MASON LOCKE WEEMS

THE LIFE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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The Life of Benjamin Franklin / With Many Choice Anecdotes and admirable sayings of this great man never before published by any of his biographers:

Содержание

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"Sage Franklin next arose in cheerful mien,
And smil'd, unruffled, o'er the solemn scene;

High on his locks of age a wreath was brac'd,
Palm of all arts that e'er a mortal grac'd;
Beneath him lay the sceptre kings had borne,
And crowns and laurels from their temples torn."

To the Reader

WE trust that you will be thoroughly satisfied with this book. During the long period of time that the publications of Street & Smith have been familiar to the reading classes (somewhat more than half a century) it has always been our aim to give to the public the very best literary products, regardless of the expenditure involved. Our books and periodicals are today read and re-read in a majority of the homes of America, while but few of our original competitors are even known by name to the present generation. No special credit is due for antiquity, but we hold it to be a self-evident fact that long experience, coupled with enterprise and the ability to maintain the front rank for so many years, proves our right to the title of leaders. We solicit your further valued patronage.

STREET & SMITH

CHAPTER I

DR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, president of the american philosophical society; fellow of the royal society of edinburgh, london and paris; governor of the state of pennsylvania; and minister plenipotentiary from the united states to the court of france, was the son of an obscure tallow-chandler and soap-boiler, of Boston, where he was born on the 17th day of January, 1706.

Some men carry letters of recommendation in their looks, and some in their names. 'Tis the lot but of few to inherit both of these advantages. The hero of this work was one of that favoured number. As to his physiognomy, there was in it such an air of wisdom and philanthropy, and consequently such an expression of majesty and sweetness, as charms, even in the commonest pictures of him. And for his name, every one acquainted with the old English history, must know, that Franklin stands for what we now mean by "Gentleman," or "clever fellow."

In the days of Auld Lang Syne, their neighbours from the continent made a descent "*on the fast anchored isle*," and compelled the hardy, red-ochred natives to buckle to their yoke. Among the victors were some regiments of Franks, who distinguished themselves by their valor, and still more by their politeness to the vanquished, and especially to the females. By this amiable gallantry the Franks acquired such glory among the

brave islanders, that whenever any of their own people achieved any thing uncommonly handsome, he was called, by way of compliment, Franklin, *i.e.* a little Frank. As the living flame does not more naturally tend upwards than does every virtue to exalt its possessors, these little Franks were soon promoted to be great men, such as justices of the peace, knights of the shire, and other such names of high renown. Hence those pretty lines of the old poet Chaucer—

> "This worthy Franklin wore a purse of silk
> Fix'd to his girdle, pure as morning milk;
> Knight of the shire; first justice of th' assize,
> To help the poor, the doubtful to advise.
> In all employments, gen'rous just he prov'd;
> Renown'd for courtesy; by all belov'd."

But though, according to Dr. Franklin's own account of his family, whose pedigree he looked into with great diligence while he was in England, it appears that they were all of the "*well born*," or gentlemen in the best sense of the word; yet they did not deem it beneath them to continue the same useful courses which had at first conferred their titles. On the contrary, the doctor owns, and indeed glories in it, that for three hundred years the eldest son, or heir apparent in this family of old British gentlemen, was invariably brought up a blacksmith. Moreover, it appears from the same indubitable authority, that the blacksmith succession was most religiously continued in the family down to the days

of the doctor's father. How it has gone on since that time I have never heard; but considering the salutary effects of such a fashion on the prosperity of a young republic, it were most devoutly to be wished that it is kept up: and that the family of one of the greatest men who ever lived in this or any other country, still display in their coat of arms, not the barren *gules* and *garters* of European folly, but those better ensigns of American wisdom—the sledge-hammer and anvil.

CHAPTER II

"Were I so tall to reach the pole,
And grasp the ocean in my span,
I must be measur'd by my soul;
For 'tis the MIND that makes the man."

From the best accounts which I have been able to pick up, it would appear that a passion for learning had a long run in the family of the Franklins. Of the doctor's three uncles, the elder, whose name was Thomas, though conscientiously brought up a blacksmith, and subsisting his family by the din and sweat of his anvil, was still a great reader. Instead of wasting his leisure hours, as too many of the trade do, in tippling and tobacco, he acquired enough of the law to render himself a very useful and leading man among the people of Northampton, where his forefathers had lived in great comfort for three hundred years, on thirty acres of land.

His uncle Benjamin, too, another old *English gentleman* of the right stamp, though a very hard-working man at the silk-dying trade, was equally devoted to the pleasures of the mind. He made it a rule whenever he lighted on a copy of verses that pleased him, to transcribe them into a large blank book which he kept for the purpose. In this way he collected two quarto

volumes of poems, written in short hand of his own inventing. And, being a man of great piety, and fond of attending the best preachers, whose sermons he always took down, he collected in the course of his life, *eight* volumes of sermons in *folio*, besides near *thirty* in quarto and octavo, and all in the aforesaid short hand! Astonishing proof, what a banquet of elegant pleasures even a poor mechanic may enjoy, who begins early to read and think! 'Tis true, he was a long time about it. His piety afforded him a constant cheerfulness. And deriving from the same source a regular temperance, he attained to a great age. In his seventy-third year, still fresh and strong, he left his native country, and came over to America, to see his younger brother Josias, between whom and himself there had always subsisted a more than ordinary friendship. On his arrival in Boston, he was received with unbounded joy by Josias, who pressed him to spend the residue of his days in his family. To this proposition the old gentleman readily consented; and the more so as he was then a widower, and his children, all married off, had left him. He had the honor to give his name, and to stand godfather to our little hero, for whom, on account of his vivacity and fondness for learning, he conceived an extraordinary affection. And Ben always took a great delight in talking of this uncle. Nor was it to be wondered at; for he was an old man who wore his religion very much to win young people—a pleasant countenance—a sweet speech—and a fund of anecdotes always entertaining, and generally carrying some good moral in the tail of them. His

grandfather before him must have been a man of rare humour, as appears from a world of droll stories which uncle Benjamin used to tell after him, and which his New England descendants to this day are wont to repeat with great glee. I must let the reader hear one or two of them. They will amuse him, by showing what strange things were done in days of yore by kings and priests in the land of our venerable forefathers.

It was his grandfather's fortune to live in the reign of Queen Mary, whom her *friends* called *holy* Mary, but her enemies *bloody* Mary. In the grand struggle for power between those humble followers of the cross, the catholics and the protestants, the former gained the victory, for which 'Te Deums' in abundance were sung throughout the land. And having been sadly rib-roasted by the protestants when in power, they determined, like good christians, now that the tables were turned, to try on them the virtues of fire and faggot. The Franklin family having ever been sturdy protestants, began now to be in great tribulation. "What shall we do to save our Bible?" was the question. After serious consultation in a family caucus, it was resolved to hide it in the close-stool; which was accordingly done, by fastening it, open, on the under side of the lid by twine threads drawn strongly across the leaves. When the grandfather read to the family, he turned up the aforesaid lid on his knees, passing the leaves of his Bible, as he read, from one side to the other. One of the children was carefully stationed at the door, to give notice if he saw the priest, or any of his frowning tribe, draw near. In

that event, the lid with the Bible lashed beneath it, was instantly clapped down again on its old place.

These things may appear strange to us, who live under a wise republic, which will not suffer the black gowns of one church to persecute those of another. But they were common in those dark and dismal days, when the clergy thought more of creeds than of Christ, and of learning Latin than of learning love. Queen Mary was one of this gnostic generation, (who place their religion in the *head*, though Christ places it in the heart,) and finding it much easier to her *unloving* spirit, to burn human beings called heretics, than to mortify her own lust of popularity, she suffered her catholic to fly upon and worry her protestant subjects at a shameful rate. Good old uncle Benjamin used to divert his friends with another story, which happened in the family of his own aunt, who kept an inn at Eaton, Northamptonshire.

A most violent priest, of the name of Asquith, who thought, like Saul, that he should be doing "*God service*" by killing the heretics, had obtained letters patent from queen Mary against those people in the county of Warwick. On his way he called to dine at Eaton, where he was quickly waited on by the mayor, a strong catholic, to ask how the *good work went on*. Asquith, leaping to his saddle-bags, drew forth a little box, that contained his commission, which he flourished before the mayor, exclaiming with high glee, "*Aye! there's that that will scorch the rogues!*" Old Mrs. Franklin, under the rose a sturdy protestant, overhearing this, was exceedingly troubled; and watching her

opportunity when the priest had stepped out with the mayor, slipped the commission out of the box, and put in its place a pack of cards, wrapped in the same paper. The priest returning in haste, and suspecting no trick, huddled up his box, and posted off for Coventry. A grand council of the saints was speedily convoked to meet him. He arose, and having with great vehemence delivered a set speech against the heretics, threw his commission on the table for the secretary to read aloud. With the eyes of the whole council on him, the eager secretary opened the package, when in place of the flaming commission, behold a pack of cards with the knave of clubs turned uppermost! A sudden stupefaction seized the spectators. In silence they stared at the priest and stared at one another. Some looking as though they suspected treachery: others as dreading a judgment in the case. Soon as the dumb-founded priest could recover speech, he swore by the Holy Mary, that he once had a commission; that he had received it from the queen's own hand. And he also swore that he would get another commission. Accordingly he hurried back to London, and having procured another, set off again for Coventry. But alas! before he got down, poor queen Mary had turned the corner, and the protestants under Elizabeth got the rule again. Having nothing now to dread, our quizzing old hostess, Mrs. Franklin, came out with the knavish trick she had played the priest, which so pleased the protestants of Coventry that they presented her a piece of plate, that cost fifty pounds sterling, equal, as money now goes, to a thousand dollars.

From an affair which soon after this took place there, it appears that Coventry, however famous for saints, had no great cause to brag of her poets.—When queen Elizabeth, to gratify her subjects, made the tour of her island, she passed through Coventry. The mayor, aldermen, and company hearing of her approach, went out in great state to meet her. The queen being notified that they wished to address her, made a full stop right opposite to a stage erected for the purpose, and covered with embroidered cloth, from which a ready orator, after much bowing and arms full extended, made this wondrous speech —"We men of Coventry are glad to see your royal highness— Lord how *fair* you be!"

To this the maiden queen, equal famed for fat and fun, rising in her carriage, and waving her lily white hand, made this prompt reply—"Our royal highness is glad to see you men of Coventry —Lord what Fools you be!"

CHAPTER III

Our hero, little Ben, coming on the carpet – Put to school very young – Learns prodigiously – Taken home and set to candle-making – Curious capers, all proclaiming "the Achilles in petticoats."

Dr. Franklin's father married early in his own country, and would probably have lived and died there, but for the persecutions against his friends the Presbyterians, which so disgusted him, that he came over to New England, and settled in Boston about the year 1682. He brought with him his English wife and three children. By the same wife he had four children more in America; and ten others afterwards by an American wife. The doctor speaks with pleasure of having seen thirteen sitting together very lovingly at his father's table, and all married. Our little hero, who was the fifteenth child, and last of the sons, was born at Boston the 17th day of January, 1706, old style.

That famous Italian proverb, "*The Devil tempts every man, but the Idler tempts the Devil*," was a favourite canto with wise old Josias; for which reason, soon as their little lips could well lisp letters and syllables, he had them all to school.

Nor was this the only instance with regard to them, wherein good Josias "*sham'd the Devil*;" for as soon as their education was finished, they were put to useful trades. Thus no leisure was allowed for bad company and habits. Little Ben, neatly clad and

comb'd, was pack'd off to school with the rest; and as would seem, at a very early age, for he says himself that, "*he could not recollect any time in his life when he did not know how to read*," whence we may infer that he hardly ever knew any thing more of childhood than its innocency and playfulness. At the age of eight he was sent to a grammar school, where he made such a figure in learning, that his good old father set him down at once for the church, and used constantly to call him his "*little chaplain*." He was confirmed in this design, not only by the extraordinary readiness with which he learned, but also by the praises of his friends, who all agreed that he would certainly one day or other become a mighty scholar. His uncle Benjamin too, greatly approved the idea of making a preacher of him; and by way of encouragement, promised to him all his volumes of sermons, written, as before said, in his own short hand.

This his rapid progress in learning he ascribed very much to an amiable teacher who used gentle means only, to encourage his scholars, and make them fond of their books.

But in the midst of this gay career in his learning, when in the course of the first year only, he had risen from the middle of his class to the head of it; thence to the class immediately above it; and was rapidly overtaking the third class, he was taken from school! His father, having a large family, with but a small income, and thinking himself unable consistently with what he owed the rest of his children, to give him a collegiate education, took Ben home to assist him in his own humble occupation, which was that

of a soap-boiler and tallow-chandler; a trade he had taken up of his own head after settling in Boston; his original one of a dyer being in too little request to maintain his family.

