Benjamin Franklin’s Aphorisms

1. There are no gains without pains.
2. Industry pays debts while despair increases them.
3. Diligence is the mother of good luck.
4. One today is worth two tomorrows.
5. If you were a servant would you not be ashamed that a good master should catch you idle? Then if you are your own master be ashamed to catch yourself idle.
6. Trouble springs from idleness and grievous toil from needless ease.
7. Industry gives comfort and plenty and respect.
8. Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee.
9. If you would have your business done, go; if not, send.
10. Want of care does us more damage than want of knowledge.
11. Not to oversee workmen is to leave them your purse open.
12. If you would have a faithful servant and one that you like — serve yourself.
13. If you would be wealthy think of saving as well as getting: The Indies have not made Spain rich because her outgoes are greater than her incomes.
14. Women and wine, game and deceit make the wealth small and the wants great.
15. Many estates are spent in the getting, since women for tea forsook spinning and knitting, And men for punch forsook hewing and splitting.
16. What maintains one vice would bring up two children.
17. Fools make feasts and wise men eat them.
18. Who dainties love shall beggars prove.
19. You may think, perhaps, that a little tea, or a little punch now and then, diet a little more costly, clothes a little finer, and a little more entertainment now and then can be no great matter but remember what Poor Richard says “Many a little makes a mickle; beware of little expense for a small leak will sink a great ship.”
20. Buy what thou has no need of and ere long thou shall sell thy necessaries.
21. Silks and satins, scarlet and velvets have put out the kitchen fire.
22. A child and a fool imagine twenty shillings and twenty years can never be spent.
23. To be humble to superiors is duty, to equals courtesy, to inferior’s nobleness.
24. After crosses and losses Men grow humbler and wiser.
25. The proud hate pride — in others.
26. Pride dines on Vanity, sups on Contempt.
27. Pride breakfasted with Plenty Dined with poverty Supped with Infamy.
28. Blame-all and Praise-all are two blockheads.
29. Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other, and scarce in that.
30. It is ill-manners to silence a fool and cruelty to let him go on.
31. The wise man draws more advantage from his enemies than the fool from his friends.
32. A learned blockhead is a greater blockhead than an ignorant one.
33. The learned fool writes his nonsense in better languages than the unlearned; but still it is nonsense.
34. When befriended, remember it; when you befriend, forget it.
35. He that lives upon hope will die fasting.
36. He that has a trade has an estate.
37. The noblest question in the world is what good may I do in it?
38. Sell not virtue to purchase wealth nor liberty to purchase power.
39. Nothing brings more pain than too much pleasure; nothing more bondage than too much liberty.
40. Wink at small faults; remember thou hast great ones.
41. Each year one vicious habit rooted out, in time might make the worst man good throughout.
42. Hear no ill of a friend, nor speak any of an enemy.
43. Many a man thinks he is buying pleasure when he is really selling himself a slave to it.
44. Having been poor is no shame; but being ashamed of it is.
45. ‘Tis hard but glorious to be poor and honest.
46. Meanness is the parent of insolence.
47. The busy man has few idle visitors; to the boiling pot the flies come not.
48. If you would reap praise you must sow the seeds, Gentle words and useful deeds.
49. Anger is never without a reason but seldom with a good one.
50. Virtue and a trade are a child’s best portion.
51. Love your neighbor yet don’t pull down your hedge.
52. He that does what he should not shall feel what he would not.
53. The honest man takes pains and then enjoys pleasures; the knave takes pleasures and then suffers pains.
54. What you would seem to be, be really.
55. Necessity never made a good bargain.
56. The heart of a fool is in his mouth, but the mouth of a wise man is in his heart.
57. Tricks and treachery are the practice of fools that have not wit enough to be honest.
58. Drink does not drown care, but waters it, and makes it grow fast.
59. Three good meals a day is bad living.
60. Here comes the orator! With his flood of words and his drop of reason.
61. He that speaks much is much mistaken.
62. Proclaim not all thou knoweth, all thou owest, all thou hast, nor all thou canst.
63. Words may shew a man’s wit but actions his meaning.
64. A great talker may be no fool but he is one that relies on him.
65. He that lies down with dogs shall rise up with fleas.
66. All things are easy to industry, all things are difficult to sloth.
67. Take this remark from Richard poor and lame, whatever is begun in anger ends in shame.
68. Be slow in choosing a friend, slower in changing.
69. The sun never repents of the good he does, nor does he ever demand recompense.
70. If what most men admire they would despise, it would look as if mankind were growing wise.
71. He that would live in peace and ease must not speak all he knows nor judge all he sees.
72. Think of three things: Whence you came, where you are going, and to whom you must account.
73. Being ignorant is not so much a shame as being unwilling to learn.
74. Be civil to all, serviceable to many, familiar with few, friend to one, enemy to none.
75. Love your enemies, for they tell you your faults.
76. Be always ashamed to catch thyself idle.
77. Fear to do evil and you need fear nothing else.
78. Good sense and learning may esteem obtain, Humor and wit a laugh, if rightly taken; Fair virtue admiration may impart; But tis good-nature only wins the heart.
79. Who is strong? He that can conquer his bad habits. Who is rich? He that rejoices in his portion.
80. Wish not so much to live long as to live well.
81. For age and want save while you may; No morning sun lasts a whole day.
82. If you would not be forgotten As soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worth reading or do things worth writing.
83. Youth is pert and positive, Age modest and doubting; So ears of corn when young and bright, stand bold upright, But hang their heads when weighty, full and ripe.
84. Kings have long arms, but Misfortune longer, Let none think themselves out of her reach.
85. Ah simple man! When a boy two precious jewels were given thee, Time and good advice, one thou has lost and the other thrown away.
86. Lend money to an enemy and you will gain him, to a friend and you will lose him.
87. Beware of little expenses, a small leak will sink a great ship.
88. When prosperity was well mounted, she let go the bridle, and soon came tumbling out of the saddle.
89. There are three faithful friends — an old wife, an old dog, and ready money.
90. Bargaining has neither friends nor relations.
91. He that is of the opinion money will do everything may well be suspected of doing everything for money.
92. Wealth is not his that has it, but his that enjoys it.
93. Many have quarreled about religion that never practiced it.
94. Marry above thy match and you will get a master.
95. When there is marriage without love, there will be love without marriage.
96. Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterwards.