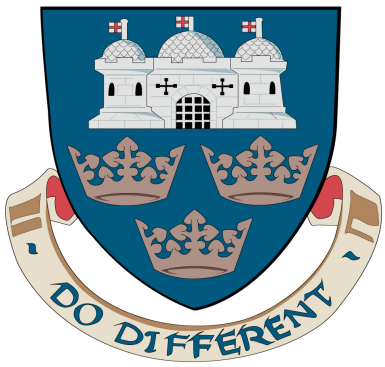
Reason, Inclination

FRANKLIN *at* PHILADELPHIA, 1762–1764



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I

Summer, 1762.

England and Prussia are at war with France and Spain. There are fronts in Europe and the colonies in Africa, North America, and the Caribbean. On the southern coast of England, Dr Benjamin Franklin is about to return home to Philadelphia. He is 56 years old, a retired printer, a published scientist, but at London he is better recognised as a low-born statesman from Pennsylvania with a reputation for causing trouble with the establishment. His mission was as simple as it was outrageous: oust Penn's sons from their inherited rule and transfer the colony's governance to the Crown.

He has been wildly unsuccessful. In five years he's done little more than to strengthen his enemies, multiply his own vulnerabilities, and nearly bankrupt his employers. But despite these professional failures he has discovered the metropolis to be extremely suited to his moral, cultural, and philosophical interests – and to his infinite ambition. It's almost three decades since his first attempts at Philadelphia to nurture the local citizenry out of ignorance, superstition, low morals. In England he has discovered a country where, to his delight, there are 'in every neighbourhood more sensible, virtuous and elegant minds than we can collect in ranging a hundred leagues of our vast forests'. When he sets sail, half-reluctantly, it is with the promise to cross over again as soon as he can … and if he can convince his wife to make the dangerous voyage … to settle in London forever.

I interpret this moment as a turning point for Franklin, a final attempt against increasing personal and political friction to realise his elusive dream of uniting in one place his family, his career, and the activities that lent meaning to his life. The three chapters bound here comprise the first half of that story.

At Philadelphia he would meet with a horrorshow: deadly fever, failed harvests, reports of vicious murders on the western frontier, a terrorist insurgency amassing on the outskirts of Philadelphia, the ruthless partisanship of Pennsylvania politics. The next two years – 1762 to 1764 – contained an almost brutal panorama of colonial American life. The contrast to the stability and intelligent bustle of London was as stark as it was dispiriting, and Franklin's letters reveal how near the edge of the world he felt himself to be during this time. How would Poor Richard fare, haunted by a sense of futility and the inescapable reality of isolation?

Here I have pursued Franklin in the midst of the culture and intrigue of his Georgian London, through the storms and progress of his colonial Philadelphia. It

seems as though he understood these cities to be not just landscapes of sights and sounds and smells, some more wonderful and magnificent than others – not just sets, but actors, too. It was the talking, thinking element that could finally evoke for him two ways of being, scenes and stages and indeed whole theatres upon which one's interests and insecurities might be shaped and his ambition played out.

And as such, two places could evoke for Franklin two different dimensions of himself, a distinction so profound that in a moment rich with finality he even named them: *Reason* (America), and *Inclination* (London). This Franklin, unable to quite reconcile these twin spirits, is not the man whom I have encountered in prior portraits. He is more agitated, more conflicted, hypochondriac, and sometimes almost paranoid. He is a great reader, but sometimes not a careful one. He is given to escape into endless experiments with an ever-larger scientific apparatus. He is a frugal tinkerer, a playful refiner, a conjurer of agreeable little shocks. He is susceptible to fits of intensity and melancholy, to spells of vindictiveness, and to sustained, probably displaced antagonism towards the authority of the Church.

He could never quite accommodate that far-flung American stage. And after five years in London, he was even less able to readjust to what became for him a set of confinements – intellectual, material, spiritual, and social.

II

So I have come to believe that the pivot of Franklin's life, the essential tension, is expressed in the continual self-enhancement that led him back into London society. Partly because it was also expressed in the two versions of his memoirs that tension has come to frame, under different guises, Dr Franklin's afterlife. To erase it, or resolve it, as many biographers have attempted to do, and therefore to claim Franklin for one side of the water or the other, is no way to recover his experience. Biographers must consider carefully the nature of a record so charged with national identity as Franklin's in its preservation, presentation, and editorial interpretation. The Prologue, in tracing early Franklin life-writing and the publication of his memoirs, exposes and explores some of these problems.

I wrote the Prologue – 'The Life of the Life of Dr Franklin' – not so much as an introduction to the biographical chapters but rather as a companion or parallel commentary to them. Its creative footing owes a good deal to such modern/historical split narratives as those by Dava Sobel (*Longitude*) and Josephine Tey (*The Daughter of Time*), and also to some of the ideas of self and memory explored in the stories of Jorge

Luis Borges. The setting is a time in the not very distant future, when the United States, as a nation, is become so removed from the pretended innocence of its original ideals that the mythologies surrounding its foundation and its so-called Founding Fathers are no longer the darlings of biographers but rather curiosities for the amusement of antiquarians. Such are the protagonists, two men neither young nor old corresponding across the Atlantic, each possessed of the right amount of time and eccentricity for making enquiries of a bygone age. Indeed, the two voices, though opposed in some ways (Cladentweed the donnish foil to the footstepper's stumbling independence), both appear to call out to the past – or even *from* it.

The reader whom the Prologue will benefit most will be familiar with Franklin's autobiography and the correspondence he inserted into it. Dr Farrand's introduction to the *Parallel Text* edition, cited early on in the footnotes, and also Henry Stevens's history of the lost holograph of the autobiography are especially helpful in tracing its journey into and out of obscurity. Both pieces of scholarship provide a remedial dose for the misconception of the historical record as a set of involuntary footprints, a lucky trail left by the human passage through a natural forest of events. A third source, informative (with reservations) and rewarding in its own way, is the account by John Bigelow – the U. S. minister to France under Lincoln – of locating and editing the lost holograph in the years just following the American civil war.

It was when reading Bigelow's memoirs that I wondered how he had come to the conclusion that the draft he possessed was *more authentic* than the text published by Temple Franklin in 1817 – in short, that the differences he found between holograph and printed edition were to be put down to Temple himself, and not to a later, lost draft made by Franklin. Two copies of the holograph are known (and were then known) to have been made. And Franklin's letters confirm that the copies were made under his personal instruction. (These letters were also published well before 1866, in numerous editions.) If the changes attributed to Temple were found to be present in the copies, it would almost certainly indicate that Franklin was aware of them, that Bigelow's 'Bohemian' 'mutilations' were nothing more offensive than Franklin's own corrections: his turns of phrase become less colloquial and his grammar more syntactic in the twenty years between first and second drafts.

But neither copy has been found. (Why not? Where are they? One was almost certainly destroyed at the print house. I tracked the other as far as rural Maine, but there the scent is lost.) Lacking one of these copies, it is impossible to know for certain just what Temple Franklin changed or did not change.

Nevertheless, my initial question was possible to answer: had John Bigelow ever considered that these second drafts of the manuscript made by Franklin, from which Temple made his edition, might have been different to the holograph? No, he did not. And yet the pieces of the puzzle which had entered public circulation were already adequate to have led him to entertain the possibility of it. Why, then, *couldn't* he see the evidence in front of him? Or why *wouldn't* he say so, if he did?

But perhaps Bigelow, after all, was merely continuing the long tradition among Franklin's nineteenth century editors of harbouring an ungodly suspicion towards prior editors of the Founder's papers, which could cross at times into bare hostility. On the extreme end of this, Franklin had become the embodiment of a new kind of order, and the fact of his public service in life meant that his papers, in death, should become public property. (Not to publish all was to *withhold* or *suppress*.) And what might they contain? Some exposé of how the powerful secretly worked against the interests of ordinary people; some irreproachable justification for the violence of the war of independence; or, just dirt to smear on the memories of celebrated Englishmen. By no editor, however, was any of this delivered, and in consequence there arose doubts of the material's *authenticity*.

While these early editions of Franklin attracted all sorts of criticism – inaccurate copyediting, poor selection, belated delivery, etc. – it was the charge of inauthenticity that turned out to be the critics' sharpest weapon. As I got to know all the inventive edges of that weapon I could detect a peculiar leaning or roughness on the surface of what then constituted Franklin's biographical tradition – scar tissue, where the weapon had left a mark. For what mattered to those early life-writers was not only the documentation itself but also the circumstances of its path to publication. The editorial tardiness; the perceived concealment; the inexplicable gaps; the eventual uncovering of new material – this contextual picture, even, had been made a kind of biographical foundation in a way I had not before considered. The record was anything but involuntary. It seemed rather purposeful, in fact, in its handling; and – maybe – such handling was itself capable of influencing the memory of Franklin's life? Of causing Bigelow to believe a manuscript to be something it probably was not?

The authorship of Temple Franklin's text is the central mystery of Franklin's autobiography. It is against that backdrop, more or less, that the Prologue's fictional correspondents examine the construction of Franklin's early afterlife – or, as one of them puts it, the 'creation, migration, collection, exegesis, evaluation, transcription, translation, and often transformation' of an important part of his biographical record.

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THE LIFE OF

The Life of Dr Franklin

(A Prologue)[1]

The following cantos are extracts from a number of letters between the author and an American friend that were written at a time when it was still current in the circles we ran with to describe the United States as an 'improvisation' (a word now employed by the same people to signal a change of subject). Our friendship began less than a decade before and lasted for a few years afterwards.

In perusing my own side of the correspondence (put again into my hands), I at once perceived a complete line of inquiry or scholarship, by whose convolutions we had attempted to trace the early tradition of what might be called 'life-writing' on the subject of the eighteenth-century printer, scientist, diplomat, and statesman – Dr Benjamin Franklin. It was towards the bottom of the stack, perhaps seventeen letters deep, that I discovered how quickly we had gained on Dr Max Farrand, late director of the Huntington Library near Pasadena, who trod the same ground before us more than half a century earlier. And yet Dr Farrand had found our mutual course so 'bewildering' that it took straying from it for merely a few weeks to fix him afterwards for 'hours and sometimes days' in 'tracing the pattern out again among the tangled threads'. These interruptions, he confessed, occurred frequently.*

The arrangement here by no means constitutes a bibliography. Neither of us possessed the right degree of entrenchment for such a wholesale study; by 'us' I mean the correspondents. In truth, I don't think either of us would have the necessary faith for one. I mean faith in the authenticity of such determination, of its yields. The tenor of our letters was rather more immediate; almost reflexive in the sense of being impressionistic. My correspondent wondered, for example, from a point early on in our conversation, whether my calendar of the composition of Dr Franklin's memoirs, whereby I had fixed the production of each day's

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* *Benjamin Franklin's Memoirs: Parallel Text Edition*, ed. by Max Farrand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949).

sitting, had not revealed the source of a subtle jest – so subtle, honestly, as might seem rather jestless without such a guide – to be one of the gospel passages ordinarily preached in accordance with the Anglican lectionary (1662 edition) on a particular Sunday in August.*[2]

At another point, buoyed up I guess by my countenancing too freely such relish for the esoteric, Mr Oliver Cladentweed (as he calls himself here) determined that I should agree to test his hypothesis that the first instances of 'written likeness' (his term) following Franklin's death in 1790 had shaped the entire subsequent biographical tradition in profound ways. For Chr–st's sake.

Until some time later I had no idea just what he thought he was getting at. Yet incidentally, the puzzle of these allegedly formative writings proved a meaningful one, a kind of ruin in the crusty temple of Americana to which we would afterwards return whenever one of us had unearthed some tessera to replace there. I can appreciate now, with the clarity that distance gives, the ray of sunlight this early fascination opened onto the sunken wreck I had already begun to excavate. But I responded to my friend's suggestion, I will confess, from an aggressive posture. Granularity was my weapon. By 'written likeness' he must necessarily mean the prefaces to the several editions of Dr Franklin's works and correspondence, for during the period in question (roughly the winter of 1791 until the publication of Parton's pioneering Life in 1864) no biographies of our modern type were brought forth.† Late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century compositors instead supplied editorial commentary on Franklin's memoirs (or such piece of them as was in circulation), sometimes expanding the text beyond its fragmentary state with an arrangement of Franklin's own letters.[3] *There was neither shame in it nor any sense of truancy on the part of these editors. (Cladentweed would wish me to add 'or of fecklessness', but I shan't.) It was always Dr Franklin's own voice, Dr Franklin's own perspective on himself and on his contemporaries, and it was precisely this that satisfied the*

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* I had arrived at such conclusions following a thorough examination of the holograph manuscript, which is in the possession of the Huntington Library, Oxford Road, San Marino, California. Cladentweed had fixed upon Dr Franklin's line, 'I had made many a meal on bread' as though it were an answer to Matthew 4.4.

† There are two exceptions, or what I will call partial exceptions, in Dr Stuber's continuation of Franklin's memoirs, and Dr Sparks's. Professor Laboulaye's judgment was that while the former 'contained excellent things' it was 'very incomplete'. He thought more of the latter for having sort of adapted Franklin's tone – 'but I thought something better could be done'. It seems as though Sparks's effort to reproduce Franklin had merely reminded Laboulaye that, after all: 'What we like above all in Franklin is himself; it is him we want to hear.' See *Mémoires de Benjamin Franklin, écrits par lui-même*, trans. by Édouard Laboulaye (Paris: Hachette, 1866), pp. 6–7.

readership of the times. For actual, critical or interpretive analysis one had to turn to the notes of these compositors.

But there one is disappointed. For hadn't my friend noticed? The commentaries served very little direct biographical purpose but endeavoured rather to reinforce a) the reader's appreciation of the lengths to which present company – mostly Englishmen, Frenchmen, and American émigrés – had gone in order to secure the original material; b) in at least two cases, to press the degree to which continued solicitation of prior editions would be considered an act of remarkable charity; and finally, in even the most improbable of places, c) to showcase the editor's more or less philosophical endurance of setback and brazen obstruction.

*To illustrate this more particularly I found it advantageous to cite, with excerpts copied out by hand, not just the English editions of 1793 (Robinson), 1806 (Johnson), 1817 (Franklin), 1840 (Sparks), and 1868 (Bigelow), but also the French of 1791 (Buisson), 1817 (Malo), and 1866 (Laboulaye).**

Such is how I had left it the evening of 1 August ——, before departing quite at dawn upon the seat of my 'Modestine' for a five-week cycling tour beyond the reach of modern channels. I, unlike the Doctor, would not be receiving any letters addressed to the major post offices en route.† All the exertion, as I explained to Cladentweed afterwards, was to amount to something of a lockstep effort to meet a phantom on the road of the jaunt the Doctor had made in 1771, some months after composing his celebrated memoirs.‡ My way turned out to be an exacting one, the diluvial rains of that year having washed out every bridge between Portpatrick and the mill-inn three miles beyond Douglas. I don't hesitate to confess my perseverance, but when at last I lurched out of the cycle carriage at the Euston terminus I began to suspect that I was further from Dr Franklin than when I had started. By the time I made it across London I had grown somewhat dispirited, feeling as though I had been coughed up by a gap or pit in the landscape of the past, and not having recognised soon enough the darkness of my surroundings. For several days afterwards I experienced strange dreams that I did not know how to explain. I perceived a vast area of pastureland on the move, literally

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* The omission of the Renouard of 1828 from this posse was not deliberate. Even now I think of it as a quiet edition; for its astonishing significance went completely unnoticed even by the keenest American and British scholars for almost forty years.

† The prerogative, along with the franking of all his mail, that Dr Franklin enjoyed as Postmaster-General of the North American colonies and briefly of the United States.

‡ I am most grateful to Mr James Bennett Nolan of Reading, Pa., whose unflinching dedication to obscure facts produced (out of the 'dearth of fundamental data') my initial roadmap – now long out of print, *Franklin in Scotland and Ireland* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1938).

travelling as though turned entirely to mud, and dragging in its midst pieces of stone walls and thatch rooftops, and broken up crusts of dried earth or the odd half-sunken tree: an artist's panorama still in its frame undergoing slow but inextricable disfigurement. Perhaps it was through this sort of Biblical weather, the kind that leaves behind no human trace, that the Doctor had passed in 1771 on his way from Dublin to David Hume's house at Edinburgh.

Somehow I felt it was I who was the worse for it.

All the while I had been on the road I was serialising my illusory gains for Cladentweed in a sea-widow's œuvre of overlong diary-letters, none of which I had actually sent. Prior to leaving the metropolis I wrapped the entire sheaf in clean white paper and posted it by the caretaker of the Sloane Gardens Club, not to be faced with it again, and adding a note for Cladentweed never to mention the pages this side of Zion. They were not included in the packet he returned to me.

To his halloo I was mechanical. In truth, had I gone so far as to invent my half of the journey, as I might as well have done, I should only have postponed the inevitable lesson acquired sooner or later on such travels as a biographer makes for the sake of his craft. (There is only the collective record; and yet each text has a past, an etymology of creation, migration, collection, exegesis, evaluation, transcription, translation, and often transformation.) But that lesson, though glimpsed, was not yet taken to heart. Nor would it be for another two years.

No sooner had I returned, trailing a redolence of tobacco and cognac and cologne and sweaty Scottish tweed, and my friend conceded that my parry pre-departure was sound as cobble, did he issue the sort of sneaky reverse for which I so esteem and value him. In a stroke he returned us to the puzzle, temple, ruin. To put it succinctly, he wanted to know if I had ever considered whether the cynical public-spiritedness of Buisson had not informed the note of suspicion evident in Johnson, and whether W. T. Franklin's consequent evasiveness had not been more than enough to arm Malo, who in turn provided Sparks with the parameters of his analysis, and whether Laboulaye, in adopting Sparks's parameters but ignoring his misgivings, had not inspired – perhaps more than we can ever know – Bigelow's subsequent interpretation of the documents that had fallen so fortuitously – 'I do not like to say gratuitously' – into his hands.

I said I had not.

Fytte One

CLADENTWEED, TO THE EDITOR:

'… yet a certain doubt visits me from time to time,
a kind of faithlessness. It is partly self-doubt; and it is, I think
now, partly a new defection growing in me and
deranging that old notion of truth.

'Perhaps this is felt more strongly because of the
particular subject. Perhaps it reflects the designs which are
inherent to the prevailing mythography of
the man, and to the record.

'I've been feeling that this doubt should not be ignored,
that it is an important and even inescapable
part of the Autobiography.'

I

Norwich, Saint Benedicts St, 26 October, ——.

Dear sir,

[…]

Isn't there something charming about the authenticity one tends to feel in these places, as much you might suppose for the rows of rubbed out spines as for – something beyond the mind's capacity for judgment? Are we not perhaps so jaded by finding everywhere what is perfectly legible to be so perfectly meaningless that we perceive our hopes to lie in the other direction? In fact I met lately with a very old quarto book on a stall of one such shop, one of these contraband libraries of the stripe that aromatises novels and the lives of poets and *this* place, it seems. My hand went to it and then I held it, reading I knew not for a minute what. As you say, I was drawn in by the very ingloriousness of a thing, by its authentic and abject *condition*.

The title pages were wanting, as well as any kind of preface and foreword, but its sour covers contained the memoirs of Thomas Jefferson. When I brought it home I became aware of a scrap of notepaper that a browser of some yesteryear had slipped between two pages. In the shop I had not noticed it but here it was, nearly transparent from age, and producing a tacky little snort as it came loose. On it, the lines,

> 'I should have confined myself to asking your Excellency's Commands, and not have troubled you with these Particulars but that it has been suggested here that I leave this Country through disgust and disappointment, that I do not propose to return –'

caught my attention so that I carried on reading by the door of the genkan. There follows, from the *n* of *return*, a broad zigzagging stroke through half the page, which I took to mean nothing worth copying occurs. The voice picks up again here:

> ' – my Reasons for going to Europe are none other than those I have mentioned; and that however I have not had the good Fortune to partake of any of the Favors or Rewards of Government, I have no less Love for the Country, Admiration of its Laws, &c.'

I could not immediately identify the source of these lines. The paper contained no other note, no citation. It was unheaded and raw. I sighed a long sigh for scholarship and went on with my life, until such time as I could make a convenient investigation. Now after your last, the author's identity seemed to hold some weight for us, and I disclose it with the caveat that there is no record of any nineteenth-century editor having beheld these lines either in manuscript or in print.

Following what Franklin considered the betrayal of his only living son, he transferred almost all of his material assets into the name of his grandson. The lines I have copied for you appear in their original over two pages of a letter from said grandson, William Temple Franklin, to George Washington, then the president of the United States. It is dated not long after the elder Franklin's death. My stowaway turns out to be a pretty accurate transcription, and a sympathetic one. (Not found, however, in the G. W. – Dorothy Twohig, 1987 – at the Institute, nor in the digital edition.* I had to write the Library of Congress for an image of the ms.) Where the copyist wrote '&c' Temple (who was then about 30) shrank into obsequious pledges of allegiance, still hopeful of favours or rewards of government.† These words ring so hollow that one cannot speak

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* George Washington, *Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series*, 1, ed. by Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987). This entire edition has been made available online, accessible free of charge at *Founders Online*, <HTTP://FOUNDERS.ARCHIVES.GOV>, part of the National Archives.

† Cladentweed correctly recognised the coded bit of intent slipped in between parentheses. According to the Constitution of the United States, thirty years is senatorial age, of which fact Temple saw fit to remind 'his Excellency' earlier that year in soliciting of him the French embassy – or indeed any embassy. See W. T. Franklin to George Washington, 9 January 1790, in Twohig.

them without feeling himself a liar. I shall not offend a fellow countryman by dwelling on them.

Of final interest, before you and I return this curio to its resting place, or I do, is the assurance Temple gave, earlier than the place where my scrap begins, that he expected to be detained abroad not longer than a year. But Dr Franklin's famous confession – that of all the virtues by whose habitual use he sought to perfect his character, Order was ever beyond him – turned out to be so true that the project of arranging his papers for publication detained the descendant for not less than 27 years! Let me put this another way. Temple set off to publish at the age of 29; he was 55 when he finally did so. I hardly believes it myself.

As it was, he never returned to America, but for the rest of his life maintained homes in London and Paris. During my stopover there last summer, I visited the stone marking his tomb in Père Lachaise.

Yours, etc.

[P. S.] The Vosges, I want to add, were delightful – Old Europe, as you will be pressed to find anymore except in such untrodden corners. I brought along the convertible trousers you shipped, by whose doubleness I was in the valleys as suitably clad as at altitude.

2

Norwich, Saint Benedicts St, 5 November, ——.

C——,

You talk of stones as though you disapprove of my unturning them with little system tying one to the next apart from mere adjacency – without direction – or to use your word, without chronology. In your next perhaps tell me if you can feel *chronology* as a guiding force in your life. Tell me if your history, the less it be known to me, decreases in proportion the intimacy of our friendship, so that I should not judge of your photograph captured at any given moment up to now and say, either, 'That is very like him,' or, 'That is not very like him.' And that I should be at all inaccurate in it, without knowing (as I do not) the nature of every schoolyard dispute or the circumstances of every family holiday.

I should certainly be another sort of judge for having voyeurised your love-letters and sniffed at your porringer. But so much data provide no more than impedimenta – fringy bric-a-brac – from which promoters and propagandists will remake you.

I say: here is one of them now, invading a stroll taken through the quieter end of town a year or two after our civil war. Supposing, if I might assume your arm in mine (as was then customary), that we were to witness the door of some fashionable address across the way fling open, and from the clotted interior a figure slip into a waiting cab – time: about 2 p.m. on a weekday mid-winter, dress: shady overcoat, tall hat, the look of one who has at that moment a balance with Providence so far in his favour that he can think only of losing it. I guess you could be forgiven for putting a tail on him.

That anyway is what I have done.[4]

How innocently must we divert ourselves while the Philosophical Society fills my request for the papers of Temple Franklin. They are backlogged – short-staffed, as usual. It's as though I've posted by the Pennsylvania Packet a request for the material I wish to read six months or a year hence. But now what's a scholar to do, in the meantime, to stave off the closing of his American mind? What would Allan Bloom do? Well I've decided to garnish the memoirs of a great man with those of the ones who edited him, and Zeus may keep my mind ajar.

So was I engaged, by the graciousness of Osborne (of Gray's Inn) who furnished me five volumes of Mr Bigelow's 'Retrospections' as he calls them, in exchange for one of Bloom's, with a kind of queer look of conspiracy.* In any case, so was I engaged when there swam out of it, being Bigelow's life, the curious events I have set about relating. The month as I said was January, the year 1867, the neighbourhood was Bayswater, the time about two o'clock when there upon this little street that runs between a park and a fine block of townhouse, emerges … a figure. Let us suppose this figure, quite without any evidence excepting the facts I have in front of me, to be that of a man who had spent the year just prior in a luxurious state of transience, dividing his life between the sandy villas of Normandy and the slopes of the Bavarian Alps. I can go further: suppose him to be a man who too soon will find himself confined temporally and spatially to the return voyage of an American steamer, and at last a man who (it could seem) would have done well before now to swap the yoke of diplomatic service for a provincial retirement somewhere *[…]* beyond the reach of his government.

I must tell you that none of this thriftless waltzing was quite his style. He was unaccustomed to it as one is unaccustomed to wearing velvet: and though it calmed

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* *The Closing of the American Mind* (Simon & Schuster, 1987).

him, it also agitated him. Could that explain the tension, the flinging all about in the manner of a startled gibbon? But no, I must set you straight there, no it does not. Something else had bristled this fellow's sidewhiskers – something to do with fame and glory, to which the document in his overcoat pocket could be taken as a sure precursor. For therein was a line not so unlike the following:

'The very best I could do at the R. & Express office was to obtain the most positive assurances that a special messenger should take the box to Cleveland Square before noon on Monday.'

To the pedestrian eye this letter-bearer's manner was not suggestive of one who presently believed any such thing. Well, the matter will be halfway clinched when I tell you that in topping off his prodigal holiday Mr Bigelow – for it was he – had transferred into his estate a truly priceless item (viz. 'the box') for which he had paid a sum he found embarassing to disclose. And it will be all the way clinched when I tell you that scheduled hour of arrival had come and gone and at Cleveland Square no parcel appeared.

It is at such times, when a man feels his place within the annals of history lurking undelivered in some post office sack, that he decides the line of providential credit has worn out. The day, unseized, would cheat him of his claim. The spot for such seizure, he determined, was the Express office at Charing Cross where twice daily the continental post arrived from Dover. Now Charingwards went the hunter, defunct assurances searing into his breast.

I will close, as I perceive the post trolley in the lane.

But let us imagine, apropos to my next, that by the tick-tock of his cab horse on the cobble was Mr Bigelow carried back to the moment when he and the object of his present anxiety had aligned courses, for to do so will change nothing insofar as an event recorded once is incorruptible. This moment occurred half a year earlier, on a summer evening in 1866, when there was assembled at his rooms in Paris a modest junto of men of what are called letters; one of them, incidentally, a Monsieur Édouard de Laboulaye – or rather *Professeur* Laboulaye – whose acquaintance we have met before….

Adieu, etc.

3

London, Sloane Gardens Club, 13 January, ——.

My dear C——,

'Riffling' is not an activity in which I engage, but you are right: Temple's letter is, as you say, right there in the footnote to Washington's reply of 25 October. (There is something to be said, however, for my possession of the descendant's hand, which Twohig neglects to say is grotesque. The copying work I saw among Dr Franklin's papers at the Reading Rooms is far better – to which he nevertheless added apologetic notes fairly vilifying the clerks. I have no examples to hand of the work Temple did as secretary to the revolutionary delegation at Paris but it would astonish me if he, in such fashion, were retained beyond a fortnight, instead of which he served throughout the war's entirety. The scrawl of his personal correspondence must be *an affectation*. Some habit contracted among the Parisians?)*

I wonder why the letter was not printed under its date, like two others from W. T. Franklin of that year – and hereby submit that scandal to your imagination.

To return: a summer evening, 1866, at the Légation américaine, 15 rue du Centre.† We must begin with the account itself in volume IV of *Retrospections*. 'In the course of the entertaiment (writes Mr Bigelow) I asked my guests, who as far as I can remember were all French gentlemen of letters, if they had ever heard, or if they had any reason to suspect, that the *original manuscript* of Franklin's autobiography was in France.'

One of the guests, as I said, was Professor Laboulaye. I have cut right to the chase, again, but we might pick up instead several minutes earlier, for it was Laboulaye and not Bigelow who raised the topic of Franklin. The professor was the type – with all the dark compactness of a plum – whom a black frock coat, the waist cut high and narrow, which must be kept buttoned to the throat, could make appear taller than he was.

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* When he was sent to France in 1776, the elder Franklin brought along both his grandsons, Temple Franklin, aged about 14, and Benjamin Bache, about 7 – I suppose to remove them from the dangers of war. He enrolled Benjamin in school at Passy and employed Temple as his secretary. In this way the male descendants of Franklin were raised at the centre of the aristocratic circles of Paris, so much so that at the time of his return to Philadelphia the young Bache's French was better than his English. Long after I posted this letter I came upon a monograph confirming my suspicion that one of the aristocratic attitudes adopted by French courtiers in the later part of the century was an inability to write a legible hand. For a witness to Temple's 'perfect Knowledge of the Manners and the Ton of Society', see Washington Papers, ed. by Twohig, VI, pp. 549–551, n. 2.

† Now rue Lamennais.

'Why didn't Benjamin Franklin push his memoirs further?' He was enumerating the points raised in his latest monograph.

It may be assumed by what little record there is of the event that he spoke to an audience not uninterested in his exploration of the topic. On this question in particular, which was not as innocent as it seems, the popular thought could be divided into two schools. The first concluded that Franklin's self-penned confessions were cut short by the author's own death. This theory – hapless, prosaic, and likely – was nevertheless found by many in the field to lack a certain degree of excitement. The second concluded that the American founder's autobiography from 1757 onwards, which was to say the part of it most relevant to the events for which he was remembered, had been suppressed by his grandson, William Temple Franklin, to as much financial gain as immortal shame. It was this second line of thought, published and repeated in several editions of the old revolutionary's works, which continued to provoke the public imagination.

For Laboulaye neither theory bore inspection, because neither seemed to offer anything very academic to him about his subject. His subject, which was a modern one, was the existence within Franklin of two narratives. Wily, untraceable, and chameleonic, there was the public avatar. At final incarnation it wore the untamed philosopher's hair, the papakha-like cap after Rousseau, the grey woollen suit that was easily (deliberately?) mistakeable for a Quaker's, and produced an absence in portraiture of any of the knick-knacks of ambition. Not a book, not a bust, not the hint of the professional metaphors typical of his earlier portraits intruded upon these late ones. They would constitute the lasting likeness.

> *The following is interlineated over the whole of the next paragraph: 'Have a look at the Duplessis portrait plus copies, and also the Nini medallion. You will recognise both instantly as though you had seen them a thousand times over, certainly as often as you have seen a hundred dollar note, or Franklin's statue at Philadelphia, or, well, him. I was once shown a child's book in which the young Ben is made impossibly identical to this old French likeness only excepting brown hair for grey. The hunnert, however, is the master stroke. It is perhaps germane that both Duplessis and Nini were commissioned by the same French aristocrat who made his mansion at Passy – not to be confused with his chateau on the Loire – the de facto American embassy for the eight years Franklin and his entourage were living in it.'*

It was that French Franklin that won out in America, even over the American Franklin (a throwback to the earlier style) of Peale's brush.

You will locate the image without effort. It is the portrait of an unpowdered, slouching, common man, his hair a shapeless wisp, his face the texture of rags, whom everybody knew was the plenipotentiary; whereby he embodied the paradox of high admiration and low preconception for which the French had it seems a ready and peculiar weakness.* But it was also that French Franklin, captured fabulously at his European home, that so outshined the genuine article that nobody quite knew how to solve the resultant enigma of his biography. The professor, as the editor of yet another collection of the great man's works, wondered how he might bridge the distance between one and the other Franklin.

(You will be thinking that it does not take so very long to arrive at Charing Cross from Bayswater, even amidst the postprandial rush, that I have already left Mr Bigelow stranded for some time. It is true. But you will forgive it, I know, and grant me here a short spell beneath the narrator's cap.)