I have never heard how Ben took this sudden reverse in his prospects. No doubt it put his little stock of philosophy to the stretch. To have seen himself, one day, on the high road to literary fame, flying from class to class, the admiration and envy of a numerous school; and the next day, to have found himself in a filthy soap-shop; clad in a greasy apron, twisting cotton wicks!—and in place of snuffing the sacred lamps of the Muses, to be bending over pots of fetid tallow, dipping and moulding candles for the dirty cook wenches! Oh, it must have seem'd a sad falling off! Indeed, it appears from his own account that he was so disgusted with it that he had serious thoughts of going to sea. But his father objecting to it, and Ben having virtue enough to be dutiful, the notion was given up for that time. But the ambition which had made him the first at his school, and which now would have hurried him to sea, was not to be extinguished. Though diverted from its favourite course, it still burned for distinction, and rendered him the leader of the juvenile band in every enterprize where danger was to be confronted, or glory to be won. In the neighbouring mill-pond, he was the foremost to lead the boys to plunge and swim; thus teaching them an early mastery over that dangerous element. And when the ticklish mill-boat was launching from the shore laden with his timid playmates, the paddle that served as rudder, was always put into

his hands, as the fittest to steer her course over the dark waters of the pond. This ascendancy which nature had given him over the companions of his youth, was not always so well used as it might have been. He honestly confesses that, once at least, he made such an unlucky use of it as drew them into a scrape that cost them dear. Their favourite fishing shore on that pond was, it seems, very miry. To remedy so great an inconvenience he proposed to the boys to make a wharf. Their assent was quickly obtained: but what shall we make it of? was the question. Ben pointed their attention to a heap of stones, hard by, of which certain honest masons were building a house. The proposition was hailed by the boys, as a grand discovery; and soon as night had spread her dark curtains around them, they fell to work with the activity of young beavers, and by midnight had completed their wharf. The next morning the masons came to work, but, behold! not a stone was to be found! The young rogues, however, detected by the track of their feet in the mud, were quickly summoned before their parents, who not being so partial to Ben as they had been, chastised their folly with a severe flogging. Good old Josias pursued a different course with his son. To deter him from such an act in future, he endeavoured to reason him into a sense of its immorality. Ben, on the other hand, just fresh and confident from his school, took the field of argument against his father, and smartly attempted to defend what he had done, on the principle of its *utility*. But the old gentleman, who was a great adept in moral philosophy, calmly observed to him, that if one

boy were to make use of this plea to take away his fellow's goods, another might; and thus contests would arise, filling the world with blood and murder without end. Convinced, in this simple way, of the fatal consequences of "*doing evil that good may come*," Ben let drop the weapons of his rebellion, and candidly agreed with his father that what was not *strictly honest* could never be *truly useful*. This discovery he made at the tender age of *nine*. Some never make it in the course of their lives. The grand angler, Satan, throws out his bait of *immediate gain*; and they, like silly Jacks, snap at it at once; and in the moment of running off, fancy they have got a delicious morsel. But alas! the fatal hook soon convinces them of their mistake, though sometimes too late. And then the lamentation of the prophet serves as the epilogue of their tragedy—"*'Twas honey in the mouth, but gall in the bowels.*"

CHAPTER IV

Picture of a wise father – To which is added a famous receipt for health and long life.

The reader must already have discovered that Ben was uncommonly blest in a father. Indeed from the portrait of him drawn by this grateful son, full fifty years afterwards, he must have been an enviable old man.

As to his person, though that is but of minor consideration in a rational creature—I say, as to his person, it was of the right standard, *i.e.* medium size and finely formed—his complexion fair and ruddy—black, intelligent eyes—and an air uncommonly graceful and spirited. In respect of *mind*, which is the true jewel of our nature, he was a man of the purest piety and morals, and consequently cheerful and amiable in a high degree. Added to this, he possessed a considerable taste for the fine arts, particularly drawing and music; and having a voice remarkably sonorous and sweet, whenever he sung a hymn accompanied with his violin, which he usually did at the close of his day's labours, it was delightful to hear him. He possessed also an extraordinary sagacity in things relating both to public and private life, insomuch that not only individuals were constantly consulting him about their affairs, and calling him in as an arbiter in their disputes; but even the leading men of Boston would often come and ask his advice in their most important concerns, as well

of the town as of the church.

For his slender means he was a man of extraordinary hospitality, which caused his friends to wonder how he made out to entertain so many. But whenever this was mentioned to him, he used to laugh and say, that the world was good natured and gave him credit for much more than he deserved; for that, in fact, others entertained ten times as many as he did. By this, 'tis thought he alluded to the ostentatious practice common with some, of pointing their hungry visitant to their grand buildings, and boasting how many thousands this or that bauble cost; as if their ridiculous vanity would pass with them for a good dinner. For his part, he said, he preferred setting before his visitors a plenty of wholesome fare, with a hearty welcome. Though to do this he was fain to work hard, and content himself with a small house and plain furniture. But it was always his opinion that a little laid out in this way, went farther both with God and man too, than great treasures lavished on pride and ostentation.

But though he delighted in hospitality as a great virtue, yet he always made choice of such friends at his table as were fond of rational conversation. And he took great care to introduce such topics as would, in a pleasant manner, lead to ideas useful to his family, both in temporal and eternal things. As to the dishes that were served up, he never talked of them; never discussed whether they were well or ill dressed; of a good or bad flavour, high seasoned or otherwise.

For this manly kind of education at his table, Dr. Franklin

always spoke as under great obligations to his father's judgment and taste. Thus accustomed, from infancy, to a generous inattention to the palate, he became so perfectly indifferent about what was set before him, that he hardly ever remembered, ten minutes after dinner, what he had dined on. In travelling, particularly, he found his account in this. For while those who had been more nice in their diet could enjoy nothing they met with; this one growling over the daintiest breakfast of new laid eggs and toast floated in butter, because his *coffee was not half strong enough!*—that wondering what people can mean by serving up a round of beef when they have *no mustard!*—and a third cursing like a trooper, though the finest rock-fish or sheep's-head be smoking on the table—because there is no *walnut pickle or ketchup!* He for his part, happily engaged in a pleasant train of thinking or conversation, never attended to such trifles, but dined heartily on whatever was set before him. In short, there is no greater kindness that a young man can do himself than to learn the art of feasting on fish, flesh, or fowl as they come, without ever troubling his head about any other sauce than what the rich hand of nature has given; let him but bring to these dishes that good appetite which always springs from exercise and cheerfulness, and he will be an epicure indeed.

He would often repeat in the company of young people, the following anecdote which he had picked up some where or other in his extensive reading. "A wealthy citizen of Athens, who had nearly ruined his constitution by gluttony and sloth, was advised

by Hippocrates to visit a certain medicinal spring in Sparta; not that Hippocrates believed that spring to be better than some nearer home; but exercise was the object—" "*Visit the springs of Sparta*," said the great physician. As the young debauchee, pale and bloated, travelled among the simple and hardy Spartans, he called one day at the house of a countryman on the road to get something to eat. A young woman was just serving up dinner—a nice barn-door fowl boiled with a piece of fat bacon. "You have got rather a plain dinner there madam," growled the Athenian. "*Yes, sir*," replied the young woman blushing, "*but my husband will be here directly, and he always brings the sauce with him*." Presently the young husband stepped in, and after welcoming his guest, invited him to dinner. "I can't dream of dining, sir, *without sauce*," said the Athenian, "and your wife promised you would bring it." "*O, sir, my wife is a wit*," cried the Spartan; "*she only meant the good appetite which I always bring with me from the barn, where I have been threshing*."

And here I beg leave to wind up this chapter with the following beautiful lines from Dryden, which I trust my young reader will commit to memory. They may save him many a sick stomach and headache, besides many a good dollar in doctor's fees.

"The first physicians by debauch were made;
Excess began and sloth sustains the trade.
By chace, our long liv'd fathers earn'd their bread;
Toil strung their nerves and purified their blood:
But we, their sons, a pamper'd race of men,

Are dwindled down to threescore years and ten.
Better hunt in fields for health unbought,
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught.
The wise for health on exercise depend;
God never made his works for man to mend."

CHAPTER V

Ben continued with his father, assisting him in his humble toils, till his twelfth year; and had he possessed a mind less active might have remained a candle-maker all the days of his life. But born to diffuse a light beyond that of tallow or spermaceti, he could never reconcile himself to this inferior employment, and in spite of his wishes to conceal it from his father, discontent would still lower on his brow, and the half-suppressed sigh steal in secret from his bosom.

With equal grief his father beheld the deep-seated disquietude of his son. He loved all his children; but he loved this young one above all the rest. Ben was the child of his old age. The smile that dimpled his tender cheeks reminded him of his mother when he first saw her, lovely in the rosy freshness of youth. And then his intellect was so far beyond his years; his questions so shrewd; so strong in reasoning; so witty in remark, that his father would often forget his violin of nights for the higher pleasure of holding an argument with him. This was a great trial to his sisters, who would often intreat their mother to make Ben hold his tongue, that their father might take down his fiddle, and play and sing hymns with them: for they took after him in his passion for music, and sung divinely. No wonder that such a child should be dear to such a father. Indeed old Josias' affection for Ben was so intimately interwoven with every fibre of his heart, that

he could not bear the idea of separation from him; and various were the stratagems which he employed to keep this dear child at home. One while, to frighten his youthful fancy from the sea, for that was the old man's dread, he would paint the horrors of the watery world, where the maddening billows, lashed into mountains by the storm, would lift the trembling ship to the skies; then hurl her down, headlong plunging into the yawning gulphs, never to rise again. At another time he would describe the wearisomeness of beating the gloomy wave for joyless months, pent up in a small ship, with no prospects but barren sea and skies—no smells but tar and bilge water—no society but men of uncultivated minds, and their constant conversation nothing but ribaldry and oaths. And then again he would take him to visit the masons, coopers, joiners, and other mechanics, at work: in hopes that his genius might be caught, and a stop put to his passion for wandering. But greatly to his sorrow, none of these things held out the attractions that his son seemed to want. His visits among these tradesmen were not, however, without their advantage. He caught from them, as he somewhere says, such an insight into mechanic arts and the use of tools, as enabled him afterwards when there was no artist at hand, to make for himself suitable machines for the illustration of his philosophical experiments.

But it was not long before this obstinate dislike of Ben's to all ordinary pursuits was found out; it was found out by his mother. "Bless me," said she one night to her husband, as he lay sleepless and sighing on his son's account, "why do we make ourselves so

unhappy about Ben for fear he should go to *sea!* let him but go to *school*, and I'll engage we hear no more about his running to sea. Don't you see the child is never happy but when he has a book in his hand? Other boys when they get a little money never think of any thing better to lay it out on than their backs or their bellies; but he, poor fellow, the moment that he gets a shilling, runs and gives it for a book; and then, you know, there is no getting him to his meals until he has read it through, and told us all about it."

Good old Josias listened very devoutly to his wife, while she uttered this oration on his youngest son. Then with looks as of a heart suddenly relieved from a heavy burden, and his eyes lifted to heaven, he fervently exclaimed—"O that my son, even my little son Benjamin, may live before God, and that the days of his usefulness and glory may be many!"

How far the effectual fervent prayer of this righteous father found acceptance in heaven, the reader will find perhaps by the time he has gone through our little book.

CHAPTER VI

Ben taken from school, turns his own teacher – History of the books which he first read – Is bound to the printing trade.

At a learned table in Paris, where Dr. Franklin happened to dine, it was asked by the abbé Raynal, *What description of men most deserves pity?*

Some mentioned one character, and some another. When it came to Franklin's turn, he replied, *A lonesome man in a rainy day, who does not know how to read.*

As every thing is interesting that relates to one who made such a figure in the world, it may gratify our readers to be told what were the books that first regaled the youthful appetite of the great Dr. Franklin. The state of literature in Boston at that time, being like himself, only in its infancy, it is not to be supposed that Ben had any very great choice of books. Books, however, there always were in Boston.[1] Among these was Bunyan's Voyages, which appears to have been the first he ever read, and of which he speaks with great pleasure. But there is reason to fear that Bunyan did no good: for, as it was the reading of the life of Alexander the Great that first set Charles the Twelfth in such a fever to be running over the world killing every body he met; so, in all probability, it was Bunyan's Voyages that fired Ben's fancy

[1] You never find presbyterians without books.

with that passion for travelling, which gave his father so much uneasiness. Having read over old Bunyan so often as to have him almost by heart, Ben added a little boot, and made a *swap* of him for *Burton's Historical Miscellanies*. This, consisting of forty or fifty volumes, held him a good long tug: for he had no time to read but on Sundays, and early in the morning or late at night. After this he fell upon his father's library. This being made up principally of old puritanical divinity, would to most boys have appeared like the pillars of Hercules to travellers of old—a bound not to be passed. But so keen was Ben's appetite for any thing in the shape of a book, that he fell upon it with his usual voracity, and soon devoured every thing in it, especially of the lighter sort. Seeing a little bundle of something crammed away very snugly upon an upper shelf, his curiosity led him to take it down: and lo! what should it be but "*Plutarch's Lives*." Ben was a stranger to the work; but the title alone was enough for him; he instantly gave it one reading; and then a second, and a third, and so on until he had almost committed it to memory; and to his dying day he never mentioned the name of Plutarch without acknowledging how much pleasure and profit he had derived from that divine old writer. And there was another book, by Defoe, a small affair, entitled "*An Essay on Projects*," to which he pays the very high compliment of saying, that "*from it he received impressions which influenced some of the principal events of his life*."

