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Benjamin Franklin
and a
Rising People

Verner W. Crane

Benjamin Franklin
and a
Rising People

Edited by Oscar Handlin

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In memory of
JANE HARRIS CRANE

All that has happened to you is also connected with the detail of the manners and situation of a rising *people; and in this respect I do not think that the writings of Caesar and Tacitus can be more interesting to a true judge of human nature and society.*

— Benjamin Vaughan to Benjamin Franklin,
Paris, January 31, 1783

Editor's Preface

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION dominates our view of the eighteenth century. Everything before 1776 seems to lead up to that momentous event; all that follows seems its consequence.

Yet the colonists themselves were slow to see that their destiny was independence from the British Empire. Although their social experience increasingly separated them from their cousins across the ocean, the hope did not die that a political union between America and Britain could yet survive. The Revolution when it came seemed almost the result of accident.

Deeper forces were nevertheless always involved. Resistance to the arbitrary acts of royal officials was the product of habits of mind and of attitudes that had developed in the century earlier, and the clash with England was the outcome of fundamentally different views of what the Empire should be.

The Americans were a "rising people." Out of the wilderness they had created a civilization and a culture. They did not conceive of themselves as cut off from Europe or the homeland; indeed, their strongest desire was to strengthen transatlantic ties, and to participate fully in the life of the western world. Only, they insisted, that partici-

pation must be on such terms as would permit them freely to develop their own institutions and to contribute in their own way to the civilization of which they were a part. In that insistence lies the key not only to the Revolution but also to the course of American development in the decades after Independence.

The life of Benjamin Franklin, more than that of any of his contemporaries, reveals the subtle interplay of these forces. He was truly the first American. Born in Cotton Mather's Puritan Boston, his life spanned almost the whole eighteenth century. Himself a participant in the decisive events of his time, his career was marked by the impact of the cultural and social forces that shaped the colonies. Replete with interesting incidents, his life is also a revelation as to the means by which a new people made itself a nation.

OSCAR HANDLIN

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Benjamin Franklin
and a
Rising People

I

Boston Apprentice

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WAS BORN IN BOSTON, January 6 (Old Style; New Style, January 17), 1706. His father was Josiah Franklin, the tallow chandler and soap boiler in Milk Street. His mother was Josiah's second wife, Abiah Folger.

Franklins and Folgers were admirable types of what Benjamin often described as the middling folk of the colonies, the farmers, artisans, and shopkeepers. Their family origins on both sides were in the provincial towns and the ordered countryside of Old England. Grandfather Peter Folger had come over from Norwich, probably as a servant, in the early days of the Puritan colonization. He had married a bondmaid, settled on Nantucket, made himself variously useful as a weaver, miller, teacher, preacher, surveyor, town clerk, Indian interpreter. A pious man, he was also that distinctive specimen of New Englander, a come-outer, by infection perhaps from heretical neighbors when he resided briefly in Rhode Island. In the homespun verses of *A Looking-Glass for the Times* he had reproved the magistrates and clergy of the Bay "with manly freedom," for their religious persecutions. In Benjamin's generation Folger cousins were Nantucket whalers, and mas-

ters of Atlantic packets. He was a good bit of a Folger himself, in physique, in versatility, in tolerance.

It was his father's influence, however, that was dominant in Benjamin's boyhood. Josiah's great adventure had been his migration, in 1683, from Banbury, with the wife of his youth and their three English-born children. Though country-bred he had settled at once in Boston, so that his youngest son was always "an inhabitant of capital cities." For many generations, however, Josiah's forebears had clung to village roots in Northamptonshire. In 1758, Benjamin traced their line in the parish records and the memories of English cousins, comfortably sure that it was better for an American to prove descent from ploughmen, smiths, or other useful folk than from idle gentry. The Franklins, he learned, had owned a small freehold and a forge at Ecton — twelve miles, as it happened, from Sulgrave manor, ancestral home of the Washingtons. Their sons had been apprenticed to smiths, or, like his father and Uncle Benjamin — another homespun poet on the family tree — to dyers. The discontents that early in the seventeenth century set in motion the Great Migration to the American shores had passed them by. They were all conforming Anglicans until late in the reign of Charles II, when Josiah and Uncle Benjamin attended illegal conventicles and underwent conversion. Some considerable men, Benjamin learned, had then persuaded his father to follow them to Massachusetts.

In this uprooting Josiah was probably moved, like so many before him, both by religious scruples and desire to improve his fortune. Most of the high hopes of the founders of Massachusetts for their errand into the wilderness had been disappointed by the 1680's. The old charter had been lately overthrown, the foundations of the church-state were crumbling. But to such as he, little men grown fearful of new troubles at home, safety still seemed to lie

in escape to New England. And Boston, the largest town in the colonies, and the most thriving port, offered opportunities to an industrious tradesman. It numbered some 6700 souls by century's end, and its population had nearly doubled in 1723 when Benjamin ran off to Philadelphia. Commerce flourished with England and the West Indies; enterprising Boston merchants plied coasting vessels from Newfoundland to the Delaware, distributing European manufactures, gathering returns of fish, lumber, foodstuffs, coin and bills of exchange. But manufactures were few and Josiah's dyer's trade was in small request. To raise his great family — seven children were born to his first wife, ten more to Abiah — he turned to other business. So it was that in 1706 he made and sold candles and soap at the sign of the Blue Ball in Milk Street.

Opposite stood the South Meeting House. With Abiah he had been admitted in 1694 to full communion, and there on the day of his birth his youngest son was baptized. Benjamin, as a matter of course, was brought up piously in the dissenting way. He remembered his father not as a Puritan bigot but as an ingenious man who could draw prettily, and who played psalm tunes in the evening on the violin and sang in a clear, pleasing voice. Josiah held no office in town or church, but leading men often consulted him; his great excellence was sound judgment in prudential matters. Although Benjamin soon discarded the religious sanctions of his father's morality, he never forgot, indeed he immensely popularized, the middle-class principles of enlightened self-interest that were also part of the code. With their doctrines of predestination and election, their slighting of salvation by works, the Puritans had run the risk of depriving morality of its effective force, but this dilemma they had avoided by a triumph of rationalization: it was the duty of the elect to manifest their election in their lives — among other ways, by dili-

gence in their everyday callings. Often the Boston soap boiler turned the talk at table to "what was good, just, and prudent in the conduct of life." In his own modest fashion he proved the efficacy of his precepts. By industry and frugality he was able to move the shop and the family to a new house at Union and Hanover Streets, purchased in 1712 for £320.

One ambition, characteristic of a Puritan family, he had to forgo. As the tithe of Josiah's sons and a bookish lad, Benjamin was destined for the church. Accordingly, at eight he was sent for part of one year to the Boston Grammar School, to prepare for college. But Harvard, it was seen, would strain the family purse — and Josiah observed that many a graduate got but a mean living. An innovating schoolmaster, George Brownell, conducted a school of writing and arithmetic which Benjamin now attended for a time. But at ten he was kept home to help in the tallow-chandlery, a smelly trade not to his liking. An expert swimmer and boatman, he haunted the water front, talking to sailors from strange ports, and was tempted to run off to sea as one brother already had done. Josiah saw the danger, knew the time had come for another Franklin to submit to the traditional discipline of apprenticeship. Knowledgeable in all handicrafts, he took the boy on walks about town to observe the many useful skills practiced in Boston shops. After trial with a cousin in the cutler's trade, a better solution was found, also within the family. An older brother, James, had just returned at twenty-one from the great city of London, where he had served his apprenticeship as a printer. Benjamin, now twelve, was articled to James as the new master printer's apprentice.

The brothers soon quarreled, as brothers will. James was passionate; Benjamin, by his own confession, often saucy and provoking. Meanwhile, apprenticeship in the

most literate of trades speeded a design he had formed for self-education in books, and launched him on one career — journalism — that he never abandoned.

Already he had begun to read to good purpose. He owned not only the *Pilgrim's Progress,* which, with the Bible, everyone read, but Bunyan's complete works. These he afterwards sold to buy a chapman's collection of history, biography, travel, and science which spread before him new horizons. He had devoured even the books of polemic divinity in his father's little library, a waste of time, he came to think; also, *Plutarch's Lives,* to greater profit; and two tracts that later turned his mind toward projects of public benefit: Defoe's *Essay on Projects,* and the *Essays to Do Good* by Boston's own celebrated pundit, Cotton Mather. In the printing house he had use of many other books, borrowed from James's friends and from bookseller's apprentices, for bookshops were more numerous and better stocked in Boston than elsewhere in the colonies.

There were great gaps, he knew, in his haphazard schooling, and these he spent the rest of his life in filling. He began with textbook studies of arithmetic and navigation, grammar and logic. One discovery that dazzled him he stumbled upon in a grammar, and he went on to master it in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* — the Socratic method of teaching (and argument) by skillful question and answer. He was always debating, with John Collins and other friends, and gradually he learned to introduce his points by concessions and propitiatory phrases, a practice that made him in later controversies the most insinuating of American propagandists. The ideas he debated with other bright boys in these years, however, were not politics but philosophy. He read Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* He read Shaftesbury and Collins, Christian deists, and also the sermons against deism that actually

raised the first doubts in his mind about the fundamentals of Puritan doctrine.

By day he learned his trade. At night he read and taught himself to write. His first attempts were in verse, which Uncle Benjamin had encouraged and James now thought to turn to profit, for there was a ready market in Boston for popular ballads on any sensational item of news. Benjamin wrote two of these, "The Lighthouse Tragedy," and a sailors' song on the capture of the pirate Teach, which the Franklin press published and the printer's boy hawked about town. His father, however, curbed his pride in these slight achievements, reminding him that versemakers were usually beggars. Josiah was intuitively right, whatever one may think of his argument. Benjamin had a prose mind: the verses he wrote in later years were amusing trifles.

With his instinct of workmanship, Josiah also held his son to strict discipline in his prose exercises: he read Benjamin's exchange of written arguments with John Collins and gave the palm to young Collins for elegance, clarity, and method. Then a stray copy of the third volume of the *Spectator* fell into Benjamin's hands, and he began his well-known experiment in systematic imitation. The plan had merit, as other young writers have discovered, and the model was well-chosen. But before Benjamin left off imitation he had learned as much from other writers, notably in ironic method from Jonathan Swift. In his mature years he wrote superbly well in the plain style of the best current tradition of English letters. By then his writing, in its "luminous simplicity," was distinctively and recognizably Franklinian. It was his own considered opinion that almost everything he accomplished in life he achieved by the pen.

He was a boy of sixteen when he read in print his first letter to the press. It was a *Spectator*-type essay that he

had written secretly, copied out in a disguised hand, and slipped at night under the printing-shop door. (His last letter to the press was composed in 1790, within a few weeks of his death.) Next day, he had the exquisite pleasure of hearing it praised by his brother's *literati* friends, with flattering guesses at the authorship.

This was in April, 1722, eight months after James Franklin had launched his *New England Courant,* the third newspaper in Boston and the fourth in the colonies. Both the established newspapers, the *Boston News-Letter* (1704) and the *Boston Gazette* (1719), had been started by postmasters, who by handling the mails had the great advantage of first access to news. With the printing press the colonial newspaper was a cultural importation from the mother country, and kept close contact in Franklin's time with English journalism. In both countries the printer usually conducted the paper and controlled its content. Most colonial printers were immigrant Englishmen, or Americans like James Franklin who learned their trade in England. Within limits imposed by small capitals, scant circulation, scarcities of paper and of news, their little journals imitated at a distance the newspapers of the mother country. All of them were weeklies until late in the century.

The *Courant* was a single small sheet, 6½ by 10 inches, printed in two columns on each side. It was still a doubtful experiment in 1722: a newspaper without the support of either the colony government or the post office, an impudently independent paper which flouted authority. It was backed by the Boston wits of the day, already hotly engaged in controversy with their betters and in need of an organ — suspect characters whether from the standpoint of the clergy, the rich merchants, or the magistrates. James Franklin was the man for their purpose. He had learned his trade in London when the periodical es-

sayists were lifting journalism above the level of mere newsmongering; and in London he could hardly have escaped infection from what passed in Boston for freethinking. He welcomed contributions that would give his paper a livelier tone than its rivals: from John Checkley, bookseller-apothecary and European traveler; from William Douglass, Scottish physician, trained in Edinburgh, Leyden, and Paris; from Matthew Adams, the "ingenious tradesman" who was lending books from his "pretty collection" to the printer's apprentice; and from a dozen others — besides himself. These men brought the new journalism to Boston, with all the *Spectator* devices. They wrote, however, not with Addisonian elegance but in the vernacular, often with vulgar violence, and they got the *Courant* into hot water. Cotton Mather thundered against them. Mather Byles, as young as Benjamin and as precocious but a Mather scion and a Harvard wit, pinned on them the scandalous label of the Hell-Fire Club.

The journalistic storm over Boston had begun in the controversy over inoculation for smallpox, touched off by the epidemics of 1721 and 1722. The issue divided all classes; but the new method introduced from Turkey was impressively supported by Cotton Mather and the conservative clergy. In the *Courant* the anti-inoculators furiously assailed Dr. Zabdiel Boylston and his ministerial supporters; Checkley went too far even for James Franklin. However, the *Courant* continued to print criticism of rival printers, ministers, Harvard wits, politicians, exploiters of the poor.

Young Benjamin entered this subversive school of journalism with the publication, between April 2 and October 8, 1722, of his precocious Dogood Papers. For purposes of amusement and social satire he wrote in the invented character of Silence Dogood, widow of a rural clergyman, who vigorously and humorously and in the

American vernacular expressed her plebeian opinions on many subjects: on the neglect of learning in Harvard College; on hypocrites; on ostentation in the rich; on excessive drinking. Even in this imitative phase Franklin managed to create both a local setting and indigenous characters. He was most successful in No. 13, on the vulgar night life of Boston. Silence Dogood was as American and as homespun as the *Spectator* was elegantly English.

Freedom of the press, as James Franklin and the Couranteers practiced it in Boston, brought down the heavy hand of the government. On June 12, 1722, the General Court ordered the arrest of the printer for publishing a satiric news item on colonial preparations against pirates. Until the session ended brother James languished in jail and his apprentice carried on the paper. In his eighth Dogood essay Benjamin quoted from *Cato's Letters,* though ostensibly from the *London Journal,* a resounding defense of freedom of thought and of speech. James offended again, more seriously, in the issue of January 14, 1723, by another attack on pretenders to religion, and this time he was forbidden to print his newspaper, or any other paper or pamphlet, without prior authorization by the provincial secretary. To avoid the censorship, a flimsy scheme was cooked up to publish the *Courant* over the name of Benjamin Franklin, a dodge which made necessary the return of his indenture, though it had three years yet to run; another, secret, indenture was substituted.

The scheme somehow satisfied, or deceived, the authorities. But it tempted Benjamin to commit his first great error. His vanity had been fed by success: submission to James's authority, sometimes to his blows, he found intolerable, and James naturally resented his pride and insubordination. So Benjamin determined to break the secret indenture. James, however, was able to close the doors of other Boston printing houses. Secretly Benjamin took

ship for New York, hoping to find work with old William Bradford, who had no need of him, but thought his son Andrew, the Pennsylvania printer, might require a hand. Benjamin pushed on to Philadelphia.

The runaway apprentice traveled light. But he carried other baggage that he never discarded: habits of industry; a trade learned though yet to be perfected in the greater printing houses of London; skill in reading books and in writing; a fair stock of ideas, though ill-digested. A rebel in religion, he preserved the Puritanism of his family circle in his ethical code, rather than in the traditional practice of piety. If the Yankee is the secularized Puritan, Franklin, in his self-exile from New England, became the first great Yankee.

I I

Philadelphia:

The Conduct of Life

ON AN AUTUMN SUNDAY MORNING in 1723 the runaway apprentice landed from a river boat at the Market Street wharf, the world before him and one Dutch dollar in his pocket. As he strolled through the straight, unfamiliar streets, munching a roll, his future wife caught sight of him and thought he made a most awkward, ridiculous appearance. Exhausted from his journey, he fell asleep in the great Quaker meetinghouse.

No episode is better remembered from the memoirs that he wrote, late in life, for the instruction of youth. In its stated theme — his emergence from poverty and obscurity to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world — the autobiography became the model of all American success stories. But success, on Franklin's terms, meant more than acquiring a small fortune, even in this chapter when he was establishing himself in Philadelphia as a prosperous printer and newspaper proprietor. A quarter century later he retired from business, to pursue more disinterested ambitions in science and public service.

He had come to the right place, at the right time. Philadelphia in 1723 was still a new town, with perhaps ten

thousand inhabitants, not yet the equal of Boston in trade or culture. In the next half century it became the leading commercial city of North America. From western Jersey to the valleys of the Potomac and Susquehanna, the thriftiest farmers of British North America raised wheat, corn, hemp, flax, cattle, and hogs, to supply the American continent and the islands from Philadelphia's wharves, or for export to Europe. Industry also expanded, in the iron furnaces and forges of these middle colonies, and in Philadelphia workshops. Hospitality to strangers, in the generous tradition of William Penn, made this port the great gateway for the new immigration from Germany and the north of Ireland in the second quarter century. Many immigrants, along with pioneers of the older stocks, moved on southwestward into the valleys and piedmont of Virginia and the Carolinas, or westward towards the mountains and the forks of the Ohio, and so Philadelphia became the focus also of commerce and culture in the Old West. Beyond the frontiers of settlement Philadelphia merchants promoted trade with distant Indians. On the eve of the American Revolution the town vied with the larger provincial towns of England in numbers, wealth, and civic improvements.

From the first Franklin found Philadelphia congenial, as he had begun to find the rigidities of Boston uncongenial. Here was no church establishment, but equality of sects and religious freedom. The Quaker tradition of thrift, the Quaker habit of business success, suited his reasoned views. The Society of Friends, to be sure, was declining in strength and numbers in Philadelphia, though not in the eastern countryside. Rich Quakers, grown worldly, deserted meeting for fashionable Christ Church and the Anglican ritual. Presbyterians soon outnumbered Quakers both in the town and in the western settlements.

With so rich a mixture of sects and nationalities, in so

free a climate of ideas, Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century became a microcosm of the future America. But no one in 1723 envisaged the federal, individualistic, and ultimately democratic republic founded two generations later in Philadelphia. Contentedly colonial, the province was still far removed from a democracy, either in society or in distribution of power. Political control was divided between absentee proprietors, Penn's degenerate descendants as Franklin came to regard them, and a local oligarchy of merchants and landowners. The existence of a numerous middling class of yeoman farmers and, in the town, of intelligent and ambitious artisans and tradesmen, forecast future challenges to aristocratic rule. But meanwhile, with growing wealth, class lines tended to harden.

The provincial gentry qualified as aristocrats not by birth so much as by property acquired in trade, or by the offices they held, or leadership in the professions. Often they were patrons of learning and the arts, with a fine sense of civic responsibility; and there were men among them who early discerned talent behind Franklin's leather apron. James Logan of Stenton, once Penn's secretary, a classical scholar and mathematician, gave the printer and his friends the run of his fine library; and he proudly described "our Benjamin Franklin" to an English correspondent in 1750 as "an extraordinary man in most respects — one of singular good judgement, but of equal modesty." In a class-conscious society patronage was important, even in this new American world. Bookish and diligent, but also affable, Benjamin made friends easily in all circles.

One early patron, however, grievously misled him. By chance he attracted the notice of able, eccentric Sir William Keith, the proprietary governor, who proposed to set him up in business to compete with Andrew Bradford

and Samuel Keimer, the two Philadelphia printers who first employed him. Benjamin visited Boston to enlist his father's help, and in James's shop foolishly flaunted his new clothes and his watch, and jingled his silver coins, an insult his brother resented. Josiah prudently withheld his assistance; but Keith renewed his flatteries, promised a letter of credit and other letters of introduction to his fine English friends, none of them delivered. Benjamin was gulled, and took ship for England to purchase his press and types.

Despite the fiasco, this first visit to London, in 1724–1726, was a pivotal experience. In great metropolitan printing houses, at Palmer's and Watts's, he perfected his skill as a pressman and compositor. He worked hard, lived frugally (a "water-American"), spent a little money on books and the theater, but was kept poor by loans to James Ralph, his shipboard companion, who in Philadelphia had been a member of his juvenile literary coterie.

For both young men this voyage had been a break with the past. Ralph had abandoned his wife and child to become a man of letters in London. (Eventually he won recognition as a political pamphleteer, and a hard rap from Pope for his poetry.) As for Benjamin, he had exchanged promises with Miss Read, with whose family he had lodged; but in his "giddiness and inconstancy" in London he neglected her sadly, and during his absence she was married by another suitor, and later deserted. When Ralph left London to teach a school in the country Benjamin attempted some familiarities with his mistress, a milliner, "being at this time under no religious restraints." His conduct was resented, the friendship with Ralph broken off.

In London Benjamin was beginning to sow his wild oats. The misstep that he most regretted, however, was an adventure not with women but with ideas. He was setting

type at Palmer's on an edition of *Religion of Nature Delineated,* by William Wollaston, the Christian deist, when he decided to refute some of the author's points in a little pamphlet of his own, *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain.* Assuming God's infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, he pursued his deductions so far in this libertine tract as to deny all distinctions between vice and virtue. As a pamphleteer, though an obscure one, he picked up some very ingenious acquaintances outside the printing houses. One William Lyon, a surgeon, read the pamphlet and introduced him to the brilliant cynic Bernard Mandeville, author of *The Fable of the Bees,* and to Dr. Henry Pemberton, editor of Newton's *Principia,* who promised to present him to Sir Isaac himself, but this never happened. By his own initiative he met another figure in the learned world, Sir Hans Sloane, and sold him a few North American curiosities for the collection in Bloomsbury Square.

More than ever Benjamin was unsettled in plans for a career. He thought of setting up a swimming school in London or of touring Europe with a friend as a sort of philosophical tramp printer. However, Thomas Denham, the good Quaker merchant who had befriended him on the voyage, persuaded him to return to Philadelphia as his salesman and clerk. But Denham soon died, and Benjamin went back to Keimer's shop, as his foreman.

Denham's benign influence, or sobering thoughts of Ralph's folly and his own, now turned his mind seriously to moral stocktaking. The resolutions he formed on the western voyage were elaborated within a couple of years into what he called his "bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection." Benjamin, like Josiah, was first and foremost the moralist, concerned with human conduct — afterwards the writer, scientist, politician, diplomat and statesman.

As a moralist, however, he has often been misunderstood. In his popular writings he stressed the merely prudential virtues. Useful as these were to him in establishing himself in business — and perhaps to economic progress in America through the conning of Poor Richard's maxims — these ledger virtues raise no answering echoes in the spirit of man. Hence Franklin's morality has appealed chiefly to "the dry, prim people." But Franklin himself was never dry or prim. It was a "reasonable science of virtue" that he proposed, for reasonable men in a reasonable age. With the Christian deists whom he read (Shaftesbury, Wollaston), for that matter with Cotton Mather, whom he also admired as a moralist, his was the morality of social obligation. Prudence was useful in money matters chiefly to insure that personal independence which enabled a man to live virtuously. Private morality had its crown in public spirit.

On shipboard he had resolved to be frugal until he had paid his debts; to speak truth, since sincerity was "the most amiable excellence in a rational being"; to be industrious; and to say ill of no man. This modest list of attainable virtues he expanded, around 1728, to include Temperance, Silence, Order, Resolution, Frugality, Industry, Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquillity, Chastity, and Humility. To each he added a short precept — to Humility, "Imitate Jesus and Socrates." He had condensed the moral inventories encountered in his reading, seeking to distill the wisdom of human experience from sources pagan and Christian, ancient and modern. "Revelation had indeed no weight with me as such," he wrote many years later, "but I entertained an opinion that, though certain actions might not be bad *because* they were forbidden by it, or good *because* it commanded them; yet probably those actions might be forbidden *because* they were bad for us, or commanded *because* they

were beneficial to us, in their own natures, all the circumstances of things considered."

In his own experience, however, he early discovered the great weakness of a purely rational "science" of morality, divorced from religious sanctions. He knew that faith, when strong enough, could overcome human weakness. But his own faith was weak, and for such as he the *science* of virtue must be aided by an *art* of virtue. To each of the moral attributes he listed he resolved to give in turn a week's strict attention, marking down all his lapses in a little book. And so, for several years, he went through the whole course of moral discipline four times annually, and had the satisfaction of seeing his faults gradually diminish. He thought so well of this system of moral bookkeeping that for years he planned to publish it, with a more extended commentary, as his treatise on "The Art of Virtue."

Thus Josiah's son, when he came of age, reverted to the characteristic Puritan habit of self-examination, though in his rational disciplinary exercises there was no trace of the deep conviction of sin that darkened Puritan soul searchings. But there was a realistic appraisal of human nature, which Franklin in his genial skepticism came to understand as well as any man. In the controversy between Hobbes and his critics Franklin took a common-sense middle ground. When James Logan lent his protégé a manuscript he had written "of Moral Good," Benjamin commented: "It seems to me that the author is a little too severe upon Hobbes, whose notion, I imagine, is somewhat nearer the truth than that which makes the state of nature a state of love. But the truth," he added, "perhaps lies between both extreams."

Franklin's art of virtue was not entirely without religion; for his own daily use he prefixed a short prayer to God as the fountain of wisdom. Late in life, in his memoirs, he wrote an account of his religious history. He was

scarce fifteen, he recalled, when he had begun to doubt essential points in Puritan doctrine, and to question their authority in revelation. Reading sermons against deism, he weighed the arguments and himself became "a thorough deist"; and a deist he remained, like most men of the Enlightenment.

But there were varieties of deism. The extreme logical deism he had asserted in his London tract (with its Q.E.D. of moral anarchy) soon went against his grain as a moralist, just as it dissatisfied many another rationalist of his time, for it failed conspicuously to promote human felicity. The doctrine, he concluded, might be true but was not very useful, as Ralph's conduct and his own had demonstrated. Thereafter he discarded all "metaphysical reasonings" in favor of a method that was essentially empirical, in religion as well as in morals (and in politics as well as in science). Observation and experiment he found better guides to usable truths than deductive reasoning. His rational religion was a form of Christian deism, with emphasis upon good works. His prayers he addressed, not to the remote God of the infinite universe, but to that particular wise and good God of our own solar system, who "made the glorious sun, with his attending worlds . . . and prescribed the wondrous laws, by which they move." This deity was neither a God of wrath, nor a mere symbol of the Newtonian laws of celestial mechanics, but a God who shared some of man's passions (perhaps even his mortality?), and was pleased in a friendly way with the happiness of his creatures, delighting in human virtue, "since without virtue man can have no happiness in this world."

Without greatly altering these views of 1728, except to refine them towards simplicity, Franklin devoted a surprising amount of attention to religion throughout his life — surprising in a man without mysticism or a deeply spirit-

ual nature. In his English years, especially, he dabbled in projects for new rational liturgies; he associated with David Williams, "the priest," author of one such scheme. He was on the closest terms, also, with a number of dissenting ministers who preached a "rational Christianity," among them Richard Price. As for Jesus of Nazareth, he wrote President Ezra Stiles of Yale in 1790, both his system of morals and his religion he thought the best the world had seen or was likely to see, though with the leading English dissenters he had some doubts of his divinity. This letter, written within a few weeks of his death, summed up the few fundamentals of Franklin's religion:

> Here is my creed. I believe in one God, Creator of the Universe. That he governs by his Providence. That he ought to be worshipped. That the most acceptable service we render him is doing good to his other children. That the soul of man is immortal, and will be treated with justice in another life respecting its conduct in this.

These principles he regarded as the fundamentals of all sound religion. In Philadelphia there were many sects, and each he assisted in building its house of worship; he also paid his subscription to the Presbyterian church, but seldom attended. Once only did he depart from this benevolent neutrality to assist with his pen the Reverend Mr. Hemphill (whose preaching of good works rather than dogma had pleased him) in his controversy with orthodox critics. When George Whitefield in 1739 brought the Great Awakening to Philadelphia, and under his eloquent preaching in the fields all the world grew religious, Franklin was impressed, despite his distrust of emotionalism and his dislike of hell-fire sermons. They became lifelong friends, on a purely civil basis. There was more than the neutrality of the confirmed tolerationist, however, in his patronage of organized religion in Philadelphia. Franklin

knew that most men needed the sanctions of religious creeds; remove them, he wrote, and we unchain the tiger. "If men are so wicked as we see them now *with religion,*" he asked, "what would they be if *without it?*" This he wrote to warn a freethinker against publishing an attack on general providence. After his first error in 1725 (which he had tried to suppress) he was cautious not to publish his own religious views, lest they unsettle others.

In 1727, the year after he returned from London, Franklin founded his famous Junto, a club which later he pronounced "the best school of philosophy, morals, and politics that then existed in the province." This was one of countless clubs meeting in taverns and coffeehouses in England and America. Some were merely convivial. Others were devoted both to good fellowship and to mutual improvement. Franklin had met Mandeville at The Horns in Cheapside, where he dined with his London club. But the Junto in its earnestness was nearer in spirit to Cotton Mather's neighborhood benefit societies in Boston than to the clubs of *literati;* the requirement from each member of a declaration that he loved "mankind in general, of what profession or religion soever," and the scheduled discussions of "history, morality, poetry, physic, travels, mechanic arts," ranged this little band of talented colonial artisans, clerks, and tradesmen in the honorable company of universal philosophers. The Junto grew, spawned other such clubs, promoted civic and cultural institutions. The Junto brought the Enlightenment, in a leather apron, to Philadelphia.

"Do you know of any deserving young beginner lately set up, whom it lies in the power of the Junto any way to encourage?" Under Franklin's "Rules" (1728) this was one of the questions to be answered by members at each meeting. The same year Franklin first established himself

as a master printer in partnership with Hugh Meredith, one of Keimer's country hands, Meredith's father furnishing the capital. But the son soon tired of the business; in 1730 Robert Grace and William Coleman of the Junto advanced Franklin funds to buy out his partner, and with other members of the club threw a good deal of business his way.

Franklin now proposed to set up a newspaper, the ambition of every enterprising colonial printer. With his recent experience of brisk London journalism he scorned Andrew Bradford's *American Weekly Mercury,* founded in 1719 and still the town's only journal, as a paltry thing though profitable. But Franklin talked indiscreetly of his project, and Keimer anticipated him, launching in 1728 *The Universal Instructor in All Arts and Sciences: and Pennsylvania Gazette.* To pay him off, Franklin inserted in Bradford's paper his satirical and entertaining Busy-Body Papers, which Joseph Breintnall of the Junto continued. Thus the *Mercury* acquired new readers, while Keimer's paper languished, and, as Franklin had planned, the *Gazette* fell into his hands in 1729 for a trifle. Franklin on the make had a ruthless streak, which showed strongly in his relations with Keimer, an abler man and a better printer than he painted him in his memoirs.

Keimer's paper he continued under the manageable shorter title of *The Pennsylvania Gazette:* "It proved in a few years," he recorded, "extreamly profitable to me," and this was one of the first benefits, he thought, of his having learned to scribble a little. Certainly the *Gazette* contained a good deal of his own writing. With lively humor and sure instinct for the right phrase he touched up routine news or concocted amusing squibs like the satirical account of "A Witch Trial at Mount Holly" (1730). Even after he had turned over the printing house and with

it the paper to David Hall, he still did an occasional editing job, as when he improved the English of the famous description by the Swedish traveler Peter Kalm of the great falls of the Niagara (1750).

Newspapers at this time, both in England and America, printed no editorials; they attempted to influence opinion through anonymous or pseudonymous letters addressed to the printer, sometimes authentic contributions by readers, sometimes pieces written in the printing office, as Franklin in 1743 made up the amusing essay on "Shavers and Trimmers" which he attributed to one Alexander Miller, peruke-maker. But generally Franklin used such letters to amuse and instruct his readers, only rarely to influence their political opinions. He wrote occasional political pamphlets, to be sure, but rather carefully separated his interests as a newspaper proprietor from provincial politics. Not until David Hall took over did the *Gazette* become a factional organ, and then it supported Franklin's opponents, the court party. He had learned caution, it would seem, from James Franklin's clashes with authority in Boston, and perhaps from his father's counsel, during his first visit home in 1724, that he correct his own youthful bent toward lampooning and libeling.

In principle he always espoused complete freedom of speech and the press, qualified only by the printer's obligation to respect the decencies of debate, and the right of others to express conflicting views. In practice, while he lived in Philadelphia, he generally managed to keep out of trouble. In 1731, however, an advertisement irritated some of the clergy, and this led him to publish his notable "Apology for Printers," in which he claimed that more than any other printer in the province he had avoided giving offense to church or state. He defined the special role of the press in sustaining free competition in ideas, asserting:

1. That the opinions of men are almost as various as their faces; an observation general enough to become a common proverb, *So many men so many minds.*

2. That the business of printing has chiefly to do with men's opinions; most things that are printed tending to promote some, or oppose others. . . .

5. Printers are educated in the belief, that when men differ in opinion, both sides ought equally to have the advantage of being heard by the public; and that when truth and error have fair play, the former is always an overmatch for the latter. Hence [he concluded, more whimsically] they chearfully serve all contending writers that pay them well, without regarding on which side they are of the question in dispute.

This was precisely the principle of the open forum which English newspapers generally followed in the mid-eighteenth century, greatly to Franklin's advantage in his later role of colony agent and American press advocate. The colonial press followed it more uncertainly.

In America, the great battle for the freedom of the press was fought, not by Franklin in Philadelphia, but by John Peter Zenger in New York. Franklin printed an account of Zenger's famous trial; it concerned him as a printer. Zenger was successfully defended by one of Franklin's friends and patrons, the Phliadelphia lawyer Andrew Hamilton.

Not all of Franklin's enterprises succeeded so well as the *Gazette.* Once he ventured into the magazine field, in imitation of the successful English periodicals which he read and excerpted for his paper: the *Gentleman's Magazine* (which he thought the best), and the *London.* But Bradford was warned by Franklin's intended partner, John Webbe, and stole a march on him; he brought out his own *American Magazine,* the first in the colonies, a few days before Franklin's *The General Magazine, and Historical Chronicle, for All the British Plantations in America*

(February, 1741). Both failed; Bradford's after three months, Franklin's after six.

There was profit, however, in printing the provincial votes and laws. In 1730, Hamilton, with other friends, persuaded the assembly to transfer the public printing from Bradford to the new firm. There was profit also in printing the colonial paper currencies. As Keimer's hand Franklin had traveled to Burlington to strike off the New Jersey bills, even cutting the ornaments and contriving a copper-plate press for the job; and in Pennsylvania, in 1729, he supported the popular agitation for a new issue. This he did in his first political pamphlet (also his first foray into political economy), *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency,* arguing forcefully for an interest-bearing currency secured by land mortgages. His case rested on two assumptions: the familiar one, that a certain proportionate quantity of money is required to carry on the trade of a country; and the more novel ground also, that the true measure of all value was labor. Rich men — money lenders, land speculators, and lawyers — feared inflation. But Franklin appealed for support not only to poor men and debtors, but to all lovers of trade and manufactures and those who hoped to see a great increase of population in the province. The measure carried, and for some years Pennsylvania so managed the engine of paper currency as to justify his forecasts. Meantime, he was employed to print the money: "A very profitable job," he called it, "and a great help to me." Through Hamilton's influence he also secured the printing of the paper money and the votes and laws in the lower counties (Delaware).

In 1737, Colonel Alexander Spotswood of Virginia, deputy postmaster general, appointed him postmaster at Philadelphia in place of Bradford, who had forbidden his riders to carry the *Gazette*. Franklin refused to retaliate; but

through handling the mails he had access to fresher news, and his paper forged ahead of its rival.

Franklin was well launched in business by 1730, at twenty-four; but his private life was still in disorder. He was young, full-blooded, and the "hard-to-be-governed passion of youth," as he later confessed, often hurried him into intrigues with low women. In 1730 or 1731 an illegitimate son, William, was born to an unknown mother. Benjamin approached the project of marriage unromantically, with cool calculation: in one quarter negotiations broke down over his demands for a dowry. But the old affection between him and Deborah Read Rogers was revived, and he took her to wife, September 1, 1730. It was a common-law marriage, since the fate of Rogers, Deborah's first husband, was unknown. Within limits it was a good marriage. Deborah had looks and health; she was industrious, more truly dedicated, perhaps, than her husband to the virtue of frugality which he preached. She was said to have a violent temper, but Benjamin spoke only of her homespun virtues. She accepted William (Benjamin acknowledging his paternity), but there is evidence that she disliked him. She bore one son, Francis Folger (b. 1732), who died at four, of the smallpox, and a daughter, Sarah (b. 1743). She never shared her husband's intellectual interests, had no part in his public or social life. They were separated by her dread of the sea during his protracted missions to England, but exchanged chatty and affectionate letters. With his sophisticated taste for feminine charms, Benjamin in his travels formed close friendships with more brilliant women; and as an old man in France he indulged in the famous flirtations, partly amorous, partly philosophical, that scandalized Abigail Adams. But he had a strong sense of family, and was always faithful, after his fashion, to his fireside Joan.

