CHAPTER III.

HONESTY—TRUTH.

There is na workemen
That can bothe worken well and hastilie.
This must be done at leisure parfaitile.—CHAUCER.

Gold thou may'st safely touch, but if it stick
Unto thy hands, it woundeth to the quick.
GEORGE HERBERT.

The honest man, though e'er so poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.—BURNS.

Ne quittez jamais le chemin de la vertu et de l'honneur; c'est le seul moyen d'être heureux.—BUFFON.

HONESTY and truthfulness go well together. Honesty is truth, and truth is honesty. Truth alone may not constitute a great man, but it is the most important element of a great character. It gives security to those who employ him, and confidence to those who serve under him. Truth is the essence of principle, integrity, and independence. It is the primary need of every man. Absolute veracity is more needed now than at any former period in our history.

Lying, common though it be, is denounced even by the liar himself. He protests that he is speaking the truth, for he knows that truth is universally respected, while lying is universally condemned. Lying is not only dishonest, but cowardly. "Dare to be true," said George Herbert; "nothing can ever need a lie." The most mischievous liars are those who keep on the verge of truth. They have not the

courage to speak out the fact, but go round about it, and tell what is really untrue. A lie which is half the truth is the worst of lies.

There is a duplicity of life which is quite as bad as verbal falsehood. Actions have as plain a voice as words. The mean man is false to his profession. He evades the truth that he professes to believe. He plays at double dealing. He wants sincerity and veracity. The sincere man speaks as he thinks, believes as he pretends to believe, acts as he professes to act, and performs as he promises.

"Other forms of practical contradiction are common," says Mr. Spurgeon; "some are intolerantly liberal; others are ferocious advocates for peace, or intemperate on intemperance. We have known pleaders for generosity who were themselves miserably stingy. We have heard of persons who have been wonderful sticklers for 'the truth'—meaning thereby a certain form of doctrine—and yet they have not regarded the truth in matters of buying and selling, or with regard to the reputations of their neighbors, or the incidents of domestic life."*

Lying is one of the most common and conventional of vices. It prevails in what is called "Society." *Not at home* is the fashionable mode of reply to a visitor. Lying is supposed to be so necessary to carry on human affairs that it is tacitly agreed to. One lie may be considered harmless, another slight, another unintended. Little lies are common. However tolerated, lying is more or less loathsome to every pure-minded man or woman. "Lies," says Ruskin, "may be light and accidental, but they are an ugly soot from the smoke of the pit, and it is better that our hearts should be swept clean of them, without our care as to which is largest or blackest."

"Lying abroad for the benefit of one's country" used to be the maxim of the diplomatist. Yet a man should care more for his word than for his life. When Regulus was sent by the Carthaginians, whose prisoner he was, to Rome, with a convoy of ambassadors to sue for peace, it was under

* "The Bible and the Newspaper," 1878.

the condition that he should return to his prison if peace were not effected. He took the oath, and swore that he would come back.

When he appeared at Rome he urged the senators to persevere in the war, and not to agree to the exchange of prisoners. That involved his return to captivity at Carthage. The senators, and even the chief priest, held that as his oath had been wrested from him by force, he was not bound to go. "Have you resolved to dishonor me?" asked Regulus. "I am not ignorant that death and tortures are preparing for me; but what are these to the shame of an infamous action, or the wounds of a guilty mind? Slave as I am to Carthage, I have still the spirit of a Roman. I have sworn to return. It is my duty to go. Let the gods take care of the rest." Regulus returned to Carthage, and died under torture.

