



EVERGREEN

POOR RICHARD'S
ALMANAC

BY

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

SERIES

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The Evergreen Series

**POOR
RICHARD'S ALMANAC
AND OTHER PAPERS**

By
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



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PREFACE

IN Franklin's lifetime the almanac was the most popular form of literature in America. A few people read newspapers, but every farmer who could read at all had an almanac hanging by the fireplace. Besides the monthly calendar and movements of the heavenly bodies, the almanac contained anecdotes, scraps of useful information, and odds and ends of literature. Franklin began the publication of such an almanac in 1732, pretending that it was written by one Richard Saunders. It was published annually for twenty-five years. "I endeavored," says Franklin, "to make it both entertaining and useful; and it accordingly came to be in such demand, that I reaped considerable profit from it, vending annually near ten thousand. And observing that it was generally read, scarce any neighborhood in the province being

without it, I considered it as a proper vehicle for conveying instruction among the common people, who bought scarcely any other books; I therefore filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality as the means of procuring wealth, and thereby securing virtue; it being more difficult for a man in want to act always honestly, as, to use here one of those proverbs, *‘it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright.’*” In the almanac Franklin introduced his proverbs by the phrase “Poor Richard says,” as if he were quoting from Richard Saunders, and so the almanac came to be called *Poor Richard’s Almanac*.

“These proverbs,” he continues, “which contain the wisdom of many ages and nations, I assembled and formed into a connected discourse, prefixed to the almanac of 1757, as the harangue of a wise old man to the people attending an auction. The bringing all

these scattered counsels thus into a focus enabled them to make greater impression. The piece, being universally approved, was copied in all the newspapers of the continent [that is, the American continent]; reprinted in Britain on a broadside, to be stuck up in houses; two translations were made of it in French, and great numbers bought by the clergy and gentry, to distribute *gratis* among their poor parishioners and tenants. In Pennsylvania, as it discouraged useless expense in foreign superfluities, some thought it had its share of influence in producing that growing plenty of money which was observable for several years after its publication.”

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ALMANAC
OF 1757

COURTEOUS READER: —

I have heard that nothing gives an author so great pleasure as to find his works respectfully quoted by other learned authors. This pleasure I have seldom enjoyed. For though I have been, if I may say it without vanity, an *eminent* author of *Almanacs* annually, now for a full quarter of a century, my brother authors in the same way, for what reason I know not, have ever been very sparing in their applauses; and no other author has taken the least notice of me; so that did not my writings produce me some solid pudding, the great deficiency of praise would have quite discouraged me.

I concluded at length, that the people

were the best judges of my merit; for they buy my works; and besides, in my rambles, where I am not personally known, I have frequently heard one or other of my adages repeated, with *as Poor Richard says* at the end of it. This gave me some satisfaction, as it showed, not only that my instructions were regarded, but discovered likewise some respect for my authority; and I own, that to encourage the practice of remembering and repeating those sentences, I have sometimes quoted myself with great gravity.

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 a vendue of merchant's 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? Won't these

heavy taxes quite ruin the country? How shall we ever be 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*, and *Many words won't fill a bushel*, as Poor Richard says." They all joined, desiring him to speak his mind, and gathering round him, he proceeded as follows:

Friends, says he, and neighbors, the taxes are indeed very heavy, and if those laid on by the government were the only ones we had to pay, we might the 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 in his *Almanac* of 1733.

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*, as Poor Richard says. *But dost thou love life? then do not squander time, for that's 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 of time must be*, as Poor Richard says, *the great-*

est 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 things easy*, as Poor Richard says; 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*, as we read in Poor Richard; who adds, *Drive thy business! let not that drive thee! and —*

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

So what signifies *wishing* and *hoping* for better times? We may make these times better, if we bestir ourselves. *Industry need not wish*, as Poor Richard says, and *He that lives on 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*. And, as Poor Richard likewise observes, *He*

that hath a trade hath an estate, and 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; for, as Poor Richard says, 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*, as Poor Richard says, *and God gives all things to industry.*

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

says Poor Dick. Work while it is called to-day, for you know not how much you may be hindered to-morrow; which makes Poor Richard say, *One to-day is worth two to-morrows; and farther, Have you somewhat to do to-morrow? Do it 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*, as Poor Dick says. When there is so much to be done for yourself, your family, your country, and your gracious king, be up by peep of day! *Let not the sun look down and say, "Inglorious here he lies!"* Handle your tools without mittens! remember that *The cat in gloves catches no mice!* as Poor Richard says.

