

# WILIAM BRUCE

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN;  
SELF-REVEALED,  
VOLUME 2 (OF 2)

**William Bruce**  
**Benjamin Franklin; Self-  
Revealed, Volume 2 (of 2)**

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Benjamin Franklin; Self-Revealed, Volume 2 (of 2) A Biographical and  
Critical Study Based Mainly on his own Writings:*

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**CHAPTER I**

**Franklin's Personal Characteristics**

The precise explanation of the great concourse of friends that Franklin drew about him, at the different stages of his long journey through the world, is to be found partly in his robust, honorable character and mental gifts. The sterner virtues, which are necessarily the foundations of such esteem as he enjoyed, he possessed in an eminent degree. An uncommonly virile and resolute spirit animated the body, which was equal in youth to the task of swimming partly on and partly under water from near Chelsea to Blackfriars, and of exhibiting on the way all of Thevenot's motions and positions as well as some of its own,

and which shortly afterwards even sported about the becalmed Berkshire in the Atlantic almost with the strength and ease of one of the numerous dolphins mentioned by Franklin in his Journal of his voyage on that ship from England to America. He hated cruelty, injustice, rapacity and arbitrary conduct. It was no idle or insincere compliment that Burke paid him when he spoke of his "liberal and manly way of thinking." How stoutly his spirit met its responsibilities in Pennsylvania, prior to the Declaration of Independence, we have seen. The risks incident to the adoption of that declaration it incurred with the same fearless courage. Of all the men who united in its adoption, he, perhaps, was in the best position to know, because of his long residence in England, and familiarity with the temper of the English monarch and his ministry, what the personal consequences to the signers were likely to be, if the American cause should prove unsuccessful. He had a head to lose even harder to replace than that of his friend Lavoisier, he had a fortune to be involved in flame or confiscation, the joy of living meant to him what it has meant to few men, and more than one statement in his writings affords us convincing proof that, quite apart from the collective act of all the signers in pledging their lives, fortunes and sacred honor to the "glorious cause," he did not lose sight of the fact that the Gray Tower still stood upon its ancient hill with its eye upon the Traitor's Gate, and its bosom stored with instruments of savage vengeance. Indeed, it was the thought that his son had been engaged against him in a game, in which not only his fortune

but his neck had been at stake, that made it so difficult for him, forgiving as he was, to keep down the bile of violated nature. But, when the time came for affixing his signature to the Declaration, he not only did it with the equanimity of the rest, but, if tradition may be believed, with a light-hearted intrepidity like that of Sir Walter Raleigh jesting on the scaffold with the edge of the axe. "We must all hang together," declared John Hancock, when pleading for unanimity. "Yes," Franklin is said to have replied, "we must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately."

The inability of old age, partly from sheer loss of animal vigor, and partly from the desire for peace, produced by the general decline in vividness of everything in a world, that it is about to quit, to assert itself with the force of will and temper, that belongs to us in our prime, is one of the most noticeable phenomena of the later stages of human existence. But John Adams to the contrary, the evidence all tends to show that the resolution of character exhibited by Franklin in the heyday of his physical strength he exhibited to the last. He was always slow to anger. Independent of the remarkable self-control, which enabled him to preserve a countenance, while Wedderburn was traducing him, as fixed as if it had been carved out of wood, his anger was not kindled quickly, among other reasons because he was too wise and just not to know that, if we could lay aside the sensitiveness of exaggerated self-importance, there would be but little real occasion for anger in the ordinary course of human

life. But when meanness, injustice or other aggravated forms of human depravity were to be rebuked, the indignation of Franklin remained deliberate, judicious, calculating and crushing to the last. One illustration of this we have already given in his letter to Captain Peter Landais. Others we shall have brought to our attention in several of his letters to Arthur Lee. Upon these occasions, angry as he was, he was apt to make out his case with very much the same cool completeness as that with which he demonstrated in a letter to the British Post Office that it would be a mistake to shift His Majesty's mails from the Western to the Eastern Post Route in New Jersey. The time never came when he was not fully as militant as the occasion required, though never more so.

And his integrity was as marked as his courage. "Splashes of Dirt thrown upon my Character, I suffered while fresh to remain," he once said. "I did not chuse to spread by endeavouring to remove them, but rely'd on the vulgar Adage *that they would all rub off when they were dry.*" And such was his reputation for uprightness that, as a rule, he could neglect attacks upon his character with impunity. The one vaunt of his life, if such it can be called, was his statement to John Jay that no person could truthfully declare that Benjamin Franklin had wronged him. A statement of that kind, uttered by an even better man than Franklin, might well be answered in the spirit that prompted Henry IV of France, when his attention was called to a memorial inscription, which asserted that its subject never knew fear, to

remark, "Then he never snuffed a candle with his fingers." But that Franklin was a man of sterling probity is unquestionable.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In his *True Benjamin Franklin*, p. 163, Sydney George Fisher makes these statements: "In a letter written to Mrs. Stevenson in London, while he (Franklin) was envoy to France, he expresses surprise that some of the London tradespeople still considered him their debtor for things obtained from them during his residence there some years before, and he asks Mrs. Stevenson, with whom he had lodged, how his account stands with her... He appears to have overdrawn his account with Hall, for there is a manuscript letter in the possession of Mr. Howard Edwards, of Philadelphia, written by Hall, March 1, 1770, urging Franklin to pay nine hundred and ninety-three pounds which had been due for three years." What Franklin's letter to Mrs. Stevenson, which is dated Jan. 25, 1779, states is that he had been told after reaching France that Mr. Henley, the linen-drapeer, had said that, when the former left England for America, he had gone away in his debt. The letter questions whether Henley ever made such a statement, asks Mrs. Stevenson to let the writer know the meaning of it all, and adds: "I thought he had been fully paid, and still think so, and shall, till I am assur'd of the contrary." The account that the letter asks of Mrs. Stevenson was probably for the shipping charges on the white cloth suit, sword and saddle, which had been forwarded, as the letter shows, to Franklin at Passy by Mrs. Stevenson. Or it may have well been for expense incurred by Mrs. Stevenson in performing some similar office for him. For instance, when he was on the point of leaving England in 1775, he wrote to a friend on the continent that, if he had purchased a certain book for the writer, Mrs. Stevenson, in whose hands he left his little affairs till his return, which he proposed, God willing, in October, would pay the draft for it. A letter from Franklin to Mrs. Stevenson, dated July 17, 1775, shows that there had been mutual accounts between them during his long and familiar intercourse with her under the Craven Street roof. With this letter, he incloses an order for a sum of money that she had intrusted to him for investment, and also an order for £260 more, "supposing," he says, "by the Sketch Mr. Williams made of our Accts. that I may owe you about that Sum." "When they are finally settled," he further says, "we shall see where the Ballance lies, and easily rectify it." If the account in question had any connection with these accounts the unliquidated nature of the latter, the abruptness with which Franklin was compelled to leave England in 1775, coupled with his expectation of returning, the troubled years which followed and the difficulty of finally settling detailed accounts, when the parties to them are widely

"We ought always to do what appears best to be done without much regarding what others may think of it," he wrote to William Carmichael, and, at more than one trying crisis of his career, he rose without difficulty to the requirements of his maxim. Lord North had little love for him, but he is credited with the remarkable statement, during the American War, that, in his belief, Franklin was the only man in France whose hands were not stained with stock jobbery. When the false charge was made that Franklin had never accounted for one of the many millions of livres entrusted to him by our French ally, no pride could suffer more acutely than did his from its inability to disprove the charge immediately. When enemies, to whom he had never given any just cause of offence whatever, were calumniating him towards the close of his life, his desire to leave the reputation of an honest man behind him became the strongest of his motives. The flattering language of great men, he said in his *Journal of the Negotiation for Peace with Great Britain*, did not mean so much to him when he found himself so near the end of life as to esteem lightly all personal interests and concerns except that of maintaining to the last, and leaving behind him the tolerably good character that he had previously supported. Still later he wrote to Henry Laurens, accepting the offer of that true patriot and gentleman to refute the slanders with regard to his career in

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separated, furnish a satisfactory explanation of the delay in settlement. If Franklin did not pay a balance claimed from him by Hall on the settlement of their partnership accounts, after the expiration of the partnership in 1766, it was doubtless because of his own copyright counter-claim to which we have already referred in our text.

France, and saying:

I apprehend that the violent Antipathy of a certain person to me may have produced some Calumnies, which, what you have seen and heard here may enable you easily to refute. You will thereby exceedingly oblige one, who has lived beyond all other Ambition, than that of dying with the fair Character he has long endeavoured to deserve.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In recent years there has been a tendency to disparage the merits of Henry Laurens. The Hales in their *Franklin in France* speak of him "as a very worthy, but apparently very inefficient, member of the Commission." In his admirable prolegomena to the *Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution*, which is well calculated to excite the regret that lawyers do not oftener bring the professional habit of weighing evidence to bear upon historical topics, Dr. Francis Wharton says: "The influence he exerted in the formation of the treaty was but slight, and his attitude as to the mode of its negotiation and as to its leading provisions so uncertain as to deprive his course in respect to it of political weight." Dr. Wharton also reaches the conclusion that Henry Laurens was deficient, in critical moments, both in sagacity and resolution. On the other hand Moses Coit Tyler in his *Literary History of the American Revolution* declares that, coming at last upon the arena of national politics, Laurens was soon recognized for what he was, "a trusty, sagacious, lofty, imperturbable character." In another place in the same work, Tyler speaks of the "splendid sincerity, virility, wholesomeness and competence of this man – himself the noblest Roman of them all – the unsurpassed embodiment of the proudest, finest, wittiest, most efficient, and most chivalrous Americanism of his time." And in still another place in the same work the *Narrative of the Capture of Henry Laurens* is described "as a modest and fascinating story of an heroic episode in the history of the Revolution, a fragment of autobiography fit to become a classic in the literature of a people ready to pay homage to whatever is magnanimous, exquisite and indomitable in the manly character." To anyone familiar with the whole conduct of Laurens in the Tower and the other facts upon which Dr. Wharton based his judgment as to his sagacity and firmness at trying conjunctures, these statements of Tyler are to a certain extent mere academic puffery. We see no reason, however, to shade the character that we have ascribed to Laurens in

When the negotiations for peace between Great Britain and the United States began, Richard Oswald, the envoy of Lord Shelburne, told Franklin that a part of the confidence felt in him by the English Ministry was inspired by his repute for open, honest dealing. This was not a mere diplomatic *douceur*, but a just recognition of his candid, straightforward conduct in his commerce with men. He was very resourceful and dexterous, if need were, and, in his early life, when he was promoting his own, or the public interests, he exhibited at times a finesse that bordered upon craftiness; but, when Wedderburn taxed him with duplicity, he imputed to Franklin's nature a vice incompatible with his frank, courageous disposition. It was his outspoken sincerity of character that enabled him, during the American War, to retain the attachment of his English friends even when he was holding up their land as one too wicked for them to dwell in.

His intellectual traits, too, were of a nature to win social fame. In his graphic description of Franklin in extreme old age, Doctor Manasseh Cutler, of Massachusetts, brings him before us with these telling strokes of his pencil:

I was highly delighted with the extensive knowledge he appeared to have of every subject, the brightness of

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the text. Writing to Franklin about him after his release from the Tower, John Adams said: "I had vast pleasure in his conversation; for I found him possessed of the most exact judgment concerning our enemies, and of the same noble sentiments in all things which I saw in him in Congress." And some eighteen months later Franklin wrote to Laurens himself in terms as strong as that he should ever look on his friendship as an honor to him.

his memory, and clearness and vivacity of all his mental faculties, notwithstanding his age. His manners are perfectly easy, and everything about him seems to diffuse an unrestrained freedom and happiness. He has an incessant vein of humour, accompanied with an uncommon vivacity, which seems as natural and involuntary as his breathing.

In other words, whatever knowledge Franklin had was readily available for social purposes, and suffused with the gaiety and humor which are so ingratiating, when accompanied, as they were in his case, by the desire to please and do good.<sup>3</sup> "He had wit at will," is the testimony of an unfriendly but honest witness, John Adams. His humor it would be difficult to over-emphasize. It ranged from punning, trifling, smutty jests and horse laughter to the sly, graceful merriment of Addison and the bitter realism

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<sup>3</sup> The Abbé Morellet in his Memoirs gives us very much the same impression of the social characteristics of Franklin that Cutler does. "His conversation was exquisite – a perfect good nature, a simplicity of manners, an uprightness of mind that made itself felt in the smallest things, an extreme gentleness, and, above all, a sweet serenity that easily became gayety." But this was Franklin when he was certain of his company. "He conversed only with individuals," John Adams tells us, "and freely only with confidential friends. In company he was totally silent." If we may judge by the few specimens reserved by the Diary of Arthur Lee, the Diary of John Baynes, an English barrister, and Hector St. John, the author of *Letters from an American Farmer*, the grave talk of Franklin was as good as his conversation in its livelier moods. After a call with Baynes upon Franklin at Passy, Sir Samuel Romilly wrote in his Journal: "Of all the celebrated persons whom in my life I have chanced to see, Dr. Franklin, both from his appearance and his conversation, seemed to me the most remarkable. His venerable patriarchal appearance, the simplicity of his manner and language, and the novelty of his observations, at least the novelty of them at that time to me, impressed me with an opinion of him as one of the most extraordinary men that ever existed."

of Swift. It irradiated his conversation, his letters, his writings, his passing memoranda, at times even his scientific essays and political papers. "Iron is always sweet, and every way taken is wholesome and friendly to the human Body," he states in his *Account of the New-Invented Pennsylvanian Fireplaces*; but his waggish propensity is too much for him, and he adds, "except in Weapons." Jefferson said that Franklin was not allowed to draft the Declaration of Independence for fear that he would insert a joke in it. So far as his humor assumed literary forms, we shall speak of it in another place. We are concerned with it now only so far as it influenced his conversation. In the *Autobiography* he tells us that his reputation among his fellow-printers at Watts's Printing House in London as "a pretty good *riggite*, that is, a jocular verbal satirist," helped to support his consequence in the society. In the same book, he also tells us that later, wishing to break a habit that he was getting into of prattling, punning and joking, which made him acceptable to trifling company only, he gave Silence the second place in his little *Book of Virtues*. "What new story have you lately heard agreeable for telling in conversation?" was one of the standing questions, of his conception, which were to be answered by the members of the Junto at each of its meetings. And, even when he was in his eighty-third year, he could say to Elizabeth Partridge that, notwithstanding the gout, the stone and old age, he enjoyed many comfortable intervals, in which he forgot all his ills, and amused himself in reading or writing, or in conversation with friends,

joking, laughing and telling merry stories, as when she first knew him a young man about fifty. His puns at times were as flat as puns usually are, and some of his stories could hardly have prospered in the ear that heard them, if they had not been set off by high animal spirits and contagious good humor. But some of those that crept into his letters, whether original or borrowed, are good enough for repetition. He seems to have had one for every possible combination of circumstances. "The Doctor," Miss Adams observes, "is always silent unless he has some diverting story to tell, of which he has a great collection." The mutinous and quarrelsome temper of his soldiers at Gnadenhutten, when they were idle, put him in mind of the sea-captain, who made it a rule to always keep his men at work, and who exclaimed, upon being told by his mate, that there was nothing more to employ them about, "*Oh, make them scour the anchor.*" His absent-mindedness, when electrocuting a turkey, in setting up an electric circuit through his own body, which cost him the loss of his consciousness, and a numbness in his arms and the back of his neck, which did not wear off until the next morning, put him in mind of the blunderer who, "being about to steal powder, made a hole in the cask with a hot iron." At times, there was a subjective quality about his stories which lifted them above the level of mere jests. When the suggestion was made that, in view of the favor conferred upon America by the repeal of the Stamp Act by Parliament, America could not, with any face of decency, refuse to defray the expense incurred by Great Britain

in stamping so much paper and parchment, Franklin did not lack an apposite story in which a hot iron was again made to figure.

The whole Proceeding [he said] would put one in Mind of the Frenchman that used to accost English and other Strangers on the Pont-Neuf, with many Compliments, and a red hot Iron in his Hand; *Pray Monsieur Anglois*, says he, *Do me the Favour to let me have the Honour of thrusting this hot Iron into your Backside?* Zoons, what does the Fellow mean! Begone with your Iron or I'll break your Head! *Nay Monsieur*, replies he, *if you do not chuse it, I do not insist upon it. But at least, you will in Justice have the Goodness to pay me something for the heating of my Iron.*

This story was too good not to have a sequel.

As you observe [he wrote to his sister Jane] there was no swearing in the story of the poker, when I told it. The late new dresser of it was, probably, the same, or perhaps akin to him, who, in relating a dispute that happened between Queen Anne and the Archbishop of Canterbury, concerning a vacant mitre, which the Queen was for bestowing on a person the Archbishop thought unworthy, made both the Queen and the Archbishop swear three or four thumping oaths in every sentence of the discussion, and the Archbishop at last gained his point. One present at this tale, being surprised, said, "But did the Queen and the Archbishop swear so at one another?" "O no, no," says the relator; "that is only *my way* of telling the story."

Another rather elaborate story was prompted by Franklin's

## disapproval of the Society of the Cincinnati.

The States [he said in his famous letter to his daughter] should not only restore to them the *Omnia* of their first Motto (*omnia reliquit servare rempublicam*) which many of them have left and lost, but pay them justly, and reward them generously. They should not be suffered to remain, with (all) their new-created Chivalry, *entirely* in the Situation of the Gentleman in the Story, which their *omnia reliquit* reminds me of... He had built a very fine House, and thereby much impair'd his Fortune. He had a Pride, however, in showing it to his Acquaintance. One of them, after viewing it all, remark'd a Motto over the Door "OIA VANITAS." "What," says he, "is the Meaning of this OIA? It is a word I don't understand." "I will tell you," said the Gentleman; "I had a mind to have the Motto cut on a Piece of smooth Marble, but there was not room for it between the Ornaments, to be put in Characters large enough to be read. I therefore made use of a Contraction antiently very common in Latin Manuscripts, by which the *m's* and *n's* in Words are omitted, and the Omissions noted by a little Dash above, which you may see there; so that the Word is *omnia*, OMNIA VANITAS." "O," says his Friend, "I now comprehend the Meaning of your motto, it relates to your Edifice; and signifies, that, if you have abridged your *Omnia*, you have, nevertheless, left your VANITAS legible at full length."

The determination of the enemies of America after the Revolution to have it that, in spite of all appearances to the

contrary, America was going from bad to worse, brought out still another story:

They are angry with us and hate us, and speak all manner of evil of us; but we flourish, notwithstanding [he wrote to his grandnephew, Jonathan Williams]. They put me in mind of a violent High Church Factor, resident some time in Boston, when I was a Boy. He had bought upon Speculation a Connecticut Cargo of Onions, which he flatter'd himself he might sell again to great Profit, but the Price fell, and they lay upon hand. He was heartily vex'd with his Bargain, especially when he observ'd they began to *grow* in the Store he had fill'd with them. He show'd them one Day to a Friend. "Here they are," says he, "and they are *growing* too! I damn 'em every day; but I think they are like the Presbyterians; the more I curse 'em, the more they *grow*."

It was impossible for such an irrational thing as the duel to escape Franklin's humorous insight, and a story like the following tended far more effectively to end the superstition upon which it throve than any pains or penalties that law could devise:

A Man [wrote Franklin from Passy to Thomas Percival] says something, which another tells him is a Lie. They fight; but, whichever is killed, the Point in dispute remains unsettled. To this purpose they have a pleasant little Story here. A Gentleman in a Coffee-house desired another to sit farther from him. "Why so?" "Because, Sir, you stink." "That is an Affront, and you must fight me." "I will fight you, if you insist upon it; but I do not see how that will

mend the Matter. For if you kill me, I shall stink too; and if I kill you, (you) will stink, if possible, worse than you do at present."

This is one of those stories which make their own application, but the grave reflections, by which it was followed, are well worthy of quotation too.

How can such miserable Sinners as we are [added Franklin] entertain so much Pride, as to conceit that every Offence against our imagined Honour merits *Death*? These petty Princes in their own Opinion would call that Sovereign a Tyrant, who should put one of them to death for a little uncivil Language, tho' pointed at his sacred Person; yet every one of them makes himself Judge in his own Cause, condemns the offender without a Jury, and undertakes himself to be the Executioner.

Some *bon mots*, too, of Franklin have come down to us with his stories. When a neighbor of his in Philadelphia consulted him as to how he could keep trespassers from coming into his back yard, and stealing small beer from a keg, which he kept there, he replied, "Put a pipe of Madeira alongside of it." When Lord Stormont, the British Ambassador to France, hatched the report that a large part of Washington's army had surrendered, Franklin was asked whether it was true. "No sir," he said, "it is not a truth, it is only a stormont." The result was that for some time no lies were told in Paris but only "stormonts." It was not often that the wit of Franklin was barbed

with malice, but there were good reasons why the malice in this instance should never have cost him any regret. When the American Commissioners proposed an exchange of prisoners to Lord Stormont, he did not deign to reply, but when they followed up their proposition with another letter, he returned a communication to them without date or signature in these insolent words: "The King's Ambassador receives no letters from rebels but when they come to implore his Majesty's mercy." The American Commissioners, with Franklin doubtless as their scrivener, were quite equal to the occasion. "In answer to a letter which concerns some of the most material interests of humanity, and of the two nations, Great Britain and the United States of America, now at war," they retorted, "we received the inclosed *indecent* paper, as coming from your lordship, which we return, for your lordship's more mature consideration." Between Franklin and the vivacity of the Parisians, Lord Stormont found it not a little difficult to maintain his position of frigid and relentless dignity. Commenting in a letter to John Lovell, after Lord Stormont had left France, upon the expense entailed upon the United States by supernumerary commissioners, Franklin takes this parting shot at the Ambassador; we reduce such of his words as were in French to English:

I imagine every one of us spends nearly as much as Lord Stormont did. It is true, he left behind him the character of a niggard; and, when the advertisement appeared for the sale of his household goods, all Paris laughed at an article of

it, perhaps very innocently expressed, "a great quantity of table linen, which has never been used." "That is very true," say they, "for he has never given any one anything to eat."<sup>4</sup>

Another *bon mot* of Franklin was his reply when he was told that Howe had taken Philadelphia. "No," he said, "Philadelphia has taken Howe"; and so it proved. Still another owed its origin to the balloon in its infancy. "Of what use is a balloon?" someone asked in Franklin's presence. "Of what use," he answered, "is a new-born baby?"

But to form a correct impression of Franklin's humor we should think of it, to use Dr. Cutler's comparison, as something as natural to him as the rise and fall of his chest in breathing. It played like an iris over the commonest transactions of his life. If it was only a lost prayer book of his wife that he was advertising

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<sup>4</sup> The lack of generous fare imputed by the Parisians to the table of Lord Stormont was in keeping with the hopelessly rigid and bigoted nature revealed by his dispatches when in France. Writing from Paris on Dec. 11, 1776, to Lord Weymouth, he says of Franklin: "Some people think that either some private dissatisfaction or despair of success have brought him into this country. I can not but suspect that he comes charged with a secret commission from the Congress, and as he is a subtle, artful man, and void of all truth, he will in that case use every means to deceive, will avail himself of the general ignorance of the French, to paint the situation of the rebels in the falsest colours, and hold out every lure to the ministers, to draw them into an open support of that cause. He has the advantage of several intimate connexions here, and stands high in the general opinion. In a word, my Lord, I look upon him as a dangerous engine, and am very sorry that some English frigate did not meet with him by the way." In another letter to Lord Weymouth, dated Apr. 16, 1777, Lord Stormont declared that he was thoroughly convinced that few men had done more than Franklin to poison the minds of the Americans, or were more totally unworthy of his Majesty's mercy.

for in his *Gazette*, he did it in such terms as these:

Taken out of a Pew in the Church some months since, a Common Prayer-Book, bound in Red, gilt, and letter'd D. F. on each corner. The Person who took it is desir'd to open it, and read the Eighth Commandment, and afterwards return it to the same Pew again; upon which no further Notice will be taken.

At times, the humor is mere waggishness. When he was the Colonial Deputy Postmaster-General, he indorsed his letters, "Free, B. Franklin," but, after he became the Postmaster-General of the United States, out of deference for the American struggle for liberty, he changed the indorsement to "B. Free Franklin." Even in his brief memoranda on the backs of letters, there are gleams of the same overflowing vivacity. Upon the manuscript of a long poem, received by him, when in France, he jotted down the words: "From M. de Raudiere, a poor Poet, who craves assistance to enable him to finish an epic poem which he is writing against the English. He thinks General Howe will be off as soon as the poem appears." When a Benedictine monk, the prior for a time of the Abbey of St. Pierre de Chalon, lost money at cards, and wrote to him for his aid, he made this endorsement upon the letter: "Dom Bernard, Benedictine, wants me to pay his Gaming Debts – and he will pray for success to our Cause!"

