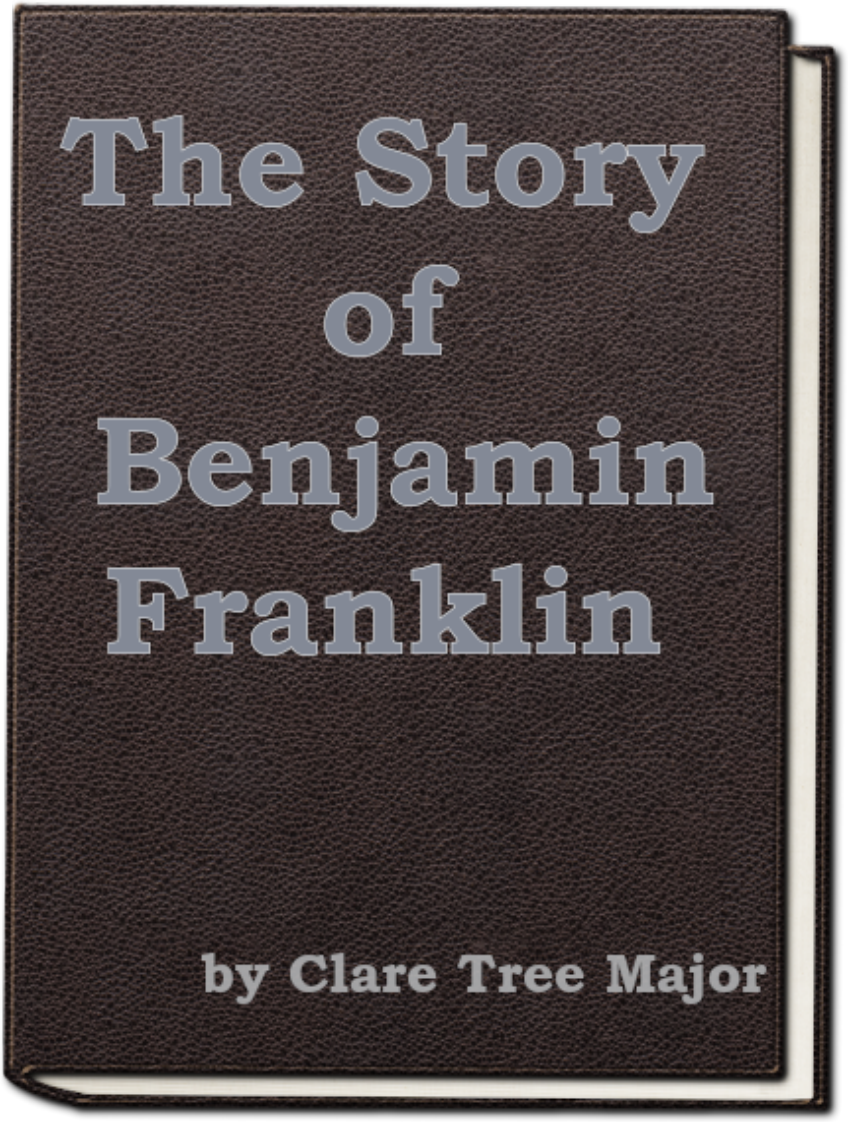
The Story of Benjamin Franklin
by Clare Tree Major

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Famous Americans For Young Readers
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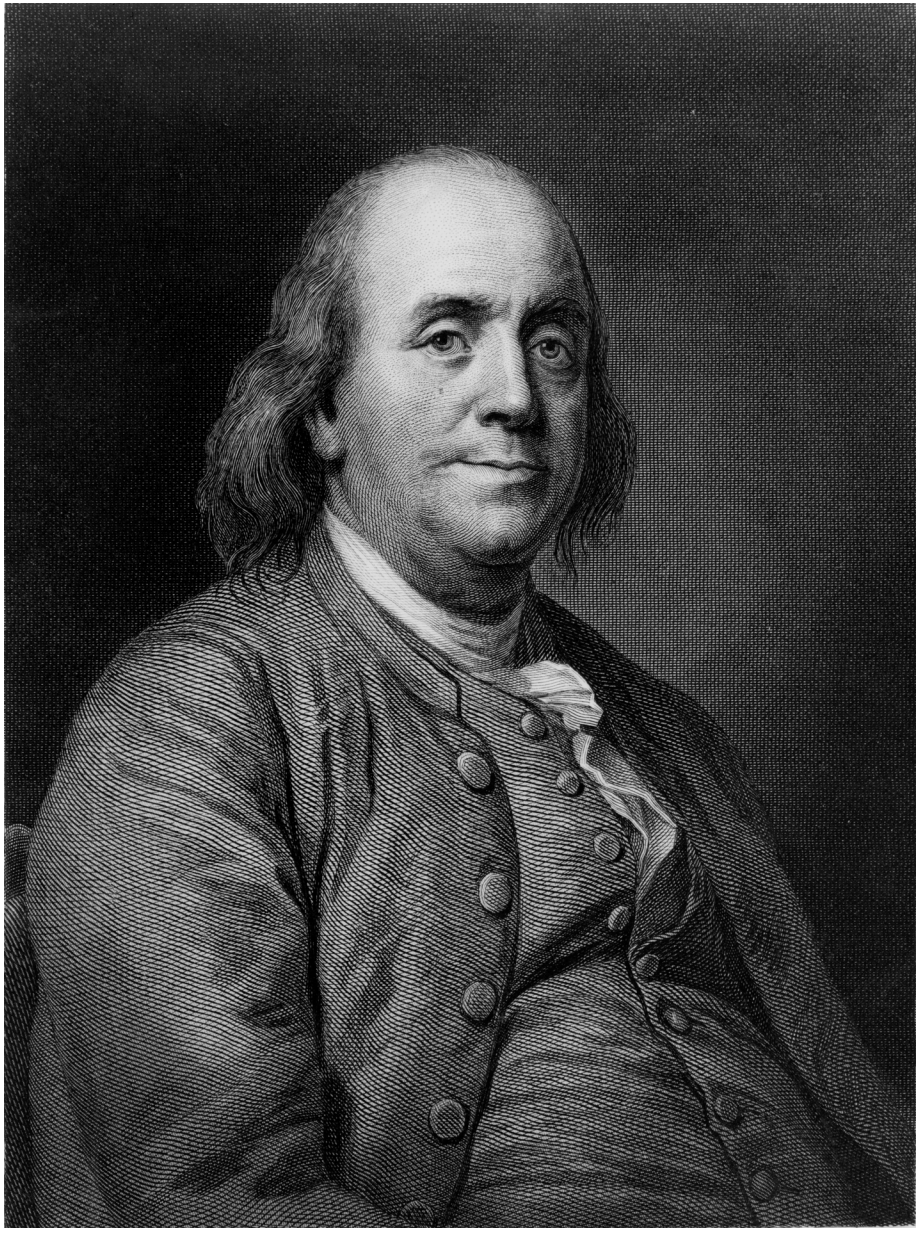
Preface

There is an irresistible appeal to both young and old in the figure of Benjamin Franklin. Whether we view him as the printer's apprentice in Boston, slipping his own contributions under the door sill, so that his brother might be fooled into publishing them; or the runaway lad reaching Philadelphia by hook or crook, and walking down the main street eating a roll of bread, with another tucked under each arm, while his future wife laughed at him from a neighboring doorway; or the man of affairs busied with many things for the advancement of his adopted town; or the simply-dressed American standing unabashed before Lords and crowned heads, not afraid to tell them the truth; or as one of the drafters of the Declaration of Independence; or as an amateur scientist dabbling with electricity — in these and many another situations he seems like a personal friend. His face and form have not been obscured by the cobwebs of history.

This is partly due to his famous "Autobiography," one of the classic stories of endeavor and achievement. We hope that every boy and girl, who has not already done so, will read that delightful narrative. We have drawn upon it freely for many of the facts of the present story; but as it was unfortunately left unfinished, we have completed the account from other standard works — to all of which we wish to give due acknowledgment.



Benjamin Franklin circa 1783

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I The Printer's Apprentice

One fine evening in the year 1717 or thereabouts, a group of youngsters met near the old mill pond, which lay between Haymarket Square and Causeway Street in Boston. On the side where the boys stood, the saltmarsh which bounded the pond had been trampled into a quagmire by their eager feet during many a happy hour of minnow fishing. Their leader, an enterprising youth of ten or twelve, proposed that they remedy this.

Not far away lay a big pile of stones, part of the material for a new house, and just what they needed to build a fine, dry wharf. He suggested that they bring these over and build their wharf that very evening. His enthusiasm was catching. The workmen had gone for the night, and in a few minutes they were all busily at work, dragging over the stones and fitting them into place. Soon backs grew tired and hands sore, but under the urging of their leader, they persisted, until at last the wharf was completed.

But the morrow told a different tale. The loss of the stones was discovered, and the culprits detected. They were taken to task, and though their leader pleaded the usefulness of their work, they

were soon convinced that "nothing was useful that was not honest."

Benjamin Franklin, the lad whose gift for leadership was so early shown, was the youngest son of Josiah Franklin and his second wife, Abiah Folger. He was born January 17, 1706. His father had come to America from Northamptonshire, England, to find the religious freedom there denied. He settled in Boston, where his first wife died leaving seven children. Those were the days when large families were common. Later Josiah remarried, and ten more children were added to the household. It must have been like a continual house party, with all that throng romping about

When Benjamin's father settled in Boston, he found that his trade of dyer was not a profitable one in the new country. So he established himself in business as a tallow-chandler and soap-maker. In this he was more successful, making a sufficient income to bring up his numerous family in modest comfort. He had little time for public matters, though his reputation for "sound understanding and solid judgment in prudential matters" was so well known that the great men of both Church and State visited him in his home to obtain his advice on matters of importance.

Benjamin learned to read while very young, and showed so much promise in his studies at home, that his father decided to educate him for the Church. At eight years of age he was sent to grammar school, so that he might acquire the necessary knowledge of Latin. He went through the entrance class and the one above it in less than a year, and was prepared to enter the third. But before this was accomplished, his father had decided that he could not provide the expense of a college education, and Benjamin was taken from the grammar school and sent to a writing and arithmetic school for another year. The writing he soon mastered, but the arithmetic proved too much for him. At the end of the year, when he was but ten years of age, he was taken from this school, and his education considered complete. The problem now was to choose a trade for him.

The simplest course was to put him into his father's business. This was done, and the great statesman of the future spent the next two years cutting wicks for candles, filling the molds, attending shop, and running errands. But when twelve years of age, his dislike of the business had grown so intense, that his father began to cast about for another occupation for him. This seemed the more

urgent because the lad, who was an expert swimmer and boatman, began to dream of following his brother Josiah's example, and running away to sea. So the wise father went with his young son to watch various workmen at their tasks, trying to find out in this way which of the trades pleased him the most.

"How do you like that trade, my son?" he would ask, pausing before a cobbler's, or a blacksmith's door.

About this time, an older son, James, a printer, had just returned from London, bringing with him a printing press and type with which to establish himself in Boston. Benjamin still wanted to go to sea, but seeing no way to do this, and preferring the printing business to anything else which had been offered, he was persuaded to bind himself to work for his brother until he was twenty-one.

In fact, the printing business soon became of absorbing interest to the young apprentice. He worked diligently and became very useful to his brother. But the greatest advantage to him was the ready access to books which the work offered. He made the acquaintance of many people who owned books, so that he was able frequently to borrow works he would not otherwise have been able to

obtain. He became a constant reader, unconsciously developing a style and diction which later were so characteristic of his own writings.

Benjamin Franklin owed much to his father's interest and counsel in these formative days. The boy had written some ballads, which he himself described later as "wretched stuff," but which had had a ready sale because of the timeliness of their subjects. His brother James, hoping to make some profit now and again from their sale, encouraged him to continue, but his father took pains to point out to him their worthlessness, and the fact that "verse-makers were usually beggars." This induced him to give up poetry.

On another occasion, having entered into an argument with another lad on the value of education for women, the papers which passed between the two came to the notice of Benjamin's father. Without touching on the subject of the argument, this worthy man pointed out the differences between the two styles of writing. The work of the printing apprentice excelled in spelling and punctuation, as might be expected, but that of his opponent showed a charm of method and expression far superior to the other.

Benjamin at once determined that he would

learn to write well. By some chance he came upon a copy of the *Spectator*, a weekly journal published in London, devoted to the writings of such men as Steele, Addison and others. Its finished style delighted the lad. He determined, if possible, to acquire this polished style for himself. Using the *Spectator* as a study book, he would carefully read an article, lay the book aside, and rewrite the piece from memory, using the same idea, but substituting his own words while attempting to preserve a similar style.

One of the agreements in the articles of apprenticeship was that Benjamin should receive regular wages only in the last year of his work. But books cost money, and the lad began to look about for some means of increasing his supply. He was now sixteen, and had adopted, as the result of some reading on the subject, a vegetable diet. This opened the way. First learning how to cook some of the simpler dishes, he proposed to James that he would board himself for one-half of what it cost his brother to board him. James consented to this arrangement, and the youth thereafter prepared his own meals, finding it possible, because of the simplicity of his diet, to save a goodly fund for his treasured volumes.

At about this time, Benjamin began to regret his failure at school to master the study of arithmetic. He therefore purchased a book on the subject, and added it to his other studies. He soon corrected his ignorance, and went on to the study of rhetoric. From this he began to read Socrates, becoming so charmed with what he read, that he determined to adopt the method of the sage. He ceased being positive and contradictory in argument, and set himself to cultivate a modest manner of speech, feeling that such a manner would be more convincing that an aggressive one. In this way he laid the foundation of that grace and simplicity of address which later made him the foremost American diplomat of his day.

Some two years before, when Benjamin was fourteen years of age, his brother had begun to print a newspaper, which he called the *New England Courant*. This paper gave the young writer an opportunity to see his work in print, though he was forced at first to use some craft in getting it accepted. Knowing that his brother would underrate any work of his, he wrote in a disguised hand and under an assumed name, slipping the finished copy under the door of the shop.

What was his delight to find his articles

accepted and printed! But when he later confessed that he wrote them, James only glowered.

II A Runaway Boy

"Have you heard the news, father?" asked Benjamin one Sunday on a visit home.

And in answer to an inquiring look, he continued: "James is arrested, and they are threatening to stop the *Courant*.

"Why so?" asked the elder Franklin.

"Why they say, over in London, that we are too outspoken. They want us to keep our ink out of politics, and James won't do it. That's what makes the paper popular."

As the upshot of this arrest, James was sentenced to prison for a month.

Benjamin also was arrested, but since he was only an apprentice, and so had no authority over the matter published in the paper, the case against him was dismissed, though he refused to give the council the information they required.

James had served his sentence and was about to be released, when he was served with an order that prohibited him from publishing his paper. This was a great blow to the printer, as well as to those who had been accustomed to use this medium for the expression of their views. They held a consultation, and found a possible way out in the

wording of the order. This read that "James Franklin should no longer print the paper called the *New England Courant*." "What shall we do about it?" they asked. "The paper must go on. To stop it is a blow at free speech."

"Why not make young Benjamin here the editor?" someone suggested.

This idea at once found favor though James Franklin made a wry face. So it was decided to continue the paper under the name of the apprentice, Benjamin; but in order that there should be less chance of interference by the Assembly, Benjamin's indentures were returned to him, with a full release signed on the back. This was to show to officers of the Government, if necessary, to protect James from any suspicion that he was still the real publisher. But James had no intention of losing the services of the cleverest and most useful of his employees, so private indentures were drawn up covering the rest of the unexpired period.

This was Benjamin's opportunity. His brother was a man of quick temper, who did not hesitate to resort to blows on slight provocation, though Franklin himself later excused him on the ground that "perhaps I was too saucy and provoking." At the time, however, he was filled with resentment

from ill-treatment, and at last the storm broke. Seizing the occasion of some fresh difference between them, and feeling convinced that his brother would not dare attempt to hold him by exposing the private indentures, he boldly informed James that he would work for him no longer.

He had guessed correctly. James did not wish to confess the subterfuge under which he had continued to print his paper against the order of the Assembly, though he still wished to retain Benjamin's services. He appealed to his father, who sided with James. The boy in desperation then planned to run away. He would not return to the hated shop!

Fortunately he found a vessel sailing for New York, whose captain agreed to take him aboard. Some of Benjamin's precious books were sold to provide money for the passage, and just before the ship was ready to leave its moorings, he slipped aboard. Franklin later censured himself for breaking faith with his brother, calling it the first great "errata of my life," but at the moment he was filled only with a great sense of freedom and desire for adventure.

After a fair voyage of three days the ship docked in New York, and the seventeen year old

traveler found himself alone in this strange town, friendless and almost penniless. But the blood in his veins was pioneer blood, and not to be daunted. He sought out the printer of the place and applied to him for work. There was no work to be had. He told the old man of his plight and asked his advice. The lad's personality pleased the printer, and he said:

“My son at Philadelphia has lately lost his principal hand by death; if you go thither, I believe he may employ you."

Franklin's own account of his trip to Philadelphia, in an autobiographical letter to his son, reads like a chapter from DeFoe. He says:

"In crossing the bay, we met with a squall that tore our rotten sail to pieces, . . . and drove us upon Long Island. In our way, a drunken Dutchman, who was a passenger too, fell overboard; when he was sinking, I reached through the water to his shock pate, and drew him up. , . . His ducking sobered him a little, and he went to sleep, taking first out of his pocket a book, which he desired I would dry for him. . . .

