

# THE WAY

# TO

# WEALTH

by

**Benjamin Franklin**

(1757)

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## The Way to Wealth

The Way to Wealth COURTEOUS Reader,

I have heard that nothing gives an author so great pleasure as to find his works respectfully quoted by others. Judge, 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 the 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 ever be able to pay them? What would you advise us to do?" 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," said 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 commissioners cannot ease or deliver us by allowing an abatement. However, let us hearken to good advice, and something maybe done for us; God helps them that help themselves, as Poor Richard says.

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"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; sloth, by bringing on diseases, absolutely shortens life. Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears; while the used key is always bright, as Poor Richard says. But dost thou love 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; since, as he elsewhere tells us, Lost time is never found again; and what we call time enough, always proves little enough. Let us, then, up and be doing, and doing to the purpose; so by diligence shall we do more with less perplexity. Sloth makes all things difficult, but industry all easy; and He that riseth late must trot all day, and shall scarce 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.

"Methinks I hear some of you say, 'Must a man afford himself no leisure?' I will tell thee, my friend, what Poor Richard says, Employ thy time well, if thou meanest to gain liesure; and, since thou art not sure 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 labor, would live by their wits only, but they break for want of stock; whereas industry gives comfort, and plenty, and respect. Fly pleasures, and they will follow you. The diligent spinner has a large shift; and now I have a sheep and a cow, everybody bids me good morrow.

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"II. But with our industry we must likewise be steady, settled, and careful, and oversee our own affairs with our own eye, and not too much to others; for, as Poor Richard says,

I never saw an oft-removed tree,  
Nor yet an oft-removed family,  
That throve 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, send. 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 oversee workmen, is to leave them your purse open. Trusting 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 overtaken and slain by the enemy; all for want of a little care about a horse-shoe nail.

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"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 estate are spent in the getting,  
Since women for tea forsook spinning and knitting,  
And men for punch forsook 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 outgoes are greater than her incomes.

"Away, 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 small and the want great.

And further, what maintains one vice would bring up two children. You may think, perhaps, that a little tea, or a little punch now and then, diet a little more costly, clothes 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. . . . 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; and indeed so does he that lends to such people, when he goes to get it in again. Poor Dick further advises, and says,

Fond pride of drow is sure a very curse;  
Ere fancy you consult, consult your purse.

And again, Pride is as loud a beggar as Want, and a great deal more saucy. 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.

Vessels 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, sups on contempt. Pride breakfasted with Plenty, dined with Poverty, and supped with Infamy. 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; it hastens misfortune.

"But what madness must it be to run in debt for these superfluities. When you have got your bargain, you may, perhaps, think little of payment; 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 lessens, 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 save while you may;  
No morning sun lasts 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 chimneys, than to keep one in fuel, as Poor Richard says; so, Rather go to bed supperless, than in debt.

Get what you can, and what you get hold;  
'Tis the stone that will turn all your lead into gold.

And when you have got the Philosopher's stone, sure you will no longer complain of bad times, or the difficulty of paying taxes.

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"IV. This doctrine, my friends, is reason and wisdom; but, after do not depend too much upon your own industry, and frugality, and prudence, though excellent things; for they may all be blasted, 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 afterward prosperous.

"And now, to conclude, Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other, as Poor Richard says, and scarce in that; for, it is true, We may give advice, but we cannot give conduct. However, remember this, They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped; and further, that, If you will not hear Reason, she will surely rap your knuckles, as Poor Richard says."

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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 sermon; for the auction opened, and they began to buy extravagantly. I found the good man had thoroughly studied my Almanacs, and digested all I had dropped on these topics during the course of twenty-five years. The frequent mention he made of me must have tired any one else; but my vanity was wonderfully delighted with it, though I was conscious that not a tenth part of the wisdom was my own, which he ascribed to me, but rather the gleanings that I had made of the sense of all ages and nations. However, I resolved to be the better for the echo of it; and though I had at first determined to buy stuff 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 as mine. I am, as ever, thine to serve thee,

RICHARD SAUNDERS.

The End

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**APPENDIX**  
**THE WAY TO WEALTH:**  
**INDUSTRY PLUS FRUGALITY**

(Selected Proverbs and Quotes)

by

**Benjamin Franklin**

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**Appendix - Selected Proverbs and Quotes**

A word to the wise is enough, and many words won't fill a bushel.

**Industry, Idleness and Waste**

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 commissioners cannot ease or deliver us by allowing an abatement.

God helps them that help themselves.

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, if we reckon all that is spent in absolute sloth, or doing of nothing, with that which is spent in idle employments or amusements, that amount to nothing. Sloth, by bringing on diseases, absolutely shortens life. Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears, while the used key is always bright.

But dost thou love life, then do not squander time, for that's the stuff life is made of.

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.

If time be of all things the most precious, wasting time must be the greatest prodigality.

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; so by diligence shall we do more with less perplexity.

Sloth makes all things difficult, but industry all easy.

He that riseth late, must trot all day, and shall scarce overtake his business at night.

Laziness travels so slowly, that poverty soon overtakes him.

Drive thy business, let not that it drive thee.

Early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.

Industry need not wish.

He that lives upon hope will die fasting.

There are no gains, without pains.