"Let him that would live well," said Plato, "attain to truth, and then, and not before, he will cease from sorrow." Let us also cite a passage from the Emperor Marcus Aurelius: "He who acts unjustly acts impiously; for since the universal nature has made rational animals for the sake of one another, to help one another according to their deserts, but in no way to injure one another, he who transgresses his will is clearly guilty of impiety toward the highest divinity. And he, too, that lies is guilty of impiety to the same divinity, from the universal nature of all things that are; and all things that are have a relation to all things that come into existence. And further, this universal nature is named Truth, and is the prime cause of all things that are true. He, then, who lies intentionally is guilty of impiety, inasmuch as he acts unjustly by deceiving; and he also who lies unintentionally, inasmuch as he is at variance with the universal nature, and inasmuch as he disturbs the order by fighting against the nature of the world; for he fights against it who is moved of himself to that which is contrary to truth, for he has received powers from nature, through the neglect of which he is not able now to distinguish falsehood from truth. And, indeed, he who pursues pleasure as good, and avoids pain as evil, is guilty of impiety."*

* "Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus." Translated by George Long, M.A., pp. 144–5.

Truth and honesty show themselves in various ways. They characterize the men of just dealing, the faithful men of business, the men who will not deceive you to their own advantage. Honesty is the plainest and humblest manifestation of the principle of truth. Full measures, just weights, true samples, full service, strict fulfilment of engagements, are all indispensable to men of character.

Take a common case. Sam Foote had reason to complain of the shortness of the beer served to him at dinner. He called the landlord, and said to him, "Pray, sir, how "many butts of beer do you draw in a month?" "Ten, sir," replied the publican. "And would you like to draw eleven if you could?" "Certainly, sir." "Then I will tell you how," said Foote; "*fill your measure!*"

But the case goes farther than this. We complain of short weights and adulteration of goods. We buy one thing and get another. But goods must sell; if with a profit, so much the better. If the dealer is found out, the customer goes elsewhere. M. Le Play, when he visited England many years ago, observed with great pleasure the commercial probity of English manufacturers. "They display," he said, "a scrupulous exactitude in the quantity and quality of their foreign consignments."

Could he say the same now? Have we not heard in public courts of the depreciation of our manufactures—of cotton loaded with china clay, starch, magnesium and zinc? We have seen the loading, and therefore know what it is. The cotton becomes mildewed, discolored, and therefore unsalable. The mildew is a fungoid, which, when developed by moisture, lives and grows upon the starch. China was one of the many marts for English-made cotton. But when the mildew appeared, the trade vanished.

There is a Chinese proverb to the effect that "the conjuror does not deceive the man who beats the gong for him." The Chinaman is as great a deceiver as we are. He puts iron filings into his tea, and water into his silk. He is therefore quite awake to the deceptions of others. "The consequence is," says the British Consul at Cheefoo, "that our textiles have got a bad name, and their place is being sup-

plied by American manufacturers. American drills, though forty per cent dearer, are driving English drills out of the market." We are no longer trusted. The English brand used to be a guarantee of honesty. It is so no longer.

It is the same in India. The English cotton won't wash. When the clay and starch are rinsed out, it becomes a rag. The Indians grow cotton. The Indians are clever workmen, with ingenious, subtle fingers. They can spin an even thread as well as the workwomen of Manchester. Capital has accumulated in India; mills have been built; and the Indians now manufacture for themselves.

All this is well known in the manufacturing districts. It is spoken of at public meetings. Sizing, and starching, and loading cotton cloth with china clay is known everywhere. Mr. Mellor, M. P., denounced the deception of the adulterating manufacturers. They seem to believe that the consuming inhabitants of the globe are all fools, excepting themselves. He mentioned the case of an engineer, who in crossing the Indian Ocean, was decorating his turban with muslin. "Is that English?" he was asked. "No; it is from Switzerland. The English makes my fingers stick; it is gummy." This is how we are losing our trade. This is how we are encountering bad times.

American cotton goods sell in London, Manchester, and elsewhere at a fair profit. Indian cotton goods sell in China and Australia, though Bombay twist sells at a higher price than English yarns. The local cotton manufacture of India is now equal to the whole home and foreign production of Manchester. Is not this a startling fact? We are now giving our artisans technical education. What will technical education do against wholesale cheating and lying? A young woman buys a reel of cotton marked 250 yards. When she works it out with her skin and bone she finds it to contain only 175 yards. What can she think of the truthfulness of her countrymen?