"When we drew near the island, we found it was at a place where there could be no landing, there being a great surf on the stony beach. So we dropped anchor, and swung round toward the

shore. Some people came down to the water edge and hallooed to us, as we did to them; but the wind was so high, and the surf so loud, that we could not hear so as to understand each other. There were canoes on the shore, and we made signs, and hallooed that they should fetch us; but they either did not understand us, or thought it impracticable, so they went away, and night coming on, we had no remedy but to wait till the wind should abate; and in the meantime, the boatmen concluded to sleep, if we could; and so we crowded into the scuttle, with the Dutchman, who was still wet; and the spray beating over the head of our boat, leaked through to us, so that we were almost as wet as he. In this manner we lay all night, with very little rest; but the wind abating the next day, we made shift to reach Amboy before night, having been thirty hours on the water, without victuals or any drink but a bottle of filthy rum, the water we sailed on being salt.

"In the morning, crossing the ferry, I proceeded on my journey on foot, having fifty miles to Burlington, where I was told I should find boats to carry me the rest of the way to Philadelphia.

"It rained very hard all the day; I was thoroughly soaked, and by noon a good deal tired; so I stopped at a poor inn, where I stayed all night,

beginning now to wish I had never left home. I cut so miserable a figure, too, that I found, by the questions asked me, I was suspected to be some runaway servant, and in danger of being taken up on that suspicion. However, I proceeded the next day, and got to an inn, within eight or ten miles of Burlington, . . . where I lay all night, and the next morning reached Burlington, but had the mortification to find that the regular boats were gone a little before my coming, and no other expected to go before Tuesday, this being Saturday; wherefore I returned to an old woman of the town, of whom I had bought gingerbread to eat on the water, and asked her advice. She invited me to lodge at her house till a passage by water should offer; and being tired with my foot traveling, I accepted the invitation, . . . and thought myself fixed till Tuesday should come. However, walking in the evening by the side of the river, a boat came by, which I found was going toward Philadelphia, with several people in her. They took me in, and as there was no wind, we rowed all the way; and about midnight, not having yet seen the city, some of the company were confident we must have passed it, and would row no further, the others knew not where we were; so we put toward the shore, got

into a creek, landed near an old fence, with the rails of which we made a fire, the night being cold, in October, and there we remained till daylight. Then one of the company knew the place to be Cooper's Creek, a little above Philadelphia, which we saw as soon as we got out of the creek, and arrived there about eight or nine o'clock on Sunday morning, and landed at the Market Street wharf."

In this way, ragged, hungry, dirty and faint for sleep, Benjamin Franklin came to Philadelphia. One dollar (Dutch) and a shilling in coppers comprised his total wealth. His trunk he had left in New York to be sent on by sea, so that he had no other clothes than those he wore and what he had stuffed into his pockets. His hunger at least he could appease. He found a bake shop, and asked for three pennyworth of bread. To his surprise he was handed three huge rolls. He tucked one under each arm, and began to eat from the third. He must have cut a funny figure, and one at which he often laughed in later years. As he walked down the street, a young girl stood in a doorway and watched him pass, smiling a little at his ridiculous appearance. That young girl, just seven years later, became his .wife. He walked on and presently came again on the point at which he had debarked. Here he found the boat still at anchor.

Satisfied with the one roll he had eaten, he gave the other two to a woman passenger who had still further to go. Then he went into the streets again, this time following a crowd of well-dressed people into the Quaker Meeting house, where, thoroughly exhausted with all he had gone through since leaving Boston, he fell asleep.

Acting on the advice of a young Quaker, Franklin slept that night at the Crooked Billet, in Water Street. The next morning he made himself as neat as possible, and set out for Bradford's, the printer's. Here, to his surprise and pleasure, he found the old man from New York, who had made the trip on horseback. Finding that his son could not give the lad work, the elder Bradford went with the applicant to interview another printer, Keimer. This man promised him work in a few days, and Benjamin stayed to put his press in order. Then he returned to Bradford, who invited him to stay with him until he should have definite employment. In return for this hospitality, Franklin performed what tasks he could.

In a few days Keimer sent for the young printer and took him into his shop. Also, not caring to have him live with a rival printer, Keimer arranged lodging for him at the home of Mr. Read, whose

daughter, Deborah, had watched him that eventful Sunday with his rolls of bread. He was able now, however, to put up a better appearance, for his trunk had arrived with his belongings. The runaway apprentice was at last securely employed and comfortably housed. His active mind now turned toward making himself acquainted with the life of this new and thriving city.

III Franklin Opens His Own Shop

One day in the early Spring of 1724, Franklin, then just past his eighteenth birthday, was working with Keimer near a window, when they saw two elegantly-dressed gentlemen cross the street to enter the shop. The delighted Keimer ran down to greet them, only to learn to his surprise and chagrin that they wished to see, not himself, but his young workman, Franklin. One of the visitors was Sir William Keith, Governor of Philadelphia. He had read a letter which Franklin had written his brother-in-law, and had been so impressed with its excellent style that he determined to make the acquaintance of the writer.

On the Governor's suggestion, Franklin accompanied the two gentlemen to a tavern where they might talk together. "Young man," he said, "we have had an eye on you, and we have a proposition to make you." Franklin listened, his eyes shining. It was to the effect that he should obtain enough money from his father to set up in business for himself, when both men promised him their influence to secure for him the Government printing.

"Both Keimer and Bradford do wretched

work," added the Governor. "We want a likely young fellow like you, who can do a good job."

Though Franklin had little hope of inducing his father to think favorably of such a proposition, it was decided that he should take the first boat to Boston and make the attempt. So at the end of April he set out, bearing with him a letter from the Governor which he hoped would further his plan. His arrival took the family entirely by surprise, for they had heard nothing of him during the seven months he had been absent. Indeed, the return of the young traveler, with his new clothes and silver watch, and his pockets full of silver money, made a big stir in the quiet town. But pleased though he might be, such excitement affected the judgment of Franklin's good old father not one whit.

The Governor's plea was refused. Benjamin was too young, in his father's opinion, to be trusted with such a business. It was well that he should return to Philadelphia, since he had made such a good beginning there; and if, by industry and economy he had saved enough to start in business when he came of age, well and good. If he needed some help then, his father would give it, but not yet. He must prove himself first.

So back to Philadelphia went the young

printer, this time, happily, with his father's full approval. He hastened to present his father's letter to the Governor, who seemed much disappointed to read that Benjamin was not to set up in business for himself. Then he said impetuously :

"Since he will not set you up, I will do it myself. Give me an inventory of the things necessary to be had from England, and I will send for them. You shall repay me when you are able; I am resolved to have a good printer here."

This raised Benjamin's hopes again, and he made the inventory. When he presented it to Sir William, it was decided that Franklin should himself go to England to buy the materials, carrying a letter of credit from the Governor. He was to leave on the next boat, some months later, and in the meantime continue to work with Keimer, keeping his project secret. This he did, but when he set sail, by various excuses the Governor had delayed giving him the letter of credit with which to purchase his stock, and Franklin found, to his dismay, that the Governor's generosity habitually went no further than words. Fortunately for him, he had made friends on shipboard with a merchant from Philadelphia, who explained this characteristic of Sir William's, and advised him to secure a position in England and save

money for his return.

Unfortunately for young Franklin, however, James Ralph, a young man he had known intimately in Philadelphia, had accompanied him to England. This Ralph was a man of fair ability and some charm, but of very weak character. In his company Franklin forgot the economy he had always exercised, and found himself continually out of funds through their racy life and the necessity of lending money to his companion, which the latter, being unable to find employment, could not repay. Franklin, with his usual industry, had secured work immediately in an excellent printing house, and circumstances soon relieving him of the burden of Ralph's friendship, his natural good habits were resumed, and he decided to make the most of his enforced stay in London.

Franklin had been eighteen months in London when his friend Dunham, with whom he had kept in touch since they had first met on the boat from Philadelphia, informed him that he was about to return to America, and offered him a position in his mercantile house if he would return with him. Tired of London, Franklin agreed, and they returned to Philadelphia in October. Here, for something over a year, the two lived and worked together, a real bond of affection and respect developing between

them. But just after Franklin had passed his twenty-first birthday, Dunham died, leaving his young friend again dependent on his own resources.

At this point Keimer, his old employer, who had enlarged his shop and was doing a very fair amount of business, in spite of the fact that his help was inefficient, offered Franklin good wages to take over the management of his printing shop. Disliking the man's character, the young printer hesitated to associate himself with him again, but the offer was so attractive that he at last consented. He soon found reason for his suspicions. The men in the shop were untrained hands who were bound to work for Keimer for a given period for extremely low wages. It was Keimer's intention to keep Franklin only so long as it was necessary for the others to learn his methods, in spite of his time agreement with him. This proved to be the case, and Franklin soon left him.

In the meantime Keimer changed front. He had learned that some paper money was to be printed for New Jersey, and he feared that the other printer would engage Franklin and so secure the commission, for Franklin was the only printer in the place who could do the work required. He therefore called on Franklin and after apologizing for his hasty

temper, asked him to return to his former position. Since this fitted in so well and with his new plans, Franklin consented, and went with Keimer to Burlington to fill the money contract which had been given his employer. Through this work for the Government, the young workman made several important friendships which were to mean much to him when he later entered upon his public career.

After three pleasant months, with much time spent in the company of cultured men of affairs, with whom his brilliant, well-stocked mind and ready wit made him a great favorite, Franklin found himself again in Philadelphia, the New Jersey money contract satisfactorily completed, and Keimer with sufficient money in consequence to keep him going for some time longer. Franklin had not long been back when he received the materials which had been ordered from England, and he and a friend, Meredith, opened a shop for themselves.

From the beginning the new business throve. Franklin's ready capacity for making friends stood him in good stead, and much work was sent to him from many sources. Meredith was of little use as a partner. His work was poor, and he began again to indulge in excessive drinking, a habit which Franklin's influence had at first seemed to keep in

restraint, but which now resumed its full sway over the unfortunate man. Franklin's friends tried to persuade him to sever the partnership, two of them going so far as to offer to advance the money to finish paying for the press, if he would do so. This, however, did not seem fair or honorable to Franklin, though his friends' generosity and confidence touched him deeply, and he continued to carry out his part of the bargain to the utmost of his ability, until circumstances brought about the very condition that seemed so desirable.

The elder Meredith was unable to meet the second payment on the press when it became due. The merchant who had sold the material to them sued, and they stood in danger of having their place sold to settle the judgment. In this emergency, Meredith suggested to Franklin that since he, Meredith, was such a poor workman, it would be better that he should return to the farm, and that Franklin might with certain payments sever the partnership, and obtain full possession of the shop. This was done, the two friends again proffering their assistance, and in 1729, at twenty-three years of age, Benjamin Franklin became his own master and sole owner of the little printing shop which was to become, through the genius of its master, one of

the famous places of Philadelphia.

Now began a period of real prosperity. Franklin soon added to his printing establishment a stationer's shop, getting a supply of paper, parchment and the like superior to any that was then being sold in Philadelphia. In this, also, he throve, so that soon he was employing others to carry on part of the work, and had begun to repay the loan which had made possible the purchase of the stock.

When he had first worked for Keimer before going to England, and had lived with the Read family, Franklin had paid serious attention to the daughter Deborah, but had been restrained from a positive engagement by the young lady's parents, owing to their youth. In the excitement of travel the lad neglected to write and seemingly forgot his implied obligation. Later, an offer of marriage was accepted by Miss Read under the advice of her parents, with a man named Rogers. This marriage proved a most unhappy one, the wife returning very shortly to the home of her parents, and the man Rogers, of whom it was reported that he already had a wife in England, leaving the country. Franklin blamed himself greatly for this unhappy condition, feeling that his own neglect had made it possible,

and having still a great affection for the young lady, which was returned in kind, they were married on the first of September, 1730, when Franklin was twenty-four years of age. The marriage seems to have resulted most happily, the young wife not only making an excellent housekeeper, but assisting her husband very materially in his new business.

At about this time, Keimer was obliged to sell out to satisfy his creditors. Franklin now had but one business rival, Bradford, to whom he had gone on his first visit to Philadelphia, and who was, by this time, in such easy circumstances that he paid little attention to business. There was nothing now to prevent the ambitious Franklin from realizing his wildest dreams, and toward this he began to direct his way.

IV A First Taste Of Public Affairs

Franklin loved a debate. His friends quite naturally formed themselves into groups or clubs for the discussion of timely subjects, of which his was usually the dominant mind. Now, on his settling down into a definite career he drew about him another and larger group, which he called the "Junto." The rules governing this club required that "every member, in his turn, should produce one or more queries on any point of Morals, Politics, or Natural Philosophy, to be discussed by the company; and once in three months produce and read an essay of his own writing, on any subject he pleased."

The Junto existed for forty years, and became "the best school of philosophy, morality, and politics that then existed in the province," while the rules of debate prevented "our disgusting each other." The number of members was restricted to twelve, but later so many wished to bring in their friends, that Franklin suggested they should form separate clubs, to be operated under the same rules as the parent club, but the new club and its relation to the parent club to be kept secret. Five of the members succeeded in forming their clubs, each bringing to

the parent club reports of the meetings and retaining their own membership in the Junto. Through this excellent scheme an avenue was opened up for the discussion of many public matters which later developed a telling influence in general thought. Two of the noteworthy public reforms which Franklin instigated may serve to show the way in which the younger clubs were used.

The first of these was the regulation of the night watch. “It was managed by the constable . . . who warned a number of housekeepers to attend him for the night. Those who chose never to attend paid him six shillings a year . . . for hiring substitutes. But the constable, for a little drink, often got such ragamuffins about him as a watch, that respectable housekeepers did not choose to mix with . . . and most of the night was spent in tippling."

Franklin brought this condition to the attention of the Junto, suggesting the hiring of proper men and the better distribution of the six shilling tax, so that those who had great property to protect should pay more than those who had little.

The second public matter which Franklin took up through the same channels was fire protection. The response was immediate and enthusiastic. A band of thirty members was formed, who obligated

themselves to keep certain buckets and equipment on hand and to assist in extinguishing fires. Soon other companies were formed and an equipment of ladders and fire engines, secured for each, until, as Franklin put it, "I doubt if there is a city in the world better provided with the means of putting a stop to beginning conflagrations."

Benjamin Franklin had always thought very deeply on religious matters, and after reading some atheistic books was for a while in sympathy with their views. But though he never adopted any religious creed, he soon returned to the belief in a Divine Being.

In place of a religious belief other than this, Franklin drew up a plan of the virtues he wished to acquire, duly entering in a book his triumphs and his failings. In his autobiography he gives an interesting account of his struggle with this orderly system of character building, claiming that all the "constant felicity" of his life he owed to this serious attempt to set up habits of mind and body that would enable him to be a useful citizen, "and obtain for him some degree of reputation among the learned."

Franklin was twenty-six years of age when his great love of books suggested to his active mind a plan out of which has grown the now world-wide

system of public libraries. There was no bookseller's shop south of Boston, and the few readers in Philadelphia were forced to send to England for their books. Each member of the Junto had acquired a few volumes, and these Franklin suggested bringing to one central room, and allowing each to borrow from the general stock for home reading.

This proved such a good plan that he wished to extend these advantages to the general public, and drew up a plan for a public subscription library. Franklin himself secured, after much trouble, fifty subscribers of forty shillings each. The money thus advanced was spent in books, and the library opened. Each subscriber was to pay ten shillings a year, and to replace any books which he might lose. Some books were presented to the institution and reading soon became popular. Other towns followed Philadelphia's example, and, to quote from Franklin's biography, "our people, having no public amusements to divert their attention from study, became better acquainted with books . . . and better instructed and more intelligent than people of the same rank generally are in other countries."

The collection of books was moved about from place to place as each became too small to hold it, until in 1790 it was placed in the present

Philadelphia Library.

Franklin's busy mind now conceived the idea of publishing a newspaper. There was but one paper printed in Philadelphia, by Bradford, and it was so poor that it seemed to offer no rivalry at all. Unfortunately Franklin spoke of his project to a man named Webb, who had worked with him in Keimer's shop, and he told Keimer of it. Keimer immediately started one himself, hoping in that way to prevent Franklin and to gain the advantage for his shop. But Franklin was not to be stopped so easily. He began at once to write clever articles for Bradford's paper, and so ridiculed and belittled Keimer's paper that in a few months he was able to buy him out for a trifle. He named the paper the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and from the beginning it was so superior in appearance to Bradford's paper, that it readily gained a large subscription list, and finally became a profitable part of the business.

It was through his paper, as well as by a private pamphlet, that Franklin brought much weight to bear in the matter of paper currency. There was very little money in the country at the time, and while the wealthy people opposed any increase in paper currency, Franklin was convinced that a moderate increase would be a good thing.

When the House at last authorized the new issue, the printing was given to Franklin to do, another reward for the excellence of his work.

All this occurred while Franklin was still in the early twenties, and left him, though so young, an acknowledged power throughout the province. Almost all the public printing gradually came into his hands, not so much through the might of his pen, as because of the excellence of his workmanship. One serious handicap in the distribution of his paper yet remained — the fact that Bradford, his only rival, was also postmaster. This man took advantage of his office to prevent Franklin's paper from being sent through the post-office, though the young publisher managed to overcome the restriction in some measure by bribing the post riders. This still left the advantage with the postmaster, however, and he was able to gain some trade, especially in the matter of advertising, which was a great loss to Franklin. The generosity of Franklin's character was shown later, for when he in turn became postmaster, the very inconvenience he had suffered from this mean trick on the part of his rival made him determine never to be guilty of such an act himself.

At the age of twenty-six, still another venture

seized him, and we find him beginning the publication of an Almanac. At the head of each page was printed some verse or paragraph embodying a comment on life or some homely advice as pleased the publisher, and in the opening part of the book was inserted a sort of discourse, containing a collection of witty proverbs. This he called "Poor Richard's Almanac," and it became one of the most popular publications of the day, reaching a distribution of ten thousand copies.

