

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

MEMOIRS OF BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN; WRITTEN BY
HIMSELF. [VOL. 1 OF 2]

Benjamin Franklin
Memoirs of Benjamin Franklin;
Written by Himself. [Vol. 1 of 2]

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Memoirs of Benjamin Franklin; Written by Himself. [Vol. 1 of 2] With His Most Interesting Essays, Letters, and Miscellaneous Writings; Familiar, Moral, Political, Economical, and Philosophical, Selected with Care from All His Published Productions, and Comprising Whatever Is Most Entertaining and Valuable to the General Reader:

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the history and labours of any individual mind, a summary of practical wisdom as rich in varied instruction as the memoirs and writings presented in these volumes will be found to afford. If, on account of the most distinguished public services, the name of Franklin has become inseparably associated with his country's glory, the works which he has left behind him no less justly entitle him to be considered as the benefactor not only of his own country, but of mankind for all coming time. So admirable, indeed, are these productions, that they can only cease being read when the love of beauty and of simplicity, of moral power and of truth, has no longer a place in the hearts of men.

"This self-taught American," to quote from the Edinburgh Review of 1806, "is the most rational, perhaps, of all philosophers. He never loses sight of common sense in any of his speculations. No individual, perhaps, ever possessed a juster understanding, or was so seldom obstructed in the use of it by indolence, enthusiasm, or authority. * * * * There are not many among the thoroughbred scholars and philosophers of Europe who can lay claim to distinction in more than one or two departments of science and literature. The uneducated tradesman of America has left writings which call for our attention in natural philosophy, in politics, in political economy, and in general literature and morality." And again: "Nothing can be more perfectly and beautifully adapted to its object than most of the moral compositions of Dr. Franklin. The tone of familiarity, of good-will, and harmless jocularly; the

plain and pointed illustrations; the short sentences, made up of short words; and the strong sense, clear information, and obvious conviction of the author himself, make most of his moral exhortations perfect models of popular eloquence, and often the finest specimens of a style which has been too little cultivated in his native country.

"The most remarkable thing, however, in these, and indeed in the whole of his physical speculations, is the unparalleled simplicity and facility with which the reader is conducted from one stage of the inquiry to another. The author never appears for a moment to labour or be at a loss. The most ingenious and profound explanations are suggested, as if they were the most natural and obvious way of accounting for the phenomena; and the author seems to value himself so little on his most important discoveries, that it is necessary to compare him with others before we can form a just notion of his merits."

While to every age these volumes cannot fail of being deeply interesting, to the young more especially they may be made of invaluable use. What an animating example do they present of the power of industry, and of frugality and temperance, of moral rectitude, and unremitting perseverance, to overcome every difficulty! And what youth, fired with the generous love of knowledge, and an ardent desire of honourable distinction, need ever despair of success after reading the memoirs of Benjamin Franklin; who, from the humble station of a printer's apprentice, without fortune or other extraneous aid, through a

manly confidence in his own powers, elevated himself to the highest stations of honour and usefulness.

It is from these and other considerations scarcely less interesting, that the publishers feel great confidence and pleasure in presenting this work to the public favour. Great care has been taken in selecting the matter of which these volumes are composed; and, it is believed, that they will be found to comprise nearly all that is most entertaining and useful to the general reader, in the writings of Franklin.

H. & B.

New-York, Sept., 1839.

PART I

To William Franklin, Esq., Governor of New-Jersey

Twyford, at the Bishop of St. Asaph's,¹ 1771.

Dear Son, – I have ever had a pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors. You may remember the inquiries I made among the remains of my relations when you were with me in England, and the journey I undertook for that purpose. Imagining it may be equally agreeable to you to learn the circumstances of *my* life, many of which you are unacquainted with, and expecting the enjoyment of a few weeks' uninterrupted leisure, I sit down to write them. Besides, there are some other inducements that excite me to this undertaking. From the poverty and obscurity in which I was born, and in which I passed my earliest years, I have raised myself to a state of affluence and some degree of celebrity in the world. As constant good fortune has accompanied me even to an advanced period of life, my posterity will perhaps be desirous of learning the means which I employed, and which, thanks to Providence, so well succeeded with me. They may also deem them fit to be imitated, should any of them find themselves in similar circumstances. This good fortune, when I reflect on it, which is frequently the case, has induced me sometimes to say, that if it were left to my

¹ Dr. Shipley.

choice, I should have no objection to go over the same life from its beginning to the end: requesting only the advantage authors have, of correcting in a second edition the faults of the first. So would I also wish to change some incidents of it for others more favourable. Notwithstanding, if this condition was denied, I should still accept the offer of recommencing the same life. But as this repetition is not to be expected, that which resembles most living one's life over again, seems to be to recall all the circumstances of it; and, to render this remembrance more durable, to record them in writing. In thus employing myself I shall yield to the inclination so natural to old men, of talking of themselves and their own actions; and I shall indulge it without being tiresome to those who, from respect to my age, might conceive themselves obliged to listen to me, since they will be always free to read me or not. And lastly (I may as well confess it, as the denial of it would be believed by nobody), I shall perhaps not a little gratify my own *vanity*. Indeed, I never heard or saw the introductory words "*Without vanity* I may say," &c., but some vain thing immediately followed. Most people dislike vanity in others, whatever share they have of it themselves; but I give it fair quarter, wherever I meet with it, being persuaded that it is often productive of good to the possessor, and to others who are within his sphere of action: and therefore, in many cases, it would not be altogether absurd if a man were to thank God for his vanity among the other comforts of life.

And now I speak of thanking God, I desire with all humility

to acknowledge that I attribute the mentioned happiness of my past life to his divine providence, which led me to the means I used and gave the success. My belief of this induces me to *hope*, though I must not *presume*, that the same goodness will still be exercised towards me, in continuing that happiness or enabling me to bear a fatal reverse, which I may experience as others have done; the complexion of my future fortune being known to him only, in whose power it is to bless us, even in our afflictions.

Some notes, one of my uncles (who had the same curiosity in collecting family anecdotes) once put into my hands, furnished me with several particulars relative to our ancestors. From these notes I learned that they lived in the same village, Ecton, in Northamptonshire, on a freehold of about thirty acres, for at least three hundred years, and how much longer could not be ascertained.²

² Perhaps from the time when the name of Franklin, which before was the name of an order of people, was assumed by them for a *surname*, when others took surnames all over the kingdom. As a proof that Franklin was anciently the common name of an order or rank in England, see Judge Fortescue, *De laudibus Legum Angliæ*, written about the year 1412, in which is the following passage, to show that good juries might easily be formed in any part of England: "Regio etiam illa, ita respersa refertaque est *possessoribus terrarum* et agrorum, quod in ea, villula tam parva reperiri non poterit, in qua non est *miles, armiger, vel pater-familias*, qualis ibidem *Frankleri* vulgariter nuncupatur, magnis ditatus possessionibus, nec non libere tenentes et alii *valecti* plurimi, suis patrimoniis sufficientes, ad faciendum juratam, in forma prænotata." Moreover, the same country is so filled and replenished with landed menne, that therein so small a thorpe cannot be found wherein dweleth not a knight, an esquire, or such a householder as is there commonly called a *Franklin*, enriched with great possessions; and also other freeholders and many yeomen, able for their

This small estate would not have sufficed for their maintenance without the business of a smith, which had continued in the family down to my uncle's time, the eldest son being always brought up to that employment; a custom which he and my father followed with regard to their eldest sons. When I searched the registers at *Ecton*, I found an account of their marriages and burials from the year 1555 only, as the registers kept did not commence previous thereto. I however learned from it that I was the youngest son of the youngest son for five generations back. My grandfather Thomas, who was born 1598, lived at Ecton till he was too old to continue his business, when he retired to Banbury in Oxfordshire, to the house of his son John, with whom my father served an apprenticeship. There my uncle died and lies buried. We saw his gravestone in 1758. His eldest son Thomas lived in the house at Ecton, and left it with the land to his only daughter, who, with her husband, one Fisher, of Wellingborough, sold it to Mr. Isted, now lord of the manor there. My grandfather had four sons, who grew up: viz., Thomas, John, Benjamin, and Josiah. Being at a distance from my papers, I will give you what account I can of them from memory: and if my papers are not lost in my absence, you will find among them

livelihooedes to make a jury in form aforementioned." —*Old Translation*. Chaucer, too, calls his country-gentleman a *Franklin*; and after describing his good housekeeping, thus characterizes him: "This worthy Franklin bore a purse of silkFix'd to his girdle, white as morning milk; Knight of the shire, first justice at th' assize, To help the poor, the doubtful to advise. In all employments, generous, just he proved, Renown'd for courtesy, by all beloved."

many more particulars.³

³ *Copy of an original letter, found among Dr. Franklin's papers, from Josiah to B. Franklin.* Boston, May 26, 1739. Loving Son, – As to the original of our name there is various opinions; some say that it came from a sort of title of which a book, that you bought when here, gives a lively account. Some think we are of a French extract which was formerly called Franks; some of a free line; a line free from that vassalage which was common to subjects in days of old; some from a bird of long red legs. Your uncle Benjamin made inquiry of one skilled in heraldry, who told him there is two coats of armour, one belonging to the Franklins of the north, and one to the Franklins of the west. However, our circumstances have been such as that it hath hardly been worth while to concern ourselves much about these things, any farther than to tickle the fancy a little. The first that I can give account of is my great grandfather, as it was a custom in those days among young men too many times to goe to seek their fortune, and in his travels he went upon liking to a taylor; but he kept such a stingy house, that he left him and travelled farther, and came to a smith's house, and coming on a fasting day, being in popish times, he did not like there the first day; the next morning the servant was called up at five in the morning, but after a little time came a good toast and good beer, and he found good housekeeping there; he served and learned the trade of a smith. In Queen Mary's days, either his wife, or my grandmother by father's side, informed my father that they kept their Bible fastened under the top of a joint-stool that they might turn up the book and read in the Bible; that, when anybody came to the dore, they turned up the stool for fear of the apparitor; for if it was discovered they would be in hazard of their lives. My grandfather was a smith also, and settled at Ecton, in Northamptonshire, and he was imprisoned a year and a day on suspicion of his being the author of some poetry that touched the character of some great man. He had only one son and one daughter; my grandfather's name was Henry, my father's name was Thomas, my mother's name was Jane. My father was born at Ecton or Eton, Northamptonshire, on the 18th of October, 1598; married to Miss Jane White, niece to Coll White, of Banbury, and died in the 84th year of his age. There was nine children of us who were happy in our parents, who took great care by their instructions and pious example to breed us up in a religious way. My eldest brother had but one child, which was married to one Mr. Fisher, at Wallingborough, in Northamptonshire. The town was lately burned down, and whether she was a sufferer or not I cannot tell, or whether she be living or not. Her father died worth fifteen hundred pounds, but what

Thomas, my eldest uncle, was bred a smith under his father; but, being ingenious, and encouraged in learning (as all my brothers were) by an Esquire Palmer, then the principal inhabitant of that parish, he qualified himself for the bar, and became a considerable man in the county; was chief mover of all public-spirited enterprises for the county or town of Northampton, as well as of his own village, of which many instances were related of him: and he was much taken notice of, and patronised by Lord Halifax. He died in 1702, the 6th of January; four years to a day before I was born. The recital which some elderly persons made to us of his character, I remember, struck you as something extraordinary, from its similarity with what you knew of me. "Had he died," said you, "four years later, on the same day, one might have supposed a transmigration." John, my next uncle, was bred a dyer, I believe of wool. Benjamin was bred a silk dyer, serving an apprenticeship in London. He was an ingenious man. I remember, when I was a boy, he came to my father's in Boston, and resided in the house with us for several years. There was always a particular affection between my father and him, and I was his godson. He lived to a great age.

her circumstances are now I know not. She hath no child. If you by the freedom of your office, makes it more likely to convey a letter to her, it would be acceptable to me. There is also children of brother John and sister Morris, but I hear no thing from them, and they write not to me, so that I know not where to find them. I have been again to about seeing . . . but have missed of being informed. We received yours, and are glad to hear poor Jammy is recovered so well. Son John received the letter, but is so busy just now that he cannot write you an answer, but will do the best he can. Now with hearty love to, and prayer for you all, I rest your affectionate father, JOSIAH FRANKLIN.