'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*; as Poor Richard says in his *Almanac*, the year I cannot just now remember.

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 leisure; 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; so that, as Poor Richard says, *A life of leisure and a life of laziness are two things.* Do you imagine that sloth will afford you more comfort than labor? No! for, as Poor Richard says, *Trouble springs from idleness, and grievous toil from needless ease. Many, without labor, would live by their wits only, but they'll break for want of stock [i.e. capital]; whereas industry gives comfort, and plenty, and respect. Fly pleasures, and they'll follow you. The diligent spinner has a large shift; and —*

*Now I have a sheep and a cow,
Everybody bids me good morrow.*

All which is well said by Poor Richard. But with our industry we must likewise be steady, settled, and careful, and oversee our own affairs *with our own eyes,*

and not trust 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 the 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, as the Almanac says, *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 saith Poor Dick, *Learning is to the studious, and Riches to the careful*; as well as, *Power*

to the bold, and Heaven to the virtuous. And further, If you would have a faithful servant, and one that you like, serve yourself.

And again, he adviseth to circumspection and care, even in the smallest matters; because sometimes, *A little neglect may breed great mischief; adding, 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!*

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, as Poor Richard says; and —*

*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, says he in another Almanac, *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 have so much cause to complain of hard times, heavy taxes, and chargeable families; for as Poor Dick says —

*Women and wine, game and deceit,
Make the wealth small and the wants 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; a diet a *little* more costly; clothes a *little* finer; and a *little* more entertainment now and then, can be no great matter; but remember what Poor Richard says, *Many a little makes a mickle;* and further, *Beware of little expenses; A small leak will sink a great ship;* and again —

Who dainties love, shall beggars prove;

and moreover, *Fools make feasts, and wise men eat them.*

Here are you all got together at this vendue of fineries and knick-knacks. 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 necessaries.* And again, *At a great pennyworth pause a while.* He means, that perhaps the cheapness is apparent only, and not real; or the bargain by straitening thee in thy business, may do thee more harm than good. For in another place he says, *Many have been ruined by buying good pennyworths.*

Again, Poor Richard says, *'Tis foolish to lay out money in a purchase of repentance;* and yet this folly is practised every day at vendues for want of minding the *Almanac.*

Wise men, as Poor Richard says, *learn by others' harms; Fools, scarcely by their own*; but *Felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum*.¹ Many a one, for the sake of finery on the back, has gone with a hungry belly, and half-starved their families. *Silks and satins, scarlets and velvets*, as Poor Richard says, *put out the kitchen fire*. These are not the necessities of life; they can scarcely be called the conveniences; 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 a hundred indigent*.

By these, and other extravagances, 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*

¹ He's a lucky fellow who is made prudent by other men's perils.

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 further advises, and says —

*Fond pride of dress 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, *'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 drest,
The gaudy fop's his picture just,*

as poor Richard says.

But what madness must it be to *run into debt* for these superfluities! We are offered, by the terms of this vendue, six months' credit; and that, perhaps, has induced some of us to attend it, because we cannot spare the ready money, and hope now to be fine without it. But, ah! 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 creditor; 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, as Poor Richard says, *The second vice is lying, the first is running into debt*; and again, to the same purpose, *lying rides 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. *'Tis hard for an empty bag to stand upright!* as Poor Richard truly says. What would you

think of that prince, or the government, who should issue an edict forbidding you to dress like a gentleman or gentlewoman, on pain of imprisonment or servitude? Would you not say that you are 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 such tryanny, when you run in debt for such dress! Your creditor has authority, at his pleasure, to deprive you of your liberty, by confining you in jail for life, or to sell 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 payment; but *Creditors* (Poor Richard tells us) *have better memories than debtors*; and in another place says, *Creditors are a superstitious set, 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*, saith Poor Richard, *who owe money to be paid at Easter*. Then since, as he says, *The borrower is a slave to the lender, and the debtor to the creditor*, disdain the chain, preserve your freedom, and maintain your independency. Be *industrious and free*; be *frugal and free*. At present, perhaps, you may think yourself 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.*