The humor of Franklin was too broad at times not to find expression occasionally in practical jokes. When in England, during his maturer years, he was in the habit of pretending to read

his Parable against Persecution, which he had learnt by heart, and in which the manner of the Old Testament is skilfully imitated, out of his Bible, as the fifty-first Chapter of the Book of Genesis. The remarks of the Scripturians on it, he said in a letter written by him a year before his death, were sometimes very diverting. On one occasion, he wrote to the famous English printer, John Baskerville, that, to test the acumen of a connoisseur, who had asserted that Baskerville would blind all the readers of the nation by the thin and narrow strokes of his letters, he submitted to the inspection of the gentleman, as a specimen of Baskerville's printing, what was in reality a fragment of a page printed by Caslon. Franklin protested that he could not for his life see in what respects the print merited the gentleman's criticism. The gentleman saw in it everywhere illustrations of the justice of this criticism and declared that he could not even then read the specimen without pain in his eyes.

I spared him that Time [said Franklin] the Confusion of being told, that these were the Types he had been reading all his life, with so much Ease to his Eyes; the Types his adored Newton is printed with, on which he has pored not a little; nay, the very Types his own Book is printed with, (for he is himself an Author) and yet never discovered this painful Disproportion in them, till he thought they were yours.<sup>5</sup>

Associated with these moral and intellectual traits was a total

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<sup>5</sup> It was Balzac who said that the *canard* was a discovery of Franklin – the inventor of the lightning rod, the hoax, and the republic.

lack of all anti-social characteristics or habits. When Franklin was in his twenty-first year, he made this sage entry in his Journal of his voyage from London to Philadelphia:

Man is a sociable being, and it is, for aught I know, one of the worst of punishments to be excluded from Society. I have read abundance of fine things on the subject of solitude, and I know 'tis a common boast in the mouths of those that affect to be thought wise, *that they are never less alone than when alone*. I acknowledge solitude an agreeable refreshment to a busy mind; but were these thinking people obliged to be always alone, I am apt to think they would quickly find their very being insupportable to them.

In his youth he adopted the Socratic method of argument, and grew, he tells us in the *Autobiography*, 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 he nor his cause always deserved. But, in a few years, he discovered that these victories were Pyrrhic victories, and he gradually left off this doubtful kind of dialectics, retaining only the habit of expressing himself in terms of modest diffidence, never using when he advanced anything, that might possibly be disputed, the words "certainly," "undoubtedly" or any others that gave the air of positiveness to an opinion, but rather saying "I conceive" or "apprehend" a thing to be so and so; "it appears to me," or "I should think it is so or

so" for such and such reasons; or "I imagine it to be so," or "it is so if I am not mistaken."

As the chief ends of conversation [he declared] are to *inform* or to be *informed*, to *please* or to *persuade*, I wish well-meaning, 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 every one of those purposes for which speech was given to us, to wit, giving or receiving information or pleasure.

And that Franklin completely succeeded in rooting out the last vestige of dogmatism in his nature we not only have his testimony but that of Jefferson, who was not even born when he resolved to do it. "It was one of the rules which, above all others, made Dr. Franklin the most amiable of men in society," he said, "never to contradict anybody." Long before this, when Franklin was only in his forty-fifth year, James Logan wrote of him to Peter Collinson in these words: "Our Benjamin Franklin is certainly an extraordinary man, one of a singular good judgment, but of equal modesty."

How noble was his capacity for self-effacement in the investigation of truth we shall see later on. In this place, it is enough to say that even the adulation poured out upon him in France did not in the slightest degree turn his head. He accepted it with the ingenuous pleasure with which he accepted everything that tended to confirm his impression that life was a game fully worth the candle, but, much as he loved France and the

French, ready as he was to take a sip of everything that Paris pronounced exquisite, celestial or divine, it is manifest enough that he regarded with no little amusement the effort of French hyperbole to assign to him the rôle of Jupiter Tonans. When Felix Nogaret submitted to him his French version of Turgot's epigram, "Eripuit cælo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis," Franklin, after acknowledging the flood of compliments that he could never hope to merit, with which the writer had overwhelmed him in his letter, added, "I will only call your attention to two inaccuracies in the original line. In spite of my electrical experiments, the lightning descends just the same before my very nose and beard, and, as to tyrants, there have been more than a million of us engaged in snatching his sceptre from him." His pen, however, was wasting its breath when it attempted to convince a Frenchman of that day that his countrymen did not owe their liberties solely to him. If the French had not been too generous and well-bred to remind him of the millions of livres obtained by him from the French King for the support of the American cause, he might have found it more difficult to deny that he was the real captor of Cornwallis.

How heartily Franklin hated disputation we have already had some occasion to see. This aversion is repeatedly expressed in the *Autobiography*. Referring to his arguments with Collins, he tells us in one place that the disputatious turn of mind

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, is productive of disgusts and perhaps enmities where you may have occasion for friendship.

In another place, he has this to say of the contentious Governor Morris, one of the Colonial governors of Pennsylvania:

He had some reason for loving to dispute, being eloquent, an acute sophister, and, therefore, generally successful in argumentative conversation. He had been brought up to it from a boy, his father, as I have heard, accustoming his children to dispute with one another for his diversion, while sitting at table after dinner; but I think the practice was not wise; for, in the course of my observation, these disputing, contradicting, and confuting people are generally unfortunate in their affairs. They get victory sometimes, but they never get good will, which would be of more use to them.

The same thought is stated in a letter from Franklin to Robert Morris in which the former told the latter that he would see, on comparing a letter which Franklin had written, with the answer, that, if he had replied, which he could easily have done, a dispute might have arisen out of it, in which, if he had got the better, he should perhaps have got nothing else.

Facetious and agreeable as he was, he was likewise free from the unsocial habit of monopolizing conversation:

The great secret of succeeding in conversation, [he declared], is to admire little, to hear much; always to distrust

our own reason, and sometimes that of our friends; never to pretend to wit, but to make that of others appear as much as possibly we can; to hearken to what is said, and to answer to the purpose.

Nor, in making or borrowing these just observations, was Franklin like Carlyle who has been wittily said to have preached the doctrine of silence in thirty volumes. What he preached in these respects, he practised.

He was friendly and agreeable in conversation [Miss Logan tells us], which he suited to his company, appearing to wish to benefit his hearers. I could readily believe that he heard nothing of consequence himself but what he turned to the account he desired, and in his turn profited by the conversation of others.

It is hardly just to Franklin, however, to portray his social character negatively. The truth is, as the extracts from his correspondence have clearly enough shown, he was one of the most companionable and one of the kindest and most sympathetic and affectionate of human beings. He detested wrangling and discord. He had no patience with malice, and refused to allow the *Pennsylvania Gazette* to be made a vehicle for detraction. To tell a chronic grumbler that he was hurt by his "voluminous complaints," or to write to a friend that he would have sent him a longer letter but for the coming in of a *bavard* who had worried him till evening was about as close as he ever got to fretfulness. There is testimony to the effect

that he never uttered a hasty or angry word to any member of his household, servant or otherwise. Even where he had strong reasons for resentment, he was remarkably just, generous and forgiving. Speaking in the *Autobiography* of the manner in which he had been deceived by Governor Keith, he had only these mild words of reproof for him:

He wish'd 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, tho' 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.

When Bradford was Postmaster, he refused to allow his post-riders to carry any newspaper but his own. When the tables were turned, and Franklin was in the position as Postmaster himself to shut out every publication from the mails except his *Gazette*, he declined to retaliate on Bradford's meanness. Drained of money, as he was by Ralph, when they were in London together, he nevertheless summed up the situation in the *Autobiography* with the charitable statement: "I lov'd him, notwithstanding, for he had many amiable qualities." If there was any person for whom Franklin entertained, and had just cause to entertain, a bitter feeling of contempt and dislike, it was Thomas Penn. Yet, when Lady Penn solicited his assistance, for the protection of her interests in Pennsylvania, after the Proprietary Government in

that Province had collapsed with the royal authority, he did all that he could properly do to aid her.

He was always ready for a friendly game of cribbage, cards or chess. Though entirely too temperate to indulge any physical appetite to excess, he was not insensible to the pleasures of the table in his later years. Wine, too, he relished sufficiently to thank God for it liturgically in his youth, and to consume a second bottle of it at times in middle age with the aid of his friend "Straney." When Col. Henry Bouquet was looking forward to a hot summer in Charleston, he wrote to him that he did all that he could for his relief, by recommending him to an ingenious physician of his acquaintance, who knew the rule of making cool, weak, refreshing punch, not inferior to the nectar of the gods. It would not do, of course, to accept too literally the song in which Franklin exalted Bacchus at the expense of Venus, or the Anacreontic letter to the Abbé Morellet, in which wine was extolled as if it were all milk of our Blessed Lady. But these convivial effusions of his pen nevertheless assist us in arriving at a correct interpretation of his character.

He was fond of music also, and was something of a musician himself. He could play on the harp, the guitar and the violin, and he improved the armonica, which acquired some temporary repute. His interest in this musical instrument owed its birth to the melodious sounds which a member of the Royal Society, Mr. Delavel, happened to produce in his presence by rubbing his fingers on the edges of bowls, attuned to the proper notes by the

different measures of water that they contained. It was upon the armonica that Franklin played at the social gatherings under M. Brillon's roof which he called his Opera, and to which such lively references are made in the letters that passed between Madame Brillon and himself. The advantages of the instrument, he wrote to Giambatista Beccaria, were that its tones were incomparably sweet beyond those of any other; that they could be swelled and softened at pleasure by stronger or weaker pressures of the fingers, and continued to any length; and that the instrument, being once well tuned, never again required tuning.

Blend with all this the happy disposition, which led Franklin to declare in his eighty-second year that he comforted himself with the reflection that only three incurable diseases, the gout, the stone, and old age, had fallen to his share, and that they had not yet deprived him of his natural cheerfulness, his delight in books, and enjoyment of social conversation, and we can form some adequate idea of what he brought to intercourse with his fellow-creatures. Only about two weeks before his death he wrote to Jane Mecom from his death-bed:

I do not repine at my malady, though a severe one, when I consider how well I am provided with every convenience to palliate it, and to make me comfortable under it; and how many more horrible evils the human body is subject to; and what a long life of health I have been blessed with, free from them all.

In his *Proposals Relating to Education*, he dwelt upon the

importance of "that *Benignity of Mind*, which shows itself in *searching for* and *seizing* every Opportunity to serve and to *oblige*; and is the Foundation of what is called Good Breeding; highly useful to the Possessor, and most agreeable to all." This benignity of mind belonged to him in an eminent degree. The grape vines that he procured for his friend Quincy at the cost of so much trouble to himself were but one of the ten thousand proofs that he gave his friends of his undiminished affection and unselfish readiness to serve them. Throughout his whole life, he had a way of keeping friendship fresh by some thoughtful gift or act of kindness. Books, pamphlets, writing materials, seeds of many descriptions, candles, hams, American nuts and dried apples, even choice soap, were among the articles with which he reminded his friends that he had not forgotten them.

The Box not being full [he wrote to Collinson], I have put in a few more of our Candles which I recommend for your particular Use when you have Occasion to read or write by Night; they give a whiter Flame than that of any other kind of Candle, and the Light is more like Daylight than any other Light I know; besides they need little or no Snuffing, and grease nothing. There is still a little Vacancy at the End of the Box, so I'll put in a few Cakes of American Soap made of Myrtle Wax, said to be the best Soap in the World for Shaving or Washing fine Linnens etc. Mrs. Franklin requests your Daughter would be so good as to accept 3 or 4 Cakes of it, to wash your Grandson's finest Things with.

In a letter to Bartram, who had informed him that his eye sight

was failing, Franklin surmises that this good and dear old friend did not have spectacles that suited him.

Therefore [he said] I send you a complete set, from number one to thirteen, that you may try them at your ease; and, having pitched on such as suit you best at present, reserve those of higher numbers for future use, as your eyes grow still older; and with the lower numbers, which are for younger people, you may oblige some other friends. My love to good Mrs. Bartram and your children.

Afterwards, he sends to Bartram several sorts of seed and the English medal which had been awarded to him for his botanical achievements. And with them went also one of the compliments in which his urbanity abounded. Alluding to the medal, he says, "It goes in a Box to my Son Bache, with the Seeds. I wish you Joy of it. Notwithstanding the Failure of your Eyes, you write as distinctly as ever."

"Please to accept a little Present of Books, I send by him, curious for the Beauty of the Impression," he wrote to Benjamin Vaughan, when Temple was on the point of visiting England. One of his last gifts was a collection of books to Abdiel Holmes, the father of Oliver Wendell Holmes. In addition to the gifts that he made to his friends, and the numerous commissions that he executed for them, when he was in London, he was prompt to let them feel that they could always be certain of his sympathy in every respect that affected their prosperity or happiness for good or for evil. In one of his letters, he assures Jared Eliot that, if

he should send any of his steel saws to Philadelphia for sale, the writer would not be wanting, where his recommendation might be of service. When at Passy, he wrote to George Whatley for a copy of his "excellent little Work," *The Principles of Trade*. "I would get it translated and printed here," he said. The same generous impulse led him to write to Robert Morris, when Morris was acquiring his reputation as "The Financier," "No one but yourself can enjoy your growing reputation more than I do." Often as he was honored both at home and abroad by institutions of learning, it is safe to say that no honor that he ever received afforded him more pleasure than he experienced when the degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred at his instance by the University of Edinburgh upon Dr. Samuel Cooper.

In no respect, however, did Franklin commend himself more signally to the affection of his friends than in the notice that he took of their children. His relations to some of these children were closely akin to those of adoption. To John Hughes, Josiah Quincy, Henry Laurens and de Chaumont, he wrote at one time or another referring to their "valuable" sons, and filling their bosoms with the parental joy that his commendation could not fail to excite.

In these attributes of mind, character and nature can readily be found, we think, the explanation of that capacity for winning and retaining friends which made the life of Franklin as mellow as a ripe peach. The most important of them in a social sense lead us, of course, simply to the statement that he was far more

beloved than most men are because he was himself influenced far more than most men are by the spirit of love. His sympathy and affection were given to men in gross, and they were given to men in detail. His heart was capacious enough to take in the largest enterprises of human benevolence, but, unlike the hearts of many philanthropists and reformers, it was not so intensely preoccupied with them as to have no place for

That best portion of a good man's life, —  
His little, nameless, unremembered acts  
Of Kindness and of Love.

## CHAPTER II

# Franklin as a Man of Business

When some one said to Erskine that punning was the lowest kind of wit, he replied that the statement was true, because punning was the foundation of all wit.

The business career of Franklin did not move upon such an exalted plane as his scientific or political career, but it was the basis on which the entire superstructure of his renown as a philosopher and a statesman was built up; inasmuch as it was his early release from pecuniary cares which enabled him to apply himself with single-minded devotion to electrical experiments, and to accept at the hands of the people of Pennsylvania the missions to England which opened up the wider horizon of his postmeridian life. Quite apart, however, from the scientific and political reputation, to which his material success smoothed the way, his business career has an intrinsic interest of its own. In itself alone, when the limited opportunities afforded by Colonial conditions for the accumulation of a fortune are considered, it is a remarkable illustration of the extent to which sleepless energy and wise conduct rise superior to the most discouraging circumstances. Comparatively few young men aspire to be philosophers or statesmen, but almost every young man of merit finds himself under the necessity of striving for a pecuniary

independence or at any rate for a pecuniary livelihood. How this object can be most effectually accomplished, is the problem, above all others in the world, the most importunate; and the effort to solve it from generation to generation is one of the things that invest human existence with perpetual freshness. To a young man, involved in the hopes and anxieties of his first struggles for a foothold in the world, the history of Franklin, as a business man, could not but be full of inspiration, even if it had not flowered into higher forms of achievement, and were not reflected in publications of rare literary value. But, putting altogether out of sight the great fame acquired by Franklin in scientific and political fields, a peculiar vividness is imparted to his business career by other circumstances which should not be overlooked. His main calling was that of a printer, a vocation of unusual importance and influence in a free community. "I, Benjamin Franklin, of Philadelphia, printer, late Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States of America to the Court of France, now President of the State of Pennsylvania," is the way in which he describes himself in his will executed less than two years before his death. And from that day to this, upon one memorable occasion or another, guilds of printers on both sides of the Atlantic have acclaimed him as little less than the patron saint of their craft.

Two of his commercial enterprises were the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, the most readable newspaper of Colonial America, and *Poor Richard's Almanac*, the only almanac that has ever

attained the rank of literature. And finally the story of Franklin's business vicissitudes and the fortune, that he ultimately won, has been pictured with incomparable distinctness in the fascinating *Autobiography*. There he has set forth, as no other man with such lowly beginnings has had the genius to set forth, the slow, painful progress of a printer and merchant, under harsh and rigid conditions, from poverty to wealth. That fortune cannot be won under such circumstances except by the exercise of untiring industry, pinching frugality and unceasing vigilance, but that, with good health, good character, unquailing courage and due regard to Father Abraham's harangue, every man can conquer adversity, is the moral which the *Autobiography* has for the youth who has no inheritance but his own hands or brain. It is sad to reflect how much more impressive and stimulating this moral would be, if the *Autobiography* did not also disagreeably remind us that pecuniary ideals subject human character to many peculiar temptations of their own, and that, as the result of the destructive competition, which extends even to the sapling struggling in the thick set copse for its share of light and air, the success of one man in business is too often founded upon the ruins of that of another.

The business life of Franklin began when he was ten years old. At that age, he was taken from Mr. Brownell's school in Boston, and set to the task at the Blue Ball, his father's shop, of "cutting wick for the candles, filling the dipping mold and the molds for cast candles, attending the shop, going of errands, etc." At this

he continued until he was twelve years of age, but his duties were so distasteful to him that his father feared that, unless he could find some more congenial occupation for him, he would run off to sea. To avert this danger, Josiah sometimes took Benjamin about with him, and showed him joiners, bricklayers, turners, braziers and other artisans at their several trades in the hope of awakening an inclination in him for one of them. The walks were not unprofitable to the son.

It has ever since [he says in the *Autobiography*] been a pleasure to me to see good workmen handle their tools; and it has been useful to me, having learnt so much by it as to be able to do little jobs myself in my house when a workman could not readily be got, and to construct little machines for my experiments, while the intention of making the experiment was fresh and warm in my mind.

After this circuit of the various handicrafts, Josiah decided to make a cutler of Benjamin, and he placed him on probation with Samuel Franklin, a cutler, and a son of Josiah's brother, Benjamin. But Samuel thought that he should be paid a fee for instructing his cousin, and the suggestion was so displeasing to Josiah that he took the lad back to his own home. He doubtless felt that Samuel might have remembered whose roof it was that had sheltered his father when the latter first came over from England to Boston.

The real inclination, however, that Benjamin discovered at this period of his life was for books. His father observed it, and

decided to make a printer of him, and it was when James, an older son of Josiah, returned from England, with a press and letters, to set up as a printer at Boston, that Benjamin was finally persuaded to enter into indentures of apprenticeship with him. He did not yield at once, because, while he preferred the business of a printer to that of a tallow chandler, the salt of the sea was still in his blood. Under the provisions of the indentures, he was to serve as his brother's apprentice, until he was twenty-one years of age, but he was to be allowed the wages of a journeyman during the last year of the apprenticeship. It was a fortunate thing for the apprentice that he should have become bound to a master, who had been trained for his craft in London, and the extraordinary skill which he early acquired as a printer was probably due in part to this circumstance. Among the publications printed by James, while the apprenticeship lasted, were Stoddard's *Treatise on Conversion*, Stone's *Short Catechism* and *A Prefatory Letter about Psalmody*. These publications were all of the kind that Franklin afterwards came to regard as hopelessly dry pemmican. Other publications, printed by James Franklin, during the same time, were various New England sermons, *The Isle of Man, or Legal Proceedings in Manshire against Sin*, an allegory, *A Letter from One in the Country to his Friend in Boston*, *News from the Moon*, *A Friendly Check from a kind Relation to the Chief Cannoneer* and *A Word of Comfort to a Melancholy Country*— all political pamphlets, — several papers on inoculation, and a production bearing the quaint title *Hooped Petticoats Arraigned by the Light*

*of Nature and the Law of God.* But it was through a publication of a very different nature from these that James Franklin has come to occupy his position of prominence in the life of his apprentice. This publication was the *New England Courant*, already mentioned above. Its first issue appeared at Boston on August 21, 1721, and so bold were its pungent comments upon the clergy and magistrates of the Colony that, within a year, James Franklin was by the Council summoned before it for what it conceived to be highly injurious reflections upon the civil authorities. The reflections consisted in this: A letter from Newport in the *Courant* for June 11, 1722, stated that a piratical vessel had been seen off Block Island, and that two vessels were being fitted out to pursue her. "We are advised from Boston," was the conclusion of the letter, "that the Government of the Massachusetts are fitting out a ship (The Flying Horse) to go after the pirates, to be commanded by Captain Peter Papillon, and 'tis thought he will sail some time this month, wind and weather permitting." The letter, of course, was fictitious, and but a mild piece of satire in comparison with some of the prior utterances of the *Courant*. But this time the magistracy of the Colony was too much exasperated by the past misdemeanors of the *Courant* to overlook such a gibe at the expense of its activity. When questioned by the Council, James admitted that he was the owner of the paper, but refused to disclose the name of the author of the offensive letter. Benjamin was questioned, too, and united in the refusal. This was excusable in him as it was a point of honor

for an apprentice not to betray his master's secrets, but James had no such plea behind which to shelter himself. Indeed, his bearing before the Council appears to have been too haughty to warrant the idea that he was much concerned about bringing forward any sort of defence. The examination resulted in a decision by the Council that the letter was "a high affront to the Government" and an order to the Sheriff to commit James to the Boston Jail.

A week in jail was sufficient to bring James a whining suppliant to the feet of his oppressors. At the end of that time, he addressed an humble petition to the Council, acknowledging his folly in affronting the civil government, and his indecent behavior, when arraigned for it, and praying for forgiveness and less rigorous confinement. The petition was granted, but, when he was released, he had been a whole month in durance. In the meantime, however, Benjamin, who had attracted the attention of his brother and the group of writers, who contributed to the columns of the *Courant*, by a sprightly series of letters signed Silence Dogood, of which we shall say something hereafter, had been conducting the publication, and, with the aid of his literary coadjutors, assailing the proceedings of the Council in prose and verse. These attacks continued for six months after James was released, and were borne by the Council with a supineness which was probably due to the fear of exciting popular sympathy with the *Courant* as a champion of free speech. But in the issue of the *Courant* for January 14, 1723, appeared an article so caustic that the Council could contain itself no longer. It was headed by the

well known lines of *Hudibras*, which are significant of the spirit in which the youthful Franklin confronted the whole system of Puritan Asceticism:

In the wicked there's no vice,  
Of which the saints have not a spice;  
And yet that thing that's pious in  
The one, in t'other is a sin.  
Is't not ridiculous and nonsense,  
A saint should be a slave to conscience?

The performance has so many earmarks of Franklin's peculiar modes of thought and speech that it is hard not to ascribe its authorship to him without hesitation. Besides thrusts at the Governor and other public functionaries, it lashed the pietists of the place and time with unsparing severity. Many persons, it declared, who seemed to be more than "ordinarily religious," were often found to be the greatest cheats imaginable. They would dissemble and lie, snuffle and whiffle, and, if it were possible, would overreach and defraud all who dealt with them.

For my own part [the writer further declared] when I find a man full of religious cant and pellavar, I presently suspect him to be a knave. Religion is, indeed, the *principal thing*; but too much of it is worse than none at all. The world abounds with knaves and villains; but of all knaves, the *religious knave* is the worst; and villainies acted under the cloak of religion are the most execrable. Moral honesty,

though it will not of itself, carry a man to heaven, yet I am sure there is no going thither *without it*. And however such men, of whom I have been speaking, may palliate their wickedness, they will find that *publicans and harlots will enter the kingdom of heaven before themselves*.

The same day, on which this issue of the *Courant* appeared, the Council passed an order, denouncing it in scathing terms, and appointing a committee of three persons to consider and report what was proper for the Court to do with regard to it. It did not take the committee long to report. They condemned the *Courant* in stern language as an offence to church and state, and "for precaution of the like offence for the future," humbly proposed that "James Franklin, the printer and publisher thereof, be strictly forbidden by this Court to print or publish the New England *Courant*, or any other pamphlet or paper of the like nature, except it be first supervised by the Secretary of this Province." The report was approved, and followed by an order, carrying its recommendations into execution. But the proprietor of the *Courant* and his literary retainers were equal to the crisis. They assembled at once, and resolved that the paper should thenceforth be issued in the name of Benjamin, at that time a boy of seventeen. At the same time, to retain his hold on his apprentice until the expiration of his term, James resorted to a knavish expedient.

The contrivance [the *Autobiography* tells us] was that my old indenture should be return'd to me, with a full discharge

on the back of it, to be shown on occasion, but to secure to him the benefit of my service, I was to sign new indentures for the remainder of the term, which were to be kept private. A very flimsy scheme it was; however, it was immediately executed.