V Clerk Of The Assembly

At twenty-seven, the lad who had entered Philadelphia penniless and friendless had become so well established in business that he began to open up branch offices. The first of these was in Charleston, South Carolina, and this succeeded so well that Franklin was encouraged to open others, in each case promoting men who had already proved their worth in the Philadelphia office. Most of these men were able to buy Franklin's equity in the business within six or seven years, so becoming full owners of their own shops.

As his business throve life became a little easier for the printer, and he began again to extend his education, this time taking up the study of modern languages, first French, then Italian, then Spanish. This was to prove a fortunate circumstance in his later life, when his knowledge of French became a necessity on his appointment as Minister to France. The ease with which he acquired Greek and Latin after mastering the modern languages confirmed him in an opinion he had long held, that the study of these two should be superseded in the schools by the study of modern languages.

Franklin's public career began with his being

chosen in 1736, at the age of thirty, as Clerk of the General Assembly. The first year there was no opposition to the appointment, but the next year when he was again proposed a new member who wished the place for a friend spoke strongly against his reappointment. Franklin was retained in spite of this opposition, but the circumstance determined him to win the friendship of the member. The means with which he accomplished his purpose were characteristic.

"I did not," he says, "aim at gaining his favor by paying any servile respect to him, but after some time took this other method. Having heard that he had in his library a certain very scarce and curious book, I wrote a note to him, expressing my desire of perusing that book, and requesting he would do me the favor of lending it to me for a few days. He sent it immediately, and I returned it in about a week with another note, expressing strongly my sense of the favor. . . . We afterward became great friends, and our friendship continued to his death. This is another instance of the truth of an old maxim I had learned, which says: 'He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another, than he whom you yourself have obliged.' "

This office was a great satisfaction to Franklin,

since it paid a moderate salary and also helped him to secure the greater part of the Government printing for his shop. He was reappointed each year, holding the office for fourteen years, at the end of which period he was elected member of the Assembly itself.

It was during his second year as Clerk that he was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia, succeeding his rival, Bradford. Franklin was glad to get this office as it afforded him a great advantage over his competitor. Bradford's paper had always been inferior to Franklin's, but the fact that its publisher was postmaster had enabled him to keep a fair circulation. With this position reversed, Franklin's paper began to increase in circulation and advertising, until it became the leader.

For the next few years Franklin's life went along tranquilly enough. With the affairs of the post-office and the Assembly, his printing shop and the Junto, his time was well and profitably occupied. Two projects for the public welfare, however, began to shape themselves in his ever active mind — one the establishment of an Academy for the better education of the youth of Pennsylvania; and the other the provision of some scheme of defense for the province against the French and their Indian

allies.

Franklin first proposed the establishment of an Academy in 1743, but he was unable to carry his plan into effect until several years later, first because of his inability to find a man of whom he approved to take charge of the school, and later through the absorbing of all the time he could spare in the matter of public defense. In 1744, however, he established the American Philosophical Society, with nine members, six of whom were members of the Junto. This society was organized to provide a central association for the interchange of ideas of all students of science or philosophy in the colonies, especially along the practical lines of invention. Like his father, Franklin had always been a clever mechanic, and was never so happy as when inventing something that would make work more efficient or life more comfortable. His best-known invention was the Franklin stove.

The invention of this stove by Franklin followed a discussion in the Junto on "Why do chimneys smoke?", and it was to foster discussions on such practical subjects as this, as well as on more abstract problems, that the Philosophical Society was established. This society, though capable of so great usefulness, fared very ill for the first few years

of its existence, its founder complaining that the members were too lazy to make the best use of it. Later it grew into an important scientific body.

Governor Thomas, meanwhile, was trying to induce the Assembly to pass a bill providing for a citizen army; but the majority of the Assembly, being Quakers, opposed any form of warfare or defense. So alarming was the situation in view of a possible Indian attack that Franklin decided to take a hand in the matter. He wrote a pamphlet, which he called "Plain Truth," showing the necessity of an organized body for defense in case of attack, and setting forth as clearly as he could the dangers of the existing state of unpreparedness. In the pamphlet he asserted that he would have ready, in a few days, a plan of organization which would be open for the signatures of those who wished to join in the proposed plan of defense.

The response was immediate and enthusiastic. The people clamored for the proposed plan. Franklin hurriedly drew up the draft and called a mass meeting of the people to discuss it. The house was full. Franklin explained the purpose of the suggested association, and asked for signatures of those who wished to join it. Twelve hundred people signed. The papers were sent through the country.

Signatures poured in until at last ten thousand men had bound themselves to fight in defense of their province. Unable to obtain money through the Quaker Assembly for the purchase of arms, each man provided his own arms. They then formed themselves into companies and regiments, and met each week for military drill.

The Philadelphia regiment asked Franklin to be colonel of their regiment, but Franklin, feeling himself unfit for the work, refused, and suggested a friend named Lawrence to be appointed in his stead.

Franklin now proposed that a battery be built below the town and furnished with cannon for its defense. By means of a lottery the necessary money was quickly raised, and the battery erected and fitted with some old cannon from Boston. These were not sufficient, so they sent to England for more, and in the meantime commissioned Franklin and three others of their number to go to New York and borrow some cannon from Governor Clinton. Of the result of the journey Franklin writes with characteristic humor :

"Clinton at first refused us peremptorily; but at dinner with his council, where there was great drinking of Madeira wine, as the custom of that

place then was, he softened by degrees, and said he would lend us six. After a few more bumpers, he advanced to ten; and at length he very good-naturedly conceded eighteen. They were fine cannon, eighteen-pounders, with their carriages, which we soon transported and mounted on our battery, where the associators kept a nightly guard while the war lasted, and among the rest, I regularly took my turn of duty there as a common soldier."

The Quaker members of the Assembly meanwhile blocked the military efforts. Their religious scruples forbade them from fighting.

An amusing incident in connection with the fire company convinced Franklin of the general feeling. Of the thirty members, twenty-two were Quakers. A meeting was called to decide whether the treasury fund of sixty pounds should be donated to the defense lottery. The non-Quaker eight favored the proposition, and one Quaker appeared to oppose it. By the Quaker's request they waited for some time to allow others to arrive. While they were waiting, a message was brought to Franklin that someone wished to see him below. To his surprise he found waiting for him two of the Quaker members, who told him that the others were assembled in a nearby tavern ready to come and

vote with him if necessary, but they preferred the vote to go through without their coming out openly in its support if possible, as they did not wish to antagonize their Quaker friends. Quite reassured, Franklin returned to the meeting, and willingly conceded the request of the Quaker that they wait another hour, and then take a deciding vote. At the end of the hour no other Quaker having arrived, the vote was taken, and the money turned over to the defense association.

Among other amusing incidents of which Franklin speaks as showing the embarrassment suffered by the Quakers because of their anti-war principles, one tells of the way in which an appropriation for gunpowder was voted by the Assembly "for the purchasing of bread, flour, wheat, or other grain", the other grain being understood to refer to the gunpowder. An equivocation suggested itself to Franklin in connection with the fire company meeting, for if the project failed, he had insinuated to another member, that they propose buying a fire engine with the money. "Then if you nominate me and I you as a committee for that purpose, we will buy a great gun, which is certainly a fire engine."

"I see," he replied, “you have improved by

being so long in the Assembly; your equivocal project would be just a match for the 'wheat or other grain.' "

Fortunately peace was declared without the need to resort to the use of arms, but his great and successful activities in the public service in the matter of defense led to a considerable growth in the good esteem in which Franklin was held by the people of the province.

VI Electricity, And Other Things

With peace came some slight leisure for the busy Franklin, and he at once turned his mind to the completion of his earlier plans for the establishment of an Academy. As usual, he commenced his campaign by writing and publishing a pamphlet, in which he showed the need of such an institution and the way in which it could be provided. A few days later, a subscription list was opened, and a sufficient amount of money provided to begin the project. Before the year was out, 1749, a house had been secured and the school was opened. It proved tremendously successful, the number of scholars increasing so rapidly that larger quarters soon had to be provided. Fortunately there was an immense hall which had been built some years before to provide for public meetings. This hall was encumbered with some debt, and little in demand. By mutual agreement it was turned over to the new Academy. From this start has grown the University of Pennsylvania of the present day.

Franklin had taken into partnership David Hall, an excellent man who worked with him for eighteen years. Then Hall purchased Franklin's share in the shop and materials. But early in the partnership,

Hall took over all the work connected with the shop, leaving Franklin with the treasured "leisure for philosophical study and amusement." He began immediately to experiment with the new wonder, electricity.

During a visit to Boston Franklin had met a certain Dr. Spence, who was showing some electrical experiments. The Leyden jar had just been perfected, and Franklin's imagination seized avidly on the possibilities of this marvelous science. Now he proceeded to investigate the new discovery. He bought all of Spence's apparatus, and soon became more efficient in their use and demonstration than the doctor himself, adding several experiments of his own, so that "my house was continually full, for some time, with people who came to see these new wonders."

It was impossible that Franklin should be interested in a science so undeveloped and with so large a field for experiment and discovery, without adding something practical and important. His two most important contributions were his theory that electricity was not, as was then thought, a substance created by friction, but "an element diffused among, and attracted by, other matter, chiefly by water and metals"; and his invention of

the lightning rod. This last he discovered by means of a metal-tipped kite, which he allowed to fly during a storm, when the metal of the kite attracted the electricity from the atmosphere and discharged it along the line by which it was held. Following this discovery, Franklin argued that if a pole with a metal end should be erected, the electricity would be drawn by the point and harmlessly conducted into the ground. This led to his invention of the lightning rods.

But no matter how eager Franklin might be to give his time to scientific experiment, he had been too valuable in the public service to be allowed to give it up. On the contrary, his additional leisure was seized upon by the public, who "laid hold of me for their purposes, every part of our civil government almost at the same time imposing some duty upon me. The Governor put me into the commission of the peace; the corporation of the city chose me of the common council and soon after an alderman; and the citizens at large chose me a burgess to represent them in Assembly. This latter station was the more agreeable to me, as I was at length tired of sitting there to hear debates, in which, as clerk, I could take no part, and which were often so unentertaining that I was induced to amuse myself

with making magic squares or circles. ... I would not however, insinuate that my ambition was not flattered by all these promotions; it certainly was; for considering my low beginning, they were great things to me; and they were still more pleasing, as being so many spontaneous testimonies of the public good opinion, and by me entirely unsolicited."

When Franklin was elected member of the Assembly, his old post of Clerk was given to his son William. William was the eldest of Franklin's children, only two of whom lived to grow up, the other a daughter, Sarah. One other child, Francis Folger, died at four years of age of smallpox. For this child Franklin had a great and lasting affection. When speaking of a grandson many years later he said, "He brings often afresh to my mind the idea of my son Franky, though now dead thirty-six years, whom I have seldom seen equaled in everything, and whom to this day I cannot think of without a sigh."

In spite of his many public interests, Franklin was devoted to his home and family. Nor did he limit this affectionate interest to his wife and children. His nephews and nieces found him ever ready to assist in their education or in setting them

up in business. To his father and mother he was ever affectionate, sending them, as he grew in prosperity, gifts of money with which to provide special comforts for their declining years. The monument which he erected to their memory stands in the Granary Burying Place, Boston. He also helped very materially those of his brothers and sisters who needed his aid. His youngest and favorite sister Jane depended entirely on his generosity during the later part of her life.

Even his mother-in-law was numbered among those under his care, though she was in some measure able to provide for herself. From an advertisement in Franklin's papers shortly after his marriage, we learn that the Widow Read had moved to the printing house, and there proposed to sell her famous Ointment for the itch. Family salve for burns, "and several other salves and ointments as useful," as well as "Lockyer's Pills at 3d a Pill." Evidently the Widow Read was an agreeable member of the printer's household, for on her death he wrote his wife to condole with her on the loss of her mother, assuring her that he was sensible "of the distress and affliction it must have thrown you into. Your comfort will be that no care was wanting on your part toward her. . . . It is . . . a great

satisfaction to me that I cannot charge myself with ever having failed in one instance of duty and respect to her during the many years that she called me son."

Of his wife Franklin always spoke with affection and praise, and though in his visits to Europe on various missions for his country he was frequently away from home for years at a time, the tender and confident tone of his letters, as well as the many useful and beautiful gifts he constantly sent, bore eloquent witness of the good judgment with which he had chosen the mistress of his home. In his Almanac "Poor Richard" says: "He who must thrive must ask his wife," and Franklin willingly concedes the share his wife's industry and frugality had in helping him to get his first start toward prosperity, though there is a charming touch in his story of the first departure from this principle of economy in their simple home.

"We kept no idle servants, our table was plain and simple, our furniture of the cheapest. For instance, my breakfast was a long time bread and milk, and I ate it out of a twopenny earthen porringer, with a pewter spoon. But mark how luxuries will enter families, and make a progress, in spite of principle; being called one morning to

breakfast, I found it in a China bowl, with a spoon of silver. They had been bought for me without my knowledge by my wife, and had cost her the enormous sum of three-and-twenty shillings, for which she had no other excuse or apology to make, but that she thought her husband deserved a silver spoon and China bowl as well as any of his neighbors. This was the first appearance of plate and china in our house, which afterward, in a course of years, as our wealth increased, augmented gradually to several hundred pounds in value."

But though Franklin censured wastefulness and vanity, he was far from being miserly. He advocated, rather, a fair adjustment of a man's spending to his income. His letter to his wife on the repeal of the Stamp Act is characteristic of this principle of his :

"As the Stamp Act is at length repealed, I am willing you should have a new gown, which you may suppose I did not send sooner, as I know you would not like to be finer than your neighbors, unless in a gown of your own spinning. Had the trade between the two countries totally ceased, it was a comfort to me to recollect that I had once been clothed from head to foot in woolen and linen of my wife's manufacture, that I never was prouder of any dress

in my life, and that she and her daughter might do it again if it was necessary. I told the Parliament that it was my opinion, before the old clothes of the Americans were worn out, they might have new ones of their own making. I have sent you a fine piece of Pompadour satin, fourteen yards, cost eleven shillings a yard, a silk negligee, and a petticoat of brocaded lute-string for my dear Sally."

VII The Leading Citizen

"A message from his lordship, the Governor!" the new Clerk of the Assembly announced, one morning.

The members, among them Franklin, settled back in their seats to listen.

"The Carlisle Indians are a menace to the public safety," the Governor said in effect. "They are dissatisfied. We must draw up a treaty with them, and assign them proper bounds."

The Assembly agreed that this was a wise thing to do. Mr. Morris, the Speaker, and Benjamin Franklin were elected to go. So one fine morning, their broad shoe buckles twinkling in the early sunshine, and their big, soft, three-cornered hats set firmly on their heads, off they went, the musical jingle of the horses' harness making them a pretty accompaniment.

They found the Indians encamped just out-side the town. There were about a hundred of them all told, and they had built themselves huts, which they had arranged around a big open square in the center. A meeting was called at once, but the Indians didn't want to talk — they wanted rum, which the commissioners had forbidden the

inhabitants of the town to sell them.

"You give us rum, we talk," they grunted.

"No rum yet," replied the commissioners. "Let us finish our business. After that is completed, you shall have all you want."

With this they were forced to be content, and like the donkey who drew his load only because of the tempting turnip held ever before his nose, they settled at once into the work of the meeting, and in a short time completed the treaty to everybody's satisfaction. Then they demanded their pay, the rum.

Just after dusk, the commissioners were chatting and smoking in their lodging when they heard a great uproar in the direction of the Indian camp. Wondering what was happening, they hurried out, to find the whole countryside lit up by the reflection from a huge bonfire which the Indians had built in the central square of their camping place. About the fire, in different stages of drunkenness, staggered, danced and writhed the naked brown bodies of the Indians, the red glare throwing into relief their weird poses. Nothing could be done to quiet them, so the commissioners went home. The hideous clamor kept up far into the night, a party of the Indians at midnight surrounding

the house in which the commissioners were lodged, hammering on the doors and walls, and demanding more rum. Finding no notice taken of them, they stopped at last, and returned to the camp, which gradually sank to silence as one after another of the revelers was overcome by drunken exhaustion.

The next day the dazed and contrite Indians sent three of their old men to apologize to the white men, offering the curious excuse that "God made the rum for the Indians to get drunk with."

* * *

By the time Franklin was forty-five he was the most admired man of the State. It was about this time that he received a visit from a friend of his, a Dr. Thomas Bond. He had been trying to gather funds with which to open a hospital, but had met with no success. In despair he went to Franklin.

"It's no use, Franklin," he said, "nothing can be done in this town without you. We'll never have a hospital unless you lend a hand. When I ask people to subscribe, all the answer I get is, *Have you consulted Mr. Franklin? What does he think of it?' When I tell them I haven't, they put me off by saying they'll think about it."

Franklin smiled at the compliment, and plied his friend with questions about his scheme. The

result was, he was so pleased with the idea, that he willingly consented to help. He wrote clever stories of the plan for the newspapers, and when he thought the people were ready, began to ask for funds. The response was generous, but the sum required was a large one. The leader soon saw that his plan would not be possible unless the Assembly came to the rescue with some public funds.

But when Franklin appealed to the Assembly, those members from districts outside Philadelphia raised some objection. They felt that the people of the town did not want it badly enough to give any great proportion of the amount. So the shrewd Franklin drew up a bill making the contribution from the Assembly dependent on the raising of a certain sum from the townspeople, knowing that the members would pass it believing that the sum required could not be raised. But Franklin knew what he was about. He raised the money, secured the public grant, and the hospital was established. This hospital is still known as the Pennsylvania Hospital.