As Poor Richard says, gain may be temporary and uncertain; but ever, while you live, expense is constant and certain; and *'Tis easier to build two chimneys than to keep one in fuel*, as Poor Richard says; so, *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,*

as Poor Richard says; and, when you have got the Philosopher's stone, sure, you will no longer complain of bad times, or the difficulty of paying taxes.

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 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.

And now, to conclude, *Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other, and scarce in that;* for it is true, *We may give advice, but we cannot give conduct,* as Poor Richard says. However, remember this, *They that won't be counselled, can't be helped,* as Poor Richard says; and further, that, *If you*

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

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 vendue opened, and they began to buy extravagantly, notwithstanding all his cautions, and their own fear of taxes. I found the good man had thoroughly studied my *Almanacs*, and digested all I had dropped on those topics during the course of five-and-twenty 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

July 7, 1757

PLAN FOR SAVING ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND POUNDS

(FROM "POOR RICHARD'S ALMANAC," 1756)

As I spent some weeks last winter in visiting my old acquaintance in the Jerseys, great complaints I heard for want of money, and that leave to make more paper bills could not be obtained. Friends and countrymen, my advice on this head shall cost you nothing; and, if you will not be angry with me for giving it, I promise you not to be offended if you do not take it.

You spend yearly at least *two hundred thousand pounds*, it is said, in European,

East-Indian, and West-Indian commodities. Suppose one half of this expense to be in *things absolutely necessary*, the other half may be called *superfluities*, or, at best, conveniencies, which, however, you might live without for one little year, and not suffer exceedingly. Now, to save this half, observe these few directions:

1. When you incline to have new clothes, look first well over the old ones, and see if you cannot shift with them another year, either by scouring, mending, or even patching if necessary. Remember, a patch on your coat, and money in your pocket, is better and more creditable than a writ on your back, and no money to take it off.

2. When you are inclined to buy China ware, chintzes, India silks, or any other of their flimsy, slight manufactures, I would not be so bad with you as to insist on your absolutely *resolving against it*; all I advise is, to *put it off* (as you do your repentance) *till another*

year; and this, in some respects, may prevent an occasion of repentance.

3. If you are now a drinker of punch, wine, or tea, twice a day, for the ensuing year drink them but *once* a day. If you now drink them but once a day, do it but every other day. If you do it now but once a week, reduce the practice to once a fortnight. And, if you do not exceed in quantity as you lessen the times, half your expense in these articles will be saved.

4. When you incline to drink rum, fill the glass *half* with water.

Thus, at the year's end, there will be *a hundred thousand pounds* more money in your country.

If paper money in ever so great a quantity could be made, no man could get any of it without giving something for it. But all he saves in this way will be *his own for nothing*, and his country actually so much richer. Then the merchants' old and doubtful debts

may be honestly paid off, and trading becomes surer thereafter, if not so extensive.

NECESSARY HINTS TO THOSE THAT WOULD BE RICH

(WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1736)

THE use of money is all the advantage there is in having money.

For six pounds a year you may have the use of one hundred pounds, provided you are a man of known prudence and honesty.

He that spends a groat a day idly, spends idly above six pounds a year, which is the price for the use of one hundred pounds.

He that wastes idly a groat's worth of his time per day, one day with another, wastes the privilege of using one hundred pounds each day.

He that idly loses five shillings' worth of time, loses five shillings, and might as

prudently throw five shillings into the sea.

He that loses five shillings, not only loses that sum, but all the advantage that might be made by turning it in dealing, which, by the time that a young man becomes old, will amount to a considerable sum of money.

Again: he that sells upon credit, asks a price for what he sells equivalent to the principal and interest of his money for the time he is to be kept out of it; therefore, he that buys upon credit pays interest for what he buys, and he that pays ready money might let that money out to use; so that he that possesses anything he has bought, pays interest for the use of it.