Happy now to find that books had the charm to keep his darling boy at home, and thinking that if he were put into a

printing office he would be sure to get books enough, his father determined to make a printer of him, though he already had a son in that business. Exactly to his wishes, that son, whose name was James, had just returned from London with a new press and types. Accordingly, without loss of time, Ben, now in his twelfth year, was bound apprentice to him. By the indentures Ben was to serve his brother till twenty-one, *i.e. nine* full years, without receiving one penny of wages save for the last twelve months! How a man pretending to religion could reconcile it to himself to make so hard a bargain with a younger brother, is strange. But perhaps it was permitted of God, that Ben should learn his ideas of oppression, not from reading but from suffering. The deliverers of mankind have all been made perfect through suffering. And to the galling sense of this villanous oppression, which never ceased to rankle on the mind of Franklin, the American people owe much of that spirited resistance to British injustice, which eventuated in their liberties. But Master James had no great cause to boast of this selfish treatment of his younger brother Benjamin; for the old adage "foul play never thrives," was hardly ever more remarkably illustrated than in this affair, as the reader will in due season be brought to understand.

CHAPTER VII

Ben in clover – Turns a Rhymer – Makes a prodigious noise in Boston – Bit by the Poetic Tarantula – Luckily cured by his father.

Ben is now happy. He is placed by the side of the press, the very mint and coining place of his beloved *books*; and animated by that delight which he takes in his business, he makes a proficiency equally surprising and profitable to his brother. The field of his reading too is now greatly enlarged. From the booksellers' boys he makes shift, every now and then, to borrow a book, which he *never fails to return* at the promised time: though to accomplish this he was often obliged to sit up till midnight, reading by his bed side, that he might be as good as his word.

Such an extraordinary passion for learning soon commended him to the notice of his neighbours, among whom was an ingenious young man, a tradesman, named Matthew Adams, who invited him to his house, showed him all his books, and offered to lend him any that he wished to read.

About this time, which was somewhere in his thirteenth year, Ben took it into his head that he could write poetry: and actually composed several little pieces. These, after some hesitation, he showed to his brother, who pronounced them *excellent*; and thinking that money might be made by Ben's poetry, pressed him to cultivate his *wonderful talent*, as he called it; and even

gave him a couple of subjects to write on. The one, which was to be called the Light-house Tragedy, was to narrate the late shipwreck of a sea captain and his two daughters: and the other was to be a sailor's song on the noted pirate Blackbeard, who had been recently killed on the coast of North Carolina, by Captain Maynard, of a British sloop of war.

Ben accordingly fell to work, and after burning out several candles, for his brother could not afford to let him write poetry by daylight, he produced his two poems. His brother extolled them to the skies, and in all haste had them put to the type and struck off; to expedite matters, fast as the sheets could be snatched from the press, all hands were set to work, folding and stitching them ready for market; while nothing was to be heard throughout the office but constant calls on the boys at press—"*more sheets ho! more Light-house tragedy! more Blackbeard!*" But who can tell what Ben felt when he saw his brother and all his journeymen in such a bustle on his account—and when he saw, wherever he cast his eyes, the splendid trophies of his genius scattered on the floor and tables; some in common paper for the multitude; and others in snow-white foolscap, for presents to the great people, such as "His excellency the governor."—"The hon. the secretary of state."—"The Worshipful the mayor."—"The aldermen, and gentlemen of the council."—"The reverend the *clergy*, &c." Ben could never tire of gazing at them; and as he gazed, his heart would leap for joy—"*O you precious little verses*," he would say to himself, "*Ye first warblings of my youthful harp! I'll soon have*

you abroad, delighting every company, and filling all mouths with my name!" Accordingly, his *two poems* being ready, Ben, who had been both poet and printer, with a basket full of each on his arm, set out in high spirits to sell them through the town, which he did by singing out as he went, after, the manner of the London cries—

"Choice Poetry! Choice Po-e-try!
Come BUY my choice Po-e-try!"

The people of Boston having never heard any such cry as that before, were prodigiously at a loss to know what he was selling. But still Ben went on singing out as before,

"Choice Poetry! Choice Poetry!
Come, buy my choice Poetry!"

I wonder now, said one with a stare, if it is not *poultry* that that little boy is singing out so stoutly yonder.

O no, I guess not, said a second.

Well then, cried a third, I vow but it must be *pastry*.

At length Ben was called up and interrogated.

"*Pray, my little man, and what's that that you are crying there so bravely?*"

Ben told them it was poetry.

"*O!—aye! poetry!*" said they; "*poetry! that's a sort of something or other in metre—like the old version, isn't it?*"

"*O yes, to be sure*," said they all, "*it must be like the old version, if it is poetry*;" and thereupon they stared at him, marvelling hugely that a "*little curly headed boy like him should be selling such a wonderful thing*!" This made Ben hug himself still more on account of his poetry.

I have never been able to get a sight of the ballad of the Light-house Tragedy, which must no doubt have been a great curiosity: but the sailor's song on Blackbeard runs thus—

"Come all you jolly Sailors,
You all so stout and brave;
Come hearken and I'll tell you
What happen'd on the wave.
Oh! 'tis of that bloody Blackbeard
I'm going now for to tell;
And as how by gallant Maynard
He soon was sent to hell—
With a down, down, down derry down."

The reader will, I suppose, agree with Ben in his criticism, many years afterwards, on this poetry, that it was "wretched stuff; mere blind men's ditties." But fortunately for Ben, the poor people of Boston were at that time no judges of poetry. The silver-tongued Watts had not, as yet, snatched the harp of Zion, and poured his divine songs over New-England. And having never been accustomed to any thing better than an old version of David's Psalms, running in this way—

"Ye monsters of the bubbling deep,
Your Maker's praises spout!
Up from your sands ye codlings peep,
And wag your tails about."—

The people of Boston pronounced Ben's poetry *mighty fine*, and bought them up at a prodigious rate; especially the Light-house Tragedy.

A flood of success so sudden and unexpected, would in all probability have turned Ben's brain and run him stark mad with vanity, had not his wise old father timely stepped in and checked the rising fever. But highly as Ben honoured his father, and respected his judgment, he could hardly brook to hear him attack his beloved poetry, as he did, calling it "*mere Grub-street.*" And he even held a stiff argument in defence of it. But on reading a volume of Pope, which his father, who well knew the force of contrast, put into his hand for that purpose, he never again opened his mouth in behalf of his "*blind men's ditties.*" He used to laugh and say, that after reading Pope, he was so mortified with his *Light-house Tragedy, and Sailor's Song*, which he had once thought so fine, that he could not bear the sight of them, but constantly threw into the fire every copy that fell in his way. Thus was he timely saved, as he ingenuously confesses, from the very great misfortune of being, perhaps, a miserable jingler for life.

But I cannot let fall the curtain on this curious chapter, without once more feasting my eyes on Ben, as, with a little basket on his

arm, he trudged along the streets of Boston crying his poetry.

Who that saw the youthful David coming up fresh from his father's sheep cots, with his locks wet with the dews of the morning, and his cheeks ruddy as the opening rose-buds, would have dreamed that this was he who should one day, single handed, meet the giant Goliah, in the war-darkened valley of Elah, and wipe off reproach from Israel. In like manner, who that saw this "*curly headed child*," at the tender age of thirteen, selling his "*blind men's ditties*," among the wonder-struck Jonathans and Jemimas of Boston, would have thought that this was he, who, single handed, was to meet the British ministry at the bar of their own house of Commons, and by the solar blaze of his wisdom, utterly disperse all their dark designs against their countrymen, thus gaining for himself a name lasting as time, and dear to liberty as the name of Washington.

O you time-wasting, brain-starving young men, who can never be at ease unless you have a cigar or a plug of tobacco in your mouths, go on with your puffing and champing—go on with your filthy smoking, and your still more filthy spitting, keeping the cleanly house-wives in constant terror for their nicely waxed floors, and their shining carpets—go on I say; but remember it was not in this way that our little Ben became the GREAT DR. FRANKLIN.

CHAPTER VIII

'Tis the character of a great mind never to despair. Though glory may not be gained in one way, it may in another. As a river, if it meet a mountain in its course, does not halt and poison all the country by stagnation, but rolls its gathering forces around the obstacle, urging its precious tides and treasures through distant lands. So it was with the restless genius of young Franklin. Finding that nature had never cut him out for a poet, he determined to take revenge on her by making himself a good prose writer. As it is in this way that his pen has conferred great obligations on the world, it must be gratifying to learn by what means, humbly circumstanced as he was, he acquired that perspicuity and ease so remarkable in his writings. This information must be peculiarly acceptable to such youth as are apt to despair of becoming good writers, because they have never been taught the languages. Ben's example will soon convince them that Latin and Greek are not necessary to make English scholars. Let them but commence with *his* passion for knowledge; with *his* firm persuasion, that wisdom is the glory and happiness of man, and the work is more than half done.

Honest Ben never courted a young man because he was rich, or the son of the rich—No. His favourites were of the youth fond of reading and of rational conversation, no matter how poor they were. "*Birds of a feather do not more naturally*

flock together," than do young men of this high character. This was what first attracted to him that ingenious young carpenter, Matthew Adams: as also John Collins, the tanner's boy. These three spirited youth, after finding each other out, became as fond as brothers. And often as possible, when the labours of the day were ended, they would meet at a little school-house in the neighbourhood, and argue on some given subject till midnight. The advantages of this as a grand mean of exercising memory, strengthening the reasoning faculty, disciplining the thoughts, and improving a correct and graceful elocution, became daily more obvious and important in their view, and consequently increased their mutual attachment. But from his own observation of what passed in this curious little society, Ben cautions young men against that *war of words*, which the vain are too apt to fall into, and which tends not only to make them insupportably disagreeable through a disputatious spirit, but is apt also to betray into a fondness for *quizzing*, *i.e.* for asserting and supporting opinions which they do not themselves believe. He gives the following as a case in point.

One night, Adams being absent, and only himself and Collins together in the old school-house, Ben observed that he thought it a great pity that the young ladies were not more attended to, as to the improvement of their minds by education. He said, that with their advantages of sweet voices and beautiful faces, they could give tenfold charms to wit and sensible conversation, making heavenly truths to appear, as he had somewhere read in

his father's old Bible, "like apples of gold set in pictures of silver."

Collins blowed upon the idea. He said, it was all *stuff*, and no pity at all, that the girls were so neglected in their education, as they were naturally incapable of it. And here he repeated, laughing, that infamous slur on the ladies,

> "Substance too soft a lasting mind to bear,
> And best distinguish'd by black, brown, or fair."

At this, Ben, who was already getting to be a great admirer of the ladies, reddened up against Collins; and to it they fell, at once, in a stiff argument on the education of women—as whether they were capable of studying the sciences or not. Collins, as we have seen, led off against the ladies. Being much of an infidel, he took the Turkish ground altogether, and argued like one just soured and sullen from the seraglio. *Women study the sciences indeed!* said he, with a sneer; *a pretty story truly! no sir, they have nothing to do with the sciences. They were not born for any such thing.*

Ben wanted to know what they *were* born for?

Born for! retorted Collins, why to *dress* and *dance*; to *sing* and *play*; and, like pretty triflers, to divert the lords of the creation, after their toils and studies. This is all they were born for, or ever intended of nature, who has given them capacities for nothing higher. Sometimes, indeed, they look grave, and fall into such brown studies as would lead one to suppose they meant to go deep; but it is all *fudge*. They are only trying in this new character

to play themselves off to a better effect on their lovers. And if you could but penetrate the bosoms of these fair Penserosoes; you would find that under all this affectation of study they were only fatiguing their childish brains about what dress they should wear to the next ball: or what coloured ribands would best suit their new lutestrings.

To this Ben replied with warmth, that it was extremely unphilosophical in Mr. Collins to argue in that way against the fair sex—that in fixing their destination he had by no means given them that high ground to which they were entitled. You say, sir, continued Ben, that the ladies were created to amuse the men by the charm of their vivacity and accomplishments. This to be sure was saying something. But you might, I think, have said a great deal more; at least the Bible says a great deal more for them. The Bible, sir, tells us that God created woman to be the helpmate of man. Now if man were devoid of reason he might be well enough matched by such a monkey-like helpmate as you have described woman. But, sir, since man is a noble God-like creature, endued with the sublime capacities of *reason*, how could woman ever make a helpmate to him, unless she were rational like himself, and thus capable of being the companion of his thoughts and conversation through all the pleasant fields of knowledge?

