

Thrift

Thus far the call to save has been for one's own sake, but now we are summoned to check our expenditures and conserve our purchases for the sake of the Empire, the Allies, and the whole human brotherhood

By J. W. MACMILLAN.

Thrift has not been consonant with the life of the Canadian people. We have had half a continent to exploit. The rich rewards came to the men who skimmed the cream and let the skimmed milk go. It has been a region of great prizes, few but dazzling. Not by saving pennies but by risking all the dollars they could borrow have our magnates been made. Canada has been a field for enterprise rather than for thrift.

Business life is not dominated by the average but by the splendid exception. As the Insurance Companies are busily telling us nowadays, the average man of business is a failure. The average venture in commerce or manufacturing goes to the wall. But one here and there makes a "big killing." It is this glorious exception which catches the eye. Men forget the failures as they envy the successful ones. They are lured on by the chances of big things, and scarcely reckon that if the prizes are big, so are the chances which attend them.

Besides, the way in which the country has been settled has exerted a selective force which draws to our shores a type which is not thrifty. The immigrant is essentially an adventurer. Not the man who will live close, and work hard, and hoard his pennies, but the man who will face risks and hardships in the hope of acquiring sudden wealth, is the type which leaves the old lands for the new. One has but to view a western wheat town, and note the absence of vegetable gardens, to behold the fashion in which the pioneer seeks wealth. He put all his coin on the one hazard, and enjoys life the more because the stakes are his all and the prizes big.

As the country settles up, however, thrift increases. It is soon apparent that there are not prizes enough to go round. The necessity of making a livelihood while the delayed prize is waited for becomes evident. After a time the prize is less thought of and the livelihood more. It is the general rule, therefore, that the longer settled any portion of the country has been the greater will be the amount of thrift. And along with the increase of habits of economy and carefulness in small things grows the regret that thrift was so long neglected and spurned. Thus, by the time the population has reached anything like a static condition there are gardens in many back-yards, savings-accounts in many banks, and the preacher of thrift gets a hearing.

And now, Canada, with her sparse population spread over thousands of square miles, and varying from the newest and most enterprising to a comparatively old and steady-going sort, is called upon to realize her resources and invest them in the market of the world's sore tribulation. Our enterprise is of little use, for it cannot be harvested at short notice. We must fall back upon our thrift. We must save in order that we may lend or give. Some of us must save, in the stress of the crisis, in order that we may live.

Our problem is a twofold one: to inculcate thrift, and to put a social motive behind it. Thus far, in the experience of all men living to-day, the call to save has been of the Poor Richard's Almanac character. It has been for one's own sake that one is bidden remember that wilful waste makes woeful want. But now we are summoned to check our expenditure and conserve our purchases for the sake of the Empire, the Allies and the whole human brotherhood.

In the practice of thrift there is at once an act of the will and a practice of efficiency. It has, so to speak, its personal and its practical side. The personal side is the choosing between the necessary and the desirable. The heart of extravagance is the preference of luxury, at all costs. The heart of thrift is the stripping of one's livelihood of needless ornamentation. It is not thrift if it continues to buy ice-cream and cakes, but of a poorer and cheaper quality. There is no degradation, nor loss of vitality, involved in thrift. All that is required to maintain life on a wholesome level must be retained. But the useless and accidental should be remorselessly cut off.

Household efficiency, undoubtedly, is also of the first importance in the practice of thrift. In a questionnaire sent by the United States Department of Agriculture to representative women throughout the

Union it was asked, in what way the Department could serve the housewives of the country. Very many of the answers dealt with the matter of household efficiency. I select one quotation from the replies, as typical of them all:

"I think waste is one great cause of the high cost of living, both in the city and on the farm, and no laws can help it. Until such time as women awake to the fact that nutritious meals can be made from simple things, and that mending is a fine art, just so long shall we hear of neglected women and discouraged men. The money saved on these two items would go far toward bettering the condition of the women."

It is an old saying, which travelers have often verified, that a family in France will live on what a family in America throws away, and often after a better fashion. The artistic temperament which prevails in the French, joined with the prevalent social condition in which there are many small proprietors, induces the practice of thrift, just as, conversely, the reckless exploitation of continental resources forbids it.

