

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

FRANKLIN'S WAY TO
WEALTH; OR, "POOR
RICHARD IMPROVED"

Benjamin Franklin
Franklin's Way to Wealth;
or, "Poor Richard Improved"

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Franklin's Way to Wealth; or, «Poor Richard Improved»:*

Содержание

INTRODUCTION	4
THE WAY TO WEALTH	6
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	10

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INTRODUCTION

Dr. Franklin, wishing to collect into one piece all the sayings upon the following subjects, which he had dropped in the course of publishing the Almanacks called "Poor Richard," introduces Father Abraham for this purpose. Hence it is, that Poor Richard is so often quoted, and that, in the present title, he is said to be improved. Notwithstanding the stroke of humour in the concluding paragraph of this address, Poor Richard (Saunders) and Father Abraham have proved, in America, that they are no common preachers. And shall we, brother Englishmen, refuse good sense and saving knowledge, because it comes from the other side of the water?

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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 those 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 commissioners 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; sloth, by bringing on diseases, absolutely shortens life.

"Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labour 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.

'So what signifies wishing and hoping for better times? We

may make these times better, if we bestir 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 smartly 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 industrious, we shall never starve; for "at the working man's house hunger looks in, but dares not enter." Nor will the bailiff or the constable enter, for "industry pays debts, while despair increaseth 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 plow deep, while sluggards sleep, 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 to-day is worth two to-morrows," 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."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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