

Thrift

Thrift,—it's an old-fashioned word, and only old-fashioned people would think of using it now, but I rejoice that the publishers of my dictionary were old-fashioned enough to publish the meaning of it, and this is what they say. "A Scandinavian word" (apparently having a variety of meanings, like most words that you have to look for in a dictionary) "meaning prosperity, industry, labor or the healthy growth of a plant, animal or institution. It is generally used to express economical management, frugality, or economy." This general use is the idea I had in mind, and since it is fashionable now to preach of ways and means to rid the world of its present economic ills, and since I believe that more thrift would be a fitting antidote for these ills, I shall try to point out some ways and means of practising thrift, the advantages of thrift, and, if I have the courage, perhaps a few words on aids to thrift.

Pardon a digression, but whenever I hear the word thrift it brings to my mind memories of evenings spent with an old friend, and especially of one evening spent with him which I found particularly interesting. My friend was an extract of that noble race who invented the bagpipes to frighten away peddlers and insurance agents, and who, by the way, are still noted for their honesty, integrity, and above all for their solicitude for the needs of the so-called "rainy day." My friend lived alone; he had been engaged to a girl once but they could not make up their minds whether the prospective wedding presents would offset the charges of a minister. After five years of deliberation and useless investigation the girl settled the difficulty by dying. Poor man, he did not know whether to be glad or sorry, but, in a fit of sentiment, he bought a sympathy card, and in order to save postage walked ten miles to deliver it to her mother! Well, on the occasion of the particular visit which I mentioned, friend Sandy was in a reminiscent mood, and we talked until late in the evening. He had lit a candle, on which he dropped salt from time to time to keep it from burning too fast, while we chatted of the good old days when men were men and could make their own boots, and when women were women and knit socks, of the prevailing low price for potatoes, and of an auction sale held a week before at the cross-

roads. Presently my friend observed that we could talk as easily in the dark, and blew out the candle. The evening wore on, and I detected that another stick might have to be added to the fire if I did not leave soon, so accordingly I struck a match in order to find my cap. Try and imagine my embarrassment, when I discovered that my friend, ever anxious to save money by honest means, under the cover of darkness, had removed his trousers to prevent needless wear of the seat of them!

Of course I realize that even the most ardent advocate of thrift would regard this as going a trifle too far. This man might easily degenerate into the miserable status of a miser, but just the same, there are many ways of practising thrift which are both praise worthy and beneficial. School boys who instead of spending mornings and evenings in useless pranks try instead to help out the family bread winner by selling papers or running errands, careful housewives who instead of throwing away uneaten food after meals, take beforehand careful note of the capacity of their diners and do not prepare too much, storekeepers who keep a minimum of old goods on their shelves by carefully budgetting on the requirements of their customers before ordering supplies, prudent business executives who do not get too high and mighty to notice such little things as wasted stationery, unnecessary words on outgoing telegrams and such carelessness on the part of their employees should all be commended for common sense. There is a certain faction who say that, since matter can be neither created nor destroyed, worry about the saving of material things is foolishness. They will go on to say that, when food is consumed or wasted, when goods are used, spoiled, or broken by the consumer, the producer benefits as much because of the necessary additional demand as the consumer loses by the additional expenditure, and that the world benefits by the stimulated trading. Such arguments may seem reasonable at first sight, but, nevertheless, in the mysterious beginning God—fools say chance—created all matter or as we would say, all *raw materials*. Chemically speaking man cannot actually destroy matter, but he can make quite a wreck of some of it. Therefore I maintain that, since the raw materials for everything we eat, use or wear were made by the Divine Providence, He must watch carefully over their consumption to see that we make the best possible use of them. It seems only reasonable then to say that

He must look after the affairs of both producer and consumer and must reward thrift in His own way.

The habit of thrift is beneficial in many ways. We are all familiar with the dejected figure of the old man on insurance advertisements who did not buy an annuity bond in his youth. Just another way of saying that he would be much happier if he had practised some thrift in his younger days in order to provide for the period when his earning capacity would be crippled by old age. I once heard the president of a large manufacturing concern say, that when giving promotions to his employees he always tried to favor the man who was not extravagant and who seemed to be saving money for himself. Such a man, he said, invariably was very useful to his employer, because, apart from having a mind not irritated because of financial worries, this man having learned to save money for himself should be fitted to make money for his employer. There is a wealth of thought in some words spoken by Pope Pius to a group of Italian bank clerks not long ago. He said, "Thrift means that one should provide a margin of living without becoming miserly. As a Christian virtue it calls for self-denial, some degree of mortification and the spirit of penance. In life there is always need of thrift."

Within the last few decades the budget system has come into pretty general use. I suppose man in every age, in as much as he looked into the future as far as possible and formulated various plans of action, really budgeted in a certain sense. In the present day many households have adopted the family budget system; an excellent means of curtailing expenses and of living within the salary of the wage earner. Nearly all business organizations, such as banks, packing houses or chain stores, forecast from time to time what they expect to accomplish in each department or branch, and in this way are enabled to check up at intervals how they are progressing and to apply stimulus where it is needed. Of course "The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft alee" and these budgets are made the butt of many a joke, but, nevertheless, they are gaining in popularity every day. Would it not be an interesting experiment or perhaps a way out of present difficulties, if every adult citizen of our country were asked to make an estimate as to what he or she could contribute to the country's treasury in the next year or two. It would certainly be a test of the loyalty of our citizens.

—R. C., '35