The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Benjamin Franklin was born the youngest son to Josiah Franklin, a candle and soap maker, in Boston, Massachusetts. He was apprenticed to his brother, James, a printer at the age of 12, but broke his terms of service early in order to run away to Philadelphia. He began work as a printer there and, through his industriousness, became a man much esteemed for his scientific and civic works. He served in the Pennsylvania Assembly, was the U.S.'s first Postmaster General, the Minister to Sweden, the Minister to France, and the 6th President of Pennsylvania.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Enlightenment in Europe began in the late 17th and carried on into the 18th century. It was an age of scientific experimentation that saw the foundation of the scientific method as well as the invention of calculus in mathematics. It culminated in the great French Encyclopedie published by Denis Diderot from 1751-72. Franklin's electrical experiments contributed to the advances made during the Enlightenment. The American Revolution (1775-1783) interrupted Franklin's writing of the *Autobiography* and represented as well as actualized significant changes in the political, social, and economic organization of nations. The events of the Enlightenment and the success of the American Revolution later occasioned the French Revolution (1789-1799), which eventually came to signify the end of the 18th century ways of life.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentlemen by Laurence Sterne can be seen as a related work as, though fiction, it parodies both the narrative of self-improvement and the writing style of the gentlemen memoirists (like Franklin) of the day. *The Confessions* of Jean Jacques Rousseau are also particularly linked with Franklin's *Autobiography* in that they provide the life history of a low-born man who achieved civic and scientific greatness through personal struggle and industry. Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year* is another nonfiction work with autobiographical dimensions that documents significant and strange historical events.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
- **When Written:** The Autobiography was written in four segments at four different times: Part One, 1771; Part Two, 1784; Part Three, 1788; Part Four 1789 or 90
- **Where Written:** Part One – Twyford, England; Part Two – Passy, France; Parts Three and Four – Philadelphia, PA
- **When Published:** 1791 in French, 1793 in English for Part One with some of Part Two
- **Literary Period:** 18th Century Memoir
- **Genre:** History; Autobiography
- **Setting:** Boston, MA; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; London, England
- **Climax:** Benjamin Franklin's proposal for uniting the colonies in case of a need for defense is rejected by the colonial assemblies.
- **Antagonist:** None, though Franklin has many rivals in politics and business, including Andrew Bradford and Mr. Keimer
- **Point of View:** First person

EXTRA CREDIT

The Autobiography's Strange Publication History. The first publication of Franklin's *Autobiography* was in French in 1791, the year after Franklin's death. The first English edition in 1793 in England was actually a retranslation of the French edition, not an edition based on the original English manuscript. One English retranslation triggered yet another retranslation back into French in 1798. The first three parts of the *Autobiography* didn't appear together until Franklin's grandson, William Temple Franklin, released an edition in 1818.

Franklin's Second Significance. It is appropriate that Benjamin Franklin is depicted on the U.S.'s $100 bill; he was the first man in the colonies to create a mold for the printing of paper money.

PLOT SUMMARY

The *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* begins with an explanation, addressed to Franklin's son, William Franklin, concerning why Franklin has undertaken to write his life history. He says it may be useful to his posterity (offspring) but also he hopes to gratify his own vanity. He goes on to describe some of his relations, including his grandfather, Thomas Franklin Sr., and his father, Josiah Franklin. Then Franklin begins the narrative of his life, how he was born in Boston in 1706, was briefly sent to grammar school around the age of eight, and eventually was apprenticed to his brother James Franklin as a printer.

From his earliest childhood, reading was very important to

Franklin as a means of self-improvement. While working under his brother, he read frequently, adopted a vegetarian diet, and submitted several anonymous pieces of writing to his brother's newspaper, the *New England Courant*. His brother published them, swelling Franklin's pride, and, eventually, giving him the courage and ego to break his terms of service and run away, first to New York, then to Philadelphia.

Franklin found work almost immediately in Philadelphia as a journeyman printer, first for the printer Andrew Bradford, then for the printer Mr. Keimer. His brother-in-law, Robert Holmes convinced him to go back to Boston and ask his father's blessing. He did, received it, and returned to Philadelphia with his friend John Collins, a drunk who drove Franklin into debt before moving to the West Indies. Governor Keith of Pennsylvania promised to help set Franklin up with a new printing house, and sent him to England to buy the things he needed. Franklin went, but Governor Keith failed to keep his promise. Franklin worked for printers in London to better learn his trade and earn enough money for passage back to America.

After about eighteen months, a friend Franklin made on the passage to England, Mr. Denham, offered to take Franklin on as a clerk for his merchant business. Franklin agreed and moved with Denham back to Philadelphia, but Denham soon died. Franklin returned to work for Mr. Keimer after Denham's death, and, once he saw that Keimer planned to steal his knowledge and cease to employ him, he made an agreement with one of Keimer's other workers, Hugh Meredith, to go into business together. The two soon opened their own printing house and Franklin, after eventually buying Meredith out of his partnership, went on to be a very successful printer and public official, founding many important civic institutions, such as the colonies' first lending library, the academy that went on to become the university of Pennsylvania, and the first company of firemen. Along the way he describes mistakes he made, which he calls **errata** and believes he was able to partially correct later by living rightly.

In Part Two of his book, Franklin presents letters from friends urging him to complete the rest of his history, then he presents one of his key methods for self-improvement, *The Art of Virtue*—a thirteen week self-improvement cycle in which Franklin exercised thirteen virtues, focusing on one per week. He also presents his daily schedule.

Part Three resumes the narrative of Part One and includes accounts of Franklin's military service during the French and Indian War as well as a brief account of some of his scientific experiments and publications on electricity. Franklin also uses Part Three to elaborate upon his civic works, including an explanation of how he got Philadelphia to pave and then light its streets. There is little transition between Parts Three and Four.

In Part Four, Franklin describes a diplomatic mission he undertook in London in order to argue on behalf of the Pennsylvania Assembly against the tax-free status of Pennsylvania's proprietary governors. The mission was a partial success, and the *Autobiography* concludes, though it is unfinished.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Benjamin Franklin – The author of the *Autobiography*. He was the youngest son of Josiah Franklin, began in life as poor printer's apprentice and went on to be one of the most important founding figures in American history. He was an inventor and scientist as well as an industrious businessman and dedicated philanthropist.

Josiah Franklin – Franklin's father, a candle and soapmaker ("Tallow Chandler and Sope-Boiler"). He was a man with a strong physical build, was of average height, could draw well, sing prettily, and practiced music on his violin in a way that was very pleasing. He had a mechanical genius and would borrow other tradesmen's tools to do small tasks. His greatest attribute was his sound judgment, which led other to seek his advice on issues large and small.

MINOR CHARACTERS

William Franklin – Benjamin Franklin's son and the addressee of Part One of the *Autobiography*. In Parts Three and Four, William is a companion of Franklin's on diplomatic missions. Later, he served as governor of Pennsylvania.

Abiah Folger – Franklin's mother, Josiah's second wife, a woman with a strong bodily constitution and an industrious nature.

James Franklin – Franklin's brother, a printer, to whom Franklin was apprenticed. A strict master who beat Franklin, James did not get along with Franklin for much of his life because Franklin broke his terms of service to him. Eventually Franklin and James reconciled, and Franklin adopted James's son after James's death.

John Collins – Franklin's boyhood friend who helped him to escape from Boston for Philadelphia. He was a drunk who became indebted to Franklin, encouraged him to break into **Vernon's money**, and never paid Franklin back.

William Bradford – A printer in New York and the father of Franklin's future rival printer in Philadelphia, Andrew Bradford, to whom he recommended Franklin as a worker.

Andrew Bradford – Franklin's first employer in Philadelphia, a bad, but well-established printer and later business rival whose poor conduct as deputy postmaster served as a counterexample for Franklin when he later took the same position.

Sir William Keith – Royal Governor of Pennsylvania when Franklin first arrived there. Keith was on the surface a very respectable man who took an early interest in Franklin, but Keith proved to be scoundrel, promising Franklin to set him up in business but failing to deliver on his promises.

Major Gordon – The man who replaced Sir William Keith as governor.

Colonel French – An influential man and friend of Governor Keith who later became Franklin's friend and supporter.

Governor Burnet – Governor of New York who took an interest in Franklin, whom he considered a promising youth.

John Franklin – Franklin's brother whose Friend, Vernon, entrusted Franklin a considerable sum of money.

Vernon – Friend of Franklin's brother John. Vernon entrusted Franklin with a considerable sum of **money**. Franklin spent it and was very anxious about paying Vernon back.

James Ralph – One of Franklin's early, bookish friends in Philadelphia. He went with Franklin to England, abandoning his wife and child, adopted Franklin's name as a pseudonym. He was a poor poet, but eventually became a much admired prose stylist.

Charles Osborne – One of Franklin's early, bookish friends in Philadelphia, a harsh critic of James Ralph's poetry who later became a lawyer in the West Indies.

Joseph Watson – One of Franklin's early, bookish friends in Philadelphia. Franklin calls him "the best of the set," unfortunately Watson died young and in Franklin's arms.

Charles Brogden – A scrivener who employed Charles Osborne and Joseph Watson.

Andrew Hamilton – Famous lawyer who became friends with Franklin and supported him.

Mr. Denham – Quaker merchant Franklin met on his first trip to London. He and Franklin became fast friends and Denham employed Franklin as a clerk before he (Denham) died.

Basket – Royal printer in London who ignored Franklin.

Palmer – Printer in London who employed Franklin.

Watts – Printer in London who employed Franklin.

Wygate – Franklin's fellow workman at Watts's whom he taught to swim.

Sir William Wyndham – A gentleman who wished Franklin to instruct his children in swimming.

Mr. Wilcox – Londoner with a large library who became Franklin's friend and lent him many book.

Lyons – London surgeon who admired Franklin's pamphlet, "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain."

Dr. Mandeville – Author, and the director of a club in London.

Dr. Pemberton – A man who promised to take Franklin to see Isaac Newton, but failed to do so.

Sir Hans Sloan – A collector of curiosities in London who befriended Franklin.

Mrs. T— – A milliner who was the mistress of James Ralph.

Riddlesden –Scoundrel lawyer in cahoots with Governor Keith to ruin Andrew Hamilton.

Mr. Keimer – Franklin's longtime employer and sometime friend in Philadelphia, a poor printer but a decently intelligent man.

Hugh Meredith – A workman of Franklin's at Keimer's who later went into partnership with Franklin but was a worthless partner and a drunk.

Mr. Meredith – Hugh Meredith's father who provided Franklin and Hugh with half the money they needed to start their press, but never provided the money in full, plunging Franklin into debt.

Stephen Potts – Workman of Franklin's at Keimer's.

David Harry – Workman of Franklin's at Keimer's, Keimer's apprentice and, briefly, Franklin's rival printer.

George Webb – Oxford scholar and workman of Franklin's at Keimer's. Webb was an indentured servant.

John – A wild Irishman who worked for Franklin at Keimer's but soon ran away.

Rogers – Ms. Read's first, abusive husband.

James Hamilton – Son of Andrew Hamilton. He later became governor.

Dr. Bard – Governor Keith's secretary.

Drunken Dutchman – Passenger on Franklin's ship from New York to Amboy whose life Franklin saved.

Robert Holmes – Franklin's brother-in-law, a merchant, who encouraged him to return to Boston and get the blessing of his family to set up as a printer in Philadelphia.

Mr. Read – Franklin's father-in-law, sometime landlord, and one of the first men he saw in Philadelphia.

Ms. Read – Franklin's fiancé and then wife, an industrious and good woman to whom Franklin attributes much of his success in life.

Mrs. Read – Franklin's mother-in-law who, early on, discouraged him from marrying her daughter.

George House – Acquaintance of Franklin who brought him his first customer.

Joseph Bretnal – One of the original members of the Junto.

Joseph Godfrey – One of the original members of the Junto.

Nicholas Scull – One of the original members of the Junto.

William Parsons – One of the original members of the Junto.

William Maugridge – One of the original members of the

Junto.

Robert Grace – One of the original members of the Junto who lent Franklin money to set up his own printing house.

William Coleman – One of the original members of the Junto who lent Franklin money to set up his own printing house.

Burnet – Governor of Massachusetts when Franklin set up shop with Hugh Meredith.

Whitemarsh – Friend of Franklin's in London who later worked for him in Philadelphia.

The Godphreys – Family of boarders who lived with Franklin and tried to set up an engagement between Franklin and the daughter of a relation of theirs.

Abel James – Quaker man and friend of Franklin's who read part of Part One of Franklin's *Autobiography* and wrote a letter to persuade him to finish it.

Benjamin Vaughn – Friend of Franklin's who wrote him a letter urging him to finish his book.

Hemphill – Talented Irish preacher Franklin supported. Hemphill presented stolen sermons as his own.

Colonel Spotswood – Postmaster General who took Franklin as his Philadelphian Deputy.

Reverend Whitefield – Talented Irish travelling preacher who raised money to build an orphanage in Georgia.

Reverend Peters – The man whom Franklin established as the overseer of his college.

Colonel Lawrence – The man Franklin suggested to serve as colonel of the Philadelphia militia.

Governor Clinton – Governor of New York who lent Franklin cannons for his militia.

Mr. Logan – Quaker man who wrote in favor of defensive war.

Michael Welfare – One of the founders of the Dunkers who thought it best that they not codify their beliefs in writing.

Governor Thomas – Governor of Pennsylvania who offered Franklin a patent on the stove he invented.

Mr. Francis – Attorney General employed with Franklin in drawing up the constitution of Franklin's academy.

David Hall – Friend of Franklin's whom he took as a partner around the time he established his academy.

Proprietary Governors – Landed British gentry who disputed with the Assembly in Pennsylvania over taxes.

Dr. Thomas Bond – Franklin's friend whom he helped with his plan to build Philadelphia's first public hospital.

Rev. Gilbert Tennent – Presbyterian minister whom Franklin refused to help raise subscriptions for a new meeting house.

Mr. Norris – Speaker of the House for the Pennsylvania Assembly who accompanied Franklin to a peace meeting with the Six Nations Native Americans.

Thomas Penn – One of the delegates who went with Franklin to Albany to propose a peace treaty with the Six Nations.

Secretary Peters – One of the delegates who went with Franklin to Albany to propose a peace treaty with the Six Nations.

Governor Morris – The Governor of Philadelphia after James Hamilton. He was in constant dispute with the Assembly.

Captain Denny – Governor who succeeded Mr. Morris in Pennsylvania and continued the same disputes with the Assembly.

Mr. Quincy – The solicitor from Massachusetts who came to Pennsylvania to ask for monetary aid with defense.

General Braddock – A brave man but poor general to whom Franklin sent aid during the French and Indian War.

Colonel Dunbar – A colonel of General Braddock's. He was persnickety and a coward.

General Shirley – A man briefly called to replace Braddock as the British general during the French and Indian War.

Colonel Clapham – Man who took over command of Franklin's troops on Pennsylvania's northwestern frontier.

Mr. Collinson – Englishman who made a gift of a glass tube for electrical experiment to Franklin's library.

Dr. Fothergill – An English friend of Franklin's who was a member of the Royal Society.

Mr. Kinersley – A neighbor of Franklin's whom he set up as a demonstrator of electrical experiments.

Count de Buffon – Frenchman who translated Franklin's papers on electricity into French.

M. de Lor – French scientist who performed Franklin's experiments for the king of France.

Lord Loudoun – An inept buffoon of a general who replaced Shirley in the French and Indian War.

Mr. Hanbury – Virginia merchant who took Franklin to meet Lord Granville, President of the British Council.

Mr. Granville – President of the British Council.

Ferdinand John Paris – A rival of Franklin's and the solicitor of the proprietary governors.

Abbe Nollet – Leading French theoretician on electricity who wrote a book challenging Franklin's scientific ideas.

John Clifton – First man in Philadelphia to place a streetlamp at his door.

Dr. Brown – Man who kept an inn near Burlington, he befriended Franklin and admired his literariness.

Aquila Rose – Former workman of Bradford's in Philadelphia. He had been an ingenious man and talented poet before his

untimely death. Franklin later took his son as an apprentice.

Peter Folger – Franklin's grandfather on his mother's side.

Samuel – Franklin's cousin, a cutler, to whom he was briefly apprenticed.

Thomas Franklin Sr. – Franklin's grandfather on his father's side.

Thomas Franklin Jr. – Franklin's uncle, a man very similar to Franklin himself.

Benjamin Franklin (2) – Franklin's uncle.

George Brownell – A famous educator (at the time) who instructed Franklin after he left grammar school.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

INDUSTRIOUSNESS

Industry, for Benjamin Franklin, is the judicious application of one's full mental and physical resources to any productive endeavor. It is, as he terms it, "a means of obtaining Wealth and Distinction" as well as a way to gratify one's vanity. Franklin's industry is evident in his daily schedule, which entails waking up at 5:00 A.M., performing eight hours of daily labor, and allotting leisure time to business (settling accounts), reading, and housework. Franklin claims that his industriousness was a means of distinguishing himself among his fellow citizens, first as a printer, then as a statesman. Through his industry, he says, he started as an unknown printing apprentice and came to meet six different kings.

Franklin applies his industry not just to personal ventures like establishing his printing house, but to civic matters, like founding Philadelphia's first lending library, as well as martial matters (wartime efforts), like enlisting the service of Pennsylvanian's wagons during the French and Indian war. Industriousness, Franklin believes, is the means by which one might achieve self-improvement.

VANITY AND HUMILITY

In his *Autobiography*, Franklin challenges the traditional idea that vanity is a vice. As he says, "Most People dislike Vanity in others whatever Share they have of it themselves, but I give it fair Quarter wherever I meet with it…" Vanity is something "productive of Good to the Possesor & to others that are within his Sphere of Action" for Franklin, so, accordingly, he lists it as something he hopes to gratify by writing his *Autobiography*.

Naturally, with his many personal, civic, and scientific achievements, Benjamin Franklin might have more than the average person to be vain about, so it is important for his project of self-improvement that he gratify his vanity without *seeming* vain. Thus, when he lists Humility as one of the thirteen virtues he aspires to bring to perfection in himself, his instructions are to "be like Jesus and Socrates"—two historical figures who, while maintaining an air of humility, achieved incredible fame.

Franklin considers Pride and Vanity to be the natural passions most difficult for a man or woman to subdue. So, he advises his reader, there will be quite a bit of both in what he calls his "History." "For," he says, "even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome [vanity], I Should probably be proud of my Humility."

ERROR AND CORRECTION

In his attempts to reach moral and personal perfection, Benjamin Franklin of course makes many errors. Franklin prefers to use the printer's term for mistakes in his proofs (**Errata** or an Erratum) for several of the major mistakes he considers himself to have made in his life. One of the justifications for this choice in terms may be that, like printing proofs, he saw the major mistakes of his life as events that could, through proper future behavior and action, be corrected. His first great erratum, he says, was leaving his apprenticeship to his brother, James Franklin, in order to begin a new life for himself as a man in Philadelphia. This error is one he believes himself to have corrected many years later when his brother died an untimely death and he adopted and educated his ten-year-old son.

Error and correction also have strong ties within the *Autobiography* to the theme of Civic Duty. Franklin is constantly on the lookout for ways to improve upon public policy and practice, and several of his inventions and policies arise as corrections to previous societal errors. One great irremediable error Franklin notes is failing to inoculate (get vaccines for) one of his young sons who died of the small pox. He describes the story in the *Autobiography* in the hopes that others will learn from his bad example and so may correct the error by having their own children vaccinated.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT AND SELF-EDUCATION

One of the main purposes Benjamin Franklin suggests for the writing of his *Autobiography* is to set out the system and means by which he elevated himself from his "lowly station" as the youngest son in a family of seventeen and a printer's apprentice to his ultimate status as

one of the main founding fathers of a nation. First, he hopes to tell the story of his own life so that others might learn by his example. Then, by revealing some of his methods and habits, he hopes to give his readers the chance to emulate him in attitude and approach if not in life history.

Many of Franklin's civic missions, including founding Philadelphia's first lending library and the University of Pennsylvania, were means of bringing others (and himself) opportunities for self-improvement and education. Franklin constructed his famous table of 13 virtues to show that one could practically address and improve his moral and overall worth as a person via the application of industry. In this schema and throughout his biography we see the beginnings of the dream of self-improvement, financial success, and personal fulfillment that, in future centuries, would come to be called the American Dream.

PUBLIC PROJECTS, COMMUNALITY, AND CIVIC DUTY

Benjamin Franklin is remembered in the United States as one the country's founding fathers for good reason. Among his many civic achievements described in the *Autobiography* are the founding of Philadelphia's (and the country's) first public lending library, the first company of firemen, a graduated property tax, Philadelphia's first paved roads, the University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania's first public hospital, public lighting, and one of the first plans for a union of the 13 colonies in case of a need for defense.

Franklin is concerned, even in religious matters, that his activities and the public activities encouraged by government produce good citizens—citizens capable of improving themselves and the lives of others through their industry. After all, what good is self-improvement or personal vanity if their fruits are not later used to assist others? Franklin describes how he undertook this assistance through public service as a statesmen, military leader, and scientist in what he likes to call "the Age of Experiments."

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

ERRATA

Errata is the word Franklin uses in Part One to describe some of the major mistakes he made early on in life. It is a term derived from the printing trade. Errata are mistakes in a proof or edition that a printer or editor can correct in a second proof or edition of a piece of writing. Franklin sees his major mistakes—leaving his brother, James Franklin's, service before his apprenticeship was over; breaking his first engagement to his future wife, Ms. Read—as correctable. He goes on to describe how he made up for and attempted to correct these initial errors. Errata are therefore a symbol not just of our fallibility but of what Franklin sees as our innate capacity to improve as people morally, economically, and creatively. They symbolize both an aspiration for and the impossibility of human perfection.

VERNON'S MONEY

After a return visit to Boston to ask his father's blessing to set up as a journeyman printer in Philadelphia, Franklin made a trip to see his brother John Franklin in Rhode Island. While he was there, his brother's friend, Vernon, wrote Franklin a money order for the 35 pounds he (Vernon) had waiting for him in Philadelphia. Franklin collected and then spent Vernon's money. He also spent years feeling anxious whenever he thought of what he would do if Vernon called for it. Vernon's money therefore symbolizes a darker side of the capitalist system for which Franklin's book and his model for self-improvement—especially once it's distorted into the cliché of the "American Dream"—are largely an unquestioning endorsement. Vernon's money gives the reader an opportunity to reflect on what might have happened had one fewer of Franklin's **errata** been corrected.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Random House edition of *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* published in 1950.