At the printing office he opened a stationer's shop and

branched out into other business. Deborah assisted cheerfully: folded and stitched pamphlets, tended shop, purchased linen rags for the papermakers. Before he retired he was probably the largest dealer in paper in the colonies. As a bookseller he imported books of history, law, mathematics, medicine, natural philosophy, poetry, and divinity from London — books in English and in foreign languages; in 1744 his catalogue listed "near 600 volumes" for sale. As a publisher he was led only rarely into ambitious projects, and then out of friendship. He published James Logan's classical translations (almost the first in America) of *Cato's Moral Distichs* (1735) and *Cato Major* (1744). The latter, his finest job, perhaps owes its typographical distinction to David Hall, the London-trained journeyman whom he employed in 1743 on the recommendation of William Strahan. Less venturesome than some other American printers, Franklin stuck mainly to the safer lines — pamphlets, psalm and hymn books, almanacs, Indian treaties.

Almanacs especially were in demand in every household; Franklin printed several for other compilers. But his great profit came from his own work, written in the character of Richard Saunders, philomath, commonly known as *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Begun late in 1732, with the almanac for the ensuing year, it was continued until his first agency in England: in his memoirs Franklin said that he vended annually nearly ten thousand copies. Buyers of almanacs expected to find a calendar, astronomical (and astrological) data, weather predictions, recipes, jokes, wise saws, and useful facts. Franklin's materials were the stuff of all almanacs, the style and flavor his own. He borrowed even his cognomen (from a London almanac), and in his first issue he perpetrated a hoax that was a flagrant theft from Jonathan Swift: the prediction that Bradford's rival philomath, Titan Leeds, would die precisely on October

17, 1733. This joke he pursued through successive prefaces, in face of Leeds's sputtering denials, until Swift was outdone.

In the little spaces between the dates he inserted proverbial sentences — "scraps from the table of wisdom" — which soon everyone quoted as the wise sayings of Poor Richard. Few of them were entirely original, though some of the best cannot be traced to other sources, as: "An empty bag cannot stand upright" (1740); "If you'd have it done, go; if not, send" (1743); "Experience keeps a dear school, yet fools will learn in no other" (1743); "Three removes is as bad as a fire" (1758). From his wide reading he extracted epigrams by Dryden, Pope, Prior, Gay, Swift, Bacon, La Rochefoucauld, Rabelais; and he made larger levies on the folk wisdom of many lands, preserved in well-thumbed collections or in the common speech. Often he improved them by a shift of phrase or a subtle inversion of meaning. His selected maxims — grave or gay (or slightly bawdy), sentimental or cynical — pointed many and often conflicting morals. Some sound strange in the mouth of Poor Richard, as: "Wealth is not his that has it, but his that enjoys it" (1736). Even the character of Poor Richard — Franklin's one notable fictional creation — was not firmly established from the outset. Richard Saunders evolved from a threadbare pseudo-scientist quarreling with other pedants, into the figure we all remember of the homespun prudential philosopher. Franklin completed the revised portrait on his voyage to England in 1757, when he wrote the preface for *Poor Richard Improved* (1758), which was a summary of one part only of the accumulated wit and wisdom of twenty-five years, the prudential sayings, skillfully strung together in the speech of a wise old man quoting Poor Richard at an auction. Printed and reprinted at least four hundred times, and translated into all the major European lan-

guages (including the Scandinavian), and into Gaelic and Catalan and also into Chinese, this essay, known as *Father Abraham's Speech,* or *The Way to Wealth (La Science du Bonhomme Richard),* was literally read round the world. It fixed for all time the "character" of Poor Richard, and to a large extent, though less accurately, the stereotype of his creator.

With Franklin's other prudential writings Poor Richard helped to mold, or certainly to confirm, the folkways that in Franklin's time and later became a large part of the American social tradition. As he sifted them in 1757 these maxims were easily remembered; for generations they were constantly quoted. They distilled the essence of an individualism which all conditions of American life in that day rendered valid. For free men, the middling folk as well as the rich, America meant economic opportunity: a vast continent to be settled, farmed, mined; a population rapidly growing, but still uncrowded; capital in short supply. Work, save, grow wealthy: it was as simple as that, said Poor Richard, ringing all the changes on the themes of Industry and Frugality, values esteemed both in Puritan Boston and in Quaker Philadelphia. It was Franklin's achievement that he gave them classic expression in an immensely popular household literature. More modestly he claimed for *The Way to Wealth* in his memoirs that by discouraging useless expenditures for foreign luxuries in Pennsylvania "some thought it had its share in producing that growing plenty of money which was observable for several years after its publication."

Franklin accumulated a tidy capital of his own, by exemplary industry (which he took pains to make visible), and by his early frugality, a virtue he afterwards subordinated to the rational enjoyment of life. Later he invested at various times in Philadelphia town-lots and houses, and in western and Nova Scotian land speculations. But at first

he preferred to put money into the business he knew best. He entered into a number of partnerships, limited in term, with other printers, his former apprentices or journeymen, setting them up with presses in several colonial towns. Thus he established three printers in succession in Charleston (Thomas Whitemarsh, Louis Timothy, and Timothy's widow); James Parker in New York; Thomas Smith, and afterwards his own nephew, Benjamin Mecom, a rolling stone, in Antigua; another printer in Jamaica, and several in Pennsylvania, including kinsmen of his wife, and the Germans who printed in their own language for the immigrant population. These partnerships brought profit and a good deal of satisfaction to Franklin. He was aiding protégés to start in business and spreading a useful and improving art, and with it the newspaper press, more widely in America. But he had no idea of forming a newspaper chain, as has been suggested. He set modest bounds to his capitalist ambitions, and they were pretty well achieved at forty-two, when he entered into a partnership with David Hall that enabled him to retire from active business.

The next year, in 1749, he wrote and printed his proposals relating to the education of youth in Pennsylvania, the culmination of a series of projects for the civic and cultural improvement of Philadelphia in which for nearly two decades he had been the prime mover. He began with small matters: the regulation of the city watch, and in 1736 the organization of the Union Fire Company. Improving ideas occurred readily to a mind fed in boyhood on Defoe's and Cotton Mather's essays; and his eye was keen to note what was amiss in the town that could be set right by the joint efforts of citizens.

There was no lack of civic spirit, either, among the leading citizens of his town, once it was aroused; and Philadelphia, without Franklin, continued to set an improving

pace for American cities during his long absences abroad, as he saw with satisfaction on his final return in 1785. But in these earlier years most such enterprises began with a discussion prompted by Franklin in his Junto, followed perhaps by an essay in the *Gazette,* then by public meetings, the passing about of subscription papers, or appeals to the assembly — in all of which the printer, with his talent for organization, was active, though to avoid jealousies he hinted that the initiative came from some public-spirited gentlemen. James Logan was one such gentleman who for his part gave Franklin full credit. In a letter to Thomas Penn he enclosed a copy of the *Proposals* (1749), scarce dry from the press. He praised Franklin's other public services, and the quality of his mind and character, observing, "I value his good sense and judgement equalled only by his modesty."

No one better than Logan could take Franklin's measure at mid-century, before he became world famous. A good deal of his continuing education in these years had derived from his reading in Logan's admirable private library, though it was mainly a classical and mathematical collection. Teaching himself to read first French, then Italian, then Spanish, he returned to the Latin he had forgotten since Boston Grammar School and found it came back with greater ease, and to him this naturally suggested a reform in language instruction. But with his friends he sought other books. The Junto brought together a small library, later dispersed, and this led in 1731 to Franklin's project to establish a circulating library, the first of its sort in America. The Junto assisted and Logan lent his patronage, and his advice on purchases; but the idea was Franklin's, and it was he who drafted the proposals. "He it was," Logan wrote, "who with some little assistance set our Philadelphia Library first on foot." Fifty subscribers were obtained, mostly tradesmen, with a few

of the gentry; a charter was secured in 1742, when the Library Company was enlarged to one hundred. The first books had been ordered from England in 1732 through Peter Collinson, the Quaker mercer and botanist who became the Library Company's agent. Through the years most of the books obtainable in English were acquired, in a wide range of poetry, fiction, essays, history, jurisprudence, government, and science.

Success brought imitation: the Union Library in Philadelphia (1747), which later merged with the Library Company, as did several others; ten libraries in the Delaware valley, outside the city; and libraries as far away as Newport, where the founder was the merchant Abraham Redwood, who had visited Philadelphia and admired the Library Company. On the eve of the Revolution Franklin asserted that these libraries had "improved the general conversation of the Americans, made the common tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries, and perhaps . . . contributed in some degree to the stand so generally made throughout the colonies in defense of their privileges."

In the 1740's Franklin had ample reason to feel satisfied that he had settled in Philadelphia. Two things only he regretted: the neglect of provincial defense when the world was again at war; and lack of provision for the complete education of youth. There were private schools in Philadelphia, some excellent, but no academy sufficiently inclusive in its program of studies and its clientele and no college such as Massachusetts, Virginia, and Connecticut had long possessed, and such as New Jersey had recently acquired at Princeton. With his persistent interest in education — in his own self-education through reading, and in the Junto and the library, which were actually projects in adult education — Franklin was bound to do something about it. As early as 1743 he had tried to interest the

Reverend Mr. Richard Peters in a scheme to conduct an academy, but Peters took office under the proprietor.

Franklin bided his time, promoting meanwhile another project for an intercolonial learned society with its seat at Philadelphia. The year 1748 brought peace and for Franklin greater leisure. In August, 1749, he printed an unsigned letter in the *Gazette* promising to publish shortly his proposals for an academy. These appeared in November in his well-known pamphlet. Thus advertised, the campaign for subscriptions went on swimmingly. By August, 1750, with the aid of a gift from the city corporation, £1500 had been raised. Trustees were appointed, with Franklin president, a post he held to 1756. In 1753 they were incorporated by the proprietor. Already, in January, 1751, the academy had opened its doors.

Franklin's *Proposals* (1749) have great interest as a reflection of his own intellectual history, but as a prospectus for the academy that actually developed the pamphlet was too hopeful, as Franklin himself pointed out many years later. It was elaborately documented, with references to such writers as Milton, Locke, Hutcheson, Obadiah Walker, M. Rollin, George Turnbull; it espoused educational ideas that were certainly not original with Franklin, though he had tested some of them in his own self-education, and found them good. He proposed for all the students, whatever their intended occupations, thorough instruction in their native tongue, by the study of English grammar and the reading and imitation of the best writers (Tillotson, Addison, Pope, Algernon Sidney, *Cato's Letters*) ; and also a broad program of general education, beginning with history and leading (through history) to geography, chronology, ancient customs, morality, oratory, religion, laws and constitutions, and logic — a scheme, he believed, that met the needs of the colony and the desires of many of the subscribers better than the

rigid classical curriculum. Similar ideas had been successfully applied, notably in the dissenting academies in England, of which George Whitefield had given an account. But Franklin needed the contributions and influence of such conservatives as William Allen, the Shippens, and James Logan, and conceded something in the pamphlet to the classics: provision would be made both for an English school and a Latin school.

With great zeal Franklin himself drew up the scheme for the English school. But the trustees neglected this part of his plan. The master of the Latin school was made rector of the academy; Franklin's favorite branch languished, and all but expired. Even so, once more he had been the prime mover in a civic enterprise which, though it disappointed him in its early development, added another institution to the cultural resources of the colony; and in time the academy developed into the University of Pennsylvania.

In the second half of the century Philadelphia acquired its greatest cultural distinction as a medical center. In 1751 Franklin's friend Dr. Thomas Bond, a member of his American Philosophical Society, sought his help in the lagging drive for subscriptions for a hospital, the first to be established in British North America. "Have you consulted Franklin upon this business?" people asked, when Bond approached them. "And what does he think of it?" Franklin was readily enough persuaded to support Bond's proposals. Medicine interested him scientifically, and he made a number of amateur contributions. Moreover, he respected medical men above members of other professions, certainly above lawyers; both in America and in England some of his closest friends were physicians. Already the medical faculty in Philadelphia was a distinguished group, most of whom had studied abroad. The eminent Dr. Thomas Cadwalader, trained in Paris and London, a

director of the Library Company, was practicing in Trenton when Franklin published in 1745 his *Essay on the West-India Dry Gripes* (lead poisoning). Other medical books were also published by the Franklin and Hall press at mid-century; and in his electrical experiments at the time Franklin was closely associated with more than one physician.

It was as an experienced fund raiser, however, and a skillful publicity agent that he greatly served the cause of the Pennsylvania Hospital at its inception. "I endeavored," he wrote, "to prepare the minds of the people by writing on the subject in the newspapers, which was my usual custom in such cases." He also proposed a petition to the assembly for public aid, and shrewdly devised a scheme for contingent matching contributions by government and the public. It worked, and none of his political maneuvers, he confessed, gave him greater pleasure; in none could he excuse himself more easily "for having made some use of cunning." A subscriber himself, in the sum of £25, he served on the board of managers, and was elected president in 1755. In 1754 he wrote and published *Some Account of the Pennsylvania Hospital.* The institution cared for the sick poor, and provided clinical facilities for medical instruction. In 1765 a medical school was set up in the College of Philadelphia, which thus became in a real sense a university.

Franklin was in England at that time, on his second mission as colony agent. Both the founder of the medical school, Dr. John Morgan, and his great rival, Dr. William Shippen, Jr., had enjoyed the agent's patronage in their student days in London and Edinburgh. To these men, and to a long line of colonial medical students thereafter, he furnished advice, sometimes funds, and invariably introductions to his eminent friends, the teaching physicians and surgeons of the British Isles — John and William

Hunter, William Hewson, John Fothergill, Sir John Pringle, and William Cullen.

By mid-century the most completely civic man in America was Benjamin Franklin, Printer, lately retired from active business with a competent fortune. For many reasons Philadelphia had proved the ideal place for his rise in fortune and his enterprises of civic and cultural improvement. But no doubt he would have succeeded anywhere in that century so congenial to his qualities of mind and temper. He had well-ordered plans for the conduct of life and an amazing capacity to assimilate both ideas and experience. Later he placed himself almost as completely in harmony with his environment in London and Paris as he had in America; and in old age he embodied the eighteenth-century ideal of the citizen of the world.

With ampler leisure in 1748 he saw a choice of paths before him: toward the pursuit of science, which had come to fascinate him, or toward leadership in the politics of province and empire — where duty called, and also ambition.

III

Natural Philosopher

In September, 1748, Franklin congratulated his friend, Dr. Cadwallader Colden, a gentleman-amateur of science, upon his retirement from office in New York. Franklin, too, was taking steps to enjoy what he looked upon as the greatest happiness in life: "leisure to read, study, make experiments." For most of two years past he had been deeply absorbed in the subject of electricity; and for a few months longer, with minor interruptions, he was able to continue these fascinating studies, before the public again laid hold upon him. During three or four golden years at mid-century he made the remarkable discoveries, published to the learned world in his own lucid letters of description and interpretation, which established his contemporary repute as "the Newton of Electricity."

Franklin the electrician became the first American famous throughout the world; his prestige in science was a factor in his rise in politics, and notably in his later resounding achievements as the republican diplomat in France. His accomplishments went well beyond the two spectacular achievements which brought him his popular fame: the launching of the electrical kite, and the invention of the lightning rod.

It was the life of science that he preferred to all others. In his busiest years he looked forward hopefully to leisure to sit down in the sweet company of philosophic friends, "communicating to each other new discoveries, and proposing improvements of old ones" — leisure which came, thereafter, only in snatches. Yet with his balanced view of his obligations to society his regrets never added up to frustrations. Ambition played its part, he admitted, in the involvements that crowded science out of so much of his life, but he always recognized an ascending scale of duties. In this sense he wrote again to Colden, two years later, urging his friend to return to office: "Had Newton been the pilot of but a single common ship, the finest of his discoveries would scarce have excused or atoned for his abandoning the helm one hour in time of danger; how much less if she carried the fate of the commonwealth."

Fortunately, science was a less jealous mistress in Franklin's time than it is today. Newton himself gave but a dozen years to purely scientific pursuits, spent much of his life superintending the coinage at the Mint. The scientific culture which flowered in England with the establishment of the Royal Society of London (1660) and soon infiltrated the colonies engaged many amateur hands, for there was spadework to be done — collecting, observing, experimenting. Science was not yet a professional preserve, nor greatly specialized. In America, as in Europe, clergymen like Cotton Mather, officials and gentry like Cadwallader Colden, and numerous physicians could set up as spare-time natural philosophers; the claims of not a few were recognized by election to the Royal Society. In Philadelphia even tradesmen and artisans advanced in a few years to new frontiers of experimental science.

Fortuitous circumstances led to the Philadelphia experiments, or determined their direction. But it was no ac-

cident that Franklin took the lead. His bent towards science was already established: he had made at least one significant scientific discovery, and was busy organizing colonial science, as he organized nearly everything and everybody in Philadelphia. Nothing, to be sure, in his early hit-or-miss education pointed this way. He had never completely repaired his early weakness in mathematics, though as the assembly clerk, when bored by the debates, he had whiled away his time constructing magic squares and circles and developed great skill in these ingenious tricks with numbers. A mathematician in the true sense, however, he never became.

What, then, did men mean when they compared Franklin, as they constantly did in the eighteenth century, to the giant Newton? The *Principia* was a tough mathematical work, full of axioms and theorems, devoid of hypotheses, proposing no experiments. With magnificent finality it embodied in the laws of celestial mechanics all the accumulated data on the motions of the earth and the heavenly bodies. Few men in the colonies pretended to master it and certainly Franklin was not one: even his patron James Logan, a mathematician, claimed only to have made some progress in its problems. Everyone, of course, who pretended to knowledge had some sort of understanding of Newton's conception: that the solar system operated as a vast machine under the pull of gravitation, like a great clock set in the heavens. Men read popularizations of the work, and its grand ideas were interwoven with the culture of the age. But by its completeness and finality it seemed to close the door to research.

Other areas of science, however, were hardly as yet explored; there the collection of data and the testing of hypotheses had still to precede attempts at mathematical formulation. Such areas concerned matter in respect not to its mass but to its substances and their physical and

chemical properties. Newton in his time had written another greatly influential work, the *Opticks*. How different from the *Principia!* Replete with queries and hypotheses, it became the model for all experimental scientists. Franklin read it, and reread it, and established his own great reputation in this other tradition of Newtonianism. His own book on electricity also became for his age and the next "a sort of *vade mecum* of experimental style in general, not merely electricity, just as Newton's *Opticks* had been before it."

The first evidence of Franklin's interest in science — or at least of a juvenile interest in meeting the great figures in the scientific world — comes from his journeyman years in London. The printer's boy in Boston had no contact with the contemporary stir of enthusiasm for natural philosophy among clergymen and Harvard graduates. Astronomy had flourished at Harvard ever since John Winthrop, Jr., a charter member of the Royal Society, had donated his telescope; and before 1720 the *Philosophical Transactions* had printed half a dozen communications from Boston, on astronomy and natural history. Cotton Mather collected natural curiosities, preached a sermon on the Copernican hypothesis, became a member of the Royal Society; it was Mather and his friends who were on the side of progress in the inoculation controversy, the Couranteers who were the obscurantists. At first Benjamin's reading ran little toward science, though John Collins, his friend, put "a pretty collection of mathematics and natural philosophy" in Benjamin's charge on his second voyage from Boston to Philadelphia. On another voyage, from London to Philadelphia in 1726, he began to display a talent for observation of nature. His Atlantic journal recorded ocean temperatures, storms, currents, the fauna and flora of the sea, a partial eclipse of the moon.

From this habit of close observation (a habit he never

relaxed, as appears from many of his marvelous letters), he went on to the next step, of experimentation. His first significant experiment was made as early as 1729, though he only described it in 1761, and then in a private letter, so little was he concerned as yet with scientific fame. Meantime, it had twice been repeated with variations by Joseph Breintnall of the Junto, his collaborator in the Busy-Body Papers. The Franklin-Breintnall experiments were designed to determine the relation of color to heat absorption and thermal conductivity. From a tailor's sample-card Franklin detached broadcloth squares of different colors and shades, laid them on snow in bright sunshine, and measured the relative depth to which they sank as the snow melted. It was a simple test: a schoolboy, it has often been said, could have done it. But Franklin was the first to define the problem and to devise the experiment.

No doubt Franklin and Breintnall talked about the color experiment in the Junto, for scientific questions were raised in the club as topics of debate, along with the usual cruxes in philosophy, ethics, and government. The Junto in its way was the first step toward an American scientific society. It brought together talented and ingenious young men, largely self-educated, a number of them afterwards heard from: William Parsons, shoemaker-mathematician who became surveryor-general; Thomas Godfrey, the glazier and self-taught mathematician who independently invented the quadrant (though the Englishman Hadley successfully maintained his priority); and Philip Syng, silversmith, whose later contributions in the electrical experiments went beyond the ingenious instruments that he contrived, as Franklin readily admitted. The Library Company, which grew out of the Junto, acquired, with other literature, books of science and even scientific apparatus. When John Bartram in 1739 proposed a broader inter-

colonial scientific organization, his London correspondent, Peter Collinson, thought the time not yet ripe, but remarked: "Your Library Company I take to be an essay towards such a society."

Collinson, the Quaker clothing merchant and botanist, was the London agent of the library and the correspondent and patron of most of the colonial scientists. In Bartram he recognized an untutored genius; even Linnaeus, it was said, pronounced Bartram the finest natural botanist of the age. It was his business to supply from his suburban Kingsessing gardens and from the distant wilderness the American seeds, plants, and shrubs which English nobility and gentry set out on their estates. Bartram took long and arduous botanizing trips to the frontiers, and he was almost the only link between the gentleman-botanists of New York, Pennsylvania, and the South. They corresponded with him — and with Collinson — but rarely with one another.

Bartram was an admirable working botanist, not an organizer. Probably Franklin learned of his proposal. He, too, aspired to mobilize the ingenious men of the colonies in a society to promote a regular scientific correspondence between these isolated natural philosophers and with the great London and Dublin societies. In May, 1743, he published *A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge among the British Plantations in America,* a call for Americans to take their place in the expanding empire of science. Hopefully Franklin declared that the "first drudgery of settling new colonies," which confined "the attention of people to mere necessaries," was now pretty well over. In every colony there were men with "leisure to cultivate the finer arts and improve the common stock of knowledge." To these "many hints must from time to time arise, many observations occur," which "might produce discoveries to the advantage of some or all of the British plantations,

or the benefit of mankind in general." Therefore he proposed that "one Society be formed of *virtuosi* or ingenious men, residing in the several colonies, to be called *The American Philosophical Society,* who are to maintain a constant correspondence."

This was a plan for a continental cultural union, linked with British science, in scope as broad as the science of his time. Significantly, it antedated by more than a decade his other plan, adopted at Albany, for a continental political union. For reasons obvious to him Philadelphia should be the seat of the society; there the officers would reside, and at least seven members, representing seven branches of knowledge. Six of the Philadelphia members Franklin identified to Colden in 1744, when the organization was actually effected: Dr. Thomas Bond, Physician; John Bartram, Botanist; Thomas Godfrey, Mathematician; James Rhodes, Mechanician; William Parsons, Geographer; Dr. Phineas Bond, General Natural Philosopher. (No one had yet been found to be designated Chemist.) Franklin was secretary; as postmaster he proposed to frank the scientific correspondence.

The plan was bold and raised great expectations abroad. Collinson impatiently awaited the projected memoirs: "I expect something new from your New World," he wrote Colden, "our Old World as it were exhausted." But no annual collections were printed in these first years, and Franklin's alternative scheme, to publish a monthly or quarterly *American Philosophical Miscellany,* also fell through. Too many nonresident members were officeholders, or gentry with little to offer. Colden and Dr. John Mitchell of Virginia were more interested than most; but Mitchell removed to England in 1746, and there made his greatest addition to American knowledge with the publication of his famous map of the French and British dominions (1775). Bartram complained to Colden

that the Philadelphia members spent more time in their clubs and coffeehouses, and at chess, than in the "curious amusements of philosophical observations." Unlike honest Bartram, Franklin enjoyed both chess and science, but he, too, admitted they were very idle gentlemen: "They will take no pains." So the society languished. A quarter century later it was revived, and it was then merged with a rival group, under the presidency of Franklin, still absent in London.

Even so, as he disengaged himself from business in the 1740's, Franklin found an atmosphere in Philadelphia favorable to his growing interest in science, and willing collaborators among friends in the club and in the Library Company. In 1743, while he was promoting the Philosophical Society, he made independently one of his most striking discoveries: in meteorology, a subject that always interested him. (The weather, of course, interests everyone; and as Richard Saunders it was Franklin's business to publish annually, tongue-in-cheek, his long-range forecasts. All these predictions, he promised in the almanac for 1753, would come "to pass *punctually* and *precisely* on the very day" — some place or other on the globe!) For October 21, 1743, astronomers predicted an eclipse of the moon. The day came, but in Philadelphia the observation was prevented by a northeast storm; yet when Franklin received his Boston paper he read that the eclipse had been well observed hundreds of miles to the northeast. This puzzled him. He corresponded with his brother in Boston, gathered data from several colonies on the storm, and from all the evidence concluded that northeast storms actually proceed out of the southwest. This "very singular opinion" he first mentioned in a letter of 1747 to the Connecticut agriculturalist, Jared Eliot, and in 1760 he expounded it at length in another letter, to a member of the London Society of Arts. He was still very

casual in a matter which every modern scientist attends to promptly, the publication of new discoveries.

Yet in 1744 he took pains to print a popular monograph on the physics of house-heating, *An Account of the New-Invented Pennsylvanian Fire-Places.* He had invented the famous Franklin stove in the winter of 1740–1741, but had refused the offer of a patent from Governor Thomas and turned over the model for manufacture to his friend and benefactor of the Junto, Robert Grace, for whom he now wrote this advertisement. Franklin never profited from any of his inventions; "as we enjoy great advantages from the inventions of others," he held, "we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by any invention of ours, and this we should do freely and generously."

Franklin's fame as the inventor of the improved stove, and of the many other devices which he contrived at one time or another for his own ease and pleasure and freely introduced to the world — the bifocal spectacles, the armonica (musical glasses played on a keyboard), the contrivance for removing books from high shelves (afterwards adapted to shoe stores), the lightning rod itself — has served to identify him primarily as a gadgeteer, the first of the type in American history and one of the cleverest, but primarily an inventor of utilitarian objects rather than a true scientist. It is easy to quote Franklin to this purpose, as when he asked in 1761, "What signifies philosophy that does not apply to some use?" This sentiment, however, was neither uniquely Franklinian nor especially American, but one professed by English scientists since Lord Bacon. Having made fundamental discoveries they felt, as Franklin did, a duty to put them to some use. Most of Franklin's inventions, to be sure, were simple applications of well-known physical principles; when they derived from his own studies they were by-products of his science rather than his original objectives. This was con-

spicuously true of his most famous invention, the lightning rod.

Franklin first witnessed the phenomena of electrical science on a visit to Boston in the spring of 1743. Dr. Adam Spencer, lately arrived from Scotland, was the demonstrator, a peripatetic lecturer on natural philosophy of a type common in Europe and just now beginning to appear in the colonies. He was not really expert, but the subject was new, and Franklin was surprised and pleased. In the spring of 1744 Spencer appeared in Philadelphia, where the printer acted as his agent, and the course was so popular that it was repeated a second and third time. He ranged widely over many subjects, demonstrating Newton's discoveries in color and Harvey's on the circulation of the blood, and tossing off items of medical advice. In his bag of tricks he also had a few simple demonstrations of the fashionable new science of electrostatics. When he rubbed a long glass tube, he showed that it would attract pieces of metal foil, and that some of the pieces, after touching the tube, would then be repelled. He repeated, too, the performance with the "electrified boy" that had astonished so many European audiences since Stephen Gray had first described it in 1730. A small boy was suspended horizontally from the ceiling by silk threads, and when Spencer approached him with the rubbed tube, sparks were seen to fly from his face and hands.

These were very elementary electrical demonstrations, but they were new to the Philadelphians and therefore amazing. Perhaps as early as the sixth century B.C. the Greeks had observed that rubbed amber (*elektron*) had a power of attracting light objects. By 1600 this property had been distinguished from magnetism and found to exist in other substances, called electrics. Cabeo, an Italian Jesuit, had discovered electrical repulsion in the seventeenth century, when men were also busy in England and on the

continent classifying electrics and nonelectrics, observing mercurial light and the brush discharge, and devising simple apparatus. But the great advances, both in experiment and in theory, had occurred in Franklin's own lifetime, though only now was he beginning to learn of them. It was the Englishman Gray, who died in 1736, who differentiated conduction and insulation. In France, Charles Dufay extended Gray's work and published in 1733 the first complete theory of electrical phenomena, distinguishing in his system between two distinct electricities which he called vitreous and resinous. As modified by his pupil, the Abbé Jean-Antoine Nollet, with his affluent and effluent streams, the doctrine of two electricities — restated in general terms by William Watson, F.R.S. — dominated European theory. Franklin was the first to challenge it.

Franklin now purchased all of Dr. Spencer's apparatus, but it was not until the winter of 1746–1747 that he and his friends of the Library Company turned with fresh zeal to repeating the experiments they had already seen, and attempting new ones. Meantime, the library's London agent, Peter Collinson, F.R.S., had sent over an electrical tube, perhaps in 1745, and soon the proprietor himself graciously presented them with "a complete electrical apparatus." There was now no lack of equipment; tubes were turned out in quantity by the Philadelphia glass house, and there were enough "exquisite mechanics" in town to contrive more elaborate apparatus. It was Philip Syng who mounted a glass tube on an axle which he turned with a crank to save the fatigue of rubbing. No one in Philadelphia then knew that similar machines had long since been used in Europe.

In a letter to Collinson at the end of March, 1747, Franklin briefly announced the beginning of the historic Philadelphia experiments. "I never was before engaged

in any study that so totally engrossed my attention and my time as this has lately done; for what with making experiments when I can be alone, and repeating them to my friends and acquaintance, who, from the novelty of the thing, come continually in crowds to see them, I have, during some months past, had little leisure for any thing else." Franklin gave the lead, as he had lately done in efforts to organize American scientists, but he had able collaborators and a stimulating *milieu*. Repeatedly he reported to Collinson what "we" were doing; and when his published letters (1751) were later issued in a revised and annotated edition (1769), he was careful to give specific credit to Thomas Hopkinson (first president of the Philosophical Society), to Syng, and to Ebenezer Kinnersley, his ablest pupil and demonstrator, for whom he later wrote a course of popular lectures.

Franklin and his friends began with a minimum knowledge of current European progress, the common disadvantage of colonials which usually kept their science from advancing beyond the elementary and derivative stage. And they wasted time in rediscovering what was already known. Thus when Franklin reported to Collinson in May, 1747, "the wonderful effect of pointed bodies, both in *drawing off* and *throwing off* the electrical fire," he was unaware that von Guericke of Magdeburg had begun the study of pointed conductors in the seventeenth century, though he suspected that "they might not possibly be new to you." (To Hopkinson he gave full credit for the discovery that points *throw off* electricity.) Even so, in their ignorance the Americans had advanced already beyond the German observations, which no one in Europe had followed up. From these independent studies of points came both Franklin's greatest experiment and his most famous invention.

For Franklin, especially, there was an advantage in iso-

lation. With his taste for reading and his highly assimilative mind he was not always — perhaps not even often — greatly original in his ideas, even in fields where he achieved great things. But in electrical science, especially when he first grasped it, he was forced to be original: to devise new experiments, to invent a terminology, to frame his own theory. As his scholarship increased, his original contributions declined.

The Philadelphians amused themselves, as everyone did, in the new science, but at the same time they were asking fundamental questions. What was the nature of the electrical fire? Franklin early concluded that it was a subtle fluid widely diffused through all other matter; that it was not created by friction, but only collected or redistributed. What the glass tube gained when rubbed the cloth lost, and in the same amount. When one experimenter, *A,* standing on wax (a nonconductor), rubbed the tube, he collected the electrical fluid from his own body into the glass, so that he then had an under quantity, or, as Franklin began to say, was electrized (or charged) *negatively* (minus, —). When *B,* also standing on wax, passed his knuckle along the tube, he added *A's* charge to his own, and was changed *positively* (plus, +). *A* and *B* then touching, a strong spark was produced, because of the difference in their charges. But if, instead, *C,* standing on the floor, touched either *A* or *B,* he perceived a weaker spark, because he had only a middle quantity of the electric fluid in his body. He received the spark, Franklin explained, from *B,* and gave the spark to *A.*

In describing these experiments in May, 1747, Franklin began to use the classic terms of his own invention now universally employed. They were terms, moreover, that implied a radically new single-fluid theory of electricity. But soon he observed phenomena that did not quite fit his hypothesis as first crudely stated, and he begged Collinson

not to expose the letters to his learned friends, or if he did to conceal his name. "If there is no other use discovered of electricity," he wrote, "this, however, is something considerable, that it may *help to make a vain man humble.*"

The refinement of his theory Franklin accomplished by the remarkable studies begun in Philadelphia in 1747 on the properties of the condenser, a wonderful new instrument just invented in Europe, which permitted the accumulation of larger electric charges. In its familiar form of a glass jar, coated outside with metal foil and filled with shot or water into which a wire hook was inserted, it was commonly known as the Leyden jar (from one of its independent inventors, Pieter van Musschenbroek, professor at Leyden). Every traveling showman of science employed it to produce his more spectacular effects: at the court of Louis XV one hundred and eighty guardsmen were made to leap high in the air with parade-ground precision when they linked hands and received a vigorous shock from the bottle. But no one, either in Europe or America, understood very well just why, and how, it worked.

Franklin's classic analysis of Musschenbroek's wonderful bottle first solidly established his scientific fame. He had the immense advantage of a workable hypothesis, his single-fluid theory, and his technique was also masterly. Step by step, he proved that the jar was always charged, inside and out, in the opposite sign (+ or —), and that these charges were always equal. Testing the bottle, one element at a time, he proved that the charge was not in the wire nor in the cork, not in the water nor the foil, but always in the glass itself. By substituting glass plates for the bottle (and so inventing the parallel-plate condenser) he showed that the charge "resides" in the glass because it is a nonconductor, not because of its form or thickness.

At the manipulative level this was model research; it be-

gan a study of the electric current, and even pointed toward the development of the battery. Most important, it enabled Franklin to complete the formulation of his single-fluid theory: a theory which in his time and for long after explained all (or nearly all) the known phenomena. It was "a theory in the Bacon-Boyle tradition," as Bernard Cohen has said, "consonant with the style and approach adopted by Newton in the *Opticks*." It was a theory, moreover, that facilitated measurements when these were later performed by a great succession of electricians, from Volta to Cavendish. More than any man of his time Franklin had raised electrostatics from the level of lecturers' games to the dignity of science.

Yet there were amusing games to be played by the Philadelphia experimenters in their lighter moments. One of the most entertaining, Franklin said, was invented by Kinnersley: a mezzotint of the king (God preserve him) was fitted with a gilt crown. When the victim held the charged frame in one hand and attempted, traitorously, to remove the crown with the other, he received a punishing shock. At the end of the summer of 1748, to celebrate their solid achievements the electricians planned a picnic on the Schuylkill, where a turkey would be killed by electrical shock, roasted on an electrical jack over a fire kindled by the electrified bottle, and toasts drunk to all the famous electricians of Europe "in *electrified bumpers,* under the discharge of guns from the *electrical battery*."

Already the Philadelphia experiments had begun to arouse interest among the Europeans who seemed so famous when viewed afar from the banks of the Schuylkill. Franklin reported them all in lucid detail in letters to scientific friends, in the first instance to Peter Collinson. As Franklin had expected, Collinson shared the letters with other members of the Royal Society, who cited them with approval in papers printed in the *Philo-*

sophical Transactions. In one form or another they were read by a wider public in Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine.* Meanwhile, Collinson's friend, Dr. John Fothergill, another Quaker and a famous London physician, was preparing them for the press; and they were printed by Cave in April, 1751, as *Experiments and Observations on Electricity, made at Philadelphia in America, by Mr. Benjamin Franklin, and Communicated in several Letters to Mr. P. Collinson, of London, F.R.S.*

This was the first slender edition of the most famous and influential book to come out of America in the eighteenth century. It is still, historically, one of the major American works in science. Five English editions, besides supplements, were published in Franklin's century, three French editions, one Italian, one German. When the fourth English edition appeared in 1769, William Bewley declared in the *Monthly Review* (London) that these papers constituted "the *principia* of electricity." He praised both their substance and their style, of "luminous simplicity." Franklin's system, he said, was "equally simple and profound."