He left behind him two quarto volumes of manuscript, of his own poetry, consisting of fugitive pieces addressed to his friends. He had invented a shorthand of his own, which he taught me, but, not having practised it, I have now forgotten it. He was very pious, and an assiduous attendant at the sermons of the best preachers, which he reduced to writing according to his method, and had thus collected several volumes of them. He was also a good deal of a politician; too much so, perhaps, for his station. There fell lately into my hands in London, a collection he made of all the principal political pamphlets relating to public affairs, from the year 1641 to 1717; many of the volumes are wanting, as appears by their numbering, but there still remain eight volumes in folio, and twenty in quarto and in octavo. A dealer in old books had met with them, and knowing me by name, having bought books of him, he brought them to me. It would appear that my uncle must have left them here when he went to America, which was about fifty years ago. I found several of his notes in the margins. His grandson, Samuel Franklin, is still living in Boston.

Our humble family early embraced the reformed religion. Our forefathers continued Protestants through the reign of Mary, when they were sometimes in danger of persecution on account of their zeal against popery. They had an English Bible, and to conceal it, and place it in safety, it was fastened open with tapes under and within the cover of a joint-stool. When my great-grandfather wished to read it to his family, he placed the joint-stool on his knees, and then turned over the leaves under the

tapes. One of the children stood at the door to give notice if he saw the apparitor coming, who was an officer of the spiritual court. In that case the stool was turned down again upon its feet, when the Bible remained concealed under it as before. This anecdote I had from uncle Benjamin. The family continued all of the Church of England till about the end of Charles the Second's reign, when some of the ministers that had been outed for their nonconformity holding conventicles in Northamptonshire, my uncle Benjamin and father Josiah adhered to them, and so continued all their lives: the rest of the family remained with the Episcopal church.

My father married young, and carried his wife with three children to New-England, about 1682. The conventicles being at that time forbidden by law, and frequently disturbed in their meetings, some considerable men of his acquaintance determined to go to that country, and he was prevailed with to accompany them thither, where they expected to enjoy the exercise of their religion with freedom. By the same wife my father had four children more born there, and by a second wife ten others, in all seventeen; of which I remember to have seen thirteen sitting together at his table, who all grew up to years of maturity, and were married; I was the youngest son, and the youngest of all except two daughters. I was born in Boston, in New-England. My mother, the second wife of my father, was Abiah Folger, daughter of Peter Folger, one of the first settlers of New-England, of whom honourable mention is made

by Cotton Mather, in his ecclesiastical history of the country, entitled *Magnalia Christi Americana*, as "a goodly and learned Englishman," if I remember the words rightly. I was informed he wrote several small occasional works, but only one of them was printed, which I remember to have seen several years since. It was written in 1675. It was in familiar verse, according to the taste of the times and people, and addressed to the government there. It asserts the liberty of conscience, in behalf of the Anabaptists, the Quakers, and other sectarians that had been persecuted. He attributes to this persecution the Indian wars, and other calamities that had befallen the country; regarding them as so many judgments of God, to punish so heinous an offence, so contrary to charity. This piece appeared to me as written with manly freedom and a pleasing simplicity. The last six lines I remember, but have forgotten the preceding ones of the stanza; the purpose of them was, that his censures proceeded from goodwill, and, therefore, he would be known to be the author.

"Because to be a libeller (said he)
I hate it with my heart;
From Sherburne⁴ town, where now I dwell,
My name I do put here;
Without offence your real friend,
It is Peter Folgier."

My elder brothers were all put apprentices to different trades.

⁴ Sherburne, in the island of Nantucket.

I was put to the grammar-school at eight years of age; my father intended to devote me, as the tithe of his sons, to the service of the church. My early readiness in learning to read (which must have been very early, and I do not remember when I could not read), and the opinion of all my friends, that I should certainly make a good scholar, encouraged him in this purpose of his. My uncle Benjamin, too, approved of it, and proposed to give me his shorthand volumes of sermons to set up with, if I would learn shorthand.

I continued, however, at the grammar-school rather less than a year, though in that time I had risen gradually from the middle of the class of that year to be at the head of the same class, and was removed into the next class, whence I was to be placed in the third at the end of the year. But my father, burdened with a numerous family, was unable, without inconvenience, to support the expense of a college education; considering, moreover, as he said to one of his friends in my presence, the little encouragement that line of life afforded to those educated for it, he gave up his first intentions, took me from the grammar-school, and sent me to a school for writing and arithmetic, kept by a then famous man, Mr. George Brownwell. He was a skilful master, and successful in his profession, employing the mildest and most encouraging methods. Under him I learned to write a good hand pretty soon, but failed entirely in arithmetic. At ten years old I was taken to help my father in his business of a tallow-chandler and soap-boiler, a business to which he was not bred, but had assumed

on his arrival in New-England, because he found that his dying trade, being in little request, would not maintain his family. Accordingly, I was employed in cutting the wick for the candles, filling the moulds for cast candles, attending the shop, going of errands, &c.

I disliked the trade, and had a strong inclination to go to sea, but my father declared against it; but, residing near the water, I was much in it and on it. I learned to swim well, and to manage boats; and when embarked with other boys, I was commonly allowed to govern, especially in any case of difficulty; and upon other occasions I was generally the leader among the boys, and sometimes led them into scrapes, of which I will mention an instance, as it shows an early projecting public spirit, though not then justly conducted.

There was a salt-marsh which bounded part of the millpond, on the edge of which, at high water, we used to stand to fish for minnows; by much trampling, we had made it a mere quagmire. My proposal was to build a wharf there for us to stand upon, and I showed my comrades a large heap of stones, which were intended for a new house near the marsh, and which would very well suit our purpose. Accordingly, in the evening, when the workmen were gone home, I assembled a number of my playfellows, and we worked diligently like so many emmets, sometimes two or three to a stone, till we had brought them all to make our little wharf. The next morning the workmen were surprised on missing the stones which formed our wharf; inquiry was made after the

authors of this transfer; we were discovered, complained of, and corrected by our fathers; and though I demonstrated the utility of our work, mine convinced me that *that which was not truly honest could not be truly useful*.

I suppose you may like to know what kind of a man my father was. He had an excellent constitution, was of a middle stature, well set, and very strong: he could draw prettily, was a little skilled in music; his voice was sonorous and agreeable, so that when he played on his violin and sung withal, as he was accustomed to do after the business of the day was over, it was extremely agreeable to hear. He had some knowledge of mechanics, and, on occasion, was very handy with other tradesmen's tools; but his great excellence was his sound understanding and solid judgment in prudential matters, both in private and public affairs. It is true, he was never employed in the latter, the numerous family he had to educate and the strictness of his circumstances keeping him close to his trade: but I remember well his being frequently visited by leading men, who consulted him for his opinion in public affairs, and those of the church he belonged to, and who showed great respect for his judgment and advice: he was also much consulted by private persons about their affairs when any difficulty occurred, and frequently chosen an arbitrator between contending parties. At his table he liked to have, as often as he could, some sensible friend or neighbour to converse with, and always took care to start some ingenious or useful topic for discourse, which might tend to improve the

minds of his children. By this means he turned our attention to what was good, just, and prudent in the conduct of life; and little or no notice was ever taken of what related to the victuals on the table, whether it was well or ill dressed, in or out of season, of good or bad flavour, preferable or inferior to this or that other thing of the kind, so that I was brought up in such a perfect inattention to those matters as to be quite indifferent as to what kind of food was set before me. Indeed, I am so unobservant of it, that to this day I can scarce tell a few hours after dinner of what dishes it consisted. This has been a great convenience to me in travelling, where my companions have been sometimes very unhappy for want of a suitable gratification of their more delicate, because better instructed, tastes and appetites.

My mother had likewise an excellent constitution: she suckled all her ten children. I never knew either my father or mother to have any sickness but that of which they died, he at 89, and she at 85 years of age. They lie buried together at Boston, where I some years since placed a marble over their grave with this inscription:

Josiah Franklin, and

Abiah, his wife,

lie here interred

They lived lovingly together in wedlock

fifty-five years

And without an estate, or any gainful employment,

By constant labour and honest industry,

maintained a large family comfortably,

old. I used to write more methodically. But one does not dress for private company as for a public ball. Perhaps it is only negligence.

To return: I continued thus employed in my father's business for two years, that is, till I was twelve years old; and my brother John, who was bred to that business, having left my father, married and set up for himself at Rhode Island, there was every appearance that I was destined to supply his place, and become a tallow-chandler. But my dislike to the trade continuing, my father had apprehensions that if he did not put me to one more agreeable, I should break loose and go to sea, as my brother Josiah had done to his great vexation. In consequence, he took me to walk with him, and see joiners, bricklayers, turners, braziers, &c., at their work, that he might observe my inclination, and endeavour to fix it on some trade or profession that would keep me on land. It has ever since been a pleasure to me to see good workmen handle their tools; and it has been often useful to me to have learned so much by it as to be able to do some trifling jobs in the house when a workman was not at hand, and to construct little machines for my experiments, at the moment when the intention of making them was warm in my mind. My father determined at last for the cutlers' trade, and placed me for some days on trial with Samuel, son to my uncle Benjamin, who was bred to that trade in London, and had just established himself in Boston. But the sum he exacted as a fee for my apprenticeship displeased my father, and I was taken home again. From my infancy I was passionately fond of reading, and all the money that came into

my hands was laid out in the purchasing of books. I was very fond of voyages. My first acquisition was *Bunyan's* works in separate little volumes. I afterward sold them to enable me to buy *R. Burton's Historical Collections*; they were small chapmen's books, and cheap, 40 volumes in all. My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read. I have often regretted that, at a time when I had such a thirst for knowledge, more proper books had not fallen into my way, since it was resolved I should not be bred to divinity; there was among them Plutarch's *Lives*, which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of *De Foe's*, called an *Essay on Projects*, and another of *Dr. Mather's*, called an *Essay to do good*, which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life.

This bookish inclination at length determined my father to make me a printer, though he had already one son (James) of that profession. In 1717 my brother James returned from England with a press and letters to set up his business in Boston. I liked it much better than that of my father, but still had a hankering for the sea. To prevent the apprehended effect of such an inclination, my father was impatient to have me bound to my brother. I stood out some time, but at last was persuaded, and signed the indentures when I was yet but twelve years old. I was to serve as an apprentice till I was twenty-one years of age, only I was to be allowed journeyman's wages during the last year. In a little time I

made a great progress in the business, and became a useful hand to my brother. I had now access to better books. An acquaintance with the apprentices of booksellers enabled me sometimes to borrow a small one, which I was careful to return soon and clean. Often I sat up in my chamber the greatest part of the night, when the book was borrowed in the evening to be returned in the morning, lest it should be found missing. After some time a merchant, an ingenious, sensible man, Mr. Matthew Adams, who had a pretty collection of books, frequented our printing-office, took notice of me, and invited me to see his library, and very kindly proposed to lend me such books as I chose to read. I now took a strong inclination for poetry, and wrote some little pieces; my brother, supposing it might turn to account, encouraged me, and induced me to compose two occasional ballads. One was called the *Lighthouse Tragedy*, and contained an account of the shipwreck of Captain Worthilake, with his two daughters: the other was a sailor's song, on the taking of the famous *Teach* (or Blackbeard) the pirate. They were wretched stuff, in street-ballad style; and when they were printed, my brother sent me about the town to sell them. The first sold prodigiously, the event being recent, and having made a great noise. This success flattered my vanity; but my father discouraged me, by criticising my performances, and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars. Thus I escaped being a poet, and probably a very bad one: but as prose writing has been of great use to me in the course of my life, and was a principal means of my advancement, I shall

tell you how, in such a situation, I acquired what little ability I may be supposed to have in that way.

