Butterworth Hezekiah

True to His Home: A Tale of the Boyhood of Franklin

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Butterworth Hezekiah True to His Home: A Tale of the Boyhood of Franklin

The noblest question in the world is, What good may I do in it?

Poor Richard

PREFACE

This volume is an historical fiction, but the plan of it was suggested by biography, and is made to include the most interesting and picturesque episodes in the home side of the life of Benjamin Franklin, so as to form a connected narrative or picture of his public life.

I have written no book with a deeper sympathy with my subject, for, although fiction, the story very truthfully shows that the good intentions of a life which has seemed to fail do not die, but live in others whom they inspire. Uncle Benjamin Franklin, "the poet," who was something of a philosopher, and whose visions all seemed to end in disappointment, deeply influenced his nephew and godson, Benjamin Franklin, whom he morally educated to become what he himself had failed to be.

The conduct of Josiah Franklin, the father of Benjamin Franklin, in comforting his poor old brother in England by naming his fifteenth child for him, and making him his godfather, is a touching instance of family affection, to the memory of which the statesman was always true.

Uncle Benjamin Franklin had a library of pamphlets that was very dear to him, for in the margins of the leaves he had placed the choicest thoughts of his life amid great political events. He was very poor, and he sold his library in his old age; we may reasonably suppose that he parted with it among other effects to get money to come to America, that he might give his influence to "Little Ben," after his brother had remembered him in his desolation by giving his name to the boy. The finding of these pamphlets in London fifty years after the old man was compelled to sell them was regarded by Benjamin Franklin as one of the most singular events of his remarkable life.

Mr. Parton, in his Life of Franklin, thus alludes to the circumstance:

> A strange occurrence brought to the mind of Franklin, in 1771, a vivid recollection of his childhood. A dealer in old books, whose shop he sometimes visited, called his attention one day to a collection of pamphlets, bound in thirty volumes, dating from the Restoration to 1715. The dealer offered them to Franklin, as he said, because many of the subjects of the pamphlets were such as usually interested him. Upon examining the collection, he found that one of the blank leaves of each volume contained a catalogue of its contents, and the price each pamphlet had cost; there were notes and comments also in the margin of several of the pieces. A closer scrutiny revealed that the handwriting was that of his Uncle Benjamin, the rhyming friend and counselor of his childhood. Other circumstances combined with this surprising fact to prove that the collection had been made by his uncle, who had probably sold it when he emigrated to America, fifty-six years before. Franklin bought the volumes, and gave an account of the circumstance to his Uncle Benjamin's son, who still lived and flourished in Boston. "The oddity is," he

> wrote, "that the bookseller, who could suspect nothing of any relation between me and the collector, should happen to make me the offer of them."

It may please the reader to know that "Mr. Calamity" was suggested by a real character, and that the incidents in the life of "Jenny," Franklin's favorite sister, are true in spirit and largely in detail. It would have been more artistic to have had Franklin discover Uncle Benjamin's "pamphlets" later in life, but this would have been, while allowable, unhistoric fiction.

Says one of the greatest critics ever born in America, in speaking of the humble birth of Franklin:

> That little baby, humbly cradled, has turned out to be the greatest man that America ever bore in her bosom or set eyes upon. Beyond all question, as I think, Benjamin Franklin had the largest mind that has shone on this side of the sea, widest in its comprehension, most deep-looking, thoughtful, far-seeing, the most original and creative child of the New World.
>
> For the last four generations no man has shed such copious good influence on America, nor added so much new truth to popular knowledge; none has so skillfully organized its ideals into institutions; none has so powerfully and wisely directed the nation's conduct and advanced its welfare in so many respects. No man has so strong a hold on the habits or the manners of the people.

"The principal question in life is, What good can I do in the world?" says Franklin. He learned to ask this question in his home in "beloved Boston." It was his purpose to answer this all-important question after the lessons that he had received in his early home, to which his heart remained true through all his marvelous career.

This is the seventh volume of the Creators of Liberty Series of books of historical fiction, based for the most part on real events, in the purpose of presenting biography in picture.

The former volumes of this series of books have been very kindly received by the public, and none of them more generously than the last volume, The Wampum Belt. For this the writer is very grateful, for he is a thorough believer in story-telling education, on the Pestalozzi and Froebel principle that "life must be taught from life," or from the highest ideals of beneficent character.

H. B.

28 Worcester Street, Boston, Mass., *June, 1897*.

CHAPTER I.
THE FIRST DAY

It was the Sunday morning of the 6th of January, 1706 (January 17th, old style), when a baby first saw the light in a poor tallow chandler's house on Milk Street, nearly opposite the Old South Church, Boston. The little stranger came into a large and growing family, of whom at a later period he might sometimes have seen thirteen children sit down at the table to very hard and simple fare.

"A baby is nothing new in this family," said Josiah Franklin, the father. "This is the fifteenth. Let me take it over to the church and have it christened this very day. There should be no time lost in christening. What say you, friends all? It is a likely boy, and it is best to start him right in life at once."

"People do not often have their children christened in church on the day of birth," said a lusty neighbor, "though if a child seems likely to die it might be christened on the day of its birth at home."

"This child does not seem likely to die," said the happy tallow chandler. "I will go and see the parson, and if he does not object I will give the child to the Lord on this January day, and if he should come to anything he will have occasion to remember that I thought of the highest duty that I owed him when he first opened his eyes to the light."

The smiling and enthusiastic tallow chandler went to see the parson, and then returned to his home.

"Abiah," he said to his wife, "I am going to have the child christened. What shall his name be?"

Josiah Franklin, the chandler, who had emigrated to Boston town that he might enjoy religious freedom, had left a brother in England, who was an honest, kindly, large-hearted man, and "a poet."

"How would Benjamin do?" he continued; "brother's name. Benjamin is a family name, and a good one. Benjamin of old, into whose sack Joseph put the silver cup, was a right kind of a man. What do you say, Abiah Folger?"

"Benjamin is a good name, and a name lasts for life. But your brother Benjamin has not succeeded very well in his many undertakings."

"No, but in all his losses he has never lost his good name. His honor has shown over all. 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver or gold.' A man may get riches and yet be poor. It is he that seeks the welfare of others more than wealth for himself that lives for the things that are best."

"Josiah, this is no common boy – look at his head. We can not do for him as our neighbors do for their children. But we can give him a name to honor, and that will be an example to him. How would Folger do – Folger Franklin? Father Folger was a poet like your brother Benjamin, and he did well in life. That would unite the names of the two families."

John Folger, of Norwich, England, with his son Peter, came to this country in the year 1635 on the same ship that bore the family of Rev. Hugh Peters. This clergyman, who is known as a "regicide," or king murderer, and who suffered a most terrible death in London on the accession of Charles II, succeeded Roger Williams in the church at Salem. He flourished during the times of Cromwell, but was sentenced to be hanged, cut down alive, and tortured, his body to be quartered, and his head exposed among the malefactors, on account of having consented to the execution of Charles I.

Among Hugh Peters's household was one Mary Morrell, a white slave, or purchased serving maid. She was a very bright and beautiful girl.

The passengers had small comforts on board the ship. The passage was a long one, and the time passed heavily.

Now the passengers who were most interesting to each other became intimate, and young Peter Folger and beautiful Mary Morrell of the Peterses became very interesting to each other and very social. Peter Folger began to ask himself the question, "If the fair maid would marry me, could I not purchase her freedom?" He seems somehow to have found out that the latter could be done, and so Peter offered himself to the attractive servant of the Peterses. The two were betrothed amid the Atlantic winds and the rolling seas, and the roaring ocean could have little troubled them then, so happy were their anticipations of their life in the New World.

Peter purchased Mary's freedom of the Peterses, and so he bought the grandmother of that Benjamin Franklin who was to "snatch the thunderbolts from heaven and the scepter from tyrants," to sign the Declaration of Independence which brought forth a new order of government for mankind, and to form a treaty of peace with England which was to make America free.

Peter Folger and his bride first settled in Watertown, Mass., where the young immigrant became a very useful citizen. He studied the Indian tongue.

About 1660 the family removed to Martha's Vineyard with Thomas Mayhew, of colonial fame, where Peter was employed as a school teacher and a land surveyor, and he assisted Mr. Mayhew in his work among the Indians. He went to Nantucket as a surveyor about 1662, and was induced to remove there as an interpreter and as land surveyor. He was assigned by the proprietors a place known as Roger's Field, and later as Jethro Folger's Lane, now a portion of the Maddequet Road. Their tenth child was Abiah, born August 15, 1667. She was the second wife of Josiah Franklin, tallow chandler, of the sign of the Blue Ball, Boston, and the mother of the boy whom she would like to have inherit so inspiring a name.

Peter Folger, the Quaker poet of the island of Nantucket, was a most worthy man. He lived at the beginning of the dark times of persecution, when Baptists and Quakers were in danger of being publicly whipped, branded, and deported or banished into the wilderness. Stories of the cruelty that followed these people filled the colonies, and caused the Quaker's heart to bleed and burn. He wrote a poem entitled A Looking-glass for the Times, in which he called upon New England to pause in her sins of intoleration and persecution, and threatened the judgments foretold in the Bible upon those who do injustice to God's children.

"Abiah," said the proud father, "I admire the character of your father. It stood for justice and human rights. But, wife, listen:

"Brother Benjamin has lost all of his ten children but one. I pity him. Wife, listen: Brother Benjamin is poor through no fault of his, but because he gave himself and all that he was to his family.

"Listen: It would touch his heart to learn that I had named this boy for him. It would show the old man that I had not forgotten him, but still thought of him.

"I can not do much for the boy, but I can give Brother Benjamin a home with me, and, as he is a great reader, he can instruct the boy by wise precept and a good example. If the boy will only follow brother's principles, he may make the name of Benjamin live.

"And once more: if we name the boy Benjamin, it will make Brother Benjamin feel that he has not lost all, but that he will have another chance in the world. How glad that would make the poor old man! I would like to name him as the boy's godfather. I do pity him, don't you? You have the heart of Peter Folger."

There was a silence.

"Abiah, what now shall the boy's name be?"

"Benjamin."

"You have chosen that name out of your heart. May that name bring you joy! It ought to do so, since you have given up your own wish and breathed it out of your heart and conscience. To give up is to gain."

He took up the child.

"Then we will give that name to him now, and I will take the child and go to the church, and I will name Brother Benjamin as his godfather."

"It is a very cold day for the little one."

"And a healthy one on which to start out in the world. There is nothing like starting right and with a good name, which may the Lord help this child to honor! And, Abiah, that He will."

He wrapped the babe up warmly, and looked him full in the face.

Josiah Franklin was a genial, provident, hard-sensed man. He probably had no prophetic visions; no thought that the little one given him on this frosty January morning in the breezy town of Boston by the sea would command senates, lead courts, and sign a declaration of peace that would make possible a new order of government in the world, could have entered his mind. If the boy should become a good man, with a little poetic imagination like his Uncle Benjamin, the home poet, he would be content.

He opened the door of his one room on the lower floor of his house and went out into the cold with the child in his arms. In a short time he returned and laid little Benjamin in the arms of his mother.

