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LIFE OF DR. FRANKLIN.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, who will shine with distinguished lustre in the page of history as a philosopher, a politician, and a legislator, seems to be indebted for his fame more to natural abilities and strength of genius than to the greatness of his ancestors, or the opulence of his family. Like the celebrated French orator, Flechier, he was the son of a tallow-chandler, who emigrated from England for his religious opinions, and established himself at Boston, where he carried on his business, and where the subject of these memoirs was born, on the 17th of January, 1706.

When scarcely fourteen, young Franklin left the place of his nativity, where he probably worked some time with his father in his profession, and went to Philadelphia about the year 1720. Here he found means to get himself introduced to the only printer then settled in that city, who, observing him to be a youth of parts, and possessed of a happy disposition, received him into his house, and taught him the art of printing, which at this period was very little known throughout the greater part of that country.

In this situation, Franklin gave such specimens of his talents and industry as recommended him to the notice of strangers who, from motives of curiosity, visited the printing-office of his master, and few of them quitted it without giving him some marks of their liberality and satisfaction.

Fond of knowledge, and having an insatiable desire for instruction, young Franklin perceived that at such a distance from England he could acquire it only from books; but as these were difficult to be procured in a place which contained only four or five hundred volumes, he formed, in conjunction with some other young men, whose pursuits were congenial with his own, a small book society, the members of which agreed to bring together all the literary works they possessed, in order to establish a library. As this resource, however, was not sufficient to gratify his ardent thirst for science he prevailed on the society to contribute a fixed sum every month, for the purpose of purchasing books in London, which, as they arrived, were added to the original collection.

This society being soon known, its members rapidly increased, and, to make the institution more generally useful, they resolved to lend out books to such of the inhabitants of Philadelphia as had a turn for reading, on condition of their paying a certain subscription. By these means, they augmented their fund, and consequently their collection, so much, that in the course of a few years they had more books perhaps than were to be found in all the colonies put together. In short, the advantages arising from this establishment appeared to be so great that their example was followed at Boston, New York, Charles Town, and other places; and thus was laid the foundation of those valuable libraries now to be seen in these towns, as well as Philadelphia, which can boast of one of the first respectability.

Convinced, however, that all the assistance he could procure would not conduct him to that point at which he wished to arrive, Franklin determined to pay a visit to England: he therefore went to England about the year 1724 or 1725, and worked for some time in London, as journeyman printer, with the late Mr. Watts. Though in this humble station, he had procured letters of recommendation to Martin Folkes, Esq. afterwards President of the Royal Society, by whom he was well received, and through him was known to Dr. Clarke: but he was not gratified with a sight of Sir Isaac Newton, which he often lamented, and which he had greatly laboured to obtain. The increasing infirmities, and great age of Sir Isaac, prevented him from enjoying that pleasure.

It may not be here improper to observe, as an instance of Franklin's good sense, that he was never ashamed of his origin, or blushed to mention his having worked for daily hire. In a conversation at Paris, in company with Count D'Aranda and the Duke de la Rochefoucault, he replied to an Irish gentleman, who asked him some ques-

tions about the state of the paper manufactory there, "Few men can give you more information on that subject than myself for I was originally in the printing trade." Some years ago, when in London, he paid a visit to Mr. Hett, who succeeded Mr. Watts, and taking a view of the spot where he had once laboured, he retired, highly satisfied, after making a present in money to the journeymen. Mr. Watts had behaved to Franklin with so much kindness that he always entertained a grateful remembrance of it. At every entertainment which he gave his workmen, during the life of Mr. Watts, the health of his old friend and master, who used often to say that "his young American composer," as he called him, "would one day make a considerable figure," was one of the first toasts.

By an original letter to Sir Hans Sloane Bart. published in the gentleman's Magazine, and dated June 2d, 1725, it appears that Mr. Franklin, at this early period, had a strong turn for philosophical science. This letter is as follows.

"Having lately been in the northern parts of America, I have brought from thence a purse made of the stone asbestos, a piece of the stone and a piece of the wood, the pithy part of which is of the same nature, and called by the inhabitants, Salamander cotten. As you are noted to be a lover of curiosities, I have informed you of these, and, if you have any inclination to purchase them, or see them, let me know your pleasure, by a line directed to me at the Golden Fan, in Little Britain, and I will wait upon you with them."