In the war of systems which ensued Franklin's unitary theory soon prevailed over Nollet's doctrine; most electricians everywhere declared themselves Franklinists. But only natural philosophers could understand systems. Franklin's vulgar fame, which became world-wide, was that of the modern Prometheus, who dared to draw down fire from heaven, and with his lightning rod rendered it harmless. Ironically enough it was precisely in this field of atmospheric electricity that Franklin's ideas were least original. The decisive experiment to prove the identity of lightning and electricity was first made, moreover, by a Frenchman, before it occurred to Franklin to fly his electrical kite.

Almost every electrical experimenter — Newton, for in-

stance, in 1716 — had noted the obvious resemblance between lightning and the electric spark; in his scientific journal of November 7, 1749, Franklin listed seven such points of similarity. But it was Franklin and no other who then added the crucial injunction: "Let the experiment be made." And it was Franklin who defined the proposed experiment, exactly describing the necessary apparatus.

On top of some high tower or steeple, he directed, place a kind of sentry box, big enough to contain a man and an electrical stand, and running through it an insulated iron rod to terminate twenty or thirty feet higher in a sharp point. If the hypothesis were true, the experimenter thus protected should be able to draw sparks by induction from the electrified rod when low clouds passed over. Franklin, however, postponed his own trial of the experiment, waiting apparently for the completion of the spire on Christ Church in Philadelphia. Meanwhile, the proposal was published in Cave's pamphlet of 1751, and Collinson sent a copy to the great French naturalist, Buffon, who got M. Jean François Dalibard to translate it. Louis XV ordered several of the other Philadelphia experiments to be exhibited at St. Germain by a Franklinist, Delor. The dangerous, decisive experiment, however, was first performed by Dalibard and his assistants. At Marly, Dalibard raised a pointed bar of iron just as Franklin had directed, and on May 10, 1752, when a storm cloud appeared, his watchmen drew from the rod the familiar sparks of fire. On May 18 Delor repeated the experiment, with the same success. The identity of lightning and electricity, long suspected, was now confirmed in France by means of Franklin's experiment.

Meantime, Franklin had thought of a simpler method of drawing the fire from the heavens, by a kite armed with an iron point. On a sultry day sometime in June, 1752, before he had heard of the success at Marly, he went out

into the fields with his son William — no stripling, as artists have shown him, but a young dandy of twenty-one — and successfully flew his electrical kite. His account was published tardily in the *Gazette,* October 19, 1752.

The same issue advertised *Poor Richard's Almanac* for 1753, which contained directions for setting up protective lightning rods. The lightning rod, along with the kite, at once became the popular symbol of Franklin's fame as an electrician. He had begun his studies with no such useful application in view: he was first of all the pure scientist, driven by curiosity to experiment and to theorize, and his most famous invention was a by-product of his science. However, he had soon grasped the possibility of an application that would benefit humanity. As early as 1749 he had asked the question whether the power of points might not be used to preserve houses, churches, and ships from the stroke of lightning. All that was needed, he was sure, was to make certain that the *protective* rod was well grounded, not insulated as were the *experimental* rods. As soon as the main scientific issue was determined — that lightning and electricity were identical — the Franklin lightning rods began to go up in Philadelphia; early in the summer of 1752 they were raised on the academy and statehouse spires. (Soon Franklin also knew that they were being adopted in Europe.) The rod that Franklin erected on his own house served a dual purpose. Bells were attached, which rang when it was time to draw off the electricity of the skies into the experimental bottles. Deborah, no scientist, found the clamor disturbing, indeed frightening, when Benjamin had departed for England.

Franklin's protective rods made their way slowly against popular ignorance and religious or eccleciastical prejudice. In England, on Franklin's advice, St. Paul's was protected in 1769, after St. Bride's spire had been

destroyed by lightning. In 1772 he served with Henry Cavendish and other members of the Royal Society on a committee which recommended his pointed rods for the powder magazine at Purfleet. One member, Benjamin Wilson, dissenting, carried on a paper war to advocate blunt rods instead. With the outbreak of the American war this scientific controversy became political, and George III ordered Franklin's points replaced by Wilson's knobs. Franklin's old friend Sir John Pringle — no friend of rebellion but a scientist of integrity — refused to endorse the change. Pringle lost his post as court physician, and under pressure resigned as president of the Royal Society.

In the 1750's Franklin's fame had not yet been compromised by politics, and from the first it was international. After the Marly experiments Louis XV ordered that a royal letter of thanks be directed to Monsieur Franklin; he read it, he confessed, far off in Philadelphia, with the secret pride of the girl in the *Tatler* who had got a new pair of garters! Harvard and Yale conferred their honorary degrees of Master of Arts in 1753, William and Mary in 1754. In 1753 the Royal Society of London awarded him the distinguished Copley gold medal; and three years later, by an unusual procedure, he was chosen a Fellow, without petition and without fee. On his first visit to Scotland, in 1759, he received from St. Andrew's his proudly worn title of Doctor Franklin. In 1762 the University of Oxford admitted him Doctor of Civil Law *honoris causa.* Late in life he listed some twenty colleges and learned societies that had honored him with their degrees or with membership — in America, Scotland, England, Holland, France, Spain, Italy, and Russia.

The formal papers that he contributed to his numerous societies were few, but he carried on an immense correspondence which was scientific as well as personal and political. He corresponded in America with Cadwallader

Colden; with the botanists Bartram and Humphrey Marshall; with Dr. John Lining, pioneer student of human metabolism (who repeated at Charleston his kite experiment); with James Bowdoin of Boston (letters which began with science and went on to politics); with Professor John Winthrop of Harvard; with Ezra Stiles, the erudite Newport clergyman, later president of Yale, who sought his aid in 1765 to secure for himself a scientific correspondence in Europe. On the continent his most faithful correspondents were Giambatista Beccaria of Turin, who introduced Franklinian electricity into Italy; Jan Ingenhousz, Dutch physician, later physician to the imperial court at Vienna; and in France his ardent disciple and translator, Dr. Jacques Barbeu-Dubourg. Answering queries about Pennsylvania, Franklin began in 1774 a correspondence with the great *philosophe* the Marquis de Condorcet.

The letters Franklin exchanged with these and many other enlightened contemporaries were a significant part of the discussions, intercolonial and international, by which scientific knowledge was disseminated and scientific opinion formed in that century. His own letters are a key to the diversity of his scientific interests. He was no more than an amateur of astronomy, but he rendered useful services to the international enterprise organized for the observation of the transit of Venus in 1769. He was an amateur also of botany, but the patron both in America and in England of colonial working botanists, notably John Bartram. No farmer, either, he entered into a lively correspondence with Jared Eliot, the Connecticut authority on husbandry. Dynamic geology fascinated him; his speculation that there had been great changes in the climates of the earth anticipated modern theories. (It was prompted by his unsuccessful attempt to solve the puzzle of the fossil bones of the mammoth, which the Indian

agent, George Croghan, had dug up at Big Bone Lick on the Ohio and presented to him and to the Earl of Shelburne.) His best friends were many of them physicians, to whom he apologized for his frequent invasions of medical science: he broached valuable ideas on ventilation and on the causes of colds; he invented a flexible catheter, promoted the first American hospital, and in England was the helpful friend of most of the young Americans who came to study under the Hunters in London or the famous medical faculty at Edinburgh. No chemist, he encouraged Joseph Priestley to enter on his electrical studies, historical and experimental, and to go on to his fundamental discoveries in the chemistry of gases. A letter he wrote to Priestley in 1774 contains the classic eighteenth-century account of marsh gas.

In physics he went farther — as far as scant leisure and skimpy mathematical equipment could carry him. In his continuing studies of heat he reported to Dr. Lining, in 1757, what have been called the first investigations of conductivity in various substances. He confessed to Colden in 1752 that he was "much in the *dark* about *light*"; but in this letter, later read before the Royal Society, he expressed discontent with the dominant corpuscular theory, and speculated that light consisted of "vibrations" in a subtle elastic fluid filling universal space. When Colden protested his heresy he promised to reread Newton's *Opticks*.

He also wrote to Colden: "I own I have too strong a penchant to the building of hypotheses, they indulge my natural indolence." Certainly he enjoyed starting hares for other investigators to pursue. But in meteorology and hydrography as well as in electricity he approached the frontiers of eighteenth-century science; and his speculations were controlled by careful observation, or ingenious techniques of experiment. Forty years after his pioneer

study of northeast storms he reported through Dr. Thomas Percival to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester on the "dry fog" that had hung over Europe in 1783, which he accurately attributed to volcanic "smoke" (dust), and also related to the cold winter of 1783–1784. In the interim he had written intelligently on waterspouts and whirlwinds.

Franklin had lost his boyish hankering for the sea as a way of life, but the ocean always fascinated him. Eight times he crossed the Atlantic on private or public business: a good sailor, usually on deck, observing, recording, speculating, he turned his active mind to more than one phase of oceanography as well as to practical problems in seamanship. He read Pliny, and like ancient seamen he proposed to still the waves with oil. In England, he experimented with his method on Clapham Common, and playfully in Shelburne's park at Wycombe, to amaze the company of philosophers — and more seriously (but unsuccessfully) at Portsmouth, in the company of colleagues from the Royal Society who included Captain Cook's companions, Banks and Solander.

The study of ocean currents had hardly begun when he published a pioneer map of the great "river of the sea," the Gulf Stream. The American Board of Customs Commissioners were complaining in 1768 that packets bound for New York were subject to long delays; these complaints, with others from General Gage, were referred to the post office, and by Anthony Todd to his North American deputy. Franklin reported that Captain Timothy Folger (his kinsman) had explained that the Nantucket whalers, accustomed to pursue the whales along the margins of the Gulf Stream, were thoroughly familiar with its course and had learned to cross it, when they must, by the shortest voyages; but they often met packet masters who were painfully breasting the main current

because they were fearful of the shoals from Cape Sable to Nantucket. Folger then marked on a chart for his cousin both the Gulf Stream and a safe course to avoid it from the Banks to New York. Franklin had copies of the chart engraved for the use of the packet captains — who nevertheless continued to slight it. All these copies of the Folger-Franklin map have now disappeared. It was the first of a series of maps of the later eighteenth century which began the charting of the Gulf Stream.

Less familiar are his persistent efforts during the next two decades to accumulate relevant data on ocean temperatures. Returning from England to Philadelphia in 1775, he took systematic readings with a Fahrenheit thermometer, and made, as he informed Priestley, "a valuable philosophical discovery." The Gulf Stream, he found, could be charted by temperature variations, and voyages regulated accordingly. On his perilous passage to France as commissioner in 1776 he took other readings, and again, with the assistance of his nephew, Jonathan Williams, Jr., when he returned at last to the United States in 1785. All these data he brought together in tables accompanying the *Maritime Observations* he wrote on shipboard in 1785. This important essay, containing also many useful hints to mariners, was published by the American Philosophical Society in 1786, and republished in Paris in a French translation in 1787.

On this last crossing to America he had faithfully promised his friends in France and England to finish the writing of his memoirs. It was a task often interrupted that he, too, longed to complete. But he broke his promise. Even in his eightieth year — suffering as he was wont to say from only three fatal diseases, the gout, the stone, and old age — he yielded to the stronger compulsion, to finish, instead, a contribution to science.

His delight in science he shared with some of the best

minds of his time — and also the conviction that science was preparing for man a new golden age. To Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society, he wrote in 1782 that their discoveries all tended "to extend the power of man over matter, avert or diminish the evils he is subject to, or augment the number of his enjoyments." Science was identified with progress; in this larger humane sense, especially, it was thought of as utilitarian. Hence scientists enjoyed the prestige of benefactors of mankind, a prestige which Franklin turned to good account in the other enterprises of his active life.

For science after all remained his avocation. His universal curiosity extended to man as well as to nature. He was a moralist before he became a natural philosopher; and with his zest for life and his improving temper he could not long shelter himself in the laboratory from public affairs.

IV

Albany:

Union for Defense

FRANKLIN WAS FORTY-FIVE when his fellow citizens in Philadelphia elected him to the Pennsylvania assembly. Thus he entered active politics late, a self-made man recently retired from business. But he had served since 1736 as the clerk of the assembly, so that nothing was strange to him in the scene at the statehouse. Other local honors had lately come to him as Philadelphia's civic leader, honors which years later (after he had stood before kings) he still thought great things, considering his low beginnings. That tight little body, the Philadelphia corporation, had named him in 1748 to the common council, made him alderman in 1751. The governor, too, had recently put him in the commission of peace.

Franklin's public career — which ended only in 1788 — presented features characteristic of American politics in his time and after, and others less typical. Outside of New England the aristocratic tradition of public service was strong, in the middle colonies as well as in the South: Washington became a burgess of Virginia at twenty-six, Jefferson at twenty-five. No aristocrat, but instead a new man from the middling rank, Franklin nevertheless conceived that political leadership was a duty which the successful citizen owed to society, and he always opposed

the creation in America of a professional class of politicians and office holders. Like Jefferson he was a philosopher in politics, but a philosopher without a rigid political theory, who adapted ideas to practice. Like Jefferson, too, he accepted reluctantly the role of party leader. In the first phase (1751–1754) he was more the statesman than the politician, concerned as he was mainly with intercolonial and imperial problems. In the next decade his involvement in the factional politics of Pennsylvania was a retreat from higher ground that he had taken in the mid-century crisis of empire.

Pennsylvania, as he knew it, was a vaguely feudal domain, one of the two proprietorships mingling landlordism with government that survived until the Revolution. But William Penn had acquired his American estate very late, when private colonies were in disfavor and the Stuarts were attempting to bring all the plantations under closer control, in the interest especially of trade regulation. Hence his privileges as a feudal lord were more restricted than Lord Baltimore's; by his own Charter of Liberties (1701), moreover, he had surrendered the making of laws to a unique unicameral assembly. His sons lived comfortably in England; they sent over to the colony their deputy-governors, who exercised a veto on the colony laws and were bound by both proprietary and royal instructions. The family collected quitrents on their grants of lands, and insisted that all their ungranted lands be exempt from provincial taxation. They became Anglicans, straining the affections of Quaker subjects who long dominated the assembly. Quaker pacifism made other difficulties when the nation was at war, and the king, through his secretary of state, called on the colonies under the requisition system for contributions of men and money.

In all the provinces, moreover, both royal and propri-

etary, there was a conflict implicit in imperialism between local interests and the interest of the metropolis. (Rhode Island and Connecticut, corporate colonies, were able to maintain a larger measure of independence, chiefly because of their insignificance; in most respects they remained little self-governing republics.) The great constitutional issue was still prerogative power against popular government; or, in human terms, governors against assemblies. Few complaints were made until 1764 of encroachments by Parliament upon the rights of Englishmen guaranteed by royal charters to American subjects of the king. Parliamentary power overseas was vaguely defined and rarely asserted, except for trade regulation — and then it was accepted in principle, though often opposed or flouted in detail. But the assemblies were always quarreling with their governors, usually over questions of finance. Tension, in fact, was built into the structure of province government: legally government by royal grace and favor, actually a dualism of power. Crown lawyers all asserted that the assemblies stood on no higher level than the municipal corporations in England; but in colonial thinking — and colonial purpose — these were their cherished miniature parliaments. Vividly aware of the course of English history, especially in the seventeenth century, the assembly leaders consciously modeled their claims both of privilege and of substantive powers upon the claims of Commons and its triumph in the Glorious Revolution. Wielding the power of the purse they were successful in many though not all of their contests with prerogative. Thus they greatly enlarged the sphere of colonial self-government.

They were good Whigs, these popular leaders in America, or so they thought themselves until Parliament, by its later claims to a universal dominion, revealed a chasm between British and American Whiggism. Their watch-

words were liberty, balanced government, popular rule. By which they meant: British liberties, a balance in government inclined toward elected legislatures, rule by representatives of such of the people as possessed property, especially in land, sufficient to ensure their stake in society.

As an assemblyman Franklin was this kind of a Whig; but his political credo was more often implied than stated. In 1729, however, Governor Burnet's long-standing quarrel with his assembly over his salary had led to some "spirited remarks" by the new editor of the *Gazette* in Philadelphia. He had praised the Massachusetts House for sticking to "what *they think* their right, and that of the people they represent." He had added, with a flourish, that their mother country would observe with pleasure, "that though her gallant cocks, and matchless dogs abate their natural fire and intrepidity, when transported to a foreign clime (as this nation is)," yet even in the third and fourth generations her sons still retain that ardent spirit of liberty "which has in every age so gloriously distinguished BRITONS and ENGLISHMEN, from the rest of mankind." So well liked were these Whiggish sentiments in Pennsylvania that the printer noticed an increase in subscriptions. Thus early he hinted at themes that often recur in his political writings: Free men have a right to express their opinions freely without compromising their loyalty. Government is wise when it heeds public opinion.

For success in politics, friends were as important as organizing ability — which Franklin possessed — or facility as a speaker, which he altogether lacked. Throughout his life he exercised a rare talent for friendships at all levels, sometimes with his opponents. His reserve made him often silent in company (and a good listener); but he could be as convivial as anyone on occasion. He enjoyed his club and his lodge, and he profited by them in politics.

Franklin had been a Mason since 1731, soon after the

founding of St. John's lodge (the first in America). He drafted the lodge's bylaws, was successively its warden, grand master, and secretary, and in 1749 was chosen grand master of Pennsylvania. He also printed the first Masonic book in the colonies (1732). Masonry followed him on journeys to Boston and Paris; he found its lodges more congenial than any church.

Franklin's successor as grand master of Pennsylvania was William Allen, wealthy merchant, landlord, and investor, for a number of years his patron in politics, but later his great enemy. Long the giant of the assembly, Allen was appointed chief justice of the province in 1750; in 1751 he helped Peter Collinson solicit an appointment for Franklin in the imperial post-office service, advancing funds for the fees. The two were often associated in good causes: the academy, the hospital, the Germany charity schools. Both feared that German immigrants and their culture would swamp the colony; their scheme of educational Anglicanization was perhaps as much influenced by politics, as Christopher Sauer charged, as by philanthropy. Together they supervised the first census of Philadelphia in 1749; and in 1753 and 1754 they promoted Captain Swaine's two remarkable voyages from Philadelphia to seek the Northwest Passage.

Both were keenly concerned with provincial defense in King George's War, when Philadelphia lay naked to attack by sea and in the assembly the Quakers, firm in their pacific principles and confident of the friendship of the Indians, resisted Governor Thomas's urgings that they pass a militia bill. While still a private citizen, Franklin had published a persuasive pamphlet, *Plain Truth* (1747), addressed especially to "the middling people, the tradesmen, shopkeepers, and farmers of this province and city," who could not, like the rich, flee the land if danger approached. He criticized the legislators: "*Protection* is as

truly due from the government to the people, as *obedience* from the people to the government"; and he deplored the selfish interests of party, class, and section that frustrated efforts for the general good. Characteristically, he proposed a common-sense way around the difficulty, by a voluntary association of the people for their own defense, and his plea was unexpectedly successful. In public meetings (one of which he addressed), ten thousand subscribers joined the association; they furnished their own arms, drilled, elected officers. Franklin, however, declined the colonelcy of the Philadelphia regiment.

He had also proposed in 1747 the lotteries that raised £6000 currency to purchase guns from Boston for the battery down-river, and with a committee, including Allen, he traveled to New York to borrow other cannon. At the outset Governor Clinton refused, but later, softened by Madeira, relented: he offered first six, then ten, and, by the end of the banquet, eighteen fine cannon! Franklin cannily managed all these warlike preparations without alienating the Quakers. Some, indeed, were willing to aid, notably James Logan; and Logan discovered new reasons for confidence in his protégé, "the principal mover and very soul of the whole," he testified, though aided by Allen, and a humble man withal, who "carried himself a musket among the common soldiers."

Franklin and Allen still were friends in 1750, when both opposed Parliament's passage of the Iron Act, forbidding the establishment of new forges and slitting mills in the colonies but encouraging the export of unprocessed iron. (Since 1698 Parliament had laid other restraints on the colonial manufactures of woolens and hats, at the behest of English interests.) Allen was himself an investor in iron furnaces. Franklin's objections were broadly stated in a significant essay written in 1751 which contained his first critique of British colonial policies.

The British empire was an empire of trade, its policies mainly embodied in the Acts of Trade and Navigation (1660–1696). These statutes established a monopoly of the carrying trade of the empire shared by colonial merchants and seamen. They restrained to English ports the export of certain colonial staples — sugar, tobacco, indigo, rice, furs — but not the foodstuffs of Pennsylvania; they required colonial imports of European manufactures to pass through the ports of the mother country; and they set up a colonial customs service. Franklin came ultimately to question the wisdom of all such artificial interferences with the natural course of commerce. But, with most Americans, he had long recognized as a practical matter that colonists owed obedience to trade regulations in return for protection. The American Revolution was not, primarily, a revolt against mercantilism, although after 1764 the stricter administration of the customs and the extension of admiralty courts created conflicts and bitterness. In another sense, however, the Revolution was a bold rejection of the inferior status inevitably assigned a colony, even in the best of empires. Franklin was as sensitive as any American on the point of status. An ardent imperialist, he accepted mercantilism, himself used mercantilist arguments; his ideal of empire, nevertheless, was an empire of mutual advantage.

On its face, his essay, "Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.," was a brilliant American contribution to current discussions of demography, anticipating as it did Malthus's argument that only the competitive struggle for existence sets a bound to the prolific nature of plants and animals, but drawing very different (more optimistic) conclusions regarding the national welfare. The passages most widely echoed by writers on both sides of the Atlantic were Franklin's famous observations on the rate of population

growth in America. He rejected estimates based on statistics of old, settled countries. People increase in proportion to the number of marriages, and in America the abundance and cheapness of land favored early and prolific marriages. His statistics were meager, but his far-reaching speculations proved amazingly accurate. By natural increase alone, he declared, the population of the continental colonies doubled every twenty to twenty-five years, hence in another century the greatest number of Englishmen would be living on this side of the Atlantic. "What an accession of power to the British empire by sea as well as land!" he exclaimed. "What increase of trade and navigation!"

Further ominous conclusions could be drawn from Franklin's classic estimate, and probably no other American pronouncement fixed so strongly in British minds, after 1763, the conviction that Americans were entering upon the path to independence. But Franklin, in 1751, argued only that a vast demand for manufactures was arising in continental North America, a glorious market that would soon exceed Britain's capacity to supply. It was folly, therefore, to restrain colonial manufactures: "A wise and good mother will not do it." For then prices would rise in England; rival nations would crowd her out of foreign markets and thus grow populous and dangerous; her colonies, "kept too low," would be "unable to assist her, or add to her strength." One notable passage scouted fears that American industry would become seriously competitive: "So vast is the territory of North America, that it will require many ages to settle it fully; and, till it is fully settled, labor will never be cheap here, where no man continues long a laborer for others, but gets a plantation of his own, no man continues long a journeyman to a trade, but goes among those new settlers, and sets up for himself, etc."

One crucial condition, of course, governed Franklin's whole argument: the fast-multiplying inhabitants of British North America must continue to find room on this continent to expand. A cardinal principle of his imperial faith, thenceforth, was the necessity of expansion. The great present threat to British expansion — the threat, indeed, alarmists were saying, to the very existence of the British seaboard possessions — was the thrust of French power from Canada toward the forks of the Ohio and the wilderness lands behind Pennsylvania and Virginia. Franklin was as keenly alive to the dangers from New France as anyone, and he shared his fears with imperialist friends in New York and Massachusetts, several of them (Colden, Kennedy, and Alexander) already his scientific correspondents. They read his essay on population in manuscript copies; in 1755 Governor Shirley persuaded him to permit its publication in Dr. William Clarke's Boston pamphlet on the French menace.

Meanwhile, with these friends he was deeply engaged in discussing Indian affairs, defense, expansion, and projects of intercolonial union. The intercolonial discussions of 1751–1754, by letters, pamphlets, and personal conferences, prepared the ground for his continental statesmanship at the Albany Congress. Most of the men of his circle were British born, royal officials in the provinces to the eastward; and Franklin himself became a crown officer in 1753. Already he was comptroller of the colonial post office; now at last he secured the eagerly sought appointment as joint-deputy postmaster general of North America, with William Hunter of Virginia as his colleague. By his efficiencies he brought the colonial post, by 1774, so he later claimed, to produce three times the revenue of the Irish post (and also provided offices for friends and kinsmen). He was one of the few administrators whose authority crossed colonial boundaries; on long journeys of inspec-

tion he acquired an intimate understanding of the middle colonies and New England.

By the spring of 1754 the Anglo-French conflict was about to burst into open warfare in the western wilderness. News of recent Virginia reverses was printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette,* May 9, with Franklin's famous woodcut: the joint-snake, standing for the disunited British colonies, with the slogan, "JOIN, or DIE." This was Franklin's graphic plea for a continental union of the kind he had been pondering for three years past. The chance to achieve it was now offered by the summons (from the Board of Trade) for a meeting at Albany of commissioners from several colonies, to renew the covenant chain with the Six Nations. Franklin was cast for his role of continental leader when the Pennsylvania assembly named him its commissioner, along with the speaker, Isaac Norris; Thomas Penn and Richard Peters would represent the council. They carried presents to treat for Indian lands west of the mountains; most of them, including Franklin, had taken part in Indian powwows at the Treaty of Carlisle (1753). But the assembly, quarreling with Governor Hamilton over an appropriation act to fulfill Pennsylvania's requisition, was deaf to his plea that they endorse the union in Indian affairs which Shirley was urging in Massachusetts and Lieutenant-Governor De Lancey in New York. Only the Massachusetts assembly, in fact, instructed its Albany commissioners to "enter into a *general,* firm and perpetual union and confederacy," for mutual assistance in peace and war.

Franklin, nevertheless, without local backing, brought to Albany the heads of that scheme of continental union which, despite its failure, marks the real beginning of American federalism. The evolution of his Albany plan can be traced clearly enough from its genesis, three years earlier, to its embodiment in the Congress proposals. In

1751, Archibald Kennedy, a defense-conscious New York official, proposed an intercolonial "confederacy," to hearten the Indians and check the French — in form an annual meeting of commissioners from all the continental colonies, to negotiate Indian treaties, establish frontier forts and settlements, fix provincial quotas of defense contributions — the whole to be enforced by an act of Parliament. However, before he published his plan in his pamphlet on *The Importance of Gaining and Preserving the Friendship of the Indians,* he submitted it to Franklin for comment, through the printer, James Parker, who was Franklin's New York partner.

Franklin promptly seized upon Kennedy's cue. It would be a very strange thing, he replied, if Six Nations of ignorant savages should be capable of forming a union that had subsisted for ages, and yet a like union should be impracticable for ten or a dozen English colonies, to whom it was more necessary. His letter was published in the pamphlet (without his name). He proposed no mere league or confederacy, such as Kennedy had outlined, but a true intercolonial *government,* to manage everything relating to Indian affairs and defense, with an institutional structure roughly of the familiar provincial type. In a general council each colony would be represented in proportion to its contributions to the general treasury; for administration, a general governor would be appointed by the crown. Franklin preferred a voluntary union, as not much more difficult to procure than one imposed by Parliament, and easier to improve; and he suggested, rather whimsically, that New York should send half a dozen "ambassadors" to convert the leading men in each colony to the cause. (Franklin was most a utopian in his faith in the power of persuasion by good and wise men; he had dreamed at twenty-five of a "United Party for Virtue," pledged to act always for the good of their country and of mankind.) But

he surrendered this point before he journeyed to Albany, persuaded, perhaps, by Dr. Clarke. Thus amended, he wrote out his ideas a little more fully in a memorandum of "Short Hints." This was the paper he discussed with Kennedy and James Alexander, his friends in science (and now in imperial planning), when he passed through New York. Alexander wrote Colden that their talk had turned on the difficulty of forming a union without "affecting our liberties on the one hand, or being ineffectual on the other." Thus early, Franklin, with his friends, had discovered the major stumbling block in all federal schemes.

On June 19 commissioners from all the New England colonies and from Maryland and Pennsylvania met at Albany with De Lancey and his New York council. On June 24 they resolved that a union of all the colonies was absolutely necessary for their preservation. As the leading men of each of their colonies, meeting in an atmosphere of crisis, they were willing to transcend their instructions. The same day a committee was appointed, of the ablest commissioners, one from each colony — including Thomas Hutchinson of Massachusetts, Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania. They were charged to receive and prepare plans of union, and digest them in their report "with all imaginable speed." This report they submitted after four days, interrupted by Indian talks, but it was still only a broad outline elaborating Franklin's "Hints." Time pressed; evidently they had found no other plan than Franklin's suited to the demands of the occasion.

The report, as copied by a New Hampshire commissioner, began with a Franklinian preamble that went to the heart of the problem: how to erect, within the empire, at the intercolonial level, a union for general purposes without disturbing the existing balance of forces? "In such a scheme," it ran, "the just prerogatives of the

crown must be preserved or it will not be approved and confirmed in England. The just liberties of the people must be secured or the several colonies will disapprove of it and oppose it. Yet some prerogative may be abated to extend dominion and increase subjects and some liberty to obtain safety." Until July 2 the most hotly debated issue was the one on which Franklin had early yielded: whether an act of Parliament was the only expedient to obtain such a union? The point was carried in the affirmative, though still opposed by some members from Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Connecticut men also continued to hold that too much power was lodged in the president general, but they went along with the main design. Clause by clause, the report was debated in intervals between Indian conferences and further elaborated, until on July 9 Mr. Franklin was desired to reduce it to a finished draft. Next day this draft was accepted, for transmission to the assemblies.

Franklin's claim, at the time and later, that he was the main architect of the Albany Plan of Union is amply confirmed by all the evidence, including the repeated testimony of Thomas Hutchinson, who at Albany stood shoulder to shoulder with his friend from Pennsylvania in support of a "strong" union. The congress plan proposed "one general government," continental in scope, for specified common ends: defense, Indian regulation, expansion. In the grand council, representing the assemblies in proportion to their contributions to the general treasury, there would be what Franklin called "a concentration of the powers of the several assemblies in certain points for the general welfare"; and in the president general, appointed and supported by the crown, a similar concentration of the powers of the several governors. In all other respects each colony would retain its existing constitution. Within its area of operation the union government would

have power to pass laws and to levy duties, imposts, or taxes.

At Albany the plan prevailed because informed colonial leaders were deeply impressed by the crisis of security — and also because Franklin and his group yielded concessions in detail. The opposition in the congress, moreover, was divided between prerogative men, led by De Lancey, and the "republican" group, strongest in the Connecticut delegation. In the aftermath of Albany, particularism and fear of concentrated power led every assembly either to ignore or to reject the plan. Franklin was aggrieved that Pennsylvania turned it down during his absence from the assembly. It was never formally considered in England; had it been, it would surely have been rejected. Looking backward in 1789 along the road which led from the last French war through revolution to federal union, Franklin argued that if this or some similar plan had been adopted, "the subsequent separation of the colonies from the mother country might not so soon have happened."

This was the wisdom of hindsight. But it is also true that in 1754 Franklin had canvassed with extraordinary foresight the alternatives that soon confronted England and her colonies. The New Yorkers at the congress, being councilors, had proposed representation of the councils as well as the assemblies in the union government; in his argument for the Albany plan, transmitted to Lord Halifax, Franklin objected, on the ground that "it is essential to English liberty, that the subject should not be taxed but by his own consent, or the consent of his elected representatives." He traveled to Boston in the winter as postmaster general, and conferred with Governor Shirley. There he raised the same argument against Shirley's substitute proposal for a union of councils and taxation by Parliament. The three letters to Shirley that he wrote in December, 1754, covered most of the arguments later

heard against the Stamp Act, so much so, in fact, that he had them printed in London in 1766, to prove that these were not objections newly started in face of the Grenville program, but had been formulated *before* the French power was subdued. The colonies, he urged, were frontiers of the British empire, properly defended at joint expense. By her trade regulations, he said, especially by her export monopoly, Britain makes sure that "our whole wealth centers finally amongst the merchants and inhabitants of Britain." By enabling them better to pay their taxes, we pay a kind of secondary taxes ourselves.

In the Boston talks Shirley had raised the question of another kind of union — a federative union of the colonies with the mother country, through American representation at Westminster. Franklin considered his suggestion seriously, both then and later. It appealed to his imperial consciousness and his improving temper. Personally, he told Shirley, he would welcome a consolidating union. He even thought, in 1754, that it would be acceptable to Americans generally — provided all the acts restraining trade and manufactures be repealed, to be reconsidered in the new imperial Parliament. A minority of American members at Westminster might abate, at least, the influence of selfish British pressure groups; such a government would be preferable to government by instruction. He hoped, too, that a union in Parliament would create, within the empire, "one community with one interest; which I imagine would contribute to strengthen the whole, and greatly lessen the danger of future separations."

Soon after the congress he returned to his favorite theme of continental expansion, to draft a plan for settling two new colonies in the critical zone of Anglo-French conflict between Lake Erie and the Ohio River — preferably under the aegis of the united colonies, should

the Albany plan be adopted; otherwise by charters from the crown to companies of British nobility and gentry, joined with Americans, both land speculators and intending settlers. At Albany he had doubtless discussed new settlements with Thomas Pownall; his own scheme seems to have been intended both to checkmate the French and to divert the Connecticut men from intruding into the Susquehanna region of Pennsylvania. In the old colonies on the seaboard, he believed, there were many thousands of families who were ready to swarm westward, "were there but a tolerable prospect of a safe settlement."

The war set aside all such schemes. Old plans were revived after the peace, new ones brought forward. As for Franklin, he continued to look westward. Beyond the Appalachians he saw both private profit in land speculations and the destined continental expansion of the Anglo-American empire.

V

War and Peace:

From Statehouse to Craven Street

AT ALBANY, in 1754, Franklin and his colleagues had acted like continental statesmen. In the drab aftermath of Albany they look like visionaries — most of all Franklin, last to lose faith in union on his own model.

For a year and more he hoped that something like the congress plan would be established by the king and Parliament. "Till it is done," he warned Collinson, "never expect to see an American war carried on as it ought to be, nor Indian affairs properly managed." This was in June, 1755, and soon it was evident that the war was going very badly. Everyone was at fault: government at home; a too-sanguine commander in chief, Edward Braddock, slain a fortnight later in the disastrous rout of his army near Fort Duquesne; quarreling governors and assemblies, exploiting the war crisis to score tactical points in their contests for power. Franklin wrote again in August to this London correspondent: "These obstructions of the general interest from particular disputes in the colonies show more and more the necessity of the projected UNION . . ." But no union was imposed from England, except at the military and administrative levels. The office of Indian superintendent was set up, as urged at Albany, but not the Grand American Council.

As much as anyone in these confused years, Franklin tried to serve the general interest. But he, too, was drawn deeply into factional politics, nowhere more bitter, more hampering to the war effort, than in Pennsylvania and the neighboring proprietorship of Maryland. It was Franklin's thesis that the vice was proprietorship itself, the fatal mingling of landlordism and government, and before long the overthrow of the proprietary regime became his obsessive political goal. On the other hand, the Penns and their supporters posed as the defenders of property rights against republicanism, and of national interest against Quaker pacifism in time of war. At every session the complicated struggle was renewed: over the appropriation acts, over the attempts by the assembly to float new issues of paper currency, and to tax the proprietor's estate; and over the instructions, rigidly imposed by the proprietor on his deputy-governors, to veto every act infringing his privileges. At bottom it was a contest for power, pressed on both sides with dangerous stubbornness. Franklin wrote most of the replies to the deputy-governors' messages; he later admitted they were tart and often abusive. Most often the assembly gave way, especially when war with the Delawares endangered the frontiers. But the military effort suffered; and Pennsylvania was in bad odor in England. Until 1757 the assembly had no effective champion at home to reply to charges that under Quaker dominance the province was incapable of assuming its share of the imperial burden, or even of performing its primary duty of self-defense.

Franklin abhorred all these altercations. So he told Collinson, in the summer of 1755. Only love of the country and the people, he wrote, restrained him from removing to the quieter government of Connecticut. Apparently, at first he felt that party leadership was thrust upon him, though enemies charged him with inordinate ambition.