"I hope the child's life will hold out as it has begun," he added. "*Benjamin Franklin, day one; started right. May Heaven help him to get used to the world!*"

As poor as the tallow chandler was, he was hospitable on that day. He did not hold the birth of the little one – which really was an event of greater importance to the world than the birth of a king – as anything more than the simple growth of an honest family, who had left the crowded towns and a smithy in old England to enjoy freedom of faith and conscience and the opportunities of the New World. He wished to live where he might be free to enjoy his own opinions and to promote a colony where all men should have these privileges.

The house in which Franklin was born is described as follows:

> Its front upon the street was rudely clapboarded, and the sides and rear were protected from the inclemencies of a New England climate by large, rough shingles. In height the house was about three stories; in front, the second story and attic projected somewhat into the street, over the principal story on the ground floor. On the lower floor of the main house there was one room only. This, which probably served the Franklins as a parlor and sitting-room, and also for the family eating-room, was about twenty feet square, and had two windows on the street; and it had also one on the passageway, so as to give the inmates a good view of

> Washington Street. In the center of the southerly side of the room was one of those noted large fireplaces, situated in a most capacious chimney; on the left of this was a spacious closet. On the ground floor, connected with the sitting-room through the entry, was the kitchen. The second story originally contained but one chamber, and in this the windows, door, fireplace, and closet were similar in number and position to those in the parlor beneath it. The attic was also originally one unplastered room, and had a window in front on the street, and two common attic windows, one on each side of the roof, near the back part of it.

Soon after this unprophetic event Josiah Franklin and Abiah his wife went to live at the sign of the Blue Ball, on what was then the southeast corner of Hanover and Union Streets. The site of the birth of Franklin was long made notable as the office of the Boston Post, a political paper whose humor was once proverbial. The site is still visited by strangers, and bears the record of the event which was to contribute so powerful an influence to the scientific and political history of the world.

Wendell Phillips used to say that there were two kinds of people in the world – one who went ahead and did something, and another, who showed how that thing ought to have been done in some other way. The boy belonged to the former class.

But I doubt if any reader of this volume was ever born to so hard an estate as this boy. Let us follow him into the story land of childhood. In Germany every child passes through fairyland, but there was no such land in Josiah Franklin's tallow shop, except when the busy man sometimes played the violin in the inner room and sang psalms to the music, usually in a very solemn tone.

There were not many homes in Boston at this period that had even so near an approach to fairyland as a violin. Those were hard times for children, and especially for those with lively imaginations, which gift little Benjamin had in no common degree. There were Indians in those times, and supposed ghosts and witches, but no passing clouds bore angels' chariots; there were no brownies among the wild rose bushes and the ferns. There was one good children's story in every home – that of "Joseph" in the Bible, still, as always, the best family story in all the world.

CHAPTER II.
UNCLE BENJAMIN, THE POET

Mrs. Franklin has said that she could hardly remember the time in her son's childhood when he could not read. He emerged almost from babyhood a reader, and soon began to "devour" – to use the word then applied to his habit – all the books that fell within his reach.

When about four years old he became much interested in stories told him by his father of his Uncle Benjamin, the poet, who lived in England, and for whom he had been named, and who, it was hoped, would come to the new country and be his godfather.

The family at the Blue Ball was quick to notice the tendencies of their children in early life. Little Benjamin Franklin developed a curious liking for a trumpet and a gun. He liked to march about to noise, and this noise he was pleased to make himself – to blow his own trumpet. The family wrote to Uncle Benjamin, the poet, then in England, in regard to this unpromising trait, and the good man returned the following letter in reply:

To my Namesake, on hearing of his Inclination to Martial Affairs. July 7, 1710

"Believe me, Ben, it is a dangerous trade;
The sword has many marred as well as made;
By it do many fall, not many rise —
Makes many poor, few rich, not many wise;
Fills towns with ruin, fields with blood beside;
'Tis sloth's maintainer, and the shield of pride;
Fair cities, rich to-day in plenty flow,
War fills with want to-morrow, and with woe;
Ruined estates, victims of vice, broken limbs, and scars
Are the effects of desolating wars."

One evening, as the tallow chandler was hurrying hither and thither in his apron and paper cap, the door opened with a sharp ring of the bell fastened by a string upon it. The paper cap bobbed up.

"Hoi, what now?" said the tallow chandler.

"A letter from England, sirrah. The Lively Nancy has come in. There it is."

The tallow chandler held the letter up to the fire, for it had been a *melting* day, as certain days on which the melting of tallow for the molds were called. He read "Benjamin Franklin," and said: "That's curious – that's Brother Ben's writing. I would know that the world over." He put the letter in his pocket. He saw Dame Franklin looking through the transom over the door, and shook his head.

He sat down with his large family to a meal of bread and milk, and then took the letter from his pocket and read it over to himself.

"Ben," said he, "this is for you. I am going to read it. As I do so, you repeat after me the first letter of the first and of every line. Are you ready? Now.

"'*Be to thy parents an obedient son.*'"

"B," said little Ben.

"'*Each day let duty constantly be done.*'"

"E," the boy continued.

"'*Never give way to sloth, or lust, or pride.*'"

"N, father."

"'*Just free to be from thousand ills beside.*'"

"J, father."

"'*Above all ills be sure avoid the shelf.*'"

"A, father."

"'*Man's danger lies in Satan, sin, and self.*'"

"M, father."

"'*In virtue, learning, wisdom, progress make.*'"

"I, father."

"'*Ne'er shrink at suffering for thy Saviour's sake.*'"

"N, father. I know what that spells."

"What?"

"Benjamin."

"'*Fraud and all falsehood in thy dealings flee.*'"

"F," said the boy.

"'*Religious always in thy station be.*'"

"R, father."

"'*Adore the Maker of thy inward heart.*'"

"A, father."

"'*Now's the accepted time, give him thy heart.*'"

"N, father; and now I can guess the rest."

"'*Keep a good conscience, 'tis a constant friend.*'"

"K, father."

"'*Like judge and witness this thy acts attend.*'"

"L."

"'*In heart with bended knee alone adore.*'"

"I."

"'*None but the Three in One forever more.*'"

"N."

"And to whom are all these things written?"

"'To Benjamin Franklin,' sir."

"Well, my boy, if you will only follow the advice of your Uncle Benjamin, the poet, you never will need any more instruction. – Wife, hear this: Brother Ben writes that he is coming to America as soon as he can settle his affairs, and when he arrives I will give over the training of little Ben to him. He is his godfather, and he takes a great interest in a boy that he has never seen. Sometimes people are drawn toward each other before they meet – there's a kind of sympathy in this world that is felt in ways unseen and that is prophetic. Your father was a poet, and Uncle Ben, he is one, after a fashion. I wonder what little Ben will be!"

He put on his paper cap and opened the door into the molding-room. The fire was dying out on the hearth, and the candles in the molds were cooling and hardening. He opened the weather door, causing the bell attached to it to ring. He stood looking out on the bowery street of Boston town.

On the hill rose the North Church in the shadows near the sea. A horn rent the still air. A stage coach from Salem came rolling in and stopped at the Boston Stone, not far away. A little girl tripped down the street.

"A pound of candles, sir."

"Hoi, yes, yes," and he took some candles out of a mold and laid them in the scales. The girl courtesied, and the tallow chandler closed the door with a ting-a-ling.

Then Josiah sat down with his family and played the violin. He loved his brother Benjamin, and the thought of his coming made him a happy man.

One day the old man came. Soon after there happened a great event in the family.

It was a windy night. The ocean was dashing and foaming along the sea wall on the beach where Long Wharf, Lewis

Wharf, and Rowe's Wharf now are. The stars shone brightly, and clouds flew scudding over the moon.

Abiah Franklin opened the weather door and looked out. She returned to her great chair slowly with a cloud in her face.

"It is a bad night for those on the sea," she said. "It is now nine years since Josiah went away. Where he found an ocean grave we shall never know. It is hard," she added, "to have hope leave you in this way. It is one long torture to live in suspense. There hasn't been a day since the first year after Josiah left us that my ear has not waited to hear a knock on the door on a night like this.

"Josiah, you may say that I have faith in the impossible, but I sometimes believe that I shall hear that knock yet. There is one Scripture that comforts me when I think that; it is, 'Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.'"

Josiah Franklin sat silent. It was now indeed nine years since his son Josiah had left home against his will and gone to sea – "run away to sea," as his departure was called. It was a kind of mental distemper in old New England times for a boy "to run away and go to sea."

There had been fearful storms on the coast. Abiah Franklin was a silent woman when the winds bended the trees and the waves broke loudly on the shore. She thought then; she inwardly prayed, but she said little of the storm that was in her heart.

"I shall never see Josiah again," at last said Josiah Franklin. "It is a pity; it is hard on me that the son who bears my name should leave me, to become a wanderer. Boys will do such things.

I may have made his home too strict for him; if so, may the Lord forgive me. I have meant to do my best for all my children. – Ben, let Josiah be a warning to you; you have been having the boy fever to go to sea. Hear the winds blow and the sea dash! Josiah must have longed to be back by the fire on nights like these."

Josiah went to the window and tapped upon the pane. He did that often when his mind was troubled. To tap upon the pane eased his heartache. It was an old New England way.

Josiah took his violin, tuned it, and began to play while the family listened by the fading coals.

"I thought I heard something," said Abiah between one of the tunes.

"What was it, Abiah?" asked her husband.

"It sounded like a step."

"That's nothing strange."

"It sounded familiar," she said. "Steps are peculiar."

"Oh, I know of whom you are thinking," said Josiah. "May the Lord comfort you, for the winds and waves do not to-night."

He played again. His wife grew restless.

"Josiah," said she when he ceased playing, "you may say that I have fancies, but I thought I saw a face pass the window."

"That is likely, Abiah."

"But this one had a short chin and a long nose."

She choked, and her eyes were wet.

There came a rap upon the door. It was a strong hand that made it; there was a heart in the sound.

"I'll open the door, Josiah," said Abiah.

She removed the wooden bar with a trembling hand, and lifted the latch.

A tall, rugged form stood before her. She started back.

"Mother, don't you know me?"

"Yes, Josiah, I knew that you were coming to-night."

She gazed into his eyes silently.

"Who told you, mother?"

"My soul."

"Well, I've come back like the prodigal son. Let me give you a smack. You'll take me in – but how about father? I thought I heard him playing the violin."

"Josiah, that is your voice!" exclaimed Josiah the elder. "Now my cup of joy is full and running over. Josiah, come in out of the storm."

Josiah Franklin rushed to the door and locked his son in his arms, but there was probably but little sentiment in the response.

"Now I *know* the parable of the prodigal son," said he. "I had only read it before. Come in! come in! There are brothers and sisters here whom you have never seen. Now we are all here."

Uncle Benjamin wrote a poem to celebrate young Josiah's return. It was read in the family, with disheartening results. Sailor Josiah said that he "never cared much for poetry." The poem may be found in the large biographies of Franklin.