At table the Plum sat very still, collected – *slightly clerical*, thought his host. He appeared differently to men of the day, neither bush nor even bramble on cheek, for he had that kind of ageless skin which will not foliate. Of the personal spice that brought Tocqueville lasting fame M. Laboulaye possessed precisely none, but he could claim rather a larger knowledge of their common subject. His third volume of American political history was set to print later that year and would soon become the standard text. Indeed, if there existed a man in France who could contradict him on the subject

* 'Do not ask him anything sublime; don't look to him for these dashes which lift you above the momentary world, Franklin never leaves the ground; it isn't invention but good sense with the supreme power. Don't look to him as a poet, nor as an orator, but a master of the art of life, a man to whom the world belongs. However, don't believe that you deal with a vulgar and partial wisdom; this mocking gentleman, who laughs at all things, lacks not a generous heart, a patriot loyal until death, one of the most sincere friends of humanity. His laugh is not Voltaire's; it has in it nothing corrosive or bitter; it is the benevolent smile of an old man whom life taught indulgence.' Laboulaye, p. 9. The English translation, such as it may be, is my own.

of, at least, the idea of America – not the actual experience of it – this person was unknown.*

His speaking voice was as mannered and gentle as a minuet, as though he allowed to wash clean over him the turbulence of his country at almost any given minute of the nineteenth century. His was not the detachment of the oblivious, however. It was rather one anachronistically aligned (owing perhaps to practice) with a type of man then extinct in France, or one reticent, at any rate. He earnestly wished for the nation to return to the ways of an earlier time. He believed there was brilliance possessed in the inhabitants of the past – names as familiar to him as those of one's neighbours – and such brilliance had become a kind of shelter from the present. But I think you will not require further examination on that score.

To call the professor a mere translator of the memoirs would be to undersell the edition as well as the man. For he was engaged too intimately with the larger ideas stirred by them, and also, on that night, allowed himself to be taken in by the mystery of their sudden stoppage. He had already raised the matter in the book's long preface and it was apparently simple. One could almost instantly suppose a handful of reasonable theories, none very consequential. The limiting factor to all of them was that nobody knew just what the entire manuscript contained or did not contain. Nobody knew whether political information had been suppressed, or parts altered, to protect senior actors in the English government. Mr Bigelow would have liked to have known. Professor Laboulaye, owing to the immediate impossibility of knowing, seems merely to have moved on.†

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* Tocqueville's contribution to the world is broadly agreed to have been his book *On Democracy in America*, published in 1835 (the first volume) and 1840 (the second). Édouard Rene de Laboulaye (1811–1883) had already to his name two full-length treatments of the Franco-American relationship, one of American slavery, two translations of the Unitarian preacher William Ellery Channing, a popular novel entitled *Paris en Amerique*, and over ten more books on various other subjects. His *Histoire des États-Unis d'Amérique*, 3 vols, (1854) exhausted six editions in fifteen years.

† I have since discovered only one instance of anyone expressly soliciting such memoirs of Dr Franklin as might advantage a muckraker. William Vaughan, whose family had enemies in the British ministry, wrote to Franklin on 27 February 1789 that he was 'happy to find you are so much recovered as to be able to continue the history of your own life; independent of the political information to be gain'd, it gives me some pleasure to learn that you propose to add those precepts which should influence common industry…'.

'What we like above all in Franklin is himself,' Laboulaye would say.[5] For the memoirs were, to him, the work of an American genius. We can imagine that the atmosphere of that evening was so rich that Laboulaye might seek in one breath to invest Franklin with the humbleness of an American Socrates, and to confirm in the next a rumour that the attentions he directed at Helvétius's widow had culminated in a proposal of marriage.

Were such flirtations, he wondered suddenly, an expression of genuine fascination, or of strictly professional charm? Mr Bigelow was put genuinely out of countenance by the professor's question but provided the answer of a diplomat, intelligent but indirect. Nowhere did he record whether his guest had attempted to force from him the awkward admission that had the hostess of the most fashionable salon in Paris accepted the offer, Dr Franklin would have stayed for the rest of his life. He would be buried there in a French cemetery like his grandson. I sensed when making the enclosed translation of his preface that Édouard Laboulaye regretted it a great deal.

'From 1776 to 1785, Franklin was ours,' is what you will find written there, and which was sent as soon as it was bound to the address of John Bigelow. And there was this: 'It was at Passy that he spent the sweetest part of his last years.' Over the Christmas holiday I discovered in Franklin's correspondence evidence to support such a conclusion, but to imagine the contours of *that discussion* amidst a handful of French literati is perhaps an awkward corner too many for our lone expatriate.

In fact, I'm not certain the letters to which I refer had even been printed at that time.*

It is also in this preface of Laboulaye's that you will find the strict factual basis for what had to be something of an unorthodox takeaway on the part of Mr Bigelow. This he now put to his guests, presenting each of his pieces of evidence in the manner of a lawyer while maintaining throughout the raptor's eye of a collector. The truth was that any intention the American might then have had to act upon his conclusions was mere fancy without the benefit of a collaboration with the local element.

It was a few years back, he said, during a visit he made to London that he met the acquaintance of a book dealer called Stevens, of Vermont House in Camden Town. This Mr Stevens was indeed a Vermonter, though his situation in Camden in no way merited the title he had given it, nor any title whatever. Mr Stevens's services, such as

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* It has struck me on reading over this that such correspondence as I had then in mind, in which particular regrets are given some degree of expression, remain untranslated, unedited … and, in short, have never been published at all![6]

they were, would interest a specific class of gentleman, whose means had so far outstripped the limitations of his natural pedigree that he required as a footnote to his legitimacy the actual library of books he was properly supposed to want to own (with a particular demand for family Bibles, it seems).* At London there was a harvest of such men and Stevens made hay, though not without earning the low opinion of some who touched on his sphere.[7]

One might infer from Mr Bigelow's subsequent enumeration of evidence much less compelling on the face of it that Mr Stevens was not to be entirely trusted. Perhaps he was not, and I refer you to the dim sketch of him in Hawthorne's *English Notebooks*. However, describing his odd vocation in prosaic terms, John Bigelow said he himself had 'received the impression' that while once on business across the Channel Stevens had come upon a private collection that contained the original manuscript of Franklin's memoirs. What was more: the manuscript was being offered for sale, but Stevens thought the price too high and would not buy it. For Mr Bigelow it was that reluctance, perhaps, in the proximity of such treasure that damaged the man's credibility.

The location, at least, could be corroborated by another account. The last dependable record of the manuscript's whereabouts was to be found in a journal kept by the Whig reformer Sir Samuel Romilly, dated 1802 and published many years later. He had, he wrote, thumbed through Franklin's manuscript in a house at Amiens.

The remaining three points are bare guesses set against facts, but they betray something of interest to me about the nature of historical record; something I shall skip for now, only to say that the word 'point' dignifies such circular thinking as Bigelow is about to exhibit. And insofar as the truth may still be served by them, we must consider his last three thoughts unequal to the first two. That the manuscript had gone out of the U. S. in the possession of Temple Franklin was the safest of presumptions – for no item of such value to the nation could be kept hidden anywhere within it all those years. Equally, 'any literary treasure of that nature' could not have stirred from the place Temple had lodged it without its existence becoming known and advertised. Or so Bigelow could conclude, having not heard any advertisement of its movement or discovery.

The factual basis for everything Mr Bigelow said from Romilly onward, which is to say everything except the impression received from Mr Stevens, is to be found in the

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* Cladentweed had written in the margin: 'Here it is said most do congregate historical materials and historic doubts.' This reference to Walpole's treatment of *Richard III* prefigured, I saw afterwards, my friend's later conclusions.

opening pages of Laboulaye's Memoirs of Franklin. Now I suppose that after hearing so much of his own work précised back to him the professor felt inclined to take the floor. He did, but only so far as to promise to relay Bigelow's 'impression' to a friend at Amiens, to make the same enquiry of his colleagues at the Institute of France, and – perhaps in this way ensuring the subject was dropped – to draw from his well of anecdotes the Doctor's application for the widow of Helvétius. The American, as I have said already, put him right.

I cannot possibly say more today except that many months went by without any report from Professor Laboulaye, so that when John Bigelow called in at his address in taking leave of Paris the following January, he had had to raise the matter in a most clumsy and forced way. It is as though this academic little man, whom we now credit for delivering to us our Statue of Liberty, knew not the importance to our national mythology of such relics, or the stories attached to them.

Imagine: 'His answer gave me the impression that he had not given the subject much thought.' You may have little enough to say for Mr Bigelow, but you mustn't deny this: he was very apt to being impressed upon. And I suppose we must credit him with the addition of Franklin's own plighted troth to the sacrifices he was prepared to make for the common weal.

Yours, etc.

[P. S.] Having set this aside for several weeks intending to make a long postscript, I fear it will be several more before I am able to do so. I shall therefore send this, and write another. B.

It was some few days further before I could send the letter and in the meantime I appended to it Laboulaye's final valediction, which found John Bigelow at London by the Royal Mail. He was within a week of embarking for America. The text is below.

12 Janvier, 1867, 34 rue Taitbout.

CHER MONSIEUR BIGELOW :

Eureka! J'ai trouvé, grâce à un ami, le manuscrit de Franklin et son possesseur.

M. de Sénarmont, héritier de la famille Le Veillard, et qui demeure à Paris, rue de Varennes, No. 98, nous écrit qu'il possède :

1. Le MS. originel autographe complet *(?)* des mémoires de Franklin.
2. Une collection considérable de lettres de Franklin, formant un ensemble de correspondence.
3. Un portrait en pastel de Franklin, donné par lui à M. Le Veillard.

Et il demande en tout la somme de vingt cinq mille francs. Vous voici sur la voie. C'est à vous maintenant à faire ce qui vous conviendra. Adieu recevez encoure tous mes vœux pour votre bonheur en ce monde et dans *l'autre* (je parle du Nouveau Monde). Votre bien dévoué.

ED. LABOULAYE.[8]

Fytte Two

CLADENTWEED, TO THE EDITOR:

'But in Franklin's case, perhaps the idea, handed down out of his living reputation or not, remains intact because it serves some purpose for us, fits some expectation of our collective identity.'

4

London [Craven Street], 30 January, ——.

C——,

I write in haste from Franklin's former rooms, what will be a short note in answer to your fumbling blindly in the dark for your narrator's cap, which I hereby relinquish by gesture of the following.

We rejoin John Bigelow at Charing Cross. By now the evening must be cutting thinly through the grey, the January light playing with the coal smoke of the station. An idea of the scene he entered onto can be had from one Ashby-Sterry, a poet remarkable for his insight into the logistics of surface mail, though now largely forgotten. In a poem whose name you would not recognise he testifies to a 'busy scene' inhabited by the porters and luggage-sorters and the trucks and tourists. It was a 'vast and varied sight' lit metrically by a 'pale electric light'. Amongst the babbling, bawling, and by-yer-

leaving could be felt 'the hustle', to say nothing of the 'bustle', of tourists waiting anxiously to board the South-Eastern Rail's Continental Mail Express. Ashby-Sterry, who bore long queues with astonishing literacy, goes on for more than a page, but by now Mr Bigelow had already discovered that this was not 'the place for such curiosity as mine to be gratified'. For what the poet found no room to include was that the South-Eastern, to the charitable end of nipping such poetical abuse in the bud, had opened a second station in Cannon Street, at whose office the quester of this story soon found himself.

The Cannon Street clerk was somehow even less helpful than the Charing one – was in fact denying the existence of the box altogether.

It was this departure of factuality from ordinary life that brought forth a fresh turning point. John Bigelow wasn't a short man, not even an averagely high one. The description on his passport puts him at 6' ¾", a comfortable length above the stock parcel jockey at the offices of the Continental Express. Eyes as sharp as hoarfrost cut into the unfortunate clerk and insisted that the facts, as presented, were very much not as they should be. And yet either side and above and below that cold stare was a thin-nosed, hollow-cheeked, bird-like sort of face whose girlish mandible not even the jungliest chops could disguise – though by Jove the attempt was made.

A bold customer, perhaps, but not a maniac.

It was now gone three o'clock, and: 'Nothing,' said the clerk, 'for you.' With a terminal 'Sir', the facts were politely (yet firmly) established.

It seems that an act of violence was out of the question, being not the kind of response of which, even at a dash, Mr Bigelow was capable. He instead swung around, walked a little along the street, and made ready to question the good order of his own mind. To perfectly impress upon oneself the man about to question the good order of his own mind it is essential to determine first whether that man's predicament can be accounted for by someone else's stupidity. To that end Mr Bigelow withdrew his friend's letter of the day before, 'to read over (he later admitted) and see which end of you I should consign to Hades first'.

I shan't have the chance to send this today if I write more. Cap yet in hand, I will conclude in my next.

Yours, etc.

With his reply, in which he enclosed part of a letter Franklin wrote not long before his death, Cladentweed and I abandoned Bigelow's story to lose ourselves in the tangle of early nineteenth century translations, re-translations, and at least one treble translation of Franklin's lost manuscript. Our successes, such as they may be, are reproduced in part over the following pages. We did not regain the path for about a year.

The enclosure is below. It is a letter from Dr Franklin to Benjamin Vaughan, at London, dated 2 November 1789. For context, Cladentweed wrote that it is one of three written to Vaughan during the years 1788 and 1789, and was printed in Sparks (1840) but in no prior edition: 'and since Sparks consulted Vaughan, who must have been very old indeed, you'll spare me the prefabricated mysteries and conspiracy baiting of your last.'*

I shall add that he followed that up by noting that the letter is of too late a date to have yet appeared in the Yale volumes, and that from the digital edition of same (containing transcribed but unindexed material alongside that already published) it makes an 'unaccountable' absence.

Enclosure:

My dearest friend,

I received your kind letter of August 8th. I thank you much for your intimations of the virtues of hemlock, but I have tried so many things with so little effect, that I am quite discouraged, and have no longer any faith in remedies for the stone. The palliating system is what I am now fixed in. Opium gives me ease when I am attacked by pain, and by the use of it I still make life at least tolerable. Not being able, however, to bear sitting to write, *I now make use of the hand of one of my grandsons*, dictating to him from my bed.†

I wish, indeed, I had tried this method sooner; for so, I think, I might by this time have finished my Memoirs, in which I have made no

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* Benjamin Vaughan (1751–1835), British radical politician and son of Samuel Vaughan, the West India merchant and close friend to Dr Franklin. It was during the peace negotiations between Great Britain and the United States, in which the younger Vaughan was a commissioner, that he assumed the manner of a protégé and confidant.

† Cladentweed had put into the margin: Can this 'hand' be any other than Temple's?

progress for these six months past. I have now taken the resolution to endeavour completing them in this way of *dictating to an amanuensis*….

5

London, Sloane Gardens Club, 2 Feburary, ——.

C——,

[…]

Jefferson's previous owner may have been onto something.

You will not yet have received my last, and so I fancy I am at perfect liberty to interject into – what was it? 28 January 1867 – an earlier slice of that century. You will forgive the interruption, though I hope I have remedied it by the inscription made over the seal of the envelope you have just opened.

I finished Jeff's memoirs, which is to say my rotten edition (literal use of the word), yesterday morning after breakfast. Or I should say I thought I had, and for the record the final page of it ended on a full stop. I am not so muddling a biographer as you sometimes imply, and I'll not have you suggesting so again for this. Full stop, and mind: I have always been made to understand that the memoirs of Jefferson end abruptly. It was only after I had returned the book to Mr Osborne – who by the by initially refused it back on account of its condition, the diminutive miser – that I remembered the curious transcription of Temple's letter, and going in again for it discovered at the rear of the volume that had been my companion these past four months a *gap* along the inside spine that I had somehow or other overlooked. In short, a portion of Jeff's memories was missing, gone walkabout with the title pages and the goldleaf sometime before the remainder had entered my custody.

I asked Osborne if he had ever spotted this wayward signature lurking in the shadows of his shop, in case it dropped out when I had first handled it. He had not.

I asked if he had another edition of Jeff. He had.

He found it in the midst of a very tall stack that also possessed the published papers of Charles Willson Peale (but no longer does) running through what looks to be most of his years at Belfield. Of course, before swapping for the Peale the Incomplete Life of Jeff I freed from its slippery binding my prize of Temple's curious letter. *It has been suggested here that I leave this country through Disgust and Disappointment* – etcetera.

I later passed a silent matcha seeing Tom Jefferson off once and for all, properly this time.

Now as we approach what even freshened by sleep I conclude to be something of a mystery, I want you to touch your bookshelf for one or two volumes. First of these is the standard mid-nineteenth-century American edition of Franklin's works – editor: Jared Sparks, Unitarian minister and later president of Harvard College. Recall that Dr Sparks crossed an ocean in search of scattered papers, the bulk of which were then collected in no archive, but rather in private libraries of the same gobbling Romantic category as himself. He discovered nearly five hundred items that he was the first to print, but was not immune to the general memes of Frankliniana editorship at the time. The 'Dr', so that we might be precise with our forms of address, is a mark not of degree attainment but rather of *ordination* (aged 30) with as I said the Unitarians.

'There was a rumor,' you will find in *the Reverend* Sparks's preface, 'that the British ministry … offered the proprietor of the papers a large remuneration to suppress them, which he accepted.' (This venal brute *the proprietor*, whose name he is far too reverend to out in the same sentence, is two lines earlier identified as none other than our emigrant flagpole, Temple Franklin.) Sparks goes on to refer us to a popular earlier edition wherein the rumor 'was so broadly stated … as to amount to a positive charge; and it was reiterated with an assurance, that would seem at least to imply, that it was fully sustained by the public opinion'. The popular edition and 'reiteration with an assurance' to which Dr Sparks refers are the Johnson of the year 1806 and the comment on it in that summer's *Edinburgh Review*, respectively.

The rumour is worth fleshing out here as best I can given the materials Dr Sparks had to hand. 'Nothing' – this is from the *Edinburgh Review*:

'Nothing can show more clearly the singular want of literary enterprise or activity in the States of America than that no one has yet been found in that flourishing republic to collect and publish the works of their only philosopher. It is not even very creditable to the literary curiosity of the English public that there should have been no complete edition of the writings of Dr Franklin till the year 1806; and we should have been altogether unable to account for the imperfect and unsatisfactory manner in which the work has now been performed, if it had not been for a statement in a prefatory advertisement, which removes all blame from the editor to attach it to a higher quarter.'

The *Review*, following upon that 'higher quarter' business, deemed it useful to reinform the English public that shortly after Franklin's death his heir – that is, Temple – expatriated himself to London along with half his grandfather's papers, a pendulum

clock, and a Chinese gong, this being the sum of his portable inheritance. In truth, I do not know what happened to the furniture, but as to the papers he soon found a bidder.

This authorised edition, Temple knew, was so highly anticipated that to maximise profits (and minimise pirate translations) it would appear on the same day in England, Germany, and France. It was to be mammoth, an unprecedented collection of the complete works of Franklin, in six volumes. Somehow or other the proposals were made public, possibly to prime the market or put off competitors. However, some months into it and without warning or explanation, says the *Review*, 'the proposals were suddenly withdrawn, and nothing more has been heard of the work'. Enter, fifteen years later, the unofficial edition from the house of Joseph Johnson, who was already notorious for publishing Priestley, Paine, Wollstonecraft, and other anti-establishment figures. Suffering a fit of exasperation at Temple's infinite delay, Johnson seems to have put together a bootleg manuscript so that the public might see what Temple Franklin, for reasons that could only be guessed at, did not wish to have revealed. To justify his circumvention of the family – and certainly of Dr Franklin's will – Johnson's editor stated frankly what indeed had been on everyone's mind all along.

Here was the 'positive charge' cited later in Sparks.

Temple Franklin, 'it seems, had found a bidder of a different description in some emissary of government, whose object was to withhold the manuscripts from the world *[…]* and they thus either passed into other hands, or the person to whom they were bequeathed received a remuneration for suppressing them'.

It's no use consulting the source for the identity of this 'bidder of a different description' tucked politely into another paragraph. It is never suggested – neither by the reviewer nor by the editor, nor by Sparks or any of those who repeated this charge. 'Some emissary' seems to have suggested a clear enough likeness as would enable anyone halfway abreast of the facts to know the truth. A ready theorist might take as implied the name of Dr Franklin's son, who as the last royally appointed governor of New Jersey was an agent or 'emissary' of the king.

In 1806, the year Johnson published his edition, former governor William Franklin was living on a government pension in the west part of London, exiled from the American 'states' for his unstinting loyalty to England throughout their rebellion. Dr Sparks thought that it was 'probable that he may have been averse to the publication of his father's papers during his lifetime'. It was a sensible theory, for William Franklin owned no land in England and that pension was his sole livelihood, not a very good

one. He presumably could not afford to have it jeopardised by the ransacking of papers thought to concern the more subterranean end of the state's business.

But now read the article with some care and you may discover the 'emissary of government' to be in effect something altogether less mortal, if I might stray savagely a moment – something which took form in the public mind as a repressive shadow, an enemy of the third estate everywhere, a presence unseen and chilling. There didn't need to be an actor with a particular face and a neurotic motive: only, *some emissary*. Between us, I might venture to pin it down as the vengeful reëmergence of an earlier order. That may be too bold a step, even amongst friends. But consider the effect of such words – 'withhold', 'suppress' – on a public that felt, after all that Franklin had come to represent, entitled to him.*

'What the manuscripts contained', the Johnson editor goes on, 'that should have excited the jealousy of government, we are unable, as we have never seen them, positively to affirm; but, from the conspicuous part acted by the author in the American revolution and the wars connected with it, it is by no means difficult to guess…'. Read it. There is contempt in the voice, as though the virtues wherewith the revolution was made secure were of themselves less so ….

Now as I was mulling this over, there swirled about me two absurdities which, every so often, flitted directly to the front of my consciousness. In short, I could not get rid of them. The first is that Temple seems not to have issued any denial of this charge against him. The second is that, the implications of the first notwithstanding, the Johnson edition could not have been made from Franklin's manuscript – the manuscript that Temple assuredly possessed, and which the editor confessed not to have seen – and so what Johnson published was nothing more than a duplication of the 1793 edition, which itself could not have been made from the holograph but was rather a desperate *reverse translation* of the 1791 French edition. None of these editions continued Franklin's narrative beyond the year 1730. I have checked this. The last sentence ends, 'and my project succeeded, as will be seen in the sequel'.

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* See, for example, the review of several editions of the Doctor's works in *The Analectic Magazine*, volume 9 (1817), where I am staggered to find this sentiment so clearly stated: 'The writings of such a man as Dr. Franklin are public property; and, when they are deposited in the hands of an executor, he is accountable to that public for whatever he does with them.' In light of Dr Franklin's own opinions regarding the publication of his private papers, such forceful disregard for the will of a man simultaneously revered in the same piece to the point of his personal artefacts being thought a kind of commons did nothing, to say the least, to contradict the prevailing assessment of American letters at that time.

Full stop. *Finis*. Before you even ask: I confirmed it in an Irish reprint.

But should you require incontrovertible proof that someone has not doctored every version I have managed to get to hand, consider that when the 1793 edition ran serially in the *Lady's Magazine* ('or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, Appropriated Solely to Their Use and Amusement'), the final instalment concluded with this:

'The life of Dr. Franklin, as written by himself so far as it has been communicated to the world, breaks off in this place. We understand that it was continued by him somewhat farther, and we hope that the remainder will, at some future period, be communicated to the public.'

Now it gets interesting, because in order to remedy the deficiency arising from, you know, not having to hand an entire bootleg with which to sweep the market from under the heir, the *Lady's Magazine* had co-opted a 'continuation' of Franklin's life that was already circulating at Philadelphia. It was composed in the third person by someone said to be a contemporary of the Doctor and identified only as one 'Stuber'. The two partial lives were thus joined and re-issued later that year in a single volume and again enhanced by an upholstery of sketches, bagatelles, and other short pieces – even, morbidly, by Dr Franklin's will and the epitaph on his tombstone.

So much for the 'as will be seen in the sequel' – which, anyway, was not any line of Franklin's.

To pivot on my second thought, out loud as it were, the question that began to close in and fill the space concerned that less complete, earlier copy of the manuscript – to 1730 – its unnamed custodian, and its whereabouts. And its provenance.

Between the pirate edition of 1793 and the year 1806 nothing more of Franklin's manuscript had been made public. So here is what Johnson did: he tacked onto the back of his *translation of a translation* – and there is some doubt as to whether the 1793 was even a new translation to begin with – the *same continuation* composed by this fellow Stuber. The reviewer of the *Edinburgh* was not wrong to consider this rustled up, mongrel life a poor substitute for the genuine article (which was then, of course, unseen and unknowable).

And yet: from that dubious pulpit the reviewer raises the broader charge of a 'want of literary enterprise' – *in America*, of all places. That is absurd, and it may be that a piece of the context is missing, some key factor that would perhaps render the Johnson new in some way, and which the anonymous editor of it did not see fit to disclose. (Here is irony for you.) All I can think is that a secret copy of Dr Franklin's manuscript was circulating, whose existence could not be made generally known, but which perhaps

informed Johnson's supposed retranslation. But any trace of such a thing I have not been able to discover.

Years passed, nothing was heard from Temple Franklin. In 1817 he released his *bona fide*, wholly authentic, definitive edition of his grandfather's papers, and made certain everyone knew it. Dr Sparks noted that this event occurred not long after Temple's father ceased to require his government pension because he had died. You may be able to tell me whether Temple offers any explanation of his timing, or answers the charges levelled publicly against him some twelve years earlier.

In any case, Sparks considered this – Temple's edition – to be the new measure of legitimacy. There's even the faintest note of harshness in his dismissal of the re-translation of 1793 – which was apparently still current as late as 1835 – as though he bore it some unusual resentment. He certainly had run out of patience with otherwise 'respectable writers' quoting from it 'as if it were the author's original work'. I suppose he felt that much had been lost in the translation.*

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* Cladentweed referred me to Dr Sparks's collected correspondence, edited by Herbert Baxter Adams (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1893), volume one, page six. The passage concerns Dr Sparks's lifelong friend and intimate correspondent Ann Storrow, who was five years his senior. In 1817, when he was 28, Sparks wrote to Miss Storrow the following: 'I sent you "Franklin" with the fullest belief that you will be pleased with it; and I shall be exceedingly disappointed if it proves otherwise. I am sure you are enough like me to warrant this opinion. I refer particularly to the life written by himself, though the essays are some of them excellent. I am willing to acknowledge, however, that I am not a very impartial judge in this case. The book fell very early into my hands. It delighted me so much that I read it several times over. I have not seen it till to-day for eleven years. I have been looking it over a little with a very strange combination of thoughts and feelings. It revived most vividly a train of associations which, though melancholy, were not entirely unpleasant. It was this book which first roused my mental energies, such as they are, and directed them to nobler objects than they seemed destined by fortune and the fates to be engaged in. It prompted me to resolutions, and gave me strength to adhere to them. It inspired me with an ardor, which I had not felt before, and which never afterwards forsook me. It taught me that circumstances have not a sovereign control over the mind. But I have not time to say more about Franklin, or the effect it had on my character and destiny. I know you will like it.' The edition that had so enchanted his heart – or by proxy of which it seems he meant to express some other enchantment – could have been none later than the Johnson of 1806. He was then seventeen. I accepted Cladentweed's suggestion that 'very early' implies an age younger than seventeen, and so shared his conclusion that the words capable of rousing the nobler energies of Jared Sparks were most probably those of the earlier volume, 1793. At any rate, the only editions of Franklin's memoirs that could have fallen 'very early into my hands' were those reverse translations whose authenticity Dr Sparks later rejected.

But I'll leave you with something to ponder, before I dash off Jefferson's testimony on the matter: for all its shortcomings and despite being obsolesced by Temple's publication of the most holy holograph, and it is almost unnecessary to say, despite the protests of the Venerable Sparks, the 1793 edition continued to be the most popular, most widely read edition well into the second half of the nineteenth century. How that must have vexed him.

Yours, etc.

6

Norwich [Saint Benedicts St], 16 June, ——.

My loyal C——,

I have before me all of your letters, unanswered these four months, for which neglect I can offer no satisfactory excuse. I promised myself a little leisure on my return from Twyford, to answer them on all counts, which I accordingly sit down to do.

You wonder about the last recorded sighting of the manuscript, and wish I had given more detail of Sam Romilly's Parisian sojourn. But I was merely repeating the account given by Bigelow in *Retrospections*, and weaving a kind of tapestry by availing myself of related threads. Now with a volume of published papers to hand, as well as the DNB and a brace of secondary texts, I do the same for the account of Sir Samuel Romilly.

In the summer of 1802, following the Peace of Amiens, the English were pouring into Paris. Like many of his countrymen, Romilly had spent the final decade of the century of enlightenment unable to make sense of events across the water. Was such bloodletting the only possible realisation of the revolutionary ideas that had once looked likely to spill over all of Europe? Now he asked himself a different question: Had such extreme convulsions really changed anything, after all?

As he made his way inland he recalled passing through countryside sown richly with grain and seeing field ploughs employed not with four horses but only a pair, yoked abreast, and he soon noticed that this configuration was so accommodating that it could be driven by just one woman working alone. Not a rod of arable soil seemed to be wasted, nor any given to pasture. To Romilly all this, and so soon, seemed promising. Perhaps he was still hoping for some positive effect that might influence affairs in Great Britain.

But at Abbeville he found the large houses shut up and the streets full of beggars. At Chantilly he found the castle gardens grown over, the castle itself 'a heap of ruins'. He did not bother to ask himself, or not openly, whether these conditions were quite to be expected. On 5 September he arrived at Paris.

The public buildings all bore the old quadripartite motto of the republic:

Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité, ou la Mort.[9]

In every case the last was struck out, and only sometimes replaced by a dual plea against the runaway passions of the earlier spirit:

Justice, Humanité.

His hotel faced onto a square that had three names. It began its life as Place Louis XV. But some years prior to Romilly's taking rooms the government had the king's statue there pulled down and something it called the Goddess of Liberty erected instead; also a guillotine. It became a bathing place for the sins of the deposed order, washed there away by the gore of thousands, and it came to be called by the name Place de la Révolution. Princes, poets, legislators, philosophers, and ordinary labourers seeped beneath the heels of Liberty. Soon the executors of such liberty were themselves forced down before her. The new government abandoned the old name in favour of *concorde*, which stuck for some time afterwards: Place de la Concorde, so that if the population of Paris were somehow to vanish overnight the history that dwelt nominally throughout the city would not be such a violent one.

But those who remained kept within them the consciousness of what had happened. At around this time, another English traveller sought to capture the nation's hideous progression in a single sentence:

'The agitation of the public mind in France was such, for a while, that, after having overthrown the monarchy and its supports; rendered private property insecure; and destroyed individual freedom; it threatened to invade foreign countries, at the same time pushing before it Liberty'.

'Liberty, that first blessing of man, when founded on laws, and the most dangerous of chimeras when it is without rule or restraint'.[10] We should not forget that one of the figureheads of the professed Liberty was Dr Franklin, his likeness a kind of icon – along with those of Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Brutus – for a freedom from traditional patterns of rulership.

Romilly had lived in Paris from 1789-90, left when things began to get ugly, and now returned as a sort of tourist of the new laws. The day after he arrived he travelled to

Passy, then a village in the hills outside the city with splendid views of the Bois de Boulogne.

On 7 September he was shown the manuscript of Dr Franklin's memoirs. That it was the original, composed by Franklin's own hand, was evident to him at a glance and, anyway, made known to him by its possessor, Madame Le Veillard, a descendant of the late mayor. He was told that only one other copy existed, which Dr Franklin had made himself, and that it was in the hands of his heir who was rumoured to own flats in the rue du Montblanc (the former rue de Mirabeau).[11] It was unclear how or why the family had lost touch with him.

Later Romilly recorded in his diary the few facts he had received that traced the manuscript's provenance. 'Franklin gave the manuscript to M. Veillard of Passy, who was guillotined during the revolution.'

'There are only two copies – this, and one which Dr. F. took with a machine for copying letters, and which is in the possession of his grandson.'

Upon M. Veillard's execution the manuscript had descended in the family. The lady who kept it now was perhaps his granddaughter, or she might have been a generation older; it was hard to tell. Franklin had been dead only a dozen years but the episode as Samuel Romilly recorded it reads with an odd detachment, as though the whole entry were made not at the conclusion of the day but very late into the night, or even at the dawn of the next. He certainly knew that Temple Franklin had left the United States with the copy of the manuscript. At that time there was still no sign of any authorised works and no statement from the Franklin descendant. Temple's bizarre aloofness leant credibility to speculations that the full memoirs might contain something unpublishable.

Is the sense of irreconcilable antiquity that hangs over Romilly's words merely an echo of the limbo into which the manuscript seemed to have fallen? In any case, one final thought occurred to him, or had been communicated to him: 'The Life comes down no lower than to the year 1757.'

(It was the year of his own birth.)

There was also a small portrait in pastel that descended with the manuscript, a likeness of unequalled mastery. A black and gilt plaque on the frame attributed the work to Joseph-Siffred Duplessis, royal painter to king Louis XVI. The two were kept together, each thought so indivisible from the other that for the family they constituted

a single heirloom.* The connection was made by a label that could not have been original to the portrait but that someone had affixed to it, which contained the words:

'Given by FRANKLIN himself.'

But of this Romilly made no mention at all.

