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Little Stories on Thrift

Issued by

The American Society for Thrift

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PRESIDENT GARFIELD once said: "I feel a profounder reverence for a boy than a man. I never met a ragged boy on the street without feeling I owed him a salute, for I know not what possibilities may be buttoned up under his shabby coat."

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The immortal Abraham Lincoln was a notable exemplar of the value of thrift of time. We can picture him trudging forty miles to borrow a grammar. We can see him prone before the pine fire at night after a hard day's work log-cutting, reading and re-reading the statutes of Indiana, the only book he owned, or learning to write and figure with a piece of charcoal on the back of a wooden shovel, as he had no paper or ink.

Another example of what a boy can do who does not waste time is that of a Milwaukee man, Nels Anton Christensen, recently appointed by the United States government, through Secretary of the Navy Daniels, on the inventors' staff of the new United States Naval Board, which includes the greatest inventive minds in the nation. Born in Denmark, Nels Christensen's school days ended at 14 years. After that he worked in a machine shop days, and attended a technical school in the evenings. From his savings he defrayed the expense of a course at the Copenhagen Technique Institute, from which he was graduated at 21. Previous to that he attained national prominence as an engineer, having designed, when 19 years old, the Danish lighthouse at Hanstholme, one of the largest in the world. During the three years he spent on an English steamer engaged in Mediterranean trade he learned enough English to secure a position

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with an English manufacturing concern. Since coming to the United States he has invented many compressed airbrake starters for railroads, aeroplanes and fire engines that have brought him world-wide fame.

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It was Gladstone who said in a talk to boys: "You may be sure that every one of you has his place and avocation on this earth, and that it rests with himself to find it. Do not believe those who too lightly say that nothing succeeds like success. Effort—honest, manful, humble effort—succeeds by its reflected action, especially in youth, better than success, which, indeed, too easily and too early gained, not seldom serves—like winning first throw in dice—to blind and stupefy. Get knowledge—all you can. Be thorough in all you do, and remember though ignorance may often be innocent, pretension is often despicable. But you, like men, be strong, and exercise your strength. Work onward and work upward, and your labors will be crowned with success."

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Choose, then, a "calling" for which your own abilities most fit you; spare no pains to make yourself master of your work; and succeed you must. Set aside a sum, no matter how small, from each week's pay. Keep strict account of your income and expenditures. Never buy anything until you have the money earned to pay for it. Have something ahead for an emergency; do not live from one day to another; and remember always that the boys who drift become the failures; the boys who study, think, work, are honest, and save, always attain the top. For thrift and honesty will procure what wealth, fame, or knowledge cannot without it—happiness.

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The boy who spends two hours each evening lounging idly on the street corner wastes, in a year, 730 precious hours, or more than 80 working days a year, which, if applied to study, would familiarize him with the rudiments of almost any of the familiar sciences. If, in addition to wasting an hour or two each evening in just loafing, he spends a dime for a smoke, which is usually the case, the amount that is more than wasted would pay for one or more of the leading periodicals each month, or would purchase the nucleus of a good students' library.

Boys, think over these things. Think of how much time and money you are now wasting, and for what? The gratification afforded by loafing on the corner, or a smoke, is only temporary, and is positively hurtful to the boy or young man. You acquire idle and wasteful habits which will cling to you with each succeeding year. You may in after life shake them off, but the probabilities are that the habits formed in early life will remain with you always.

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What use do the boys and girls of the country make of their long vacation?

In Spokane, Washington, no time was lost in earning money, as far as the pupils of the North Central High School were concerned, and the results were truly amazing. The statistical report of Miss Ida May Wilson, head of the vocational department of one of the Spokane high schools, shows that 65 per cent of the boys attending the high school worked during the summer. They earned a total of $4,247.45. Boys and girls together earned a total of $33,083.35. It was found that girls had a lesser earning power than the boys. The senior girls earned on an average of only $50.50, in comparison with $102.66 by the boys of the same class. The average earned by the girls gradually decreased by classes, each class earning less than the class above. The freshmen held the lowest average, each girl worker earning on an average of $24.81. The average earnings of all the boys and all the girls was $64.62, while the average earning power of the boys was $72.82, and of the girls $36.62. The total number of boys who worked during vacation was 396, and the girls 116, the boys working in mines, mills and factories.

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Thomas Edison began to save before he began to invent. The successful magazine editor, Edward Bok, started saving on a salary of 50 cents a week. Grover Cleveland's wages for his first year of work totaled $50. Garfield could not have become president had he not saved early in life. Horace Greeley and Cooper founded their careers on saving.

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Ex-Governor Ferris of Michigan, now a college president, a life-long advocate of thrift, tells of his own thrifty training: "In my youth if I had a toy, I made it, and made it not to suit myself alone but it had to suit my father as well. His examination of my work and his insistence that I should put the best there was in me even into my toys, put into my back a spine and sufficient lime to last a lifetime.

"There is nothing more important in the life of a boy today than to get the habit of thrift. The waste of a nickel is as important as the waste of $10,000. When I was a boy, if I wanted a nickel I earned it. After I had earned the nickel I was not allowed to waste it. That was a part of my bringing up. It helped in the building of my manhood.

"Every day in the week the governor of a state receives letters from men in prison, pleading for work. These men want work so that they will not lose their minds. They must have work if their half-formed desire for reformation is to be fostered. If work is the salvation of men in prison, why should not boys and men outside the bars be taught to work? For the industrious and thrifty boy is not criminal in his tendencies."