CHAPTER III.
BENJAMIN AND BENJAMIN

An old man sat by an open fire in a strange-looking room with a little boy on his knee. Beside him was a middle-aged man, the father of the boy.

"Brother Josiah," said the old man, "I have had a hard, disappointed life, but I have done the best that I could, and there has nothing happened since my own children died and my hair turned gray that has made me so happy as that letter that you sent to me in England in which you told me that you had named this boy for me."

"It makes me happy to see you here by my fire to-night, with the boy in your lap," said the father. "Benjamin and Benjamin! My heart has been true to you in all your troubles and losses, and I would have helped you had I been able. How did you get up the resolution to cross the sea in your old age?"

"Brother Josiah, it was because my own son is here, and he was all that I had left of my own family. But that was not all. In one sense my own life has failed; I have come down to old age with empty hands. When your letter came saying that you had named this boy for me, and had made me his godfather, I saw that you pitied me, and that you had a place for me in your heart. I thought of all the years that we had passed together when we were young; of the farm and forge in Ecton; of Banbury; of the chimes of Nottingham; of all that we were to each other then.

"I was all alone in London, and there my heart turned to you as it did when we were boys. That gave me resolution to cross the sea, Brother Josiah, although my hair is white and my veins are thin.

"But that was not all, brother; he is a poor man indeed who gives up hope. When a man loses hope for himself, he wishes to live in another. The ancients used to pray that their sons might be nobler than themselves. When I read your letter that said that you had named this boy for me and had made me his godfather, you can not tell how life revived in me – it was like seeing a rainbow after a storm. I said to myself that I had another hope in this world; that I would live in the boy. I have come over to America to live in this boy.

"O brother, I never thought that I would see an hour like this! I am poor, but I am happy. I am happy because you loved me after I became poor and friendless. That was your opportunity to show what your heart was. I am happy because you trusted me and gave my name to this boy.

"Brother Josiah, I have come over to America to return your love, in teaching this boy how to live and how to fulfill the best that is in him. A boy with your heart can succeed in life, even if he have but common gifts. The best thing that can be said of any man is that he is true-hearted. Brother, you have been true-hearted to me, and the boy inherits your nature, and I am going to be true-hearted to him and to do all I can to make his life a blessing to you and the world. We do no self-sacrificing thing without fruit."

The old man put his arm about the boy, and said:

"Ben, little Ben, I loved you before I saw you, and I love you more than ever now. I have come across the ocean in my old age to be with you. I want you to like me, Ben."

"I do, uncle," said little Ben. "I would rather be with you than with any one. I am glad that you have come."

"That makes me happy, that makes my old heart happy. I did everything a man could do for his wife and children and for everybody. I was left alone in London, poor; I seemed to be a forsaken man, but this makes up for all."

"Benjamin and Benjamin!" said the younger brother, touching the strings of the violin that he held on his lap – "Benjamin and Benjamin! Brother Benjamin, how did you get the money to cross the ocean?"

"I sold my goods and my pamphlets. *They* were my life; I had put my life into them. But I sold them, for what were they if I could have the chance to live another life in little Ben?"

"What were your pamphlets?" asked little Ben.

"They were my life, and I sold them for you, that I might make your life a blessing to your father, who has been a true brother to me. I will tell you the whole story of the pamphlets some day."

"Uncle, I love you more than ever before, because you sold the treasures for me. I wish that I might grow up and help folks, so that my name might honor yours.

"You can make it that, my boy. If you will let me teach you, you may make it that. There can nothing stand before a will that wills to do good. It is the heart that has power, my boy. My life will not have been lost if I can live in you."

"I have not much time for educating my children," said the younger brother. "I am going to give over the training of the boy to you. True education begins with the heart first, so as to make right ideas fixed in the mind and right habits, in the conduct. It may be little that I can send him to school, but it is what you can do for him that will give him a start in life. I want you to see that he starts right in life. I leave his training to you. I have a dozen mouths to feed, and small time for anything but toil."

He tuned his violin and played an old English air. There were candle molds in the room, long rows of candle wicks, great kettles, a gun, a Bible, some old books, and a fireplace with a great crane, hooks, and andirons.

Little Benjamin looked up into the old man's face and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"I am glad father did not forget you," said he.

The old man's lip quivered.

"He has been a true brother to me. Always remember that, boy, as long as you live. It is such memories as that that teach. His heart is true to me now as when we used to leave the forge and roam the woods of Banbury together in springtime, when the skylark rose out of the meadows and the hedgerows bloomed. It is good for families to be so true to each other. If one member of a family lacks anything, it is good for another to make up for it. Yes, boy, your father has a good heart, else you would not now be in my arms."

"Why do you cry, papa?" said the boy, for his father's eyes were filled with tears which coursed down his cheeks. Something that aged Benjamin had said about the forge, the nightingale, or the thorn had touched his heart.

"We can never be young again, brother," said Josiah Franklin. "I shall never see the thorn bloom or hear the nightingale sing as I once did. No, no, no; but I am glad that I have brought you and Ben together. That would have pleased our old mother's heart, long dead and gone to the violets and primroses. Do you suppose the dead know? I sometimes think they do, and that it makes them happy to see things like these. I will talk with the parson about these things some day."

The younger brother smiled through his tears and straightened himself up, as though he felt that he had yielded to weakness, for he was a plain, hard-working man. Suddenly he said:

"Brother, you remember Uncle Tom?"

"Yes, yes; he set the chimes of Nottingham ringing in the air. I can hear them ringing now in my memory. Brother, I think little Ben favors Uncle Tom."

"Who was Uncle Tom?" asked the boy.

"They used to say that he was a wizard. I will tell you all about him some day. Let us listen now to your father's violin."

The house was still, save that the sea winds stirred the crisp autumn leaves in the great trees near and the nine o'clock bell fell solemnly on the air. A watchman went by, saying, "All is well!"

Yes, all is well in hearts like these – hearts that can pity, love, forbear, and feel.

CHAPTER IV.
FRANKLIN'S STORY OF A HOLIDAY IN CHILDHOOD

As barren as was the early Puritan town in things that please the fancy of the child, Josiah Franklin's home was a cheerful one. It kept holidays, when the violin was played, and some pennies were bestowed upon the many children.

Let us enter the house by the candle-room door. The opening of the door rings a bell. There is an odor of tallow everywhere. One side is hung with wickings, to be cut and trimmed.

When the tallow is boiling the room is very hot, close, and the atmosphere oily.

There is a soap kettle in the room. The odor of the lye is more agreeable than that of the melted tallow.

Little Ben is here, short, stout, rosy-faced, with a great head. Where he goes the other children go; what he does, they do. Already a little world has begun to follow him.

Look at him as he runs around among the candle molds, talking like a philosopher. Does he seem likely to stand in the French court amid the splendors of the palace of Versailles, the most popular and conspicuous person among all the jeweled multitude who fill the mirrored, the golden, the blazing halls except the king himself? Does he look as though he would one day ask the French king for an army to help establish the independence of his country, and that the throne would bow to him?

Homely as was that home, the fancy of Franklin after he became great always loved to return to it.

In his advanced years he wished to prepare a little story or parable that would show that people spend too much time and money on things that could be more cheaply purchased or that they could well do without. He wrote out an anecdote of his childhood that illustrated in a clear way, like so many flashes, how the resources of life may be wasted. The story has been printed, we may safely say, a thousand times. Few stories have ever had a wider circulation or been more often quoted. It has in it a picture of his old home, and as such we must give it here. Here is the parable again, as in the original:

"When I was a child, at seven years old, my friends, on a holiday, filled my pockets with coppers. I went directly to a shop where they sold toys for children, and, being charmed with the sound of a *whistle* that I met by the way in the hands of another boy, I voluntarily offered him all my money for one. I then came home, and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my *whistle*, but disturbing all the family. My brothers and sisters and cousins, understanding the bargain I had made, told me I had given four times as much for it as it was worth. This put me in mind what good things I might have bought with the rest of the money; and they laughed at me so much for my folly that I cried with vexation, and the reflection gave me more chagrin than the *whistle* gave me pleasure.

"This, however, was afterward of use to me, the impression continuing on my mind; so that often, when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing, I said to myself, *Don't give too much for the whistle*, and so I saved my money.

"As I grew up, came into the world, and observed the actions of men, I thought I met with many, very many, who *gave too much for the whistle*.

"When I saw any one too ambitious of court favor, sacrificing his time in attendance on levees, his repose, his liberty, his virtue, and perhaps his friends, to attain it, I have said to myself, *This man gave too much for his whistle.*

"When I saw another fond of popularity, constantly employing himself in political bustles, neglecting his own affairs, and ruining them by neglect, *He pays, indeed*, says I, *too much for this whistle.*

"If I knew a miser who gave up every kind of comfortable living, all the pleasure of doing good to others, all the esteem of his fellow-citizens, and the joys of benevolent friendship for the sake of accumulating wealth, *Poor man*, says I, *you do, indeed, pay too much for your whistle.*

"When I meet a man of pleasure, sacrificing every laudable improvement of mind, or of his fortune, to mere corporeal sensations, *Mistaken man*, says I, *you are providing pain for yourself instead of pleasure; you give too much for your whistle.*

"If I see one fond of fine clothes, fine furniture, fine equipages, all above his fortune, for which he contracts debts, and ends his career in prison, *Alas!* says I, *he has paid dear, very dear, for his whistle.*

"When I see a beautiful, sweet-tempered girl married to an ill-natured brute of a husband, *What a pity it is*, says I, *that she had paid so much for a whistle!*

"In short, I conceived that great part of the miseries of mankind were brought upon them by the false estimates they had made of the value of things, and by their giving too much for their *whistle*."

CHAPTER V.
THE BOY FRANKLIN'S KITE

Little Ben now began to lead the sports of the boys. As there came to Froebel an inspiration to found a system of education in which the playground should be made a means of forming character when life was in the clay, so to young Franklin came a desire to make sports and pastimes useful. This caused him to build the little wharf in the soft marsh whence the boys might catch minnows and sail their boats.

Boys of nearly all countries and ages have found delight in flying kites. A light frame of wood, covered with paper, held by a long string, and raised by propelling it against the air, has always peculiar attractions for the young. To see an object rise from the earth by a law of Nature which seems to overcome gravitation to the sky while the string is yet in the hand, gives a boy a sense of power which excites his imagination and thrills his blood.

In Franklin's time the boy who could fly his kite the highest, or who could make his kite appear to be the most picturesque in the far-away blue sky, was regarded as a leader among his fellows, and young Franklin, as we may infer, made his kite fly very high.

But he was not content with the altitude to which he could raise his kite or its beauty in the sky. His inquiry was, What can the kite be made to teach that is useful? What can it be made to *do?* What good can it accomplish?

Ben was an expert swimmer. After he had mastered the art of overcoming the water, he sought how to make swimming safe and easy; and when he had learned this himself, he taught other boys how to swim safely and easily.

One day he was flying his kite on the shore. His imagination had wings as well as the kite, and he followed it with the eye of fancy as it drifted along the sky pulling at his fingers.

