

Truth's Contributors.

TRUTH.

BY JOHN WADDELL.

The inscription by which your excellent journal is designated suggests to its readers that truth may be considered in two different points of view—logical truth, which consists in the conformity of an assertion with the actual state of things; and moral truth, which consists in the agreement of our words and actions with our thoughts. Logical truth belongs to the thing or fact asserted; moral truth is termed veracity, has a reference to the person who utters it. In both these respects, truth is of immense importance; it is the bond of society and intercourse which subsists among rational beings. The greater part of all the knowledge we possess, has been derived from the testimony of others. It is from the communication of others and from a reliance on their veracity, that those who were never beyond the limits of the Dominion of Canada, know that there are such cities as Washington, London, Paris, Vienna, Constantinople, and Cairo; and that there are such countries as the United States of America, England, Peru, Persia, China, and Hindostan. It is from the same source that we have learned the facts of ancient and modern history, and that there once existed such empires as the Greek and Roman, the Persian, Assyrian, and Babylonian. On the same ground, the veracity of others, we confide in all the domestic relations and intercourse of life, and on this ground all the transactions of commercial society, and all the arrangements and operations of Government are conducted. On the implied veracity of others, we retire from our employments at certain hours, and sit down to breakfast or dinner; and, on the first day of the week, we assemble in a certain place at an appointed hour, for religious worship. On this ground the pupil confides in his teacher for instruction; the child in his parents for sustenance, clothing and protection; the master in his servant for the execution of his orders; and the wife in her husband for provision and support. We confide every moment in the faithfulness of the Almighty for the regular return of day and night, of summer and winter, of seedtime and harvest. Could the veracity of God be impeached or rendered liable to suspicion, we should remain in awful suspense; whether another day would again dawn upon the world, or whether the earth would be shattered to pieces, and its fragments dispersed throughout surrounding worlds, before the sun again appeared in the horizon. A Being possessed of boundless knowledge and omnipotence, without veracity, would be the terror of the whole intelligent universe.

It appears that truth is of the utmost importance to all rational beings, as it forms the source of our knowledge, the foundation of our intercourse, the basis of all the views we can take of the Divine character, and of all our prospects of future improvement in the eternal world. It is the bond of union among all the inhabitants of heaven; it is the chain which connects the whole moral universe; and constitutes the immutable basis on which rests the throne of the Eternal.

In depraved society truth is violated in a thousand ways. It is violated in thoughts, in words, in conversation, in oral discourses, in writings, in printed books, by gestures, and by signs, by speaking, and by remaining silent, by raking up with a malevolent

design any action which the party has long since repudiated and repented of. It is violated when we promise, either what we have no intention of performing, or what we had no right to promise, or what was out of our power to perform, or what would be unlawful for us to execute. It is violated in threatenings, when we neglect to put them in execution, or we threaten to inflict what would be either cruel or unjust. It is violated in history, when the principal facts are blended with doubtful, or fictitious circumstances; when the conduct of liars and intriguers, of public robbers and murderers, is varnished over with the false glare of heroism and glory; and when the actions of upright men are, without sufficient evidence, attributed to knavery, or to the influence of fanaticism; when the writer construes actions and events and attributes to the actor's motives and designs in accordance with his own prejudices and passions, and interweaves his opinions and deductions, as if they were a portion of the authenticated records of historical fact. When disputants bring forward arguments in support of any position which they are conscious is unsound; when they appear more anxious to display their skill and dexterity, and to obtain a victory over their adversaries, than to vindicate the cause of truth; when sneers, and sarcasms, and personal reproaches are substituted in the room of substantial arguments; when they misrepresent the sentiments of their opponents, by stating them in terms which materially alter their meaning; and when they palm upon them the opinions which they entirely disavow.

The mischiefs and miseries which have followed the violation of the law of truth in reference to the affairs of nations, to the private interests of societies, families, and individuals, and the everlasting concerns of mankind, are dreadful beyond description. It has been chiefly owing to the violation of this law, that the thrones of tyrants have been destroyed, that public safety and happiness have been overturned, that nations have been dashed one against another; and that war has produced among the human race so many overwhelming desolations. By the perniciousness of falsehood the peace of families has been invaded; their comforts blasted, their good name dishonored, their wealth destroyed, their hopes disappointed. By the sophistry of unprincipled men, literature and science have been perverted; litigations have been multiplied without number; human beings have been agitated, perplexed, and bewildered, and the widows and fatherless oppressed and robbed of their dearest enjoyments. Could we search the private records of ancient kings, princes, and legislators, and trace the deceitful plans which have been laid in palaces, vice-regal halls and cabinets—or could we penetrate into all the intrigues, deceptions, treacheries, plots, and machinations, which are going forward in the cabinets of despots, the mansions of princes, presidents, and viceroys, and the courts of law, throughout Europe, Africa, Asia, the United States of America, and the Dominion of Canada; such a host of falsehoods, and lying abominations, like an army of spectres from the infernal regions would stare us in the face, as would fill us with astonishment, and make us shrink back with horror and amazement.