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A Russian immigrant lad came to this country three years ago—ignorant of our language and customs. He located in Milwaukee and was thrifty of his time and saving of the money he earned in a shoe factory. He works in the factory days and studies law at night. Recently he won a prize from a magazine for an article on how he earned his first one hundred dollars. This shows the remarkable advancement he has made in three years by being thrifty. Boys like this humble Russian shoemaker—who finds so many opportunities in this alien land—and the American boys who work their way through college, will continue to be the rocks on which our country will rest.

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Almost any thrifty, ambitious young man can make his own opportunity. An Oklahoma lad, brought up in a home of small means, determined to go to his state university. While attending high school he earned his books and clothes in the summer by cutting cockleburs for the neighboring farmers. After leaving high school, he taught school for six months, and instead of spending his earnings—$200—he saved them. During the entire four years at the university he did his own cooking, took care of a furnace for his room rent, and did janitor work in the college library.

This young man is just one of many ambitious, energetic youths who save every minute of their time to earn money which they do not spend foolishly. With this they buy an education that will enable them to earn more money. They are obliged to learn the lessons of thrift so thoroughly that, in after life, they become solid, conservative citizens.

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Sir Walter Raleigh gave some excellent advice along this line some three centuries ago, which is no less timely today, when he said: "Use thy youth so that thou mayest have comfort to remember it when it hath forsaken thee, and not sigh and grieve at the account thereof; use it as the springtime which soon departeth and wherein thou oughtest to plant and sow all provision for a long and happy life."

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A few years ago a wreck on one of the railroads cost the company $250,000. The president sent around word that if each employe would save five cents' worth of material a day, or do five cents' worth of extra work in a day, the $250,000 would be made good in a year.

The Pennsylania Railroad requires that every nut and bolt be repaired and used again when possible, and the cotton waste used in wiping engines is cleansed and used again for packing journals.

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John D. Rockefeller, the organizer of the Standard Oil Company, has made more money than, probably, any other man of his day. He has more than he himself, it is said, can keep account of. He is rated as a billionaire. Yet, as we all know, he began his business career as a clerk in a small town in the rural section of New York. He practiced economy and was not ashamed to do so. His theory is that one can only be ready for the opportunities which come to the ambitious and hard-working, when the habits of thrift and prudence in spending have been cultivated.

Mr. Rockefeller still has the little memorandum book that he kept when he was a poor clerk, in which he kept account of every penny that he spent and thus knew

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just what was going out. For, like other men whose wealth has been amassed little by little, he realized that what goes out is a greater factor in accumulating money than what comes in.

It is very much easier to make than to save money. Nearly everyone makes money, be it much or little, but those who make little think only those who make much can save. Now anyone can save if he will. The trouble is a dime looks so small. It is only ten pennies or ten cents, and ten cents is almost nothing. It is hardly missed. Yet one little ten-cent piece saved every day for ten days means a dollar, and each dollar set to earning for you, the earlier in life the better, will surprise you at the end of a period of time by its industry.

A good way to create the saving habit is to determine to save a dime every day—even a nickel or a cent, in the case of a very small pay envelope. Make almost any sacrifice to save the sum you have set out to save. Or another rather enticing form of thrift is to save every dime you get, or every nickel, or every penny—no matter how many you get in a day. You will soon have a dollar, then ten dollars, and finally it will get to be a hundred dollars, and you will feel quite a capitalist. By this time you will have journeyed far on the way to thrift and you will find it not a hard road. Be sure of one thing: You will never have anything unless you save something.

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Thrift was the keynote of success in the life of the late James J. Hill. He was one of the country's most consistent exponents of thrift, one of the greatest exemplars of what this virtue, combined with energy and high purpose, can do. He preached always that the man who cannot save money will be a failure; that though he may have education, talent and ability, without thrifty habits he cannot succeed.

The great railroad builder began to save even before he had visions of the wonderful agricultural and industrial empire he was to create.

From the day he arrived in St. Paul from Canada, after working his way there, and received for his first day's pay $1.25, he began to save. He taught that the dollar that is worth more than any other dollar in the world to you is the first dollar you save, and that the earlier that start is made the sooner you will be able to meet the great opportunity that comes at some time to every man.

One of Mr. Hill's axioms was that prosperity not based on economy and thrift is transient, because one cannot be extravagant today, and expect to become a safe conservator of energy and wealth tomorrow.

He let it be known that he did not place a high value on the man who could not save, for he believed that to save means ability to deny and control one's self; when you are master of yourself, you will be able to master others, and with money thus at hand, you will be able to seize opportunity when it comes along. One of his favorite sayings was: "Opportunity comes sometimes disguised and surrounded by hard work and adverse circumstances."

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"Save, young man, and become respectable and respected," said Benjamin Franklin. "It is the quickest and surest way." To find out whether these words are true or not, begin to save. A person will be astonished at how much he will grow in his own self-esteem, and his attitude of self-respect will compel respect from others. Select some solid citizen of your neighborhood who is known to have made and saved money. Observe the assurance with which he walks the streets and the confidence with which he meets people; also how he is looked-up-to by others. Truly Benjamin Franklin spoke wisely.

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Down in Athens, Georgia, a graphic picture of thrift and enterprise was presented the past summer at the opening of the short course of the State College of Agriculture when 300 boys and girls—and some grizzled men—enrolled. These boys and girls won their scholarships in the State College in their corn club, canning club and pig club contests. They worked hard and incessantly to win these scholarships, and who will say they will not make better citizens thereby?

We see these evidences of the thrift of time looming up in all parts of the country. In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the total enrollment of pupils for the winter night school classes numbers 760, the largest night school in the state. The ages of the pupils in these evening classes vary from 14 to 72 years, all workers, boys, girls and old persons, shop girls, laborers and mill hands, high school and college graduates, all seeking to take up some practical study.