CHAPTER II

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
If you would not be forgotten,  
as soon as you are dead and rotten,  
either write things worth reading,  
or do things worth writing.

Benjamin Franklin
As mentioned earlier, Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography was written in four instalments. He wrote the first part in August 1771, while staying at the home of his friend Jonathan Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph. Before becoming bishop, Shipley had been dean of Winchester and rector of Chilbolton in Hampshire. The liberal and outspoken bishop was strongly Pro-American. Franklin was so impressed by Shipley's views that when the War of Independence was over, he wrote to Shipley saying that "the Cause of liberty and America was greatly obliged to you." Franklin did not write the second part until 1784 at his home in Passy, outside Paris, after the conclusion of the Revolution and the signing of the treaty with England. He returned to America in the summer of 1785, but with the excitement of his homecoming, his duties as President of Executive Council of Pennsylvania, and his work at the Federal Convention, he did not start the third part until August 1788. The brief fourth instalment was written only shortly before his death, on 17 April 1790.

Each part of the Autobiography reflects the time and circumstances of its composition. The first section treats the years in Boston, the early work in Philadelphia, his adventures in London, and his marriage to Debbie Read in 1730. Franklin did not have this part with him when he wrote the second part at Passy. He did have his outline, however, and he picks up almost exactly where he left off and proceeds
to describe his advancement of the subscription library project and the famous effort to arrive at moral perfection. In the third part he resumes the record of his life in the early 1730's and carries on with an account of his activity and reflection down to his arrival in England as agent for the Pennsylvania Assembly in July 1757. Part four is a memoir of his dealings with the proprietaries in London.

When Franklin wrote the first portion while visiting the Shipleys in Hampshire, he liked England. He was enjoying a welcome period of relief from his official duties, and he assumed the role of a retired country gentleman giving a private account of his unusual and adventurous history. The Autobiography begins with a letter to his son. In the very first few lines Franklin mentions to his son the reasons for his undertaking the task of writing an autobiography:

... there are some ... inducements that excite me to this undertaking. From the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and in which I passed my earliest years, I have raised myself to a state of affluence and some degree of celebrity in the world. As constant good fortune has accompanied me even to an advanced period of life, my posterity will perhaps be desirous of learning the means which I employed, and which, thanks to Providence,
so well succeeded with me. They may also deem them
fit to be imitated, should any of them find
themselves in similar circumstances.(3)

As Franklin wrote, this part of the Autobiography began to
take the shape of a short picaresque novel, with deceitful
governors like Keith making empty promises, braggadocios like
Samuel Keimer, who invented his own religion, and James
Ralph, Franklin's fellow traveller to England, who added to
his treachery as a runaway by taking not only a false name
but that of another. Franklin manipulates their entrances in
order to give the story suspense and continuity. In addition
to the people mentioned above, Mr. Denham, Andrew Hamilton,
and Sir William Wyndhan are important older man who take
notice of the young Franklin and help him.

There is a distinct juxtaposition of youth and age
in this part of the Autobiography, symbolized by the device
of writing it as a letter to his son William Franklin. One
is led to believe that William was about the age of the young
Benjamin, in his teens or twenties; yet in 1771 he was about
forty years old and Governor of New Jersey. "In a sense
Franklin was writing to himself as well as about himself,
developing correspondences between the past and the
present."
In the very beginning, Franklin gives an account of his ancestry. In fact, in ancient England, Franklin was the common name of an order or rank. A Franklin was a free tenant of the Crown, holding his lands without the obligations of military service or rent. It is interesting to notice that one of the characters in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is a Franklin. Franklin's ancestors had lived in Ecton in Northamptonshire for at least 300 years, perhaps from the time when the name of Franklin was assumed by them as a surname. Benjamin "was the youngest son of the youngest son for five generations" (5). His grandfather Thomas, who was born in 1598, lived at Ecton till he was too old to continue his business, when he retired to Banbury in Oxfordshire. He had four sons: Thomas, John, Benjamin and Josiah. Thomas was bred a smith under his father, but being ingenious and encouraged in learning by an Esquire Palmer, then the principal inhabitant of that Parish, he qualified himself for the business of scrivener, became a considerable man in the county affairs, was a chief mover of all public-spirited enterprises for the county or town of Northampton and his own village, and he was much taken notice of and patronized by Lord Halifax. John was a dyer. Benjamin was a silk dyer. Franklin considers his uncle Benjamin ingenious man. There was always a particular affection between his father and his uncle, and Franklin was his uncle's godson. His uncle left
behind him two volumes of manuscript of his poetry, consisting of pieces addressed to his friends and relations. Franklin reproduces a poem addressed to him. The whole poem runs almost like a father's advice to his son:

To my Namesake upon a Report of his Inclination to Martial Affairs, July 7th, 1710.

Believe me, Ben, War is a dangerous trade.
The sword has many marred as well as made;
By it do many fall, not many rise -
Makes many poor, few rich, and fewer wise;
Fills towns with ruin, fields with blood; beside
'Tis Sloth's maintainer and the shield of Pride.

Fair cities, rich today in plenty flow,
War fills with want tomorrow, and with woe,
Ruined estates, vice, broken limbs, and scars
Are the effects of desolating wars.

ACROSTIC

B-e to thy parents an obedient son,
E-aeh day let duty constantly be done,
N-ever give way to sloth or lust or pride,
I-f free you'd be from thousand ills beside;
A-bove all ills, be sure avoid the shelf;
M-an's danger lies in Satan, sin, and self.
I-n virtue, learning, wisdom progress make,
N-e'er shrink at suffering for thy Saviour's sake.
F-raud and all falsehood in thy dealings flee,
R-eligious always in thy station be,
A-dore the maker of thy inward part.
N-ow's the accepted time; give God thy heart.
K-eepl a good conscience, 'tis a constant friend;
L-ike judge and witness this thy act attend,
I-n heart, with bended knee, alone, adore
N-one but the Three-in-One forevermore. (6-7)

Josiah, Franklin's father, married young and shifted to New England in 1682. He had seven children by his first wife and ten by his second. Franklin was the youngest son and the youngest of all the children except two daughters, and was born in Boston.