There was another bookish lad in the town, John Collins by name, with whom I was intimately acquainted. We sometimes disputed, and very fond we were of argument, and very desirous of confuting one another, which disputatious turn, by-the-way, is apt to become a very bad habit, making people often extremely disagreeable in company, by the contradiction that is necessary to bring it into practice; and thence, besides souring and spoiling the conversation, it is productive of disgusts and, perhaps, enmities with those who may have occasion for friendship. I had caught this by reading my father's books of disputes on religion. Persons of good sense, I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and, generally, men of all sorts who have been bred at Edinburgh. A question was once some how or other started, between Collins and me, on the propriety of educating the female sex in learning, and their abilities for study. He was of opinion that it was improper, and that they were naturally unequal to it. I took the contrary side, perhaps for dispute' sake. He was naturally more eloquent, having a greater plenty of words; and sometimes, as I thought, I was vanquished more by his fluency than by the strength of his reasons. As we parted without settling the point, and were not to see one another again for some time, I sat down to put my arguments in writing, which I copied fair and sent to him. He answered, and I replied. Three or four letters on a side had passed, when my father happened to find my papers

and read them. Without entering into the subject in dispute, he took occasion to talk to me about my manner of writing; observed that, though I had the advantage of my antagonist in correct spelling and pointing (which he attributed to the printing-house), I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method, and perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances. I saw the justice of his remarks, and thence grew more attentive to my manner of writing, and determined to endeavour to improve my style.

About this time I met with an odd volume of the Spectator. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With that view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiments in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length and as fully as it had been expressed before in any suitable words that should occur to me. Then I compared my Spectator with an original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual search for words of the same import, but of different lengths, to suit the measure, or of different sounds for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also

have tended to fix that variety in my mind, and make me master of it. Therefore I took some of the tales in the Spectator, and turned them into verse: and after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collection of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavoured to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the subject. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of the thoughts. By comparing my work with the original, I discovered many faults and corrected them; but I sometimes had the pleasure to fancy that, in particulars of small consequence, I had been fortunate enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think that I might in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious. The time I allotted for writing exercises and for reading was at night, or before work began in the morning, or on Sunday, when I contrived to be in the printing-house, avoiding as much as I could the constant attendance at public worship which my father used to exact from me when I was under his care, and which I still continued to consider as a duty, though I could not afford time to practise it.

When about sixteen years of age I happened to meet with another book, written by one Tryon, recommending a vegetable diet. I determined to go into it. My brother, being yet unmarried, did not keep house, but boarded himself and his apprentices in another family. My refusing to eat flesh occasioned an

inconvenience, and I was frequently chid for my singularity. I made myself acquainted with Tryon's manner of preparing some of his dishes, such as boiling potatoes or rice, making hasty pudding, and a few others, and then proposed to my brother if he would give me, weekly, half the money he paid for my board, I would board myself. He instantly agreed to it, and I presently found that I could save half what he paid me.

This was an additional fund for buying of books. But I had another advantage in it. My brother and the rest going from the printing-office to their meals, I remained there alone; and despatching presently my light repast, which was often no more than a biscuit, or a slice of bread and a handful of raisins, a tart from the pastry-cook's, and a glass of water, I had the rest of the time till their return for study, in which I made the greater progress, from that clearness of head and quick apprehension which generally attends temperance in eating and drinking.

Now it was that, being on some occasion made ashamed of my ignorance in figures, which I had twice failed learning when at school, I took *Cocker's* book on arithmetic, and went through the whole by myself with the greatest ease. I also read *Sellers* and *Sturny's* book on navigation, which made me acquainted with the little geometry it contained; but I never proceeded far in that science. I read about this time *Locke on the Human Understanding*, and the *Art of Thinking*, by Messrs. du Port Royal.

While I was intent on improving my language, I met with an

English grammar (I think it was Greenwood's) having at the end of it two little sketches on the arts of rhetoric and logic, the latter finishing with a dispute in the Socratic method; and soon after I procured Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates*, wherein there are many examples of the same method. I was charmed by it, adopted it, dropped my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer; and being then, from reading *Shaftesbury* and *Collins*, made a doubter, as I already was in many points of our religious doctrines, I found this method the safest for myself and very embarrassing to those against whom I used it; therefore I took delight in it, practised it continually, and grew very artful and expert in drawing people, even of superior knowledge, into concessions, the consequences of which they did not foresee; entangling them in difficulties, out of which they could not extricate themselves, and so obtaining victories that neither myself nor my cause always deserved. I continued this method some few years, but gradually left it, retaining only the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence; never using, when I advanced anything that might possibly be disputed, the word *certainly*, *undoubtedly*, or any other that gave the air of positiveness to an opinion; but rather said, I *conceive* or *apprehend* a thing to be so and so; it *appears to me*, or I should not think it is so, for such and such reasons; or I *imagine it to be so*; or *it is so, if I am not mistaken*. This habit, I believe, has been of great advantage to me when I have had occasion to inculcate my opinions, and persuade men

into measures that I have been from time to time engaged in promoting; and, as the chief ends of conversation are to *inform* or to be *informed*, to *please* or to *persuade*, I wish well-meaning and sensible men would not lessen their power of doing good by a positive, assuming manner, that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create opposition, and to defeat most of those purposes for which speech was given to us.

In fact, if you wish to instruct others, a positive and dogmatical manner in advancing your sentiments may occasion opposition and prevent a candid attention. If you desire improvement from others, you should not, at the same time, express yourself fixed in your present opinions; modest and sensible men, who do not love disputations, will leave you undisturbed in the possession of your errors. In adopting such a manner, you can seldom expect to please your hearers, or obtain the concurrence you desire. Pope judiciously observes,

"Men must be taught as if you taught them not,
And things unknown proposed as things forgot."

He also recommends it to us,

"To speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence."

And he might have joined with this line that which he has coupled with another, I think, less properly.

"For want of modesty is want of sense."

If you ask why less properly, I must repeat the lines,

"Immodest words admit of *no defence*,
For want of modesty is want of sense."

Now is not the *want of sense* (where a man is so unfortunate as to want it) some apology for his *want of modesty*? and would not the lines stand more justly thus?

"Immodest words admit *but this defence*,
That *want of modesty* is want of sense."

This, however, I should submit to better judgments.

My brother had, in 1720 or 21, began to print a newspaper. It was the second that appeared in America, and was called the *New-England Courant*. The only one before it was the *Boston News-Letter*. I remember his being dissuaded by some of his friends from the undertaking, as not likely to succeed, one newspaper being, in their judgment, enough for America. At this time (1771) there are not less than *five-and-twenty*.⁵ He went on, however, with the undertaking; I was employed to carry the papers to the customers, after having worked in composing the types and printing off the sheets. He had some ingenious men among his friends, who amused themselves by writing little pieces for his paper, which gained it credit and made it more in demand, and these gentlemen often visited us.

⁵ The number in 1817 exceeds 400

Hearing their conversations and their accounts of the approbation their papers were received with, I was excited to try my hand among them; but being still a boy, and suspecting that my brother would object to printing anything of mine in his paper if he knew it to be mine, I contrived to disguise my hand, and, writing an anonymous paper, I put it at night under the door of the printing-house. It was found in the morning, and committed to his writing friends when they called in as usual. They read it, commented on it in my hearing, and I had the exquisite pleasure of finding it had met with their approbation, and that, in their different guesses at the author, none were named but men of some character among us for learning and ingenuity. I suppose that I was rather lucky in my judges, and they were not really so very good as I then believed them to be.

Encouraged, however, by this attempt, I wrote and sent in the same way to the press several other pieces that were equally approved; and I kept my secret till all my fund of sense for such performances was exhausted, and then discovered it, when I began to be considered with a little more attention by my brother's acquaintance. However, that did not quite please him, as he thought it tended to make me too vain. This might be one occasion of the differences we began to have about this time. Though a brother, he considered himself as my master, and me as his apprentice, and, accordingly, expected the same services from me as he would from another, while I thought he degraded me too much in some he required of me, who from

a brother required more indulgence. Our disputes were often brought before our father, and I fancy I was either generally in the right, or else a better pleader, because the judgment was generally in my favour. But my brother was passionate, and had often beaten me, which I took extremely amiss; and thinking my apprenticeship very tedious, I was continually wishing for some opportunity of shortening it, which at length offered in a manner unexpected.

Perhaps the harsh and tyrannical treatment of me might be a means of impressing me with the aversion to arbitrary power that has stuck to me through my whole life.

One of the pieces in our newspaper on some political point, which I have now forgotten, gave offence to the Assembly. He was taken up, censured, and imprisoned for a month, by the speaker's warrant, I suppose, because he would not discover the author. I, too, was taken up and examined before the council: but though I did not give them any satisfaction, they contented themselves with admonishing me, and dismissed me, considering me, perhaps, as an apprentice, who was bound to keep his master's secrets.

During my brother's confinement, which I resented a good deal notwithstanding our differences, I had the management of the paper; and I made bold to give our rulers some rubs in it, which my brother took very kindly, while others began to consider me in an unfavourable light, as a youth that had a turn for libelling and satire. My brother's discharge was accompanied

with an order (and a very odd one), that "James Franklin should no longer print the newspaper called the New-England Courant."

On a consultation held in our printing-office among his friends, what he should do in this conjuncture, it was proposed to elude the order by changing the name of the paper; but my brother, seeing inconveniences in this, came to a conclusion, as a better way, to let the paper in future be printed in the name of Benjamin Franklin: and in order to avoid the censure of the Assembly, that might fall on him as still printing it by his apprentice, he contrived and consented that my old indenture should be returned to me, with a discharge on the back of it, to show in case of necessity; and, in order to secure to him the benefit of my service, I should sign new indentures for the remainder of my time, which was to be kept private. A very flimsy scheme it was; however, it was immediately executed, and the paper was printed, accordingly, under my name for several months. At length, a fresh difference arising between my brother and me, I took upon me to assert my freedom, presuming that he would not venture to produce the new indentures. It was not fair in me to take this advantage, and this I therefore reckon as one of the first errata of my life; but the unfairness of it weighed little with me, when under the impression of resentment for the blows his passion too often urged him to bestow upon me; though he was otherwise not an ill-natured man: perhaps I was too saucy and provoking.

When he found I would leave him, he took care to prevent my

getting employment in any other printing-house in town, by going round and speaking to every master, who accordingly refused to give me work. I then thought of going to New-York, as the nearest place where there was a printer; and I was rather inclined to leave Boston, when I reflected that I had already made myself a little obnoxious to the governing party, and, from the arbitrary proceedings of the Assembly in my brother's case, it was likely I might, if I stayed, soon bring myself into scrapes; and farther, that my indiscreet disputations about religion began to make me pointed at with horror by good people, as an infidel or atheist. I concluded, therefore, to remove to New-York; but my father now siding with my brother, I was sensible, that if I attempted to go openly, means would be used to prevent me. My friend Collins, therefore, undertook to manage my flight. He agreed with the captain of a New-York sloop to take me. I sold my books to raise a little money, was taken on board the sloop privately, had a fair wind, and in three days found myself at New-York, near three hundred miles from my home, at the age of seventeen, without the least recommendation or knowledge of any person in the place, and very little money in my pocket.

The inclination I had felt for the sea was by this time done away, or I might now have gratified it. But having another profession, and conceiving myself a pretty good workman, I offered my services to a printer of the place, old Mr W. Bradford, who had been the first printer in Pennsylvania, but had removed thence, in consequence of a quarrel with the governor, General

Keith. He could give me no employment, having little to do, and hands enough already. But he said, "My son, at Philadelphia, has lately lost his principal hand, Aquilla Rose, by death; if you go thither, I believe he may employ you." Philadelphia was one hundred miles farther; I set out, however, in a boat for Amboy, leaving my chest and things to follow me round by sea. In crossing the bay we met with a squall that tore our rotten sails to pieces, prevented our getting into the kill, and drove us upon Long Island. In our way, a drunken Dutchman, who was a passenger too, fell overboard; when he was sinking, I reached through the water to his shock pate, and drew him up, so that we got him in again. His ducking sobered him a little, and he went to sleep, taking first out of his pocket a book which he desired I would dry for him. It proved to be my old favourite author, *Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress*, in Dutch, finely printed on good paper, copper cuts, a dress better than I had ever seen it wear in its own language. I have since found that it has been translated into most of the languages of Europe, and suppose it has been more generally read than any other book, except perhaps the Bible. Honest John was the first that I know of who mixed narration and dialogue; a method of writing very engaging to the reader, who, in the most interesting parts, finds himself, as it were, admitted into the company and present at the conversation. *De Foe* has imitated him successfully in his *Robinson Crusoe*, in his *Moll Flanders*, and other pieces; and *Richardson* has done the same in his *Pamela*, &c.