It was a warm day, and the cool harbor rippled near, and he began to feel a desire to plunge into the water, but he did not like to pull down his kite.

He threw off his clothes and dropped into the cool water, still holding his kite string, which was probably fastened to a short stick in his hand.

He turned on his back in the water and floated, looking up to the kite in the blue, sunny sky.

But something, was happening. The kite, like a sail in a boat, was bearing him along. He was the boat, the kite high in the sky was the sail, between the two was a single string. He could sail himself on the water by a kite in the sky!

So he drifted along, near the Mystic River probably, on that warm pleasant day. The sense of the power that he gained by thus obeying a law of Nature filled him with delight. He could not have then dreamed that the simple discovery would lead up to another which would enable man to see how to control one of the greatest forces in the universe. He saw simply that he could make the air *work* for him, and he probably dreamed that sometime and somewhere the same principle would enable an inventor to show the world how to navigate the air.

The kite now became to him something more than a plaything – a wonder. It caused his fancy to soar, and little Ben was always happy when his fancy was on the wing.

There was a man named Jamie who liked to loiter around the Blue Ball. He was a Scotchman, and full of humor.

"An' wot you been doin' now?" said Jamie the Scotchman, as the boy returned to the Blue Ball with his big kite and wet hair. "Kite-flying and swimming don't go together."

"Ah, sirrah, don't you think that any more! Kite-flying and floating on one's back in the water do go together. I've been making a boat of myself, and the sail was in the sky."

"Sho! How did that come about?"

"I floated on my back and held the kite string in my hand, and the kite drew me along."

"It did, hey? Well, it might do that with a little shaver like you. What made you think of that, I would like to know? You're always thinkin' out somethin' new. You'll get into difficulties some day, like the dog that saw the moon in the well and leaped down to fetch it up; he gave one howl, only one, once for all, and then they fetched *him* up; he had nothing more to say. So it will be with you if you go kiting about after such things, flyin' kites for boat sails."

"But, Jamie, I think that I am the first boy that ever sailed on the water without a boat – now don't you?"

"Well, I don't know. There's nothin' new under the sun. People like you that are always inquirin' out the whys and wherefores of things commonly get into trouble. Ben, wot will ever become of you, I wonder?"

"Archimedes made water run uphill."

"He did, hey? So he did, as I remember to have read. But he lost his life broodin' over a lot of figers that he was drawin' on the sand – angles and triangles an' things. The Roman soldier cut him down when he was dreamin', and they let his tomb all grow up to briers. Do you think, Ben, that you will ever make the river run uphill? Perhaps you'll turn the water up to the sky on a kite string, and then we can have rain in plantin' time. Who knows?"

He added thoughtfully:

"I wouldn't wonder, Ben, if you invented somethin' if you live. But the prospect isn't very encouragin' of your ever doin' anything alarmin'."

"Did you ever hear what Archimedes exclaimed when he discovered the law that a body plunged in water loses as much of its weight as is equal to the weight of an equal volume of the fluid, and applied it to the alloy in the king's crown?"

"No. Wot did he exclaim?"

"*Eureka! Eureka!*"

"Wot did he do that for?"

"It means, 'I have found it.'"

"Maybe you'll find out something sometime, Ben. You all run to dreams about such things, and some boys turn their dreams into facts, as architects build their imaginations and make money. But the fifteenth child of a tallow chandler, who was the son of a blacksmith and of a woman whose mother was bought and sold, a boy whose wits are off kite-flyin' instead of wick-cuttin' and tallow-moldin', has no great chance in the future, so it looks to me. But one can't always tell. I don't think that you'll never get to be an Archimedes and cry out 'Eureka!' But you've got imagination enough to hitch the world to a kite and send it off among the planets and shootin' stars, no one knows where. I never did see any little shaver that had so much kite-flyin' in his head as you."

"Archimedes said that if he only had a lever long enough he would move the world."

"He did, hey? Well, little Ben Franklin, you just put up your kite and attend to the candle molds, and let swimmin' in the air all go. Whatever may happen on this planet, *you'll* never be likely to move the world with a kite, of all things, nor with anything else, for that matter. So it looks to me, and I'm generally pretty far-sighted. It takes practical people to do practical things. Still, the old Bible does say that 'where there is no vision the people perish.' Well, I don't know – as I said, we can not always tell – David slew a giant with a pebble stone, and you may come to somethin' by some accident or other. I'm sure I wish you well. It may be that your uncle Benjamin, the poet, will train you when he comes to understand you, but his thoughts run to kite-flyin' and such things, and he never has amounted to anything at all, I'm told. You was named after him, and rightly, I guess. He would like to have been a Socrates. But the tape measure wouldn't fit his head."

He saw a shade in the boy's face, and added:

"*He's* going to live here, they say. Then there will be two of you, and you could fly kites and make up poetry together, if it were not for a dozen mouths to feed, which matters generally tend to bring one down from the sky."

An older son of Josiah Franklin appeared.

"James," said Jamie, "here's your brother Ben; he's been sailin' with the sail in the sky. He ought to be keerful of his talents. There's no knowin' what they may lead up to. When a person gets started in such ways as these there's no knowin' how far he may go."

Brother James opened the weather door at the Blue Ball. The bell tinkled and Ben followed him in, and the two sat down to bowls of bread, sweet apples, and milk.

"What have you been doing, Ben?" asked Brother James.

Little Ben did not answer. He got up from the table and went away downhearted, with his face in his jacket sleeve. It hurt him to be laughed at, but his imagination was a comforting companion to him in hours like these.

He could go kite-flying in his mind, and no one could see the flight.

"One can not make an eagle run around a barnyard like a hen," said a sage observer of life. There was the blood of noble purposes in little Ben Franklin's vein, if his ancestors were blacksmiths and his grandmother had been a white slave whose services were bought and sold. He had begun kite-flying; he will fly a kite again one day.

CHAPTER VI.
LITTLE BEN'S GUINEA PIG

Ben loved little animals. He not only liked to have them about him, but it gave him great joy to protect them. One of his pets was a guinea pig.

"There are few traits of character that speak better for the future of a boy than that which seeks to protect the helpless and overlooked in the brute creation," said Uncle Benjamin to Abiah Franklin one day. "There are not many animals that have so many enemies as a guinea pig. Cats, dogs, and even the hens run after the harmless little thing. I wonder that this one should be alive now. He would have been dead but for Ben."

Abiah had been spinning. It was a windy day, and the winds, too, had been spinning as it were around the house. She had stopped to rest in her work. But the winds had not stopped, but kept up a sound like that of the wheel.

"You are always saying good things about little Ben," said Abiah. "What is it that you see in him that is different from other boys?"

"*Personality*," said Uncle Ben. "Look at him now, out in the yard. He has been protecting the pigeon boxes from the wind, and after them the rabbit warren. He is always seeking to make life more comfortable for everybody and everything. Now, Abiah, a heart that seeks the good of others will never want for a friend and a home. This *personality* will make for him many friends and some enemies in the future. The power of life lies in the heart."

The weather door opened, and little Ben came into the room and asked for a cooky out of the earthen jar.

"Where's your guinea pig, my boy?" asked Uncle Benjamin. "I only see him now and then."

"Why do you call him a guinea pig, uncle?" asked little Ben. "He did not come from Guinea, and he is not a pig. He came from South America, where it is warm, and he is a covey; he is not a bit of a rabbit, and not a pig."

"Where do you keep him?" asked Uncle Benjamin.

"I keep him where he is warm, uncle. It makes my heart all shrink up to see the little thing shiver when the wind strikes him. It is cruel to bring such animals into a climate like this."

"There are tens of thousands of guinea pigs, or coveys, in the land where they are found. Yes, millions, I am told. One guinea pig don't count for much."

"But, uncle, one feels the cold wind as much as another would – as much as each of all the millions would."

"But, Ben, you have not answered my question. Where is the little covey now?"

Little Ben colored red, and looked suspiciously toward the door of the room in which his father was at work. He presently saw his father's paper hat through the light over the door, and said:

"Let me tell you some other time, uncle. They will laugh at me if I tell you now."

"Benjamin," said his mother, "we are going to have a family gathering this year on the anniversary of the day when your father landed here in 1685. The family are all coming home, and the two Folger girls – the schoolmarms – will be here from Nantucket. You will have to take the guinea-pig box out of your room under the eaves. The Folger girls are very particular. What would your aunts Hannah and Patience Folger, the schoolmarms, say if they were to find your room a sty for a guinea pig?"

"My little covey, mother," said Ben. "I'll put the cage into the shop. No, he would be killed there. I'll put him where he will not offend my aunts, mother."

Abiah Folger began to spin again, and the wheel and the wind united did indeed make a lonely atmosphere. Uncle Benjamin punched the fire, which roared at times lustily under the great shelf where were a row of pewter platters.

Little Ben drew near the fire. Suddenly Uncle Ben started.

"Oh, my eyes! what is that, Ben?"

Ben looked about.

"I don't see anything, uncle."

"Your coat sleeve keeps jumping. I have seen it four or five times. What is the matter there?"

Uncle Ben put the tongs in the chimney nook, and said:

"There is a bunch on your arm, Ben."

"No, no, no, uncle."

"There is, and it moves about."

"I have no wound, or boil, nor anything, uncle."

"There it goes again, or else my head is wrong. There! there! Abiah, stop spinning a minute and come here."

The wheel stopped. Abiah, with a troubled look, came to the hearth and leaned over it with one hand against the shelf.

"What has he been doing now?" she asked in a troubled tone.

"Look at his arm there! It bulges out."

Uncle Ben put out his hand to touch the protrusion. He laid his finger on the place carefully, when suddenly the bunch was gone, and just then appeared a little head outside the sleeve.

"I told you that there was something there! I knew that there was all the time."

There was – it was the little covey or guinea pig.

"What did I tell you before Ben came in?" said Uncle Benjamin.

Little Ben did not know what his uncle had said to his mother before he opened the door; but he heard him say now mysteriously:

"It is a cold day for shelterless things. That little bunch on his arm illustrates what I mean by personality. There are more guinea pigs than one in this cold world."

Abiah went to her wheel in silence, and it began to buzz again.

Little Ben went into the room where his father was at work.

The wheel stopped.

"I do love that boy," said Abiah, "notwithstanding all the fault they find with him."

"So do I, Abiah. I'm glad that you made him my godson. All people are common in this world except those who have personality. He had a great-uncle that was just like him, and, Abiah, he became a friend of Lord Halifax."

"I am afraid that poor little Ben, after all his care of the guinea pig, will never commend himself to Lord Halifax. But we can not tell."

"No, Abiah, we can not tell, but stranger things have happened, and such things begin in that way."

CHAPTER VII.
UNCLE TOM, WHO ROSE IN THE WORLD

Little Ben had some reasons to dread the visits of his two stately aunts from Nantucket, the schoolmarms, whom his mother called "the girls."

But one November day, as he came home after the arrival of the stage from Salem, he was met at the door by his uncle with the question:

"Who do you think has come?"

"I don't know, uncle. Josiah?"

"No."

"Brother John from Rhode Island? Esther and Martha from school? Zachary from Annapolis?"