Like so many Americans in his time, he began by deploring party as faction. Late in life, a veteran of many political struggles, he took a different view; among the Founders he was one of the few who ungrudgingly accepted the role of parties in the new republic. "Such will exist wherever there is liberty," he wrote in 1786; "and perhaps they help to preserve it."

Braddock and Shirley were organizing their campaigns in 1755, and Franklin attempted with some success to unite conflicting interests for the general welfare. He devised ways to induce moderate Quakers to vote funds, without surrendering the assembly's claims of right. "Quakerism" in defense he still opposed as much as did William Allen, but by different methods. Indeed, he now contended that "Quakerism" was a false issue, kept alive by the court party to rid the assembly of all the Quakers, whom he regarded in other respects as good and useful members; with greater realism than Allen he understood that both the Quakers and the German sectaries must be skillfully managed in wartime. By this middle course he broke with old friends, notably with Allen, a Penn supporter, who bitterly regretted his former patronage of the "grand incendiary" of the province. Josiah Quincy arrived from Boston to appeal for Pennsylvania's aid in the Crown Point expedition, and Franklin successfully backed his plea; he showed the assembly, moreover, how it could by-pass a veto, by drawing its orders on the loan-office account; and he made a lifelong friend of Quincy.

Franklin's public spirit also won him praise from General Braddock, for whom he performed perhaps the greatest civilian service of the war. He journeyed to Frederick, in Maryland, to confer with the commander in chief, ostensibly on post-office business, actually to remove his prejudices against Pennsylvania; and there he engaged to

find wagons and horses from the Pennsylvania farms for the transport of the western expedition. He even pledged his own modest fortune for the purpose, and for supplies he forwarded to the ill-fated army on its march, so that for some months after the debacle he faced ruin, until Shirley ordered payment of the claims.

And now the frontiers of Pennsylvania and Virginia swarmed with hostile Indians. All the summer of '55 Franklin was busy on the army's business; all fall and winter he took the lead in putting the province into a posture of defense. His correspondence fell into arrears, even his charmingly equivocal replies to the indiscreet youthful letters of adoration from Catharine Ray, the lovely, lively Block Islander of his past winter's idyl in New England. "Adieu," he wrote in October, to close a punning note to Katy, advising her to get a good husband and to practice *addition* (to her husband's estate), and *multiplication*. "I would gladly have taught you that myself, but you thought it was time enough and wouldn't learn." "Adieu. The bell rings, and I must go among the grave ones, and talk politics."

What came of these talks was his militia bill, saving Quaker scruples, which he explained to the public in "A Dialogue between X, Y, & Z, concerning the Present State of Affairs in Pennsylvania." This he published in the *Gazette,* December 18; it was reprinted in London, in the *Gentleman's Magazine,* March, 1756, to offset proprietary propaganda. The bill, however, was disallowed; but meanwhile a militia had been organized, on a democratic basis, modeled on Franklin's association of 1748 but now with assembly sanction; and Franklin was elected colonel of the Philadelphia regiment. Thomas Penn was piqued when he learned that Franklin's officers had put on a parade in his honor to speed him on a journey to Williams-

burg. Was this plebeian on horseback, at the head of a republican army, planning, perhaps, to defy him among his American subjects?

Franklin's improbable career in arms had its climax that winter in an expedition to rebuild the outpost at Gnadenhuetten (razed by Indians), for defense of the Lehigh gap. He went out as a civilian committeeman, merely, but the Moravians at Bethlehem were soon calling him "General" Franklin. "Providence," he wrote Sister Jane in Boston, "seems to require various duties of me."

For the next eight years the duty that absorbed his energy was leadership of the popular party — no longer exactly the old Quaker party, though Quakers were still an important element in the antiproprietary coalition. Indian attacks, imperiling the frontiers, had posed an impossible dilemma for the more rigid Quakers, who began to withdraw from the assembly, to be replaced by "Franklin men." The remodeled Franklin-Quaker party was widely popular in all sections, and in most sects, but from various motives; it was united mainly in its opposition to proprietary privilege. Franklin, however, kept on familiar terms with the deputy-governors, who found his services still indispensable; and attempts were made, by flattery, to soften his popular principles. Thus in 1756 William Denny, just come from England, made a ceremony (at his own reception by the city) of bestowing the gold medal of the Royal Society on Philadelphia's famous electrical experimenter. But the next year it was Denny, bound by inflexible instructions, who precipitated another constitutional crisis; and from this crisis Franklin emerged as the assembly's champion in England.

In January, 1757, Denny vetoed the appropriation bill for £100,000, which included a tax on the proprietary estate. Soon Franklin was writing his business correspondent, William Strahan (a notably successful Scots printer

in London) : "Our assembly talk of sending me to England speedily. Then look out sharp, and if a fat old fellow should come to your printing-house and request a little smouting, depend upon it 'tis your affectionate friend and humble servant." But there were urgent tasks to complete before he embarked with his son William, his companion on the long voyage: the drafting of the assembly's case (in the report of the committee of aggrievances); and the agreement which he reached in conference with Denny and Lord Loudoun to preserve the national interest — again he persuaded the assembly to recede, but only temporarily, without conceding their principle.

It was not until July that he arrived in London as the special agent of the assembly. The first night he spent at Mill Hill, with Peter Collinson, his patron in science; and next day Strahan came to call. These two printers, over their dinners and their cribbage, became the greatest cronies, and Strahan gave him entree to London journalism. Soon Franklin took comfortable lodgings in Craven Street (conveniently near the government offices in Whitehall), in the household of the estimable widow Margaret Stevenson.

Both in medicine and in politics Franklin took advice from the eminent Quaker leader in London, Dr. John Fothergill, and Fothergill advised him against an immediate appeal to the crown. Accordingly, tedious negotiations were begun with the Penns, which dragged on into 1760. Soon, however, Franklin conferred with Lord Granville, the president of the council, who disturbed him profoundly by asserting that the king was the legislator of the colonies, dismissing out of hand the objection that while the colonists could not make a permanent law without the king's consent, neither could the king "make a law for them without theirs. He assured me I was totally mistaken."

As a humble colony agent, Franklin learned to expect arrogance from great men in power. But he felt only contempt when arrogance appeared in lesser men. He refused to deal with Paris, the Penns' attorney, "a proud, angry man," and at once he decided, not quite fairly, to despise the proprietor. Had not Thomas Penn at their first conference insinuated that Franklin's constituents were claiming privileges which his benevolent father had lacked the power to grant? — privileges, nevertheless, that had been advertised all over Europe to attract settlers? Later Franklin compared Penn to a low jockey, insolently pleased that he had cheated a customer on a horse!

The Penns, on their side, had been warned against this upstart agent, who seemed now to be acting in his reputed republican character. He wrote out at their request his statement of the assembly case, at first orally delivered, but he omitted their titles of "True and Absolute Proprietaries," a rudeness they took care to repay. They sent their reply, when at last it was ready (November, 1758), directly to Pennsylvania, a pointed snub.

Franklin, however, carried the battle to the English public, through the London press, and here Strahan was immensely obliging. He inserted all the assembly messages in his new evening newspaper, the *London Chronicle,* and reprinted a letter by William Franklin, now a student of the law at the Middle Temple and his father's assistant press agent. A more formidable statement was needed to overcome prejudices successfully planted in the English mind: it was nearly ready in June, 1758, but not actually published until a year later, as *An Historical Review of the Constitution and Government of Pennsylvania.* This was a lengthy, hard-hitting tract; many thought Franklin was the author, but he only furnished the materials, including documents that he had written for the assembly. From one of these a ringing motto was

chosen for the title page: "Those, who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety." An old friend, James Ralph, may have helped, but the main compiler was Richard ("Omniscient") Jackson, a learned bencher of the Middle Temple. The printer was Strahan, who struck off two thousand copies, which he charged to the agent's account. The publisher was Ralph Griffiths, the editor of the *Monthly Review* (which Strahan also printed), a Whig periodical always friendly to the Americans and to Franklin. With contacts such as these (and later with other notable London printers and stationers), the Craven Street publicity office functioned vigorously in every successive American controversy until the Revolution.

When, at length, the *Historical Review* was published, a troublesome affair for the agent, the Moore-Smith case, was pending on appeal in the Privy Council. William Moore, a justice of the peace in Chester county, and William Smith, Anglican provost of the academy, had been charged in 1758 with libeling the Pennsylvania assembly. Both had been arrested by the sergeant at arms, and lodged in jail until released by the supreme court. Provost Smith was now in England, pressing their appeal — with the prestige of his learning, which was recognized by Oxford with a D.D. degree — and everywhere he denounced the Quakers, and Franklin, their tool. In June, 1759, the Privy Council held that the assembly had exceeded its powers.

In another contest, before the board of trade, Franklin at first appeared more successful. Tedyuscung, "King of the Delawares," now at peace with the province, complained that the Penns had provoked the trouble by unjustly depriving his tribe of their Wyoming lands. The Friendly Association supported him: its agent, Charles Thomson, had kept a record at the conference of Easton

(1757) that differed from the proprietary minutes. The famous "Walking Purchase" (1737), denounced by the Indians and the Quakers as a fraud, was involved. Thomson now sent him the manuscript of *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Alienation of the Delaware and Shawanese Indians* (1759), which Strahan printed (with other materials) on the agent's account, as further effective antiproprietary propaganda. And before the board Franklin successfully challenged the proprietary title deeds to the disputed lands. The contest was therefore referred to Sir William Johnson, the northern Indian superintendent, who blunted this victory by eliminating the charge of fraud, thus throwing back on the Quakers the onus for Pennsylvania's disasters in the Indian War.

A compromise was reached, however, on the great point in controversy, taxation of the Penns' estate, and the assembly counted it a victory. Contrary to his instructions, Denny had signed an appropriation bill on the assembly's terms: accordingly the Penns determined to rid themselves of their pliant deputy, and to oppose royal confirmation of the act. They won the first round, in the council committee for plantation affairs (June, 1760). In later arguments before the council, Franklin's lawyers denied the charge that provincial assessors would deal unfairly with the proprietary interests, and bore down heavily on the mischiefs of repeal, since the whole sum of £100,000 had already been printed (and indeed actually spent in the king's service). At this point in the tedious arguments, Lord Mansfield beckoned Franklin into the clerk's chamber. Would he and Robert Charles (the regular agent) sign an engagement that the Penns' estate would not be harmed if the act were allowed? The agents agreed, and the act received the royal assent (September 2, 1760). The terms were a victory, in principle, for his constituents, but they yielded little revenue.

Franklin, however, was already playing for higher stakes — for the overthrow of the proprietary government — but cautiously, still, because he was as yet unsure of support in the province. In June, 1758, he had sent the assembly the opinion of Richard Jackson on "How far our present privileges would be affected in case of a change of government, by our coming directly under the crown." Jackson held that without Pennsylvania's consent the king could not alter any of the privileges granted by the royal charter, or by Penn's Charter of Privileges (annual elections, no legislative council, and the political rights, still denied in England, of the people called Quakers). Only an act of Parliament, he advised, could make any considerable alterations in these cherished privileges. But no one, he added prudently, could foresee what the wisdom of Parliament might determine with respect to new-modeling the provincial constitution.

Jackson's caution might well have given Franklin pause. Precisely these dangers of Parliamentary meddling with Pennsylvania's liberties, greater than those enjoyed by any colony except the New England corporations, strengthened the court party against the advocates of royal government in the contest of 1764. But Franklin's too-great contempt for the Penns, and the exaggerated value he set on "our coming directly under the crown," tempted him to pursue his own course, in which he subordinated every other issue to his attack upon proprietary privilege — a course that brought him close to political disaster in 1765. He became thoroughly a king's man — but still in his own mind the assembly's man — warned though he had been (by Granville's dictum) of the threat to American liberties that lurked in government by instruction. Almost, but not quite, he closed his eyes to the other great threat to colonial liberties, of direct Parliamentary encroachment, a danger he had defined so clearly in his conferences with

Shirley in the winter of 1754. (Perhaps his first step in this retreat had already occurred when he surrendered his idea of a voluntary continental union, to accept the necessity of union by Parliamentary statute.) It was a long and difficult course that he had to retrace after the crisis of 1765, to recover his original principles — principles that in the end justify (or explain) the American Revolution.

In September, 1758, he had warned Joseph Galloway, his party lieutenant in Pennsylvania, that the proprietary negotiation would be long unless the province should decide to petition for royal government. He wrote the same day to the speaker that government, at the first handle, would gladly rid itself of the remaining proprietorships: "I only think they wish for some advantage against the people's privileges as well as the proprietary powers." What were Norris's sentiments? he asked. Would the change be generally agreeable to the people?

He had planted a seed; he must be patient until he could cultivate the plant upon his return to Philadelphia. Meanwhile, he took every opportunity to expose the evils of proprietary government. To Israel Pemberton, "King of the Quakers," he wrote in March, 1759, "I believe it will in time be clearly seen by all thinking people that the government and property of a province should not be in the same family. 'Tis too much weight in one scale." Pemberton had shown antiproprietary leanings, but in 1764 he chose the other side. To his earlier letter to Galloway, Franklin had added a postscript, under date of September 19, 1758: "I enclose you one of the latest papers, communicate it to the speaker." That same day, in Strahan's *London Chronicle,* he had addressed some twenty-nine queries "to a friend of Lord Baltimore." The grievances of the Maryland assembly closely paralleled Pennsylvania's, and their popular leaders lay under the same imputation of hampering the war effort; denied an agent, they

were suspected of secretly employing Franklin. This piece was a frontal attack upon the Calverts, and it set them fuming; it was also an adroit flank attack upon the Penns. For in his final query Franklin assumed that the frequent clashings of interest, so prejudicial to His Majesty's service during this war, were inevitable in proprietary governments. Did this not make it necessary now to inquire into their nature and conduct, "and put them on a better footing?"

In 1762 a Franklin opponent, James Hamilton, wrote sarcastically of the vast expense, and the negative results, of his mission: "Yet what is this to Mr. Franklin? Hath it not afforded him a life of pleasure, and an opportunity of displaying his talents among the virtuosi of various kingdoms and nations?" Certainly he lived well, and even graciously, in London, with a coach of his own and two servants (one a slave who ran away), but not as expensively as Hamilton — and William Allen — alleged. (Nor as frugally, either, as he had preached to others in "The Way of Wealth," written on the voyage over.)

In England, happily, he found leisure for other matters than the assembly's business, so long delayed by the Penns. Leisure for friendships: in Mrs. Stevenson's home circle, with Dr. Fothergill and "Straney," and with his other intimate among the transplanted Scots in London, Sir John Pringle, F.R.S. Pringle had acquired a great name as the reformer of military medicine; and in 1761 he was appointed physician to the queen. He was afterwards physician to that young rake, James Boswell, and it was Boswell, in his journal for 1769, who sharply etched the discongruity in manners of these two fast friends. He called on Pringle, found them engaged in a game of chess: Sir John with his "peculiar sour manner," Franklin "all jollity and pleasantry. I said to myself, 'Here is a prime contrast: acid and alkali.' " Often Franklin was Pringle's

guest at dinners of the Royal Philosophers in the Mitre tavern, where the scientists unbent; and more intimately in Pringle's house, at his Sunday evenings for select company from the learned world. Together they attended meetings of the Royal Society, when papers were read. Franklin also met with other ingenious spirits at the Society of Arts. And there were weekly supper meetings with his clubs: on Mondays with "the Gentlemen at the George and Vulture"; on Thursdays at St. Paul's Coffee House, where he conversed with the Reverend Richard Price, "founder of life insurance," and the schoolmasters John Canton (a notable electrician), George Rose, and James Burgh (who wrote on morals, education and reform of representation), and all those other congenial dissenters in religion and politics whom he called his "Club of Good Whigs." In 1760 he was elected an Associate of Dr. Bray, a philanthropic society which backed Negro schools in the colonies. At one of their meetings, at least, he must have met a less active Associate, the great moralist and lexicographer, Dr. Samuel Johnson.

His contacts were few, however, with the *literati* of London. But he knew intimately the great scientists of the day, who had greatly honored him, and he tried to keep up with scientific progress. In 1758 he joined John Hadley, professor of chemistry, in his laboratory at Cambridge to perform experiments in evaporation. He wrote a letter to Dr. Pringle which was read in the Royal Society and printed in the *London Chronicle,* reporting his attempts in Philadelphia to treat paralytics by electric shock (which he had found of no benefit). He invented a clock, with three wheels only and two pinions, which his friends James Ferguson and John Whitehurst improved. He perfected his armonica; for a time this musical instrument had a vogue in Europe comparable to his lightning rod. But he was interrupted too often in London for the brilliant pio-

neering in science that he had achieved in Philadelphia. He could always find time, however, to write his landlady's daughter, that eager young novice in natural philosophy, on her holidays; and these letters to Mary Stevenson were models of style (and good manners) in elementary scientific instruction.

Travel, Franklin thought, benefited his health. With his son he visited Cambridge twice in 1758, then set out to discover Franklin sites and kindred in Northamptonshire. With William again his companion, he made his first visit to Scotland in 1759, to accept his doctorate of laws at St. Andrew's. In London most of his close friends were Scots, and not a few in America; and now in Scotland he enjoyed, as he assured one of his hosts, "six weeks of the *densest* happiness" that he had met with in life, a tribute to his friendship with that galaxy of genius which made Edinburgh at this time the "Athens of the North": Sir Alexander Dick, president of the College of Physicians; William Robertson, historian; David Hume, historian and philosopher; Dr. William Cullen, chemist; Henry Home, Lord Kames, judge of the court of session, just now writing his *Elements of Criticism;* and at Glasgow, Adam Smith, quaestor of the university. There were other holiday jaunts: to the midlands in 1760, when he joined Matthew Boulton of Birmingham in electrical experiments; with William to Belgium and Holland in 1761, when at Leyden he met Dr. Musschenbroek, whose wonderful bottle he had analyzed with classic precision.

For all his prestige as the new Prometheus, in his humble official character of colony agent he found it hard to meet the great men who determined the policies of empire. Speaker Onslow was his friend, and through Pringle he came to the notice of Lord Shelburne and Lord Bute. Most of all he was anxious to meet William Pitt, organizer of victory on four continents, but he found him inac-

cessible until 1774, "too great a man, or too much occupied in affairs of greater moment." Pitt's secretaries were polite, and seemed interested in the agent's views of America. Early in his mission he talked at length with Charles Pratt (later Lord Camden), who surprised him by declaring that the colonists, for all their professions of loyalty, would one day throw off their dependence on Britain. Franklin assured him (as for years he assured everyone), that no such idea was entertained by the Americans, "nor will it ever enter their heads, unless you grossly abuse them." "Very true," replied Pratt, "that is one of the main causes I see will happen, and will produce the event."

Not independence, but the future grandeur of empire was foremost in Franklin's mind in these years when Pitt was compelling victory. He had left for Scotland on the day when London citizens were celebrating the news of Minden; and in Edinburgh he had read the glorious — and tragic — news of the capture of Quebec, Wolfe's fatal climactic victory in the American war. War and peace, these were the recurrent themes of his letters to the press, published in Strahan's *London Chronicle* between 1758 and 1761. Satirical essays most of them were, leading up to his cogent argument in the Canada pamphlet for a peace of security in North America. Once, indeed, he wrote warmly as "A New Englandman," to defend the colonial troops against those aspersions on their courage which were so frequently published in the London press, in extracts of letters from the regular officers serving overseas. Most of these detractors, he observed, were North Britons; despite his great liking for individual Scots, he was willing to exploit the prevailing English prejudice in so good a cause. Matching ironic blow for blow, he ended this piece, nevertheless, on a typical healing note: "Na-

tional reflections being general, are therefore unjust."

Franklin often asserted that there was never a good war or a bad peace. But in these years, when the turn to victory was stimulating a powerful peace movement in England (prematurely he thought), he subordinated philosophy to realism, and to his conception of American and imperial interest. Writing as "Chearful," in December, 1758, he borrowed a device from Poor Richard to minimize the burden of the great expenditures for the ensuing campaign. As "A Briton," in 1761, he quoted from a supposititious chapter in a Jesuit book to discredit the motives of the proponents of an early peace. Again, in December, 1759, he stated ironically a number of reasons for restoring Canada to the French, in a sprightly little satire that concluded: "Let us be but a *little too late* with our ships in the river St. Laurence, so that the enemy may . . . recover Quebec, and there is an end of the question."

When this appeared he was about to intervene more seriously in the controversy over peace terms: the so-called Canada *vs.* Guadeloupe debate. In 1759 both Guadeloupe and Quebec had fallen to British arms. Which of these conquests should Britain retain in the peace, if, as seemed likely by an early negotiation a choice must be made? The French sugar island? Or the vast continental dominion of Canada and the trans-Appalachian West? Opinion was sharply divided, and the issues were vigorously debated in newspapers and pamphlets. Mercantilist writers, in general, favored enlarging the raw-material area (though the powerful British West India interests were opposed, fearing competition and lower prices for their sugar). Mercantilists, moreover, who took short-term commercial views, saw no profit in scattered wilderness settlements, and in a longer prospect predicted that removing the French from the back of the British seaboard settlements

would invite them to throw off their commercial and, eventually, their political dependence. One of the ablest of these writers — probably William Burke, secretary of Guadeloupe — had replied in 1759 to a tract in favor of continental conquests, in a pamphlet entitled *Remarks on the Letter Address'd to Two Great Men.* Franklin annotated his copy, and from his notes he constructed his own famous rejoinder, *The Interest of Great Britain Considered, with Regard to her Colonies, and the Acquisitions of Canada and Guadaloupe,* published April 17, 1760. Afterwards he acknowledged assistance from a learned friend who did not wish to be named, his fellow agent, Richard Jackson, but demonstrably the pamphlet was planned and written throughout by Franklin.

The case that Franklin made for retaining Canada and the West turned upon three great points of *security:* security of possession, that the French might not thereafter drive the English from North America; security of the frontiers against Indian ravages instigated by the French; and security for Britain herself against the repetition in every future European war of expenditures of blood and treasure to defend the North American empire. If Canada should be returned, he argued, no system of frontier posts, such as the Remarker had proposed, could provide reasonable security in these vital respects. Only the complete removal of French dominion would answer this end. Franklin assumed too readily that in his kind of peace no need would arise for future imperial expenditures in North America for forts and garrisons. Only posts to protect the Indian trade would be required, he thought, and these would be manned and supported by the colonies concerned in the trade. His pamphlet, of course, was written before the crucial British decision was made known to maintain for the first time a permanent peacetime garrison in North Amerca — from which flowed so many

other decisions fatal to the internal peace and security of the empire.

One persistent British assumption, on the other hand, Franklin vainly undertook to dispel: that the Seven Years' War had been fought in defense of the colonies, and to make conquests for them. New acquisitions on the continent, he argued, would actually reduce the value of the colonists' present lands, by throwing new lands on the market. Aside from safety, the only advantages Americans might expect would be shared with all British subjects: "*Our North American* colonies are to be considered as the frontier of the *British* empire on that side . . . It will be a conquest for the whole; and all our people will, in the increase of trade, and the ease of taxes, find the advantage of it. . . . if ever there was a *national war,* this is truly such a one." By just such arguments, framed in 1760 to demonstrate that expansion in North America was a British, rather than merely an American, object, he later denied the equity of the measures adopted after 1763 to shift to American shoulders part of the costs of defending the new acquisitions.

In his rebuttal of the Remarker's arguments, moreover, he foreshadowed another American thesis in later controversies. North American conquests, the Remarker had contended, would be both useless and dangerous to Britain. Useless, because Americans, by expanding into the interior, would be able to live by their own labor and consume their own manufactures; dangerous, because after the removal of the French check they would break with the mother country, to set up as independent states. These views, Franklin knew, were widely held in Britain, and he was at great pains to rebut them.

He agreed, of course, that with room for expansion the Americans would multiply greatly in numbers; had he not proved this point himself, in his essay on population? — an

essay now reprinted in his appendix, and drawn upon heavily in his arguments. He foresaw, indeed, an increase of population to perhaps one hundred millions — but only after many generations. Meantime, Britain must continue to supply America with most of its requirements in manufactures. An expanding frontier population, he argued, was a population mainly of farmers; manufactures arise in densely settled countries, the result of poverty in the people. Jackson had perhaps supplied him with the data on the internal commerce of Europe and Asia, here used to argue, not too convincingly, that by the navigation of rivers and lakes in North America British trade would keep pace with the frontier advance. More effective was the statistical demonstration that British exports to North America were already increasing more rapidly than British exports to the West Indies — more rapidly, indeed, than the rate of increase of the North American population. By his own emphasis on the market aspect of mercantilism Franklin hoped to offset the mercantilist fears of new continental acquisitions.

In his rebuttal Franklin was most effective in the ironical commentary on the plea that removal of the French check would open the door to independence: "We have already seen in what manner the French and their Indians *check the growth* of our colonies. 'Tis a modest word, this, *check,* for massacring men, women, and children." As the framer of the defunct Albany Plan, he could easily show that intercolonial jealousies were so strong among Americans as to prevent even a necessary union of the colonies for their common defense. Could there be any danger, then, that they would unite against their own nation, "which 'tis well known they all love much more than they love one another?" But remembering, perhaps, his conversation with Charles Pratt, he made one reservation which preserves his standing as a prophet:

When I say such an union is impossible, I mean without the most grievous tyranny and oppression. People who have property in a country which they may lose, and privileges which they may endanger, are generally disposed to be quiet; and even to bear much, rather than hazard all. While the government is mild and just, while important civil and religious rights are secure, such subjects will be dutiful and obedient. The waves do not rise but when the winds blow.

Eight years later, at the head of a newspaper essay expounding American grievances, Franklin set what he called a proverb: "The waves never rise but when the winds blow."

In 1760, in the mood established by the great victories of the *annus mirabilis,* he rejected all the gloomy English forebodings of an end of empire. His faith as an Anglo-American imperialist was confirmed in 1763 when the peace was written, broadly, in terms of his own prescription — though he never claimed, nor can it be established, that his arguments swayed the English diplomats at Paris. It was the optimistic faith he had already stated so eloquently to Lord Kames in January, 1760: "I have long been of opinion, that the *foundations of the future grandeur and stability of the British empire lie in America.*" Like other foundations, these were "low and little seen"; but they were nevertheless broad and strong enough to support "the greatest political structure human wisdom ever yet erected."

VI

Stamp Act:

Retreat and Recovery

By the treaty of paris (1763), France ceded Canada and her claims east of the Mississippi to Great Britain. With the later cession to Spain of New Orleans and western Louisiana, French power was finally excluded from North America.

Franklin called it a glorious peace, the most advantageous in British annals. Well he might: it satisfied all his conditions for security and expansion. Doubling their numbers every quarter century, the American people now had room to expand for generations to come, and thus preserve their character of a middling society of farmers and artisans, adding year by year through trade to the riches and power of the British empire. Franklin saw no need of innovations in government to make this best of empires endure, except a continental union. For the rest, an easygoing mercantilism would suffice (sweetened by local self-rule) until princes and states grew more rational and abolished all unnatural restraints upon commerce.

In England, other views prevailed. The national debt had been nearly doubled by the war. Powerful groups, gentry and farmers burdened by the land tax, disliked the peace and thought that Americans, liking it so well, should pay their share — and by some better method than the

discredited requisition system. Another wartime scandal, the trade with the enemy, had prompted Pitt's circular letter of August, 1760, forecasting a peacetime policy of efficiency in mercantilist controls; and this policy was implemented in 1763 by new orders to the navy and the American customs service. Pitt's successors were confronted by other confusing colonial problems, which none of them understood very well, neither Newcastle nor Bute nor now Grenville: problems of organizing and defending the new conquest colonies, regulating the Indian trade, disposing of western lands, restraining colonial currencies.

George Grenville, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was a conscientious financier who knew little of America; but with good reason he regarded the colonial revenue problem as urgent. Contrary to all previous practice it had been decided to maintain a permanent garrison in North America to defend the expanded empire. Accordingly, Grenville in 1763 was canvassing measures to create a regular American revenue; this he proposed to use solely to cover a part of the new military expense. Early in March, 1764, he laid his proposals before Commons, in the resolutions embodied in the new Revenue (or Sugar) Act. A fifteenth resolution was also offered, asserting that it was necessary to impose a stamp act in the colonies. But this fateful legislation was postponed for another year.

Americans reacted with slowly gathering momentum in 1764 — and in 1765 with a violence that threatened to unhinge the empire. For their leaders this was a testing time, in theory and in action. All the new measures were unpopular, in one section or another, and the proposed stamp tax was universally detested. But what rights should be asserted in opposing the program? And what basis should be claimed for those rights — in the charters, the constitution, or the law of nature? By what tactics — of loyal petition and remonstrance, economic pressure, or

mob violence — could American rights best be secured? The answers varied with men's interests, their tempers, and their politics. Before the crisis ended, most leaders had set a course that led, a decade later, either to loyalism or independence.

In Franklin's case, however, it would have been difficult to predict in 1764, or even early in 1765, what future path he would follow. His friends were conservatives, several of them officials soon beset by Stamp Act mobs. His temper was pacific, compromising; he hated disorder and mob violence, by Paxton Boys or Sons of Liberty. And he distrusted legalisms, when most American spokesmen were lawyers, spinning their fine theories. In 1762 he had returned from England an enthusiast of empire and still, uncritically, an Anglophile. Like most Americans, he admired the young king, George III; more vividly than most he had conceived the ideal of an expanding Anglo-American empire of power and culture. All his recent memories of England were of delightful friendships and vanity-tickling honors. (Only the Penns had snubbed him, and he meant to have his revenge.) "Of all the enviable things England has," he wrote Polly Stevenson in 1763, "I envy it most its people." A little later he wrote Strahan that he intended to settle things before his next voyage so that another return to America would be unnecessary. This was a passing fancy, but it reflected a mood meaningful for his politics. He found it harder than most colonists (except the foreordained Tories) to conceive that England meant ill to her colonies — found it easier than most to believe that if the new measures injured America, they would be seen to injure Englishmen also and be repealed.

Hence Franklin was slow to grasp the historic significance of the Grenville program. Until his eyes were opened by Charles Thomson, in the fall of 1765, he also

persistently underrated the rising force of hostile American opinion. In this first crisis he stumbled at the threshold. Yet he recovered his footing, to play a brilliant part in the repeal. It was not that he lacked foreknowledge; his great friend Richard Jackson, now the Pennsylvania agent (and the agent also for Massachusetts and Connecticut, a member of Parliament, and Grenville's private secretary), informed him well in advance of the steps impending. Neither did he lack guidance in principles appropriate to an American critique of the new trade and taxation measures. These he had stated himself in his writings of the 1750's, notably in the letters to Shirley (1754).

Probably his mind was too much on the other battle he was fighting. In England, in 1758, he had launched his campaign for royal government in Pennsylvania, and in 1764 he was determined to push it to a decision. The province was again in turmoil. Peace with France had brought not peace with the Indians but war in the West (Pontiac's "conspiracy"), and new ravages on Pennsylvania's frontiers. Westerners were under-represented in the assembly and complained with justice that the Quakers and their eastern allies neglected frontier defenses; many eastern Presbyterians, supporters of the Penns, sympathized with their hard-pressed frontier coreligionists. But there were wild gangs of frontiersmen who took redress into their own hands, vengefully attacking peaceful as well as hostile Indians. Franklin published his moving *Narrative of the Late Massacres in Lancaster County* (1764) to denounce the "Christian white savages" who had exterminated the unoffending Conestoga settlement, and were now threatening the Moravian Indians huddled for safety in Philadelphia. When the rioters moved menacingly on the city Franklin organized another association; played a leading part in the defense.

After the rioters were dispersed, the assembly passed another militia bill, which John Penn vetoed, and another money bill, which he also rejected, for its provisions taxing the proprietary estate. In this impasse, the assembly, under Franklin's strong leadership, unanimously resolved to appeal to the people to support an intended petition to His Majesty that he take the province under his immediate protection.

Franklin framed the petitions: both the popular appeals, widely signed by the inhabitants, and the assembly memorial. Again he wrote pamphlets: *Cool Thoughts,* and his preface to the printed speech of his lieutenant, Joseph Galloway. In as bitter a contest as American politics had yet produced, Franklin exposed himself to scurrilous personal attack. He and Galloway lost their seats, by narrow margins, in the October elections; but again the "Old Ticket" prevailed in the province. Once more, on October 26, the assembly chose him agent extraordinary in England: this time to manage with Jackson the delicate business of the petition for royal government.

The business was delicate because, as Jackson had hinted, the province by its suit might hazard all those precious guarantees of popular rights embedded in the ancient charters. The proprietary party had found an able new leader in the young lawyer John Dickinson, a former critic of proprietary rule. With greater realism than Franklin, he asserted that this was no time to take risks, when Grenville, at Westminster, was raising new threats to the liberties of all North America. By his party ties Franklin involved himself with dangerously unpopular men and measures. Governor Bernard of Massachusetts was urging the overhaul of the colonial constitutions, to reduce the democratic element: Bernard and Franklin were known friends. Enemies of the republican charters in Connecticut and Rhode Island looked to Franklin to

join their cause with his, with how much encouragement does not appear. In Pennsylvania, moreover, it was Dickinson's group who stood out boldly as the people's champions against the Stamp Act, Galloway and John Hughes, Franklin's lieutenants, who soon provoked the popular fury.

Franklin sailed again for England in November, 1764, amid continuing explosions of pamphlets and newspaper libels. In reply to the minority party's protest at his appointment his parting shot was a tract ending on an exasperating note of forgiveness for his enemies. One charge they made which was not soon or easily dismissed; for years it beclouded his notable public services in England. He held a crown office, his son another, as royal governor of New Jersey (since 1762). Could it be expected that a gentleman of his moderate fortune would sacrifice these interests to oppose the ministry? The question grossly prejudged Franklin's integrity, but it was not unnatural, in view especially of the restraint that he had maintained ever since Jackson began to report the successive items in the Grenville program.

In June, 1763, Franklin had acknowledged the agent's report that the government proposed to charge the colonies with the maintenance of ten thousand soldiers: "I shall only say, it is not worth your while. . . . The more you oblige us to pay here, the less you can receive there." This was his stock comment on all the revenue schemes of the period; he put it more crisply to Collinson, in April, 1764: "The cat can yield but her skin." Usually he argued that the key decision, to maintain a standing garrison, was unnecessary, especially if a union were effected; but he indiscreetly conceded in *Cool Thoughts* that after a few years' experience Americans might be satisfied to be defended by regulars and to provide some revenue from duties on trade. A great respecter of facts, he

was early persuaded by Jackson that Parliament would inevitably establish some kind of American revenue. "It is not now to be argued against," Jackson had reported in December, 1763. Jackson himself held that Parliament was a universal legislature, with the constitutional right to impose any kind of tax in every part of the king's dominions. Franklin, like most Americans, never accepted this doctrine, a point of orthodoxy in England. But he shared Jackson's special dread of "inland duties" (excises) as likely to render assemblies useless and thus subvert the happy colonial constitution. If money *must* be raised in America for the troops, he replied in February, 1764, then Jackson's idea was acceptable (moderate duties on foreign molasses, wines, East India goods). It was for tactical reasons, apparently, that he adopted Jackson's convenient but confusing distinction between "internal" and "external" taxes.

This unhappy distinction at first bemused the American argument against Parliamentary taxation. In their petitions and pamphlets, opponents of the Sugar Act began by stressing the burden and inequity of the new duties: after all, Americans for most of a century had paid regulatory duties in a form undistinguishable from the newfangled Grenville imposts. But it was also true that in its preamble the Sugar Act announced the purpose of raising a revenue. The duty on foreign molasses, moreover, was reduced from a prohibitive 6d to a collectible 3d. Few Americans in 1764 saw the issue as clearly as did James Otis, who denied altogether the validity of any distinction between internal and external taxes, calling it one that some made in England — a reference, it would seem, to Jackson. Franklin borrowed the distinction from the English lawyer, and later used it effectively in England to win support for Stamp Act repeal. Unfortunately, however, he clung to it long after it had done its work,

and after other Americans had discarded it, and thus he was largely responsible for convincing Englishmen that this was the narrow line which Americans generally drew in their critique of Parliamentary power.

It was also the case that Franklin at first heavily discounted the mercantile opposition to the Sugar Act: "If it is not finally found to hurt us," he wrote Jackson, "we shall grow contented with it; — and as it will, if it hurts us, hurt you also, you will feel the hurt and remedy it." He kept his composure too in face of the Currency Act (1764), passed on the Board of Trade's urging (at the behest of merchants trading to Virginia), an act which extended to the middle and southern colonies the prohibition of legal tender already in force in New England. It was strongly opposed in Pennsylvania; afterwards in England Franklin as strongly pressed the colony's case for exemption.