On approaching the island, we found it was in a place where there could be no landing, there being a great surf on the stony beach. So we dropped anchor, and swung out our cable towards the shore. Some people came down to the shore and halloed to us, as we did to them, but the wind was so high and the surf so loud that we could not understand each other. There were some small boats near the shore, and we made signs, and called to them to fetch us; but they either did not comprehend us, or it was impracticable, so they went off. Night approaching, we had no remedy but to have patience till the wind abated, and, in the mean time, the boatmen and myself concluded to sleep if we could; and so we crowded into the hatches, where we joined the Dutchman, who was still wet, and the spray breaking over the head of our boat, leaked through to us, so that we were soon almost as wet as he. In this manner we lay all night with very little rest; but the wind abating the next day, we made a shift to reach Amboy before night, having been thirty hours on the water, without victuals, or any drink but a bottle of filthy rum, the water we sailed on being salt.

In the evening I found myself very feverish, and went to bed; but having read somewhere that cold water drank plentifully was good for a fever, I followed the prescription, and sweat plentifully most of the night: my fever left me, and in the morning crossing the ferry, I proceeded on my journey on foot, having fifty miles to Burlington, where I was told I should find boats that would carry me the rest of the way to Philadelphia.

It rained very hard all the day; I was thoroughly soaked, and by noon a good deal tired, so I stopped at a poor inn, where I stayed all night, beginning now to wish I had never left home. I made so miserable a figure too, that I found, by the questions asked me, I was suspected to be some runaway indentured servant, and in danger of being taken up on that suspicion. However, I proceeded next day, and got in the evening to an inn within eight or ten miles of Burlington, kept by one Dr. Brown. He entered into conversation with me while I took some refreshment, and, finding I had read a little, became very obliging and friendly. Our acquaintance continued all the rest of his life. He had been, I imagine, an ambulatory quack doctor, for there was no town in England, or any country in Europe, of which he could not give a very particular account. He had some letters, and was ingenious; but he was an infidel, and wickedly undertook, some years after, to turn the Bible into doggerel verse, as Cotton had formerly done with Virgil. By this means he set many facts in a ridiculous light, and might have done mischief with weak minds if his work had been published; but it never was. At his house I lay that night, and arrived the next morning at Burlington, but had the mortification to find that the regular boats had gone a little before, and no other expected to go before Tuesday, this being Saturday. Wherefore I returned to an old woman in the town, of whom I had bought some gingerbread to eat on the water, and asked her advice; she proposed to lodge me till a passage by some other boat occurred. I accepted her offer, being much fatigued by travelling on foot.

Understanding I was a printer, she would have had me remain in that town and follow my business, being ignorant what stock was necessary to begin with. She was very hospitable, gave me a dinner of ox-cheek with a great good-will, accepting only of a pot of ale in return; and I thought myself fixed till Tuesday should come. However, walking in the evening by the side of the river, a boat came by which I found was going towards Philadelphia, with several people in her. They took me in, and as there was no wind, we rowed all the way; and about midnight, not having yet seen the city, some of the company were confident we must have passed it, and would row no farther: the others knew not where we were, so we put towards the shore, got into a creek, landed near an old fence, with the rails of which we made a fire, the night being cold, in October, and there we remained till daylight. Then one of the company knew the place to be Cooper's Creek, a little above Philadelphia, which we saw as soon as we got out of the creek, and arrived there about eight or nine o'clock, on the Sunday morning, and landed at Market-street wharf.

I have been the more particular in this description of my journey, and shall be so of my first entry into that city, that you may in your mind compare such unlikely beginnings with the figure I have since made there. I was in my working dress, my best clothes coming round by sea. I was dirty, from my being so long in the boat; my pockets were stuffed out with shirts and stockings, and I knew no one, nor where to look for lodging. Fatigued with walking, rowing, and the want of sleep, I was very

hungry; and my whole stock of cash consisted in a single dollar, and about a shilling in copper coin, which I gave to the boatmen for my passage. At first they refused it on account of my having rowed, but I insisted on their taking it. Man is sometimes more generous when he has little money than when he has plenty, perhaps to prevent his being thought to have but little. I walked towards the top of the street, gazing about, still in Market-street, where I met a boy with bread. I had often made a meal of dry bread, and inquiring where he had bought it, I went immediately to the baker's he directed me to. I asked for biscuits, meaning such as we had at Boston: that sort, it seems, was not made in Philadelphia. I then asked for a threepenny loaf, and was told they had none. Not knowing the different prices, nor the names of the different sorts of bread, I told him to give me threepenny worth of any sort. He gave me, accordingly, three great puffy rolls. I was surprised at the quantity, but took it, and having no room in my pockets, walked off with a roll under each arm, and eating the other. Thus I went up Market-street as far as Fourth-street, passing by the door of Mr. Read, my future wife's father; when she, standing at the door, saw me, and thought I made, as I certainly did, a most awkward, ridiculous appearance. Then I turned and went down Chestnut-street and part of Walnut-street, eating my roll all the way, and, coming round, found myself again at Market-street wharf, near the boat I came in, to which I went for a draught of the river water; and, being filled with one of my rolls, gave the other two to a woman and her child that came down

the river in the boat with us, and were waiting to go farther. Thus refreshed, I walked again up the street, which by this time had many clean-dressed people in it, who were all walking the same way: I joined them, and thereby was led into the great meeting-house of the Quakers near the market. I sat down among them, and after looking round awhile, and hearing nothing said, being very drowsy, through labour and want of rest the preceding night, I fell fast asleep, and continued so till the meeting broke up, when some one was kind enough to rouse me. This, therefore, was the first house I was in, or slept in, in Philadelphia.

I then walked down towards the river, and looking in the faces of every one, I met a young Quaker man whose countenance pleased me, and, accosting him, requested he would tell me where a stranger could get a lodging. We were then near the sign of the Three Mariners. "Here," said he, "is a house where they receive strangers, but it is not a reputable one; if thou wilt walk with me, I'll show thee a better one;" and he conducted me to the Crooked Billet in Water-street. There I got a dinner; and, while I was eating, several questions were asked me, as from my youth and appearance I was suspected of being a runaway. After dinner, my host having shown me to a bed, I lay myself on it, without undressing, and slept till six in the evening, when I was called to supper. I went to bed again very early, and slept very soundly till next morning. Then I dressed myself as neat as I could, and went to Andrew Bradford, the printer's. I found in the shop the old man, his father, whom I had seen at New-York, and who,

travelling on horseback, had got to Philadelphia before me. He introduced me to his son, who received me civilly, gave me a breakfast, and told me he did not at present want a hand, being lately supplied with one: but there was another printer in town lately set up, one Keimer, who perhaps might employ me; if not, I should be welcome to lodge at his house, and he would give me a little work to do now and then, till fuller business should offer.

The old gentleman said he would go with me to the new printer; and when we found him, "Neighbour," said Bradford, "I have brought to see you a young man of your business; perhaps you may want such a one." He asked me a few questions, put a composing stick in my hand to see how I worked, and then said he would employ me soon, though he had just then nothing for me to do; and taking old Bradford, whom he had never seen before, to be one of the town's people that had a good will for him, entered into conversation on his present undertaking and prospects; while Bradford (not discovering that he was the other printer's father), on Keimer's saying he expected soon to get the greatest part of the business into his own hands, drew him on by artful questions, and starting little doubts, to explain all his views, what influence he relied on, and in what manner he intended to proceed. I, who stood by and heard all, saw immediately that one was a crafty old sophister, and the other a true novice. Bradford left me with Keimer, who was greatly surprised when I told him who the old man was.

The printing-house, I found, consisted of an old damaged

press, and a small worn-out fount of English types which he was using himself, composing an elegy on Aquilla Rose, before mentioned; an ingenious young man, of excellent character, much respected in the town, secretary to the Assembly, and a pretty poet. Keimer made verses too, but very indifferently. He could not be said to *write* them, for his method was to *compose* them in the types directly out of his head; there being no copy, but one pair of cases, and the elegy probably requiring all the letter, no one could help him. I endeavoured to put his press (which he had not yet used, and of which he understood nothing) into order to be worked with; and, promising to come and print off his elegy as soon as he should have got it ready, I returned to Bradford's, who gave me a little job to do for the present, and there I lodged and dined. A few days after Keimer sent for me to print off the elegy. And now he had got another pair of cases, and a pamphlet to reprint, on which he set me to work.

These two printers I found poorly qualified for their business. Bradford had been bred to it, and was very illiterate; and Keimer, though something of a scholar, was a mere compositor, knowing nothing of presswork. He had been one of the French prophets, and could act their enthusiastic agitations. At this time he did not profess any particular religion, but something of all on occasion; was very ignorant of the world, and had, as I afterward found, a good deal of the knave in his composition. He did not like my lodging at Bradford's while I worked with him. He had a house, indeed, but without furniture, so he could not lodge me; but he

got me a lodging at Mr. Read's, before mentioned, who was the owner of his house; and my chest of clothes being come by this time, I made rather a more respectable appearance in the eyes of Miss Read than I had done when she first happened to see me eating my roll in the street.

I began now to have some acquaintance among the young people of the town that were lovers of reading, with whom I spent my evenings very pleasantly, and gained money by my industry and frugality. I lived very contented, and forgot Boston as much as I could, and did not wish it should be known where I resided, except to my friend Collins, who was in the secret, and kept it faithfully. At length, however, an incident happened that occasioned my return home much sooner than I had intended. I had a brother-in-law, Robert Holmes, master of a sloop that traded between Boston and Delaware. He being at Newcastle, forty miles below Philadelphia, and hearing of me, wrote me a letter, mentioning the grief of my relations and friends in Boston at my abrupt departure, assuring me of their good-will towards me, and that everything would be accommodated to my mind if I would return, to which he entreated me earnestly. I wrote an answer to his letter, thanking him for his advice, but stated my reasons for quitting Boston so fully, and in such a light, as to convince him that I was not so much in the wrong as he had apprehended.

Sir William Keith, governor of the province, was then at Newcastle, and Captain Holmes happening to be in company

with him when my letter came to hand, spoke to him of me, and showed him the letter. The governor read it, and seemed surprised when he was told my age. He said I appeared a young man of promising parts, and, therefore, should be encouraged: the printers at Philadelphia were wretched ones, and if I would set up there, he made no doubt I should succeed; for his part, he would procure me the public business, and do me every other service in his power. This my brother-in-law Holmes afterward told me in Boston, but I knew as yet nothing of it; when one day, Keimer and I being at work together near the window, we saw the governor and another gentleman (who proved to be Colonel French, of Newcastle, in the province of Delaware), finely dressed, come directly across the street to our house, and heard them at the door. Keimer ran down immediately, thinking it a visit to him; but the governor inquired for me, came up, and, with a condescension and politeness I had been quite unused to, made me many compliments, desired to be acquainted with me, blamed me kindly for not having made myself known to him when I first came to the place, and would have me away with him to the tavern, where he was going with Colonel French to taste, as he said, some excellent Madeira. I was not a little surprised, and Keimer stared with astonishment. I went, however, with the governor and Colonel French to a tavern at the corner of Third-street, and over the Madeira he proposed my setting up my business. He stated the probabilities of my success, and both he and Colonel French assured me I should have their

interest and influence to obtain for me the public business of both governments. And as I expressed doubts that my father would assist me in it, Sir William said he would give me a letter to him, in which he would set forth the advantages, and he did not doubt he should determine him to comply. So it was concluded I should return to Boston by the first vessel, with the governor's letter to my father. In the mean time it was to be kept a secret, and I went on working with Keimer as usual. The governor sent for me now and then to dine with him, which I considered a great honour, more particularly as he conversed with me in the most affable, familiar, and friendly manner.