A generation went by. The lady Veillard died, and the manuscript, after being listed for sale near the back of an index of 'rare or curious' collectibles – 'it would be the ornament of a great literary establishment, or the library of a wealthy and enlightened gentleman' – fell into obscurity. (The dealer is identified only as 'Monsieur —'.)[12]

Sometime after Romilly's death his sons took their father's diary to Byron's publisher off Piccadilly, and had it printed in several volumes. In the first of these is the author's account of the manuscript, the most compelling proof of its existence since M. Cabanis and M. de Rochefoucauld-Liancourt each made mention of it in public eulogies delivered in the summer of 1790.[13] The Romilly memoirs appeared the same year as Dr Sparks's *Works of Franklin*, and so the reference to the manuscript, though slight, was not overlooked.†

The Franklin descendant died at his home in Paris in 1823, and though some of his papers were later discovered at the back of a tailor's shop in St James's – where he evidently had lodged – his copy of the manuscript was not among them.

So far as I can tell, Romilly is the first to confirm in English that the original manuscript terminates in the year 1757. But if you had hoped to make something of his being the first *in any language*, I will disappoint you.

Your second hunch, however, may have turned up something. To what extent did Dr Sparks know about the copy of the manuscript? On the final five years at Philadelphia his edition is very sparse – if *sparse* is the word I want – or not overly nourishing, as you say. Naturally I have no access at this distance to the Sparks papers at the Philosophical Society. You will have to plumb that downspout yourself: there are diaries, correspondence – Dr Sparks was in touch not only with the Vaughans at Hallowell, but also with Mr Stevens of Camden Town and with various Franklin descendants in and about Philadelphia. There are, in short, the tracks you might imagine such a gatherer to leave. But any fishiness about manuscripts and copies thereof fetched by that broad net

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* See the description in Fontaine's *Manuel de l'amateur d'autographes* (Paris: Morta, 1836), pp. 336–339, which includes not just the autobiography but several letters and, finally, the 'beau portrait … au pastel et bien conservé'. He does not identify the artist; but then, when William Huntington and John Bigelow corresponded in 1867, neither had ever heard of Duplessis, so perhaps he had fallen out of favour.

† Except, that is, by Dr Sparks, as is shown below.

of his did not make it to market. 'What did he know?' is thus a question we can answer at this time only by comparing what he confesses to knowing with a negative drawn by contrasting his with the edition before it, viz. the Temple Franklin of 1817.

Prompted by your enclosure of the letter of 2 November 1789, I darted at once into the thicket of '88–89, a-flushing Vaughans … and came away with just one other of any value. Besides yours, which accompanied the copy of 'what is already done' of the memoirs, there is one of 3 June of the same year, in which said copy is mentioned as being in state of semi-manufacture. Note the detail here: it is the grandson-cum-amanuensis who 'is copying what is done, which will be sent to you *[Vaughan]* for your opinion by the next vessel *[…]*.'

It is perhaps due merely to the monasticism that has become a habit with me but I have never before heard, pace Sam Romilly, of any grandson described as 'a machine for copying letters'. I suppose Sir Sam's editors are the more negligent for their ignorance of the record discrediting the story told to him – a certain letter then already put before the public, though put in an odd way that I will shortly describe. In any case, the copy Franklin sent abroad would be not in his own hand but in that of Temple Franklin. It's a wonder Vaughan or anyone could read it at all.

Of primary interest, however, is the runaway portion of the quoted line above (as Franklin's full stops so easily slip into halves). After promising Vaughan a copy by next ship, 'for your opinion', he goes on: 'And not merely for your opinion, but for your advice; for *I find it a difficult task to speak decently and properly of one's own conduct*; and I feel the want of a judicious friend *to encourage me in scratching out*.' (Emphasis is mine, but the punctuation, to a semicolon, his.) I think we can agree that the Doctor is here at his most candid, but what an unexpected statement from someone who has just confessed to being fifty years deep into his memoirs!

On the other hand, nothing could be truer than that the first half of that text, the part written prior to the war and over a summer's fortnight spent in charming rural Hampshire at the Shipley house and read aloud evenings for the children, can by every measure be reckoned the better half. I think I expose no great secret in unambiguously stating that the later stuff is rote and uninspired. The lines above are the first hint of Franklin's knowing it, too. But what sort of muse could Mr Vaughan be, after all, against five adoring Shipley girls?

You state in your last that the November letter is not to be found in Temple Franklin's edition of the works. I found the June letter missing there, as well, until by chance I came upon a later printing, 1818, advertised as the 'third edition'. In that, it

appears, but by what means it was overlooked for the first, or there suppressed, is a mystery. For if Temple Franklin received – in the interim between first and third printings – some of Vaughan's letters – why not all? Why then is the letter of 2 November kept back until the Sparks?

> *I was wrong, as Cladentweed irksomely pointed out some time later, in my entertaining this 'mystery'. It was the more irksome, because I was forced by the timing of his mentioning it – a moment deliberately and shrewdly chosen – to concede him the point in favour of a chronological presentation of material. For I was not the first rustler of old leaves to be foxed by the eccentricity with which Temple Franklin had arranged his grandfather's letters for print, and in thumbing the volumes for comparison trusted my search to reason rather than index. But I leave it stand as both a warning and a demonstration of how easily we may be led astray … I was about to add 'by reason'! But no – by cleaving too closely upon the heels of our predecessors.*
>
> *My second consideration, concerning the letter of 2 November 1789, which appeared first in Sparks, was perfectly legitimate and we never did satisfy ourselves upon it.*

On the following page in Sparks is your enclosure of the date 2 November, where you had neglected (out of regard, I gather, for my everywhere picking up discrepancies) to include the following:

'What is already done (says Franklin) I now send you, with an earnest request that you and my good friend Dr. Price would be so good as to take the trouble of reading it, critically examining it, and giving me your candid opinion whether I had best publish *or suppress it*; and if the first, then *what parts had better be expunged or altered*.'

I read those lines over many times. Then, returning with hot matcha, I read them again in their context until I could recite all from memory. For Dr Franklin the suppression of the manuscript – the whole of it – was not out of the question. For as he confessed in the earlier letter, and reiterated in the lines that follow those above, he had lost any sense of decency and propriety in print.*

'I shall (he says then) rely upon your opinions, for I am now grown so old and feeble in mind, as well as body, that I cannot place any confidence in my own judgment. In the

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* Here Cladentweed drew in the margin a curious and perhaps personal image: 'The old patriarch with one foot in the grave already. All connection with those nearest him coming across the fatal boundary.'

mean time, I desire and expect that *you will not suffer any copy of it, or of any part of it, to be taken for any purpose whatever*.'[14]

This was a man who when holding political office made use of intentional leaks by careful channels and to calculated degrees of publicity, fretting now over the potential disclosure of something improper or indecent contained in his memoirs.

Let us consider:

1) By his letter to Vaughan, 24 October 1788, Franklin confessed to having taken the memoirs no further than the year 1756. This statement is repeated in a letter four days later to Rochefoucauld. In his next to Vaughan, June 1789, he seemed not to have returned to the manuscript, and despairing of completing it at all he intends to have a copy sent by the next opportunity. These letters are published in W. T. Franklin (1817), along with the memoirs to the year 1757.

2) It is in his final letter to Vaughan, 2 November 1789, that Franklin said he was composing by dictation, that prior to taking up that method he had 'made no progress for these six months past', and that he wished he had tried it sooner for he now resolved to finish the work 'in this way dictating to an amanuensis'.

3) That final letter could imply that something more was done, perhaps a great deal more, that was not sent abroad.

4) If Dr Franklin was using Temple as his amanuensis, this further material would have been known to Temple and in his possession. As would the letter itself have been known to him, for it was also written by dictation. But it does not appear in his edition, and neither does the material after 1757. In fact there is no indication there *whatever* of any copy having been actually sent to Vaughan or anyone.

I wonder whether Temple published the letters directly from originals received from Vaughan at London, or whether he had letterbook copies of them.* And if the former, why would Vaughan refuse Temple the 2 November letter, but furnish it for Sparks? And if the latter, why would Temple suppress the letterbook copy of 2 November unless he were also suppressing the post-1757 portion of the memoirs to which it refers?

Finally, 5) Romilly was given to believe that Le Veillard possessed the original manuscript, and Temple the copy. Bigelow's later intelligence from Stevens, and Laboulaye's 'Eureka' letter, which you have seen, imply the same. But it is clear from Dr Franklin's own correspondence – even such as was available to Bigelow and Sparks *in print* – that he sent the copy abroad, not the original. So which was it?

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* Sparks was under the impression that Temple Franklin took the letterbooks with him to London. Sparks, xvii.

Regarding which twist, I have one item further for your consideration. Ten years after Dr Sparks went to press in ten volumes, he released an eleventh, in which he became the first of the American editors to attempt to 'continue' the life by cobbling together a mean chronology of letters and other gubbins thought to satisfy a more or less narrative element. You may only guess at the proportions of the monster this produced, for I forbid your reading a word of it. However, in contrasting the preface to his earlier memoirs of Franklin (1840) with that of his later, you will turn up a single but most toothsome morsel. In the later edition Dr Sparks states that Le Veillard indeed possessed a *copy* of the manuscript – not the original as Romilly et al. believed – but not, either, a copy *sent to him*. Rather, according to Dr Sparks, he had a copy which he made or caused to be made when Franklin was living nearby at the Hôtel de Valentinois, courtesy of M. Chaumont, during the American revolution. (In the earlier preface, he fudges the detail slightly by making it a copy Franklin 'presented' to his friend at no certain time or place. Now he seems convinced of the presentation occurring prior to Franklin's return to America in 1785.)

You have my permission to check this once for yourself. Turn to the first words of the second paragraph of the portion composed in France, or what has come to be called 'part two' of the memoirs, which begins where Franklin left off at Twyford – the year 1730. Any modern edition will do. In resuming the composition at Passy Franklin confessed that he was in danger of repeating himself – 'not having any copy here of what is already written'. I have just taken this line from the very edition in which Dr Sparks, drawing on evidence not cited, suggested the exact opposite, that Franklin had, in fact, the original manuscript with him from which Le Veillard's copy was made. It is a tempting conclusion, for it would at once identify the manuscript from which the 1791 edition was made, but there is too much evidence against it. Not the least of which comes direct from Franklin, who did, it turned out, repeat himself.

I think you can't but grant me this discrepancy, which makes me think Sparks had not read Romilly's account. He could not have – or he might have made note of the contradiction.

All this gurgles up the question:

How came Temple to have the copy – done by his hand, and which was perhaps the more complete – and Le Veillard the original?

Yours, etc.

For some months we trekked such randonnées, Cladentweed following a scent on the transatlantic breeze of smoked herring, I flushing wild geese by my footsteps. I exchanged with Osborne my volumes of Retrospections *for others, as many marked 'Paris' as 'London' before the publisher, and one 'Weimar'. (Had I only managed to secure a certain 'Philadelphia' – overlooked not only by editors of the nineteenth century but also by scholars of the twentieth – I might have saved us much effort.) It was plain to me that I had finished with John Bigelow, for I had tailed him through what he called 'an Iliad of anxieties' until he found his parcel at last, and with almost a day to spare before drifting off across the Atlantic. It was enough time to have brought it before the practised eye of the writer John Forster, who (wrote Bigelow later) 'seemed to think that on the whole I had done a good thing' in relieving the French of it. But by the end of the next month, still leaking no details of his treasure, apparently ignorant of any, he would be trying 'with all my might to forget the price I paid for the lot'.*

I read and re-read Bigelow's account of the hunt, the evaluation of the manuscript by proxy from London, and the final purchase by banker's draft, after which followed an extensive attempt – mostly on the part of his Paris correspondent, William Huntington – to trace the provenance of both the holograph and each of its two copies. As their investigation carried out beyond six months, then a year, I returned to the beginning and tracked the pair's progress on a timeline I dedicated for that purpose. Later I collated my notes with a parallel set derived from Bigelow's portrayal of events in his edition of the memoirs. In truth I found his account to be less remarkable for the national treasure being brought to light, than for the incongruous mood of speculation I sensed in it. Over time I grew to suspect that he knew all along the significance of what he had and that it was only in repose at his country retreat on the Hudson that he decided upon its essential selling point. So came he, within a very short span of time, to publish a new and newly authentic edition of the memoirs of Dr Franklin, having as its source the original manuscript in the Doctor's own hand. And so, I thought, ended the story, and with it the use to me of any book bearing the name of John Bigelow on the title page.

But still hearing no word from the American Philosophical Society regarding my photoduplication request for a great many of the Temple

Franklin papers, I turned once again to what Cladentweed maintained were blighted leaves – Franklin's works, editor John Bigelow.

7

Norwich [Saint Benedicts St], 8 November, ——.

Dear C——,

[…]

I'm sure I shall teach you nothing by repeating to you that there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries.

I quote a little known letter from Temple Franklin to Washington, composed and sent four months before Dr Franklin's death.* Temple's motivation is clear from the start: 'You well know Sir, the claims I have both on my own account, and that of my venerable grandfather's, on the justice, as well as the favor of the United States.' In short (if one can be any shorter than that) he is seeking an appointment. Here is more:

'If I have been rightly informed, it is your wish to forward my views in the line of foreign affairs: should this be the case, an opportunity will probably soon offer of doing it to the utmost of my ambition. By Mr Jefferson's accepting his late honorable appointment, a vacancy will ensue at the court of France.'

(I like that 'probably'.)

Nobody more wished for Temple the French embassy, says he, than his grandfather, who in placing the young man beside him all those years at Paris had bred him to no other profession.† Yet he – I mean the Doctor, author of the quintessential tale of self-reliance – seems also to have bred in his grandson a great deal of entitlement. Most shocking is that the very same language Temple oozes in soliciting Jefferson's saddle you will find set down by the elder Franklin himself in a letter to the secretary of the revolutionary Congress, Charles Thomson.[16] So it does not seem amiss that Temple

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* Printed in the aforementioned edition by Twohig, IV, pp. 549–51. The letter was given in an earlier edition as the prime example of an application 'in which continuance in an office held under the old Government is requested', which it is not (Temple having not held what he now seeeks) unless one senses in it the inference of *hereditary office*.

† It is to be remembered that Temple's father, William Franklin, who might have been expected to educate him, had been arrested and imprisoned for his adherence, after the declaration by colonial bodies of a united rebellion, to the law of England.

would go on, invoking this sentiment on his grandfather's behalf: 'He would consider it likewise, in some measure, as an approbation of his services in Europe, for which, though acknowledged to be great, he never has yet received either reward or even thanks.' That teat is milked for some few lines, and then, more astonishing I think than anything else:

'It is possible that from the nature of this letter your Excellency may not think it proper to answer it in writing, but would prefer conferring with me on the subject: if so, be pleased to mention it to Mr Morris, who will apprise me of it, and I will immediately do myself the honor of waiting upon you.'*

I must say I do not hold with Temple Franklin's employment of the colon. One hopes it was not the thing for which Washington refused to hold with any employment of Temple Franklin. It is true that neither the Doctor nor his descendant felt as though their services had been acknowledged or rewarded. I believe they considered it very likely, given the totality of the risk taken, given the success realised, that the family would henceforth be thrust among the governing classes, that *privilege* would be extended on down the bloodline … it is there in the resonance of their disappointment. Consider the Doctor's words, after listing the various instances of remuneration and recognition received by his colleagues Lee and Bollan and Jay – which remuneration included their 'good places' or government appointments – and even the Doctor's French counterpart to the rebelling colonies being made a Counsellor of State:

'But how different is what has happened to me.'

He returned from France to find that the administration of the U. S. Post Office, which he had left in the care of his son-in-law, had been taken from him while he was kept at a distance, and given to somebody else, and that it appeared moreover that his name superscribed was no longer considered to be a valid frank. And there follows the almost incredible objection that not even England, in angrily discharging him from the colonial postmastership, demanded *postage* of him afterward. Why, sir, he had not *paid postage* in over fifty years!

It is a curious thing to have written, and curiouser still for what writing it so preserved him from having to declare explicitly. The letter is in Sparks.

(Now one wonders, had Washington retained for the Doctor his franking privilege, how much more correspondence of his we should have.)

It was with such knowledge in his heart – that the first U. S. Postmaster General had not only the office snatched from his family in his absence abroad but was stripped

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* It was Morris who received the appointment.

along with it of his now famous frank, 'B. Free Franklin', which England, anyway, had not even begrudged him; that the expectation of a hereditary security was utterly misplaced – it was with this twin humiliation in tow that Temple Franklin left his country's shore for London.

In your last you promise a *correction* of Bigelow, new light, you say, that extinguishes rather than illuminates his credibility. I implore you to send this posthaste, for I have need of it. I confess I was close to accepting Temple Franklin's explanation as, on the whole, reasonable, until into my notice came, in the words of Professor Laboulaye (those I have sent you), 'une collection considérable de lettres de Franklin, formant un ensemble de correspondence' among the items in Mr Bigelow's parcel. Bigelow found, however, that the correspondents included not only the elder but also the younger Franklin, and his letters produced for Bigelow a confirmation of his guilt. I produce said confirmation here, in dated extracts of letters sent from Temple Franklin to Le Veillard:*

1) 22 May 1790. Temple writes to Le Veillard to announce Dr Franklin's death. Second paragraph: 'I feel it my duty to profit by this occasion to inform you that my grandfather, among other legacies, has left all his papers and manuscripts to me, with permission to turn them to what profit I can. *[…]* As I have the original here of the part which you have *[of the memoirs]*, it will not be necessary for you to send it to me, but I beg you at all events to put it in an envelope, well sealed, addressed to me, in order that by no accident it may get into other hands.'

2) 28 February 1792. A postscript reads: 'You have heard I suppose of the nomination by the President, of Mr. Gouverneur Morris, to be minister at your Court? It has however suffer'd from demur in the Senate and has not been yet confirmed. I have no doubt however but it will. From the well-known sentiments of Mr. M. this

* All found in the preface to Bigelow's edition of Dr Franklin's memoirs, 1868.

appointment will not I believe be very agreable to the National Assembly. Mr. Short goes to Holland – and I am totally neglected.'*

3) 22 April 1791. 'I am as sensible as you can be of the advantage that would result from my being at present in Paris – and I can assure you I am equally desirous of it. But business of the last importance, and that interested me personally, has hitherto detained me here: that, however, is now happily completed; and I am at present constantly occupied in the arrangement of my late grandfather's papers *[…]*.'

4) 14 June 1791. This is the penultimate letter between Temple Franklin and Le Veillard. 'I am much distressed my dear friend, at what you say you suffer from my not arriving in Paris. I have been wishing to be there as much as you could wish to see me; but I could not possibly think of leaving this while a business I had undertaken was pending – for which I received a salary; and which being now completed, affords me a profit of *seven thousand pounds sterling!* This, my dear friend, has hitherto kept me here *[…]*. I have now only some few arrangements to make in consequence of my success, and shall undoubtedly be with you before the conclusion of this month.'

The proposals for the publication of the papers were halted the following year.

What can we make of it?

Yours, etc.

8

Earlier that same year I had transcribed and enclosed in a letter to Cladentweed the final pages of the memoirs of Thomas Jefferson. The letter is given above. The enclosure now appears at what is, for the present purpose, its rightful place.

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* Shortly after he returned from France, Thomas Jefferson advised President Washington to 'to establish as a rule of practice that no person should be continued on a foreign mission beyond an absence of 6. 7. or 8. years.' See Thomas Jefferson to William Short, 3 October 1801, in the Jefferson Papers, or at *Founders Online*, <HTTP://**FOUNDERS.ARCHIVES.GOV**/DOCUMENTS/JEFFERSON/01-35-02-0307>. The reason being, in his own experience: 'we return like foreigners & like them require a considerable residence here to become Americanized.' Temple Franklin was a Londoner from birth to the age of 14, and became only shortly afterwards a Parisian until he returned to the United States with his grandfather in his mid-twenties. He was European by Jefferson's reckoning. Benjamin Franklin himself had lived in America for only three of the 28 years concluding in 1785 – by which time he would have been, by the same token, thoroughly de-Americanised. The greater significance of Washington's acceptance of Jefferson's proposal has only lately become clear to me.

I prefaced my transcription with this: 'The account begins thirty years prior to its writing, in March 1790. Jefferson has stopped en route to New York at Philadelphia. Dr Franklin is now five years returned from Paris. Too old and infirm to care for himself, he occupies the house he built off Market Street, in what he called Franklin Court, with his daughter's family. Through the haze of opium the dying Franklin receives his friend for the last time.[*]

He was then (writes Jefferson) on the bed of sickness from which he never rose.

My recent return from a country in which he had left so many friends, and the perilous convulsions to which they had been exposed, revived all his anxieties to know what part they had taken, what had been their course, and what their fate. He went over all in succession, with a rapidity and animation, almost too much for his strength. When all his inquiries were satisfied, and a pause took place, I told him I had learned with more pleasure that, since his return to America, he had been occupied in preparing for the world the history of his own life.

'I cannot say much of that,' said he. 'But I will give you a sample of what I shall leave.' And he directed his little grandson (William Bache), who was standing by the bedside, to hand him a paper from the table, to which he pointed. He did so, and the Doctor putting it into my hands, desired me to take it and read it at my leisure.

It was about a quire of folio paper, written in a large and running hand, very like his own. I looked into it slightly, then shut it, and said I would accept his permission to read it, and would carefully return it.

He said, 'No, keep it.'

Not certain of his meaning, I again looked into it, folded it for my pocket, and said again, I would certainly return it.

'No,' said he. 'Keep it.'

I put it into my pocket, and shortly after, took leave of him.

At this point I interjected a note and a paragraph taken from elsewhere by which I meant to press upon my friend that this was not a wholly accidental passage for someone to write in the years following the appearance, at long

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[*] As I later discovered, the anecdote preceded the memoirs of Jefferson by some years, for the printer William Duane had heard it as early as 1810. See *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Retirement Series, III, ed. by J. Jefferson Looney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 37–40 (17 August 1810, Duane to Jefferson).

last, of Temple's edition. Peale was scribbling recollections of Franklin in his Belfield journal at around the same time: 'In the entry for 18 November 1818,' I had written, 'he sets down an amusing recollection of a visit he paid to Franklin at his home in London, very vividly described, in the year 1771 – a year that Peale was never outside of North America.'

Cladentweed answered in his next: 'Of course. When one goes a-fishing at the shores of the past, he uses new bait, not old.'

By this I suppose he meant that a memory is framed not by what came before but by what came after. I have since traced the passage to the original page in Peale's diary. Whatever triggered the memory went unrecorded. There is no relevant context, excepting the publication of Temple's long-awaited edition. For it was in 1817, twenty-seven years after Jefferson's fragment vanished into Temple Franklin's coat pocket – as is related below – that the memoirs finally appeared.*

We return to Jefferson at the very place where my borrowed volume, with the words, 'He died on the 17th of the ensuing month of April', appeared to me to have concluded.

– and as I understood that he had bequeathed all his papers to his grandson, William Temple Franklin, I immediately wrote to Mr. Franklin, to inform him I possessed this paper, which I should consider as his property, and would deliver to his order. He came on immediately to New York, called on me for it, and I delivered it to him.

As he put it into his pocket he said, carelessly, he had either the original, or another copy of it. I do not recollect which. This last expression struck my attention forcibly, and for the first time suggested to me the thought, that Dr. Franklin had meant it as a confidential deposit in my hands, and that I had done wrong in parting from it.

I have not yet seen the collection he published of Dr. Franklin's works, and therefore, know not if this is among them. I have been told it is not. It contained a narrative of the negotiations between Dr. Franklin and the British Ministry, when he was endeavouring to prevent the contest of arms which followed.

And shortly thereafter Mr Jefferson had to depart, so he leaves his friend a-bed with the remainder of his life, reaches New York a few days later, and drops the case of that missing fragment. That the delinquent grandson of Dr Franklin could be, 'in such degree, an accomplice in the parricide of the

* The actual year of the events Peale remembered was 1768.

memory of his immortal grandfather' was possible to him – one senses in that offhand 'he said, carelessly' that it was even probable – and produced a sweet abhorrence. 'If this is not among the papers published, what has become of it?' he wondered before turning away at last. 'It certainly established views so atrocious in the British government, that its suppression would, to them, be worth a great price.'

Full stop.

Fytte Three

CLANDENTWEED, TO THE EDITOR:

'Where I find him is in his writing. It is important
to read deeply, fully aware, simultaneously within the text
and before it (and after it).

'… the absence of something is a positive. It is itself presence,
a negative presence, for silence, and obfuscation, too,
carry meaning.'

Not long before the date of the letter below I received a visit from my friend Seymour Grätz at Stanford. He had only one evening to spend with me as he was embarking next day from Southampton – claiming in a manner consistent with what I knew of his upbringing that the 'gentleman's passage' was the only one for him.

We had become hopelessly embroiled in a vast debate around a speech given by Dr Franklin at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, the text of which he immediately sent to France to demonstrate that he had not, in neglecting his memoirs, been idle,and in which he had made a political point of surprising pessimism.[15] *For me it was an early instance of the self-doubt he would later express to Vaughan and to Le Veillard. The lines of our respective arguments were drawn out of the thesis that the country had now reached, as Dr Franklin predicted it would, a state of such popular corruption 'as to need despotic government, being incapable of any*

*other'. It is unimportant which side was taken by Grätz and which by me – we could easily have switched – as the debate was academic.**

It was near the apex of the evening that Grätz interjected with an anecdote so haunting that it was afterwards as though he himself remained in the house as a ghost. Over the course of the preceding eighteen months or so he had become accustomed to rising just before the dawn. This was not in itself bizarre, except that he altered his schedule according to the season so as always to wake before the dawn. Sometimes he took walks outside. Sometimes he sat by the window and read. Sometimes he sat and did nothing. When I asked what had inspired him to act in this way, he answered that he had always been a light sleeper.

One morning when he had decided to walk he came upon a figure standing alone in a field, just standing still, with hands in pockets and looking at the treeline at the other side of the field. He said the sight of the figure startled him, for it was high summer, still dark, and very early in the morning. As he drew nearer he could make out the profile of a man, Eastern, with hands not in pockets but rather in front of him. He was holding what appeared to be a smart phone, and tilting this from side to side in such a way as might suggest a child playing a game. It was then that Grätz saw the drone above the trees, and as he had seen it he found he could also hear it, a faint scream. The sound grew steadily and he moved, he said, instinctively to the corner of an athletic shed, from which ambush he could continue to observe the figure without himself being noticed. He ended the story with the revelation that the drone pilot, whom he has seen several mornings since, always just before dawn, was the well-known political scientist Francis Fukuyama.[17]

As I said, I could not shake from my mind the image of Fukuyama launching a drone across a blue Pacific morning, and in retelling the story to Cladentweed I was put in mind of a part of Dr Franklin's journal I had come across. The thread picks up in the letter below.

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* The Convention speech is not printed in the Yale edition of Franklin's papers, nor so far as I have found in any of the preceding editions, and not in any of the biographies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But it is quoted in part in Joseph J. Ellis's recent *The Quartet: Orchestrating the Second American Revolution, 1783-1789* (Knopf Doubleday, 2016) – with the Doctor's visions of political decay and inevitable despotism wisely ellipsed. Dr Ellis can thus 'safely say that the Constitution has stood the test of time and fulfilled Franklin's fondest hopes'. Grätz, I think, would agree and go one step further to suggest the ellipsed prophecy being also fulfilled.

9

Norwich [Saint Benedicts St], 14 April, ——.

Dear C——,

[…]

You ask what traces a biographer leaves behind, as though you meant to set a trap for me. Nevermind; I've conceded you the point already, and perhaps in providing you an answer in double portions I might rake part of it back.

Chronologies. Notes such as those you describe handling at the Philosophical Society.

Some are grand and encompassing, some very precise and focused, but most are both. You have seen mine for the first twelve or so days of the month of August, 1771, and know the intensity or density of time that can be achieved.* Out of consideration, indeed, for time, I spared you the entire year, but I enclose it now as an example of what I anyway leave behind. Note how the general thinness of material for the 1771 volume of the Yale edition is immediately perceived beside the other volumes upon the shelf. It owes in part to the odd darkness of early spring that followed the terrible audience at the levee of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Hillsborough; to the Doctor's abrupt shyness in the press; to his hesitancy and dispiritedness noticed by Mr Strahan, viz.: 'Your father (he writes to William Franklin) could not stir in this business as he is not only on bad terms with Lord Hillsborough, but with the *ministry in general*. Besides, his temper is grown so very reserved, which adds greatly to his *natural inactivity*, that there is no getting him to take part in *anything*.'† I recall suspecting, as I still do, that what Strahan took for reserve was the sort of self-reflection, triggered by the Doctor's sudden insecurity, that seems to have inspired the pouring out of his memoirs that August. You will say that is not such a difficult insight to have made, even without the advantage of a chronology. What is more astonishing is that when I looked at Dr Franklin's account of the audience I saw that he had laid it out on the page as though it were a scene in a play to be staged, certainly to be delivered aloud, with a skeleton cast consisting only of Frankin and Hillsborough and one minor character. *There are even stage directions!* And I remember thinking, as I still do, that there were moments when that chandler's son – in

* Dr Franklin was visiting with the Shipley family at Twyford, Hampshire, from 30 July to 12 August, when he composed the first part of his memoirs on 23 foolscap sheets, or 87 folio sides, always reserving a half-page left-hand margin for additions.

† *Papers*, XVIII, pp. 65–66 (3 April 1771, William Strahan to William Franklin).

considering how far he had got – must have felt himself a damned inauthentic article, and dreaded in his belly the fatal reverse of his fortune.

After falling out with Hillsborough the Doctor was convinced his career in politics had reached its end. So you find on the date of that interview a reference to the first day of August, same year, which was a Thursday. It was on the morning of that day, sitting by the window in the garden room at Twyford (where he had arrived Tuesday) with the prior day's words before him, that he made in the gutters of the first two pages an addition peculiar not just for its length but also for the extraordinary sense of insecurity – even *resignation* – expressed in it. In short, the Doctor thanked God for the considerable share of felicity he had enjoyed in life before allowing that 'the complexion of my future fortune' was not then knowable, and hoped in a tone of immediate expectation that whatever mischief should come his way he would by 'his kind providence' be able to bear. Now that kind of language was far from usual. You must agree with me there, or I can furnish you a handful of examples in earlier correspondence where the utility of such prayers is doubted and their use scoffed at.

> *I am afraid I went on along this tangent for some pages, the year in question being one that had often beguiled me. But as this is not the place to prepare an edition of the memoirs, I exercise the editor's license to prune what bears no relation to the present agenda.*

To finish my point, the simple date-and-event method you see in my notes has been of most use to me, moving forward in time (naturally) but not without an anticipatory layer of secondary notation. This direction, as you have put to me a winter since, reveals patterns, and it is in uncovering patterns that we can approximate of such gaps in the record their size, shape, colour, and perhaps substance. Or if not any of those, or in addition to them, we hope by seizing upon whatever threads to be led to somebody's papers where further material may be found. It is an excellent way to mine and account for the historical record, and to arrange it for the purposes of a narrative style that seldom if ever untangles the complexities and the experience of life. And while it is perhaps the best we can hope to create within the mechanical limit of two dimensions, a third, namely *memory* – which entwines consciousness – would be most welcome progress.

I should have been so lucky, even if the Society had found the time to fill my request, to be sent such material as you've unearthed there in the flesh, and from such an

exceptional source as the late Claude-Ann Lopez.* I can only conclude from your description of the entire folder that Ms Lopez was conceiving – and at some point prior to the manual typewriter falling out of general use, shelved – a life of William Temple Franklin. (The handwritten additions suggest abandonment rather than rejection, do they not?)

You see that she cites no source for the date that Temple divested himself of the original manuscript. She can only deduce that he made the exchange for Le Veillard's fair copy sometime after 10 July 1791, the date she thinks he arrived in France, and before he returned to London at the beginning of 1792. The interval seems to have been filled gambolling about Paris with John Paul Jones, someone called 'Bosville' – not, I shouldn't think, *the* Boswell – and Gouverneur Morris, as the country unravelled around them. All that research seems not to have led to the intended product. That, in truth, was not a little jarring to behold.

> *The following is interlineated: 'I want to add that it's strange – I mean that she should have pursued him so eagerly. How many of his boozed-up womanising dawns did she endure before concluding that this was nothing with which to follow up her much lauded* The Private Franklin [1975] *and* Mon Cher Papa: Franklin and the Ladies of Paris [1966]*?*† *It would be a Boswell without the charm. But despite the virtuosity Temple seems to have inherited for the corporeal arts, he was innocent, it appears, of the crimes so often attributed to him.*

The copied extract of Ms Lopez's notes that came wrapped in your last reached me at the S. G. C. over the bank holiday, as I stepped in from an afternoon chez Osborne the bookseller. And it was the ultimate or penultimate of several such whiled there off of the number remaining to me in this life. In light of your evidence, I did (I confess it) make a rough tally in my head of the hours wasted securing my case, with much now-dubious assistance from that quarter, John Bigelow, against Mr Temple Franklin.[18] The coup de grâce, I might have thought, was a note bearing a Philadelphia postmark and the name of William Duane, and which I shall (to no legitimate end) describe to you in my next, when I have ready some bits of further research. For though I may be wrong in

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* Ms Lopez was for many years an editor and finally editor-in-chief of the Franklin Papers project at Yale University.