Part 1 Quotes

"You may remember the inquiries I made among the remains of my relations when you were with me in England, and the journey I undertook for that purpose. Imagining it may be equally agreeable to you to know the circumstances of my life, many of which you are yet unacquainted with, and expecting the enjoyment of a week's uninterrupted leisure in my present country retirement, I sit down to write them for you.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker), William Franklin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis

At the very beginning of the autobiography, Benjamin Franklin addresses his son, William, in this passage. He thinks that William will be interested in learning about his father's life, a great portion of which William is unaware.

By journeying to England to find out about his ancestors, Benjamin Franklin demonstrates an interest in uncovering his past--in fleshing out the 'biography' of his origins, a history which predates him. Now, looking back on his life, Benjamin thinks William will share his interest in learning about the people who came before him, and so endeavors to write down his own history for William. This idea relates to Franklin's constant emphasis on self-correction and self-improvement--learning more about the past, and particularly one's own family history, can allow one to attempt to avoid past mistakes or be inspired by past successes.

> And, lastly (I may as well confess it, since my denial of it will be believed by nobody), perhaps I shall a good deal gratify my own vanity. Indeed, I scarce ever heard or saw the introductory words, "Without vanity I may say," &c., but some vain thing immediately followed. Most people dislike vanity in others, whatever share they have of it themselves; but I give it fair quarter wherever I meet with it, being persuaded that it is often productive of good to the possessor, and to others that are within his sphere of action...

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage at the beginning of the autobiography, Benjamin Franklin accounts for the element of vanity implicit in any autobiography, in any account one gives of one's self, life, or history.

To try and narrate one's life assumes, at the very start, that one's life is worth being told--that one's life has a certain importance or authority, and that those who read about it will gain pleasure or instruction from it. Franklin seems to be accounting for this here; he tries to depict how aware he is of this assumption at the heart of writing an autobiography. Yet he also wants to defend vanity, to a certain extent, and claims that vanity can propel someone towards action--towards virtuous and good action. It's as if vanity is sometimes a motor for the good, and that the idea of pure humility--humility untainted by a trace of vanity--is a myth. Perhaps some amount of vanity is required for humans to do anything, to perform any action--but vanity doesn't necessarily entail evil.

> That felicity, when I reflected on it, has induced me sometimes to say, that were it offered to my choice, I should have no objection to a repetition of the same life from its beginning, only asking the advantages authors have in a second edition to correct some faults of the first. So I might, besides correcting the faults, change some sinister accidents and events of it for others more favorable.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 6

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, beginning the second paragraph of the book, Benjamin Franklin says he would be content with reliving his life over again--though he would enjoy having the ability to edit or delete certain faults, errors, and accidents of his history.

Here, Franklin reveals a deep satisfaction with his own life, as well as an affirmation of life against death. He acknowledges his desire to revise and correct certain mistakes and events, but more powerfully claims that he would willingly choose to live his life over again despite these. In a way, Franklin's desire to revise his life (like a printer revises a second printing after checking for errata) doesn't seem to be motivated by wanting more pleasure for his life, but rather to correct the faults and errors he has committed so as to become more virtuous and industrious.

> Since such a repetition is not to be expected, the next thing most like living one's life over again seems to be a recollection of that life, and to make that recollection as durable as possible by putting it down in writing.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

Following just after the previous quote, Benjamin Franklin acknowledges here the impossibility of reliving his life, and says that the closest thing to reliving ones's life is to recall it through writing it down.

Benjamin Franklin places a lot power in the act of writing here. He claims that narrating one's life is akin to reliving it--but further, that recording one's life in writing has the power to make it durable, to make it last through time, perhaps with the aim of making whatever is written eternal. For Franklin, his biography is therefore not simply an act of writing down his experiences, but of reliving them, and of permanently etching them into a history which will outlast his own life.

> The first [poem] sold wonderfully, the event being recent, having made a great noise. This flattered my vanity; but my father discouraged me by ridiculing my performances, and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

The "event" mentioned in this quote is the drowning of Captain Worthilake and his two daughters--a tragedy much discussed in Boston at the time. BenjaminFranklin's poem "The Lighthouse Tragedy" gave an account of this incident.

Here, the theme of vanity--at the core of the autobiography's beginning--again surfaces. Franklin notes that his poem's success flattered and indulged his sense of vanity, but his father counteracted this, though perhaps not in the sense of instilling humility in Benjamin. His father's motivation for ridiculing him seems to regard money more than the character trait of vanity; he isn't really trying to prevent Benjamin from acquiring a pretentious personality. Rather, his father seems most intent on preventing his son from writing poetry because it is not profitable. In this way, Benjamin's father ironically exemplifies a different kind of vanity.

> I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind, and make me master of it.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 19

Explanation and Analysis

Just before this quote, Benjamin Franklin writes about how he has just acquired a copy of *Spectator*, and comments about how delighted he was with its style of writing. He wants to try and emulate the sophistication of the publication's prose.

Here, Franklin demonstrates the strength of his will and drive to improve his skills, and his aptitude for acknowledging and identifying his weaknesses in order to advance himself. Franklin had recognized that his friend Collins was more eloquent than he was, and has decided to begin training himself to write with a more careful and calculated choice of words. By using the *Spectator* as the standard of quality for his writing exercises, he is able to gradually train himself to write more proficiently through practice and commitment.

> My refusing to eat flesh occasioned an inconveniency, and I was frequently chid for my singularity.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 20

Explanation and Analysis

Having read a book on vegetarianism by Tyron, Benjamin Franklin endeavors to eat a meatless diet.

Here, Franklin reveals his aptitude for free-thinking and experimentation. His ability to truly think for himself, and not join in with those who eat meat, makes him into something "singular," something detached from and different than the masses (vegetarianism being highly

unpopular at the time). Yet Franklin is not concerned with this singularity--he has taken up a vegetarian diet because he sees it as a source of self-improvement; he sees refraining from killing innocent animals as a moral decision, and he finds out that it also saves him money. Vegetarianism is, for Franklin, just one exercise on the road to his becoming a better person.

> ...despatching presently my light repast, which often was no more than a bisket or a slice of bread, a handful of raisins or a tart from the pastry-cook's, and a glass of water, [I] had the rest of the time till their return for study, in which I made the greater progress, from that greater clearness of head and quicker apprehension which usually attend temperance in eating and drinking.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 20

Explanation and Analysis

Following shortly after the previous quote, in this passage Benjamin Franklin relays to us the sparseness and restrictiveness of his new diet.

For Franklin, the vegetarian diet not only saves him money and supports his belief in not harming animals, it also benefits his self-education. The meatless diet allows him to eat very quickly and maintain a clear-headedness that enhances his studying. Here, the meticulous nature of Franklin's industriousness stands out--even the adjustment of his diet serves some purpose that improves his progress towards becoming well-read and educated. He has singled out the goal of advancing his intellect, and meticulously alters any possible hindrances to achieving it.

> I procur'd Xenophon's Memorable Things of Socrates, wherein there are many instances of the [Socratic Method]. I was charm'd with it, adopted it, dropt my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs shortly after Benjamin Franklin discusses his conversion to a vegetarian diet.

Having formerly argued in a direct, confrontational and oppositional manner, Franklin has decided to adopt the more humble approach to argumentation afforded by the Socratic method. Using this method, Franklin stops directly arguing with his opponent, but rather focuses on asking questions and doubting his opponents in order to bring them to a point where they contradict themselves (or he himself changes his mind). Franklin no longer tries to intervene with his own arguments and reasoning in order to bring his opponents to contradiction, but rather leads them to contradict themselves, to make their own errors. In this way, Franklin adopts a much humbler method of argumentation--humbler at least in its outward appearance, and much less likely to lead to a fight or a deadlock.

Instead of proclaiming a wealth of knowledge about a topic--which he may not posses--and aggressively arguing for a certain position, he decides to proclaim no such special knowledge, and to intently listen to the other's point of view. By adopting this method, Franklin comes to a fuller understanding of his opponents' positions, an understanding which also affords him more opportunities to lead them to commit errors of logic, ultimately giving him the upper hand.

> So I sold some of my books to raise a little money, was taken on board privately, and as we had a fair wind, in three days I found myself in New York, near 300 miles from home, a boy of but 17, without the least recommendation to, or knowledge of any person in the place, and with very little money in my pocket.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 26

Explanation and Analysis

Having had a dispute with his brother, and unable to find work at another printing-house, Benjamin Franklin decides to leave for New York (without informing his family).

The daringness of Franklin's ambition, as well as his prodigious sense of independence and self-sufficiency at

such a remarkably young age shine out in this passage. Franklin displays a willingness to take an extraordinary risk--to thrust himself into a totally foreign environment with no connections and little money. But he accepts his humble yet inevitable status as a poor outsider in order to improve the quality of his life--to escape the frustrations he encountered in Boston. Though Franklin ultimately ends up in Philadelphia, his trek to New York reveals his readiness to experience new environments and his confidence in his ability to adapt to them.

> My brother's discharge was accompany'd with an order of the House (a very odd one), that "James Franklin should no longer print the paper called the New England Courant."

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker), James Franklin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 25

Explanation and Analysis

Having served his jail sentence for publishing a controversial political piece in *The New England Courant*, Benjamin Franklin's brother James has been forbidden to continue printing the newspaper. Benjamin supposes thatJames's imprisonment was due to his refusal to reveal the author of the piece.During his brother's confinement, Benjamin managed the paper, and made sure to write pieces in it that criticized the Assembly responsible for incriminating James.

Here, we see the strict censorship of early eighteenth century Boston, and the authoritarian nature of the Assembly's power with regard to policing public discourse. Further, James's right to refuse revealing the author's name was not considered--such a right did not exist at the time. Yet, while the Assembly deemed James's conduct as an error in need of correction, Benjamin saw through the Assembly's 'arbitrary' power, and sought to criticize their 'correction' through his own political writings.

> So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 41

Explanation and Analysis

Benjamin Franklin writes this after deciding to reincorporate fish into his diet. After reflecting on the fact that fish eat one another, he reasons that this justifies humans in eating them.

Here, it seems that Franklin is at once praising the merits of reason--that it enables our minds to logically explain our behavior as well as adjust it when new evidence suggests we should--while also playing on the humorous ability for reason to provide an explanation for practically anything the mind wants to justify. Franklin's resumption of eating fish, though based on a justification provided by his reasoning--that fish eat other fish--will, nevertheless, result in the death of fish which could otherwise be avoided (by continuing the vegetable diet). However, Frankin seems to mostly view his return to eating fish as a triumph of reason, as an improvement of his mind and health.

> I continu'd [the Socratic Method] some few years, but gradually left it, retaining only the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence; never using, when I advanced any thing that may possibly be disputed, the words certainly, undoubtedly, or any others that give the air of positiveness to an opinion; but rather say, I conceive or apprehend a thing to be so and so; it appears to me, or I should think it so or so, for such and such reasons; or I imagine it to be so; or it is so, if I am not mistaken.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

Having acquired *Memorable Things of Socrates* by Xenophon, young Benjamin Franklin decides to adopt Socrates's method of argumentation. Though he ultimately moves on from this method's emphasis on pure doubting, Franklin retains a hesitance towards sounding absolutely certain about any topic of argument.

This move by Franklin to resist appearing totally confident demonstrates his intention to be more humble in conversation. Humility is one of the virtues he later enumerates as the ingredients of a good character--

becoming humble is one of the elements of his journey towards moral perfection. Here, we see how humility operates at the very level of speech and conversation--Franklin must rethink the way he approaches discussion with others. As we read later, this proves difficult, and Franklin says he has only been able to achieve humility at the level of outward appearances.

Part 2 Quotes

It will moreover present a table of the internal circumstances of your country, which will very much tend to invite to it settlers of virtuous and manly minds.

Related Characters: Benjamin Vaughn (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 81

Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs in section two of the autobiography, in Benjamin Vaughan's letter.

Vaughan is trying to convince Benjamin Franklin to continue writing his autobiography, believing that it will paint a portrait of New England life which will attract people with virtue and intellect similar to Franklin's. Reading about New England through the lens of Franklin's mind may attract people who might see America in a similar light. Vaughan sees Franklin as the perfect person for introducing New England to the world; he's the ideal combination of industriousness, humility, ingenuity, and passion--those qualities which make up the prototype of a productive citizen invested in bettering himself and his society.

It will be so far a sort of key to life, and explain many things that all men ought to have once explained to them, to give them a chance of becoming wise by foresight.

Related Characters: Benjamin Vaughn (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

Continuing the sentiments of the previous quote, Benjamin Vaughan believes that the autobiography will be a source of education for many people. Benjamin Franklin's principled way of conducting himself, and his wide variety of experiences--from his poverty to his extraordinary wealth, his political participation, travels, free-thinking, and many innovations--will inspire and inform people in a way that will prepare them in advance--give them wisdom by foresight--to successfully deal with future hardships and obstacles. Franklin's story proves that poverty (in some cases at least) doesn't necessarily limit one's future; it also provides a method for achieving "moral perfection," and it discusses the nature of human relations at large. As such, it's a vehicle for the reader's self-improvement.

In reality, there is, perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for, even if I could conceive that I had compleatly overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 104

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs after Benjamin Franklin discusses his endeavors to embody the virtue of humility more in his life.

Here, Franklin accepts that the presence of pride in one's mind is inescapable--"it is still alive" despite the best of attempts at deleting it from one's thinking. He therefore admits that it will not be absent from his autobiography. Even if he could conceive of having totally rid himself of pride, he says, he should still be 'proud' of his humility, ironically pointing to the inescapable and paradoxical nature of pride--for even the possession of humility is something that is likely to become a source of pride.

Part 3 Quotes

I have always thought that one man of tolerable abilities may work great changes, and accomplish great affairs among mankind, if he first forms a good plan, and, cutting off all amusements or other employments that would divert his attention, makes the execution of that same plan his sole study and business.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 107-8

Explanation and Analysis

Benjamin Franklin says this after discussing his project of forming *The Society of the Free and Easy*, a society to be composed of the "good men of all nations."

Franklin's sense of industriousness and dedication to his work--no matter the magnitude of its requirements--shines out in this passage. Franklin's philosophy about how to achieve one's goals doesn't begin by saying that one must have so much talent that the ascertainment of any goal be effortless; rather, he says that a tolerable or average ability is sufficient to achieve great things. He doesn't see the need to work hard at something as necessarily correlated with lack of aptitude; rather, he seems to view achievement asthe process of enduring hard work which leads to self-improvement. Seen as a process, self-improvement is almost a never-ending goal.

Further, Franklin believes that the most effective way to achieve one's goals is to clearly plan them out and refrain from engaging with anything that might serve as obstacles. Perhaps this is also an element of the hard work that goes into self-improvement: stopping those behaviors, habits, and activities that distract one from more meaningful but perhaps more difficult things.

> When I disengaged myself, as above mentioned, from private business, I flatter'd myself that, by the sufficient tho' moderate fortune I had acquir'd, I had secured leisure during the rest of my life for philosophical studies and amusements... but the publick, now considering me as a man of leisure, laid hold of me for their purposes, every part of our civil government, and almost at the same time, imposing some duty upon me.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 135

Explanation and Analysis

Having given over the management of his printing business to David Hall, Benjamin Franklin thought he would be able to dedicate most of his time to purely intellectual pursuits. Here, however, he tells us that much of his time would be soon taken up performing civil service instead.

Franklin reveals a strong sense of civic duty and community involvement here. Besides his own willingness to perform roles in public office, there's a sense that the community *expected* him to--that the community, aware of Franklin's ingenuity and industriousness, felt him to be an indispensible staple to the workings of things. It seems that, for Franklin, retirement is not an option for him--but he also might agree that complete retirement should never be an option for anyone, and that everyone should maintain an involvement in public affairs and the greater good.

> Thus, if you teach a poor young man to shave himself, and keep his razor in order, you may contribute more to the happiness of his life than in giving him a thousand guineas. The money may be soon spent, the regret only remaining of having foolishly consumed it; but in the other case, he escapes the frequent vexation of waiting for barbers, and of their sometimes dirty fingers, offensive breaths, and dull razors; he shaves when most convenient to him, and enjoys daily the pleasure of its being done with a good instrument.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 145

Explanation and Analysis

After having described his innovative plan for keeping the streets of London and Westminster clean, Benjamin Franklin gives us this anecdote.

This quotes further reveals Benjamin Franklin's philosophy of industriousness--that it is much more important to acquire lasting skills and good habits than to seek satisfaction in temporary or material pleasures. To start of with a lot of money but little skill will not get one very far; knowledge and routine must be established in order for one to enjoy the freedom of independence and the satisfaction of self-sufficiency--qualities which support the pursuit and maintenance of wealth. The work of self-improvement leads to lasting pleasure, despite the investment of effort required--as opposed to the instantaneous and temporary pleasure made possible by the finite resource of money.

The colonies, so united, would have been sufficiently strong to have defended themselves; there would then have been no need of troops from England; of course, the subsequent pretence for taxing America, and the bloody contest it occasioned, would have been avoided. But such mistakes are not new; history is full of the errors of states and princes.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Page Number: 148

Explanation and Analysis

The quote occurs after Benjamin Franklin reveals that the plan he supported for uniting the colonies with an American military separate from (though allied with) England has been rejected.

Here, Franklin's extraordinary wisdom--even regarding military matters--yet again surfaces. He claims that the English army acted out of greed and not strategy: providing the colonies with military defense is just another reason to tax America. If the colonies had been permitted to unite, he claims that, though no such taxation would occur to benefit England, the horrible loss suffered by General Braddock would have been completely avoided. Most importantly, he wisely declares that such poor decisions are so common in history. Mistakes made over monetary concerns and bureaucratic interests, when more tactful and practical options could have been chosen, are rampant throughout history. This is perhaps one of very few instances of pessimism in the book.

The British government, not chusing to permit the union of the colonies as propos'd at Albany, and to trust that union with their defense, lest they should thereby grow too military, and feel their own strength, suspicions and jealousies at this time being entertain'd of them, sent over General Braddock with two regiments of regular English troops for that purpose.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

The British government, denying the proposed union of the colonies--which commissioners (including Benjamin Franklin) from each colony had drafted in Albany--has sent English troops to New England in order to satisfy the colonies' need for a military power to defend against the Indians (and to have an excuse to tax America). Franklin intimates that this is also a gesture aimed at intimidating the colonies, as the British government is suspicious of New England growing an independent military power.

Franklin's keen sense of diplomatic and military relations continues revealing itself here. He understands England's fear that a union of the colonies may allow them an independence that could threaten British power. England is painted as a force of vanity, concerned with regulating the American economy and maintaining its revenue from taxation, rather than a genuine force that acts out of practical or strategic concern for America's growth.

...common sense, aided by present danger, will sometimes be too strong for whimsical opinions.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 165

Explanation and Analysis

Benjamin Franklin, discussing the Moravian village of Gnadenhut's anti-arms policy with bishop Spangenberg, learns that many of Gnadenhut's residents have recently started to bear arms after the recent Indian attack.

Here, Franklin's pragmatic view of human behavior is exposed. He thinks that the "whimsical" anti-arms policy of the Moravians has had its idealism deflated by the violent reality of the recent Indian attack. The high ideals of the Moravians, being in reality inadequate for their survival, are suddenly being ignored as they begin to acquire arms. Franklin points out a kind of vanity in the Moravians' holding of beliefs that ultimately cannot be followed--as if the refusal to hold practical beliefs about self-defense, when that refusal budges under the pressure of actual violence, is a vain way of thinking. The realities of war and of the need to protect themselves are now demanding common sense.

One paper, which I wrote for Mr. Kinnersley, on the sameness of lightning with electricity, I sent to Dr. Mitchel, an acquaintance of mine, and one of the members also of that society [the Royal Society], who wrote me word that it had been read, but was laughed at by the connoisseurs.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 174

Explanation and Analysis

The paper to which Benjamin Franklin refers in this quote is one where he argues for the sameness of electricity with lightning.

Franklin's sense of confidence in his own thinking and innovation is humbly shown to us here. He paints the "connoisseurs" as vain and unimaginative people who cannot look past their current beliefs in order to consider the possible truth behind Franklin's new theory. That Franklin's theory was "laughed" at shows that even people in very eminent academic positions can lack the decorum and intellectual integrity to consider a radical theory with levelheadedness and open-mindedness. Franklin oozes humility here, considering that his theory would later be proven correct and he would be heralded as a genius for it.

> There was a great company of officers, citizens, and strangers, and, some chairs having been borrowed in the neighborhood, there was one among them very low, which fell to the lot of Mr. Shirley. Perceiving it as I sat by him, I said, "They have given you, sir, too low a seat." "No matter," says he, "Mr. Franklin, I find a low seat the easiest."

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 183

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Benjamin Franklin writes about the party given for Lord Loudoun's succession of Mr. Shirley as (British) Commander-in-Chief of North America. The party occurred in New York, and Shirley was in attendance despite his being replaced by Loudoun.

Franklin acknowledges Shirley's sense of humility and dignity in this passage--a dignity that Shirley holds at the same time that he is averse to holding a position of extraordinary military power. Shirley metaphorically plays off of Franklin's polite concern--that Shirley has received too low a seat--in support of that aversion, that he dislikes positions of great power and prefers to be out of the spotlight, with less pressure and overwhelming responsibility. Franklin paints Shirley as a humble man who knows himself and his strengths firmly, such that he graciously steps down from his position and celebrates Loudoun's promotion.

> On the whole, I wonder'd much how such a man [Lord Loudoun] came to be entrusted with so important a business as the conduct of a great army; but, having since seen more of the great world, and the means of obtaining, and motives for giving places, my wonder is diminished.

Related Characters: Benjamin Franklin (speaker), Lord Loudoun

Related Themes:

Page Number: 182

Explanation and Analysis

After describing Lord Loudoun's indeciveness and irresponsibility in directing several 'paquets' (or mail, freight, and passenger transportation boats), Benjamin Franklin makes this remark about his own lack of surprise that an incompetent person like Loudoun can come to occupy such an eminent position as General.