Here Collins interrupted him, asking very sarcastically, if in this fine flourish in favour of the ladies he was really *in earnest*.

Never more so in all my life, replied Ben, rather nettled.

What, that the women are as capable of studying the sciences

as the men?

Yes, that the women are as capable of studying the sciences as the men.

And pray, sir, continued Collins, tauntingly, do you know of any *young woman* of your acquaintance that would make a Newton?

And pray, sir, answered Ben, do you know any young man of your acquaintance that would? But these are no arguments, sir,—because it is not every young man or woman that can carry the science of astronomy so high as Newton, it does not follow that they are incapable of the science altogether. God sees fit in every age to appoint certain persons to kindle new lights among men.—And Newton was appointed greatly to enlarge our views of celestial objects. But we are not thence to infer that he was in all respects superior to other men, for we are told that in some instances he was far inferior to other men. Collins denied that Newton had ever shown himself, in any point of wit inferior to other men.

No, indeed, replied Ben; well what do you think of that anecdote of him, lately published in the New England Courant from a London paper?

And pray what is the anecdote? asked Collins.

Why it is to this effect, said Ben.—Newton, mounted on the wings of astronomy, and gazing at the mighty orbs of fire above, had entirely forgotten the poor little fire that slumbered on his own hearth below, which presently forgot him, that is

in plain English, went out. The frost piercing his nerves, called his thoughts home, when lo! in place of the spacious skies, the gorgeous antichamber of the Almighty, he found himself in his own little nut-shell apartment, cold and dark, comparatively, as the dwelling of the winter screech-owl. He rung the bell for his servant, who after making a rousing fire, went out again. But scarcely had the servant recovered his warm corner in the kitchen, before the vile bell, with a most furious ring, summoned him the second time. The servant flew into his master's presence. *Monster!* cried Newton with a face inflamed as if it had been toasting at the tail of one of his comets, *did you mean to burn me alive? push back the fire! for God's sake push back the fire, or I shall be a cinder in an instant!*

Push back the fire! replied the servant with a growl, zounds, sir, I thought you might have had sense enough to push back your chair!

Collins swore that it was only a libel against Sir Isaac.

Ben contended that he had seen it in so many different publications, that he had no sort of doubt of its truth; especially as Sir Hans Sloan had backed it with another anecdote of Newton, in the same style; and to which he avers he was both eye and ear witness.

And pray what has that butterfly philosopher to say against the immortal Newton? asked Collins, quite angrily.

Why, replied Ben, it is this: Sloan, stepping in one day, to see Sir Isaac, was told by his servant that he was up in his study, but

would be down immediately; *for there, sir, you see is his dinner, which I have just set on the table*.—It was a pheasant so neatly browned in the roasting, and withal so plump and inviting to the eye, that Sloan could not resist the temptation; but venturing on his great intimacy with the knight, sat down and picked the delicious bird to the bone; having desired the cook in all haste to clap another to the spit. Presently down came Sir Isaac—was very glad to see his friend Sloan—how had he been all this time? and how did he leave his good lady and family? you have not dined?

No.

Very glad of it indeed; very glad. Well then, come dine with me.—Turning to the table, he sees the dish empty, and his plate strewed with the bones of his favourite pheasant.—*Lord bless me!* he exclaimed, clasping his forehead, and looking betwixt laughing and blushing, at Sloan—*what am I good for? I have dined, as you see, my dear friend, and yet I had entirely forgot it!*

I don't believe a syllable of it, said Collins; not one syllable of it, sir.

No, replied Ben; nor one syllable, I suppose, of his famous courtship, when sitting by an elegant young lady, whom his friends wished him to make love to, he seized her lily white hand. But instead of pressing it with rapture to his bosom, he thrust it into the bowl of his pipe that he was smoking; thus making a tobacco stopper of one of the loveliest fingers in England; to the inexpressible mortification of the company, and to the most

dismal scolding and screaming of the dear creature!

'Tis all a lie, sir, said Collins, getting quite mad, all a confounded lie. The immortal Newton, sir, was never capable of acting so much like a blockhead. But supposing all this slang to be true, what would you infer from it, against that prince of philosophy?—Why I would infer from it, replied Ben, that though a great man, he was but a man. And I would also infer from it in favour of my fair clients, that though they did not make Sir Isaac's discoveries in astronomy, they are yet very capable of comprehending them. And besides, I am astonished, Mr. Collins, how any gentleman that loves himself, as I know you do, can thus traduce the ladies. Don't you consider, sir, that in proportion as you lessen the dignity of the ladies, you lessen the dignity of your affections for them, and consequently, your own happiness in them, which must for ever keep pace with your ideas of their excellence.—This was certainly a home thrust; and most readers would suppose, that Ben was in a fair way to crow over his antagonist; but, Collins was a young man of too much pride and talents to give up so easily. A spirited retort, of course, was made; a rejoinder followed, and thus the controversy was kept up until the watchman bawling twelve o'clock, reminded our stripling orators that it was time for them to quit the old school-house; which with great reluctance they did, but without being any nearer the end of their argument than when they began.

CHAPTER IX

The shades of midnight had parted our young combatants, and silent and alone, Ben had trotted home to his printing-office; but still in his restless thoughts the combat raged in all its fury: still burning for victory, where truth and the ladies were at stake, he fell to mustering his arguments again, which now at the drum-beat of recollection came crowding on him so thick and strong that he felt equally ashamed and astonished that he had not utterly crushed his antagonist at once. He could see no reason on earth why Collins had made a drawn battle of it, but by his vastly superior eloquence. To deprive him of this advantage, Ben determined to attack him with his pen. And to this he felt the greater inclination, as they were not to meet again for several nights. So, committing his thoughts to paper, and taking a fair copy, he sent it to him. Collins, who, "was not born in the woods to be scared by an owl," quickly answered, and Ben rejoined. In this way several vollies had passed on both sides, when good old Josias chanced to light upon them all; both the copies of Ben's letters to Collins, and the answers. He read them with a deep interest, and that very night sent for Ben that he might talk with him on their contents. "*So Ben!*" said he to him as he pressed his beloved hand, "*you have got into a paper war already, have you?*"

Ben blushed.

I don't mean to blame you, my son, continued the old

gentleman. I don't blame you; on the contrary I am delighted to see you taking such pains to improve your mind. Go on, my dear boy, go on; for your mind is the only part that is worth your care: and the more you accustom yourself to find your happiness in *that*, the better. The body, as I have a thousand times told you, is but nicely organized earth, that in spite of the daintiest meats and clothes, will soon grow old and withered, and then die and rot back to earth again. But the Mind, Ben, is the Heavenly part, the Immortal inhabitant, who, if early nursed with proper thoughts and affections, is capable of a feast that will endure for ever.

This your little controversy with your friend Collins is praiseworthy, because it has a bearing on that grand point, the improvement of your mind.

But let me suggest a hint or two, my son, for your better conduct of it. You have greatly the advantage of Mr. Collins in correctness of spelling and pointing; which you owe entirely to your profession as a printer; but then he is as far superior to you in other respects. He certainly has not so good a cause as you have, but, he manages it better. He clothes his ideas with such elegance of expression, and arranges his arguments with so much perspicuity and art, as will captivate all readers in his favour, and snatch the victory from you, notwithstanding your better cause. In confirmation of these remarks, the old gentleman drew from his pocket the letters of their correspondence, and read to him several passages, as strong cases in point.

Ben sensibly felt the justice of these criticisms, and after

thanking his father for his goodness in making them, assured him, that as he delighted above all things in reading books of a beautiful style, so he was resolved to spare no pains to acquire so divine an art.

The next day, going into a fresh part of the town, with a paper to a new subscriber, he saw, on the side of the street, a little table spread out and covered with a parcel of toys, among which lay an odd volume, with a neat old woman sitting by. As he approached the table to look at the book, the old lady lifting on him a most pleasant countenance, said, "*well my little man do you ever dream dreams?*"

Ben rather startled at so strange a salutation, replied, that he had *dream't* in his time.—*Well*, continued the old woman, *and what do you think of dreams; do you put any faith in 'em?*

Why, no, madam, answered Ben; as I have seldom had dreams except after taking too hearty a supper, I have always looked on 'em as a mere matter of indigestion, and so have never troubled my head much about 'em.

Well now, replied the old lady, laughing, *there's just the difference between you and me. I, for my part, always takes great notice of dreams, they generally turn out so true.* And now can you tell what a droll dream I had last night?

Ben answered that he was no Daniel to interpret dreams.

Well, said the old lady, I dreamed last night, that a little man just like you, came along here and bought that old book of me.

Aye! why that's a droll dream sure enough, replied Ben; and

pray, Madam, what do you ask for your old book?

Only four pence halfpenny, said the old lady.

Well, Madam, continued Ben, as your dreaming has generally, as you say, turned out true, it shall not be otherwise now; *there's your money*—so now as you have another reason for putting faith in dreams, you can dream again.

As Ben took up his book to go away, the old lady said, stop a minute, my son, stop a minute. I have not told you the whole of my dream yet. Then looking very gravely at him, she said, But though my dream showed that the book was to be bought by a *little* man, it did not say he was always to be little. No; for I saw, in my dream, that he grew up to be a great man; the lightnings of heaven played around his head, and the shape of a kingly crown was beneath his feet. I heard his name as a pleasant sound from distant lands, and I saw it through clouds of smoke and flame, among the tall victor ships that strove in the last battle for the freedom of the seas. She uttered this with a raised voice and glowing cheek, as though the years to come, with all their mighty deeds, were passing before her.

Ben was too young yet to suspect who this old woman was, though he felt as he had read the youthful Telemachus did, when the fire-eyed Minerva, in the shape of Mentor, roused his soul to virtue.

Farewell, Madam, said Ben with a deep sigh, as he went away; you might have spared that part of your dream, for I am sure there is very little chance of its ever coming to pass.

But though Ben went away to attend to his brother's business, yet the old woman's looks made such an impression on his mind, that he could not help going the next day to see her again; but she was not there any more.

On leaving the old woman, he opened his book, when, behold, what should it be but an odd volume of the Spectator, a book which he had not seen before. The number which he chanced to open was the vision of Mirzah; which so caught his attention that he could not take it off until he had got through. What the people thought of him for reading in that manner as he walked along the street, he knew not; nor did he once think, he was so taken up with his book. He felt as though he would give the world to write in so enchanting a style; and to that end he carried his old volume constantly in his pocket, that by committing, as it were, to memory, those sweetly flowing lines, he might stand a chance to fall into the imitation of them. He took another curious method to catch Addison's charming style; he would select some favourite chapter out of the Spectator, make short summaries of the sense of each period, and put them for a few days aside; then without looking at the book, he would endeavour to restore the chapter to its first form, by expressing each thought at full length.

These exercises soon convinced him that he greatly lacked a fund of words, and a facility of employing them; both of which he thought would have been abundantly supplied, had he but continued his old trade of *making verses*. The continual need of words of the same *meaning*, but of different *lengths*, for

the *measure*; or of different sounds, for the *rhyme*, would have obliged him to seek a variety of *synonymes*. From this belief he took some of the papers and turned them into verse; and after he had sufficiently forgotten them, he again converted them into prose.

On comparing *his* Spectator with the original, he discovered many faults; but panting, as he did, for perfection in this noble art, nothing could discourage him. He bravely persevered in his experiments, and though he lamented that in most instances he still fell short of the charming original, yet in some he thought he had clearly improved the order and style. And when this happened, it gave him unspeakable satisfaction, as it sprung the dear hope that in time he should succeed in writing the English language in the same enchanting manner.

CHAPTER X

About this time, which was somewhere in his sixteenth year, Ben lighted on a very curious work, by one *Tryon*, recommending vegetable diet altogether, and condemning "*animal food as a great crime.*" He read it with all the avidity of a young and honest mind that wished to renounce error and embrace truth. "*From start to pole*," as the racers say, his conscience was under the lash, pointing at him as the dreadful Sarcophagist, or Meat-eater alluded to by this severe writer. He could not, without horror reflect, that, young as he was, his stomach had yet been the grave of hundreds of lambs, pigs, birds, and other little animals, "*who had never injured him.*" And when he extended the dismal idea over the vast surface of the globe, and saw the whole human race pursuing and butchering the poor brute creation, filling the sea and land with cries and blood and slaughter, he felt a depression of spirits with an anguish of mind that strongly tempted him, not only to detest man, but even to charge God himself with cruelty. But this distress did not continue long. Impatient of such wretchedness, he set all the powers of his mind to work, to discover designs in all this, worthy of the Creator. To his unspeakable satisfaction he soon made these important discoveries. 'Tis true, said he, man is constantly butchering the inferior creatures. And it is also true that they are constantly devouring one another. But after all, shocking as this

may seem, it is but *dying*: it is but giving up life, or returning a something which was not their own; which for the honour of his goodness in their enjoyment, was only lent them for a season; and which, therefore, they ought not to think hard to return.