Franklin gives an account of his father's personality and qualities:

He had an excellent constitution, was of middle stature, but well set and very strong. He was ingenious, could draw prettily, was skilled a little in music; his voice was sonorous and
agreeable, so that when he played Psalm tunes on his violin and sung withal, as he sometimes did in an evening after the business of the day was over, it was extremely agreeable to hear. He had some knowledge of mechanics, too, and on occasion was very handy with other tradesmen’s tools. But his great excellence was a sound understanding and a solid judgement in prudential matters, both in private and public affairs. (11)

One of charges that critics of Benjamin Franklin level against him is that he was a miser. Perhaps Franklin’s prudence is the result of his observing his father’s way of handling financial affairs. Another quality that Franklin developed in himself from observing his father’s attitude was his accepting any kind of food served:

At his table he liked to have, as often as he could, some sensible friend or neighbor to converse with, and always took care to start some ingenious or useful topic for discourse which might tend to improve the minds of his children. By this means he turned our attention to what was good, just, and prudent in the conduct of life; and little or no notice was ever taken of what related to the
victuals on the table — whether it was well or ill
dressed, in or out of season, of good or bad
flavor, preferable or inferior to this or that
other thing of the kind; so that I was brought up
in such a perfect inattention to those matters as
to be quite indifferent what kind of food was set
before me, and so unobservant of it that to this
day I can scarce tell a few hours after dinner of
what dishes it consisted. This has been a great
convenience to me in traveling, where my companions
have been sometimes very unhappy for want of a
suitable gratification of their more delicate,
because better instructed, tastes and appetites.(11)

Franklin was put to the grammar school when he was
eight years old, his father intending to devote him to the
service of the church. Franklin's early readiness in
learning to read and the opinion of all his friends that he
should certainly make a good scholar encouraged his father in
his purpose. But he found it almost impossible to support
the expense of a grammar school education, as he was burdened
with a large family. So he gave up his first intentions, and
took Franklin from the grammar school and sent him to a
school for writing and arithmetic run by Brownell. Brownell
was a skilful master. But, ironically, though under him Franklin, who later became a famous scientist, learned to write a good hand pretty soon, he failed in the arithmetic and made no progress in it. Very soon Franklin was taken home to help his father in his business, which was that of a tallow chandler and soap boiler. Franklin's duty was cutting wick for the candles, filling the molds for cast candles, attending the shop, etc.

Even from his childhood Franklin showed qualities of a leader: "I learned early to swim well and to manage boats; and when embarked with other boys, I was commonly allowed to govern, especially in any case of difficulty; and upon other occasions I was generally the leader among the boys." (10).

Another quality that Franklin acquired very early was love of books: "From my infancy I was passionately fond of reading and all the little money that came into my hands was laid out in the purchasing of books. I was very fond of voyages. My first acquisition was Bunyan's works in separate volumes" (13). Perhaps that is why many critics assert that "the Autobiography, especially this first part of it, owes its structure to Bunyan and Defoe and is a sort of 'American Pilgrim's Progress' or American Robinson Crusoe". In fact, Franklin devotes more than five pages to give an account of
his reading of books like Plutarch's Lives, Defoe's Essay on Projects, Dr. Nather's Essays to do Good, the third volume of The Spectator, Locke's On Human Understanding, and Xenophon's Memorable Things of Socrates. As Robert Sayre observes, "The poses and masks which Franklin came across in his reading - not only in Bysshe's eighteenth century translation of Xenophon, but in Addison, Swift, Defoe, Arbuthnot, Gay, Dryden, Pope, and other Augustan satirists - were more than literary ones to be assumed in his scores of hoaxes and pieces of satiric journalism; they were 'real' ones to be tried out in life as well. This is evident in Franklin's tireless affection for pranks, for practical jokes, and disguises."

It did not take long for Franklin to extend his habit from reading to writing. The opportunity came when his brother started a newspaper called The New England Courant in 1720 or 1721. This was the second newspaper in America. Franklin, when he read some of the articles that appeared in the paper, was tempted to contribute to the newspaper. But he didn't have the courage to give his articles directly to his brother. He therefore contrived to write anonymous articles and felt immensely happy when he saw them in print. However, his happiness did not last long. Differences rose between Franklin and his brother and Franklin decided to quit
his job. He found that even his father supported his brother, and therefore with the help of his friend Collins Franklin reached New York. When Franklin offered his services to the printer of the place, Mr. William Bradford, the latter expressed his inability, but directed Franklin to his son at Philadelphia.

Critics pointed out that Franklin was shaped by the raw and difficult environment of early-eighteenth-century America. In 1723, he, at age seventeen, escaped from an economically precarious life in Boston to Philadelphia. A burgeoning new commercial centre, Philadelphia stood at the edge of a vast wilderness that seemed to overwhelm the city’s vigour. "But the wilderness on the west was not the only one Franklin observed; he also perceived Philadelphia’s moral and educational wilderness, which needed to be tamed and disciplined." There were streets to be paved, cleaned, and lighted; schools to be founded, funded, and developed, a populace to be trained in discipline, forbearance, and frugality; and a proprietary government to be enlightened. Franklin concluded that the city had to take the lead in shaping an environment in which a way of life suited to a new sort of society could proceed unthreatened.

An important aspect of Franklin’s youth was the freedom he felt he had in the development of his habit and
his personality. In his voyage from Boston to Philadelphia he noticed the crew catching cod. Till then he used to consider eating every fish a kind of unprovoked murder and therefore had resolved to eat nothing that had had life. But when he found that when the fish were opened, there were smaller fish in their stomach, he decided to eat as other people. Franklin doesn't hesitate to have a dig at himself when he says, "So convenient a thing it is to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do" (36).