About the end of April, 1724, a little vessel offered for Boston. I took leave of Keimer as going to see my friends. The governor gave me an ample letter, saying many flattering things of me to my father, and strongly recommending the project of my setting up at Philadelphia, as a thing that would make my fortune. We struck on a shoal in going down the bay, and sprung a leak; we had a blustering time at sea, and were obliged to pump almost continually, at which I took my turn. We arrived safe, however, at Boston, in about a fortnight. I had been absent seven months, and my friends had heard nothing of me; for my brother Holmes was not yet returned, and had not written about me. My unexpected appearance surprised the family; all were, however, very glad to see me, and made me welcome, except my brother: I went to see him at his printing-house. I was better dressed than ever while in his service, having a genteel new suit from head to foot, a watch,

and my pockets lined with near five pounds sterling in silver. He received me not very frankly, looked me all over, and turned to his work again. The journeymen were inquisitive where I had been, what sort of a country it was, and how I liked it. I praised it much, and the happy life I led in it, expressing strongly my intention of returning to it; and one of them asking what kind of money we had there, I produced a handful of silver and spread it before them, which was a kind of *raree-show* they had not been used to, paper being the money of Boston. Then I took an opportunity of letting them see my watch; and, lastly (my brother still grum and sullen), gave them a dollar to drink and took my leave. This visit of mine offended him extremely. For when my mother some time after spoke to him of a reconciliation, and of her wish to see us on good terms together, and that we might live for the future as brothers, he said I had insulted him in such a manner before his people, that he could never forget or forgive it. In this, however, he was mistaken.

My father received the governor's letter with some surprise, but said little of it to me for some time. Captain Holmes returning, he showed it to him, and asked him if he knew Sir William Keith, and what kind of a man he was; adding, that he must be of small discretion to think of setting a youth up in business who wanted three years to arrive at man's estate. Holmes said what he could in favour of the project, but my father was decidedly against it, and at last gave a flat denial. He wrote a civil letter to Sir William, thanking him for the patronage he

had so kindly offered me, and declining to assist me as yet in setting up, I being, in his opinion, too young to be trusted with the management of an undertaking so important, and for which the preparation required a considerable expenditure.

My old companion, Collins, who was a clerk in the postoffice, pleased with the account I gave him of my new country, determined to go thither also; and while I waited for my father's determination, he set out before me by land to Rhode Island, leaving his books, which were a pretty collection of mathematics and natural philosophy, to come with mine and me to New-York, where he proposed to wait for me.

My father, though he did not approve Sir William's proposition, was yet pleased that I had been able to obtain so advantageous a character from a person of such note where I had resided, and that I had been so industrious and careful as to equip myself so handsomely in so short a time; therefore, seeing no prospect of an accommodation between my brother and me, he gave his consent to my returning again to Philadelphia, advised me to behave respectfully to the people there, endeavour to obtain the general esteem, and avoid lampooning and libelling, to which he thought I had too much inclination: telling me, that by steady industry and prudent parsimony, I might save enough by the time I was one-and-twenty to set me up; and that, if I came near the matter, he would help me out with the rest. This was all I could obtain, except some small gifts, as tokens of his and my mother's love, when I embarked again for New-

York, now with their approbation and their blessing. The sloop putting in at Newport, Rhode Island, I visited my brother John, who had been married and settled there some years. He received me very affectionately, for he always loved me. A friend of his, one Vernon, having some money due him in Pennsylvania (about thirty-five pounds currency), desired I would recover it for him, and keep it till I had his directions what to employ it in. Accordingly, he gave me an order to receive it. This business afterward occasioned me a good deal of uneasiness.

At Newport we took in a number of passengers, among which were two young women travelling together, and a sensible, matron-like Quaker lady, with her servants. I had shown an obliging disposition to render her some little services, which probably impressed her with sentiments of good-will towards me; for, when she witnessed the daily growing familiarity between the young women and myself, which they appeared to encourage, she took me aside and said, "Young man, I am concerned for thee, as thou hast no friend with thee, and seemest not to know much of the world, or of the snares youth is exposed to: depend upon it, these are very bad women. I can see it by all their actions; and if thou art not upon thy guard, they will draw thee into some danger: they are strangers to thee, and I advise thee, in a friendly concern for thy welfare, to have no acquaintance with them." As I seemed at first not to think so ill of them as she did, she mentioned some things she had observed and heard that had escaped my notice, but now convinced me

she was right. I thanked her for her kind advice, and promised to follow it. When we arrived at New-York, they told me where they lived, and invited me to come and see them, but I avoided it, and it was well I did; for the next day the captain missed a silver spoon, and some other things that had been taken out of his cabin, and knowing that these were women of bad character, he got a warrant to search their lodgings, found the stolen goods, and had the thieves punished. So, though we had escaped a sunken rock, which we scraped upon in the passage, I thought this escape of rather more importance to me.

At New-York I found my friend Collins, who had arrived there some time before me. We had been intimate from children, and had read the same books together: but he had the advantage of more time for reading and studying, and a wonderful genius for mathematical learning, in which he far outstripped me. While I lived in Boston, most of my hours of leisure for conversation were spent with him, and he continued a sober as well as industrious lad; was much respected for his learning by several of the clergy and other gentlemen, and seemed to promise making a good figure in life. But during my absence he had acquired a habit of drinking brandy, and I found by his own account, as well as that of others, that he had been drunk every day since his arrival at New-York, and behaved himself in a very extravagant manner. He had gamed too, and lost his money, so that I was obliged to discharge his lodgings, and defray his expenses on the road and at Philadelphia, which proved a great burden to

me. The then governor of New-York, Burnet (son of Bishop Burnet), hearing from the captain that one of the passengers had a great many books on board, desired him to bring me to see him. I waited on him, and should have taken Collins with me had he been sober. The governor received me with great civility, showed me his library, which was a considerable one, and we had a good deal of conversation relative to books and authors. This was the second governor who had done me the honour to take notice of me; and, for a poor boy like me, was very pleasing. We proceeded to Philadelphia. I received on the way Vernon's money, without which we could hardly have finished our journey. Collins wished to be employed in some counting-house; but whether they discovered his dram-drinking by his breath or by his behaviour, though he had some recommendations, he met with no success in any application, and continued lodging and boarding at the same house with me and at my expense. Knowing that I had that money of Vernon's, he was continually borrowing of me, still promising repayment as soon as he should be in business. At length he had got so much of it that I was distressed to think what I should do in case of being called on to remit it. His drinking continued, about which we sometimes quarrelled; for, when a little intoxicated, he was very irritable. Once, in a boat on the Delaware, with some other young men, he refused to row in his turn: "I will be rowed home," said he. "We will not row you," said I. "You must," said he, "or stay all night on the water, just as you please." The others said, "Let

us row, what signifies it?" But my mind being soured with his other conduct, I continued to refuse. So he swore he would make me row, or throw me overboard; and coming along, stepping on the thwarts towards me, when he came up and struck at me, I clapped my hand under his thighs, and rising, pitched him head foremost into the river. I knew he was a good swimmer, and so was under little concern about him; but, before he could get round to lay hold of the boat, we had, with a few strokes, pulled her out of his reach; and whenever he drew near the boat, we asked him if he would row, striking a few strokes to slide her away from him. He was ready to stifle with vexation, and obstinately would not promise to row. Finding him at last beginning to tire, we drew him into the boat, and brought him home dripping wet. We hardly exchanged a civil word after this adventure. At length a West India captain, who had a commission to procure a preceptor for the sons of a gentleman at Barbadoes, met with him, and proposed to carry him thither to fill that situation. He accepted, and promised to remit me what he owed me out of the first money he should receive; but I never heard of him after. The violation of my trust respecting Vernon's money was one of the first great errata of my life; and this showed that my father was not much out in his judgment when he considered me as too young to manage business. But Sir William, on reading his letter, said he was too prudent; that there was a great difference in persons; and discretion did not always accompany years, nor was youth always without it. "But, since he will not set you up, I

will do it myself. Give me an inventory of the things necessary to be had from England, and I will send for them. You shall repay me when you are able; I am resolved to have a good printer here, and I am sure you must succeed." This was spoken with such an appearance of cordiality, that I had not the least doubt of his meaning what he said. I had hitherto kept the proposition of my setting up a secret in Philadelphia, and I still kept it. Had it been known that I depended on the governor, probably some friend that knew him better would have advised me not to rely on him; as I afterward heard it as his known character, to be liberal of promises which he never meant to keep; yet, unsolicited as he was by me, how could I think his generous offers insincere? I believed him one of the best men in the world.

I presented him an inventory of a little printing-house, amounting by my computation to about one hundred pounds sterling. He liked it, but asked me if my being on the spot in England to choose the types, and see that everything was good of the kind, might not be of some advantage; "then," said he, "when there, you may make acquaintance, and establish correspondences in the bookselling and stationary way." I agreed that this might be advantageous. "Then," said he, "get yourself ready to go with the Annis;" which was the annual ship, and the only one at that time usually passing between London and Philadelphia. But as it would be some months before the Annis sailed, I continued working with Keimer, fretting extremely about the money Collins had got from me, and in

great apprehensions of being called upon for it by Vernon; this, however, did not happen for some years after.

I believe I have omitted mentioning that, in my first voyage from Boston to Philadelphia, being becalmed off Block Island, our crew employed themselves in catching cod, and hauled up a great number. Till then I had stuck to my resolution to eat nothing that had had life; and on this occasion I considered, according to my master Tryon, the taking every fish as a kind of unprovoked murder, since none of them had nor could do us any injury that might justify this massacre. All this seemed very reasonable. But I had been formerly a great lover of fish, and when it came out of the frying-pan it smelled admirably well. I balanced some time between principle and inclination, till, recollecting that when fish were opened I saw smaller fish taken out of their stomachs; then, thought I, "if you eat one another, I don't see why we may not eat you." So I dined upon cod very heartily, and have since continued to eat as other people; returning only now and then occasionally to a vegetable diet. So convenient a thing it is to be a *reasonable creature*, since *it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do.*

Keimer and I lived on a pretty good, familiar footing, and agreed tolerably well; for he suspected nothing of my setting up. He retained a great deal of his old enthusiasm, and loved argumentation. We therefore had many disputations. I used to work him so with my Socratic method, and had trepanned him so often by questions apparently so distant from any point we

had in hand, yet by degrees leading to the point, and bringing him into difficulties and contradictions, that at last he grew ridiculously cautious, and would hardly answer me the most common questions, without asking first "*What do you intend to infer from that?*" However, it gave him so high an opinion of my abilities in the confuting way, that he seriously proposed my being his colleague in a project he had of setting up a new sect. He was to preach the doctrines, and I was to confound all opponents. When he came to explain with me upon the doctrines, I found several conundrums which I objected to, unless I might have my way a little too, and introduce some of mine. Keimer wore his beard at full length, because somewhere in the Mosaic law it is said, "*Thou shalt not mar the corners of thy beard.*" He likewise kept the seventh-day Sabbath; and these two points were essential with him. I disliked both; but agreed to them on condition of his adopting the doctrine of not using animal food. I doubt, said he, my constitution will not bear it. I assured him it would, and that he would be the better for it. He was usually a great eater, and I wished to give myself some diversion in half starving him. He consented to try the practice if I would keep him company: I did so, and we held it for three months. Our provisions were purchased, cooked, and brought to us regularly by a woman in the neighbourhood, who had from me a list of forty dishes, which she prepared for us at different times, in which there entered neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. This whim suited me the better at this time, from the cheapness of it, not costing us above eighteen

pence sterling each per week. I have since kept several Lents most strictly, leaving the common diet for that, and that for the common, abruptly, without the least inconvenience. So that I think there is little in the advice of making those changes by easy gradations. I went on pleasantly, but poor Keimer suffered grievously, grew tired of the project, longed for the fleshpots of Egypt, and ordered a roast pig. He invited me and two women friends to dine with him; but it being brought too soon upon table, he could not resist the temptation, and ate the whole before we came.

I had made some courtship during this time to Miss Read; I had a great respect and affection for her, and had some reasons to believe she had the same for me; but as I was about to take a long voyage, and we were both very young (only a little above eighteen), it was thought most prudent by her mother to prevent our going too far at present; as a marriage, if it was to take place, would be more convenient after my return, when I should be, as I hoped, set up in my business. Perhaps, too, she thought my expectations not so well founded as I imagined them to be.