As the final step in the fraud, the next issue of the *Courant* announced that the late publisher of the paper, finding that so many inconveniences would arise by his taking the manuscripts and public news to be supervised by the Secretary as to render his carrying it on unprofitable, had entirely dropped the undertaking. The *Courant* itself, however, went merrily along in its old evil courses, despite the fact that the same issue, speaking through its new management, as if it were an entire stranger to its guilty past, deprecated newspaper license in the strongest terms, looked forward to a future of genial good-humor only, and even gave expression to such a deceitful sentiment as this: "Pieces of pleasancy and mirth have a secret charm in them to allay the heats and tumors of our spirits, and to make a man forget his restless resentments." These debonair pretences were hardly uttered before they were laid aside, and the attacks on the clergy and their sanctimonious adherents renewed with as much wit and vivacity as formerly, if not more; and so eagerly read were the lampoons of the *Courant* by the population of Boston, which, perhaps, after all, stiff-necked as it was, did not differ from most urban populations in containing more sinners than saints, that, under the management of "Old Janus," the mask behind which

young Franklin concealed his features, the *Courant* was in a few months able to raise its price from ten to twelve shillings a year. It was a lawless sheet, but, in its contest against arbitrary power and muffled speech, it was swimming with a current that was to gather up additional elements of irresistible volume and force at every stage of its journey towards the open main of present American political ideas.

In the management of the *Courant*, Franklin had scored his first business success. James might well have made his gifted apprentice his co-partner; but, whether from jealousy, the sauciness of the apprentice, mere choler, or the domineering temper that we should naturally expect in a man who meekly kissed the hand of tyranny after a single week in jail, he was far from doing anything of the sort. Smarting under the snubs and blows administered to him by a brother, from whose fraternal relationship to him he thought that he was entitled to receive somewhat more than the ordinary indulgence shown an apprentice, Benjamin, to use his own words, took upon him to assert his freedom; presuming that James would not venture to produce the new indentures. When James found that his apprentice was about to leave him, he prevented him from securing employment with any other Boston printer by warning them all against him. The consequence was that the boy, between his reputation as "a young genius that had a turn for libelling and satyr," the horror with which he was pointed at by good people as an infidel or atheist, the lowering eye of the Provincial

Government, and the rancor with which he was pursued by his brother, found himself under a cloud of opprobrium from which he could not escape except by making his home in another place than Boston. Knowing that his father would detain him, if he learnt that he was about to go elsewhere, he sold enough of his books to obtain a small sum of money for his journey, and contrived, through the management of Collins, to be secretly taken on board of a sloop on the eve of sailing for New York, under the pretence of his being a young acquaintance of Collins, who had got a naughty girl with child. The flight which followed has been narrated and pictured until it is almost as well known as the exodus of the Old Testament. He would be a rash writer, indeed, who imagined that he could tell that story over again in any words except those of Franklin himself without dispelling a charm as subtle as that which forbids a seashell to be removed from the seashore. How, with a fair wind, he found himself, a boy of seventeen, in New York,<sup>6</sup> without a claim of friendship, acquaintance or recommendation upon a human being in that town; how he fruitlessly applied for employment to the only printer there, William Bradford, and was advised by him to go on to Philadelphia; how, owing to an ugly squall, he was thirty hours on the waters of New York Bay before he could make the Kill, without victuals, or any drink except a bottle of filthy rum, and with no companion except his boatman and a drunken Dutchman; how after breaking up a fever, brought on by this

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<sup>6</sup> In 1723 the town of New York had a population of seven or eight thousand persons.

experience, with copious draughts of cold water, he trudged on foot all the way across New Jersey from Amboy to Burlington; stopping the first day for the night at a poor inn, where travel-stained and drenched to the skin by rain, he was in danger of being taken up as a runaway servant; stopping the second day at an inn within eight or ten miles of Burlington, kept by a Dr. Brown, an infidel vagabond, with a flavor of letters, and arriving the next morning at Burlington, where a kindly old woman of whom he had bought gingerbread, to eat on his way down the Delaware, gave him a dinner of ox cheek with great good will, and accepted only a pot of ale in return – all these things are told in the *Autobiography* in words as well known to the ordinary American boy as the prominent incidents of his own life. And so also is the descent of the Delaware in the timely boat that hove in sight as Benjamin was walking in the evening by the water-side at Burlington on the day of his arrival there, and took him aboard, putting in about midnight at Cooper's Creek for fear that it had passed in the darkness the town which has since grown to be a vast city more luminous at night than the heavens above it, and landing at Market Street, Philadelphia, the next day, Sunday, at eight or nine o'clock. Here the dirty, hungry wayfarer found himself in a land marked by many surprising contrasts with the one from which he had fled. There was no biscuit to be had in the town, nor could he even obtain a three-penny loaf at the baker shop on Second Street; but for three pence he purchased to his astonishment three great puffy rolls, so large that, after sating his

hunger with one of them, as he walked up Market Street as far as Fourth Street, and then back by other streets for a drink of river-water to the Market Street Wharf, he still had the other two left to give to a mother and child, who had come down the Delaware with him, and were on their way to a more distant point. But, doubtless, of all the things in that unfamiliar place, the one that seemed to him most unlike his former home was the serene, mild face that religion wore. It must have been like mollifying oil poured into a wound for him to find himself in such an edifice as the Great Quaker meeting house near the market with a placid, clean-dressed concourse of worshippers, whose brooding silence, so unlike the strident voices of the Saints, with whom he had been warring in Boston, soon lulled him to sleep; a sleep not so deep or so long, however, that the youth, exhausted by the labor of rowing, and the want of rest, could not, when diverted from the sign of the disreputable Three Mariners, and directed to the sign of the more reputable Crooked Billet, in Water Street, by a friendly Quaker guide, consume in profound slumber, with a brief intermission for supper, the entire time between dinner and the next morning. He was too young yet to need to be reminded by any Poor Richard that there is sleeping enough in the grave, and the next morning was to see the beginning of a struggle, first for subsistence, and then for a fortune, hard as a muscle tense with the utmost strain that it can bear.

With the return of day, he made himself as tidy as he could without the aid of his clothes chest, which was coming around

by sea, and repaired to the printing shop of Andrew Bradford, to whom he had been referred by William Bradford, the father of Andrew, in New York. When he arrived at the shop, he found the father there. By travelling on horseback, he had reached Philadelphia before Benjamin. By him Benjamin was introduced to Andrew Bradford, who received him civilly, and gave him breakfast but told him that he was not at present in need of a hand, having recently secured one. There was another printer in town, however, he said, lately set up, one Keimer, who perhaps might employ him. If not, Benjamin was welcome to lodge at his house, and he would give him a little work to do now and then until he could find steadier employment for him.

Benjamin then went off to see Keimer; and William Bradford accompanied him; for what purpose soon became apparent enough. "Neighbor," said Bradford, "I have brought to see you a young man of your business; perhaps you may want such a one." Keimer asked Benjamin a few questions, put a composing stick in his hands to test his competency, and declared that he would employ him soon though he had just then nothing for him to do. Then taking old Bradford, whom he had never seen before, and whose relationship to Andrew he never suspected, to be a friendly fellow townsman, he opened up his plans and prospects to his visitors, and announced that he expected to get the greater part of the printing business in Philadelphia into his hands. This announcement prompted William Bradford to draw him on "by artful questions, and starting little doubts, to explain all his views,

what interest he reli'd on, and in what manner he intended to proceed." "I," observes Franklin, "who stood by and heard all, saw immediately that one of them was a crafty old sophister, and the other a mere novice. Bradford left me with Keimer, who was greatly surpris'd when I told him who the old man was."

There was room enough in Philadelphia for such an expert craftsman as Benjamin. Andrew Bradford had not been bred to the business of printing, and was very illiterate, and Keimer, though something of a scholar, was a mere compositor, and knew nothing of presswork. His printing outfit consisted of an old shattered press, and one small, worn-out font of English letters. When Benjamin called on him, he was composing directly out of his head an elegy on Aquila Rose, a worthy young Philadelphian who had just died:

What mournful accents thus accost mine ear,  
What doleful echoes hourly thus appear!  
What sighs from melting hearts proclaim aloud  
The solemn mourning of this numerous crowd.  
In sable characters the news is read,  
Our Rose is withered, and our Eagle's fled,  
In that our dear Aquila Rose is dead.

These are a few of the many lines in which Keimer, disdainful of ink-bottle and quill, traced with his composing stick alone from birth to death the life of his lost Lycidas. As there was no copy, and but one pair of cases, and the threnody was likely to

require all the letters that Keimer had, no helper could be of any assistance to him. So Benjamin put the old press into as good a condition as he could, and, promising Keimer to come back and print off the elegy, as soon as it was transcribed into type from the tablets of his brain, returned to Bradford's printing-house. Here he was given a small task, and was lodged and boarded until Keimer sent for him to strike off his poem. While he had been away, Keimer had procured another pair of cases, and had been employed to reprint a pamphlet; and upon this pamphlet Benjamin was put to work.

During the period of his employment by Keimer, an incident arose which gave a decisive turn to his fortunes for a time. Happening to be at New Castle, his brother-in-law, Robert Holmes, the master of a sloop that plied between Boston and the Delaware River, heard that he was at Philadelphia, and wrote to him, earnestly urging him to return to Boston. To this letter Benjamin replied, thanking Holmes for his advice, but stating his reasons for leaving Boston fully and in such a way as to convince him that the flight from Boston was not so censurable as he supposed. The letter was shown by Holmes to Sir William Keith, who read it, and was surprised when he was told the age of the writer. Benjamin, he said, appeared to be a young man of promising parts, and should, therefore, be encouraged, for the printers at Philadelphia were wretched ones, and he did not doubt that, if Benjamin would set up as a printer there, he would succeed. As to himself, he would procure him the public

printing and render him any other service in his power. Before these circumstances were brought to the knowledge of Benjamin, the Governor and Col. French of New Castle proceeded to look him up, and one day, while he and Keimer were working together near the window of the Keimer printing-office, they saw the pair coming across the street in their fine clothes towards its door. As soon as they were heard at the door, Keimer, assuming that they were calling upon him, ran down to greet them, but the Governor inquired for Benjamin, walked upstairs, and, with a condescension and politeness to which the youth was quite unaccustomed, paid him many compliments, expressed a desire to be acquainted with him, blamed him kindly for not making himself known to him, when Benjamin first came to Philadelphia, and invited him to accompany him to the tavern where he was going, he said, with Col. French to taste some excellent Madeira.

"I," says Franklin, "was not a little surprised, and Keimer star'd like a pig poison'd." But the invitation was accepted, and, at a tavern, at the corner of Third Street, and over the Madeira, Keith suggested that the youth should become a printer on his own account, and pointed out to him the likelihood of his success; and both he and Col. French assured him that he would have their interest and influence for the purpose of securing the public printing in Pennsylvania and the three Lower Counties on the Delaware. When Benjamin stated that he doubted whether his father would assist him in the venture, Keith replied that he

would give him a letter to Josiah, presenting the advantages of the scheme, and that he did not doubt that it would be effectual. The result of the conversation was a secret understanding that Benjamin should return to Boston in the first available vessel with Keith's letter, and, while he was awaiting this vessel, Benjamin continued at work with Keimer as usual; Keith sending for him now and then to dine with him, and conversing with him in the most affable, familiar and friendly manner imaginable.

Later a little vessel came along bound for Boston. With Keith's letter in his possession, Benjamin took passage in her, and, after a dangerous voyage of two weeks, found himself again in the city from which he had fled seven months before. All the members of his family gave him a hearty welcome except his brother James, but Josiah, after reading the Governor's letter, and considering its contents for some days, expressed the opinion that he must be a man of small discretion to think of setting up a boy in business who wanted yet three years of being at man's estate. He flatly refused to give his consent to the project, but wrote a civil letter to the Governor, thanking him for the patronage that he had proffered Benjamin, and stating his belief that his son was too young for such an enterprise. Nevertheless, Josiah was pleased with the evidences of material success and standing that his son had brought back with him from Philadelphia, and, when Benjamin left Boston on his return to Philadelphia, it was with the approbation and blessing of his parents, and some tokens, in the form of little gifts, of their love, and with the promise,

moreover, of help from Josiah, in case he should not, by the time he reached the age of twenty-one, save enough money by his industry and frugality to establish himself in business.

When Benjamin arrived at Philadelphia, and communicated Josiah's decision to Keith, the Governor was not in the least disconcerted. There was a great difference in persons he was so kind as to declare. Discretion did not always accompany years, nor was youth always without it. "And since he will not set you up," he said to Benjamin, "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 resolv'd to have a good printer here, and I am sure you must succeed." This, the *Autobiography* tells us, was uttered with such apparently heartfelt cordiality that Benjamin did not entertain the slightest doubt of Keith's sincerity, and, as he had kept, and was still keeping, his plans entirely secret, there was no one more familiar with Keith's character than himself to warn him that the actual value of Keith's promises was a very different thing from their face value. Believing the Governor to be one of the best men in the world to have thus unsolicited made such a generous offer to him, Benjamin drew up an inventory calling for a small printing outfit of the value of about one hundred pounds sterling, and handed it to him. It met with his approval, but led him to ask whether it might not be of some advantage for Benjamin to be on the spot in England to choose the type, and to see that everything was good of its kind. Moreover, he

suggested that, when Benjamin was there, he might make some useful acquaintance, and establish a profitable correspondence with book-sellers and stationers. To the advantage of all this Benjamin could not but assent. "Then," said Keith, "get yourself ready to go with Annis"; meaning the master of the *London Hope*, the annual ship, which was the only one at that time plying regularly between London and Philadelphia.

Until Annis sailed, Benjamin continued in the employment of Keimer, whom he still kept entirely in ignorance of his project, and was frequently at the home of Keith. During this time, Keith's intention of establishing him in business was always mentioned as a fixed thing, and it was understood that he was to take with him letters of recommendation from Keith to a number of the latter's friends in England besides a letter of credit from Keith to supply him with the necessary money for buying the printing outfit and the necessary printer's supplies. Before Annis' ship sailed, Benjamin repeatedly called upon Keith for these letters at different times appointed by him, but on each occasion their delivery was postponed to a subsequent date. Thus things went on until the ship was actually on the point of sailing. Then, when Benjamin called on Keith, to take his leave of him and to receive the letters, the Governor's secretary, Dr. Bard, came out from Keith and told him that the Governor was busily engaged in writing, but would be at New Castle before the ship, and that there the letters would be delivered. Upon the arrival of the ship at New Castle, Keith, true to his word, was

awaiting it, but, when Benjamin went to Keith's lodgings to get the letters, the Governor's secretary again came out from him with a statement by him that he was then absorbed in business of the utmost importance, but that he would send the letters aboard. The message was couched in highly civil terms, and was accompanied by hearty wishes that Benjamin might have a good voyage, and speedily be back again. "I returned on board," says Franklin in the *Autobiography*, "a little puzzled, but still not doubting." At the very beginning of the voyage, Benjamin and his graceless friend Ralph had an unusual stroke of good luck. Andrew Hamilton, a famous lawyer of Philadelphia, who was accompanied by his son, afterwards one of the Colonial Governors of Pennsylvania, Mr. Denham, a Quaker merchant, and Messrs. Onion and Russell, the masters of the Principio Iron Works in Cecil County, Maryland, had engaged the great cabin of the ship; so that it looked as if Benjamin and Ralph, who were unknown to any of the cabin passengers, were doomed to the obscurity and discomfort of the steerage. But, while the ship was at New Castle, the elder Hamilton was recalled to Philadelphia by a great fee in a maritime cause, and, just before she sailed, Col. French came on board, and treated Benjamin with such marked respect that he and Ralph were invited by the remaining cabin passengers to occupy the cabin with them – an invitation which the two gladly accepted. They had good reason to do so. The cabin passengers formed a congenial company, the plenteous supply of provisions laid in by Andrew Hamilton,

with the stores to which they were added, enabled them to live uncommonly well, and Mr. Denham contracted a lasting friendship for Benjamin. The latter, however, had not lost sight of the letters from Keith which had been so long on their way to his hands. As soon as he learnt at New Castle that Col. French had brought the Governor's dispatches aboard, he asked the captain for the letters that were to be under his care. The captain said that all were put into the bag together, and that he could not then come at them, but that, before they landed in England, Benjamin should have the opportunity of picking them out. When the Channel was reached, the captain was as good as his word, and Benjamin went through the bag; but no letters did he find that were addressed in his care. He picked out six or seven, however, that he thought from the handwriting might be the promised letters, especially as one was addressed to Basket, the King's printer, and another to some stationer. On the 24th day of December, 1724, the ship reached London. The first person that Benjamin waited upon was the stationer, to whom he delivered the letter addressed to him, with the statement that it came from Governor Keith. "I don't know such a person," the stationer said, but, on opening the letter, he exclaimed, "O! this is from Riddlesden. I have lately found him to be a compleat rascal, and I will have nothing to do with him, nor receive any letters from him." With that he gave the letter back to Benjamin and turned on his heel to serve a customer. Then it was that Benjamin, putting two and two together, began to doubt Keith's sincerity, and looked up Mr.

Denham, and told him what had happened. There was not the least probability, Mr. Denham declared, that Keith had written any letters for him. No one, he said, who knew the Governor, trusted him in the slightest degree, and, as for his giving a letter of credit to Benjamin, he had no credit to give. One advantage, however, Benjamin reaped from the deception practised upon him. Both Mr. Denham and himself as well as the stationer knew that Riddlesden was a knave. Not to go further, Deborah's father by becoming surety for him had been half ruined. His letter disclosed the fact that there was a scheme on foot to the prejudice of Andrew Hamilton, and also the fact that Keith was concerned in it with Riddlesden; so, when Hamilton came over to London shortly afterwards, partly from ill will to Keith and Riddlesden, and partly from good will to Hamilton, Benjamin adopted the advice of Mr. Denham and waited on him, and gave him the letter. He thanked Benjamin warmly, and from that time became his friend, to his very great advantage on many future occasions. "I got his son once £500," notes the grateful Franklin briefly in a foot-note of the *Autobiography*.

By cozenage almost incredible, Benjamin, at the age of eighteen, had been thus lured off to London; the London of Addison, Pope and Sir Isaac Newton. Rather than confess the emptiness of his flattering complaisance Keith preferred to rely upon the chance that, once in London, the youth would be either unable or disinclined to return to his own native land. It would be hard to say what might have become of him if he had not had the

skill as a printer which exemplified in a striking way the truth of two of the sayings of Poor Richard, "He that hath a Trade hath an Estate" and "He that hath a Calling, hath an Office of Profit and Honour."

The most serious stumbling block to his advancement in London was the one that he brought over seas with him, namely, Ralph himself, who had deserted his wife and child in Philadelphia, and now let his companion know for the first time that he never meant to return to that city. All the money that Ralph had, when he left home, had been consumed by the expenses of the voyage, but Benjamin was still the possessor of fifteen pistoles when the voyage was over, and from this sum Ralph occasionally borrowed while he was endeavoring to convert some of his high-flown ambitions into practical realities. First, he applied for employment as an actor, only to be told by Wilkes that he could never succeed on the stage, then he tried to induce Roberts, a publisher in Paternoster Row, to establish a weekly periodical like the *Spectator*, with himself as the Addison, on certain conditions to which Roberts would not give his assent. Finally, he was driven to the stress of seeking employment as a copyist for stationers and lawyers about the Temple, but he could not find an opening for even such ignoble drudgery as this. Soon all of Benjamin's pistoles were gone. But, in the meantime, with his training as a printer, he had secured employment without difficulty at Palmer's, a famous printing-house in Bartholomew Close, where he remained for nearly a

year. Here he labored pretty diligently, but with Ralph as well as himself to maintain, and with the constant temptations to expense, afforded by playhouses and other places of amusement, he was unable to hoard enough money to pay his passage back to Philadelphia.

For a time, after Ralph and himself arrived at London, they were inseparable companions, occupying the same lodgings in Little Britain, the home of bookstalls, and sharing the same purse. But when Ralph drifted off into the country, all intercourse between the friends was brought to an end by the overtures that Benjamin made to his mistress in his absence. It was then that Benjamin, relieved of the burden which the pecuniary necessities of Ralph had imposed on him, began to think of laying aside a little money, and left Palmer's to work at Watts' near Lincoln's Inn Fields, a still more important printing-house, where he was employed so long as he remained in London. His reminiscences of this printing-house are among the most interesting in the *Autobiography*. One episode during his connection with it presents him to us with some of the lines of his subsequent maturity plainly impressed on him. "I drank," he says, "only water; the other workmen, near fifty in number, were great guzzlers of beer." When they observed that his physical strength was superior to theirs, they wondered that the Water-American, as they called him, should be stronger than they who drank strong beer. A boy was incessantly running between an alehouse and the printing-house for the purpose of keeping the

latter supplied with drink. Benjamin's pressmate drank every day a pint of beer 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 pint when he had done his day's work. Franklin vainly endeavored to convince him that the physical strength, produced by beer, could only be in proportion to the grain or barley-flour dissolved in water that the beer contained, that there was more flour in a pennyworth of bread, and that, therefore, if he would eat that with a pint of water, it would give him more strength than a quart of beer. As it was, he had four or five shillings to pay out of his wages every Saturday night for muddling liquor, and in this way he and his fellow-workmen kept themselves always under.

Benjamin began at Watts' as a pressman, but, after some weeks of service, he was transferred by the master to the composing-room. There a toll of five shillings for drink was demanded of him by the other compositors as the price of his admission to their society. At first he refused to pay it, as he had already paid a similar *biennu* in the press-room, and the master followed his refusal up by positively forbidding him to pay it; but after a few weeks of recusancy he learnt how despotic a thing an inveterate custom is. He was excommunicated for a while by all his fellow-workmen, and could not leave the composing-room for even the briefest time without having his sorts mixed or his pages transposed by the Chapel ghost, who was said to have a deep grudge against all imperfectly initiated compositors.

Master or no master, he finally found himself forced to comply with the custom and to pay the exaction, convinced as he became of the folly of being on ill terms with those with whom one is bound to live continually. Ere long his offence was forgotten, and his influence firmly established among his fellow-compositors. It was prevailing enough to enable him to propose some reasonable changes in the Chapel laws, and to carry them through in the face of all opposition. At the same time, the example of temperance, set by him, induced a great part of his companions to give up their breakfast of beer, bread and cheese, and to supply themselves from a neighboring public-house with a large porringer of hot water-gruel, seasoned with butter and pepper, and crumbed with bread, for the price of a pint of beer, namely, three half-pence. This made a more comfortable as well as a cheaper breakfast, and one that left their heads clear besides. Those of Benjamin's fellow-workmen whom he could not reclaim fell into the habit of using his credit for the purpose of getting beer when their *light* at the alehouse, to use their own cant expression, was out. To protect himself, he stood by the pay-table on Saturday night, and collected enough from their wages to cover the sums for which he had made himself responsible, amounting sometimes to as much as thirty shillings a week. The loan of his credit in this way and his humor gave him an assured standing in the composing-room. On the other hand, his steadiness – for he never, he says, made a St. Monday – recommended him to the favor of his master; and his uncommon quickness in composing enabled him to secure

the higher compensation which was paid for what would now be termed "rush work." His situation was at this time very agreeable and his mind became intently fixed upon saving as much of his wages as he could.

Finding that his lodgings in Little Britain were rather remote from his work, he obtained others in Duke Street, opposite the Romish Chapel, with a widow, who had been bred a Protestant, but had been converted to Catholicism by her husband, whose memory she deeply revered. It is a pleasing face that looks out at us from the portrait painted of her by Franklin in the *Autobiography*. She

had lived much among people of distinction, and knew a thousand anecdotes of them as far back as the time of Charles the Second. She was lame in her knees with the gout, and, therefore, seldom stirred out of her room, so 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 strip 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 talk'd of a lodging I had heard of, nearer my business, for two shillings a week, which, intent as I now was on saving money, made some difference, she bid me not think of it, for she would abate me two shillings a week for the future, so I remained with her at one shilling and six

pence as long as I staid in London.

It was in the garret of this house that the nun mentioned by us in connection with the religious opinions of Franklin passed her secluded life.

It was while he resided here that Wygate, a fellow-printer, made a proposal to him that, if accepted, might have given a different direction to his career. Drawn to Benjamin, who had taught him how to swim, by common intellectual tastes, and by the admiration excited in him by Benjamin's vigor and agility as a swimmer, he suggested to the latter that they should travel all over Europe together, and support themselves as they went by the exercise of their handicraft. Benjamin was disposed to adopt the suggestion, but, when he mentioned it to his friend, Mr. Denham, upon whom he was in the habit of calling, the latter disapproved of it, and advised him to dismiss every thought from his mind except that of returning to Pennsylvania, which he was about to do himself. Nay more, he told Benjamin that he expected to take over a large amount of merchandise with him, and to open a store in Philadelphia; and he offered to employ Benjamin as his clerk to keep his books, when the latter had acquired a sufficient knowledge of bookkeeping under his instruction, copy his letters, and attend to the store. In addition, he promised that, as soon as Benjamin should have the requisite experience, he would promote him by sending him with a cargo of bread-stuffs to the West Indies, and would, moreover, procure profitable commissions for him from others, and, if Benjamin

made a success of these opportunities, establish him in life handsomely. The proposal was accepted by Benjamin. He was tired of London, remembered with pleasure the happy months spent by him in Pennsylvania, and was desirous of seeing it again. He agreed, therefore, at once, to become Mr. Denham's clerk at an annual salary of fifty pounds, Pennsylvania money. This was less than he was earning at the time as a compositor, but Mr. Denham's offer held out the prospect of a better future on the whole to him.