Here is another one of the few instances of Franklin's pessimism in the autobiography. Like his belief that the mistakes of history are commonly repeated, this passage reveals his sense of wisdom about the corrupt and haphazard ways people acquire positions and offices of great authority. Franklin is taken aback by Loudoun's incompetence, but at the same time, based on his experiences traveling the world and meeting many people, he is after all not so shocked.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PART 1

Benjamin Franklin begins writing Part One of his *Autobiography* in 1771 at the age of 65 while on a country vacation in England in the town of Twyford. In the opening pages, he addresses his son, William, the Royal Governor of New Jersey, telling him that he, Benjamin, has always taken pleasure in hearing stories about his family members, and suggesting that William might enjoy hearing the story of his father's life. It is the perfect time for him to set his life to paper because he has a period of leisure.

It is important to note that Franklin, in this first part of his Autobiography, at least claims that he is writing for his son and family, and not for the public at large. This position of Franklin's changes, and so does the tone and style of Franklin's writing, in later sections of the Autobiography where Franklin's stated audience changes to a larger public.

Franklin goes on to remark that his life trajectory, from obscure tradesman to renowned statesman, is somewhat unusual, so, beyond just serving his son as entertainment, his story might be worthy of imitation. The felicity—ease and grace—with which he has gone through life has often led Franklin to reflect that, given the chance, he would live his whole life over again only asking that he might correct a few errors ("**errata**") he made the first time around.

Franklin introduces the themes of self-improvement, error and correction, and industriousness—but also notes that the Autobiography is not a dry, reference manual of strategies, names and dates, but a diverting narrative. This function of the narrative (entertainment) increases the utility of the work as an educational tool, and, perhaps, the educational elements make the narrative more engrossing

The thing most like living one's life over, Franklin continues, is recollecting it and writing it down. He admits that one of the reasons he is writing the *Autobiography* is to indulge his vanity. Franklin argues that vanity is a good thing, good for the vain person and the people around him. Then Franklin thanks God and says everything good that has happened to him is owing to God's providence.

Franklin argues that recollecting his life in writing is like getting a second chance to live it. Naturally, what follows is an admission of the vanity involved in loving oneself and one's life enough to think others will gain pleasure and learn from reading about it. Perhaps due to accusations of atheism he faced early in life, Franklin is quick to give credit to God.

Franklin relates how he learned from the notes of an uncle (unnamed) that the Franklin family lived in the same English village, Ecton in Northamptonshire, for at least 300 years and possibly longer, maybe even since the name "Franklin" (formerly the name of an order or rank of citizen in England) was adopted by the family. The eldest son of each generation for all of that time was trained as a smith. Consulting the Ecton registry, Franklin discovered that he was the youngest son of the youngest son going back five generations.

Now Franklin begins to describe his lineage and the previous generations of his family. Here there is at least some evidence to support Franklin's claim that William is more than just the stated audience for this first section of his work. He notes the peculiarity of his being the youngest son of the youngest son for five generations, hinting how lucky it was for him to have been born at all.

Franklin describes seeing the gravestone of his grandfather, Thomas (sr.), who died at Banbury in Oxfordsire. Thomas (sr.) had four sons, Thomas jr., John, Benjamin, and Josiah. Thomas jr. was a smith but went on to become a scrivener (scribe) and became a man much esteemed by the community and gentry. Franklin says he remembers that the account he and William received of Thomas jr.'s life and character at Ecton struck William as something Extraordinary for its similarity to Franklin's own.

Franklin now introduces the key male members of his father's family—Franklin tends to dwell more, throughout the Autobiography, on men and male members of his family and society. Perhaps in this, unlike in other areas of his attitude and thinking, his ideas are more symptomatic of the sexism of his times. He notes that a strong character capable of civic achievements may run in the family.

John, the next of Thomas sr.'s sons, was a silk dyer. Franklin says he was an ingenious man, and gives an example of an acrostic that John composed out of the name, "Benjamin Franklin." John, Franklin says, developed his own method of writing in shorthand, was very pious and had a collection of sermons he transcribed in said shorthand, and was something of a politician.

Not only does civic mindedness run in the family, according to Franklin, so does literacy and even literary accomplishment. He is proud to show off the compositions of his relatives, especially those that flatter his own vanity. Literary achievement is important for Franklin, in that he sees it as a main avenue for his success.

Franklin notes that his "obscure" family was composed of Protestants, so they were sometimes in danger when Catholics like Queen Mary were in power. He shares an anecdote about how the family taped an English Bible under a joint stool so that when his Great-Grandfather was reading from it to the family with the stool on his knees, if an apparitor (a kind of religious police officer) were to come by, he could simply flip the stool over and the Bible would be concealed.

Perhaps more than the actual religious beliefs of his family members, Franklin celebrates how, as Protestants, they questioned the religious power structures of their time. Perhaps he shares this anecdote about the taped bible to show not just their conviction and ingenuity when it came to practicing their religion, but their early commitment to the principle of religious freedom, a principle which would become a cornerstone in early American society.

Franklin describes how his father, Josiah, and his uncle Benjamin broke away from the Episcopal (Anglican) Church while the rest of the family remained with it. Josiah married young and moved to New England (Boston, where much of Part One takes place) with his first wife and first three children around 1682 to practice his new religion freely. Josiah had four more children with his first wife and then ten more by a second wife, Franklin's mother, Abiah Folger. Franklin was the youngest son.

Now Franklin describes how his family first came from England to the American colonies and sets the stage for his own appearance there. His father sired a prodigious family, and Franklin is proud of his family's size and success. He introduces his mother, whom he speaks of tenderly. We see how religious freedom was an essential element of the Franklin family's emigration.

Abiah was the daughter of one of the first settlers of New England, Peter Folger, who was mentioned by the historian Cotton Mather in *Magnalia Christi Americana*. Peter, Franklin's grandfather, dabbled in writing. There is one political poem that Franklin remembers having read. He found it well-written and includes its last six lines.

Franklin links his lineage to the colonies' first Puritan settlers, ascribing himself, in the process, a kind of American nobility or bona fides. Once again he samples from his ancestors' literary achievements, these deriving from his mother's line.

All of Franklin's elder brothers were apprenticed to various trades, but Franklin was sent to grammar school at the age of eight because Josiah intended to put him in the priesthood. Franklin's father reconsidered sending Franklin to school, however, because of the expense of college education. He transferred Franklin to a school for writing and arithmetic kept by a famous man, George Brownell. Franklin began to write well, but failed in arithmetic.

Noting that, unlike his brothers, he was set aside for a literary, religious, and language education, Franklin describes the small portion of his learning history that was not self-driven. Franklin may have derived some personal motivation from the fact that his father briefly set him aside for an intellectual vocation.

At the age of ten, Franklin was removed from school to assist Josiah who was a "Tallow Chandler and Sope-Boiler" (a candle and soap maker). Franklin was employed at various small tasks around his father's shop. He disliked the trade and wanted to become a sailor. He taught himself how to swim well and manage boats. He says he was a leader among the boys his age.

Franklin suggests to some extent that his future leadership was prefigured in his earliest childhood. This idea stands at odds with the ideas of self-actualization and improvement expounded later in the book, though, it might be said, there are many leaders among boys who do not go on to become leaders among men.

Franklin relates an anecdote from his boyhood because he says it "shows an early projecting public Spirit" though, he says, improperly applied. He directed a group of boys his age to steal a large number of cobblestones from workmen building a house in Boston so that they could build a small wharf on the salt marsh where they liked to fish for minnows. The boys were caught and reprimanded, and, though Franklin pleaded with Josiah that the work he and the boys had done was useful, his father taught him that nothing is useful which is not done honestly.

Civic-mindedness was an element of Franklin's character from his earliest youth, and, if his method of approach was unlawful or dishonest, it may simply have been because no proper avenue existed (or exists) for children to contribute in matters of public improvement. Of course, this wasn't Franklin's father's opinion. Franklin demonstrates how Josiah held him to the highest moral standards.

Franklin thinks William might like to hear more about Josiah, who, Franklin says, had a strong physical build, was of average height, could draw well, sing prettily, and practiced music on his violin in a way that was very pleasing. He had a mechanical genius and would borrow other tradesmen's tools to do small tasks. But, Franklin says, his father's greatest attribute was his sound judgment, which led other to seek his advice on issues large and small.

Franklin takes pride in the sturdiness, ingenuity, and creative inclinations of his stock. Once again it seems Franklin makes no overt claims for self-determination over genetic predisposition, and instead, as he states in the opening pages, seems to share any detail that serves to satisfy his vanity or seems as if it may have set him up for his later advantages.

Josiah liked to invite friends and neighbors over for dinner and chose ingenious topics of conversation in order to improve the minds of his children. Franklin said his interest in the conversations kept him from being a picky eater because his attention was always directed away from the food. This was very convenient for him in his later travels abroad.

Once again, Franklin gives credit to his father as a nurturer of his intellect and his sense of both morality and justice. What's more, he explains how he derived his pragmatism (practicality) and adaptability to Josiah's judicious parenting.

Franklin goes on to describe his mother, Abiah. She too had a strong bodily constitution. He says he never knew her or his father to have any sickness except those which killed them, he at 89 years of age and she at 85. They are buried together at Boston, Franklin says, and he placed a marble tombstone at the site with a loving inscription that he includes in the *Autobiography*.

Franklin seems to argue not just that his parents were well made, but that their industriousness and frugality contributed to their long life and good health. He pays them respect and homage in his poetic epitaph, perhaps even as an effort to atone for his long absence from the family after he moved away from Boston.

Franklin says he can tell he's grown old because of his rambling digressions. He returns to his story, saying that he continued as an assistant to Josiah until the age of twelve. Because he did not like his father's trade and his father feared that, if Franklin were apprenticed to it, he would run away and go to sea, his father began to search for a new trade in which to apprentice Franklin. He took Franklin to watch different tradesmen at work, which, Franklin says, led him to watch and learn how good workmen handle their tools. Later, from this natural curiosity, he was able to construct little machines for his scientific experiments on his own.

Now Franklin describes his curiosity in craftsmanship and appreciation for industriousness in all of its many spheres, large and small. It is one thing to acquire a skill through years of apprenticeship, but to learn tasks, even small ones, from a few hours of observation takes a keen wit and a knack for improvement through imitation, two features Franklin constantly demonstrates throughout his work.

Franklin was briefly apprenticed to his cousin Samuel, a cutler, but, because Franklin's father wouldn't pay a fee for Samuel to take Franklin, Franklin was brought home again. Then Franklin describes his love for reading, which he cultivated from an early age. Some of his favorite books, those most influential on him, he says, were Plutarch's *Lives*, Daniel Defoe's *Essay on Projects*, and Cotton Mather's *Essay to do Good*.

A cutler is one who makes, deals, or repairs cutlery and kitchen utensils—it comes as no surprise that Franklin (who later describes how he prided himself in eating with a pewter spoon from a wooden bowl) didn't fight for his apprenticeship to a cousin in this profession. He wanted, he implies, a trade that could facilitate his love for reading and position him for self-improvement.

His "bookish inclination" caused his father to apprentice Franklin to his brother James, a printer. Franklin signed the indentures (binding agreements for a term of service) to serve James from the ages of 12 to 21 and left his father's house to live with James. He learned the trade quickly. The apprenticeship gave him access to better books and he sat up most of the night reading.

At last Franklin and his father came upon a suitable trade for Franklin's enterprising and upward-aspiring spirit. The printer's trade allowed Franklin to practice his composition and gave him access to the books that would be the primary means for his self-education and improvement.

Franklin took a fancy to poetry and wrote a few pieces of it. James found out and encouraged Franklin to pursue it. Franklin wrote two occasional poems, one called the "Light House Tragedy" and one that was a sailor song on the "Taking of *Teach* or Blackbeard the Pirate."

Franklin shares how his creative energy led him to pursue poetry early on. He did not yet see it as a time-squandering pastime, and took it upon himself to write some occasional poems based on recent events in the colonies.

Franklin says the poems were wretched but the "Light House Tragedy" sold well, which flattered his vanity. Josiah ridiculed his verses and told him that poets were generally beggars, so Franklin escaped being a poet. Prose writing, however, he says, was very useful to him and was a principle means of his advancement. He says he will tell about how he acquired his abilities as a prose stylist.

Franklin's early success with poetry allowed him to fancy himself a writer, but his father's advice that poetry wouldn't provide a stable financial future made Franklin question its utility, except as a tool for improving one's prose writing. Prose writing, beyond being more marketable, was also an essential skill for a statesman at that time.

Franklin recounts how he had a bookish friend, John Collins. The two of them liked to debate each other and argue. Franklin describes such disputatiousness (argumentativeness) as a nasty habit, one best to be avoided, but suggests he didn't know any better at the time. He and Collins started a debate about the appropriateness of educating women. Collins argued it was improper and Franklin, "perhaps a little for Dispute sake," took the opposing view.

Once again Franklin describes a hardheaded bad habit he developed early on, a habit he was able to break himself of by assiduously applying his effort and will. We see Franklin acknowledge that he took up the cause of educating women perhaps more for the sake of debate than because he actually supported it.

Collins was more fluid and eloquent than Franklin in his arguments. The two were to be apart for some time, so they exchanged letters on the subject. Josiah found the letters and showed Franklin how he lacked Collin's elegance of expression. Franklin saw that his father was right, and took it upon himself to improve his manner of writing.

Franklin, with his father's help, was able to see the difference in ability between himself and a peer, but, as with all of his natural limitations, Franklin did not take this as a prohibition but as a challenge to improve himself. Perhaps with each improvement to his character, Franklin was better able to gratify his vanity.

Franklin found a volume of Samuel Johnson's *The Spectator* and tried to improve his writing by rewriting and imitating Johnson's style. Then he translated the prose into verse, and from verse back to prose. Eventually, he saw a few small points of expression in which, he thought, he had improved upon the original. Franklin did these writing exercises and his reading at night after work, before work began in the morning, or on Sundays, when he skipped church services.

Here we see Franklin improve and educate himself through imitation. Naturally, when he compared his work to the esteemed Dr. Johnson and found, as he says, that he had improved upon the original, Franklin swelled with pride. A lacking transformed into a skill, for Franklin, was akin to an error corrected, and Franklin's industriousness was such that even his "leisure" time was devoted to intellectual productivity.

At the age of 16, Franklin read a book by a man named Tryon that recommended a vegetarian diet. He immediately adopted one. His vegetarianism was inconvenient for James, so he acquainted himself with some of the recipes in Tryon's book and made an arrangement to get half of the money his brother spent on food for him each week so that he could buy and prepare his food himself. He was able to save half of what his brother paid him and used the savings as a fund for buying books.

We see how Franklin's future humanitarianism is prefigured by an incredible empathy (uncommon in Western civilization at the time) for all animal life. This moral decision became a practical principal; not only did he consider it the "correct" thing to do, it saved him money, gave him time to dedicate to his education, and improved, or so he claims, both his clarity of mind and physical constitution.

There was another advantage to Franklin of preparing his own meals, namely that he remained in the printing house alone when his brother and the others left for their longer, heavier meals. This gave him additional time for study. He says that his temperance in eating and drinking gave him clearness of head and quicker apprehension, so he was able to progress more in his studies. He took the extra time to teach himself the arithmetic he had failed to learn in school.

Franklin's newfound leisure time allowed him to dedicate more time to reading and improving his prose styling , but, not content with improving just this one aspect of his knowledge and intelligence, Franklin also took it upon himself to correct the error of having previously failed to learn arithmetic from his instructor by teaching it to himself.

Still intent on improving his language and writing, Franklin studied from an English grammar book that concluded with two sketches on the art of rhetoric and logic with an example of a dispute in the Socratic Method (a way of proceeding through arguments with questions rather than claims).

Franklin further elaborates how he was able to stamp out the habit of disputatiousness and reveals where he found his life-long admiration of the Greek philosopher Socrates. Franklin speaks of the Socratic Method often—perhaps a sign that he feared his son, William, was too disputatious himself.

Franklin loved the Socratic Method, became less argumentative and contradictory, and took on the air of the "humble Enquirer and Doubter." He practiced it and found it very useful. He eventually retained only the habit of expressing himself modestly and using expressions like "it appears to me" or "if I am not mistaken" rather than "certainly" or "undoubtedly."

Note that Franklin does not say he became the humble enquirer and doubter, but that he took on his airs. For Franklin, it is almost always more important to appear to have humility in the eyes of others than to actually possess it for oneself.

Franklin says that what he learned from the Socratic Method—his reserved style—was very helpful to him later in persuading men into measures he was promoting. He wishes other men would adopt this style of communicating, because a "dogmatical" (self-assured) manner can provoke contradiction. He quotes some lines of the poet Alexander Pope to illustrate his point, not without proposing an emendation (edit) to one of the lines.

Franklin employs prolepsis (foreshadowing) to tell how the Socratic Method was useful to him in his future civic career. Once again, it's possible that by "other men" Franklin means William in particular, who, at the time of the writing of Part One of the Autobiography, had his own civic career as Royal Governor of New Jersey.

Franklin's brother, James, began to print a newspaper, *The New England Courant*, in 1720 or 1721. It was the second newspaper to appear in America. James's friends tried to dissuade him because one newspaper was "enough for America." Franklin points out that at the time of his writing (1771) there are more than 25. Franklin was employed by James to carry the newspaper through the streets to customers.

Franklin takes an amazed moment to consider the progress of printing and access to information in the rapidly expanding American colonies. He also notes and shuns the foolishness of naysayers. For Franklin it is always a better idea to say yes to an enterprising idea. One can always make up for a lack of space in the market by producing a superior product.

Franklin says James had skilled and intelligent friends who composed short pieces for his paper. Franklin listened to their conversations and the talk about their writings and decided to try his own hand at writing for the paper. He was still a boy and thought his brother would object to printing anything of his in the paper, so he disguised his handwriting and put an anonymous piece of writing under the door of the printing house one night.

Again, Franklin's precociousness as a young man of talent, intellect, and skill with little formal education takes center stage. Not only was Franklin precocious, however, his vanity made him ambitious. No piece of writing would be published if authors lacked the vanity to try.

James and his friends read Franklin's anonymously submitted essay and, within Franklin's hearing, said how much they liked it. They guessed at the author, naming only men of "some character… for learning and ingenuity," and James published it in his newspaper. Encouraged, Franklin wrote and submitted several more papers, which were, likewise, approved of and published. At last, Franklin revealed to his brother and brother's friends that he was the author of the anonymous papers. His brother thought he was being boastful and vain, which, Franklin said, led to some of their differences and disagreements.

Franklin finds his vanity flattered by the talk and false guesses of his brother's friends, but Franklin's vanity, this time, may have extended too far. The way in which he reveals the authorship of his anonymous papers aggravates his brother, James, and gave James a sense that he had to knock the chip off his brother's shoulder. If Franklin had stuck to his plan of seeming humble, perhaps he could have avoided the mistake of disputing with his brother.

Franklin and James often took their disputes before Josiah and, Franklin says, either he was generally in the right or a better pleader than James because his father often sided with Franklin over his brother. His brother often physically beat him, and Franklin sought a way to get out of his apprenticeship.

In humble gesture, Franklin acknowledges that the success of his cause before his father may only have been due to his skill in pleading, not due to the correctness of his opinion. Perhaps, also, Josiah was partial to his youngest son.

One piece published in James's newspaper offended the Assembly (the governing body in Boston). James was brought to court and imprisoned for a month because he would not reveal the author of the offending paper. Franklin went unpunished. When James was released the Assembly ordered that "James Franklin should no longer print the paper called the New England Courant."

Franklin begins the unusual tale of how he was able to escape his brother's employ, unusual perhaps because of the strange legal phrasing used by the Assembly in its order. It's likely that the Assembly wanted to censure James without completely prohibiting the publication of his paper.

Some of James's friends suggested changing the name of the paper to evade the order, but James thought it would be better if the paper kept its name but was published instead under the name Benjamin Franklin. Accordingly, Franklin was released from his apprenticeship so that the assembly couldn't censure him for escaping their order by publishing under the name of an apprentice. Franklin signed new indentures (agreements to serve as an apprentice) for the remainder of the term, which were to be kept private.

James could have avoided his troubles with his brother had he simply changed the name of his paper, but its likely that he wanted to challenge the authority of the Assembly members who would likely be startled or aggravated to see that The New England Courant was still in circulation. In other words, Franklin was able to escape his brother's service because of his brother's hubris (swollen pride).

Soon, another quarrel arose between Franklin and James, and Franklin, guessing that his brother wouldn't produce the private contract for fear of being punished for his evasion of the Assembly's order, decided not to remain apprenticed to his brother. When James found out, he spoke to all the other printers in Boston to prevent Franklin from getting employment there. Franklin decided to go to New York City as it was the closest place with another printer and because he had offended some of the members of the Assembly in Boston with his publications in James's paper.

Franklin made a rare, imprudent decision by escaping his brother's printing house, imprudent because his brother had the legal authority to capture him as a runaway and because Franklin could have been further censured by the assembly and even subjected to fines for the services he failed to render. However, Franklin imprudence in this situation was tempered by his understanding of his brother's character, and the odd double-bind his brother had gotten himself into.

Josiah sided with James in the dispute, so Franklin decided it was best if he ran away without telling anybody. His friend, Collins, helped him to get passage on a boat to New York by inventing a story about how Franklin had gotten a "naughty girl" pregnant and needed to escape before her friends forced him to marry her. He sold some books to pay for the journey and, at the age of 17, reached New York in three days time without any friends or recommendations and with very little money.

Contrary to his habit, Franklin's father sided with his brother, so Franklin had to escape like a convict (which, in some sense, he was). But, as in the anecdote of the pier he constructed with his boyhood friends, Franklin's dishonesty only serves to highlight his remarkable capacity. At a tender age, he was able not just to leave home, but to forge a new life with no recommendations or money.

Franklin offered his services to the printer in New York, a man named William Bradford, who had no employment to offer him. Bradford, however, told Franklin that his son in Philadelphia had lost his main workman, Aquila Rose, to death. Franklin set out for Philadelphia in boat bound for Amboy, New Jersey, leaving his chest and things to be shipped after him. His boat lost its sails in a squall.

Franklin's decision to move to Philadelphia, like his earlier decision to leave for New York because it was the closest city to Boston with a printing house, was a matter of coincidence. It is striking to the modern reader that the journey between these cities, now a matter of a few hours, was then a multi-day affair subject to many trials and tribulations.

A drunken Dutchman fell overboard during the storm. Franklin reached into the water and drew the man back into the boat. The man sobered up a little from falling in the water and asked Franklin to dry his book for him, a Dutch copy of The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan, Franklin's favorite author. Franklin comments on Bunyan's novelistic technique of mixing dialogue and narration, and remarks that Daniel DeFoe and Samuel Richardson copy the method in some of their books.

