent, and knowing that there are recorded speeches of the devil and of false prophets in the Bible, it withholds the Bible from the ignorant. Those Protestant parents who would banish all periodicals containing the pros and cons of these great questions are doing precisely the same thing, and to be consistent should keep the Bible from their children or forbid them to read some parts of it. I heard that many people took exception to the publication of Frederic Harrison's splendid articles on "The Soul and Future Life," on that ground. I can scarcely conceive of more fatal stupidity. Of course they ignore the fact that a "Symposium" followed, containing the best answers the Church can give; and of course those same parents would never allow their sons and daughters to read "The Pilgrim's Progress" and such like books because some very antichristian remarks are made therein by some very anti-christian characters. is time for us to awake out of our sleep and enter the great and real war of life. We have nothing to fear from discussion; we have everything to fear from repression. So I hope it will be allowed us to discuss this matter in the SPECTATOR, as the journal professes to be open to all who have anything

"Quartus" indicates three opinions which are open for discussion, viz., everlasting conscious suffering, conditional immortality, or life in Christ only, and restoration, either universal or partial. If it be allowed me I will place my views before the readers of the Spectator in the best way I can in a series of articles. I do not expect that I shall make it quite clear to any one. It is not quite clear to my own mind. No doctrine of Scripture and of spiritual life is. In everything there is a secret, which by no searching can we find out. Perhaps it is well that it should be so. The mystery keeps us moving. we must move, or we shall stagnate.

Why not let us have a Canadian "Symposium?" If it be thought that my articles are worthy of being taken as the exposition of one phase of the question, then others might follow in answer, giving reason or refutation. That would give at least a clear view of the whole case. My object is to deal with this question of the future punishment of sins.

But let us first define terms, so as to have a clear understanding of what we mean by the use of them. For the word "sin" is to many obscure, belonging not much to ordinary life, but mostly to theology and the pulpit. By many it is supposed to be some natural "fault" in our being, and caused originally by They think a sweet, unconscious child, whose eyes have Adam's transgression. but a few months opened to the light, a sinful creature. But sin as I understand it, is a conscious act—it is a violation of duty. It is sin when a man resists his sense of right; it is sin to turn away from an obligation; to withhold from God the reverence and gratitude due to Him. It is sin to injure a fellow-man, from motives of revenge or covetousness. It is sin to sacrifice the intellect and the heart to the senses, thus putting the animal over the spiritual. Sin is voluntary wrong-doing. It is a wilful violation of a known law of God and our own being. And that sin is, and must be punished. We are sure of that. Not own being. And that sin is, and must be punished. We are sure of that. Not only does Scripture teach it, but our conscience tells us it is so. Here, or hereafter, the price of wrongdoing must be paid. No man can escape. Penitential tears and prayers; a change of conduct—the exercise of faith in God and Christ, not one of these and not all of these can ward it off. It is an invisible and invisible law that punishment shall follow sin. "Whatsoever inexorable, and inviolable law that punishment shall follow sin. Cast in the seed, and the harvest time a man sows, that shall he also reap." will come.

But the difficulty arises the moment we try to find some conception of the nature and duration of that punishment. According to the current notion of the churches it is eternal. It is everlasting, an unending torment, if not a literal flame of fire; an inward remorse that shall last for ever and for ever. It is banishment from God-a life without His life-breath and motion apart from Him; a place and a state of woe, where hope never enters, but every thought is torment in the mind, and every feeling a fiery torture in the heart. All the faculties shall live, but only live to suffer. Memory shall be as a worm at the vitals, all the being shall be on fire, but shall not burn. It is an awful doctrine. But what is the origin and history of this doctrine? I think it will be found that it began with the Jews, and arose from the fact that they took a part truth for a whole truth, that is to say, that they formed a misconception of God in His relation to man. All through the patriarchal ages God is represented as a beneficent Being. He enters into fellowship with man, talks with him face to tace. He calls Abraham to a great inheritance. He is the Form at the top of the ladder which Jacob saw. He is the Angel of the covenant, and the God of all He enters into fellowship with man, talks with him face to face. blessing. But with the Exodus of Israel from Egypt the idea gets changed. God is the avenger of all the oppressed. He is the great King of the nation. His throne is in the heavens—His sceptre is a rod of iron. From the secret place of His Majesty come forth the thunderings of His law. The fire and the smoke which crown the quaking mountain tell of His power and the terribleness of His wrath. He is not only King, but Judge. He pronounces judgment and administers the law. Now, that seems the only way in which those people could have been taught to know right and do it. They were children in Prince and the secret way in which those people could have been taught to know right and do it. They were children in Prince and the secret way in which those people could have been taught to know right and do it. They were children in Prince and the secret way in the sec could have been taught to know right and do it. They were children in Religion. The sojourn in Egypt had corrupted them in mind and heart. They came out of it with the very lowest standard in morals, and a blunted sense of justice. Children must be ruled largely by the rod. They must be kept from

^{* &#}x27;There may be crowns of material splendour, there may be trees of unfading loveliness, there may be pavements of emerald, and canopies of the brightest radiance, and gardens of deep and tranquil security, and palaces of proud and stately decoration, and a city of lofty pinnacles, through which there unceasingly flows a river of gladness, and where jubilee is ever sung by a concord of seraphic voices.'—Dr. Chalmers's Sermons.

^{&#}x27;Poor fragments all of this low earth—
Such as in dreams could hardly soothe
A soul that once had tasted of immortal truth.'—Christian Year.