Yet, in buying goods, it is best to pay ready money, because he that sells upon credit expects to lose five per cent. by bad debts; therefore he charges, on all he sells upon credit, an advance that shall make up that deficiency.

Those who pay for what they buy

upon credit, pay their share of this advance.

He that pays ready money escapes, or may escape, that charge.

“A penny saved is two pence clear;
A pin a day’s a groat a year.”

ADVICE TO A YOUNG TRADESMAN

(WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1748)

TO MY FRIEND, A. B.:

As you have desired it of me, I write the following hints, which have been of service to me, and may, if observed, be so to you.

Remember, that *time* is money. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labor, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon *that* the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides.

Remember, that *credit* is money. If a man lets his money lie in my hands after it is due, he gives me the interest, or so much as I can make of it during that time. This amounts to a considerable sum where a man has good and large credit, and makes good use of it.

Remember, that money is of the prolific, generating nature. Money can beget money, and its offspring can beget more, and so on. Five shillings turned is six; turned again it is seven and threepence, and so on till it becomes an hundred pounds. The more there is of it, the more it produces every turning, so that the profits rise quicker and quicker. He that kills a breeding sow, destroys all her offspring to the thousandth generation. He that murders a crown, destroys all that might have produced even scores of pounds.

Remember, that six pounds a year is but a groat a day. For this little sum (which may be daily wasted either in time or expense unperceived) a man of

credit may, on his own security, have the constant possession and use of an hundred pounds. So much in stock, briskly turned by an industrious man, produces great advantage.

Remember this saying, *The good paymaster is lord of another man's purse*. He that is known to pay punctually and exactly to the time he promises, may at any time, and on any occasion, raise all the money his friends can spare. This is sometimes of great use. After industry and frugality, nothing contributes more to the raising of a young man in the world than punctuality and justice in all his dealings; therefore, never keep borrowed money an hour beyond the time you promised, lest a disappointment shut up your friend's purse forever.

The most trifling actions that affect a man's credit are to be regarded. The sound of your hammer at five in the morning, or nine at night, heard by a creditor, makes him easy six months longer; but, if he sees you at a billiard-

table, or hears your voice at a tavern, when you should be at work, he sends for his money the next day; demands it, before he can receive it, in a lump.

It shows, besides, that you are mindful of what you owe; it makes you appear a careful as well as an honest man, and that still increases your credit.

Beware of thinking all your own that you possess, and of living accordingly. It is a mistake that many people who have credit fall into. To prevent this, keep an exact account for some time, both of your expenses and your income. If you take the pains at first to mention particulars, it will have this good effect: you will discover how wonderfully small, trifling expenses mount up to large sums, and will discern what might have been, and may for the future be saved, without occasioning any great inconvenience.

In short, the way to wealth, if you desire it, is as plain as the way to market. It depends chiefly on two words, *industry* and *frugality*; that is, waste neither

time nor *money*, but make the best use of both. Without industry and frugality nothing will do, and with them everything. He that gets all he can honestly, and saves all he gets (*necessary expenses excepted*), will certainly become *rich*, if that Being who governs the world, to whom all should look for a blessing on their honest endeavors, doth not, in his wise providence, otherwise determine.

AN OLD TRADESMAN

DIGGING FOR HIDDEN TREASURE

(FROM "THE BUSY-BODY," A SERIES OF ESSAYS BY
FRANKLIN)

ONE of the greatest pleasures an author can have is certainly the hearing his works applauded. The hiding from the world our names, while we publish our thoughts, is so absolutely necessary to this self-gratification, that I hope my well-wishers will congratulate me on my escape from the many diligent but fruit-

less inquiries that have of late been made after me. Every man will own that an author, as such, ought to be tried by the merit of his productions only; but pride, party, and prejudice at this time run so very high, that experience shows we form our notions of a piece by the character of the author. Nay, there are some very humble politicians in and about this city, who will ask on which side the writer is, before they presume to give their opinion of the thing written. This ungenerous way of proceeding I was well aware of before I published my first speculation, and therefore concealed my name. And I appeal to the more generous part of the world, if I have, since I appeared in the character of the Busy-Body, given an instance of my siding with any party more than another, in the unhappy divisions of my country; and I have, above all, this satisfaction in myself, that neither affection, aversion, nor interest has biassed me to use any partiality towards any man, or set of

men; but whatsoever I find nonsensical, ridiculous, or immorally dishonest, I have, and shall continue openly to attack, with the freedom of an honest man and a lover of my country.