After entering into this agreement, Benjamin supposed that he was done with printing forever. During the interval preceding the departure of Mr. Denham and himself for America, he went about with his employer, when he was purchasing goods, saw that the goods were packed properly for shipment, and performed other helpful offices. After the stock of goods had been all safely stored on shipboard, he was, to his surprise, sent for by Sir William Wyndham, who had heard of his swimming exploits, and who offered to pay him generously, if he would teach his two sons, who were about to travel, how to swim; but the two youths had not yet come to town, and Benjamin did not know just when he would sail; so he was compelled to decline the invitation. The offer of Sir William, however, made him feel that he might earn a good deal of money, were he to remain in England and open a swimming school, and the reflection forced itself upon his attention so strongly that he tells us in the *Autobiography* that, if Sir William had approached him earlier, he would probably

not have returned to America so soon.

He left Gravesend for Philadelphia on July 23, 1726, after having been in London for about eighteen months. During the greater part of this time, he had worked hard, and spent but little money upon himself except in seeing plays and for books. It was Ralph who had kept him straitened by borrowing sums from him amounting in the whole to about twenty-seven pounds. "I had by no means improv'd my fortune," Franklin tells us in the *Autobiography*, "but I had picked up some very ingenious acquaintance, whose conversation was of great advantage to me; and I had read considerably."<sup>7</sup>

After a long voyage, he was again in Philadelphia, and Keith was now a private citizen. When Benjamin met him on the street, he showed a little shame at the sight of his dupe, but he passed on without saying anything. Keimer seemed to have a flourishing business. He had moved into a better house, and had a shop well supplied with stationery, plenty of type, and a number of hands, though none of them were efficient.

Mr. Denham opened a store in Water Street, and the

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<sup>7</sup> In his edition of Franklin's works, vol. x., p. 154, Smyth says of him, when he was in London in his youth, "His nights were spent in cynical criticism of religion or in the company of dissolute women." It is likely enough that the religious skepticism of Franklin at this time found expression in his conversation as well as in his *Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity*, though there is no evidence to justify the extreme statement that his nights *were spent* in irreligious talk. His days, we do know, were partly spent in listening to London preachers. He may have had good reason, too, to utter a *peccavi* in other sexual relations than those that he so disastrously attempted to sustain to Ralph's mistress; but of this there is no evidence whatever.

merchandise brought over with him was placed in it. Benjamin gave his diligent attention to the business, studied accounts, and was in a little while an expert salesman. But then came one of those sudden strokes of misfortune, which remind us on what perfidious foundations all human hopes rest. Beginning with his relations to Mr. Denham, Franklin narrates the circumstances in these words:

We lodg'd and boarded together; he counsell'd me as a father, having a sincere regard for me. I respected and loved him, and we might have gone on together very happy, but, in the beginning of February, 1726/7, when I had just pass'd 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 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 do over again. I forget what his 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 for 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.

Franklin did have all that disagreeable work to do over again, for it was of a pleuritic abscess that he died in the end. Of Mr. Denham we cannot take our leave without drawing upon the *Autobiography* for an incident which shows that he was one of the many good men whose friendship was given so generously to

Franklin. He was at one time a merchant at Bristol, and failed in business. After compounding with his numerous creditors, he migrated to America where he made a fortune in a few years. While he was in England with Benjamin, he invited his former creditors to an entertainment, and, when they were all seated, thanked them for the easy terms on which they had compromised their claims against him. Duly thanked, they supposed that there was nothing in store for them but the ordinary hospitality of such an occasion, but, when each turned his plate over, he found under it an order upon a banker for the full amount, with interest, of the unpaid balance of the debt that he had released.

At the time of Mr. Denham's death, Franklin had only recently arrived at the age of twenty-one. Holmes, his brother-in-law, now urged him to return to his trade, and Keimer offered him a liberal yearly wage to take charge of his printing-office, so that he himself might have more time for his stationery business. Franklin had heard a bad character of Keimer in London from Keimer's wife and her friends, and he was reluctant to have anything more to do with him; so much so that he endeavored to secure employment as a merchant's clerk, but, being unable to do so, he closed with Keimer.

I found in his house [says the *Autobiography*] these hands: Hugh Meredith, a Welsh Pennsylvanian, thirty years of age, bred to country work; honest, sensible, had a great deal of solid observation, was something of a reader, but given to drink. 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 extream low wages per week, to be rais'd a shilling every three months, as they would 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 book-binding, which he, by agreement, was to teach them, though he knew neither one nor t'other. John, – a wild 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.

George Webb is later described by Franklin as being lively, witty, good-natured and a pleasant companion, but idle, thoughtless, and imprudent to the last degree. While a student at Oxford, he had become possessed with the desire to see London and be a player. Yielding to this impulse, he walked outside of Oxford, hid his gown in a furze bush, and strode on to London where he fell into bad company, spent all his money, pawned his clothes and lacked bread; having failed to secure an opening as a player. While in this situation, he was induced by his necessities to bind himself to go over to America as an indentured servant, and this he did without ever writing a line to his friends to let them know what had become of him. John, the

Irishman, soon absconded. With the rest of Keimer's awkward squad, Franklin quickly formed very agreeable relations, all the more so because they had found Keimer incapable of teaching them, but now found that Franklin taught them something daily. By Keimer, too, Franklin was for a time treated with great civility and apparent regard. The selfish reasons for such treatment were patent enough.

Our printing-house [declares the *Autobiography*] often wanted sorts, and there was no letter-founder 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, made use of the letters we had as puncheons, struck the matrices in lead, and thus supply'd in a pretty tolerable way all deficiencies. I also engrav'd several things on occasion; I made the ink; I was warehousman, and everything, and, in short, quite a fac-totum.

Keimer was simply using Franklin to lick his rough cubs into shape. The value of Franklin's services declined every day as his other hands became more efficient, and, when he paid him his wages for the second quarter, he let him know that he thought that he should submit to a reduction. By degrees, he grew less civil, assumed a more imperious air, became fault-finding and captious, and seemed ready for an outbreak. Nevertheless, Franklin preserved his patience, thinking that Keimer's demeanor was partly due to his embarrassed circumstances. But a very small spark was enough

to produce an explosion. Startled one day by a loud noise near the court-house, Franklin put his head out of the window of the printing-office to see what was the matter. Just then, Keimer, who was in the street, looked up and saw him, and called out to him in vociferous and angry tones to mind his business, adding some reproachful words that nettled Franklin the more because they were heard by the whole neighborhood. Keimer made things still worse by coming up into the printing-office and continuing his rebuke. High words passed between the two, and Keimer gave Franklin the quarter's notice to quit, to which he was entitled, saying as he did it that he wished he could give him a shorter one. Franklin replied that the wish was unnecessary, and, taking up his hat, walked out of doors, requesting Meredith, as he left, to take care of some of his things that remained behind him, and to bring them to his lodgings. This Meredith, who had a great regard for Franklin, and regretted very much the thought of being in the printing-office without him, did the evening of the same day, and he availed himself of the opportunity to dissuade Franklin from returning to New England. Keimer, he said, was in debt for all that he possessed, his creditors were beginning to be uneasy, and he managed his shop wretchedly, often selling without profit for ready money, and frequently giving credit without keeping an account. He must, therefore, fail, which would make an opening for Franklin. To this reasoning Franklin objected his want of means. Meredith then informed him that his father had a high opinion of him, and, from some things, that his father had said to

him, he was sure that, if Franklin would enter into a partnership with him, the elder Meredith would advance enough money to set them going in business. His time with Keimer, he further said, would be out in the spring. Before then, they might procure their press and type from London. "I am sensible," added Meredith, "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."

Franklin acceded to the proposal, and Meredith's father ratified it all the more willingly as he saw that Franklin had a great deal of influence with his son, had prevailed on him to abstain from dram-drinking for long periods of time, and might be able to induce him to give up the miserable habit entirely when they came to form the close relations of partners with each other. An inventory of what was needed for the business was accordingly given to the father; an order for it was placed by him in the hands of a merchant; and the things were sent for. Until they arrived, the partnership was to be kept secret, and Franklin was to seek employment from Bradford. Bradford, however, was not in need of a hand, and for some days Franklin was condemned to idleness. But opportunely enough the chance presented itself to Keimer just at this time of being employed to print some paper money for the Province of New Jersey which would require cuts and type that nobody but Franklin was clever enough to execute or make. Fearing that Bradford might employ him, and secure the work, Keimer sent Franklin word that old

friends should not be estranged by a few passionate words, and that he hoped Franklin would return to him. Influenced by the desire of Meredith to derive still further benefit from his instruction, Franklin did return to Keimer, and entered upon relations with him that proved more satisfactory than any that he had had with him for some time past. Keimer secured the New Jersey contract.

The New Jersey jobb was obtain'd [the *Autobiography* states], I contriv'd 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 his head much longer above water.

One of the attractive things about the youth of Franklin is the extent to which his love of reading and intellectual superiority gave him a standing with distinguished or prominent men much older than himself. In the case of Sir William Keith, the standing produced nothing but deception and disappointment, but, in the case of Cotton Mather, it supplied Franklin with one of those moral lessons for which his mind had such an eager appetency.

The last time I saw your father [he wrote late in life to Samuel Mather, the son of Cotton] was in the beginning of 1724, when I visited him after my first trip to Pennsylvania. He received me in his library, and on my taking leave showed me a shorter way out of the house through a narrow

passage, which was crossed by a beam overhead. We were still talking as I withdrew, he accompanying me behind, and I turning partly toward him, when he said hastily, *Stoop, stoop!* I did not understand him, till I felt my head hit against the beam. He was a man that never missed any occasion of giving instruction, and upon this he said to me, "*You are young, and have the world before you; STOOP as you go through it, and you will miss many hard thumps.*" This advice, thus beat into my head, has frequently been of use to me; and I often think of it, when I see pride mortified, and misfortune brought upon people by their carrying their heads too high.

Gov. William Burnet, of New York, the son of the famous English Bishop of that name, was another conspicuous personage to whose friendly notice the youth was brought. Shortly after the apt admonition of Cotton Mather, when Franklin was on his return to Philadelphia, the Governor heard from the captain of the vessel, by which Franklin had been conveyed to New York, that a young man, one of his passengers, had a great many books with him, and asked the captain to bring this young man to see him. The Governor loved books and lovers of books.

I waited upon him accordingly [says Franklin] and should have taken Collins with me but that he was not sober. The gov'r. treated me with great civility, show'd me his library, which was a very large one, and we had a good deal of conversation about books and authors. This was the second governor who had done me the honour to take notice

of me; which, to a poor boy like me, was very pleasing.

The happy consequences to Ralph and himself of the respect, shown him by Col. French at New Castle, and the lasting sense of gratitude that he soon afterwards excited in Andrew Hamilton have just been mentioned. This capacity for arresting the attention of men of years and influence now made its mark in New Jersey. Some of the principal men of the province were appointed by the Assembly to oversee the working of Keimer's press, and to take care that no more bills were printed than were authorized by law. They discharged this duty by turns, and usually each one, when he came, brought a friend or so with him for company. In this way, Franklin was introduced to a considerable group of persons who invited him to their houses, introduced him to their friends, and showed him much attention. Keimer, on the other hand, perhaps, Franklin surmises, because his mind had not been so much improved by reading as his, was a little neglected, though the master. The explanation given by Franklin for this neglect would seem a rather inadequate one when we recollect that in the same context he sums up the character of Keimer in these trenchant words: "In truth, he was an odd fish; ignorant of common life, fond of rudely opposing receiv'd opinions, slovenly to extream dirtiness, enthusiastic in some points of religion, and a little knavish withal." Like St. Sebastian, poor Keimer will never be drawn without that arrow in his side.

For three months Franklin remained at Burlington, making

printer's ink money. At the end of that time, he could reckon among his friends Judge Allen, Samuel Bustill, the Secretary of the Province, Isaac Pearson, Joseph Cooper, and several of the Smiths, members of the Assembly, and Isaac Decow, the surveyor-general.

The latter [he says] 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, carri'd the chain for surveyors, who taught him surveying and he had now by his industry, acquir'd a good estate; and says he, "I foresee that you will soon work this man out of his business, and make a fortune in it at Philadelphia." He had not then the least intimation of my intention to set up there or anywhere. These friends were afterwards 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.

Shortly after the completion of the New Jersey contract, the new type, which had been ordered for Franklin and Meredith from London, arrived at Philadelphia. With Keimer's consent, the two friends left him before he knew of its arrival. They rented a house near the market, and, to reduce the rent of twenty-four pounds a year, they sublet a part of it to Thomas Godfrey, who was to board them. They had scarcely made ready for business when George House, an acquaintance of Franklin, brought to them a countryman who had inquired of him on the street where he could find a printer. By this countryman the firm was paid

for the work that he gave them the sum of five shillings, and this sum, Franklin declares in the *Autobiography*, being their first fruits, and coming in at a time when they had expended all their available cash in preparing for business, awakened more pleasure in him than any crown that he had ever since earned, and, besides, made him prompter than he, perhaps, would otherwise have been to help beginners. Whether there were any "boomers," to use the cant term of to-day, in Philadelphia at that time the *Autobiography* does not tell us, but there was, to use another cant term of to-day, at least one "knocker."

There are croakers in every country [says Franklin in the *Autobiography*] always boding its ruin. Such a one then 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, stopt 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 appearances to the contrary, 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 soon ruin us. And 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 man 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 his croaking.

The outlook of Franklin was a cheerful, optimistic one, and he had no sympathy with pessimists of any sort. Even his civic interests came back to him in personal profit, since, aside from its public aims, the Junto was a most useful aid to the business of Franklin and Meredith. All its members made a point of soliciting patronage for the new printing firm. Breintnal, for instance, obtained for it the privilege of printing forty sheets of the history which the Quakers published of their sect; the rest having gone to Keimer. The price was low, and the job cost Franklin and Meredith much hard labor. The work, Franklin tells us, with the fond minuteness with which a man is disposed to dwell upon the events of his early life, was a folio, of *pro patria* size, and in pica, with long primer notes. Franklin composed it at the rate of a sheet a day, and Meredith ran off what was composed at the press. It was often eleven at night and later, when Franklin had completed his distribution for the work of the next day, for now and then he was set back by other business calls. So resolved, however, was he never to default on his sheet a day that one night, when one of his forms was accidentally broken up, and two pages of his work reduced to pi, he immediately distributed and composed it over again before he went to bed, though he

had supposed, when the accident occurred, that a hard day's task had ended. This industry brought the firm into favorable notice, and especially was Franklin gratified by what Dr. Baird had to say about it. When the new printing-office was mentioned at the Merchants' Every Night Club, and the opinion was generally expressed that three printing-offices could not be maintained in Philadelphia, he took issue with this view; "For the industry of that Franklin," he said, "is superior to anything I ever saw of the kind; I see him still at work when I go home from club, and he is at work again before his neighbors are out of bed." This statement led one of the persons who heard it to offer to furnish the new firm with stationery; but it was not yet ready to open a stationery shop.

About this time, George Webb, who had bought his time of Keimer, with the aid of one of his female friends, solicited from the firm employment as a journeyman. Its situation was not such as to warrant his employment, but Franklin indiscreetly let him know as a secret that he expected to establish a newspaper soon; when he might have work for him. Bradford's newspaper, *The American Mercury*, he told Webb, was a paltry thing, stupid and wretchedly managed, and yet was profitable. "Three can keep a Secret if two are dead," is a saying of Poor Richard. It would have been well if Franklin on this occasion had been mindful of the wisdom in which it was conceived. He requested Webb not to mention what he said; but, as is often true under such circumstances, it would have been more prudent for him

to have asked him to mention it. Webb did tell Keimer, and he immediately published the prospectus of a newspaper on which Webb was to be employed. This was resented by Franklin, and, to counteract the scheme, he and his friend Breintnal wrote some clever little essays for Bradford's newspaper under the title of the "Busy Body." In that dull sheet, they were, to borrow Shakespeare's image, like bright metal on sullen ground. Public attention was fixed upon them, and Keimer's prospectus was overlooked. He founded his newspaper nevertheless, and conducted it for nine months under the prolix name of the *Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences and Pennsylvania Gazette*. It never had, at any time, more than ninety subscribers, and, at the end of the nine months, in 1729, Franklin, who had for some time had his arms extended to catch it when it fell, bought it at a trifling price. Under his ownership, the cumbrous name of the paper was cut down simply to that of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and the absurd plan formed by Keimer of publishing an instalment of Chambers' Universal Dictionary of all the Arts and Sciences in every issue was abandoned for a strain of original comment and unctuous humor which made the *Gazette* in popularity second only to *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Under Franklin's hands, the paper assumed from the beginning a better typographical appearance than any previously known to the Province, and some spirited observations by him on a controversy between Governor Burnet and the Massachusetts Assembly, which called into play his aversion to political tyranny,

aroused so much public attention that all the leading citizens of the Province became subscribers. Many other subscribers followed in their train, and the subscriptions went on continually increasing until in a few years, to quote Franklin's own words, the *Gazette* proved extremely profitable to him.

This was one of the first good effects of my having learnt a little to scribble [he tells us], another was that the leading men, seeing a newspaper now in the hands of one who could also handle a pen, thought it convenient to oblige and encourage me. Bradford still printed the Votes and laws, and other publick business. He had printed an address of the House to the Governor, in a coarse, blundering manner; we reprinted it elegantly and correctly, and sent one to every member. They were sensible of the difference: it strengthened the hands of our friends in the House, and they voted us their printers for the year ensuing.

Among these friends, was the grateful Andrew Hamilton.

The young printer had pushed himself forward successfully enough to make his competition keenly felt by both Keimer and Bradford. But now unexpectedly, when all the omens were so fair, he found himself on the brink of ruin. For some time past, he had faithfully observed his obligations to Meredith, though his friends lamented his connection with him. Meredith was no compositor, and but a poor pressman, and, if he had been the best compositor or pressman in the world, he would have been a poor partner, for he was seldom sober. While Franklin was bearing him along on his back as well as he could, Meredith's

father found himself unable to advance for the firm the second instalment of one hundred pounds, necessary to complete the payment for its printing outfit. The result was that the merchant, who had sold it to the firm, grew impatient, and sued them all. They gave bail, but realized that, if the money could not be raised in time, judgment and execution would follow, and that the outfit would be sold at half price. Then it was, to recall the simple and affecting words of Franklin himself in the *Autobiography*, that two true friends, William Coleman and Robert Grace, whose kindness he had never forgotten, and never would forget, while he could remember anything, came to him separately, unknown to each other, and, without any application from him, each offered to advance to him all the money that should be necessary to enable him to acquire the whole business of the firm, if that should be practicable.<sup>8</sup> They did not like the idea of his continuing to be a partner of Meredith, who, they said, was often seen drunk in the streets, and playing at low games in alehouses to the discredit of the firm. Distressing, however, as his situation was, Franklin appears to have acted with a high-minded regard to the proprieties of the occasion. He told Coleman and Grace that, so long as there was any prospect that the Merediths might live up to their agreement, he was under too great obligations to

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<sup>8</sup> The ineffaceable impression of gratitude left upon the mind of Franklin by the timely assistance of these two dear friends was again expressed in the Codicil to his Will executed in 1789. In it he speaks of himself as "assisted to set up" his business in Philadelphia by kind loans of money from two friends there, which was the foundation, he said, of his fortune and of all the utility in life that might be ascribed to him.

them for what they had done, and would do, if they could, to suggest a dissolution of the partnership, but that, if they finally defaulted in the performance of their part of the agreement, and the partnership was dissolved, he would feel at liberty to accept the assistance of his friends.

But he was astute as well as conscientious. After the matter had rested in this position for some time, he said to Meredith:

Perhaps your father is dissatisfied at the part you have undertaken in this affair of ours, and is unwilling to advance for you and me what he would for you alone. If that is the case, tell me, and I will resign the whole to you, and go about my business.

No, said he, my father has really been disappointed, and is really unable; and I am unwilling to distress him farther. I see this is a business I am not fit for. I was bred a farmer, and it was a folly in me to come to town, and put myself, at thirty years of age, an apprentice to learn a new trade. Many of our Welsh people are going to settle in North Carolina, where land is cheap. I am inclin'd to go with them, and follow my old employment. You may find friends to assist you. If you will take the debts of the company upon you; return to my father the hundred pound he has advanced; pay my little personal debts, and give me thirty pounds and a new saddle, I will relinquish the partnership, and leave the whole in your hands.

Franklin agreed to this proposal. It was made the basis of a contract which was immediately signed and sealed. Meredith

received the thirty pounds and the saddle, and soon afterwards went off to North Carolina, whence he sent to Franklin the next year two long letters containing the best account of the climate, soil, husbandry and other features of that Province that had been given up to that time. "For in those matters," adds Franklin, with his usual generosity, "he was very judicious. I printed them in the papers, and they gave great satisfaction to the publick."

After the departure of Meredith for North Carolina, Franklin turned to the two friends who had proffered their help. He accepted from each of them, because he would not give an unkind preference to either, one half of the money he needed, paid off the debts of the partnership, advertised its dissolution and went on with the business in his own name. This was on July 14, 1730.

Seasonably for him, there was a loud cry among the people at this time for a more abundant issue of paper money. The wealthier members of the community were all against the proposition. They feared that an addition to the existing paper circulation would depreciate, as it had done in New York, and that the debts due to them would be discharged by payment in a medium worth less than its nominal value. The question was discussed by the Junto, and Franklin argued in favor of the issue; being persuaded that the prosperity of the Province had been very much promoted by a small previous issue of paper money in 1723. He remembered, he says in the *Autobiography*, that, when he first walked about the streets of Philadelphia, eating his roll,

most of the houses on Walnut Street, between Second and Front Streets, and many besides, on Chestnut and other streets, were placarded, "To be let"; which made him feel as if the inhabitants of Philadelphia were deserting the town one after the other; whereas at the time of this discussion all the old houses were occupied, and many new ones were in process of construction. Not content with presenting his views on the subject to the Junto, he wrote an anonymous pamphlet on it entitled *The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency*. This pamphlet was well received by the common people, he tells us, but met with the disfavor of the rich, because it swelled the clamor for more money. Their opposition, however, for lack of writers, competent to refute its reasoning, languished, and the issue was authorized by the Assembly. Franklin's friends in the house rewarded him for his part in the controversy over it by employing him to print the money. "A very profitable job and a great help to me," remarks Franklin complacently in the *Autobiography*, and he adds, "This was another advantage gain'd by my being able to write."

Through the influence of his friend Hamilton, he likewise secured the contract for printing the paper money, issued by the Three Lower Counties on the Delaware. "Another profitable job as I then thought it," he says, "small things appearing great to those in small circumstances." Hamilton also procured for him the privilege of printing the laws and legislative proceedings of the Three Lower Counties, and he retained it as long as he remained in the printing business. Now, for the first time, he

felt that his position was assured enough for him to open up a small stationery shop, where he sold blanks of all sorts, paper, parchment, chapmen's books and other such wares. The blanks he believed to be "the correctest that ever appear'd among us, being assisted in that by my friend Breintnal." The demands on his printing-office, too, increased to such a degree that he employed a compositor, one Whitemarsh, an excellent workman, whom he had known in London, and undertook the care of an apprentice, a son of the ever-to-be-lamented Aquila Rose. Soon he was prospering to such an extent that he could begin to pay off the debt that he owed on his printing outfit. These are the words in which he himself described his situation at this time:

In order to secure my credit and character as a tradesman, I took care not only to be in *reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid all appearances to the contrary. I drest plainly; I was seen at no places of idle diversion. I never went out a fishing or shooting; a book, indeed, sometimes debauch'd me from my work, but that was seldom, snug, and gave no scandal; and, to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the paper I purchas'd at the stores thro' the streets on a wheel-barrow. Thus being esteem'd an industrious, thriving young man, and paying duly for what I bought, the merchants who imported stationery solicited my custom; others proposed supplying me with books, and I went on swimmingly. In the meantime, Keimer's credit and business declining daily, he was at last forc'd to sell his printing-house to satisfy his creditors. He

went to Barbadoes, and there lived some years in very poor circumstances.

For some time before Keimer went off to Barbadoes, he had been in the condition of an unsound tree, which still stands but with a dry rot at its heart momentarily presaging its fall. As far back as Issue No. 27 of *The Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences*, and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, he had found it necessary to explain a week's delay in the publication of that issue by stating to the public that he had been awakened, when fast asleep in bed, about eleven at night, over-tired with the labor of the day, and taken away from his dwelling by a writ and summons; it being basely and confidently given out that he was that very night about to run away, though there was not the least color or ground for such a vile report. He was, he further declared, "the shuttlecock of fortune ... the very but for villany to shoot at, or the continued mark for slander and her imps to spit their venom upon." It was remarkable, he thought, that

a person of strict sincerity, refin'd justice, and universal love to the whole creation, should for a series of near twenty years, be the constant but of slander, as to be three times ruin'd as a master-printer, to be nine times in prison, one of which was six years together, and often reduc'd to the most wretched circumstances, hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, and persecuted with the most abominable lies the devil himself could invent or malice utter.

It was but the old story of the man, who is dizzy, thinking that

the whole world is spinning around.