† Cladentweed here adorned the margin with a wry expression of disagreement: namely, that such a book would have been the *perfect* end to a trilogy concerning the venereal accomplishments of sundry Mr Franklins.

my conclusions, having veered in error onto some trailhead long ago blazed out of fancy, I may (it is to be hoped) shed inadvertant light on our topic.

So that you may not poison the well I am to draw from, I'll not reveal more.

Yours, etc.

Over the weeks following the posting of this letter I found myself drawn to the extract Cladentweed had enclosed of Claude-Ann Lopez's notes, oftener and oftener to the point of obsession. Each time it was with the same sense that there I should find the answers to questions I could not put into words and of whose ultimate significance I had only the merest inkling. Ms Lopez depended very heavily on the journals of Mr Gouverneur Morris – the transparent elitist and one-legged playboy who was Washington's favourite for the French ministry – and supplemented this almost exclusively with material from the papers of Temple's employer and of his close friend George Fox. All of these men being of the same country and social set, it seemed at first glance to be a thin blend of sources. But the truth was that no other material illuminated for me so plainly the character of Temple Franklin. The most sympathetic of his posthumous apologists could chalk his tardiness in issuing his grandfather's works up to a kind of naïve incompetence, but there are, for example, entries in the Morris journals such as those written around the time Temple arrived at London:

'Dec. 13. Receive a Note from Temple F. and go to look for him at Osborne's Hotel.* Find him with a female fellow Passenger, a French Woman who left her husband on board the ship off Portsmouth. She is handsome. Receive from him many letters and packets…'

'Dec. 17. Mr *[Temple]* F and his Father call. I take the young Man to dine with the french Embassador *[sic]*. After dinner we have a long conversation on the affairs of France. Bring F home to eat Oysters. He gives me a curious account of Mrs Le Couteulx de Caumont who is, it seems, very much of a w——e.'

'Dec. 20. Call on Mr Temple F who is not at Home; I visit however his Lady. She is neither handsome nor anything else but I think very much of a W——e. Call on his Father and leave my Card.'

'Dec 24. At 5 go to Dinner at Mr R. Penn's. Mr Boswell, Mr F. and myself are the guests. *[…]* Go with Mr F. to visit Mrs Church and then to the Piazza Coffee House where we sup together. He gives me some Account of his Gallantries both in France

* No relation, I'm told, to *my* Osborne.

and in America. He shews a Note he has received from a young Innamorata in the same House with him. I think she will not prove so pure a Virgin as he imagines.'

'Dec 28. Mr F calls to postpone a Dinner Engagement and shews me the Love Letters of his Inamorata who I fancy understands Trap as well as he.'

And so on. The entries made later at Paris are much similar.

The other great distraction for Temple turned out to be the getting of money in real estate by scooping bargains from those fleeing the Terror and selling high in America to the same people, presumably. His services included the securing of American passports. I soon wrote Cladentweed a short line to request a duplication of the entire timeline – more than a hundred pages typescript.

The packet arrived only days later, he having anticipated me in some respect but acting from a different motive.

I was reading at that time Dr Currey's Code Number 72: Benjamin Franklin, Patriot or Spy? [1972], *quite without Cladentweed's knowledge. It had been presented to me, I think honestly, as a clever book in which the author is at great lengths to employ a quasi-academic voice in the telling of historical fiction, appending chapter notes in an entirely convincing manner and going even so far as to have it published with a well-regarded educational press. The result was a skilled and original piece of writing, I remember thinking until about the hundredth page. I had begun the chapter entitled 'Surrounded by Spies' (six, I think it was) when I was roused by a beat on the study door, was prevented by some or another thing from sitting back down, and was accidentally informed at a gathering that evening that the book was immaculate of any such artifice. Thereafter its enrapture of me ceased.*

What I had read of it, however, cast its effects on my mind. It was not difficult, when under the savour of such a purposive hock off the archives, to imagine Dr Franklin as a double agent. On the other hand, it was almost impossible to believe that he did not take pains when composing letters whose interception he knew to be likely to ensure the contents were innocuous. My present conclusions owe nothing to the case Dr Currey was making, underpinned as they are by completely different material, but when in certain humours I fancy being able to trace my first imaginative efforts to a line or two of his extraordinary book. Turning just now to page 106 of Code Number 72 *I find quoted warnings from the Doctor to his sister and to Thomas Cushing, an old political ally, that his correspondence with them was 'often intercepted'.* As early as 1769, William Franklin suspected that someone, perhaps a clerk at the central Post Office at London, was intercepting his father's letters to him. 'At first (says he)*

* *Papers*, XVI, pp. 58–62 and XIX, pp. 332–37.

I was apprehensive that you might be indisposed, and not able to write […]'. Not long after this, however, he was informed of his own seals arriving broken and henceforth became increasingly suspicious, even paranoid. It was the first time the Doctor became aware that he was the target of surveillance by his own state. Later he confessed that:

'I have long observed one rule which prevents any inconvenience from such practices. It is simply this, to be concerned in no affairs that I should blush to have made publick, and to do nothing but what spies may see and welcome. When a man's actions are just and honourable, the more they are known, the more his reputation is increased and established. If I was sure, therefore, that my valet de place was a spy, as probably he is, I think I should not discharge him for that, if in other respects I liked him.'[19]

There are very few omissions in Temple Franklin's edition of the memoirs. Indeed, John Bigelow – who had the best reasons of all to find some – cited only one in his preface. It is not a passage that anyone 'should blush to have made publick'. He counted twelve hundred differences between original manuscript and the edition then considered 'authentic' but these were petty issues of style.† A later editor noted that it was often an instance of substituting a Latin word for an Anglo-Saxon one, a measure – one cannot long put off the thought – that would greatly facilitate a French translation. By 'one' I suppose I mean 'one who is not an editor of Franklin's works' because it seems that each of them managed to have put the thought off very ably.*

It is no recommendation of Franklin scholarship that the nineteenth century became the scene of a grand tug of war for his voice, but it is of interest to the biographer that of victories more or less fleeting none is without qualification. When Temple released his edition he was the only person alive who was ever in possession of the means to judge, and he judged that what the world had already seen of his grandfather's memoirs 'can scarcely lay any claim to

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* A reader familiar with any edition of the memoirs will easily recall one or two passages he might think blush-worthy. He will look for them in the 1817 edition and find them there intact.

† Mr Bigelow's method was to revise the Sparks edition (i.e., Temple Franklin's text) from the holograph manuscript. Max Farrand found that by this method Bigelow or his clerk introduced errors and 'mutilations' that 'made him a greater culprit than the grandson'. Dr Farrand, having employed a more direct and dependable method of comparison, discovered more than twelve *thousand* differences. See Farrand, p. xxxvi.

originality, *since the English edition is no more than a translation from the French, which of itself is a professed version of a transcription*'.*

But notwithstanding his unique access to the manuscripts, Temple's edition of the works met with a public already prepared to question its authenticity. Only months before, having seen a volume advertised in a French magazine, the writer Charles Malo rushed to press a pirated two-volume selection that he called 'inedité et secrète' of the Doctor's late correspondence:

'I should reproach myself if I had suppressed the smallest passage of it.'

In one of those volumes he dismissed Temple's edition sight unseen as 'a thing of shreds and patches' and a 'fraudulent speculation' and promised instead to deliver the Doctor's words unfiltered by any mercenary obligations. The credulous, in his view, who might be taken in by any volume of Temple Franklin's 'will still not have Franklin' 'with all that freedom of speech so piquant and so noble which he indulged toward all the courts of Europe'.[20] *At Malo's provocations the French press exploded, and what mattered was not that Temple might commit patricide to his grandfather's memory – that was not possible – but that he should attempt by unspecific omissions to defuse a mythology still in the making.*

Was it not also true that omitting to make such omissions was of even graver concern? I suggested once to Cladentweed that the supposed agent of suppression within the British government acted far more powerfully on the public imagination when not identified than ever would have been the case had the perpetrator been positively known. The same seems to have been true, in reading Malo and his set, for the authentic Franklin. No edition, simply put, would to their minds ever supply him. Whatever subversive genius the complete memoirs contained would be, as though by definition had to be, *always withheld. No ordinary person was to be let in on it. The closest anyone came prior to John Bigelow was the well-connected book dealer Jules Renouard.*

In 1828 M. Renouard published in two seemingly pedestrian volumes the memoirs of Dr Franklin. The first comprised everything in Temple's edition, newly translated into French by the publisher's brother. The preface to this was short, and so uninteresting that few apparently bothered to read the second volume, in which the editor introduced unpublished material from the original manuscript that had been written after the fair copies were sent to Europe. It was taken from a translation made by Le Veillard of the two manuscripts that had been at different times in his possession. The existence of this sequel was unknown to anyone but the Le Veillard heir, who alone in 1817 could have proved the charges of suppression against Temple Franklin. It is astonishing that no reviewer of Renouard's edition or subsequent editor seems to have made use of it to renew those charges.

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* *Memoirs*, ed. by Temple Franklin, p. viii.

The quiet edition slept beneath the notice even of Dr Jared Sparks, who spent months turning over French libraries for material written by or to Franklin. Several reservations notwithstanding, Sparks was ready to accept the notion of a correct and finally authentic text even if it came from so inscrutable a source as Temple Franklin. He thought Temple's manner of excusing the delay in publication 'not very satisfactory' but could find no evidence whatever of suppression – and that, it seemed, was that. By 1840, when Temple's stash of his grandfather's papers was uncovered at London, the idea that any had escaped publication was so far beyond credence that the possessor of them could not find a buyer at any price.

It was eleven years before the entire collection, minus a handful of 'autographs' that had been sold individually, ended up in the hands of Henry Stevens. To a collector of his experience it would have been clear at a glance that a great many of those letters were not to be found anywhere in Temple's edition. Mr Stevens's account came to me by the same packet as the notes of Ms Lopez. Cladentweed called it 'straight bourbon' for the scholar of the memoirs.

This document, which Mr Stevens composed for the auction-house pamphlet, led me to share Cladentweed's contempt for John Bigelow on the grounds that his flat adoption of Malo's outrage and rehearsal of his charges, when looked at with a particular frame of reference, could not seem otherwise than a cynical and irresponsible ploy to sell more books. When pressed on the matter, my friend noted with a quickness that might have been contempt that such 'farraginous warmth' as Bigelow projected served to skirt the central question: were the changes, after all, Temple's? Were the revisions of grammar and language present in that edition present also in the fair copies? Bigelow had listed a number of them in a second column beside the autograph text, in each case condemning the change as being utterly incompatible with anything Dr Franklin would have put into his fair copies. The truth was that nobody since Temple's publisher had seen either of the copies, nobody knew where they had gone to, and nobody – not Sparks, not Bigelow – had thought to look for them.

Except Stevens had.

From the publisher, who was still living in 1851, Mr Stevens received the details of the protracted negotiations that had taken place with Temple Franklin and of the ultimate disappointment with the product he delivered. The manuscripts he had not included were to comprise an additional five volumes, and were kept secret from the public in order to maximise the impact of their eventual publication. But Temple's edition had sold so poorly and he was found so laborious to deal with that there was no interest in following through with the second instalment.

Of the fair copies there was no trace whatsoever.

The testimony of Henry Stevens, who had at his disposal a collection of material unrivalled anywhere, was utterly complete and convincing. In the matter of the revisions I agreed with him: I was not part of that camp that believed Temple had made them. For Cladentweed it was, he said, not so simple, but he refused to take any position that was purely speculative. It was at this point or a little beyond it that we closed the case, unresolved.

It was many months before I found any reason to re-open it. Somehow, guided still by questions I had scarcely a frame for, and sensible (as I thought) of a penumbra on Dr Franklin's life of the old controversy, I had set off – alone – in a markedly new direction. In the course of indulging Osborne's generosity and of passing many mornings in the reading rooms at the Institute, I came to consider whether the public controversy around the memoirs was to be attributable so easily to competitive invention, as I had first supposed. On repeated readings I had perceived a palpable tension expressed in the differences between Dr Franklin's autograph manuscript and the text printed by his grandson from the fair copy; and I now thought the controversy related largely and at last to that tension. In short, I suspected that the two drafts had come to indicate facets of Dr Franklin himself. I had not, and still have not, diagnosed in the manner of modern psychology the class or grade of this duality, and I cannot say whether this step in my thinking was an indirect consequence of Ms Lopez's exposition of his grandson, to which I had returned many times, or of the research with which I was then primarily occupied, or merely of the strength of habit.

Osborne, upon hearing me out on it, furnished for me another curious and rare enterprise, a volume purporting to be a 'restoration' of the fair copy by a twentieth-century scholar. He told me that he himself had also identified, as he saw it, the same pattern expressed across the spectrum of Franklin scholarship under a variety of different guises, all of which came down, in the end, to one measure: authoritative and not. I thanked him, not then grasping what he meant by this, and left with the wide volume under my arm. At home I found pasted onto the first page the list in Osborne's hand:*

'Latin or Anglo-Saxon. Genteel or low. European or American. Public, or private. Self-interested, or patriotic. Permissive, or puritanical. Mutilated, or authentic.'†

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* *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin: A Restoration of a 'Fair Copy'*, ed. by Max Farrand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949).

† See, for instances of these among Franklin's biographers: John Bach McMaster, *Benjamin Franklin as a Man of Letters* (1887), quoted in Farrand, *Parallel Text*, p. xxxii; Farrand, *Parallel Text*; Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin, 2005); Currey, *Franklin: Patriot of Spy?*; Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Garden City, 1938); Bigelow, *Autobiography*.

That volume was the first I had ever heard of Dr Max Farrand, and it was plain to me that his project of restoring the fair copy from clues in the extant texts was a chimeric one. Indeed, his title is misleading in that it is not so much the 'fair copy' he was after, but rather Franklin's last intention: an authoritative text – there it was again – against the irregularities of all the others. Even so, I did not hestitate to confirm Dr Farrand's initial conclusions, by checking both the Temple Franklin edition and the autograph manuscript against the Buisson translation of 1791, as he had done. In several places I found it to be a word-for-word translation of language present only in Temple's edition. It was obvious that M. Buisson's edition was made from the same text that Temple used: a fair copy. The sole example given by John Bigelow of any tinkering on the part of Temple that was not competely eroded by that exercise was the addition of one line to the salutation:

'To William Franklin, Esq., Governor of New-Jersey, North America.'*

Perhaps it was Temple's way of honouring his father's memory.

But so much for the rest of Bigelow's 'mutilations'. The 'Bohemian' whose 'contamination' of Dr Franklin's style he found so appalling was none other than the Doctor himself, revising to his present taste in 1789 what he had written almost twenty years prior. For Dr Farrand it was quickly evident that a 'restoration' of the lost revisions could be constructed from the only other translation known to have been made from the fair copy. If there was a flaw in such a logical step it was that nobody knew how far Le Veillard had got before resuming without note from the manuscript he received from Temple Franklin in the summer of 1791. Dr Farrand, however, seems to have regarded the obstruction with confidence – not undue, given his absolute mastery of the material. Where I had been dismissive at first of his 'fair copy', I came to see after considering his arguments that such a restoration – call it instead the last intention – was indeed within reach.

I immediately presented Cladentweed with a summary of the progress I had made over two years and a bevy of new insights, suppressing with meticulous care any note of triumph. For the truth was that I had caught him up at last, even (or so I thought) excelled him in one or two instances. For six months I had no word. Meanwhile, I demanded that Osborne put into

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* Some time afterward, on repeating this point, I was informed by one Mr Ludwig, who had bettered himself by many a careful reading of these editions, that it seemed likely that Temple Franklin had taken it upon himself to omit certain details regarding the social status of his ancestors. Closer inspection revealed one omission of the words 'a dyer' from a passage describing an uncle. I trust that there may be others. I asked Mr Ludwig what he made of it. His reply: 'I reckon that would be Mr Franklin's resentment at being passed over for the French ministry on account, to his mind, of his forefathers' being tradesmen.'

*my hands everything, no matter how insignificant, that Dr Farrand had published on the memoirs.**

I had never once known Cladent-weed to concede a point, and I never would. In lieu of anything like the response I imagined, I received by private courier a brief and almost perfunctory note of congratulations (though not concession) and, separately, a thick packet containing all of my letters to him. The note was postmarked from Berlin, but the return address I discovered to be in a street that was never rebuilt after the war.

What provoked him to it I don't know. I had confessed my admiration for Dr Farrand's unprecedented – literally microscopic – knowledge of the manuscript and also his undertaking, from so expert a judgement as his, to reverse engineer a 'fair copy' – even one whose accuracy could never be truly verified. I directed my friend to what was, at last, the authoritative text and the epitome of the Doctor's last intention. He did not, however, share my enthusiasm.

'The very effort surprised me (he wrote). He *[Farrand]* could have stopped at presenting – viz. the Parallel Text edition – the four relevant texts side by side. To go further as he did – as you would have done and for all I know are now doing – is to believe that such tension unresolved in life could ever be resolved in death. It's an indication of those same old reductions still squaring the hell out of his private portrait of Dr Franklin, though he (and you) had affected to have transcended them.'

'I should not have to tell you, *given your preamble to all this*, to consider *both versions*, and any others that may yet appear, as being the Doctor's *authentic* intention, each one of and within him – so far as your making them facets might go (which I am willing to grant you as a convenience but nothing more). Each variously ascendant *in relation to himself*.'

Beneath these lines he signed 'your humble servant' and a single word, doubly underlined:

CHRONOLOGY.

It was the last I heard from him.

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* I was in this way made the caretaker of *Benjamin Franklin's Memoirs: Parallel Text Edition*, being, reckoned Osborne, the only other thing worth reading that met the criteria I had given him. When the two English texts are arranged specifically to be read in parallel the differences between them is at once apparent and underwhelming. It has been entertained that the changes were made by the amanuensis acting under Dr Franklin's eye. For can we believe that he would send the copy abroad, accompanied twice by his explicitly signalling his reservations about it, without first looking it over? Dr Farrand, however, does not think this worth consideration. He merely states that, 'The fair copies embodied changes which, it must be assumed, were made with Franklin's tacit or expressed approval.' See pp. xxxiii, xxxvii.

Fytte Four

CLANDENTWEED, TO THE EDITOR:
'My interest in Franklin, if you want the truth of it, is
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL.'

I had promised Cladentweed, prior to setting out on my own pursuit, a 'coup de grâce' against Temple Franklin's innocence. The letter was composed earlier than our brief and fatal recommencement, given above, by about two years and so I break chronology to print it here as a kind of postlude. It is the final quirk in a series of quirky traces that led nowhere, or so I was convinced by the abandoned notes of Claude-Ann Lopez whose reading had left me in a state of immediate transfixion.

But in all honesty I still find myself seduced now and again by the testimony transmitted herein and reluctant to consign to oblivion the missing half of Dr Franklin's life.

10

Norwich, Saint Benedicts St, 15 April, ——.

Dear C——,

I have now, at your request, made myself familiar with the full notes of Ms Lopez and the belated testimony given in 1881 by Henry Stevens, which I think to be the finest treatment of all the twisting, fraying, looping back, dissembling threads that one encounters in the inspection of the seemingly tidy little autobiography.

But notwithstanding the texture of finality to Mr Stevens's essay, there exists substantive testimony not mentioned by any editor of Franklin or by Mr Stevens. If found to be credible it would constitute the best evidence yet that the grandson was not altogether clean in this, that out of limited evidence questions have been assigned answers that merely appear to satisfy them. So I return us to the promise of my last.

In 1868, just weeks before the last proofs of the 'authentic' memoirs had gone to the printer, John Bigelow received a note from a stranger at Philadelphia, Mr William Duane. Duane was a descendant it seems of Dr Franklin's daughter. He had composed his message for no other purpose than to advertise that:

'I have lately learnt that you are about publishing the entire autobiography of Dr. Franklin, recently recovered by you in France. I have thought it might interest you to know that fifty years ago the opinion of his descendants here was that Temple Franklin had received a *consideration* from the British government for suppressing part of the Memoirs. The delay in publishing any part of it may have been due to the same cause.'

Very respectfully, etc. It does not appear in Bigelow's preface but in his *Retrospections*, some hundred-odd pages after the affair of the manuscript. I can recall dismissing it simply because it does nothing more than to confirm, as Bigelow himself put into a footnote, the opinions advanced in his *Life of B. F.* – opinions he was not the first or even the tenth of Franklin's editors to espouse though he brought to them the most worthwhile evidence. It was only on coming again to it by accident that I perceived in Mr Duane's language an indication of something more, a continuation in Temple of the fracture that family suffered from his father remaining loyal to the crown.

The delicate nature of some guarded abrasiveness between the two sides is almost palpable in the decision taken very early by the first William Duane (grandfather to the one above) to print the very edition that he knew his relative to be preparing for European markets.[21] This he was able to undertake in 1807 or '08 using manuscripts and copies of papers that remained at Philadelphia, and others that he solicited – leaving aside the first volume until he heard from Temple, as it was to be the memoirs.* Before he could finish the final volume he was discovered, however, and stopped, and forced into Temple's simultaneous publication scheme that now included four countries on two continents. Some of these sly Philadelphia volumes which I have been able to locate nevertheless bear the two dates. In short, William Duane kept his edition back for ten years, only to bind it with new title pages so that it would seem on the face of it to be a reprint of Temple's edition. It wasn't; Sparks noted it is *more complete* – and that was not all.

Duane's edition was criticised by Ford in 1889 as being 'full of blunders and misstatements'. And it is true that he was a careless compositor. But the more immediate truth, which Mr Duane could not bring to his own defense without exposing some activity or arrangement he should not, was that he hadn't printed from

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* 'The four volumes of Franklins works with plates are all printed and at two and a half dollars a volume, these alone are worth 20,000 dollars – I have even offered these at a reduced price engaging or forfeit the whole to have the *Memoirs* written & printed by the 4th of July next.' *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Retirement Series*, III, ed. J. Jefferson Looney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 449–453 (15 March 1811, William Duane to Thomas Jefferson).

final copies of the letters at all, or from Temple's edition, but rather from drafts.* I have said somewhere before that the usual practice among Franklin's editors was to regard the minutiae of their sources as something worth throwing into the barest relief. Duane, in a departure from this, merely hinted in the last volume that a number of letters 'have been derived from two different sources' and others 'derived from a third source, no less obviously authentic'.† But when the edition was reviewed alongside Temple's and others in 1817 in *The Analectic Magazine*, the reviewer pretended to find nothing obvious at all in it, and there followed a brief comparison with Temple's 'originals' – 'from which these same "*sources*" must have been derived' – to Duane's eternal detriment.‡ And there you see immediately the error of this reviewer, if we can call it that, or the malice. Naturally, differences were found – 'blunders' he said, the same word Ford repeated later, I think, without much consulting the edition itself – and these so-called blunders were used to underscore Mr Duane's concealment of his sources. But the reviewer gives away his bias in asking,

'Why is this same Philadelphia Editor constantly alluding to books in Dr. Franklin's library, without telling us how those books came into his possession?'

For William Duane was well-known as an eager political firebrand not just in his city but everywhere in the country. It is impossible that the anyone, must less anyone taking the trouble to review his edition upon publication for a Philadelphia magazine, could not have been aware that Duane had married the widow of Dr Franklin's grandson, Benjamin Bache.§ One does not need to put himself through a second reading to

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* It seems likely that in reducing to a reasonable number the trunks he would have to transport to London, Temple Franklin had set aside the drafts of letters – Stevens noted there were sometimes four of even five of each – taking with him only the most interesting in their final form for the printer.

† Mr Duane, in a 1834 republication of his 1808–18 edition, again obscured the location of his 'sources'. He may have been using manuscripts that were the property of Temple Franklin and left by him in the care of Mr George Fox. I can see no other way that he could have printed, in 1809, without Temple's cooperation, some of the material that he did. See 'Postliminious Preface', in *The Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. by William Duane, 1 (Philadelphia: McCarthy & Davis, 1834).

‡ The review is in *The Analectic Magazine*, 9 (May 1817), pp. 353–394.

§ Cladentweed's next, I knew, would be twice as long if I reminded him that Benjamin Bache, the founder and first editor of the *Aurora*, was jailed by the Adams administration, charged under the Alien and Sedition Act with libelling the president and inciting sedition. Undeterred, he posted bail and printed a scathing condemnation of the Act as a violation of the First Amendment.

notice how deeply the cuts are aimed, how contemptuous the tone, how every thing decent about Duane's work – and there are genuine points of light – are but grudgingly admitted and instantly employed as segues to further abuse, how, in short, the reviewer required nary a glance at it himself to know that he would excoriate Mr Duane's edition whatever its virtues.

I do not make this halfway defence of Mr Duane as a preamble to resurrecting his edition of Dr Franklin's works. I do so out of a sense that he had been ill-used, and that were he not so discredited from the first, his preface in a later republication of the memoirs, dated 1834, would have invited before now a careful look. For if there was one instance in 1818 of Mr Duane taking the side of caution over his usual horn-locking, it was his refusal to express any opinion whatever of Temple Franklin. None of his volumes from 1808–09 and 1818 contains the slightest hint of the maddening disappointment and frustration he expressed openly in his private letters. That, and more, he withheld until after Temple's death.

But I shall return to this.

There is a page of the Lopez notes, you may guess already which, that I have continued every so often to look upon. A meagre line inserted into the chronology at 26 January 1791 is about all there is to indicate the touching eulogy of Dr Franklin read that date on the floor of the Senate. Six weeks earlier it had come addressed to the United States and signed in official capacity by Abbé Sieyès – President of the Assemblée nationale, which was the French Revolutionary congress. Washington withheld it for reasons about to be clear. The reception, it is noted, was 'icy', and the full recorded remark – I did not sleep until I had hunted it down – is this, recorded that day by one of the senators:

'I cannot help painting to myself the disappointment that awaits the French Patriots, while their warm fancies are figuring the raptures that we will be thrown into, on the Receipt of their letter, and the information of the honors which they have bestowed on our Countryman, and anticipating the complimentary echos of our Answers, when they find that we, cold as Clay, care not a fig about them, Franklin or Freedom.'*

Temple Franklin, by this time, was already arrived at London with documents by which, if he chose, to do a good turn to the nation whose government's sentiment regarding his grandfather is described above. Now granting you all of the points you

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* The lines are in the published journal of Maclay, senator from Pennsylvania, and are more easily located in the Jefferson Papers, ed. by Julian P. Boyd. See 'Editorial Note: Death of Franklin', *Founders Online*, National Archives <HTTP://FOUNDERS.ARCHIVES.GOV/DOCUMENTS/JEFFERSON/01-19-02-0005-0001>.

have raised and the supporting material you included to bolster them, I think I should comprehend the facts swaying in Temple's favour. But consider the following:

1) Temple, upon returning to the United States in 1785, took possession of his father's estate in New Jersey. He was not the Doctor's amanuensis, as we had assumed.

2) Benjamin Bache was.

3) Franklin wrote, *after* he had sent copies to Europe, that he was continuing the memoirs by amanuensis. The final eight pages of the manuscript Mr Bigelow purchased were not yet composed when the Doctor sent the copies to London and Passy, and were not printed in the Temple Franklin edition. They are written in a progressively laboured hand that finally halts without punctuation and can only be that of Dr Franklin. The manuscript bears no traces of Benjamin Bache ever having touched it.

4) However, the manuscript that Dr Franklin entrusted to Thomas Jefferson was, by Mr Bache's own account, one that he was made to copy several times, or it was one of those copies. This must be part or all of what was done by amanuensis, Franklin revising aloud from his bed. There are accordingly two extant copies of this manuscript.

5) Neither is in the hand of Mr Bache.*

In 1834 a publisher at Philadelphia reprinted William Duane's edition of the memoirs and other writings in two volumes, with new material come to light since the earlier edition. To introduce it Duane made what he called a 'postliminious preface' touching on many subjects, which he framed as an appeal 'to some future biographer, should one arise, whose benevolence and disinterestedness of purpose may be in sympathy with the American sage'. Something, he said, was necessary to elucidate 'circumstances which appertain to the writings – to the history of the author – and to the matter now added, as well as to some part of the Memoirs, which it is now too evident have been withheld or suppressed'. To that end he reprinted generous extracts of the relevant material: Temple's preface and non-apology for his delay (1817), the charges frankly levelled against him by the *Edinburgh Review* (1806), the insinuations of Johnson's edition same year, and Jefferson's account of his final visit to Franklin Court, transmitted privately, and very close in substance to what was later published but with one important difference. The Doctor, Jefferson told Duane, directed his grandson 'to go into the library, and from a shelf described where he would find *three folio stitched books*, bring him one of them'. (Not a 'quire' taken from the table, as he thought later.) This book was intended, Dr Franklin said, for Mr Jefferson 'and for posterity'.

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* See 'Journal of Negotiations in London, 22 March 1775', *Papers*, XXI, pp. 540–599, n. 8.

When Dr Franklin died, 'an advertisement appeared in the public prints, calling upon all persons who possessed papers, books, or manuscripts of the deceased to return them to the legatee'. Jefferson properly sent the book to Temple Franklin, 'who on receiving from the gentleman by whom I sent it, said, "Hah! this is the very thing I wanted."'. This was relayed back to Jefferson, who only then suspected that the Doctor had dispersed the copies very deliberately, in case Temple should not prove honest, and he regretted that he had not made a copy of it.

This account is set beside particulars personally communicated to Mr Duane by Benjamin Bache, and not mentioned by later editors. I enclose below in full Mr Bache's account as given by Duane, and leave you with this final question:

What happened to the stitched folios in Mr Bache's hand?

Yours, etc.

Enclosure

'Conversing with the late Benj. F. Bache, the doctor's grandson, on the subject of the memoirs published by Dr. Steuber *[1790]*, he casually said that there were some transactions which were yet to appear, which would excite great attention when Temple should publish his grandfather's papers; he had himself made three copies of a very important writing, one of which he had been told was intended for himself; but, said he,

"Temple tells me he possesses them all."

Being asked if the subject was proper to be mentioned, he replied,

"No! I expected to have had some concern in the publication myself, but he whose right it was to decide has disposed of them otherwise; he considered Temple so ill requited by the government for his laborious services abroad, that as a small compensation, he bestowed the whole on him.

"His wishes were always sacred with me – my lips are sealed."'

1 The first indication of the intentional use of narrative form is that there are two types of notation. The writer and arranger of the letters – somewhere identified as 'B.' – and his correspondent, Cladentweed, make editorial notation and marginalia. This meta-text is understood to be intrinsic to the monograph which I, the researcher, am presenting here by way of an introduction. My own notes are properly included as section endnotes, of which this is the first.

2 For assistance leant on this matter, the author expresses his gratitude to Father Mark Genszler, Diocese of Long Island, NY.

3 Americans now refer to Franklin's *Autobiography*, and there is still legitimacy to the modern distinction between one's autobiography and his memoirs. Franklin never used the modern term. For him, and for most of the eighteenth– and nineteenth–century editors who appear here, he had composed *memoirs*.

4 John Bigelow's account is found in his memoirs, *Retrospections of an Active Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1913), IV, pp. 6–9, and in his correspondence (passim) with William H. Huntington. It is worth comparing what is written there with the preface to his *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1868).

5 Mémoires de Benjamin Franklin, écrits par lui-même, trans. by Édouard Laboulaye, 2nd edn (Paris: Hachette, 1866), p. 7.

6 The reference is to correspondence from 1785 onwards from Franklin to Mme Brillon. In these and also the letters to Mme Helvétius, the sentiment is there beneath the words, and even at one point: 'Je suis heureux d'être avec ma Famille, mes Enfans, c'est vrai; mais pour le reste, j'etais plus heureux en France.' ('The truth is that it pleases me to be with my family, my children; but as for everything else, I was happier in France.') See *Franklin Papers Digital Edition*, 20 October 1785. <HTTP://**FRANKLINPAPERS.ORG**/FRANKLIN//YALE?VOL=43&PAGE=505>

The only of Franklin's biographers who has quoted from this letter – which is not yet published in any collection of his works – is Stacy Schiff, *A Great Improvisation* (Macmillan, 2006) – where the lines are tucked into the epilogue.

7 Verbal portraits of Henry Stevens can be found in Benjamin Moran, *Journal, 1857–1865*, ed. by Sarah A. Wallace and Frances E. Gillespie (University of Chicago Press, 1948–49), I, p. 487; and also Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks*, ed. by Randall Stewart (New York: Modern Language Association, 1941), II, p. 326.

8 The letter is also reproduced in John Bigelow, *Some Recollections of the Late Edouard Laboulaye* (New York: privately printed, 1889), p. 28.

9 Samuel Romilly, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Samuel Romilly, Written by Himself, with a Selection from His Correspondence*, ed. by John Romilly and Frederick Romilly, 3rd edn (London: Murray, 1841), I, pp. 407–408, 412.