The very first day that he reached Philadelphia was perhaps special to him in another sense: "I went up Market Street as far as Fourth Street, passing by the door of Mr. Read, my future wife's father, when she, standing at the door, saw me and thought I made— as I certainly did — a most awkward, ridiculous appearance" (25-26). To his surprise, Franklin saw William Bradford, who, when his son said he could not take Franklin, took the latter to another printer, Keimer. Bradford, without revealing his identity, succeeded in leaving Franklin with Keimer. Thus began the first phase in the series of adventures that Benjamin Franklin undertook in his life.
Very soon Franklin came into contact with Sir William Keith, Governor of the Province. In fact it was Franklin's brother-in-law, Robert Homes, who spoke to the governor about Franklin and showed him the letter that Franklin had written to him. The governor was so impressed that he decided to encourage Franklin. In fact, it was the governor's encouraging words that made Franklin go back to Boston and set up his business. What is ironical is that Franklin had to take a letter from Keith to his father "recommending the project of my setting up at Philadelphia as a thing that would make my fortune" (30). Franklin's return was a pleasant surprise to every member of the family except his brother. Though Franklin's father was happy to receive a letter from a governor praising his son, he expressed his unwillingness to help Franklin set up his own business as he thought that Franklin was too young to do so. Not able to find an alternative job for him Franklin's father gave his consent to his returning again to Philadelphia, and "advised me to behave respectably to the people there, endeavour to obtain the general esteem and avoid lampooning and libeling, to which he thought I had too much inclination - telling me that by steady industry and a prudent parsimony I might save enough by the time I was twenty-one to set me up, and that if I came near the matter he would help me out with the rest"
Thus began Franklin's second voyage to Philadelphia. The only difference between the earlier journey and the present one was that this time Franklin had his parents' approbation and blessing.

An important characteristic of the first part of the Autobiography is that Franklin quiet often gives a detailed account of even a minor incident. But almost every one of such incidents had its own importance in his life. For example, on his way to Philadelphia via New York, it so happened that the boat he was travelling in touched Newport, Rhode Island. Franklin took the opportunity to visit his brother John, who had been married and settled there some years. A friend of John's, Vernon, had some money due to him in Pennsylvania, which Franklin promised to recover and keep till he had his directions about what to do with that money. But, unfortunately, "This business afterwards occasioned me a good deal of uneasiness" (32). As mentioned earlier, the first part of the autobiography has the qualities of a picaresque novel, in which the protagonist comes across different types of people and often realizes the difference between appearance and reality. On resuming his journey, Franklin came to know that a few more passengers had joined them, among whom were an old lady and two young women. Franklin's helping nature impressed the old lady, who warned him about the two young women. Though Franklin did not
believe her words in the beginning, he soon realized that the two women were in fact thieves. He was so relieved to be rid of the two strumpets that he felt that "though we escaped a sunken rock which we scraped upon in the passage, I thought this escape of rather more importance to me" (32), which clearly shows that sometimes small incidents teach great men useful lessons.

The last break in the journey was at New York, where Franklin met his old friend Collins, who had become a drunkard. This news pained Franklin. Collins had lost all his money in drinking and gambling. So Franklin took the responsibility of paying his friend's bills. This fact clearly shows Franklin as a man of affection and love. Franklin's sorrow at the loss of a good friend was more than compensated by the invitation he received from the governor of New York, William Burnet. The reason for the invitation was that Mr. Burnet had come to know that he (Franklin) had a number of books. Franklin was immensely pleased: "The Governor received me with great civility, showed me his library, which was a very considerable one, and we had a good deal of conversation about books and authors. This was the second governor who had done me the honor to take notice of me, and for a poor boy like me was very pleasing" (33). Franklin, though he had to spend lot of money on his friend,
did not desert him. But his friend, instead of being grateful to him, began to demand more and more money from him. Franklin, as mentioned earlier, had to face difficulties because of the money he had recovered for his brother's friend. Knowing Franklin had recovered the money due to Vernon, Collins was continually borrowing money from him, promising repayment as soon as he was employed. However, no one was prepared to employ a drunkard. At last Collins was taken to West Indies as a tutor. Though he promised to return the money that he had taken from Franklin, Franklin never heard of him after. This was the second occasion in Franklin's life when he was pained at the behaviour of people he considered close to him, the first being his brother's selfish attitude. This incident, in fact, left Franklin unhappy on two counts: his disappointment with his friend and his helplessness with regard to the spending of the money he had recovered for his brother's friend. Franklin realized that "the violation of my trust respecting Vernon's money was one of the first great errata of my life, and this affair showed that my father was not much out in his judgement when he supposed me too young to manage business of importance" (34). Franklin's difficulties were not yet over. The next man to disappoint him was Governor William Keith, who promised to come to Franklin's rescue and help him in every possible way. It was
only later that Franklin realized how shallow the governor's promises were. When he told Franklin that he would help him set up his own business, "Had it been known that I depended on the Governor, probably some friend that knew him better would have advised me not to rely on him, as I afterwards heard it as his known character to be liberal of promises which he never meant to keep. Yet unsolicited as he was by me, how could I think his generous offers insincere? I believed him one of the best men in the world" (35).

Franklin, since he had to wait for some months to go to England, continued working with Keimer. He, however, did not reveal to Keimer his plans of starting his own business. It was during this period that Franklin met Miss Deborah Read (whom he married later, on 1 September 1730) : "I had made some courtship during this time to Miss Read. I had a great respect and affection for her, and had some reasons to believe she had the same for me" (37). But as he was about to take a long voyage and they were both young, a little above eighteen, Miss Read's mother thought it better for them to get married only after Franklin returned from England and settled in his business.

Anyone who reads Benjamin Franklin's autobiography will notice that it was this period of his life that shaped his attitude towards people with different mentalities. This
was probably because it was during this period that Franklin came into contact with people different in age and behaviour. Franklin's good friends during that time were Charles Osborne, Joseph Watson, and James Ralph. James Ralph was an American writer who accompanied Franklin to London in 1724. He remained there and became a free-lance writer and political propagandist. His major work is The History of England. Franklin gives a detailed account of his three friends:

My chief acquaintances at this time were Charles Osborne, Joseph Watson, and James Ralph - all lovers of reading. The two first were clerks to an eminent scrivener or conveyancer in the town, Charles Brogden; the other was clerk to a merchant. Watson was a pious, sensible young man of great integrity. The others (were) rather more lax in their principles of religion, particularly Ralph, who as well as Collins had been unsettled by me, for which they both made me suffer. Osborne was sensible, candid, Frank - sincere and affectionate to his friends - but in literary matters too fond of criticism. Ralph was ingenious, genteel in his manners, and extremely eloquent; I think I never knew a prettier talker. (37)
Franklin was, of course, disappointed with all his three friends, for different reasons. James Ralph abonded his wife and child in America and went with Franklin to London. Failing to find a job in London, Ralph moved to Berkshire and took Franklin's name - to avoid his creditors - leaving Franklin with the responsibility not only for his bills, but for looking after his new girl friend. Young as he was, Franklin made advances to Ralph's girl friend, which she repulsed. Franklin considered this an erratum. She also wrote to Ralph about Franklin's conduct, which resulted in a breach between Franklin and Ralph. But "by the loss of his friendship I found myself relieved from a heavy burden" (45).