David Harry, Keimer's former apprentice, had also opened a printing-office in Philadelphia. When his enterprise was in its inception, Franklin regarded his rivalry with much uneasiness on account of his influential connections. He accordingly proposed a partnership to him, a proposal which, fortunately for the former, was disdainfully refused. "He was very proud," says Franklin, "dress'd like a gentleman, liv'd expensively, took much diversion and pleasure abroad, ran in debt, and neglected his business; upon which, all business left him." The result was that Harry had to follow Keimer to Barbadoes, taking his printing outfit with him. Here the former apprentice employed the former master as a journeyman; they frequently quarrelled with each other; Harry steadily fell behind, and was compelled to sell his type, and to return to his country work in Pennsylvania. The purchaser of the outfit employed Keimer to operate it, but, in a few years more, Keimer was transported by death out of the world, which for a considerable part of his life he had seen only through the gratings of a jail.

The departure of Harry left Franklin without any competitor except his old one, Bradford, who was too rich and easy-going to actively push for business. But, in one respect, Bradford was a formidable rival. He was the Postmaster at Philadelphia, and his newspaper flourished at the expense of the *Gazette* upon the public impression that his connection with the Post-office gave him facilities for gathering news and for circulating

advertisements that Franklin did not enjoy.

To this period belong Franklin's treaty for a wife with enough means to discharge the balance of one hundred pounds still due on his printing outfit, and his final recoil to Deborah whose industry and frugality were far more than the pecuniary equivalent of one hundred pounds. After his marriage, he was, if anything, even more industrious than before, and this is what he has to say about his habits and employments during the period that immediately followed that event:

Reading was the only amusement I allow'd myself. I spent no time in taverns, games, or frolicks of any kind; and my industry in my business continu'd as indefatigable as it was necessary. I was indebted for my printing-house; I had a young family coming on to be educated, and I had to contend with for business two printers, who were established in the place before me. My circumstances, however, grew daily easier. My original habits of frugality continuing, and my father having among his instructions to me when a boy, frequently repeated a proverb of Solomon, "Seest thou a man diligent in his calling, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men," I from thence considered industry as a means of obtaining wealth and distinction, which encourag'd me, tho' I did not think that I should ever literally *stand before kings*, which, however, has since happened; for I have stood before *five*, and even had the honour of sitting down with one, the King of Denmark, to dinner.

Another passage in the *Autobiography* tells us just what degree of frugality Franklin and Deborah practiced at this stage of his business career.

We kept no idle servants [he says], our table was plain and simple, our furniture of the cheapest. For instance, my breakfast was a long time bread and milk (no tea), and I ate it out of a twopenny earthen porringer, with a pewter spoon. But mark how luxury will enter families, and make a progress, in spite of principle: being call'd one morning to breakfast, I found it in a China bowl, with a spoon of silver! They had been bought for me without my knowledge by my wife, and had cost her the enormous sum of three-and-twenty shillings, for which she had no other excuse or apology to make, but that she thought *her* husband deserv'd a silver spoon and China bowl as well as any of his neighbors. This was the first appearance of plate and China in our house, which afterward, in a course of years, as our wealth increased, augmented gradually to several hundred pounds in value.

In 1732 was first published, at fivepence a copy, Franklin's famous almanac known as *Poor Richard's Almanac*, which for twenty-five years warmed the homes of Pennsylvania with the ruddy glow of its wit, humor and wisdom. His endeavor in conducting it he tells us was to make it both entertaining and useful, and he was so successful that he reaped considerable profit from the nearly ten thousand copies of it that he annually sold. Hundreds of the inhabitants of Pennsylvania, who read

nothing else, read the *Almanac*. Its infectious humor, its coarse pleasantry, its proverbs and sayings so much wiser than the wisdom, and so much wittier than the wit of any single individual, made the name of Franklin a common household word from one end of Pennsylvania to another, and, when finally strained off into Father Abraham's speech, established his reputation as a kindly humorist and moral teacher throughout the world.

In somewhat the same spirit of instruction as well as entertainment was the *Gazette*, too, conducted.

I considered my newspaper, also [says Franklin], as another means of communicating instruction, and in that view frequently reprinted in it extracts from the *Spectator*, and other moral writers; and sometimes publish'd little pieces of my own, which had been first compos'd for reading in our Junto.

The caution exercised by the *Gazette* in shutting out malice and personal abuse from its columns is the subject of one of the weightiest series of statements in the *Autobiography*.

In the conduct of my newspaper [Franklin declares] I carefully excluded all libelling and personal abuse, which is of late years become so disgraceful to our country. Whenever I was solicited to insert anything of that kind, and the writers pleaded, as they generally did, the liberty of the press, and that a newspaper was like a stage-coach, in which any one who would pay had a right to a place, my answer was, that I would print the piece separately if desired, and the author might have as many copies as he

pleased to distribute himself, but that I would not take upon me to spread his detraction; and that, having contracted with my subscribers to furnish them with what might be either useful or entertaining, I could not fill their papers with private altercation, in which they had no concern, without doing them manifest injustice. Now, many of our printers make no scruple of gratifying the malice of individuals by false accusations of the fairest characters among ourselves, augmenting animosity even to the producing of duels; and are, moreover, so indiscreet as to print scurrilous reflections on the government of neighboring states, and even on the conduct of our best national allies, which may be attended with the most pernicious consequences. These things I mention as a caution to young printers, and that they may be encouraged not to pollute their presses and disgrace their profession by such infamous practices, but refuse steadily, as they may see by my example that such a course of conduct will not, on the whole, be injurious to their interests.

By 1733 Franklin was sufficiently established in business to branch out still more. That year he sent one of his journeymen, Thomas Whitemarsh, to Charleston, South Carolina, where a printer was needed, under an agreement of partnership which was the prototype of most of the subsequent articles of copartnership formed by him with other printers under similar conditions; that is to say, he furnished the printing outfit, paid one third of the expenses, and received one third of the profits. The history of this partner gave Franklin an opportunity to moralize a little in the *Autobiography* upon the importance of a knowledge

of accounts rather than of music or dancing as a part of female education. The Carolina printer was a man of education and honest, but ignorant of accounts, and, though he made occasional remittances, Franklin could never get any account from him, nor any satisfactory statement of the condition of the partnership business. On his death, however, his widow, who had been born and bred in Holland, not only sent Franklin as clear a statement as was possible of the past transactions of the firm, but subsequently rendered him an exact account every quarter with the utmost punctuality, and, besides, managed the business with such success that she reared a family of children decently, and, upon the expiration of the copartnership, purchased the outfit from Franklin, and turned it over to her son.

The success of the Carolina partnership encouraged Franklin to form partnerships with other journeymen of his, and by 1743 he had opened three printing-offices in three different colonies, and proposed to open a fourth, if he could find a suitable person to take charge of it. Others were opened by him later. Among the persons besides Whitmarsh, established by him at different times as printers, under one arrangement or another with himself, were Peter Timothy in South Carolina, Smith and Benjamin Mecom in Antigua, James Parker in New York, his brother in Rhode Island, Hall and Miller and Samuel Holland at Lancaster, and William Daniell at Kingston, Jamaica. Speaking of his partners in the *Autobiography*, he says of them:

Most of them did well, being enabled at the end of our

term, six years, to purchase the types of me and go on working for themselves, by which means several families were raised. Partnerships often finish in quarrels; but I was happy in this, that mine were all carried on and ended amicably, owing, I think, a good deal to the precaution of having very explicitly settled, in our articles, everything to be done by or expected from each partner, so that there was nothing to dispute, which precaution I would therefore recommend to all who enter into partnerships; for, whatever esteem partners may have for, and confidence in each other at the time of the contract, little jealousies and disgusts may arise, with ideas of inequality in the care and burden of the business, etc., which are attended often with breach of friendship and of the connection, perhaps with lawsuits and other disagreeable consequences.

Two other business enterprises of Franklin merit notice. He was the founder of the first newspaper in the United States to be published in a foreign tongue, namely, the *Philadelphische Zeitung*, which owed its origin to the large number of Germans who came over to Pennsylvania during the Colonial Period. He was also the founder of a monthly literary magazine which for some reason he does not mention in the *Autobiography* at all. It was the second enterprise of the kind undertaken in America, and was known as *The General Magazine and Historical Chronicle for All the British Plantations in America*. To Franklin as a business man might aptly be applied the words of Emerson with respect to Guy:

Stream could not so perversely wind  
But corn of Guy's was there to grind.

One exception, however, appears to have been this magazine which lasted but a short time. It was ill-starred from the start. When Franklin was ready to spring it upon the public, he engaged John Webbe as its editor, but Webbe betrayed the project to Bradford, who at once announced that, a little later, a magazine would be offered to the public edited by Webbe, and published by himself. When the first number of Franklin's magazine came out, he stated that its publication was earlier than he had intended because of the faithless conduct of Webbe. This Webbe resented by charging Franklin, who was then Postmaster at Philadelphia, with shutting out Bradford's *Mercury* from the post, but Franklin silenced his fire by stating and proving that he had had no choice in the matter, because he had been commanded by Postmaster-General Spottswood, on account of Bradford's failure as Postmaster at Philadelphia to account with him, to suffer no longer any of his newspapers or letters to be conveyed by post free of charge.

The business of Franklin received another push forward with the political consequence which he acquired through the *Gazette* and the influence of the Junto. In 1736, he was chosen Clerk of the General Assembly, and in the succeeding year he was appointed Postmaster at Philadelphia, in the place of Bradford,

by Alexander Spottswood, who had been Governor of Virginia, and was then the Deputy Postmaster-General for America. The salary of the Postmastership was small, but, for the purposes of the *Gazette*, the office gave him the same advantage that Bradford had enjoyed, when he refused to allow that newspaper to be carried by his post-riders. The positions of the two men were now reversed, but Franklin was too magnanimous to remind Bradford, sternly, as he did Jemmy Read, that Fortune's Wheel is ever turning. "My old competitor's newspaper," he says, "declined proportionably, and I was satisfy'd without retaliating his refusal, while postmaster, to permit my papers being carried by the riders." Bradford had suffered, Franklin adds, "for his neglect in due accounting." And this gave him occasion to observe that regularity and clearness in rendering accounts and punctuality in making remittances are "the most powerful of all recommendations to new employments and increase of business."

The office of Clerk of the Assembly also had its business value.

Besides the pay for the immediate service as clerk [Franklin says] the place gave me a better opportunity of keeping up an interest among the members, which secur'd to me the business of printing the votes, laws, paper money, and other occasional jobs for the public, that, on the whole, were very profitable.

The first year that he came up for election the vote in his favor

was unanimous, but the next year, while he was elected, it was only after a new member had made a long speech against him in the interest of another candidate. How Franklin conciliated the unfriendliness of this member is fully told in the *Autobiography*;

I therefore did not like the opposition of this new member, who was a gentleman of fortune and education, with talents that were likely to give him, in time, great influence in the House, which, indeed, afterwards happened. I did not, however, aim at gaining his favour by paying any servile respect to him, but, after some time, took this other method. Having heard that he had in his library a certain very scarce and curious book, I wrote a note to him, expressing my desire of perusing that book, and requesting he would do me the favour of lending it to me for a few days. He sent it immediately, and I return'd it in about a week with another note, expressing strongly my sense of the favour. When we next met in the House, he spoke to me (which he had never done before), and with great civility; and he ever after manifested a readiness to serve me on all occasions, so that we became great friends, and our friendship continued to his death. This is another instance of the truth of an old maxim I had learned, which says, "*He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another, than he whom you yourself have obliged.*" And it shows how much more profitable it is prudently to remove, than to resent, return, and continue inimical proceedings.

The artifice practised by Franklin on this occasion has been condemned. What he really did, of course, was to use gratified

vanity as a foil to mortified vanity. The possible consequences of the new member's hostility were too serious for him to say as Washington was in the habit of saying when he had a bad cold: "Let it go as it came." He knew that the malice was as shallow as the good will; and the alternatives were resentment, sycophancy, or a little subtlety. Under the circumstances, Franklin would not have been Franklin, if he had not elected subtlety.

Nothing was now wanting to the full development of his business career except the repetition in other communities of the success that had crowned his personal exertions in Pennsylvania. Referring to the state of his business at this time, he says in the *Autobiography*;

My business was now continually augmenting, and my circumstances growing daily easier, my newspaper having become very profitable, as being for a time almost the only one in this and the neighboring provinces. I experienced, too, the truth of the observation, "*that after getting the first hundred pound, it is more easy to get the second,*" money itself being of a prolific nature.

The outcome of it all was that, in the year 1748, at the age of forty-two, he flattered himself, to repeat his own language, that, by the sufficient, though moderate, fortune which he had acquired, he had secured leisure during the rest of his life for philosophical studies and amusements.

The plan that he formed for securing this leisure, which he turned to such fruitful, purposes, was marked by his usual good

judgment. In 1744, he had taken into his employment David Hall, a Scotch journeyman, and a friend of Strahan. He now admitted Hall to partnership with him. "A very able, industrious, and honest partner, Mr. David Hall, with whose character I was well acquainted, as he had work'd for me for four years," are the terms in which he speaks of Hall in the *Autobiography*. "He took off my hands," he continues, "all care of the printing-office, paying me punctually my share of the profits. The partnership continued eighteen years, successfully for us both." Under the provisions of the partnership agreement, Hall was to carry on the printing and publishing business of Franklin in his own way, but in the firm name of Franklin and Hall, and Hall was to pay to Franklin a thousand pounds a year for eighteen years; at the end of which period Hall was to become the sole proprietor of the business.<sup>9</sup> Exactly what income Franklin was deriving from his

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<sup>9</sup> The interest of Franklin in the Art of Printing did not end with his retirement from his vocation as a printer. When he arrived in England in 1757, he is said to have visited the composing-room at Watts' printing establishment, where he was employed many years before, and to have celebrated the occasion by giving to the composing force there a *biennu*, or fee for drink, and proposing as a toast "Success to Printing." The type of Baskerville, the "charming Editions" of Didot *le Jeune*, the even finer *Sallust*, and *Don Quixote* of Madrid, and the method of cementing letters, conceived by John Walter, the founder of the *London Times*, all came in for his appreciative attention. It is said that the process of stereotyping was first communicated to Didot by him. When he visited the establishment of the latter, in 1780, he turned to one of his presses, and printed off several sheets with an ease which excited the astonishment of the printers about him. Until the close of his life he had a keen eye for a truly black ink and superfine printing paper and all the other niceties of his former calling. The only trace of eccentricity in his life is to be found in his methods of punctuation, which

printing and publishing business at the time that this agreement was entered into is not known, but reasonable conjecture has placed it at something like two thousand pounds a year. At that time he was also the owner of a considerable amount of property, representing invested returns from his business in the past. The *Gazette* continued to be published until the year 1821. When the term of eighteen years, during which the partnership was to last, expired in 1766, the profits had been over twelve thousand pounds, Pennsylvania currency, from subscriptions, and over four thousand pounds, Pennsylvania currency, from advertisements. Judged by the standards of the time and place, it was an extraordinary degree of success which had enabled Franklin in some twenty years to establish so lucrative a business as that which he handed over to the management of Hall in 1748, and few indeed have been the men in mercantile history, who have been willing, after so long a period of prosperous addiction to gain, to turn away to purely intellectual and unremunerative pursuits from such a prospect of increasing self-enrichment as that renounced by Franklin when he wrote to Cadwallader Colden that he, too, was taking the proper measures for obtaining leisure to enjoy life and his friends more than in the past; having put his printing-house under the care of his partner, David Hall, absolutely left off book-selling, and removed to a more quiet part

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are marked by a sad lack of uniformity in the use of commas, semicolons and colons, and by the lavish employment of the devices to denote emphasis which someone has happily termed "typographical yells."

of the town, where he was settling his old accounts, and hoped soon to be quite master of his own time, and no longer, as the song had it, at everyone's call but his own. Nobody knew better than he that, if, after getting the first hundred pounds, it is easier to get the second, it is still easier, after getting the second hundred pounds, to get the third.

For Hall, Franklin entertained uninterrupted feelings of respect and affection, down to the date of the former's death on December 17, 1772. "My Love to Mr. Hall," is one of his messages to Deborah some seven years after the firm of Franklin and Hall was created. Before that he had written to Strahan, "Our friend, Mr. Hall, is well, and manages perfectly to my satisfaction." Many years after the death of Hall, the account between Franklin and him had not been wholly settled, and a letter from the former to Strahan in the year 1785 tells him that Hall and himself had not been of the same mind as to "the value of a copyright in an established newspaper, of each of which from eight to ten thousand were printed," but "were to be determined" by Strahan's opinion. "My long absence from that country, and immense employment the little time I was there," Franklin wrote, "have hitherto prevented the settlement of all the accounts that had been between us; though we never differed about them, and never should if that good honest man had continued in being."

Franklin's failure to forecast the stubborn hostility of the Colonies to the Stamp Act not only cost him some personal popularity but it caused his firm some pecuniary loss.

Anticipating with his usual shrewdness the passage of that Act, which imposed a tax of a sterling half-penny on every half-sheet of a newspaper, however small, he sent over to Hall one hundred reams of large half-sheet paper, but permission could not be obtained to have it stamped in America, and it was all reshipped to England at a loss.

As to the Paper sent over [he wrote to Hall] I did it for the best, having at that time Expectations given me that we might have had it stamp't there; in which case you would have had great Advantage of the other Printers, since if they were not provided with such Paper, they must have either printed but a half sheet common Demi, or paid for two Stamps on each Sheet. The Plan was afterward alter'd notwithstanding all I could do, it being alledged that Scotland & every Colony would expect the same Indulgence if it was granted to us. The Papers must not be sent back again: But I hope you will excuse what I did in Good will, tho' it happen'd wrong.

After the retirement of Franklin from active business, he still continued to hold his office as Postmaster at Philadelphia, and, while holding it, he was employed by the Deputy Postmaster-General for America as his comptroller to examine and audit the accounts of several of his subordinate officers. Upon the death of the Deputy Postmaster-General, he was appointed his successor, jointly with William Hunter, of Virginia, by the British Postmasters-General. When the pair were appointed, the office had never earned any net revenue for the British Crown.

Under the terms of their appointment, they were to have six hundred pounds a year between them, if they could make that sum out of its profits, and, when they entered upon it, so many improvements had to be effected by them that, in the first four years, it ran into debt to them to the extent of upwards of nine hundred pounds; but, under the skilful management of Franklin, it became remunerative, and, before he was removed by the British Government, after his arraignment before the Privy Council, it had been brought to yield three times as much clear revenue to the Crown as the Irish Post-office. "Since that imprudent transaction," Franklin observes in the *Autobiography*, "they have receiv'd from it – not one farthing!"

On August 10, 1761, eight years after the appointment of Franklin and Hunter, and a few weeks before Foxcroft succeeded Hunter, there was a net balance of four hundred and ninety-four pounds four shillings and eight pence due by the American Post-office to the British Crown; which was duly remitted. "And this," exclaims the astonished official record of the fact in England, "is the first remittance ever made of the kind." Between August 10, 1761, and the beginning of 1764, the net profits of the American Post-office amounted to two thousand and seventy pounds twelve shillings and three and one quarter pence, and drew from the British Postmasters-General the statement, "The Posts in America are under the management of persons of acknowledged ability." With this record of administrative success, it is not surprising that, when Franklin was removed

from office, he should have written to Thomas Cushing these bitter words:

I received a written notice from the Secretary of the general post-office, that His Majesty's postmaster-general *found it necessary* to dismiss me from my office of deputy postmaster-general in North America. The expression was well chosen, for in truth they were *under a necessity* of doing it; it was not their own inclination; they had no fault to find with my conduct in the office; they knew my merit in it, and that, if it was now an office of value, it had become such chiefly through my care and good management; that it was worth nothing, when given to me; it would not then pay the salary allowed me, and, unless it did, I was not to expect it; and that it now produces near three thousand pounds a year clear to the treasury here. They had beside a personal regard for me. But as the postoffices in all the principal towns are growing daily more and more valuable, by the increase of correspondence, the officers being paid *commissions* instead of *salaries*, the ministers seem to intend, by directing me to be displaced on this occasion, to hold out to them all an example that, if they are not corrupted by their office to promote the measures of administration, though against the interests and rights of the colonies, they must not expect to be continued.

Not only was the American postal service made by Franklin's able management to yield a net revenue to the British Crown, but it was brought up to a much higher level of efficiency. For one thing, the mails between New York and Philadelphia were

increased from one a week in summer and two a month in winter to three a week in summer and one a week in winter. In 1764, a Philadelphia merchant could mail a letter to New York and receive a reply the next day. For another thing, post-riders were required to carry all newspapers offered to them for carriage whether the newspapers of postmasters or not. In the discharge of his postal duties, Franklin was compelled to make many long journeys outside of Pennsylvania, and these journeys did much, as we have said, to extend his reputation on the American continent and to confirm his extraordinary familiarity with American conditions. As soon as he was appointed Deputy Postmaster-General for America with Hunter, William Franklin was appointed Comptroller of the Post-office. The post-office at Philadelphia he first conferred upon William Franklin, then upon Joseph Read, one of Deborah's relatives, and then upon Peter Franklin, Franklin's brother. Indeed, so long as there was a Franklin or a Read willing to enter the public service, Franklin's other fellow-countrymen had very little chance of filling any vacant post in the American Post-office. This was doubtless due not only to his clannishness but also to the fact that, as far as we can now judge, nepotism was a much more venial offence in the eyes of the public during the colonial era than now. Even now it may be doubted whether the disfavor with which it is regarded is prompted so much by its prejudicial tendency from a public point of view as by its tendency, from the point of view of the spoilsman, to interfere with the repeated use of office for partisan

purposes.

The income upon which Franklin retired from business was the sum of one thousand pounds a year for eighteen years, which Hall agreed to pay him, the small salary, arising from the office of Postmaster at Philadelphia, and the income, supposed to be about seven hundred pounds a year, produced by his invested savings. When in England, in addition to the one thousand pounds a year, paid to him by Hall, which ended in the year 1766, and the income derived by him from invested savings, he received a salary of three hundred pounds a year from his office as Deputy Postmaster-General for America, until he was removed in 1774, and for briefer periods a salary of five hundred pounds a year from his office as Colonial Agent for Pennsylvania, and salaries of four hundred pounds, two hundred pounds and one hundred pounds as the Colonial Agent of Massachusetts, Georgia and New Jersey, respectively. With his removal from his office of Deputy Postmaster-General, all these agencies and the salaries attached to them came to an end. When the annuity paid to him by Hall ceased, his income was so seriously curtailed that he was compelled, as we have seen, to remind Deborah of the fact. After his return from England in 1775, he was appointed the Postmaster-General of the United States at a salary of one thousand pounds a year.

For his public services in France, he was allowed at first a salary of five hundred pounds a year and his expenses, and subsequently, when his rank was advanced to that of ambassador,

two thousand five hundred pounds a year. When he returned from France to America, he communicated to his old friend, Charles Thomson, the Secretary of Congress, his hope that Congress might be kind enough to recognize the value of his services and sacrifices in the American cause by granting him some small tract of land in the West. He saw, he said, that Congress had made a handsome allowance to Arthur Lee for his services to America in England before his appointment as Commissioner to France, though it had made none to the writer or to Mr. Bollan, who were also parties to these services. Moreover, Lee, on his return to America, as well as John Jay, had been rewarded by Congress with a good office. The letter, of course, made out an irrefragable case; for, if the United States had given the whole Northwest Territory to Franklin, his heirs and assigns forever, the gift would hardly have exceeded the value of his services. It was written just before the Old Congress gave way to the First Congress under the Federal Constitution, and nothing ever came of it. The conduct of the Old Congress to Franklin in other respects had been so ungenerous that it is hardly likely that it would have made any response to the appeal anyhow unless solicited by a more intriguing spirit than his.

The State of Georgia was more mindful of its obligations to him, and voted him the right to take up three thousand acres of land within its limits.

After his return from France, a great rise took place in the value of real estate in Philadelphia, and his houses and lots reaped

its benefits to a conspicuous degree. On Jan. 29, 1786, he wrote to Ferdinand Grand, "My own Estate I find more than tripled in Value since the Revolution"; and similar statements are to be found in other letters of his at this time.

At this period of his life, a considerable amount of his attention was given to the improvement of his property. On Apr. 22, 1787, in a letter to Ferdinand Grand, he said, "The three Houses which I began to build last year, are nearly finished, and I am now about to begin two others. Building is an Old Man's Amusement. The Advantage is for his Posterity."