10 Francis William Blagdon, *Paris As It Was and As It Is* (London, 1803), p. x.

11 'William Temple Franklin appointment books: diaries, 1785-1803.' Unpublished notes by Claude-Anne Lopez, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

[12] Pierre Jules Fontaine, *Manuel de l'amateur d'autographes* (Paris: Morta, 1836), p. 339.

[13] Sotheby, Wilkinson, & Hodge, *Henry Stevens's Historical Collections: Auction Catalogue* (London: J. Davy & Sons, 1881), p. 160A; Bigelow, *Autobiography*, p. 32 n.

[14] *Works of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. by Jared Sparks (Philadelphia: Childs & Peterson, 1840), X, pp. 393–98. Emphasis not in the original.

[15] See 17 February 1788, to Louis-Guillaume Le Veillard, *Franklin Papers Digital Edition*. <HTTP://**FRANKLINPAPERS.ORG**/FRANKLIN//YALE?VOL=45&PAGE=406&SSN=001-35-0032>

[16] Sparks, X, pp. 368–71 (29 November 1788, to Charles Thomson). Dated December in the *Franklin Papers Digital Edition*. <HTTP://**FRANKLINPAPERS.ORG**/FRANKLIN/YALE?VOL=46&PAGE=157&SSN=001-43-0024>

[17] Francis Fukuyama, 'Surveillance Drones, Take Two', *The American Interest*, 20 September 2012. <HTTP://**BLOGS.THE-AMERICAN-INTEREST.COM**/FUKUYAMA/2012/09/20/SURVEILLANCE-DRONES-TAKE-TWO>

[18] The circumstances of Temple's lucrative project, by which he was made heavier by £7,000, were unknown to collectors and editors for most of the nineteenth century. Henry Stevens did not know them when he published his summary, in 1881, of the collection then gracing the auction block. Ford, however, did know by 1889: 'Temple Franklin was himself diverted from the venture by a profitable agency in an American land company'. See item 561 in Paul L. Ford, *Franklin Bibliography* (Brooklyn: 1889). Of several probable sources for Ford's information, the earliest was a public edition of Jefferson's works, ed. by H. A. Washington (New York: Mac Coun, 1884), III, p. 231.

[19] Quoted in Currey, pp. 106–108.

[20] The translation in Bigelow, *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (London: Lippincott, 1869), Appendix 8, p. 384, is found in the original in Malo's second volume (Paris: Janet Pere, 1817).

[21] The volumes printed early were numbers two through five. Volume one was to be the memoirs, volume six additional correspondence. See letters from Duane to James Madison (1 May 1807) and Thomas Jefferson (17 August 1810) at *Founders Online*, National Archives, <HTTP://**FOUNDERS.ARCHIVES.GOV**/DOCUMENTS/MADISON/99-01-02-1659>, <HTTP://**FOUNDERS.ARCHIVES.GOV**/DOCUMENTS/JEFFERSON/03-03-02-0010>; also, item number 568 in Ford.

1

Prizes

AUGUST, 1762.
Portsmouth.

Adieu, adieu

The fortress town lay amidst a gentle bob of rigged timber, dark poles against the vast distance. When he left the inn and walked the dirt streets for the docks or took the tourist circuit upon the ramparts, it was the distance that glimpsed suddenly blue, a sudden horizon at the bottom of the high street, a splotch in the puddles of a freak summer rain.[1] He had planned to meet it, to plunge as if into a river, the sooner to be swept away in its solitude. In those final English days he found he could settle even for that kind of certainty.

Instead he found himself holed up at a 'wretched inn' and 'waiting here only for a wind to waft me to America'. In the tone of his farewell letters is an uncharacteristic note of fancy, perhaps some ascendant tension or romance. It was just forty-eight hours since he had caught the Portsmouth machine out of London, and the long, idle stretches had already begun to twist the momentum that it had taken him months to build within himself. At the bottom of the high street across the expanse of the Grand Parade was the viewing platform where he could see the warships returning from Prussia and the western coast of Africa. There were second and third rate ships of the line equipped with upwards of sixty or ninety guns, a few smaller frigates and transports, sloops of war, the wherries going back and forth across the harbour, and the hoys that made daily for the Isle of Wight. In the mornings the guard gathered in the Parade and spun and clicked their evolutions against the clangs of the churchbells marking the hour and the explosions of the guns in the harbour, saluting to the King, to the King.[2]

He could hear the brass playing on after the guard had gone while a gallery of holidaymakers watched from the shady places along the shopfronts.

At two in the afternoon the post went out on the road to London. It came in at six. At around four he dined. On the first morning he was told the man-o'-war was delayed, the colonial trade was waiting in the harbour with the Spanish prize the frigate *Hermione*, and she was unloaded two days before of more silver than had ever been taken.[3]

On the first morning, sore from the day's riding on the hard road and anxious to clear out, he wrote to his bankers.[4]

The response came for him at the Post House in the street by the field called Governors Green. 'We hope you will never have occasion' to rely on the letter of credit enclosed 'but if you should, we are persuaded the name of B. M. da Costa whatever port you are carried into will be respected and procure you all you wish'. It was some assurance, anyway, against the present dangers of his voyage. But it did little to answer those that had caused him to make it. The money would be drawn against the account of a coral merchant in St. Mary Axe, a Sephardi Jew whose names, Mendes da Costa, were those of two ancient Iberian families. At short notice, and with Spanish privateers cruising the waters beyond the Channel, no better assistance could be expected. If his ship were captured it was the name as much as the ransom itself that would secure his release and onward conveyance with the least encumbrance. Later, when he had no use for it anymore, he would destroy the document.[5]

'We are with the most sincere regard, dear sir, your most faithful and obedient servants. Sargent, Aufrère & Co.'

'We have just sent you by the channel of the Post Office the two gold medals which you will apply as a mark of our good wishes for your college.'[6]

There was a separate note from Sargent to indicate the purpose of the medals. 'You remember the intention,' viz.: they were to be awarded 'for the two best performances at the general meeting or public act of your college or seminary. The subject of one to be, in a short English discourse, or essay *on the reciprocal advantages arising from a perpetual union between Great Britain and her American colonies*'.[7]

He had exactly specified the wording.

The Doctor pocketed the items.

It would be a fortnight's wait for the crossing. The town bells were pealing to announce the birth of the Prince of Wales at St. James's the morning before, and all the gunships at Spithead thundered their iron symphony in royal salute. His things were packed into many trunks. He said he felt poised on the edge of an afterlife, as if precariously, caught in a melancholy state of half-death he hadn't expected. Adieu, he told his friends. Adieu, adieu – I must go. But at the sight of the sea stretching beyond the bastions he was suddenly sensible of great tenderness in himself, felt at once loved and isolated, felt at once admired and regretted, and was overcome with the loss.

Splashes of dirt

On the southern road he passed by a parade of twenty wagons crowned with an escort of light horse and a noisy band of brass horns and kettledrums. Each wagon was drawn by eight horses and attended by four marines on foot and laden with three tonnes of treasure taken from the belly of *Hermione*.

Ever since the days of his boyhood when the local militia at Boston made an occasional public spectacle of its drills, the Doctor had accommodated the pageantry of the empire with something between thrill and inhibition. (He had long known to posture when a situation seemed to demand it of him.) This latest display was a testament to what he called the greatest political structure human wisdom had yet erected. In speaking of the empire's 'future grandeur and stability' he would take a sincere pride 'not merely as I am a colonist, but as I am a Briton' and look optimistically to the day when its power and influence would extend 'round the whole globe and awe the world'. It was extravagant language. It was even a little ugly coming from a government official, and in company he laughed it off as 'the ravings of a mad prophet'.[8] But the truth was that he had never felt himself so much a functionary of the empire and so near the centre of its intricate web of affairs, and during those years in London had striven to make himself worthy of it.

The people watched the marines all in new cloth with bayonets fixed and the wagons decorated with the captured flags hung beneath English ones. All of this will arrive at London the following day, the newspapers said, where the crowds are prepared to raise cheers to the King and his navy, and where the value of silver has fallen because the market will soon be flooded with all these chests of Spanish colonial dollars. Three hours before it arrives the Queen will be delivered of a son and when the announcement falls like confetti from the palace balcony the cheers are thrown up early and every noise that can be made with gun and bell is made. Then the treasure hoard pushes through the St. James's gate, a bellow of timpani and trumpets and French horns and hautboys – all the instrument, in short, that the garrison could spare – and the twenty wagonfuls of gold and silver, wool, cocoa, gunpowder, saddlecloth, and other goods altogether worth twelve million pounds sterling, or maybe one million, or not quite, though nobody knew yet for certain.[9] Over the week the fanfare of the birth will spread through 'this happy island', the Doctor will write, as he awaited a figurative death in the crowded little inn at Portsmouth. Above him the bells of St. Thomas's church, with its notable octagonal cupola and golden weathervane of a ship in full sail,

will swing all the next day. The prize herself would make a triumphant arrival at Dover the following week.[10]

But behind all the eruption was a nation tired of war. The markets languished in a sour stew of spiralling public debt, the failure of peace talks at Paris, and the announcement seven months earlier of a new front with Spain. On the topic of war negotiations even the usually intelligent reports in the *Chronicle*, to whose eight pages the Doctor brought more than a professional interest, had taken on a writhing, almost cynical tone. He read news for what it was – his own insiders were slipping him better information – but in this instance the popular rally was sound. Not even the reduction that February of four French islands in the Caribbean had been enough to shift public opinion. More than anything else, it was the sweeping capture of so much valuable territory that lent credibility to speculations that a final, shattering blow against the Spanish was then under way; at the gaming clubs of the West End it was not a question of whether, but of when.[11]

The wagers paid out within a few months. Sightings early in June of three hundred sail of warships bound for the Havana dispelled any hope of a general peace before the end of the year. Rumours of revived talks were quickly discounted as a hollow ruse spread from above 'in order to quiet the minds of the people'.

But peace was the only event certain to return the pound to health. On that everyone was in agreement, and the Doctor had told himself that the Prime Minister, whose portrait he was to hang in his home at Philadelphia, wished it heartily. Even so: it was already too late to save the colony's parliamentary grant, which he had put into stocks when the war's end seemed inevitable and close. He had felt a sense of proximity and exposure to what he would later call 'the secret of affairs', as though he were then able to survey the true theatre of state behind the print façades. If only, with such lucidity at his disposal, he might have proved the wisdom of his appointment by offsetting the cost of it entirely.

He didn't want to think about it. The fact was that between December 1760 and August 1761 he had made several stock purchases totalling almost £27,000 on behalf of the province of Pennsylvania.[12] When the order came from Philadelphia to cash out, he had implored the Assembly leaders to wait for a peace announcement and warned them, by several different channels lest any fail to carry, that the value of the holdings stood no greater than eighty percent of the original investment.[13]

The most he had been able to do, and his last task as agent for the colony, had been to protect its friendly borrowing rates by mitigating the fallout. When the bills came due

at the worst possible moment there was no choice but to sell, and in the end he sold at such a loss that he had found himself unable to satisfy the colony's creditors and in a state of utter mortification. Only by appealing (with a humility he could muster in very select circumstances) to the goodwill of Messieurs George Aufrère and John Sargent, textile merchants in Mincing Lane and bankers to the colony, had the Doctor managed to avoid a catastrophic explosion of returned bills. It had taken nothing less than a combination of charm, personal assurances, and outright sycophancy, but the bankers – absent two of their usual number, who thought it 'too delicate a thing' to meddle in – furnished in the end, at extraordinary risk to themselves and 'without accepting any security other than that which we know we have in your character', what amounted to an enormous personal loan. But although he had perhaps preserved the colony's credit, the Doctor was less fortunate when it came to his own reputation. For his perceived mismanagement he was legally forbidden to ever again accept funds on behalf of the government of Pennsylvania.[14]

Though his allies in the Assembly had been silent on the matter, the whole ordeal had given his enemies plenty to squawk about. Within limited circles, so as not to alarm investors, he was ridiculed by some of his own colleagues for cack-handedly dabbling in activities he had neither the experience nor the society to succeed in.[15] He found himself less concerned about the slung mud than about the absence of anything at all from the men who had always fed him timely intelligence from Philadelphia. 'Splashes of dirt,' went the common line, 'would all rub off when they were dry'.[16] It was true that he resented them when they were fresh but at least they told him where he stood. When faced with the impossibility of knowing the size and nature of the danger before him, he felt powerless and too inclined to harbour dark illusions.

'I must go.'

Ignorant, he was inconsolable. He had become frank and undiplomatic, would no longer (he had stated to a friend earlier that year) be prevailed upon 'to do nothing'.[17]

A country and a people that I love

The downland road is knobby with flint shards that work up to the surface and catch the wheels, jerking the machine's suspension, and exposing the passengers to such abuse that the elderly and the frail could feel their own organs knocking about within them.[18] It could not have been a comfortable journey, but the Doctor indicated none of the physical complaints that, in his final decade, would severely hamper his mobility. (He

would crow wryly then about having journeyed from Paris to Havre de Grace by the humble transport of mules, like Christ into Jerusalem – humble, apart from the use of the royal litter, extended to him as courtesy by the Queen of France.) But when he was leaving London the infirmity and the patronage were yet to come. Having not quite reached his fifty-seventh year, it was only when he caught cold, or when the gout was biting, or sometimes when his ambition reached an impasse, that he talked of his life's 'evening' and attributed the time remaining him to the favour of Divine Providence. Those were the moments when he had missed most the careful attention of his wife and daughter and the comforts of the house in the quiet end of the high street at Philadelphia. In later years, when most of his friends there had died, such golden expressions as he was fond of making would melt into what seemed like nostalgia, and he would think himself something of a stranger to his own country.[19]

From the high ground, called Portsdown, there was a grand prospect where the road escaped foliated banks and suddenly presented the entire harbour, spilling as it seemed inland and shimmering amidst the fields. Beyond the mouth was the wide channel known as Spithead where the Doctor had once supposed the entire navy might be laid up in peacetime. The smell of tar from the yards rose up on the midsummer breeze and he could spot the belltower, lone and dark, and the ships planing across the water.

At the bottom of the hill a tidal creek severed the mainland, whose bank was fortified with a sprawl of new guns. Since its walls had been expanded five years before, Portsmouth had become the most heavily defended fortress in the world. Sometime before nine in the evening, when the town shut up for the night, he felt the flying machine slow and halt before the great stone arch of the Landport Gate so that a team of garrison men could conduct a search of the passengers and luggage. It was standard procedure to search all traffic for explosives, evidence of espionage, and contraband, the inconvenience having little effect on the success of the fortress as a popular seaside resort.

Night drew in slowly. Out at Spithead he could see *Hermione* and one of her captors, the sixth-rate frigate HMS *Active*. He discovered that the man-o'-war that was to be the convoy to Philadelphia, and had been under sailing orders for a fortnight earlier, was held up again in some other port. His accommodation, *Carolina*, the mail, could not yet be boarded. He took a cheap room, aware that much of his own money was still tied up in stocks, and prepared to wait.

Four, it was light. Six or seven, the church bells began their musical pattern and the inn was already up, a few of the horses freed of their stabling and gone with their

travellers on the road north into the hills. At London he would rise before the coal-smoke spoilt the breeze, strip down in the easy light of morning, and look over his letters. He sometimes answered them while the air of the night before lingered on his nakedness like a tonic, 'licking up and carrying off' the bad stuff from his eczematous scalp and back and gouty feet. 'Having an air bath,' he called it when at last one of the women in the house discovered him like that, and allowed the charges of eccentricity it brought him by testifying to the curative properties of undress.[20]

When the bathing-house opens the public slides like tidewater into its pools, the bold without the assistance of a swimming guide, the others paying a silver three-penny extra to have one, no matter rain or shine since the whole facility is enclosed. All four pools are saltwater, there being no river to supply fresh, and are drained and filled daily by the natural sea-rhythm. Any sensible person must find this saltwater to be a most healthful solution, the promoters said.[21] Perhaps he swam there, or strolled along the coast to the pebble beach, or perhaps he felt no need to bathe. In more adventurous days he had been a swimmer of uncommon skill, found he could float on his back indefinitely, and drifted like that almost into a placeless life. He could still see himself then, a piece of flotsam, a runaway, his biography little more than a series of controversies and schemes made in haste. One moment he found himself looking through his window at Lincoln's Inn Fields, the exile of two cities in the colonies, shifting lead type at a nearby printing house and dreaming of meeting Newton. The next he had cut the few ties he had and was scheming by himself again. He had come then by the edge of this world, lacking map or compass and knowing he was in danger of what he called 'incongruity' in life, when with a single turn of his mind he might run forever along the waterways in the skin of a swim instructor and never touch down. He had only just turned twenty.[22]

It was a period of his youth that would always sting him, but then again he cherished the memories of those fugitive days. He had lodged first by St. Paul's, then by the great green before Lincoln's Inn, always in cheap rooms because he was completely unattached.[23] When he could no longer afford the theatre, reading and sermon-hearing became his chief pleasures; and, on one occasion, he amused himself writing cheap metaphysics.

He was capable then of great conceit. He was capable of loading one glyph after another into a line of his swaggering wisdom, much of it borrowed, never thinking better of it as they went in, and of arranging the lines upon a page and the pages into a press and stitched up the seam, once and a hundred times. He was capable, when under

that peacock spell, of stitching himself up so well in the pamphlet he called by some philosophic-sounding title, that his master would take him aside, having read the thing, to flatter him on its execution while ridiculing the hedonistic principles expressed in it. And he was then capable of destroying every last copy he could purchase back, or of wishing to.[24]

He could picture still the smoke his travesty had made in the end.

Then once, on a return trip from Chelsea, he hurled himself into the Thames and winged along in neat strokes and turns, accompanied all the way by whoops from the boat party, till the water traffic closed in at Blackfriars and he climbed back aboard dripping river and glory. And so to the water he thought he might go, and really live there.[25]

It would have supported him well, he had told himself. It would have shown him places, got him in with the right circles – leisured men who would pay to have their sons fluent in the sport illustrated by the Frenchman Thévenot in his widely read *L'Art de nager*. (Somehow in his youth the Doctor acquired a copy.) But when he had looked at himself then, penniless, homeless, and friendless, he saw his career for what it was: 'a confused variety of different scenes'. For all that ability and experience, for his knowledge of the world and of arguments and reason, he could have traced his most promising direction in life to a swimming manual.[26]

The history of that careless young man still affected him, even at a distance of almost forty years. He had been shown places, indeed, and entered certain circles by means of his performances, such as they were.[27] But how mistaken he had been in his behaviour! Sometimes he employed a classical word, *errata*, when regretting his misconduct, as if his life – or that part of it, anyway – were a printer's production and the book's mistakes scored on the back of the title page. And for a moment in that memory there darts across the bright surface of chance the freedom from all the conflicting things that men believed variously and warmed their tempers defending and that he, unable to shy away where he might prove able, had believed and had warmly, even offensively defended. It was true (he could now admit) that without the rewards of public debate, without purposeful activity among that set of actors, his imagination foundered and he lost track of himself, and he fell to feeling like a thing out of its place and useless because it was out of its place. 'How then', the Doctor asked or rather proposed to someone in July of that year, 'How then can I any longer be happy?'[28]

Inertia had submerged him. Like this he had always been, given to wander in pursuit of usefulness, which he sometimes called felicity and sometimes fame, though he could

not yet articulate the pattern in himself or its intended conclusion. Perhaps what he meant, after all, was simply that sense of belonging indicated, for him, by the word *reputation*.[29] In youth he had slipped over the world in a stream channel, equally at home anywhere it might set him, but running as water must always run to the sea. He was less amphibious now but that floating, drifting disposition had pulled him in again.

It occurred to him that his present direction or dedication 'to a country and a people that I love', was the project of the rational side of his nature, but that London had seduced the other side, and neither could let go. He felt divided by these polar energies, oriented as he saw them to opposite shores as a compass needle somehow settled on the east-west axis. But which way would it direct him, in the end? The Doctor didn't know, not with certainty, he said, and seemed content to leave it at that.[30] Among those of influence in Philadelphia, he was known to be a man of 'almost insatiable ambition' who had long courted the patronage of the London powerhouses. He had found it at last in the various honours bestowed on him. They included the offices of Philadelphia postmaster in 1737 and then in 1753 of Postmaster General for all of British North America, both salaried by the crown. Then, shortly into his forty-second year, he turned his printing business over to his partner, moved to the edge of town, and bought a laboratory full of strange devices from overseas so that he could spend the rest of his days reasoning out the mysteries of natural phenomena. After two years of quiet seclusion he had had to move back.[31]

When he entered into questions of politics it was to such an extent that within a matter of two years he held an elected seat in the Pennsylvania House of Assembly. It was during that swift rise in the halls of local government that he became a member of the Royal Society at London, and that he was awarded the Society's esteemed Copley Medal for his contributions to the understanding of electricity. It came as a surprise, for only once before had the prize gone to a man not resident in Britain, and never to one so provincially situated as he was. He did not have long to wait before, in 1756, his membership blossomed into a fellowship, granted for life, with a suspension of the usual fees until such time as he might be able to attend the meetings. But for his absence, it would have enabled him to serve on royal commissions, and so established him in a track that could lead to further and better preferment. A year later, as though by design, he was arranging to move to London on a public mission funded by the taxpayers of Pennsylvania, and his ambition was the subject of not a little controversy.[32]

The truth was that the voyage was the realisation of a plan made seven years earlier, when his son had quitted the military and ordered a pile of law books from London.

The Doctor had written to his closest friend there to request that Billy's name be entered – 'in one of those inns as you think best' – as a student of law. He added: 'Let me know what time must expire before he can be called to the Bar after such entry, because he intends to go to London a year or two before, to finish his studies.' Had he imagined then, had he even dreamt, that he himself was to be given the honour of a degree in civil law not once, but twice?

The Doctor's request came with an open-ended promise: 'I believe I shall hardly have the pleasure of seeing you in England till I accompany him when he goes over.'[33]

That William Franklin, since 1750 a student in the Middle Temple, was the young clerk he brought with him ostensibly in the service of government did little to assuage doubts of the mission's sincerity. News spread of holidays to the Peaks, the Lakes, the Dales; to Edinburgh and the foothills of Ben Nevis; to Paris and the Hague. There was talk of a grand family portrait in the works.[34]

Visiting colonials who saw him noted a change in his appearance. The Doctor's wardrobe, much of which he acquired within weeks of his arrival, included a handsome burgundy-brown suit worn during sittings for two portraits, the fashionable physical wig of a clergyman or medical doctor, a banyan of violet silk to be draped when at home over a bright yellow waistcoat, shoes with silver buckles, a pocketwatch, and a sword (with knot) for occasions of state. In the course of his first three months his bills from Howard, Christopher, Madden, Carisfield, and Elliot – the wigmaker, tailor, shirtmaker, shoemaker, and jeweller – ran to almost a hundred and thirty pounds. Each month's rent, which included meals, cost him just sixteen. 'We have four rooms furnished,' he wrote once his purchases were settled and things were 'pretty genteel', adding no detail except that 'living here is in every respect very expensive'.[35]

Within half a year of his departure, as his wife and daughter prepared the house for the warm seasons, a crate arrived on the river. It was the first of many that would be carted up High Street past the market and almost to the edge of town, to the rented two-storey property across from the Indian Queen tavern. During the Doctor's London residence his Philadelphia home was furnished gradually but splendidly with silver from Sheffield, large woven carpets, crewels, pins, and other things for needlework, a bed and eider down bedding, silk blankets of the newest French fashion ('never seen in England' for they were spoils taken with a ship), Flemish cotton for drapes and seat cushions, and other items that readily exemplified the advanced manufacturing techniques of the Old World. The carpet (actually two to be sewn together) and cotton bolts were, as the Doctor asserted, 'my fancyings' – as was the war loot.[36]

The dining table was soon set in the English style, with a cloth mat beneath each ('large') plate. The mats were selected by the Doctor's landlady, a merchant's widow who kept a sharp eye on the stalls at the nearby Hungerford market.[37] It was probably she who informed him that 'nobody breakfasts here on the naked table', so to Philadelphia there went two tablecloths of fine damask with matching napkins. There was no case of silver cutlery, nor silver candlesticks; those, the Doctor said in a sudden tone of conspicuity, he would keep in London for he was 'obliged sometimes to entertain polite company'. But he sent silver candle snuffers, a candle screen, new prayer books, and a reading glass set in a frame of tortoise-shell and silver.[38]

By the time of his first absent summer the sideboard and mantels were arranged with a connoisseur's display of porcelain 'to show the difference of workmanship … from all the china works in England', including a dessert setting decorated with tropical Indian flora, a bowl and cups of Bow porcelain painted after the Oriental style with intricate animal figures ('they will bear examining'), and silver salt ladles that cost little but demonstrated the latest fashion in such things. For having company there were several examples of cut glassware and for everyday small beer it was to be a comical anthropomorphic jug resembling the lady of the house. ('I fell in love with it at first sight; for I thought it looked like a fat jolly dame, clean and tidy, with a neat blue and white calico gown on, good natured and lovely, and put me in mind of – somebody.') Like the other china, the workmanship was of a standard almost unknown in the colonies.[39]

In the back of the house: curious new gadgets for paring vegetables, a set of saucepans tinned not with tin (which melted away with use) but with silver, wine from Madeira, gourmet crystal salt, and towards the end of one spring a twenty-pound wedge of Parmesan cheese.[40]

Soon his wife and daughter turned out in the latest colours and patterns, in gowns of silk and printed cotton from the state-of-the-art textile factories at Ghent and also of very fine gold-threaded gauze, satin lustring, Persian lining, and lace. Hats and gloves followed, and shoes, and buckles made of an astonishing new gem-like glass 'next in lustre to diamonds'. In the spring of 1762, more than twelve months gone since the Doctor paid the last of the lawyers' fees on the public account, there escaped through the windows the sounds of his daughter drumming fitfully on a new English harpsichord. By then it was clear both to the Doctor and to his enemies that the services he was meant to be carrying out for the colony had been outpaced by those he was carrying out for himself.[41]

It was as though, in words his son would later write, he wished 'that we could put Great Britain under sail, bring it over to this country and anchor it near us; we could then enjoy the pleasure which that delightful spot affords'.[42] There were enough boxes, several each year and intended not just for the house on High Street but also for cousins and friends, to make a convincing go at it. In his pocketbook the Doctor kept a punctilious record of all that he spent connected even peripherally to the nature of his mission.[43] Even the country jaunts he took each summer, son alongside him, could be seen to procure or secure valuable political alliances. In the end, despite what had seemed to him a just reckoning of expenses, he would claim the most conservative fraction of it. He may not have realised until it was too late what kind of figure he was cutting against that backdrop of imported English gentility, for it was almost as if he were really present as selector and purchaser and signatory to all those carefully packed boxes.[44]

During his absence not even the Assembly seat he held (to which he was elected *in absentia* each year) protected him from the suspicion of using his situation for personal gain. In the worst cases the official nature of his errand only helped to conflate the personal and the public, by bringing against him charges (more tempered when printed than when spoken in private) of harbouring a loyalty to his own ambitions before anything else.[45]

It was perhaps true. He later recalled that even as a boy of twelve he could be found immersed in a volume of *The Spectator*, haunting in his imagination the street of booksellers, Little Britain, where it was printed for one Mr. Buckley. It was practically his only glimpse from such a provincial vantage point as Boston onto the rich stage of urbanity that no place defined so well as London, and by his own admission not a single work in the English language had inspired him more. In those pages, just as he was making his own way out into the world, he discovered a true observer of humankind, the eponymous 'spectator' casually literate not just in the fashions but also the duties and philosophy of a certain breed of gentleman. The volumes – he soon read them all – presented a thoroughly novel character who modelled in every way the finest contemporary male ideal, it had seemed to him then and always.[46] Bitingly and with stunning grace the authors revelled in their social portraits while a foundation of solid virtue kept their acid wit from sliding into the abyss of travesty. Nothing he had ever come across was so marvellous, so capable of curing his mind of every fancy but that his own pen might one day produce such a style. There was no need to plot the social mechanics by which he hoped it would elevate him.

It had taken years, but by sedulous imitation, by an ingenuity on which the Doctor prided himself ever after, he manufactured his own Spectator, a 'corrected' voice as much as a corrected character. He never forgot those early hours of self-fashioning, or method acting, guided by that literate eye. As spectator he had perceived the ordinary types of folk embroidered in costume, he had composed lines for these new figures, and soon they had spoken words that were his own because in truth he had wrought them from pieces of himself. It was the sort of writing he never ceased to enjoy – his travelling cases were packed with examples of the moral essay in short and long form bound singly and collectively – and to pass on to his children. The *Gentleman's Magazine* (to which he maintained an overseas subscription), *The World and The Connoisseur* (presented to his daughter in her fourteenth year), *The Tatler*, and (certainly the best of them all) *The Spectator* characterized, and informed the character, of the class in which the Doctor moved, at last, with ease. He knew the gentleman of those pages so well by his pen, and knew the methods he had employed to become him, that he could claim (and did, in moments of true liberty) to be in possession of an art.[47]

And he had played it out during his five-year residence, a production he had been working up to all his life, and which had brought him even further than he once had dreamed. But it had all come at a price, he feared. 'Parading about England' was how some now styled his activities there: politically irrelevent if not outright tactless. Few in his Philadelphia circles would disagree that he had already extended the mission at least a year longer than was necessary. (Most were inclined to say two.)[48] For what nobody denied had been 'a vast expence' to the public, it seemed the gains of the Doctor's political adventure had been to have 'every point that was in controversy' determined against them.[49]

'Yet' – the murmurs grew more sardonic by the word – 'has it not afforded him a life of pleasure, and an opportunity of displaying his talents among the virtuosi of various kingdoms and nations?' The Doctor would not deny it and had plans already, or said he did, to publish the method by which he had come by his success. A book such as he imagined 'I flatter myself will be useful to many, and afford some reputation to its author'. Perhaps he would have the time to finish it 'when once again at home' in the provinces. He expected so.[50]

No one knew the limit of his ambition, or if it had any. He had once been thought to be effectively in command of a private militia and dead set on having the governorship, by force if necessary. (Even in truly secret correspondence he would never reveal whether he had been aiming for it or not.) His reported activities at the time endowed

the suggestion with so much credibility that, he discovered later, back-channel negotiations were established with a Member of Parliament in an effort to destroy him. The rumour and the negotiations came to nothing but the blot they made on the Doctor's self-image stuck with him to the end of his life.[51] The immediate effects were to let him abandon himself to the idea that he had slipped outside time and place and to caution him from making any public announcement of his return, for he could not say honestly that he knew what sort of situation he would be coming home to. It was, it seemed to him, like being on the cusp of two worlds that were impossibly distinct. Perhaps the sense of the misunderstanding over his political efforts in light of his personal successes had heightened the contrast. But though he appreciated the metaphysical quality of the moment – pictured himself one minute torn between reason and partiality, another partway between Heaven and Earth – such poetic spirit did little to settle his nerves.

'I fancy I feel like those who are leaving this world for the next', he offered, or 'like dying saints, who in parting with those they love in this world, are only comforted with the hope of more perfect happiness'. But despite the introspection of those idle weeks at the harbour, the Doctor couldn't say precisely what had kept him in the metropolis, or he refused to put into words those sentiments with which he couldn't publically agree – not, anyway, without putting his reputation at greater risk.[52]

The truth was that behind the sentimental language of his leave-taking letters he felt uncomfortable, even distracted. For once he had found himself almost immune to the escalating tensions in the world and, unwilling to comment on the latest dispatches, had bobbed deliriously amid tiny errands and philosophical correspondence in the flood of spring and summer. By the time he was taking a fly out of London he had lost the mental focus to read, and was given to sudden attacks of uncertainty (brought on by the city's continued seductions) which he called 'my own treacherous inclinations'. Under different circumstances he could attribute a vague sense of dread to the memory of his last crossing five years earlier, when at New York the convoy was delayed so consistently and predictably that by the time it finally sailed he had consumed his second purchase of sea stores, taken a short holiday through New Jersey, and spent a good part of his ready cash acquiring fresh supplies. He hoped never again to repeat the experience.

But now, forced to dwell in his sense of isolation, too uprooted to direct his own energy, even the inn where he slept (a 'wretched' house) threatened to lay him low. He was unable to express what was really bothering him – one day he pretended it was that the writing paper they stocked was not to his liking – but although he could not or

would not disclose how he had come to be five years into a three-year mission, the contents of his travelling cases gave him away. For if anyone at home could have peered across the water and beneath the handfuls of packing straw, they would have seen his son's wish profoundly materialised: the England the Doctor had roped off and was dragging home was now as essential a piece of him as his practised style of expression.