Now certainly, continued Ben, all this is very clear and easy to be understood. Well then, since all life, whether of man or beast, or vegetables, is a kind loan of God, and to be taken back again, the question is whether the way in which we see it is taken back is not the *best way*. It is true, life being the season of enjoyment, is so dear to us that there is no way of giving it up which is not shocking. And this horror which we feel at the thought of having our own lives taken from us we extend to the brutes. We cannot help feeling shocked at the butcher killing a lamb, or one animal killing another. Nay, tell even a child who is looking with smiles on a good old family horse that has just brought a bag of flour from the mill, or a load of wood from the forest, that this his beloved horse will by and by be eaten up of the buzzards, and instantly his looks will manifest extreme distress. And if his mother, to whom he turns for contradiction of this horrid prophecy, should confirm it, he is struck dumb with horror, or bursts into strong cries as if his little heart would break at thought of the dismal end to which his horse is coming. These, though very amiable, are yet the amiable weaknesses of the child, which, it is the duty of man to overcome. This animal was created of his God for the double purpose of doing service to man, and of enjoying comfort himself. And when these are

accomplished, and that life which was only lent him is recalled, is it not better that nature's scavengers, the buzzards, should take up his flesh and keep the elements sweet, than that it should lie on the fields to shock the sight and smell of all who pass by? The fact is, continued Ben, I see that all creatures that live, whether men or beasts, or vegetables, are doomed to die. Now were it not a greater happiness that this universal calamity, as it appears, should be converted into an universal blessing, and this *dying* of all be made the *living* of all? Well, through the admirable wisdom and goodness of the Creator, this is exactly the case. The vegetables all die to sustain animals; and animals, whether birds, beasts, or fishes, all die to sustain man, or one another. Now, is it not far better for them that they should be thus continually changing into each other's substance, and existing in the wholesome shapes of life and vigour, than to be scattered about dying and dead, shocking all eyes with their ghastly forms, and poisoning both sea and air with the stench of their corruption?

This scrutiny into the economy of nature in this matter, gave him such an exalted sense of nature's Great Author, that in a letter to his father, to whom he made a point of writing every week for the benefit of his corrections, he says, though I was at first greatly angered with Tryon, yet afterwards I felt myself much obliged to him for giving me such a hard nut to crack, for I have picked out of it one of the sweetest kernels I ever tasted. In truth, father, continues he, although I do not make much noise or

show about religion, yet I entertain a most adoring sense of the Great First Cause; insomuch that I had rather cease to exist than cease to believe him all wise and benevolent.

In the midst, however, of these pleasing speculations, another disquieting idea was suggested.—Is it not cruel, after giving life to take it away again so soon? The tender grass has hardly risen above the earth, in all its spring-tide green and sweetness, before its beauty is all cropped by the lamb; and the playful lamb, full dressed in his snow-white fleece, has scarcely tasted the sweets of existence, before he is caught up by the cruel wolf or more cruel man. And so with every bird and fish: this has scarcely learned to sing his song to the listening grove, or that to leap with transport from the limpid wave, before he is called to resign his life to man or some larger animal.

This was a horrid thought, which, like a cloud, spread a deep gloom over Ben's mind. But his reflections, like the sunbeams, quickly pierced and dispersed them.

These cavillers, said he, in another letter, are entirely wrong. They wish, it seems, *long life* to the creatures; the Creator wishes them a *pleasant* one. They would have but a few to exist in a *long* time; *he* a great many in a *short* time. Now as youth is the season of gaiety and enjoyment, and all after is comparatively insipid, is it not better, before that pleasant state is ended in sorrow, the creature should pass away by a quick and generally easy fate, and appear again in some other shape? Surely if the grass could reason, it would prefer, while fresh and beautiful, to be cropped

by the lamb and converted into his substance, than, by staying a little longer, to disfigure the fields with its faded foliage. And the lamb too, if he could but think and choose, would ask for *a short life and a merry one*, rather than, by staying a little longer, degenerate into a ragged old sheep, snorting with the rattles, and dying of the rot, or murrain.

But though Ben, at the tender age of sixteen, and with no other aid than his own strong mind, could so easily quell this host of atheistical doubts, which Tryon had conjured up; yet he hesitated not to become his disciple in another tenet. Tryon asserted of animal food, that though it gave great strength to the body, yet it contributed sadly to grossness of blood and heaviness of mind; and hence he reasoned, that all who wish for cool heads and clear thoughts should make their diet principally of vegetables. Ben was struck with this as the perfection of reason, and entered so heartily into it as a rare help for acquiring knowledge, that he instantly resolved, fond as he was of flesh and fish, to give both up from that day, and never taste them again as long as he lived. This steady refusal of his to eat meat, was looked on as a very inconvenient singularity by his brother, who scolded him for it, and insisted he should give it up. Ben made no words with his brother on this account.—Knowing that avarice was his ruling passion, he threw out a bait to James which instantly caught, and without any disturbance produced the accommodation he wished. "Brother," said he to him one day as he scolded; "you give three shillings and six pence a week for

my diet at this boarding-house; give me but *half* that money and I'll diet myself without any farther trouble or expense to you." James immediately took him at his word and gave him in hand his week's ration, one shilling and nine pence, which after the Boston exchange, six shillings to the dollar, makes exactly thirty-seven and a half cents. Those who often give one dollar for a single dinner, and five dollars for a fourth of July dinner, would look very blue at an allowance of thirty-seven and a half cents for a whole week. But Ben so husbanded this little sum, that after defraying all the expenses of his table, he found himself at the end of the week, near twenty cents in pocket—thus expending not quite three cents a day! This was a joyful discovery to Ben —twenty cents a week, said he, and fifty-two weeks in the year; why, that is upwards of ten dollars in the twelve months! what a noble fund for books! Nor was this the only benefit he derived from it; for, while his brother and the journeymen were gone to the boarding-house to devour their pork and beef, which, with lounging and picking their teeth, generally took them an hour, he stayed at the printing-office; and after dispatching his frugal meal, of boiled potatoe, or rice; or a slice of bread with an apple; or bunch of raisins and a glass of water, he had the rest of the time for study. The pure fluids and bright spirits secreted from such simple diet, proved exceedingly favourable to that clearness and vigour of mind, and rapid growth in knowledge which his youthful soul delighted in.

I cannot conclude this chapter without making a remark which

the reader has perhaps anticipated—that it was by this simple regimen, vegetables and water, that the Jewish seer, the holy Daniel, while a youth, was of Providence made fit for all the learning of the East; hence arose his bright visions into futurity, and his clear pointings to the far distant days of the Messiah, when the four great brass and iron monarchies of Media, Persia, Grecia, and Rome, being overthrown, Christ should set up his last golden monarchy of Love, which, though faint in the beginning as the first beam of the uncertain dawn, shall yet at length brighten all the skies, and chase the accursed clouds of sin and suffering from the abodes of man and beast.

In like manner, it was on the simple regimen of vegetables and water, the easy purchase of three cents a day, that the same Providence raised up our young countryman to guard the last spark of perfect liberty in the British colonies of North America. Yes, it was on three cents' worth of daily bread and water, that young Ben Franklin commenced his collection of that blaze of light, which early as 1754, showed the infant and unsuspecting colonies their rights and their dangers—and which afterwards, in 1764, blasted the treasonable stamp act—and finally, in '73 and '74, served as the famed star of the East, to guide Washington and his wise men of the revolution, to the cradle of liberty, struggling in the gripe of the British Herod, lord North. There rose the battle of God for an injured people; there spread the star-spangled banner of freedom; and there poured the blood of the brave, fighting for the rights of man under the last republic.

O that God may long preserve this precious vine of his own right hand planting, for his own glory and the happiness of unborn millions!

But the reader must not conclude that Ben, through life, tied himself up to a vegetable diet. No. Nature will have her way. And having designed man partly carnivorous, as his canine teeth, his lengthened bowels, and his flesh-pot appetites all evince, she will bring him back to the healthy mixture of animal food with vegetable, or punish his obstinacy with diarrhœa and debility. But she had no great difficulty in bringing Ben back to the use of animal food. According to his own account, no nosegay was ever more fragrant to his olfactories than was the smell of fresh fish in the frying pan. And as to his objection to such a savory diet on account of its stupifying effects on the brain, he easily got the better of that, when he reflected that the witty queen Elizabeth breakfasted on beef-stake; that sir Isaac Newton dined on pheasants; that Horace supped on fat bacon; and that Pope both breakfasted, dined, and supped on shrimps and oysters. And for the objection taken from the cruelty of killing innocent animals, for their flesh, he got over that by the following curious accident:—On his first voyage to New-York, the vessel halting on the coast for lack of breeze, the sailors all fell to fishing for cod, of which they presently took great numbers and very fine. Instead of being delighted at this sight, Ben appeared much hurt, and began to preach to the crew on their "injustice," as he called it, in thus taking away the lives of those poor little fish, who,

"*had never injured them, nor ever could*." The sailors were utterly dum-founded at such queer logic as this. Taking their silence for conviction, Ben rose in his argument, and began to play the orator quite outrageously on the main deck. At length an old wag of a boatswain, who had at first been struck somewhat aback by the strangeness of this attack, took courage, and luffing up again, with a fine breeze of humour in his weather-beaten sail, called out to Ben, "*Well, but my young Master preacher, may not we deal by these same cod here, as they deal by their neighbours.*"

"To be sure," said Ben.

"Well then, sir, see here," replied the boatswain, holding up a stout fish, "see here what a whaler I took just now out o' the belly of that cod!" Ben looking as if he had his doubts, the boatswain went on, "O sir, if you come to that, you shall have *proof*;" whereupon he laid hold of a large big-bellied cod that was just then flouncing on the deck, and ripping him open, in the presence of Ben and the crew, turned out several young cod from his maw.

Here, Ben, well pleased with this discovery, cried out, Oho! villains! is that the game you play with one another under the water! Unnatural wretches! What! eat one another! Well then, if a cod can eat his own brother, I see no reason in nature why man may not eat him. With that he seized a stout young fish just fresh from his native brine, and frying him in all haste, made a very hearty meal. Ben never after this, made any more scruples about animal food, but ate fish, flesh, or fowl, as they came in his way, without asking any questions for conscience sake.

CHAPTER XI

Except the admirable Crichton, I have never heard of a genius that was fitted to shine in every art and science. Even Newton was dull in languages; and Pope used to say of himself, that "he had as leave hear the squeal of pigs in a gate, as hear the organ of Handel!" Neither was our Ben the "*omnis homo*" or "*Jack of all trades*." He never could bear the mathematics! and even arithmetic presented to him no attractions at all. Not that he was not capable of it; for, happening about this time, still in his sixteenth year, to be laughed at for his ignorance in the art of calculation, he went and got himself a copy of old Cocker's Arithmetic, one of the toughest in those days, and went through it by himself with great ease. The truth is, his mind was at this time entirely absorbed in the ambition to be a finished writer of the English language; such a one, if possible, as the Spectator, whom he admired above all others.

While labouring, as we have seen, to improve his style, he laid his hands on all the English Grammars he could hear of. Among the number was a treatise of that sort, an old shabby looking thing, which the owner, marking his curiosity in those matters, made him a present of. Ben hardly returned him a thankee, as doubting at first whether it was worth carrying home. But how great was his surprise, when coming towards the close of it, he found, crammed into a small chapter, a treatise on the

art of disputation, after the manner of Socrates. The treatise was very short, but it was enough for Ben; it gave an outline, and that was all he wanted. As the little whortle-berry boy, on the sands of Cape May, grabbling for his breakfast in a turtle's nest, if he but reaches with his little hand but one egg, instantly laughs with joy, as well knowing that all the rest will follow, like beads on a string. So it was with the eager mind of Ben, when he first struck on this plan of Socratic disputation. In an instant his thoughts ran through all the threads and meshes of the wondrous net; and he could not help laughing in his sleeve, to think what a fine puzzling cap he should soon weave for the frightened heads of Collins, Adams, and all others who should pretend to dispute with him. But the use which he principally had in view to make of it, and which tickled his fancy most, was how completely he should now confound those ignorant and hypocritical ones in Boston, who were continually boring him about religion. Not that Ben ever took pleasure in confounding those who were honestly desirous of *showing their religion by their good works*; for such were always his esteem and delight. But he could never away with those who neglected justice, mercy, and truth, and yet affected great familiarities with the Deity, from certain conceited wonders that Christ had wrought *in* them. As no youth ever more heartily desired the happiness of man and beast than Ben did, so none ever more seriously resented that the religion of love and good works tending to this, should be usurped by a *harsh, barren puritanism, with her disfigured faces,*

whine and cant. This appeared to him like Dagon overturning the Ark of God with a vengeance. Burning with zeal against such detestable phariseeism he rejoiced in his Socratic logic as a new kind of weapon, which he hoped to employ with good effect against it. He studied his Socrates day and night, and particularly his admirable argumentations given by Xenophon, in his book, entitled "Memorable things of Socrates;" and in a little time came to wield his new artillery with great dexterity and success.