How long Mr. Franklin resided in England, or in what year he went back to America, our materials do not inform us, but we learn, from the account of him published in France, by M. Le Roy, that on his return he persuaded the printer who first instructed him in the typographic art to set on foot a newspaper, on the plan of those published in London. This idea was attended with the happiest success, and his master, who derived great benefit from it, after admitting him as a partner, out of gratitude for his friendship and assistance, gave him his daughter in marriage. The fruits of this union were, a son, who espousing the party in opposition to that of our philosopher, became one of the chiefs of the loyalists, and a daughter, afterwards married to Mr. Bache, a merchant in Philadelphia.

In 1735, Mr. Franklin was attacked by a severe pleurisy, which terminated in an abscess on the left lobe of his lungs, and he was then almost suffocated with the quantity and suddenness of the discharge. A second attack of a similar nature happened some years after this, from which he soon recovered, and he did not appear to suffer any inconvenience in his respiration from the effects of these diseases. His idea of death may be collected from a letter which he wrote to Miss Hubbard, on the loss of his brother, John Franklin, of Boston, who was Miss Hubbard's father-in-law.—"Dear child," says he, "I console with you; we have lost a most dear and valuable relation; but it is the will of God and Nature that these mortal bodies be laid aside, when the soul is entered into real life; it is rather an emblem of state, a preparation for living: A man is not completely born until he be dead;—why then should we grieve that a new child is born among the immortals, a new member added to their happy society? We are spirits. That bodies should be lent us while they can afford us pleasure, assist us in acquiring knowledge, or doing good to our fellow creatures, is a kind and benevolent act of God. When they become unfit for these purposes, and afford us pain instead of pleasure, instead of an aid, they become an incumbrance, and answer none of the intentions for which they were given. It is equally kind and benevolent that a way is provided by which they may get rid of them. Death is that way. We ourselves prudently choose a partial death. In some cases a mangled painful limb, which cannot be restored, we willingly cut off. He who plucks out a tooth parts with it free-

ly, since the pain goes with it; and he that quits the whole body, parts at once with all the pains and diseases it was liable to, or capable of making him suffer. Our friend and we are invited abroad—on a party forever—his carriage was first ready, and he is gone before us; we could not all conveniently start together, and why should you and I be grieved at this, since we are soon to follow, and know where to find him? Adieu!"

By pursuing his profession with diligence and assiduity, Mr. Franklin, after the year 1748, was enabled, by the fortune which he had acquired, to devote more of his time to the study of natural philosophy, and to the service of his country, by taking an active part in the government and administration of public affairs. About this period also, he began to turn his thoughts towards electricity, in which he made some very important discoveries.

The celebrated experiment of Leyden having excited the attention of all the literati in Europe, Mr. Collinson a member of the Royal Society, sent Mr. Franklin several glass tubes and other instruments, proper for making electrical experiments, and for pursuing his researches in that curious part of science. These he employed with so much success, that he was at length enabled to make those discoveries which astonished the world, and which alone are sufficient to render his name immortal. Two of those discoveries seem peculiarly to characterize his genius: that of the unequal distribution of the electric fluid, and that of conductors. Mr. Grey had said, a little before his death, that if small objects were to be compared with great, he would venture to affirm, that electricity and lightning were one and the same thing. The more the phenomena of electricity were multiplied, the more this idea appeared to be founded in truth; and as it was observed in America, that pointed bodies attracted the electric fluid at a much greater distance than bodies of any other figure, our philosopher concluded, that if the clouds during a storm are filled with that fluid, any metal point presented to them, in an elevated situation, would be electrified by them. This grand and sublime conjecture was at first treated as an absurdity by those who could not soar above the prejudices of the vulgar, but it was soon after confirmed in France by Mr. Dalihard, who made the experiment on the 10th of May, 1752.