I profess I can hardly contain myself, or preserve the gravity and dignity that should attend the censorial office, when I hear the off-hand and unaccountable expositions that are put upon some of my works, through the malicious ignorance of some, and the vain pride of more than ordinary penetration in others; one instance of which many of my readers are acquainted with. A certain gentleman has taken a great deal of pains to write a key to the letter in my Number IV. [upon annoyances from children], wherein he has ingeniously converted a gentle satire upon tedious and impertinent visitants into a libel on some of the government. This I mention only as a specimen of the taste of the gentleman I am, forsooth, bound to please in my speculations; not that I suppose my impar-

tiality will ever be called in question on that account. Injustices of this nature I could complain of in many instances; but I am at present diverted by the reception of a letter, which, though it regards me only in my private capacity as an adept, yet I venture to publish it for the entertainment of my readers:

TO CENSOR MORUM, Esq., Busy-Body-General of the Province of Pennsylvania, and the Counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex upon Delaware.

HONORABLE SIR:

I judge by your lucubrations that you are not only a lover of truth and equity, but a man of parts and learning and a master of science; as such I honor you. Know then, most profound Sir, that I have, from my youth up, been a very indefatigable student in and admirer of that divine science, Astrology. I have read over Scot, Albertus Magnus, and Cornelius Agrippa, about three hundred

times; and was in hopes, by my knowledge and industry, to gain enough to have recompensed me for my money expended and time lost in the pursuit of this learning. You cannot be ignorant, Sir (for your intimate, second-sighted correspondent knows all things), that there are large sums of money hidden underground in divers places about this town, and in many parts of the country; but, alas! Sir, notwithstanding I have used all the means laid down in the immortal authors before mentioned, and when they failed, the ingenious Mr. P-d-l, with his mercurial wand and magnet, I have still failed in my purpose. This, therefore, I send, to propose and desire an acquaintance with you; and I do not doubt, notwithstanding my repeated ill fortune, but we may be exceedingly serviceable to each other in our discoveries; and that if we use our united endeavors, the time will come when the Busy-Body, his second-sighted correspondent, and your very humble

servant, will be three of the richest men in the province. And then, Sir, what may we not do? A word to the wise is sufficient. I conclude, with all demonstrable respect, yours and Urania's votary,

TITAN PLEIADES

In the evening, after I had received this letter, I made a visit to my second-sighted friend, and communicated to him the proposal. When he had read it, he assured me that, to his certain knowledge, there is not at this time so much as one ounce of silver or gold hid underground in any part of this province; for that the late and present scarcity of money had obliged those who were living, and knew where they had formerly hid any, to take it up and use it in their own necessary affairs; and as to all the rest, which was buried by pirates and others in old times, who were never likely to come for it, he himself had dug it all up and applied it to charitable

uses; and this he desired me to publish for the general good. For, as he acquainted me, there are among us great numbers of honest artificers and laboring people, who, fed with a vain hope of growing suddenly rich, neglect their business, almost to the ruining of themselves and families, and voluntarily endure abundance of fatigue in a fruitless search after imaginary hidden treasure. They wander through the woods and bushes by day to discover the marks and signs; at midnight they repair to the hopeful spots with spades and pickaxes; full of expectation, they labor violently, trembling at the same time in every joint, through fear of certain malicious demons, who are said to haunt and guard such places. At length a mighty hole is dug, and perhaps several cart-loads of earth thrown out; but, alas! no keg or iron pot is found. No seaman's chest crammed with Spanish pistoles, or weighty pieces of eight! They conclude that, through some mistake in the pro-

cedure, some rash word spoken, or some rule of art neglected, the guardian spirit had power to sink it deeper into the earth, and convey it out of their reach. Yet, when a man is once infatuated, he is so far from being discouraged by ill success, that he is rather animated to double his industry, and will try again and again in a hundred different places, in hopes at last of meeting with some lucky hit, that shall at once sufficiently reward him for all his expenses of time and labor.