Well tilled, and sowed with profitable seed

On consecutive evenings that April the Doctor had acquired at auction an extension to his personal library. His successful bids had come almost to three hundred and fifty altogether, of which only two works – Middleton's *Life of Cicero* and a reissue of Massington's plays – had been published within the last fifteen years. The earliest publication, an edited collection of Sherburne's poetry with a comment on the Rape of Helen, dated from before the Restoration.[53]

The rest included, in translation, *The Secret History of Persia* (authorship undisclosed), the physician François Bernier's *History of the Late Revolution of the Empire of the Great Mogul*, Richelieu's *Complete Statesman*, Baron Sammarco's treatise concerning revolutions in kingdoms, Comazzi's collection of historical passages on the Roman Emperors, Appian's five histories of the Roman civil wars, the memoirs of the fifteenth-century diplomat Philippe de Commines, and the physician Huartes's classic work on the correct application of natural genius; in the original French: Louis XIV's letters to his ambassador at the Hague, Beaufort's controversial dissertation on the early Roman historians, and Abbé Dubos' *Les intéréts de l'Angleterre mal-entendus*, whose uncanny prescience Voltaire would later recognise; in English: several folio volumes of state tracts, discourses on law and government, histories of the English court and courtiers, four or five volumes on public finance, trade, and taxation by the political economist Davenant, an account of Sacheverell's trial 'for high crimes and misdeameanors', a dozen or so collections of plays, poems, apophthegms, anecdotes, and satire, twenty-five years of Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine*, and a few collections of some less popular journals.[54] He could have bought eighty more without a second thought had he not, after a passionate exchange of bids, finally lost a large collection of pamphlets to an agent for the Prime Minister.[55]

Though substantial in itself, when considered beside the lifetime haul of a hopeless bibliophile the auction take amounted to a few drops in the Doctor's vast ocean. It was a habit that had followed him everywhere, from Boston to Philadelphia to London and

back again, and he had indulged it whatever his circumstances. Looking back on his life he would remember that when he was poor he sometimes borrowed volumes off booksellers to read outside trading hours, an arrangement that cost him only tallow candles to light his nights. Then later, when he had some capital, he turned bookseller himself and read his own stock. He would recall how when he had exhausted the titles he could hope to sell onwards he had pulled his neighbours into a scheme for a subscription library so that he did not have to shoulder alone the entire expense of his enormous literary appetite.[56]

If he had followed this regime with the strictness often observed in his public character, the Doctor could have greatly increased his knowledge at scarcely any expenditure. But despite every attempt he made to preserve a veneer of frugality, which bordered at times on miserliness, and regardless of the proverbs extolling the virtue of moderation that he clipped and saved from the storehouses he collected of half-price wit, he soon found himself in the possession of a rapidly expanding library of his own. It had grown so large that a bedroom of the house had to be given over to its storage and a system of indexed shelfmarks designed to keep it in some kind of order. By the end of his life he would require a double-depth room with floor-to-ceiling shelves to house some four or five thousand volumes, and when he died he left to his heirs the second or third largest private library on the continent.[57] In London, which was nothing if not a city of authors and publishers, he continued what had been his lifelong pastime by nurturing friendships with those who would inform him now and again of some acquisition that might run parallel to his tastes. So the works of playwrights, poets, political scientists, biographers, belletrists, and historians gradually spread over the shelves of his rented rooms, along with over five hundred volumes of almanacs for most of the years going back a century. Material of such breadth and quality was simply unavailable to him anywhere else he had ever lived. Perhaps he considered the mission his final opportunity to build himself a truly marvellous collection.[58]

As he was boxing it all, telling himself never to travel with such a library again, he uncovered three new-bound octavo volumes, unread. They comprised a first edition of the latest work by the Scots judge Lord Kames and had been a gift from the author. Somewhere was Kames's letter, unanswered for almost six months, which had accompanied them. The winter before, when he had heard of the book's imminent publication, the Doctor expressed his desire to read it with what seemed like genuine sincerity. (The two men had agreed at their first meeting to exchange all their publications to date and thereafter.) But when it finally came he skimmed to about the

sixth or seventh page and forgot about it. The discovery of his oversight stung him. Without quite believing the excuse he allowed to himself that travel preparations had left his mind unfit 'for serious and attentive reading'. But the upshot was that the correspondence had also lain dormant without even so much as an acknowledgment of the book's receipt. It was a frightful lapse of courtesy, especially considering that the author was not only a justice of the Scottish bench but one of the country's foremost moral thinkers. By the time the Doctor unearthed the volumes *The Elements of Criticism*, as it was called, was already widely acknowledged as a classic. (Later that summer the *Chronicle* began running extracts from the book.) With a sudden sense of guilt, he set the work aside for the voyage.[59]

It would be months before he would be able to deliver his thoughts to his friend, but he wrote from Portsmouth to renew the correspondence and to offer, at least, that he was convinced of the book's purpose. Kames likened a 'taste in the arts' to a natural thing, a plant that grows 'in many soils'. But the caveat that followed could not have escaped the Doctor's notice: 'without culture, scarce to perfection in any soil'.[60] The metaphor extended the farmer's parable of Matthew and was the same the Doctor had used years before when in his proposal for a city academy he set down in awkward paraphrase:

'The best capacities require cultivation, it being truly with them, as with the best ground, which unless well tilled and sowed with profitable seed, produces only ranker weeds.'[61]

Even at a cursory glance the Doctor could see that the Scotsman had taken the matter further. For he had included in the assemblage of profitable seed not just some basic ability in the arts but an absolute method by which to applaud or deplore their productions. It was the development of 'a clear perception of what objects are lofty', as he put it in his *Elements*, 'what low, what proper or improper, what manly, and what mean or trivial' that redefined a new, truly European morality that simply would not be attainable in the colonial milieu for several generations – if even that soon. Without the experience of visiting a city furnished opulently to please the eye and ear (those finer of the five senses), and not just one but city upon city, the Doctor might have challenged the soundness of anything purporting to trace out an aesthetical morality. For the truth was that it was new doctrine to a man from whose first fifty years anything like the arts had been almost entirely absent, and in whose children there had been virtually no possibility of instilling such taste. There were no galleries, no academies, and no societies for the arts at Philadelphia. A limner made his living, if he made one at all, by

offering a menu of other services, such as the painting of signboards, landscapes, coach doors, houses, and ships; or by travelling up and down the coast in search of wealthy vanity. An ambitious artist, such as the young and unlikely Quaker from whom the Doctor had commissioned a sketch of his daughter, not very good, went to Europe – in the young man's case, on a trade boat to Leghorn – and stayed.[62]

Even low cultural productions were scarce, if not legally forbidden. The Doctor's daughter was already about ten when the first real theatre troupe, a gypsyish outfit with a magnetic female lead, opened in an old warehouse by the Delaware. (An earlier band of comedians had already come and, within a year, failed at the same location.) Their presence led to a ban on theatrical performances, first in the city and then throughout the entire colony, that had only recently been struck down by the Privy Council. When his son was about sixteen there came to the city a professor of the art of dancing, which he taught alongside the use of the small sword. The man was quickly told he could take his 'detestable vices' elsewhere:

'They are diabolical.'[63]

It was only upon reaching London that any child of his discovered 'the gaiety and brilliancy' of a first-class performance, or strolled through such pleasure gardens as those at Vauxhall, the paths lit from the trees by Chinese lanterns, or heard 'the ravishing music' of an orchestra, or beheld the 'elegant paintings and sculpture' which seemed to adorn the city's every surface and space. It was the sort of experience that moved Billy, at twenty-six, to declare breathlessly and half-lyrically that to a native of the colonies London's aesthetic abundance 'would have made you conceive yourself in a situation beyond even the Elysium of the Ancients'. It had changed the young man, the Doctor was sure of that; it had changed them both. He would write casually, as if expressing some universal truth, that in England young men found these new 'amusements more agreeable than the company of old ones'. He was admitting that London's charm had the power to weaken long-standing ties and relationships.[64]

Talent would cross over and take root in the province, and improve them – or so he was telling himself – as the public imagination began to mature beyond ideas of mere subsistence. But later he would wonder for perhaps the first time whether anything like Kames described could flourish in a local 'soil' accustomed to little more than lawn bowls, the occasional ball (without swordplay), marionette shows, cock fights, horse races, and a live lion chained up for a time in back of a tavern in Water Street.[65]

'I am convinced of your position,' he wrote to Kames from the inn, 'new as it was to me, that a good taste in the arts contributes to the improvement of morals; and that I

have had the satisfaction of hearing the work universally commended by those who have read it'. Apart from anything else, he was not inclined in those hours pregnant with finality to disagree with a friend, but he chose the words carefully, half-sceptically, unwilling to concede outright so much as Kames had claimed.[66]

If Kames's *Elements*, which he promised to read while the water grew between them, anticipated for the Doctor the relative obscurity he faced at Philadelphia, he made no hint of it at that time. But perhaps he was more conscious than he let on of having already, prior even to the book's publication, accepted its premise without meaning to. When he returned to the question a few months after his return, in the spring of 1763, he was convinced more than ever that the Americans were at such a disadvantage from isolation that they could do no more than imitate the productions of the mother country. In any case, the ties would and had to endure, and as much as he could he was taking London back with him. For apart from any book or idea there was, stowed with exceeding care, a musical device the likes of which had never been heard at all in the colonies, and whose sophistication surpassed the abilities of even the best craftsmen on that side of the sea.

The voice of heaven

The week he left town, the voice instructor and harpsichordist Mary Ann Davies gave the last of her fashionable concerts in the large room in Spring Gardens. Over the course of the preceding weeks these had gained such a following that the notices advertising her sensational instrument had begun running the names of the celebrities who came to hear it. The afternoon performance, which included English and Scotch airs accompanied by voice and flute, coincided with the end of the London season, after which it would be necessary for the curious to book a private demonstration of the new, unearthly sound.[67]

Few in the Doctor's closest circle had not heard it already, for the instrument, then hastily termed a 'glassychord', was the project he had spent the past half-stolen year completing. In his own opinion it was his proudest contribution to that so-called Elysium, the sensory feast laid out around every corner of the city, and his only material addition to the interests of natural philosophy since the philosophical societies at London and Edinburgh had elected to extend fellowships to him. Quite simply, he adored it. Or perhaps, he rather adored himself for creating it, for it meant that he was

part of a set who had the leisure not only to develop a taste for the arts but, much more magnificently, to direct them.

For decades after the Doctor's papers were made public, speculation over how Miss Davies had come by his acquaintance and how, furthermore, she had come under his musical tutelage would run the charitable gamut. (The Doctor's fondness for women of all ages was already legendary by the time of his death.) The eldest daughter of a musical family, she was about twenty when during two concerts earlier that year she unveiled the apparatus to audiences at Bath and Bristol. It cannot have been long before that the Doctor had brought the instrument, as he put it most modestly, 'to its present perfection'. The truth was that she held the attentions of his heart by proxy. For the girl does not seem to have interested him as much as the fact of her willingness to wager the rest of her career on his invention.[68]

It was only an oblong mahogany case of surprising weight, set on top of four legs and so much like a desk that it was advertised by the firm contracted to make it as 'a genteel piece of furniture'.[69] Inside was a row of glass bowls ('hemispheres' he called them at the glassmaker's) held in place one within another by an iron rod, and rotated by rocking a foot-pedal. It was a simple, almost crude device. Any spinner or seamstress would master the motion in an instant. But in a betrayal of its apparent domesticity, the machine was supposed to reproduce the voices of a celestial choir, and so took on the properties of a miracle. One German intellectual would go so far as to attribute to its sweetness the reconciliation of quarrelling friends.[70]

Within three years the sideways stack of glasses would make its way to the Continent, where it was found to aid in the achievement of dream-states and to eliminate diseases of the spirit. Some professors of the treatment believed it to be curative of thickness in the blood. By others it was used as a sonic alternative to ammonium carbonate because it seemed able to restore those who had fainted, but was later abandoned when found to cause them to faint anew. The instrument's tone would soon come to possess a thrilling, dangerously remedial quality noted by both its celebrants and its critics, and it was perhaps inevitable after such breadth of experimentation that reports should surface of its darker powers. Patients of the glasses therapy began to notice the concurrent onset of fits in their dogs. A sleeping girl was observed to wake in paroxysms of terror at the shriek expressed by a diminished seventh chord. More alarming still was the combination thought to have had lethal effect when played within the proximity of a small child. Then finally, after the most prominent masters of the instrument – Miss Davies among them – had each fallen victim to the

same nervous disruption of the mind, a condition said to have been brought on by toxic vibrations entering the body by running up the fingers, the homely box of glasses would be declared a menace to the health of listeners and players alike and bans enforced in various parts of Europe. By the turn of the next century the armonica (which was the Doctor's romantic name for it) would be cast aside in favour of its inspiration, the old musical glasses, and of a newer invention, less fearsome and more versatile – the pianoforte.[71]

The Doctor had first heard the airy, voice-like sound the spring of the year before. The chemist and Royal Society member Edward Delaval was giving performances on a set of glasses that, according to the reports out of Cambridge, 'sing like nightingales'. The set was one of the chemist's own design, and he made no secret of his belief that its sound approached perfection. The Doctor, who had earlier petitioned the Society for Delaval's membership, needed little convincing. It was well understood not only that Delaval had arrived at his design following thorough observations made on the tones produced by stemware of various forms and sizes, but also that his set was superior to any ever before manufactured in England. The Doctor had no basis for comparison because he was hearing such an instrument for the first time, but by his own admission he was charmed. Each precision-made glass was capable of voicing a note so perfectly formed, so supremely natural, and so unconnected with its maker as to emit seemingly out of a prehistoric age, the tonal apparition of an uncorrupted world.[72]

His obsessions would besiege his mind like a sudden fever on the body. Often they were attached to some visionary curiosity, or a material interest, which led him into a course of experimentation that could last months. A prototype would be prepared by whichever artisan possessed the required sympathy with his ideas and would be refined again and again, at an expense of time and money by which the Doctor was quite unaffected. It seems that from the first moment he heard the credible sound of heaven, he knew he must summon it by his own hand and could scarcely imagine the effect of more sophisticated music voiced with such perfection. In his cramped first-floor apartment that served both as a bedroom and a laboratory, the glasses arranged on a table before him, he would endeavour to expand the range of notes that could be drawn within arm's reach and the number that could be played at once.

That was how he found himself one autumn day at the shop of Messrs. Hughes and Co., glassmakers, placing an order for six dozen bowls to be blown with exceeding care to his exact specifications. He also paid a blacksmith for a tapered rod with a lever at one end, and a carpenter for a hardwood frame or perhaps the unassembled wood since

he knew a little simple woodworking by observation.[73] But with the glasshouse he was most particular, taking time to instruct the glazier in writing and with figures sketched and labelled with the strict precision of a chemist.[74]

'Mr. Barnes is desired to take notice that the glasses are not to be made hollowing up, like those Mr. Franklin had last, but like those he had first with bottoms nearly even. To fix them I used a frame like the figure in the margin with an upright iron rod, on which was a screw from end to end; the rod turned on its point.'

Near the top of the page he had also drawn a squat bowl, nearly flat on the bottom, but with a funnel-like hole (or 'neck') opening out of it. The sides of the bowls had to be upright or 'as near as may be'. The necks had to be made an inch deep for all sizes.

'I had a number of brass female screws about an inch long.'

One of these was to be cemented in the neck of each glass so that it could be fastened onto the rod – screwed around a piece of cork – so exactly as to allow no accidental drip of water to penetrate and so corrode the fastening over time.

An acceptable three-octave set required almost one hundred and fifty glasses with mouths of twenty-five slightly different diameters. Three quarters of these would not be used but the extravagance assured acceptable tuning, for as he found with other prototypes, two glasses of the same size could differ by as much as a full note due to tiny imperfections in shape and thickness.

'When the glasses were all furnished with screws in their necks I put them on the rod, a thin piece of cork between their necks to screw them hard upon and prevent jarring.'

The instructions had to be the more complete because no glassmaker in the colonies was capable of such fine work as his design demanded. He could only ever have them made in London, and in one of the boxes he took with him to Portsmouth was a complete set of spares in case any should ever break. The cost exceeded forty guineas in the end – about what a decent harpsichord would fetch at auction, or four months' rent; but that did not include a reckoning of his prototypes.[75]

Mindful that he was still charging his living expenses to the province, the Doctor never reported the instrument's existence to his correspondents there, not even to his wife. To others, he was careful not to imply any neglect of his public duties during this time. But the truth was that his effectiveness had waned and it was as if he had leapt upon the first project that conceptualised itself to him. The instrument's completion and immediate success provided the kind of resolution he seemed to have been waiting for. That glass voice, at once 'soft and plaintive' and 'incomparably sweet', seemed to validate

the Doctor's awkward restlessness, for it produced a kind of music that was forever taking leave of its listeners, a nightingale's melancholy song, unpursuable except through madness or death.[76]

Guard my reputation and interest

HMS *Scarborough* crept plain as a thundercloud across the sky. 'A man-o'-war,' the men called her, though she was no more than a post ship. On her gun deck were twenty-two lean nine-pounders, she was small for a warship, slow, and ill-suited to real action but she would do for an escort. For several months the Doctor had lived for the crossing, becoming more and more consumed by it, for he had crossed the sea only once before in wartime and the thought of boarding his own tomb brought him up short.[77] Trying suddenly to reconnect with Kames, he addressed several full pages to the judge's Edinburgh address:

'It is usual for the dying to beg forgiveness of their surviving friends if they have ever offended them. Can you, my Lord, forgive my long silence?'[78]

Could the Doctor forgive himself? He decided that the procrastination that had taken lodging with him was a quirk of aging, 'a habit that grows upon us with years'. The only excuse he could muster for the atrophic underperformance it brought out of him was that he knew not how to rid himself of it. It was a stunning admission by one who had committed to memory so many little maxims on the habits of orderliness and industry. 'I can now only confess,' he wrote as the hours tolled towards his departure, 'and endeavour to amend'. He hoped the return to the colonies would allow him to cultivate a 'more punctual correspondence'.

It had come down, again, to that question of place.

When the Doctor's ship departed in convoy with nine sail and the warship, the friends he left behind mourned him like a dead man. 'I part with him with infinite regret and sorrow,' said Strahan. 'There is something in his leaving us even more cruel than a separation by death'.[79] The philosopher David Hume praised him as the first true colonial man of letters, regretted losing him from 'our hemisphere', and found himself unwilling to think of the Doctor's settling finally in an American wilderness.

'That there is some chance of our never seeing you again,' he closed a sorrowful letter, 'no-one regrets it more'.[80]

The wording reflected the Doctor's own thoughts. The New World, where he had already passed a decade in semi-retirement, felt to him now like an afterlife, and in a

letter like a final breath he expressed what he believed to be the feelings of a man at the boundary of mortality. It was as if everything that had made him a Londoner clouded his future prospects, and all the breathless energy of those years and what might come after collapsed somehow into that singular moment. His heart was low, he said, anchored by a mixture of strange passions that caught one upon another: 'grief at the parting; fear of the passage; hope of the future …'. He could now only list them. Somehow his existence had fallen briefly outside normal time, a chasm had opened, and the celebration noising all around him merely heightened his sensibility of the gap. He bridged it, or tried to, by listing the conflicting attachments to Kames, and somewhat defenceless, declared, 'These have tendered me down exceedingly'.[81]

There were times, and they had grown too frequent during the previous year, when the Doctor felt an old insecurity stirring. Before he left for England, he had warned Joseph Galloway, a twenty-six year old attorney from Maryland and his closest political ally:

'I leave enemies in Pennsylvania.'

'Watch 'em,' he had said. 'And guard my reputation and interest as much as may be from the effects of their malevolence.'[82]

To his printing partner, David Hall, he said something similar, but in truth there were only a few men at most whose loyalty to him was as strong as their pens. For he could do no more than trust that his friends would answer any aspersions brought out against him in his absence, to quell the rumours he was sure would appear merely because he was not there to defend himself, to keep him informed, and to the young lawyer especially he gave this responsibility.

But Galloway's almost monthly correspondence, never very satisfactory anyway on that account, fell off after a year. The Doctor was usually too busy even to notice. It was only when the government took its Christmas holiday, and he found himself virtually alone in the city, that the silence seemed to manifest like smoke from an unseen fire. One winter brought him so low that he had taken to fishing for the assurances he desired, calling the mission a 'banishment', and dropping hints about 'the happy society of my friends'.[83] The answer came a few months later by an unexpected channel: his wife wrote to test a rumour then circulating at Philadelphia that by the excesses he flaunted around London he had become an embarrassment to his family. He did not even try to address the details of it, for he had already let slip to Galloway that his income in various and unspecific 'remittances' had greatly eclipsed his personal expenses for the mission.[84] Instead, he merely promised her that whatever 'idle reports' she might

catch wind of in the future were as unfounded as the last. By that time he knew their correspondence to be far from private, for she loved company too much, and he put down no lines but those which might safely be read in public. Crisply, without colour, without tenderness, he wrote to her:

'While I have my senses, and God vouchsafes me his protection, I shall do nothing unworthy the character of an honest man, and one that loves his family.'[85]

It could have been a prayer, and he had never been very sincere in his prayers. That summer he sent her letters by almost every opportunity, even if it was only to say that he had written more fully by another. The upshot of such frequent notes, all dated from London, was to demonstrate that he was not travelling. The rumour foundered and for the next year he was able to forget about it.

He never received from Galloway or anyone the reassurance that would calm his waves of dread, but neither could he detect any sign of displeasure in the regular packets from the Assembly Speaker, which he read with vague, delicate hopefulness. Then all at once, on a whirlwind trip to Oxford, the bad blood he had left behind in Philadelphia caught up to him without so much as a warning.

It was almost March when the invitation came, and he had been finalising the details of his crossing. A fleet was to make for Virginia, shipping, with a military escort, in early May. He had perhaps six weeks before he would leave London forever. He had already delayed several times.

The letter told him that there had been a meeting of the heads of the colleges at the university which had included the Vice Chancellor. One of the Regius professors, Dr John Kelly, had been asked to communicate their decision. The 'compliment' of the degree of Doctor of Civil Law would be offered whenever the Doctor 'shall please to visit the University'.[86]

'*Honoris causâ*.'

It was affirmation as much of the years ahead of him as of those behind. Later he considered it to be the logical continuation of the same honour given him at St. Andrews in 1759, as if the one had been a half-step toward the other.[87] Why had they waited until three years later, the eve of his departure? He responded at once, and agreed to present himself at a special convocation two weeks into the final academic term. He must have known that he would not make it back to London in time to sail by his intended passage.

It was the greatest honour of his life, but he anticipated the date of the ceremony in a silence so complete as to seem almost secretive, and betrayed scarcely a hint even of the

journey he would make into the country. To the parson William Smith, who called late one morning at the end of March, the Doctor let on merely that he would 'not spend more than a week or two in London in the whole' until he sailed, without revealing the particulars of his itinerary. The sky had awakened soon after, naked and dry, and it was as if summer reared up two months early.

He was gone into the country most of April, writing to no one, perhaps expecting the Virginia fleet to sail late so that he might go with it. But the city's eternal interruptions once again forced a delay. When the Trinity term began at Oxford he was back in town and sifting methodically through a confusion of loose papers, hardly conscious of the date. The sudden heat brought an influenza that struck early in the lodging house and it would be many weeks before both the family and the city were clear. It was perhaps to that, as much as to the Sisyphean project of leaving, that the Doctor owed a reticence that was quite unlike him.[88] By the end of the month, when at length the unseasonal temperatures were breaking in a frenzy of hail and thunderclouds, the Doctor crept out of town on the Oxford coach.[89]

His son was along, for someone had arranged for him to have a Master's at the same ceremony, and so witnessed the prelude to a disclosure that would haunt the Doctor for the rest of the year. There was a tour of the university in the company of Kelly, which had seemed something exclusive, as if it were a ritual initiation. At some point in the midst of everything, a letter was brought to light by the head of one of the colleges who was introduced as Thomas Fry. He said it had been received years earlier in confidence, and he had apparently not known how, or whether, to act on it. But meeting the Doctor there for the first time he decided to communicate it to him, for it was his character that it concerned. The Doctor unfolded the pages without hesitating and was sure at a glance only of the next immediate step he would take: he asked if he could keep a copy. It was dated May 1759, within three months of his receipt of an honourary doctorate of laws at St. Andrews, and had been conceived to no other purpose than to prevent his having the same at Oxford.[90]

It required no great stretch of memory to recognise the author's style: a familiar, repellent, busybody's mixture of indignant censure and poncey reportage. Nor did he need even to read the signature. There was only one man who could bear him such personal malice, who knew his career in enough detail to have so misrepresented it, and who had been in the country at that time. Maddened by the discovery of such a low-level plot against him, by the civility he had only lately shown the architect of it, and

perhaps by the stinging shadow of ambivalence that fell at once over the ceremony, the Doctor had made his way back to London.

There he had shown the letter to Strahan.

With Strahan as mediator they had gone over it, Parson Smith unpacking each paragraph – his sources, his intelligence – and the Doctor in turn proving him misinformed in several instances. The warmth in some of the parson's expressions – 'rancour' was the word Strahan used later – was called out as gratuitous and improper. But Smith had listened, owned his asperity, promised to retract what was baseless in a new letter to Dr Fry. He would write it, he said, not then but in a few days. Strahan had scolded him like a child. But if the face Smith had worn at their meeting in March was any indication of his duplicity, there had been no reason to trust anything he told them.[91]

How had he failed to see through it, that morning the month before? Had he been taken in by a glimmer in the parson's manner of their former closeness? Smith, arrived from Philadelphia only the day before, was restless, officious, the same as ever. He said he was raising funds for the College and Academy of Philadelphia, which were on the verge of financial ruin.[92]

Smith was a transplant to the province, originally from Aberdeen and then New York, and conducted himself with a gravity of purpose that could be taken as proof that the expatriation had not occurred without true consideration. During the years the Doctor had known him, something of a habitual paranoia had marked features that once were handsome and collapsed much of his face in a ring beneath his chin of smooth, waxy flesh.

It could have been Strahan or Pringle or another of the regular Scotsmen in the parlour, but for the Doctor's reticence. Though he had little to do with its direction anymore, he had never forgotten how he had formalised in the Academy's curriculum the self-guided tuition of his youth. He remained on the Board without attending the meetings but from him no contribution of any kind was required, or solicited, until that morning. Of Smith, the provost, he had not turned his attention for two moments together since the day three years earlier when he had destroyed the parson's credit with a publishing house in Gray's Inn. It was near the end of his second winter in the city.

Smith had placed an order for a large catalogue of titles with which he hoped to begin a new business venture in the province. Though it was the first of its kind, for him, he had expressed a perfect confidence in what must be a natural business acumen,

for he promised to undercut the 'excessive prices' of the only other bookseller at Philadelphia.[93] No sooner had the Doctor learned of it than he went to the owner:

'Smith's creditors would be glad to see him come back with a cargo of any kind, as they might have some chance of being paid out of it.'[94]

At this the publisher seemed to express a shrewd gratitude. 'Then he shall have no books of me,' he replied, and as for some ten pounds already extended, 'I will have the money immediately or the books again'.[95]

The parson's loss had been the product of a particular excitability in his manner that seldom rewarded him beyond the pulpit, and which he would subdue only in old age. 'If another shop was but opened,' he had assured the publisher, 'all the custom would run to it.' He had spoken with a cheerful but transparent canniness, little grasping the madness of his project because he was unaware that the bookseller he proposed to ruin was a longtime customer of the same house. Still, the publisher's trade was so extensive that such an offhand comment might have gone unnoticed had Smith not been so bold with the name of his competition, 'one Hall at Philadelphia,' the active partner at the printing shop of Franklin and Hall.[96]

When the publisher – a low, plump figure who had been born to the business – went to the Doctor to confirm the upstart's solvency, he could not know that he was asking for the opinion of an enemy. The Doctor, by his own account, obliged him with every semblance of impartiality. Affecting an ironic duty to those of his acquaintance who held Smith's debt, he said drily that he 'could not in conscience' dissuade the publisher from trusting him because to do so would be an act of disloyalty to his fellow townsmen. But he had indicated his true meaning clearly enough. He would relate it all later for Hall's benefit, without passion or venom, and with a wink of conspiracy that was not unpleasant.[97]

Two years later, the two of them seated before coals tumbling softly in marble – the landlady had replaced the old sandstone surrounds in hopes of securing better rents – Smith gave the Doctor no indication of having established that he was the source of the information. But in a packet addressed to the president of the College's Board of Trustees later that summer, the parson slipped in with his regular fundraising report a page of private news intended only for the president. Scribbled vertically into the lefthand margin was a word of warning:

'The old rancour is still brooding at the heart of this man.'[98]

It was his propensity for cynicism that kept him from knowing the half of it: their former friendship still appalled the Doctor. So propitious of a different outcome had

been the circumstances of their introduction, that in his memoirs the Doctor would suppress it beneath a torrent of regret or resentment. But it was likely that he still had, somewhere in his papers, the pamphlet he received ten years earlier out of the blue, which he once considered the single most transformative piece of writing that he had ever come across. For the Doctor, at that time, it had had none of the qualities of a mirage. Composed when Smith was only a private tutor lodging with wealthy Long Island planters, and printed at New York by the city's finest printer, the slim volume had been sent as a preliminary to their alliance.

Perhaps in its vision for a practical education, for lessons not just in the productions of antiquity but in English rhetoric and natural philosophy, he made out the traces of that once masterless reader, set adrift in the libraries he had forever built around himself. By making inquiries the Doctor discovered the author to be a young Scot of Aberdeenshire, and the timing of it could not have been better. For though he was then the president of the Board of Trustees, a position of real influence, he was steadily losing ideological ground to a coterie of classical scholars who would never be convinced that a mercenary ability in spelling and speaking, or even his own splendid *Spectator* rhetoric, was in any way equal to the principles to be gained by the mastery of Latin and Greek. The Doctor wasted no time in drafting Smith an encouraging response:

'I know not when I have read a piece that has more affected me, so noble and just are the sentiments, so warm and animated the language.' There followed no qualifying statement.[99]

Not yet thirty, Smith had had his sights on the establishment of a college at New York, and argued convincingly that there was no better place for one in the colonies. Purporting to be a sketch or account of a hypothetical college whose name, *Mirania*, was the Latin for 'wonderful things', his essay displayed a familiarity with recent works of moral philosophy that impressed the Doctor. But even more delightful was that, as early as the fifteenth page, in describing his proposed Mechanic's School, Smith had written in glowing terms of the Doctor's own treatise on education:

'This school is so much like the English School in Philadelphia, first sketched out by the very ingenious and worthy Mr. Franklin, that a particular account of it here is needless.' The Doctor required nothing more to recognise in him a capable and durable ally.[100]

'The Mathematical School is pretty well furnished with instruments,' he wrote so soon after receiving the pamphlet that he had not even read it over thoroughly. 'The

English Library is a good one, and we have belonging to it a middling apparatus for Experimental Philosophy, and purpose speedily to complete it'.[101]

He added, perhaps only to name the city's most accomplished scholar, James Logan, who sat on the Board of the Academy: 'The Loganian Library, one of the best collections in America, will shortly be opened…'.

And then:

'We are determined always to give good salaries, we have reason to believe we may have always an opportunity of choosing good masters…'.

'When you are settled in England, we may occasionally make use of your friendship and judgment.'

And finally:

'I do not know whether you ever happened to see the first proposals I made for erecting this Academy. I send them enclosed. They had (however imperfect) the desired success, being followed by a subscription of £4000 towards carrying them into execution. And as we are fond of receiving advice, and are daily improving by experience, I am in hopes we shall in a few years see a perfect institution.'

Much of this rambling braggadocio he left out of the letter that he sent, via the New England post and franked by his own authority, to the estate where Smith was living.[102] By then he had heard not just of the dismissive responses in that country to Smith's unorthodox vision but also of his intention to remove back across the sea and continue his studies in England. When he wrote again a fortnight later, having read the volume through, it was as if he approved the bulk of it so thoroughly that he could offer only the broadest declarations of praise. The lines that had most arrested his attention were 'all those expressions of resentment against your adversaries' that betrayed a warrior sworn by principal to a battle he half believed to be hopeless.[103]

For the two of them, fighting separately in adjoining provinces, it was maybe hopeless. Propped up even by the grandest voices against the hegemony of tradition, the cleverest blow still seemed, after all, inadequate, as abuse flung at a star. He was utterly convinced of the young man's merit, however, and brought him into his confidence with an almanac-maker's saw:

'The noblest victory is obtained by neglect, and by *shining on*.'[104]

It was something he had read once, something to do with the sun's retaliation against its earthly critics, a revenge of quiet restraint. To hell with the meddlers, he could have written, and the busybodies chattering on the periphery of progress. The possibility of reshaping the city, of fashioning its next leading men, was never so near; and he seems

suddenly lonesome in the knowledge of an ally sinking from reach. The Doctor's pen drove steadily across the page, knitting together the lines of brakeless flattery and the repeated hints of generous compensation, and only one small worry stretched its shadow over him. He could not let so kindred a spirit slip away without a meeting.