My chief acquaintances at this time were Charles Osborne, Joseph Watson, and James Ralph; all lovers of reading. The first two were clerks to an eminent scrivener or conveyancer in the town (Charles Brockden), the other was a clerk to a merchant. Watson was a pious, sensible young man of great integrity: the others rather more lax in their principles of religion, particularly Ralph, who, as well as Collins, had been unsettled by me, for

which they both made me suffer. Osborne was sensible, candid, frank, sincere, and affectionate to his friends; but in literary matters too fond of criticism. Ralph was ingenuous, genteel in his manners, and extremely eloquent; I think I never knew a prettier talker. Both were great admirers of poetry, and began to try their hands in little pieces. Many pleasant walks we have had together on Sundays in the woods on the banks of the Schuylkill, where we read to one another, and conferred on what we had read. Ralph was inclined to give himself up entirely to poetry, not doubting but he might make great proficiency in it, and even make his fortune by it. He pretended that the greatest poets must, when they first began to write, have committed as many faults as he did. Osborne endeavoured to dissuade him, assured him he had no genius for poetry, and advised him to think of nothing beyond the business he was bred to; "that in the mercantile way, though he had no stock, he might, by his diligence and punctuality, recommend himself to employment as a factor, and in time acquire wherewith to trade on his own account." I approved, for my part, the amusing one's self with poetry now and then, so far as to improve one's language, but no farther. On this it was proposed that we should each of us, at our next meeting, produce a piece of our own composing, in order to improve by our mutual observations, criticisms, and corrections. As language and expression was what we had in view, we excluded all considerations of invention, by agreeing that the task should be a version of the eighteenth Psalm, which

describes the descent of a deity. When the time of our meeting drew nigh, Ralph called on me first, and let me know his piece was ready: I told him I had been busy, and, having little inclination, had done nothing. He then showed me his piece for my opinion, and I much approved it, as it appeared to me to have great merit. "Now," said he, "Osborne never will allow the least merit in anything of mine, but makes a thousand criticisms out of mere envy: he is not so jealous of you; I wish, therefore, you would take this piece and produce it as yours: I will pretend not to have had time, and so produce nothing; we shall then hear what he will say to it." It was agreed, and I immediately transcribed it, that it might appear in my own hand. We met: Watson's performance was read; there were some beauties in it, but many defects. Osborne's was read; it was much better. Ralph did it justice, remarked some faults, but applauded the beauties. He himself had nothing to produce. I was backward, seemed desirous of being excused, had not had sufficient time to correct, &c., but no excuse could be admitted; produce I must. It was read and repeated: Watson and Osborne gave up the contest, and joined in applauding it. Ralph only made some criticisms and proposed some amendments; but I defended my text. Osborne was severe against Ralph, and told me he was no better able to criticise than to compose verses. As these two were returning home, Osborne expressed himself still more strongly in favour of what he thought my production; having before refrained, as he said, lest I should think he meant to flatter me. "But who

would have imagined," said he, "that Franklin was capable of such a performance; such painting, such force, such fire! He has even improved on the original. In common conversation he seems to have no choice of words; he hesitates and blunders; and yet, good God, how he writes!" When we next met, Ralph discovered the trick we had played, and Osborne was laughed at. This transaction fixed Ralph in his resolution of becoming a poet. I did all I could to dissuade him from it, but he continued scribbling verses till Pope cured him.⁶ He became, however, a pretty good prose writer. More of him hereafter. But as I may not have occasion to mention the other two, I shall just remark here that Watson died in my arms a few years after, much lamented, being the best of our set. Osborne went to the West Indies, where he became an eminent lawyer, and made money. He and I had made a serious agreement, that the one who happened first to die should, if possible, make a friendly visit to the other, and acquaint him how he found things in that separate state. But he never fulfilled his promise.

The governor, seeming to like my company, had me frequently at his house, and his setting me up was always mentioned as a fixed thing. I was to take with me letters recommendatory to a number of his friends, besides the letter of credit to furnish me with the necessary money for purchasing the press, types, paper, &c. For these letters I was appointed to call at

⁶ "Silence, ye wolves, while Ralph to Cynthia howls,And makes night hideous: answer him, ye owls!"Pope's Dunciad, b. iii., v. 165.

different times, when they were to be ready, but a future time was still named. Thus we went on till the ship (whose departure, too, had been several times postponed) was on the point of sailing. Then, when I called to take my leave and receive the letters, his secretary, Dr. Baird, came out to me and said the governor was extremely busy in writing, but would be down at Newcastle before the ship, and then the letters would be delivered to me.

Ralph, though married, and having one child, had determined to accompany me in this voyage. It was thought he intended to establish a correspondence and obtain goods to sell on commission; but I found after, that, having some cause of discontent with his wife's relations, he proposed to leave her on their hands and never return to America. Having taken leave of my friends and exchanged promises with Miss Read, I quitted Philadelphia in the ship, which anchored at Newcastle. The governor was there, but when I went to his lodging, his secretary came to me from him with expressions of the greatest regret that he could not then see me, being engaged in business of importance; but that he would send the letters to me on board, wishing me heartily a good voyage and a speedy return, &c. I returned on board a little puzzled, but still not doubting.

Mr. Andrew Hamilton, a celebrated lawyer of Philadelphia, had taken his passage in the same ship for himself and son, with Mr. Denham, a Quaker merchant, and Messrs. Oniam and Russel (masters of an iron work in Maryland), who had engaged the great cabin; so that Ralph and I were forced to take up with a birth

in the steerage, and, none on board knowing us, were considered as ordinary persons. But Mr. Hamilton and his son (it was James, since governor) returned from Newcastle to Philadelphia, the father being recalled by a great fee to plead for a seized ship. And just before we sailed, Colonel French coming on board, and showing me great respect, I was more taken notice of; and, with my friend Ralph, invited by the other gentlemen to come into the cabin, there being now room; accordingly, we removed thither.

Understanding that Colonel French had brought on board the governor's despatches, I asked the captain for those letters that were to be under my care; he said all were put into the bag together, and he could not then come at them, but before we landed in England I should have an opportunity of picking them out; so I was satisfied for the present, and we proceeded on our voyage. We had a sociable company in the cabin, and lived uncommonly well, having the addition of all Mr. Hamilton's stores, who had laid in plentifully. In this passage Mr. Denham contracted a friendship for me, that continued during his life. The voyage was otherwise not a pleasant one, as we had a great deal of bad weather.

When we came into the Channel, the captain kept his word with me, and gave me an opportunity of examining the bag for the governor's letters; I found some upon which my name was put, as under my care: I picked out six or seven, that by the handwriting I thought might be the promised letters, especially as one of them was addressed to Basket, the king's printer,

and another to some stationer. We arrived in London the 24th December, 1724. I waited upon the stationer, who came first in my way, delivering the letter as from Governor Keith. "I don't know such a person," said he: but opening the letter, "Oh! this is from Riddlesden. I have lately found him to be a complete rascal, and I will have nothing to do with him, nor receive any letters from him." So, putting the letter into my hand, he turned on his heel and left me to serve some customer. I was surprised to find these were not the governor's letters; and, after recollecting and comparing circumstances, I began to doubt his sincerity. I found my friend Denham, and opened the whole affair to him. He let me into Keith's character; told me there was not the least probability that he had written any letters for me; that no one who knew him had the smallest dependance on him; and he laughed at the idea of the governor's giving me a letter of credit, having, as he said, no credit to give. On my expressing some concern about what I should do, he advised me to endeavour to get some employment in the way of my business. Among the printers here, said he, you will improve yourself, and when you return to America you will set up to greater advantage.

We both of us happened to know, as well as the stationer, that Riddlesden, the attorney, was a very knave; he had half ruined Miss Read's father, by persuading him to be bound for him. By his letter it appeared there was a secret scheme on foot to the prejudice of Mr. Hamilton (supposed to be then coming over with us); that Keith was concerned in it, with Riddlesden.

Denham, who was a friend of Hamilton's, thought he ought to be acquainted with it; so, when he arrived in England, which was soon after, partly from resentment and ill will to Keith and Riddlesden, and partly from good will to him, I waited on him and gave him the letter. He thanked me cordially, the information being of importance to him; and from that time he became my friend, greatly to my advantage afterward on many occasions.

But what shall we think of a governor playing such pitiful tricks, and imposing so grossly upon a poor ignorant boy! It was a habit he had acquired; he wished to please everybody, and having little to give, he gave expectations. He was otherwise an ingenious, sensible man, a pretty good writer, and a good governor for the people, though not for his constituents the proprietaries, whose instructions he sometimes disregarded: several of our best laws were of his planning, and passed during his administration.

Ralph and I were inseparable companions. We took lodgings together in Little Britain, at 3s. 6d. per week; as much as we could then afford. He found some relations, but they were poor, and unable to assist him. He now let me know his intentions of remaining in London, and that he never meant to return to Philadelphia. He had brought no money with him, the whole he could muster having been expended in paying his passage. I had fifteen pistoles; so he borrowed occasionally of me to subsist, while he was looking out for business. He first endeavoured to get into the playhouse, believing himself qualified for an actor; but

Wilkes to whom he applied, advised him candidly not to think of that employment, as it was impossible he should succeed in it. Then he proposed to Roberts, a publisher in Paternoster Row, to write for him a weekly paper like the Spectator, on certain conditions; which Roberts did not approve. Then he endeavoured to get employment as a hackney-writer, to copy for the stationers and lawyers about the Temple; but could not find a vacancy.

For myself, I immediately got into work at Palmer's, a famous printing-house in Bartholomew Close, where I continued near a year. I was pretty diligent, but I spent with Ralph a good deal of my earnings, at plays and public amusements; we had nearly consumed all my pistoles, and now just rubbed on from hand to mouth. He seemed quite to have forgotten his wife and child; and I, by degrees, my engagements with Miss Read, to whom I never wrote more than one letter, and that was to let her know I was not likely soon to return. This was another of the great *errata* of my life which I could wish to correct if I were to live it over again. In fact, by our expenses I was constantly kept unable to pay my passage.

At Palmer's I was employed in composing for the second edition of Woollaston's Religion of Nature. Some of his reasonings not appearing to me well-founded, I wrote a little metaphysical piece, in which I made remarks on them. It was entitled, "*A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain.*" I inscribed it to my friend Ralph; I printed a small number. It occasioned my being more considered by Mr. Palmer as a

young man of some ingenuity, though he seriously expostulated with me upon the principles of my pamphlet, which to him appeared abominable. My printing this pamphlet was another *erratum*. While I lodged in *Little Britain*, I made acquaintance with one Wilcox, a bookseller, whose shop was next door. He had an immense collection of second-hand books. Circulating libraries were not then in use, but we agreed that on certain reasonable terms (which I have now forgotten), I might take, read, and return any of his books; this I esteemed a great advantage, and I made as much use of it as I could.

My pamphlet by some means falling into the hands of one Lyons, a surgeon, author of a book entitled "*The Infallibility of Human Judgment*," it occasioned an acquaintance between us; he took great notice of me, called on me often to converse on those subjects, carried me to the Horns, a pale alehouse in – lane, Cheapside, and introduced me to Dr. Mandeville, author of the *Fable of the Bees*, who had a club there, of which he was the soul, being a most facetious, entertaining companion. Lyons, too, introduced me to Dr. Pemberton,⁷ at Baston's Coffee-house, who promised to give me an opportunity, some time or other, of seeing Sir Isaac Newton, of which I was extremely desirous; but this never happened.

I had brought over a few curiosities, among which the principal was a purse made of the *asbestos*, which purifies by

⁷ F. R. S., author of "A View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy," and "A Treatise on Chymistry;" died in 1771.

fire. Sir Hans Sloane heard of it, came to see me, invited me to his house in Bloomsbury Square, showed me all his curiosities, and persuaded me to add that to the number; for which he paid me handsomely.