A more serious matter was Grenville's favorite project of an internal tax, in the form of stamps. Busy as he was with local politics, Franklin gave it a good deal of thought. (Perhaps he even thought about it too much, certainly too ingeniously.) Instead of reverting at once, as most Americans now did, to his clear doctrine of 1754 — "That it is supposed an undoubted right of Englishmen, not to be taxed but by their own consent given through their representatives" — he cast about for a feasible substitute, to wean the British financier away from his dangerous proj ect.

Grenville had seemed to invite counterproposals when he told the Commons, in March, 1764, that he was anxious to consult the ease, quiet, and comfort of the Americans, and during the year of grace would listen to offers of an alternative revenue better to their liking. Later, a myth was spread that he had offered the colonists in good faith an opportunity to construct their own "golden bridge" to

unite the empire — which they had then willfully rejected. Under the agents' questioning, however, Grenville had refused to say how large a total contribution would be required from America (a matter that had not yet been determined). The Massachusetts assembly considered drafting a counterproposal, but Governor Bernard himself sensibly explained that it would be unsafe in the circumstances for any single colony to proceed alone. Apparently Pennsylvania was the only other colony to rise, briefly, to Grenville's bait. The instructions prepared for Jackson in September, though protesting that the proposed taxes were subversive of their rights as Englishmen, referred mysteriously to "a Plan" then under consideration which would preserve both the rights of the crown and the liberties of the colonies. But in October, after the elections, this whole cryptic section was withdrawn.

Thus Pennsylvania retreated to safer ground. Like other colonies she offered aids, but by the old "constitutional method" of requisitions. Grenville, in any case, was not likely to be diverted; what he really wanted was American assent in advance to the principle of a stamp act. The myth of the "golden bridge" was overthrown by Franklin himself in 1778, in a "True History" published in England. The Pennsylvania assembly, he recalled, had held that Grenville's proposition was unconstitutional throughout, both in the object sought (taxation by Parliament), and in the means employed: "their business was with the king in matters of aid; they had nothing to do with any financier, nor he with them; nor were the agents the proper channels through which requisitions should be made."

Yet Franklin omitted the most interesting part of the story. He said nothing of the Pennsylvania "Plan" of September, or of substitute proposals which he himself was pondering, one of which he submitted privately to

Grenville in February, 1765. When Jackson first wrote of Grenville's purported offer, Franklin in reply (June 25, 1764), dismissed out of hand the strange ministerial notion that the colonies, or even one colony, would apply to Parliament for a stamp act. To be sure, if a gross sum should be required of all the colonies, and they were left to settle the mode of raising it at some general congress, they might, he thought, fall on such a tax as easier to fix and maintain than quotas. And yet, he added, he could propose "a better mode by far" for both countries — if he could talk with his friend — "but a letter will not suit the discussion of it." Sometime later he drew up a memorandum of arguments against the stamps, with "three ways of avoiding these inconveniences." His first suggestion was colonial representation in Parliament. (In the Stamp Act crisis only Otis shared his willingness to consider it, and it was rejected by the Stamp Act Congress.) The second alternative reverted to his plan of 1754: "a common council, of which council the sum to be asked. This practicable. Albany Plan." The third was more briefly stated, but it was this alternative that he elaborated in the secret project he unfolded in England: "3. By the paper money scheme."

Franklin arrived in London in December, 1765. Once more he settled snugly into old quarters in Craven Street with the best of landladies, to enjoy his clubs, his societies, his summer travels, his widening circles of friendship with ingenious and cultivated Englishmen, Scots, Europeans. A mission he had hoped to complete in one season kept him abroad for more than a decade. Each fall he planned to return in the spring, each spring to sail by a summer packet. During the first winter the Pennsylvania petition was thrust aside by the greater crisis. Often revived, it was as often interrupted, and dragged on interminably to no issue. In this respect, obviously, his

second mission was a failure. But as years passed, his political leadership in his province, though shaken in 1765, grew stronger than ever, until he stood above factions. So, too, his leadership of the cultural movements that he had nurtured, which he still fostered from England, patron as he was of the hospital, of American medical students, of John Bartram, and broadly of American science — now so closely linked, through him, with the academies of Europe.

Eventually, too, he recovered his leadership in the movement for American rights within the empire, to become the most active and persuasive American advocate in the British press, agent for four colonies, almost the "ambassador" (as men sometimes called him) from North America. But this did not happen all at once. For several months in England, as for the past year in America, his vision was still strangely out of focus. Meanwhile, other colonial spokesmen were refining their definitions of American rights. No doctrinaire at any time, Franklin in this great crisis was far too inventive: he was contriving, instead, a dubious expedient intended to solve at one stroke both the currency needs of the colonies and the revenue necessities of the ministry. This was his most dangerous maneuver at any moment in his long career. It was also, by good fortune, his best-kept secret.

Grenville received the agents in February. The year of grace was nearly over. They came to him empty-handed, with nothing to offer from their constituents but the old plea that he was bound to reject — to return to requisitions — accompanied by those challenges to the taxing power of Parliament which the assemblies had asserted in their petitions: challenges that were visibly stiffening the backs of ministers and Parliament men. Clearly Grenville meant, as he had always meant, to impose the stamps. But again he seemed — as Franklin thought — to hold the door

open a little way for negotiation. Repeatedly he asked: "Can you gentlemen that are agents name any mode of raising money for public service that the people would have less objection to, if we should agree to drop this bill?" So Franklin wrote to Galloway eighteen months later, in his "secret history" of this strange transaction. "This encouraged me," he continued, "to present him with a plan for a general loan-office in America, nearly like ours, but with some improvements effectually to prevent depreciation: to be established by act of Parliament, appropriating the interest to the American service, &c." The plan, in fact, was already framed, and he had agreed to permit ex-Governor Thomas Pownall, his old friend from Albany days, to print it in the second edition of *The Administration of the Colonies*. But now he told Pownall that he preferred to present it to the ministry, "provided their present scheme of a Stamp Act might be set aside." Pownall agreed, and in a joint letter of February 12 they transmitted it to Grenville, even offering their services to set up the scheme, should it be adopted.

They moved very late, if they still hoped at this last moment to persuade the minister to accept a substitute for his favorite measure. Two days later Franklin wrote John Ross that the Stamp Act would pass, "notwithstanding all the opposition we have been able to give it." But a scheme, he added, was under consideration to create an American currency, "without which we can neither pay debts nor duties." To Galloway he later candidly admitted that the loan-office scheme involved a Parliamentary tax on Americans — but a lighter and more bearable tax, he had thought, than the stamps, because those who paid it would have an equivalent in the use of the money. This argument was plausible, at the level of expediency. Yet when Galloway passed on the "secret history" to Franklin's son in New Jersey, he remarked, sagely: "In the present

temper of Americans I think it would occasion great clamors."

Grenville's obstinacy saved Franklin from the consequences of this attempted private treaty. Grenville paid little heed to the plan, "being besotted with his stamp-scheme, which he rather chose to carry through." Carried it was, and by large majorities, but not without opposition. After November 1 the stamps would be required on all legal and commercial papers, newspapers, cards, dice, and numerous other articles. The expected return was small, £60,000 out of the £350,000 budgeted to the North American forces. But everyone would be taxed. The resentment, once aroused, became universal. Two groups were especially burdened, both highly articulate — the lawyers and the printers.

Nevertheless, no one at first expected a formidable opposition. The agents turned their attention to moderating the provisions of the new Mutiny Act, and Franklin claimed a considerable share in the dropping of the clause for quartering troops in private houses in America.

"Depend upon it, my good neighbour," he wrote Charles Thomson in July, "I took every step in my power to prevent the passing of the Stamp Act." Nobody could have been more concerned in interest than he, a printer. "But the tide was too strong against us. The nation was provoked by American claims of independence, and all parties joined in resolving by this act to settle the point." To Franklin, who had traveled widely in America, English fears that Americans sought independence in the absolute sense seemed nonsense, and throughout the next decade he denied the charge on every possible occasion. But more clearly than stay-at-home Americans he understood that their claims of right and their critique of Parliamentary power touched tender nerves in Englishmen, most of whom held exalted notions of Parliamentary sovereignty.

Therefore he tried as much as possible to keep out of sight the constitutional claims which aroused these jealousies. Even so, he took this great defeat much too philosophically: "We might as well have hindered the sun's setting." Since "it may be long before it rises again, let us make as good a night of it as we can. We may still light candles. Frugality and Industry will go a great way toward indemnifying us. Idleness and Pride tax with a heavier hand than Kings and Parliaments; if we can get rid of the former, we can easily bear the latter."

In another way, Franklin was much too practical. Thomas Whately of the treasury announced that no stamp officers would be sent from England and asked the agents to make their own nominations — another concession, the government thought, to American sensibilities. Franklin looked at patronage with eighteenth-century eyes, having filled the colonial post office with relatives; he nominated John Hughes, a party lieutenant, as stamp master for Pennsylvania, and advised Jared Ingersoll, a fellow agent, to accept the Connecticut post. This was another great error. Popular resentment was focused on these American jobholders, and on the too-pliant agents. By force or threats of force the stamp men were compelled to resign, the stamps confiscated or returned; when November 1 rolled around, the act was already nullified. Hughes showed great stubbornness in clinging to his post, to the embarrassment of his party; and Franklin as his patron had laid himself open to the charge that he favored the Stamp Act, which he actually opposed. He was also accused of seeking an office for himself under the act, and even of having originally proposed the measure to the ministry.

Events in America brought Franklin a rude awakening. Reading Virginia's May resolves, widely published in a more radical version than the set actually adopted, he

wrote Hughes: "the rashness of the assembly in Virginia is amazing!" His advice to his henchman — to act with firm loyalty to the crown and faithful adherence to the government of this nation, in face of the madness of the populace, and their blind leaders — showed him still imperfectly aware of the force of the storm blowing up in America, more fearful of British reactions and of the greater burdens that Parliament might yet impose to punish "acts of rebellious tendency."

Franklin never lost his distaste for mobs and rioting, though he often argued in the next decade that rioting was not peculiarly an American vice; in that turbulent age he could point to innumerable riots in England (of Wilkesite mobs, weavers, coal heavers). In 1765 he naturally sympathized with the law-and-order activities of the White Oaks of Philadelphia in opposing the Stamp Act mobs. At the height of the madness his own house was threatened. Deborah sent young Sally to safety in Burlington, but refused herself to leave town; kinsfolk brought guns, and she stoutly prepared to defend her domestic citadel. From Boston, Sister Jane wrote feelingly of the sufferings of Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson, Franklin's Albany colleague; his conduct she even likened to Our Saviour's. He had shown her great kindness as a judge, and she called him "the Gratest ornement of our Country, & the most Indefateguable Patrioat."

Yet she, too, was shocked by John Hughes's appointment, fearing it was by her brother's means; she loyally assumed that he had some good reason for it which others could not see into. Benjamin assured her in March, 1766, that both Bernard and Hutchinson had been maligned: from letters he had seen he knew that both had opposed the Stamp Act. As for himself, despite his temporary unpopularity, he found this still a pretty good world. "It

sometimes is cloudy, it rains, it hails; — again 'tis clear and pleasant, and the sun shines on us."

The sun shone brightly, indeed, when he wrote this letter, for by then the hated Stamp Act had been repealed, after a long campaign in which he had borne an honorable part. Hopes of repeal had been raised when Grenville fell and the young Marquis of Rockingham formed his ministry. By November Franklin threw himself actively into the campaign. Through Lords Grantham and Bessborough of the post office (who had lately renewed his commission), he gained a long audience, November 6, with Lord Dartmouth, the pious young nobleman at the head of the Board of Trade whose amiable qualities aroused Americans to high hopes whenever he took office. Franklin struck at once the common-sense note that he sounded throughout the campaign. Execution of the act would be impracticable "without occasioning more mischief than it was worth, by totally alienating the affections of the Americans from this country, and thereby lessening its commerce." Advantage should be taken of the expected address of the Stamp Act Congress (if expressed, as he hoped, in humble and dutiful terms), to suspend the act for a term of years, until the colonies should be more clear of debt and better able to bear it, and then to drop it "on some other decent pretence, without ever bringing the question of right to a decision." He strongly recommended either "a thorough union with America" (which the Stamp Act Congress rejected), or a return to requisitions; he was confident that more could be got by voluntary grant than by "compulsory taxes laid by Parliament." Coercion would ruin trade and lay the foundation "of a future total separation." If the Stamp Act Congress should unhappily not open the door to a suspension, he proposed the sending of a royal commission

to hear complaints, redress grievances, and reclaim the Americans by reason where they should be found wrong.

Dining with Rockingham, November 10, he probably repeated the same adroit argument, evidence that he was acquiring skill in what would be his greatest political role: diplomacy. Apparently he also unveiled his loan-office scheme, ignored by Grenville, which he waited upon Rockingham (with Pownall) to discuss on December 3; later he told Galloway that the Rockinghamites liked it, and strengthened each other in the resolution of repealing the Stamp Act by the prospect of raising a greater sum, with more satisfaction to the American people.

Repeal still seemed remote in November; Franklin dared aim only at suspension. He understood the weakness of the ministry and its difficulties, increased by shocking news of American disorders, and also by the resolutions of the Stamp Act Congress, which raised again those high points of constitutional doctrine that to many Englishmen portended independence. Yet he welcomed the Congress. As early as August he had written to Thomas Wharton that if it was favorably received at home he hoped such meetings in future might be of great service to America. He was still firm in his faith in continental union, though another continentalist of 1754, Thomas Hutchinson, was retreating. Hutchinson wrote Franklin in November concerning the New York Congress: "When you and I were at Albany ten years ago we did not propose an union for such purposes as these."

The effective movement for repeal sprang from another source: from the complaints of the merchants and manufacturers of the loss of American trade, the result of frugality movements and boycotts that had spread rapidly through the colonies. (Americans had begun to "light candles.") Early in December, the London Merchants trading to North America organized at the King's Arms

Tavern. Their committee, under Barlow Trecothick (formerly of Boston), corresponded with groups in other trading and manufacturing towns, negotiated with colonial agents and ministers and the West India merchants' committee, and thus paved the way for the bombardment of Parliament in the next session with petitions for repeal of the Stamp Act and modification of the trade acts where they cramped British commerce with America. This was the most powerful mercantile pressure group that had operated at Westminster in that century — and it succeeded, where other methods had failed.

Franklin's role in the great repeal movement was belittled by friends of the Penns, probably also by friends of the Massachusetts agent, Dennis De Berdt, an important member of the London Merchants' committee, with whom his relations were always cool. Bradford printed a London report that De Berdt had complained that he could get little counsel or assistance from his Philadelphia colleague; that the Bristol committee had found him "cool, reserved, and uncivil"; that not till a private poll of Commons assured success did he raise his voice in defense of American rights. "Several pens were employed to plead the cause of America," the letter added. "But why does not the Pennsylvania agent write? He has leisure and a masterly pen."

The last charge was flagrantly untrue, as we know from Franklin's pseudonymous essays recovered from the London press between May, 1765, and February, 1766. Most of the other slanders were also refuted in extracts from London letters that Franklin's friends inserted in the Philadelphia papers, to rehabilitate his tarnished reputation (a campaign they kept up for several years): letters from the banker Hinton Brown, from Strahan and Fothergill, and an impressive testimonial from the Reverend George Whitefield. Strahan in January described Franklin's as-

siduity as really astonishing: he was forever with one member of Parliament or another — most of them deplorably ignorant of America — correcting errors, refuting slanders, stating the essence of the American case. "All this while, too," Strahan wrote, from his own knowledge as the printer of the *Chronicle,* "he hath been throwing out hints in the public papers, and giving answers to such letters as have appeared in them, that required or deserved an answer. — In this manner is he now employed, with very little interruption, night and day."

This press campaign he had begun in the *Chronicle,* as early as May 15, 1765, with one of his brightest satires, ridiculing English ignorance of the colonies on evidence of news items collected from London papers. It was climaxed by his famous tall tale (in the authentic tradition of American humor) of the grand leap of the whale up the falls of the Niagara. One paper had actually reported from Quebec that a cod and whale fishery would be established that summer on the upper lakes of Canada. In November Strahan printed an extract (unsigned) from his too-acquiescent letter of July 11, followed by Charles Thomson's vigorous reply: "The sun of liberty is indeed fast setting, if not down already, in the American colonies; but I much fear instead of the candles you mention being lighted, you will hear of the works of darkness."

Hereafter he took his cue from Thomson, his protégé in civic affairs and in politics, now a merchant and a popular leader against the stamps, rather than from the conservative Galloway, who nevertheless remained his friend. In December and January he replied in the press to charges of American selfishness and want of public spirit, and to the constant allegations that they sought independence. He described the late war as primarily in the British interest, and for British trade. Americans, he claimed, had bled freely in the common cause in their

persons and their purses, as Mr. Pitt had recognized with his Parliamentary grants. His sharpest satire was aimed at writers who would use fleets and armies rather than reason to settle the argument — a decision he still regarded as the possible disastrous outcome of the crisis. Writing for a British public he was necessarily adroit and propitiatory (as he knew so well how to be), especially in all his references to American claims of right, which he identified with the indefeasible right of Englishmen to grant their own money to the crown. "If they are mistaken," he urged, "'tis their misfortune, not their fault. Your most celebrated writers on the constitution, your *Seldens,* your *Lockes,* and your *Sidneys,* have reasoned them into this mistake."

"I have reprinted every thing from America," he wrote Thomson, "that I thought might help our common cause" — Daniel Dulany's *Considerations;* the *Late Regulations* penned by his party foe, John Dickinson; his own letters of 1754 to Shirley. Strahan was his printer; the publisher was another friend, John Almon. A typical conceit was his emblematical representation of "Magna Britannia dismembered" (the severed limbs labeled "New England," etc.), which he had engraved on political cards. These he distributed in great numbers, handing them out in the lobbies, it was said, to members entering the Commons for the repeal debates.

On the whole he preferred to remain behind the scenes, as press agent and lobbyist. There came a day, however, when he stood at the center of the stage before the bar of the House of Commons (sitting in committee of the whole) to answer questions in the grand investigation of American affairs which the merchants had instigated. The hearings ran on for a fortnight while votes were whipped up for repeal; thirty witnesses were heard, mostly merchants. But it was the testimony of this American, given

February 13, that made the great sensation. Most accounts highly praised his performance. "He stood unappalled," one gentleman wrote to New York, "gave pleasure to his friends, and did honor to his country."

His examination was published — some months after repeal — in American, English, and European editions. For years it was read as the classic plea for a realistically liberal colonial policy. As important as anything that he said, perhaps, was the fact that he stood where he did, the first American to speak for the continent in so exalted an assembly, or with his special authority. Officially, to be sure, he was no more than a messenger at the seat of empire for a backwoods assembly. There was a quality, nevertheless, in this calmly assured, notably competent witness, to raise self-doubts in his hearers. By his own achievements he challenged the assumption that subjects of the king who chanced to be born overseas were less than equals, or would long be content with status as subjects of English fellow subjects.

For three hours Franklin stood at the bar, answering or parrying questions from friendly or hostile members, adroitly, persuasively — when necessary, evasively. Friendly questions, probably concerted in advance, were raised by such members as New Hampshire-born John Huske, trained to trade in Boston, an M.P. from Maldon, Essex. So far as they were able to control the interrogation, Franklin and his friends chose to shift the ground from questions of right, where he could expect a good deal of hostility, to questions of the expediency of the Stamp Act. "What do you mean by its inexpediency?" he was asked.

A. I mean its inexpediency on several accounts; the poverty and inability of those who were to pay the tax; the general discontent it has occasioned; and the impracticability of enforcing it. . . .

Q. What was the temper of America towards Great Britain before the year 1763?

A. The best in the world. . . . They were governed by this country at the expense only of a little pen, ink and paper. They were led by a thread. . . .

Q. And what is their temper now?

A. O, very much altered.

The Americans, he asserted, would never submit to the Stamp Act, however it might be modified; and it would be impossible to support the act by fleets and armies. "Suppose a military force sent into America, they will find nobody in arms; what are they then to do? . . . They will not find a rebellion; they may indeed make one." "*Q.* If the act is not repealed, what do you think will be the consequences?" "*A.* A total loss of the respect and affection the people of America bear to this country, and of all the commerce that depends on that respect and affection."

For the sharper thrusts of Grenville, Nugent, Townshend, and other adversaries, Franklin had answers at hand from his own newspaper debates. But often he was pressed hard, especially when he attempted to justify his distinction between internal and external taxes. When cornered, he was both evasive and prophetic: "Many arguments have been lately used here to shew them, that there is no difference, and that, if you have no right to tax them internally, you have none to tax them externally, or make any other law to bind them. At present," he declared, not quite accurately, "they do not reason so; but in time they may possibly be convinced by these arguments."

Questions and answers ranged widely over the whole ground of controversy. Eloquently Franklin defended the colonists from charges growing out of their conduct in the

late war, as so often he had done in the press; as eloquently he pressed his familiar arguments for a return to the old constitutional procedure of requisition. But he ended, shrewdly, upon the note of expediency which he always preferred, confident that it would appeal to the commercial spirit of Britain:

Q. What used to be the pride of the Americans?

A. To indulge in the fashions and manufactures of Great Britain.

Q. What is now their pride?

A. To wear their old cloaths over again, till they can make new ones.

"There are claimers enough of merits in obtaining the repeal," Franklin wrote Thomson. For himself, he claimed only that his examination had enhanced his reputation, and that in consequence he was caressed by the Rockingham ministry. Fothergill and Hinton Brown assured James Pemberton that his testimony had considerable influence with the Parliament. With repeal assured, and relaxation in several commercial restrictions, Franklin joined English friends of America in counseling prudent conduct by the colonists, to confute the Grenvillite charges that the condescension of Parliament would only promote further colonial demands and excesses, and lead to rebellion.

The price that the Rockingham ministry paid for repeal was enactment by the same Parliament of the American Declaratory Act, asserting the power of Parliament to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever. In their rejoicing over repeal, Americans generally discounted this declaration, as Franklin had done in advance during his examination. At one point, to be sure, he predicted that Americans

would regard the resolutions later embodied in the act as unconstitutional and unjust; elsewhere he remarked that they would give little concern, if as in Ireland (which had furnished the precedent) it was never attempted to put them into practice.

These were his public assertions. Privately, the legal formulation in 1766 of the doctrine of Parliamentary sovereignty over the colonies had already led him to reconsider radically his whole view of the relations between the colonies and the mother country. He returned to the ground that he had taken at the Albany Congress and in his discussions with Shirley in Boston in the winter following. Henceforth he subordinated his quarrel with the Penns and his party leadership in the province. In ensuing crises of empire he became the spokesman in England of all the continental colonies, armed at all points with a mature theory of empire.

VII

Liberty and Empire

AFTER THE STAMP ACT STRUGGLE Franklin visited Hanover with Dr. Pringle, and talked with scientists at Göttingen. Pringle was his companion again on holiday trips to Paris in 1767 and 1769. There the Franklinists paid him homage, and he met the economists of the new physiocratic school, who confirmed his view of the basic importance of agriculture and his doubts of mercantilist controls. They reprinted his *Examination* and other pieces in their journal, the *Éphémérides du citoyen;* thus he became the first American political writer (as well as the first scientist) to achieve a continental audience.

All had seemed hopeful when he returned to London with Pringle in the summer of 1766. His Rockinghamite friends were out, but the new ministry was headed by William Pitt, now the Earl of Chatham, the great hero of the Stamp Act repeal, to whom Americans were raising statues. In the southern department his friend the Earl of Shelburne looked to western expansion and improvement of the quitrent fund to avoid new American taxes; he encouraged the Illinois colony scheme that Franklin was promoting, and consulted him also on a plan to return the Indian trade to provincial management. Meanwhile,

the agents for the middle and southern colonies were pressing for repeal of the Currency Act (1764), with mercantile backing. To offset the opposition of the Board of Trade and its president, Lord Hillsborough, Franklin furnished the London merchants with a cogent paper of "Remarks and Facts"; and the ministry, he thought, was won over.

In the sequel none of these hopes was fulfilled. Chatham was tormented by gout and shattered nerves, unable to lead or discipline his divided cabinet, his attempt to capture the territorial revenues of the East India Company overthrown in a revolt led by Charles Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Shelburne's colonial plans were interminably delayed, and in American affairs, too, it was Townshend, brilliant and willful, who emerged as the new star of the ascendant.

On one American issue, a legacy of the first crisis, Englishmen felt alike and felt strongly. New York had refused to pass an act providing the schedule of supplies prescribed by the Mutiny Act (1765). Other colonies qualified their obedience, but this province (headquarters of the British army in North America) was wholly recalcitrant. "Their refusal is here called *rebellion*," Franklin wrote Kames, "and punishment is thought of." The New York merchants also offended: though their London correspondents were still complaining of American ingratitude for former favors, they petitioned for removal of burdens not lifted in 1766. Massachusetts, too, was in bad odor: quarreling with Bernard, the general court passed an indemnity act covering the Stamp Act rioters.

Once more, as in the winter of '65–'66, Franklin was alarmed by rising British tempers. He heard the same violent language in coffeehouses and Parliament: "Force is called for. Fleets and troops should be sent." Pennsylvania,

to be sure, was still high in favor; but the danger he thought was general, and in April, 1767, he resumed his writing for the press "to abate a little if possible the animosity stirred up against us." The New Yorkers, he explained, were opposing an unfair and onerous burden, since most of the troops passed through their province in transit to the western posts. The Mutiny Act, moreover, threatened the independence of the colonial assemblies. If they were bound to pass a law in obedience to a superior legislature, "they would be of no use as a parliament, their nature would be changed, their constitution destroyed." "Petitioning," he reminded Englishmen, "is not rebellion," and in one brilliant satire he justified in detail the merchants' complaints of economic oppression. To Lord Kames he confided that the New Yorkers also regarded the Mutiny Act as in effect another internal tax, levied without their consent.

Once more a clamor for new American taxes arose in Britain. By the revolt of backbenchers in Commons the treasury had lost a shilling in the pound on the domestic land tax. Franklin thought the time had come to restate all the arguments against American taxation that he had used in the last contest; and this he did in an essay signed "Benevolus." But for some unexplained reason he included his obsolete argument on the distinction between internal and external taxation — a serious blunder, for already Townshend had hinted that he might proceed upon this so-called American distinction, groundless and frivolous though he held it to be.

Whether Townshend read "Benevolus" does not appear. But another of Franklin's too-ingenious expedients of 1765 (one that he had thought safely buried) now rose up to plague him. When Townshend opened his budget, George Grenville remembered the substitute for the stamps that had interested him so little when Franklin

and Pownall had proposed it in 1765. He belittled Townshend's duties as mere trifles; he could name a revenue, he told Commons, that would produce something valuable in America: the interest on loan-office bills. Townshend was annoyed; this he claimed was a part of his own program which he had forgotten to mention, and he rebuked Grenville for taking advantage of his slip of memory. The agents and merchants in alarm suspended their agitation for Currency Act repeal. But somehow, along the way, the revived loan-office scheme dropped out of Townshend's baggage — another narrow escape for Franklin.

All the Townshend measures were then passed, amid what Franklin called "great heats on American affairs." The New York assembly was suspended until it should comply with the Mutiny Act. (Under this threat the New Yorkers had already given way.) The new Revenue Act laid port duties in the colonies on glass, lead, paint, and paper — English manufactures, hence these were "non-commercial" duties which no mercantilist could defend — and also upon tea. The act was expected to produce no more than £40,000 a year, for Townshend prided himself upon moderation. But a precedent was established which might lead to greater burdens; and in one respect he was more rash than Grenville, for with part of the proceeds he proposed to pay civil salaries of judges and governors. By another act an American Board of Customs Commissioners was established, with its seat at Boston, to introduce efficiency in enforcement of the trade acts and the collection of revenue.

At first the colonial reaction to the legislation of 1767 was hesitant and uncertain. Fewer Americans felt their interests damaged than had in '65, though pamphleteers and lawyers, expert in smelling out tyranny, reminded them that again they were threatened with the loss of an Englishman's most precious liberty, the right to dispose of

his own property — and that in subtler ways (as Franklin had warned) the corporate liberties of their assemblies were in danger of subversion.

In this second crisis (1767–1770) the American case was most effectively restated by John Dickinson, Franklin's party foe in Pennsylvania. His *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (1767–1768) were widely printed in colonial newspapers and in numerous pamphlet editions on both sides of the Atlantic. Franklin grumbled when he found that the Farmer had finally abolished the distinction between the two kinds of taxes, which he himself had kept alive too long. But he surrendered the point without a struggle. At the same time he strongly dissented from the Farmer's definition of empire and his critique of Parliamentary power. However, he recognized the polemic value of the *Letters,* and promptly brought out a British edition with his own preface.

In his second letter the Farmer had set forth the gist of his "half-way house" doctrine: "We are as much dependent on Great-Britain," he said, "as a perfectly free people can be on another." The dependence that he and most other Americans still conceded was upon both king and Parliament. It extended to all matters of legislation (in practice, hitherto, this had meant external regulation). But it ended precisely where taxation, in any guise, began. To determine whether a particular duty was an unconstitutional tax or a legal regulation he proposed to discover the intent of the legislature, which was clear enough, certainly, in the Revenue Act of 1767; in future doubtful cases, the intent might have to be determined in roundabout fashion, by examining the nature of the legislation. The legal subtleties in Dickinson's theory made it unpalatable to Franklin. But the Farmer's advice to his fellow colonists on the tactics they should pursue was clear, and persuasively stated. He solemnly warned against vio-

lence — seek redress, he urged, only by constitutional methods: by petitions or, these failing, by withdrawal from Britain of the advantages of her American trade. The immediate effect of his pamphlet was to revive the lagging movement, already initiated in Boston, for a great intercolonial nonimportation league.

Sooner than Dickinson Franklin lost his faith in petitions: but he agreed perfectly in deprecating violence and trusting to economic pressures, and from 1768 to 1770 he served diligently as press agent in England for the North American nonimportation. He was politically embarrassed, however, until 1769, by the reluctance of the conservative Philadelphia merchants to join the movement, and personally embarrassed by published charges that Pennsylvania's meekness had been purchased with the crown offices bestowed upon himself and his son. (It was even rumored in 1768 that he would be appointed to another post, in the new office of secretary of state for the colonies. He had defended the creation of the third secretaryship in the press, and for a time he thought well of Hillsborough; but in the summer he began a newspaper vendetta against him.) Repeatedly he predicted the spread of the nonimportation, and the consequent ruin of British trade and manufactures. Meanwhile, for tactical reasons, he played down American claims of right, or stated them in the most moderate terms. The colonies, he insisted, challenged not Parliament's power but only its unconstitutional exercise, and to this purpose he found it useful to cite "the Dummers, the Otises, the Dickinsons, the Dulaneys."

In all these defenses, however, he prudently concealed his own private doctrine of the true nature of the empire: a dominion-status theory that he had adopted as early as 1766. "From a thorough enquiry," he asserted in 1774, " (on occasion of the Stamp Act) into the nature of the con-

nection between Britain and the colonies, I became convinced, that the bond of their union is not the Parliament, but the King." Evidence of his conversion appears abundantly in the marginal notes he began to jot down in 1766 in his copies of the controversial tracts. (However, it was not the Stamp Act, as he remembered, but evidently the resolutions of right embodied in the Declaratory Act that stimulated him to rethink, historically, the problem of empire.) Possibly he was influenced by the writings of Richard Bland of Virginia, whom Jefferson pronounced a more liberal thinker than Dickinson; possibly by the Stamp Act resolves of several colonies asserting claims of local autonomy in broader terms than merely self-taxation. Even so, he had to recognize that in his private views he was in advance of most of his compatriots, and that these views were utterly unacceptable to Englishmen. In 1766 one British writer charged that the American case against taxation actually extended to all other laws; whereupon he observed: "It is so reasoned here, not there, but in time they may be convinced." By 1770 he believed that time was fast approaching. Another pamphleteer sharply defined the underlying constitutional issue: "Our right of legislation over the Americans, unrepresented as they are, is the point in question. This right is asserted by most, doubted by some, and wholly disclaimed by a few." Franklin commented (marginally): "I am one of those few, but am persuaded the time is not far distant, when the few will become the many; for *magna est Veritas, et prevalebit.*" By 1774, Franklin's formula for empire had become the American formula of John Adams, James Wilson, and Thomas Jefferson. It was the formula implied in the Declaration of Independence.

Until 1773 — when the Massachusetts assembly tentatively advanced these ideas in its historic controversy with Thomas Hutchinson — responsible leaders of American

opinion echoed the views of the Farmer and the similar imperial views of the Boston spokesmen, who vigorously asserted American rights, but at the same time acknowledged the subordination of their assemblies to the king in Parliament. Franklin in family confidence made clear his own dissent from the conventional American position when he wrote his son (March 13, 1768) of his first reactions to the Dickinson *Letters:* "The more I have thought and read on the subject, the more I find myself confirmed in opinion, that no middle doctrine can well be maintained, I mean not clearly with intelligible arguments. Something might be made of either of the extremes; that Parliament has a power to make *all laws* for us, or that it has a power to make *no laws* for us; and I think the arguments for the latter more numerous and weighty, than those for the former." The real grievance, he asserted, was not that Britain put duties upon manufactures exported to the colonies, "but that she forbids us to buy the like manufactures from any other country. This she does, however, in virtue of her allowed right to regulate the commerce of the whole empire, allowed I mean by the Farmer, though I think whoever would dispute that right might stand upon firmer ground, and make much more of the argument: but my reasons are too many and too long for a letter."

The model of empire that he constructed in these years was based on his conception of the history of English expansion into the American world. He also found, as others did, interesting precedents in the cases of the Channel Islands, of Scotland before the Union, and in particular of Ireland. But he was quite aware that a good deal of recent history ran counter to his theory. Parliament, he argued, had orginally no power to bind the colonies by any kind of law without their consent, for Britain and the colonies were separate states, subject to the same king.

Confronted by numerous precedents of acts of Parliament extending to America cited constantly by Grenvillite writers — acts restraining commerce, acts prohibiting exports from one colony to another, and the like — he retorted: "All usurpations of power not belonging to them; many unjust." By submission in particular instances Americans had yielded a kind of tacit consent. But for the future, he advised the Massachusetts speaker in 1771, "methinks we should be cautious how we add to those instances, and never adopt or acknowledge an act of Parliament but by a formal law of our own." In 1767, to be sure, he admitted to Lord Kames that for the good of the whole empire it seemed necessary that a power be placed somewhere to regulate its general commerce, and that it could be lodged nowhere so properly as in Parliament. This was a practical concession, based not on right but on convenience, which John Adams, for one, was willing to make so late as 1774.

In a different climate of British opinion Franklin's formula might have prevented or postponed the American Revolution, for a second British Empire was preserved into our day on much his terms. Franklin labored as long and as earnestly as anyone to save from breaking what he could still call, a few weeks after the Declaration of Independence, "that fine and noble china vase, the British Empire." But he never ventured to support this radical solution openly during his protracted second mission in England. He knew that the Whig doctrine of Parliamentary supremacy, legacy of the Glorious Revolution, had hardened into rigid dogma. An overt claim to dominion status would alienate even those liberal Whigs who were willing at some points to abate the exercise of sovereignty in order to save the profits of a mercantile empire. It would complicate his first task as agent, which was to promote repeal of measures obnoxious to his constituents,

and would jeopardize his larger task, which was to mediate between extremes of opinion in the two countries, to restore harmony and good will, and thus preserve the empire. Only time, with the spectacular growth of America in numbers and wealth, and some future crisis of British security in Europe, offered hope that Parliament might someday concede an American Bill of Rights on true principles of empire. Meanwhile it was the part of wisdom to avoid not only premature contests of strength, but also premature debates of constitutional issues. They could only widen the breach.

Meanwhile, too, some *modus vivendi* might be achieved that would serve as well — in an imperfect world — as the ideal constitution. Pragmatically, Franklin was willing that the empire should be saved on any tolerable terms. When the Stamp Act was repealed he had in hand an unfinished pamphlet supporting the solution that he had discussed with Shirley in 1754, a "consolidating union." He renounced the idea, ironically, in a London newspaper (January 29, 1766), but more than once returned to it, nostalgically: most often in later years, however, to show that Parliament as then constituted was not truly an imperial assembly. Like so many of his compatriots, he easily fell back upon the contention that all that they sought was a return to "the good old way," as it had been before 1764. In 1769 he tacitly admitted one hostile writer's opinion of the extreme inconvenience of colonial representation at Westminster: "Here appears the excellency of the invention of colony government, by separate independent legislatures. By this means the remotest parts of a great empire may be as well governed as the center," and, "the power of the King may be extended without inconvenience over territories of any dimensions how great soever." Thus America in all its extent and diversity had been governed happily until "the new politics took place,

of governing it by our Parliament, which have not succeeded and never will."