But in all his rencontres with the *false* christians, he adhered strictly to the spirit of Socrates, as being perfectly congenial to his own. Instead of blunt contradictions and positive assertions, he would put modest questions; and after obtaining of them concessions of which they did not foresee the *consequences*, he would involve them in difficulties and embarrassments, from which they could never extricate themselves. Had he possessed a vanity capable of being satisfied with the triumph of wit over dulness, he might long have crowed the master cock of this Socratic pit. But finding that his victories seldom produced any practical good; that they were acquired at a considerable expense of time, neglect of business, and injury of his temper, which was never formed for altercation with bigots, he abandoned it by degrees, retaining only the habit of expressing himself with a modest diffidence. And not only at that time, but ever afterwards through life, it was remarked of him, that in argument he rarely used the words *certainly*, *undoubtedly*, or any others that might convey the idea of being obstinately conceited of his own

opinion. His ordinary phrases were—*I imagine—I suppose*--or, *it appears to me, that such a thing is so and so*—or, *it is so, if I am not mistaken*. By such soothing arts he gradually conciliated the good will of his opponents, and almost always succeeded in bringing them over to his wishes. Hence he used to say, it was great pity that sensible and well-meaning persons should lessen their own usefulness by a positive and presumptuous way of talking, which only serves to provoke opposition from the passionate, and shyness from the prudent, who rather than get into a dispute with such self-conceited characters, will hold their peace, and let them go on in their errors. In short, if you wish to answer one of the noblest ends for which tongues were given to rational beings, which is to *inform* or to be *informed*, to *please* and to *persuade* them, for heaven's sake, treat their opinions, even though erroneous, with great politeness.

> "Men must be taught as though you taught them not,"
> And things unknown propos'd as things forgot,"

says Mr. Pope; and again

> "To speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence;
> For want of modesty is want of sense."

CHAPTER XII

So late as 1720, there was but one newspaper in all North America, and even this by some was thought one too many so little reading was there among the people in those days. But believing that the reading appetite, weak as it was, ran more on newspapers than any thing else, James Franklin took it into his head to *start* another paper. His friends all *vowed* it would be the ruin of him; but James persevered, and a second newspaper, entitled "The New England Courant," was published. What was the number of subscribers, after so long a lapse of time, is now unknown; but it was Ben's humble lot to furnish their papers after having assisted to compose and work them off.

Among his friends, James had a number of literary characters, who, by way of amusement, used to write for his paper. These gentlemen frequently visited him at his office, merely for a little chat, and to tell how highly the public thought of their pieces Ben attended closely to their conversation, and happening to think they were no great wits, he determined to cut in and try his hand among them. But how to get his little adventures into the paper was the question, and a serious one too; for he knew very well that his brother, looking on him as hardly more than a child, would not dream of printing any thing that he knew had come from his pen. Stratagem of course must be resorted to. He took his time, and having written his piece pretty much to his mind, he

copied it in a disguised hand, and when they were all gone to bed, slyly shoved it under the door of the office; where it was found next morning. In the course of the day, his friends dropping in as usual, James showed them the stranger paper; a caucus was held, and with aching heart Ben heard his piece read for their criticism. It was highly applauded: and to his greater joy still, among their various conjectures as to the author, not one was mentioned who did not hold a distinguished reputation for talents! Encouraged by such good success of this his first adventure, he wrote on, and sent to the press, in the same sly way, several other pieces, which were equally approved, keeping the secret till his slender stock of information was pretty completely exhausted, when he came out with the real author.

His brother, on this discovery, began to entertain a little more respect for him, but still looked on and treated him as a common apprentice. Ben, on the other hand, thought that, as a brother, he had a right to greater indulgence, and sometimes complained of James as rather too rigorous. This difference in opinion rose to disputes, which were often brought before their father, who either from partiality to Ben, or his *better* cause, generally gave it in his favour. James could not bear these awards of his father in favour of a younger brother, but would fly into a passion and treat him with abuse even to blows. Ben took this tyrannical behaviour of his brother in extremely ill part; and he somewhere says that it imprinted on his mind that deep-rooted aversion to arbitrary power, which he never lost, and which rendered him through

life such a firm and unconquerable enemy of oppression. His apprenticeship became insupportable, and he sighed continually for an opportunity of shortening it, which at length unexpectedly offered.

An article in his paper, on some political subject, giving great offence to the assembly, James was taken up; and because he would not discover the author, was ordered into confinement for a month. Ben also was had up and examined before the council, who, after reprimanding, dismissed him, probably because deeming him bound, as an apprentice, to keep his master's secrets.

Notwithstanding their private quarrels, this imprisonment of his brother excited Ben's indignation against the assembly; and having now, during James' confinement, the sole direction of the paper, he boldly came out every week with some severe pasquinade against "*The little tyrants of Boston*." But though this served to gratify his own angry feelings, and to tickle James, as also to gain himself the character of a wonderful young man for satire; yet it answered no good end, but far contrariwise, proved a fatal blow to their newspaper; for at the expiration of the month, James's enlargement was accompanied with an order from the assembly, that "James Franklin should no longer print the newspaper entitled the New England Courant."

This was a terrible thunder-clap on poor James and his whole scribbling squad; and Ben could find no lightning rod to parry the bolt. A caucus, however, of all the friends was convoked

at the printing-office, to devise ways and means of redress. One proposed this measure and another that; but the measure proposed by James himself was at length adopted. This was to carry on the newspaper under Ben's name. *But*, said some, *will not the assembly haul you over the coals for thus attempting to whip the d–l round the stump?*

No, replied James.

Aye, how will you prevent it?

Why, I'll give up Ben's indentures.

So then you'll let Ben run free?

No, nor that neither; for he shall sign a new contract.

This was to be sure a very shallow arrangement. It was however carried into immediate execution, and the paper continued in consequence to make its appearance for some months in Ben's name. At length a new difference arising between the brothers, and Ben knowing that James would not dare to talk of his new *contract*, boldly asserted his freedom!

His numerous admirers will here blush for poor Ben, and hide their reddening cheeks. But let them redden as they may, they will hardly ever equal that honest crimson which glows in the following lines from his *own pen*:

"It was, no doubt, very dishonourable to avail myself of this advantage, and I reckon this as the *first* error of my life. But, I was little capable of seeing it in its true light, embittered as my mind had been by the blows I had received. Exclusively of his passionate *treatment* of me, my brother was by no means an ill

tempered man. And even here, perhaps, my *manners* had too much of impertinence not to afford it a very natural pretext."

Go thy way, honest Ben. Such a confession of error will plead thy excuse with all who know their own infirmities, and remember what the greatest saints have done. Yes, when we remember what young Jacob did to his brother Esau, and how he came over him with his mess of pottage, robbing him of his birthright; and also what David did to Uriah, whom he robbed not only of his wife, but of his life also, we surely shall pity not only Ben, but every man his brother for their follies, and heartily rejoice that there is mercy with Christ to forgive *all*, on their repentance and amendment.

CHAPTER XIII

Finding that to live with James in the pleasant relations of a brother and a freeman was a lost hope, Ben made up his mind to quit him and go on journey-work with some of the Boston printers. But James suspecting Ben's intentions, went around town to the printers, and made such a report of him, that not a man of them all would have any thing to say to him. The door of employment thus shut against him, and all New England furnishing no other printing office, Ben determined, in quest of one, to push off to New-York. He was farther confirmed in this resolution by a consciousness that his newspaper squibs in behalf of his brother, had made the governing party his mortal enemies. And he was also afraid that his bold and indiscreet argumentation against the gloomy puritans, had led those crabbed people to look on him as no better than a young atheist, whom it would be doing God service to worry as they would a wild cat. He felt indeed that it was high time to be off.

To keep his intended flight from the knowledge of his father, his friend Collins engaged his passage with the captain of a New-York sloop, to whom he represented Ben as an amorous young blade, who wished to get away privately in consequence of an intrigue with a worthless hussy, whom her relations wanted to force upon him. Ben had no money. But he had money's worth. Having, for four years past, been carefully turning into books

every penny he could spare, he had by this time made up a pretty little library. It went prodigiously against him to break in upon his books. But there was no help for it. So turning a parcel of them back again into money, he slipped privately on board of a sloop, which on the third day landed him safely in New-York, three hundred miles from home, only seventeen years old, without a single friend in the place, and but little money in his pocket.

He immediately offered his services to a Mr. Bradford, the only printer in New-York. The old gentleman expressed his regret that he could give him no employment; but in a very encouraging manner advised him to go on to Philadelphia, where he had a son, a printer, who would probably do something for him. Philadelphia was a good hundred miles farther off; but Ben, nothing disheartened by that, instantly ran down to the wharf, and took his passage in an open boat for Amboy, leaving his trunk to follow him by sea. In crossing the bay, they were overtaken by a dreadful squall, during which a drunken Dutchman, a passenger, fell headlong into the raging waves. Being hissing hot and swollen with rum, he popped up like a dead catfish; but just as he was going down the second time, never to rise again, by a miracle of mercy, Ben caught him by the fore-top, and lugged him in, where he lay tumbled over on the bottom of the boat, fast asleep, and senseless as a corpse of the frightful storm which threatened every moment to bury them all in a watery grave. The violence of the wind presently drove them on the rocky coasts of Long Island; where, to prevent being

dashed to pieces among the furious breakers, they cast anchor, and there during the rest of the day, and all night long, lay riding out the gale. Their little boat pitching bows under at every surge, while the water constantly flying over them in drenching showers, kept them as wet as drowned rats; and not only unable to get a wink of sleep, but also obliged to stir their stumps, baling the boat to keep her from sinking.

The wind falling the next day, they reached Amboy about dark, after having passed thirty hours without a morsel of victuals, and with no other drink than a bottle of bad rum; the water upon which they had rowed, being as salt as brine. Ben went to bed with a high fever. Having somewhere read that cold water, plentifully drank, was good in such cases; he followed the prescription, which threw him into a profuse sweat, and the fever left him. The next day, feeble and alone, he set out, with fifty wearisome miles to walk before he could reach Burlington, whence he was told that a passage boat would take him to Philadelphia. To increase his depression, soon as he left the tavern, it set in to rain hard. But though wet to the skin, he pressed on by himself through the gloomy woods till noon, when feeling much fatigued, and the rain still pouring down, he stopped at a paltry tavern, where he passed the rest of the day and night. In this gloomy situation he began seriously to repent that he had ever left home; and the more, as from the wretched figure he made, every body was casting a suspicious eye upon him as a runaway servant. Indeed, from the many insulting questions put

to him, he felt himself every moment in danger of being taken up as such, and then what would his father think on hearing that he was in jail as a runaway servant, four hundred miles from home! And what a triumph to his brother. After a very uneasy night, however, he rose and continued his journey till the evening, when he stopped about ten miles from Burlington, at a little tavern, kept by one Dr. Brown. While he was taking some refreshment, Brown came in, and being of a facetious turn, put a number of droll questions to him; to which Ben retorted in a style so superior to his youthful looks and shabby dress, that the Doctor became quite enamoured of him. He kept him up conversing until midnight; and next morning would not touch a penny of his money. This was a very seasonable liberality to poor Ben, for he had now very little more than a dollar in his pocket.

On reaching Burlington, and buying some gingerbread for his passage, he hastened to the wharf. But alas! the boat had just sailed! This was on Saturday; and there would be no other boat until Tuesday. Having been much struck with the looks of the old woman, of whom he had just bought his cargo of gingerbread, he went back and asked her advice. Her behaviour proved that he had some skill in physiognomy. For the moment he told her of his sad disappointment and his doubts how he should act, she gave him the tender look of a mother, and told him he must stay with her till the next boat sailed. Pshaw! Don't mind these little disappointments, child, said she, seeing him uneasy; they are not worth your being troubled about. When I was young, I used to

be troubled about them too. But now I see that it is all but vanity. So stay with me till the boat goes again; and rest yourself, for I am sure you must be mighty tired after such a terrible walk. The good old lady was very right; for what with his late loss of sleep, as also his fever and long walk in the rains, he was tired indeed; so he gladly consented to stay with her and rest himself. Having shown him a small room with a bed in it, for him to take a *nap, for she saw clear enough*, she said, that *he was a dying for sleep*, she turned with a mother's alacrity to get him something to eat. By and by she came again, and from a short but refreshing doze, waked him up to a dinner of hot beef-steaks, of which she pressed him to eat *heartily*, telling him that *gingerbread was fit only for children*. While he was eating, she chatted with him in the affectionate spirit of an aged relative; she asked him a world of questions, such as *how old* he was—and what was his *name*—and whether his mother was alive—and how far he lived from Burlington? Ben told her every thing she asked him. He told her his name and age. He also told her that his mother was alive, and that he had left her only seven days ago in Boston, where she lived. The old lady could hardly believe him that he ever came from Boston. She lifted up her hands, and stared at him as though he had told her he had just dropped from the North Star. From Boston! said she with a scream, *now only to think of that! O dear, only to think of that!* And then, O how she pitied his mother. *Poor dear soul!* She, all the way yonder in Boston, and such a sweet looking, innocent child, wandering here at such a distance

by himself: how could she stand it?