"Not right yet."

"Esther and Martha from school at Nantucket?"

"Yes; and your Aunt Hannah and Aunt Prudence have come with them, with bandboxes, caps, snuffboxes, and all. They came on the sloop. It is a time for little boys to be quiet now, and to keep guinea pigs and such things well out of sight."

"How long are *they* going to stay, uncle?"

By "they" he referred to his aunts.

"A week or more, I guess. This will be your still week."

"But I can not keep still, uncle; I am a boy."

Little Benjamin went into the home room and there met his stately aunts, the school teachers.

There was a great fire in the room, and the pewter platters shone there like silver. His aunts received him kindly, but in a very condescending way. They had not yet discovered any "personality" in the short, little boy of the numerous family.

The aunts delighted in imparting moral instruction, and they saw in little Ben, as they thought, a useful opportunity for such culture.

That night the family, with the aunts from Nantucket, sat down by the great fire under the shining platters to hear Uncle Benjamin relate a marvelous story. Every family has one wonder story, and this was the one wonder story of the Franklin side of the family. Uncle Benjamin wished the two "aunts" to hear this story "on his side of the house."

"There was only one of our family in England who ever became great, and that was my Uncle Thomas," he began.

"Only think of that, little Ben," said Aunt Hannah Folger, "only one."

"Only one," said Aunt Prudence Folger, "and may you become like him."

"He was born a smith, and so he was bred, for it was the custom of our family that the eldest son should be a smith – a Franklin."

"Sit very still, my little boy," said the two aunts, "and you shall be told what happened. He was a smith."

"There was a man in our town," continued Uncle Ben, "whose name was Palmer, and he became an esquire."

"Maybe that *you* will become an esquire," said Aunt Esther to Ben.

"He became an esquire," said Aunt Prudence. "Sit very still, and you shall hear."

"This man liked to encourage people; he used to say good things of them so as to help them grow. If one encourage the good things which one finds in people it helps them. It is a good thing to say good words."

"If you do not say too many," said Josiah Franklin. "I sometimes think we do to little Ben."

"Well, this Esquire Palmer told Uncle Tom one day that he would make a good lawyer. Tom was very much surprised, and said, 'I am poor; if I had any one to help me I would study for the bar.' 'I will help you,' said Esquire Palmer. So Uncle Tom dropped the hammer and went to school."

"And *you* may one day leave the candle shop and go to school," said Aunt Esther, moralizing.

"I hope so," said little Ben humbly.

"Not but that the candle shop is a very useful place," said the other aunt.

"Uncle Tom read law, and began to practice it in the town and county of Northampton. He was public-spirited, and he became a leader in all the enterprises of the county, and people looked up to him as a great man. Everything that he touched improved."

"Just think of that," said Aunt Esther to Ben. "Everything that he touched improved. That is the way to make success for yourself – help others."

"May you profit by his example, Ben," said Aunt Prudence, bobbing her cap border.

"He made everything better – the church, the town, the public ways, the societies, the homes. He was a just man, and he used to say that what the world wanted was *justice*. Everybody found him a friend, except he who was unjust. And at last Lord Halifax saw how useful he had become, and he honored him with his friendship. When he died, which was some fourteen years ago, all the people felt that they had lost a friend."

The two aunts bowed over in reverence for such a character. Aunt Esther did more than this. She put her finger slowly and impressively on little Ben's arm, and said:

"It may be that you will grow up and be like him."

"Or like Father Folger," added Aunt Prudence, who wished to remind Uncle Benjamin that the Folgers too had a family history.

Little Ben was really impressed by the homely story which he now heard a second time. It presented a looking-glass to him, and he saw himself in it. He looked up to his Uncle Ben with an earnest face, and said:

"I would like to help folks, too; why can I not, if Uncle Tom did?"

"A very proper remark," said Aunt Esther.

"Very," said Aunt Prudence.

"Good intentions are all right," said Josiah Franklin. "They do to sail away with, but where will one land if he has not got the steering gear? That is a good story, Brother Ben. Encourage little Ben here all you can; it may be that you might have become a man like Uncle Tom if you had had some esquire to encourage you."

The aunts sat still and thought of this suggestion.

Then Josiah played on his violin, and the two aunts told tales of the work of *their* good father among the Indians of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

A baby lay in Abiah Franklin's arms sleeping while these family stories were related. It was a girl, and they had named her Jane, and called her "Jenny."

Amid the story-telling Jenny awoke, and put out her arms to Ben.

"The baby takes to Ben," said the mother. "The first person that she seemed to notice was Ben, and she can hardly keep her little eyes off of him."

Ben took little Jenny into his arms.

As Uncle Benjamin grew older the library of pamphlets that he had sold and on whose margins he had written the best thoughts of his life haunted him. He would sometimes be heard to exclaim:

"Those pamphlets! those pamphlets!"

"Why do you think so much of the lost pamphlets, uncle?"

said little Ben.

"Hoi, Ben, hoi! 'tis on your account, Ben. I want you to have them, Ben, and read them when you are old; and I want my son Samuel to have them, although his mind does not turn to philosophy as yours does. It tore my heart to part with them, but I did it for you. One must save or be a slave. You see what it is to be poor. But it is all right, Ben, as the book of Job tells us; all things that happen to a man with good intentions are for his best good."

It was Uncle Benjamin's purpose to mold the character of his little godson. He had the Froebel ideas, although he lived before the time of the great apostle of soul education.

"The first thing for a boy like you, Ben, is to have a definite purpose, and the next is to have fixed habits to carry forward that purpose, to make life automatic."

"What do you mean by *automatic*, uncle?"

"Your heart beats itself, does it not? You do not make it beat. Your muscles do their work without any thought on your part; so the stomach assimilates its food. The first thing in education, more than cultivation of memory or reason, is to teach one to do right, right all the time, because it is just as the heart beats and the muscles or the stomach do their work. I want so to mold you that justice shall be the law of your life – so that to do right all the time will be a part of your nature. This is the first principle of home education."

Little Ben only in part comprehended this simple philosophy.

"But, uncle," said he, "what should be my purpose in life?"

"You have the nature of your great-uncle Tom – you love to be doing things to help others, just as he did. The purpose of your life should be to improve things. Genius creates things, but benevolence improves things. You will understand what I mean some day, when you shall grow up and go to England and hear the chimes of Northampton ring."

Uncle Benjamin liked to take little Ben out to sea. They journeyed so far that they sometimes lost sight of the State House, the lions and unicorns, and the window from which new kings and royal governors had been proclaimed.

These excursions were the times that Uncle Ben sought to mold the will of little Ben after the purpose that he saw in him. He told him the stories of life that educate the imagination, that help to make fixed habit.

"If I only had those pamphlets," he said on these excursions, "what a help they would be to us! You will never forget those pamphlets, will you, Ben?"

CHAPTER VIII.
LITTLE BEN SHOWS HIS HANDWRITING TO THE FAMILY

Mr. George Brownell kept a writing school, and little Ben was sent to him to learn to write his name and to "do sums."

Franklin did indeed learn to write his name – very neatly and with the customary flourish. In this respect he greatly pleased the genial old master.

"That handwriting," he said, "is fit to put before a king. Maybe it will be some day, who knows? But, Ben," he added, "I am sorry to say it, although you write your name so well, you are a dunce at doing your sums. Now, if I were in your place I would make up for that."

In picturing these encouraging schooldays in after years, Benjamin Franklin kindly says of the old pedagogue: "He was a skillful master, and successful in his profession, employing the mildest and most encouraging methods. Under him I learned to write a good hand pretty soon, but he could not teach me arithmetic."

One afternoon, toward evening, after good Master Brownell had encouraged him by speaking well of his copy book, he came home with a light heart. He found his Uncle Benjamin, and his cousin, Samuel Franklin, Uncle Benjamin's son, at the candle shop.

"Uncle Benjamin," he said, "I have something to show you; I have brought home my copy book. Master Brownell says it is done pretty well, but that I ought to do my sums better, and that I 'must make up for that.'"

"He is right, little Ben. We have to try to make up for our defects all our lives. Let me look at the book. Now that is what I call right good writing."

"Do you see anything peculiar about it?" asked Ben. "Master Brownell said that it was good enough to set before a king, and that it might be, some day."

Little Ben's big brothers, who had come in, laughed, and slapped their hands on their knees.

Josiah Franklin left his tallow boiling, and said:

"Let me see it, Ben."

He mounted his spectacles and held up the copy book, turning his eyes upon the boy's signature.

"That flourish to your name does look curious. It is all tied up, and seems to come to a conclusion, as though your mind had carried out its original intention. There is character in the flourish. Ben, you have done well. But you must make up for your sums. – Brother Ben, that is a good hand, but I guess the sun will go around and around the world many times before kings ever set their eyes on it. But it will tell for sure. The good Book says, 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business – ' Well, you all know the rest. I repeat that text often, so that my boys can hear."

Samuel Franklin, Uncle Ben's son, examined the copy book.

"Samuel," said Uncle Ben, "I used to write a hand something like that. I wish that I had my pamphlets; I would show you my hand at the time of the Restoration. I used to write political proverbs in my pamphlets in that way.

"I want you," he continued, "to honor that handwriting, and do your master credit. The master has tried to do well by you. I hope that handwriting may be used for the benefit of others; live for influences, not for wealth or fame. My life will not fail if I can live in you and Samuel here. Remember that everything that you do for others will send you up the ladder of life, and I will go with you, even if the daisies do then blow over me.

"Ben, you and Samuel should be friends, and, if you should do well in life, and he should do the same – which Heaven grant that he may! – I want you sometimes to meet by the gate post and think of me.

"If you are ever tempted to step downward, think of me, Ben; think of me, Samuel. Meet sometimes at the gate post, and remember all these things. You will be older some day, and I will be gone."

The old man held up the copy book again.

"'Fit to set before kings,'" he repeated. "That was a great compliment."

Little Jane, the baby, seeing the people all pleased, held out her hands to Ben.

"Jenny shall see it," said Ben. He took the copy book and held it up before her eyes. She laughed with the rest.

That signature was to remap the world. It was to be set to four documents that changed the history of mankind. Reader, would you like to see how a copy of it looked? We may fancy that the curious flourish first saw the light in Mr. Brownell's school.

CHAPTER IX.
UNCLE BENJAMIN'S SECRET

Little Ben was fond of making toy boats and ships and sailing them. He sometimes took them to the pond on the Common, and sometimes to wharves at low tide.

One day, as he was going out of the door of the sign of the Blue Ball, boat in hand, Uncle Benjamin followed him.

The old man with white hair watched the boy fondly day by day, and he found in him many new things that made him proud to have him bear his name.

"Ben," he called after him, "may I go too?"

"Yes, yes, Uncle Benjamin. I am going down beside Long Wharf. Let us take Baby Jane, and I will leave the boat behind. The baby likes to go out with us."

The old man's heart was glad to feel the heart that was in the voice.

Little Ben took Baby Jane from his mother's arms, and they went toward the sea, where were small crafts, and sat down on board of one of the safely anchored boats. It was a sunny day, with a light breeze, and the harbor lay before them bright, calm, and fair.