This odd humor of digging for money, through a belief that much has been hid by pirates formerly frequenting the river, has for several years been mighty prevalent among us; insomuch that you can hardly walk half a mile out of the town on any side, without observing several pits dug with that design, and perhaps some lately opened. Men, otherwise of very good sense, have been drawn into this practice through an overweening desire of sudden wealth, and

an easy credulity of what they so earnestly wished might be true; while the rational and most certain methods of acquiring riches, by industry and frugality, are neglected or forgotten. There seems to be some peculiar charm in the conceit of finding money; and if the sands of Schuylkill were so much mixed with small grains of gold that a man might in a day's time, with care and application, get together to the value of half a crown, I make no question but we should find several people employed there that can with ease earn five shillings a day at their proper trades.

Many are the idle stories told of the private success of some people, by which others are encouraged to proceed; and the astrologers, with whom the country swarms at this time, are either in the belief of these things themselves, or find their advantage in persuading others to believe them; for they are often consulted about the critical times for digging, the methods of laying the spirit,

and the like whimseys, which renders them very necessary to, and very much caressed by, the poor, deluded money-hunters.

There is certainly something very bewitching in the pursuit after mines of gold and silver and other valuable metals, and many have been ruined by it. A sea captain of my acquaintance used to blame the English for envying Spain their mines of silver, and too much for despising or overlooking the advantages of their own industry and manufactures. "For my part," says he, "I esteem the Banks of Newfoundland to be a more valuable possession than the mountains of Potosi; and, when I have been there on the fishing account, have looked upon every cod pulled up into the vessel as a certain quantity of silver ore, which only required carrying to the next Spanish port to be coined into pieces of eight; not to mention the national profit of fitting out and employing such a number of ships and seamen."

Let honest Peter Buckram, who has long without success been a searcher after hidden money, reflect on this, and be reclaimed from that unaccountable folly. Let him consider, that every stitch he takes, when he is on his shop-board, is picking up part of a grain of gold, that will in a few days' time amount to a pistole; and let Faber think the same of every nail he drives, or every stroke with his plane. Such thoughts may make them industrious, and, in consequence, in time they may be wealthy. But how absurd it is to neglect a certain profit for such a ridiculous whimsey; to spend whole days at the "George," in company with an idle pretender to astrology, contriving schemes to discover what was never hidden, and forgetful how carelessly business is managed at home in their absence; to leave their wives and a warm bed at midnight (no matter if it rain, hail, snow, or blow a hurricane, provided that be the critical hour), and fatigue themselves with the

violent exercise of digging for what they shall never find, and perhaps getting a cold that may cost their lives, or at least disordering themselves so as to be fit for no business beside for some days after. Surely, this is nothing less than the most egregious folly and madness.

I shall conclude with the words of my discreet friend Agricola, of Chester County, when he gave his son a good plantation. "My son," said he, "I give thee now a valuable parcel of land; I assure thee I have found a considerable quantity of gold by digging there; thee mayst do the same; but thee must carefully observe this, *Never to dig more than plough-deep.*"

THE WHISTLE

(Written in the form of a letter to Madame Brillon, one of Franklin's French friends. The letter was written from his home at Passy, near Paris, November 10, 1779, when he was envoy from the United States to the court of France.)

I RECEIVED my dear friend's two letters, one for Wednesday, one for Saturday.

This is again Wednesday. I do not deserve one for to-day, because I have not answered the former. But, indolent as I am, and averse to writing, the fear of having no more of your pleasing epistles if I do not contribute to the correspondence, obliges me to take up my pen; and as Mr. B. has kindly sent me word that he sets out to-morrow to see you, instead of spending this Wednesday evening, as I have done its namesakes, in your delightful company, I sit down to spend it in thinking of you, in writing to you, and in thinking over and over again your letters.