One looks for excellent results to follow the putting of a social motive behind thrift. For purely individualistic thrift ran easily into hoarding and miserliness; and life was injured in the interests of its material possessions. To save for oneself is always in peril of becoming meanness, but saving for others is the nobility of sacrifice. A social worker, with sympathies enlisted on behalf of the unprivileged many, is apt to scrutinize narrowly any proposal to spread the gospel of thrift. He has seen thrift used to further restrict the freedom and lessen the joys of the poor. Never has he been allowed to escape the constant dinning into his ears of the tale that the poor are destroyed by their own thriftlessness. People who keep motor cars for their own pleasure and take winter trips to Florida will bemoan the reckless extravagance of the man who is trying to bring up a family on fifteen dollars a week. They who wear diamonds would refuse the laborer's

daughter a ribbon. Moreover, when a question of juvenile labor is up, he has had to meet the argument that the earnings of the children increase the family income. He has been met by the contention that women should be allowed to work for any length of time, and under any conditions, for the same blessed reason. Landlords of evil tenements plead that improvements are a waste of good money. He, with his social vision, sees that no such arguments could be advanced by anyone who was thinking of the good of the people as a whole. Their plausibility lies in their being purely individualistic. Hence he hails the entrance of the social motive into a campaign of thrift with joy. It will purify the campaign from pharisaism and avarice.

In reality the exhortation comes, not from the rich to the poor, but from the poor to the rich. The thrifty are the poor and always have been. The rich have never been thrifty, for they have lacked the inducements to become so. It is in a home where the young people bring their envelopes unopened to mother, and sometimes the father does the same, trusting her wisdom to expend them to the best advantage, that we have real thrift. It is where the telegraph messenger boy goes without his skates because the dining-room needs a carpet, or sister's teeth are in bad shape, that we have real thrift. They are generally without capacity of expression, these sincerely thrifty families, but they ought to be the mentors of that virtue for every class of society.

Women have more capacity for sacrifice than men, because they are kept in practice by sacrificing more than men. Motherhood is supremely sacrificial in its nature. Always and everywhere the "female of the species" thinks less of herself and more of those she protects than the male. Sometimes she has to fight for her offspring, a fact which Mr. Kipling observed, and its consequence, that on such occasion she was fiercer than the male. She is also, and for the same reason more tender, devoted, enduring and compassionate than her male companion. In time of war women have always shared, to the utmost possible, the labors and hardships of their menfolk. Witness all the wars from the days when the women of Virginia and Carolina made their house and body linen into bandages to the days when the Carthaginian women wove their hair into bowstrings. Witness the Red Cross and kindred efforts during the past three years in Canada. And now they are finding a new vent for their skill and power, in the elimination of waste and the promotion of thrift. God bless them.

Comparative Retail Prices in Canada, England and the United States for September, 1917

The following table shows a comparison of recent retail prices of certain articles for a few cities of the United States and for England with the corresponding prices of largest cities of Canada and with the average for all Canadian cities. In the case of milk it should be noted that the American quart is one-fifth smaller than the Canadian measure. Hence the price of a Canadian quart is given in brackets for better comparison with our prices.

These commodities have been chosen solely because they were the most comparable of all those on the official lists of the Labour Department of each country

	N. Y.	Mont.	Buff.	Tor.	Chic'g.	St. Pl.	Win.	Eng.
Milk, Qt.	14 (17.5)	11	11 (13.75)	11.1	10½ (13)	9 (11)	12	14
Fresh Eggs, Doz. . .	68	55	57	55	44	46	45	85
Potatoes, Bush. . .	2.20	1.31	1.68	1.19-1.39	1.76	1.40	1.00
Sugar, Lb.	8½	10	9	10	9 1-3	9½	10½
Bacon, Lb.	50	43	53	45	47	46	38	51½-57 (Rump)
Round Steak, Lb. . .	40	25-28	33	25-30	31	28	25	52½
Canned Salmon, Lb. .	25	22.5	24	25	27	32
Bread, Lb.	9	6.7	.11	7.3	11½	10	6.4	* 4½ (Oat-meal)

† The figures in brackets show the price of the Canadian quart, which is in ratio of 5-4 to American quart.

* War bread subsidized by Government and containing other than white flour.

ON THE STREET IN PEKIN.

There are some things that the Chinese do well and with no suggestion of ways that are dark and tricks that are vain.

An automobile had killed a child on one of those great, swarming highways of Pekin which the gods intended for carts and barrows and not for devil

wagons. The court imposed a small fine upon the driver, and there remained only a wreck of a body to testify to the speed of Occidental civilization. But the neighborhood, unappeased, set the child's coffin in the middle of the road, at the scene of the accident, and there it rested, a grim reproach to the heartless hurry of modernity. Traffic was turned into other channels to avoid the shrine. It was a revenge that will be long remembered.—New York Sun.