"Ben, let us talk together a little. I am an old man; I do not know how many years or even days more I may have to spend with you. I hope many, for I have always loved to live, and, since I have come to know you and to give my heart to you, life is dearer to me than ever. I have a secret which I wish to tell you.

"Ben, as I have said, I have found in you *personality*. You do not fully know what that means now. Think of it fifty years from now, then you will know. You just now gave up your boat-sailing for me and the baby. You like to help others to be more comfortable and happy, and that is the way to grow. That is the law of life, and the purpose of life is to grow. You may not understand what I mean now; think of what I say fifty years from now.

"Ben, I have faith in you. I want that you should always remember me as one who saw what was in you and believed in you."

"Is that the secret that you wanted to tell me, uncle?" asked little Ben.

"No, no, no, Ben; I am a poor man after a hard life. You do pity me, don't you? Where are my ten children now, except one? Go ask the English graveyard. My wife is gone. I am almost alone in the world. All bright things seemed to be going out in my life when you came into it bearing my name. I like to tell you this again and again. Oh, little Ben, you do not know how I love you! To be with you is to be happy.

"One after one my ten children went away to their long rest where the English violets come and go. Two after one they went, three after two, and four after three. I lost my property, and

Samuel went to America, and I was told that Brother Josiah had named you for me and made me your godfather. Then, as there was nothing but graves left for me in old England, I wished to come to America too.

"Ben, Ben, you have heard all this before, but, listen, I must tell you more. I wanted to cross the ocean, but I had little money for such a removal, and I used to walk about London with empty hands and wish for £100, and my wishes brought me nothing but sorrow, and I would go to my poor lodgings and weep. Oh, you can not tell how I used to feel!

"I had a few things left – they were as dear to me as my own heart. I am coming to the secret now, Ben. You are asking in your mind what those things were that I sold; they were the things most precious of all to me, and among them were – were my pamphlets."

The old man bowed over, and his lip quivered.

"What were your pamphlets, uncle? You said that you would explain to me what they were."

"Ben, there are some things that we come to possess that are a part of ourselves. Our heart goes into them – our blood – our life – our hope. It was so with my pamphlets, Ben. This is the secret I have to tell.

"I loved the cause of the Commonwealth – Cromwell's days. In the last days of the Commonwealth, when I had but little money to spare, I used to buy pamphlets on the times. When I had read a pamphlet, thoughts would come to me. I did not seem to think them; they came to me, and I used to note these thoughts down on the margins of the leaves in the pamphlets. Those thoughts were more to me than anything that I ever had in life."

"I would have felt so too, uncle."

"Years passed, and I had a little library of pamphlets, the margins filled with my own thoughts. Poetry is the soul's vision, and I wrote my poetry on those pamphlets. Ben, oh, my pamphlets! my pamphlets! They were my soul; all the best of me went into them.

"Well, Ben, times changed. King Charles returned, and the Commonwealth vanished, but I still added to my pamphlets for years and years. Then I heard of you. I always loved Brother Josiah, and my son was on this side of the water, and the longing grew to sail for America, where my heart then was, as I have told you."

"I see how you felt, uncle."

"I dreamed how to get the money; I prayed for the money. One day a London bookseller said to me: 'You have been collecting pamphlets. Have you one entitled Human Freedom'? I answered that I had, but that it was covered with notes. He asked me to let him come to my lodgings and read it. He came and looked over all my pamphlets, and told me that a part of the collection had become rare and valuable; that they might have a value in legal cases that would arise owing to the change in the times. He offered to buy them. I refused to sell them, on account of what

I had written on the margins of the leaves. What I wrote were my revelations.

"He went away. Then my loneliness increased, and my longing to come to America. I could sell my valuables, and among them the pamphlets, and this would give me money wherewith to make the great change."

"You sold them, uncle?"

"When I thought of Brother Josiah, I was tempted to do it. But I at first said 'No.' When I heard that my son was making a home for himself here, I again was tempted to do it. But I said, 'No.' I could not sell myself.

"Then there came a letter from Brother Josiah. It said: 'I have another son. We have named him Benjamin, after you. We have named you as his godfather.'

"Then I sat down on the side of the bed in my room, and the tears fell.

"'*We have named him Benjamin*' – how those words went to my heart!"

"It was the first time that you ever heard of me, wasn't it, uncle?"

"Yes, yes; it makes me happy to hear you say that. And you will never forget me, will you, Ben?"

"Never, uncle, if I live to be eighty years old! But, uncle, you sold the pamphlets!"

"Yes. When I read your name in Josiah's letter I felt a weight lifted from my mind. I said to myself that I would part with myself – that is, the pamphlets – for you."

"Did you sell them for me, uncle?"

"Yes, I sold them for you, Benjamin."

"What was the man's name that bought them, uncle?"

"I hoped that you would ask me that. His name was Axel. Repeat it, Ben."

"Axel."

"It is a hard name to forget."

"I shall never forget it, uncle."

"Ben, you may go to London sometime."

"We are all poor now."

"But you have *personality*, and people who look out for others are needed by others for many things. Maybe they will sometime send you there."

"Who, uncle?"

"Oh, I don't know. But if ever you should go to London, go to all the old bookstores, and what name will you look for?"

"Axel, uncle."

"Ben, those are not books; they are myself. I sold myself when I sold them – I sold myself for you. Axel, Ben, Axel."

Little Ben repeated "Axel," and wondered if he would ever see London or meet with his uncle in those pamphlets which the latter claimed to be his other self.

"Axel," he repeated, pinching Baby Jane's cheek. Baby Jane laughed in the sunlight on the blue sea when she saw the excitement in Ben's face.

The tide was coming in, the boat was rocking, and Ben said: "We must go home now, for Jenny's sake."

CHAPTER X.
THE STONE WHARF, AND LADY WIGGLEWORTH, WHO FELL ASLEEP IN CHURCH

Did little Ben's trumpet and gun indicate that he would become a statesman whose cause would employ armies? We do not know. The free will of a boy on the playground is likely to present a picture of his leading traits of character. In old New England days there was a custom of testing a child's character in a novel way. A bottle, a coin, and a Bible were laid on the floor at some distance apart to tempt the notice of the little one when he first began to creep. It was supposed that the one of the three objects that he crept toward and seized upon was prophetic of his future character – that the three objects represented worldly pleasure, the seeking for wealth, and the spiritual life.

Franklin's love for public improvements was certainly indicated in his early years. He liked the water and boats, and he saw how convenient a little wharf near his house would be; so he planned to build one, and laid his plans before his companions.

"We will build it of stone," he said. "There are plenty of stones near the wharf."

"But the workmen there would not let us have them," said a companion.

"We will take them after they have gone from their work. We can build the wharf in a single evening. The workmen may scold, but they will not scold the stone landing out of the water again."

One early twilight of a long day the boys assembled at the place chosen by young Franklin for his wharf, and began to work like beavers, and before the deep shadows of night they had removed the stones to the water and builded quite a little wharf or landing.

"We can catch minnows and sail our boats from here now," said young Franklin as he looked with pride on the triumphs of his plan. "All the boys will be free to use this landing," he thought. "Won't it make the people wonder!"

It did.

The next morning the weather door of the thrifty tallow chandler opened with a ring.

"Josiah Franklin, where is that boy of yours?" asked a magistrate.

The paper cap bobbed up, and the man at the molds bent his head forward with wondering eyes.

"Which boy?"

"Ben, the one that is always leading other boys round."

"I dunno. He's making a boat – or was. – Benjamin!" he called; "I say, Benjamin!"

The door of the living room opened, and little Ben appeared.

"Here's a man who has come to see you. What have you been doing now?"

"Boy," said the man – he spoke the word so loudly that the little boy felt that it raised him almost to the dignity of a man.

"What, sir?" gasped Ben, very intelligent as to what would follow.

"Did you put those stones into the water?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do that for?"

"To make a wharf, sir."

"'To make a wharf, sir!' Didn't you have the sense to know that those stones were building stones and belonged to the workmen?"

"No, sir; I didn't know that they belonged to any one. I thought that they belonged to everybody."

"You did, you little rascal! Then why did you wait to have the workmen go away before you put them into the water?"

"The workmen would have hindered us, sir. They don't think that improvements can be made by little shavers like us. I wanted to surprise them, sir – to show them what we could do, sir."

"Benjamin Franklin," said Josiah, "come here, and I will show you what I can do. – Stranger, the boy's godfather has come to live with us and to take charge of him, and he does need a godfather, if ever a stripling did."

Josiah Franklin laid his hand on the boy, and the workman went away. The father removed the boy's jacket, and showed him what he could do, the memory of which was not a short one.

"I did not mean any harm, father," young Benjamin said over and over. "It was a mistake."

"My boy," said the tallow chandler, softening, "never make a second mistake. There are some people who learn wisdom from their first mistakes by never making second mistakes. May you be one of them."

"I shall never do anything that I don't think is honest, father. I thought stones and rocks belonged to the people."

"But there are many things that belong to the people in this world that you have no right to use, my son. When you want to make any more public improvements, first come and talk with me about them, or go to your Uncle Ben, into whose charge I am going to put you – and no small job he will have of it, in my thinking!"

Benjamin Franklin said, when he was growing old and was writing his own life, that his father *convinced* him at the time of this event that "that which is not honest could not be useful."

We can see in fancy his father with a primitive switch thus *convincing* him. He never forgot the moral lesson.

Where was Jamie the Scotchman during this convincing episode? When he heard that the little wharf-builder, bursting with desire for public improvement, had fallen into disgrace, he came upon him slyly:

"So you've been building a wharf for the boys of the town. When one begins so soon in life to improve the town, there can be no telling what he will do when he grows up. Perhaps you will become one of the great benefactors of Boston yet. Who knows?"

"We can't tell," said the future projector of Franklin Park, philosophically.

"No, that is a fact, bubby. Take your finger out of your mouth and go to cutting candle wicks. It must make a family proud to have in it such a promising one as you! You'll be apt to set something ablaze some day if you keep on as you've begun."

He did.

Jamie the Scotchman went out, causing the bell on the door to ring. He whistled lustily as he went down the street.

Little Benjamin sat cutting wicks for the candle molds and wondering at the ways of the world. He had not intended to do wrong. He may have thought that the stones, although put aside by the workmen, were common property. He had made a mistake. But how are mistakes to be avoided in life? He would ask his Uncle Benjamin, the poet, when he should meet him. It was well, indeed, never to make a *second* mistake, but better not to make any mistake at all. Uncle Benjamin was wise, and could write poetry. He would ask him.

Besides Jamie the Scotchman, who spent much time at the Blue Ball, little Benjamin's brother James seems to have looked upon him as one whose activities of mind were too obvious, and needed to be suppressed.

The evening that followed the disgrace of little Ben was a serious one in the Franklin family. Uncle Ben had "gone to meeting" in the Old South Church.

The shop, with its molded candles, dipped candles, ingot bars of soap, pewter molds, and kettles, was not an unpleasant place in the evening, and old sea captains used to drop in to talk with Josiah, and sometimes the leading members of the Old South Church came to discuss church affairs, which were really town affairs, for the church governed the town.

