THRIFT.

CHAPTER I.

INDUSTRY.

"Not what I have, but what I do, is my kingdom."—CARLYLE.

"Productive industry is the only capital which enriches a people, and spreads national prosperity and well-being. In all labor there is profit, says Solomon. What is the science of Political Economy but a dull sermon on this text?"—SAMUEL LAING.

"God provides the good things of the world to serve the needs of nature, by the labors of the plowman, the skill and pains of the artisan, and the dangers and traffic of the merchant. . . . . The idle person is like one that is dead, unconcerned in the changes and necessities of the world; and he only lives to spend his time, and eat the fruits of the earth; like a vermin or a wolf, when their time comes they die and perish, and in the mean time do no good.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

"For the structure that we raise
Time is with materials filled;
Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build.—LONGFELLOW.

THRIFT began with civilization. It began when men found it necessary to provide for to-morrow as well as for to-day. It began long before money was invented.

Thrift means private economy. It includes domestic economy, as well as the order and management of a family.

While it is the object of Private Economy to create and promote the well-being of individuals, it is the ob-

ject of Political Economy to create and increase the wealth of nations.

Private and public wealth have the same origin. Wealth is obtained by labor; it is preserved by savings and accumulations; and it is increased by diligence and perseverance.

It is the savings of individuals which compose the wealth—in other words, the well-being—of every nation. On the other hand, it is the wastefulness of individuals which occasions the impoverishment of states. So that every thrifty person may be regarded as a public benefactor, and every thriftless person as a public enemy.

There is no dispute as to the necessity for Private Economy. Everybody admits it, and recommends it. But with respect to Political Economy there are numerous discussions—for instance, as to the distribution of capital, the accumulations of property, the incidence of taxation, the poor-laws, and other subjects—into which we do not propose to enter. The subject of Private Economy, of Thrift, is quite sufficient by itself to occupy the pages of this book.

Economy is not a natural instinct, but the growth of experience, example, and forethought. It is also the result of education and intelligence. It is only when men become wise and thoughtful that they become frugal. Hence the best means of making men and women provident is to make them wise.

Prodigality is much more natural to man than thrift. The savage is the greatest of spendthrifts, for he has no forethought, no to-morrow. The prehistoric man saved nothing. He lived in caves, or in the hollows of the ground covered with branches. He subsisted on shell-fish which he picked up on the sea-shore, or upon hips and haws which he gathered in the woods. He killed animals with stones. He lay in wait for them, or ran

them down on foot. Then he learned to use stones as tools; making stone arrow-heads and spear-points, thereby utilizing his labor, and killing birds and animals more quickly.

The original savage knew nothing of agriculture. It was only in comparatively recent times that men gathered seeds for food, and saved a portion of them for next year's crop. When minerals were discovered, and fire was applied to them, and the minerals became smelted into metal, man made an immense stride. He could then fabricate hard tools, chisel stone, build houses, and proceed by unwearying industry to devise the manifold means and agencies of civilization.

The dweller by the ocean burned a hollow in a felled tree, launched it, went to sea in it, and fished for food. The hollowed tree became a boat, held together with iron nails. The boat became a galley, a ship, a paddle-boat, a screw steamer, and the world was opened up for colonization and civilization.

Man would have continued a savage, but for the results of the useful labors of those who preceded him. The soil was reclaimed by them, and made to grow food for human uses. They invented tools and fabrics, and we reap the useful results. They discovered art and science, and we succeed to the useful effects of their labors.

All nature teaches that no good thing which has once been done passes utterly away. The living are ever reminded of the buried millions who have worked and won before them. The handicraft and skill displayed in the buildings and sculptures of the long-lost cities of Nineveh, Babylon, and Troy, have descended to the present time. In nature's economy no human labor is altogether lost. Some remnant of useful effect continues to reward the race, if not the individual.

The mere material wealth bequeathed to us by our forefathers forms but an insignificant item in the sum of our inheritance. Our birthright is made up of something far more imperishable. It consists of the sum of the useful effects of human skill and labor. These effects were not transmitted by learning, but by teaching and example. One generation taught another, and thus art and handicraft, the knowledge of mechanical appliances and materials, continues to be preserved. The labors and efforts of former generations were thus transmitted by father to son; and they continue to form the natural heritage of the human race—one of the most important instruments of civilization.

Our birthright, therefore, consists in the useful effects of the labors of our forefathers; but we can not enjoy them unless we ourselves take part in the work. All must labor, either with hand or head. Without work, life is worthless; it becomes a mere state of moral coma. We do not mean merely physical work. There is a great deal of higher work—the work of action and endurance, of trial and patience, of enterprise and philanthropy, of spreading truth and civilization, of diminishing suffering and relieving the poor, of helping the weak, and enabling them to help themselves.