Perhaps Franklin masks his act of heroism—his saving a man's life—with the anecdote that the Dutchman he saved was also an admirer of John Bunyan. Franklin interrupts his narrative to describe the technique of prose narrative itself—dialogue mixed with exposition—that was pioneered by Bunyan, Defoe, Richardson, and others—and we see some of Franklin's literary influences revealed.

The boat neared Long Island and couldn't find a place to land, so they dropped anchor and swung around toward the shore. People came down to the shore and shouted hello, but the wind and surf were so loud that neither party could hear or understand the other. Franklin's party made signs that the party on shore should fetch them in canoes but they either didn't understand or decided against it and went away. Franklin and the other slept on the boat as best they could with the wet Dutchman and the spray leaking through to them.

Following his description of the prose narrative technique, Franklin tells a story straight out of an adventure novel—failed communication in the midst of natural calamity. Perhaps the communication that fails between the passengers and Franklin can be symbolically taken to represent an absence of the narrative technique described; in the Autobiography, practically all characterization occurs in exposition, not in dialogue—this might be a symptom of Franklin's committing himself to what "really happened."

The wind let up the next day and Franklin's party decided to make for Amboy before night, having already been thirty hours on the water without food or anything to drink but dirty rum. In the evening, Franklin took with fever, but, having read somewhere that drinking plenty of cold water was good for a fever, he drank a lot of water and felt better by the next morning. Franklin was told that he would find boats the rest of the way to Philadelphia in Burlington, and so made his way the 50 miles from Amboy to Burlington on foot.

Given our modern understanding of illness and disease—the fact that Franklin was most likely suffering symptoms of severe dehydration—it is somewhat staggering that the importance of staying hydrated when sick was not, at the time, common knowledge, and also significant to note the extent to which Franklin was able to improve his circumstances with access to books and frequent reading.

It rained the whole day of Franklin's journey and he stopped to spend the night at an inn where he wished he had never left home. People there suspected him of being a runaway. The next day he made it to an inn eight miles from Burlington kept by a Dr. Brown, who was very sociable and friendly to Franklin once he discovered that he was well read. Dr. Brown knew all the cities in Europe and, some years later, undertook to parody the Bible in doggerel verse. Franklin says he is glad Brown never published his parody, as it might have hurt weak minds.

In retelling people's suspicion that he might be a runaway, Franklin almost seems to forget the fact that he was one. Franklin pays particular attention to all the literary or learned friends that he made in the autobiography—perhaps these friends took a special significance for him because of his commitment to self-education and improvement. It may also work to reveal something of Franklin's (at this point) buried intention that the work be used for the improvement and education of others.

Franklin spent the night at Dr. Brown's inn and reached Burlington in the morning only to find that the boats for Philadelphia had left just before his arrival. It was a Saturday and no boats were expected to leave until Tuesday. An old woman from whom Franklin bought gingerbread offered to house him until he could catch a boat. She was hospitable and fed him well. However, when he was walking by the river in an evening, he found a boat going to Philadelphia and they took Franklin on board.

Once again the Autobiography takes one of its more narrative bents. Perhaps the description of an act of travel alone is enough to make a piece of writing take on a novelistic air. Dr. Brown and the woman Franklin describes have no future place in the Autobiography. These were one time encounters, remembered vividly, perhaps, because it was Franklin's first time travelling.

Franklin's new boating party rowed until midnight when some men in the party said they thought they had passed Philadelphia and would row no farther. They went into a creek and made a fire out of an old fence. In the morning, one of the company knew the creek to be Cooper's Creek, a little above Philadelphia, which they saw as soon as they got out of the creek's mouth. They arrived about eight or nine o'clock Sunday morning and landed at the Market St. Wharf.

The travel narrative continues and Franklin includes rich sensory, novelistic details—like that the fire was made from the planks of a rotten fence. Dawn brings with it a quelling of the travel's difficulties—the unknown night landscape, in the morning, is transformed into a name. What's more, not only had the party failed to reach Philadelphia, they had stopped and spent an uncomfortable night only a short way from their destination.

Franklin addresses William, saying he has been so detailed in this account of his journey so that William can compare what he was then with what he has become. Franklin was dirty and his pockets were stuffed with clothes and stockings. He had only a Dutch dollar and a shilling in copper to his name and gave the shilling to the boatmen for his passage. They refused because Franklin had rowed, but Franklin insisted, remarking that sometimes a man with little is more generous because he doesn't want others to think he has nothing.

It is likely that Franklin first lost himself in the recollection of this formative period of his life and only afterwards sought to justify it with the explanation he offers here. Franklin seems uncomfortable with the idea that a story might be a pleasure simply to tell or that a work might offer pleasure first and foremost rather than instruction, or, alternatively, he may fear that, though his story has been a pleasure for himself to recollect, the pleasure of his reader(s) may not equal it.

Franklin walked up Market St. until he met a boy with bread and asked him to point out the baker's. He bought three large rolls from the baker of 2nd St., tucked one under each arm and ate the third as he walked up Market St. where he passed by the door of Mr. Read, his future wife's father.

Franklin likely tells this anecdote to emphasize the lowliness and absurdity of his condition when he was but a dirty boy carrying three gigantic rolls.

Standing at Mr. Read's door, Ms. Read saw him and thought he made a ridiculous appearance. He turned down Chestnut St. and part of Walnut St. eating his roll the whole way. Eventually, he found himself back at the Market St. Wharf where he gave his two extra rolls to a woman and child who had come down on the boat with him.

Perhaps there is something to Franklin's doctrine of seeming humility because, in this passage, he manages to describe a simple act of kindness in such a way that it seems not to demonstrate his own beneficence but merely to relay the kindness as one fact among many on the day of his arrival.

Refreshed, Franklin walked up the street again. He joined the well-dressed people of the town and followed them into the Quaker meeting-house. He sat down among them, looked around awhile, heard nothing said, and fell sound asleep. Someone woke him up at the end of the meeting.

This passage concerning Franklin's falling asleep in a Quaker meeting house is indicative of Franklin's attitude toward both Quakerism and organized religion in general.

Franklin went back out on the street and met a young Quaker man he liked. He asked the man where he might find lodging. He showed him a house called the Three Mariners, but said it was a house of ill-repute and invited Franklin to follow him to another house, the Crooked Billet on Water St. Franklin ate dinner there and responded to the inquiries of people who suspected he was a runaway.

Franklin, once again, mentions his being suspected as a runaway seeming to forget that he in fact was one. He seems to relish the opportunity to include the names of streets and houses in Philadelphia, the city that became his home, a city he would improve with institutions that endure to the present day.

After his meal, Franklin grew weary once more, went to his room and slept until 6:00 in the evening when he was called to supper, went to bed again very early and slept soundly until morning. He made himself as presentable as possible and went to Andrew Bradford the printer's. Bradford's father, William Bradford, the printer in New York, was there. He had arrived before Franklin on horseback.

Naturally, Franklin was exhausted after the trials and tribulations of his journey. Revealing his literary mind, Franklin seems to appreciate the irony that William arrived in Philadelphia before him despite taking a means of transit typically less than half as fast.

William Bradford introduced Franklin to his son, who gave Franklin breakfast but told him he had no employment to offer him because his open position had already been filled. He directed Franklin to a Mr. Keimer who had lately set up a competing press in the town.

Continuing a string of fortuitous coincidences, Franklin's longtime employer and sometime friend, Mr. Keimer has just begun a competing printing house in Philadelphia at the moment of Franklin's arrival.

William Bradford took Franklin to Keimer's. Keimer asked Franklin some questions and gave him a task to see how he worked and, at last, said he would employ Franklin soon but had nothing for him to do at that moment. Keimer took Bradford to be one of the townspeople that had good will for him and spoke to him about his projects while Bradford kept it a secret that he was Keimer's chief competitor's father. Bradford baited Keimer into revealing all his business secrets while Franklin watched and learned from the crafty old man. Keimer was greatly surprised when Franklin told him who the old man was.

For Franklin, the key illustration performed by this passage concerning Keimer's credulity is not, as it may seem at first, performed merely to illustrate the credulity and wrong-headedness of Keimer himself, but instead to extol the craftiness of the wizened veteran, the elder Bradford. Franklin appreciates all men with a knack for learning, and, as he eventually spells out more explicitly, silence is a virtue he appreciates.

Keimer had only an old, broken press and one worn-out font with which he was then composing an elegy on the deceased printer's apprentice, Aquila Rose, who was much respected in the town and who had been considered a promising poet. Keimer composed the elegy in the types without first writing it down, so Franklin couldn't help him. Franklin got Keimer's press, which had not yet been used, into order. He went back to Andrew Bradford's where he was given a little job to do for the present. He lodged and ate there.

Aquila Rose, for a virtually unknown printer's apprentice who died before Franklin's arrival in Philadelphia, makes a remarkable number of appearances in the Autobiography. Perhaps, having heard the story of Rose's talents and capacities, Franklin was more than typically affected by Rose's untimely death, seeing in him an analog for his own early condition, and a reminder of what just as easily might have been.

A few days later, Keimer sent for Franklin to print off the elegy for Aquila Rose. In the meantime, Keimer had gotten another set of cases and a pamphlet to reprint on which he set Franklin to work. Franklin found both Bradford and Keimer to be poor printers, Bradford because he was poor writer and speller and Keimer because he knew nothing of presswork. Keimer had no religion, but professed to elements of each, according to Franklin, depending on the occasion.

Franklin criticizes both Bradford and Keimer for their abilities as printers, one gets the sense, less out of a desire merely to criticize, but more as a lament. One almost feels that Franklin wishes they had been better printers, despite the fact that, if either had been more capable, he may never have gotten the opportunity to set up his own shop and may not have achieved such incredible success.

Keimer did not want Franklin lodging at Bradford's while Franklin worked for him, but his house was without furniture so he could not lodge him. Keimer got Franklin a lodging at Mr. Read's (Franklin's future father-in-law's). Franklin's clothes and belongings had since arrived in Philadelphia and he cut a more respectable appearance for Ms. Read, his future wife. Franklin began to make friends with some of the young literary men in Philadelphia.

We get a sense, in this passage, of how temperamental Keimer was as an employer—though it seems, at least, Keimer did not share James's habit of physically beating Franklin. We also see how Franklin prudently and pragmatically, unlike certain friends of his, sought employment out first when he moved to a new city, rather than recreation.

Franklin made some money due to his industry working for Bradford and Keimer and so lived "very pleasantly," trying not to think of Boston. Soon, Franklin's brother-in-law, Robert Holmes, who traded between Boston and Delaware, heard that Franklin was in Delaware and wrote him a letter urging him to go back to Boston and address the concerns of his friends and family who had no idea where he was. Franklin responded and gave Holmes his reasons for leaving Boston, somewhat convincing him that he was not so much in the wrong as Holmes had suspected.

At the age of seventeen, with almost no formal education, Franklin seems to have been more than capable of succeeding on his own. There is little doubt his fortune would have been much different if he had never returned to Boston. It also seems he would have avoided the trip until much later had his brother in law Holmes not urged him to it. Capable of existing as an adult, Franklin was still subject to the moods and attitudes of a child, and was, perhaps, still harboring anger for his father and brother.

Sir William Keith, Governor of Pennsylvania, was then at Newcastle where Holmes received Franklin's letter. He spoke to Keith of Franklin and showed him the letter. Keith read it and was impressed with Franklin's writing, especially when he was told Franklin's age (17 or 18). Keith saw Franklin's potential, knew the printers in Philadelphia to be as poor as Franklin saw, and thought that Franklin should be encouraged. He decided to take Franklin under his wing.

Franklin's capacities didn't go unnoticed in his own day. This is the first time news of Franklin's abilities reached a governor. In future days, he would stand in the presence of and even dine with kings, but perhaps Franklin appreciated Keith's noticing him merely because Keith was the first man in a position of power to do so.

One day, Keimer and Franklin were working together (Franklin, as yet, knew nothing of the governor's interest in him) when they saw Keith and a famous man named Colonel French come across the street and knock at the door. Keimer ran down, thinking the two illustrious men were visiting him and was shocked when they asked after Franklin, his workman.

Franklin probably found this anecdote to be a fun yarn as it shows his vain and temperamental employer, Keimer, in the kind of state—befuddlement tinged with humiliation—he most liked to pretend he was immune to. Many of Franklin's most humorous stories in the Autobiography involve Keimer.

Keith was very kind to Franklin and asked why Franklin hadn't made himself known to him when he first arrived in Philadelphia. Keith invited Franklin to join him and French for some Madiera wine at the tavern. Keimer was shocked.

Perhaps the finest gift that Keith and French gave Franklin was not the conversation or the wine, but Keimer's shock and surprise. Franklin always loves to exceed the expected constraints of his social position.

Franklin, Keith, and French went to a tavern on the corner of 3rd St. and Keith proposed to Franklin that Franklin should set up his own printing business. Keith promised his support and offered to write Josiah a letter stating as much. They concluded that Franklin should return to Boston on the next available ship with Keith's letter in order to propose the idea to Josiah.

Keith's character, at this time, was unknown to Franklin. He had no idea what kind of man or governor Keith might be, but, nonetheless, and unsuspectingly, he appreciated Keith's attention and favors. Perhaps Keith's role in getting Franklin back to Philadelphia (with an eye to setting up Franklin's own business) was more instrumental in getting the young Franklin back to Boston than the urgings of Holmes, his brother-in-law.

A ship was setting out for Boston at the end of April 1724 and Franklin took it with Keith's letter in hand. The ship struck a shoal and sprung a leak and the passengers and crew had a difficult time at sea. They arrived safely, however, in about two weeks time. Franklin had been gone seven months. No one had heard any news of him because Holmes had not yet returned from Newcastle and had not written. Franklin's appearance surprised his friends and family.

At this point, Franklin seems bemused by his first poor luck traveling, but he defers from giving as detailed an account of the passage as he gave of his first journey. It is somewhat surprising that Franklin was employed and had already appeared on the public stage in Philadelphia, a few hundred miles from Boston, without word reaching his family. Though news did travel differently in the 18th century, Franklin does not mention that his family would have heard from him had he simply written home.

Everyone was glad to see Franklin except his brother James. Franklin visited James's shop in a new, elegant suit. James received Franklin coldly and turned back to his work. James's workers were curious where he'd been and he told them about Philadelphia, praising it highly.

Franklin shows how he continued to act arrogantly around his brother James, perhaps out of spite for the way James had treated him when he was James's apprentice.

Franklin showed James's workmen the silver money that they used in Philadelphia at the time, and it greatly impressed them. Then he showed off his new watch, gave them some money for drink, and took his leave. James was very offended by what he saw as Franklin's pompous manner.

It seems, when it came to his early dealings with James, Franklin's vanity consistently got the better of him. It may be that these many errors, this general attitude, not just Franklin's escaping his brother's service, wove themselves into his true erratum.

Franklin's father, Josiah, was very surprised at Governor Keith's letter and, when Holmes returned, asked him about Keith's character, adding that he must be a man of small discretion to want to set up a boy not yet of age in a business of his own. Holmes was in favor of the project, but Josiah gave a flat denial, writing a civil letter to Keith rejecting the proposal.

Here we get a window into the discerning mind of Franklin's father, Josiah, who was right, not just to be pleased at the attention being paid his son and not just to suspect Keith of having a suspicious character, but to believe that Franklin himself was still a boy, unready to own and operate his own business.

Franklin's friend Collins was working as a post office clerk and, being pleased with Franklin's description of Philadelphia, resolved to move there with him. Collins set out, leaving his books with Franklin, and proposed that Franklin meet up with him in New York. Josiah, though he rejected Keith's proposal, was still happy at the attention that was being paid his son and gave his consent for Franklin to return to Philadelphia.

At times, Franklin's world seems to be populated by characters familiar from Russian novels, lazy intellectual in petty state employments; wise, almost superhumanly insightful fathers—Franklin, as we shall see, had more luck in his upbringing than he had in choosing friends.

Josiah advised Franklin to be well-behaved and respectful and to gain the esteem of the people in Philadelphia. He told Franklin to pursue steady industry and prudent parsimony (wise spending), adding that if Franklin came close to saving enough to set up his own shop by the time he was 21, he might supply him with the rest.

Josiah's advice to Franklin is so proper that it reads like a section of monologue from Shakespeare's Polonius. Unfortunately, Franklin's description of Josiah lacks Shakespeare's irony and satire. Franklin seems to have respected and imitated his father, especially at the time of writing.

Franklin set out again in a sloop that stopped in Newport, Rhode Island where he visited his brother John. A friend of John's, Vernon, asked Franklin to pick up some money (thirty five pounds) that was owed him in Philadelphia and to hold on to it for him. He gave Franklin a money order. Seeing after such a quantity of money later caused Franklin a good deal of anxiety.

Here, Franklin sets the stage for his second great erratum (dipping into Vernon's money to support Collins). We see how the darker side of capitalism (debt) can present itself as innocuously as any small favor to the friend of a relative or friend of a friend.

At Newport, a number of passengers joined the ship, including two young women and grave, matron-like Quaker woman. Franklin did the Quaker woman some good deeds and she advised him to avoid the company of the two young women. She managed to convince him they were bad women and he avoided them.

Franklin's natural generosity seems to have won him the respect of the well-meaning Quaker matron. Franklin's stated capacity to receive, accept, and employ good counsel seems unique in the history of mankind.

When the sloop arrived at New York, the women invited Franklin to where they lived, but he turned down the offer. It was discovered that a silver spoon and some other items of the captain's had gone missing. A warrant was drafted and the things were discovered in the women's apartment. Thanks to the Quaker woman, Franklin narrowly avoided being implicated in the crime.

Lo and behold, the Quaker woman was right—the young women were thieves. If Franklin had followed his own inclinations to associate with the young women, he could have gotten into serious trouble. It seems some errors can be corrected before they occur.

In New York, Franklin found his friend Collins. The two had read many of the same books but Collins had skills in mathematics that outstripped Franklin's. Unfortunately, Franklin discovered that Collins had taken to drink and found out from others that Collins had been drunk every day since his arrival in New York. Franklin paid for his lodging in New York and (later) supported Collins monetarily when they arrived in Philadelphia, much to his inconvenience.

So begins the history of Franklin's difficult friendships with drunks and scoundrels. Perhaps Franklin's shrewdness in judging character was limited by his appreciation for intellect and literary skill. Collins possessed great quantities of both, but drowned them in debts and alcohol.

The governor of New York, Burnet, heard from the captain that one the young passengers had a great deal of books and asked after the boy (Franklin). Franklin went to visit him and Burnet treated him with great civility. It was the second governor who had taken an interest in him.

For the second time, a royal governor took special interest in Franklin's enterprising manner. Being literate as well as literary was much more of a rarity in the 18th century and was enough, it seems, to get attention.

The sloop proceeded to Philadelphia where Franklin received **Vernon's money**. Collins was unable to find work due to his obvious alcoholism and continued to stay and eat with Franklin at Franklin's expense. Knowing Franklin had Vernon's money, Collins was continually borrowing from him and promised to repay as soon as he found work.

Collins exploited Franklin's soft spot for his friends, living off of Franklin and even driving him into debt. Some errors, even when they are clearly foreseen (as this one for Franklin surely was) cannot seem to be avoided.

Collins drinking continued and Franklin and he sometimes quarreled about it. Franklin tells an anecdote about throwing Collins overboard on a boat on the Delaware River when Collins refused to row in his turn. The boys rowed away from Collins whenever he swam near the boat to punish him for his haughty manner. It was the end of Franklin and Collins' friendship. Collins went to Barbadoes to serve as a tutor for a rich gentleman. Franklin never heard from him after and was never repaid the money he'd lent.

It seems that along with being a drunk and good-for-nothing, Collins was also pompous. This surely miffed the egalitarian Franklin, who consistently strove for equity and fairness in his dealings between men. Whether the others were as angry with Collins or if they were, like the boys who helped him to construct the pier, just following Franklin's lead, is a matter of speculation.

Franklin calls dipping into **Vernon's money** one of the first great **errata** of his life and adds that Josiah was right that he was too young to manage the affairs of a business. Governor Keith said Josiah was too cautious, however, and that, since Franklin's father would not set him up, he would set Franklin up in business himself. Keith told Franklin to tell him the things he would need from England and Franklin did not doubt Keith's sincerity. Franklin says he was unaware at the time that Keith often made promises he did not keep.

It is interesting to note that Franklin considers his error to be spending Vernon's money, not failing to help his friend Collins. Though, as we have seen, Collins wasn't exactly making it easy for him. Not only was Josiah right that his son was unready for his own business, he seems also to have predicted that Keith was a man of great talk and small action. Franklin, however, was more naïve.

Franklin presented Keith an inventory of the things he'd need, amounting to one hundred pounds sterling. Keith and Franklin decided it might be better if Franklin went to England to get the things himself. Keith told Franklin to prepare to sail with Annis, the annual ship from Philadelphia to England. Annis left months later, so Franklin continued to work for Keimer and kept fretting over **Vernon's money**.

Even when his prospects seemed best, the idea of being in debt was an incredible burden on Franklin's conscience. It is difficult, even in hindsight, to fathom Governor Keith's mind—surely Keith knew his promises were empty, so why go through the trouble of getting Franklin passage on a ship to London?

Franklin says he believes he forgot to mention that he had ended his vegetarian diet and tells an anecdote about how, on his first voyage from Boston, the people on board his boat caught a great many cod. When he saw that the cod had other fish in their stomachs, he allowed himself to eat the fish because he saw that they eat each other. "So convenient," he says, "a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do."

Franklin's statement that being a reasonable creature is remarkably convenient because one can "make a reason for anything one has a mind to do" is one of the most memorable in the Autobiography and typifies the wit and wisdom that Franklin popularized and disseminated in his Poor Richard's Almanac.

Before Franklin's voyage to England, Franklin and Keimer got along well together because Keimer didn't know Franklin planned to set up his own press. They did however argue and dispute often over ideas. Franklin used his Socratic Method to draw Keimer into contradictions and befuddle him. Keimer grew cautious to answer any of Franklin's questions and seriously proposed to him to join him in setting up a new religious sect. Keimer was to preach, and Franklin was to confute opponents.

Though not a secretive man in his general dealings, it seems Franklin found it necessary to keep business ventures close to the vest. We see Franklin return to talk about the skill he had with the Socratic Method, and we also see something of the religious zealotry that existed in America at the time. It seems every other man Franklin talks to has an idea for or has actually founded his own religion.

