

Honesty - Spoken June 2^d 1857

Pope calls the honest man the noblest work of God, but this illy compares with our narrow views in this matter. For we think we are awarding but a small medal of praise to a man when we call him honest - I think must be then either some higher meaning attached to this word or our ideas of nobleness have greatly changed - Is there not some higher, broader, deeper, truer meaning attachable to the word honesty - To find this higher meaning which the poet had in view, we must search the word close & scan more narrowly the workings of the human heart - True honesty is a principle that dwells in the heart - There may be honesty in action when there is none in the heart, but it can never exist in the heart without being manifested in the actions - Hence arises the need of so much caution in judgment before we can pronounce on the honesty of a man's character - Many men the gods of honesty elevate the muse, blind of their pride & selfishness - Many too in their search for that tangle, jam, into themselves in their quest - Many more try to shelter themselves beneath it, from the force & scourge of a relentless law - There remains but few in whom honesty in action is a type of honesty in principle - These, as all will admit are the only ones to whom the name comes deservedly -

It will be seen then that we are not cautious enough to whom we apply the name honest. It is not by a single action that a man proves himself honest, but only by a long series of such actions, under widely differing circumstances & all sorts of influences - As a general thing we can readily distinguish between a genuine & counterfeit honesty, inasmuch as the one presents us with a steadily ascending, the other with a vacillating course - These latter honest only from selfish motives, will be honest only when their selfish ends are to be attained - Such honesty is a curse to its possessor, he is never at ease for there is no

essarily a conflict continually going on in his breast - for he is trying to build a reputation when he has no foundation for it. He is necessarily thrown into trepidation at every rising storm of trial & sooner or later at some less quarrel enormous, a sudden bursting storm will prostrate the baseless fabric of the vile impost - But turn now to the truly honest man, he stands forth in the nobleness of his principals as on a basis of adamant around which the bursting storms of life may fret among their fury in futile assaults, which only serve to display their own comparative weakness - This man knows of what his foundation is composed - he feels assured, that through the earth's might or hurled from warring orbits & shivered to atoms, yet the pillars of truth can never be shaken one jot from their immovable basis - Hence how peaceful the honest man's life - he can laugh to scorn the howlings of the tempest, for ever oves the bright bow of promise span the horizon of his vision - Such men are few indeed & our wonder, seeing that honesty is held in so low repute - The pen of the historian is usually busied in portraying the martial achievements of some warrior chieftain or the political intrigues of some witty statesman & seldom finds so worthy a theme - but the honest man passes unremembered & unwept to the tribunal & presence of his God where alone worth is truly appreciated & more clearly