About the other two friends Franklin says, "Watson died in my arms a few years after, much lamented, being the best of our set. Osborne went to the West Indies, where he became an eminent lawyer and made money but died young. He and I had made a serious agreement that the one who happened first to die should, if possible, make a friendly visit to the other and acquaint him how he found things in that separate state. But he never fulfilled his promise" (39).

On Franklin's journey to London, "Mr. Denham contracted a friendship for me that continued during his life" (40-41). It took a long time - in fact, not until he reached London - for Franklin to realize that William Keith
had cheated him. But, fortunately for Franklin this incident made him come into contact with a famous American lawyer, Mr. Hamilton, who became his friend, "greatly to my advantage afterwards on many occasions" (42). Franklin, helpless, got into work at Palmer's, a famous printing house, and continued there almost for a year. He was employed in composing for the second edition of Wallaston's Religion of Nature. Some of Wallaston's reasonings did not appear to Franklin well founded, and he wrote a pamphlet in which he made remarks on them. The pamphlet was entitled "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain." He even printed a few copies of his pamphlet. Though Mr. Palmer was impressed by the pamphlet, Franklin considered the pamphlet another erratum. Thus for Franklin it was a period of committing and then realizing mistakes. But he never lost an opportunity to learn, whether from the world or from books. He made friendship with Wilcox, a book seller, who had an immense collection of secondhand books. Franklin read as many books as he could.

Franklin, after a year, left Palmer's and joined Watts'. Here the workers started calling him "Water-American" because they used to drink a strong beer but Franklin never touched it. They were in fact surprised at his strength. Franklin succeeded in convincing some of them that his diet was better than theirs. Maybe this was one of
the early occasions when Franklin, who was to become a great statesman later, was able to persuade people to follow his way of life: "From my example, a great many of them left their muddling breakfast of beer, bread, and cheese, finding they could with me be supplied from a neighboring house with a large porringer of hot water gruel, sprinkled with pepper, crumbed with bread, and a bit of butter in it, for the price of a pint of beer, viz., three halfpence" (46).

As mentioned earlier, this phase was one of the most important in Franklin's life in that it gave an opportunity for him to meet a number of people, who influenced him in different ways. One of the people that Franklin came into contact during this period was a maiden lady of seventy. This lady was a Roman Catholic who had been sent abroad when young with an intent of becoming a nun. But as the country did not agree with her, she returned to England and had owed to lead the life of a nun. Accordingly, she had given her estate to charitable uses, reserving only twelve pounds a year to live on. A confessor visited her everyday. When asked why she needed a confessor, she said, "it is impossible to avoid vain thoughts" (48). Franklin had the opportunity of visiting her once: "She looked pale but was never sick, and I give it as another instance on how small an income life and health may be supported" (48).
Franklin frankly mentions some of his desires that he wanted to fulfil as a young man. One such desire was to travel all over Europe with his friend Wygate, though this idea was first proposed by the latter. It was Mr. Denham who dissuaded him from it, advising him to think of returning to Pennsylvania, which he was about to do. Denham was one of the persons who had a positive influence on Franklin through their honesty and integrity:

He had formerly been in business at Bristol, but failed in debt to a number of people, compounded, and went to America. Thereby a close application to business as a merchant, he acquired a plentiful fortune in a few years. Returning to England in the ship with me, he invited his old creditors to an entertainment, at which he thanked them for the easy composition they had favored him with; and when they expected nothing but the treat, every man at the first remove found under his plate an order on a banker for the full amount of the unpaid remainder with interest. (49)

When Denham offered employment in Philadelphia, Franklin happily accepted the offer though he would get less than what he was getting in London. But before he left for
Philadelphia, Franklin met Sir William Wyndham. In fact it was Wyndham who wanted Franklin to teach his sons swimming. This meeting also proved beneficial to Franklin: "After many years, you and I had something of more importance to do with one of these sons of Sir William Wyndham, become Earl of Egremont, which I shall mention in its place" (50).

One of the reasons for the meteoric rise of Benjamin Franklin was perhaps his ability to look at the positive side of every event in his life. During this period, though Franklin worked very hard he spent but little upon himself because his friend Ralph had kept him poor. But "I loved him ... for he had many amiable qualities. I had improved my knowledge, however, though I had by no means improved my fortune. But I had made some very ingenious acquaintance, whose conversation was of great advantage to me, and I had read considerably" (50).

It is interesting to notice that Franklin gives the dates of his starting for and landing in Philadelphia, 23 July and 11 October 1726 respectively. Perhaps Franklin was aware of the importance of this journey when he undertook it and also when he wrote his Autobiography. On reaching Philadelphia Franklin learned that Miss Read, thinking that he would never return to Philadelphia, had married one Rogers, a potter. She was never happy with him and soon they
got separated. He got into debt, went to the West Indies, and died there. For Franklin a greater disappointment was to follow. His life with Mr. Denham was smooth until both of them were taken ill in 1727. Though Franklin recovered, Mr. Denham could not survive his disease. He left Franklin a small legacy. Helpless again, Franklin was almost forced to join Keimer's printing house. There he made friends with the other employees, of whom Hugh Meredith was to become his partner later. Though Franklin knew why Keimer was treating him so well -- Keimer wanted Franklin to train the other workers in their respective jobs -- he did his best till Keimer realized that the other workers had received sufficient training and sent away Franklin on a small pretext. It was then that Franklin got the real opportunity to start planning for his own publishing house. The offer of help came from Hugh Meredith, whose father was so impressed by Franklin's positive influence on his son that he decided to invest some of his money in the venture. The understanding was that Meredith would use his money and Franklin his talent. However, until they could get the necessary equipment, since he was free, Franklin accepted another invitation from Keimer who had an assignment of printing paper money. This assignment was at Burlington, where, as usual people were impressed by Franklin's conversational skill. His new friends included Judge Allen,
Samuel Bustill, the Secretary of the province, Isaac Pearson, Joseph Cooper, and several of the Smiths, members of the Assembly, and Isaac Decow, the Surveyor General.

