

Poor Richard Improved 1750

Ben Franklin

To the READER.

The Hope of acquiring lasting FAME, is, with many Authors, a most powerful Motive to Writing. Some, tho' few, have succeeded; and others, tho' perhaps fewer, may succeed hereafter, and be as well known to Posterity by their Works, as the Antients are to us. We Philomaths, as ambitious of Fame as any other Writers whatever, after all our painful Watchings and laborious Calculations, have the constant Mortification to see our Works thrown by at the End of the Year, and treated as mere waste Paper. Our only Consolation is, that short-lived as they are, they out-live those of most of our Cotemporaries.

Yet, condemned to renew the Sisyphean Toil, we every Year heave another heavy Mass up the Muses Hill, which never can the Summit reach, and soon comes tumbling down again.

This, kind Reader, is my seventeenth Labour of the Kind. Thro' thy continued Good-will, they have procur'd me, if no Bays, at least Pence; and the latter is perhaps the better of the two; since 'tis not improbable that a Man may receive more solid Satisfaction from Pudding, while he is living, than from Praise, after he is dead.

In my last, a few Faults escap'd; some belong to the Author, but most to the Printer: Let each take his Share of the Blame, confess, and amend for the future. In the second Page of August, I mention'd 120 as the next perfect Number to 28; it was wrong, 120 being no perfect Number; the next to 28 I find to be 496. The first is 6; let the curious Reader, fond of mathematical Questions, find the fourth. In the 2d Page of March, in some Copies, the Earth's Circumference was said to be nigh 4000, instead of 24000 Miles, the Figure 2 being omitted at the Beginning. This was Mr. Printer's Fault; who being also somewhat niggardly of his Vowels, as well as profuse of his Consonants, put in one Place, among the Poetry, mad, instead of made, and in another wrapp'd, instead of warp'd; to the utter demolishing of all Sense in those Lines, leaving nothing standing but the Rhime. These, and some others, of the like kind, let the Readers forgive, or rebuke him for, as to their Wisdom and Goodness shall seem meet: For in such Cases the Loss and Damage is chiefly to the Reader, who, if he does not take my Sense at first Reading, 'tis odds he never gets it; for ten to one he does not read my Works a second Time.

Printers indeed should be very careful how they omit a Figure or a Letter: For by such Means sometimes a terrible Alteration is made in the Sense. I have heard, that once, in a new Edition of the Common Prayer, the following Sentence, We shall all be changed in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye; by the Omission of a single Letter, became, We shall all be hanged in a Moment, &c. to the no small Surprize of the first Congregation it was read to.

May this Year prove a happy One to Thee and Thine, is the hearty Wish of, Kind Reader,

Thy obliged Friend,

R. SAUNDERS.

There are three Things extremely hard, Steel, a Diamond and to know one's self.

Hunger is the best Pickle.

He is a Governor that governs his Passions, and he a Servant that serves them.

A Cypher and Humility make the other Figures & Virtues of ten-fold Value.

If it were not for the Belly, the Back might wear Gold.

Wouldst thou confound thine Enemy, be good thy self.

Pride is as loud a Beggar as Want, and a great deal more saucy.

Pay what you owe, and what you're worth you'll know.

Sorrow is good for nothing but Sin.

Many a Man thinks he is buying Pleasure, when he is really selling himself a Slave to it.

Graft good Fruit all,
Or graft not at all.

'Tis hard (but glorious) to be poor and honest: An empty Sack can hardly stand upright; but if it does, 'tis a stout one!

He that can bear a Reproof, and mend by it, if he is not wise, is in a fair way of being so.

Beatus esse sine Virtute, nemo potest.

Sound, & sound Doctrine, may pass through a Ram's Horn, and a Preacher, without straitening the one, or amending the other.

Clean your Finger, before you point at my Spots.

He that spills the Rum, loses that only; He that drinks it, often loses both that and himself.

That Ignorance makes devout, if right the Notion,
'Troth, Rufus, thou'rt a Man of great Devotion.

What an admirable Invention is Writing, by which a Man may communicate his Mind without opening his Mouth, and at 1000 Leagues Distance, and even to future Ages, only by the Help of 22 Letters, which may be joined 5852616738497664000 Ways, and will express all Things in a very narrow Compass. 'Tis a Pity this excellent Art has not preserved the Name and Memory of its Inventor.

Those that have much Business must have much Pardon.

Discontented Minds, and Fevers of the Body are not to be cured by changing Beds or Businesses.

Little Strokes,
Fell great Oaks.

You may be too cunning for One, but not for All.

Genius without Education is like Silver in the Mine.

Many would live by their Wits, but break for want of Stock.

Poor Plain dealing! dead without Issue!

You can bear your own Faults, and why not a Fault in your Wife.

Tho' Modesty is a Virtue, Bashfulness is a Vice.

Hide not your Talents, they for Use were made.

What's a Sun-Dial in the Shade!

What signifies knowing the Names, if you know not the Natures of Things.

Tim was so learned, that he could name a Horse in nine Languages; So ignorant, that he bought a Cow to ride on.

The Golden Age never was the present Age.

'Tis a Shame that your Family is an Honour to you! You ought to be an Honour to your Family.

Glass, China, and Reputation, are easily crack'd, and never well mended.