'If it suits your conveniency to visit Philadelphia, before your return to Europe, I shall be extremely glad to see and converse with you here.'[105]

The sweetness in his overtures did not go astray, nor was the promise lost on the parson, however oblique the terms in which it was made, of a paid position. He had only to gratify the Doctor's vanity, but, as the Doctor himself would find later to his own disgust, Smith's character was perfectly suited to such employment. The young parson accepted the rectorship at the Academy the same year he was ordained, at the age of twenty-seven. But he was an artful man with something of the Doctor's own ambition, and seeing which direction the wind was blowing he betrayed his earlier sentiments, ceased playing to the Doctor's designs, and sided with the Latinists against him.

They clashed, and then clashed again spectacularly in a libel case that had obliged the parson, who was already provost of the College at the time of his imprisonment, to make a temporary classroom of his cell, and to travel as far as London in a fight for his freedom. The Doctor was waiting for him when he arrived in 1758, shortly after the new year.

The Privy Council hearings were the Doctor's first before Crown officers as the agent for the provincial assembly. In fewer than six months the metropolis had already changed him. It was possible, he said later, to feel as if he was not so much a singular being as an ageless spirit communicating itself down the bloodline through the possession of one after another body, and he had begun to feel entrusted as if by lineage with the security of the public welfare.[106] For he was finding himself an important man; a man beset by what he might call the 'eternal interruptions' of 'this great city'; a man whose presence it was *necessary* at times to supply, when sought, and to offer humbly when not; and a man for whom amusements enjoyed many years earlier in innocent company with his own thoughts had come to be rather more expansive than that, and were now an unavoidable duty of his office. That year, for the first time since he had had the family arms made into a signet ring, he would recognise the attachments that had never quite been broken off since his father had crossed for Boston in the last century.[107]

No, not a Londoner; not yet. But dazzled as he often was by 'the many matters of use and importance' and by whose promotion he could attach those qualities to himself, he fancied the city's energy a natural stimulant.[108] Then, with the cold pitilessness he reserved only for political adversaries the Doctor instructed his lawyers to present Smith as 'an old offender', a hot-headed polemicist, and a forsaker of the cloth. 'He has no charge as a clergyman,' he wrote, and in a point-by-point rebuttal of Smith's claim of injury, added a descriptive aside:

'Having been long considered as a common scribbler of libels and false abusive papers against public bodies and private persons, and thereby keeping up party heats in the province, on which account he had been refused the pulpit by the minister.'[109]

It was a long way from *Mirania*. When taken together, the notes had been as much the skeleton of a legal argument as a list of exposed nerves.

Yet Smith could supplicate for the sake of the College. Seated in the parlour of the house where the Doctor lodged, he spoke of the Academy with a preacher's charm. He said that he had thought of raising several thousand pounds by means of a brief from the King, that by such an allowance he would make a collection at every parish church in the kingdom, that he had a personal connection through the Archbishop. The truth was that he disliked the Doctor and had come only at the direction of his masters. Their mutual admiration, once so apparently strong, had turned out to be borne of convenience.

The room was lit brightly by large windows that looked into the street. There was no sign of spring. Three days later the city would rejoice at the fall of Martinico and the churchbells clang in union with the Tower guns, and what the Doctor could not say was that he was already swimming in a sea of unease.

The Trustees' designs for the place had come gradually to violate certain of his own principles, and he had ceased to be of use to them. It was not long after the College was chartered, not long at all after he had secured that important event, that a majority of them ('a cabal', he would later say) ousted him from the presidency. 'They laid me aside', he had written to someone recently, having 'reaped the full advantage of my head, hands, heart and purse'. When once unopposed the Latinists wasted no time in narrowing the focus of their old constitution, and by a steady sequence of changes the English School was made the subordinate enterprise.[110] It was from a position of political isolation that the Doctor had looked on as his successor to the presidency, the former assistant rector of Christ Church, and Smith, who would never stop – he saw that now – began taking steps to establish the College as an Anglican seminary. He

would hold his seat on the Board as long as it were offered. His syllabus of *Spectators* and prose experiments, amended by decades of subsequent study, still informed the modes of instruction under his friend Kinnersley, the English master, and such goodwill as he expressed in correspondence was not altogether false. To turn his back on the enterprise might have felt like an amputation of sorts.

But he withdrew. He withdrew because he was powerless, and hurt, and hadn't the will to win a proxy battle when he might shift the entire terrain from London. So it was that he had left things years earlier when he accepted the Quaker Party nomination and made across the water, able to shine on in apparent neglect, but the humiliation bore into his pride as icily as if it had been a month. Smith was made Provost of the College, the Doctor's leverage quietly, systematically circumvented and at last taken from him. He might forgive, after all, but he was ever watchful, attentive to signs of internal division, and indeed he had found some consolation in practising the patience of waiting for the first stumble.

It had not come. Smith received a degree from Oxford after the Privy Council pardoned him.

He wanted money for a seminary, he wanted to secure his income. He wanted the Church behind the enterprise, because the Church was behind him, and he was saying to the Doctor that he would use the Archbishop to put himself into the King's proximity, and whether any of it had to do with reality the Doctor did not then concern himself.

Before the parson left (he had it in mind to call on the Archbishop before eleven) he had outlined and sought the Doctor's counsel upon each particular measure he was to take over the course of what might be a year-long mission. There was the printed appeal he would take door to door: the Doctor made a demonstration of the way it should be done. There were men of wealth and influence to be called on: but it was late in the season, the Doctor said, and to those whose houses he would visit in the country he could do no more than mention the affair. But he would try to mention it. Then, it would be essential to have a list of highly connected men who could be counted on to give out of genuine or circumstantial interest. The Doctor promised to supply one, and that was all. To offer anything more was impossible and the parson, having taken his leave, slipped away in the direction of the Strand.[111]

It was perhaps upon learning of Smith's treachery at Oxford, three years earlier, that the Academy was lost to the present part of the Doctor's life, kicked adrift amidst the jetsam of his old experiments. Did he have any care for it, after having been laid aside

without ceremony and attacked in secret and without foundation by its head? It was overrun, he said about this time, with the interests of the party then in opposition, by whose machinery it had devolved until it was nothing but a tool, he put it, a tool of the governing family. The cure, as with all cases of parasitic infection, was to bleed.[112]

Watch 'em.

I leave enemies in Pennsylvania.

The revenge I shall take of you, is, to shine on. He could not. He was leaving.

On 22 June, the *Chronicle* printed a letter from New York, where reports had surfaced of a secret expedition that was to set out for some unspecified destination to the south. It was said, though unconfirmed, that provincials made up a part of its number and that several ships already embarked would attack the Spanish in the Gulf of Mexico. The Doctor had written a list of names on the draft of a letter. He was informed at the beginning of the month that the *Carolina*, on which he had booked his passage, was to sail near the middle of July, and he had made an orderless column of the friends he wanted to call on prior to leaving. These included some of the wealthy men to whom Smith would apply for his collection. Some of the names already had lines through them.[113]

Sargent had come to him in May with one of Smith's leaflets. The firm had long served the government of Philadelphia and was inclined 'to encourage every public design in that city'. But Smith had the tinge of controversy about him and, after all, it was a question of 'what was proper'.[114] The province had become rife with party politics that were ingrained to such an extent that virtually none of the city's designs was without some political edge. In conversation the Doctor expressed his best wishes for the Academy's future. But the position he expressed to Sargent on the subject of Smith's collection was straightforward:

'It would never do to trouble people here.'[115]

The market would remain down while the war crept on. Even the Doctor had been led by ambitious reports to overestimate the swiftness of a French accord, he was heavily invested and now careful with cash, if not entirely short of it. And he was not alone. Of all this Sargent was quite aware. It would be a kindness to Smith, after all, given such unfavourable conditions for raising contributions in London, to suggest applying to the Assembly itself for support. For there, the Doctor knew, a compromise must be struck between those who served the interests of the governing family and those (the Doctor among them) who wished to reduce or even eliminate its influence.

A direct donation would enrich the College only – the 'seminary' – while the English School would be left to struggle and wither. Perhaps it was the Doctor himself who hit upon the idea of an essay contest, in two areas, classical and modern, the prize for each being a five-guinea medal of gold. For the topics, Sargent would select a suitable point of modern interest, and leave to the Doctor's invention 'some Classical exercise that you shall think best suited to your plan of education'. More favourable still, the merchant would insist that no decision be made on whether to open the contest to the public without the consent not just of the Doctor but also of the Speaker of the Assembly.[116]

As to Smith's collection, he 'would not give anything that way'.[117]

By the end of the social season, with the city's grand houses emptying for the summer, the Doctor had made it a habit to undermine the collection at every opportunity. Smith's public alliance with the Archbishop and his talk of the 'seminary' at Philadelphia would be enough to turn Dissenters against the scheme with little more provocation than to pretend to them that the place had become 'narrow', 'an engine of government', the leadership so throughly 'bigotted' that only boys of Anglican families had any chance in it. It was no wonder, he said, that support could not be found among the people of the province itself, many of whom were not Anglican, and that here was one of the Academy's Church men come to London a-begging.[118]

Smith would counter it. He would cry that the Doctor's report was a misrepresentation, but to deny the details of it was impossible if he was to retain the Archbishop's support. For the truth was that there could scarcely be counted two Anglicans among the faculty – and so went a second, contradictory report whispered into the ears of prominent Anglicans. The parson had been calling at the houses on the Doctor's list for little more than a fortnight when he made the upsetting discovery that while a number of the Dissenters were unconvinced by what seemed to them to be an 'engine' of state religion, an equally reluctant set of Anglicans were refusing their support to what they had heard described as 'an instrument of Dissension'. Sargent had hesitated, met with the Doctor, and returned promising medals in lieu of money. Others contributed little or nothing.[119]

All through spring and into summer the Doctor had allowed his mind to settle into the flow of his usual distractions. His conversation turned to questions of natural philosophy, and even of love, as often as it did to politics. He soon found himself reciting the physics of fires started by friction, and how no degree of heat was ever produced that way in fluids. To Professor Giambatista Beccaria at Turin, whose work on the behaviour of electricity had surpassed his own, he wrote more than four pages

describing the process by which he had improved the playing of musical glasses. To the Prime Minister he composed an exhaustive essay in order to dispel any ongoing doubts over the probable discovery of a Northwest Passage. One day at the beginning of July he cut his face on a glass vial that exploded in an attempt to melt powdered amber by the application of an electric charge. He repeated the same experiment on another occasion, with the addition of a protective outer tube of heavy card, but the result had been a disappointment.[120]

He complained of Smith's duplicity to his landlady, Margaret Stevenson, who knew the parson from a volume she owned of his sermons, and he implied once in her company that he would move on. It was a strategy of his, picked up in earlier days, to ask small favours of those who bore him malice, for he believed a compliment that commanded a kind act to be an almost infallible antidote to division among intelligent men. It worked even reflexively upon himself, for having offered to carry Smith's letters with him to Philadelphia, and being entrusted with several, the Doctor found he was the more ready to renew his attachment to the Academy.[121]

But he was mistaken.

It was only weeks before he was due to sail, too late to confirm any of it, that he learned that recent political developments in the colony had hurt his standing among the people, and the event of his losing his seat in the October elections was not unlikely. Smith had kept the 'intelligence' quiet while he believed the Doctor would hold firm to his promises of assistance. The Doctor became painfully aware that it was already five months since he had written in a mist of mortification that the colony's bills could not be paid, and there had been nothing from the Speaker in the way of the usual news. At that time he had given no explanation for the blunder, except to declare that the governing family had intervened in an effort to disgrace him, and had asked only that the Assembly defer its judgment until his return:

'I now hope to be with you pretty early in the summer, when I shall render a particular account of this transaction.'[122]

The only explanation for such phantasmal silence was that reversal of fortune the Doctor had long imagined. Perhaps in defense of the Academy, or of his own character, Smith had betrayed at last what the Speaker and the Doctor's other allies would not. The Doctor was no longer their man. He had fallen out of favour not just within the shifting marketplace of public opinion, but also within his own circles. Or so Smith was leading all of London to believe.[123]

Adieu, adieu! he clanged (for it might have been the knell of his own interment) and waited for news about a convoy.

Don't style me Exellency

On the tenth of July the Doctor wrote the Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Assembly that he had booked passage for the end of the month. He said that he had received the latest reports of the colony's affairs (upon which he hazarded no comment) and would leave matters in the hands of the agent before him, Richard Jackson, a Middle Temple lawyer 'who is well acquainted with them, very able, and will appear for the Assembly, if there should be occasion'.[124]

The convoy was already six weeks overdue and each day was another Assembly meeting, another chance for his enemies to further fix things against him. For Smith's report had seemed to go far beyond mere retribution for the Doctor's disloyalty and, true or not, became a permanent fixture in his mind. His 'interest' was in decline in his adopted city: the certainty with which the words pealed out over the metropolis could leave no one in doubt that the queer old philosopher from the colonies had finally exhausted the trust and goodwill of his people. 'Opinion *or* intelligence,' offered Jackson. What seemed to have been news might turn out to be nothing but slander.[125] And it was perhaps in the space of that sudden distortion of facts that the Doctor chanced on a few lines recently published that pretended to give comfort to victims of public injury:

> *In writing, as in life, he foils the foe*
> *Who, conscious of his strength, forgives the blow.*
> *They court the insult who but seem afraid:*
> *And then, by answering, you promote the trade.*[126]

But it was useless to make assurances that it could not be true. Feeling idle in political business and helplessly partial to his own pursuits, the Doctor found with a pang of dread that he could believe even the worst stories about himself. The effect on him of such talk, which at that distance he could neither verify nor refute, was clear to those who knew him best. Apart from all else the news underscored his own separation from the place he had once, and still, called home. Strahan had pushed him to stay forever, to shine on in spite of what his enemies would say of him, but the Doctor had grown hard. 'You have great powers of persuasion, and might easily prevail on me to do

any thing,' he was writing as the rumour of his downfall thickened the air in the rainless summer streets.

'But not any longer to do nothing. I must go home.'[127]

The adieus went up like sails hoisted by his cold reasoning and by lists of leave-taking errands – people to be called on, toys to be bought for children, money to be left for orders still outstanding – as he became something like a vessel of determination. Strahan looked on the whole thing as 'an untimely death' and could not shake the sense of suddenness that left him grieving 'with a whole heart', so pained that he hadn't the words to express how deeply it touched him. Yet he could not force from his heart an essential self-assurance, no matter how sizeable his grief, and no sooner had that line come from his pen than he issued the same raw wish that he had sent so often before:

'But I will still indulge myself in the hope, however distant, that he may soon find it his interest and inclination to return to Britain, where he can be of great use to his native country.'[128]

With words plucked directly from the Doctor's own arguments, his appeals wore but the uniform of reason. And once, in the face of this, the Doctor had conceded out of deference and regret that the petitions fired over the decks with 'irresistable eloquence' were 'secretly supported and backed by my own treacherous inclinations'. Strahan, more than anyone, knew how to get to the core of him. *He can be of great use* – those words never lost their charm – *to his native country*. Was England not his adopted country, now that he had so many friends there, as Pennsylvania had once been?[129]

No: 'I must go home.'

It was early in the second week of August, and his rooms were not yet advertised, when at the turn in the stairwell he caught sight of his door for the last time. Of his residence there the only permanent signs were a customised fireplace and a black mark on the table where the amber had touched off like gunpowder. A short walk away in Charing Cross the Portsmouth machines left before dawn.[130]

The inn was wretched. The paper was too poor for the sentiment that was to be conveyed on it, by which he perhaps meant that it was not white enough.[131]

The letter he made as soon as he could was addressed to Miss Polly Stevenson, twenty-eight years old, whose mother owned a lodging house in one of the small streets that connected the Strand and the river in the west part of London, near the Liberty of Westminster. It was a genteel development, pretty recent, and the location had suited the Doctor perfectly. Although the street ran between the city's two main

thoroughfares, land and water, and so was not very far from anything, it was quiet almost as an alley. The Stevenson house was at the bottom on the left side and resembled its neighbours in every particular apart from the signboard in front. He was, until earlier that week, the occupant of the rooms on the first floor.[132]

It is a short letter, two paragraphs on a pressing matter of love, in which he said twice as much as he wrote. He called her 'my Polly', and he wanted to tell her how much her friend is afflicted, that he must, perhaps never again, see one for whom he has so sincere an affection, joined to so perfect an esteem; whom he once flattered himself might become his own in the tender relation of a child; but can now entertain such pleasing hopes no more.[133] Here he stopped, the cascade of fitful punctuation about to pull him over. The emotion that would follow, if he allowed it to follow, was the wreckage of that pleasing illusion he once had held. It was bound up in the words 'flattered himself', and now, to release it onto the page seemed to threaten some dreadful chain of clarifications, or to betray some other illusion that was yet cherished.

But he did not allow it. There is no memory of his son's promises, implied though they may have been, and no describing the whirlwind of love and anger that inspired this outpour of sentiment. Could such a letter as this, no more than a page of the unworthy inn-paper, reveal the depth of his affliction? No, he found himself writing, it cannot. The dramatic repetition of 'adieu' underscores the intensity – and the concealment – of the conflicted emotions behind these lines:

> *Adieu, my dearest child. I will call you so. Why should I not call you so, since I love you with all the tenderness, all the fondness of a father? Adieu. May the god of all goodness shower down his choicest blessings upon you, and make you infinitely happier than that event could have made you. Adieu.*[134]

And yet he draws back, for he must realise that Polly, more than he, is the owner of her affection. Even if she had consented to the event, to marriage, would she and Billy have suited each other? It is a question he answers only obliquely and in the negative, for 'the event' would indeed take place but without the intended bride. Billy, the half-prodigal son, would not be mentioned between them until long after he and the classy girl of the West Indies, whom those outside the know termed 'the old flame' when in fact Billy had never ceased burning for her, had crossed an ocean into irrelevance.[135]

Adieu, he said, for if Polly had instead become his child she would cross in the spring and live in the governor's mansion just across the Delaware River in New Jersey, but that was a secret and could not be mentioned while the governorship was yet

unconfirmed. Even the rumour of it would rouse the Doctor's political enemies who would say the son was a bastard and the appointment, too, the product of some fresh intrigue, for it was not believed that the young Billy without experience and connections of his own had secured the post himself.[136]

Better to remain quiet and let those who would raise scruples raise them after the matter was settled. So, apparently, went the Doctor's thinking; and perhaps Billy had embraced this philosophy as well in his consideration of the Stevenson girl. Those were the words the Doctor could not bring himself to write. Such fanciful matchmaking, it appears now, as his had been humoured as long as was necessary, but no longer. Billy's disclosure of the engagement stung his father not so much for the woman, for she was very amiable, and everybody loved her, but rather for the mask he had been obliged to wear all along. The Doctor and his son were, until then, not given to keep secrets from one another.

Now the Doctor closed his letter and begged the jilted girl believe that he, anyway, was no chameleon:

> *And wherever I am, believe me to be, with unalterable affection, my dear Polly,*
> *Your sincere friend,*
> *B. Franklin.*[137]

On the twenty-first of August he quit the inn, took to the water, and resolved to lie there with the ship until it sailed. He did not send his manservant ashore for letters arrived at the Post Office by the field called Governors Green. All he had to say had been franked and posted already and he was through with correspondence until Philadelphia, or so he thought.[138]

The event took place twelve days later at a well-to-do church by Hanover Square. The groom, handsome and confident despite his father's absence, wrote immediately to William Strahan, who had become almost as intimate with the son as with the father. He wanted to suggest how precisely the announcement should be worded in the next issue of the *Chronicle*. 'Don't style me Exellency,' he warned, 'as I have not yet kissed hands.' Privately, he was elated by the event he had long wished for:

'Your friend is this moment arrived at the land of matrimony and, to continue the seaman's phrase, hopes to get safe into harbor this night.'[139]

Reason and inclination

Just before the ship sailed the Doctor came ashore one last time. He had spent two nights on the *Carolina*, cut off from contact, and found he couldn't bear it.

'I cannot,' he was writing from the inn again, 'quit even this disagreeable place without regret, as it carries me still farther from those I love, and from the opportunities of hearing of their welfare.' At the final moment, travelling chests installed already in his cabin, a letter came for him in Strahan's beautiful hand and was worded so strongly that in answering it the Doctor found his resolve was no longer where he thought he had locked it. He just managed to get off a response before the wind, as he put it, wafted him away.[140]

Some days later, as the convoy was following the easy semi-coastal waters down the western edge of Europe to the stopover at Madeira, rumours began to circulate in London about a secret agreement between England and France. It was said that the preliminary articles of peace, signed at Paris, were awaiting ratification in Madrid and it was only the Spanish, who in their arrogance were plying for time, keeping the nations at war.[141] At Strahan's house in Shoe Lane, New Street Square, a letter came whose absence of any postal charge was as good an identifier as any. (The Doctor, as an official of the Post Office, franked all his outgoing mail whether attending to matters professional or personal.)

It was only a page in length.

'Dear Sir,' he wrote, for that was how he had always addressed his friend, even in such tender letters as this would prove to be. The tone was oddly solemn and in places almost awkward. 'I will not tell you, that to be near and with you and yours, is any part of my inducement; it would look like a complement extorted from me by your pretences to insignificancy.'[142]

'Nor will I own that your persuasions and arguments have wrought this change in my former resolutions; though it is true that they have frequently intruded themselves into my consideration whether I would or not.'

And so on he went, but the gist was clear.

He said that while the attraction of *Reason* was at present for the other side of the water, that of *Inclination* (he capitalized them, as if they were twinned electric charges) would be for the English side, and he added a line so that Strahan would not mistake the meaning:

'You know which usually prevails.'

He would require about two years to tidy his affairs in Philadelphia and cut his remaining attachments there but then, he wrote, he would return, 'and settle here for ever. Nothing will prevent it, if I can, as I hope I can, prevail with Mrs. F. to accompany me'. Then another thought came to him, and he had drawn a semicolon from his full stop.

'Especially if we have a peace.'

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[1] Although it was an unusually hot, dry summer generally, correspondents in *Lloyd's Evening Post* and the *Public Advertiser* report that the weather had been wet. *LEP*, 13–16 August 1762, p. 155; *PA*, 18 August 1762, p. 2.

[2] *Papers*, x, pp. 142–43 (11 August 1762, to Polly Stevenson); pp. 147–49 (17 August 1762, to Lord Kames). For the sounds and sights of Portsmouth, see *The Portsmouth Guide, or a Description of the Ancient and Present State of the Place* (Portsmouth: Carr, 1775), and *The New Portsmouth, Southsea, Anglesey & Hayling Island Guide*, 4th edn (Portsmouth: Charpentier, 1846), pp. 25–31.

[3] Ships in the harbour are listed daily in the London newspapers for the week of 10 August 1762; and there, as well as in William H. Saunders, *Annals of Portsmouth* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1880), pp. 62–64, may also be found reports of the unloading of *Hermione*'s treasure and its elaborate conveyance to London.

[4] Although Franklin's letter has not been found, I think it likely that he composed it shortly after he arrived at Portsmouth, rather than shortly before he left London. It would have been trivial to send his servant to the offices of Sargent and Aufrère, near the Tower, where it would be more sensible of them to give him the gold medals and, what was more important, the letter of security. He was at Portsmouth probably the tenth of August, but would have missed the two o'clock London post, and certainly on the eleventh. The letter and medals arrived the thirteenth.

[5] The year before, William Smith was given a similar letter that would assure him £100 at Barclay & Co., should he be taken by the enemy during his passage and 'find it necessary to draw on you in order to obtain a a decent support or to procure his discharge and a conveyance to England'. Horace Wemyss Smith, *Life and Correspondence of the Rev. William Smith*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: Ferguson, 1880), 1, p. 285.

Mendes da Costa's brother, Emanuel, was an amateur philosopher who followed the experiments of Franklin's close friend John Canton. A letter regarding Canton's work and an examination committee, which included Franklin, is in the manuscript collection at the American Philosophical Society.

[6] *Papers*, x, pp. 144–45 (12 August 1762, from Sargent, Aufrère & Co.).

[7] Ibid., pp. 143–44 (12 August 1762, from Sargent). The only surviving ms. is an incomplete copy in the minutes of the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania. The essay topic was openly considered to be 'too high' for the degree candidates, but secretly was thought too low. The copyist left off when it became clear that Sargent intended for the Speaker of the Assembly to have a hand in organising the contest.

[8] *Papers*, IX, pp. 5–10 (3 January 1760, to Lord Kames).

[9] Although estimated at first to be worth twelve million Sterling, and then one million, the actual take was just over £540,000, or £65 million in modern value. It was nevertheless the largest prize ever captured, and perhaps still is. The captains of the two English ships were each awarded a fortune that would be close to nine million pounds today and each seaman given the equivalent of thirty years' wages. An 'account of the value of the *Hermione* prize' was printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine,* 33 (1763), p. 385. See also Frederic Hervey, *The Naval History of Great Britain* (London: Adlard, 1779), pp. 362–64n, and Thomas Allen, *History and Antiquities of London, Westminster, Southwark, etc.*, II (London: Cowie and Strange, 1828), p. 61. The fall in silver was printed in the newspapers, but see also the letter from William Allen to D. Barclay & Sons, 4 December 1762, in Lewis Burd Walker, *Burd Papers* (Pottsville, PA: Standard, 1897), p. 63.

[10] *PA*, 17 August 1762, p. 1.

[11] *LC*, 1–3 June 1762, p. 526.

[12] *PA*, 22 June 1762, p. 2; *LC*, 12–14 August 1762, p. 158; *Papers*, XII, pp. 292–99 ([6–13 October 1765], from Deborah Franklin). The face value of the £27,000 in stock was £30,000: it should have earned twice the £1,500 allowance provided for his mission.

[13] *Papers*, IX, pp. 357–62, 383–84 (30 September 1761, from Isaac Norris; 17 November 1761, to Charles Norris and Thomas Leech). Franklin predicted the loss would be £3156. 17s. 6d., but that inflation in Philadelphia could 'far overbalance' that amount. He expected a peace to be agreed in 1761. See his letter to Joseph Galloway, 26 February 1760 (*Papers*, IX, p. 26): 'I have laid out most of the Money I had here in the Stocks, in hopes of this Advantage, some Interest, tho' low, arising in the meantime and a Peace it is thought we must have next Year. If you incline to employ any Money in the same Way, I shall readily serve you, on Request, in transacting the Affair'. Perhaps wisely, Galloway seems to have declined the opportunity.

[14] *Papers*, x, p. 11 (15 January 1762, from Sargent, Aufrère & Co.). The Yale editors note that the majority of Franklin's correspondence regarding these unfortunate investments is nowhere to be found; see *Papers,* ix, pp. 383–384, n. 5. In 1760 Franklin wrote to Isaac Norris to suggest that Pennsylvania use the parliamentary grant to purchase stocks, which would be sold at a return once a peace was agreed. The Assembly backed the idea but the governor, suspecting that his salary was to be paid out of it (which would have removed his independence of the electorate), refused his support and the bill died. But in October 1760, the Assembly resolved, against the governor's wishes, to allow its agents at London to handle the grant for Pennsylvania, and instructed Franklin to make good on his suggestion to put it into the stocks. Franklin acted accordingly but made no indication in writing of having received the instruction. See *Papers*, ix, pp. 221–27, 232–33, 236–39.

[15] In 1757, when Franklin's nomination as agent to London was all but confirmed, his fellow boardmember at the College and Academy, Richard Peters, knew that only two of his contacts there could 'introduce him to the Men of most influence at Court'. Even so, Peters' correspondent replied, 'he will be looked very coldly upon by great People' (*Papers*, vii, p. 111n). See also the letter from William Allen to D. Barclay & Sons, 15 February 1762, in *Burd Papers*, p. 49: 'One would fain hope his almost insatiable ambition is pretty near Satisfied by his parading about England &c. at the province's Expense for these five years past, which now appears in a different Light to our patriots than formerly especially, as he has already stayed near two years longer; than they expected; a sample of which is their refusing to put the Second Sum received from the Crown into his Hands'.

That 'at the province's expense' could suggest that Franklin was not thought to be of the proper social class to be hobnobbing around England, as Allen was to do on his own nickel the following year.

[16] Franklin knew this 'vulgar adage'. He relied on it to justify his silence during the scandal of the Hutchinson letters. See 'Tract Relative to the Affair of Hutchinson's Letters', 1774 (*Papers*, xxi, pp. 414–435).

[17] *Papers*, x, pp. 132–33 (20 July 1762, to William Strahan).

[18] Henry Broadhurst travelled those roads on foot some time later, and left an account. See, Henry Broadhurst, *Henry Broadhurst, M.P; the Story of His Life from a Stonemason's Bench to the Treasury Bench* (London: Hutchinson, 1901), p. 17.

[19] Franklin used the construction a few times. See *Papers*, xx, pp. 144–45, 383–84 (6 April and 1 September 1773, to Deborah Franklin); and to William Franklin, 16 August 1784, *Franklin Papers: Digital Edition*, Yale University <HTTP://**FRANKLINPAPERS.ORG**/FRANKLIN/YALE?VOL=42&PAGE=129>.

[20] Nathaniel Hawthorne once asked, 'Did anyone ever see Washington nude? It is inconceivable. He had no nakedness, but I imagine he was born with his clothes on, and his hair powdered, and made a stately bow on his first appearance in the world.' Polly later drew a resemblance between Franklin and her newborn child (his godson) on the basis of their shared enjoyment of nakedness: 'he is very fond of being in his *birthday suit*, and has not the least apprehension of catching cold in it'. For air baths, see Franklin's letter to Kitty Shipley, 2 May 1786, *Franklin Papers: Digital Edition* <HTTP://**FRANKLINPAPERS.ORG**/FRANKLIN//YALE?VOL=44&PAGE=092>; *Papers*, xv, pp. 180–81 (28 July 1768, to Jacques Barbeu-Dubourg); and *Papers*, xviii, pp. 238–39 (2 November 1771, from Polly Stevenson). For cool air as a tonic for the body, see Franklin's advertisement pamphlet for his Pennsylvania Fireplace, *Papers*, ii, pp. 419–46. The reasoning behind Franklin's morning air baths – that the body required a balancing of its various tempers – wasn't eccentric but his practice of it was; see Charles E. Rosenberg, 'The Therapeutic Revolution: Medicine, Meaning, and Social Change in Nineteenth Century America', *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 20 (1977), pp. 485–506.

[21] The bathing-house at Portsmouth opened in 1754. Franklin suspected that immersing the body in salt water would relieve thirst. *Papers*, ix, pp. 338–39 (10 August 1761, to Polly Stevenson). Although he talked much of swimming in ponds and rivers – the Thames and the Delaware, at least – I cannot find an instance of his taking to sea-swimming, which had yet to come into vogue.

[22] On the danger of incongruity, see Franklin's Plan of Conduct, 1726, *Papers*, i, pp. 99–100.

[23] 'Three shillings and sixpence a week', he remembered later. *Autobiography*, p. 37.

[24] The Sotheby, Wilkinson, & Hodge auction house catalogue for Henry Stevens's 'Historical Collections', 11 July 1881, contains perhaps the original material for Franklin's early philosophical lispings, p. 162: 'Woolston's Religion of Nature, 4° London, 1725. Fine large paper copy in old red morocco extra; on this book Franklin worked as a compositor at Palmer's in 1725, and from it probably imbibed his shortlived free notions that appeared in his Liberty and Necessity'. Franklin printed only a hundred copies of 'Liberty and Necessity', gave a few away, and burnt the rest. See *Papers*, i, p. 57 n.

[25] *Autobiography*, p. 39.

[26] *Papers*, i, p. 99. *The Art of Swimming*, first published in 1696 (Paris: Moette) and in English a few years later (London: Brown) is mentioned by Franklin in his memoirs. 'I had from a child been ever delighted with this exercise, had studied and practis'd all Thévenot's motions and positions.' Each motion and position was illustrated by naked swimmers, both male and female, with nothing left to the imagination.

[27] Franklin was encouraged by the interest shown him by a nobleman's son, 'one Wygate', to pursue the bohemian scheme of running an itinerant swimming school on the Continent. (It was just the sort of thing the older Franklin would have loved to have done.) His lack of any languages was perhaps what convinced him to accompany the merchant Mr Denham back to Philadelphia.

[28] *Papers*, x, pp. 132–33 (20 July 1762, to William Strahan).

[29] The wordplay here is taken from the passage Franklin inserted early into his memoirs during the second day of writing, and from the various self-corrections he made while composing that telling segment. See *Holograph*, p. 1.

[30] *Papers*, x, pp. 147–49 (17 August 1762, to Lord Kames). See also *Papers*, iv, pp. 143–45 (29 June 1751, to Peter Collinson).

[31] William Allen's correspondence published in the *Burd Papers* gives us the flavour of the criticism of Franklin at this time at Philadelphia. For London-based criticism, see the letters of Thomas Penn and John Fothergill. Also Robert Middlekauff, *Benjamin Franklin and His Enemies* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996). Franklin wrote to his London contact as soon as he was informed that the deputy postmaster general was not likely to recover from an illness, and sent the message by Ireland because it would arrive sooner than the next packet to London. He confessed then that 'to the Manner of Managing these Applications' 'I am quite a Stranger' – though to the various rumours of the office's salary he was not.