Alas, in 1769, the "new politics" seemed more firmly established than ever. Long since the frequently shifting ministry had lost its reforming spirit. Chatham had retired, preceded by Shelburne; under Grafton, government more and more leaned on the votes of Bedfordites and their allies in Commons, hence in American policy became thoroughly authoritarian. Hillsborough by his circular letter in 1768 had required all of the assemblies, on pain of dissolution, to reject the Massachusetts appeal for a common front. Thus the prerogative menacingly reinforced the legislative power, to cramp the independence of the colonial assemblies. Turbulence in Boston had led to the sending of troops to protect the Customs Board and to restore law and order. Despite economic pressures from America — and Franklin's warnings — English merchants still felt prosperous and lagged in their support of the American cause. Petitions from the assemblies were regularly tabled because they called in question the power of Parliament; Franklin, for one, thought it time to give over petitioning. Thomas Pownall was one of the few members of Parliament on whom the agents could rely to make the right motions, and in general the right speeches, though Franklin noted that he, too, sometimes used the language of Parliamentary sovereignty to make himself heard. Unfortunately, his speeches emptied the House, and his motions were defeated: including the motion, in April, 1769, for the repeal of the Townshend Revenue Act. In May, however, after the end of the session, Hillsborough notified the governors that no further taxes would be laid on America, and that in the next session the anticommercial duties (on British manufactures) would be reconsidered.

Strahan claimed that it was his intervention with the

American secretary that had won this promise. However that may be, in November he concerted an exchange of letters with his friend from Philadelphia intended to show that the Americans would be satisfied with nothing less than total repeal. Franklin blandly assumed that then other healing measures would follow, so that harmony might be completely restored: withdrawal of the troops from Boston, dissolution of the American Customs Board, or appointment of more temperate commissioners. But what he really expected, he wrote Strahan, was that government (misinformed by Bernard and other officials), would once more refuse adequate redress. In such case, he solemnly predicted, mutual provocations must go on to complete the separation of the two countries. He swept aside as dangerously irrelevant to the task of saving the empire all the fruitless debate over Parliament's right to tax the Americans. Let Englishmen, he wrote, continue to claim the right, provided they never exercised it, as they could never properly do for want of knowledge — and because Americans would never submit — "and we shall continue to enjoy *in fact* the right of granting our money, with the opinion now universally prevailing among us, that we are free subjects of the King, and that fellow subjects of one part of his dominions are not sovereigns over fellow subjects in any other part."

In these eloquent — and gloomy — replies to Strahan Franklin came nearer than in any earlier public statement to disclosing the essence of his imperial doctrine. The letters were not published until 1774. In 1769, however, they were privately circulated among the chiefs of the Grafton ministry. But now Lord North succeeded Grafton, and in March, 1770, he moved the repeal of the noncommercial duties only, saving the tax on tea in order to preserve Parliament's disputed right. Up to this moment Franklin had continued to press his newspaper cam-

paign for total repeal. On March 2 he had printed the eleventh number of the "Colonist's Advocate" series, restating all the arguments he had found useful since 1765.

But events in America within the year seemed to discredit completely all his dire predictions. With partial repeal, the merchants' nonimportation agreements began to crumble. By fall, British trade was fully resumed in all the colonial ports. For a time, however, the retreat had been checked by letters which he wrote to Philadelphia, to Joseph Galloway and to Charles Thomson. Thomson gave his letter to the press, and it was widely published. If we do not now persist in this measure till it has had its full effect, Franklin asserted, "it can never again be used on any future occasion with the least prospect of success, and . . . if we do persist another year, we shall never afterwards have occasion to use it." In the long run his intervention was futile. But it had a lasting influence on his reputation and political alliances. He drew closer to Charles Thomson, despite Galloway's warning that the man was void of principle, and to the mechanics' organization that Thomson was using to bring pressure to bear on the fainthearted merchants. In America old doubts of the agent's loyalty to the popular cause nearly vanished. In England he was assailed in the press as "Dr. Doubleface," and "the Judas of Craven Street," whose advice to the "yeas and nays" of Philadelphia had been treachery to king and parent state. For a while his tenure of the post-office job was threatened.

Other assemblies had recently retained his services: Georgia in 1768, New Jersey in 1769. Now in 1770, by the death of old De Berdt, the important agency of the Massachusetts House of Representatives fell vacant. Samuel Adams favored the candidacy of Dr. Arthur Lee, of Virginia, who was studying law in London and supporting America (and John Wilkes) in his flaming letters signed "Junius

Americanus." But Franklin, with his great prestige and his new popularity, was appointed, Lee named a sort of reversionary agent. Impatient and pathologically suspicious, Lee had been one of the young Americans attracted to the De Berdt household in Artillery Court, where little praise was heard of the Craven Street colleague; and now the old doctor, to his annoyance, would neither resign nor die. Lee passed on his dark suspicions to Samuel Adams. Thus the Lee-Franklin feud began; characteristically, Franklin paid it little heed.

Franklin had not sought the Massachusetts agency, but his appointment was a decisive event in his career. He became the spokesman for the most turbulent and radical American community, where troops had been stationed since 1768, and blood had been shed, March 5, 1770, in the so-called "Boston massacre." Boston-born, he had kept alive his ties of kinship and of scientific friendships by visits and correspondence. One of his friendly services for fellow New Englanders was the procuring of Scottish honorary degrees for their eminent clergy. In 1767, for example, he had persuaded Principal Robertson to confer an Edinburgh degree upon Samuel Cooper, who was the pastor of the Brattle Street church, but more a politician than a theologue.

With Cooper, in 1769, he began a political correspondence of such interest that when later it fell into Tory hands it was presented to George III as a prime example of American treason. It was one of his letters to Cooper, of June, 1770, that came timely to hand in Boston when the agency question was being debated. Cooper showed it discreetly to other leaders, and thus, he claimed, procured Franklin's appointment. In it Franklin urged that until American rights were fully recovered, their spokesmen should avoid all expressions admitting their subordinacy to Parliament, "which in reality mean nothing, if our as-

semblies, with the King, have a true legislative authority. . . . They are too strong for compliment, and tend to confirm a claim of subjects in one part of the King's dominions to be sovereigns over their fellow subjects in another part of his dominions, when in truth they have no such right, and their claim is founded only in usurpation, the several states having equal rights and liberties, and being only connected, as England and Scotland were before the Union, by having one common sovereign, the King." In other notable letters to Cooper, and in confidential correspondence with the speaker, Thomas Cushing, Franklin disclosed his private doctrine of empire more fully than elsewhere in his surviving correspondence. There were other channels through which similar dominion ideas of empire circulated in New England and throughout America. But Thomas Hutchinson surreptitiously read a good many of Franklin's letters (opened in the post office or copied out by informers), and he flatly charged that it was Franklin, chiefly, who spread the poison.

When Franklin took over his new agency political tensions were relaxing, even in Massachusetts. The "faction" itself was divided, Hancock drawing away from Sam Adams, who felt leadership slipping from him; and John Adams, for his part, resolved henceforth to mind his own farm and business. The tea duty still stood, and in Boston even patriots drank dutied tea. But Franklin confidently predicted repeal, and that no other American tax would be attempted in future. He was also heartened by failure of an anticipated attempt to alter the Massachusetts charter in its corporate features. Hutchinson held up his pay on the ground that only the lower house had consented to his appointment, predicting that these partial agents, when they found themselves deprived of their salaries, would give less trouble to administration and to servants of the crown in America; and Hillsborough also chal-

lenged the validity of his appointment in a stormy interview. But Franklin found himself still able to do business at the offices in Whitehall.

The second crisis had ended with none of the great issues of taxation and Parliamentary power definitely determined, in a kind of Franklinian *modus vivendi*. When the truce was broken, by the aggressive radical tactics of the Massachusetts men, Franklin found himself placed at the precise focus of Anglo-American relations as they began to tip dangerously toward revolt and revolution.

VIII

Boston Agent:

Crisis of Empire

THE YEARS FROM 1770 to 1772 were the Indian summer of the American controversy. Again Franklin had leisure to travel: to the midlands in the spring of 1771, and in the summer to Ireland and Scotland. He was lionized in Dublin by the Irish patriots; he dined with Charles Lucas, and was admitted to the floor of the Irish House of Commons as a member of an "English Parliament." But his warmest welcome he received in Scotland, not as a politician, for few Scots favored colonial aspirations, but as the natural philosopher. In June, between these journeys, he had visited his great friend (and the friend of America) Jonathan Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph. In "the sweet retreat at Twyford" he began to write his incomparable memoirs.

All had seemed hopeful still in the summer of 1772. Hillsborough, who opposed the Grand Ohio scheme of Franklin and his partners (Pennsylvania Whartons, English Walpoles, and highly placed politicians), was forced to resign. But this, it proved, was only the occasion of his fall, and the Vandalia colony scheme still stuck on the ways when Franklin left England in 1775. Dartmouth took over the American office and again raised hopes, which later he

disappointed. Franklin basked in the sunshine of his own great fame and knew that it was still greater abroad. Learned and ingenious foreigners, he wrote William, made a point of visiting him in London; the foreign ambassadors treated him as one of their *corps*. Their courts, he was well aware, hoped that Britain's alarming power would be diminished by the defection of his colonies. "The King, too," he added complacently, "has lately been heard to speak of me with great regard."

But soon Dartmouth showed himself as loath as any minister to receive the American petitions. One petition that Franklin was induced to postpone had come over from Massachusetts to protest the attempt by a civil list to render the provincial judges independent. This was one of a number of secondary issues that Samuel Adams had been stirring: in order, as he hoped, to keep alive the American sense of grievance.

No contrast could be more sharply drawn — in temperament and in tactics — than that between Samuel Adams, the inveterate agitator, and the assembly agent. Both still professed loyalty to the crown; as late as April, 1774, Adams wrote to Arthur Lee, whom he trusted, that he wished for a permanent union with the mother country, "but only on principles of liberty and truth." In September, 1771, Adams was still printing essays that referred to "the acknowledged supreme legislative power" of Parliament, language which Franklin then sedulously avoided and had counseled the Boston men to discard. But Adams must have fumed when he read in the same letters Franklin's further advice to be quiet, to avoid tumults, to trust to time and the growth of American population and wealth to set matters right. The strange collaboration produced some results that Franklin had not intended. Under Adams's radical leadership Massachusetts assimilated Franklin's imperial doctrine but often departed from his tacti-

cal concepts. It was late in 1771 that Adams began to drop those expressions which Franklin had called too strong for compliment; significantly, he referred publicly at this time to Franklin's counsel to "assert our rights in occasional solemn resolves . . . never yielding them up, and avoiding even the slightest expressions that seem confirmatory of the claim that has been set up against them."

On November 2, 1772, Adams introduced in Boston town meeting those famous motions from which developed the new radical engine of the town committees of correspondence, which spread rapidly through New England, and the resolves (asserting American rights and grievances) that were published as the *Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston.* These were soon echoed in the resolves of other Massachusetts towns, some more radical than Boston's. Copies of the Boston pamphlet were hurried to London, and in February, 1773, Franklin had it reprinted by Strahan, with his own preface. Later, Thomas Hutchinson charged that the Bostonians had done little more than put together materials furnished them "by their great director in England," meaning Franklin. This was exaggeration. But undoubtedly Franklin's letters of counsel helped to confirm the Bostonians in their decision to challenge more boldly than before the legislative supremacy of Parliament.

Franklin himself would have preferred to postpone the challenge to a more propitious time. In the Boston manifesto the fundamental issue of legislative supremacy was only hinted at, and was suppressed altogether in the British editor's preface. But Hutchinson was too sensitive on the score of sovereignty to let the matter rest. At the next session of the assembly he thought it necessary to challenge the dangerous popular heresy, roundly declaring that he knew of no line that could be drawn between the

supreme authority of Parliament and the total independence of the colonies.

In March, 1773, when he read the speech, Franklin censured Hutchinson in the *Public Advertiser* for forcing the dangerous issue: "As a friend to both countries, being concerned with both, I wish Governor Hutchinson had thought of some other subject for his speech, and not revived needlessly a dispute that can end in nothing but mischief." He signed himself "A New England-man." He knew, of course, that the blame was shared by his constituents, who in their replies in this historic debate echoed his own doctrine.

His protégé Edward Bancroft pointed out the connection in a notice in the *Monthly Review* (Nobember, 1774), which Franklin had probably read in advance. At the beginning of the American controversy, Bancroft observed, the colonists, challenging Parliamentary taxation, hastily conceded Parliament's legislative authority over them. But this concession was abused. Accordingly, in 1773, the Massachusetts assembly — after duly considering their political history and their charters — adopted instead "a system before proposed by an American advocate" (Franklin) to maintain that the colonies had "been originally constituted distinct states, subject to the King, but independent of the parliament; and since that time the claims and arguments of the colonists have been generally founded upon this system, which therefore becomes an object of importance."

The cat was now out of the bag. But it was still Franklin's hope that the dramatic exposure of the chasm separating English and American views of empire would give the ministry pause. This was a tenuous hope, and by one of his own actions he had already helped to defeat it. On December 2, 1772, he had sent the Boston committee a batch of letters lately placed in his hands, part of a corre-

spondence, he said, which there was reason to believe had laid the foundation of most of the colonial grievances. These letters had already convinced him that the arbitrary measures under Hillsborough had been advised by Americans themselves, hence his own resentment against the mother country had been abated; and he professed to believe that they would have the same effect in New England. This explanation seems overly naïve in so sagacious an observer of the imperial scene. It might more accurately be said that he was offering his constituents, and the government at home, a chance to escape from their dilemma — a dilemma which involved them all and threatened the peace and safety of the empire — by loading their troubles on the backs of two scapegoats: namely, Thomas Hutchinson and Andrew Oliver.

These famous letters had been written from Massachusetts between 1767 and 1769, when Hutchinson, now governor, was lieutenant governor and chief justice, and Oliver, now lieutenant governor, was secretary of the province. Thus they were written, as Franklin claimed in his defense, by public officials — but hardly to public officials, as he also claimed, since Thomas Whately, who received them, though formerly of the treasury, was then an opposition member of Parliament. It is perhaps doubtful that they were intended, as he further alleged, to produce public measures. However, they were passed on to Grenville (also in the opposition), and were still circulating among politicians when both Grenville and Whately died, and an unknown intermediary placed them in Franklin's hands. John Temple, Bowdoin's son-in-law, was involved in the affair, but Franklin protected him at the time and later refrained from endorsing his claim when he sought to acquire credit in Massachusetts. Franklin was permitted to send the letters to Boston, and to allow them to be circulated privately there. But he warned that under his pledge

to the intermediary they must not be published. They might work their effect better, he thought, if seen by a few and talked about by many: "as distant objects seen only through a mist appear larger, the same may happen from the mystery in this case."

But published they were, by a shabby expedient, so as to authenticate them as the basis for an appeal to the king to remove Hutchinson and Oliver from their offices. Read dispassionately, the famous letters fall short of Franklin's advance billing and of the sensation their printing produced in America. Hutchinson's worst indiscretion had been to write: "There must be an abridgement of what are called English liberties," and he rightly complained that his words were torn out of their context. Franklin was nettled to learn that Adams had found a way (with Hancock's help) to avoid the restrictions he had imposed. But he swallowed his anger. Again the agitator had had his way, as in the recent constitutional dispute. In each episode, Franklin had furnished materials and seen them exploited, dangerously, by a more reckless spirit.

Adams had also alarmed the moderates in his own faction, who looked to the agent in England for safer guidance; Cushing even attempted a correspondence with that "very good man" Dartmouth. Both houses now assured the American secretary that all that was necessary to restore the old harmony was to return things "to the general state in which they stood at the conclusion of the last war." Franklin underlined the plea. *"They aim at no novelties,"* he told Dartmouth when he presented the petition for removal of the governors.

But the passage of the Tea Act, in May, 1773, for the financial relief of the East India Company, built up new tensions in America to produce another formidable continental movement of resistance. Under the act the full drawback, or rebate, of British import duties made it pos-

sible thereafter to sell dutied teas in the colonies more cheaply than the smuggled Holland article. Patriots revived their scruples against being taxed by Parliament; and they were joined again by colonial merchants, who in 1770 had foresworn politics and all radical alliances, but were now alarmed by the monopoly accorded the company, permitted as it was to sell teas directly through its own consignees in the American ports. Once more tea became a major ingredient in American politics. Opposition to the landing of the cargoes spread from colony to colony, and at Griffin's wharf, on December 16, patriots disguised as Mohawks cast the tea chests into Boston harbor — an event hailed by John Adams as "an epocha in history." In London Franklin deplored it as "an act of violent injustice."

News of the disciplined Boston "insurrection" reached England at a time when after long hesitation the North ministry was hardening its policy toward coercion. Britons were shocked, and government could safely propose to punish the rebellious town and the colony for multiplied sins of disloyalty over the past year and more. In the ministerial view these sins included the challenges by town meetings and assembly to the principle of Parliamentary sovereignty, and the plot against Hutchinson and Oliver, as well as the wholesale destruction of British property in the Boston Tea Party. A prologue to sterner measures in Parliament was prepared: the exposure and punishment of the colony agent. Franklin's public disgrace in January, 1774, he himself attributed both to the Hutchinson-letters affair and to certain of his writings: the preface to the Boston pamphlet, and the two famous satires, written with greater asperity in the fall of 1773 — the "Rules by which a Great Empire may be Reduced to a Small One" and the purported "Edict by the King of Prussia." One illusion he had now entirely abandoned. In a letter to Wil-

liam (July 14, 1773) he wrote: "the late measures have been, I suspect, very much the King's own."

For months the controversy over the Hutchinson letters had raged on in the London press, with charges and countercharges involving John Temple and William Whately (his brother's executor), who fought a foolish and inconclusive duel — but not yet Franklin, until, on Christmas Day, to save further bloodshed, he published his avowal that he, and he alone, had obtained and transmitted the letters. One office holder, Charles Jenkinson, told Hutchinson several years later that coercion had been postponed and would not have been undertaken but for this letter of Franklin's, which convinced the administration that a dangerous conspiracy was afoot. However that may be, steps were soon taken to expose the origins of the Boston rebellion in an alleged conspiracy spanning the Atlantic, with Franklin the arch conspirator.

The Massachusetts petition for the removal of the governors, which had been gathering dust, gave the handle. Franklin was summoned to appear before a committee of Privy Council on January 11. To his surprise Hutchinson was represented by counsel, in the person of the solicitor general, Alexander Wedderburn. A postponement was granted to enable the agent to prepare his case, a hopeless business from the start, since he could produce no witnesses without revealing secrets. The colony's real case for the removal was political, based upon Hutchinson's demonstrated unpopularity. But it was evident already that this colony case would be transformed into the political case of the ministry against a rebellious colony and a conniving agent. Shortly Franklin was also served with a subpoena in a private suit brought in chancery by William Whately. Before the second hearing, news of the Boston Tea Party was published and caused violent clamors.

Thirty-six privy councilors attended in the Cockpit on

January 29, and as many spectators as could crowd in, for rumors had spread of an expected great sensation. Joseph Priestley made his way through the crush on the arm of Edmund Burke. The colonial agents were there, and Charles James Fox, and Jeremy Bentham; also General Thomas Gage, who hurried off an account to his friend Hutchinson in Boston. Franklin, for this extraordinary occasion, wore a cloak of Manchester velvet. On advice of counsel — John Dunning, Shelburne's friend, and John Lee, able lawyers both, but this day ineffective — he stood silent throughout the proceedings. Even Priestley conceded Wedderburn "a complete triumph." Another compared his speech (of nearly an hour) with Cicero's philippics against Antony. Most of the privy councilors, Priestley noted, frequently laughed outright at his sarcastic sallies; only Lord North behaved with "decent gravity."

Wedderburn began with a cogent defense of his client's conduct, and his violated correspondence. What everyone remembered was his charge that Franklin had basely stolen private letters, a charge he embellished with a Latin pun out of Plautus, which his audience was able to relish. This man of letters was a man of three letters: *homo trium literarum* (i.e. *fur,* thief). There was much more, however, in his speech. By innuendo he tied together all the late offenses of the colony and its agent into one bundle of iniquity. Franklin, with his letters of counsel, was "the true incendiary . . . and abettor" of the Boston faction now inflaming the colony as a committee of correspondence. These men, he insinuated, had learned "the lessons taught in Dr. Franklin's school of politics," lessons they repeated in the Boston resolves of 1772: "If the Doctor should not choose now to filiate the child, yet the time has been when he was not ashamed of it; for, after it had had its operation in America, the Doctor reprinted

it here, with a preface of his own, and presented it to his friends." Hutchinson was now the target because he had challenged these doctrines aiming at independence after they were echoed by the other towns. Wedderburn revealed a plot within a plot: Hutchinson's downfall was intended to prepare the way for the destruction of the legal foundations of the colony government and the setting up of "a great American Republic." Franklin was already using "the language of the minister of a foreign independent state."

The committee decided that the petition to remove Hutchinson was "groundless, vexatious, and scandalous"; on February 7 this report was confirmed by Privy Council. Meantime, Franklin had been summarily dismissed from his place in the postal service. He began at once to write his own vindication, but on advice of friends he withheld it from publication. In the Boston and Philadelphia papers, however, accounts were printed that he had inspired; henceforth there were few doubters in America of his patriotism. William wrote him in May: "It seems your popularity in this country, whatever it may be on the other side, is greatly beyond what it was." To the credit of the London press, there also he had apologists — almost as many, in fact, as his detractors. The ministerial hack writers repeated both counts in Wedderburn's indictment. John Mein (the nemesis of the nonimportation in Boston), writing as "Sagittarius" in the *Public Ledger,* charged a treacherous plot to establish "a GREAT AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH," with Boston the capital, of which "the GREAT and LEARNED DOCTOR was to be the REGULATOR and DICTATOR! The old dotard thought he saw himself as the founder of empires and the father of kings."

Within a week, Shelburne wrote Chatham, there was talk, "of a new plan of American government." By the Coercive Acts the port of Boston was closed, the customs

removed to Salem, and Parliament in effect annulled the Massachusetts charter: *mandamus* councilors were substituted for the elected council, town meetings strictly regulated; trials in capital cases might be transferred to Britain. Americans included in this bracket of punitive acts another measure, the Quebec Act, which did justice at last to the French inhabitants in point of law and religion, but also extended the boundaries of Quebec to the Ohio River, thus limiting the western claims of Virginia and other seaboard colonies. Hutchinson was replaced in his governorship of Massachusetts by the commander in chief, Thomas Gage.

Franklin had urged "speedy reparation" for the destruction of the East India Company's tea, to "set us right in the opinion of all Europe," so that "if war is finally to be made upon us, which some threaten, an act of violent injustice on our part, unrectified, may not give a colorable pretence for it." But in his view the Coercive Acts radically shifted the balance of wrongs. Britain must now take the first step toward reconciliation by repeal of these harsh measures. Expecting soon to return to America, he turned over the Massachusetts papers to Arthur Lee; but Lee chose just this critical moment to make the grand tour of Europe. Franklin's friends advised him to stay on, to await the outcome of the intended American congress, when his presence might again be invaluable. He knew that he was taking risks. There were rumors for a time in the spring that a Hutchinson-letters affair in reverse was about to be sprung. Government, it was hinted in the press, possessed treasonable letters that Franklin and Lee had written to Boston; punishment was talked of. And all the while Whately's suit hung over his head. Sudden violence in America might lead to his imprisonment. He grew more cautious in his letters to America, but more than ever satirical in his pseudonymous letters to the press.

Franklin still hoped — or chose to hope — that the good sense of the mass of Englishmen, among the mercantile classes and the dissenters especially, would correct the folly of mad ministers and a corrupt Parliament. But his greatest hopes he pinned upon the new movement of intercolonial union started in 1773, when, on Virginia's initiative (after the appointment of the *Gaspee* commission), the system of provincial committees of correspondence was established. There was also discussion into which he entered, even before the tea crisis, of a congress as the next step toward achieving American rights. The Massachusetts House had evaded Hutchinson's challenge in January, 1773, that they attempt to draw "the line between the supreme authority of Parliament and the total independence of the colonies." So arduous an undertaking, they replied, of such importance to all the colonies, required their consent in a congress. Samuel Adams began to enlarge upon the idea. Arthur Lee urged caution; he feared hostile British reaction. But at this juncture Franklin was ready to take that calculated risk. No American had promoted intercolonialism as long or as consistently as he: intercolonialism in culture, in defense, in government, and now in political action.

In June, 1773, he was at work upon an important considered statement of his views, which he dispatched July 7 to Speaker Cushing. "How are we to obtain redress?" he asked. The king rejects all our petitions. The history of Parliament itself supplied an answer: withhold aids. "Whenever a war happens, our aid will be wished for, our friendship desired and cultivated, our good will courted: Then is the time to say, *'Redress our grievances. . . .'*" But great questions had lately been raised by the Massachusetts assembly, which must be weighed by the rest of America if they were to present a united front. Perhaps, then, "it would be best and fairest for the colonies, in a

general Congress now in peace to be assembled," or by means of the new intercolonial system of correspondence, after a full and solemn declaration of their rights, to engage that "they will never grant aids to the Crown in any general war, till those rights are recognized by the King and both Houses of Parliament." He fully realized the possible consequences of his advice. Such a step would bring the dispute to a crisis; and "whether our demands are immediately complied with, or compulsory measures thought of to make us rescind them, our ends will finally be obtained."

Thus Franklin threw his weight behind the new movement for an intercolonial political union, and defined its first object: the drafting of a colonial bill of rights, to be enforced when England's necessity became America's opportunity. His bold strategy pleased Samuel Adams and was endorsed in the circular letter sent out October 21 by the Massachusetts provincial committee to all the other committees of the continent.

The congress idea came to fruition in 1774 in another context, however: the spontaneous reaction throughout the colonies against the Coercive Acts. Among the delegates assembled in Carpenter's Hall in Philadelphia in September were men of every opinion, from the radicalism of Samuel Adams to the conservatism of Franklin's old ally, Joseph Galloway. Fearing and despising republicanism, Galloway came armed with his Plan of Union, a project for a Britannic-American imperial parliament in which a grand council (on Franklin's old model) would constitute the inferior American chamber. Franklin observed with the greatest interest this climactic movement toward a continental political union. But he was persistently overoptimistic in his predictions that a united front would arouse British merchants and the public from their indifference to the fate of America. As late as October 6

he wrote Cushing that if Congress resolved on a nonconsumption of British manufactures, intelligent men believed "this ministry must go out and their late measures be all reversed." This was after warrants had been issued for a new Parliamentary election, suddenly called (he believed) to forestall the effect of the expected appeals from Philadelphia. The snap election greatly strengthened the Parliamentary majority for an authoritarian policy.

Dartmouth and his undersecretaries were sure that the Congress would do exactly what Franklin advised, and they eagerly collected his opinions. John Pownall wrote William Knox at the end of August that Franklin had said that the Congress would adopt a bill of rights and annex it to a nonimportation. And at Lord North's levee Hutchinson learned in November that government had secret information from Philadelphia: letters from Dr. Franklin, he was told, had arrived at the critical moment to convert hesitant middle-colony delegates to strong measures of economic retaliation. Later, General Gage confirmed these allegations.

The Congress endorsed the radical Suffolk County Resolves, tabled Galloway's plan, enacted the Continental Association with its elaborate machinery of local committees to enforce the nonimportation, nonconsumption, and nonexportation. These were vigorous measures: its "bill of rights," however, was a compromise document embodied in the Declaration and Resolves, which named all those measures enacted since 1763 (culminating in the Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act) that must now be repealed, and defined colonial rights in the familiar terms of "life, liberty and property," asserting also the exclusive power in their assemblies to legislate "in all cases of taxation and internal polity," subject only to the royal veto.

These papers, with the petition to the king and the addresses to the British and American peoples, came to

Franklin's hands about the middle of December. With William Bollan and Arthur Lee he presented the petition to Dartmouth, who told them later that the king had received it graciously and would lay it before Parliament. They concluded too hopefully that it would furnish the occasion for a change of measures, a hope soon dashed when it was sent down with a great heap of papers on America, the last in the list. But the impression made by the Congress on people in general was heartening. At Hayes, the day after Christmas, Chatham told Franklin that the Congress had acted "with so much temper, moderation and wisdom, that he thought it the most honorable assembly of statesmen since those of the ancient Greeks and Romans, in the most virtuous times."

Franklin had at last met the inaccessible Chatham. The first meeting had occurred the preceding summer, when he was trying to promote a coalition among the chiefs of the divided and impotent opposition. But Chatham gave him little encouragement, and expressed his concern lest the Americans might actually be seeking independence, as their enemies charged, or at least to rid themselves of the Navigation Acts. Franklin quieted his fears on both scores; and in January, 1775, Chatham consulted him frequently — and ostentatiously — while he was preparing his abortive plan of reconciliation. On a Sunday, one year to a day after Franklin's disgrace in the Privy Council, the great man's coach stood before his lodgings in Craven Street for nearly two hours while curious people were coming from church. Chatham personally admitted the agent to the Lords' chamber on January 20 when he moved unsuccessfully that the troops be removed from Boston. And Franklin was again leaning on the bar on February 1 when Chatham presented his plan, proposing to recognize the Congress, which would henceforth vote American supplies; to renounce taxation without American consent; but

to require American recognition of the "supreme legislative authority and superintending power" in Parliament. These were certainly not Franklin's terms, as Lord Sandwich insinuated, charging that he was "one of the bitterest and most mischievous enemies this country had ever known." But Franklin had hoped that Chatham's plan, if considered, might serve as the basis for a treaty, and meantime prevent mischiefs. It was immediately rejected, however. Franklin's only satisfaction that day was to hear himself ranked by Chatham with "our Boyles and Newtons," and described as one "who was an honor, not to the English nation only, but to human nature."

With growing alarm he listened to the warlike speeches in Parliament and the loose talk by generals in London society, decrying American valor, predicting an easy conquest. His most mordant satires he wrote in this crisis to expose British military arrogance, now become a dangerous ingredient in national policy. And he also wrote more bitterly than ever of the corruptions of the British political system, as revealed in the late elections. By discarding English fopperies America, he said, in three or four years could save enough money to "buy the whole Parliament, minister and all." Similarly he explained to Galloway, February 25, 1775, his overriding objection to his Plan of Union: "When I consider the extream corruption prevalent among all orders of men in this old rotten state, and the glorious public virtue so predominant in our rising country, I cannot but apprehend more mischief than benefit from a closer union."

Yet he would try anything and bear anything, he added, short of risking American liberties, rather than go to war with such near relations except in self-defense. For three months past he had in fact explored all the possible avenues to an accommodation in protracted backstairs negotiations with friends, or friends of friends, who came to

him insisting that there was a party in the cabinet, including North and Dartmouth, who sincerely desired an accommodation, though others favored harsher punishments for New England. These secret devious negotiations ran for a time in two separate channels, both leading to the American minister, Lord Dartmouth, or to Lord Hyde, the respected friend of other ministers. One channel was furnished by Dr. Fothergill (who saw Dartmouth daily as his physician), and the merchant, David Barclay, with whom Franklin was trying to arrange more vigorous mercantile intervention with Parliament. Another was opened with a good deal of mystery when he was invited by a fellow member of the Royal Society to play chess with Lady Howe. At the third game she introduced her brother, Lord Howe, who hinted at tangible rewards which Franklin might earn for services as a peacemaker: his back pay as agent, a post with a peace commission to deal with the Congress, other vague preferments — all this Franklin called "spitting in the soup." Dartmouth and Hyde seem to have believed that he had powers from the Congress to negotiate a settlement, which he was unwilling to own. In any case, his prestige, if he could be won over, might lead the Congress to relax its demands. Such actual divisions as existed in the cabinet probably turned more upon tactics — and upon timing — than on the fundamentals of the American policy, which remained authoritarian and coercive. The intermediaries had no credentials, and could at any time be disowned. In effect, they were disowned on February 20, 1775, when Lord North produced his so-called plan of conciliation in the Commons.

The narrative of this protracted shadowboxing, which Franklin wrote on his voyage to America, reveals those mature qualities of diplomacy which he had developed as a colonial agent since his early stumblings ten years before: his flexibility, his willingness to take great personal risks

to reach an accommodation, and at the same time his grasp of the fundamental issues at stake upon which it was now impossible for the American advocate to retreat. He had yielded at the outset the point which Barclay and Fothergill insisted was the *sine qua non* of the negotiation: the teas destroyed should be paid for. He had even agreed that under certain conditions (which were not met) he would engage personally for the payment, by which, he told Lord Hyde, "I must have risked my whole fortune, which I thought few besides me would have done." What had Lord Dartmouth conceded in return? A return to requisitions, but not the renunciation of the asserted Parliamentary right to tax; repeal of a few only of the measures whose repeal had been demanded by the Congress: chiefly the tea-duty act and the Boston Port Act; concessions with respect to the appointment of judges, and operations of the admiralty courts; payment of the proceeds of the regulatory duties into the provincial treasuries.

This last item was the only surviving remnant of Franklin's original proposals for a durable settlement to be incorporated into Lord North's plan of conciliation of February 20 — which promised for the rest that whenever any colony should contribute to the common defense and engage to support its civil government and the administration of justice, Parliament would forgo its power to tax with respect to that colony. Even this gesture was thought by most of North's supporters to be a sign of weakness. Americans read it as an attempt to divide and conquer, aimed chiefly at separating New York from the intercolonial union.

The sands had nearly run out. A few days later Dartmouth's long-delayed orders to General Gage were dispatched: orders that led on April 19 to the march on Concord and the outbreak of war in Massachusetts. Franklin

was then crossing the Atlantic; news of Deborah's death in Philadelphia had hastened his departure. On March 1 he had his final interview with Lord Hyde, when he defined the two great unresolved issues which now more than ever threatened to disrupt the empire. Parliament still held over the colonies the threat of taxing them at pleasure, and of compelling taxes by force of arms. A new dispute of even greater importance had arisen through Parliament's claim to a power of altering colonial charters and laws. For Dartmouth (through his intermediaries) had flatly rejected Franklin's insistence on the repeal of all the late acts respecting Massachusetts. The Port Act might go; the other acts were real amendments of the colonial constitution and "a standing example of the power of Parliament."

As Franklin had so long predicted, once the quarrel over Parliamentary sovereignty was brought out into the open, a chasm was revealed between English and American convictions too wide to be bridged.

He spent his last day in London in the company of Joseph Priestley, reading American newspapers, directing his friend what to extract for the London papers. From Fothergill he received a moving letter of farewell, deploring the failure of their united endeavors, which should convince the most courtly of their loyalist friends in America of the hollowness of their expectations from the king's present government. "Farewell," he wrote, "and befriend this infant, growing empire. . . . A happy, prosperous voyage!"

I X

Philadelphia:

Union for Independence

FRANKLIN RETURNED TO PHILADELPHIA on the evening of May 5, 1775. Next morning, by unanimous vote, the assembly named him a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, which four days later met in the statehouse. Not retirement but his busiest and most brilliant decade in public service lay ahead.

War had begun at Lexington and Concord, April 19. To meet the immediate crisis, the Congress acted boldly: resolved to put the colonies in a state of defense (May 15); adopted the army of Yankee farmers besieging Gage's forces in Boston; appointed the Virginia delegate, George Washington, commander in chief (June 15).

Each resolute step taken — or merely debated and postponed — pointed up the complicated dilemma confronting the colonial leaders, a dilemma both of means and of ends. The Congress was attempting to wield with one hand the weapon of the nonimportation and nonconsumption forged by the first Congress, and with the other hand the sword — and these weapons clashed. At Bunker Hill (June 17) the rebel troops showed that they could fight bravely; they exacted a terrible toll from Howe's and Clinton's redcoats, but fled their redoubt when their powder was exhausted. A committee of Congress, with Frank-

lin a member, reported on the manufacture of saltpeter, and miracles of powder-making were somehow accomplished. Even so, it was plain that greater stocks of munitions must be imported. Another of Franklin's committees devised a scheme to admit (secretly) essential military supplies. But Congress laid aside his and Richard Henry Lee's propositions to throw open the ports to trade. That way, reluctant men feared, lay the road to independence.

Franklin at sixty-nine was as busy as anyone in the Congress on its numerous committees — for this was a revolution planned and directed by committees — and bolder than most in counsel. One of his committees reported on the organization of the postal service, and he was appointed postmaster general. Another reported on the printing of paper currency; still another on Lord North's plan of conciliation, which of course was rejected. Also thrust upon him in this hectic summer were the duties of the president of the Pennsylvania committee of safety. He supervised the new defenses of Philadelphia: a great *chevaux de frise* of logs and iron to bar the channel, a fort, a fleet of armed vessels.