The deterioration of the standard of public men, of public morality, and of political principles, is undeniable. When the late Baron Dupin visited England, about sixty years ago, he observed with admiration the courage, the intelligence,

and the activity of our commercial men. "It is not alone the courage, the intelligence, the activity of the manufacturer or merchant which maintain the superiority of the productions and commerce of their country; it is far more their wisdom, their economy and, *above all*, *their probity*. If ever, in the British Islands, the useful citizen should lose these virtues, we may be sure that for England, as well as for any other country, notwithstanding the protection of the most formidable navy, notwithstanding the foresight and activity of diplomacy the most extended, and of political science the most profound, the vessels of a degenerate commerce, repulsed from every shore, would speedily disappear from those seas whose surface they now cover with the treasures of the universe, bartered for the treasures of the industry of the Three Kingdoms."*

The excuse, no doubt, is the keenness of competition, and the obstacles which the Government throws in the way of freedom of production. The manufacturer is bound hand and foot by restrictive laws. Some of these are excellent; for instance, the law which emancipated women and children from working in coal-pits, and the law which shortened the hours of labor. But it seems that the Factory laws have gone too far. Mr. Kitson recently said at Leeds that through the action of the Factory Acts several industries of the country had been already all but extinguished. Belgium was introducing into this country small sizes of rods in iron and steel, because boys could be employed in their production. All the small engines, which were at one time an important branch of English trade, are now made in France and Belgium. He pointed out that by this means Parliament was extinguishing sundry trades in this country, and then injustice was added by making these trades pay the cost of their own extinction. Another speaker at the meeting said that his firm imported iron castings from Belgium, because they could get them more cheaply than in England, although their works were surrounded by all the mills of Lancashire.

* "The Commercial Power of Great Britain," vol. i. Introduction, p. xi.

The employer is not only grievously hindered by the law; he is still more grievously hindered by strikes. When trade seems to improve, the men turn out and strike for more wages. Mills are closed, iron-furnaces are damped out, building ceases, and everything is at a standstill. We throw our means and opportunities away; and the foreigner thrives upon our recklessness. It is more than unfortunate—it is ruinous—that workmen should consider their employers as their born enemies.

But what of the quality of the work done by the workmen? Time was when men threw their heart and soul into their work—when they took pride in the quality of their work—in doing that which Chaucer describes at the head of this chapter—work "must be done at leisure, parfaitlie." But what have we now? Work done scampingly—without skill, without conscience, without industry. Because of this, tunnels fall in, iron bridges give way, and buildings tumble down. Houses are left half-finished, drains are left untrapped, and disease spreads abroad. Oh, careless, thoughtless British workman! What lives you have taken, what families you have made desolate! So that your work is done, you care not *how* it is done. You have not put your best into it; you have not put yourself into it. The work is done anyhow so that it may pass muster. All this is dishonest and dishonorable. Poor British workman! It is not altogether your own fault. You have been brought up without knowledge. You have been educated without sympathy. You thought the world was against you, while it has often sympathized with you.

All bad work is lying. It is thoroughly dishonest. You pay for having a work done well; it is done badly and dishonestly. It may be varnished over with a fair show of sufficiency, but the sin is not discovered until it is too late. So long as these things continue, it is in vain to talk of the dignity of labor, or of the social value of the so-called working man. There can be no dignity of labor where there is no truthfulness of work. "Dignity does not consist in hollowness and in light-handedness, but in substantiality and in strength. If there be flimsiness and superficiality of all

kinds apparent in the work of the present day more than in the work of our forefathers, whence comes it? From eagerness and competition, and the haste to be rich."*

Even the Polynesians have found us out. When Bishop Patteson was voyaging among the South Sea Islands on his mission of mercy, he found that the natives refused to buy our goods. "A mere Brummagem article," he said, "that won't stand wear, is quite valueless in their eyes. Whatever is given to them, be it cheap or dear, though it cost but a shilling, must be good of its kind. For example, a rough-handled, single-bladed knife, bought for a shilling, they fully appreciate; but a knife with half a dozen blades they would almost throw away." So Dr. Livingstone found that the natives of Africa refused to buy English iron, because it was "rotten."