Ben told her that it was a great affliction to be sure; but could not be helped. That his mother was a poor woman, with sixteen children, and that he the youngest boy of all, was obliged to leave her to seek his livelihood, which he hoped he should find in Philadelphia, at his trade, which was that of a printer.

On hearing that he was a printer, she was quite delighted and pressed him to come and set up in Burlington, for that she would be *bound* for it he would do mighty well there. Ben told her that it was a costly thing to set up printing; that it would take two hundred pounds, and he had not two hundred pence.

Well then, said she, now that you have got no money, it will give me more pleasure to have you stay with me till you can get a good opportunity to go to Philadelphia. I feel for your poor mother, and I know it would give her such a pleasure if she knew you were here with me.

Soon as Ben had enjoyed his beef-steaks, which he did in high style, having the double sauce of his own good appetite and her motherly welcome, he drew out his last dollar to pay the good old lady. But she told him to *put it up, put it up, for she would not take a penny of it*. Ben told her that he was young and able to work, and hoped to do well when he got into business, and therefore could not bear that she who was getting old and weak should entertain him for nothing.

Well, said she, *never mind that, child, never mind that. I shall never miss what little I lay out in entertaining you while you stay*

with me. So put up your money. However, while she was busied in putting away the dishes, he slipped out and got a pint of ale for her: and it was all that he could prevail on her to accept.

From the pleasure with which Ben ever afterwards spoke of this good old woman, and her kindness to him, a poor strange boy, I am persuaded as indeed I have always been, that there is nothing on which men reflect with so much complacency as on doing or receiving offices of love from one another.

Ben has not left us the name of this good old woman, nor the sect of christians to which she belonged. But it is probable she was a Quaker. Most of the people about Burlington in those days were Quakers. And besides such kindness as her's seems to be more after the spirit of that wise people, who instead of wrangling about *faith*, which even devils possess, give their chief care to that which is the *end* of all faith, and which the poor devils know nothing about, viz, "*love* and *good works*."

CHAPTER XIV

Ben now sat himself down to stay with this good old woman till the following Tuesday; but still Philadelphia was constantly before him, and happening, in the impatience of his mind, to take a stroll along the river side, he saw a boat approaching with a number of passengers in it. *Where are you bound?* said he.

To Philadelphia, was the reply.

His heart leaped for joy. Can't you take a passenger aboard? I'll help you to row. O yes, answered they, and bore up to receive him. With all his heart he would have run back to his good old hostess to bid her farewell, and to thank her for her kindness to him, but the boat could not wait; and carrying, tortoise-like, his all upon his back, in he stepped and went on with them to Philadelphia, where, after a whole night of hard rowing, they arrived about eight o'clock next morning, which happened to be Sunday.

Soon as the boat struck the place of landing, which was Market-street wharf, Ben put his hand into his pocket, and asked, what was the damage. The boatmen shook their heads, and said, *oh no; he had nothing to pay. They could never take pay from a young fellow of his spirit, who had so cheerfully assisted them to row all the way.* As his own stock now consisted of but one Dutch dollar, and about a shilling's worth in coppers, he would have been well content to accept his passage on their own friendly

terms; but seeing one of their crew who appeared to be old, and rather poorly dressed, he hauled out his coppers and gave them all to him. Having shaken hands with these honest-hearted fellows, he leaped ashore and walked up Market-street in search of something to appease his appetite, which was now abundantly keen from twenty miles' rowing and a cold night's air. He had gone but a short distance before he met a child bearing in his arms that most welcome of all sights to a hungry man, a fine loaf of bread. Ben eagerly asked him where he had got it. The child, turning around, lifted his little arm and pointing up the street, with great simplicity and sweetness said, *don't you see that little house—that little white house, way up yonder?*

Ben said, yes.

Well then, continued the child, *that's the baker's house; there's where my mammy sends me every morning to get bread for all we children.*

Ben blessed his sweet lips of innocence, and hastening to the house, boldly called for *three pence* worth of bread. The baker threw him down three large rolls.

What, all this for three pence! asked Ben with surprise.

Yes, all that for three pence, replied the baker with a fine yankee snap of the eye, all that for *only* three pence! Then measuring Ben from head to foot, he said with a sly quizzing sort of air, and pray now my little man where may you have come from?

Here Ben felt his old panic, on the runaway servant score,

returning strong upon him again. However, putting on a bold face, he promptly answered that he was from Boston.

Plague on it replied the man of dough, and why did'nt you tell me that at first; I might so easily have cabbaged you out of one whole penny; for you know you could not have got all that bread in Yankee-town for less than a good four-pence? Very cheap, said Ben, three large rolls for three-pence: *quite dog cheap!* So taking them up, began to stow them away in his pockets; but soon found it impossible for lack of room—so placing a roll under each arm, and breaking the third, he began to eat as he walked along up Market-street. On the way he passed the house of that beautiful girl, Miss Deborah Read, who happening to be at the door, was so diverted at the droll figure he made, that she could not help laughing outright. And indeed no wonder. A stout fleshy boy, in his dirty working dress, and pockets all puckered out, with foul linen and stockings, and a loaf of bread under each arm, eating and gazing around him as he walked—no wonder she could not help laughing aloud at him as one of the greatest gawkies she had ever seen. Very little idea had she at that time that she was presently to be up to her eyes in love with this young gawky; and after many a deep sigh and heart-ache, was to marry him and to be made a great woman by him. And yet all this actually came to pass, as we shall presently see, and we hope greatly to the comfort of all virtuous young men, who though they may sometimes be laughed at for their oddities; yet if, like Franklin, they will but stick to the *main chance*, *i.e.* Business and Education, they will

assuredly, like him, overcome at the last, and render themselves the admiration of those who once despised them.

But our youthful hero is in too interesting a part of the play for us to lose a moment's sight of him; so after this short moral we turn our eyes on him again, as there, loaded with his bundles and his bread, and eating and gazing and turning the corners of the streets, he goes on without indeed knowing where he is going. At length, however, just as he had finished his first roll, his reverie was broken up by finding himself on Market-street wharf, and close to the very boat in which he had come from Burlington. The sight of the silver stream, as it whirled in dimpling eddies around the wharf, awakened his thirst; so stepping into the boat he took a hearty draught, which, to his unvitiated palate, tasted sweeter than ever did mint-sling to any young drunkard. Close by him in the boat sat a poor woman with a little ragged girl leaning on her lap. He asked her if she had breakfasted. With a sallow smile of hunger hoping relief, she replied *no*, for that she had nothing to eat. Upon this he gave her both his other loaves. At sight of this welcome supply of food, the poor woman and her child gave him a look which he never afterwards forgot.

Having given, as we have seen, a tythe of his money in gratitude to the poor boatman, and two thirds of his bread in charity to this poor woman and her child, Ben skipped again upon the wharf, and with a heart light and gay with conscious duty, a second time took up Market-street, which was now getting to be full of well-dressed people all going the same way. He cut

in, and following the line of march, was thus insensibly led to a large Quaker meeting-house. Sans ceremonie, he pushed in and sat down with the rest, and looking around him soon felt the *motions*, if not of a devout, yet of a pleasantly thoughtful spirit. It came to his recollection to have heard that people must go abroad to see strange things. And here it seemed to be verified. *What, no pulpit! Whoever saw a meeting-house before without a pulpit?* He could not for his life conceive where the preacher was to stand. But his attention was quickly turned from the meeting-house to the congregation, whose appearance, particularly that of the young females, delighted him exceedingly. Such simplicity of dress with such an air of purity and neatness! He had never seen any thing like it before, and yet all admirably suited to the gentle harmony of their looks. And then their eyes! for meekness and sweetness of expression, they looked like dove's eyes. With a deep sigh he wished that his brother James and many others in Boston were but gentle and good as these people appeared to be. Young as he was, he thought the world would be a great deal the happier for it. As leaning back he indulged these soothing sentiments, without any sound of singing or preaching to disturb him, and tired nature's soft languors stealing over him too, he sunk insensibly into sleep. We are not informed that he was visited during his slumber, by any of those benevolent spirits who once descended in the dreams of the youthful patriarch, as he slept in the pleasant plains of Bethel. But he tells us himself, that he was visited by one of that benevolent sect in whose place of

worship he had been overtaken by sleep. Waked by some hand on his shoulder that gently shook him, he opened his eyes, and lo! a female countenance about middle age and of enchanting sweetness, was smiling on him. Roused to a recollection of the impropriety he had been guilty of, he was too much confused to speak; but his reddened cheeks told her what he felt. But he had nothing to fear. Gently shaking her head, though without a frown, and with a voice of music, she said to him "*My son, thee ought not to sleep in meeting.*" Then giving him the look of a mother as she went out, she bade him farewell. He followed her as well as he could, and left the meeting-house much mortified at having been caught asleep in it; but deriving at the same time great pleasure from this circumstance, because it had furnished opportunity to the good Quaker lady to give him that *motherly look*. He felt it sweetly melting along his soul as he walked. *O how different, thought he, that look from the looks which my brother and the council men of Boston gave me, though I was younger then and more an object of sympathy!*

As he walked along the street, looking attentively in the face of every one he met, he saw a young Quaker with a fine countenance, whom he begged to tell him where a stranger might find a lodging. With a look and voice of great sweetness, the young Quaker said, they receive travellers *here*, but it is not a house that bears a good character; if thee will go with me, I will show thee a better one.

This was the *Crooked Billet*, in Water-street. Directly after

dinner, his drowsiness returning, he went to bed and slept, without waking till next morning.

Having put himself in as decent a trim as he could, he waited on Mr. Bradford, the printer, who received him with great civility, and invited him to breakfast, but told him he was sorry he had no occasion for a journeyman. There is, however, continued he in a cheering manner, there is another printer here, of the name of Keimer, to whom if you wish it, I will introduce you. Perhaps he may want your services.

Ben gratefully accepting the offer, away they went to Mr Keimer's. But alas, poor man! both he and his office put together, made no more than a miserable burlesque on printing. Only one press, and that old and damaged! only one font of types, and that nearly worn out! and only one set of letter cases, and that occupied by himself! and consequently no room for a journeyman.

Here was a sad prospect for poor Ben—four hundred miles from home—not a dollar in his pocket—and no appearance of any employment to get one.—But having, from his childhood, been accustomed to grapple with difficulties and to overcome them, Ben saw nothing here but another trial of his courage, and another opportunity for victory and triumph.

As to Keimer, suspecting from his youthful appearance, that Ben could hardly understand any thing of the printing art, he slyly put a composing stick into his hand. Ben saw his drift, and stepping to the letter cases, filled the stick with such celerity

and taste as struck Keimer with surprise, not without shame, that one so inferior in years should be so far his superior in professional skill. To complete this favourable impression, Ben modestly proposed to repair his old press.—This offer being accepted, Ben instantly fell to work, and presently accomplished his undertaking in such a workman-like style, that Keimer could no longer restrain his feelings, but relaxing his rigid features into a smile of admiration, paid him several flattering compliments, and concluded with promising him, that though, for the present, he had no work on hand, yet he expected an abundance shortly, and then would *be sure* to send for him.

In a few days Keimer was as good as his word; for having procured another set of letter cases, with a small pamphlet to print, he sent in all haste for Ben, and set him to work.

CHAPTER XV

As Keimer is to make a considerable figure in the early part of Ben's life, it may gratify the reader to be made acquainted with him. From the account given of him by Ben, who had the best opportunity to know, it appears that he possessed but little either of the amiable or estimable in his composition. A man he was of but slender talents—quite ignorant of the world—a wretched workman—and worse than all yet, utterly destitute of religion, and therefore very uneven and unhappy in his temper, and abundantly capable of playing the knave whenever he thought it for his interest. Among other evidences of his folly, he miserably envied his brother printer, Bradford, as if the Almighty was not rich enough to maintain them both. He could not endure, that while working with him, Ben should stay at Bradford's; so he took him away, and having no house of his own, he put him to board with Mr. Read, father of the young lady who of late had laughed so heartily at him for eating his rolls along the street. But Miss Deborah did not long continue in this wind. For on seeing the favourable change in his dress, and marking also the wittiness of his conversation, and above all, his close application to business, and the great respect paid him on that account by her father, she felt a wonderful change in his favour, and in place of her former sneers, conceived those tender sentiments for him, which, as we shall see hereafter, accompanied her through life.

Ben now began to contract acquaintance with all such young persons in Philadelphia as were fond of reading, and spent his evenings with them very agreeably: at the same time he picked up money by his industry, and being quite frugal, lived so happy, that except for his parents, he seldom ever thought of Boston nor felt any wish to see it. An affair, however, turned up, which sent him home much sooner than he expected.