On this particular night little Ben sat in the corner of the shop very quietly, holding little Jane as usual. The time had come for a perfect calm in his life, and he himself was well aware how becoming was silence in his case.

Among those who used to come to the shop evenings to talk with Josiah and Uncle Ben, the poet, was one Captain Holmes. He came to-night, stamping his feet at the door, causing the bell to ring very violently and the faces of some of the Franklin children to appear in the window framed over the shop door. How comical they looked!

"Where's Ben to-night?" asked Captain Holmes.

Little Ben's heart thumped. He thought the captain meant *him*.

"He's gone to meetin'," said Josiah. "Come, sit down. Ben will be at home early."

Little Ben's heart did not beat so fast now.

"Where's that boy o' yourn?" asked the captain.

Ben's heart began to beat again.

"There, in the corner," said Josiah, with a doubtful look in his face.

"He'll be given to making public improvements when he grows up," said the captain. "But I hope that he will not take other people's property to do it. If there is any type of man for whom I have no use it is he who does good with what belongs to others."

The door between the shop and the living room opened, and the grieved, patient face of Abiah appeared.

"Good evening, Captain Holmes," said Abiah. "I heard what you said – how could I help it? – and it hurt me. No descendant of Peter Folger will ever desire to use other people's property for his own advantage. Ben won't."

"That's right, my good woman, stand up for your own. Every drop of an English exile's blood is better than its weight in gold."

"Ben is a boy," said Abiah. "If he makes an error, it will be followed by a contrite heart."

Little Ben could hear no more. He flew, as it were, up to the garret chamber and laid down on the trestle bed. A pet squirrel came to comfort him or to get some corn. He folded the squirrel in his bosom.

Ting-a-ling! It was Uncle Ben, the poet, whose name he had disgraced. He could endure no more; he began to sob, and so went to sleep, his little squirrel pitying him, perhaps.

There was another heart that pitied the boy. It was Uncle Ben's. Poor Uncle Ben! He sleeps now at the side of the Franklin monument in the Granary burying ground, and we like to cast a kindly glance that way as we pass the Park Street Church on Tremont Street, on the west side. It is a good thing to have good parents, and also to have a good uncle with a poetic mind and a loving heart.

There was one trait in little Benjamin's character that Josiah Franklin saw with his keen eye to business, and it gave him hope. He was diligent. One of Josiah Franklin's favorite texts of Scripture was, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." This text he used to often repeat, or a part of it, and little Ben must have thought that it applied to him. Hints of hope, not detraction, build a boy.

Jamie the Scotchman had little expectation that puttering Ben would ever "stand before kings." Not he. He had not that kind of vision.

"Ah, boy, I could tell you a whole history of diligent boys who not only came to stand before kings, but who overturned thrones; and he who discrowns a king is greater than a king," said he one day. "Think what you might become."

"Maybe I will."

"Will what?"

"Be some one in the world."

"Sorry a boy you would make to 'stand before kings,' and I don't think you'll ever be likely to take off the crown from anybody. So your poor old father might as well leave that text out of the Scriptures. There are no pebbles in your sling of life. If there were, wonders would never cease. You are just your Uncle Ben over again. I'm sorry for ye, and for all."

Little Ben looked sorry too, and he wondered if there really were in the text something prophetic for him, or if Jamie the Scotchman were the true seer. But many poor boys had come to stand before kings, and some such boys had left tyrants without a crown.

Jamie the Scotchman thought that he had the gift of "second sight," as a consciousness of future events was called, but he usually saw shadows. He liked to talk to himself, walking with his hands behind him.

After his dire prophecy concerning the future of little Ben he walked down to Long Wharf with Uncle Benjamin, talking to himself for the latter to hear.

"Ye can't always tell," said he; "I didn't speak out of the true inward spirit when I said those things. It hurt the little shaver to tell him there was no future in him; I could see it did. The boy has a curious way of saying wise things; such words fly out of his mouth like swallows from a cave. If I were to take up a dead brand in the blacksmith's shop and he was around, as he commonly is, he would say, 'The more you handle a burned stick the smuttier you become'; or if I were to pick up a horseshoe there, and say, 'For the want of a nail the shoe was lost,' he would answer, 'And for want of a shoe the horse was lost.' Then, after a time, he would add, 'For want of a horse the rider was lost,' and so on. His mind works in that way. Maybe he'll become a philosopher. Philosophers stand before kings. I now have the true inner sight and open vision. I can see a streak of light in that curious gift of his. But blood tells, and his folks on his father's side were blacksmiths over in England, and philosophers don't come from the forge more'n eagles do from the hen yard.

"I said what I did to stimulate him. It cut the little shaver to the quick, didn't it? Now he wouldn't have been so cut if there had been nothing there. The Lord forgive me if I did wrong!"

He walked down the wharf to the end. Beyond lay the blue harbor and the green islands. The town had only some ten thousand inhabitants then, but several great ships lay in the harbor under the three hills, two of which now are gone.

The harbor was girded with oaks and pines. Here and there a giant elm, still the glory of New England, lifted its bowery top like a cathedral amid towns of trees. Sea birds screamed low over the waters, and ospreys wheeled high in the air.

Jamie the Scotchman had not many things to occupy his thoughts, so he sat down to wonder as to what that curious Franklin boy might become.

A new thought struck him.

"He has French blood in him – the old family name used to be Franklein," he said to himself. "Now what does that signify? French blood is gentle; it likes to be free. I don't see that it might not be a good thing to have; the French like to find out things and give away to others what they discover."

A shell fell into the water before him from high in the air. The water spouted up, causing an osprey to swoop down, but to rise again.

Jamie the Scotchman turned his head.

"You, Ben? You follow me 'round everywhere. What makes ye, when I treat ye so?"

"If a boy didn't hope for anything he would never have the heartache."

"True, true, my boy; and what of that?"

"I would rather expect something and have the heartache."

"No one ever misses his expectations who looks for the heartache in this world. But what queer turns your mind does take, and what curious questions you do ask! Let us return to the Blue Ball."

They did, through winding streets, one or more of which were said to follow the wanderings of William Blackstone's cow from the Common. Boston still follows the same interesting animal.

There were windmills on the hills and tidemills near the water. There was a ferryboat between Boston and Charlestown, and on the now Chelsea side was the great Rumney Marsh. On the Common, which was a pasture, was a branching elm, a place of executions. Near it was a pond into which had been cast the Wishing Stone around which, it was reported, that if one went three times at night and repeated the Lord's Prayer *backward* at each circuit one might have whatever he wished for. Near the pond and the great tree were the Charles River marshes. Such was Boston in 1715-'20.

Little Ben went to the South Church on Sundays, and the tithingman was there. The latter sat in the gallery among the children with his long rod, called the tithing stick, with which he used to touch or correct any boy or girl who whispered in meeting, who fell asleep, or who misbehaved. Little Ben must have looked from the family pew in awe at the tithingman. The old-time ministers pictured the Lord himself as being a kind of a tithingman, sitting up in heaven and watching out for the unwary. Good Josiah Franklin governed the conduct of the children in his own pew. You may be sure that none of them whispered there or fell asleep or misbehaved.

The tithingman, who was a church constable, was annually elected to keep peace and order in the church. In England he collected tithes, or a tenth part of the parish income, which the people were supposed, after the Mosaic command, to offer to the church. He sometimes wore a peculiar dress; he was usually a very solemn-looking man, the good man of whom all the children, and some of the old women, stood in terror.

A crafty man was the tithingman in the pursuit of his duties. He was on the watch all the time, and, as suspicion breeds suspicion, so the children were on the watch for him. The sermons were long, the hourglass was sometimes twice turned during the service, and the children often kept themselves awake by looking out for the tithingman, who was watching out for them. This was hardly the modern idea of heart culture and spiritual development, but the old Puritan churches made strong men who faced their age with iron purposes.

We said that the tithingman was sometimes a terror to old women. Why was he so? It was sweet for certain good old people to sleep in church, and his duties extended to all sleepers, young and old. But he did not smite the good old ladies with a stick. In some churches, possibly in this one, he carefully tickled their noses with a feather. This led to a gentle awakening, very charitable and kindly.

It is a warm summer day. Josiah Franklin's pew is crowded, and little Ben has gone to the gallery to sit among the boys. Uncle Ben, the poet, is there, for he sees that the family pew is full.

How can little Ben help whispering now, when the venerable poet is by his side and will not harshly reprove him, and when so many little things are happening that tempt him to share his thoughts with his amiable godfather?

But he restrained himself long and well.

In her high-backed pew, provided with the luxury of the cushion, sat fine old Lady Wiggleworth, all in silks, satins, and plumes. Little Ben, looking over the gallery rail, saw that my lady's plumes nodded, and he gently touched Uncle Ben and pointed down. Suddenly there came a tap of the tithing stick on his head, and he was in disgrace. He looked very solemn now; so did Uncle Ben. It was a solemn time after one had been touched by the tithing rod.

But the tithingman had seen Lady Wiggleworth's nodding plumes. Could it be possible that this woman, who was received at the Province House, had lost her moral and physical control?

If such a thing had happened, he must yet do his duty. He would have done that had the queen been there. The law of

Heaven makes no exception, nor did he.

He tiptoed down the stair and stood before the old lady's pew. All her plumes were nodding, something like the picture of a far ship in a rolling sea. My lady was asleep.

The tithingman's heart beat high, but his resolution did not falter. If it had, it would soon have been restored, for my lady began to snore.

Gently, very gently, the tithingman took from his side pocket a feather. He touched with it gently, very gently, a sensitive part of the oblivious old lady's nose. She partly awoke and brushed her nose with her hand. But her head turned to the other side of her shoulders, and she relapsed into slumber again.

The sermon was still beating the sounding-board, and a more vigorous duty devolved upon the tithingman.

He pushed the feather up my lady's nose, where the membrane was more sensitive and more quickly communicated with the brain. He did this vigorously and more vigorously. It was an obstinate case.

"Scat!"

The tithingman jumped. My lady opened her eyes. The sermon was still beating the sounding-board, but she was not then aware that she, too, had spoken in meeting.

There were some queer church customs in the days of Boston town.

CHAPTER XI.
JENNY

Jenny Franklin, the "pet and beauty of the family," Benjamin's favorite sister, was born in 1712, and was six years younger than he.

"My little Jenny," said Josiah, "has the Franklin heart." Little Ben found that heart in her baby days, and it was true to him to the end.

Uncle Benjamin had entertained such large hopes of the future of little Ben since the boy first sent to him a piece of poetry to England, that he wrote of him:

> "For if the bud bear grain, what will the top?"

and again:

> "When flowers are beautiful before they're blown,
> What rarities will afterward be shown!
> If trees good fruit un'noculated bear,
> You may be sure't will afterward be rare.
> If fruits are sweet before they've time to yellow,
> How luscious will they be when they are mellow!"

He also saw great promise in bright little Jenny, who had heart full of sympathy and affection. Jenny, Ben, and Uncle Benjamin became one in heart and companionship.