Keimer wore his beard long because of a passage in the Bible saying "Thou shalt not mar the corners of thy beard," and he kept the seventh day (Saturday) as the sabbath. He thought these should be tenants of their new sect. Franklin disliked both of these points, which were essential to Keimer, but he agreed to adopt them if Keimer accepted a vegetarian diet as part of their doctrine. Keimer thought his constitution wouldn't bear it, but Franklin insisted it would.

One gets the sense in reading that Franklin was less inclined to start a new religious sect than he was to watch the meat-loving Keimer try to live as a vegetarian. It's unlikely Franklin would have agreed to the enterprise if he didn't think he could transform the experience into a good laugh, and, perhaps, Franklin gratified his vanity by showing Keimer up.

Franklin and Keimer lived by the tenants of their new faith for three months. Franklin faired well, but Keimer suffered, tired of the project, and ordered a roast pig. He invited Franklin and two women to dine, but ate the whole pig before they arrived.

Keimer, though a harmless and generally well-meaning man, lacked Franklin's resolve. It is not difficult to see why, later, Keimer's business failed while Franklin's thrived.

Franklin had been courting Ms. Read, but because he was soon to travel and they were both so young, Mrs. Read prevented their marrying. His best friends were Charles Osborne, Joseph Watson, and James Ralph. Osborne and Watson were clerks for the scrivener Charles Brogden. Ralph was a clerk to a merchant. They all loved reading. Osborne was too much of a critic and Ralph was an ingenious writer. They all went on walks together in the woods near Schuylkil.

Once again, we see a prudent parent prohibit the over-zealous ideas of a child and watch as Franklin surrounds himself with young men inclined toward literary and intellectual pursuits. In some ways this early, natural circle of friends became Franklin's model for the later intellectual club he established in Philadelphia, the Junto.

Ralph wanted to be a poet, but Osborne criticized him and his poetry. One day, the four friends decided to each compose a piece for their next meeting. Franklin failed to produce one and Ralph suggested he take his (Ralph's) and pretend it was his own. Osborne praised what he thought was Franklin's composition highly, showing that really he was prejudiced against Ralph, not Ralph's writing. Osborne was laughed at when the trick was revealed.

Perhaps the opinion Franklin expressed earlier in the Autobiography, about the inutility of poetry, derived from these and later dealings with Ralph. Franklin seems to delight in situations where the subjectivity of men in their dealings with men is foregrounded and, in the process, he calls into question the capacity of men to be rational, objective beings.

After the trick, Ralph resolved to become a poet (which he failed at) but eventually became a good prose writer. Watson, Franklin adds while he has space and time, died in his arms a few years later. Osborne went to the West Indies where he became a notable lawyer and made money, but died young.

These few lines on the lives and deaths of his boyhood friends are among the most touching in the Autobiography. There isn't much space given to emotion without some practical, educational point attached, but, if there is an education offered by this passage, it is an emotional one.

Governor Keith had Franklin to his house frequently and set up a plan to give Franklin letters of recommendation to his friends in England as well as a letter of credit to get him the money he would need to by his press type and paper. When Franklin called to take leave for England, Keith's secretary, Dr. Bard, told him Keith was busy writing but would be at Newcastle before the ship left to give him the letter.

Why Keith ingratiated himself so thoroughly to a boy of 18 is unclear, perhaps he genuinely liked Franklin and his company and genuinely sought to do him a good turn without being able to acknowledge to himself that he was incapable of setting Franklin up in his own business.

Ralph, though married and with a young child, decided to go with Franklin on the journey. Franklin discovered only afterward that Ralph intended to (and did) abandon his wife and child. Franklin left from Newcastle after having exchanged letters with Ms. Read. Dr. Bard came to Franklin and told him Governor Keith would send the letters to him while he was on board.

Again, we see the questionable moral character of Franklin's friends. Franklin himself admits to exchanging promises and letters with Ms. Read, but, as we soon see, he himself fails (temporarily) to make good on them.

Also on board the ship were Andrew Hamilton (the famous lawyer), his son James Hamilton who later became governor, and a Quaker Merchant called Mr. Denham with whom Franklin later became good friends. Andrew Hamilton was called to plead a case just before the ship sailed, and left the rest of the company his supplies.

This passage is mostly logistical, setting us up for future friendships and associations that would be valuable to Franklin as well as setting the stage for Franklin's "upgrade" (so to speak) into the cabin.

Then Franklin's friend Colonel French came on board and invited Franklin and Ralph into the first class cabin because of the vacancy left by Andrew Hamilton. Franklin understood that French had brought Keith's letters, but the captain told him that all the letters had been placed together so Franklin would have to wait before getting his. The company in the cabin was very sociable and got along well, but the weather on the voyage was poor.

Here we see Franklin's boyhood credulity in its most extreme light. To trust a man's promise is one thing, but to undertake a month long passage without the money for return faire based solely on someone's seemingly good intentions is another matter entirely. Once again Franklin excises the narrative of his travel.

When the ship arrived in the British channel, the captain let Franklin examine the bag of letters. Franklin found none put under his name, but six or seven that looked like Keith's, some of them addressed to printers. After the ship arrived in London the 24th of December 1774, Franklin delivered one to a printer named Basket. Basket said it was from someone named Riddlesden who was a scoundrel he would have nothing to do with. Then he turned his back on Franklin.

As Franklin has already done much to foreshadow, Governor Keith was full of empty promises. Keith failed to write Franklin any letters or provide him any credit, and Franklin coincidentally ended up with the letters of another scoundrel he knew. This was a major turning point for Franklin as a judge of human character, a coming of age moment.

Perplexed and frustrated, Franklin found and confided in his friend Denham, who told him that there wasn't the slightest possibility Keith had written him letters. Keith, he said, was totally undependable and couldn't give Franklin credit because he had no credit to give. Denham advised Franklin to improve himself with the printers in England and so be improved for life and business in America.

Franklin's friend Denham confirms Franklin and Franklin's father's suspicions concerning Governor Keith. It was the end of one of Franklin's important friendships, but the beginning of another. Franklin, with Denham's advice, set out to turn his misfortune into yet another opportunity for self improvement.

Ralph and Franklin were inseparable at first. They lodged together in the district called Little Britain and Ralph told Franklin his intention to remain in London and thus abandon his wife and child. Ralph borrowed from Franklin while he was looking for work. Ralph wanted to become an actor but was dissuaded by the company master to whom he applied. He could not find work as a writer either.

Franklin, on the one hand a poor judge of character in his friends, on the other hand was a remarkably generous and compassionate companion. He seems to have been capable of forgiving and understanding a great deal that others in his position would dismiss as misconduct.

Franklin found work immediately at a printer's called Palmer's in Bartholomew Close (a neighborhood) where he worked for a year. He worked and earned but spent much of his money (including what he had brought with him) going to plays with Ralph. Franklin forgot his engagement to Ms. Read, which he calls another of the great **errata** of his life. He was unable to save enough money for passage back to Philadelphia because of his liberal spending.

Here we get our first and only glimpse of Franklin behaving imprudently with his earnings. It seems that his wise financial dealings came half-naturally to him and were half-learned after his stay abroad. More than sympathize with Ralph, Franklin went on to emulate him when he made the error of forgetting Ms. Read.

In response to a piece he set at Palmer's, Wallaston's "Religion of Nature," Franklin wrote a philosophical piece called "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain" which he dedicated to Ralph. Afterward, Palmer considered Franklin a man of some ingenuity, but disagreed with the ideas Franklin expressed in his pamphlet. Franklin considers printing the pamphlet another of his **errata**.

As a young man, Franklin's religious or, perhaps, anti-religious ideas were more extreme than the one's he puts forth in the Autobiography. He, repents, then, the decision to publish his pamphlet for no other reason than that his religious convictions, or at least the way he felt about expressing them, changed.

While in Little Britain, Franklin made friends with a Mr. Wilcox, who had a considerable library and allowed Franklin to borrow his books. Franklin's pamphlet got into the hands of surgeon named Lyons who'd written a book called "The Infallibility of Human Judgment."

Now we see Franklin behaving as we've come to expect. He cultivates literary relationships with learned man, relationships he uses to further his education and enact his own advancement.

Franklin and Lyons became friends and Lyons introduced franklin to Dr. Mandeville, author of "Fable of the Bees," who had a club in Cheapside, and also to a man named Dr. Pemberton, who promised to give Franklin a chance, which Franklin deeply desired, to see Sir. Isaac Newton, but it never happened.

Franklin's literary relationships multiply, like money, seemingly of their own accord, and we learn for the first time of his admiration for the greatest scientific and mathematical mind of the preceding generation, Sir. Isaac Newton.

Franklin had brought with him several "curiosities" including a purse made of asbestos, which, he says, "purifies by fire." One Sir Hans Sloane came to see it and Franklin and invited Franklin to see all of his curiosities at his house in Bloomsbury Square. Franklin sold him the purse.

These "curiosities" of Franklin's, which are mentioned more or less in an aside and with little detail, are one of our first clues concerning his scientific interests, which take a back seat throughout the book to his daily moral concerns.

A young woman, Mrs. T—, a milliner, lived in the same house as Franklin and Ralph. Ralph read her plays in the evening. They became intimate and moved in together. Ralph, still out of work, decided to become a teacher at a country school. Franklin later discovered that Ralph had begun using the name "Benjamin Franklin" because he felt his career ignominious (unworthy).

Ralph's romantic exploits finally force him into taking a career and earning money to provide for his mistress and her child. Franklin, with the clarity of hindsight, laughs that Ralph, not wanting to besmear his own name, besmirched one that, in the years and centuries to come, would shine far brighter than Ralph's own.

Ralph wrote Franklin frequently, including excerpts from an epic poem he was writing. Franklin tried to discourage him from pursuing poetry. Ralph asked Franklin to look in on Mrs. T— and Franklin grew fond of her and made advances (another **erratum**). She refused him, told Ralph, and it was the end of Franklin and Ralph's friendship. He never got the money Ralph owed him.

Franklin's understanding of Ralph's licentiousness, we see, may have derived from Franklin's being licentious himself, perhaps even more so than the Autobiography lets on. He seems concerned with his mistake not because of general moral qualms, but because it caused a rift between him and his friend.

Franklin left Palmer's to work at a printer called Watts's near Lincon's Inn Fields where he continued the rest of his stay in London. Franklin saved a good deal of money and kept himself healthy by drinking water at work (all the other workmen drank beer). Franklin was moved from the press room to the composing room by Watts and was asked to pay in for beer (which he didn't drink), he held out paying and the other workers played tricks on him until he, at last, conceded to the fee.

We get some secondary sight of what must have been Franklin's aptitude for the printing trade when we learn how he was quickly and almost effortlessly able to obtain employment and promotion at two of the major London printing houses. His private life excesses seemed not to have affected his temperance, and he seems to have quickly returned to his natural frugal lifestyle.

Franklin reached good standing with the other men and proposed some alterations to their chapel (printing-house) rules. Following Franklin's example, many of the other workmen gave up beer and switched to more frugal breakfasts. Franklin's being a good riggist (verbal satirist) endeared him to the men. His industriousness made him valuable to the master, so he got on very agreeably.

Franklin's wit and humor, which he made famous in his Poor Richard's Almanac, seems to have won him many friends among his fellow workmen, but his workplace jokes didn't detract from his wisdom with money or industriousness, so he was in the rare position of being liked by both his coworkers and boss.

Franklin moved from Little Britain to Duke St. The landlady was an elderly widow and Franklin got along very well with her. Eventually, after Franklin proposed moving to a cheaper apartment closer to his workplace, she liked him so much she reduced his rent to keep him around.

Once again Franklin receives patronage of a kind from a well-disposed elder. He seems, from these anecdotes, to have been able to win over people from all walks of life without necessarily trying to win them over. This nature of his character surely contributed to his later roles in the formation of the United States of America.

Franklin's landlady told him about the maiden woman of 70 who lived in the garret. She, though not a nun, lived as one. She ate only water gruel and gave all her other money to charity. A priest visited to give her confession everyday. Franklin asked her, living as she did, why she needed to confess daily. She said, "Oh, it is impossible to avoid vain thoughts." He visited her once and was amazed at how human beings are able to survive with so little.

Franklin hears the story of what he surely sees as the maiden woman's impressive temperance, and then is amazed to find out that the woman finds herself vain. Surely he sympathizes, given his decision to "exercise his vanity" in the autobiography, with the woman's ideas about the persistence of vain thoughts even in an incredibly humble lifestyle.

At Watts's, Franklin became friends with a young man named Wygate whom he describes as ingenious. Wygate spoke Latin and French, and Franklin taught him to swim. At the request of a company of men Wygate introduced to him, Franklin displayed his great capacities as a swimmer. He says he learned the his swimming techniques by studying Thernov's book on motions and positions. Wygate proposed to Franklin that they should travel all about Europe making money by holding swimming lessons, but Denham dissuaded him.

After losing Ralph, Franklin cultivates another literary friendship with an ingenious young man. Franklin, finding himself in some ways the intellectual inferior of his new friend (he was, as yet, unable to speak Latin or French), he was able to trade a physical skill for Wygate's intellectual guidance, and, for a moment, it seems Franklin seriously considers pursuing a life as a swimming instructor.

Franklin tells how Denham accrued debts years previously in England, moved to the United States and eventually paid back all his debts with interest. He calls it an admiral aspect of his character. Franklin visited Denham and Denham told him he was about to return to Philadelphia and proposed to take Franklin as his clerk. Franklin agreed and thought himself to be giving up the printing trade forever. Franklin assisted Denham in buying wears for his store and then had a few days of leisure before departure.

Denham, because of his ability to right the errata of his early life, especially given that they were errors concerning money, which seems always to have been a great source of anxiety for Franklin, became one of Franklin's chief role models and mentors. Franklin himself was still, at this time, in debt to Vernon. Perhaps out of desire to emulate Denham, Franklin attached himself to the merchant as his clerk.

On one of his days off, Franklin was sent for by a man named Sir William Wyndham. He had heard of Franklin's abilities as a swimmer. He wished to have his children taught swimming. Franklin, of course, had to refuse because of his impending departure, but, he reflects, had things gone differently in his life, he might have set up as a swimming instructor in London and gotten on quite nicely.

Once again we see Franklin called back to a life of the body, to explore physical exercise or athleticism rather than a more mercantile or semi-intellectual profession (like printing). It is easy for Franklin to imagine that he could have passed his life happily as a swimming teacher, considering there was only an imagined possibility of it happening.

In total, Franklin says, he spent 18 months in London, mostly working at his business, sometimes seeing plays, and reading books. His friend Ralph had kept him poor. They sailed from Gravesend on the 23rd of July 1726. Franklin tells William to look in his journal for an account of the journey. The most important thing that happened on it, he says, was that he conceived his plan for regulating his future conduct in life (the plan he gives the reader in Part Two). They landed in Philadelphia on the 11th of October.

Franklin summarizes his trip to London and gives additional credence to his claim that his true, intended audience was just his son William by pointing William toward documents unavailable to the contemporary or general reader of the Autobiography. He reveals for the first time his "practical" plan to achieve moral perfection.

Keith was no longer governor; he had been replaced by Major Gordon. Franklin saw Keith in the street one day and Keith turned away in shame. He said he would have been as much ashamed seeing Ms. Read, but found out that she had married another man, Rogers, a potter, who treated her poorly. She left him because it was said he had another wife. Keimer had gotten a new shop and types and a number of new though poorly skilled workmen.

Franklin arrives back in Philadelphia and finds that life has gone on in his absence, that his sometime friend governor Keith recognizes how he mistreated him, but is unable to account for that mistreatment. Franklin at once feels absolved for the way he behaved toward Ms. Read and responsible for her unfortunate plight.

Mr. Denham took a shop on Water St. Franklin attended business diligently, studied accounts, and grew expert at sailing. Franklin tells how much he loved Denham and then how the two of them took sick in February of 1726 or 27. Franklin, after preparing himself for death, recovered; Denham died. He left Franklin some money. Franklin's brother-in-law, Holmes, advised him to return to business and Keimer offered him high wages to oversee his shop.

Practicing many pursuits, Franklin's industriousness was in full fledge while he was in Mr. Denham's employ. Keimer's success or, at least, growth, while Franklin was away in London, proved to be advantageous to Franklin in the short term after Denham's death and the sudden dissolution of Franklin's new prospects.

Franklin accepted and began to oversee workmen Hugh Meredith and Stephen Potts, who were employed at lower wages until they learned the trade, "a wild Irishman" named John who soon ran away, a boy with an Oxford education named George Webb who's service Keimer had purchased for four years, and a country boy, David Harry whom Keimer had taken as an apprentice. Franklin saw that Keimer wanted to employ him only to teach his men and then cut him loose.

Finally, Franklin found himself in the position he'd long been ready for as an overseer of employees in a printing house. Keimer, being an interesting character, filled his shop with characters no less colorful. Franklin quickly apprehended Keimer's plan for his (Franklin's) service and began to think of ways to counteract it while still fulfilling his duties.

Franklin found it remarkable that the Oxford scholar Webb (a boy of 18) was there and gives an account of Webb's origins and skill as an actor. He skipped out on his debts to become an actor in London, became destitute, and bound himself to service in America. Franklin admired his intelligence and liveliness but says he found him idle and imprudent as well. Franklin lived agreeably and got on well with the rest of the men.

Men of literary accomplishment, like Webb, are always fascinating to Franklin above the "country boys" he encounters, perhaps because Franklin thought they (the literary men) had something to offer his intellectual pursuits and his mission of self-education and personal moral fulfillment/accomplishment.

Because there was no place to cast types in America, Franklin contrived a mold to do some himself. He engraved on occasion and even made the shop's ink. Because of the growing proficiency of the other workmen, after two pay cycles Keimer tried to get Franklin to take a pay cut. Franklin refused and they began to not get along. Franklin quit after Keimer gave him a quarter's notice after catching him looking out on the street after hearing a loud noise. The workman Meredith agreed to bring Franklin's things to him later that night.

We see Franklin's entrepreneurship and ingenuity at work, as well as the application of the lessons he describes learning from watching other craftsman at work before he was apprenticed to James. Franklin's predictions concerning Keimer's shop proved to be accurate, and Keimer threatened to dismiss him at a whim rather than because of any actual wrongdoing on Franklin's part.

Meredith loved Franklin and didn't want him to leave. Meredith spoke to Franklin of Keimer's debts, told him his father had some money, and suggested that when Keimer inevitably failed as a printer, Franklin and he could become partners and set up their own shop. Franklin agreed. They purchased inventory from England and they kept the deal a secret.

Meredith and Franklin hatch a plot to start their own business. They're uniquely positioned to understand Keimer's weaknesses. Meredith is well acquainted with Franklin's skill and industriousness and willing to back his faith in Franklin with capital. Franklin had long been awaiting this opportunity for advancement.

While Franklin and Meredith waited for their capital to arrive, Keimer got a prospect to print some paper money, which he couldn't do without Franklin. Keimer apologized and hired Franklin back. He got the job to print money, Franklin went to Burlington to execute the job, and Keimer made a good sum from it. The men in Burlington who oversaw the printing of the money found Franklin to be well-read and well-spoken. They stayed in Burlington three months and Franklin made great friends with the influential men there.

Keimer, an unskilled printer, unwisely dismissed his best employee. There was much he was incapable of doing without Franklin, and he prematurely cut off his ability to expand his business to the best jobs, like money-printing. Franklin's literary abilities, skill, and wit continued to earn him friends wherever he went, and, Franklin, though he needed the work Keimer had to offer him, was surely troubled to improve Keimer's prospects with the sum.

Franklin digresses to tell about his principles and morals before going on to narrate his public appearance in business. He says that he became a Deist early on as a boy, and persuaded his friends Collins and Ralph to it. They had treated him badly and he had treated Ms. Read poorly, so he decided that this doctrine, though perhaps true, wasn't useful. He grew convinced that truth, sincerity, and integrity in dealings between men were of the utmost importance and formed written resolutions to practice virtues while he lived (given in Part Two).

One gets the impression from the Autobiography that Franklin's early religious beliefs were somewhat less conservative than the one's he later espoused when writing the Autobiography, which were still, though common among intellectuals during the Enlightenment, radical. Why else would he describe printing his pamphlet in London as an erratum? Was Franklin wrong to seek pragmatism from his spiritual convictions?

Franklin says, for the most part, his constitution was suited toward treating others well and that he began in life with a fairly good character, for which he can thank God's providence.

Once again Franklin acknowledges that there were qualities he possessed that were innate and perhaps, though they could be improved, could not have been wholly acquired had he not been born with them.

Franklin wasn't back in Philadelphia long before Meredith and his types arrived from London. The two of them settled with Keimer and left his service before he heard about their having acquired types. They rented a house near the market and, to lessen the rent, took on a family of boarders. They had hardly opened the letters and put their press in order before George House, an acquaintance of Franklin's brought a customer to him. The man's five shillings was their first earnings.

Finally, with Meredith's help, Franklin was able to set up his own shop. He seems not to have found it duplicitous to keep his plan with Meredith from Keimer, but given Keimer's capricious dismissal of Franklin and generally bad intentions for Franklin's service, perhaps Franklin never considered that he was indebted to Keimer, or that the debt had long since been paid off.

Franklin tells of an old man with a wise look and grave manner who was constantly foretelling the fall of Philadelphia. The man told Franklin it was too bad he had just opened a new shop in a sinking country, but Franklin later laughed to see that the man eventually bought a house which he could have had for five times less if he hadn't refrained because he thought the city would soon meet its end.

It is little wonder that Franklin, a die-hard pragmatist, found his neighborhood apocalyptic prophet to be something of a clown. In the perfect hindsight of history, even the history of Franklin's own life, it seems Franklin's pragmatism was vindicated.

Franklin pauses to tell how, the autumn of the previous year, he formed his friends into a club called the Junto. They took turns delivering speeches on morals, politics, and natural philosophy on the pre-agreed specific topics of their desire. The first members were Joseph Bretnal, Joseph Godfrey, Nicholas Scull, William Parsons, William Maugridge, Hugh Meredith, Robert Grace, and William Coleman.

Franklin's faith in collective institutions, community, and parties of men is demonstrated by his desire to organize his literary and intellectual friends into a club. Franklin's pragmatism ensured that the club would have a charter and rules, and these formal elements of the clubs meeting probably increased the club's intellectual yield.

