

## TRUTH—A WORD TO BUSINESS MEN.

Examples of the decline of honesty are so commonly afforded in trade, and in the ordinary transactions of daily life, that they come within the experience of every one of us. From time to time there are exposures of jobbery and ill-concealed dishonesty in the administration of public affairs. When the exposure is made we are justly severe in our censure; and we denounce corruption in well-rounded sentences. But it would be more profitable and more to the purpose to come closer home with our investigations.

Our ancestors had a good old-fashioned virtue which they called Honour. It was a great favourite with them, and they were never tired of singing its praises. They were very proud of it; and a poet went so far in a fit of enthusiasm as to declare that "an honest man is the noblest work of God." What has now become of this virtue? It had been in use a long time, but it could not have been positively worn out. It was of good lasting material, and ought to have served a good many generations yet to come; but really it seems to have been cast aside and lost. Certainly it has gone out as a fashion. Little by little we have lost that quality which was the bond of social intercourse and success in trade. Deterioration in the tone of society strikes all observers. The social cords are relaxed, and Society is ready to give a "hail-fellow-well-met" sort of reception to all and sundry, whatever their antecedents.

Mr. Gladstone, in one of his writings, notes "a depression of the standard of conduct within the very highest circles of society," and points especially to one proof of it, the decline in "conjugal morality." The same applies to bankruptcy. Time was when a bankrupt lost his social standing. Even his misfortunes were held to be a possible reflection on his honesty. This was hard, but we have assuredly got to the other extreme, now that bankruptcy causes but little stigma, and there is every toleration for the man who "goes," if he only goes for a sufficiently large sum.

Bankruptcy is regarded too, as a sort of short cut to wealth, and as indicating a certain sharpness on the part of the bankrupt in having got so much credit, and played his cards so well as to have fleeced his creditors for a good round amount. He "gets through" with a fatal facility, goes into temporary economy, reappears on the scene with renovated plumes, is received in "society," has the credit of having passed with the payment of the smallest dividend ever declared in the community, and carries everything before him more brilliantly than ever.

How difficult it is to get anything "good" at an ordinary store. Lowness of price is so confounded with cheapness that it is difficult to distinguish the one from the other. A lady goes to a store to buy silk—it is half cotton, or some other fibre almost impossible to detect; she wants calico—it is half "dressing"; flannel—it washes to a cobweb; a spool of cotton—it is marked "50 yards" and really contains twenty; and so on throughout.

With reference to the adulteration of Manchester goods, we find the following in a late exchange:—

"Not very long ago the Manchester Chamber of Commerce waxed virtuously indignant over a report from the British Consul at Chefoo, China, to the effect that a bad name attaches to Manchester goods among the Chinese consequent on the attempts "to sell glue as cloth." This refers to the practice of "heavy sizing" cotton goods, said to be now largely resorted to by unscrupulous manufacturers in order to increase the weight of goods. Recent investigations into the composition of some of these adulterated fabrics show that only 56½ per cent. of the whole is pure cloth, the remainder consisting of China-clay and chlorides of magnesium and zinc. "Pure" goods contain from 5 to 7 per cent. of size."

In furniture shops things are "blown" together, and fall to pieces with the swelling of the green wood or on the slightest wear. Then, again, look at the adulteration in food and drink, even to our milk. And as in quality so also is there deterioration of quantity; the quart bottle has dwindled down to a pint; and it holds good in all trades—the secret of cheap jams, marmalade, &c., will often be found in the pot, which has a goodly outside but holds next to nothing. How drugs are adulterated has often been exposed, and one of the most recent complaints is of "boiled seeds"—that is to say, when you buy any seeds for your garden you get a few sound seeds and the rest may be withered old things boiled up to plumpness but of course having no life in them.

Will not our housewives bear testimony how the largest eggs are invariably invested with the honour of being the specimens, and how the strawberry-box has so dwindled that the large berries can scarcely be got into them.

From Nova Scotia we have a report of a "difficulty" with the fruit-growers, complaining of the packing of apples. "There would be a row of good apples at the bottom and two rows at the top, the intervening space being filled with inferior apples." Of course there are many thoroughly honest, upright fruit-growers, on whose word perfect reliance may be placed; but they have been made to suffer through the dishonesty of others. Not the least part of the wickedness is that it has been carried to such an extent that the reputation of a whole country-side has been destroyed, and at the same time it has inflicted severe pecuniary loss upon honest men.