Franklin knew that he had reached a turning point in his life when he was about to start his publishing house. Therefore he wants his son to know the state of his mind with regard to his principles and morals. Franklin was a freethinker, and in his Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain and Dialogues Concerning Virtue and Pleasure, he argued that "vice and virtue are empty distinctions." But he realized that vice and virtue needed no theological justification but were "of the utmost importance" in practical affairs. This discovery he mentions with his characteristic simplicity: "I grew convinced that truth, sincerity and integrity, in dealings between man and man, were of the utmost importance to the felicity of life, and I formed written resolutions (which still remain in my journal book) to practice them ever while I lived" (57). In short, Franklin placed the frontier morality of the Puritans on a secular, utilitarian footing:

Revelation had indeed no weight with me as such; 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. And this persuasion, with the kind hand of Providence, or some guardian angel, or accidental favorable circumstances and situations, or all together, preserved me (through this dangerous time of youth and the hazardous situations I was sometimes in among strangers, remote from the eye and advice of my father) without any willful gross immorality or injustice that might have been expected from my want of religion. I say willful because the instances I have mentioned had something of necessity in them, from my youth, inexperience, and the knavery of others. I had, therefore, a tolerable character to begin the world with; I valued it properly and determined to preserve it. (57)

Though Franklin had to cross a number of hurdles in his business, he began to taste success. The first part of the Autobiography comes to an end with Franklin's marriage with Miss Read and the starting of another project, a subscription library. In fact, the subscription library started by Franklin, with the help of the other members of
the club called the Junto - which he had started the previous year - was "the mother of all the North American subscription libraries" (69). We can say that this was one of Franklin's many contributions to the development of America: "These libraries have improved the general conversation of the Americans, made the common tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as most gentlemen from other countries, and perhaps have contributed in some degree to the stand so generally made throughout the colonies in defense of their privileges" (69).

According to some critics, there seem to be some descriptions which are not exactly true. For example, Franklin writes that Sir Hans Sloane, having heard of an asbestos purse he had brought from America, came to see him, and "invited me to his House in Bloomsbury Square" (44). In actual fact, Franklin had heard that Sloane was a lover of curiosities and had written offering to sell the purse to him. As Sayre points out, either by design or by failure of memory, Sloane is forced into the category of influential men attracted to the young Franklin.

In such ways does the older Franklin publicize his youth and also demonstrate to himself
a continuity between the retired gentleman who is writing and the boy and young man who was already receiving attention from men like the indulgent writer.

Franklin concludes this part with a Memo: "Thus far was written with the intention expressed in the beginning and therefore contains several little family anecdotes of no importance to others. What follows was written many years after, in compliance with the advice contained in these letters, and accordingly intended for the public. The affairs of the Revolution occasioned the interruption" (69). But what has attracted critics' attention is that "despite the beginnings and the interest in family origins, there is strikingly little in the Autobiography of parents - he did after all run away from home - of wife, daughter, and son, and of his delight in the company of children, and his charm for women of all ages."

Max Farrand, the editor of the "Fair Copy" of the Autobiography, refers to the first of the letters mentioned in the Memo:

Ten years and more had passed since the writing of the first part of the Autobiography. Franklin had returned to America in 1775, and the following year was sent as one of a commission of three to
negotiate a treaty with France. He was living at Passy, near Paris, where toward the close of 1782, or early in 1783, he received the following letter (69).

The letter was from Abel James, who had read the first part of the Autobiography and was impressed by it. Farrand gives an account of how Abel James came across Franklin's papers. Franklin, before sailing to France, left a chest full of his papers in the care of his friend Joseph Galloway. During the Revolution, Joseph Galloway went over to the British side and the chest fell into the hands of Mrs. Galloway, who protected it from confiscation by the enemy. At her death, it is probable that Abel James, a highly respected Philadelphia merchant, acted as executor of Mrs. Galloway's estate and in that way came into possession of the first part of the Autobiography.

Requesting Franklin to complete his Autobiography as early as possible, Abel James wrote, "I know of no character living, nor many of them put together, who has so much in his power as thyself to promote a greater spirit of industry and early attention to business, frugality, and temperance with the American youth" (70). Franklin sent the letter and the papers to his friend Benjamin Vaughan.
In his letter Benjamin Vaughan praised Franklin for the disciplined life that he had led as a young man. He wrote, "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" (71). That is why Vaughan wanted Franklin to complete and publish his Autobiography as Abel James desired. He wrote,

Take then, my dear sir, this work most speedily into hand; show yourself good as you are good; temperate as you are temperate; and above all things, prove yourself as one who from your infancy have loved justice, liberty, and concord in a way that has made it natural and consistent for you to have acted as we have seen you act in the last seventeen years of your life. Let Englishmen be made not only to respect, but even to love you. When they think well of individuals in your native country, they will go nearer to thinking well of your country; and when your countrymen see themselves well thought of by Englishmen, they will go nearer to thinking well of England. Extend your views even further; do not stop at those who speak
the English tongue, but after having settled so many points in nature and politics, think of bettering the whole race of men. (75)

It thus came about that Part II, written in Passy in 1784, and again without benefit of source material, begins in the year 1731. Critics point out that its main theme was less the story of a man's life than an essay on his "Project of arriving at Moral Perfection," through a listing of a schedule of thirteen virtues from temperance to industry and frugality, with moderation, chastity, and humility, including injunctions to himself.