His brother-in-law, a captain Holmes, of a trading sloop from Boston to Delaware, happening at Newcastle to hear that Ben was in Philadelphia, wrote to him that his father was all but distracted on account of his sudden elopement from home, and assured him that if he would but return, which he earnestly pressed him to do, every thing should be settled to his satisfaction. Ben immediately answered his letter, thanked him for his advice, and stated his reasons for quitting Boston, with a force and clearness that so highly delighted captain Holmes, that he showed it to all his acquaintance at Newcastle, and among the rest to sir William Keith, governor of the province, with whom he happened to dine. The governor read it, and appeared surprised when he learnt his age. "*Why, this must be a young man of extraordinary talents, captain Holmes*," said the governor, "*very extraordinary talents indeed, and ought to be encouraged; we have no printer in Philadelphia now worth a fig, and if this young man will but set up, there is no doubt of his success. For my part, I will give him all the public business, and render him every other service in my power.*"

One day as Keimer and Ben were at work near the window, they saw the governor and colonel French cross the street, and make directly for the printing-office. Keimer not doubting it was a visit to himself, hurried down stairs to meet them. The Governor taking no notice of Keimer, but eagerly inquiring for young Mr. Franklin, came up stairs, and with a condescension to which Ben had not been accustomed, introduced himself to him —desired to become acquainted with him—and after obligingly reproaching him for not having made himself known when he first came to town, invited him to the tavern where he and colonel French were going to break a bottle of old Madeira.

If Ben was surprised, old Keimer was thunderstruck. Ben went, however, with the governor and the colonel to the tavern, where, while the Madeira was circulating in cheerful bumpers, the governor proposed to him to set up a printing-office, stating at the same time the great chances of success, and promising that both himself and colonel French would use their influence in procuring for him the public printing of both governments. As Ben appeared to doubt whether his father would assist him in this enterprize, sir William said that he would give the old gentleman a letter, in which he would represent the advantages of the scheme in a light that would, he'd be bound, determine him in his favour. It was thus concluded that Ben should return to Boston by the first vessel, with the governor's letter to good old Josias: in the mean time Ben was to continue with Keimer, from whom this project was to be kept a secret.

The governor sent every now and then to invite Ben to dine with him, which he considered as a very great honour, especially as his excellency always received and conversed with him in the most familiar manner.

In April, 1724, Ben embarked for Boston, where, after a fortnight passage, he arrived in safety. Having been absent seven months from his relatives, who had never heard a syllable of him all that time, his sudden appearance threw the family into a scream of joy, and excepting his sour-faced brother James, the whole squad gave him a most hearty welcome. After much embracing and kissing, and some tears shed on both sides, as is usual at such meetings, Ben kindly inquired after his *brother James*, and went to see him at his printing-office, not without hopes of making a favourable impression on him by his dress, which was handsome far beyond what he had ever worn in his brother's service; a complete suit of broad cloth, branding new—an elegant silver watch and chain—and his purse crammed with nearly five pound sterling—all in silver dollars. But it would not all do to win over James. Nor indeed is it to be wondered at; for in losing Ben he had lost a most cheerful, obliging lad, whose rare genius and industry in writing, printing, and selling his pamphlets and papers, had brought a noble grist to his mill.

Ben's parade therefore of his fine clothes, and watch, and silver dollars, only made things worse with James, serving but to make him the more sensible of his loss; so after eyeing him from head to foot with a dark side-long look, he turned again to

his work without saying a syllable to him. The behaviour of his own journeymen contributed still the more to anger poor James: for instead of taking part with him in his prejudices against Ben, they all appeared quite delighted with him; and breaking off from their work and gathering around him, with looks full of curiosity, they asked him a world of questions.

Philadelphia! said they, O dear! have you been all the way there to Philadelphia!

Ben said, yes.

Why Philadelphia must be a *tarnal nation way off*!

Four hundred miles, said Ben.

At this they stared on him in silent wonder, for having been four hundred miles from Boston!

And so they have got a printing-office in Philadelphia!

Two or three of them, said Ben.

O la! why that will starve us all here in Boston.

Not at all, said Ben: their advertising "*lost pocket books*"—"*runaway servants*" and "*stray cows*" in Philadelphia, can no more starve you here in Boston, than the catfish of Delaware, by picking up a few soft-crabs there, can starve our catfish here in Boston harbour. The world's big enough for us all.

Well, I wonder now if they have any such thing as *money* in Philadelphia?

Ben thrust his hand into his pocket, and brought up a whole fist full of dollars!

The dazzling silver struck them all speechless—gaping and

gazing at him and each other. Poor fellows, they had never, at once, seen so much of that precious metal in Boston, the money there being nothing but a poor paper proc.

To keep up their stare, Ben drew his silver watch, which soon had to take the rounds among them, every one insisting to have *a look at it*. Then, to crown all, he gave them a shilling to drink his health; and after telling them what great things lay before them if they would but continue *industrious* and *prudent*, and make themselves *masters of their trade*, he went back to the house.

This visit to the office stung poor James to the quick; for when his mother spoke to him of a reconciliation with Ben, and said how happy she should be to see them like brothers again before she died, he flew into a passion and told her such a thing would never be, for that Ben had so insulted him before his men that he would never forgive nor forget it as long as he lived. But Ben had the satisfaction to live to see that James was no prophet. For when James, many years after this, fell behind hand and got quite low in the world, Ben lent him money, and was a steady friend to him and his family all the days of his life.

CHAPTER XVI

But we have said nothing yet about the main object of Ben's sudden return to Boston, *i.e.* governor Keith's letter to his father, on the grand project of setting him up as a printer in Philadelphia. The reader has been told that all the family, his brother James excepted, were greatly rejoiced to see Ben again. But among them all there was none whose heart felt half such joy as did that of his father. He had always doted on this young son, as one whose rare genius and unconquerable industry, if but conducted by prudence, would assuredly, one day, lead him to greatness. His sudden elopement, as we have seen, had greatly distressed the old man, especially as he was under the impression that he was gone to sea. And when he remembered how few that go out at his young and inexperienced age, ever return better than blackguards and vagabonds, his heart sickened within him, and he was almost ready to wish he had never lived to feel the pangs of such bitter disappointment in a child so beloved. He counted the days of Ben's absence; by night his sleep departed from his eyes for thinking of his son; and all day long whenever he heard a rapping at the door, his heart would leap with expectation: "who knows," he would say to himself, "but this may be my child?" And although he would feel disappointed when he saw it was not Ben who rapped, yet he was afraid, at times, to see him lest he should see him covered with the marks of dishonour. Who can

tell what this anxious father felt when he saw his son return as he did? Not in the mean apparel and sneaking looks of a drunkard, but in a dress far more genteel than he himself had ever been able to put on him; while his beloved cheeks were fresh with temperance, and his eyes bright with innocence and conscious well doing. Imagination dwells with pleasure on the tender scene that marked that meeting, where the withered cheeks of seventy and the florid bloom of seventeen met together in the eager embrace of parental affection and filial gratitude:

"*God bless my son!*" the sobbing sire he sigh'd.

"*God bless my sire!*" that pious son replied.

Soon as the happy father could recover his articulation, with great tenderness he said, "but how, my beloved boy could you give me the pain to leave me as you did?"

"Why you know, my dear father," replied Ben, "that I could not live with my brother; nor would he let me live with the other printers; and as I could not bear the thought of living on an aged father now that I was able to work for myself, I determined to leave Boston and seek my fortune abroad. And knowing that if I but hinted my intentions you would prevent me, I thought I would leave you as I did."

"But why, my son, did you keep me so long unhappy about your fate, and not write to me sooner?"

"I knew, father, what a deep interest you took in my welfare, and therefore I resolved never to write to you until by my own industry and economy I had got myself into such a state, that I

could write to you with pleasure. This state I did not attain till lately. And just as I was a going to write to you, a strange affair took place that decided me to come and see you, rather than write to you."

"Strange affair! what can that mean, my son?"

"Why, sir, the governor of Pennsylvania, sir William Keith—I dare say, father, you have often heard of governor Keith?"

"I may have heard of him, child—I'm not positive—but what of governor Keith?"

"Why he has taken a wonderful liking to me, father!"

"Aye! has he so?" said the old man, with joy sparkling in his eyes. "Well I pray God you may be grateful for such favours, my son, and make a good use of them!"

"Yes, father, he has taken a great liking to me sure enough; he says I am the only one in Philadelphia who knows any thing about printing; and he says too, that if I will only come and set up in Philadelphia, he will make my fortune for me in a trice!!"

Old Josias here shook his head; "No, no, Ben!" said he, "that will never do: that will never do: you are too young yet, child, for all that, a great deal too young."

"So I told him, father, that I was too young. And I told him too that I was certain you would never give your consent to it."

"You were right there, Ben; no indeed, I could never give my consent to it, that's certain."

"So I told the governor, father; but still he would have it there was a fine opening in Philadelphia, and that I would fill it so

exactly, that nothing could be wanting to insure your approbation but a clear understanding of it. And to that end he has written you a letter."

"A letter, child! a letter from governor Keith to me!"

"Yes, father, here it is."

With great eagerness the old gentleman took it from Ben; and drawing his spectacles, read it over and over again with much eagerness. When he was done he lifted his eyes to heaven, while in the motion of his lips and change of countenance, Ben could clearly see that the soul of his father was breathing an ejaculation of praise to God on his account. Soon as his *Te Deum* was finished, he turned to Ben with a countenance bright with holy joy, and said, "Ben, I've cause to be happy; my son, I've cause to be happy indeed. O how differently have things turned out with you! God's blessed name be praised for it, how differently have they turned out to what I dreaded! I was afraid you were gone a poor vagabond, on the seas; but instead of that you had fixed yourself in one of the finest cities in the country. I was afraid to see you; yes, my dear child, I was afraid to see you, lest I should see you clad in the mean garb of a poor sailor boy; but here I behold you clad in the dress of a gentleman! I trembled lest you had been degrading yourself into the low company of the profane and worthless; and lo! you have been all the time exalting yourself into the high society of great men and governors. And all this in so short a time, and in a way most honourable to yourself, and therefore most delightful to me, I mean by your virtues and

your close attention to the duties of a most useful profession. Go on, my son, go on! and may God Almighty, who has given you wisdom to begin so glorious a course, grant you fortitude to persevere in it!"

Ben thanked his father for the continuance of his love and solicitude for him; and he told him moreover, that one principal thing that had stirred him up to act as he had done, was the joy which he knew he should be giving him thereby; as also the great trouble which he knew a contrary conduct would have brought upon him. Here his father tenderly embraced him, and said, "Blessed be God for giving me such a son! I have always, Ben, fed myself with hopes of great things from you. And now I have the joy to say my hopes were not in vain. Yes, glory to God, I trust my precious hopes of you were not in vain." Then, after making a short pause, as from fullness of joy, he went on, "but as to this letter, my son; this same letter here from governor Keith; though nothing was ever more flattering to you, yet depend upon it, Ben, it will never do; at least not yet awhile.—The duties of the place are too numerous, child, and difficult for any but one who has had many more years of experience than you have had."

"Well then, father, what's to be done, for I know that the governor is so very anxious to get me into this place, that he will hardly be said nay?"

"Why, my dear boy, we must still decline it, for all that: not only because from your very unripe age and inexperience, it may involve you in ruin; but also because it actually is not in your

power. It is true the governor, from his letter, appears to have the greatest friendship in the world for you; but yet, it is not to be expected that he would advance funds to set you up. O no, my dear boy, that's entirely out of the question. The governor, though perhaps rich, has no doubt too many poor friends and relations hanging on him, for you to expect any thing from that quarter. And as to myself, Ben, with all my love for you, it is not in my power to assist you in such an affair. My family you know, is very large, and the profits of my trade but small, insomuch that at the end of the year there is nothing left. And indeed I never can be sufficiently thankful to God for that health and blessing which enables me to feed and clothe them every year so plentifully."

Seeing Ben look rather serious, the old gentleman, in a livelier tone, resumed his speech, "Yes, Ben, all this is very true; but yet let us not be disheartened. Although we have no funds now, yet a noble supply is at hand."

"Where, father," said Ben, roused up, "where?"

"Why, in your own virtues, Ben, in your own virtues, my boy —There are the noblest funds that God can bestow on a young man. All other funds may easily be drained by our vices and leave us poor indeed. But the virtues are fountains that never fail: they are indeed the true riches and honours, only by other names. Only persevere, my son, in the virtues, as you have already so bravely begun, and the grand object is gained. By the time you reach twenty-one, for every friend that you now have, you will have ten; and for every dollar an hundred; and with these you will make

thousands more. Thus, under God, you will have the glory to be the artificer of your own fame and fortune: and that will bring ten thousand times more honour and happiness, to you, Ben, than all the money that governors and fathers could ever give you."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.