

AN AMERICAN CITIZEN.

THE LATE HENRY L. PIERCE.



WHEN the Hon. Henry L. Pierce was mayor of Boston, Wendell Phillips said: «If Diogenes were to come to Boston in search of an honest man, he would find him in the mayor's chair.» The mayor of Boston is nearly always an honest man; but neither the modern Diogenes nor the ancient one meant that kind of honesty. There is the honesty of the street and the exchange, the conventional honesty of society and of the day, the honesty that flows from good training and environment; but it was not for this that Diogenes searched Athens with a lantern.

There is also the honesty that comes from the way in which a man is put together—every part framed for the specific purpose of securing honesty; conscience, intellect, tastes, all so shaped and combined and informed that the constant action and expression of his nature is honesty as the natural and necessary product of the man. If he is a man of force, the force will be recognized not as energy, but as honesty. If he is a man of feeling, his honesty will be a passion that nothing can overcome. If he is a man of both force and feeling, you have the man whom Diogenes could not find, but Wendell Phillips did.

During the past year three such men have died in Massachusetts—Ex-Governor William E. Russell, General Francis A. Walker, and the Hon. Henry L. Pierce. The first, «dead ere his prime,» but showed what he was: a man built on this model of honesty. The second was a great publicist in whom the soldier, the scholar, and the fearless thinker were united on the groundwork of native, thoroughgoing honesty. The last lacked some things that graced and strengthened the others; but he had in even greater degree what might be called a genius for honesty. When he died last December, at the age of seventy-two, he surprised Boston by leaving a will which distributed well-nigh a million dollars among the leading institutions and charities of that city. Mr. Pierce had not been in the public service for several years; his later life was devoted to a narrow circle of friends, and to his business as a manufacturer of chocolate under a well-known name. The business was known to be large and remunerative, but it was unattended by

those startling signs common to wealth at the present day. Age had crept upon him, and so it happened that to the present generation he was but slightly known, and his bequests left the impression with most that he was simply a generous man of wealth who had given back to the public in wise ways what he had drawn from it.

The opinion is a meager one, and in that respect unjust. His bequests, indeed, revealed his generosity; but they did not reveal the proportions or the leading characteristics of the man. They were more than generous, and more than wise in the prudential sense: they were full of love and pity and justice. More than three millions were devised; and if the gifts were to be classified according to their objects, they would bear witness to a character of uncommon breadth and rare nobility. Great sums were bequeathed to relatives, for the blood in his veins was thicker than water; large sums were given as a tribute to friendship, and like sums to all those who had coöperated with him in conducting his business—gifts of love, after all claims of justice had been more than satisfied year by year. Most indicative of all was the distribution of fifty thousand dollars among his five hundred employees, so that not one was left without a token of friendship, which, however, had always been shown by generous wages and by the utmost consideration for individual needs. It is true that the business had been profitable, and could afford unusual generosity in the treatment of agents and workmen; but it was profitable because he drew all the intelligence of his associates into oneness with his own, and so multiplied himself in every department of it. This generosity, however, was not a price paid for fidelity, but was a natural expression of a generous and just heart, and was felt to be such. On both sides the business was conducted on principles considerably above those which are termed the laws of the business world. The student of economics may scoff, but when five hundred men in these days bury an employer with tears and universal sorrow, it shows that something more than the law of demand and supply had entered into the relation between them. There were three factors that contributed to this success, and the last is not least: a broad and thorough knowledge

of business, a cherished preference to «make a good article rather than to make money,» and a profound and practical sympathy with every person in his service.

The bequests made to public institutions reveal another side of his character. The sums are not surprisingly great, but the objects are of such a nature, and the amounts are so graded, as to indicate not only the proportions of his character, but, taken together, they reveal the strong points in it. Beginning logically with Harvard University as lying at the base of true civic life, they are distributed among twenty institutions that fairly represent the humanity, culture, and civilization of modern society. There are no signs of partiality, but only of breadth and comprehensiveness. The bequests made to six churches in his immediate neighborhood, ranging from Roman Catholic to Unitarian, indicate his unwillingness to discriminate between them, and his sense of the value of instituted religion in municipal life. The estate of four hundred acres at the foot of the Blue Hills, his resting-place and playground for nearly half a century, ultimately goes to the city as a park. He never married, but ten of his bequests are to institutions for the homeless and for children. The residue of his estate is to be divided between education, art, and hospitals—knowledge, truth, and mercy, the trinity of civic faith, in which he fully believed. The city to which these bequests are made will not fail to see in them the marks of a large-hearted and wise citizen; and the more discerning will find in his business career proofs that the relations between employer and employed can add humanity to a law of wages, and profit thereby.

But these estimates do scant justice to the man. The prime trait of Mr. Pierce was the heroic character of his honesty in civic affairs. He was trained in that school of public life which regarded slavery not only in the light of humanity, but of political

order. When still a young man he bore a part in forming the Free-soil party; and from that day to the close of his life his record was one of absolute incorruptibility and continual protest against political dishonesty. In Congress and out, in the mayor's chair and as a private citizen (when his influence was not less than while in office), he was the unceasing enemy of all jobbery and dicker-ing and barter of principles for party success. He was not rated a good party man, and yet he was the best. He was loyal to party, and yet was superior to it. He held principles as first, and measures as under them; when they seemed to conflict he instantly asserted «the divine right to bolt.» He was a citizen of the higher order, and of that type in which conscience is supreme. He believed in Burke's great word, that «justice is itself the great standing policy of civil society, and any departure from it, under any circumstances, lies under the suspicion of being no policy at all.»

It is refreshing in these days, when one man owns a legislature whose majority hold their seats by the most degrading form of bribery ever devised, and have prostituted government into a machine that rules by blackmail, to turn our eyes for a moment from such a sight to a man who would not delegate his conscience nor his manhood to another; who could not be led by friendship, nor by party, nor by abuse to countenance injustice; a man who could not be frightened or deceived or bought by any sort of price, but stood, as if one with it, on the rock of simple honesty. There are few men of the day who could so well use the words of the Homeric hero: «I hate as the gates of hell the man who says one thing with his lips and hides another in his heart»—an inscription which we commend as fit to be placed over the gates of all cities, either those to be built, or those undergoing the process of reorganization.

T. T. Munger.

«AT REST.»

UPON a hillside where the sea
Enfolds a rocky Northern isle,
Her lone grave nestles in the lee
Of sunset's vauge, withdrawing smile.

The late wild roses bend to frame
Their sleeping sister's last bequest—
Only her simple woman's name:
The legend on her stone, «At Rest.»

The gull's wild welcome to the dawn,
The wren's near song, encircle her;
White ships troop noiseless and are gone;
Deep falls the shadow of the fir.

How oft 'mid toil and mockery,
Long leagues from that assurance blest,
Envy and pity strive with me
For her transporting fate, «At Rest!»

Martha Gilbert Dickinson.