Franklin says he mentions the club because it was among the numerous interests he had that brought him business. Bretnal in particular got them jobs from the Quakers, including a forty page history. Franklin did a sheet of it per night, and, one night, one of the forms he set out was broken. He composed and it over again before going to bed. This industry, he says, gave him and Meredith character and credit with their neighbors.

We see how Franklin's unquestioning acceptance of the practicality of money-making allows him even to justify his digressions so long as he can tie than back to the success of his business. We see him apply his industry to the early jobs he acquired for his printing house. Perhaps Franklin was right to think that ample money was necessary for his fullest advancement in his other pursuits.

When people predicted Franklin and Meredith would fail, Franklin says, eminent citizens praised Franklin's industry and said he was sure to succeed. Franklin says he mentions it so that those of his posterity will know the value of the virtue of industry.

Franklin's industriousness soon culminated in a good reputation, and, as we've seen in other passages, Franklin saw the good will and high opinion of his neighbors as eminently practical.

George Webb found a "female friend" who purchased his time of Keimer and he came to Franklin looking for work. Franklin said he couldn't employ him, but that he planned on starting a newspaper and then might be able to use him. Webb told Keimer Franklin's plan and proposed to start his own paper with Keimer. Franklin was peeved and started a column in Bradford's paper to satirize Webb and Keimer.

Not everyone, however, had good will for Franklin, even the young man and scholar Franklin admired, George Webb, went behind his back—though perhaps Webb didn't do it out of ill will for Franklin but, rather, was motivated by his own self-interest. Franklin found a practical way, albeit somewhat mean-spirited, to make sure his paper would have an opportunity for success.

Keimer started a paper, which, after nine months, had little success. Franklin bought it for "a trifle" and it proved extremely profitable to him. Franklin says he speaks in the singular of business affairs because Meredith was a drunk and hardly contributed to their business. Nonetheless, he says, he was able to make the best of his connection with him.

Franklin's satire proved effective (or Keimer was simply incapable of producing a good newspaper) and Keimer's paper failed. Franklin found himself in yet another close relationship with a roustabout, but he had enough experience managing drunkards at this point to profit regardless.

Franklin says his first newspapers looked better than any that had been published in the colonies before. He wrote of a dispute between Governor Burnet of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Assembly that gained him many subscribers. He says leading men, seeing a newspaper in the hands of someone who could write well, encouraged him. Bradford was still the printer for public documents, but Franklin was able to steal away some of the government printing jobs by reprinting an address of the House that Bradford had botched.

Now Franklin undertakes to explain how he met success where Keimer failed. In this case, he said, he simply was able to produce a superior product—and it was better both in form (looks) and content (its articles). Franklin keenly observed his competitors weaknesses and exploited them as a means to show off his industriousness as a printer, to curry favor, and win jobs.

At this time, Vernon wrote to Franklin of his debt. Franklin asked for a little time, then paid the balance with interest, feeling at last that this **erratum** had been corrected. Mr. Meredith, Hugh Meredith's father, however, who was to have paid in full for starting the printing house, only advanced 100 pounds (half the total). Franklin was left with the debt. Thankfully, Franklin says, two true friends (William Coleman and Robert Grace) lent him the money and the business was saved. They insisted he split with Meredith who was often drunk in public.

Franklin finally escapes one onerous debt and relieves himself of the burden of Vernon's money only to acquire a greater one when Meredith's father reneges on his promise to front the printing house. Franklin justifies his decision to split with Meredith, and the way he discredits Meredith's contributions to his business with the evidence that his benefactors shared his opinion of Meredith's character.

Meredith acknowledged to Franklin that he wasn't fit to be a printer and allowed Franklin to buy him out of his partnership. Meredith went south to become a farmer and sent back reports of the Carolinas that Franklin published in his newspaper. The reports pleased the public. Franklin says this all happened about 1729.

Meredith felt himself ill-suited to the printing trade—at least in Franklin's account, but it seems, after their split, Franklin and Meredith were able to retain friendly relations, and Franklin was able to print the writings of a man who supported and believed in him.

At that time, the people wanted more paper money. The wealthy opposed any addition, because they worried that the currency would depreciate. Franklin wrote and argued for more paper money, even publishing a pamphlet entitled "The Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency."

Franklin perhaps skirts his true motives for writing in favor of paper money: he's mentioned many times that printing money was a very profitable job, and it's likely he felt he could secure the jobs and profit greatly if more paper money were introduced.

Eventually, partly due to the success of Franklin's pamphlet, the Assembly resolved to print more paper money. His friends in the House gave Franklin the reward of printing the new money. His friend Alexander Hamilton also procured for him the job of printing money in Newcastle and the job of printing the laws and votes there. These money-printing and government jobs were very profitable.

Whether or not Franklin's conviction that the colony should introduce more paper currency was vested self-interest, the decision to print more, partially advanced through his own writings, profited him greatly.

With these jobs in hand, Franklin opened a stationary shop. A man named Whitemarsh, a compositor Franklin knew in London, came to Franklin in Philadelphia and worked for him. He also took an apprentice, the son of Aquila Rose. Franklin began to pay off the debt he was under for the printing house.

Franklin was able to reinvest his profits into capital and, watching as they accumulated, was able to pay back his debt to his friends and benefactors as well as take on new employees and expand his business—his industriousness began literally paying off.

Franklin took care both to be and *seem* industrious. Because people saw this, they were more likely to give him business. Keimer's business suffered and he was forced to sell his printing house. He moved to Barbadoes and lived their some years in poor circumstances.

Franklin reiterates the value he sees in appearances and the analogous proliferations of positive public opinion and money. As Franklin thrived, Keimer's business suffered, eventually abandoning the colony.

Keimer's apprentice, David Harry, set up in Keimer's place. At first Franklin feared Harry as a rival and proposed a partnership which, thankfully for Franklin, Harry refused. Harry lived lavishly and ran up his debt and ended up following Keimer to Barbadoes. Franklin's only competitor now was Andrew Bradford who was "rich and easy."

Temperance and industriousness, Franklin demonstrates, coupled with his skill in his trade, were the keys to his success. Without his temperance and even his, at least, seeming humility he could easily have failed like the rich-living Harry.

Because Bradford ran the post office, people thought he got news faster, so his paper got more advertisers. Bradford kept Franklin from getting and sending his newspapers by the post, so Franklin bribed the riders and took care not to repeat Bradford's meanness when he held the same position.

Bradford's political positioning increased the worth of his paper in the general estimation and Franklin's comparative lack (at this time) of political appointments was something with which he recognized he must contend.

The Godfreys, Franklin's boarders, tried to set Franklin up with one of their relative's daughters, but the proposal failed because they refused to give Franklin, in his eyes, a suitable dowry. The Godfreys moved out after the engagement fell apart and he resolved not to take on new tenants.

Franklin, concerned as usual with his financial affairs, was unwilling to marry without being promised a dowry he felt reflected his position and prospects, and, as a result, his prospects and financial arrangements momentarily suffered.

The affair turned Franklin's thoughts to marriage, but, because the printing business was thought poor, he felt he couldn't get a suitable dowry from anyone. This together with "that hard-to-be-governed passion of youth" caused him to get involved with "low women" that cost him money and inconvenienced him, besides "risking [his] health by a distemper… which by great good luck [he] escaped."

Despite the, one would think, distasteful events with his tenants, Franklin still wished to acquire a wife, not it seems, out of desire for true love or companionship, but because Franklin saw that his youthful debaucheries were unhealthy, impractical, and potentially ruinous.

Meanwhile, a neighborly correspondence had been kept up between Franklin and the Reads. He pitied Ms. Read's situation, considered himself partially the cause of it, and their affection rekindled. There were difficulties because of Ms. Read's previous marriage, but they overcame them and married on September 1st ,1730. He says she was a great wife and helper. He corrected another of his great **errata**.

Once again, partially thanks to good fortune and luck, Franklin was able to correct one of his early errors in life—the decision to break off his engagement with Ms. Read Franklin says very little about the actual traits or personality of his lifelong partner.

The Junto began to meet in a little room of Mr. Grace's and Franklin proposed that they bring their books in to start a small lending library. The small library lasted about a year before each member took his books home. Thus, Franklin says, he set himself to a public project: setting up a subscription library. He drew up proposals with the scrivener, Brockden, and with the help of the Junto, got 50 subscribers to pay into the library. The company grew to 150 members and obtained a charter. Franklin calls his library "the mother of all the North American subscription libraries."

Now the Autobiography begins to turn toward Franklin's public works and community building. In this case the public project started small, and private, but the germ of the idea was there, and Franklin saw its potential for the good of his city, and the potential of similar institutions to improve the American colonies as a whole. He saw in this small collection of a few hundred books the means to build better citizens.

Part One concludes with a memo that says that the first part of the *Autobiography* was written for family and has bits irrelevant to the public, the next part, he says, was written many years afterward in compliance with the advice contained in the two letters he includes. The American Revolution caused the interruption in his writing.

The bits of the Autobiography that Franklin, in later years, found irrelevant, the kind of personal anecdotes and stories which he largely refrains from including in later sections, may to some readers to have been some of the most interesting and profitable parts in his work.

PART 2

The first letter Franklin includes to show why he is continuing his *Autobiography* is from a man named Abel James who wrote to Franklin while Franklin was in Paris. James says he has wanted to write Franklin for some time but feared the letter might fall into the hands of the British.

There is an obvious shift, between Part One and Two of the Autobiography, in Franklin's estimation of the value and scope of his work. He begins to think of it as something for the public at large.

Abel James read over 23 pages of Franklin's handwritten draft of Part One of the *Autobiography*. He includes a copy of it so that Franklin might continue to write the history of his life. He says the book would be entertaining to millions. He says it would instruct the world's youth to achieve Franklin's industry and temperance. The work would have many other values, he adds, but this would be most important.

Because Franklin has begun to think of the Autobiography as a work that might be suitable for a larger audience, it seems he feels anxiety and a corresponding need to justify the vanity inherent in writing a book about himself. Perhaps this is why he includes the letters of other men to support the belief he already secretly harbored of his work's merit.

The second, longer letter Franklin includes to demonstrate why he's undertaken to complete his *Autobiography* was sent by Benjamin Vaughn in Paris, January 31st 1783. After reading over a description from a mutual friend (perhaps James) of what was to become Part One of Franklin's book, Vaughn says, he found it necessary to urge Franklin to complete the work.

The second letter is longer and more categorical than the first, containing many of the same arguments, and much to the same purpose, but expounding those arguments in greater detail. Perhaps Franklin included the letters of these friends as much for personal motivation as public justification.

Vaughn says he solicits the history of Franklin's life because: (1) His life is remarkable (2) It will be a valuable document of the foundation and working of the newly created United States. (3) Most importantly, it will allow for the formation of future great men who might follow in Franklin's example, in particular by giving a "noble rule and example of self-education."

Vaughn's argument that Franklin's work will allow for the formation of future great men may have persuaded Franklin to include more in the way of instructions for self-improvement and shows how even Franklin's contemporaries noted his unique position to pioneer the genre now somewhat grossly known as "Self Help."

Franklin's Autobiography, Vaughn continues, will not only teach self-education, but the education of a wise man. He insists that the small, private details are as important as the larger plans because what people need is "rules of prudence in ordinary affairs." His book will be a "key to life." His readers will see that even Franklin formed a plan by which he became considerable—that he wasn't simply born to greatness. A man should arrange his conduct to suit the whole of a life, not simply a moment.

Vaughn notes that Franklin's work might have very real practical educations, that, by following Franklin's example, they too might develop the habits to improve their station in life, and, if not become rich, at least possess a certain quantity of wisdom. Vaughn's wise insight that a man should conduct himself to suit the whole of his life is also an attempt to get Franklin to share the whole of his.

Vaughn praises what he calls Franklin's modesty and disinterestedness. Yet another reason, Vaughn continues, is that Franklin's style of writing is serviceable, shrewd, and well-composed and his continuing it may inspire more writing of the same kind rather than the vain trifles of the pretentiously literary. He concludes his letter with a personal application. Vaughn says he himself is desirous of seeing the *Autobiography* come into the world. He asks Franklin to show himself as he is, a great man, one who loves "justice, liberty, and concord."

The final note, perhaps most interesting when considering the Autobiography as a work of literature rather than an historical document, is an argument for the literary merits of the work. Once again, Vaughn praises Franklin's pragmatism, saying that his words and teachings have practical value and that this enhances their artistic merit. It is a work applied to life, not built purely on literary concern and allusion.

Franklin continues the account of his life, writing from Passy, near Paris, in 1784. He says he had been too busy to set to work again when he first received the letters. He says if he lives until he gets home to Philadelphia he might improve his present recollections from his notes and adds that he can't remember if he gave an account of the means he used to establish the Philadelphia public library. He speaks of the lack of booksellers and the poor state of printing houses in New York and Philadelphia when he first moved from Boston.

Franklin retreads some of the ground he began to cover at the end of Part One, which is understandable given that nearly twenty years have passed since he last looked at the manuscript and that he is restarting his story without a copy of the old manuscript in front of him. He summarizes, to some extent, the state of affairs in the colonies when it came to a person's access to books and, therefore, one's ability to self-educate.

Franklin recounts how the Junto formed a small library, and he transformed this into a subscription library after seeing its utility. Other towns copied the idea, reading became fashionable, and people became better read. He says that Brockden, the scrivener who helped him start the library, criticized that they would all be dead before the term of subscription had expired, but he says that, in his case, Brockden was wrong, and a charter allowed the library to continue in perpetuity without subscriptions anyway.

Franklin here resumes the story he left off with the Junto's small lending library, but the scope and detail have somewhat changed, perhaps due to the rift opened by the intervening decades. Once again we see Franklin get the last laugh with a naysayer. As with the old man who prophesied Philadelphia and the colonies doom, time vindicated Franklin's judicious optimism.

Franklin says his attempts to gain subscribers showed him that soliciting his fellows was more easily done if he did not present himself as the author of the idea. It was best to fain modesty because the sacrifice of vanity would later be amply repaid. He said the library gave him a chance to improve by constant study, for which he set aside an hour or two every day.

Presenting another lesson in humility and the importance of seeming humble to one's neighbors, Franklin describes how he collected the necessary subscriptions to start his lending library. His own self-improvement, like the improvement of his fellow citizens, was part of the reward.

Reading, Franklin adds, was his only amusement. He says he became industrious to provide for the family he was starting and to achieve success, eventually standing before five kings and sitting down with one, the King of Denmark, for dinner. He reiterates his luck at having such a good wife, and tells how he eventually went from eating from a wooden bowl with a pewter spoon to eating out of china bowls with silver.

Franklin emphasizes how his industrious was so prevalent that his only leisure activity is one many of us consider to be industrious as well. This industry, he said, not only transformed the material conditions in his life, it also changed his social station, so that no sphere of social experience was closed to him.

Franklin tells how he was raised Presbyterian, didn't attend service, but never doubted God existed. The best way to serve God, he thought, was to do good to man. He eventually refrained from debating points of religion with others. Though he didn't attend church service, he paid an annual sum to the Presbyterian church. He said he would have gone to church more if the minister had been a good preacher. He laments that when he did go to church he received no practical moral instruction.

Questions of religion and spiritual searching were of the utmost importance to Franklin. His chief issue with his religious experience was that he found the services and teachings to lack practical value—he found them inapplicable to his daily life. It is unclear why he continued to donate to his church despite his feelings about the services. Perhaps he felt morally obligated.

It was about this time, Franklin writes, he conceived the "bold and arduous plan of arriving at moral perfection." He wished to live faultlessly, but soon found he couldn't. He devised what he calls a more practical means for moral improvement. He established a list of thirteen virtues with definitions. They are: Temperance, Silence, Order, Resolution, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquility, Chastity, and Humility.

Franklin's dissatisfaction with the practical application of traditional Christianity and, even, with the Deism he practiced, eventually led him to formulate a more rigorous, practical plan for spiritual and moral self improvement. Of course, the question remains, is Franklin's plan practical? Is it practicable for people who aren't Ben Franklin?

Franklin wanted to achieve all these virtues, but thought it best to focus on one at a time. He resolved to pay strict attention to one virtue per week for thirteen weeks, improving in one area before moving on to the next. The ordering of the virtues was planned to build toward success. He made charts, and tracked his failures in each realm of virtue with a dot, wanting, eventually, to keep the charts completely clear of marks.

One of the ways Franklin sought to enhance the practicality of his plan for moral improvement was to focalize his efforts on one of his thirteen virtues, only moving on to the next virtue after a week of concentrated effort. Naturally the reader may pose such questions as: How accurately can a man track his own moral failings? Are moral failings not relative?

Franklin chose quotations from Cato, Cicero, and King Solomon to preface his book of charts, wrote a prayer to God asking him for wisdom, guidance, and strength, and used sometime a prayer of Thomson's asking God to teach us what is good.

Franklin looked to his moral heroes for guidance in his path toward moral perfection, Regardless of whether his plan is more practical than traditional Christian services or other spiritual paths, the quest alone is admirable.

One page of Franklin's notebook contained a daily schedule which entailed: (1) rising at 5:00 A.M., washing, addressing the "Powerful Goodness" and asking "What good shall I do this day?" (2) a work period from 8:00-12:00 (3) two hours for lunch and looking over accounts (4) working from 2:00-6:00, and (5) putting things in their proper places, listening to music or taking diversion, examining the day and asking the question "What good have I done today?"

More than any of his anecdotes or advice, Franklin daily schedule is perhaps the most convincing document of his industriousness, and the daily manifestation of his quest for self-improvement makes one question if one could be doing more to get the most out of life. Couldn't we be living better?

Franklin said he went through with the plan for several cycles of thirteen weeks, with occasional intermissions, and was surprised to find how full of faults he was. He was satisfied to see himself improve. In time he went through only one cycle per year, then one every several years. He says that Order was most difficult for him, that he almost gave up pursuing it, and he wishes he had gotten better at it because his memory has grown worse as he has aged and it would have been a great thing to have all his documents in order.

For Franklin, perhaps his most practical finding of his thirteen week regiment was the self-sight or self-knowledge that came with tracking his daily failings. One must see and know oneself before one is able to change. It is interesting that "Order" or cleanliness was the most difficult virtue for Franklin—perhaps his energies were such that he couldn't bear to break from his larger projects to take the time to tidy.

Franklin says he owes all his happiness, right down to his 79th year (his age at the time of writing), to pursuing this plan. He says he owes his health to Temperance; to Industry, his early success; to Sincerity and Justice, the confidence of his country; and to the influence of all the virtues, his evenness of temper and cheerfulness. He says he avoided the tenants of any particular religion because he hoped one day the plan might be serviceable to people of all faiths, and considered publishing it as book called "The Art of Virtue," which he never did.

Perhaps more important than any kind of moral "perfection" or superiority, Franklin says his plan gave him health and happiness. Though his industriousness seems, throughout most of the Autobiography, to be his most prized virtue, he gives it no special place here. As usual, with an eye to the public good, Franklin wanted to share his plan with the world, and, though he never published "The Art of Virtue," his plan eventually came to light in the present work.

Franklin says that vicious or immoral actions are not hurtful because they are forbidden by various religions, but are forbidden by those religions because the actions are hurtful in themselves. He tells how his list first only had twelve virtues, but a friend convinced him he was sometimes vain, so he added humility.

Franklin reiterates a point he makes several times throughout the Autobiography: actions aren't immoral because religions or gods condemn them—they are immoral because of their own inherent badness. Franklin broaches the subject of vanity with his usual irony.

Franklin says it is more important, perhaps, to seem to others to practice humility than actually to possess it. He followed the rules of the Junto in expressing dissent and tried never to rush into contradicting someone, even if that someone's point was ridiculous. This led others to respect him and be more easily persuaded to his reasoning. Expressing himself in this way eventually became easy to him.

Here, again, Franklin stresses the importance of seeming to others to be virtuous over actually being it. It is Franklin's most Machiavellian strain. The restraint he was able to impose on his vanity and intellect were as important as his vanity and intellect themselves when it came to his self-improvement.

Pride and vanity, Franklin adds, are the hardest passions to overcome. Even if he could get rid of them, he says he would probably end in being proud of his humility.

Franklin notes the paradox of vanity and humility. His utter pragmatism ensured that he saw human nature as thoroughly self-interested.

PART 3

Franklin begins Part three with a note that he is beginning it from home (Philadelphia) in August 1788 and that many of his papers were lost during the war. Franklin begins to describe "a great and extensive project which he had conceived" by quoting a scrap of paper with his reading history in May of 1731. It details how "parties" are responsible for the great events of the world rather than singular individuals, and describes how parties form and dissolve.

Now Franklin formalizes some of the opinions about clubs, institutions, and parties that were already implied in his earlier writings on the various organizations he founded and/or participated in. If one man could accomplish so much, Franklin reasoned, then many men working together could achieve gains exponentially greater.

The note concludes with the observations that a "United Party for Virtue" could bring into effect great good in the world. These notes were the inception of Franklin's idea, which he added to from time to time. He lays out his religious creed (that there is a God and the best way to serve him is to do good to man) as the creed of the party. His idea was that the party would be open to young single men only at first, that they should both declare their assent to the creed and exercise themselves with a thirteen week virtue-cycle before joining.

Franklin, in his pontificating on the power of parties, seems to forget that institutions like the Presbyterian Church (in which he had so little faith) were founded with similar good intentions to his "United Party for Virtue." Perhaps Franklin is a bit overly optimistic about the goodness of people or concerning people's willingness to strive for moral improvement.

Franklin says they should have been called "The Society for the Free and Easy," but of course the party never came to be. What he gives in the *Autobiography*, he says, is as much as he can remember of it except that he shared the idea with two young men who liked it. Franklin reiterates his conviction "…that one man of tolerable abilities may work great changes, and accomplish great affairs among mankind…"

Despite his conviction that the party he describes would have done much to improve the fledgling United States and even the world, Franklin gives little or no explanation of why it never came to be or why he didn't pursue its founding with same intensity with which he pursued the foundation of other institutions. Perhaps he saw his society as a project for the coming generations.

In 1732, Franklin first published his almanac (*Poor Richard's Almanac)* under the name Richard Saunders and continued it 25 years. He said he wanted it to be entertaining and useful, and it made him a lot of money. He filled it with proverbs to instruct the common people.

Franklin reveals that his penchant for instruction coupled with entertainment (what we see in the Autobiography) has deep roots in his personal history, and that the mixture often produces profit for the mixer.