Franklin next busied himself with the filthy condition of the streets of the town. They were unpaved and unlighted. As usual when he had a reform in mind, he began to write in favor of it for

the newspapers. But beside this, he won the public interest in a very practical way. He managed to get the Jersey Market paved with brick, which made it much more comfortable for shoppers. Then when he found that the traffic from the surrounding streets brought quantities of filth up on to the pavement, he engaged a man to sweep the whole pavement each day for an amount equal to sixpence a month for each house in the district. Then he went to each householder, and asked him to sign an agreement to pay the six-pence in order that they might have a clean street. Everyone was delighted at the improvement, and it was not long before Franklin was able to present a Bill to the Assembly for the paving of the entire city.

Like the famous preacher who said, "The world is my parish," Franklin seemed to consider Philadelphia his home and its people his family, for he was always about some task for their happiness. It seems incredible that any one man could have brought about so many public improvements as did Franklin in a very few years. Only his unceasing industry made such a record possible. He was as loath to waste time as to waste money. When he was learning Italian he used sometimes to play chess with a friend who was also learning the

language. This friend liked much better to play chess than to study, so Franklin, finding that too much of his time was being taken up by the game, made a bargain with his friend. He made it a condition of the game that the winner should be allowed to set a task in Italian that each must do before they played together again. In this way, as he said, they "beat each other into the language,"

But though so willing to serve the public, Franklin was not to be tricked into using his time or his influence for other than the general good. Many people tried to get him to help them on more personal projects, but his advice to the Rev. Gilbert Tennant shows how he dealt with them. This gentleman called on Franklin one day and asked his assistance to raise money to build a church. Franklin refused.

"Then," said the gentleman, "will you be good enough to give me a list of those people you know have subscribed to other public matters?"

"No," replied Franklin, "I cannot do that. It does not seem fair to me that, because they have been generous in other causes, I should send you to them for something else."

"I am sorry. May I ask at least that you give me the benefit of your advice, as to who to go to and

who not."

"That will I readily do," replied Franklin, his genial smile and sparkling eyes putting the discomfited minister more at ease. "In the first place, apply to all those whom you know will give something; next, to those whom you are uncertain whether they will give anything or not, and show them the list of those who have given; and lastly, do not neglect those who you are sure will give nothing, for in some of them you may be mistaken."

The visitor laughed, thanked his host, and took his leave. He also took the advice, and succeeded amazingly, for he asked everybody, and got enough money to build the church which was the forerunner of that standing now at Twenty-first and Walnut Streets. Franklin had given him two of the virtues which played so great a part in his own wonderful success, courage and perseverance.

During Franklin's connection with the post-office, he had done some extra work for the Postmaster General by visiting other post-offices and bringing them up to date in their accounts. It was a natural thing, therefore, that when the Postmaster General died, the office should be offered to Franklin. He accepted it, to work jointly with a William Hunter. They were to receive six

hundred pounds a year between them, if they could make it out of the profits of the office. The office had never made a sufficient profit to pay salaries and leave anything over to send to England. As usual, Franklin started in to improve things, the improvements costing the partners in office nine hundred pounds during the first four years. After that it began to pay them, then it began to pay enough to make a profit for the home office in England, and finally it produced, through the new methods, "three times as much clear revenue to the crown as the post-office of Ireland." Franklin was justly proud of this record, telling the story delightfully in his biography, and ending with : "But since I was displaced by a freak of the ministers, they have received from it — not one farthing."

It was on business of the post-office that he made a trip to New England, when the opportunity was seized on by Harvard University to present him with the degree of Master of Arts. Yale had done this some time before, their action having been taken in recognition of Franklin's discoveries and inventions in electricity. Franklin was justly proud of these unexpected honors. He was always regretful of his lack of early education, and in speaking of this, he says :

"Thus, without studying in any college, I came to partake of their honors."

Franklin was forty-eight years old when troubles with England arose which finally resulted in the union of the colonies and their separation from the Mother Country. Seeing that war was almost certain between England and France, a congress was held in Albany, to which each colony sent representatives, to discuss the best means of protecting the people from the French and Indians. Franklin was one of the representatives from Pennsylvania, and during the journey he drew up a plan for the uniting of the colonies with a central government. He had been urging some such action for some time in his newspaper writings, and several of the other commissioners had been working on similar plans. After much discussion and comparison, Franklin's plan was voted the best. The congress which had been called to discuss the business of defense, took up this question also, and ordered copies of the plan printed and sent to the various colonies for their acceptance.

Franklin now had great hope that the union of the colonies, which he had so long hoped for, and felt so sure would be the means of the greatest growth and security for the people, would become

an actual fact. But he was to be disappointed. The Assemblies thought it allowed too much prerogative, and England thought it too democratic. So they compromised by combining, through the various governors, for the raising of troops and the building of fortresses, a temporary arrangement to take care of the peril of the moment. The expense of the movement was to be taken care of by the treasury of Great Britain, the money to be refunded by means of a tax on the American people through an Act of Parliament.

Franklin had long held the opinion that the colonies could and should provide both arms and armies for their own defense. England had opposed the training of American troops, fearing that with a great and efficient army, the colonies would break away from the Mother Country and declare themselves an independent nation. Franklin resented this suspicion, but quite understood it. His greatest indignation was directed, however, against the taxation clause of the proposed union. If the money were to be raised in America, and he was quite agreed that it should be, he felt that it should be raised by the provinces themselves, and not by taxation through an Act of the English Parliament.

He fought the measure by every means in his

power. He wrote for the newspapers, and to the British government, pointing out the injustice of taxation without the consent of the taxed, and the fact that to tax these peoples, who by their courage and self-sacrifice had won for the Mother Country a great extension of her territories, was to treat them as enemies and a conquered people, rather than to give them the reward which such a great contribution to the lands and commerce of the dominion deserved.

But his efforts met with no success. The British Government had been growing more and more friendly to the idea of making the American colonies contribute something of their wealth to the treasury by direct taxation, and the measure was adopted. Not only that, but more and more of the power over public funds which the separate Assemblies had held, the British Government now began to remove, with the excuse that they used these powers to encourage independence. As one looks back over the history of the succeeding years, one is amazed at the shortsightedness of the men in charge of public matters in England who could possibly expect that this highhanded method of government could have any other result than the one which took place — the separation of the colonies from the home

country and their union as an independent nation.

However, no one yet dreamed that such a thing would happen. And meanwhile the common peril from the French and Indians still held them to England.

VIII Franklin Aids General Braddock

Franklin's loyalty to the true interests of the people, early in his political career brought him into ill favor with the proprietors of the colony, the Penn family. The "proprietors," as they were called, were the descendants of William Penn, whose treaty with the Indians had given him control of much of the public lands of Pennsylvania. The state, as we know, was named for him.

It was the privilege of these proprietors to appoint the Governor to his office, and they were careful to appoint only men who would serve their interests. Their chief instruction was that no bill was to be signed by him which allowed any tax to be made on their properties. They had sold or leased for long periods a great deal of their property, but there were huge tracts of unimproved land still held by them, and on this they succeeded in evading taxation. They lived in England on the immense wealth produced by their Pennsylvania holdings, refusing to acknowledge any obligation to the source of their riches, and caring nothing for the province except to draw money from it.

Franklin insisted that the Penn brothers should bear their share of the expense of defense against

the Indians and the French. It was a curious situation. The Assembly would pass bills providing money for their needs, and the Governor would veto them, unless a clause excusing the Penn family from the tax should be inserted. The Assembly abandoned the submitted bill, and usually through Franklin's cleverness found some other way of providing the money. This went on until after the defeat of the small army under General Braddock which had been sent from England, when friends in England whom Franklin had kept informed of the way in which the Penn's representatives had ignored the public good in favor of their masters, caused so much comment on the stingy habits of the proprietors, that they were forced to send to the Assembly a gift of five thousand pounds, to be added to the sum for defense raised by the Assembly. This was accepted as taking the place of the tax, and the bill for taxation was passed without the Penn lands.

General Braddock, with his two regiments of British regulars, landed in Virginia. He was proud and overbearing, and very sure of his own opinion. His soldiers knew nothing of Indian warfare, but this did not disturb Braddock. He was so certain of his own ability that he did not even use the friendly

Indian scouts who came to help him. Instead, he treated them so harshly that they soon left him to shift for himself.

The Philadelphia Assembly, fearing lest Braddock should become their enemy when he learned of their belief, as Quakers, that war of any kind was sinful, asked Franklin to go to him and try to secure his friendship. So with his son William for company, off he set, and soon arrived in Frederickstown, where he found the General. As Postmaster General he found an excuse for his visit in the need of talking over plans to help Braddock in the matter of despatches, and his own delightful personality was enough to make even the doughty Britisher urge him to stay as long as he could. After several days, during which he was much with the General, and had been able to give him an excellent report of what the Assembly had done to help the expedition, he prepared to return, but when he went to take his leave, he found the General in a fury.

A company of men whom he had sent into the country to secure horses and wagons to transport the troops had just returned. They had brought in only twenty-five, and some of these were in such poor condition as to be almost useless.

"Look at them! Twenty-five and we need a hundred and fifty," said the angry General. "We will give up the expedition. It is impossible with such paltry equipment," and he stamped up and down, railing at the ministers who brought about his landing in such an unsatisfactory place.

"It is too bad," said Franklin, when he could get in a word. "If you had landed in Pennsylvania, you would have found every farmer with his own wagon."

Immediately the harassed General seized on the promising idea. "Then you, sir, who are a man of interest there," he said, "can probably procure them for us. I beg you will undertake it."

"What terms do you offer the owners?"

"Write down what terms you think fair," was the reply, "and I will sign it."

"Very good, sir," said Franklin.

This was done, and with repeated thanks for his help Franklin returned home, where he immediately began his campaign for the collecting of horses and wagons. This he did through advertisements, which brought such good results that within two weeks one hundred and fifty wagons and two hundred and fifty-nine horses were on their way to the camp. The terms of hire had

included food for the animals and wages for the men, but for the compensation for such horses and wagons as should be lost or destroyed the owners insisted on Franklin himself being responsible. This later led to a great deal of trouble for the patriot, for almost all were destroyed in the only engagement which the little force suffered, and repayment was delayed so long that several suits were brought against Franklin before the Government came to his relief and removed the responsibility.

Nothing could be a better demonstration of the genuine kindliness of Franklin's feeling toward others than another incident which grew out of his visit to the camp. He learned there that the younger officers, with very little pay, were finding it impossible to provision themselves for the long march across a wild country. This touched Franklin deeply, and on his return, without having said anything of his plans to the officers, he wrote to the Assembly proposing that a present of food for the journey be sent to these young men. One can readily imagine the gratitude the officers felt to their late visitor when each received a present of a riding horse, on whose back was strapped a huge package containing such substantial articles of food

as a twenty pound keg of butter, two hams, six pounds of coffee, and the same quantity of cocoa, rice, raisins, cheese and wine, as well as many other things.

It is also an interesting sidelight of this visit to Braddock's camp that Franklin met for the first time a young Virginia colonel, with whom he was later to be intimately associated in public affairs. That young man was George Washington.

The Braddock expedition was a tragic failure. The enemy waited until the little army were within nine miles of their first objective, and then, with half of the troops on either side of a river which they had to cross, attacked them front and rear. The troops were thrown into great confusion, many of the officers were killed and almost all the rest wounded. Braddock himself was mortally wounded. Had it not been for Washington and his scouts who reformed the shattered lines, hardly a man would have lived to tell the tale.

No time was now lost in forming a civilian army. Franklin drew up a bill for the preparing of a militia, and by exempting the Quakers from service quickly got it passed. Companies were formed, and soon the town was humming with the drill of its citizen soldiers. In the meantime Franklin was urged

by the Governor to take over the defense of the northwestern part of the province, where the Indians were on the warpath. He was to build a line of forts and train the local men in the use of arms.

Franklin never considered himself a military man, but he was ready to do anything which seemed to be needed. So, gathering to himself a force of five hundred and sixty men, he set out for the village of Gnadenhut, a Moravian settlement which the Indians had just burned, murdering the inhabitants. They met with no mishap on the way, and arriving at Gnadenhut fortunately found some lumber near that had been a sawmill, and soon built themselves huts.

Within a week a fort of sorts had been erected and their one swivel gun set up. This gun they shot off as soon as they had it in place, so that any Indians who might be within hearing should be duly impressed with their preparedness. The fort was really only a rude stockade, with a platform all round the inside, on which men might stand to fire through the loopholes. But it was sufficient for defense from the Indians, who had no large guns.

When the little band at last felt at liberty to send scouting parties out into the nearby country, they found that they had been watched during the

whole time by small bands of Indians. It was January and very cold. Indians are always careful to keep their feet as warm as possible, and all around the fort back in the woods were found the holes in which they had built charcoal fires, and the places where they had lain with their feet dangling over the edge of the little pit above the warm ashes.

Speaking of the importance of keeping a band of men busy, in order that they might be happy and contented, Franklin tells an amusing story in his autobiography. He said it reminded him of a captain whose rule it was to keep his men constantly at work, and when the mate once told him there was nothing left to do, he said, "Oh, then make them scour the anchor."

But Franklin could not long be spared from Philadelphia. He had no sooner provisioned his fort than he was recalled to the Assembly. There were now three forts on that frontier, two others having been built by the Moravians from Bethlehem under directions which Franklin had left them when on the march through their district, and since the people seemed well content with this protection, Franklin prepared to return home. He had lived and labored just as the rest had done, and was glad to rest a few days at Bethlehem to recover.

He says: "The first night, being in a good bed, I could hardly sleep, it was so different from my hard lodging on the floor of our hut at Gnadenhut, wrapped only in a blanket or two."

On his return home Franklin was delighted to find that the work he had begun had been well kept up. Several companies had been formed, officers had been chosen, and the men had been well drilled. There was a company of artillery, with six brass cannon, which, Franklin proudly says, "they had become so expert in the use of as to fire twelve times a minute." Once more the Philadelphia regiment asked Franklin to become its colonel, and this time he accepted. There were about twelve hundred well trained men in the regiment, and their great admiration and love for their colonel was sometimes a source of embarrassment to him. He tells amusingly of his first review of them, after which they escorted him to his home and insisted on firing a salute in his honor. The vibration broke some thin, glass tubes belonging to his electrical apparatus, and he says, "my new honor proved not much less brittle; for all our commissions were soon after broken by a repeal of the law in England."

An unwise demonstration of their affection for their commanding officer served also to bring about

a greater enmity on the part of the proprietor, who was already much incensed over Franklin's opposition to the excusing of the Penn estates from taxation. Franklin was about to set out on a journey to Virginia. He was just getting on his horse when up to the house, in full uniform, with the rattle of accouterments and the sparkle of sword-hilts, swept the officers of his regiment, come to escort him to the ferry. With his natural distaste for any sort of show, Franklin was as annoyed as he was astonished, his embarrassment increasing as his well-meaning but mistaken officers drew their swords and rode with them so, making a lane of naked steel for their admired colonel. This demonstration, much as Franklin disliked it, was used as a means of persecution by his enemies.

One of the Penn brothers had recently visited America, and no such honor had been shown him; neither had the Governor ever been so treated. He became loud in his blame of Franklin as the cause of all the discontent in the colonies, going so far as to accuse him of intending to take the government into his own hands, of which intention the escort by his officers was an indication. He was unable to do Franklin any harm, however, and a change of office occurring shortly after, he showed his recognition of

the strength of his opponent by instructing the new Governor to seek his friendship, and endeavor to win him to the side of the proprietors.

Franklin was too sincere to be caught in any such scheme. He had one interest, the interest of the people of his province. He gladly promised his friendship and assistance to the new Governor, with one proviso:

"I hope," he said, "you have not brought with you the unfortunate instruction which your predecessor was so hampered with."

The Governor evaded a direct answer, but it did not take long to find out that he had been told to follow the same course as before, to avoid signing bills which taxed the proprietors' lands. Things became so bad at last that the Assembly, charging that such instructions worked against the best interests of the Crown as well as of the people, determined to send a petition to the King, begging him to adjust the matter. There was but one man in the Assembly with the knowledge and the address for such a mission, Franklin, and he was appointed to go to England as agent of the Province to present the petition.

IX Franklin's First Official Visit To England

Franklin arranged to sail from New York on the next packet, and had his goods put on board. But just as he was about to leave for the port, Lord Loudoun, the new Governor of the province of New York, arrived in Philadelphia, on purpose to try to patch up the quarrel between the Assembly and the Penns. He had nothing to offer which had not already been discussed, but he threatened that unless the Assembly raised funds, without taxing the proprietors, for their defense against the attacks of the Indians and the French, they could go unprotected, as he would not give them any soldiers of the regular forces. In this case, there was nothing to do but submit, and they did so, but first Franklin drew up a protest for the Assembly records, stating that they did so under force, and not as conceding the proprietors' right to exemption. Then he prepared again for his interrupted journey, to find that the packet, with all his goods on board, had sailed without him.

Lord Loudoun had charge not only of all military matters but also of the sailing of the packets. There were two still in the harbor, and Franklin asked the Governor when the next would

sail. He was told, the following Monday morning. So Franklin and his son, who was to accompany him, purchased more stores, and set out on Monday for New York. Arriving there, they found that the ship was to be delayed till next day, because the Governor's letters were not ready. The next day it was delayed again, and this kept up day after day, the letters always supposedly to be ready the following day, until it was the end of June before the boat finally left the dock. It had been in the beginning of April that Franklin had gone to New York. In all this time the passengers had lived on board expecting to start the next day, eating the food they had bought for their trip, and fuming with impatience to be gone. The Governor seemed always busily writing, but nothing was ever ready. One of Franklin's friends compared him with "St. George on the signs, always on horseback, and never riding on."

