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The WAY to WEALTH,

As clearly shewn in the Preface of an old Penitentiarian Almanack, intituled, *Poor Richard Improved*,
Written by Dr. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. Extracted from the Doctor's Political Works.

COURTIOUS READER,
I HAVE heard that nothing gives an author so great pleasure as to find his works respectfully quoted by others. Judges, then, how much I must have been gratified by an incident I am going to relate to you. I stopped my horse lately, where a great number of people were collected at an auction of merchants goods. The hour of sale not being come, they were conversing on the badness of the times, and one of the company called to a plain, clean, old man, with white locks.

"Pray, *Father Abraham*, what think you of the times? Will not these heavy taxes quite ruin the country? How shall we be ever able to pay them? What would you advise us to?"
"Father Abraham stood up, and replied, 'If you would have my advice, I will give it you in short, for 'A word to the wise is enough,' as *Poor Richard* says. They joined in desiring him to speak his mind, and gathering round him he proceeded as follows:

"FRIENDS, says he, 'the taxes are indeed very heavy; and if those laid on by the government were the only ones we had to pay, we might more easily discharge them, but we have many others, and much more grievous to some of us. We are taxed twice as much by our idleness, three times as much by our pride, and four times as much by our folly, and from these taxes the commission-ers cannot ease or deliver us, by allowing an abatement. However, let us hearken to good advice, and something may be done for us; 'God helps them that help themselves,' as *Poor Richard* says.

"I. 'It would be thought a hard government that should tax its people one-tenth part of their time to be employed in its service; but idleness taxes many of us much more, by bringing on diseases, laziness, and a faster than labour wears, while that idle key is always bright,' as *Poor Richard* says. 'But do not thou lose life, then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of,' as *Poor Richard* says. How much more than is necessary do we spend in sleep, forgetting that 'The sleeping fox catches no poultry,' and that there will be sleeping enough in the grave,' as *Poor Richard* says. 'If time be of all things the most precious, wasting time must be,' as *Poor Richard* says, 'the greatest prodigality;' hence, as he elsewhere tells us, 'Lost time is never found again; and what we call time enough, always proves little enough.' Let us then be up and be doing, and doing to the purpose; for by diligence we shall do more with less perplexity. 'Sloth makes all things difficult, but industry all easy; and he that is rich last, must toil all night, and shall forever overtake his business at night, while laziness travels so slowly, that poverty soon overtakes him. Drive thy business, let not that drive thee; and early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise,' as *Poor Richard* says.

"So what signifies wishing and hoping for better times; we may make these times better, if we better ourselves. 'Industry need not wish, and he that lives upon hope will die fasting. There are no gains without pains; then help hands, for I have no lands,' or, if I have, they are finarly taxed. 'He that hath a trade, hath an estate; and he that hath a calling, hath an office of profit and honour,' as *Poor Richard* says; but then the trade must be worked at, and the calling well followed, or neither the estate nor the office will enable us to pay our taxes. 'If we are indolent, we shall never flourish; for, 'at the working man's house hunger looks in, but dares not enter.' Nor will the ballif or the constable enter, for, 'A lazy man's debts, while despair excites, catch them.' What though you have found no treasure, nor has any rich relation left you a legacy, 'Diligence is the mother of good luck, and God gives all things to industry; then plough deep, while sluggards sleep,

[* Dr. Franklin, writing to collect into one piece all the sayings upon the following subjects, which he had dropped in the course of publishing the Almanack called *Poor Richard*; introduces *Father Abraham* for this purpose. Hence it is that *Poor Richard* is often quoted, and that in the present title, he is said to be improved. — *Newspaper* the *Review of America* in the concluding paragraph of this address, *Poor Richard* (*Saunders*) and *Father Abraham* have proved in America, that they are no common characters. And that we, brother Englishmen, receive good lessons in saving knowledge, because it comes from the other side of the water.]

"and you shall have corn to sell and to keep." Work while it is called to-day, for you know not how much you may be hindered to-morrow. 'One today is worth two to-morrow,' as *Poor Richard* says; and farther, 'Never leave that till to-morrow which you can do to-day.' — If you were a servant, would you not be ashamed that a good master should catch you idle? Are you then your own master? Be ashamed to catch yourself idle, when there is so much to be done for yourself, your family, your country, and your king. Handle your tools without mittens; remember, that the cat in gloves catches no mice,' as *Poor Richard* says. It is true there is much to be done, and perhaps you are weak handed, but stick to it steadily, and you will see great effects; for 'Constant dropping wears away stones; and by diligence and patience the mouse ate in two the cable; and little strokes fell great oaks.' 'Methinks I hear some of you say, 'Must a man affront himself no leisure?' I will tell thee, my friend, what *Poor Richard* says. 'Employ thy time well, if thou meanest to gain leisure, and, since thou art not free of a minute, throw not away an hour.' Leisure is time for doing something useful; this leisure the diligent man will obtain, but the lazy man never, for 'A life of leisure, and a life of laziness are two things. Many without labour would live by their wits only, but they break for want of stock;' whereas industry giveth comfort and plenty, and respect. 'Fly pleasures and they will follow you. The diligent spinner has a large fluff; and now I have a sheep and a cow, every body bids me good morrow."