Franklin used his newspaper to instruct the people as well. He reprinted excerpts from Samuel Johnson's *Spectator* and wrote several small, instructive pieces of his own. He refrained from printing any libel or gossip and refused to fill his paper with private altercations. Other printers, he remarks, were not so scrupulous.

Franklin didn't see personal profit, moral practice, or education as incompatible spheres. He tried to bring his moral practice to his profitable business and always tried to educate himself and others through their joint application. He might be described as self-congratulatory on these matters, even glib.

In 1733, Franklin sent one of his workers to Charleston, South Carolina, where there was no printer. He gave the man a press and letters and entered into an agreement of partnership with a one third share of profits. The man kept poor accounts but when his Dutch widow took over (in Holland women were taught to manage accounts) the accounts grew clear and precise. He recommends learning mathematics for American women as it is more useful to them later in life than music or dancing.

Nearly every personal experience, for Franklin, had lessons with potential for broader application or scope. He saw how business practices changed in the hands of a woman with the proper education, knew that women were capable, if not (in his mind) of the same intellectual feats as men, at least of mathematics and accounting, and suggests a progressive change in the nation's custom and practice.

Then in 1734 a talented Irish preacher named Hemphill arrived in Philadelphia. Franklin began to attend his sermons and hear him because his preaching was practical and moral, but orthodox Presbyterians disapproved of Hemphill. Franklin defended him and tried to raise a party in his favor when the orthodox party tried to have him officially banned from preaching. He wrote on Hemphill's behalf.

Franklin was to have several encounters with talented Irish preachers to which he allied himself, his money, and his writing. It seems, even in his middle age, he had enough faith in organized religion to endeavor to improve it for more practical and educational ends.

It was soon discovered that Hemphill hadn't written his sermons but rather had memorized the sermons of others. Many of Hemphill's supporters then abandoned his cause, but Franklin continued with him, thinking it was better to receive good sermons composed by others rather than poor self-made ones. After he was defeated, Hemphill left the congregation and Franklin never joined in it after.

Ever the pragmatist, Franklin almost seems to have believed it didn't matter that Hemphill hadn't been the author of his own sermons because the sermons that he hadn't authored were so much better (instructive, practical) than the sermons written and preached by the local ministers. The experience led to his ultimate disillusionment with organized Christianity.

Franklin had begun studying languages in 1733, learning French, Italian, and Spanish. Then, returning to Latin and seeing he remembered more from his boyhood than he had thought, returned to its study and learned it as well. He recommends that Americans be educated in practical modern languages and then classic languages because, in his opinion, the learning of the former helps with learning the latter.

Here we see a situation where Franklin's conviction concerning the acquisition of modern languages before ancient languages has, in effect, become the general practice in the United States. That change in practice, however, did not necessarily come into effect because of Franklin's writings.

After being away from Boston ten years, Franklin returned to visit his relations. He called at Newport to see his brother James, the printer, and they forgave each other their former differences. James was in ill health and asked Franklin to see after his young son and widow if he should die. James did die and Franklin adopted the boy, thus, he says, making amends for the **erratum** of leaving his brother's employ.

Finally Franklin was able to reconcile his old quarrel with his hard-headed and perhaps hard-hearted brother, James. Franklin seems glad for the opportunity to have done a good turn for his brother, but the reader should question whether these early mistakes of Franklin's are the kind of moral money, getting paid and repaid tit-for-tat, that Franklin treats them as.

Franklin goes on to tell how he lost one of his young sons in 1736 to smallpox. The boy was four. He advises everyone with children to have them vaccinated and avoid his mistake.

Hardly a grief or personal loss existed that was great enough for Franklin not to derive some moral lesson or instructive possibility from it.

In the meantime, the Junto had grown so popular its members wished to expand. New branches of the club were formed to prevent them exceeding their agreed upon membership of twelve. Five or six new branches succeeded under different names and were useful to the original members.

This was a period of great expansion in Franklin's family, institutions, wealth, and character. He was rapidly becoming the man who would eventually preside over the founding fathers of the United States of America.

Franklin was chosen as clerk of the General Assembly in 1736 without opposition and again the next year despite one member's making a speech against him in favor of another candidate. The position secured him the business of printing the votes and laws. He didn't like that the man opposed him and became friends with him by asking the man to lend him a book. He had read somewhere that "He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another than he whom you have obliged."

Franklin makes his first appearance as a public servant. Franklin has no qualms with his public involvement effecting his personal gain, and blithely advertises the fact that it did. He tells an anecdote about overcoming the animosity of strangers via a kind of reverse indebtedness. Habits, the moral might go, once established, are more closely followed than obligations.

Colonel Spotswood the onetime governor of Virginia and then postmaster-general was dissatisfied with the accounting of his Philadelphian deputy in 1737 and offered the position to Franklin who accepted it. The position was a great advantage to Franklin in business.

Once again Franklin accepted a position as a public servant and profited from it in his personal affairs. He gained the advantages Bradford once had, and must have felt he had finally arrived.

After receiving the commission as postmaster in Philadelphia, Franklin began to turn his attention to public affairs. As usual, he thought it best to begin with small matters. He reformed the city watch (an early kind of police group). Previously, paying one's way out of having to serve in the watch was very profitable to the constable in charge of it. Franklin changed the rate because it was too onerous on the poor.

Now secure in his business, family, and in the public estimation, Franklin could undertake the public works that would extend his fame throughout the colonies and make him a key figure in the nation building that was to take place after the American Revolution.

In all, Franklin proposed "a more effectual watch, the hiring of proper men to serve constantly [rather than common citizens taking turns]… and levying a tax that should be proportion'd to the [person's] property." It was one of the first, if not the first, graduated income/property taxes put into effect in the colonies.

Regardless of some of his duplicities, it is hard to argue that Franklin's establishing a more effectual watch not only helped the already disadvantaged from the burden of an onerous tax, but also cut down on crime and saved lives.

Next, Franklin proposed establishing the first company of firemen. Thirty men were found for the task of keeping leather buckets for water and strong bags and baskets in good order for removing goods from burning buildings. The company was to meet once a month to discuss its affairs. The utility of the institution was immediately obvious. Many more wanted to join the company, but Franklin advised them to form their own group.

The first fire company, like the first crude police force in Philadelphia, also saved individuals and the city money and expense as well as, one imagines, the lives and health of many citizens. Once the company was established, its practicality was so obvious that similar companies proliferated in Philadelphia and across the colonies.

At the time of his writing, "The Union Fire Company" that Franklin formed still existed, flourished and had since acquired fire-engines, ladders, fire-hooks and other useful implements. Between the founding of the company and Franklin's writing the city never lost more than one or two houses to fire at a time.

Franklin seems almost to have viewed the institutions he helped to found as his own progeny. The industriousness he applied to their formation came back in later years to stroke his vanity.

In 1739, the travelling Irish preacher Reverend Whitefield came to Philadelphia, but soon found that he had no place to preach because the local preachers took a dislike to him. Multitudes attended his services, Franklin says, noting on the growing zealotry (religious fervor) in the colonies around that time. Franklin proposed building a meeting hall open to preachers of all faiths and the funds were soon raised.

Reverend Whitefield came to town and Franklin began his second friendship with a charismatic Irish preacher. Franklin saw the occasion as an opportunity to construct a meeting hall that would be serviceable to the preachers of all religions and perhaps prove a practical secular gathering place in the years to come.

Reverend Whitefield removed to Georgia where there were many orphans due to the hardships suffered by the people settling that colony for the first time. Whitefield proposed the project of building an orphanage there to Franklin, who resolved not to contribute because he thought that the orphanage should be built in Philadelphia and the orphans brought to it. After hearing Whitefield speak, however, he gave all the money in his pockets. Other members of the congregation were likewise moved.

Franklin's love for his home city of Philadelphia was so great that it made him propose an idea against his practical nature. Surely an orphanage in Georgia would be more practically serviceable to the orphans of Georgia than an orphanage in Philadelphia, but that's besides the point. This is an anecdote about a notable public speaker who used his skill for the greater good.

Some people doubted Whitefield's integrity, but Franklin thought him an upright man. They had a civil rather than religious friendship. Franklin tells an anecdote about the loudness and clarity of Whitefield's voice, estimating and imagining that thirty thousand men could have heard and listened to him at once. Franklin notes that an itinerant (travelling) preacher has the advantage of getting to perform his sermons many times.

As with any talented man, people had their doubts about the Reverend Whitefield. Franklin's endorsement shouldn't necessarily countermand this public opinion in the reader's mind—we have already seen that he was something of a sucker for charismatic Irishman, and threw in his lot with a plagiarist and fraud.

Franklin also notes that Whitefield's writing and printing gave his enemies the advantage of attacking his points at their leisure. Franklin says Whitefield's supporters would have been more numerous had he never written anything at all.

Franklin notes, as an aside, the advantages, as far as the foundation of religious practice, of the spoken over the written word.

Franklin's business was now growing continually and his circumstances became easier every day. He says money itself is prolific in nature. His Carolina partnership worked out, so he promoted other workmen and established them with printing-houses in other colonies. All his partnerships at this point were carried on and ended amicably after a pre-agreed term of six years.

Here Franklin acknowledges the ambivalent condition his monetary security placed him in. When he thought he would have more time for personal improvement and leisure, he was called upon again and again to serve the community and provide for the common good.

Franklin says there were two things about living in Pennsylvania that troubled him: that there was no militia and no college. Therefore, in 1743, Franklin drew up a proposal to establish an academy. He thought the Reverend Mr. Peters would be a good man to oversee it. He had more success the next year in proposing a "Philosophical Society."

Franklin noted some flaws in the civic landscape of Pennsylvania that he undertook to personally remedy. It comes as no surprise that a man who devoted so much of his time and energy to his own education should undertake to give others an opportunity for the same advancement.

Franklin thought it wise to establish a militia because Spain and France had recently gone to war with Britain. Franklin wrote a pamphlet in favor of starting one called "Strong Truth." He called a meeting in the meeting house he'd had built, distributed copies of the pamphlet to all present and had them sign it (signing meant that they would be members of the militia). The enlisters soon amounted to 10,000 armed men divided in companies.

Another factor that may have contributed to Franklin's station in the post-war proceedings of the founding fathers was his keen foresight in the establishment of American militias for defense. He saw the growing chasm between British and American interests, and, once again, was enough of a pragmatist not to count on the aid of diplomats far from his home.

The officers of the Philadelphia company chose Franklin as their Colonel but he declined and suggested a Mr. Lawrence in his stead. He proposed a lottery to help with the cost of building a battery below the town. It was soon built. Colonel Lawrence, Franklin and some others went to New York to borrow cannons from Governor Clinton. He at first refused any, but as he grew more intoxicated through the evening he allowed them to borrow eighteen.

Franklin's vanity did not extend into martial (military) affairs. He seems genuinely to have not considered himself qualified for the management of troops in war, nor to have desired political advancement through wartime efforts or military accomplishment. That, however, didn't keep him from becoming involved.

The Governor of Pennsylvania and council took Franklin into confidence. Franklin proposed a fast to ask God's blessing in the establishment of their militia and in any future need for success. Franklin drafted the proclamation. The clergy now influenced the members of their sects to join the association.

The political men in Pennsylvania saw that Franklin was right when it came to Pennsylvania's defense. It is interesting to note the importance of the clergy and religious institutions in political machinations of the time.

It was difficult to establish a militia among the numerous Quakers because of their doctrine of passivity. Some men advised Franklin to step down from his position in the Assembly because the Quakers held a majority there, but Franklin refused, saying he would leave office only if voted out. He was chosen again unanimously the next election.

The Quakers believed that war, even defensive war, was against God's commandments. Franklin shows little compunction in labeling this a foolish (because impractical) belief. He seems to have learned a lot about politics from his dealings with the Quakers.

Franklin tells an anecdote that shed light on the feelings of the Quakers. In the fire company it was proposed that they should encourage the plan to build a battery by raising money amongst themselves. The next meeting only one of the twelve Quakers, who by their doctrine should have opposed spending money on military matters, showed up to vote against the proposal. The rest stayed away, thus abstaining from the vote and allowing the measure to pass.

The Quakers, in an odd double bind between practical reality and religious conviction, allowed the practitioners of other faiths to see to defense. The majority of them, Franklin seems to argue, in their heart of hearts saw that practical reality took precedence to religious conviction or questions of creed.

One Mr. Logan wrote an address to the Quakers explaining his approval of defensive war. He bought sixty pounds in lottery tickets toward the battery from Franklin with the direction that any winning should be applied to that same expense. Logan told Franklin an anecdote about William Penn to the effect that Penn allowed a servant to defend his ship by not ordering him to go below deck. The Quakers supported necessary military matters frequently yet covertly, sometimes giving money simply "For the King's Use" or for the buying of "grain" where grain was taken to mean gunpowder.

Not all Quakers were of the same mind when it came to the doctrine of passivity, and Franklin seems to argue that the wisest among them saw that only fools would sit idly by as their enemies ransacked there cities and murdered their families. The wise and pragmatic (in Franklin's eyes) Mr. Logan even saw a precedent for more practical behavior from the Quakers from the earliest days of the Pennsylvania colony.

Franklin says the Quakers suffered many embarrassments for having once published as one of their principles that no war was lawful. Franklin tells an anecdote about the sect called the Dunkers and one of its founders, Michael Welfare, who told Franklin he would rather not publish the tenants of the Dunker faith because God might reveal yet undisclosed truths to them in time. Franklin calls this modesty in the sect "a singular instance in the history of mankind."

Now Franklin returns to his aside about the importance of the flexibility of the spoken word for Religious establishments and the importance of allowing flexibility and an acknowledgement of human error into the fabric of religious tenants and the convictions of religious practitioners.

Franklin goes back in his narrative to tell how he invented a stove for the better heating of rooms in 1742. He wrote and published an account of and description of the stove. Governor Thomas offered to give Franklin a patent for the stove, but he refused preferring that the public profit rather than himself. An ironmonger in London, however, patented it there and made a fortune by it.

It's easy to forget, in the first two thirds of the Autobiography, that Franklin was and is renowned for his scientific achievements. This account of his invention of a superior heating stove reminds the reader of Franklin's scientific abilities though it still leads one to question how, exactly, he came to possess them.

Peace having been declared between Britain, Spain, and France, Franklin turned his thoughts back to establishing an academy. He published another pamphlet, this one called "Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania" and set out on foot to raise the necessary subscriptions. He quickly raised a significant sum. He presented the academy as the idea of some public-spirited gentleman not himself in order to keep his neighbors from thinking it was a project of vanity.

Having successfully motivated the people to establish and maintain a militia for their defense, Franklin perhaps had premonitions that said militia would come to be greatly advantageous to his colony despite its not having been needed in the war between Britain, Spain, and France. Once again Franklin was able to employ seeming humility to garner public support for his academy project.

The academy subscribers chose out of their number 24 trustees and appointed Mr. Francis, the attorney general, and Franklin to draw up the academy's constitution. When it was done, the academy was started in 1749. The house built for it was soon found too small, so they reappointed the public meeting house as the new academy space with a stipulations that it still be open as a public space to preachers of any faith and that a free-school be opened for the instruction of poor children.

The public-spirited subscribers—men of means and education—chose Franklin perhaps because of his humility while soliciting them and probably because of the success of his other public projects. Franklin's earlier project to build a public meeting house for preachers and speakers of all faiths proved to be useful in an unforeseen way.

Franklin had to supervise the work that had to be done on the building, which he said he did cheerfully because he had recently taken on an able, industrious partner at the printing house named Mr. David Hall. The trustees of the academy were soon incorporated by a charter, more land was given from the proprietary governors, and the University of Philadelphia (now the University of Pennsylvania) was officially established.

Finally, having escaped his tendency for poor partnerships and onerous friendships, Franklin is freed from some of the daily demands of his business. We see that not just Franklin's ideas for public institutions but, in some cases, the institutions themselves survive in evolved form unto the present day.

Governor Thomas put Franklin into the commission of the peace, the city chose him for council, and he was soon after made an alderman. Then the citizens at large chose him as burgess to represent them in Assembly. He was glad, at last, as burgess, to be able to take part in debates. He says his ambition was flattered by the promotions.

Franklin was elected into higher public positions by both the Assembly and the citizens at large. These advancements pleased Franklin's vanity and were the consequences of his industry. His early debate techniques—the Socratic Method that he so loved—could finally be employed in to the public's service.

Franklin gradually withdrew from his position as justice of the peace because he felt he lacked the necessary knowledge of common law. When he took the seat in the House his son was appointed clerk.

Despite how his advancements flattered his vanity, Franklin felt himself unqualified for one of his positions (not to mention taxed for time). His own success extended to the success of his family.

The following year Governor Thomas called for members of the House to serve as commissioners of peace for the treaty being drawn with the Carlisle Indians. Franklin was commissioned and went with the speaker of the House. They forbade the Native Americans to drink until the treaty had been drawn. Afterward the Native Americans got very drunk, and apologized for their behavior the next day. Franklin notes how alcohol wreaked havoc among the Native American tribes.

Franklin, who would later serve as ambassador to France during the American revolution, acquired some of his earliest experience as a diplomat in these dealings with Native American tribes. These dealings are not without a touch of their age's racism, though Franklin seems to have been genuinely moved by the deplorable, alcohol-dependent condition of the men he dealt with.

In 1751, Dr. Thomas Bond, Franklin's friend, had the idea to establish a public hospital in Philadelphia. He had difficulty getting subscriptions. Franklin helped by writing on the subject in the newspapers. Then Franklin proposed a measure in the house to match donations once a large sum was reached. The measure passed because members of the Assembly doubted Bond could raise so much. He succeeded and the hospital was built.

Now, with many great contributions and a considerable stock of wealth, Franklin was able to enter the public arena as a philanthropist and humanitarian and to help with and give council on projects he did not author but nonetheless supported. He was able to use his influence in the Assembly to support private entrepreneurs.

A Rev. Gilbert Tennent asked Franklin for help in getting subscriptions for a Presbyterian meeting house. Franklin refused because he did not want to place too many requests with his neighbors. He advised Tennent, in short, to ask everyone for money, including those he thought would give none. Tennent succeeded in raising enough.

Now we see the skepticism of the Presbyterians Franklin developed in his early misadventures with charismatic travelling preachers at work. He is, however, willing to give advice, and to help his fellows get want they want for themselves.

Franklin notes that Philadelphia lacked paved streets, an inconvenience for everybody. At length, Franklin was successful in getting a number of streets near the market paved. It was difficult, even then, to keep the pavement clean, so Franklin had his neighbors pay in six pence a month to employ a man to haul off the mud. Eventually the people submitted to a tax to have all the streets paved. Franklin submitted the bill for it to the Assembly just before going to England in 1757.

It seems there was no public project too large or small for Franklin's attention. New developments, however, need new systems to manage them, and, though people like the convenience afforded by public projects, they are seldom willing to consent to give their money. Franklin was able to convince his friends and neighbors of the convenience and utility only after the streets were built.

Next, the people, following the example of a Mr. John Clifton who placed a streetlamp at his door, desired to have the streets lit by gas lamps at night. Franklin designed a superior model of lamp with four panes of glass and a vent at the bottom. Franklin says he was surprised that in London they did not adopt these vents in their lamps to keep them clean.

Not content merely to help the city of Philadelphia to acquire its first public lighting, Franklin applied his scientific know-how to the designing a superior model of street light. Franklin notes how men seldom change their habits, even when an alternative way of doing things is obviously advantageous.

While he was inn London, Franklin had proposed to a Dr. Fothergill that the streets be swept when the dust on them was dry and manageable rather than when it had gathered into a thick mud. He proposed to have several men sweep the dust up in dry seasons, a proposal which he says was put into practice. Franklin says that though these civic matters may seem small and not worthy of relating, they are small only in particular and not as a whole. He gives a version of the "teach a man to fish" proverb but changes it to teaching a man to shave.

As with Vaughn's injunction, derived from the first part of Franklin's Autobiography, that a man should live each moment of his life with the whole of the life in mind, Franklin sees each public improvement, from constructing an academy to sweeping the streets, as an essential unit in the building of a better society.

Franklin became joint postmaster-general in 1753. Franklin and his partner made improvements to the office, which, after a period of three years, made it very profitable to them and to the king in England, but, Franklin says, he was removed from office by a mistake of the ministers.

Franklin once again had no qualms with turning a public appointment to his private improvement, especially if it meant a financial improvement for his superiors as well. The ministers in England took issue.

As postmaster-general Franklin had to take a trip to New England where the College of Cambridge (Harvard) presented him an honorary Master of Arts. He was given the honorary degree for his achievements with electricity.

News of Franklin's work with electricity, known to many American readers before they read the Autobiography, almost comes as a shock within the work itself.

In 1754 war with France seemed imminent and a congress of commissioners from different colonies was assembled at Albany to confer with the Native American chiefs of the Six Nations. James Hamilton sent Franklin and the speaker of the House Mr. Norris to join Thomas Penn and Secretary Peters as commissioners to act for Pennsylvania and give gifts to the Native American chiefs.

Once again Franklin is called on to demonstrate his diplomatic prowess. The appointment was both practical for the state of Pennsylvania, as Franklin had already demonstrated his skill in this capacity, and something somewhat flattering to Franklin's vanity.

On his way to Albany Franklin drew a plan for the union of all the colonies under one government for the sake of defense. He laid the plan before the congress and it turned out other commissioners had drafted similar proposals. Franklin's was preferred and recommended. It was sent to the Assemblies of the various colonies, but they did not adopt it because they thought there was a secret agenda behind it.

Franklin, beyond his inventions, public projects, and the like, was among the first to draft a plan for the union of the colonies, such a plan was the first step toward uniting them into an independent nation. The assemblies balked to implement the plan because they feared how the crown might react.

Therefore the Board of Trade did not approve Franklin's plan and an alternative plan, where the governors would draw on the treasury of Great Britain for the expense of defense was adopted. The colonies would pay the expense later in the form of taxes. Once imposed after the French and Indian War, these taxes were one of the main causes of the American Revolution. Franklin says things might have been better for both the British and the colonists if his plan had been adopted, but adds that "history is full of the errors of states and princes."

Franklin, in no unclear terms, suggests that the plan implemented in favor of his own, because of the hesitancy of the Assemblies, directly led to the conditions that provoked the Revolutionary War. Franklin takes a detached view of the circumstances, however, to say that such mistakes riddle the annals of history, perhaps even suggesting that the Revolutionary war could not have been prevented, only delayed.