Socrates explained how useful and excellent a thing it was that a man should resolve on perfection in his own line, so that, if he be a carpenter, he will be the best possible carpenter; or if a statesman, that he will be the best possible statesman. It is by such means that true success is achieved. Such a carpenter, Socrates said, would win the wreath of carpentering, though it was only of shavings.

Take the case of Wedgewood, who had the spirit of the true worker. Though risen from the ranks, he was never satisfied until he had done his best. He looked especially to the quality of his work, to the purposes it would serve, and to the appreciation of it by others. This was the source of his power and success. He would tolerate no inferior work. If it did not come up to his idea of what it should be, he would take up his stick, break the vessel, and throw it away, saying, "This won't do for Josiah Wedgewood!"

Of course he took the greatest care to insure perfection, as regarded geometrical proportions, glaze, form, and ornament. He pulled down kiln after kiln to effect some necessary improvement. He learned perfection through repeated failures. He invented and improved almost every tool used in his works. He passed much of his time at the bench

* F. R. Conder, C. E., in "Good Words."

beside his workmen, instructing them individually. How he succeeded his works will show.

Another instance of true honesty and courage may be mentioned in the case of a great contractor. We mean Thomas Brassey. Even when scamping was common, he was always true to his word and work. The Barentin viaduct of twenty-seven arches was nearly completed, when, loaded with wet after a heavy fall of rain, the whole building tumbled down. The casualty involved a loss of £30,000. The contractor was neither morally nor legally responsible. He had repeatedly protested against the material used in the structure, and the French lawyers maintained that his protest freed him from liability. But Mr. Brassey was of a different opinion. He had contracted, he said, to make and maintain the road, and no law should prevent him from being as good as his word. The viaduct was rebuilt at Mr. Brassey's cost. His life is one of the highest examples we can offer to this generation.

We have had good times and bad times; but the result is always the same. We take little thought of the future. We only economize when we have no more money to spend upon selfish gratifications. An employer at Bradford recently said, "Some five or six years ago we were in a state of great commercial prosperity. It almost carried the trading classes off their heads. Everybody was becoming rapidly rich, and so bent were they on amassing money, that they seemed to think there would be no end to it. The working classes joined in the prosperity, and they lost their heads as well as those above them. They struck for higher wages, and for a time they got what they desired. They limited production, and urged that the fewer hours they worked, the more money they would get for their labor, and the better they would be off. But then came the period of depression, and no efforts of strikes or unions could stave it off." He urged upon the workmen that if they wished to see a return to better times, they must honestly and faithfully do their duty, and alter their present manner of doing slippery work, and doing as little as possible for their money.

At a conference of working men in Edinburgh, one of

the speakers upheld the advantages of strikes. "My theory is," he said, "work as little as you possibly can, and get as high a wage as you possibly can." This theory, if worked out, would produce the entire demoralization of labor; it would make it idle, inefficient, and disloyal. Another speaker took an opposite view. He said, "the existence of unions for the purpose of striking was immoral in the extreme. The other day he was going along a street in Edinburgh, when he met a man walking very slowly and easily along. A boy passing said to him, 'You're taking it very easy the day.' 'It's my master's time,' said the man. The man," he added, "had the idea forced into him that by the striking system the master's injury was their benefit; and the effect of the whole system was, that *a piece of work well done* could not be got."