I am charmed with your description of Paradise, and with your plan of living there; and I approve much of your conclusion, that in the mean time we should draw all the good we can from this world. In my opinion, we might all draw more good from it than we do, and suffer less evils, if we would take care not to give too much for *whistles*. For to me it seems that most of the unhappy people we

meet with are become so by neglect of that caution.

You ask what I mean? You love stories, and will excuse my telling one of myself.

When I was a child of seven years old, my friends on a holiday filled my pocket with coppers. I went directly to a shop where they sold toys for children: and, being charmed with the sound of a *whistle* that I met by the way in the hands of another boy, I voluntarily offered and gave all my money for one. I then came home, and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my *whistle*, but disturbing all the family. My brothers and sisters and cousins, understanding the bargain I had made, told me I had given four times as much for it as it was worth; put me in mind what good things I might have bought with the rest of the money, and laughed at me so much for my folly, that I cried with vexation; and the reflection gave me more chagrin than the *whistle* gave me pleasure.

This, however, was afterwards of use to me, the impression continuing on my mind, so that often, when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing, I said to myself, *Don't give too much for the whistle:* and I saved my money.

As I grew up, came into the world, and observed the actions of men, I thought I met with many, very many, who *gave too much for the whistle.*

When I saw one too ambitious to court favor, sacrificing his time in attendance on levees, his repose, his liberty, his virtue and perhaps his friends, to attain it, I have said to myself, *This man gives too much for his whistle.*

When I saw another fond of popularity, constantly employing himself in political bustles, neglecting his own affairs and ruining them by that neglect, *He pays, indeed, said I, too much for his whistle.*

If I knew a miser, who gave up any kind of a comfortable living, all the pleasure of doing good to others, all the

esteem of his fellow-citizens, and the joys of benevolent friendship, for the sake of accumulating wealth, *Poor man*, said I, *you pay too much for your whistle.*

When I met with a man of pleasure, sacrificing every laudable improvement of the mind, or of his fortune, to mere corporal sensations, and ruining his health in their pursuit, *Mistaken man*, said I, *you are providing pain for yourself instead of pleasure; you give too much for your whistle.*

If I see one fond of appearance, or fine clothes, fine houses, fine furniture, fine equipages, all above his fortune, for which he contracts debts, and ends his career in a prison, *Alas!* say I, *he has paid dear, very dear, for his whistle.*

When I see a beautiful, sweet-tempered girl married to an ill-natured brute of a husband, *What a pity*, say I, *that she should pay so much for a whistle!*

In short, I conceive that great part of the miseries of mankind are brought upon them by the false estimates they

have made of the value of things, and by their *giving too much for their whistles*.

Yet I ought to have charity for these unhappy people, when I consider, that with all this wisdom of which I am boasting, there are certain things in the world so tempting, for example, the apples of King John, which happily are not to be bought; for if they were put up to sale by auction, I might very easily be led to ruin myself in the purchase, and find that I had once more given too much for the *whistle*.

Adieu, my dear friend, and believe me ever yours, very sincerely and with unalterable affection.

B. FRANKLIN

THE EPHEMERA

AN EMBLEM OF HUMAN LIFE

TO MADAME BRILLON, OF PASSY

(Written in 1778)

YOU may remember, my dear friend, that when we lately spent that happy

day in the delightful garden and sweet society of the Moulin Joly, I stopped a little in one of our walks, and stayed some time behind the company. We had been shown numberless skeletons of a kind of little fly, called an ephemera, whose successive generations, we were told, were bred and expired within the day. I happened to see a living company of them on a leaf, who appeared to be engaged in conversation. You know I understand all the inferior animal tongues. My too great application to the study of them is the best excuse I can give for the little progress I have made in your charming language. I listened through curiosity to the discourse of these little creatures; but as they, in their national vivacity, spoke three or four together, I could make but little of their conversation. I found, however, by some broken expressions that I heard now and then, they were disputing warmly on the merit of two foreign musicians, one a *cousin*, the

other a *moscheto*; in which dispute they spent their time, seemingly as regardless of the shortness of life as if they had been sure of living a month. Happy people! thought I; you are certainly under a wise, just, and mild government, since you have no public grievances to complain of, nor any subject of contention but the perfections and imperfections of foreign music. I turned my head from them to an old gray-headed one, who was single on another leaf, and talking to himself. Being amused with his soliloquy, I put it down in writing, in hopes it will likewise amuse her to whom I am so much indebted for the most pleasing of all amusements, her delicious company and heavenly harmony.