Franklin pauses to talk about the man who became governor of Pennsylvania after James Hamilton, Mr. Morris, a man constantly disputing with the Assembly and, therefore, Franklin, in civic matters, but also overwhelmingly friendly to Franklin in day to day life. Eventually, Mr. Morris got tired of his contests with the house, and, like his predecessor Hamilton, quit his office.

When he introduces Mr. Morris to the reader, Franklin illustrates yet another lesson in the disadvantages of argumentativeness. Franklin was a great negotiator and a diplomat capable of finding concord between parties with sometimes wildly divergent views.

The disputes James Hamilton and Morris were having with the Assembly had to do with hereditary governors in Pennsylvania who refused to allow taxes to be passed unless their own estates were excused. The Assembly held out against this injustice, but Mr. Morris's successor, Captain Denny, managed to force the Assembly to give way to it.

Franklin's sense of equity and justice caused him to be uncompromising, however, when it came to the taxation of the estates of the proprietary (or hereditary) governors. He felt their estates should be subject to the same taxes as those of the common citizens.

During Governor Morris's term, war broke out with France (The French and Indian War). The government at Massachusetts Bay projected an attack upon a place called Grown Point and sent representatives to New York and Pennsylvania to solicit help. The solicitor in Pennsylvanian was a Mr. Quincy who applied to Franklin for help. Franklin managed to pass a bill offering him ten thousand pounds through the House, but the governor refused to ratify it unless a clause were inserted protecting the estates of proprietary governors.

The impracticality of the exemptions that the proprietary governors expected soon became apparent in wartime. Their insistence on exemption prohibited or, at least, impeded Pennsylvania's government from taking the necessary measures for strategic defense, and the people of Pennsylvania felt their movements constrained by unseen noblemen reaping the rewards of their property an ocean away.

Franklin managed to skirt the governor's dissent by drawing the money from the Loan Office, which was fully under the Assembly's power. Mr. Quincy went home to Massachusetts proud of his suit and ever afterward held Franklin in high esteem and friendship.

Ingenuity and creativity were Franklin's strong suit. He was able to find a way around the restrictions Mr. Morris's veto imposed upon the Assembly's political power.

The British sent General Braddock to the colonies with two regiments of regular English troops for the war. He landed in Alexandria, Virginia and marched to Frederictown, Maryland where he waited on carriages. Franklin was sent to advise him on how best to procure them from the governors. He went with his son, William, to speak to the general at Frederictown.

Once again the colonies called on Franklin for diplomatic service and he and his son William, the addressee of Part One of the Autobiography, were obliging to the demand. The ineptitude of the British army and generals becomes clear almost from the moment of their first arrival.

Braddock's men were only able to secure 25 wagons when they needed 150. Franklin said there were many in Pennsylvania and drafted the terms for which he felt the farmers would offer their wagons to the army. Franklin advertised these terms and was in part able to procure the necessary wagons by personally vouching that they would be paid for in full if they were lost or destroyed when farmer's signed contracts lending them to the army.

Sticking his neck out a bit in service to the crown and the British army, Franklin tries to suggest ways in which the British can procure themselves the necessary wagons for their supplies. Franklin saw that the army wasn't going to make the necessary guarantees to secure themselves the wagon, so, perhaps cavalierly, offered them himself.

When Franklin returned to Braddock's camp, a Colonel Dunbar spoke to him of how the troops lacked the necessary stores for their long march toward French territory in the west. Franklin applied to a committee of the Assembly to send such items as his son (being more familiar with military life) thought that the troops would need. The Assembly applied the food and goods, twenty large parcels of sugar, cheese, butter, wine, coffee, rice and other necessities.

Not only did the army lack the wagons to tote their supplies—they lacked the supplies themselves. Where was the might of the British empire? The people of Pennsylvania were able to get together the proper supplies and arrange for them to be transported to Braddock in Maryland.

The parcels were very graciously received and General Braddock was very grateful to Franklin for supplying him the necessary wagons and continuing to help him until his defeat. Franklin calls Braddock a brave man, but reveals that he was probably a poor general: he underestimated the Native Americans that his troops would be fighting. Franklin tried to offer him counsel, but Braddock laughed him off.

No dullard, Franklin quickly apprehended the weaknesses of Braddock's army and their strategic deficiencies. European racism couple with British Nationalism crippled Braddock's military sense. He should have, as Franklin suggests, interviewed the British subjects in America to better understand his opponents.

Franklin tells how the Native Americans massacred Braddock's troops after they crossed a river and were in one large mass. All the wagons, provisions, artillery and stores were left to the enemy after the army scattered and the men had fled. Franklin says that the news of Braddock's defeat spooked Colonel Dunbar who fled with his army to Philadelphia. It was the first sign, Franklin says, that the Americans had been overestimating the "prowess of British regulars."

Braddock, to Franklin's frustration, met with precisely the end that Franklin foresaw, practically from the moment Braddock and his troops landed in Virginia. Colonel Dunbar lacked even General Braddock's bravery. These inept military leaders and foolhardy maneuvers opened the eyes of the American British subjects to the fallibility of the British.

Furthermore, the army had robbed the inhabitants during its marches through the country. Franklin contrasts this with the behavior of the Americans' French allies during the Revolution. (The French behaved impeccably and occasioned no complaints.)

Not only was the British command incapable of meeting the enemy, they did not treat the Americans like the British subjects they were. These were signs of the growing rift between the colonies and the crown.

The French published some of General Braddock's papers that had come into their hands which showed the hostile intentions of the British before the war and which contained some notes that spoke highly of Franklin and recommended him. But those recommendations, due to the failure of the campaign, were never of any use to him.

Even the recommendations of the failed and inept General Braddock were flattering to Franklin, who did, it seems, do much to support the British troops to his own inconvenience and at his own expense. Naturally, the recommendations of dead general published by the enemy were of no use to him.

The only thing Franklin had asked Braddock was that he not enlist any more of the Americans' bought servants and that he should discharge those who had been already enlisted. The general complied. Colonel Dunbar refused Franklin the same request. When the wagon-lenders heard about the loss of their wagons they all went to Franklin to claim payment for them. General Shirley saved Franklin from their lawsuits by setting up commissioners to examine the claims and order payment.

Franklin advocated for the rights of the masters of indentured servants. If an indentured servant were serving in the British army, not only was he not fulfilling the terms of his binding agreement to his master, he add ample opportunity for escaping his indentures. In seeking this end, Franklin had in mind the interests of his constituents.

Men had come to Franklin in Philadelphia before Braddock's defeat with a subscription paper for raising money for a celebratory firework display to be held after Braddock's victory. Franklin of course urged prudence, and suggested they wait until the victory had been won.

Still a die-hard pragmatist, Franklin expresses his skepticism of anyone who thinks he can predict the future. Franklin also seems somewhat amazed at the blind conviction that the British would simply win the war because they were the British.

Now Governor Morris redoubled his efforts to secure money from the Assembly for the defense of the province. The Assembly withheld because of the injustice of the proprietary governors not having to pay the tax, eventually the Assembly's friends in Britain pressured the proprietary governors into paying the tax. Franklin was appointed to allocate the defense money, some sixty thousand pounds. Franklin proposed a bill to establish a voluntary militia and wrote a dialogue arguing for it.

Now the Assembly fought back against Governor Morris, hobbling him as governor by denying him the necessary funds to defend the province. Perhaps this was the wrong time for tax disputes, but the Assembly felt it finally had the governor and the proprietaries pinned. They did. The Assembly won out and Franklin's vanity was flattered as he was called on to serve the public once again.

Governor Morris applied to Franklin to take charge of Pennsylvania's northwestern frontier, which was infested with the enemy. Franklin accepted the position, enlisted over five hundred men, took his son William as his aid-de-camp and set about constructing forts on the frontier.

Governor Morris applied directly to Franklin to manage the colony's defense. Despite of his lack of military experience, he consented, receiving an elevating position and having the humility to accept it all at once.

Franklin and his troops left from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania which he found exceptionally well-prepared for defense even though the community there was supposedly pacifist. He says that "common sense, aided by present danger, will sometimes be too strong for whimsical opinions."

Franklin shows that his wartime experience bolsters his understanding of practical philosophy. Whatever a people's religious tenants, he argues, they will stand up to save themselves and their families.

Franklin sent men to build forts along the Minisink River and resolved to go himself to Gnadenhut where the Native Americans had already destroyed a fort and killed many inhabitants of the town. Before they left Bethlehem, eleven farmers came to Franklin asking for guns to get their cattle back from the Native Americans who had stolen them. He gave them the guns, but ten of them men were killed because their weapons failed to discharge in the rain.

Though inexperienced in war, Franklin had the bravery to go into the heart of the action in service of his country. He tells an anecdote that shows the ingenuity of the Native American warriors, who had ways of doing battle and tricks at their disposal such that the white settlers found themselves at a disadvantage

At Gnadenhut, Franklin and his men built themselves huts and buried the dead. The next morning they planned and marked out their fort. It was finished in a week though the weather was so bad that every other day the men could not work. This, Franklin says, caused him to observe that when men were busily employed they were much better behaved and in better tempers. After the fort was finished the men set out in parties to scour the country where they observed how the Indians had dug holes to watch their progress and keep their fires concealed.

Despite his lack of experience, Franklin seems to have done a decent job cleaning up after the invasions of the Native Americans in that area and securing the frontier against further attacks. He observes how the dignity of man increases under forced labor. Once again Franklin marvels at the ingenuity of the Native Americans; he seems to have learned from General Braddock's grave underestimation of this people.

Franklin arranged with the chaplain of his company that he should preach before the men received their daily allotment of rum so that his preaching would be heard. Franklin soon received a letter from the governor asking him to come back to Philadelphia and attend the Assembly. Franklin returned after giving over command to one Colonel Clapham who was experienced at warring with the Native Americans.

Displaying his wit and humor, a wit and humor always in service of practical ends, Franklin relays this anecdote about the chaplain's sermons. Soon Franklin's skills as a statesman were required back home. He seems to have genuinely been regarded as one of the most capable men for any civic affair on the continent.

While at Bethlehem, Franklin had learned more about the Moravians (the sect that had settled the country there). He asked about the Moravian marriages, if it were true that they were settled by lot rather than the free choice of the parties involved. It proved to be partially true in some circumstances and when he asked if this led to the parties sometimes being unhappy he was answered in the affirmative, but, it was added, they might also be unhappy if they decided for themselves—a point he could not deny.

Ever the inquisitor, Franklin took his return journey as an opportunity to further his education and learn more about the customs and ways of strange peoples. Franklin seems pleased to find that the Moravian way of handling marriages is equally practicable as the traditional non-arranged style then in practice in the colonies. People might be unhappy, the moral goes, no matter what.

When he returned to Philadelphia, Franklin found the war efforts to be coming along nicely. The officers of the militia there chose Franklin to be colonel of the regiment, and this time he accepted the position. However, he managed to offend the proprietor general when, undertaking a journey to Virginia, his men escorted him out of town with their sabers drawn—an honor which had not been paid the proprietor when he visited the province. Franklin said he was ignorant of the etiquette or would not have allowed it.

The institutions and plans Franklin set in motion before his campaign on the frontier progressed even in his absence. With some military experience under his belt, and the experience of having seen the ineptitude of the British commanders, Franklin is willing to accept the honor he had previously denied. The small-hearted proprietary governors decided to harangue him for a trifling matter of conduct.

Governor Morris wanted to set up Franklin as a general, but Franklin refused, not thinking as highly of his military abilities as the governor.

Though Franklin accepted the position of colonel, he still did not trust himself in military matters and showed the humility and good grace to refuse a generalship.

Franklin pauses his narrative of the war to relate some of his scientific achievements. He says that he was shown some electric experiments in Boston in 1746 by a Scotsman. They were performed imperfectly but impressed Franklin. Back in Philadelphia, his library received a gift of a glass tube from a Mr. Collinson with some account of its use. He recreated the experiments he saw in Boston as well as some he heard account of from England and performed some new experiments of his own.

Franklin's scientific achievements, though he begins to discuss them briefly here, are largely excluded from the Autobiography. He seems more concerned, in these pages, with the human conflicts and disputes surrounding his scientific publications than he is concerning the scientific findings themselves. Experimental glass tubes were a relatively new devices at the time.

Franklin had more glass tubes made, and Philadelphia soon had several experimenters, the foremost being a man name Mr. Kinnersley, a neighbor whom Franklin encouraged to demonstrate experiments for a fee because he (Kinnersley) was out of business. Franklin wrote Mr. Collinson with accounts of the success of his experiments. Collinson read the reports to the Royal Society where they were not, at first, given much notice.

Knowing his neighbor Mr. Kinnersley to be a man of some learning and talent, Franklin seems committed enough to his idea (that the best way to serve God is to do good to man) to use the new glass tubes to do his neighbor a good turn. Franklin was eager to share his and his neighbor's finding with larger scientific communities.

Franklin wrote a paper to the Royal Society on the sameness of lightning with electricity, but the paper was received with laughter there. Dr. Fothergill however got the papers printed in a small book. It took some time before the Count de Buffon, a famous European scientist, had the papers translated into French.

Given the scientific entrenchment of our own age, it can seem like something of a revelation to the modern reader that, a few centuries ago, it was a laughable idea that electricity and the natural phenomenon known as lightning were one and the same.

In France, the leading theoretician on electricity, Abbe Nollet, would not at first believe that an American had done such admirable work. Nollet wrote a volume of letters addressed to Franklin decrying Franklin's work. Franklin decided against answering Nollet because, he says, his experiments could be reproduced and verified without the help of letters. Franklin's book was translated into Italian, German, and Latin and its theories were "universally adopted" by the scientists in Europe.

Franklin trusted in the scientific method, in the reproducibility of experimental findings. His faith in it was so strong that he refused to allow himself to be drawn into an ad hominem (personally directed) debate with a jealous Frenchman. Franklin must have been flattered to see his findings translated into the languages he had spent his early adulthood mastering.

Franklin's book became famous when one of its proposed experiments, drawing lightning from the clouds, was performed by one M. de Lor for the king and court of France. Franklin says he won't lengthen the *Autobiography* with accounts of the experiments or the one he later performed with a kite and key in Philadelphia because accounts can be found in the histories of electricity.

The reader of the Autobiography wishes Franklin had taken the trouble to describe the experiment performed by M. de Lor and written more personally about the famous experiment using a kite and key. A personal account of these experiments would have had its own historical value.

News of the success of Franklin's experiments in France soon came back to the Royal Society in London, a summary of Franklin's papers was published and the members of the academy made amends for the slight they had given him by making him a member of the Society and presenting him the gold medal of Sir Godfrey Copley for the year 1753.

Only after Franklin's experiments were reproduced in the hands of the enemy French did the British proto-scientific community take Franklin's writings and publication seriously. His work was recognized for pioneering a new field of study.

Governor Denny presented Franklin with the medal at a special ceremony in Philadelphia, drew Franklin aside, and assured Franklin of his readiness to be of service to him. Franklin refused any monetary gifts and told Denny that he should put forward any of Denny's proposals he felt to be for the good of the people and would do everything in his power to make his administration as easy as possible, but Denny renewed the same disputes as his predecessors. He and Franklin became good friends. Denny told Franklin that his old friend Ralph was still alive in England and esteemed one of the best political writers there.

Governor Denny tried to use the occasion of Franklin's award ceremony as an opportunity to ingratiate Franklin and soften him to the position of the proprietary governors, but Franklin, of course knowing that even the award wasn't coming from Denny, but from scientists in London, balked to form any kind of political alliance merely out of fellow-feeling and not based on the public good. Denny, speaking from the more congenial offices of friendship, was able to give Franklin news of his old friend.

The Assembly grew frustrated with the proprietaries and resolved to petition the king against them. They appointed Franklin as their agent to the king to present their petition. The Assembly had sent a bill to the governor granting sixty thousand pounds to the king, ten thousand of which was to be subjected to the orders of the then general, Lord Loudoun, but the governor refused to ratify the bill because of the interest of the proprietary governors.

Once again Franklin was asked to serve as a diplomat on behalf of the Pennsylvania Assembly. The Assembly was attempting to fund the king and the war effort and trusted that the king and his agents were disapprove of any actions by the proprietary governors that would hind the Assembly from doing so.

Franklin made ready to travel to London and paid passage on a ship, but Lord Loudoun arrived at Philadelphia to arbitrate between the Assembly (Franklin) and Governor Denny. Lord Loudon sided with the governor, and Franklin encouraged the Assembly to draft another bill more amenable to the proprietary governors' instructions. They did so and the governor ratified it. In the meantime, his ship had sailed with his things to London, which was a considerable loss to him.

The arbitration of Lord Loudoun temporarily resolved the impasse between the Pennsylvania Assembly and the proprietary governors, but Franklin seems to have had enough of deadlocked relations between the House and governor. He advised the Assembly to draft a new bill according to the governors demands perhaps so as not to spurn the powerful Loudoun.

Franklin, still wanting to make the journey, went to New York to catch another ship. He arrived in New York in April and it was almost June before he sailed, the ships were constantly delayed because they were waiting for Lord Loudoun's letters. Eventually, though the general was constantly at his desk and seeming to be writing, he was removed from his office because the ministers in England never heard from him. Franklin's ship was almost detained to take part in a siege on Loisburg that the general eventually and ineptly decided against.

If General Braddock's conduct had struck Franklin as inept and unbefitting of the British Empire, how much more, then, Lord Loudoun's impotent and infinitely delayed letter writing and botched sieges? The difference in timescale between Franklin's age, when ships would wait two months to make a one month passage across the Atlantic, and the punctuality of the present era is very striking.

Franklin says he wondered how such a man came to be entrusted with the affairs of a whole army. He says General Shirley who replaced Braddock would have done a much finer job than Loudoun, who was a disgrace to the nation. Franklin says he believes Shirley was glad to be relieved of the burden of commanding the army.

Franklin momentarily wonders how Loudoun got his power, but as with his statement about history being riddled with mistakes of states and princes, he recognizes that the giving of generalships was a matter of political intrigue, or else Shirley would have been appointed.

While waiting in New York, Franklin received the accounts for provisions, etc., which he had furnished Braddock. He was unable to receive payment, in part because of suspicions that he had used his position to line his own pockets, which he had not done. He was never paid.

Graft and greed were so commonplace in the British Empire at the time that the clerk in charge of paying Franklin's default position assumed Franklin had already stolen more than he was owed.

Franklin's captain on his ship boasted of the speed of the ship, but it proved to be dreadfully slow until they rearranged the cargo. The ship's speed was measured at the rate of 13 knots (very fast at the time). Franklin says he shares the fact because he believes that ships could be made much faster if experiments were applied to hull shape and cargo distribution, that sailing could, in brief, be made more of a science.

Ever-hungry for scientific development and improvement, Franklin suggests that the dynamics of shipbuilding, ripe for experimentation, be studied scientifically for the building of faster ships. Soon after his death, such experiments were begun, eventually leading to the development of the much faster clipper ships.

Franklin tells of an incident that occurred when they were nearing their destination-port, Fallmouth. The watchman failed to see a lighthouse and they narrowly avoided shipwreck. Nonetheless, the event impressed Franklin with the utility of lighthouses so that he should encourage their building more in America. In the morning, they arrived at Fallmouth.

Any incident Franklin experienced that might turn toward the making of a better United States of America (in this case by the construction of lighthouses) was one he gave special attention to in writing the history of his experiences.

PART 4

After arriving in Fallmouth, Franklin set out with William for London, stopping to see Stonehenge and Lord Pembroke's house and gardens. They arrived in London on July 27th, 1757. Franklin went to visit Dr. Fothergill, who thought that the proprietary governors could be persuaded before a suit was made to the crown.

Part Four begins with a cursory description of a journey alluded to in the early passages of Part One (when Franklin mentions learning of his family origins in England). Franklin reconnects with and receives advice from his old friend.

Next Franklin met with his friend in the Society, Collinson. They went together with a Virginian merchant named Mr. Hanbury to see Lord Granville, President of the Council. Granville reprimanded Franklin as a representative of the American idea that the king's laws were not the laws of the colonies. Franklin expressed his surprise, saying he had always understood from their charters that the Assemblies were to make the colonies' laws. The two men debated the issue awhile.

From the tone of the passage, it's clear that Lord Granville's position, that the king makes the colonies' laws, is as absurd to Franklin as if Granville were arguing that blue were red and fish were birds, yet Franklin seems to have forced himself to have remained deferential to the vain British noblemen. As we'll see, his deference seems not to have done his cause much good.

Dr. Fothergill arranged a meeting between Franklin and the proprietary governors. Franklin presented the Assembly's position and found that their opinions were so different as to discourage all hope of agreement. They asked him, however, to put the Assembly's complaints in writing so that they could better address them. They gave the draft to their solicitor, Ferdinand John Paris, who had made himself an enemy of Franklin's because of Franklin's written responses to some of Paris's previous arguments read to the Assembly.

For the first time as a diplomat, Franklin found himself in a position where he found the two side's positions to be irreconcilable. Franklin, knowing how written arguments are more subject to scrutiny from his experience with Presbyters and preachers, probably hesitated to give over the Assembly's position in writing. Besides, the governors had practically already resolved to settle the dispute in court.

Neither Paris nor the proprietary governors ever responded to Franklin directly, but drafted a long letter to the Assembly criticizing the lack of formality in Franklin's paper. But, in the meantime, the Assembly had prevailed upon Governor Denny to pass an act taxing the proprietary estate in common with the estates of the people, so they, in turn, never responded.

Finally, after Franklin's months-long delays and journeying, the Assembly put an end to the deadlock over the proprietary estates, which made Franklin's diplomatic mission far less pressing. Once there, however, his desire for an accord between the two groups led him to try and resolve the issue.

The proprietary governors petitioned the king to oppose the resolution passed in Philadelphia. Paris and Franklin each hired lawyers to argue their case, and at last the Assembly's proposal was allowed to pass. A full report was issued that the tax had been passed in perfect equity.

Of course the proprietaries had been motivated by greed, not equity, all along, and the judges sided with the practically minded Franklin and the Assembly he represented.

The Assembly saw Franklin's service as essential to the province and thanked him when he returned, but the proprietaries were enraged at Governor Denny and threatened to turn him out of office. The threats were never executed. The *Autobiography* concludes, though it is unfinished.

The Autobiography ends not with a bang but a whimper. The events of the of the Revolutionary War and a description of presiding over the foundational debates establishing the United States of America are left out of Franklin's account. Perhaps, however, the description of this moment of petty politics sheds a telling light on the events to come, and Franklin's role in them.

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