When Franklin died, his estate consisted of ten houses in Philadelphia, and almost as many vacant lots, a pasture lot near Philadelphia, a farm near Burlington, New Jersey, a house in Boston, the right to the three thousand acres of land in Georgia, a tract of land on the Ohio, a tract of land in Nova Scotia, twelve shares of the capital stock of the Bank of North America and bonds of individuals in excess of eighteen thousand pounds. The value of his entire estate was supposed to be between two hundred and two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Under his management, the *Gazette* was probably the best newspaper produced in Colonial America. In its early history, it appeared first twice a week, and then weekly, and consisted of but a single sheet, which, when folded, was about 12 by 18 inches square. Parton is not accurate, as his own context shows, in stating that Franklin "originated the modern system of business-advertising." Other newspapers of the time, including

Bradford's *Mercury*, contained advertisements for the recovery of runaway servants and slaves, and lost or stolen articles, and for the sale of different kinds of merchandise. When Franklin fled from Boston, his brother James advertised for another apprentice in the *Courant*. Nor is Parton accurate, either, in stating that Franklin "invented the plan of distinguishing advertisements by means of little pictures, which he cut with his own hands." There were such cuts in Bradford's *Mercury* even before the *Gazette* was founded. The *Gazette* won a position of its own because its proprietor and editor brought to its issues that knowledge of human life and human nature and that combination of practical sagacity, humor and literary skill which he carried into everything. The latest advices of the day, foreign and domestic, which were tardy enough, extracts from the *Spectator* and other moral writers of the age, verses from contemporary poets, cuttings from the English newspapers, broad, obscene jokes, as unconscious of offence as the self-exposure of a child or an animal, all assembled with the instinctive eye to unity of effect, which is the most consummate achievement of journalistic art, made up the usual contents of the *Gazette*. Now, along with news items of local and outside interest, we have a humorous account of a lottery in England, by which, for the better increase of the King's subjects, all the old maids are to be raffled for; now some truculent flings at the Catholics, the *caput lupinum* of that age; now a hint to a delinquent subscriber that it was considerably in his power to contribute towards the happiness of his most

humble obliged servant; now an exasperating intimation that the *Mercury* has been depredating upon the columns of its rival; now some little essay or dialogue from the pen of Franklin himself, good enough to be classed as literature. The open, kindly, yet shrewd, face, with the crow's-feet, furrowed by the incessant play of humor about the corners of its eyes, looks out at us from every page.

The editor of the *Gazette* sustains to his readers a relation as personal as that sustained by Poor Richard to his. He goes off to New Jersey to print some paper currency for that Colony, and he inserts this paragraph in the *Gazette*: "The Printer hopes the irregular Publication of this Paper will be excused a few times by his Town Readers, on consideration of his being at Burlington with the press, labouring for the publick Good, to make Money more plentiful." The statement that a flash of lightning in Bucks County had melted the pewter buttons off the waistband of a farmer's breeches elicits the observation, "Tis well nothing else thereabouts was made of pewter." When contributions by others failed him, he even wrote letters to himself under feigned names. "Printerum est errare," we are told, and then, under this announcement, Franklin, in another name, addresses the following facetious letter to himself:

Sir, As your last Paper was reading in some Company where I was present, these Words were taken Notice of in the Article concerning Governor Belcher (After which his Excellency, with the Gentlemen trading to New

England, died elegantly at Pontack's). The Word died should doubtless have been dined, Pontack's being a noted Tavern and Eating house in London for Gentlemen of Condition; but this Omission of the Letter (n) in that Word, gave us as much Entertainment as any Part of your Paper. One took the Opportunity of telling us, that in a certain Edition of the Bible, the Printer had, where David says I am fearfully and wonderfully made, omitted the Letter (e) in the last Word, so that it was, I am fearfully and wonderfully mad; which occasion'd an ignorant Preacher, who took that Text, to harangue his Audience for half an hour on the Subject of Spiritual Madness. Another related to us, that when the Company of Stationers in England had the Printing of the Bible in their Hands, the Word (not) was left out of the Seventh Commandment, and the whole Edition was printed off with Thou shalt commit Adultery, instead of Thou shalt not, &c. This material Erratum induc'd the Crown to take the Patent from them which is now held by the King's Printer. The Spectator's Remark upon this Story is, that he doubts many of our modern Gentlemen have this faulty edition by 'em, and are not made sensible of the Mistake. A Third Person in the Company acquainted us with an unlucky Fault that went through a whole Impression of Common-Prayer Books; in the Funeral Service, where these Words are, We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an Eye, &c., the Printer had omitted the (c) in changed, and it read thus, We shall all be hanged, &c. And lastly, a Mistake of your Brother News-Printer was mentioned, in The Speech of

James Prouse written the Night before he was to have been executed, instead of I die a Protestant, he has put it, I died a Protestant. Upon the whole you came off with the more favourable Censure, because your Paper is most commonly very correct, and yet you were never known to triumph upon it, by publickly ridiculing and exposing the continual Blunders of your Contemporary Which Observation was concluded by a good old Gentleman in Company, with this general just Remark, That whoever accustoms himself to pass over in Silence the Faults of his Neighbours, shall meet with much better Quarter from the World when he happens to fall into a Mistake himself; for the Satyrical and Censorious, whose Hand is against every Man, shall upon such Occasions have every Man's Hand against him.

This is an accusation of plagiarism made by Franklin against Bradford:

When Mr. Bradford publishes after us [he declared], and has Occasion to take an Article or two out of the *Gazette*, which he is always welcome to do, he is desired not to date his Paper a Day before ours, (as last Week in the Case of the Letter containing Kelsey's Speech, &c) lest distant Readers should imagine we take from him, which we always carefully avoid.

Bradford hit back as best he could. On one occasion he charged that the contract for printing paper money for the Province of New Jersey had been awarded to Franklin at a higher bid than that of another bidder. "Its no matter," he said, "its

the Country's Money, and if the Publick cannot afford to pay well, who can? Its proper to serve a Friend when there is an opportunity."

One of Franklin's favorite devices for filling up gaps in the *Gazette* was to have himself, in the guise of a correspondent, ask himself questions, and then answer them. "I am about courting a girl I have had but little acquaintance with; how shall I come to a knowledge of her faults, and whether she has the virtues I imagine she has," is one such supposititious question. "Commend her among her female acquaintance," is the ready-made answer. Another imaginary question was of this tenor: "Mr. Franklin: Pray let the prettiest Creature in this Place know (by publishing this), that if it was not for her Affectation she would be absolutely irresistible." Next week a flood of replies gushed out of the editor's pigeon-holes. One ran thus:

"I cannot conceive who your Correspondent means by 'the prettiest creature' in this Place; but I can assure either him or her, that she who is truly so, has no Affectation at all."

And another ran thus:

"Sir, Since your last Week's Paper I have look'd in my Glass a thousand Times, I believe, in one way; and if it was not for the Charge of Affectation I might, without Partiality believe myself the Person meant."

At times we cannot but suspect that Franklin has deliberately created a sensation for the purpose of quickening the sale of the *Gazette*. For instance, a peruke maker in Second Street advertises

that he will "leave off the shaving business after the 22nd of August next." Commenting on this advertisement, Franklin observes that barbers are peculiarly fitted for politics, for they are adept shavers and trimmers; and, when the angry peruke maker calls him to task for his levity, he replies that he cherishes no animosity at all towards him, and can only impute his feelings to a "Want of taste and relish for pieces of that force and beauty which none but a University bred gentleman can produce."

On another occasion, when advertising the sailing of a ship, he added this N. B. of his own: "No Sea Hens, nor Black Gowns will be admitted on any terms." To such a degree were some of the clergy incensed by it that they withdrew their subscriptions; but it is not unlikely that in a day or so twice their number in scoffers were added to the subscription list of the young printer. At times the fooling is bald buffoonery.

On Thursday last [he informed his readers] a certain P – r ('tis not customary to give names at length on these occasions) walking carefully in clean clothes over some barrels of tar on Carpenter's Wharf, the head of one of them unluckily gave way, and let a leg of him in above the knee. Whether he was upon the Catch at that time, we can not say, but 'tis certain he caught a *Tar-tar*, 'Twas observed he sprang out again right briskly, verifying the common saying, as nimble as a Bee in a Tar barrel. You must know there are several sorts of bees: 'tis true he was no honey bee, nor yet a humble bee: but a *Boo-bee* he may be allowed to be, namely B. F.

Franklin was a publisher of books as well as a newspaper proprietor. Most of the books and pamphlets published by him were of a theological or religious nature, in other words books which, aside from the pecuniary profit of printing them, he was very much disposed to regard as no books at all. Others were of a description to serve the practical wants of a society yet simple in its structure, such as *The Gentlemen's Pocket Farrier* and *Every Man his Own Doctor, or the Poor Planter's Physician*. But some were of real note such as two little volumes of native American poetry, Colden's *Essay on the Iliac Passion*, which is said to have been the first American medical treatise, Cadwallader's *Essay on the West India Dry Gripes*, and James Logan's translation of Cato's *Moral Distichs*, which Franklin regarded as his *chef d'œuvre*, and which is said to have been the first book in the Latin tongue to have been both translated and printed in America. Worthy of mention also are various publications on the subject of slavery, precursors of the endless succession a little later on of anti-slavery tracts, books and speeches, which anon became a mountain. The mercantile business, of which Franklin's stationery shop was the nucleus, was of a highly miscellaneous character. In addition to books and pamphlets printed by himself, he imported and sold many others including chapmen's books and ballads.

At the time I establish'd myself in Pennsylvania [he tells us in the *Autobiography*], there was not a good bookseller's shop in any of the Colonies to the southward of Boston. In

New York and Philad'a the printers were indeed stationers; they sold only paper, etc., almanacs, ballads, and a few common school-books. Those who lov'd reading were oblig'd to send for their books from England.

The spirit in which he imported the pamphlets sold by him is indicated in one of his letters to Strahan. "Let me have everything, good or bad, that makes a Noise and has a Run," he says. His stock of merchandise included everything usually sold at a stationer's shop such as good writing paper, choice writing parchment, cyphering slates and pencils, Holman's ink powders, ivory pocket books, pounce and pounce boxes, sealing wax, wafers, pencils, fountain pens, choice English quills, brass inkhorns, and sand glasses. There were besides "fine mezzotints, a great variety of maps, cheap pictures engraved on copper plate of all sorts of birds, beasts, fishes, fruits, flowers etc., useful to such as would learn to draw." Along with these things, and choice consignments of the Franklin Crown Soap, were vended articles almost as varied as the contents of a junkshop, such as the following:

very good sack at 6s per gallon, glaz'd fulling papers and bonnet-papers, very good lamp-black, very good chocolate, linseed oil, very good coffee, compasses and scales, Seneca rattlesnake root, with directions how to use it in the pleurisy &c., dividers and protractors, a very good second hand two-wheel chaise, a very neat, new fashion'd vehicle, or four wheel'd chaise, very convenient to carry weak or other sick persons, old or young, good Rhode Island cheese

and codfish, quadrants, forestaffs, nocturnals, mariner's compasses, season'd murchantable boards, coarse and fine edgings, fine broad scarlet cloth, fine broad black cloth, fine white thread hose and English sale duck, very good iron stoves, a large horse fit for a chair or saddle, the true and genuine Godfrey's cordial, choice bohea tea, very good English saffron, New York Lottery tickets, choice makrel, to be sold by the barrel, a large copper still, very good spermacety, fine palm oyl, very good Temple spectacles and a new fishing net.

Another commodity in which Franklin dealt was the unexpired time of indentured or bond servants, who had sold their services for a series of years in return for transportation to America. This traffic is illustrated in such advertisements in the *Gazette* as these: "To be sold. A likely servant woman, having three years and a half to serve. She is a good spinner"; "To be sold. A likely servant lad about 15 years of age, and has 6 years to serve." And alas! the humanitarian, who strove so earnestly, during the closing years of his life, when he was famous and rich, and the President of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, to bring home the horrors of slavery to the Southern conscience, was himself what involved until the end utter social disrepute in the slaveholding South, that is to say, a negro-trader. "Some of these slaves," Paul Leicester Ford tells us in *The Many Sided Franklin*, "he procured from New England where, as population grew in density, the need for them passed, leading to their sale in the colonies to the southward."

The business was certainly a repulsive one, even when conducted by such a lover of the human species as Franklin. How far this is true the reader can judge for himself when he reads the following advertisements, which are but two of the many of the same kind that appeared in the *Gazette*:

To be sold a likely negro woman, with a man-child, fit for town or country business. Enquire of the printer hereof.

To be sold. A prime able young negro man, fit for laborious work, in town or country, that has had the small pox: As also a middle aged negro man, that has likewise had the small pox. Enquire of the printer hereof: Or otherwise they will be expos'd to sale by publick vendue, on Saturday the 11th of April next, at 12 o'clock, at the Indian-king, in Market Street.

While Franklin was printing pamphlets against slavery and selling negroes, and Deborah was stitching pamphlets and vending old rags, Mrs. Read, the mother of Deborah, was engaged in compounding and vending an ointment suited to conditions still graver than those for which the Franklin Crown Soap was intended. We can hardly doubt that this advertisement, which was published in the *Gazette*, was penned by the same hand which wrote the *Ephemera*:

The Widow Read, removed from the upper End of High Street to the *New Printing Office* near the Market, continues to make and sell her well-known Ointment for the ITCH, with which she has cured abundance of People in and about this City for many Years past. It is always effectual for that

purpose, and never fails to perform the Cure speedily. It also kills or drives away all Sorts of Lice in once or twice using. It has no offensive Smell, but rather a pleasant one; and may be used without the least Apprehension of Danger, even to a sucking Infant, being perfectly innocent and safe. Price 2s. a Galley-pot containing an Ounce; which is sufficient to remove the most inveterate Itch, and render the Skin clear and smooth.

The same advertisement informed the public that the Widow Read also continued to make and sell her excellent *Family Salve* or Ointment, for Burns or Scalds, (Price 1s. an Ounce) and several other Sorts of Ointments and Salves as usual.

From this review of the business career of Franklin, it will be seen that the stairway, by which he climbed to pecuniary independence and his wider fame, though not long, was, in its earlier gradations, hewn step by step from the rock. From the printing office of Keimer to Versailles and the *salon* of Madame Helvétius was no primrose path. As long as the human struggle in its thousand forms, for subsistence and preferment, goes on, as long as from year to year youth continues to be rudely pushed over the edge of the nest, with no reliance except its own strength of wing, it is safe to say that the first chapters of the *Autobiography* will remain a powerful incentive to human hope and ambition.

# CHAPTER III

## Franklin as a Statesman

The career of Franklin as a public official began in 1736, when he was appointed Clerk of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania. In this position, he remained until his retirement from business precipitated so many political demands upon him that he had to give it up for still higher responsibilities.

The publick [he says in the *Autobiography*] now considering me as a man of leisure, laid hold of me for their purposes, every part of our civil government, and almost at the same time, imposing some duty upon me. The Governor put me into the commission of the peace; the corporation of the city chose me of the common council, and soon after an alderman; and the citizens at large chose me a burgess to represent them in Assembly.<sup>10</sup>

His legislative seat was all the more agreeable to him because he had grown tired as clerk of listening to debates in which he could take no part, and which were frequently so lifeless that

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<sup>10</sup> There is no evidence that, while he was a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly, Franklin ever had occasion, as every member of an American State legislature is likely to have, to deal with a bill for the extermination of hawks and owls; but a skeleton sketch by his hand of his services as an assemblyman shows that he shared the fate of the ordinary member of an American State legislature in having a bill relating to dogs referred to a Committee of which he was a member.

for very weariness he had to amuse himself with drawing magic squares or circles, or what not, as he sat at his desk. The office of justice of the peace he withdrew from by degrees, when he found that, to fill it with credit, more knowledge of the common law was requisite than he possessed, and, in this connection, the belief maybe hazarded that his influence in Congress and the Federal Convention of 1787 would have been still greater, if he had been a better lawyer, and, therefore, more competent to cope in debate with contemporaries fitter than he was to discuss questions which, true to the time-honored Anglo-Saxon traditions, turned largely upon the provisions of charters and statutes. That he was lacking in fluency of speech we have, as we have seen, his own admission – a species of evidence, however, by no means conclusive in the case of a man so little given to self-praise as he was. But there is testimony to convince us that, as a debater, Franklin was, at least, not deficient in the best characteristic of a good debater, that of placing the accent upon the truly vital points of his case.

I served [declares Jefferson] with General Washington in the legislature of Virginia, before the revolution, and, during it, with Dr. Franklin in Congress. I never heard either of them speak ten minutes at a time, nor to any but the main point, which was to decide the question. They laid their shoulders to the great points, knowing that the little ones would follow of themselves.

What John Adams has to say about Franklin as a legislator is

manifestly the offspring of mere self-love. After taking a view of his own legislative activity through the highly magnifying lens, which he brought to bear upon everything relating to himself, he pictures Franklin in Congress as "from day to day, sitting in silence, a great part of his time fast asleep in his chair."

But whatever were the demerits of Franklin as a speaker, his influence was very great in every legislative assembly in which he ever sat. To begin with, he had the kind of eloquence that gives point to his own saying, "Whose life lightens, his words thunder." Commenting in the latter part of his career to Lord Fitzmaurice upon the stress laid by Demosthenes upon action as the point of first importance in oratory, he said that he

thought another kind of action of more importance to an orator, who would persuade people to follow his advice, viz. such a course of action in the conduct of life, as would impress them with an opinion of his integrity as well as of his understanding; that, this opinion once established, all the difficulties, delays, and oppositions, usually occasioned by doubts and suspicions, were prevented; and such a man, though a very imperfect speaker, would almost always carry his points against the most flourishing orator, who had not the character of sincerity.

In the next place, Franklin's rare knowledge and wisdom made him an invaluable counsellor for any deliberative gathering. He was the protagonist in the Pennsylvania Assembly of the Popular Party, in its contest with the Proprietary Party, and was for a

brief time its Speaker. As soon as he returned from Europe, at the beginning of the Revolution, he was thrice honored by being elected to the Continental Congress, the Pennsylvania Assembly, and the Convention to frame a constitution for Pennsylvania. Besides appointing him Postmaster-General, Congress placed him upon many of its most important committees; the Assembly made him Chairman of its Committee of Safety, a post equivalent, for all practical purposes, to the executive headship of the Province; and the Convention made him its President. It is safe to say that, had there not been a Washington, even his extreme old age and physical infirmities would not have kept him from being the presiding officer of the Federal Convention of 1787 and the first President of the United States. The intellect of Franklin was too solid to be easily imposed upon by mere glibness of speech. "Here comes the orator, with his flood of words and his drop of reason," remarks Poor Richard. Equally pointed is that other saying of his, "The worst wheel of the cart makes the most noise." But Franklin was fully alive to the splendid significance of human eloquence, when enlisted in the service of high-minded and far-seeing statesmanship. Speaking in a letter to Lord Stanhope of Lord Chatham's speech in support of his motion for the removal of the King's troops from Boston, he said, "Dr. F. is fill'd with admiration of that truly great Man. He has seen, in the course of Life, sometimes Eloquence without Wisdom, and often Wisdom without Eloquence; in the present Instance he sees both united; and both, as he thinks, in the highest

Degree possible."

When Franklin took his seat in the Assembly, William Franklin was elected its clerk in his place; for heredity as well as consanguinity was a feature of the Franklin system of patronage. Once elected to the Assembly, he acquired a degree of popularity and influence that rendered his re-election for many years almost a matter of course. "My election to this trust," he says in the *Autobiography*, "was repeated every year for ten years, without my ever asking any elector for his vote, or signifying, either directly or indirectly, any desire of being chosen." So eager were his constituents to confer the honor upon him that they kept on conferring it upon him year after year, even when he was abroad.<sup>11</sup> He proved himself eminently worthy of this confidence. By nature and training, he was a true democrat, profoundly conservative at the core, but keenly sensitive to every rational and wholesome appeal to his liberal or generous instincts. He loved law and order, stable institutions, and settled forms and tendencies, rooted in the soil of transmitted wisdom and experience. He was too much of an Englishman to have any sympathy with hasty changes or rash innovations. Much as he loved France he could never have been drawn into such a delirious outburst as the French Revolution. He loved

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<sup>11</sup> Franklin, though in no sense a time server, rarely got out of touch with the majority simply because he always saw things as the best collective intelligence of the community is likely to see them – only a little sooner and more clearly. "Friend Joseph," one Quaker is said to have asked of an acquaintance, "didst thee ever know Dr. Franklin to be in a minority?"

liberty as Hampden loved it, as Chatham loved it, as Gladstone loved it. John Wilkes, though in some respects an ignoble, was in other respects an indubitable champion of English freedom; yet Franklin utterly failed to see in him even a case for the application of his reminder to his daughter that sweet and clear waters come through very dirty earth. His happy nature and his faith in individual thrift sometimes made him slow to believe that masses of men had as much cause for political discontent as they claimed, and for such mob violence, as attended the career of Wilkes, of whom he speaks in one of his letters to his son as "an outlaw and an exile, of bad personal character, not worth a farthing," it was impossible for his deep-seated respect for law and order to have any toleration; though he did express on one occasion the remarkable conviction that, if George the Third had had a bad private character, and John Wilkes a good one, the latter might have turned the former out of his kingdom.

It is certain, however, that few men have ever detested more strongly than he did the baseness and meanness of arbitrary power. And he had little patience at the same time with conditions of any sort that rested upon mere precedent, or prescription. He welcomed every new triumph of science over inert matter, every fresh victory of truth over superstition, bigotry, or the unseeing eye, every salutary reform that vindicated the fitness of the human race for its destiny of unceasing self-advancement. His underlying instincts were firmly fixed in the ground, but his sympathies reached out on

every side into the free air of expanding human hopes and aspirations. In his faith in the residuary wisdom and virtue of the mass of men, he is more like Jefferson than any of his Revolutionary compeers. "The People seldom continue long in the wrong, when it is nobody's Interest to mislead them," he wrote to Abel James. The tribute, it must be confessed, is a rather equivocal one, as it is always somebody's interest to mislead the People, but the sanguine spirit of the observation pervades all his relations to popular caprice or resentment. Less equivocal was his statement to Galloway: "The People do not indeed always see their Friends in the same favourable Light; they are sometimes mistaken, and sometimes misled; but sooner or later they come right again, and redouble their former Affection." Few were the public men of his age who looked otherwise than askance at universal suffrage, but he was not one of them.

Liberty, or freedom [he declared in his *Some Good Whig Principles*], consists in having *an actual share* in the appointment of those who frame the laws, and who are to be the guardians of every man's life, property, and peace; for the *all* of one man is as dear to him as the *all* of another; and the poor man has an *equal* right, but *more* need, to have representatives in the legislature than the rich one.

For similar reasons he was opposed to entails, and favored the application of the just and equal law of gavelkind to the division of intestate estates.

It was impossible for such a man as this not to ally

himself with the popular cause, when he became a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly. At that time, the Proprietary Government of Pennsylvania had proved as odious to the people of the Province as the proprietary governments of South Carolina and the Jerseys had proved to the people of those Colonies. Almost from the time of the original settlement, the relations between the Assembly and the Penns had been attended by mutual bickerings and reproaches. First William Penn had scolded the Assembly in a high key, then his sons; and, in resolution after resolution, the Assembly had, in true British fashion, stubbornly asserted the liberties and privileges of their constituents, and given the Proprietary Government, under thinly veiled forms of parliamentary deference, a Roland for its every Oliver. The truth was that a Proprietary Government, uniting as it did governmental functions, dependent for their successful exercise upon the popular faith in the disinterestedness of those who exercised them, with the selfish concerns of a landlord incessantly at loggerheads with his vendees and tenants over purchase money and quitrents, was utterly incompatible with the dignity of real political rule,<sup>12</sup> and hopelessly repugnant to the free English spirit of the Pennsylvanians. Under such circumstances, there could be no such thing as a true commonwealth; nor anything much better than a feudal fief.

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<sup>12</sup> "I believe it will in time be clearly seen by all thinking People that the Government and Property of a Province should not be in the same family. Tis too much weight in one scale." Letter from Franklin to Israel Pemberton, Mar. 19, 1759.

Political sovereignty lost its aspect of detachment and legitimate authority in the eyes of the governed, and wore the appearance of a mere organization for the transaction of private business. Almost as a matter of course, the Proprietaries came to think and speak of the Province as if it were as much their personal property as one of their household chattels, refusing, as Franklin said, to give their assent to laws, unless some private advantage was obtained, some profit got or unequal exemption gained for their estate, or some privilege wrested from the people; and almost, as a matter of course, the disaffected people of the Province sullenly resented a situation so galling to their pride and self-respect. Franklin saw all this with his usual clearness. After conceding in his *Cool Thoughts* that it was not unlikely that there were faults on both sides, "every glowing Coal being apt to inflame its Opposite," he expressed the opinion that the cause of the contentions was

radical, interwoven in the Constitution, and so become of the very Nature, of Proprietary Governments. And [he added] as some Physicians say, every Animal Body brings into the World among its original Stamina the Seeds of that Disease that shall finally produce its Dissolution; so the Political Body of a Proprietary Government, contains those convulsive Principles that will at length destroy it.