Franklin begins this part with a few more details about the Philadelphia Public Library that he had started. It is in this part that Franklin praises a member of his family, his wife, for the first time. He quotes an English proverb, "He that would thrive/Must ask his wife," and writes, "It was lucky for me that I had one as much disposed to industry and frugality as myself" (78).

Almost the whole of this part of the Autobiography is devoted to his attempts at moral perfection. Franklin had been religiously educated as a Presbyterian; and "though some of the dogmas of that persuasion, such as the eternal decrees of God, election, reprobation, etc., appeared to me
unintellegeble, others, doubtful ... I never was without some religious principles" (79). He never doubted the existence of the Deity, "that the most acceptable service of God was the doing good to man, that our souls are immortal, and that all crime will be punished and virtue rewarded either here or hereafter" (79). Franklin very rarely attended any public worship. He was disappointed with the few that he attended because the aim of the preacher seemed to be to make people Presbitarians rather than good citizens. Franklin therefore decided to go back to a little liturgy or form of prayer he had composed in 1728, entitled "Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion." He included under thirteen names of virtues all that occurred to him as necessary or desirable, and annexed to each a short precept:

1. Temperance

Eat not to dullness. Drink not to elevation.

2. Silence

Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling conversation.

3. Order

Let all your things have their places. Let each part of your business have its time.
4. Resolution

Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.

5. Frugality

Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself, i.e., waste nothing.

6. Industry

Lose no time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary actions.

7. Sincerity

Use no hurtful deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

8. Justice

Wrong none by doing injuries or omitting the benefits that are you duty.

9. Moderation

Avoid extremes. Forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.
10. Cleanliness

Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, clothes, or habitation.

11. Tranquility

Be not disturbed at trifles or at accidents common or unavoidable.

12. Chastity

Rarely use venery but for health or offspring—never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's peace or reputation.

13. Humility

Imitate Jesus and Socrates (81-83).

Franklin's intention was to acquire the habitude of all virtues. He made a little book in which he allotted a page for each of the virtues. A sample page is included in the text (85). One page in the book contained" the scheme of employment for the twenty-four hours of a natural day." The page is included in the text (87). "Franklin's 'moral algebra' is complete with lines and red ink, columns, mottos, dots, abbreviations, headlines. Yet with all these
Franklin's procedure was "to give a week's strict attention to each of the virtues successively" (84), at the same time keeping account of his performance regarding the others as well. Proceeding in this way, he could go through a complete course in thirteen weeks.

Franklin attributes to the effect of the "Project" his wealth and well-being and says that it had once been his intention to write a book to be called The Art of Virtue. He even shifts briefly into the third person, stating that "my posterity should be informed that to this little artifice, with the blessing of God, their ancestor owed the constant felicity of his life down to his seventy-ninth year, in which this is written" (89). He, however, admits that he found humility the most difficult of the thirteen virtues, and "I cannot boast of much success in acquiring the reality of this virtue, but I had a good deal with regard to the appearance of it" (91). It is therefore appropriate that the concluding paragraph of this part of the Autobiography is on pride and humility:

In reality there is perhaps no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as pride; disguise it,
struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive and will every now and then peep out and show itself. You will see it perhaps often in this history. For even if I could conceive that I had completely overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility (92).

When Franklin began writing the third part of his Autobiography in August 1788, he was eighty-two years old, and suffering from gout. As Esmond Wright observes, "His memoirs no longer pretend to be a letter to his son, nor a series of moral exhortations; both the narrative phase of part I and the Puritan Sermon Part II are missing. Instead, he becomes Franklin the citizen, the now famous public man, and adopts a less frank and less personal style. The cynicism of the real world had, by that time, carried him far from his father's house." This part of the Autobiography covers the most important events in Franklin's life. In his survey of his public activities from 1731 to 1757, Franklin describes his roles as founder of the United Party for Virtue, printer and publisher of the Gazette, inventor of "Poor Richard," civic doer of good, founder of the Academy, the Hospital, and the Union Fire Insurance Company - and deviser of the matching grant. In addition, he gives an
account of the Quakers' dilemma over defence, and of the contest between the Assembly and the Proprietors. As Esmond Wright points out,

Of them all he writes in a long retrospect, and in the knowledge of the outcome of the tensions with Britain that he was describing. As a result, there are errors of fact in the story; he gives the wrong date for the beginning of his interest in electricity; he obscures the circumstances of Braddock's arrival in America; his account of his political activities in Pennsylvania and of his contacts with Lord Loudoun is highly partisan and obviously selective; there is now an Anglophobia totally missing in Part I.

This part of the Autobiography begins with an account of the "great and extensive project" (92) and its object. According to Franklin, "few in public affairs act from a mere view of the good of their country .... fewer still in public affairs act with a view to the good of mankind," and therefore, "there seems to me at present to be great occasion for raising a united party for virtue, by forming the virtuous and good men of all nations into a regular body, to be governed by suitable good and wise rules,
which good and wise men may probably be more unanimous in their obedience to than common people are to common laws" (93). Such a party must believe that "the most acceptable service to God is doing good to man" (94).

Franklin's ideas at that time were that

... the sect should be begun and spread at first among young and single men only declare his assent to such creed but should have exercised himself with the thirteen weeks' examination and practice of the virtues, as in the before-mentioned model; that the existence of such a society should be kept a secret till it was become considerable, to prevent solicitations for the admission of improper persons; but that the members should each of them search among his acquaintance for ingenuous, well-disposed youths to whom, with prudent caution, the scheme should be gradually communicated; that the members should engage to afford their advice, assistance, and support to each other in promoting one another's interest, business, and advancement in life; that for distinction we should be called the Society of the Free and Easy: free, as being by the general practice and habit of the virtues, free
from the dominion of vice; and particularly by the practice of industry and frugality, free from debt, which exposes a man to confinement and a species of slavery to his creditors. (94)

But, Franklin went on postponing his project for a number of reasons. He was however confident that it is not impossible for a man to undertake such a project.