Franklin even then was more fortunate than the passengers of the other two ships, for the changeable Loudoun, setting out for Louisburg to besiege that fortress, insisted that these other packets go with him, so that they could take his letters as soon as they were ready. First he went to Halifax, where he stayed some time drilling his men,

then he gave up the idea and went back to New York, taking the two packets and their passengers back with him. One can imagine the indignation of the passengers at such an unwarranted waste of their time and money. In the meantime, while the bulk of the army was away with Loudoun, the French and Indians attacked and took Fort George, and massacred most of the inhabitants. One wonders again that in such a crisis, such hopelessly incompetent men should have been sent to important positions.

Franklin and his son reached London at last on July 27, 1757. They had had an uneventful journey until the very last night, when the watchman failed to see a light ahead, and they suddenly found themselves on the point of being driven on to the rocks on which a lighthouse had been built. A quick change of course just saved the ship, and when the fog lifted in the morning the town of Falmouth lay before them. The escape from wrecking so impressed Franklin that he made up his mind when he returned home he would use his influence to secure more lighthouses for the American coast.

The energetic Franklin at once secured an interview with Lord Granville, President of the Council. That gentleman's point of view was a great

surprise to the American representative.

"You Americans," he said, "have wrong ideas of the nature of your constitution; you contend that the King's instructions to his governors are not laws, and think yourselves at liberty to regard or disregard them at your own discretion. But those instructions are not like the pocket instructions given to a minister going abroad. They are first drawn up by judges learned in the laws; they are then considered, debated and perhaps amended in Council, after which they are signed by the King. They are then, as far as they relate to you, the law of the land; for the King is the legislator of the colonies."

"This is a new doctrine to me, your lordship," replied the astonished American. "I had always understood from our charter that our laws were to be made by our Assemblies, to be presented indeed to the King for his royal assent, but that being once given, the King could not repeal or alter them. And as the Assemblies could not make permanent laws without his assent, so neither could he make a law for them without theirs."

But Granville assured him that he was entirely mistaken, and Franklin left the house in some alarm, seeing a greater task before him than he had

expected. Nor were his expectations unjustified, as he was to learn at the next conference, which took place at the home of one of the Penn brothers in Spring Garden. Here Franklin, after being courteously assured that his opponents wished only what was fair and reasonable, set forth the case of the Assembly, to find that what was "fair and reasonable" in the minds of the Penns was a very different thing from the "fair and reasonable" ideas of the people of Pennsylvania. They talked the matter into a deadlock, neither side being willing to give up anything to the other, which meant simply that the Penns would not pay taxes, while Franklin, as representing the Assembly, refused to recognize their right to be exempt from taxation. At last the meeting broke up, nothing having been decided except that Franklin should write out his complaint and give it to them to consider.

Now the Penns' attorney was one Ferdinand John Paris, an arrogant, hot-tempered man, who lost no opportunity to insult and annoy Franklin, because of the clever and merciless way in which the latter had answered his letters to the Assembly, letters which were as weak in argument as the case on which they were based. The Penns suggested that the whole matter should be discussed by

Franklin and this Paris in conference, but Franklin knew well he could expect nothing but an unpleasant argument in such a case, and refused to talk with any other than the Penns themselves, the principals in the matter.

More angry than ever at this slight, Paris advised the Penns to place the matter in the hands of the Solicitor General for his opinion, and this they did, telling Franklin that he would hear when the decision should be given. With this he was forced to be content.

Now began a long and tedious delay for the energetic ambassador. After several weeks had passed without result, Franklin called on the Penns and asked for an answer. He was told that no opinion had been yet received from the Solicitor General. He waited again for some weeks, called, and was again given the same reply. Again and again was this repeated, until a whole year had gone by, when he learned that they had written a long letter to the Assembly, complaining of the rudeness of the wording of Franklin's complaint, and saying that they would adjust the matter if the Assembly would send them "a man of candor" to treat with.

This letter the Assembly did not answer. While the tricky lawyer had been holding up Franklin's

mission, the Assembly had managed to pass a bill taxing the proprietors' lands, and had issued and distributed in consequence one hundred thousand pounds in paper currency. This had, so far as they were concerned, settled the whole matter.

But the Penns, furious at the Governor for signing the bill, were determined to do everything in their power to prevent its being ratified by the King. A hearing was arranged, and with two lawyers appearing for the Penns, and two for the delighted Franklin, whose long term of inaction was over, and who at last saw the matter just where he had wanted it, making a fair fight in open court.

The legal fight was memorable, and so much testimony was brought in, that it was hard to decide. At last one of the counsel left his seat, and taking Franklin with him went into a room adjoining the council chamber.

"Are you really of the opinion, Mr. Franklin," he said, "that no injury will be done the proprietory estate in the execution of this act?"

"Most certainly, my lord," replied Franklin.

"Then, if you are so sure, you will have no objection to enter into an engagement to assure that point?"

"None at all," Franklin told him.

"Then let us call Mr. Paris. I think we can arrange this." And in a short time, in spite of Paris's unwillingness to concede the victory to his hated opponent, the matter was settled. The agreement to deal fairly with the proprietory estate was drawn up and signed, and when the parties returned to the council chamber, the Bill was ratified and made law. Three years had been consumed in this dissension, but it left Franklin — who had been "a stranger," as one of his biographers puts it, "on an unpopular errand, representing before an aristocratic government a parcel of tradespeople and farmers who lived in a distant land and were charged with being both niggardly and disaffected," — the victor in a struggle which had been waged for years, and in the cause of a people oppressed and burdened through the greed and selfishness of the absentee proprietors. The importance of this victory can hardly be overestimated, and we may consider it as the first real recognition of Franklin as a great statesman.

But though the Penns and their legal aids spared no pains to make Franklin's mission as difficult and distasteful as possible, except for this his life was far from unpleasant. His literary reputation and his discoveries in electricity had

made for him a host of friends and admirers in England before he arrived. These soon sought him out, and insisted that he visit them at their homes, his great wit and sense of humor making him a more than welcome guest. He traveled all over Great Britain, finding popularity and interest everywhere, and feeling greatly flattered when Edinburgh presented him with the freedom of the city, and the University of St. Andrews gave him the degree of Doctor of Laws, to be followed by the same action on the part of the University of Oxford. One remembers again his comment when Harvard presented him with a degree; thinking of the short term of his school days, only two years in all, and thinking too of the many hours of earnest study which had brought him to this point of honor, he said, "Thus, without studying at any college, I came to partake of their honors."

X A Long Absence Abroad

Although the matter for which he had been sent to England was so well finished, Franklin was not allowed to return home at once. Indeed, it was five years from the time he left his beloved Philadelphia before he saw it again. During this long exile, he grew to love England and the very many friends he made there so much, that he almost decided to make it his permanent home. But Mrs. Franklin, much as she loved her famous husband, could not be persuaded to face the discomforts and dangers of a trip across the ocean, and this, together with his almost fatherly affection for the people of his adopted province, brought him back.

Always when Franklin was in England he made his home with Mrs. Margaret Stevenson, in Craven Street, London. Mrs. Stevenson and her daughter Mary grew very fond of their American visitor, and did all they could to make him comfortable and happy. Mary was only a young girl, but was so unusually intelligent that Franklin talked with her on his pet scientific subjects quite as though she were his equal in learning. He wanted very much to be able to call her daughter, and hoped to persuade his son William to marry her. But neither William nor

Mary was of Franklin's opinion, and each chose to marry one of their own picking, a common habit of young folks, which Franklin acknowledged in spite of his regret at the failure of his plan. Mary was always like a daughter to him, even after her marriage and his return to America.

It was during his first visit to England that he met and developed a very great friendship for William Strahan, one of the most important publishers of the day, and the King's printer. "Straney," as Franklin used to call him, tried hard to persuade the American representative to make his home in England, even offering his son in marriage with Franklin's daughter, Sarah, whom he had never seen, but evidently judged from her fond father's praise to be a desirable daughter-in-law. Franklin wrote to his wife, telling her of the offer, and saying that the lad would be a good choice, as well as being in line as heir to plenty of money. But Mrs. Franklin's dread of the ocean spoiled the little match-making scheme, as her husband had predicted to Strahan that it would, though the King's printer seems to have been hard to convince. Not long after, Strahan told Franklin that he himself had written Mrs. Franklin a letter,

"I will wager you anything you like," he said,

"that that letter will bring her to England.'*

"No, my friend," laughed Franklin, "I will not pick your pocket. I don't know what you have written, but there is no inducement strong enough to make my wife cross the seas."

And so it proved; not even the desire to be with her dear "Pappy" as she always called him, could make her overcome her terror of the ocean. Strahan's letter was amusingly naive. He wrote:

"I never saw a man who was, in every respect, so perfectly agreeable to me. Some are amiable in one view, some in another, he in all. Now, Madame, as I know the ladies here consider him in exactly the same light I do, upon my word I think you should come over, with all convenient speed, to look after your interest; not but that I think him as faithful to his Joan as any man breathing; ... I know you will object to the length of the voyage and the danger of the seas; but truly this is more terrible in apprehension than in reality. Of all the ways of traveling, it is the easiest and most expeditious; and as for the danger, there has not a soul been lost between Philadelphia and this, in my memory; and I believe not one ship taken by the enemy."

It may have been that Franklin did not urge his good wife too much to go to England. Rather in all

his letters he takes it for granted that she will not. Mrs. Franklin was an excellent housekeeper, but quite unschooled in the manners of good society, as well as lacking in general education. She took little part in Franklin's life, even in Philadelphia, and her intense affection for him owed nothing to his public fame, which, in fact, she rather resented as being a great care to her husband and interfering with their family life. Their letters to each other were full of affection, and Strahan's suggestion that she had "better come over and look after her interests" does not seem to have troubled her at all. That Franklin took a philosophical and kindly view of his wife's failings is shown in a little poem he wrote of her :

**Some faults have we all, and so has my Joan, But then they're exceedingly small. And, now I'm grown used to them, so like my own I scarcely can see them at all."

Also it is possible that Franklin's love for his native country was too great to allow him to settle permanently in England, even if he had not had the excuse of his wife's dislike of the sea to fall back on. Mrs. Franklin frequently sent him huge boxes of foodstuffs which he was used to having in America and which he could not readily get in England, such as buckwheat, Indian meal, dried peaches and

apples. His manner of acknowledging the arrival of one such box shows how constantly his home was in his mind. He wrote :

"The buckwheat and Indian meal are come safe and good. They will be a great refreshment to me this winter; for, since I cannot be in America, everything that comes from thence comforts me a little, as being something like home. The dried peaches are excellent; . . . the apples are the best I ever had, and came with the least damage."

In return, Franklin loved to send his "dear child," as he used to call her, gifts from the great market of London. In his choice of these, due probably to the example of the society in which he found himself, he more and more departed from his early opinions of what was and was not modest in dress. In one letter he said, "I sent my dear a newest fashioned white hat and cloak, and sundry little things, which I hope will get safe to hand. I now send her a pair of buckles, made of French paste stones, which are next in luster to diamonds."

One of his letters, telling of having sent off some things, is most interesting in several ways. The number and variety of the gifts shows more than anything how much his family must have been in his mind, inducing him to buy for them so many curious

or useful things, as he happened upon them. The description of the gifts themselves is interesting also, as it shows clearly the habits and utensils of the period, so that one can imagine Mrs. Franklin making up the curiously printed cotton into curtains and drapings, as she fixed up the house for her husband's return, seeing that the sewing of the seams of the carpet should be strongly done and that the pattern should be carefully matched, and that the silver salt ladles were polished to their most brilliant possibility. It ends:

"I hope Sally applies herself closely to her French and music, and that I shall find that she has made great proficiency. The harpischord I was about, and which was to have cost me forty guineas, Mr. Stanley advises me not to buy; and we are looking out for another, one that has been some time in use, and is a tried good one, there being not so much dependence on a new one, though made by the best hands. Sally's last letter to her brother is the best wrote that of late I have seen of hers, I only wish that she was a little more careful of her spelling. I hope she continues to love going to church, and would have her read over and over again the Whole Duty of Man, and the Lady's Library."

XI The Home Coming

Franklin watched with the greatest interest the fight between the two parties in England over the terms of peace between Great Britain and France. The big point was whether England would return Canada or Guadaloupe to France. There could be no two opinions as to which place would be more valuable to the conqueror commercially, but those who advocated retaining Guadaloupe did so on the ground that if America were not afraid of the French in Canada, and depending on England to protect her from that country, she would break away from the Mother Country, and declare her independence. Franklin did not take an active part in the matter for some time, then he threw the whole weight of his influence in the retention of Canada.

"It cannot harm us to leave Canada to the French," said one side. "They have learned their helplessness against us, and will not try again very soon to fight us. As for the Indians, a few forts along the border will keep them in order."

But Franklin had fought Indians. He knew their style of warfare. "You are wrong," he said. "You cannot protect the country from Indians on the

warpath by forts. They can pass between them through the forests, burn and pillage and massacre the people of the scattered villages, and return again in perfect safety. Only a Chinese wall the whole length of the Western frontier would be a sufficient protection against these savages. Experience has taught our planters that they cannot rely upon forts as a security against Indians; the inhabitants of Hackney might as well rely upon the Tower of London, to secure them against highwaymen and housebreakers."

"But if the people of our colonies find no check from Canada," he was answered, "they will extend themselves almost without bound into the inland parts. What the consequence will be to have a numerous, hardy, independent people, possessed of a strong country, communicating little or not at all with England, I leave to your own reflections. By eagerly grasping at extensive territory we may run the risk, and in no very distant period, of losing what we now possess. ... If we acquire all Canada, we shall soon find North America itself too powerful and too populous to be governed by us at a distance."

This opinion of William Burke drew a scathing reply from Franklin. "It is a modest word, this

check," he said, "for massacring men, women and children. . . . Will not this be telling the French in plain terms, that the horrid barbarisms they perpetrate with Indians on our colonies are agreeable to us; and that they need not apprehend the resentment of a government with whose views they so happily concur?"

The argument then turned on the chance of the colonies severing themselves from the Mother Country. This Franklin held to be almost an impossibility.

"Their jealousy of each other is so great, that, however necessary a union of the colonies has long been for their common defense, and security against their enemies, yet they have never been able to effect such a union among themselves, nor even to agree in requesting the Mother Country to establish it for them," he pointed out. "Then can it reasonably be supposed there is any danger of their uniting against their own nation, which protects and encourages them, and which it is well-known they love more than they love each other?"

But the opposition were hard to persuade. "For all you Americans say of your loyalty, and notwithstanding your boasted affection," was the astute reply of Attorney General Pratt, "you will one

day set up for independence."

"No such idea is entertained by the Americans, or ever will be," persisted Franklin, "unless you grossly abuse them."

"Very true," was the reply, "but that is just what will happen, and will produce the event."

In view of the unjust taxation and the resulting revolution which took place so shortly after, this conversation, which is historical, is more than interesting.

In August, 1762, Franklin at last set sail to return to his home. Peace had not yet been declared between France and Great Britain, and it was necessary that the little group of ships should be convoyed by a man-o-war. At Madeira they stopped to stock themselves with the fruits of the fertile islands, grapes, apples, peaches, oranges, bananas, and other delicacies which were not native to England. The weather was delightful, warm, and with just enough breeze to fill the sails and carry them along at a satisfying speed. At the best the voyage was a long and tedious one, more especially for those who, like Franklin, were thrilling with the joy of returning home after an absence of years. But the tedium was greatly relieved during the trip by the visits which the calmness of the weather made

possible between the passengers of the several ships.

"There were few days in which we could not visit from ship to ship," Franklin wrote to a friend, "dining with each other, and on board the man-o-war; . . . this was like traveling in a moving village, with all one's neighbors about one."

Franklin arrived home on the first day of November. Here his welcome was all that even he could desire. He had slipped into town as unostentatiously as possible, probably feeling there would be some demonstration, if the townsfolk knew the hour of his arrival. And so it turned out, for they had prepared a big procession to welcome their returning statesman, and bring him in state into the city. But he could not long remain hidden. He had scarcely had time to greet his wife, and to grow accustomed to the change which the years had made in his only daughter, whom he had left a little girl of thirteen, and found now a well developed woman of nineteen, when his friends began to pour into his house, wringing his hands in friendly greeting and filling him with happiness at their sincere spirit of welcome.

For days the visits continued, until the Franklin home seemed to be holding a continual reception.

Then the day came for Franklin to present himself in the Assembly. Each year of his absence, his loyal and admiring people, in spite of the efforts of political enemies, had elected him to his seat in the Assembly. When he entered, the House rose to welcome him, while the Speaker, acting as the personal spokesman of the members as well as in his official capacity, made him an address of congratulation and thanks. Then they voted him the sum of three thousand pounds partly to defray his expenses during his absence.

These evidences of appreciation and affection were very dear to Franklin. In spite of his great intellect, his fame as a writer, inventor and statesman, he was first and always a man, with a warm, friendly nature, which made him very sensitive to the feeling towards him of the people whose interests he always kept so near his heart. It pleased him greatly to know that his long absence had not killed the esteem in which he had been held, and made his homecoming a very happy one.

William, his son, did not return to America with his father. His affections had become engaged by a young lady, a native of the West Indies. Franklin thought her very agreeable, and since he could not induce William to marry Miss Stevenson, he gave his

consent and approval, before leaving England, to William's marriage with the girl of his own choice. Two or three months after Franklin's return, William also came to America, bringing with him his young bride. William had come to assume the post of Governor of New Jersey, which had been given him against much opposition on the part of members of the English government. But if they expected to tie the illustrious father to any government by giving his son an appointment, they were sadly lacking in judgment.