The Proprietary Government of Pennsylvania was bad enough in principle; it was made still worse by the unjust and greedy manner in which it was administered by Thomas and Richard

Penn, who were the Proprietaries, when Franklin became a member of the Assembly. The vast estate of William Penn in Pennsylvania, consisting of some twenty-six million acres of land, held subject to the nominal obligation of the owner to pay to the King one fifth of such gold and silver as the Province might yield, descended upon the death of Penn to his sons John, Thomas and Richard, in the proportion of one half to John, as the eldest son, and in the proportion of one fourth each to Thomas and Richard. John died in 1746, after devising his one half share to Thomas; thus making Thomas the owner of three out of the four shares.<sup>13</sup> The political powers of the Proprietaries were exercised by a deputy-governor whose position was in the highest degree vexatious and perplexing. He held his office by appointment of the Proprietaries, who resided in England, and the mode in which he was to discharge his duties was prescribed by rigid "instructions," issued to him by them. His salary, however, was derived from the Assembly, which was rarely at peace with the Proprietary Government. If he obeyed his instructions, he ran the risk of losing his salary; if he disobeyed them, he was certain to lose his place. Incredible as it may now seem, the main duty imposed upon him by his instructions was that of vetoing every tax bill enacted by the Assembly which did not expressly exempt all the located, unimproved and unoccupied lands of the Proprietaries, and all the quitrents, fines

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<sup>13</sup> In 1768, the revenues of the Proprietaries from their Pennsylvania estates were estimated by Joseph Galloway to be not much short of one hundred thousand pounds.

and purchase money out at interest, to which they were entitled, that is to say, the greater part of their immense estate. This was the axis about which the bitter controversy between the Popular and Proprietary parties, in which Franklin acquired his political training and reputation, revolved like one of the lurid waterspouts with which a letter that his correspondent John Perkins received from him has been illustrated. The Assembly insisted that they should not be required to vote money for the support of the Proprietary Government, unless the proprietary estate bore its proper share of the common burden. The Governor did not dare to violate his instructions for fear of being removed by his masters, and of being sued besides on the bond by which he had bound himself not to violate them. At times, the feud was so intense and absorbing, that, like a pair of gamecocks, too intent on their own deadly encounter to hear an approaching footstep, the combatants almost lost sight of the fact that, under the shelter of their dissensions, the Indian was converting the frontiers of Pennsylvania into a charred and blood-stained wilderness. Occasionally the Assembly had to yield the point with a reservation asserting that its action was not to be taken as a precedent, and once, when England as well as America was feeling the shock of Braddock's defeat, the pressure of public opinion in England was sufficient to coerce the Proprietaries into adding five thousand pounds to the sum appropriated by the Assembly for the defence of the Province. But, as a general thing, there was little disposition on either side to compromise.

The sharpness of the issue was well illustrated in the bill tendered by the Assembly to Governor Morris for his signature after Braddock's defeat. Both before, and immediately after that catastrophe, he had, in reliance upon the critical condition of the public safety, endeavored to drive the Assembly into providing for the defence of the Province without calling upon the proprietary estate for a contribution. The bill in question declared "that all estates, real and personal, were to be taxed, those of the proprietaries *not* excepted." "His amendment," says Franklin in his brief way, "was, for *not* read *only*; a small, but very material alteration."<sup>14</sup>

This dependence of the Governor upon the Assembly for his salary and the dependence of the Assembly upon the Governor for the approval of its enactments brought about a traffic in legislation between them which was one of the most disgraceful features of the Proprietary régime; though it became so customary that even the most honorable Governor did not scruple to engage in it. This traffic is thus described by Franklin in his stirring "Preface to the Speech of Joseph Galloway, Esq.":

Ever since the Revenue of the Quit-rents first, and after that the Revenue of Tavern-Licenses, were settled irrevocably on our Proprietaries and Governors, they have look'd on those Incomes as their proper Estate, for which

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<sup>14</sup> "The shocking news of the strange, unprecedented and ignominious defeat of General Braddock," William Franklin said, "had no more effect upon Governor Morris than the miracles of Moses had on the heart of Pharaoh."

they were under no Obligations to the People: And when they afterwards concurr'd in passing any useful Laws, they considered them as so many Jobbs, for which they ought to be particularly paid. Hence arose the Custom of Presents twice a Year to the Governors, at the close of each Session in which Laws were past, given at the Time of Passing. They usually amounted to a Thousand Pounds per Annum. But when the Governors and Assemblies disagreed, so that Laws were not pass'd, the Presents were withheld. When a Disposition to agree ensu'd, there sometimes still remain'd some Diffidence. The Governors would not pass the Laws that were wanted, without being sure of the Money, even all that they call'd their Arrears; nor the Assemblies give the Money without being sure of the Laws. Thence the Necessity of some private Conference, in which mutual Assurances of good Faith might be receiv'd and given, that the Transactions should go hand in hand.

This system of barter prevailed even before Franklin became a member of the Assembly, and how fixed and ceremonious its forms sometimes were we can infer from what happened on one of the semi-annual market days during Governor Thomas' administration. Various bills were lying dormant in his hands. Accordingly the House ordered two of its members to call upon him and acquaint him that it had long "waited for his Result" on these bills, and desired to know when they might expect it. They returned and reported that the Governor was pleased to say that he had had the bills long under consideration, and

"waited the Result" of the House. Then, after the House had resolved itself into a committee of the whole, for the purpose of taking the "Governor's support" into consideration, there was a further interchange of communications between the House and the Governor; the former reporting "some progress" to the Governor, and the Governor replying that, as he had received assurances of a "*good disposition*," on the part of the House, he thought it incumbent upon him to show *the like* on his part by sending down the bills, which lay before him, without any amendment. The manifestation of a good disposition was not the same thing as an actual promise to approve the bills; so the wary assembly simply resolved that, on the passage of such bills as then lay before the Governor, and of the Naturalization Bill, and such other bills as might be presented to him during the pending session, there should be paid to him the sum of five hundred pounds; and that, on the passage of the same bills, there should be paid to him the further sum of one thousand pounds for the current year's support. Agreeably with this resolution, orders were drawn on the Treasurer and Trustees of the Loan-Office, and, when the Governor was informed of the fact, he appointed a time for passing the bills which was done with one hand, while he received the orders in the other. Thereupon with the utmost politeness he thanked the House for the fifteen hundred pounds as if it had been a free gift, and a mere mark of respect and affection. "*I thank you, Gentlemen*," he said, "for this *Instance of your Regard*; which I am the more pleased with, as it gives

an agreeable Prospect of *future Harmony* between me and the Representatives of the People."

Despicably enough, while this treaty was pending, the Penns had a written understanding with the Governor, secured by his bond, that they were to receive a share of all money thus obtained from the people whom they sought to load with the entire weight of taxation. Indeed, emboldened as Franklin said by the declining sense of shame, that always follows frequent repetitions of sinning, they later in Governor Denny's time had the effrontery to claim openly, in a written reply to a communication from the Assembly, with respect to their refusal to bear any part of the expenses entailed on the Province by the Indians, that the excess of these donatives over and above the salary of the Governor should belong to them. By the Constitution, they said, their consent was essential to the validity of the laws enacted by the People, and it would tend the better to facilitate the several matters, which had to be transacted with them, for the representatives of the People to show a regard to them and their interest. The Assembly hotly replied that they hoped that they would always be able to obtain needful laws from the goodness of their sovereign without going to the market for them to a subject. But the hope was a vain one, and to that market, directly or indirectly, the People of Pennsylvania still had to go, for some time to come. To use Franklin's language, there was no other market that they could go to for the commodity that they wanted.

Do not, my courteous Reader [he exclaims with fine

scorn in the "Preface to the Speech of Joseph Galloway, Esq.]" take Pet at our Proprietary Constitution, for these our Bargain and Sale Proceedings in Legislation. 'Tis a happy Country where Justice, and what was your own before, can be had for Ready Money. 'Tis another Addition to the Value of Money, and of Course another Spur to Industry. Every Land is not so bless'd. There are Countries where the princely Proprietor claims to be Lord of all Property; where what is your own shall not only be wrested from you, but the Money you give to have it restor'd, shall be kept with it, and your offering so much, being a Sign of your being too Rich, you shall be plunder'd of every Thing that remain'd. These Times are not come here yet: Your present Proprietors have never been more unreasonable hitherto, than barely to insist on your Fighting in Defence of their Property, and paying the Expences yourselves; or if their estates must, (ah! *must*) be tax'd towards it, that the *best* of their Lands shall be tax'd no higher than the *worst* of yours.

Governor Hamilton, who succeeded Governor Thomas, so far departed from the vicious practice of buying and selling laws as to sign them without prepayment, but, when he observed that the Assembly was tardy in making payment, and yet asked him to give his assent to additional laws, before prior ones had been paid for, he stated his belief to it that as many useful laws had been enacted by him as by any of his predecessors in the same space of time, and added that, nevertheless, he had not understood that any allowance had been made to him for his support, as had been customary in the Province. The hint proved effective, the money

was paid and the bills were approved.

From the time that Franklin became a member of the Assembly until the time that the minor controversy between the Proprietary Party and the Popular Party in Pennsylvania was obscured by the larger controversy between the Crown and all the American Colonies, he was engaged in an almost uninterrupted struggle with the Proprietaries, first, for the annulment of their claim to exemption from taxation, and, secondly, for the displacement of their government by a Royal Government. If there was ever an interlude in this struggle, it was only because, in devising measures for the defence of the Province, a Proprietary Governor found it necessary, at some trying conjuncture, to rely upon the management of Franklin to quiet the Quakers, who constituted a majority of the Assembly and detested both war and the Proprietaries, or upon the general abilities and popularity of Franklin to strengthen his own feeble counsels. If there was any political tranquillity in the Province during this time, it was, to employ one of Franklin's own comparisons, only such tranquillity as exists in a naval engagement between two broadsides. On the one hand were ranged the official partisans and dependents of the Proprietary Government and other adherents of the kind, whose allegiance is likely to be won by the social prestige and political patronage of executive authority. To this faction, in the latter stages of the conflict, was added a large body of Presbyterians whose sectarian sympathies had been excited by the Scotch-Irish uprising against

the Indians, of which we have previously spoken. On the other hand were ranged the Quakers, upon whom the burden of resisting the Proprietary encroachments upon the popular rights had mainly rested from the origin of the Province, and middle-class elements of the population whose views and sympathies were not highly colored by any special influences. The task of preparing resolutions, addresses and remonstrances, voicing the popular criticism of the Proprietaries, was mainly committed to Franklin by the Assembly. It was with him, too, as the ablest and most influential representative of the popular interest that the various Proprietary Governors usually dealt.

We first find him high in favor with Governor Thomas and his Council at the time of the Association because of his activity, when still only Clerk of the Assembly, in providing for the defence of the Province and arousing a martial spirit in its people. This was the period when the Quaker found it necessary to help his conscience out a little with his wit, and when Franklin made good use of the principle that men will countenance many things with their backs that they will not countenance with their faces. The Quaker majority in the Assembly did not relish his intimacy at this time with the members of the Council who had so often trod on their punctilio about military expenditures, and it might have been pleased, he conjectured, if he had voluntarily resigned his clerkship; "but," he declares in the *Autobiography*, "they did not care to displace me on account merely of my zeal for the association, and they could not well give another reason."

Governor Hamilton became so sick of the broils, in which he was involved by the Proprietary instructions, that he resigned. His successor was the Governor Morris whose father loved disputation so much that he encouraged his children to practise it when he was digesting his dinner. Franklin met him at New York when he was on his way to Boston, and Morris was on his way to Philadelphia to enter upon his duties as Governor. So ready for a war of words was the new Governor that, when Franklin returned from Boston to Philadelphia, he and the House had already come to blows, and the conflict never ceased as long as he remained Governor. In the conflict, Franklin was his chief antagonist. Whenever a speech or message of the Governor was to be answered, he was made a member of the Committee appointed to answer it, and by such committees he was invariably selected to draft the answer. "Our answers," he says, "as well as his messages, were often tart, and sometimes indecently abusive." But the Governor was at heart an amiable man, and Franklin, resolute as he was, when his teeth were fairly set, had no black blood in his veins. Though one might have imagined, he says, that he and the Governor could not meet without cutting throats, so little personal ill-will arose between them that they even often dined together.

One afternoon [he tells us in the *Autobiography*] in the height of this public quarrel, we met in the street. "Franklin," says he, "you must go home with me and spend the evening; I am to have some company that you will like";

and, taking me by the arm, he led me to his house. In gay conversation over our wine, after supper, he told us, jokingly, that he much admir'd the idea of Sancho Panza, who, when it was proposed to give him a government, requested it might be a government of *blacks*, as then, if he could not agree with his people, he might sell them. One of his friends, who sat next to me, says, "Franklin, why do you continue to side with these damn'd Quakers? Had you not better sell them? The Proprietor would give you a good price." "The Governor," says I, "has not yet *blackened* them enough." He, indeed, had laboured hard to blacken the Assembly in all his messages, but they wip'd off his colouring as fast as he laid it on, and plac'd it, in return, thick upon his own face; so that, finding he was likely to be negrofied himself, he, as well as Mr. Hamilton, grew tir'd of the contest, and quitted the Government.

All these disputes originated in the instructions given by the Proprietaries to their Governors not to approve any tax measure enacted by the Assembly that did not expressly exempt their estates; conduct which Franklin justly terms in the *Autobiography* "incredible meanness."

The ability of Governor Morris to keep on good terms with Franklin in spite of the perpetual wrangling between the Assembly and himself Franklin sometimes thought was due to the fact that the Governor was bred a lawyer and regarded him as simply the advocate of the Assembly and himself as simply the advocate of the Proprietaries. However this was, he sometimes

called upon Franklin in a friendly way to advise with him on different points; and occasionally, though not often, Franklin tells us, took his advice. But when the miserable fugitives, who escaped from the *Aceldama* on the Monongahela, brought back to the settlements their awful tale of carnage and horror, and Dunbar and his rout were cravenly seeking the protection of those whom they should have protected, Governor Morris was only too glad to consult, and take the advice of, the strongest man on the American Continent, except the gallant Virginian, young in years, but from early responsibilities and hardships, as well as native wisdom and intrepidity, endowed with a calm judgment and tempered courage far beyond his years, whom Providence almost seemed to have taken under its direct guardianship for its future purposes on the day that Braddock fell. Later, when it appeared as if the Indians would carry desolation and death into the very bowels of Pennsylvania, the Governor was equally glad to place Franklin in charge of its Northwestern Frontier, and to thrust blank military commissions into his hands to be filled up by him as he pleased. And later still, when the desire of the Governor to consult with Franklin about the proper measures for preventing the desertion of the back counties of Pennsylvania had brought the latter home from the Northwestern Frontier, the Governor did not hesitate, in planning an expedition against Fort Duquesne, to offer Franklin a commission as general. If Franklin had accepted the offer, we are justified, we think, in assuming that he would have won at least as high a degree of credit as that

which he accorded to Shirley. "For tho' Shirley," he tells us in the *Autobiography*, "was not a bred soldier, he was sensible and sagacious in himself, and attentive to good advice from others, capable of forming judicious plans, and quick and active in carrying them into execution." No mean summary of the military virtues of Franklin himself as a citizen soldier. But Franklin knew the limitations of his training too well to be allured by such a deceitful honor. There were few civil tasks to which he was not equal, but, when it came to being a military commander, he had the good sense to make an admission like that which Shirley made to him. When a banquet was given to Lord Loudon by the city of New York, Shirley was present, though the occasion was due to the fact that the command previously held by him had just been transferred to Loudon. Franklin noticed that he was sitting in a very low seat. "They have given you, sir, too low a seat," he said. "No matter, Mr. Franklin," replied Shirley, "I find *a low seat* the easiest." When Governor Morris saw that, disputatious as he was, he was no match in that respect for the Assembly, he was succeeded by Governor Denny, who brought over with him from England the gold medal awarded by the Royal Society to Franklin for his electrical discoveries. This honor as well as the political experience of his predecessors was calculated to impress upon the Governor the importance of being on good terms with Franklin. At all events, when the medal was delivered by him to Franklin at a public dinner given to himself, after his arrival at Philadelphia, he added to the gift some very

polite expressions of his esteem, and assured Franklin that he had long known him by reputation. After dinner, he left the diners with their wine, and took Franklin aside into another room, and told him that he had been advised by his friends in England to cultivate a friendship with him as the man who was best able to give him good advice, and to make his task easy. Much also was said by the Governor about the good disposition of the Proprietary towards the Province and the advantage that it would be to everyone and to Franklin particularly if the long opposition to the Proprietary was abandoned, and harmony between him and the people restored. No one, said the Governor, could be more serviceable in bringing this about than Franklin himself, who might depend upon his services being duly acknowledged and recompensed. "The drinkers," the *Autobiography* goes on, "finding we did not return immediately to the table, sent us a decanter of Madeira, which the Governor made liberal use of, and in proportion became more profuse of his solicitations and promises."

To these overtures Franklin replied in a proper strain of mingled independence and good feeling, and concluded by expressing the hope that the Governor had not brought with him the same unfortunate instructions as his predecessors. The only answer that the Governor ever gave to this inquiry was given when he settled down to the duties of his office. It then became plain enough that he was under exactly the same instructions as his predecessors; the old ulcer broke out

afresh, and Franklin's pen was soon again prodding Proprietary selfishness. But through it all he contrived to maintain the same relations of personal amity with Governor Denny that he had maintained with Governor Morris. "Between us personally," he says, "no enmity arose; we were often together; he was a man of letters, had seen much of the world, and was very entertaining and pleasing in conversation." But the situation, so far as the Province was concerned, was too grievous to be longer borne without an appeal for relief to the Crown. The Assembly had enacted a bill, appropriating the sum of sixty thousand pounds for the King's use, ten thousand pounds of which were to be expended on Lord Loudon's orders, and the Governor, in compliance with his instructions, had refused to give it his approval. This brought things to a head, the House resolved to petition the King to override the instructions and Franklin was appointed its agent to go over to England and present the petition. His passage was engaged, his sea-stores were actually all on board, when Lord Loudon himself came over to Philadelphia for the express purpose of bringing about an accommodation between the jarring interests. The Governor and Franklin met him at his request, and opened their minds fully to him; Franklin revamping all the old popular arguments, so often urged by him, and the Governor pleading his instructions, the bond that he had given and the ruin that awaited him if he disregarded it. "Yet," says Franklin, "seemed not unwilling to hazard himself if Lord Loudon would advise it." This his Lordship did not choose to

do, though Franklin once thought that he had nearly prevailed on him to do it; and finally he entreated Franklin to use his influence with the Assembly to induce it to yield, promising, if it did, to employ unsparingly the King's troops for the defence of the frontiers of Pennsylvania, but stating that, if it did not, those frontiers must remain exposed to hostile incursion. The result was that the packet, in which Franklin engaged passage, sailed off with his sea-stores, while the parties were palavering, and the Assembly, after entering a formal protest against the duress, under which it gave way, abandoned its bill, and enacted another with the hateful exemption in it which was promptly approved by the Governor.

Franklin was now free to embark upon his voyage, whenever he could find a ship ready to sail, but, unfortunately for him, all the packets by which he could sail were at the beck of Lord Loudon, who was the most vacillating of human beings. When Franklin, before leaving Philadelphia, inquired of him the precise time at which a packet boat, that he said would be off soon, would sail, he replied: "I have given out that she is to sail on Saturday next; but I may let you know, *entre nous*, that if you are there by Monday morning, you will be in time, but do not delay longer." Because of detention at a ferry, Franklin did not reach New York before noon on Monday, but he was relieved, when he arrived, to be told that the packet would not sail until the next day. This was about the beginning of April. In point of fact, it was near the end of June when it got off. At

the time of Franklin's arrival in New York, it was one of the two packets, that were being kept waiting in port for the dispatches, upon which his Lordship appeared to be always engaged. While thus held up, another packet arrived only to be placed under the same embargo. Each had a list of impatient passengers, and many letters and orders for insurance against war risks from American merchants, but, day after day, his Lordship, entirely unmindful of the impatience and anxiety that he was creating, sat continually at his desk, writing his interminable dispatches. Calling one morning to pay his respects, Franklin found in his ante-chamber Innis, a Philadelphia messenger, who had brought on a batch of letters to his Lordship from Governor Denny, and who told Franklin that he was to call the next day for his Lordship's answer to the Governor, and would then set off for Philadelphia at once. On the strength of this assurance, Franklin the same day placed some letters of his own for delivery in that city in Innis' hands. A fortnight afterwards, he met the messenger in the same ante-chamber. "So, you are soon return'd, Innis" he said. "*Return'd!*" replied Innis, "No, I am not *gone* yet." "How so?" "I have called here by order every morning these two weeks past for his lordship's letter, and it is not yet ready." "Is it possible, when he is so great a writer? for I see him constantly at his *escritoire*." "Yes," says Innis, "but he is like St. George on the signs, *always on horseback, and never rides on.*" Indeed, so purely rotatory was all his Lordship's epistolary energy, unremitting as it seemed to be, that one of the reasons given by William Pitt for subsequently

removing him was that "*the minister never heard from him, and could not know what he was doing.*" Finally, the three packets dropped down to Sandy Hook to join the British fleet there. Not knowing but that they might make off any day, their passengers thought it safest to board them before they dropped down. The consequence was that they found themselves anchored at Sandy Hook for about six weeks, "as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean," and driven to the necessity of consuming all their sea-stores and buying more. At length, when the fleet did weigh anchor, with his Lordship and all his army on board, bound for the reduction of Louisburg, the three packets were ordered to attend it in readiness to receive the dispatches which the General was still scribbling upon the element that was not more mutable than his own purposes. When Franklin had been five days out, his packet was finally released, and stood off beyond the reach of his Lordship's indefatigable pen, but the other two packets were still kept in tow by him all the way to Halifax, where, after exercising his men for some time in sham attacks on sham forts, he changed his mind about besieging Louisburg, and returned to New York with all his troops and the two packets and their passengers. In the meantime, the French and their savage friends had captured Fort George, and butchered many of the garrison after its capitulation. The captain of one of the two packets, that were brought back to New York, afterwards told Franklin in London that, when he had been detained a month by his Lordship, he requested his permission to heave his ship down

and clear her bottom. He was asked how long that would require. He answered three days. His Lordship replied, "If you can do it in one day, I give leave; otherwise not; for you must certainly sail the day after tomorrow." So he never obtained leave, though detained afterwards, from day to day, during full three months. No wonder that an irate passenger, who represented himself as having suffered considerable pecuniary loss, swore after he finally reached London in Franklin's presence, that he would sue Lord Loudon for damages.

As Oxenstiern's son was enjoined by his father to do, Franklin had gone out into the world and seen with what little wisdom it is ruled. "On the whole," he says in the *Autobiography*, "I wonder'd much how such a man came to be intrusted with so important a business as the conduct of a great army; but, having since seen more of the great world, and the means of obtaining, and motives for giving places, my wonder is diminished."

The *Autobiography* makes it evident enough that for Loudon Franklin came to entertain the heartiest contempt.<sup>15</sup> His Lordship's movements in 1757 he stigmatized as frivolous, expensive and disgraceful to the nation beyond conception. He was responsible, Franklin thought, for the loss of Fort George, and for the foundering of a large part of the Carolina fleet,

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<sup>15</sup> Franklin's first impressions of Lord Loudon were very different from his later ones. In a letter to Strahan from New York, dated July 27, 1756, he said: "I have had the honour of several conferences with him on our American affairs, and am extremely pleased with him. I think there can not be a fitter person for the service he is engaged in."

which, for lack of notice from him, remained anchored in the worm-infested waters of Charleston harbor for three months, after he had raised his embargo on the exportation of provisions. Nor does Franklin hesitate to charge that this embargo, while laid on the pretence of cutting off the enemy from supplies, was in reality laid for the purpose of beating down the price of provisions in the interest of the contractors, in whose profits, it was suspected, that Loudon had a share. Not only did his Lordship decline, on the shallow pretext that he did not wish to mix his accounts with those of his predecessors, to give Franklin the order that he had promised him for the payment of the balance, still due him on account of Braddock's expedition, though liquidated by his own audit, but, when Franklin urged the fact that he had charged no commission for his services, as a reason why he should be promptly paid, his Lordship cynically replied, "O, Sir, you must not think of persuading us that you are no gainer; we understand better those affairs, and know that everyone concerned in supplying the army finds means, in the doing it, to fill his own pockets."

Franklin and his son arrived in London on July 27, 1757. Shortly after he had settled down in his lodgings, he called upon Dr. Fothergill, whose counsel he had been advised to obtain, and who thought that, before an application was made to the British Government, there should be an effort to reach an understanding with the Penns themselves. Then took place the interview between Franklin and Lord Granville, at which

his Lordship, after some preliminary discourse, expressed this alarming opinion:

You Americans have wrong ideas of the nature of your constitution; you contend that the King's instructions to his governors are not laws, and think yourselves at liberty to regard or disregard them at your own discretion. But those instructions are not like the pocket instructions given to a minister going abroad, for regulating his conduct in some trifling point of ceremony. They are first drawn up by judges learned in the laws; they are then considered, debated, and perhaps amended in Council, after which they are signed by the king. They are then, so far as they relate to you, the *law of the land*, for the King is the LEGISLATOR OF THE COLONIES.

The correctness of this opinion was combated by Franklin. He told his Lordship that this was new doctrine to him, and that he had always understood from the American charters that the colonial laws were to be enacted by the assemblies of the Colonies, and that, once enacted and assented to by the King, the King could not repeal or alter them, and that, as the colonial assemblies could not make laws for themselves without his assent, so he could not make laws for them without their assent. The great man's reply was as brief as a great man's reply is only too likely to be when his opinions are questioned by his inferiors. It was merely that Franklin was totally mistaken. Franklin did not think so, and, concerned for fear that Lord Granville might be but expressing the sentiment of the Court, he wrote down

what had been said to him as soon as he returned to his lodgings. The utterance reminded him that some twenty years before a bill had been introduced into Parliament by the ministry of that time containing a clause, intended to make the King's instructions laws in the Colonies, but that the clause had been stricken out of it by the House of Commons. For this, he said, the Colonies adored the Commons, as their friends and the friends of liberty, until it afterwards seemed as if they had refused the point of sovereignty to the King only that they might reserve it for themselves.