At my first admission into the printing-house I took to working at press, imagining I felt a want of the bodily exercise I had been used to in America, where presswork is mixed with the composing. I drank only water; the other workmen, near fifty in number, were great drinkers of beer. On occasion, I carried up and down stairs a large form of types in each hand, when others carried but one in both hands; they wondered to see, from this and several instances, that the *Water American*, as they called me, was *stronger* than themselves who drank *strong* beer! We had an alehouse-boy, who attended always in the house to supply the workmen. My companion at the press drank every day a pint before breakfast, a pint at breakfast with his bread and cheese, a pint between breakfast and dinner, a pint at dinner; a pint in the afternoon about six o'clock, and another when he had done his day's work. I thought it a detestable custom; but it was necessary, he supposed, to drink *strong* beer, that he might be *strong* to labour. I endeavoured to convince him that the bodily strength afforded by beer could only be in proportion to the grain or flour of the barley dissolved in the water of which it was made; that there was more flour in a pennyworth of bread, and, therefore, if he could eat that with a pint of water, it would give him more strength than a quart of beer. He drank on, however, and had

four or five shillings to pay out of his wages every Saturday night for that vile liquor: an expense I was free from; and thus these poor devils keep themselves always under.

Watts, after some weeks, desiring to have me in the composing-room, I left the pressmen; a new *bien venu* for drink (being five shillings) was demanded of me by the compositors. I thought it an imposition, as I had paid one to the pressmen; the master thought so too, and forbade my paying it. I stood out two or three weeks, was accordingly considered as an excommunicate, and had so many little pieces of private malice practised on me, by mixing my sorts, transposing and breaking my matter, &c., &c., if ever I stepped out of the room, and all ascribed to the *chapel ghost*, which they said ever haunted those not regularly admitted, that, notwithstanding the master's protection, I found myself obliged to comply and pay the money, convinced of the folly of being on ill terms with those one is to live with continually. I was now on a fair footing with them, and soon acquired considerable influence. I proposed some reasonable alterations in their *chapel*⁸ laws, and carried them against all opposition. From my example a great many of them left their muddling breakfast of beer, bread and cheese, finding

⁸ A printing-house is always called a *chapel* by the workmen, because printing was first carried on in England in an ancient chapel, and the title has been preserved by tradition. The *bien venu* among the printers, answers to the terms *entrance* and *footing* among mechanics; thus a journeyman, on entering a printing-house, was accustomed to pay one or more gallons of beer *for the good of the chapel*; this custom was falling into disuse thirty years ago; it is very properly rejected entirely in the United States.

they could with me be supplied from a neighbouring house with a large porringer of hot water-gruel, sprinkled with pepper, crumbled with bread, and a bit of butter in it, for the price of a pint of beer, viz., three halfpence. This was a more comfortable as well as a cheaper breakfast, and kept their heads clearer. Those who continued sopping with their beer all day, were often, by not paying, out of credit at the alehouse, and used to make interest with me to get beer, their *light*, as they phrased it, *being out*. I watched the pay-table on Saturday night, and collected what I stood engaged for them, having to pay sometimes near thirty shillings a week on their accounts. This, and my being esteemed a pretty good *rig-ite*, that is, a jocular verbal satirist, supported my consequence in the society. My constant attendance (I never making a *St. Monday*) recommended me to the master; and my uncommon quickness at composing occasioned my being put upon work of despatch, which was generally better paid; so I went on now very agreeably.

My lodgings in Little Britain being too remote, I found another in Duke-street, opposite to the Romish Chapel. It was up three flights of stairs backward, at an Italian warehouse. A widow lady kept the house; she had a daughter, and a maidservant, and a journeyman who attended the warehouse, but lodged abroad. After sending to inquire my character at the house where I last lodged, she agreed to take me in at the same rate, 3s. 6d. per week; cheaper, as she said, from the protection she expected in having a man to lodge in the house. She was a widow, an

elderly woman; had been bred a Protestant, being a clergyman's daughter, but was converted to the Catholic religion by her husband, whose memory she much revered; had lived much among people of distinction, and knew a thousand anecdotes of them, as far back as Charles the Second. She was lame in her knees with the gout, and therefore seldom stirred out of her room, so she sometimes wanted company; and hers was so highly amusing to me, that I was sure to spend an evening with her whenever she desired it. Our supper was only half an anchovy each, on a very little slice of bread and butter, and half a pint of ale between us; but the entertainment was in her conversation. My always keeping good hours, and giving little trouble in the family, made her unwilling to part with me; so that, when I talked of a lodging I had heard of nearer my business, for 2s. a week, which, intent as I was on saving money, made some difference, she bid me not think of it, for she would abate me 2s. a week for the future; so I remained with her at 1s. 6d. as long as I stayed in London.

In a garret of her house there lived a maiden lady of seventy, in the most retired manner, of whom my landlady gave me this account: that she was a Roman Catholic, had been sent abroad when young, and lodged in a nunnery with an intent of becoming a nun; but, the country not agreeing with her, she returned to England, where, there being no nunnery, she had vowed to lead the life of a nun as near as might be done in those circumstances. Accordingly, she had given all her estate to charitable purposes,

reserving only twelve pounds a year to live on, and out of this sum she still gave a part in charity, living herself on water-gruel only, and using no fire but to boil it. She had lived many years in that garret, being permitted to remain there gratis by successive Catholic tenants of the house below, as they deemed it a blessing to have her there. A priest visited her to confess her every day: "from this I asked her," said my landlady, "how she, as she lived, could possibly find so much employment for a confessor." "Oh," said she, "it is impossible to avoid *vain thoughts*." I was permitted once to visit her; she was cheerful and polite, and conversed pleasantly. The room was clean, but had no other furniture than a mattress, a table with a crucifix, and a book, a stool which she gave me to sit on, and a picture over the chimney of *St. Veronica* displaying her handkerchief, with the miraculous figure of Christ's bleeding face on it, which she explained to me with great seriousness. She looked pale, but was never sick, and I give it as another instance on how small an income life and health may be supported.

At Watts's printing-house I contracted an acquaintance with an ingenious man, one Wygate, who, having wealthy relations, had been better educated than most printers; was a tolerable Latinist, spoke French, and loved reading. I taught him and a friend of his to swim at twice going into the river, and they soon became good swimmers. They introduced me to some gentlemen from the country, who went to Chelsea by water, to see the college and Don Saltero's curiosities. In our return,

at the request of the company, whose curiosity Wygate had excited, I stripped and leaped into the river, and swam from near Chelsea to Blackfriars; performing in the way many feats of activity both upon and under the water, that surprised and pleased those to whom they were novelties. I had from a child been delighted with this exercise, had studied and practised Thevenot's motions and positions, added some of mine own, aiming at the graceful and easy as well as the useful. All these I took this occasion of exhibiting to the company, and was much flattered by their admiration; and Wygate, who was desirous of becoming a master, grew more and more attached to me on that account, as well as from the similarity of our studies. He at length proposed to me travelling all over Europe together, supporting ourselves everywhere by working at our business. I was once inclined to it; but mentioning it to my good friend Mr. Denham, with whom I often spent an hour when I had leisure, he dissuaded me from it, advising me to think only of returning to Pennsylvania, which he was now about to do.

I must record one trait of this good man's character: he had formerly been in business at Bristol, but failed in debt to a number of people, compounded and went to America; there, by a close application to business as a merchant, he acquired a plentiful fortune in a few years. Returning to England in the ship with me, he invited his old creditors to an entertainment, at which he thanked them for the easy composition they had favoured him with, and when they expected nothing but the treat, every man at

the first remove found under his plate an order on a banker for the full amount of the unpaid remainder, with interest.

He now told me he was about to return to Philadelphia, and should carry over a great quantity of goods in order to open a store there. He proposed to take me over as his clerk, to keep his books (in which he would instruct me), copy his letters, and attend the store; he added, that, as soon as I should be acquainted with mercantile business, he would promote me, by sending me with a cargo of flour and bread, &c., to the West Indies, and procure me commissions from others which would be profitable; and, if I managed well, would establish me handsomely. The thing pleased me, for I was grown tired of London; remembered with pleasure the happy months I had spent in Pennsylvania, and wished again to see it; therefore I immediately agreed on the terms of fifty pounds a year, Pennsylvania money; less, indeed, than my present gettings as a compositor, but affording better prospects.

I now took leave of printing, as I thought, for ever, and was daily employed in my new business: going about with Mr. Denham among the tradesmen, to purchase various articles and see them packed up, delivering messages, calling upon workmen to despatch, &c.; and, when all was on board, I had a few days' leisure. On one of these days I was, to my surprise, sent for by a great man, I knew only by name (Sir William Wyndham), and I waited upon him; he had heard, by some means or other, of my swimming from Chelsea to Blackfriars, and of my teaching

Wygate and another young man to swim in a few hours: he had two sons, about to set out on their travels; he wished to have them first taught swimming, and proposed to gratify me handsomely if I would teach them. They were not yet come to town, and my stay was uncertain, so I could not undertake it; but from the incident I thought it likely, that if I were to remain in England and open a swimming school, I might get a good deal of money; and it struck me so strongly, that, had the overture been made me sooner, probably I should not so soon have returned to America. Many years after, you and I had something of more importance to do with one of those sons of Sir William Wyndham, become Earl of Egremont, which I shall mention in its place.

Thus I passed about eighteen months in London, most part of the time I worked hard at my business, and spent but little upon myself, except in seeing plays and in books. My friend Ralph had kept me poor; he owed me about twenty-seven pounds, which I was now never likely to receive; a great sum out of my small earnings! I loved him, notwithstanding, for he had many amiable qualities. I had improved my knowledge, however, though I had by no means improved my fortune; but I had made some very ingenious acquaintance, whose conversation was of great advantage to me, and I had read considerably.

We sailed from Gravesend on the 23d of July, 1726. For the incidents of the voyage I refer you to my journal, where you will find them all minutely related. Perhaps the most important part of that journal is the *plan* to be found in it, which I formed at

sea, for regulating the future conduct of my life. It is the more remarkable as being formed when I was so young, and yet being pretty faithfully adhered to quite through to old age.

We landed at Philadelphia the 11th of October, where I found sundry alterations. Keith was no longer governor, being superseded by Major Gordon; I met him walking the streets as a common citizen; he seemed a little ashamed at seeing me, and passed without saying anything. I should have been as much ashamed at seeing Miss Read, had not her friends, despairing with reason of my return after the receipt of my letter, persuaded her to marry another, one Rogers, a potter, which was done in my absence. With him, however, she was never happy, and soon parted from him, refusing to cohabit with him or bear his name, it being now said he had another wife. He was a worthless fellow, though an excellent workman, which was the temptation to her friends; he got into debt, ran away in 1727 or 1728, went to the West Indies, and died there. Keimer had got a better house, a shop well supplied with stationary, plenty of new types, and a number of hands, though none good, and seemed to have a great deal of business.

Mr. Denham took a store in Water-street, where we opened our goods; I attended the business diligently, studied accounts, and grew in a little time expert at selling. We lodged and boarded together; he counselled me as a father, having a sincere regard for me: I respected and loved him, and we might have gone on together very happily, but in the beginning of February, 1727,

when I had just passed my twenty-first year, we both were taken ill. My distemper was a pleurisy, which very nearly carried me off; I suffered a good deal, gave up the point in my own mind, and was at the time rather disappointed when I found myself recovering; regretting in some degree that I must now, some time or other, have all that disagreeable work to go over again. I forget what Mr. Denham's distemper was; it held him a long time, and at length carried him off. He left me a small legacy in a nuncupative will, as a token of his kindness to me, and he left me once more to the wide world, for the store was taken into the care of his executors, and my employment under him ended. My brother-in-law, Holmes, being now at Philadelphia, advised my return to my business; and Keimer tempted me with an offer of large wages by the year, to come and take the management of his printing-house, that he might better attend to his stationer's shop. I had heard a bad character of him in London from his wife and her friends, and was not for having any more to do with him. I wished for employment as a merchant's clerk, but not meeting with any, I closed again with Keimer. I found in his house these hands: Hugh Meredith, a Welsh Pennsylvanian, thirty years of age, bred to country work; he was honest, sensible, a man of experience, and fond of reading, but addicted to drinking. Stephen Potts, a young countryman of full age, bred to the same, of uncommon natural parts, and great wit and humour, but a little idle. These he had agreed with at extreme low wages per week, to be raised a shilling every three months as they should deserve

by improving in their business; and the expectation of these high wages to come on hereafter was what he had drawn them in with. Meredith was to work at press, Potts at bookbinding, which he, by agreement, was to teach them, though he knew neither one nor the other. John Savage, an Irishman, brought up to no business, whose service for four years Keimer had purchased from the captain of a ship; he too was to be made a pressman. George Webb, an Oxford scholar, whose time for four years he had likewise bought, intending him for a compositor (of whom more presently), and David Harry, a country boy, whom he had taken apprentice.