In 1732 Franklin published his Almanack, under the name of Richard Saunders; it was continued for about 25 years, from 1733 to 1758, and was called Poor Richard's Almanack. It contained, in addition to Franklin's essays, humorous sketches, and proverbs, the usual almanac material - weather forecast, road conditions, important historical dates, etc. The Way to Wealth is the Preface to the edition 1758 and contains most of Franklin's best sayings over the entire period of publication. Franklin made his Almanack both entertaining and useful and accordingly it came to be in such demand that he got good profit from it. Realizing that it was read by the common people, Franklin filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences, "chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality as the means of procuring wealth and thereby securing virtue - it being more difficult for a man in want to act always honestly, as (to use here one
of those proverbs) 'it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright'" (95). When Franklin assembled all the proverbs, formed them into a connected discourse, and prefixed it to his Almanack, it became so popular that it

... was copied in all the newspapers of the Continent, reprinted in Britain on a broadside to be stuck up in houses, two translations were made of it in French, and great numbers bought by the clergy and gentry to distribute gratis among their poor parishners and tenants. In Pennsylvania, as it discouraged useless expense in foreign superfluities, some thought it had its share of influence in producing that growing plenty of money which was observable for several years after its publication. (95-96)

Franklin did not confine himself to the English language alone. In 1733 he began to study other languages, and soon learned French, Italian, and Spanish. Then he realized that his knowledge of these three languages made it easier for him to understand the Latin Testament, which gave him a new idea regarding learning Latin:
We are told that it is proper to begin first with the Latin, and having acquired that, it will be more easy to attain those modern languages which are derived from it; and yet we do not begin with the Greek in order more easily to acquire the Latin. It is true that if you can clamber and get to the top of a staircase without using the steps, you will more easily gain them in descending; but certainly if you begin with the lowest, you will with more ease ascend to the top. (99)

This clearly shows that Franklin's genius was not confined to only one field, but extended to different fields. Sometimes it was out of experience that Franklin realized certain truths about life, even if they are not great truths. For example, when one of his sons died of small-pox, he regretted his not getting his son inoculated, and "This I mention for the sake of parents who omit that operation" (100).

In the meanwhile their club, the Junto, became so famous that many people wanted to become its members. But, since the founder members had restricted the number to twelve, Franklin made "a proposal that every member separately should endeavor to form a subordinate club with
Franklin's life took a new turn in 1736, when he was made clerk of the General Assembly unanimously. Though there was opposition to his candidature next year, Franklin was chosen. This secured him "the business of printing the votes, laws, paper money, and other occasional jobs for other public, that, on the whole were very profitable" (101). Franklin's diplomacy can be seen in the way he turned the member who opposed his selection to his side not by showing him kindness but by seeking kindness from the member on the basis that "He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another than he whom you yourself have obliged" (102). The next step in Franklin's rise to success came in the form of an offer from Col. Spotswood, late Governor of Virginia, in 1737. The offer was that of the deputy, which Franklin gladly accepted.

Success made Franklin think more and more about public affairs. In fact, it was during this period that the statesman in him began to develop. When he noticed that every householder had to pay a six-shilling tax to the constables if he or she wanted substitutes, he proposed a tax proportionate to the property of the householder. Another service that he did to American society was the formation of
the Union Fire Company on December 7, 1736. He also contributed to the starting of an orphan house started by Mr. Whitefield in Georgia.

Franklin's continued success encouraged him to undertake many developmental activities. Though he was satisfied with his life in Pennsylvania, there were two things that he regretted: "there being no provision for defense nor for a complete education of youth; no militia nor any college. I therefore in 1743 drew up a proposal for establishing an academy .... I succeeded better the next year, 1744, in proposing and establishing a philosophical society" (109). The American Philosophical Society rapidly became the chief academy of sciences in the country and is still one of the most important foundations for the promotion of scientific interests. When the endeavors of Governor Thomas to make the Quaker Assembly pass a militia law and make other provisions for the security of the province failed, Franklin decided to try what might be done by a voluntary association of the people. He wrote and published a pamphlet, Plain Truth, in which he stated the defenceless situation they were in. This pamphlet had a surprising effect. More than ten thousand citizens furnished themselves with arms and formed themselves into companies and regiments. When they offered Colonelship to Franklin, he politely rejected the offer and instead
recommended one Mr. Lawrence, who was accordingly appointed. They even got a few cannons. That success never went to Franklin's head is proved by the fact that "I regularly took my turn of duty there as a common soldier" (110). Thus, as Robert E. Spiller observes,

It would seem that Franklin's mind ran a similar course with reference to social thinking. His fire company, his postal service, his library, and his newspapers and magazines at home and in other colonies were developed to answer the public need rather than for personal profit alone. Experience in each case pointed out a situation which needed the exercise of his ingenuity, and his solution to the problem was so obvious, once it had been put into practice, that it immediately became public habit. Often it was a scientific discovery which was turned into a social channel and the two currents of his mind flowed together. He had no consistent view of the nature of society other than that dictated by his understanding of the needs of his own country.

Franklin's active role in various developmental activities drew the attention of the Governor and Council. They took him into confidence and he was consulted by them
"in every measure wherein their concurrence was thought useful to the association" (110). It is not out of place to mention here that there are critics according to whom Franklin was not so honest as he claimed himself to be. Quoting his statement that "I shall never ask, never refuse, nor ever resign an office" (111), Esmond Wright observes, "In fact, he petitioned for the Assembly clerkship in 1736, and, by letters to friends in Britain, and by soliciting the support of William Allen, with whom he later quarrel, he obtained the deputy postmaster-generalship in 1751, which brought him free mailing of his newspaper."

His being many years in the Assembly, the majority of which were Quakers, gave Franklin opportunities of seeing embarrassments the members faced because of their principle against war whenever application was made to them by order of the Crown to grant aids for military purposes. Franklin was amused at the way they successfully rigged out of the embarrassing situation:

They were unwilling to offend government, on the one hand, by a direct refusal and their friends, the body of Quakers, on the other, by a compliance contrary to their principles — hence a variety of evasions to avoid complying and modes of disguising
the compliance when it became unavoidable. The common mode at last was to grant money under the phrase of its being "for the king's use," and never to inquire how it was applied. But if the demand was not directly from the Crown, that phrase was found not so proper, and some other was to be invented. (113-114)

It is interesting to notice that it is at this point that Franklin remembers one of his inventions that actually took place in 1742, an open stove for the better warming of rooms. He even published a pamphlet explaining the operation of the stove.