When the Revolution came, and each had to make a definite choice, William stayed with the government of Great Britain, while his father espoused the cause of the colonies. This led to a complete disruption of their affection and trust, which lasted for years, and indeed was never completely healed. At first, however, Franklin was openly pleased at the preference shown his son, the more so that his new dignity would keep him so near to the family home.

But even his long absence could not earn for Franklin any great period of leisure. The following Spring he started out on a tour of the post-offices. Traveling was difficult and hazardous in those days, and before he returned in November, he had

covered a distance of over 1600 miles. At this time he was fifty-seven years old, and had grown quite stout, suffering occasionally from attacks of gout, which made such a journey the more remarkable.

Franklin returned to find a new Governor in office, John Penn, nephew of the proprietory. This man had begun his term in office by trying to win the cooperation of the Assembly by fair speeches, claiming that the proprietors were eager that there should be friendship between them, and that everything should be done for the comfort and prosperity of the colony. The Assembly accepted these fair promises eagerly, and showed him every mark of respect and consideration they could. Franklin, with the rest, accepted these sentiments as frankly as they were offered.

All might have gone well had not an event occurred which enraged Franklin so thoroughly that he gave his enemies the opportunity they had so long been seeking to work his political ruin. A band of settlers, mostly Scotch Irish, who had been troubled a good deal by enemy Indians, revenged themselves by carrying out a cowardly and unwarranted raid on a peaceful and friendly Indian village within the boundaries of the colony, torturing and massacring some twenty of its

innocent inhabitants. Fired with righteous indignation, Franklin wrote a pamphlet scourging the cowardly settlers and trying to rouse public opinion to the prevention of a repetition of such a deed. But the public had suffered so much at the hands of the Indians that not even Franklin could move them. On the contrary, they resented his taking the part of the Indians against the settlers to such a degree, that the settlers brazenly started for Philadelphia itself, increasing their numbers as they went, and all armed with what weapons they could get, with the intention of killing some one hundred and forty friendly Indians living there under the protection of the Government.

The city was in a panic. They had no soldiers, and the Governor showed himself a weakling and a coward, quite unable to assume the direction of affairs in such a crisis. As always, it was to Franklin the people turned to lead them. The Governor went to his house while the danger lasted, and left his host to the familiar task of organizing and arming the citizens for the defense of their homes. Franklin soon had a thousand men under arms, and when the assailants came near, he so alarmed them by telling them how impossible it was that they should meet anything but death with so large a force

opposing them, that he induced them to return to their homes without bloodshed.

But Franklin's success as the protector of his city was the sentence of his own political beheading. No matter how just his taking up the cause of the Indian was, it was impossible to overcome the fact that the cause was most unpopular. Besides, the Governor, having gotten over his fright, resented the humiliation he had suffered in running to Franklin for protection, and hated him accordingly. This gave his enemies a chance to consolidate various factions against Franklin, and during a recess which was taken by the legislature shortly after, they began openly and actively working to prevent his reelection.

His greatest enemies were, of course, among the friends of the proprietories. Governor Penn's actions soon betrayed the fact that his instructions were exactly the same as those of his predecessors, to prevent the taxing of the Penn lands, and to prevent any law being passed that would allow the establishment of a colonial army. This so held back the Assembly in everything it needed to do, as to make its work of no value, keeping them busy passing bills only to have the Governor veto them, and building up an ever-increasing weight of

resentment. At last Franklin bent all the power of his pen to bring the people to the point of imploring the King to assume the direct government of the colony, without the intervention of the proprietories. He wrote with all the brilliance at his command, and when the Assembly again met, presented a petition embodying this desire to be presented to the King. In the meantime, the public had made it plain that they were heart and soul for the measure, and the Assembly passed it, Franklin himself setting upon it the official signature, in the place of the alarmed Speaker.

XII Franklin Tries To Stop The Stamp Act

This last act of Franklin, bringing to a climax the struggle of years against the oppression of the Penns, united the opposition solidly against him. His taking up the cause of the Indians had, in spite of the wickedness of the unprovoked assault upon them, made for him a great many enemies. At the following election, these various elements of wrath were cunningly bound together to bring about Franklin's defeat at the polls. Both parties worked hard, all day and well into the night. A record vote was cast, and Franklin was defeated by twenty-five votes. His own honesty of purpose and loyalty to the cause of the people had brought about his downfall. In this he was not alone among great men.

At last the party had won its way, and after fourteen years had ousted the pestilent fellow who would persist in exposing their weaknesses and their crimes. Joyfully their members attended the meeting of the new Assembly, cleansed from the presence of their enemy. One can imagine their amazement, then, when almost the first act of the Assembly was to appoint Franklin its agent to England to present the petition to the King to beseech him to assume the direct government of

the colony. Instantly their leader, Dickenson, was on his feet, pouring out all his force of invective and antagonism against the measure.

"No man in Pennsylvania is at this time so much the object of public dislike as he that has been mentioned," he raved. "Why then should the Assembly single out from the whole world the man most obnoxious to his country to represent his country, though he was at the last election turned out of the Assembly, where he had sat for fourteen years? Why should they exert their power in this most disgusting manner, and throw pain, terror and displeasure into the breasts of their fellow-citizens?"

He also made an appeal to Franklin (which is as amusing as his invective against him, in the light of history) to refuse the office. "Let him," he said, "from a private station, from a smaller sphere, diffuse, as I think he may, a beneficial light; but let him not be made to move like a comet, to terrify and distress."

But the Assembly would not be moved. Franklin was offered and accepted the appointment, to "alarm, offend and disturb," not his country, but those who held his country in an unspeakable condition of thralldom.

Scarcely two months later, Franklin arrived in England and took his old rooms in Craven Street. He had had a royal send-off. The expense of his trip, for which he accepted less than half of what had been offered him, was raised by the citizens, and three hundred of them rode in procession sixteen miles to the ship to bid him bon voyage, "filling the sails with their good wishes." When the news reached Philadelphia that the man than whom "no man in Pennsylvania is at this time so much the object of public dislike," had safely landed, the bells of the churches were rung joyously until midnight.

But when Franklin took up his duties in England, he found something of even greater and more immediate importance to absorb his attention than the mission on which he had been sent. Among other things, he had been instructed to oppose a measure which was to come before the British Parliament taxing America by means of a revenue stamp. Things had gone along so far, however, that all that Franklin could do had little effect. The British government was in desperate need of money to pay the cost of the war with France. Already her citizens were groaning under the excessive taxation with which they were burdened. The unbounded resources of America were just coming into

recognition. Here was an almost untouched field. It must be made to yield its share of the funds so urgently needed. So the tax on the colonies grew more and more in favor, and despite the utmost efforts of Franklin and several other colony agents, the fateful bill was passed about the middle of March.

The passing of the Act, in spite of his intense disapproval of it, did not harm Franklin as much as did an incident which grew out of it. Grenville sought out Franklin, and asked him for the name of a dependable citizen of Philadelphia to whom he could entrust the giving out of the tax stamps. Feeling the reason he gave to be a good one, that it would be much better and less objectionable to the people if one of their own fellow-citizens should do this, than if some stranger from Great Britain should be sent for the purpose, Franklin innocently gave him the name of a friend in Philadelphia, a Mr. Hughes, who was then appointed.

To Franklin's great surprise and dismay, the news had no sooner reached Philadelphia, than the whole town rose in revolt and condemnation of their former favorite. "Traitor" was the lightest term applied to him. He was blamed for everything the public could remember or invent that was

objectionable in their relations with the English government. They were so violent that friends begged Mrs. Franklin to fly to some other town for safety, but she would not forsake her husband's home.

The public fury was not long directed only against Franklin. Soon all the colonies were in open revolt. The houses of the collectors were sacked and burned, and the officials forced to resign their positions. The streets were made impassable by mobs, which collected to protest against the tax. Even the governing bodies of the colonies allied themselves with the rebels, and the collection of the tax was made a most hazardous task. At last news of the turmoil reached England, where already many powerful politicians had been working in opposition to the measure. Pitt, whose ill health kept him out of public life, still from his own house brought his enormous influence to bear on the side of the Americans. Soon after, the Cabinet was dissolved and a new one appointed, one more favorable to the colonies. More than all, however, the British public began to take active notice of the results of the Stamp Act. On the other side of the water, a rigorous boycott against English goods was being carried out. No cloth was imported, the housewife

weaving all that might be needed for the family. Many new industries were being developed, making the people more and more independent of the Mother Country. All this, in the end, was, of course, a very good thing for America, but it was pretty hard on manufacturers and exporters, as well as on the shipping interests of Great Britain. Great :?stocks of goods stood in the warehouses, and ships which should have been employed in carrying these goods across the ocean, remained idle in the harbor, an expense to their owners instead of a means of profit.

All this, the effect in England and the turmoil in America, opened the way for an inquiry into the value of the tax. In February, 1776, Franklin was summoned to appear before the House of Commons to give his testimony on conditions in the Colonies. It was an unparalleled scene. Against the witness were arrayed some of the keenest minds in England. Questions, relevant and irrelevant, were hurled at him in quick succession, from all points of the huge chamber. But the soap-maker's son was a match for them all. Calm and unafraid, he answered their questions with the simple, straightforward manner of his print-shop or his laboratory. When the examination was over, the repeal of the Act was

practically assured.

"Would the colonists submit to the Stamp Act, if it were modified, and the duties reduced to particulars of small amount?'' he had been asked.

"No," he replied, "they will never submit to it."

"Can anything less than a military force carry the Stamp Act into execution?"

"I do not see how a military force can be applied to that purpose," said Franklin. "Suppose a military force is sent into America, they will find nobody in arms. What are they then to do? They cannot force a man to take stamps who chooses to do without them."

"If the Act is not repealed, what do you think will be the consequences?" asked a member.

"A total loss of the respect and affection the people of America bear to this country, and of all the commerce that depends on that respect and affection," gravely replied the witness.

"How can the commerce be affected?"

"The goods they take from Britain are either necessaries, mere conveniences, or superfluities," was the stern answer. "The first, as cloth, etc., with a little industry they can make at home; the second they can do without until they are able to provide them among themselves; and the last, which are

much the greatest part, they will strike off immediately."

Plain, simple words, but in them lay the whole power of the colonies for self-government, the fear of which had been the cause of so many diplomatic mistakes by English statesmen. The examination was kept up for hours, but the sturdy colonist did not flinch. The public wrath, which he knew to be undeserved, had not changed his great love for the country of his birth. No man had a greater knowledge of the problems of his people and their relation to Great Britain. Out of his love and his knowledge he made his answers, explaining the past and forecasting the future, until the men with whom he was surrounded could find no more questions to ask, and in dumb admiration let him go.

Before the month was ended, the repeal of the Stamp Act was passed in the House of Commons, and in March the King set his official signature on the document. Philadelphia, when the people received the good news, in concert with the other colonies, declared a public holiday. With shame they remembered their conduct toward Franklin, to whose efforts they now felt the repeal of the hateful tax to be due. They wanted to do

something to remove the stain they had cast on his fair name. So they formed a great procession, which was made a feature of the holiday, and in the center they dragged a great float, on which was built a huge barge, "forty feet long, named FRANKLIN, from which salutes were fired as it passed along the streets."

Soon after all this, Franklin was appointed agent for New Jersey, Georgia and Massachusetts, so that he seemed in England to represent the whole of America. With the Stamp Act out of the way, he tried again to bring about the change which he had gone to England to influence, — the putting aside of the proprietories, and the assuming of the direct government by the Crown. But England herself was in such a turmoil with the elections that it seemed a doubtful question whether such a change would be beneficial. Franklin's description of the condition of the capital brings to mind such similar happenings of the present day, that it is interesting to note. In a letter he says:

"Even this capital, the residence of the King, is now a daily scene of lawless riot and confusion. Mobs patrolling the streets at noonday, some knocking all down who will not roar for Wilkes and liberty; courts of justice afraid to give justice against

him (Wilkes); coal heavers and porters pulling down the houses of coal merchants, that refuse to give them more wages; sawyers destroying sawmills; sailors unrigging all the outward bound ships, and suffering none to sail till merchants agree to raise their pay; watermen destroying private boats and threatening bridges; soldiers firing among the mobs and killing men, women and children, which seems only to have produced a universal sullenness, that looks like a great black cloud coming on, ready to burst in a general tempest."

Not so different from the actions of disaffected peoples of to-day. Nor was the change of administration the only problem before the great American statesman. The colonies were incensed against and seeking to avoid compliance with another Act, that forcing colonies in which British troops were stationed to provide food and lodging for these troops at the public expense. This was called the "Billeting Act." New York had been especially resentful, so had opened the way for more legislation of the same kind. In 1767, on a day when the American agents were barred from the House of Commons, Townshend, the minister who more than any other had shown his utter ignorance of the American temper and point of view,

introduced bills which were passed a month later, imposing taxes on wine, oil, fruits, glass, etc., and threepence per pound on tea. So straw by straw the burden which was so soon to become too heavy was laid on the people of the colonies, by ignorant and inefficient ministers, preparing the way for the great Revolution which was to free the new country for all time from the dominance of the old.

XIII Family Affairs

In the meantime Franklin was growing very weary of his long stay in Europe. He had become quite stout, and though he used to make his weight a point on which to hang a good many jokes at his own expense, it still was a great inconvenience to him, as well as the cause of some sickness and a great deal of discomfort. "Dr. Fatsides" he used to call himself, and "the great person." In the Craven Street Gazette, a newspaper burlesque which he wrote for the amusement of the Stevenson household, while Mrs. Stevenson was away on a visit, he refers to himself in many amusing ways.

"We hear that the great person (so called from his enormous size) of a certain family in a certain district, is grievously affected at the late changes, and could hardly be comforted this morning, though the new ministry promised him a roasted shoulder of mutton and potatoes for his dinner. It is said that the same great person intended to pay his respects to another great personage this day, at St. James, it being coronation-day, hoping thereby to amuse his grief; but was prevented by an accident. Queen Margaret having carried off the key of the drawers, so that the lady of the bed-chamber could not come

at a lace shirt for his highness. Great clamors were made on this occasion against her majesty. Other accounts say, that the shirts were afterwards found, though too late, in another place.

"A cabinet council was held this afternoon at tea, the subject of which was a proposal for a more strict observation of the Lord's day. The result was a unanimous resolution that no meat should be dressed to-morrow; whereby the cook and first minister will be at liberty to go to church. It seems the cold shoulder of mutton and the apple-pie were thought sufficient for Sunday's dinner.

" (Sunday.) Notwithstanding yesterday's solemn order of council, nobody went to church to-day — it seems the great person's broad-built bulk lay so long abed, that the breakfast was not over until it was too late to dress. At least this is the excuse. In fine, it seem a vain thing to hope for reformation from the example of our great folks.

"(Monday.) We are credibly informed, that the great person dined this day with the club at the Cat and Bagpipes in the City, on cold round of boiled beef. This, it seems, he was under necessity of doing (though he rather dislikes beef) because truly the ministers were to be all abroad somewhere to dine on hot roast venison. It is thought, that, if the

Queen had been at home, he would not have been so slighted. And though he shows outwardly no sign of dissatisfaction, it is suspected that he begins to wish for her majesty's return.

"It is currently reported that poor Nanny had nothing for dinner in the kitchen, for herself and puss, but the scraping of the bones of Saturday's dinner.

" (Tuesday.) It is remarked that the skies have wept every day in Craven Street since the absence of the Queen.

"This morning a certain great person was asked very complaisantly by the mistress of the household, if he would choose to have the blade bone of Saturday's mutton, that had been kept for his dinner, broiled or cold. He answered gravely, *If there is any flesh on it, it may be broiled; if not, it may as well be cold.' Orders were accordingly given for broiling it. But when it came to table, there was indeed so very little flesh, or rather none at all, puss having dined on it yesterday after Nanny, that, if our new administration had been as good economists as they would be thought, the expense of broiling might well have been saved."

Franklin made many loyal and affectionate friends during his life in England, and in the Widow

Stevenson's house in Craven Street he was soon counted one of the family circle. In such exquisite bits of foolery as the "Gazette" and in the letters which passed between Franklin and Mary Stevenson when he was away from London, the affection and intimacy of his relation to the household are plainly shown. To Mary Stevenson Franklin showed all the love and consideration of a fond father, and she in her turn gave him the utmost regard and respect. This happy home life made his separation from his family less hard, though his first allegiance was always to his own.

It was during this stay in England that Sarah, his daughter, now grown to womanhood, met and became interested in Richard Bache. Soon this friendship warmed to something deeper, and Mrs. Franklin wrote to her husband to win his consent to a marriage between the young people. Franklin had never met Bache, but left the decision to his wife, who was much in favor of the alliance.

He wrote, "If he proves a good husband to her, and a good son to me, he shall find me as good a father as I can be; but at present I suppose you would agree with me that we cannot do more than fit her out handsomely in clothes and furniture, not exceeding in the whole five hundred pounds in

value. For the rest, they must depend, as you and I did, on their own industry and care, as what remains in our hands will be barely sufficient for our support, and not enough for them, when it comes to be divided at our decease."

Bache was a merchant, evidently with little capital, but this was a small thing to the man who had begun his career in Philadelphia with only the price of a few rolls and a night's lodging in his pocket. He advised the young couple to remain in his house, making their home with her mother, where they should be at no charge for rent in consideration of the comfort and protection their presence in the house would give her. When at last he met his son-in-law, when the latter was on a buying trip in England, he became very fond of him, giving him two hundred pounds sterling to purchase more stock for his shop, and telling his wife in a letter that "His behavior here has been very agreeable to me. I hope he will meet with success."