Less conspicuously he served on the two committees of the Congress which wrestled with the most controversial of its tasks: the definition of America's position *vis à vis* Great Britain. Congress was dissatisfied with the original report of the committee which drafted its "manifesto," and added Jefferson and John Dickinson to its membership, who between them drew up that ambivalent document, the "Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking up Arms" (July 6), asserting: "We have not raised armies with ambitious designs of separating from Great Britain, and establishing independent states. We fight not for glory or for conquest." Already Dickinson, the moderate leader of the party of conciliation, had

drafted yet another appeal to the king, the Olive Branch Petition (July 5) — scorned by the Adamses, disliked by Jefferson, viewed skeptically also by Franklin, who was willing, nevertheless, that the futile game of petitioning should be played out to the end in the interest of American unity. He wrote to Priestley (July 7): "It has been with difficulty that we have carried another humble petition to the crown, to give Britain one more chance, one opportunity more, of recovering the friendship of the colonies; which, however, I think she has not sense enough to embrace, and so I conclude she has lost them forever."

The hazardous, uncertain cause embraced by the Congress and defended by Washington's army was dividing Americans as sharply as it divided the empire. It divided Franklin's family among many others, and his circle of old friends. Already he had sadly concluded that his own son was a "thorough courtier" who saw everything "with government eyes." William clung to his post as royal governor of New Jersey, and, "suspecting his father's intention" (from his avoidance of the great issue in their conversations), he attempted to draw him out, brashly hoping that "if he designed to set the colonies in a flame, he would take care to run away by the light of it." Galloway told the story several years later, when he rode down from London to Richmond with another loyalist exile in England, Thomas Hutchinson, who recorded the gossip in his *Diary* (January 6, 1779).

For five or six weeks, Galloway recalled, Franklin had been so reserved that "people seemed at a loss what part he would take," and Samuel Adams, supposing the worst, "opened against him as a suspicious person, designing to betray the cause." Meeting his old political ally one day, Franklin remarked cryptically, "Well, Mr. Galloway, you are really of the mind that I ought to promote a reconciliation?" Galloway said, "Yes," but the subject was then

dropped. Later, Franklin read him part of his journal in London, but failed to draw him back into the Congress. Then one evening "at a late hour," when the three were together, "the glass having gone about freely," Franklin "declared in favor of measures for attaining to independence." He denounced as he had so often done of late the "corruption and dissipation of the Kingdom." From the strength of the opposition and disunion in the ministry he expected that the colonies with their great resources would finally prevail.

Franklin was not usually so indiscreet, but his conduct throughout this year of painful American hesitations confirms the Galloway-Hutchinson version. More than once he proposed that Congress enter paths which converged at length in the independence movement: to open the ports, to create a confederation, to approach foreign powers. By virtue of his long-pondered imperial theory, and by his late disillusioning experiences in England, the old imperialist was better prepared than most to venture on the next great and revolutionary step. As early as January, 1775, while he still worked pessimistically for accommodation, he had surprised and delighted Josiah Quincy, Jr. (the young radical then in England on his mysterious mission for the Boston "faction") by the vigor of his expressions, so different from Quincy's expectations. For Quincy in 1773 had dined with John Dickinson at his seat near Philadelphia and then entered in his journal a description of Franklin as "a very trimmer, a very courtier." This entry he now expunged, to declare instead that he was one "of the wisest and best of men upon earth." Ironically, it was Dickinson, honorably hesitant, who held back in 1775–1776, Franklin who was ready to press forward as fast as American opinion would permit.

For Franklin the scales had been tipped by obstinate Parliamentary claims of unlimited sovereignty over fellow

subjects who had outgrown dependence — and by the horrid fact of war. He hated all wars, and especially this internecine contest. "Perhaps ministers may think this a means of disposing us to reconciliation," he wrote Bishop Shipley (July 7), with news of the bloody work at Bunker Hill and the burning of Charlestown. "I feel and see everywhere the reverse. Most of the little property I have consists of houses in the sea-port towns, which I suppose may all soon be destroyed in the same way, and yet I think I am not half so reconcilable now as I was a month ago." Usually so poised, henceforth he grew warm whenever he named the guilty parties, the king and his ministers, or their supporters, the American loyalists. And he finally dismissed his hope that the sound core of British middle-class and dissenter opinion would check their folly. Throughout the war he still wrote to a few English intimates. In a letter to Priestley (June 7, 1782), he wondered how it happened that the "Club of Honest Whigs" and other friends "came to be such good creatures in the midst of so perverse a generation."

For more than twenty years Franklin had advocated intercolonial union, and union was never more necessary than now. Surely something better could be contrived than the *de facto* Continental Congress. So once more he tried his hand at a sketch for a constitution, for what he now called "The United Colonies of North America." He showed his "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union" to his friends in Congress, among them Jefferson, who highly approved. Others, says Jefferson, "were revolted at it." Franklin therefore only read the paper in the committee of the whole on the state of the union (July 21); he did not press it to a vote. So strong, in fact, was the sentiment for reconciliation that the document was not even mentioned in the minutes. But it survived this cold reception, to furnish the groundwork for the committee

report of 1776, and thus (with many alterations) for the first federal constitution, ratified tardily in 1781.

Franklin's "Articles" were no mere revision of his Albany Congress Plan, though some features were retained: the Congress of delegates from each colony, chosen under a scheme of proportional representation (here based upon the number of male polls), and the same emphasis upon centralized control of western affairs (land purchases and new colonies). But those other features which had tied the earlier projected union into the framework of the British Empire — the president general, and the requirement that laws conform to those of England and be submitted to the king in council — were omitted. Provision was made, it is true, that if the Congress demands were yielded the colonies would return "to their former connection and friendship with Britain." But Franklin, for one, held no such hope; "on failure thereof," his document concluded, "this Confederation is to be perpetual." It was especially this bold acceptance of the prospect of independency which, Jefferson realized, "would startle many members."

Franklin had proposed a "strong" union in 1754, in terms of that time, and it had been defeated by colonial particularism. In most respects this was a stronger union, though the taxing power provided in the Albany Plan was withheld, evidently out of consistency with late arguments against Parliament's claims, and requisitions substituted. These Articles pointed toward national sovereignty as well as toward independence: in the provision for representation by numbers, in the large powers granted Congress over war and peace, diplomacy and alliances, and western expansion; and in the law-making powers, extending to all matters "necessary to the general welfare." Here Franklin raised issues which could be interminably debated, as the history of the confederation problem from 1776 to 1781 reveals. But there was no debate in 1775.

The subject was shelved. Federal union waited on a decision which few were yet willing to make, for national independence.

But the war could not wait. When the Congress resumed in September, Franklin found himself "immersed in so much business that I have scarce time to eat or sleep. . . . This bustle," he wrote Shipley, "is unsuitable to age." In October he was sent to Washington's camp at Cambridge with Thomas Lynch and Benjamin Harrison to confer with the general and the New England executives on measures necessary to support and regulate the army. Their report was timely, and measurably effective: the army was held together; in the spring Washington was able to push Howe's army out of Boston. Meanwhile, a northern campaign had been launched from which great things were expected: no less than the addition of Canada to the "United Colonies." Franklin had left room in his July "Articles" for this enlargement (and for the Floridas, the West Indies, and even Ireland!). No one could have been more interested than this inveterate expansionist in the news which trickled in of the progress of Montgomery's and Arnold's expeditions towards Montreal and Quebec.

Americans also awaited news of the reception of the Olive Branch Petition — Franklin quite skeptically. On November 9 it was known that the king had refused to receive the petition and had proclaimed that the American colonies were in a state of rebellion. For the party of action, this was decisive. But the Congress hesitated: its declaration of December 6 still disclaimed any intent to deny the king's sovereignty, though renouncing at last (as Franklin had done long since) all allegiance to Parliament. "We never owed" it, they declared, and (rewriting the record) "we never owned it."

Within the week Franklin began writing to old friends

in Europe — to Charles W. F. Dumas, a man of letters at The Hague, the translator of Vattel, and to his own translator, Barbeu-Dubourg, in Paris — letters that raised a great question now agitating American minds (which perhaps would determine the fate of the revolution). We wish to know he said, "whether, if, as it seems likely to happen, we should be obliged to break off all connexion with Britain, and declare ourselves an independent people, there is any state or power in Europe, who would be willing to enter into an alliance with us for the benefit of our commerce." The Congress had begun to look abroad. Franklin had begun to play his greatest role in the American Revolution.

The Congress, on November 29, had appointed a committee of five, Benjamin Harrison, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Johnson, John Dickinson, John Jay, "for the sole purpose of corresponding with our friends in Great Britain, Ireland, and other parts of the world." Two months later Robert Morris's name was added. It was a secret committee, charged with a large discretion, the most important of the standing committees out of which evolved the structure of a national government — the germ, in fact, of the Department of State. One phrase in the "Declaration upon Taking Up Arms" had hinted at foreign aid. The time had now come to pursue it, when George III was hiring Hessians to suppress his American subjects. On December 12 the committee instructed Arthur Lee, the Massachusetts agent still in London, to sound out with great secrecy the disposition of the European powers toward the revolted colonies.

Few courtships, surely, have been conducted with more doubts, hesitations, and concealments on both sides, than that now begun between America and the French monarchy of Louis XVI. There were formidable obstacles to an honest marriage by open alliance, or even to such a "se-

cret" liaison as was first achieved, with a suitable establishment provided out of French funds (in the form of munitions and other necessary supplies) for the recreant daughter of the ancient enemy, John Bull. Americans could not easily forget that France was their traditional enemy as well as Britain's, nor give over their Protestant suspicion of all papists. Certainly an alliance — and probably a commercial connection — would lead, willy-nilly, to the final break with home which so many dreaded. As for the French king, he could not lightly contemplate aid to rebellious subjects, an aversion even more pronounced at the court of the Spanish monarch, joined to France by the Family Compact. Even a cautious policy of secret aid would be expensive, and was opposed by the finance minister, Turgot, who thought all colonies were destined to be free, and asked why France should trouble to hasten the inevitable event.

But there were eager marriage brokers, none more enterprising than the clockmaker-turned-librettist, Caron de Beaumarchais, who had become a sort of unofficial French minister in London, deep in three or four intrigues as involved as the plots of his operas. He negotiated with Lee, and bombarded Louis XVI and his foreign minister, Charles Gravier de Vergennes, with memoirs urging French intervention. Already fears had been aroused that in this American crisis the North ministry might be overthrown by the opposition under that inveterate enemy of France, the Earl of Chatham, who would then rally the insurgents to their old allegiance by a joint British-America attack on the French West Indies.

As for Vergennes, he welcomed the American revolt. Skillfully managed, it could furnish France with the long-awaited opportunity to recover her dominant position in Europe, lost in the Seven Years War. From 1763 to 1783 France pursued a policy of *revanche* for her great defeat.

She had renounced, to be sure, her dream of a continental empire in North America (which simplified the problem of achieving a Franco-American understanding), though she was still intent upon maintaining her Caribbean empire and recovering her North American fisheries. But the main object of Choiseul and later of Vergennes was to weaken Britain, raised by victory to such heights of colonial and commercial power, and thus to elevate France again to her rightful primacy in Europe. From the Stamp Act crisis on, French diplomats in London and secret agents in America had probed every sign of weakness in the imposing fabric of the British empire.

Franklin in London had been aware that he was an object of special interest to French ministers. When he planned to visit Paris in 1767, Durand gave him letters "to the Lord knows who," asked for all his political writings, visited and dined him. "I fancy," Franklin wrote his son, "that intriguing nation would like very well to meddle on occasion, and blow up the coals between Britain and her colonies; but I hope we shall give them no opportunity." And after his second visit, in 1769, he wrote Cooper on September 30 that all Europe was on the American side: "But Europe has its reasons. It fancies itself in some danger from the growth of British power, and would be glad to see it divided against itself."

In December, 1775, one Achard de Bonvouloir, lately arrived in Philadelphia, made himself known to Franklin through a French bookseller, and was shortly engaged in meetings — arranged, amid great mystery, at night — with the committee of correspondence. He came as a secret agent, with verbal instructions from Vergennes to assure the leaders informally that France had no designs on Canada and would welcome their ships to French ports; and to encourage them to seek independence. In turn they convinced him that Congress had decided upon separation.

This was six months and more before the Declaration; even late in February Franklin's motion to open the ports to trade was defeated. But events and hard necessity were wearing the opposition down. On March 3, 1776, the secret committee of correspondence sent Silas Deane of Connecticut to France (in the assumed character of a Yankee merchant) to negotiate for aid.

Franklin was then preparing for another mission. Montgomery, advancing from Ticonderoga, had occupied Montreal, and Arnold, after incredible hardships in the march from the Kennebec, had reached Quebec; but their combined assault on the citadel had failed with Montgomery killed and Arnold wounded. Franklin's report of February 14, convinced the Congress that although the Canadian clergy and *noblesse* had turned the people against their sister colonies, persuasion might yet undo the harm. Despite his age, Franklin was dispatched on the mission, with Samuel Chase, another delegate, and Charles Carroll of Carrolton; the Reverend John Carroll, a Jesuit, accompanied them. It was a formidable journey; Franklin was so ill when they joined Arnold at the end of April that he shortly returned to Philadelphia. The loyalty of the Canadians had been ensured by the reforms of the Quebec Act, which Americans had denounced in terms unlikely to win friends in the North, as an establishment of arbitrary government and of popery. The conduct of the American soldiery had completed their alienation. The mission was inevitably a fiasco.

Back in Philadelphia Franklin slowly recovered from an attack of the gout, which kept him from the Congress when great events were impending. "I know little of what has passed there," he wrote Washington, "except that a Declaration of Independence is preparing."

The independence movement had been powerfully stimulated by the publication of the anonymous pamphlet

Common Sense, with its ringing denunciation of monarchy and of George III as "the Royal Brute of Britain." Some thought Franklin the author, but it was wholly the work of his protégé Thomas Paine, an immigrant of 1774, who had brought over the agent's letters of introduction to his Philadelphia circle. In October, 1775, Franklin had offered him materials to complete "a history of the present transactions," with the idea, Paine thought, of opening the new year with "a new system." To surprise his patron, Paine rushed his pamphlet to the press; great numbers read it and were converted. Virginia, on May 15, instructed her delegates to move for independence (and for a confederation and foreign alliances). The same day the Congress advised the several colonies to assume all the powers of government. On June 7, Richard Henry Lee offered his historic tripartite resolution. The middle colonies still held back, and debate was therefore postponed. But on June 11 a committee of five was appointed, Jefferson, Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman and Robert R. Livingston, to prepare a document to justify independence to hesitant Americans and the opinion of mankind.

Probably the committee met in Duffield's house on the Bristol pike, where Franklin was recuperating, to agree upon the main character of the document. Jefferson showed his draft both to Adams and Franklin, who wrote in minor changes which he accepted. The most interesting seems to have been one of Franklin's: the happy choice of "self-evident" instead of "sacred & undeniable" in the sentence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident." The implied theory of empire had been Franklin's before Jefferson had begun to play a role in the impending revolution. But Franklin could hardly have penned with Jefferson's eloquent conviction the brief summary of the American revolution doctrine which stands at the beginning of the Declaration. In his own writings he had usu-

ally avoided the language of natural rights that Jefferson instinctively used.

On July 2, Lee's motion at last prevailed, and debate began upon the Declaration. Jefferson writhed while the Congress tampered with his handiwork, and Franklin consoled him with his amusing anecdote of John Thompson, Hatter. On July 4 independence was rationally justified to the world. It remained to establish it by arms and by diplomacy, and to finish the work already begun of creating new republican states and a federal union.

For a time, as John Adams observed, the colonies were as busy manufacturing governments as they had lately been manufacturing gunpowder. In July Franklin divided his time between Congress and the sessions of the revolutionary Pennsylvania Convention, which had chosen him its president. The Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 was the product of a genuine local revolution which had received his blessing, and thereby he alienated conservative friends. Later he defended its distinctive features: the unicameral assembly, and the multiple executive. Often described as the most "democratic" of the revolutionary constitutions, it was also one of the least durable.

With his strong faith in representative assemblies, chosen on a basis of population and not of wealth, he never shared the doubts of popular rule which inspired John Adams's political science, or felt the need for elaborate devices of balanced government. But he rejected the localism and particularism which was so large a part of the spirit of '76. This he demonstrated in the debates that now began in Congress on the Articles of Confederation. John Dickinson's committee on confederation had reported a plan which preserved a number of Franklin's strong union provisions, including control of the West, but continued the voting equality of the states established by the First Continental Congress. Franklin moved that the

states should vote in proportion to population, arguing that if the small states insisted on an equal vote they should make equal contributions to the treasury. He discounted fears of small-state men that they would be swallowed up, recalling Scottish fears of the union with England which had proved baseless — there Jonah had swallowed the whale! But in 1776 nothing could be decided. Later, Franklin's principle was rejected, and the Articles were further amended to make clear that this was a union of limited powers between equal sovereign states.

Lately Franklin had been receiving polite and propitiatory letters from an old acquaintance, Admiral Lord Howe, who was joined with his brother, Sir William, in the British command and also in a feeble peace commission which, as Whig "friends of America," they were anxious to pursue instead of a bloody conquest. At Long Island Washington suffered a stunning defeat on August 27, whereupon Lord Howe approached Congress, and Congress, though wary, sent a committee — Franklin, John Adams, Edward Rutledge — to confer with him on Staten Island, to determine the extent of his powers. These they learned, as they had expected, were few and meager: to grant pardons to individuals upon submission, but not to treat with Congress or the state governments. Negotiations for peace would depend upon "treading back this step of independency." Everyone was polite; but like the chess games in London, the Staten Island conference was fruitless.

Thus the point of independence was confirmed as the supreme issue of the contest. Again Congress turned toward Europe, to seek aid and recognition — but not yet an alliance, so strong was the repugnance to entanglements. Franklin had served on the committee which drafted the Plan of 1776 for a model treaty of amity and commerce. In his volume of European treaties he had marked certain

clauses stressing the "liberal" maritime code favored by small-navy and neutral states. The draft had been completed by John Adams, and then accepted, with some alterations, by the Congress. Franklin also took part in framing the instructions for the commissioners appointed to negotiate such treaties: Silas Deane, Franklin himself, Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson declined; Arthur Lee replaced him.

"It is highly probable," the instructions declared, "that France means not to let the United States sink in the present contest," but might believe "we are able to support the war on our own strength and resources longer than, in fact, we can do." Hence, "it will be proper for you to press for the immediate and explicit declaration of France in our favor, upon a suggestion that a reunion with Great Britain may be the consequence of a delay." This was the "trump card" which Franklin played so shrewdly in the great crisis of the negotiations, to secure the French alliance. But Congress avoided as yet any mention of alliance, though seeking favors likely to involve France in war. Soon the commissioners were also directed to seek recognition and similar treaties from other European countries (October 16). Franklin's disapproval of this kind of "militia diplomacy" he made plain to one of its persistent practitioners, Arthur Lee: "I have never yet changed the opinion I gave in Congress, that a virgin state should preserve the virgin character, and not go about suitoring for alliances. . . . I was overruled; perhaps for the best."

X

Paris:

Alliance and Peace

AFTER A DANGEROUS WARTIME VOYAGE in the armed sloop *Reprisal,* which took two prizes off the coast of France, Franklin landed at Auray, in Brittany, on December 3. He reached Paris December 21, to become at once the object of universal acclaim.

Thanks to Lee's and Deane's solicitations — but even more to French initiative — France had already embarked upon the policy of all aid short of war, to keep the revolt alive until the moment should arrive for armed intervention. Thus far had Vergennes and Beaumarchais overcome the king's scruples. On May 2, Louis XVI had directed that one million *livres* be furnished the insurgents in the form of munitions; in Spain Charles III had matched the offer. To give a colorable disguise to unneutral assistance, Beaumarchais had set up the fictitious firm of Rodrigue Hortalez et Cie., and Deane had entered into contracts promising repayment. Lee was convinced from talks with Beaumarchais in London that these grants were really gifts disguised as loans, and Lee convinced Congress. Thus Deane's troubles began, which culminated several years later in his defection — and quarrels were started which continued to plague the American mission in Paris.

Sooner or later, Vergennes knew, France must go to war, if the opportunity offered by the American revolt was not to be lost forever. Two assurances were essential: that the revolt would not fizzle out; and that Spain would also fight Britain. Spain's naval support was necessary, everyone believed, to balance Britain's sea power. In the late summer of 1776 it appeared that Vergennes might soon have his war. For Spain, directed by the bellicose Grimaldi, was proposing to conquer Portugal and Minorca; and the intelligence from America was heartening — Howe had evacuated Boston, independence had been declared. Then had come news of Washington's defeat at Long Island. France returned to watchful waiting.

So eager were the commissioners to bring both powers in that in February, 1777, they agreed to stretch their instructions, to enter into a mutual pledge of no separate peace with Britain. In the spring, under new authority from Congress, they urged a triple alliance. But Vergennes evaded the proposal, and Arthur Lee was turned back at the Spanish border. Meanwhile, the burden of exploiting all the possible advantages of French benevolent neutrality fell mainly on Franklin, who alone commanded the confidence of Vergennes and enjoyed a vogue in France, indeed throughout Europe, such as no other American diplomat attained in his time or since.

This exotic Franklin vogue was an extraordinary mingling of fact and fiction. So famous already in his own right, he became the symbol of the utopian myth spun by French philosophers: the intriguing myth of an ideal American society, most often identified with Penn's Woods, where dwelt a simple, pious, tolerant, industrious folk, practicing all the social virtues, true farmer-philosophers — the perfect foil for literary assaults upon Old World privilege, luxury, and corruption. Even aristocrats and courtiers were caught up in the fashionable enthusi-

asm. With his flair for public relations Franklin meant to transform it into active support of American rebellion.

If Frenchmen thought him a Quaker, he would dress and act the part. Three weeks after he had settled temporarily in the rue de l'Université the police reported: "This Quaker wears the full costume of his sect. He has an agreeable physiognomy. Spectacles always on his eyes; but little hair — a fur cap is always on his head." He was much run after, they observed, but was difficult to approach — a point of tact, no doubt, to save government from embarrassment, which also enhanced the sensation of his rare appearances in public. He met with the Academy of Sciences (since 1772 he had been an *associé étranger,* one of eight in all Europe) ; he sometimes visited the theater or the opera. Once he attended a session of the *parlement* of Paris, and a path was made for him through the applauding crowd: an honor, Deane proudly noted, "seldom paid to the first princes of the blood." Everyone soon was familiar with his benign features, in medallions, on snuff-box lids (and homelier household articles), as well as in "pictures, busts, and prints (of which copies upon copies are spread everywhere)." These, he wrote his daughter (June 3, 1779), "have made your father's face as well known as that of the moon."

In March, 1777, he withdrew to the pleasant suburb of Passy, a half-hour's drive from the city, where the American mission was established "in a fine airy house on a hill" in the grounds of the Hôtel Valentinois. Temple Franklin, William's son, lived with him, as his secretary, and for a time his other grandson, young Benny Bache, until sent off to school. There he set up his Passy press, to run off forms and legal documents, passports, and acts of Congress, and to print occasional pieces of propaganda and the famous "Bagatelles," and to revive his taste for fine printing.

In France, as in England, he plunged with great energy into political journalism: to support by pen and press-agentry the greatest cause he had yet embraced. Many of his own essays, old and new, along with such documents from America as the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions, and items from his correspondence (especially letters from Dr. Samuel Cooper) were translated and printed in a periodical edited by a clerk in the French foreign office, Edme-Jacques Genêt, the *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique* (1776–1779). Other journals which Franklin frequently used were the *Journal de Paris* and, notably, the *Gazette de Leyde*.

These were familiar and congenial tasks. Much was sheer drudgery: the endless bother of the accounts, which Deane when he returned to America left in confusion, and Franklin rather slighted; dealings with prizes brought into French ports, and affairs of American ship captains and sailors. These last properly belonged to the office of consul, which Congress, for all his urgings, neglected to fill. His perpetual torment was an endless flood of applications from officers seeking employment in the American army. A few were chivalrous idealists, like "that amiable young nobleman" the Marquis de Lafayette, or men of great military talents, like von Steuben, whose services in the reorganization of the Continental Army amply justified his letter of recommendation to Washington. Others were mere adventurers, whose demands created jealousies in the American officer corps. These, he wrote, worried him from morning to night, so that the "noise of every coach now that enters my court terrifies me." But he could still see wry humor in their solicitations, and frame an ironic model letter of recommendation.

In another quarter, at the French foreign office, Franklin was himself a constant solicitor: for clandestine loans and subsidies, which France (and Spain) continued to furnish, and for privileges for American privateers in the

French ports, which were secretly granted to the extent that British shipping was sorely harassed in the Channel, but suddenly revoked when Lord Stormont, the British minister, grew too difficult. Neither Stormont nor his government was deceived regarding breaches of French neutrality. Their efficient secret service placed spies everywhere; they even penetrated the offices in the Hôtel Valentinois. Unknown to Franklin, though suspected by Lee (who suspected everyone), Dr. Edward Bancroft, Franklin's protégé and the commission's secretary, was in British pay. Running back and forth between London and Paris, he served both sides, and speculated on the London stock market.

Vergennes encouraged Franklin's appeals to French sympathies to gain popular support for his own calculated program of armed intervention — when the right moment arrived. Until late in 1777 that moment still eluded him. Spain ended her disputes with Portugal; Florida Blanca opposed a war with Britain for French profit, sought a truce instead, through mediation, which would cheat the colonies of independence but keep alive their hostility to the mother country. News from America was bad and grew steadily worse. After Washington's retreat through New Jersey, his brilliant *riposte* at Trenton (December 26, 1776) and the Princeton stroke (January 3) lifted spirits briefly; but by fall Howe was in Philadelphia, and Burgoyne's army was advancing toward the Hudson. These were anxious days. Franklin and his colleagues were pressing for recognition and a large loan; Vergennes was stalling, warning them to be more discreet. Franklin still talked overconfidently to Lee of going it alone, and opposed playing the "trump card" as yet, lest France treat the hint of a return to the old empire as a menace, and abandon America "in despair or anger."

Suddenly, the whole scene was altered when a courier

from Boston arrived on December 4 with the glorious news that on October 17 Burgoyne had surrendered at Saratoga. Gérard brought Vergennes's congratulations, and invited the Americans to renew their offer of an alliance. In a secret meeting on the 12th the foreign minister further encouraged their hopes, though he still talked of waiting for Spain. But five days later he promised recognition and a treaty, with or without Spanish concurrence, and on January 8 he confirmed the fact that the king would grant an immediate alliance.

The momentous shift in French policy was the result of fears, skillfully exploited by Franklin, that Saratoga would lead to a reconciliation between Britain and her colonies. In London bills were preparing to meet the American demands as of 1775, and plans were under way to send the Carlisle peace commission to America. Paul Wentworth of New Hampshire, a loyalist agent in Eden's secret service, had hurried over to Paris to sound out Deane and Franklin. Neither would talk terms except with an accredited envoy, or on any other basis than independence, and they scorned his hints of personal rewards. Franklin, indeed, refused to see Wentworth until January 6, when he brushed aside appeals to his old faith in imperial union, and denounced British military depredations. But they were closeted for two hours — the lengthy interview was bound to raise suspicions at Versailles. It was the next day that the king's council reached its historic decision.

For the formal treaty ceremony Franklin donned an old coat: "To give it a little revenge," he explained to Deane. "I wore this coat on the day Wedderburn abused me at Whitehall." Two treaties were signed: one of amity and commerce, on the lines of the Plan of 1776, the other of alliance, by which (as Franklin wrote Cushing, February 27), Louis XVI "guarantees to the United States their liberties, sovereignty, and independence, absolute and un-

limited, with the possessions they now have, or may have, at the end of the war; and the States in return guarantees to him his possessions in the West Indies." Neither party would make peace without formal consent first obtained from the other, nor lay down arms until independence was formally or tacitly assured by treaty. On March 20 the commissioners were ceremoniously received by the king in his court at Versailles.

Most of a year had passed since Congress had heard from the Paris commissioners, so successful was the British secret service in intercepting their correspondence. The treaties were received May 2; copies had already arrived of North's bills, but not yet the peace commission. It was a close race. Two days later the treaties were ratified. By June 17 France was at war with Britain.

Not until the autumn of 1781 did the United States reap the fruits of its first great diplomatic triumph, when French fleets won temporary command of the seas off the Virginia capes, and Washington's and Rochambeau's armies, after brilliant marches, bottled up Cornwallis in Yorktown. American fortunes in diplomacy rose and fell with the fortunes of war and were hopelessly entangled in European power politics. Meanwhile, Vergennes completed the diplomatic isolation of Britain. Spain was drawn into the war in 1779. In 1780 the Armed Neutrality arose in the North to enforce on British sea power the same "liberal" maritime principles that Congress had incorporated in the Plan of 1776. Spain had allied herself with France by the secret convention of Aranjuez (April 3, 1779), but not with the United States, whose independence she persistently refused to recognize. France, moreover, had assumed new obligations toward the Bourbon ally which seriously compromised the Franco-American alliance: no separate peace; the war to continue until Spain achieved her great objective, the recovery of

Gibraltar. Spain had correctly estimated the future aggressive tendencies of an independent Anglo-American republic; and her own large ambitions in the Mississippi valley now strained the French-American alliance and greatly complicated the making of peace.

Franklin was wiser than Congress in disapproving of "militia diplomacy." One after another of the eager militia diplomats (Arthur and William Lee, Ralph Izard — all three great critics of Franklin — and Francis Dana) were rebuffed in Spain, Tuscany, Vienna, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. "All Europe is on our side of the question," Franklin had told Cooper (May 1, 1777), but he had added: "as far as applause and good wishes can carry them." For princes and courts were not swayed by popular sentiment, except when it coincided with state policy, as in France. Even Dutch fellow republicans, for all Franklin's propaganda efforts, were stolidly unmoved by ideological appeals, though as traders they made St. Eustatius in the West Indies the principal entrepôt for the supply of foreign munitions. They were trapped into war in 1780 by Britain herself, to put an end to their services to France and the United States as neutral carriers, and Rodney soon pounced on St. Eustatius. On the eve of the peace John Adams at last secured recognition at The Hague, a Dutch loan to restore American solvency, and a treaty of friendship and commerce.

The war had restored French primacy in Europe. Only within the French orbit could American diplomacy operate effectively; and only Franklin possessed the influence with Vergennes, and the finesse, to extract every possible benefit from the alliance. As the weaker ally the United States was in danger of sinking into the position of a client; over Congress the French ministers, Gérard and La Luzerne, wielded a dominant influence. In 1778 John Adams replaced Deane in the commission; but Vergennes

treated him coldly, suspecting him as an anti-Gallican. Adams thought Franklin too propitiatory (and too fond of ease), but recognized his genius and the value of his enormous reputation, which he described as "more universal than that of Leibnitz or Newton, Frederick or Voltaire." (This year Franklin and the aged Voltaire met several times, most dramatically when they embraced at the Academy of Sciences.) Sensibly Adams advised the appointment of a single minister to France, and in September, 1778, Franklin was voted the appointment.

As minister he was now busier than ever, but freer from the nagging jealousies of Arthur Lee and his circle. He negotiated loans; he managed the naval affairs of Congress in European waters, climaxed by the daring raids of John Paul Jones; and by correspondence with English friends he tried to ameliorate the condition of American prisoners, and to arrange cartels. Lee's and Izard's enmity pursued him in Congress, where he had other enemies. In 1780 he brought matters to a head by submitting his resignation, which Congress rejected.

John Adams had been appointed the plenipotentiary to negotiate a peace with Britain in August, 1779, when Spain was offering mediation to procure a truce, but in the form of an ultimatum which Britain rejected. His instructions demanded as *sine qua non* independence, the Mississippi boundary, and on the south the line of 31°. Adams returned to Paris. He was dissuaded by Vergennes when he sought to open direct negotiations, and rebuffed when he tried to mix in Franco-American concerns. "I apprehend that he mistakes his ground," Franklin wrote the president of Congress, "and that this court is to be treated with decency and delicacy." Adams's suspicions that France was selling out American rights in the alliance and giving priority to Spanish interests were later shared by John Jay, whom Congress in 1779 had sent on a futile mission to

Spain. In February, 1781 (when the war was going badly), Jay was authorized to pay a heavy price for the Spanish alliance: to recognize her exclusive right to navigate the Mississippi below 31°. Not only Jay but also Franklin thought the price too high; when Spain delayed, Jay withdrew the concession. "Poor as we are," Franklin had written, "yet, as I know we shall be rich, I would rather agree with them to buy at a great price the whole of their right on the Mississippi, than sell a drop of its waters. A neighbor might as well ask me to sell my street door."

In 1781 peace negotiations were again in prospect, with the imperial powers (Russia and Austria) pressing their mediation. Fortunately, the project fell through, for as Adams clearly perceived, the conditions proposed would have jeopardized the territorial integrity and even the independence of the United States. In June the commission was enlarged to include Adams, Franklin, Jay, Henry Laurens (the minister to the Dutch whom the British captured and lodged in the Tower) and also Thomas Jefferson, who only sailed to France in 1784.

Before 1782 Franklin had been approached many times in France by former English acquaintances, in person or by letter (with or without the approving nod of a minister but never with full authority), to enlist his aid in a settlement to restore the empire. In the Saratoga crisis he was visited by Paul Wentworth, the spy; by James Hutton, an old member of his Craven Street "family" who was often at the Queen's court and reported to his "old schoolfellow" Germain; and by William Pulteney, M.P. Always he made it plain that he could not be bought, that peace was impossible without independence, that he was loyal to the French alliance. But he planted a seed which in 1782 he sedulously cultivated. To Hutton he put the argument strongly (February 1, 1778) that no peace could profit Britain unless she recovered the affections of the Amer-

icans: "In proposing terms, you should not only grant such as the necessity of your affairs may evidently oblige you to grant, but such additional ones as may show your generosity." Throw in Canada, he advised, and even Nova Scotia and the Floridas!

The surrender at Yorktown on October 19, 1781, doomed the ministry which had conducted the war; but frantic last-minute efforts were made to split the hostile coalition, hence another series of approaches through David Hartley to Franklin, who was not beguiled. In February, 1782, an address was then carried in Commons which branded as enemies of their country any who would attempt to reduce America by force.

In Passy, when Franklin heard the news, he dispatched a note of compliment to his old friend the Earl of Shelburne, offering to contribute everything in his power to promote a general peace. It was a timely missive, well directed, for two days before, on March 20, 1782, George III had accepted at last Lord North's resignation, and Shelburne became the king's intermediary in the new ministry, which Rockingham nominally headed. As secretary of state, moreover, he again had the colonies in his department, and could thus direct the American negotiations until independence was formally recognized. Actually, he was in control until the preliminary treaty was signed, for when Rockingham died in July he took over the treasury and the undivided leadership. But he was strongly opposed in the first months of diplomatic skirmishing by his colleague as secretary, Charles James Fox. Throughout the war Fox had strongly championed American independence — which Shelburne still deeply dreaded — and now as foreign secretary he was more insistent than ever on immediate recognition, to draw all the negotiations into his own hands.

Peace had its hazards no less than war, both for Britain

and for the United States. Parliament, by renouncing the American war, had limited the field of diplomatic maneuver; and the continental powers seemed bent on a punitive peace, to reverse the decisions of 1763. Britain's best hope was to split America away from her ally. But Franklin and his colleagues were now doubly bound to France: by the alliance of 1778, and by crippling instructions which Congress had adopted, under strong French pressure, in the dark days of June, 1781. These made independence the only *sine qua non,* and submitted them in all other matters — boundaries, navigation of the Mississippi, fisheries — to the advice of the French court.

One day in April a Scottish merchant, Richard Oswald, appeared unexpectedly at Passy with a letter from Shelburne introducing him as an agent authorized to talk in full confidence with Franklin. (He brought another letter from Henry Laurens, who had likewise been sent, on his parole, to talk with Adams at The Hague.) Franklin told him at once that America would treat only in concert with France, and presented him to Vergennes, who talked hopefully of a general treaty. Thus Franklin at the outset took the correct line that America would firmly adhere to the alliance, to which she was bound both in honor and in gratitude for French services. Yet even in these first talks he began to spell out for Shelburne the meaning of a peace of sweet reconciliation in terms he omitted to report to Vergennes — terms which he knew that France would not support. In British hands Canada would lead to future quarrels which might oblige America, he hinted, to strengthen the union with France. Therefore, let Britain cede Canada voluntarily and enjoy a free trade thither.