When peace returned, Franklin turned his thoughts again to the affair of establishing an academy. He contacted his friends at the Junto, and also published a pamphlet entitled Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania. It has been observed that Franklin had his eye upon the practical problems of a young and unexploited country. In the education of youth, he revealed his lack of concern for abstract theory and showed practical and foresighted wisdom with reference to fact. In his several tracts on educational matters, he stresses the need for the establishment of academies in the colony and outlines a pragmatic curriculum in which facility in speaking and writ-
ing, and the reading of contemporary English literature, share with history and natural science the places habitually assigned to logic, theoretical mathematics, and the classics. He even urges that, with this study, excursions might be made "to the neighbouring Plantations of the best Farmers, their Methods observ'd and reasn'd upon for the Improvement of Youth." According to Robert Spiller,

The modern "activity" school which has developed from John Dewey's pragmatic theories of education, with its emphasis upon the study of the immediate environment, is largely a rediscovery of practices which Franklin advocated in 1749. Higher education, with its diversified vocational schools, has followed a familiar pattern. To Franklin, it was enough that America needed young men to carry forward the material welfare of the colonies and their people.

Through his developmental activities Franklin became so popular that who ever had any proposal was asked whether he had consulted Franklin. A friend of Franklin's had to face such a situation when he conceived the idea of establishing a hospital in Philadelphia for the poor. It was, of course, with the help of Franklin that Dr. Thomas Bond
was able to establish a good hospital in 1757. This hospital called "The Pennsylvania Hospital" was the first hospital in the colony and became, under the influence of Dr. Benjamin Rush, a leading institution in the treatment of mental diseases. Franklin also helped Gilbert Tennent build the Second Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia in 1743. Franklin then turned his attention to the maintenance of roads and lamps in the streets. He himself prepared a model lamp. All these activities show the multifaceted personality of Benjamin Franklin.

The next step in Franklin's rise to success was his appointment as deputy postmaster general in 1753, and he was successful in this venture also. It was during his term as postmaster general that the College of Cambridge conferred on him the degree of Master of Arts. This was the second one, the first one was by Yale College in Connecticut.

There were occasions when Franklin had to face failure, not because of his fault but because of circumstances beyond his control. By the time he was proved right, it was too late. One such instance was when his project for the formation of a Union was rejected. The result was the defeat of the British army at the hands of the French army. Franklin could not avert the disaster in spite of his best efforts. He knew that had his proposal been
accepted, they would not have faced such humiliating defeat:
"I am still of opinion it would have been happy for both sides (of) the water if it had been adopted. The Colonies so united would have been sufficiently strong to have defended themselves; there would then have been no need of troops from England; of course the subsequent pretense for taxing America and the bloody contest it occasioned would have been avoided. But such mistakes are not new; history is full of the errors of states and princes" (129-130). When the news of the disaster reached England, many people "raised a clamor against the proprietaries for their meanness and injustice in giving their Governor such instructions, some going so far as to say that by obstructing the defense of their province, they forfeited their right to it" (143). The proprietaries were intimidated by this, and contributed 5000 pounds for any purpose considered suitable by the Assembly. With the amount collected strong forts were constructed. Of course, Franklin took an active part in it. Another aspect of Franklin's character a reader of his Autobiography notices is that political rivalry does not come in the way of his cordial relationship with others: "... as he (the Governor) knew I wrote for the Assembly, one might have imagined that when we met we could hardly avoid cutting throats. But he was so good-natured a man that no personal difference between him and me was occasioned by the contest, and we often dined
together" (131); "Notwithstanding the continual wrangle between the Governor and the House, in which I as a member had so large a share, there still subsisted a civil intercourse between that gentleman and myself, and we never had any personal difference" (150).

Franklin continued his scientific experiments and Peter Collison was responsible for introducing Franklin's scientific experiments to the Royal Societies and for publishing his volume Experiments and Observations on Electricity, Made at Philadelphia in America, by Benjamin Franklin, London, 1751. In fact Franklin was very happy when he learnt that "Without my having made any application for that honor, they chose me a member (of the Royal Society) and voted that I should be excused the customary payments, which would have amounted to twenty-five guineas, and ever since have given me their transactions gratis. They also presented me with the gold medal of Sir Godfrey Copley for the year 1753" (154).

Franklin's next assignment was very successful. It was in fact his first foreign mission when the Assembly appointed him their agent to go over to England to present and support the petition against the proprietaries. It was on 27 July 1757 that Franklin, Commissioner for the Colony of Pennsylvania, along with his son William Franklin, arrived in
London. Here the third part of the Autobiography ends and the fourth part, written shortly before Franklin's death, begins. Analysing the third part of the Autobiography Robert F. Sayre observes,

When Franklin wrote this part of his Autobiography in 1788, the country was rebuilding from the destruction of the Revolution and in need of new ideas and energies and men with the social and political skill to employ them. Franklin is seeing himself not as the retired gentleman of the first portion of the Autobiography or the naive philosopher of the second, but as the busy Philadelphian. It might be added that this is the only part of the book in which Franklin seems something of an Anglophobe. In the account of General Braddock's campaign, in the offhand remarks about working hours in London, in implications that the Royal Society scorned his scientific experiments, and in criticism of Lord Louden for delaying the ship on which he sailed to England in 1757 - in all these places we know that the Revolution has come between the events and the reminiscences. But this section is most strongly American for its emphasis on doing and upon self-realization in public life. It does not present
the whole Franklin; it does not present the whole American. But it presents the American Franklin as the writer saw himself at that time. The life has once again been made over in a discovery of the present by means of re-discovering the past.

The fourth part of the Autobiography consists of just a few pages and is about how Franklin brought about the assessment of the surveyed lands of the Proprietaries of Pennsylvania, the Penns.

The Autobiography is in one sense an unfinished work; it does not include the last thirty years of his life when in England, France, and America he earned fame as a statesman and a diplomat. By definition, however, no autobiography can ever be complete.
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