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HOUSEHOLD.

The Wealth of Economy.

(William Mathews, in 'Success.')

Economy is, of itself, a great revenue.—Cicero.

In almost all the cases where men have accumulated great fortunes, attention to margins and remnants has been the secret of their success. Wealth did not come to them in huge windfalls, overwhelming them with opulence, but by gradual acquisitions, and by saving, year after year, the loose money which other men squander. By economizing the little sums which the thoughtless and improvident man deems not worth looking after,—the pennies and dimes and quarter-dollars of which he keeps no reckoning, the pyramid of their fortune has been slowly and surely reared.

All this may seem, to some of my readers,—and, doubtless, it is,—very commonplace. But, commonplace or not, the lesson is one which thousands of Americans have never practically, and many others but partially, learned. It is a fact, as notorious as it is melancholy, that, of all the civilized peoples on the globe, we are the most wasteful. It is well known to every traveller in France that a French cook would feed a family on what an average American family would waste or reject as worthless. Even the 'heathen Chinese' may teach us here,—may show us examples of economy which are of priceless value. The lowest of the race are sages in this respect, compared with many of those who would exclude them from our shores. A Baptist minister in China writes home that what an American family throws away in a year would support a dozen Chinese families during that time; while, on the other hand, all the waste of a Chinese family in the same time would not keep a mouse from starving.

The extravagance of American housekeepers is strikingly shown in the waste barrel,—the refuse that is carted away from their houses. Even those who buy their fuel, and complain bitterly of its increasing cost, will throw away their boxes and barrels, that could be used for firewood. How often articles of clothing are discarded before they are half worn out, simply because they are a little passé in style, or rusty looking, when, at a small cost, they might be renovated and made serviceable for months, or a year! When one sees the way in which Americans treat their hats and foot-wear, he cannot wonder that shoe factories are so numerous and profitable, their work forming the chief occupation in cities of fifty or more thousand inhabitants, and that, in our

large cities, about every fifth or sixth shop is a boot and shoe store.

How rarely an American will wear a pair of boots, even of the best quality, longer than a year or two! Yet I have known a man, by adequate care of a pair of boots,—by carefully cleaning and drying them after each day's wear, and by having them thoroughly oiled, to prevent cracks, four or five times in a year, to make them do good service, though used almost exclusively, for sixteen winters. Of course, they were of the best Parisian manufacture,—costing, with new solings and heelings and straps, twelve dollars, or seventy-five cents a year!

I once asked the proprietor of one of the great leading Back Bay hotels, in Boston, why he asked so high a price for weekly board at his table,—a price, as it seemed to me, about double that at which it might be profitably afforded. He replied that the seemingly exorbitant price was due to two things, viz.: The amount of service demanded by his boarders, and their wastefulness. In the dining room he was obliged to furnish one waiter for every three guests to be served; and, again, most Americans at hotels are very wasteful. On an average, said my informant, each person orders twice as much food as he consumes. Many dishes are only nibbled at, yet spoiled for anybody else.

One of the paradoxes of waste is that the persons most addicted to it are not men and women of independent means, who can support themselves in spite of their extravagant expenditure, but the poorer classes. There is hardly an able-bodied laborer who might not become financially independent, if he would but carefully husband his receipts and guard against the little leaks of needless expense. But unfortunately, this is the one thing which the workingman finds it the hardest to do. There are a hundred laborers who are willing to work hard, to every half-dozen who are willing properly to husband their earnings. Instead of hoarding a small percentage of their receipts, so as to provide against sickness or want of employment, they eat and drink up their earnings as they go, and thus, in the first financial crash, when mills and factories 'shut down,' and capitalists lock up their cash instead of using it in great enterprises, they are ruined. Men who thus live 'from hand to mouth,' never keeping more than a day's march ahead of actual want, are little better off than slaves.

Professor Marshall, the noted English economist, estimates that \$500,000,000 are spent annually by the British working classes for things that do nothing to make their lives nobler or truly happier. At the last meeting of the British Association, the president, in an address to the economic section, expressed his belief that the simple item of food waste alone would justify the

above-mentioned estimate. One potent cause of waste, to-day, is that very many of the women, having been practically brought up in factories, do not know how to buy economically, and are neither passable cooks nor good housekeepers. Mr. Atkinson estimates that, in the United States, the waste from bad cooking alone is over a thousand million dollars a year!

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