A meeting between the Proprietaries and Franklin was arranged by Doctor Fothergill. It assumed the form that such meetings are apt to assume, that is of mutual professions of an earnest desire to agree, repetition of the old antagonistic reasonings and a disagreement as stubborn as before. However, it was agreed that Franklin should reduce the complaints against the Proprietaries to writing, and that the Proprietaries were to consider them. When the paper was drawn, they submitted it to their solicitor, Ferdinand John Paris, who had represented them in the celebrated litigation between the Penns and the Lords Baltimore over the boundary line between Pennsylvania and Maryland, and had written all their papers and messages in their disputes with the Pennsylvania Assembly. "He was," says Franklin, "a proud, angry man, and as I had occasionally in the answers of the Assembly treated his papers with some severity, they being really weak in point of argument and haughty in expression, he had conceived a mortal enmity to me." With

Paris, Franklin refused to discuss the points of his paper, and the Proprietaries then, on the advice of Paris, placed it in the hands of the Attorney- and Solicitor-Generals for their opinion and advice. By them no answer was given for nearly a year, though Franklin frequently called upon the Proprietaries for an answer only to be told that they had not yet received the opinion of their learned advisers. What the opinion was when it was finally rendered the Proprietaries did not let Franklin know, but instead addressed a long communication, drawn and signed by Paris, to the Assembly, reciting the contents of Franklin's paper, complaining of its lack of formality as rudeness, and justifying their conduct. They would be willing, they said, to compose the dispute, if the Assembly would send out *some person of candor* to treat with them. Franklin supposed that the incivility imputed to him consisted in the fact that he had not addressed the Proprietaries by their assumed title of True and Absolute Proprietaries of the Province of Pennsylvania.

The letter of the Proprietaries was not answered by the Assembly. While they were pretending to treat with Franklin, Governor Denny had been unable to withstand the pressure of his situation, and, at the request of Lord Loudon, had approved an act subjecting the estates of the Penns to taxation. When this Act was transmitted to England, the Proprietaries, upon the advice of Paris, petitioned the King to withhold his assent from it, and, when the petition came on for hearing, the parties were represented by counsel. On the one hand it was contended that

the purpose of the Act was to impose an oppressive burden upon the Proprietary estates, and that the assessment under it would be so unequal because of the popular prejudice against the Penns that they would be ruined. To this it was replied that the Act was not conceived with any such purpose, and would not have any such effect, that the assessors were honest and discreet men under oath, and that any advantage that might inure to them individually from over-assessing the property of the Proprietaries would be too trifling to induce them to perjure themselves. It was also urged in opposition to the petition that the money, for which the Act provided, had been printed and issued, and was now in the hands of the inhabitants of the Province, and would be deprived of all value, to their great injury, if the Act did not receive the royal assent merely because of the selfish and groundless fears of the Proprietaries. At this point, Lord Mansfield, one of the counsel for the Proprietaries, led Franklin off into a room nearby, while the other lawyers were still pleading, and asked him if he was really of the opinion that the Proprietary estate would not be unfairly taxed if the Act was executed. "Certainly," said Franklin. "Then," said he, "you can have little objection to enter into an engagement to assure that point." "None at all," replied Franklin. Paris was then called in, and, after some discussion, a paper, such as Lord Mansfield suggested, was drawn up and signed by Franklin and Mr. Charles, who was the agent of Pennsylvania for ordinary purposes, and the law was given the royal assent with the further engagement, upon the part of Franklin and Mr. Charles,

that it should be amended in certain respects by subsequent legislation. This legislation, however, the Assembly afterwards declined to enact when a committee, appointed by it, upon which it was careful to place several close friends of the Proprietaries, brought in an unanimous report stating that the yearly tax levied before the order of the Council reached Pennsylvania had been imposed with perfect fairness as between the Proprietaries and the other tax-payers.

In the most important respect, therefore, Franklin's mission to England had resulted in success. The principle was established by the Crown that the estate of the Proprietaries was subject to taxation equally with that of the humblest citizen of Pennsylvania; and the credit of the paper money, then scattered throughout the province, was saved. The Assembly rewarded its servant, when he returned to Pennsylvania, with its formal thanks and the sum of three thousand pounds. He responded in the happy terms which he always had at his command on occasions of this sort. "He made answer," says the official report, "that he was thankful to the House, for the very handsome and generous Allowance they had been pleased to make him for his Services; but that the Approbation of this House was, in his Estimation, far above every other kind of Recompense."

The Proprietaries punished their servant, Governor Denny, by removing him and threatening him with suit for the breach of his bond, but it is a pleasure to be told in the *Autobiography* that his position was such that he could despise their threats.

While the duel was going on between the Proprietaries and the Assembly, Franklin had some significant things at times to say about it in his familiar letters. As far as we can see, his political course, during this period, was entirely candid and manly. He was on agreeable personal terms with all the colonial governors, he seems to have cherished an honest desire to be helpful to the Proprietaries, so far as their own illiberality and folly would allow him to be, and it is very plain that he was not without the feeling that the demands of the Popular Party itself were occasionally immoderate. He was quite willing for the sake of peace to concede anything except the essential points of the controversy, but when it came to these he was immovable as men of his type usually are when they realize that a claim upon them is too unjust or exorbitant even for their pacific temper.

I am much oblig'd to you for the favourable Light you put me in, to our Proprietor, as mention'd in yours of July 30 [he wrote to Peter Collinson in 1754], I know not why he should imagine me not his Friend, since I cannot recollect any one Act of mine that could denominate me otherwise. On the contrary if to concur with him, so far as my little Influence reach'd in all his generous and benevolent Designs and Desires of making his Province and People flourishing and happy be any Mark of my Respect and Dutyful Regard to him, there are many who would be ready to say I could not be suppos'd deficient in such Respect. The Truth is I have sought his *Interest* more than his *Favour*; others perhaps have sought both, and obtain'd at least the latter.

But in my Opinion great Men are not always best serv'd by such as show on all Occasions a blind Attachment to them: An Appearance of Impartiality in general gives a Man sometimes much more Weight when he would serve in particular instances.

To the friend to whom these words were written Franklin was disposed to unbosom himself with unusual freedom, and, in the succeeding year, in another letter to Collinson, he used words which showed plainly enough that he thought that the Assembly too was at times inclined to indulge in more hair-splitting and testiness than was consistent with the public welfare.

You will see [he said] more of the same Trifling in these Votes in both sides. I am heartily sick of our present Situation; I like neither the Governor's Conduct, nor the Assembly's; and having some Share in the Confidence of both, I have endeavour'd to reconcile 'em but in vain, and between 'em they make me very uneasy. I was chosen last Year in my Absence and was not at the Winter Sitting when the House sent home that Address to the King, which I am afraid was both ill-judg'd and ill-tim'd. If my being able now and then to influence a good Measure did not keep up my Spirits I should be ready to swear never to serve again as an Assembly Man, since both Sides expect more from me than they ought, and blame me sometimes for not doing what I am not able to do, as well as for not preventing what was not in my Power to prevent. The Assembly ride restive; and the Governor tho' he spurs with both heels, at the same time reins in with both hands, so that the Publick Business

can never move forward, and he remains like St. George on the Sign, Always a Horseback and never going on. Did you never hear this old Catch?

Their was a mad Man – He had a mad Wife,  
And three mad Sons beside;  
And they all got upon a mad Horse  
And madly they did ride.

Tis a Compendium of our Proceedings and may save you the Trouble of reading them.

In a still later letter to the same correspondent, Franklin asserted that there was no reason for excluding Quakers from the House, since, though unwilling to fight themselves, they had been brought to unite in voting the sums necessary to enable the Province to defend itself. Then, after referring to the defamation, that was being heaped upon him by the Proprietary Party, in the place of the court paid to him when he had exerted himself to secure aids from the House for Braddock and Shirley, he said, "Let me know if you learn that any of their Slanders reach England. I abhor these Altercations and if I did not love the Country and the People would remove immediately into a more quiet Government, Connecticut, where I am also happy enough to have many Friends."

However, there was too much fuel for the fire to die down. The claim of the Proprietaries to exemption from taxation was only

the most aggravated result of their efforts, by their instructions to their Governors, to shape the legislation of the Province in accordance with their own personal aims and pecuniary interests instead of in the spirit of the royal charter, which gave to William Penn, and his heirs, and his, or their, deputies or lieutenants, free, full and absolute power, for the good and happy government of Pennsylvania, to make and enact any laws, according to their best discretion, by and with the advice, assent and approbation of the freemen of the said country, or of their delegates or deputies. In the report of the Committee of Aggrievances of the Assembly, drawn by Franklin, the case of the freemen of the Province against the Penns, which led to Franklin's first mission to England, is clearly stated. They are arraigned not only for seeking to exempt the bulk of their estate from the common burden of taxation, but also, apart from this, for stripping, by their instructions, their governors, and thereby the People themselves, of all real discretion in fixing by legislation the measure and manner in which, and the time at which, aids and supplies should be furnished for the defence of the Province. They had even, the report charged, prohibited their governors, by their instructions, from assenting to laws disposing of interest arising from the loan of bills of credit or money raised by excise taxes – forms of revenue to which the Proprietary estate did not contribute at all – unless the laws contained a clause giving their governors the right to negative a particular application of the sums. Another grievance was the issuance by the governor

of commissions to provincial judges, to be held during the will and pleasure of the governors instead of during good behavior, as covenanted by William Penn – a practice which gave the Proprietaries control of the judicial as well as the executive Branch of the provincial government.

For a time, after Franklin returned to Pennsylvania in 1762, there was something like peace between the Proprietaries and the people. When a nephew of Thomas Penn was appointed governor, the Assembly accepted him as a family pledge of restored good feeling.

The Assembly [Franklin wrote to Dr. Fothergill] received a Governor of the Proprietary family with open arms, addressed him with sincere expressions of kindness and respect, opened their purses to them, and presented him with six hundred pounds; made a Riot Act and prepared a Militia Bill immediately, at his instance, granted supplies, and did everything that he requested, and promised themselves great happiness under his administration.

And no governor was ever so dependent upon the good will of the Assembly. It was during his administration that the Scotch-Irish inhabitants of the frontier, inflamed by Indian outrages, imbrued their hands in the blood of the Conestoga Indians, and, so far from being intimidated by the public proclamations issued by the Governor for their arrest and punishment, marched to the very threshold of Philadelphia itself with the purpose of destroying the Moravian Indians huddled there in terror of their

lives. The whole Province outside of the City of Philadelphia was given over to lawlessness and disorder. In the contagious excitement of the hour, a considerable portion of its population even believed that the Quakers had gained the friendship of the Indians by presents, supplied them secretly with arms and ammunition, and engaged them to fall upon and kill the whites on the Pennsylvania frontier. Under these circumstances, the Governor simply did what Governor Morris and Governor Denny had been compelled to do before him, namely, call in the aid of the man who could in a letter to Peter Collinson truthfully sum up all that there was in the military demonstration which angered Thomas Penn so deeply with the simple utterance, "The People happen to love me." The whole story was told by Franklin to Dr. Fothergill in the letter from which we have just quoted.

More wonders! You know that I don't love the Proprietary and that he does not love me. Our totally different tempers forbid it. You might therefore expect that the late new appointments of one of his family would find me ready for opposition. And yet when his nephew arrived, our Governor, I considered government as government, and paid him all respect, gave him on all occasions my best advice, promoted in the Assembly a ready compliance with everything he proposed or recommended, and when those daring rioters, encouraged by general approbation of the populace, treated his proclamation with contempt, I drew my pen in the cause; wrote a pamphlet (that I have sent you) to render the rioters unpopular; promoted an association to

support the authority of the Government and defend the Governor by taking arms, signed it first myself, and was followed by several hundreds, who took arms accordingly. The Governor offered me the command of them, but I chose to carry a musket and strengthen his authority by setting an example of obedience to his order. And would you think it, this proprietary Governor did me the honour, in an alarm, to run to my house at midnight, with his counsellors at his heels, for advice, and made it his head-quarters for some time. And within four and twenty hours, your old friend was a common soldier, a counsellor, a kind of dictator, an ambassador to the country mob, and on his returning home, nobody again. All this has happened in a few weeks.

With the retirement of the backwoodsmen from Philadelphia to their homes, sprang up one of the angriest factional contests that Pennsylvania had ever known. Every malignant passion, political or sectarian, that lurked in the Province was excited into the highest degree of morbid life. The Presbyterians, the Churchmen, even some of the Quakers, acclaimed the Paxton Boys as instruments of a just vengeance, and they constituted a political force, which the Governor was swift to utilize for the purpose of strengthening his party. He dropped all efforts to apprehend the murderers of the Conestoga Indians, granted a private audience to the insurgents, and accused the Assembly of disloyalty, and of encroaching upon the prerogatives of the Crown, only because it had been presumptuous enough to make an appointment to a petty office in a bill tendered to him for his

assent. It was during his administration, too, that the claim was made that, even if the Proprietary estate had been subjected to taxation by the Lords in Council, under the terms of one of the amendments, proposed by them, "*the best and most valuable*," of the Proprietary lands "should be tax'd no higher than the *worst and least valuable* of the People's."

When the conflict was reopened, the Assembly boldly brought it to an issue. One of its committees, with Franklin at its head, reported a series of resolutions censuring the proprietaries, condemning their rule as too weak to maintain its authority and repress disorder, and petitioning the King to take over the Government of the Province, after such compensation to the Proprietaries as was just. The Assembly then adjourned to sound the temper of their constituents, and their adjournment was the signal for a pamphlet war attended by such a hail of paper pellets as rarely marked any contest so early in the history of the American Colonies. Among the best of them was the pamphlet written by Franklin, and entitled *Cool Thoughts on the Present Situation of our Public Affairs*, which has already been mentioned, and which denounced in no uncertain terms the "insolent Tribunitial VETO," with which the Proprietaries were in the habit of declaring that nothing should be done, unless their private interests in certain particulars were served.

On May 14, 1764, the Assembly met again, and was soon deeply engaged in a debate as to whether an address should be sent to the King, praying the abolition of the Proprietary

Government. Long did the debate last; Joseph Galloway making the principal argument in support of the proposition, and John Dickinson the principal one against it. When the vote was taken, the affirmative prevailed, but, as Isaac Norris, who had been a member of the body for thirty years, and its speaker for fifteen, was about to be bidden by it to sign the address, he stated that, since he did not approve it, and yet would have to sign it as speaker, he hoped that he might have time to draft his objections to it. A short recess ensued, and when the members convened again, Norris sent word that he was too sick to be present, and requested that another person should be chosen as speaker. The choice of the body then fell upon Franklin, who immediately signed the paper.

The next sitting of the Assembly was not to be held until the succeeding October, and before that time the annual election for members of the Assembly was to take place. For the purpose of influencing public opinion, Dickinson, upon its adjournment, published his speech with a long preface by Dr. William Smith. Galloway followed suit by publishing his speech with a long preface by Franklin. This preface is one of Franklin's masterpieces, marked it is true by some quaint conceits and occasional relaxations of energy, but full of power and withering sarcasm. Preceded by such a lengthy and brilliant preface, Galloway must have felt that his speech had little more than the secondary value of an appendix. With the consummate capacity for pellucid statement, which was one of Franklin's most

remarkable gifts, it narrated the manner in which the practice of buying legislation from the Proprietaries had been pursued. With equal force and ingenuity, it demonstrated that five out of the six amendments, proposed by the Lords in Council to the Act, approved by Governor Denny, did not justify the charge that the circumstances, in which they originated, involved any real injustice to the Proprietaries, and that the sixth, which forbade the tender to the Proprietaries of paper bills of fluctuating value, in payment of debts payable to them, under the terms of special contracts, in coin, if a measure of justice to them, would be also a measure of justice to other creditors in the same situation, who were not mentioned in the amendment.

Referring to the universal practice in America of making such bills a legal tender and the fact that the bills in question would have been a legal tender as respects the members of the Assembly and their constituents as well as the Proprietaries, Franklin's preface glows like an incandescent furnace in these words:

But if he (the reader) can not on these Considerations, quite excuse the Assembly, what will he think of those *Honourable* Proprietaries, who when Paper Money was issued in their Colony for the Common Defence of their vast Estates, with those of the People, and who must therefore reap, at least, equal Advantages from those Bills with the People, could nevertheless *wish* to be exempted from their Share of the unavoidable Disadvantages. Is there upon Earth a Man besides, with any Conception of what is honest, with any Notion of Honor, with the least Tincture in his

Veins of the Gentleman, but would have blush'd at the Thought; but would have rejected with Disdain such undue Preference, if it had been offered him? Much less would he have struggled for it, mov'd Heaven and Earth to obtain it, resolv'd to ruin Thousands of his Tenants by a Repeal of the Act, rather than miss of it, and enforce it afterwards by an audaciously wicked Instruction, forbidding Aids to his King, and exposing the Province to Destruction, unless it was complied with. And yet, – these are *Honourable Men*... Those who study Law and Justice, as a Science [he added in an indignant note] have established it a Maxim in Equity, "Qui sentit commodum, sentire debet et onus." And so consistent is this with the *common* Sense of Mankind, that even our lowest untaught Coblers and Porters feel the Force of it in their own Maxim, (which *they* are *honest enough* never to dispute) "Touch Pot, touch Penny."

Other passages in the Preface were equally scorching. Replying to the charge of the Proprietaries that the Quaker Assembly, out of mere malice, because they had conscientiously quitted the Society of Friends for the Church, were wickedly determined to ruin them by throwing the entire burden of taxation on them, Franklin had this to say:

How foreign these Charges were from the Truth, need not be told to any Man in *Pennsylvania*. And as the Proprietors knew, that the Hundred Thousand Pounds of paper money, struck for the defence of their enormous Estates, with others, was actually issued, spread thro' the Country, and in the Hands of Thousands of poor People,

who had given their Labor for it, how base, cruel, and inhuman it was, to endeavour by a Repeal of the Act, to strike the Money dead in those Hands at one Blow, and reduce it all to Waste Paper, to the utter Confusion of all Trade and Dealings, and the Ruin of Multitudes, merely to avoid paying their own just Tax! – Words may be wanting to express, but Minds will easily conceive, and never without Abhorrence!

But fierce as these attacks were, they were mild in comparison with the shower of stones hurled by Franklin at the Proprietaries in the Preface in one of those lapidary inscriptions which were so common in that age. The prefacer of Dickinson's Speech had inserted in his introduction a lapidary memorial of William Penn made up of tessellated bits of eulogy, extracted from the various addresses of the Assembly itself. This gave Franklin a fine opportunity to retort in a similar mosaic of phrases and to contrast the meanness of the sons with what the Assembly had said of the father.

That these Encomiums on the Father [he said] tho' sincere, have occur'd so frequently, was owing, however, to two Causes; first, a vain Hope the Assemblies entertain'd, that the Father's Example, and the Honors done his Character, might influence the Conduct of the Sons; secondly, for that in attempting to compliment the Sons on their own Merits, there was always found an extreme Scarcity of Matter. Hence *the Father, the honored and honorable Father*, was so often repeated, that the Sons

themselves grew sick of it; and have been heard to say to each other with Disgust, when told that A, B, and C. were come to wait upon them with Addresses on some public Occasion, "*Then I suppose we shall hear more about our Father.*" So that, let me tell the Prefacer, who perhaps was unacquainted with this Anecdote, that if he hop'd to curry more Favor with the Family, by the Inscription he has fram'd for that great Man's Monument, he may find himself mistaken; for, – there is too much in it of *our Father*.

If therefore, he would erect a Monument to the Sons, the Votes of Assembly, which are of such Credit with him, will furnish him with ample Materials for his Inscription.

To save him Trouble, I will essay a Sketch for him, in the Lapidary Style, tho' mostly in the Expressions, and everywhere in the Sense and Spirit of the Assembly's Resolves and Messages.

Be this a Memorial  
Of T – and R – P – ,  
P – of P, —  
Who, with Estates immense,  
Almost beyond Computation,  
When their own Province,  
And the whole *British* Empire  
Were engag'd in a bloody and most expensive War,  
Begun for the Defence of those Estates,  
Could yet meanly desire  
To have those very Estates  
Totally or Partially

Exempted from Taxation,  
While their Fellow-Subjects all around them, Groan'd  
Under the Universal Burthen.  
To gain this Point,  
They refus'd the necessary Laws  
For the Defence of their People,  
And suffer'd their Colony to welter in its Blood,  
Rather than abate in the least  
Of these their dishonest Pretensions.  
The Privileges granted by their Father  
Wisely and benevolently  
To encourage the first Settlers of the Province,  
They,  
Foolishly and cruelly,  
Taking Advantage of public Distress,  
Have extorted from the Posterity of those Settlers;  
And are daily endeavouring to reduce them  
To the most abject Slavery:  
Tho' to the Virtue and Industry of those People  
In improving their Country,  
They owe all that they possess and enjoy.  
A striking Instance  
Of human Depravity and Ingratitude;  
And an irrefragable Proof,  
That Wisdom and Goodness  
Do not descend with an Inheritance;  
But that ineffable Meanness  
May be connected with unbounded Fortune.

It may well be doubted whether any one had ever been subjected to such overwhelming lapidation as this since the time of the early Christian martyrs.

There are many other deadly thrusts in the Preface, and nowhere else are the issues between the Proprietaries and the People so clearly presented, but the very completeness of the paper renders it too long for further quotation.

Franklin, however, was by no means allowed to walk up and down the field, vainly challenging a champion to come out from the opposing host and contend with him. At his towering front the missiles of the Proprietary Party were mainly directed. Beneath one caricature of him were these lines:

"Fight dog, fight bear! You're all my friends:  
By you I shall attain my ends,  
For I can never be content  
Till I have got the government.  
But if from this attempt I fall,  
Then let the Devil take you all!"

Another writer strove in his lapidary zeal to fairly bury Franklin beneath a whole cairn of opprobrious accusations, consuming nine pages of printed matter in the effort to visit his political tergiversation, his greed for power, his immorality and other sins, with their proper deserts, and ending with this highly rhetorical apostrophe:

"Reader, behold this striking Instance of  
Human Depravity and Ingratitude;  
An irrefragable Proof  
That neither the Capital services  
of *Friends* power, tyranny."  
Nor the attracting Favours of the Fair,  
Can fix the Sincerity of a Man,  
*Devoid of Principles* and  
Ineffably mean:  
Whose ambition is  
And whose intention is

The illegitimacy of William Franklin, of course, was freely used during the conflict as a means of paining and discrediting Franklin. In a pamphlet entitled, *What is sauce for a Goose is also Sauce for a Gander*, the writer asserted that the mother of William was a woman named Barbara, who worked in Franklin's house as a servant for ten pounds a year, that she remained in this position until her death and that Franklin then stole her to the grave in silence without pall, tomb or monument. A more refined spirit, which could not altogether free itself from the undertow of its admiration for such an extraordinary man, penned these lively lines entitled, "Inscription on a Curious Stove in the Form of An Urn, Contrived in such a Manner As To Make The Flame Descend Instead of Rising from the Fire, Invented by Dr. Franklin."

"Like a Newton sublimely he soared  
To a summit before unattained,  
New regions of science explored  
And the palm of philosophy gained.

"With a spark which he caught from the skies  
He displayed an unparalleled wonder,  
And we saw with delight and surprise  
That his rod could secure us from thunder.

"Oh! had he been wise to pursue  
The track for his talents designed,  
What a tribute of praise had been due  
To the teacher and friend of mankind.

"But to covet political fame  
Was in him a degrading ambition,  
The spark that from Lucifer came  
And kindled the blaze of sedition.

"Let candor then write on his urn,  
Here lies the renowned inventor  
Whose fame to the skies ought to burn  
But inverted descends to the centre."

The election began at nine o'clock in the morning on October 1, 1764. Franklin and Galloway headed the "Old Ticket," and Willing and Bryan the "New." The latter ticket was supported by the Dutch Calvinists, the Presbyterians and many of the Dutch

Lutherans and Episcopalians; the former by the Quakers and Moravians and some of the McClenaghanites. So great was the concourse of voters that, until midnight, it took fifteen minutes for one of them to work his way from the end of the line of eager electors to the polling place. Excitement was at white heat, and, while the election was pending, hands were busy scattering squibs and campaign appeals in English and German among the crowd. Towards three the next morning, the new-ticket partisans moved that the polls be closed, but the motion was opposed by their old-ticket foes, because they wished to bring out a reserve of aged or lame retainers who could not stand long upon their feet. These messengers were dispatched to bring in such retainers from their homes in chairs and litters, and, when the new-ticket men saw the success, with which the old-ticket men were marshalling their recruits, they, too, began to scour the vicinage for votes, and so successful were the two parties in mobilizing their reserves that the polls did not close until three o'clock in the afternoon of the second day. Not until the third day were the some 3900 real and fraudulent votes cast counted; and, when the count was over, it was found that Franklin and Galloway had been defeated. "Franklin," said an eye-witness of the election, "died like a philosopher. But Mr. Galloway agonized in death like a mortal deist, who has no hopes of a future life."

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