Help hands, for I have no lands.

He that hath a trade hath an estate.

He that hath a calling hath an office of profit and honor; 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 industrious we shall never starve.

At the working man's house hunger looks in, but dares not enter.

Industry pays debts, while despair increaseth them.

Diligence is the mother of good luck.

God gives all things to industry.

Then plough deep, while sluggards sleep, and you shall have corn to sell and to keep.

Work while it is called today, for you know not how much you may be hindered tomorrow.

One today is worth two tomorrows.

Have you somewhat to do tomorrow, do it today.

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 gracious king, be up by peep of day.

Handle your tools without mittens; remember that the cat in gloves catches no mice.

'Tis 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.

Employ thy time well if thou meanest to gain leisure.

Since thou art not sure 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.

Trouble springs from idleness, and grievous toil from needless ease.

Industry gives comfort, and plenty, and respect.

Flee pleasures, and they'll follow you.

With our industry, we must be steady, settled and careful, and oversee our own affairs with our own eyes, and not trust too much to others.

I never saw an oft removed tree, Nor yet an oft removed family, That throve so well As those that settled be.

Three removes is as bad as a fire.

Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee.

If you would have your business done, go; if not, send.

He that by the plough would thrive, Himself must either hold or drive.

The eye of a master will do more work than both his hands.

Want of care does us more damage than want of knowledge.

Not to oversee workmen is to leave them your purse open.

Trusting too much to others' care is the ruin of many.

In the affairs of this world men are saved not by faith, but by the want of it.

A man's own care is profitable.

Learning is to the studious, and riches to the careful. Power to the bold, and Heaven to the virtuous.

If you would have a faithful servant, and one that you like, serve yourself.

Sometimes 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 overtaken and slain by the enemy, all for want of care about a horse-shoe nail.

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### **Frugality**

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.

Many estates are spent in the getting, Since women for tea forsook spinning and knitting, And men for punch forsook 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 outgoes are greater than her incomes.

Women and wine, game and deceit, Make the wealth small, and the wants great.

What maintains one vice, would bring up two children.

You may think perhaps that a little tea, or a little punch now and then, diet a little more costly, clothes a little finer, and a little entertainment now and then, can be no great Matter; but remember what Poor Richard says, many a little makes a mickle, and farther, beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship.

Who dainties love, shall beggars prove.

Fools make feasts, and wise men eat them.

Buy what thou hast no need of, and ere long thou shalt sell thy necessaries.

Many have been ruined by buying good pennyworths.

Wise men learn by others' harms, fools scarcely by their own.

Many a one, for the sake of finery on the back, have gone with a hungry belly, and half starved their families.

Silks and satins, scarlet and velvets, put out the kitchen fire. ---These are not the necessaries of life; they can scarcely be called the conveniencies, and yet only because they look pretty, how many want to have them. The artificial wants of mankind thus become more numerous than the natural; and, as Poor Dick says, for one poor person, there are an hundred indigent. By these, and other extravagancies, the genteel are reduced to poverty, and forced to borrow of those whom they formerly despised, but who through industry and frugality have maintained their standing; in which case it appears plainly, that a ploughman on his legs is higher than a gentleman on his knees, as Poor Richard says. Perhaps they have had a small estate left them, which they knew not the getting of; they think 'tis day, and will never be night; that a little to be spent out of so much, is not worth minding; (a child and a fool, as Poor Richard says, imagine twenty shillings and twenty years can never be spent) but, always taking out of the meal- tub, and never putting in, soon comes to the bottom; then, as Poor Dick says, when the well's 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, and indeed so does he that lends to such people, when he goes to get it in again. Poor Dick farther advises, and says, Fond pride of dress, is sure a very curse; E'er fancy you consult, consult your purse. And again, pride is as loud a beggar as want, and a great deal more saucy. 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, 'tis easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follow it. And 'tis as truly folly for the poor to ape the rich, as for the frog to swell, in order to equal the ox. Great estates may venture more, But little boats should keep near shore. 'Tis however a folly soon punished; for pride that dines on vanity sups on contempt, as Poor Richard says. And in another place, pride breakfasted with plenty, dined with poverty, and supped with infamy. 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; or ease pain; it makes no increase of merit in the person, it creates envy, it hastens misfortune. What is a butterfly? At best He's but a caterpillar dressed. The gaudy fop's his picture just, as Poor Richard says. But what madness must it be to run in debt for these superfluities!

The second vice is lying, the first is running in debt.

Lying rides upon debt's back.

'tis hard for an empty bag to stand upright.

Creditors have better memories than debtors.

Creditors are a superstitious sect, great observers of set days and times.

The borrower is a slave to the lender.

For age and want, save while you may; No morning sun lasts a whole day.

Gain may be temporary and uncertain, but ever while you live, expense is constant and certain.

'tis easier to build two chimneys than to keep one in fuel.

Rather go to bed supperless than rise in debt.

Get what you can, and what you get hold. 'Tis the stone that will turn all your lead into gold.

Do not depend too much upon your own industry, and frugality, and prudence, though excellent things, for they may all be blasted 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.

We may give advice, but we cannot give conduct.

They that won't be counseled, can't be helped.

If you will not hear reason, she'll surely rap your knuckles.

End

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