

It has, in fact, become the fashion in certain quarters to over-compassionate the doubter, to accredit him with a greater depth, and even with a more thorough conscientiousness, than the man convinced. But with every desire to find the reasonableness of such a view, we have entirely failed to discover why the holding of a creed should imply a smaller share either of intelligence or honesty than the holding of a doubt. Credulity has its negative side as well as its positive one, and there is as much room to slip on the one side as on the other. Doubt disintegrates, disperses, repels. Faith attracts and knits together. It acts as a kind of centre of gravitation in the planetary system of things ideal, controlling the most erratic of orbits; standing to the intellect in much the same overmastering relation that Cressida's love stood to all her other feelings, when she declares :

—My love
Is as the very centre of the earth
Drawing all things to it.

Faith is the tonic of the poetical scale, the key-note to which the most wildly discursive imagination must return in the end, before the ear can rest satisfied. Hence we have absolutely no poetry in which doubt is anything like the central or dominant interest; while we have, as in the Hebrew poetry, as gorgeous palaces as imagination ever sanctified, whose material is supplied and whose genius is inspired from faith alone. When doubt is made use of at all in poetry, as in that highest quotable example, the Book of Job, it is introduced more as a foil to faith—the intense shadow of an intenser light—a wrestler brought into the arena only to be overthrown by his mightier opponent. Doubt can command no prolonged sympathy, and consequently can find no permanent footing in any of the higher places of poetry. Faith, on the contrary, seems to clothe itself with poetry without effort; attracts all poetry to it as a seemingly natural consequence; interwinds and interweaves its life with it, until—to use the strong Shakespearian phrase—the two have “grown together,” and their parting would be “a tortured body.” They are the dermis and the epidermis of the ideal anatomy, and their severance means mutilation. Poetry can find no more than a partial and passing attraction in anything that is doubtful; she is at best but a stranger and a pilgrim in the