“It was,” said he, “the opinion of learned philosophers of our race, who lived and flourished long before my time, that this vast world, the Moulin Joly, could not itself subsist more than eighteen hours; and I think there was some foundation for that opinion, since,

by the apparent motion of the great luminary that gives life to all nature, and which in my time has evidently declined considerably towards the ocean at the end of our earth, it must then finish its course, be extinguished in the waters that surround us, and leave the world in cold and darkness, necessarily producing universal death and destruction. I have lived seven of those hours, a great age, being no less than four hundred and twenty minutes of time. How very few of us continue so long! I have seen generations born, flourish, and expire. My present friends are the children and grandchildren of the friends of my youth, who are now, alas, no more! And I must soon follow them; for, by the course of nature, though still in health, I cannot expect to live above seven or eight minutes longer. What now avails all my toil and labor in amassing honey-dew on this leaf, which I cannot live to enjoy? What the political struggles I have been engaged in, for the good of my compa-

triot inhabitants of this bush, or my philosophical studies for the benefit of our race in general? for, in politics, what can laws do without morals? Our present race of ephemeræ will in a course of minutes become corrupt, like those of other and older bushes, and consequently as wretched. And in philosophy how small our progress! Alas! art is long, and life is short. My friends would comfort me with the idea of a name, they say, I shall leave behind me; and they tell me I have lived long enough to nature and to glory. But what will fame be to an ephemera who no longer exists? And what will become of all history in the eighteenth hour, when the world itself, even the whole Moulin Joly, shall come to its end, and be buried in universal ruin?"

To me, after all my eager pursuits, no solid pleasures now remain but "the reflection of a long life spent in meaning well, the sensible conversation of a few good lady ephemeræ, and now and then

a kind smile and a tune from the ever amiable *Brillante*.

B. FRANKLIN

TO MISS GEORGIANA
SHIPLEY

ON THE LOSS OF HER AMERICAN SQUIRREL, WHO,
ESCAPING FROM HIS CAGE, WAS KILLED BY A
SHEPHERD'S DOG

LONDON, 26 *September*, 1772

DEAR MISS: I lament with you most sincerely the unfortunate end of poor Mungo. Few squirrels were better accomplished; for he had a good education, had travelled far, and seen much of the world. As he had the honor of being, for his virtues, your favorite, he should not go, like common skuggs, without an elegy or an epitaph. Let us give him one in the monumental style and measure, which, being neither prose nor verse, is perhaps the properest for grief; since to use common language would look as if we were not affected, and to

make rhymes would seem trifling in
sorrow.

EPITAPH

Alas! poor Mungo!
Happy wert thou, hadst thou known
Thy own felicity.
Remote from the fierce bald eagle,
Tyrant of thy native woods,
Thou hadst nought to fear from his piercing
talons,
Nor from the murdering gun
Of the thoughtless sportsman.

Safe in thy wired castle,
Grimalkin never could annoy thee.
Daily wert thou fed with the choicest viands,
By the fair hand of an indulgent mistress;
But, discontented,
Thou wouldst have more freedom.
Too soon, alas! didst thou obtain it;
And wandering,

Thou art fallen by the fangs of wanton, cruel
Ranger!
Learn hence,
Ye who blindly seek more liberty,
Whether subjects, sons, squirrels, or daughters,
That apparent restraint may be real protection,
Yielding peace and plenty
With security.

You see, my dear Miss, how much more decent and proper this broken style is, than if we were to say, by way of epitaph —

Here Skugg
Lies snug,
As a bug
In a rug.

And yet, perhaps, there are people in the world of so little feeling as to think that this would be a good enough epitaph for poor Mungo.

If you wish it, I shall procure another to succeed him; but perhaps you will now choose some other amusement.

Remember me affectionately to all the good family, and believe me ever your affectionate friend,

B. FRANKLIN

THE END

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