

Parsimonious

“Penny wise, pound foolish” Robert Burnton

Chandler Watlington

St. Catherine’s School

(804) 288-2804

6001 Grove Avenue
Richmond, Va. 23226

3

Mr. Bader

dbader@st.catherines.org

Parsimonious
“Penny wise, pound foolish”

Parsimonious

Mr. Jones woke up every morning at five-thirty, put on an old suit that showed about an inch of holey sock between his old leather shoes and the bottom of his pant legs. He wandered down to the kitchen and fixed himself a cup of coffee. It was cold because the machine had broken long ago, and he couldn't see the point in buying a new one. Then he got into the 1970s pickup truck that he'd acquired a few years before because the guy had sold it to him for next to nothing, and headed downtown to his corner office.

He resented the beautiful mahogany desk the firm had forced him to accept when he'd been made partner because he couldn't see the problem with the old one. He also hated the new computer system they were installing. “This is such a waste of money,” he grumbled to his secretary as she pulled up his schedule for the day. She was accustomed to his morning rant about how the laptops were “costing him a ton of money,” and how the five-year-old desktops “still worked just fine.”

Mr. Jones had always been cheap. He never gave anyone Christmas presents, he never went on vacation, he never took his wife out to dinner and he never bought his teenage daughter a new dress for a dance. He'd even grounded the girl for giving away their old VCR player to goodwill, instead of letting him sell it on ebay. It didn't matter that Mr. Jones had been listed as one of the 50 wealthiest men in America; he simply hated to spend money.

He couldn't concentrate on preparing for court that morning. He was still angry with his wife for suggesting they get Jane a new car for her 18th birthday.

Parsimonious
“Penny wise, pound foolish”

She'd been driving a 1980 BMW for the last two years that she'd paid 500 of her own dollars for. The car was in bad shape. The tires were completely bald, the service engine light never shut off, and the leaky oil tank left a treacherous puddle in the driveway. Jane had pleaded with her father to help her fix it up. She was already paying for her own insurance, cell phone, clothes and snack food so she simply couldn't afford to fix it up herself. Of course he'd refused, and claimed that the car had never broken down on her and it would be a waste of money to fix something that "worked just fine."

Mr. Jones had scoffed at his wife's proposal to buy Jane a new car even though she hadn't suggested anything extravagant. She just wanted something reliable so her daughter would have a safe way to get to and from college next year. He accused her of being wasteful and told her that "endless money forms the sinews of war" (Cicero). Mrs. Jones was expecting this cliché because she was used to his melodramatic statements. She resolved to ask her parents to buy Jane a car in the next few weeks.

He sat at his desk and the thoughtful look on his wife's face floated to the surface of his mind. He tried to figure out what she was planning—probably the best way to get him to hire someone to clean the gutters. She would claim it was dangerous for him to be up on a ladder at age 50.

He didn't know when his wife had changed to become so materialistic. She'd grown up in a one-room apartment, and shared a bed with her mother and younger brother. When he'd met her she sewed her own clothes, and never expected him to spend a dime on the occasional dinner outing. He thought to himself, "This just goes to show

Parsimonious
"Penny wise, pound foolish"

what happens when you make a little money, they expect you to fund their wildest dreams.” He was about to send an email to his wife about all the fresh fruit she’s bought at the grocery store that week. He intended to put a stop to that kind of extravagance. He reached for the receiver and the phone rang.

“Hello.”

“Is this Tristan Jones?” inquired a thin, quiet voice.

“Yes.”

“My name is Dr. Smith. I work in the trauma unit at St. Mary’s hospital. I’m very sorry to have to tell you this but your daughter is in the intensive care unit. The brakes in her car went out when she was on her way to school and she slammed into a brick wall. You might want to hurry, it doesn’t look good...”

It took the death of his only daughter for Tristan to finally learn the detrimental effects of penny pinching to the point of recklessness.

Works Consulted:

Fishback, Price V. "Economics." 2008. [Place of access.] 30 Sept. 2008
<<http://www.worldbookonline.com/student/article?id=ar173340>>.

Hewett, Roger S. "Economics." *Encyclopedia Americana*. 2008. Grolier Online. 30 Sep.
2008 <<http://ea.grolier.com/cgi-bin/article?assetid=0138330-05>>.

Ward, Allen M. "Cicero, Marcus Tullius." *Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*. 2008.
Grolier Online. 30 Sep. 2008
<<http://gme.grolier.com/cgi-bin/article?assetid=0063110-0>>.