II. 'But with our industry we must likewise be steady, settled, and careful, and over-see that we do not neglect others, for, as *Poor Richard* says, 'I never saw an off-removed tree, nor yet an off-removed family, that thrive so well as those that settled be.' And again, 'Three removes are as bad as a fire;' and again, 'Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee;' and again, 'If you would have your business done, go; if not, fend.' And again, 'He that by the plough would thrive, himself must either hold or drive.' And again, 'The eye of a master will do more work than both his hands;' and again, 'Want of care does us more damage than want of knowledge;' and again, 'Not to overtake workmen is to leave them your purse open.' Trading too much to others, care is the ruin of many; for 'In the affairs of this world, men are saved not by faith, but by the want of it.' But a man's own care is profitable; for 'If you would have a faithful servant, and one that you like, serve yourself. A little neglect may breed great mischief; for want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost;' being overaken and slain by the enemy; all for want of a little care about a horse-shoe nail.

III. 'So much for industry, my friends, and attention to one's own business; but to these we must add frugality, if we would make our industry more certainly successful. A man may, if he knows not how to save as he gets, keep his nose all his life to the grindstone, and die not worth a groat at last. A fat kitchen makes a lean will,' and 'Many estates are spent in the getting, since women for tea forsok spinning and knitting.' And men for punch forsok hewing and splitting. 'If you would be wealthy, think of saving as well as of getting. The Indies have not made Spain rich, because her out-goes are greater than her in-comes.' Aways then, with your expensive follies, and you will not then have so much cause to complain of hard times, heavy taxes, and chargeable families; for 'Women and wine, game and deceit, Make the wealth thall, and the want great.' And farther, 'What maintains one vice

would bring up two children.' You may think, perhaps, that a little tea, or a little punch now and then, cost a little more cost, is cloaths a little finer, and a little entertainment now and then, can be no great matter; but remember, 'Many a little makes a mickle.' Beware of little expenses; 'A small leak will sink a great ship,' as *Poor Richard* says; and again, 'Who dainties love, shall beggars prove;' and moreover, 'Fools make feasts, and wise men eat them.' — Here you are all got together to this file of sineries and nick-nacks. You call them goods; but if you do not take care, they will prove evils to some of you. You expect they will be sold cheap, and perhaps they may for less than they cost; but if you have no occasion for them, they must be dear to you. Remember what *Poor Richard* says, 'Buy what thou hast no need of, and ere long thou shalt sell thy necessities.' And again, 'At a great penny-worth pause awhile.' He means that, perhaps, the cheapness is apparent only, and not real; or the bargain, by frightening thee in thy business, may do thee more harm than good. For in another place he says, 'Many have been ruined by buying good penny-worths.' Again, 'It is foolish to lay out money in a purchase of 'ornaments;' and yet this folly is practised every day at auctions, for want of minding the Almanack. Many a one, for the sake of a hairy one, has gone with a hungry belly, and half starved their families; 'Silks and furrings, feathers and velvets, put out the kitchen-fire,' as *Poor Richard* says. 'These are not the necessaries of life, they can scarcely be called the conveniences, and yet only because they look pretty; how many want to have them! By these and other extravagances, the gentler are reduced to poverty, and forced to borrow of those whom they themselves have despised. Industry and frugality, have maintained their standing; in which case it appears plainly, that 'A ploughman on his knees is higher than a gentleman on his horse;' as *Poor Richard* says. Perhaps they had a small estate left them, which they knew not the getting of; they think 'It is day and will never be night;' that a little to be spent out of so much is not worth minding; but 'Always taking out of the meal-bin, and never putting in, soon comes to the bottom,' as *Poor Richard* says; and then, 'When the well is dry, they know the worth of water.' But this they might have known before, if they had taken his advice. 'If you would know the value of money, go and try to borrow some; for he that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing,' as *Poor Richard* says. 'To such people, when he goes to get it in again. *Poor Dick* farther advises, and says, 'Pond pride of dress is sure a very curle; 'Ere fancy you consult, consult your purse.'

And again, 'Pride is as loud a beggar as want, and a great deal more faulty.' When you have bought one fine thing, you must buy ten more, that your appearance may be all of a piece; but *Poor Dick* says, 'It is easier to suppress the first desire, than to satisfy all that follow it.' And it is as truly folly for the poor to ape the rich, as for the frog to swell in order to equal the ox. 'Well is large may venture more, but little boats should keep near shore.' It is, however, a folly soon punished: for, as *Poor Richard* says, 'Pride that dines on vanity, saps on contempt; Pride breakfasted with plenty, dined with poverty, and fopped with plenty.' And after all, of what use is this pride of appearance, for which so much is risked, so much is suffered? It cannot promote health, nor ease pain; it makes no increase of merit in the person, it creates envy, and what madness must it be to run in debt for these superfluities! We are offered, by the terms of this sale, six months credit; and that perhaps has induced some of us to attend to it, because we cannot spare the ready money, and hope now to be free without it. But, ah! I think what you do when you run in debt; you give to another power over your liberty. If you cannot pay at the time, you will be ashamed to see your creditors; you will be in fear when you speak to him; you will make poor pitiful sneaking excuses, and by degrees come to lose your veracity, and

sink into base downright lying; for, 'The formal vice is lying, the first is running in debt,' as *Poor Richard* says; and again, 'The same purpose, 'Living rules upon Debt's back;' whereas a free-born Englishman ought not to be ashamed or afraid to see or speak to any man living. But poverty often deprives a man of all spirit and virtue. 'It is hard for an empty bag to stand upright.' What would you think of that price, or of that government, who should give an edict forbidding you to dress like a gentleman or gentleman, on pain of imprisonment, or servitude? Would you not say that you were free, have a right to dress as you please, and that such an edict would be a breach of your privileges, and such a government tyrannical? And yet you are about to put yourself under that tyranny, when you run in debt for such dress! Your creditor has authority, at his pleasure, to deprive you of your liberty; by combining you in jail for life, or by selling you for a servant, if you should not be able to pay him. When you have got your bargain, you may, perhaps, think little of payments; but, as *Poor Richard* says, 'Creditors have better memories than debtors; creditors are a superstitious sect, great observers of set days and times.' The day comes round before you are aware, and the demand is made before you are prepared to satisfy it; or, if you bear your debt in mind, the term which at first seemed so long, will, as it happens, appear extremely short. Time will seem to have added wings to his heels as well as his shoulders. 'Those have a short Lent, who owe money to be paid at Easter.' At present, perhaps, you may think yourselves in thriving circumstances; and that you can bear a little extravagance without injury; but

For age and want fade while you may, No passing goods are a whole day. Gain may be temporary and uncertain, but ever while you live, expense is constant and certain; and, 'It is easier to build two chimnies, than to keep one in fuel,' as *Poor Richard* says; for 'rather go to bed a paperless, than rise in debt.' Get what you can, and what you get hold, 'Tis the fons that will turn all your lead into gold.' And when you have got the philosopher's stone, fare you will no longer complain of bad times, or the difficulty of paying taxes.

IV. 'This doctrine, my friends, is reason and wisdom. But after all, do not depend too much upon your own industry and frugality, and prudence, though excellent things; for they may be all blighted without the blessing of Heaven; and therefore ask that blessing humbly, and be not uncharitable to those that at present seem to want it, but comfort and help them. Remember, *Job* suffered, and was afterwards prosperous. And now, to conclude, 'Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other,' as *Poor Richard* says, and hence it is, that, 'We may give advice; but we cannot give conduct.' However, ever, remember this, 'They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped;' and farther, that, 'If you will not hear Reason, the will surely rap your knuckles,' as *Poor Richard* says.

'Thus the old gentleman ended his harangue. The people heard it, and approved the doctrine—and immediately practised the contrary, just as if it had been a common ferment; for the auction opened, and they began to buy extravagantly,—I found the good man had thoroughly studied my Almanacks, and digested all I had dropt on these topics during the course of twenty-five years. The frequent mention he made of me, would have tried any one else; but my vanity was wonderfully delighted with it, though I was conscious that not a tenth part of the widow was my own, which he ascribed to me; but rather the gleamings that I had made of the sense of all ages and nations. However, I relented to be the letter for the echo of it; and, though I had at first determined to buy fluff for a new coat, I went away resolved to wear my old one a little longer. Reader, if thou wilt do the same, thy profit will be as great mine.—I am, as ever,

Thine to serve thee,

RICHARD SAUNDERS.

Verso