Later Canada dropped out of negotiations, when Franklin was ill and John Jay was in charge. In any case it is doubtful that Shelburne would or could have yielded all of Canada. Yet much was eventually yielded. The

boundaries of the Quebec Act were abolished, though Vergennes would have had them stand; at one moment the United States might even have obtained the boundary of the old province of Quebec (1763). Franklin's bold proposal showed him still the expansionist that he had been since mid-century, but now in the context of a republican empire. And it put Shelburne on notice that his old friend's talk of reconciliation meant, first, ample boundaries for a rising people, and thereafter the breaking down of trade barriers.

Both Franklin and Shelburne were shrewd and subtle politicians with a philosophical bent. Both looked beyond immediate issues into the longer future of Anglo-American relations. When Shelburne was last in office they had collaborated closely on western policy. Perhaps they might collaborate again, Franklin was suggesting, to restore friendship between kindred divided peoples — even, Shelburne himself hoped, to find the formula for a new kind of federal union. For they shared the liberal doctrines of trade which their mutual friend Adam Smith had expounded in his *Wealth of Nations* (1776). On the basis of Anglo-Irish-American trade reciprocity Shelburne hoped for a time to salvage from the wreck of the territorial empire in North America a new empire of commerce, and Oswald reported that Franklin also hinted at some such happy consummation. Probably he was misunderstood; he was too subtle for Oswald, over whom his charm and his reiterated homilies on reconciliation had cast a spell. Englishmen found it hard to realize that this was not the old Anglo-American imperialist of the 1760's: that he was now completely an American, playing for national stakes, cooperating amiably — up to a point — with Shelburne, but for American ends.

Franklin's goals were independence, complete and unlimited, within ample boundaries; peace, friendship, and

reciprocal commerce with Britain, but also, for counter-insurance (if Anglo-American friendship should fail), continued close relations with the continental powers. For reasons of interest as well as of honor he was more reluctant than Jay or Adams to challenge French good faith. As minister to France, moreover, he cherished the confidence he had won from Vergennes, a confidence he must still cultivate to solicit the loans which Congress still required. It was a difficult course he had to steer, made no easier by the fact that a large party in Congress were clients of La Luzerne, the French minister — and by the other fact that honest John Adams believed him also the dupe of Vergennes.

Franklin at once summoned his fellow commissioners to Paris. Jay arrived June 23, Adams not till October 26. In the first round (May–June) Franklin carried on alone. Little was accomplished, but significant patterns began to emerge. The London cabinet decided to offer independence "in the first instance," which made it difficult for Vergennes to oppose separate but parallel negotiations, between Britain and America, and between Britain and the continental powers, a procedure which Franklin suggested and the British endorsed. Fox again pressed for an immediate acknowledgment, which Shelburne again frustrated: by his interpretation of the cabinet minute, independence would be acknowledged in the American treaty, and thus made contingent on a general peace. Both were trying to split America from France, but by different tactics. Both put too much faith in reported hints by Franklin, which they grossly misinterpreted to mean that with independence assured America would lose interest in continental alliances. Franklin was indignant and suspicious when he learned that Shelburne had also tried this tactic in America, through separate overtures by General Carleton. Yet he preferred to deal with Shelburne rather

than Fox, recognizing as he did in Shelburne's vision of future Anglo-American relations the means to realize his own ends. Therefore, he helped Shelburne defeat Fox's effort to draw both negotiations into his own hands. Oswald he highly praised, and accordingly Oswald was named Lord Shelburne's envoy to negotiate with the Americans. Thomas Grenville, Fox's envoy, would negotiate only with the continental powers.

When Shelburne succeeded Rockingham in July, Fox resigned his office in anger, and ten months later he joined with Lord North, whom he had so bitterly opposed throughout the war, to overthrow the new ministry. But Shelburne, meanwhile, had concluded the preliminaries of the peace. While he was still reshuffling his offices Franklin kept on talking with Oswald, and let him hear a memorandum of the *necessary* articles — independence, settlement of boundaries, confinement of Canada at least to the Lake Nipissing line, freedom of fishing on the Banks — and also of *advisable* articles, which he recommended "as a friend." These included reciprocal shipping privileges in the ports of both nations, and, again, the "giving up every part of Canada."

Once more Franklin had suggested terms to Oswald without fully apprising Vergennes — some time before the crisis arrived when he was allegedly "persuaded" to ignore the Congressional injunction to be guided by France. At length Franklin's necessary articles were accepted as the basis on which the negotiation would proceed, but only after prolonged controversy over the point of independence. With news of the change in the London ministry Franklin heard disturbing rumors that now conditions would be attached to independence, contrary to Grenville's former assurances: what he knew already of Shelburne's hopes for imperial reunion must have given them weight. In any case he forbade Oswald to make use

of the terms in the memorandum just read him until this matter was clarified. Early in August a copy arrived of Oswald's intended commission. It was carefully drawn to avoid mention by title of the United States. Franklin and Jay consulted Vergennes, who advised them to overlook the defect in form; after all, in the exchange of powers Oswald must accept their commissions as plenipotentiaries of the United States of America.

Franklin thought this "would do." Jay, a lawyer, objected strongly to his colleague; he suspected that Vergennes's motive was to delay the Anglo-American parleys until France and Spain achieved their own ends. John Adams, another lawyer, shared these suspicions; he also thought Franklin honest but incapable, a mistake Jay never made. Too much has been made of differences between Jay and Franklin, who in Paris became the best of friends. But differences there were, both in diplomatic style and in their views of America's place in the postwar world. At first Jay had alarmed Oswald with his menaces, though all the time he was personally convinced that after the peace the United States would have to do business chiefly with Britain. Franklin, it is clear, still hoped to make the best of both worlds, Britannic and Bourbon.

Jay now openly invited the British to offer terms that would split America off from France. Shelburne thereupon took the risk of persuading the cabinet to send new instructions to Oswald (August 29) which marked the extreme limit of concession. If the Americans insisted, Parliament would be asked to pass a new act recognizing their independence prior to a treaty. Canada would be limited to the line of 1763. Britain would abandon her claims for justice in regard both to the loyalists and the debts.

Such a peace might perhaps have been won by quick action in Paris before the news reached London a month later that the Spanish had failed in their great assault upon

Gibraltar. But suddenly Jay, with Franklin's concurrence, withdrew the demand for prior recognition; they would be satisfied now with a compromise in the form of Oswald's commission. The immediate occasion for the shift in tactics — which actually prolonged the negotiation — was the information Jay received on September 9 that Gérard de Rayneval, Vergennes's secretary, had slipped over to London on a secret mission. The report confirmed his growing suspicion that France backed Spain in her effort to exclude the United States from the great domain between the mountains and the Mississippi. In Paris he had continued with the Spanish minister the negotiations broken off in Madrid. Aranda had countered his claims for the Mississippi boundary, south to 31°, and free navigation to the sea, by a Spanish claim to territory as far east as a zigzag line drawn from the western end of Lake Erie to the head of the St. Mary's in East Florida. Then Rayneval had intervened in the dispute with a suggested compromise line, evidently approved by Vergennes, from the mouth of the Cumberland to the Bay of Apalache, to divide the Indian tribes south of the Ohio into two spheres of influence. The lands north of the Ohio would be left in British possession. Spain, Franklin conjectured, meant "to coop us up within the Allegany mountains."

In London Rayneval talked mostly of Europe, Asia, and Africa, but he also criticized American claims to the fisheries and to the northwestern territory, so that there was substance in Jay's fears of a Franco-Spanish conspiracy into which Britain might now be drawn. Without consulting Franklin he sent his own messenger to London (the Englishman Benjamin Vaughan, long a Franklin disciple, but now drawn strongly to his colleague), to propose a separate secret arrangement between America and Britain. Franklin, less suspicious than Jay of France but second to none in dedication to western expansion, fell in line.

(Already he had concealed much from Vergennes, and it was he who had first steered the talks into separate channels.) In cutting the cords with France, Jay took the great risk that Franklin would have avoided — of isolating the United States if the treaty failed. Shelburne also took risks, with his king and his public. As he wrote Oswald: "We have put the greatest confidence, I believe, was ever placed in man, in the American commissioners."

The treaty as finally agreed was firmly based on Franklin's necessary articles. It vested in the new republic an imperial domain, stretching westward to the Mississippi, southward to 31°. So anxious was Jay to push Spain out that he invited a stronger power in at the south, and Franklin concurred in this imprudent tactic. A secret article, which dropped out of the final treaty, set the southern boundary at the Yazoo if Britain at the end of the war should possess West Florida. Jay's draft also stipulated freedom of navigation and commerce on the Mississippi for both nations — and also elsewhere *throughout all their dominions.* But this article, so much in the temper of the commercial liberalism shared by Shelburne and Franklin, conflicted with the British navigation system. The question was therefore referred to postwar negotiation — which got nowhere.

As the talks dragged on, the British military position improved, and British sights were raised. Difficulties arose over the northern boundary, fisheries, debts, and loyalists. Canada, which for years had been a Franklin obsession, dropped out of the discussion, except for the division of the greater Canada of the Quebec Act. But the British failed to recover the Ohio boundary of 1774, which Rayneval had encouraged them to attempt. At length the Americans offered a choice of two boundaries: the line of 45° or the familiar present lake-and-river line, which they chose. On the subsidiary issues, Shelburne knew that

his ministry if it was to survive must make for the record a strong demand for justice for British subjects, merchants and American loyalists. Franklin cherished few other grudges, but despised Tories, and stubbornly opposed restitution or compensation for America's internal enemies — at one point he pulled out of his pocket a long list of counterbalancing damage claims on behalf of patriots! — and by the treaty the loyalists were left to the mercies of the states. John Adams, however, successfully championed a more generous and honorable solution of the question of prewar debts. And it was Adams who had to do what he could for the great New England interest in the fisheries. Unhappily, the compromise entailed a century-long controversy.

It was a glorious peace which Franklin, Jay and Adams had won, partly by luck and partly by bold and skillful bargaining. The provisional treaty was signed November 30. Not till the night before had Franklin warned Vergennes. He sent him at once a copy of the agreement, minus the secret Florida article. For a fortnight Vergennes refrained from showing any marked sign of displeasure. France had suffered a diplomatic check, but as Franklin understood very well, France was not yet ready to throw away America. A vessel was about to sail under British passport with dispatches for the United States, and Vergennes knew that it would carry the treaty. Franklin blandly suggested that it would offer safe transport for the new French loan which he was soliciting. Only then did Vergennes complain, with formal courtesy, of the conduct of the commissioners, in violation of their instructions from Congress. It was Franklin's task to smooth over the breach of good faith. In his classic reply (December 17) he admitted a lack of *bienséance,* but protested that no disrespect had been intended to the king, whom Americans loved and honored. He hoped "the great work"

would not now be ruined "by a single indiscretion of ours," adding: *"The English, I just now learn, flatter themselves they have already divided us.* I hope this little misunderstanding will therefore be kept a secret, and that they will find themselves totally mistaken."

Already he had reminded Livingston that he was soon entering his seventy-eighth year, and that for fifty years he had been absorbed in public business. "I wish now to be, for the little time I have left, my own master." Remain he must until the definitive treaty was signed (September 3, 1783). It did no more than confirm the provisional treaty, without the secret article. And remain he did, perforce, until 1785, when a tardy Congress (as he wrote jubilantly to Ingenhousz) made him "once more a freeman."

After his famous services in France he could return in good conscience to Philadelphia. The alliance and the peace had consolidated American independence, which he had helped to declare. These were diplomatic triumphs of the first order, in which he shared credit with able colleagues. He had made other contributions, however, to the manners and the spirit of republican diplomacy, which were distinctively Franklinian. At the French court and in French society his greatest asset had been his prestige as a natural philosopher, and it had become America's asset. Long experience in politics, and especially his apprenticeship to diplomacy as the colony agent in England, had helped him to penetrate the purposes of Vergennes and Shelburne, Oswald and Rayneval, and at crucial moments to bend them to America's interests. Moreover, he was the first American to practice the difficult art of accommodating our interests to those of an ally. He it was who first marked the line between subservience and a narrow isolationism in our relations with European powers.

XI

Return to Philadelphia

IN LONDON AND EDINBURGH Franklin had been comfortably at home, though never, by the same token, an object of the adulation that Frenchmen heaped upon him. For in France he was an exotic, his success sustained by his willingness to play a role, as he did with zest, sometimes even making himself a little ridiculous. "They love me, and I love them," he wrote one correspondent (July 28, 1783). "Yet I do not feel myself at home, and I wish to die in my own country."

He was most nearly French, no doubt, in his gallantries. At Passy feminine neighbors charmed him "by their various attentions and civilities and their sensible conversation." The Comtesse d'Houdetot (Rousseau's Sophie) arranged for "our dear Benjamin" in 1781 the memorable *fête champêtre* at Sannois, when verses were sung in his honor and he planted a Virginia locust tree in her park. More intimate, less theatrical, were his friendships with Madame Helvétius, widow of the wealthy farmer-general and celebrated *philosophe,* herself a *femme savante* and the friend of Voltaire and Turgot; and with youthful, affectionate Madame Brillon.

Abigail Adams was shocked by the freedom of manners she observed at Passy. Madame Helvétius embraced the

sage, threw one arm around his neck at table, even ventured to place the other now and then on the back of John Adams's chair; and Abigail thought her a noisy, brazen dowdy of doubtful morals. Once Franklin proposed marriage to the widow, as Turgot had done. She refused, pleading faithfulness to her husband's memory, and he turned the *méprise* into a bagatelle, describing his dream-encounter in the Elysian Fields with M. Helvétius, whom he found married again — to Madame Franklin! He relished the witty, civilized conversation of "Notre Dame d'Auteuil" and her circle. It included the two abbés: Morellet (whom he had met at Lord Shelburne's), and de la Roche; also young Cabanis, who became a famous physiologist. This was the salon into which he introduced his younger philosophical colleague from America, Thomas Jefferson.

Other bagatelles, notably *The Ephemera* and *The Whistle,* he wrote for Madame Brillon, who corrected his French and formed the pleasant habit of sitting on his knee. In their letters they debated endlessly his light teasing for favors which she amiably refused. It was all very witty and self-consciously very French, but it meant little more than that he possessed indestructibly what she described as "that gaiety and gallantry which makes all women love you, because you love all women."

John Jay and his lady lived in his household in the summer of 1783, and they became great friends. Jay recorded a number of Franklin's reminiscences from their conversations of that year. For Franklin was now being prodded to complete his memoirs: by Benjamin Vaughan, who had published his political writings in London during the war, and by his neighbor, the mayor of Passy, M. Le Veillard; he added a brief section in 1784 before he was interrupted again by the press of business. In September, 1783, he had appealed rather pathetically to Jay to

set the record straight on a more recent chapter in his life: to vindicate his zeal and faithfulness in the peace negotiations, against charges circulated in America that he had favored, or at least not opposed, the alleged design of France to cramp the United States in its territory and in the fisheries; and Jay fully complied. These reports Franklin traced to the "Braintry focus." Already he had been stung into writing to Livingston (July 22, 1783) his famous characterization of John Adams as "always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes, and in some things, absolutely out of his senses."

Jay returned to America in the spring of 1784 to become the secretary for foreign affairs, and Franklin was joined in the summer by John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. These three, who had collaborated on the Declaration of Independence, were now brought together again in a commission to negotiate treaties of amity and commerce with all and sundry. "You will see that a good deal of business is cut out for us," Franklin wrote Adams (August 6), "treaties to be made with, I think, twenty powers in two years, so that we are not likely to eat the bread of idleness."

Actually, little was accomplished. Franklin had already signed a treaty with Sweden, and between them the commissioners added another with Prussia. But now that the war was over there was no such rush as Congress had anticipated to enter into commercial agreements on liberal principles with the United States, and Jefferson was soon describing the commission as "the lowest and most obscure of the whole diplomatic tribe." France had yielded some concessions in the West Indian trade; but in Britain Shelburne's successors had rejected his principles of reciprocal trade for the restrictive doctrines of Lord Sheffield. The new mercantilism was nicely adjusted to skim the cream of the American trade without admitting the former colo-

nists to the British West Indies. Franklin's hopes soon vanished for the project he had advocated with David Hartley, of a family compact between England, France, and America. "America would be as happy as the Sabine girls," he had written, "if she could be the means of uniting in perpetual peace her father and her husband." Despite his objections in theory to all "restraining and protective systems," he began to discuss the "political importance" of measures to employ American ships "and to raise a breed of seamen among us."

Franklin, like Jefferson, traced the decline of American prestige in Europe to false rumors of internal dissensions and impending anarchy within the Confederation. "Your newspapers," he wrote Richard Price (August 16, 1784), "are full of fictitious accounts of distractions in America. We know nothing of them." Mr. Jefferson, just arrived, had reported general tranquillity, a people well satisfied with their present forms of government. But the rumors persisted, and he found them echoed in the queries of European diplomats; he was convinced that they were spread by official British policy.

After the peace he therefore continued to promote public understanding of America in Europe, and of its enlightened institutions. In 1783 he published what he called his *Book of the Constitutions,* a translation by his friend the young Duc de la Rochefoucauld of the Articles of Confederation and the state constitutions, bearing on its title page Charles Thomson's new design of the "Great Seal" of the United States. He had thought it would promote the making of treaties, but he was disappointed. He could hardly have anticipated its greater influence — on the French constitution of 1791 and later documents of the age of European revolutions which still lay over the horizon.

Peace, he was certain, with spreading knowledge of the

social and political felicities of the new republic, would promote new emigrations to America, for already great numbers were applying to him, many with extravagant expectations. Accordingly he printed at the Passy press, sometime before March, 1784, a paper of *Information to Those Who Would Remove to America.* America he described soberly as a land of labor, its chief resource cheap land, its brightest promise held out to husbandmen and mechanics, but with few lures for aristocrats, office seekers, or military adventurers (or for scholars and artists); and he advised intending emigrants to read the book of constitutions in order to understand the state of government. The paper was reprinted in a London pamphlet, *Two Tracts,* which also included his *Remarks concerning the Savages of North America.* Three editions were published in London, one in Dublin; in addition there were Italian, French, and German translations.

Thus the veteran publicist was holding up to the eyes of Europe a realistic image of America, to offset both hostile distortions and a too-glowing Rousseauesque myth. His own faith in America's future was rooted in the conviction he set down for David Hartley (September 6, 1783): "We are more thoroughly an enlightened people, with respect to our political interests, than perhaps any other under heaven. Every man among us reads, and is so easy in his circumstances as to have leisure for conversations of improvement, and for acquiring information."

Not that Americans had yet sloughed off all Old World follies with their colonial status. Officer-veterans of the Revolution had lately founded the hereditary Society of the Cincinnati. Washington, whom he honored, was its president: Lafayette, another friend, had accepted membership. But Franklin thought it opposed "to the solemnly declared sense of their country," and in a famous ironic letter to his daughter (January 26, 1784) he demon-

strated mathematically the "absurdity of *descending honors*." Morellet translated the letter but persuaded him not to print it at Passy lest he offend good friends. He discussed it, however, with the younger Mirabeau (son of his old physiocratic acquaintance, the Marquis), and his views appear in the vigorous pamphlet that Mirabeau had printed (with his assistance) in London, to avoid French censorship, which later was reprinted in Philadelphia after Franklin's return.

Confidence in America's political future was matched by his hopeful predictions of scientific progress under the aegis of the European academies. "I begin to be almost sorry I was born so soon," he wrote Sir Joseph Banks (July 27, 1783), "since I cannot have the happiness of knowing what will be known 100 years hence." In the same letter he first mentioned current French experiments with balloons. The subject fascinated him and led to speculations on aerial navigation by dirigibles (January 16, 1784). Too hopefully he assumed that one consequence would be "convincing sovereigns of the folly of wars . . . since it will be impracticable for the most potent of them to guard his dominions." He witnessed the first ascent in Paris, on August 27, 1783, when Professor Charles raised his captive hydrogen-gas balloon from the Champs de Mars. At Passy, in November, he saw the first ascent by human passengers in a free balloon (one of Montgolfier's hot-air contraptions). He interviewed the inventors and the daring aviators, and he forwarded data to Banks for the Royal Society. Later, when M. Blanchard and the loyalist Dr. John Jeffries crossed the Channel by balloon, they brought him a letter from England, "the first through the air." He had no inkling, apparently, that it was the aviator Jeffries who had carried off from Boston in 1776 his own important correspondence with Dr. Cooper. (Jeffries gave it to Benjamin Thompson, later Count Rumford; Thomp-

son passed it on to Lord George Germain; Germain presented it to George III!)

In 1784 the balloon excitement was succeeded by the fashionable enthusiasm for the purported new "science" of "animal magnetism," as practiced by Friedrich Anton Mesmer and his disciples. Mesmer was on the verge of discovering the useful therapy of hypnotism, but his technique was crude and his claims excessive. So great was the controversy he stirred up that the king appointed a commission of four physicians from the Paris faculty to investigate the alleged cures; and at their request five members of the Academy of Sciences, including Lavoisier and Franklin, were joined with them. Franklin was the oldest and most famous of the investigators if not the most active, though some of the experiments were conducted at Passy; his name appears first both in the report to the king and in the *exposé* submitted to the Academy. They denied, unanimously, the reality of the new science, exposed a good deal of charlatanry in its practice, and so checked experiments which later proved fruitful.

By the summer of 1785 nothing hindered Franklin's long-postponed return to America except painful bodily infirmities: recurrent fits of the gout (which he could still transmute into humor in one of the most entertaining of the bagatelles), and now the agony of the stone, for which he refused to be cut. Thomas Jefferson was ready to take over his duties as minister, a younger man who shared so many of his tastes and ideas. "The succession to Dr. Franklin at the court of France," he wrote in 1791, "was an excellent school of humility." No one can replace him, he was wont to say: "I am only his successor." And to Congress he wrote: "Europe fixes an attentive eye on your reception of Dr. Franklin. He is infinitely esteemed. Do not neglect any mark of your approbation which you think proper. It will honor you here."

For the journey to the coast one of the queen's litters, comfortably borne by mules, was made ready. On July 12, 1785, he set out for Le Havre, where he crossed to Southampton; farewells were said all the way. There was a last cold meeting at the English port with William Franklin, whose defection he could not forgive, and a happier brief reunion with good Bishop Shipley and his family. On the voyage his companion was the distinguished French sculptor Houdon, for whom he and Jefferson had arranged the commission that was taking him to America to execute a bust of General Washington. (Franklin had sat for the sculptor eight years before, and since then for so many artists that he had grown weary of posing.) It was a happy voyage, devoted again to science despite his promises to get on with the memoirs.

A great welcome awaited him in Philadelphia, with guns firing and bells ringing, when he landed once more, September 14, at the Market Street wharf (where he had stepped from a river boat in 1723 on his obscure first arrival). For more than a week he was visited and congratulated in formal addresses, by speaker and assemblymen, by the American Philosophical Society, by the provost and professors of the university, by the Union Fire Company. Rival delegations of politicians sought him out, each eager to capture the great man for their faction. Both parties, indeed, nominated him for the Supreme Executive Council: the radical Constitutionalists, seeking to preserve intact the Constitution of 1776 which he had helped to frame, and the Anti-Constitutionalists, toward whom he now leaned in their demands for revision; for good measure also the Mechanical Society. Naturally he carried the poll, and soon after was chosen president of the council. "They have eaten my flesh," he wrote his good friends the Bards, "and seem resolved now to pick my bones." He was re-elected unanimously in 1786 and 1787, which flattered

his vanity "more than a peerage could do," he wrote Sister Jane. He had no great talent for administration; but with some temporary success he tried to conciliate rival factions. He approved the repeal of the discriminatory test act of 1777, and the rechartering of the Bank of North America (his son-in-law was a director and he owned twelve shares); both were Anti-Constitutional measures. But he still defended the multiple executive, and in 1789 he vigorously opposed a second chamber to represent property as "contrary to the spirit of all democracies." Private property, he asserted, was the creature of society; to the great ends of civil society, and to security of life and liberty, the poorest have an equal claim with the most opulent.

Thus he was still the libertarian of '76, even though in France he had adjusted himself gracefully to a society of aristocratic privilege. To French friends he wrote "that only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." Later he rejoiced, of course, in the first stirrings of liberty in France: "God grant," he wrote Hartley (December 4, 1789), "that not only the love of liberty, but a thorough knowledge of the rights of man, may pervade all the nations of the earth, so that a philosopher may set his foot anywhere on its surface, and say, 'This is my country.' "

These were the proper sentiments of a friend of mankind. When he turned to the American scene, it was an altogether optimistic picture that he drew for his European correspondents — this, too, at a time when many solid Americans were developing doubts regarding their revolution of liberty. From his letters one would never suspect that this was what historians would describe as uniquely "the critical period" in the early life of the republic, or comprehend those forces of conservative reac-

tion that led in 1787 to the convention at Philadelphia. Faults there doubtless were in the revolutionary constitutions, he admitted to Shipley (February 24, 1786), but, "We are, I think, in the right road of improvement, for we are making experiments." Shays's rebellion in Massachusetts, so alarming to Washington and other conservatives, along with the paper-money madness in Rhode Island he described as "little disorders . . . raised by a few wrong heads," which were now subsiding.

Soon after his return he wrote a striking essay on "The Internal State of America" and sent copies to English friends to correct widespread reports of internal divisions, distresses, and impending anarchy; it was printed in London with John Adams's sanction. "The great business of the continent," he wrote, "is agriculture." Land values were rising with increase of population; so, too, were mechanics' wages in the towns. Nowhere in the world, consequently, "are the labouring poor so well fed, well clothed, well lodged, and well paid, as in the United States of America." Admittedly some merchants and shopkeepers were complaining of languishing trade, but he reduced this flaw in the general well-being to relative unimportance by a typical physiocratic argument. True, there were noisy disputes between factions: "Such will exist wherever there is liberty; and perhaps they help to preserve it." And Great Britain stubbornly refused a commercial treaty; he replied with a declaration of economic independence for America: "We are sons of the earth and seas, and, like Anteus in the fable, if in wrestling with a Hercules we now and then receive a fall, the touch of our parents will communicate to us fresh strength and vigor to renew the contest." This was propaganda, of course, but it also preserved, in a late context, the model of a middling American society, expanding massively over a continent, that he had envisaged at mid-century.

Franklin took no part in the conservative-nationalist maneuvers that led to the assembling of the federal convention in Philadelphia in May, 1787. His name was added late to the list of Pennsylvania delegates; he doubted at first that his health would permit him to attend, but for four months he was present at every session. Never a fluent speaker, and now so much an invalid that his speeches were read for him, he took small part in the debates. But with Washington, who presided, he threw the great weight of his reputation into the cause of reaching agreed decisions, for he knew, as he had written to Jefferson, that if the meeting did not do good it must do harm by strengthening the opinion "that popular governments cannot long support themselves." His own pet projects (a single-chamber legislature, a plural executive, nonpayment of officers), were rightly rejected as impractical. But as much as anyone he held the convention together until it finished its business. When tempers were frayed and tension mounted, he would intervene with a humorous remark — on one occasion with his famous motion for prayers (which was defeated) — to alter the tone of the discussion.

In July the convention was nearly disrupted by the great divisive issue of representation, so sharply drawn between the large and the small states. Both at Albany and in the Continental Congress Franklin had championed proportional representation; he still defended it in principle for both houses of the new Congress. Nevertheless, it was Franklin who offered the middle-of-the-road motion in the grand committee embodying the "Great Compromise" of the Constitution. Political realism also dictated his closing speech in the convention, a masterly appeal to the spirit of compromise. There were several parts of the finished instrument, he said, that he did not approve. But he was not sure that he would never approve them, for the

older he grew the more he had learned to doubt his own judgment. "Thus I consent, Sir, to the Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure that it is not the best. The opinions I have had of its errors I sacrifice to the public good."

To the great debates over ratification he contributed only one newspaper essay, a defense of the Federalists. But he was still writing letters to the papers in 1789 and 1790: an essay on the freedom of the press, and its abuses, another on the slave trade. Once a slave-owner himself, he had grown sensitive to the anomaly of slavery in a society proclaiming human rights, and in the early 1770's had begun to collaborate with the antislavery reformers, Granville Sharp in England and Anthony Benezet of Pennsylvania. He was now the president of the recently revived Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and in February, 1790, he signed its memorial to the first Congress.

This was his last public act. His letter to the *Federal Gazette* of March 23, with its Algerian parody of Congressman Jackson's speech defending slavery, was his last political essay. Journalism was one career he had never abandoned. But he had finally withdrawn from public office, in October, 1788, after more than fifty eventful years in the service of province, empire, and republic.

He had fallen on his garden steps in January. Thereafter he suffered grievously from the stone and was often bedridden; latterly the American Philosophical Society had held its meetings at his house, and also his Society for Political Enquiries. There was leisure now for family and friends, but age and ill health prevented him from devoting it as he had always intended to scientific experiment. In May, 1788, however, he had gallantly proposed to James Bowdoin that they resume their ancient philosophical correspondence, and he sent him queries on magnetism

and the theory of the earth. He could still enjoy "starting game for philosophers," for he could still write, even on his sickbed, or dictate to a grandson. In the summer of 1788 he returned to the writing of his memoirs, which he hoped to complete that winter. But the last pages brought the narrative only to July, 1757, the beginning of his first mission to England.

After a long, painful illness (when he took opiates), Franklin died during the night of April 17, 1790, aged exactly eighty-four years and three months.

Four days later the greatest assemblage ever gathered in Philadelphia saw his body borne to the Christ Church burying-ground and laid beside the grave of Deborah. The procession recalled chapter after chapter in his civic and republican career. It formed at the statehouse; and the clergy marched before the body of this avowed deist, who as a moralist (by first intent) had assisted them all because he saw in religion the main support of public virtue. The corpse was carried "by Citizens," the pall borne by local notables, among them the president of the state (his successor), and the chief justice. The city corporation turned out, and each branch of the state government; the printers of Philadelphia and their journeymen and apprentices; and members of those institutions of culture which he had founded or fostered: the Philosophical Society, the College of Physicians, the College of Philadelphia. In New York, still the national capital, the House of Representatives went into mourning. So did the French Convention, when the news reached Paris, on the motion of Mirabeau, seconded by Lafayette and La Rochefoucauld. Condorcet pronounced Franklin's eulogy in the Academy of Sciences.

There were many eulogies in 1790. To contemporaries, Franklin and Washington were the two supreme heroes of

the American Revolution; and Franklin, alone among Americans, had belonged to the greater eighteenth-century philosophical world from which Newton and Hume and Voltaire had already departed. But neither formal eulogies nor the homely anecdotes soon related of Franklin nor the bourgeois myth spun about his character nor even his own frank and appealing memoirs (because they were written as a didactic story of selected episodes) quite settled the question of his quality as genius and hero.

There can be little dispute about the personality and character that he presented to the world: friendly, humorous, gay, even frivolous at times, but frequently silent and reserved; shrewd, worldly-wise, genially skeptical; vain, but not conceited; ambitious but never avid of power; often amazingly candid, but secretive when it served his turn; honestly sensuous, though not luxurious; moral by conviction and dint of practice. These traits added up to a charm which few could resist, the charm that beguiles us still in all that he said and wrote.

What has puzzled men most about Franklin is that he turned so often and so easily from one career to another, seemingly from no inner compulsion; and that he refused to be completely serious, even about the weightiest of human concerns. Hence the theory that only when he confronted nature as a scientist was he wholly committed. "Nature alone," wrote Carl Becker, "met him on equal terms, with a disinterestedness matching his own; needing not to be cajoled or managed with finesse, she enlisted in the solution of her problems the full power of his mind."

No doubt it is true that only in certain of his philosophical writings can we see his mind at full stretch. In politics, which in one way or another absorbed most of his energies through much of his life, he produced no Franklinian system. Indeed he generally avoided theory, contenting him-

self with a few usable generalizations about human affairs, based on his private art of virtue and his reading of history and his observation of the societies he knew. Politics (and for that matter science) should promote the happiness of mankind. Government should aim at the general welfare. Rulers would do well to be guided by public opinion. As for means, in most situations he was ready to consider alternatives, as in science he canvassed hypotheses; hence the impression he so often left of instability and even cynical detachment. Sometimes he referred to his age, by a crude analogy, as one of experiment in politics as well as in natural philosophy. But as a practictioner of both, he knew the difference between hypotheses which could be tested in the laboratory, and the informed guesses that men must make in human affairs, where only future experience can determine their wisdom.

In politics, then, he passed on not a system but the empirical method which American leaders have generally adopted. Most of his political writings were *ad hoc* pieces, designed to form public opinion and produce political action. And these, most often, he wrote, as he wrote so many of the letters from which biographers have drawn his portrait, lightly, wittily, ironically, tongue-in-cheek. Even more than Lincoln he has suffered in reputation as a statesman by his addiction to humor (where also he molded an American tradition). People came to suspect Franklin, even when he was most earnest, of concealing in the premises "some stupendous cosmic joke." The master ironist became the victim of his own irony.

To set us right in the face of overrefined judgments there is the record of his life, lived in every aspect with infinite zest, which speaks louder than words — even when the words are Franklin's, jesting at his own foibles and the foibles of mankind.

A Note on the Sources

READERS OF FRANKLIN'S LIFE should make his acquaintance at first hand in his writings, if only in selections. Carl Van Doren's *Benjamin Franklin's Autobiographical Writings* (Viking Press, 1945), includes both the memoirs and those letters and papers which have autobiographical reference. Another valuable anthology, on a different model, is I. Bernard Cohen's *Benjamin Franklin: His Contribution to the American Tradition* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1953). The finest edition of the autobiography, since it contains the text of the original manuscript, is Max Farrand, ed., *Benjamin Franklin's Memoirs,* Parallel Text Edition (University of California Press, 1949).

On a larger scale, the last edition of the works is Albert H. Smyth, ed., *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (10 vols., Macmillan, 1905–1907). But neither Smyth nor his nineteenth-century predecessors—William Temple Franklin, Jared Sparks, John Bigelow—collected all the writings or met present exacting standards of editing, and therefore a comprehensive edition of the Franklin papers is now projected by Yale University and the American Philosophical Society. Meanwhile, additions to the canon can be read in Carl Van Doren, ed., *Letters and Papers of Benjamin Franklin and Richard Jackson, 1753–1785* (American Philosophical Society, 1947); in the same editor's *The Letters of Benjamin Franklin and Jane Mecom* (Princeton University Press, 1950); in W. G. Roelker, ed., *Benjamin Franklin and Catharine Ray Greene, Their Corre-*

spondence, 1755–1790 (American Philosophical Society, 1949); and in Verner W. Crane, ed., *Benjamin Franklin's Letters to the Press, 1758–1775* (University of North Carolina Press, 1950).

The best full-length biography is the late Carl Van Doren's *Benjamin Franklin* (Viking Press, 1938), which rescued Franklin "from the dry, prim people who have claimed him as one of them." My many obligations to this scholarly and perceptive book and to its author, the most distinguished of modern Franklinists, are gratefully acknowledged. The best brief essay is the brilliant miniature biography — and appraisal — contributed by Carl Becker to the *Dictionary of American Biography,* VI, 585–98 (reprinted as a brochure by the Cornell University Press, 1946). The most penetrating analysis of his ideas has just appeared in Gerald Stourzh, *Benjamin Franklin and American Foreign Policy* (University of Chicago Press, 1954).

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Chapter III: For Franklin's science I have leaned heavily on the invaluable studies of I. Bernard Cohen, both his edition of the *Experiments and Observations* (1941), and his numerous articles; I can mention only "Benjamin Franklin: an Experimental Newtonian Scientist," in the *Bulletin* of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, V, No. 4 (Jan., 1952), 2–6, quoted on pp. 41, 52. See also Lloyd A. Brown, "The River in the Ocean," in *Essays Honoring Lawrence C. Wroth* (1951), 69–84.

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rence C. Wroth, *An American Bookshelf, 1755* (1934). Lawrence H. Gipson, *The British Empire Before the American Revolution,* V (1942), and "Letters to the Editor," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography,* LXXV (July, 1951), 350–62. Beverly McAnear, ed., "Personal Accounts of the Albany Congress of 1754," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review,* XXXIX (March, 1953), 727–46.

Chapter V: On Franklin's English propaganda, in this and later chapters, see my introduction to the *Letters to the Press,* and the essay in *Meet Dr. Franklin* (The Franklin Institute, 1943), 63–81.

Chapter VI: Here the discussion follows in part (but also supplements) Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis* (1953).

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