Were the love of truth universally cherished, what a mighty change would be effected in the condition of mankind, and what a glorious radiance would be diffused over all the movements of the intelligent system! The whole host of liars, perjurers, sharpers, seducers, slanderers, tale-bearers, quacks,

thieves, swindlers, fraudulent dealers, false friends, flatterers, corrupt judges, despots, sophists, hypocrites, and religious impostors, with the countless multitude of frauds, treacheries, impositions, falsehoods, and distresses, which have followed in their train, would instantly disappear from among men. Confidence would be restored throughout every department of social life; jealousy, suspicion, and distrust would no longer rankle in the human breast; and unfeigned affection, fidelity, and friendship would unite the whole brotherhood of mankind. With what simplicity, and what smoothness and harmony, would the political world and the world of trade move onward in all its transactions! Truth irradiating every mind, would dispel doubt, error, and perplexity, from the inhabitants of this world; and unite man to man and man to God.

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CONVERSATION.

BY THE REV. E. A. STAFFORD A. B. PASTOR OF THE METROPOLITAN CHURCH.

Is conversation doomed to become a lost art? Some indications seem to point in that direction. It is certain that many a dear hostess is at this hour in much perplexity as to the manner in which she will entertain her guests, so as to make them feel at home with herself and each other, and yet not offend either the varied tastes, or the no less varied consciences of any. It is probable that no one feels that any recognized method is absolutely perfect. The musical evening, the supper party, or the ball, does not touch everywhere with equal ease. What a pity that some leader in social life could not open a vein from which exhaustless wealth might be drawn to relieve the stress in this line.

Is not the art of conversation, developed in a high degree, the relief which is needed? The answer would undoubtedly be in the affirmative, were it not that it is the exception for any lady to bring her guests together and expect them to entertain themselves by their own conversation. The thought of such a thing brings to her mind the vision of a dreary circle of people, arranged around her walls in helpless silence, the whole company weighed down in abject fear, like some anniversary meeting, gathered together of uncongenial elements, in a too solemn church, when no cheer or speaker can rise above the suffocating oppressive ness. The memory of one such company, and the fruitless efforts of this kind, but exhausted hostess, to make a break in the forbidding, well guarded lines, will live on until the very mention of company haunts one like a nightmare.

Now this ought not so to be, and the less as it is easily within reach of a thorough remedy. I have spoken of conversation as a lost art; I had done better if I had said an art never yet cultivated, for this is the fact. When a baby has learned to talk, and, to this accomplishment, a few years later, some lessons in the elements of English grammar are added, we have all that is ever done to draw out the faculties of any one along the line of conversation. Yet it is likely that, except those who have absolutely no musical faculty, people come by nature, as near to perfection in musical art as they do to perfection in the art of conversation. Certainly the former is capable of being carried to greater heights, and developed along more widely diverging lines, but without special cultivation conversation will fall as helpless and powerless, except in a few cases rarely favored by nature, as music would if wholly neglected. No one thinks of leaving

music just to grow up of itself. Why expect the art of conversation to do so?

But the question will start up, where and how should it be taught? The schools are already overburdened with subjects. There is no room to bring in a new department of high culture. Well now it is just possible that even the greatly crowded curriculum of the schools might allow them to do something more than they do, though every recitation is in some sense a discipline in clear expression.

But beyond a doubt social life is the natural and great school of conversation. It is to blame, and open to a grave indictment for encouraging conversation to run down into mere exchange of a commonplace words, about the most commonplace things, instead of rising into the white heat of healthful excitement over subjects of deep and universal interest. Society has practically abandoned this field, which, of all fields, is peculiarly its own.

Now, everybody admires the person who has the power to hold a company under the charm of his words in colloquial discourse. Instead of such persons being the exception they might be the rule. These did not leap at a bound to their distinguished pre-eminence in this particular. Their grace is the last finishing touch put upon a high art. The elements which enter into this art admit of easy analysis. Mentioned in the order of their influence in thrusting one forward in the entertainment of others, they stand something like the following:

The person will be a good listener. Respect for what others say is about the best introduction which a stranger can have for what he is going to say himself. Self-possession will enable one who speaks to grow upon the attention of his listeners. Without it, in a reasonable measure, when one finds his own voice the only distinct sound in a company, the thoughts which before were clear to his mind will become confused; and after struggling along in growing mistiness for a time, he will hurry under cover of silence. But, of course, in all discourse the operator's trump card must be something to say. Though this might seem the most difficult part of the qualification it is actually about the most easy. A bashful boy, for the first time away from his father's house, a teacher of a small school among strangers, boarded in a house where were three young ladies, and suffered unspeakable agonies for want of something to say. He spent his first earned money in paying for *Harper's Weekly*, a paper at that time just beginning its career. In this the diffident youth found stories and anecdotes, and facts and politics, and he could always draw upon any of these when in the throes of his effort to do his part in the talk at table or elsewhere. He was surprised at the ease with which he could remember and repeat anything which he wished to present. The experience did more than anything else in his life to give him command of himself, and a ready supply of illustrative anecdotes, while at the same time it taught him the habit of noticing and remembering what he read. If people had conversation in view, the life of each day would be found to be full of incident, and even of novelties well worth repeating. These things always seem larger in the telling than they do when looking upon them. To find something to say is easy indeed if one cares to make himself interesting to his friends. Certainly the more versatile one has the more interesting he will become. Brief, pithy anecdotes will hold away anywhere if well told. It is fashionable to ridicule anecdote as not consistent with the