This gentleman caused an iron rod, an inch in diameter, forty feet in length, and very sharp at the upper extremity, to be erected in a garden at Mary-la-ville, six leagues from Paris. It was supported by large poles disposed at proper distances, and was insulated by means of silk strings and a stool with glass feet. On the day above mentioned, between the hours of two and three in the afternoon, after a very loud clap of thunder, the Sieur Coiffier, who was left to make observations in Mr. Dalihard's absence, ran to the machine, and having presented to the rod a piece of wire fitted to a glass handle, observed a small brilliant spark to proceed from it, with a crackling noise, and on repeating the experiment, produced a second, still stronger than the former, and accompanied with a louder noise.

About a month after this period our philosopher verified the same theory by means of an electric kite, which he raised when a storm of lightning was perceived to be coming on. This kite had a pointed wire fixed upon it, by which it drew the lightning from the clouds. The lightning descended by a hempen string, and was received by a key, tied to the extremity of it; that part of the string which was held in the hand being of silk, that the electric virtue might stop when it came to the key. Having prepared his apparatus, he embraced the opportunity of the first approaching thunder storm to take a walk into a field, in which there was a shed convenient for this purpose; but dreading the ridicule which too often attends unsuccessful attempts in science, he communicated his intentions to nobody but his son, who assisted him in raising the kite. The kite being raised, a considerable time elapsed before there was any appearance of its being electrified; but just as he was beginning to despair of his contrivance, he

observed some loose threads of the hempen string to stand erect, and to avoid each other as if they had been suspended on a common conductor. Struck with this promising appearance, he immediately presented his knuckle to the key, and with infinite pleasure perceived a very evident electric spark. Others succeeded even before the string was wet, and when the rain had moistened the string, he collected electric fire in great abundance. This happened in the month of June, 1752, before he had heard, according to Dr. Priestly, of any thing of the like kind being done in France.

This curious experiment led our philosopher to a discovery of the utmost importance to mankind, but especially to the inhabitants of several parts of North America, where thunder storms are more frequent, and their effects in that dry air more dreadful than they are ever known to be in Europe. The discovery here alluded to, was that of securing buildings from being damaged by lightning. This great end our philosopher accomplished, by only fixing a metalline rod higher than any part of the building and communicating the ground or rather the nearest water. This rod the lightning was sure to fly to sooner than to any other object, and by these means its dangerous power was safely conducted to the earth, and dissipated without doing any harm to the edifice.

On account of these and other useful discoveries in electricity, the Royal Society of London, on the 30th of November, 1753, adjudged Sir Godfrey Copley's medal to Mr. Franklin, and delivered it, to be transmitted to him, to the care of his worthy friend Mr. Collinson. On this occasion the Earl of Macclesfield, then President made a speech, which greatly enhanced the value of the prize, and did honor to the judgment of that learned body. "To be assured," said his lordship, "that in conferring this annual prize, constant regard will be had to the advancement of useful knowledge and the honor of the society—to bear it declared, that overlooking their own circle, they will always, with the generous spirit of true philosophers, esteem ingenious men of all countries, fellow members with themselves of the illustrious republic of letters, and that they will accordingly distinguish the most deserving *Tros, Rutulasse*;—and to see this verified in the present instance, must excite a laudable emulation among learned men, since in their turns they may hope for this honor, without friend, and without solicitation, wherever born, or however distant their residence."

About the year 1758 Dr. Franklin paid another visit to England; and in 1759 published an Historical Review of the Government of Pennsylvania, which was followed in 1760 by a work entitled, The Interests of Great Britain considered, with regard to her colonies. Both these pamphlets display depth of judgment, as well as accuracy of observation, and evidently shew that the author was equally qualified to shine as a politician and a philosopher.

In the month of August, 1762, Dr. Franklin left England, and arrived at Philadelphia in the October following. His stay in America was, however, very short, for he came back to England in December 1764, and resided in that country above ten years, during which he published several miscellaneous pieces in the philosophical Transactions.

(To be Continued.)

NEW PLAN of the FRENCH CONSTITUTION. AS SKETCHED BY ROBERER. The male inhabitants of France, of age, and paying duties as a qualification to vote, he estimates at

5,000,000 Citizens voters	
Who reduce themselves to 500,000 Notables of Com.	
Who reduce themselves to 50,000 Notables of Depart.	
Who reduce themselves to 5,000 Notables of France.	
From whom are to be chosen	500
Tribunate.	Legislators
And also	Senate and
And also	80 Conservators
And also	2 Puisse con.
And also	1 Grand constab.