Frauds upon the revenue are of course accounted as fair game. The numerous manufactories of illicit spirits cannot be carried on without a considerable number of persons being in the secret. All these persons must be

aware that they break the laws of God and man, and yet the great concern with them is to keep their secret hidden and to make money by it.

Of the same character, though perhaps not so pernicious in its consequences, is the crime of smuggling any kind of goods. The offence of the smuggler is really and truly a sin as well as a crime. Common honesty revolts against "cheating the revenue" as much as against cheating your neighbour. Indeed in robbing the revenue you do rob all your neighbours.

A "modern instance" of a peculiar kind of dishonesty may be mentioned,—it has happened within the past fortnight that an illustrated journal in this city has made the portrait of Costofrolaz (who was hanged over a year ago for the murder at Lacolle) do duty to represent "Pere Sansfaçon" in its *feuilleton*.

But we need not multiply examples. The thing to be deplored is the widespread degeneration which renders these things possible. Thus it goes on from bad to worse. The moral bulwarks are broken down, and the floods of iniquity threaten to rise and overwhelm society.

It is a perilous thing that men live lies, and substitute knaveries in place of the simple, honest, God-fearing lives their fathers lived. But so it is. We have drifted into it, and must take the consequences. We are fast beginning to lose our faith in human nature; men look right and left, not in hope, and trust, and generous confidence, but askance in distrust each of his neighbours; anything will be believed without or even against evidence, if it be only bad enough.

As surely as the law of gravitation controls the fall of the apple from the tree, the moral law will find out with its penalty, the man who steals, or robs, or cheats, or lies.

*Quevedo Redivivus.*

## "THE SITUATION."

The great problem of domestic service is not one that can be fully treated in a short space. Whatever touches on home-life is always of the greatest importance, and whatever tends to throw light and beauty into the household, must be welcomed by all thoughtful men and women. Servants fill a very necessary and important part in this home-life, and however much they may be grumbled at, they can't be done without. With fear and almost trembling, I would suggest, may there not be something wrong in the households as well as in the servants? Our dearest (?) friends see only the best side of all our affairs. Even if called on at unseasonable hours or when worried with cares, we find it possible to be polite, smile and seem pleased, and thus make the best of it. And when we invite a friend to stay with us, do we not make up our minds to "let things go" for the time, that the "skeleton in the cupboard" may not show its repulsive form in their presence? These are our friends, educated, cultivated, refined, and on a social scale, equal at least to our own, and yet we feel we can't trust them with the true knowledge of ourselves and our household life. Now think of the delicate position of a household servant and the amount of trust we must repose in her—a stranger, not our social equal, and without the advantages or refinement and education which our friends have. She is not long in the house till she has gauged the dispositions and tempers of the inhabitants, knows many of its troubles and where the hitches occur, and yet she must be wise and prudent and guide her behaviour as though she saw not these things, and do her duty with respect to all. If she has no natural intuition or delicacy of feeling, what wonder that ceasing to respect she becomes disrespectful, and goes on from bad to worse, till she "gives up her place" or is dismissed.

No: we must not expect more in this way from a servant than we would ask from a friend, our equal. It would be better if we could trust fully, both our friends and our servants, and have neither servants nor friends that we can't trust. If we are not over-wealthy, don't let us try to hide it from those who must sooner or later see the fact for themselves. Economy need not make us mean either in thought or act. It is right, even when there is great wealth, to see that there is no waste or needless extravagance. If temper is what troubles the house, the means of relief are within our grasp,—struggle with it till it is conquered. Let the object of our life be, to live as politely, considerately and friendly before our servants as before our friends, and thus give them the privilege of seeing and mixing with good society till they rise to its level, which the good ones will do in a short time. Respect finds an outlet in work well done. The desire to be able to please becomes strong, and the household begins to move easily and in harmony, the oil of mutual love preventing danger from friction. No amount of wages will assure us of a good servant, for money cannot buy the link that stretches easily between mistress and maid, therefore we do owe our servants gratitude and thanks indefinitely of all we supply them with besides.

Our household servants are not drawn from the same class as most of the clerks, &c., belong to, who fill positions in our offices and stores. These as a rule are our own sons and those of Mr. Brown and Mr. Jones, who are learning the business. But our daughters are not, if we know it, the cooks and housemaids or nurse-girls of Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Jones, so that there can be little comparison between the men who work in business and the women