"A noble heart," says Barrow, "will disdain to subsist, like a drone, upon others' labors; like a vermin, to filch its food out of the public granary; or, like a shark, to prey upon the lesser fry; but it will rather outdo his private obligations to other men's care and toil, by considerable service and beneficence to the public; for there is no calling of any sort, from the sceptre to the spade, the management whereof, with any good success, any credit, any satisfaction, doth not demand much work of the head, or of the hands, or of both."

Labor is not only a necessity, but it is also a pleasure. What would otherwise be a curse, by the constitution of our physical system becomes a blessing. Our life is a conflict with nature in some respects, but it is also a co-operation with nature in others. The sun, the air, and the earth are constantly abstracting from us our vital forces. Hence we eat and drink for nourishment, and clothe ourselves for warmth.

Nature works with us. She provides the earth which we furrow; she grows and ripens the seeds that we sow and gather. She furnishes, with the help of human labor, the wool that we spin and the food that we eat. And it ought never to be forgotten that, however rich or poor we may be, all that we eat, all that we are clothed with, all that shelters us, from the palace to the cottage, is the result of labor.

Men co-operate with each other for the mutual sustenance of all. The husbandman tills the ground and provides food; the manufacturer weaves tissues, which the tailor and a seamstress make into clothes; the mason and the brick-layer build the houses in which we enjoy household life. Numbers of workmen thus contribute and help to create the general result.

Labor and skill applied to the vulgarest things invest them at once with precious value. Labor is indeed the life of humanity; take it away, banish it, and the race of Adam were at once stricken with death. "He that will not work," said St. Paul, "neither shall he eat;" and the apostle glorified himself in that he had labored with his own hands, and had not been chargeable to any man.

There is a well-known story of an old farmer calling his three idle sons around him when on his deathbed, to impart to them an important secret. "My sons," said he, "a great treasure lies hid in the estate which

I am about to leave to you." The old man gasped. "Where is it hid?" exclaimed the sons in a breath. "I am about to tell you," said the old man; "you will have to dig for it—" But his breath failed him before he could impart the weighty secret, and he died. Forthwith the sons set to work with spade and mattock upon the long-neglected fields, and they turned up every sod and clod upon the estate. They discovered no treasure, but they learned to work; and when the fields were sown, and the harvest came, lo! the yield was prodigious, in consequence of the thorough tillage which they had undergone. Then it was that they discovered the treasure concealed in the estate, of which their wise old father had advised them.

Labor is at once a burden, a chastisement, an honor, and a pleasure. It may be identified with poverty, but there is also glory in it. It bears witness, at the same time, to our natural wants and to our manifold needs. What were man, what were life, what were civilization, without labor? All that is great in man comes of labor—greatness in art, in literature, in science. Knowledge—"the wing wherewith we fly to heaven"—is only acquired through labor. Genius is but a capability of laboring intensely: it is the power of making great and sustained efforts. Labor may be a chastisement, but it is indeed a glorious one. It is worship, duty, praise, and immortality—for those who labor with the highest aims and for the purest purposes.

There are many who murmur and complain at the law of labor under which we live, without reflecting that obedience to it is not only in conformity with the Divine will, but also necessary for the development of intelligence, and for the thorough enjoyment of our

common nature. Of all wretched men, surely the idle are the most so—those whose life is barren of utility, who have nothing to do except to gratify their senses. Are not such men the most querulous, miserable, and dissatisfied of all, constantly in a state of *ennui*, alike useless to themselves and to others—mere cumberers of the earth, who, when removed, are missed by none, and whom none regret. Most wretched and ignoble lot, indeed, is the lot of the idlers.

Who have helped the world onward, so much as the workers; men who have had to work from necessity or from choice? All that we call progress—civilization, well-being, and prosperity—depends upon industry, diligently applied—from the culture of a barley-stalk to the construction of a steamship; from the stitching of a collar to the sculpturing of "the statue that enchants the world."

All useful and beautiful thoughts, in like manner, are the issue of labor, of study, of observation, of research, of diligent elaboration. The noblest poem can not be elaborated, and send down its undying strains into the future, without steady and painstaking labor. No great work has ever been done "at a heat." It is the result of repeated efforts, and often of many failures. One generation begins, and another continues—the present co-operating with the past. Thus, the Parthenon began with a mud-hut; the "Last Judgment" with a few scratches on the sand. It is the same with individuals of the race; they begin with abortive efforts, which, by means of perseverance, lead to successful issues.

The history of industry is uniform in the character of its illustrations. Industry enables the poorest man to achieve honor, if not distinction. The greatest names in the history of art, literature, and science are those

of laboring men. A working instrument-maker gave us the steam-engine; a barber, the spinning-machine; a weaver, the mule; a pitman perfected the locomotive; and working-men of all grades have, one after another, added to the triumphs of mechanical skill.

By the working-man we do not mean merely the man who labors with his muscles and sinews. A horse can do this. But *he* is pre-eminently the working-man who works with his brain also, and whose whole physical system is under the influence of his higher faculties. The man who paints a picture, who writes a book, who makes a law, who creates a poem, is a working-man of the highest order; not so necessary to the physical sustainment of the community as the plowman or the shepherd, but not less important as providing for society its highest intellectual nourishment.