I soon perceived that the intention of engaging me, at wages so much higher than he had been used to give, was to have these raw, cheap hands formed through me; and, as soon as I had instructed them (they being all articed to him), he should be able to do without me. I went, however, very cheerfully, put his printing-house in order, which had been in great confusion, and brought his hands by degrees to mind their business, and to do it better.

It was an odd thing to find an Oxford scholar in the situation of a bought servant; he was not more than eighteen years of age; he gave me this account of himself: that he was born in Gloucester, educated at a grammar-school, and had been distinguished among the scholars for some apparent superiority in performing his part when they exhibited plays; belonged to the Wit's club there, and had written some pieces in prose and verse, which were printed in the Gloucester newspapers; thence

was sent to Oxford; there he continued about a year, but not well satisfied, wishing of all things to see London and become a player. At length, receiving his quarterly allowance of fifteen guineas instead of discharging his debts he went out of town, hid his gown in a furz bush, and walked to London, where, having no friend to advise him, he fell into bad company, soon spent his guineas, found no means of being introduced among the players, grew necessitous, pawned his clothes, and wanted bread. Walking the street, very hungry, and not knowing what to do with himself, a crimp's bill was put into his hand, offering immediate entertainment and encouragement to such as would bind themselves to serve in America; he went directly, signed the indentures, was put into the ship, and came over, never writing a line to his friends to acquaint them what was become of him. He was lively, witty, good-natured, and a pleasant companion; but idle, thoughtless, and imprudent to the last degree.

John, the Irishman, soon ran away; with the rest I began to live very agreeably, for they all respected me the more, as they found Keimer incapable of instructing them, and that from me they learned something daily. My acquaintance with ingenious people in the town increased. We never worked on Saturday, that being Keimer's Sabbath, so that I had two days for reading. Keimer himself treated me with great civility and apparent regard, and nothing now made me uneasy but my debt to Vernon, which I was yet unable to pay, being hitherto but a poor economist; he, however, kindly made no demand of it.

Our printing-house often wanted sorts, and there was no letter foundry in America. I had seen types cast at James's in London, but without much attention to the manner; however, I now contrived a mould, and made use of the letters we had as puncheons, struck the matrices in lead, and thus supplied, in a pretty tolerable way, all deficiencies. I also engraved several things on occasion; made the ink; I was warehouse-man, and, in short, quite a *factotum*.

But, however serviceable I might be, I found that my services became every day of less importance, as the other hands improved in their business; and when Keimer paid me a second quarter's wages, he let me know that he felt them too heavy, and thought I should make an abatement. He grew by degrees less civil, put on more the airs of master, frequently found fault, was captious, and seemed ready for an outbreaking. I went on, nevertheless, with a good deal of patience, thinking that his encumbered circumstances were partly the cause. At length a trifle snapped our connexion; for a great noise happening near the courthouse, I put my head out of the window to see what was the matter. Keimer, being in the street, looked up and saw me; called out to me in a loud voice and an angry tone, to mind my business; adding some reproachful words, that nettled me the more for their publicity; all the neighbours, who were looking out on the same occasion, being witnesses how I was treated. He came up immediately into the printing-house; continued the quarrel; high words passed on both sides; he gave me the quarter's warning we

had stipulated, expressing a wish that he had not been obliged to so long a warning. I told him his wish was unnecessary, for I would leave him that instant; and so, taking my hat, walked out of doors, desiring Meredith, whom I saw below, to take care of some things I left and bring them to my lodgings.

Meredith came accordingly in the evening, when we talked my affair over. He had conceived a great regard for me, and was very unwilling that I should leave the house while he remained in it. He dissuaded me from returning to my native country, which I began to think of; he reminded me that Keimer was in debt for all he possessed; that his creditors began to be uneasy; that he kept his shop miserably, sold often without a profit for ready money, and often trusted without keeping accounts that he must therefore fail, which would make a vacancy I might profit of. I objected my want of money. He then let me know that his father had a high opinion of me, and, from some discourse that had passed between them, he was sure he would advance money to set me up, if I would enter into partnership with him. My time, said he, will be out with Keimer in the spring; by that time we may have our press and types in from London. I am sensible I am no workman: if you like it, your skill in the business shall be set against the stock I furnish, and we will share the profits equally. The proposal was agreeable to me, and I consented; his father was in town and approved of it; the more, he said, as I had great influence with his son; had prevailed on him to abstain long from dram-drinking, and he hoped might break him

of that wretched habit entirely when we came to be so closely connected. I gave an inventory to the father, who carried it to a merchant: the things were sent for, the secret was to be kept till they should arrive, and in the mean time I was to get work, if I could, at the other printing-house. But I found no vacancy there, and so remained idle a few days, when Keimer, on a prospect of being employed to print some paper money in New-Jersey, which would require cuts and various types that I only could supply, and apprehending Bradford might engage me and get the job from him, sent me a very civil message, that old friends should not part for a few words, the effect of sudden passion, and wishing me to return. Meredith persuaded me to comply, as it would give more opportunity for his improvement under my daily instructions; so I returned, and we went on more smoothly than for some time before. The New-Jersey job was obtained; I contrived a copperplate press for it, the first that had been seen in the country; I cut several ornaments and checks for the bills. We went together to Burlington, where I executed the whole to satisfaction; and he received so large a sum for the work as to be enabled thereby to keep himself longer from ruin.

At Burlington I made an acquaintance with many principal people of the province. Several of them had been appointed by the Assembly a committee to attend the press, and take care that no more bills were printed than the law directed. They were, therefore, by turns, constantly with us, and generally he who attended brought with him a friend or two for company. My mind

having been much more improved by reading than Keimer's, I suppose it was for that reason my conversation seemed to be more valued. They had me to their houses, introduced me to their friends, and showed me much civility; while he, though the master, was a little neglected. In truth, he was an odd creature; ignorant of common life, fond of rudely opposing received opinions; slovenly to extreme dirtiness; enthusiastic in some points of religion, and a little knavish withal. We continued there near three months, and by that time I could reckon among my acquired friends Judge Allen, Samuel Bustill, the secretary of the province, Isaac Pearson, Joseph Cooper, and several of the Smiths, members of Assembly, and Isaac Decow, the surveyor-general. The latter was a shrewd, sagacious old man, who told me that he began for himself, when young, by wheeling clay for the brickmakers, learned to write after he was of age, carried the chain for surveyors, who taught him surveying, and he had now, by his industry, acquired a good estate; and, said he, I foresee you will soon work this man out of his business, and make a fortune in it at Philadelphia. He had then not the least intimation of my intention to set up there or anywhere. These friends were afterward of great use to me, as I occasionally was to some of them. They all continued their regard for me as long as they lived.

Before I enter upon my public appearance in business, it may be well to let you know the then state of my mind with regard to my principles and morals, that you may see how far those influenced the future events of my life. My parents had early

given me religious impressions, and brought me through my childhood piously in the dissenting way. But I was scarce fifteen, when, after doubting by turns several points, as I found them disputed in the different books I read, I began to doubt of the revelation itself. Some books against Deism fell into my hands, they were said to be the substance of the sermons which had been preached at Boyle's Lectures. It happened that they wrought an effect on me quite contrary to what was intended by them; for the arguments of the Deists, which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much stronger than the refutation; in short, I soon became a thorough Deist. My arguments perverted some others, particularly Collins and Ralph: but each of these having wronged me greatly without the least compunction; and recollecting Keith's conduct towards me (who was another freethinker), and my own towards Vernon and Miss Read, which at times gave me great trouble, I began to suspect that this doctrine, though it might be true, was not very useful. My London pamphlet (printed in 1725) – which had for its motto these lines of Dryden:

"Whatever is, is right. Though purblind man
Sees but a part o' the chain, the nearest link,
His eye not carrying to that equal beam
That poises all above – "

and which, from the attributes of God, his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, concluded that nothing could possibly be wrong in the world; and that vice and virtue were empty

distinctions, no such things existing – appeared now not so clever a performance as I once thought it; and I doubted whether some error had not insinuated itself unperceived into my argument, so as to infect all that followed, as is common in metaphysical reasonings. I grew convinced that *truth*, *sincerity*, and *integrity*, in dealings between man and man, were of the utmost importance to the felicity of life; and I formed written resolutions (which still remain in my journal-book) to practise them ever while I lived. Revelation had indeed no weight with me as such; but I entertained an opinion that, though certain actions might not be bad *because* they were forbidden by it, or good *because* it commanded them, yet probably those actions might be forbidden *because* they were bad for us, or commanded *because* they were beneficial to us, in their own natures, all the circumstances of things considered. And this persuasion, with the kind hand of Providence, or some guardian angel, or accidental favourable circumstances and situations, or all together, preserved me through the dangerous time of youth and the hazardous situations I was sometimes in among strangers, remote from the eye and advice of my father, free from any *wilful* gross immorality or injustice that might have been expected from my want of religion; I say *wilful*, because the instances I have mentioned had something of *necessity* in them, from my youth, inexperience, and the knavery of others: I had, therefore, a tolerable character to begin the world with; I valued it properly, and determined to preserve it.

We had not been long returned to Philadelphia before the new types arrived from London. We settled with Keimer, and left him by his consent before he heard of it. We found a house to hire near the market, and took it. To lessen the rent (which was then but twenty-four pounds a year, though I have since known it to let for seventy), we took in Thomas Godfrey, a glazier, and his family, who were to pay a considerable part of it to us, and we to board with them. We had scarce opened our letters and put our press in order, before George House, an acquaintance of mine, brought a countryman to us, whom he had met in the street inquiring for a printer. All our cash was now expended in the variety of particulars we had been obliged to procure, and this countryman's five shillings, being our first fruits, and coming so seasonably, gave me more pleasure than any crown I have since earned; and, from the gratitude I felt towards House, has made me often more ready than perhaps I otherwise should have been, to assist young beginners.

There are croakers in every country always boding its ruin. Such a one there lived in Philadelphia, a person of note, an elderly man, with a wise look and a very grave manner of speaking; his name was Samuel Mickle. This gentleman, a stranger to me, stopped me one day at my door, and asked me if I was the young man who had lately opened a new printing-house. Being answered in the affirmative, he said he was sorry for me, because it was an expensive undertaking, and the expense would be lost, for Philadelphia was a sinking place; the people

already half bankrupts, or near being so; all the appearances of the country, such as new buildings and the rise of rents, being to his certain knowledge fallacious; for they were, in fact, among the things that would ruin us. Then he gave me such a detail of misfortunes now existing, or that were soon to exist, that he left me half melancholy. Had I known him before I engaged in this business, probably I never should have done it. This person continued to live in this *decaying place*, and to declaim in the same strain, refusing for many years to buy a house there, because all was going to destruction; and at last I had the pleasure of seeing him give five times as much for one as he might have bought it for when he first began croaking.

I should have mentioned before, that in the autumn of the preceding year I had formed most of my ingenious acquaintance into a club for mutual improvement, which we called the Junto; we met on Friday evenings. The rules that I drew up required that every member in his turn should produce one or more queries on any point of morals, politics, or natural philosophy, to be discussed by the company; and once in three months produce and read an essay of his own writing, on any subject he pleased. Our debates were to be under the direction of a president, and to be conducted in the sincere spirit of inquiry after truth, without fondness for dispute or desire of victory; and to prevent warmth, all expressions of positiveness in opinions or direct contradiction were after some time made contraband, and prohibited under small pecuniary penalties.

The first members were Joseph Brientnal, a copier of deeds for the scriveners; a good-natured, friendly, middle-aged man, a great lover of poetry, reading all he could meet with, and writing some that was tolerable; very ingenious in making little knickknackeries, and of sensible conversation.

Thomas Godfrey, a self-taught mathematician, great in his way, and afterward inventor of what is now called *Hadley's Quadrant*

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