It would be well if the working men could be got to see the position in which they actually stand. They are now competing with the working men all over the Continent and in America. It used to be supposed that the superiority of English labor would overcome all foreign competition. Whatever it may have once been, this is now an utter fallacy. The foreigners have all the advantages of our best machinery, with the latest improvements. They now manufacture machines for themselves. They have learned to work as fast and as well as English operatives. They work on Sunday and Saturday alike. In France they work 72 hours a week, while in this country they work only 56 hours a week. And the wages of the foreign artisans are about 25 per cent less than those in England. The English work turned out is not so good and honest as that of France. How can we maintain competition in the face of these facts? The French and German cotton manufactures come into England free, while ours cannot get into French and German ports without high prohibitive duties. We have lost the monopoly of the trade which we once possessed, and it is not likely that we can ever regain it. Our cotton trade will soon be confined to home supply; and if the articles are not made good and cheap, they will be driven out of use by

the French and American fabrics. It will be the same with every other product.

Mr. Holyoake spoke in the right spirit when he rebuked the mistakes of unionism, and expressed his opinion—no doubt that of the *elite* of the working classes—as to the duty of sympathy and sincerity between master and man. "Recalling to my recollection," he said, "fourteen years' experience as a workman, I say now that where I secured wages for eight hours' daily labor, which would supply a moderate competence before the strength of life was spent, and was I left at liberty to produce the best work I could, so that my pride and taste and character should be in my handicraft, and I had a reasonable assurance of continuing in my situation while I discharged my duties in good faith, I should now prefer that state to any other. I should be the friend of the master; his fame would be my pride, his interests mine. He would have the care and the profit which is the honest due of care, and I should have content and leisure for learning and study."

This nation, no doubt, possessses the best material in the world. We have men who are willing to work and able to work. But we want good work, not scamped work. We have strikers against receiving low wages; but we have no strikers against doing bad work. It is better work, not longer hours, that is wanted. It is dishonest and insincere labor that is discrediting English articles in all of the great markets of the world. "Work," again says Mr. Holyoake, "has small pleasure, because it has little pride. It ought to be impossible for employers to find men who will execute shabby work. It is a sort of crime against the honor of industry, a fraud by connivance upon the purchaser. Nothing shows more plainly the state of honor in artisanship than the fact that we have all sorts of trade unions to come to the support of a man who refuses low wages, but not one union professedly to succor a man who refuses to do dishonest work." Let such a system continue, and all the science and art schools in the world could not maintain England as a great commercial country.

The same cry comes to us from America. The truth of

the proverbial saying, "There is no God west of the Missouri," is everywhere manifest. The almighty dollar is the true divinity, and its worship is universal. A Sacramento paper says that "Americans are a money-loving and money-making people. They have no queen or aristocracy to rule them; their aristocracy is money. The lust of wealth overrides every other consideration. Fraud in trade is the rule instead of the exception. We poison our provisions with adulteration. We even poison our drugs with cheaper materials. We sell shoddy for wool. We sell veneering for solid wood. We build wretched sheds of bad brick and bad mortar and green wood, and call them houses. We rob and cheat each other all round, and in every trade and business, and we are all so bent on making money that we have not time to protest against even the more palpable frauds, but console ourselves by going forth and swindling somebody else. We pay a very heavy price for our national idiosyncrasy. We are rapidly destroying our national sense of honesty and integrity. In those benighted and slavish countries which are ruled by monarchs they contrive to live a great deal cheaper and a good deal better than we can. There fraud is regarded as criminal, and the impostor, when detected, is punished severely. But those are old fogy countries, who know nothing about liberty. They have no Fourth of July, no Wall Street, no codfish or shoddy aristocracies. They do not recognize the fact that the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (which means money), entitles every man to cheat his neighbors, and bars redress."

Strange to say, the Americans are beginning to think that the badness of work, and the unwillingness to do good work, is, to a certain extent, the outcome of the common school system. Everybody is so well educated that he is above doing manual labor. There are no American apprentices, and no American servants. We do not speak without authority. A writer in *Scibner's Monthly* says "that the Americans make a god of their common school system. It is treason to speak a word against it. A man is regarded as a foe to education who expresses any doubt