Franklin's interest in his son-in-law was soon cemented by the birth of a grandson, named after his illustrious grandfather, Benjamin. From the first news of his birth, Franklin's letters to his family were full of inquiries concerning the little fellow. He longed to see him, and was disappointed if his

letters from home did not devote generous space to his favorite's doings and sayings. He had little to complain of in this respect, however, for Grandmamma was even more fond than was the absent Grandpapa. Franklin shows this in a letter to his wife, in which he says :

*'I am glad that your little grandson recovered so soon of his illness, as I see you are quite in love with him, and that your happiness is wrapped up in his; since your whole long letter is made up of the history of his pretty actions. It was very prudently done of you not to interfere, when his mother thought fit to correct him; which pleased me the more, as I feared, from your fondness of him, that he would be too much humored, and perhaps spoiled. There is a story of two little boys in the street; one was crying bitterly; the other came to him to ask what was the matter. *I have been,' says he, *for a pennyworth of vinegar, and I have broke the glass, and spilled the vinegar, and my mother will whip me.' *No, she won't whip you,' said the other. 'Indeed she will,' says he. *What,' says the other, 'have you then got ne'er a grandmother?' "

It was well for Mrs. Franklin that her daughter had so happily settled down with her, for she was becoming more and more helpless as the result of a

paralytic stroke which she had suffered soon after Franklin's departure for England. It was a great comfort to Franklin to know that she was so well cared for, since his return was so delayed. He himself was beginning to feel the touch of age, and to dread lest he should not be able to return if much longer held in England. He longed for his wife and children, especially for his little "Benny-boy." Again and again he made ready to return to his dear America, but each time he was delayed by some new problem or procrastination on the part of the Government. So long as two years before he actually set sail, his daughter wrote him of their expectations of seeing him.

"Dear and honored Sir," she wrote, "We are all much disappointed at your not coming home this Fall. . . . Do not let anything prevent your coming to your family in the Spring, for indeed we want you here very much. . . . I suppose he (Bache) has given you an account of Ben's manly behavior on his journey to New York, where he went in high expectation of meeting with you, and would have stayed for the September packet, could they have had any hopes of your being in her."

But though Mrs. Franklin's faculties, as well as her general health, were failing, she was very

unwilling to give up the activities which had filled her life for so long. Especially she struggled to remain the active head of the household, though her daughter Sarah tried to relieve her of such cares. For a time she yielded the reins of government to the capable hands of her daughter, but they were soon returned. "It gave my dear Mamma so much uneasiness, and the money was given to me in a manner which made it impossible to save anything by laying in things beforehand, so that my housekeeping answered no good purpose," wrote Sarah to her father.

It was about a year later that a letter from his son William told him of the death of Mrs. Franklin. She had suffered another stroke, from which she died, in her seventieth year. It was a great blow to Franklin. He had already lost many of his old Philadelphia friends by death, and now he began to wonder if it would not seem more strange there when he returned than he found it in England, where he had so many dear and close friends.

Indeed, Franklin's life in England was really a very happy one, in spite of the longing for his family, and his many political enemies. His interests were so varied and his accomplishments so broad that no man could have had a wider or more fascinating

circle of acquaintances. At one time we find him taking a keen interest in the silk industry, trying to promote the raising of silkworms and the manufacture of silk materials in America. With his usual thoroughness, he investigated every phase of the business, and convinced himself that it could be a profitable thing for his own country. He sent silkworms to friends and explained the ways to care for them. He told them how to wind the silk from the cocoons, and had them send the raw silk to him to have spun in England.

He found time to notice that oil spilled on water stilled its movement, and wrote long letters suggesting the invention of some method of using the liquid for the protection of ships during storms. He went so far as to carry oil in small quantities with him on windy days, with which to experiment on rough water. At last, during a wind storm, he demonstrated his discovery before some naval officers and members of the Royal Society at Portsmouth, who were most likely to have use for such knowledge. His keen sense of observation is shown in this incident, for his attention was first drawn to the fact by seeing the result of greasy water thrown overboard by the kitchen boy on a ship on which he was traveling.

His charting of the Gulf Stream was also of great benefit to shipmasters. Their ignorance of it had meant much lost time on trips from England to America, the current carrying further back than a light wind could take them forward. Franklin mapped out a course which would carry them to New York without this disadvantage, and sent it to Falmouth for their use.

These and many other interesting and useful discoveries, made possible by his remarkable habit of observation of small things and the brilliance of his mind, brought him great respect and popularity with scientific men of all nations. Night after night he dined with some one or another of his many friends. His week-ends were spent with other friends at their delightful country homes. Never was a man more sought after. His great scientific knowledge, his personal charm, his delightful sense of wit and humor, his position as the representative statesman of America, and perhaps more than all — the simplicity and naturalness and friendliness of his disposition, with his great understanding of human nature, — all these combined to make him the center of a great host of admiring and affectionate friends.

XIV The Political Pot Boils Over

Meanwhile, politically things were going from bad to worse. Under the excuse that an agent could not be appointed by resolution of the Assembly, but only by the passage of a bill (which would have to be signed by the Governor), Franklin was refused recognition as the agent for Massachusetts. This did no great harm to the colony, since Franklin handled its affairs quite as well afterwards, but it was a public affront to the great statesman.

In the colonies the feeling against the taxation on imports was growing daily more bitter, and talk of independence more and more popular. Franklin implored the people not to be hasty in their actions, but to wait quietly until the reaction in England against the American boycott should bring about the repeal of the taxes. Indeed, the loss was so great to exporters, especially the East India Company, whose warehouses were so stored with tea which would normally have been consumed in the colonies that their financial troubles threatened to involve the greatest money institutions in England, that Franklin felt justified in hoping that the way would soon be opened to a complete settlement of the differences between the two

countries.

Franklin's great love for England, the country in which he had spent so many years of very happy living, and where he had made so many charming friends, made him hope that some plan would be found to prevent a rupture between the old country and the new, but in his heart he must have felt the hope to be groundless. Once born, the thought of independence gained strength rapidly, and nothing Franklin did could possibly stem the swelling tide.

The Boston Tea Party, and the Hutchinson letters hurried matters in the path toward their logical conclusion. Franklin indignantly condemned the sending of troops to Boston. He was told in answer that the course had been suggested by certain government officials in America, all Americans. He demanded proof. Some days later he was shown letters from Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson, Secretary Oliver, and others, asking that troops be sent as a necessary measure for the welfare of the country.

Franklin asked permission to retain the letters and send them to certain public men in Massachusetts. He hoped to prove through this action that the British Government was not to blame for the sending of the troops, and so bring

about a more kindly feeling between the colonists and England. Permission was given him to send them on condition that only certain people should see them, that no copies should be printed, and that no publication of their contents should be made. All this Franklin promised to observe, and the letters were sent.

But although Franklin in several later letters insisted that his pledge not to have the letters printed be kept, the Assembly did print them and made them public, feeling that the private knowledge of their contents would do no good, while the public knowledge was necessary to make use of them. They were led to this action by the claim that other copies of the letters had been sent to another member of the Assembly direct from England. This Franklin believed to be impossible, but the statement was seized upon by the Assembly as an excuse to free them from the promise made by Franklin. The matter was discussed in the Assembly, and the angry members passed a resolution petitioning the King to remove Hutchinson and Oliver from office. The petition was sent to Franklin to present.

The publication of the letters brought about a great storm of protest and discussion. No one knew

who had obtained them, who had sent them to America, or who had there received them. The man to whom they had originally been written was dead. Accusations were bandied about, and a serious duel was fought between two of those under greatest suspicion. Learning of this duel, Franklin immediately issued a statement to the effect that he had secured the letters and sent them, but refused to divulge the name of the man from whom he had obtained them. He felt under no blame in the matter, since the letters were not personal ones, but written by Government officials and dealing with public matters, and had been received by him as Agent for the House of Representatives of Massachusetts.

The episode was, however, made use of by his enemies to inflict the greatest humiliations upon him. He was deprived of his office of Deputy Postmaster. He was notified that the hearing of the petition regarding the removal of the offending officials would be held at the Cockpit, instead of the matter being considered in the privacy of the King's cabinet, as was usual. Hutchinson and Oliver were represented by counsel. Franklin also secured counsel. When the hearing opened, the place was packed with his enemies, who had come to gloat

over his humiliation. Wedderburn, counsel for the Governor and his secretary, poured on Franklin's head such a storm of invective and insult that it was obvious that the whole proceeding had been arranged, not to defend the accused, but in order to demean the man who was such a powerful enemy to the oppressors of his country. Never had Franklin had greater need to call on his marvelous faculty of self-control as he did on that day. He must have been an impressive figure, standing "close to the fireplace, in front of which, though at some distance, the members of the Privy Council were seated at a table. The Doctor was dressed in a full dress suit of spotted Manchester velvet, and stood conspicuously erect, without the smallest movement of any part of his body. The muscles of his face had been previously composed, so as to afford a placid, tranquil expression of countenance, and he did not suffer the slightest alteration of it to appear during the continuance of the speech, in which he was so harshly and so improperly treated." Needless to say, the petition was dismissed.

"I have never before been so sensible of the power of a good conscience," Franklin told a friend next morning. "For if I had not considered the thing for which I have been so much insulted as one of

the best actions of my life, and what I should certainly do again in the same circumstances, I could not have supported it."

But though Franklin refrained from any defense of himself after this public outrage.

feeling the affront to be one directed toward the Assembly as much as toward himself, a significant circumstance in connection with the "suit of spotted velvet" which he wore on that occasion is recorded by his friend, Dr. Bancroft. The occasion was the signing of the treaty of alliance with France, which was to result in the winning of the war of independence by the new republic.

"When Dr. Franklin had dressed himself for the day," said Dr. Bancroft, "I observed that he wore the suit in question, which I thought the more extraordinary, as it had been laid aside for many months. This I noticed to Mr. Deane; and soon after when a letter came from Mr. Gerard, stating he was so unwell, from a cold, that he wished to defer coming to Paris to sign the treaty, until the next evening, I said to Mr. Deane, *Let us see whether the Doctor will wear the same suit of clothes to-morrow; if he does, I shall suspect he is influenced by a recollection of the treatment which he received at the Cockpit.' The morrow came, and the same

clothes were worn again, and the treaties signed."

The suit was laid aside again after this great event, to be worn once more, much later, at the signing of the peace treaty with England.

It would seem as though the affair of the Hutchinson letters had ended Franklin's usefulness in England, but for another year he stayed at his post, striving to avert the war which was growing more imminent each day and attempting to reconcile the two countries. But despite everything he could do, the antagonism of the Government became more and more definite, until at last Franklin saw that he could no longer serve his country by remaining in England, and he set sail for home, arriving in Philadelphia on May 5, 1775.

Almost seventy years of age, Franklin might well have contended that his long years of service to the people entitled him to the rest and leisure to which he seemed always looking forward. But the times were difficult and critical ones. Before Franklin had been twenty-four hours in Philadelphia he was unanimously chosen delegate to the new Continental Congress. Two weeks before, the battles of Concord and Lexington had been fought. War had not actually been declared, yet it was actively in effect. Boston was besieged. There was

much to do, and the brains and experience of such a man as Franklin could not be spared.

Nor was this all. Almost immediately after his return, he was appointed Postmaster General. As chairman of a committee on postal matters he had completely reorganized the postal system, putting into effect the foundation of the present system. Fortunately for him, this last appointment carried a salary of one thousand pounds a year; his financial affairs had been by no means as prosperous as if he had stayed in America, and on several occasions he had lamented his decreasing resources. He was placed on other committees — on the committee of safety, and later was again elected member of the Assembly. This last he would not accept, since he would have had to take the oath of allegiance, and this he refused to do.

Two months later. General Washington took charge of the American armies, and Franklin and two others, a committee of Congress, rode to Cambridge to confer with him on the support and regulation of the army. They made the journey from Philadelphia in thirteen days, Franklin, in spite of his age, seemingly bearing the trip excellently. In a letter to Dr. Priestly written the day before they started, he pointed out:

"Britain, at the expense of three millions, has killed one hundred and fifty Yankees, which is twenty thousand pounds a head. And at Bunker's Hill she gained a mile of ground, half of which she lost again. During the same time, sixty thousand children have been born in America. From these data his (Dr. Price, to whom he was sending the message through Dr. Priestly) mathematical head will easily calculate the time and expense necessary to kill us all and to conquer our vast territory."

During the following March, Franklin and two others as a committee set out on another journey, this time to go into Canada to try to effect an alliance with the Canadian Government. It was a terrible journey, especially for a man of Franklin's age. It was also a useless one. Already the small band of colonists who had stood against the British had been scattered, and the public spirit was such it was soon evident that nothing was to be gained there. So back to Philadelphia went

Franklin, half sick with gout, and from the fatigue of the difficult traveling. It had taken ten weeks to cover the trip.

Immediately on his return, however, he was again set to work. This time it was the Declaration of Independence which was under consideration.

Franklin was one of a committee of four, with Thomas Jefferson as chairman. Jefferson drafted it, and its provisions were discussed and changed in committee sittings. It was a serious and important document, and the weight of its consequence was heavy on the little group of men who were its sponsors. Together they labored over it, suggesting such changes as seemed wise. Only Jefferson resented this departure from the original wording, and Franklin, noticing this, relieved the tension by telling the inimitable story of the hatter.

"When I was a journeyman printer," he said, "one of my companions, an apprentice hatter, having served out his time, was about to open shop for himself. His first concern was to have a handsome signboard with a proper inscription. He composed it in these words: 'John Thompson, Hatter, makes and sells hats for ready money,' with a figure of a hat subjoined. But he thought he would submit it to his friends. The first thought the word ‘Hatter’ tautologous, because the words ‘makes hats’ showed he was a hatter. It was struck out. The next observed that the word 'makes' might be omitted, because his customers would not care who made the hats; if good and to their minds they would buy, by whomsoever made. He struck it out.

A third thought the words 'for ready money' were useless, as it was not the custom to sell on credit. They were struck out, and the inscription now stood, 'John Thompson sells hats.' 'Sells hats?' said his next friend; 'why, no one will expect you to give them away! What, then, is the use of that word?' It was stricken out, and 'hats' followed, since there was one painted on the board. So his inscription was ultimately reduced to 'John Thompson,' with the figure of a hat subjoined."

When the historic document was presented to Congress and ready for adoption, Franklin treated the solemn conclave with another flash of wit. John Hancock made the remark, when the signatures were about to be affixed.

"We must be unanimous; there must be no pulling different ways; we must all hang together."

"Yes," replied Franklin, "we must indeed all hang together, or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."

During this same month a convention was formed to draw up a constitution for the Independent State of Pennsylvania. Franklin was chosen to be its President. They sat for two months, during which time a constitution and plan of legislature were drawn up to present to the people.

The last act of this constitutional convention was to pass the following resolution:

"Resolved, That the thanks of this convention be given to the President, for the honor he has done it by filling the chair during the debates on the most important parts of the bill of rights and frame of government, and for his able and disinterested advice thereon."

One can imagine how gratifying these evidences of respect and admiration must have been to the man who, only a few months before, had been made the target for Wedderburn's insults in the Cockpit.

XV Franklin's Work In France

It is not possible or necessary in a short work such as this, to go into the events of the War for Independence, except as they directly are concerned with Benjamin Franklin. It was in keeping with the breadth and decision of his character that this man, whose love for England had been so great, and who had done more than any other of his countrymen to avoid a break and try to bring about a reconciliation, should now become the staunchest supporter of his country's policy of independence. In spite of the many discouraging events of the early part of the war, his certainty in the outcome seems never to have faltered.

Congress soon saw that it would be necessary to secure the aid of foreign powers to provide men and material for the great struggle. Silas Deane, who was first sent to France, failed sadly in his mission there, and since this seemed a more favorable court than any other, Franklin, with two colleagues, was appointed by Congress to the post of Ambassador to that country. This was a wise choice. At seventy Franklin was still a healthy, sturdy man; no other American had had the wide experience of foreign diplomacy which had fallen to his lot, as well as the

opportunity to follow the most intimate details of the preparation for war in his own country. He knew the needs of Congress, and he knew the ways of courts and ministries. He accepted his appointment with his familiar habit of joking.

"I am old and good for nothing," Parton tells us he whispered to Dr. Rush, "but, as the storekeepers say of their remnants of cloth, *I am but a fag end and you may have me for what you please.' "

Franklin seems to have lost none of his delightful humor with age. His reply to Lord Howe, who had a sincere feeling of friendship for the colonies, and who expressed this to Franklin, is charming in its naivete.

"I feel for America as for a brother," said Lord Howe, "and if America should fail, I should feel and lament it like the loss of a brother."

"My Lord," was Franklin's answer, "we will do our utmost endeavors to spare your Lordship that mortification."

Franklin, with his grandson Temple, who was to be his secretary, and his little namesake, Benjamin Bache, for whom he wished the advantages of the French schools, arrived in France on the 28th of November, 1776. The Reprisal, on

which they sailed, was a sixteen gun, fast sloop, which had been captured from the British. It was a hazardous journey. Several times they were chased by British ships, but got away by reason of their superior speed. In their turn just before sighting the French coast, they met with two brigantines with full cargo. These they captured and took into the French harbor.

The weather had been rough, and Franklin suffered a good deal in consequence, so that he was forced to rest for some days before proceeding inland. Lee and Deane, his colleagues, were already in France. Franklin was cheered to find in the harbor "several vessels laden with military stores for America, just ready to sail." His feeling of confidence in the outcome of the war is shown in a letter which he wrote shortly after he arrived in Paris:

"You are too early, hussy, as well as too saucy, in calling me rebel," he wrote to Mrs. Thompson. "You should wait for the event, which will determine whether it is a rebellion, or only a revolution. Here the ladies are more civil; they call us 'les insurgens' a character which usually pleases them."

