

"When the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. . . . The
soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through
his life !
Never leave growing till the life to
come !"

To many a truthful and truth-loving man, doubt is simply an intellectual necessity. The man who is uncertain of some of the dogmas of our religion may be a manly thinker ; but he may be—alas ! too often is—an immoral unbeliever. Now, the test I would apply to the doubt of any man, by which to find out whether it is manly or not—praiseworthy or to be condemned—is the question of Browning :—

"What think ye of Christ, friend ?
When all's done and said,
Like you this Christianity, or not ?
It may be false, but will you wish it
true ?
Has it your vote to be so, if it can ?"

If a man is in the right attitude toward truth, earnest in his search for it, open-minded to receive it from whatever source, hoping in his heart that Christianity may be the truth, we may have no fear of such an one ; because his doubt really springs from his devotion to truth. But such a man never flaunts his doubts before his fellows. He knows by sad experience the agony of his present skepticism, the blessedness of his former faith ; and, if manfully tender, he will spare the pain of those now happy in their belief. Blatant skepticism is a coarse, unmanly thing, indicative of superficiality and want of sympathy. The loud-mouthed unbeliever who seeks to destroy the faith of others is not a man of strong conviction ; for the deep thinker, like deep water, is never noisy. His unbelief has its root in sin, in intellectual pride, in presumptuous impatience of authority ; nay, it may even spring—as it oftentimes seems to do—from the devilish delight of wound-

ing sacred feelings. Call you that a mark of strength ? Call you that a manly thing ? In this age of scientific discovery, of research into all departments of truth, of critical testing, it is inevitable that many forms and formularies, long regarded as essentials of our faith, shall be swept away ; and in the sifting process, many earnest souls are being perplexed. Such perplexity is no sin. Such doubt is the mark of faith, the evidence of disinterested search for truth which will stand the test. It is not unbelief ; we should meet it not with denunciation but with kindly sympathy. But how many young men there are who simply ape the honest doubter, making their unbelief the subject of boasting and wantonly wounding the holy feelings and destroying the blessedness of the faith of others by their pretended doubt or by their unbelief, which really results from immoral living ! Is that a mark of tenderness, of sympathy, of strong manliness ? Such unbelief is cruel, brutal, diabolical.

Hear the words of one who knew well in his own soul the agony of skepticism and the joy of faith :—"Young men are prone to consider skepticism a proof of strong-mindedness, a something to be proud of. Let Pilate be a specimen, and a wretched one he is. He had clear-mindedness enough to be dissatisfied with all the views he knew ; enough to see through and scorn the squabbles and superstitions of priests and bigots. All well, if from doubt of falsehood he had gone on to belief in a higher truth. But doubt—when it left him doubting—why, he missed the noblest opportunity man ever had, that of saving the Saviour : he became a thing for people to despise and after ages to pity. And that is skepticism. Call you that a manly thing ? To believe is to be happy ; to doubt is to be wretched. To believe is to be strong. Doubt cramps energy. Belief is power. Only so far as a man believes strongly, mightily, can he act cheerfully or do anything that is worth the doing. I