Having said so much of the importance and the necessity of industry, let us see what uses are made of the advantages derivable from it. It is clear that man would have continued a savage but for the accumulations of savings made by our forefathers—the savings of skill, of art, of invention, and of intellectual culture.

It is the savings of the world that have made the civilization of the world. Savings are the result of labor; and it is only when laborers begin to save that the results of civilization accumulate. We have said that thrift began with civilization; we might almost have said that thrift produced civilization. Thrift produces capital, and capital is the conserved result of labor. The capitalist is merely a man who does not spend all that is earned by work.

But thrift is not a natural instinct. It is an acquired principle of conduct. It involves self-denial—the denial of present enjoyment for future good—the subordination of animal appetite to reason, forethought and

prudence. It works for to-day, but also provides for to-morrow. It invests the capital it has saved, and makes provision for the future.

"Man's right of seeing the future," says Mr. Edward Denison, "which is conferred on him by reason, has attached to it the duty of providing for that future; and our language bears witness to this truth by using, as expressive of active precaution against future want, a word which in its radical meaning implies only a passive foreknowledge of the same. Whenever we speak of the *virtue of providence*, we assume that forewarned is fore-armed. To know the future is no virtue, but it is the greatest of virtues to prepare for it."

But a large proportion of men do not provide for the future. They do not remember the past. They think only of the present. They preserve nothing. They spend all that they earn. They do not provide for themselves; they do not provide for their families. They may make high wages, but eat and drink the whole of what they earn. Such people are constantly poor, and hanging on the verge of destitution.

It is the same with nations. The nations which consume all that they produce, without leaving a store for future production, have no capital. Like thriftless individuals, they live from hand to mouth, and are always poor and miserable. Nations that have no capital have no commerce. They have no accumulations to dispose of; hence they have no ships, no sailors, no docks, no harbors, no canals, and no railways. Thrifty industry lies at the root of the civilization of the world.

Look at Spain. There the richest soil is the least productive. Along the banks of the Guadalquivir, where once twelve thousand villages existed, there are now not eight hundred; and they are full of beggars. A Spanish proverb says, "*El cielo y suelo es*

bueno, el entresuelo malo"—"The sky is good, the earth is good; that only is bad which lies between the sky and the earth." Continuous effort, or patient labor, is for the Spaniard an insupportable thing. Half through indolence, half through pride, he cannot bend to work. A Spaniard will blush to work, he will not blush to beg!

It is in this way that society mainly consists of two classes—the savers and the wasters, the provident and the improvident, the thrifty and the thriftless, the Haves and the Have-nots.

The men who economize by means of labor become the owners of capital which sets other labor in motion. Capital accumulates in their hands, and they employ other laborers to work for them. Thus trade and commerce begin.

The thrifty build houses, warehouses, and mills. They fit manufactories with tools and machines. They build ships, and send them to various parts of the world. They put their capital together, and build railroads, harbors, and docks. They open up mines of coal, iron, and copper; and erect pumping-engines to keep them clear of water. They employ laborers to work the mines, and thus give rise to an immense amount of employment.

All this is the result of thrift. It is the result of economizing money, and employing it for beneficial purposes, The thriftless man has no share in the progress of the world. He spends all that he gets, and can give no help to anybody. No matter how much money he makes, his position is not in any respect raised. He husbands none of his resources. He is always calling for help. He is, in fact, the born thrall and slave of the thrifty.

CHAPTER II.

HABITS OF THRIFT.

"Die Hauptsache ist dass man lerne sich selbst zu beherrschen." [The great matter is to learn to rule one's self.]—GOETHE.

"Most men work for the present, a few for the future. The wise work for both—for the future in the present, and for the present in the future."—*Guesses at Truth.*

"The secret of all success is to know how to deny yourself... If you once learn to get the whip-hand of yourself, that is the best educator. Prove to me that you can control yourself, and I'll say you are an educated man; and without this, all other education is good for next to nothing."—MRS. OLIPHANT.

"All the world cries, 'Where is the man who will save us? We want a man!' Don't look so far for this man: you have him at hand. This man—it is you, it is I, it is each one of us!.... How to constitute one's self a man? Nothing harder, if one knows not how to *will* it: nothing easier, if one wills it."—ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

COMPETENCE and comfort lie within the reach of most people, were they to take the adequate means to secure and enjoy them. Men who are paid good wages might also become capitalists, and take their fair share in the improvement and well-being of the world. But it is only by the exercise of labor, energy, honesty, and thrift, that they can advance their own position or that of their class.

Society at present suffers far more from waste of money than from want of money. It is easier to make money than to know how to spend it. It is not what a man gets that constitutes his wealth, but his manner of spending and economizing. And when a man ob-