The English Government, familiar with the great gifts of the American diplomat, was furious at

his presence in France. But the French people gave him a royal welcome. They called him "the ideal of a patriarchal republic and of idyllic simplicity. They admired him because he did not wear a wig; they lauded his spectacles; they were overcome with enthusiasm as they contemplated his great cap of martin fur, his scrupulously white linen, and the quaint simplicity of his brown Quaker raiment of colonial make."

To save the French court embarrassment, Franklin chose to settle himself some way from Paris, at Passy. From this place he conducted the business of the young United States of America. To him came those intrepid adventurers, Conynham, Wickes, and others, who under his direction harried the British ships at sea, capturing and taking into harbor some vessels, and burning others, accumulating in the process more prisoners than they knew well what to do with. Franklin stood as a buffer between these men and those officers of the French Government who were forced to make some show of objecting to their ports being used in these warlike proceedings. But no one could handle such a situation better than the shrewd Franklin. He knew that the French protest was almost entirely a surface one, and by many tricks he kept the peace,

while the British thundered their denunciations at the French ministers.

Franklin soon became greatly disturbed at the needs of American prisoners in England. Though not intentionally cruel, there was much distress among them owing to neglect, and Franklin entered into correspondence with his friend, a most humanitarian Englishman, named David Hartley. To him he wrote begging that an arrangement be made whereby he might be permitted to send a commissioner to England to look after the comforts of the prisoners of war, and to try to effect some basis of exchange for English prisoners.

Hartley responded enthusiastically. More, he set in effect a scheme to raise funds in England, with which to buy comforts for the Americans. The people of England, who were in general throughout the entire war friendly to America, gave liberally. The matter of exchange of prisoners, however, dragged woefully. For almost two years, from October 14, 1777, to March 30, 1779, when the first exchange ship sailed, Franklin hammered at the diplomatic doors of Great Britain without success. In the meantime. Hartley had exerted himself to the utmost in the American cause.

During the first year of Franklin's service in

France, American affairs wore a gloomy and forbidding aspect. The alliance with the French, which he was so anxious to effect, became more and more difficult. As news of the crises in America leaked into Europe, France grew less friendly. Franklin dared not risk a refusal of aid by a premature application, and he determined to await a better chance.

"In December, 1777, there broke a great and sudden rift in the solid cloudiness," says Morse. "First there came a vague rumor of good news; then a post-chaise drove into Dr. Franklin's courtyard, and from it hastily alighted Jonathan Loring Austin, whom Congress had sent express from Philadelphia. The American group of envoys and agents were all there, and at the sound of wheels they ran out and eagerly surrounded the chaise.

" 'Sir,' exclaimed Franklin, 'is Philadelphia taken?'

" 'Yes, sir,' replied Austin, and Franklin clasped his hands and turned to reenter the house.

"But Austin cried that he bore greater news; that General Burgoyne and his whole army were prisoners of war. At the words the glorious sunshine burst forth. Beaumarchais sprang into his carriage and drove madly for the city to spread the story.

The envoys hastily read and wrote; in a few hours Austin was again on the road, this time bound for Versailles, to tell the great tidings. Soon all Paris got the news and burst into triumphant rejoicing."

From this moment the French attitude became more friendly, and after much labor on Franklin's part, a treaty of alliance of amity and commerce was prepared, and on the following February 6th was signed by the French and American representatives. It was on this occasion that Franklin wore the "Cockpit" suit, which he must have taken to France with him with some such purpose in mind.

It was on March 23d that France set her formal mark of recognition and approval on the new Republic. On that day the American envoys were formally received by the King as accepted representatives of a foreign and friendly country.

It was extremely unfortunate for Franklin that he should have had to serve with him a man of such a disagreeable character as Arthur Lee. This man's contemptible attitude toward the venerable Franklin, who above all things valued peace and amity, is reflected in a letter which was drawn from the Doctor by repeated insulting epistles sent him by Lee.

"It is true," he wrote, "that I have omitted

answering some of your letters, in which you, with very magisterial airs, schooled and documented me, as if I had been one of your domestics. I saw in the strongest light the importance of our living in decent civility toward each other, while our great affairs are impending here. I saw your jealous, suspicious, malignant, and quarrelsome temper, which was daily manifesting itself against Mr. Deane and almost every other person you had any concern with. I, therefore, passed your affronts in silence, did not answer, but burnt your angry letters, and received you, when I next saw you, with the same civility, as if you had never wrote them. ... Of all things, I hate altercation."

This man's overbearing and vindictive temper had much to do with the undeserved disgrace which fell upon Deane, and was the source of a great deal of annoyance and even of some danger to Franklin.

But in spite of the many complaints which Lee was always sending to Congress, their confidence in Franklin was undisturbed. Conditions becoming very uncomfortable for the commissioners by reason of this internal disagreement, each wrote to various members of Congress suggesting that the business of the United States could be much better managed if a single envoy to the court of France should be

chosen, and the commission be recalled. Approving this, on October 28, 1778, Congress appointed Franklin Minister Plenipotentiary to France.

This mark of confidence was very welcome to the aged Doctor. He was most honorably received by the King, who freely expressed his pleasure at the appointment. Franklin was careful to observe the obligations of his new position, as well as to take advantage of its privileges. Every week he attended the royal levee, as did all the other ministers, being careful to miss no opportunity of speaking of America's gratitude and good will toward the French nation. His diplomacy was always of the personal kind, feeling that in making friends for himself, he was making friends for his country.

The glimpses we get in his letters of his way of living are interesting. "You wish to know how I live," he wrote to Mrs. Stevenson. "It is a fine house, situated in a neat village, on high ground, half a mile from Paris, with a large garden to walk in. I have abundance of acquaintances, dine abroad six days in seven. Sundays I reserve to dine at home, with such Americans as pass this way; and then I have my grandson Ben, with some other American children from the same school.

"If being treated with all the politeness of

France, and the apparent respect and esteem of all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, can make a man happy, I ought to be so. Indeed, I have nothing to complain of but a little too much business."

To his sister, who had written him of her pleasure in hearing of "your glorious achievements in the political way, as well as in the favor of the ladies (since you have rubbed off the mechanic rust and commenced complete courtier) who claim from you the tribute of an embrace, and it seems you do not complain of the tax as a very great penance," he wrote :

"Perhaps few strangers in France have had the good fortune to be so universally popular; but the story you allude to, mentioning 'mechanic rust,' is totally without foundation. I hope, however, to preserve, while I stay, the regard you mention of the French ladies; for their society and conversation, when I have time to enjoy them, are extremely agreeable."

His own declaration to Madame Helvetius, his chief favorite, a charming, witty Frenchwoman of sixty, however, seems to belie this modest salve to his sister's New England prejudices. He writes humorously:

*'Mr. Franklin never forgets any party at which

Madame Helvetius is expected. He even believes that if he were engaged to go to Paradise this morning, he would pray for permission to remain on earth until half-past-one, to receive the embrace promised him at the Turgots!"

Fortunate Franklin, that he was always able to form such devoted, affectionate friendships, to offset the troubles which the enmity and jealousy of lesser men than himself continually brought into his less private life. The accusations and annoyances visited on him through Lee during his whole residence in France, and later, the attacks this same man made on his aged associate when he returned to America, tried even Franklin's great philosophy. Of the John Paul Jones - Arthur Lee - Captain Landais quarrel we have no space to treat. But all these brought their own reaction on Dr. Franklin, forcing from him a statement which cannot but touch our sympathy:

"It is hard that I, who give no trouble to others with my quarrels," he said, "should be plagued with all the perversities of those who think fit to wrangle with one another."

XVI Closing Events Of A Busy Life

The difficulties of financing and carrying on the War, and the vexations which arose during the arrangements of the conditions of the peace treaty, are too well known to have a place on these pages. Franklin's long political career had prepared him for the criticisms which fell to the lot of the negotiators. Having in mind the verse, "Blessed are the peacemakers," he writes humorously:

"I have never yet known of a peace made that did not occasion a great deal of popular discontent, clamor, and censure on both sides ... so that the blessing promised to peacemakers, I fancy, relates to the next world, for in this they seem to have a greater chance of being cursed."

Franklin was seventy-six years of age when the preliminary articles of peace were signed in Paris. He immediately appealed to Congress to recall him and send his successor. But there was too much of importance yet to be done to lose his services. For three years more he was kept in France, making commercial treaties with other European powers, and in general fixing the standing of the infant United States of America in the diplomatic world. At length peace was definitely signed, and Jefferson

having in the meantime arrived to help Franklin with the many duties of his office, Franklin again begged leave to return. This time the aged diplomat, who saw some humor in constantly being refused by Congress that which his enemies had tried to take from him by force, the resignation of his position, was relieved of his charge and given permission to return.

His successor, Jefferson, was so impressed with the evidences of affection and regard with which he saw his aged fellow-countryman surrounded, that when asked: "Are you, sir, the one who is to replace Doctor Franklin?" he modestly replied: "No one can replace him, sir; I am only his successor."

Morse gives us a striking picture of his taking leave of the France he had grown to love. He writes:

"When at last Franklin took his farewell of the much-loved land of France, the distinguished attentions which he received left no doubt of the admiration in which he was held. Indeed, many persons pressed him to remain in France, and three offered him homes in their own families, telling him that not even in America could he expect esteem and love so unalloyed as he enjoyed in France, and warning him also that he might not survive the

voyage. But he said:

" *The desire of spending the little remainder of my life with my family is so strong as to determine me to try at least whether I can bear the motion of the ship. If not, I must get them to set me ashore somewhere in the channel and content myself to die in Europe.' "

"When the day of departure from Passy came, it seemed," said Jefferson, "as if the village had lost its patriarch. His infirmities rendered the motion of a carriage painful to him, and the King therefore placed at his disposal one of the Queen's litters, which bore him by easy stages to the sea coast. He carried with him the customary complimentary portrait of the King; but it was far beyond the ordinary magnificence, for it was framed in a double circle of four hundred and eight diamonds, and was of unusual cost and beauty. On July 18 he arrived at Havre, and crossed the channel to take ship at Portsmouth. The British Government ordered that the effects of Dr. Franklin's party should be exempt from the usual examination at the customs house."

Many old friends came to see him, and wish him a pleasant and safe voyage. Then he set sail for home, arriving in Philadelphia just seven weeks later, rested and braced up by the trip, and full of

joy at the sight of his beloved country and his family and friends. He was seventy-nine years of age, and though so infirm before leaving France, he was able to use the general conveyances by the time he reached home. A great crowd of his admiring fellow citizens met him at the wharf, giving him as royal a welcome home as he had had an affectionate and regretful parting when starting out.

"My son-in-law came in a boat for us," he wrote. "We landed at Market Street wharf, where we were received by a crowd of people with huzzahs, and accompanied with acclamations quite to my door."

*'I am now in the bosom of my family," he wrote again, "and find four new little prattlers, who cling about the knees of their grandpapa, and afford me great pleasure."

At last it seemed as though the aged statesman had secured the leisure and rest to which he had looked forward through so many years of public life. But it was not to last for long. Almost immediately after his return, he was elected to the State Council of which he was made President. To friends he wrote in November :

"It was my intention to avoid all public business. But I had not firmness enough to resist the

unanimous desire of my country-folks; and I find myself harnessed again in their service for another year. They engrossed the prime of my life. They have eaten my flesh, and seem resolved now to pick my bones."

Fortunately for him, his affairs in Philadelphia had improved so much that they provided him with an adequate income. During the entire time he served on the Council, to which he was reelected each year until he became so old that he refused the office, he devoted the whole of the income from his office to the public good. He found much time for the pleasing occupations of age, of which he wrote to Mrs. Hewson in this vein:

"I am turning my garden, in the midst of which my house stands, into grass plots and gravel walks. Cards we sometimes play here, in the long winter evenings; I have indeed, now and then, a little compunction in reflecting that I spend time so idly; but another reflection comes to relieve me, whispering, 'You know that the soul is immortal; why then should you be a niggard of a little time, when you have a whole eternity before you?' So, being easily convinced, and, like other reasonable creatures, satisfied with a small reason, when it is in favor of doing what I have a mind to, I shuffle the

cards again, and begin another game."

One suspects that so great a departure from the admonitions of "Poor Richard" is due to the knowledge of a long life of hard work accomplished, rather than to a lessening ideal of the value of time.

He soon found that the six grandchildren were not always a blessing, for they interfered with his privacy to such an extent that he began the building of a library for himself as an enlargement of his house. The floor of the library was arranged to be level with the floor of his bedroom, so that he could get easily from one room to another. This enabled him to write without the danger of interruption.

This does not mean that he resented the occupation of his house by his daughter and her family. Far from it, his letters are full of the gratification he felt that they should be so devoted to him. They were his first consideration and his greatest pride. Never was he too busy to write his friends abroad of Temple's farming and Ben's college life. These were always his favorites, especially since he had become estranged from his own son through a division of loyalty during the war, William having espoused the English cause.

In Mary Hewson, the Mary Stevenson of Craven Street days, who had lost her husband some

years before, Franklin found another daughter. He induced her to bring her little family of children to Philadelphia, and through the last days of his life she was much with him, helping Sarah to care for him and minister to his comfort and amusement.

In May, 1787, at eighty-one years of age, Franklin was appointed member from Philadelphia to the convention which framed the Constitution of the United States, and as was entirely fit, was one of the signatories of that famous document. It is told of him, that as the last members were signing, the aged Doctor, "looking toward the President's chair, at the back of which a rising sun happened to be painted, observed to a few members near him that painters had found it difficult to distinguish in their art a rising from a setting sun. *I have,' he said, 'often and often in the course of the session looked at that behind the President, without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting, but now at length I have the happiness to know that it is a rising and not a setting sun.' "

Franklin was a master of simile. Perhaps that was why he was so quick to see the significance of a symbol. When he was in France, he wrote his daughter his opinion of the choice of the bald eagle as the American symbol. He said:

"For my own part, I wish the bald eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country; he is a bird of bad moral character; he does not get his living honestly; you may have seen him perched on some dead tree, where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the labors of the fishing hawk; and, when the diligent bird has at last taken a fish, and is bearing it to his nest for the support of his mate and young ones, the bald eagle pursues him, and takes it from him. With all this injustice he is never in good case; but, like those among men who live by sharping and robbing, he is generally poor and often very lousy. Besides, he is a rank coward; the little kingbird, not bigger than a sparrow, attacks him boldly and drives him out of the district. He is therefore by no means a proper emblem for the brave and honest Cincinnati of America, who have driven all the 'kingbirds' from our country."

It is gratifying to know that the breach between Franklin and his old friend Strahan, whose intimacy had been broken up through their opposing interests during the War, was entirely healed in their later life. Franklin's great heart held abundant room for all his many friends, to whom he was as loyal as he was affectionate. Nor was he

deficient in generosity to his enemies, ignoring their attacks silently.

Replying to a letter from his sister that the Boston papers had said much in his honor, he wrote: *'I am obliged to them. On the other hand, some of our papers here are endeavoring to disgrace me. I take no notice. My friends defend me. I have long been accustomed to receive more blame, as well as more praise, than I have deserved. It is the lot of every public man, and I leave one account to balance the other."

In 1788 Franklin was obliged, because of his enfeebled physique, to give up his seat in the Pennsylvania Council. His health gradually failed, though his mind and his spirits remained as vigorous and clear as ever. His letters are always full of charming humor. To Madame Lavoisier, who had sent him a portrait of himself which she had drawn, he wrote, after an apology for delay caused by; a more than usually severe attack of gout:

"Our English enemies, when they were in possession of this city and my house, made a prisoner of my portrait, and carried it off with them, leaving that of its companion, my wife, by itself, a kind of widow. You have replaced the husband, and the lady seems to smile as well pleased."

Franklin's last great public interest was the abolition of the slave trade. In this cause he showed himself as unselfishly diligent as in all his other work. He became President of the "Society for the Abolition of Slavery," and drew up the memorial of that Society, signed by him as President, that was presented to Congress and which begged that body to "devise means for removing this inconsistency from the character of the American people; that you will promote mercy and justice toward this distressed race; and that you will step to the very verge of the power vested in you for discouraging every species of traffic in the persons of our fellow-men."

The last two years of Franklin's life were visited with more and more frequent periods of very intense pain. Writing to Washington, in 1789, late in the year before his death, he said:

"My malady renders my sitting up to write rather painful to me. For my own personal ease, I should have died two years ago; but, though those years have been spent in excruciating pain, I am pleased that I have lived them, since they have brought me to see our present situation."

As one by one his old friends passed away, Franklin began to anticipate, almost with pleasure,

his own end. These partings he spoke of as Nature's way of lessening the ties that bind to life, and said he had lived so long and so full a life, that he was beginning to have more curiosity to investigate the next, than wish to stay on in this he knew so well.

In April, 1790, he began to suffer intense pain in the chest, which caused a great difficulty in breathing, and on the 17th day of that month he passed away.

A full and busy life! Runaway apprentice, printer, scientist, patriot, public servant, diplomat, humanitarian, — history has given to Franklin a place among the greatest men of his time.

When but twenty-three he composed an epitaph, which in simple words, stated his philosophy of life:

The Body
of
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
Printer
(Like the cover of an old book
its contents torn out
And stript of its lettering and gilding)
Lies here, food for worms,
But the work shall not be lost

For it will (as he believed) appear once more
In a new and more elegant edition
Revised and corrected
by
The Author.