Beacon Hill was a lovely spot in summer in old Boston days. Below it was the Common, with great trees and winding ways. It commanded a view of the wide harbor and far blue sea. It looked over a curve of the river Charles, and the bright shallow inlet or pond, where the Boston and Maine depot now stands, that was filled up from the earth of the fine old hillside. The latter place may have been the scene of Ben's bridge, which he built in the night in a forbidden way. The place is not certainly known.

Uncle Benjamin, one Sunday after church, took Ben and little Jenny, who was a girl then, to the top of the hill. It was a showery afternoon in summer – now bright, now overcast – and all the birds were singing on the Common between the showers.

In one of the shining hours between the showers they sat down under an ancient forest tree, and little Jenny rested her arms on one of the knees of Uncle Benjamin, and Ben leaned on the other. The old man looked down on the harbor, which was full of ships, and said:

"I wish I had my sermons that I left behind. I would read one of them to you now."

"I would rather hear you talk," said Ben, with conscientious frankness.

"So would I," said Jenny, who thought that Ben was a philosopher even at this early age, and who echoed nearly everything that he said.

"Look over the harbor," said the old man. "There are more and more ships coming in every year. This is going to be a great city, and America will become a great country. Ben, I hope there will never be any wars on this side of the water. War is sloth's maintainer, and the shield of pride; it makes many poor and few rich, and fewer wise.[1] Ben, this is going to be a great country, and I want you to be true to the new country."

"I will always be true to my country," said Ben.

"And I will be true to my home," said little Jenny.

"So you will, so you will, my darling little pet; I can see that," said Uncle Benjamin.

Ben was so pleased at his echo that he put his arm around his sister's neck and kissed her many times.

The old man's heart was touched at the scene. He thought of his lost children, who were sleeping under the cover of the violets now.

"It is going to rain again," he said. "The robins are all singing, and we will have to go home. But, children, I want to leave a lesson in your minds. Listen to Uncle Ben, whose heart is glad to see you so loving toward each other and me.

"*More than wealth, more than fame, more than anything, is the power of the human heart, and that power is developed by seeking the good of others.* Live for influences that multiply, and for the things that live. Now what did I say, Ben?"

"You said that more than wealth, more than fame, more than anything, was the power of the human heart, and that that power was developed in seeking the good of others."

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[1] The old man's own words to Benjamin on war.

"That's right, my man. – Now, Jenny, what did I say?"

"I couldn't repeat all those big words, uncle."

"Well, you lovely little *creeter*, you; you do not need to repeat it; you know the lesson already; it was born in you; you have the Franklin heart!"

"Beloved Boston," Franklin used to say when he became old. What wonder, when it was associated with memories like these!

CHAPTER XII.
A CHIME OF BELLS IN NOTTINGHAM

Some time after Uncle Benjamin, who became familiarly known as Uncle Ben, had revealed to little Ben his heart's secret, and how that he had for his sake sold his library of pamphlets, which was his other self, the two again went down to the wharves to see the ships that had come in.

They again seated themselves in an anchored boat.

"Ben," said Uncle Benjamin, "I have something more on my mind. I did not tell you all when we talked here before. You will never forget what I told you – will you?"

"Never, uncle, if I live to be old. My heart will always be true to you."

"So it will, so it will, Ben. So it will. I want to tell you something more about your Great-uncle Thomas. You favor him. Did any one ever tell you that the people used to think him to be a wizard?"

"No, no, uncle. You yourself said that once. What is a wizard?"

"It is a man who can do strange things, no one can tell how. They come to him."

"But what made them think him a wizard?"

"Oh, people used to be ignorant and superstitious, like Reuben of the Mill, your father's old friend and mine. There was an inn called the World's End, at Ecton, near an old farm and forge. The people used to gather there and tell stories about witches and wizards that would have made your flesh creep, and left you afraid to go to bed, even with a guinea pig in your room.

"Your Great-uncle Thomas was always inventing things to benefit the people. At last he invented a way by which it might rain and rain, and there might be freshets and freshets, and yet their meadows would not be overflown. The water would all run off from the meadows like rain from a duck's back. He made a kind of drain that ran sideways. Now the pious Brownites thought that this was flying in the face of Providence, and people began to talk mysteriously about him at the World's End.

"But it was not that which I have heavy on my mind or light on my mind, for it is a happy thought. There are not many romantic things in our family history. The Franklins were men of the farm, forge, and fire. But there was one thing in our history that was poetry. It was this – listen now.

"What was the name of that man to whom I sold the pamphlets?" he asked in an aside.

"Axel."

"That is right – always remember that name – Axel.

"Now listen to that other thing. Your uncle, or great-uncle Thomas, started a subscription for a chime of bells. The family all loved music – that is what makes your father play the violin.

Your Great-uncle Thomas loved music in the air. You may be able to buy a spinet for Jenny some day.

"Now your Great-uncle Thomas's soul is, as it were, in those chimes of Nottingham. I pray that you may go to England some day before you die and hear the chimes of Nottingham. You will hear a part of your own family's soul, my boy. It is the things that men do that live. If you ever find the pamphlets, which are myself – myself that is gone – you will read in them my thoughts on the Toleration Act, and on Liberty, and on the soul, and the rights of man. What was the man's name?"

"Axel."

"Right."

Little Jenny, who loved to follow little Ben, had come down to the wharf to hear "Uncle Benjamin talk." She had joined them in the boat on the sunny water. She had become deeply interested in Uncle Tom and the chimes of Nottingham.

"Uncle Ben," she asked, "was Uncle Tom ever laughed at?"

"Yes, yes; the old neighbors who would hang about the smithy used to laugh at him. They thought him visionary. Why did you ask me that?"

"What makes people who come to the shop laugh at Ben? It hurts me. I think Ben is real good. He is good to me, and I am always going to be good to him. I like Ben better than *almost* anybody."

"A beneficent purpose is at first ridiculed," said Uncle Benjamin.

Little Ben seemed to comprehend the meaning of this principle, but the "big words" were lost on Jenny.

"He whose good purpose is laughed at," said Uncle Benjamin, "will be likely to live to laugh at those who laughed at him if he so desired; but, hark! a generous man does not laugh at any one's right intentions. Ben, never stop to answer back when they laugh at you. Life is too short. It robs the future to seek revenge."

Uncle Benjamin was right.

Did little Ben heed the admonition of his uncle on this bright day in Boston, to follow beneficence with a ready step, and not to stop to "answer back"? Was little Jenny's heart comforted in after years in finding Ben, who was so good to her now, *commended?* We are to follow a family history, and we shall see.

As the three went back to the Blue Ball, Ben, holding his uncle by the one hand and Jane by the other, said:

"I do like to hear Jane speak well of me, and stand up for me. I care more for that than *almost* any other thing."

"Well, live that she may always speak well of you," said Uncle Benjamin; "so that she may speak well of you when you two shall meet for the last time."

"Uncle," said Jenny, "why do you always have something solemn to say? Ben isn't solemn, is he?"

"No, my girl, your brother Ben is a very lively boy. You will have to hold him back some day, I fear."

"No, no, uncle, I shall always push him on. He likes to go ahead. I like to see him go – don't you?"

CHAPTER XIII.
THE ELDER FRANKLIN'S STORIES

Peter Folger, Quaker, the grandfather of Benjamin Franklin, was one of those noblemen of Nature whose heart beat for humanity. He had been associated in the work of Thomas Mayhew, the Indian Apostle, who was the son of Thomas Mayhew, Governor of Martha's Vineyard. The younger Mayhew gathered an Indian church of some hundred or more members, and the Indians so much loved him that they remained true to him and their church during Philip's war.

What stories Abiah Franklin could have told, and doubtless did tell, of her old home at Nantucket! – stories of the true hearts of the pioneers, of people who loved others more than themselves, and not like the sea-rovers who at this time were making material for the Pirate's Own Book.

Josiah, too, had his stories of Old England and the conventicles, heroic tales of the beginning of the long struggle for freedom of opinion. Hard and rough were the stories of the Commonwealth, of Cromwell, Pym, and Sir Henry Vane, the younger.

There was one very pleasing old tale that haunted Boston at this time, of the Hebrew parable order, or after the manner of the German legend. Such stories were rare in those days of pirates, Indians, and ghosts, the latter of whom were supposed to make their homes in their graves and to come forth in their graveclothes, and to set the hearts of unquiet souls to beating, and like feet to flying with electrical swiftness before the days of electricity.

Governor Winthrop – the same who got lost in the Mystic woods, and came at night to an Indian hut in a tree and climbed into it, and was ordered out of it at a later hour when the squaw came home – took a very charitable view of life. He liked to reform wrongdoers by changing their hearts. Out of his large love for every one came this story of old Boston days.

We will listen to it by the Franklin fire in the candle shop. It was an early winter tale, and it will be a good warm place to hear it there.

"It is a cold night," said Josiah, "and Heaven pity those without fuel on a night like this! There are not overmany like Governor Winthrop in the world."

Abiah drew her chair up nearer to the great fire, for it made one chilly to hear the beginning of that story, but the end of it made the heart warm.

"It was in the early days of the colony," said Josiah, "and the woods in the winter were bare, and the fields were cold. There was a lack of wood on the Mystic near the town.

"A poor man lived there on the salt marsh with his family. He had had a hard time to raise enough for their support. A snowstorm came, and his fuel was spent, his hearth was cold, and there was nothing to burn.

"The great house of the Governor rose over the ice-bordered marshes. Near it were long sheds, and under them high piles of wood brought from the hills.

"The poor man had no wood, but after a little time smoke was seen coming out of his chimney.

"There came one day a man to the Governor, and said:

"'Pardon me, Governor, I am loath in my heart to accuse any one, but in the interest of justice I have something which I must tell you.'

"'Speak on, neighbor.'

"'Some one has been stealing your wood.'

"'It is a hard winter for the poor. Who has done this?'

"'The man who lives on the marsh.'

"'His crop was not large this year.'

"'No, it failed.'

"'He has a wife and children.'

"'True, Governor.'

"'He has always borne a good reputation.'

"'True, Governor, and that makes the case more difficult.'

"'Neighbor, don't speak of this thing to others, but send that man to me.'

"The man on the marsh came to the Governor's. His face was as white as snow. How he had suffered!

"'Neighbor,' said the Governor, 'this is a cold winter.'

"'It is, your Honor.'

"'I hope that your family are comfortable.'

"'No, your Honor; they have sometimes gone to bed supperless and cold.'

"'It hurts my conscience to know that. Have you any fuel?'

"'None, your Honor. My children have kept their bed for warmth.'

"'But I have a good woodpile. See the shed: there is more wood there than I can burn. I ought not to sit down by a comfortable fire night after night, while my neighbor's family is cold.'

"'I am glad that you are so well provided for, for you are a good man, and have a heart to feel for those in need.'

"'Neighbor, there is my woodpile. It is yours as well as mine. I would not feel warm if I were to sit down by my fire and remember that you and your wife and your children were cold. When you need any fuel, come to my woodpile and take all the wood that you want.'

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