[32] For foreign fellowships, see Raymond Phineas Stearns, 'Colonial Fellows of the Royal Society of London, 1661-1788', *WMQ*, 3 (1946), pp. 208–68.

[33] *Papers*, iv, pp. 77–78 (6 December 1750, to William Strahan); p. 114 (4 February 1751, to William Strahan). Strahan entered the name promptly on his receipt of the earlier letter.

[34] The family portrait, or 'conversation piece', never came to fruition, partly because all the artist had to work with were second-rate colonial miniatures, and partly because such portraits were no longer in fashion anyway. It was an early plan of Franklin's, however, which he mentioned seriously to Deborah in his letter of 22 November 1757, just a few months after arriving at London; see *Papers*, vii, pp. 272–279.

[35] Ibid., pp. 376–70 ([January?] 1758], to Deborah Franklin).

[36] Ibid., pp. 379–84 (19 February 1758, to Deborah Franklin).

[37] He reimbursed her for their purchase and recorded the expense in his pocketbook.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] *Papers*, VIII, pp. 305–09 (c. 7 April 1759, to Deborah Franklin). The cheese was perhaps for selling.

[41] Franklin's transatlantic shipping adventures are chronicled in his letters to Deborah Franklin dated 19 February 1758, 10 June 1758, 21 September 1758, c. 7 April 1759, 27 February 1760, 23 August 1760, and [November?] 1761, *Papers*, VII–IX. The instrument arrived at Philadelphia in January 1762.

[42] Charles Henry Hart, ed. 'Letters from William Franklin to William Strahan,' *PMHB*, 35 (1911), p. 427. Reprinted as a book (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1911). Hart was a flagbearer for the theory that William Franklin was the legitimate son of Benjamin and Deborah Franklin, despite there being no evidence to support this and in fact much to suggest (one would even say confirm) the opposite. His treatment of the subject, 'Who Was the Mother of Franklin's Son' (*PMHB*, 35, pp. 308–314), simply omits the contrary evidence, while the so-called 'avalanche of contemporary proof' for his argument does not hold up under inspection. Hart's intention was clearly to defend Franklin against charges of 'loose morals' by certain writers – a group, as he seemed to have forgotten, that included Franklin himself. Errors of interpretation notwithstanding, the letters he collected and caused to be printed form a useful resource to the biographer.

[43] See George Simpson Eddy, 'Account Book of Benjmain Franklin Kept by Him during His First Mission to England as Provincial Agent, 1757–1762', *PMHB*, 55 (1931), pp. 97–133. The serious biographer will regret Eddy's silent edits, however.

[44] The 'end' was 15 February 1763 when, after binning the largest part of his carefully composed preliminary remarks, Franklin finalised his expense report in a short note to the Pennsylvania Assembly Committee of Accounts. The Yale editors speculate as to the unsuitability of the first draft, dated 9 February: 'he must have felt that it gave the impression of extravagant living in London'. It was as if, sometime that week, he discovered what William Allen had been saying about him. See *Papers*, X, pp. 193–97 (9–19 February 1763, to Isaac Norris). For countryside politicking, see *Papers*, VIII, pp. 146–47 (6 September 1758, to Joseph Galloway), viz.: 'I have been much in the Country this summer, travelling over great Part of the Kingdom, partly to recover my Health, and partly to improve and increase Acquaintance among Persons of Influence.'

[45] William Allen is blunt in his letters to his contacts in London, collected in the *Burd Papers*. The tone of these is so open that they can only reflect what he was saying in private company. In contrast, the political discourse had yet to turn dark, or even savage, as it would during the campaign of 1764.

Although it has been mostly kept out of the biographies and even the various editions of Franklin's works and papers, there was a contemporary undercurrent of abuse slung at him, and it runs along the lines of his having too much 'ambition'. (The implication was that he could not be trusted to serve the public before himself. Partly, too, it was what one scholar called 'aristocratic contempt'. See J. Philip Gleason, 'A Scurrilous Colonial Election and Franklin's Reputation', *WMQ*, 18 (1961), pp. 68–84.) The echo of this and of what went unrecorded was to resound in the years following his death and well into the nineteenth century. By the time Mark Twain penned his satire-dripping roast of 'the hoary Sabbath-breaker' – the humour itself evidence that Franklin's reputation was then more or less secure – the tide of feeling was beginning to shift against his defenders. Within a generation or two the great body of what some called 'Frankliniseries' – cumulatively, what would now be considered the Franklin brand – could be seen to have transformed an exquisitely flawed genius into a two-dimensional paragon of Victorian virtue. Derived partly from the disjointed, post-1771 continuation of Franklin's own memoirs (the incongruity inspired primarily by the new social purpose for it contrived by the Whig M. P. Benjamin Vaughan), partly from the cartoon of Poor Richard, and partly from industrial ideals, this fictitious nineteenth-century figure was certainly the 'sound, satisfied Ben' whose emptiness of spirit D. H. Lawrence found to be such a disappointment – indeed, one the size and shape of the United States itself.

It may have been as a foil to Lawrence's anti-Franklin thesis – 'every man … is in himself a multitude of conflicting men' – that Carl Van Doren promised readers of his 1938 biography a less dyspeptic fellow, a rather 'harmonious human multitude'. Yet he echoed some of Lawrence's exasperation, at least, when he claimed in the preface to the book that he hoped to extract his subject from the clutches of 'the dry, prim people' who 'seem to regard him as a treasure shut up in a savings bank to which they have the lawful key'. See Mark Twain, 'The Late Benjamin Franklin', in *Autobiography*, pp. 272–74; D. H. Lawrence, 'Benjamin Franklin', ibid., pp. 289–99; Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin*, rev. ed. (New York: Garden City, 1941), p. ix. Incidentally, the book won Van Doren the Pulitzer Prize.

[46] Lemay, in his list of titles on the Boston *Courant* bookshelf, includes the eight volumes of *The Spectator*. Of course, Franklin's autobiography is the only source for that part of his life. *Lemay*, 1, p. 60. See also *Autobiography*, p. 11.

[47] *Autobiography*, pp. 11–12. The romantic existence, exemplified by Pope, Addison, and Steele, to which Franklin once aspired was in fact achieved by the close friend of his teenage years, the poet, playwright, and political essayist James Ralph. Franklin thought Ralph 'ingenious, genteel in his manners, and extremely eloquent' even after reconnecting with him many years afterwards. He said, 'I think I never knew a prettier talker.' (See *Autobiography*, pp. 29–34.) In his memoirs Franklin expressed a touch of resentment at Ralph's unnecessary indebtedness and dependence on him, but in slumming it together ('Ralph and I were inseparable companions') was Franklin not attaching himself to the sort of *Spectator* or Addisonian character he would always admire? For Ralph's biography, see Robert W. Kenny, 'James Ralph: An Eighteenth-Century Philadelphian in Grub Street', *PMHB*, 64 (1940), pp. 218–42.

The 'art' was Franklin's planned treatise on his own success, to be titled, *The Art of Virtue*. At this point in his life, discounting the collected letters that made up his *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* (London: Cave, 1751), *The Art of Virtue* was the only book-length piece of writing Franklin seemed really to have had in him. He wrote and spoke of it in great detail to Lord Kames and later to Benjamin Vaughan, a little secular Testament by the sound of it, in the same vein as the moral touchstones of his youth: Mather's *Essays to Do Good*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Plutarch's *Lives*. It seems impossible that his 'bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection', his treatment of which he put into his memoirs in a tone almost of self-mockery and in the first person (*Autobiography*, pp. 66–76), would have satisfied his intentions for the book he outlined for Kames and Vaughan. Scholars who conclude otherwise must overlook Franklin's own admission that 'my intention of writing and publishing this comment was never fulfilled'.

[48] The £1500 granted to Franklin to cover his expenses seems to suggest (in light of his later salary of £500 per year) a stay of three years. At the beginning of 1762 William Allen wrote to contacts at London that Franklin 'has already stayed near two years longer than [the Assembly] expected'. See *Burd Papers*, p. 49 (15 February 1762, to D. Barclay and Sons).

In April 1761, Thomas Penn wrote that he believed Franklin 'has spent most of his time in philosophical, and especially in electrical matters, having generally company in a morning to see those experiments, and musical performances on glasses'. Dr. William Stukeley's diary entry of 22 May 1761 does not contradict Penn: 'Visited Dr. Franklyn, the electric genius. He has made a dulcimer of wooden sticks, very sweet; another of glass bells, that warble like the sound of an organ.' See Works of Benjamin Franklin, ed. by Jared Sparks, VII (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, & Co., 1840), p. 243 n., and William Stukeley, *Family Memoirs of the Rev. William Stukeley, M.D.*, III (London 1887), p. 480.

[49] *Papers*, x, pp. 112–13 (8 July 1762, James Hamilton to Jared Ingersoll). The Yale editors included this letter as 'a summary statement' of the attitude of Franklin's enemies. All that survives (in the Parkman MSS at the Massachusetts Historical Society) is a copy. The original letter seems to have been suppressed and destroyed. See also *Burd Papers*, p. 49 (15 February 1762, William Allen to D. Barclay & Sons).

[50] *Papers*, x, pp. 27–29 (27 January 1762, to Lord Kames).

[51] Franklin recalled this episode in detail in his memoirs three decades later. He seems to have been thought, then and afterwards, capable of almost anything. One of his biographers once wrote in exasperation, 'There are many books describing the false Franklin, the impossible Franklin, the Franklin that never existed, and could not in the nature of things exist, and to these books those who do not like the truth are referred.' (See Sydney George Fisher, *The True Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1908), p. 4.) Van Doren, who famously characterised Franklin as 'a harmonious human multitude', mistakenly endowed the aging patriot with a knack for agriculture – on the back of one letter (incorrectly identified). That he supposed Franklin to have managed a country estate in New Jersey whilst living in increasingly enfeebled state in Philadelphia only underscores this strange pattern of trying to discover in him unlikely, even superhuman powers. The now-inharmonious Franklin farm was redacted in Van Doren's second edition.

[52] Franklin's words to Lord Kames on 17 August 1762 very closely echo those he wrote to Polly Stevenson some two months earlier, on 7 June 1762. See *Papers*, x, pp. 147–149, 102.

[53] Record number 3105 in Edwin Wolf's catalogue of *The Library of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society and The Library Company, 2006).

[54] Franklin knew this book well enough to borrow its title for a pamphlet on the question of how some of England's North American gains in the Seven Years War ought (voluntarily) to be disposed of. See 'The Interest of Great Britain Considered', *Papers*, ix, pp. 47–100. In his catalogue of 'most of' the French writers from the time of Louis XIV, Voltaire wrote that Abbé Dubos saw the separation of the American colonies from England as an inevitable consequence of destroying the French North American presence, a measure that would necessitate the imposing of new taxes on the colonies. The Abbé died in 1742. *Œuvres Completes de Voltaire*, xviii (Paris: Renouard, 1818), p. 81.

[55] Lord Bute's final bid, £25 for the pamphlets alone, was evidently too steep for Franklin, who paid £6 5s. for all the other volumes he bought on both evenings. (Did Franklin really want those pamphlets, or was he simply driving up the price?) This whole episode is delightfully recorded by John B. Shipley, 'Franklin Attends a Book Auction,' *PMHB*, 80 (1956), pp. 37-45.

[56] The Library Company, as it was called, has survived to the present day as an independent research library located in Locust Street, Philadelphia.

[57] Franklin owned over 4,000 volumes at his death in 1790, conservative estimate. Jefferson, at his collection's peak, had over 10,000 – most of which was lost to fire and debt. James Logan's library, in 1760, numbered about 2,500 volumes (some say more than 3,000). Cotton Mather's collection numbered around 4,000 volumes at his death in 1728. By comparison, John Adams and George Washington were featherweights, with less than a thousand volumes each. See the extensive scholarship by Edwin Wolf, 2nd, particularly: 'James Logan, Bookman Extraordinary,' *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society,* 3rd ser., 79 (1967), pp. 33-46; and *Library of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2006).

[58] See Appendix in Wolf's *Library of Franklin*. Noted there is that the pages for several of the almanacs had not yet been cut. Franklin seems to have bought them purely as a collector. The Yale editors 'presume', on what evidence is unclear, that Franklin's voracious bidding at the auction of James Ralph's estate – he and Bute were the primary buyers – was his way of lending financial assistance to Ralph's daughter, who was unmarried. Although it's possible that he attended in part as a shill bidder or out of charity, the examples of his giving money directly to those who expressed need of it are not rare. Further, it seems unlikely that he would act in such a way against Lord Bute, perhaps his most powerful friend, who was instrumental in fixing William's appointment to the governorship of New Jersey. See *Papers*, I, pp. 57–71, n. 1.

[59] *Papers*, IX, pp. 5–10 (3 January 1760, to Lord Kames): 'Your Lordship was pleas'd kindly to desire to have all my Publications.' *Papers*, X, pp. 147–49 (17 August 1762, to Lord Kames). It is sometimes said that the more excuses one furthers for his behaviour, the less credible he makes himself. Franklin listed at least three in his sheepish letter to Kames. Even the light-footed Boswell read *The Elements of Criticism*, thinking it 'chimerical' but deserving. See *Boswell's London Journal, 1762–1763*, ed. by Frederick A. Pottle (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950), p. 261. On his second mission to London, Franklin made a point of leaving his books at Philadelphia.

[60] Henry Home, *The Elements of Criticism,* I (Edinburgh: Kincaid & Bell, 1762), p. 7.

[61] See 'Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania,' in *Papers*, III, pp. 397–421.

[62] For this early drawing of Sally Franklin, see Charles Coleman Sellers, *Benjamin Franklin in Portraiture* (London: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 47. The artist was Benjamin West.

[63] John Fanning Watson and Willis Pope Hazard, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Stuart, 1899), III, p. 154.

[64] *Papers*, VII, pp. 288–292 (9 December 1757, William Franklin to Elizabeth Graeme); *Papers*, IX, pp. 396–398 (10 December 1761, to Joshua Babcock). The recipient of William's letter was the Philadelphia beauty Elizabeth Graeme, to whom he was engaged. It seems to be his last to her. Just as Franklin, when stranded in London aged nineteen, had forgotten his promises to Deborah, William forgot his to Betsy and the engagement ended. Some researchers have claimed that she was unaware of its ending until she read in the newspapers of William's marriage. It is said she was nearly destroyed by it.

[65] James A. Coombs, *The Colonial American Stage, 1665-1774: A Documentary Calendar* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), p. 128–29; J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, II (Philadelphia, 1884), p. 864; *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. by Russell F. Weigley (New York: Norton, 1982).

[66] *Papers*, X, pp. 147–49 (17 August 1762, to Lord Kames).

[67] *PA*, 11 August 1762, p. 1. It isn't unlikely that the airs, probably Highland folk tunes of the sort that were then popular, were arranged by Franklin's friend, the Scots composer and musician James Oswald.

[68] *Papers*, X, pp. 116–30 (13 July 1762, to Giambatista Beccaria). The most complete source for stories of the armonica is A. Hyatt King, 'The Musical Glasses and Glass Harmonica,' *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 72nd sess. (1945-1946), pp. 97–122. The contemporary German pamphlets on the subject would be a most enlightening addition to his work.

[69] *LC*, 24–26 June 1762, p. 1.

[70] King, p. 114.

[71] Ibid.

[72] 'Edward Hussey Delaval', *DNB;* much of which can be found also in 'Biographical memoranda respecting Edward Hussey Delaval', *Philosophical Magazine and Journal*, 45, pp. 29–32. Delavel's membership nomination was, in May 1759, the first of many that Franklin had anything to do with, and the only nomination he made during the first London mission. Delavel's family owned vast estates in two counties, which he eventually inherited. See also *The Letters of Thomas Gray*, ed. by Duncan C. Tovey (London: Bell, 1904), II, p. 246 (8 December 1761, Gray to William Mason).

[73] Franklin also owned Moxon's works on mechanics, which contained illustrated descriptions of various trades, but which did not include glassmaking.

[74] See Franklin's 'Directions for Making a Musical Machine,' sent to 'Messrs. Hughes and Co. at the Cockpit Glasshouse, opposite St. Paul's', in *Papers*, x, pp. 180–82. The date is uncertain, and although it is published in the Yale edition under the year 1762, the document was probably made earlier. (See King, p. 107.) The editors state that its placement was arrived at only 'because that was the year in which Franklin first described his musical invention' and to accompany a letter on the subject in the same volume. It is believed that, of two glassmakers Franklin employed to make the bowls, the 'Mr. Barnes' at Hughes and Co. was the earlier.

[75] That it was an expensive instrument to make, and to own, is evident by one glassmaker's advertisement for it, which he addressed 'to the nobility, gentry, etc.,' and also by Franklin's own accounts.

[76] The armonica is rarely used anymore except in dramatic scoring and alternative music. The Icelandic musician Björk employed it on her record *Homogenic* (1997), and it has reportedly had very limited use by the bands Pink Floyd, KoRn, and Aerosmith. To the modern ear, the sound seems eerie and even dark – in film scoring it is sometimes used to evoke these moods – not soft and sweet as it had been for Franklin. But as with other forms of expression, the experience of the listener or viewer is influenced both by contemporary ideals and by his own state of mind.

[77] The initial voyage over had almost killed him. William Franklin wrote, upon landing, that the ship 'narrowly escap'd running ashore on the Rocks of Scilly'. 'Few,' he added, 'are the inducements that will tempt me to pass the ocean again.' Franklin, for his part, wrote that 'were I a Roman Catholic, perhaps I should on this occasion vow to build a chapel to some saint; but as I am not, if I were to vow at all, it should be to build a *lighthouse*.' *Papers*, vii, pp. 243–44 (17 July 1757, to Deborah Franklin; and William Franklin to Elizabeth Graeme).

[78] *Papers*, x, pp. 147–49 (17 August 1762, to Lord Kames). Kames was not at home, having just set out about 17 August on a tour of the Lowlands with James Boswell. See *Boswell's London Journal*, p. 10.

[79] Ibid., pp. 140–142 (10 August 1762, William Strahan to David Hall). Franklin carried this letter over himself, having received it from Strahan either in person at London or by post at Portsmouth.

[80] Ibid., pp. 80–82 (10 May 1762, from David Hume).

[81] *Papers*, x, pp. 147–49 (17 August 1762, to Kames).

[82] *Papers*, vii, pp. 178–79 (11 April 1757, to Joseph Galloway). Also *Papers*, viii, pp. 96–97 (10 June 1758, to Galloway): 'you may depend on my endeavouring to shield your Reputation wherever I find it attack'd, as I rely on the like Defence in the same Case from your Friendship'.

[83] *Papers*, IX, pp. 15–17 (9 January 1760, to Galloway). All of Franklin's letters during the first weeks of January 1760 have a negative colour to them and Polly Stevenson confirms, in hers to him that month, that he was indeed short on 'felicity'. See ibid., pp. 19–20.

[84] *Papers*, VIII, pp. 149–152 (16 September 1758, to Joseph Galloway).

[85] *Papers*, IX, pp. 173–77 (27 June 1760, to Deborah Franklin).

[86] *Papers*, X, p. 59 (22 February 1762, Joseph Browne to John Kelly).

[87] Although years apart, Franklin grouped the two awards together in the outline of this memoirs. See 'Enclosure I: Abel James to Benjamin Franklin, [1782]', in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, IX: 1 November 1785–22 June 1786, ed. by Julian P. Boyd (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp. 484–495.

[88] See the note to the secretary of the Royal Society, in which Franklin apologised for his 'officiousness' in attempting (unsuccessfully) to resolve a dispute, or potentional dispute, between Delaval and Canton. He had found 'that neither of them cordially approve the Alterations propos'd, tho' they might consent to them at the Instance of their Friends'. It's an unusual admission from Franklin, who counted both men among his friends, and here seems to have withdrawn. *Papers*, X, pp. 74–75 (16 April 1762, to Thomas Birch).

[89] *LC*, 29 April–1 May, 1762, p. 8, reported 'remarkably hot' weather and 'sharp easterly winds'. *LEP*, 28–30 April 1762, p. 7, reported 'thunder, lightning, hail' at Enfield 'that the inhabitants could not stir out of their houses. It was very violent, that the like has not happened there in the memory of the oldest person living in that place'. It was not healthful weather, and both Smith and Franklin wrote that the city suffered under influenzas that spring.

[90] Smith remembered that he had written to Fry 'about May 1759'. Smith Mss, William Smith to Richard Peters, 23 November 1762. The indication of the Vice Chancellor, Joseph Browne, that the decision to offer Franklin a degree was agreed to 'nem. con.' could be seen to suggest that Fry did act on Smith's letter. *Papers*, X, p. 59 (22 February 1762, Browne to John Kelly).

[91] The account is found in correspondence between Strahan and John Kelly, beginning 11 February 1763, quoted in Benjamin Franklin, *Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. by Albert Henry Smyth, X (New York: Macmillan, 1907), pp. 208–09.

[92] Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Archives & Records Center, Smith Mss, William Smith to Richard Peters, 22 March 1762 <HTTP://**SCETI.LIBRARY.UPENN.EDU**/FRANKLIN>.

[93] In 1732, the secretary of the Library Company Joseph Brientnall wrote Peter Collinson that there was not 'a good Booksellers Shop nearer than Boston'. *Papers*, I, pp. 248–49 (7 November 1732, Brientnall to Collinson). It seems that once Franklin began to stock books for sale at his shop, he had the local market cornered for some time.

[94] *Papers*, VIII, pp. 317–22 (8 April 1759, to David Hall).

[95] Ibid.

[96] After Smith's return from London, Hall took the matter up with him. Naturally, the parson denied saying any such thing as Franklin had reported, and Hall seems almost to have believed him. For his writing to Franklin a year later that 'I was convinced what you wrote was true notwithstanding' seems superfluous and half accusatory. See *Papers*, IX, pp. 100–01 (18 April 1760, from David Hall).

[97] Ibid. See also 'Thomas Osborne', *DNB*.

[98] Smith Mss, William Smith to Richard Peters, 14 September 1762.

[99] *Papers*, IV, pp. 475–76 (3 May 1753, to William Smith). Franklin wrote Peter Collinson in 1753 that he considered Smith 'to have excellent Notions of Education'; see *Papers*, VI, pp. 511–12 (26 June 1753).

[100] William Smith, *A general idea of the College of Mirania* (New York: Parker and Weyman, 1753), p. 15.

[101] *Papers*, IV, pp. 467–70 (19 April 1753, to William Smith).

[102] The Sparks edition of Franklin's works, like the Yale, prints the 'original' and longer draft of the letter quoted in H. W. Smith's life of Smith (pp. 23–24; cf. Sparks, *Works*, VII, p. 63). But neither edition makes any indication where the two drafts differ, or even that a second, final draft ever existed. William Smith's biographer seems to have had the actual letter to hand among his subject's papers, and he quotes it in full, noting a large insertion after the first line. A later historian more clearly noted that Franklin removed the second paragraph when he copied out the final letter from the draft. See Thomas Harrison Montgomery, *A History of the University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Jacobs, 1900), pp. 191–92.

[103] *Papers*, IV, pp. 475–76 (3 May 1753, to William Smith).

[104] Ibid. This 'saw' is not, it should be noted, one of Poor Richard's, but rather a slice of verse composed by Franklin's former master Samuel Keimer, in response to one of his pressman's *Busy-Body* papers. The Yale editors made the connection, which fits, and also shows how Franklin picked up useful pieces even from his critics.

[105] Ibid.

[106] In his memoirs Franklin suggested he was possessed by a soul transmuted – namely, his uncle's. Thomas Franklin, eldest of the former generation, had made himself central to the Northamptonshire community in which he had lived. The more Franklin learned of Thomas Franklin's life, the more he felt they shared some deathless, communicable quality. See *Autobiography*, p. 3.

[107] Sometime in his thirties or forties Franklin began to use what he thought or wanted to be his family arms. This line of conceit began when he became secure in his printing business and was appointed Postmaster of Philadelphia: in 1739, he inquired of his father into the family name (*Papers*, II, pp. 229–32, 26 May 1739, from Josiah Franklin; it was the year the Franklins moved to the larger house rented from Robert Grace). The 'Franklin arms' were in fact the arms of an unconnected set of Franklins, or Frankleyns, in the neighbourhood of Skipton-in-Craven, Yorkshire. Later geneologists thought it 'very probable' that he was granted their use about the time he began to hold political office, but 'that arms should have been conceded to him so closely resembling those of families of the same name in other counties' was indeed 'strange'. No record survives of it. In any case, he had the design – two lions' heads, two doves, and a dolphin – made into a signet ring that he kept on his person often enough to have dropped it somewhere in the summer of 1751. See *PG*, 20 June 1751; *Papers*, II, p. 230 n.

He was not the only one in the family to make use of the 'family arms' – which appear on a bookplate and a tombstone – but when his nephew Peter Mecom proposed to stamp them on crown soap, Franklin drew the line. See *Papers*, VII, pp. 221–23 (30 May 1757, to Jane Mecom); Paul L. Ford, *The Many-Sided Franklin* (New York: Century, 1899), p. 2; *Heraldic Journal*, II, ed. by W. H. Whitmore (Boston: Wiggin, 1866), p. 97; and *Heraldic Journal*, III, ed. by W. S. Appleton (Boston: Wiggin & Lunt, 1867), p. 67.

[108] *Papers*, VIII, pp. 317–22 (8 April 1759, to David Hall).

[109] See 'Documents on the Hearing of William Smith's Petition', in *Papers*, VIII, pp. 28–51; particularly, points (g) and (k).

[110] *Papers*, VIII, pp. 415–17 (28 July 1759, to Ebenezer Kinnersley).

[111] Smith Mss, letters from William Smith to Richard Peters, 22 March and 10 April 1762.

[112] Smith Mss, letters from Smith to Peters, 22 May [dated 2 October], 14 August, and 14 September 1762.

[113] *Papers*, X, pp. 105–10 (21 June 1762, to Polly Stevenson). Smith would apply to the mercantile firms of Sargent & Aufrère and Neate & Neave. Both names appear on this list, as well as that of Thomas Allen, brother-in-law to Elizabeth Downes, Franklin's future daughter-in-law. Allen repeated Franklin's sentiment towards the College to Mr Hanna, whom Smith later found not to be well disposed to giving (Smith Mss, Smith to Peters, 22 May 1762 [dated 2 October]). For Smith's letter of introduction to William Neate, see Smith Mss, Smith to Peters, 10 July 1762.

[114] Smith Mss, Smith to Peters, dated 'received' 2 October 1762. The letter is archived under the date scrawled into the corner by Richard Peters. In pencil beside it is the word 'received'. This is repeated more clearly in a note in the left margin of the first page. The letter, in fact, is undated, but was probably written 22 May 1762.
The precise dating can be determined by a number of delimiters. First, Smith refers to William Franklin's ongoing courtship of Elizabeth Downes. ('This I discovered by the Help of a Lady.') The two married early September, the news made a public announcement, and so the letter could have been written no later than that date.

He also says he has had no letters. The first letter he received, from Mr Moore, was dated 15 May and came before 10 July, when he acknowledged it. The reason he had not received any letters, he believed, was that the last two mail ships were taken. These were the 'last packet' and also 'Wynne' from New York. Wynn's capture was reported on 9 April. The last mail 'packet' was the General Wall, Captain Aires, which sailed from New York that same day and was taken on 28 April. This was reported on 13 May, but the news report notes that this was the third time the ship had been captured. (I cannot find reports of the other two times.) So Smith's letter had to have been written after 28 April and more probably after 13 May.

Another potential event by which to date Smith's message is somewhat speculative. On the draft of a letter dated 21 June, and never sent in any form, Franklin made a list of people to call upon before he left London. Three of the names – Allen, Sargent, and Neate – were later mentioned by Smith as men who had been persuaded to deny him donations. (There were others, also, whom he did not name.) Franklin had agreed at their meeting in March to assist Smith by giving him a list of 'his friends' who would be likely to answer Smith's appeal. (Smith confessed later to Peters that he had arrived in London without any letters of introduction, and was making use of Franklin's contacts.) By 21 June, Franklin seems to have had plans to undermine Smith by paying visits to a few of the men on the list, ostensibly to take his leave, and also to frustrate Smith's collection. He had already talked to Sargent (who had sought his advice after receiving a solicitation from Smith) already when Smith wrote the letter to report the mischief to Peters. Furthermore, in a separate letter of 22 May, Smith notes that he had not begun the collection until 29 April.

Finally, it was not unusual for Smith to send several letters at the same time. One was to be shown to the Board of Trustees. Another, pertaining to secret or contentious matters, was for Peters' eyes only. The undated letter was probably one of these, included

with a public letter. Peters did, in fact, receive another letter from Smith by the same ship and on the same date, 2 October. In it, Smith makes oblique reference to the episode with Sargent: 'this method of first waiting on Persons with the printed Case, and then calling upon them after perusing it, I find so fatiguing & liable to so many Disappointments and Chances of their being abroad, that I am now in general obliged to drop it'. The date of this letter is 22 May, which must also be the date of the undated letter.

Smith would not learn the full extent of Franklin's campaign against him until around 14 September. He retaliated by repeating a well-known Philadelphia scandal, that William Franklin was illegitimate, but was unsuccessful in having his governorship revoked.

[115] Ibid. Franklin's feelings towards the Academy during his English mission are made ambiguous both by his own caution and by later destruction of the record. See, for example, his letter to Deborah early in 1758, where he begins to reflect on the decisions he made as President of the Board of Trustees: 'I am sorry to hear of any Disturbance in the Academy, the rather as by my mistaken Zeal for its Welfare in introducing that imprudent Man, I think myself in some Degree the Cause of those Misfortunes.' Whatever sentiment followed his admittedly 'mistaken zeal' in supporting William Smith seems to have been enough to cause someone to tear away the rest of the page. *Papers*, VII, pp. 367–70.

[116] *Papers*, X, pp. 143–44 (12 August 1762, from John Sargent).

[117] Smith Mss, Smith to Peters, 22 May 1762 [dated 2 October].

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] *Papers*, X, pp. 105–110 (21 June 1762, to Polly Stevenson); pp. 116–130 (13 July 1762, to Giambatista Beccaria); pp. 85–100 (27 May 1762, to John Pringle); pp. 111–12 (3 July 1762, 'Experiments on Amber').

[121] Ibid., pp. 231–35 (25 March 1763, to Polly Stevenson). He recounts asking a favour of a political enemy in his memoirs. Franklin did attend one or two meetings of the Board of Trustees on his return to Philadelphia, but soon resumed his neglect of them.

[122] *Papers*, X, pp. 8–9 (14 January 1762, to Thomas Leech and Charles Norris).

[123] Ibid., pp. 160–61 (2 December 1762, to Richard Jackson); pp. 161–62 (2 December 1762, to William Strahan); pp. 162–65 (6 December 1762, to Richard Jackson); pp. 166–69 (7 December 1762, to William Strahan); pp. 241–45 (4 April 1763, from Richard Jackson).

[124] Ibid., pp. 115–16 (to Isaac Norris). Franklin wrote on 17 November 1761 to advise the Assembly against cashing in their stocks at that time, and to wait instead for a peace with France and 'an expected rise' in the value of the stock. If they cashed in then, he said, they would do so at a loss. The loss was blamed on Franklin by his enemies. See letters of 17 November 1761 (*Papers*, IX, pp. 383–84), 8 January 1762 to Sargent Aufrère & Co. (*Papers*, X, pp. 4–5), and, to David Hall, 10 December 1761 (*Papers*, IX, pp. 398–99). From the latter: 'What Money I have here is chiefly in the Funds, from whence I cannot withdraw it for present Use without great Loss, compar'd with the Price it will bear at a Peace.' See particularly the exchange of letters on and around 14 January 1762, wherein Franklin expresses his 'mortification' and apologies sheepishly to the bankers (*Papers*, X, pp. 3–13). Also *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the Province of Pennsylvania: Dec.4, 1682–Sept.26, 1776*, VI, p. 5359.

[125] *Papers*, X, pp. 241–45 (4 April 1763, from Richard Jackson). I have drawn emphasis on the 'or', which in the original context is clearly meant to qualify 'intelligence'.

[126] The lines are from *A Charge to the Poets*, published 1762. They were extracted for the *London Magazine* for the month of April that year (p. 206). It is probably from the latter that Franklin quoted them in a letter to Polly, 25 March 1763. Whitehead's somewhat forced rhyming verse was not unlike that of Franklin's uncle Benjamin, quality aside, and probably of the young Franklin himself. He would have found the volume appealing as much for that as for its witty morality.

[127] *Papers*, X, pp. 132–33 (20 July 1762, to William Strahan).

[128] Ibid., pp. 140–42 (10 August 1762, William Strahan to David Hall).

[129] Ibid., pp. 136–37 (23 July 1762, to William Strahan).

[130] Most of the Portsmouth flying machines and wagons left London at five in the morning or earlier. The nearest to Franklin left the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, at 5 a.m., fare one pound, one shilling. Others departed from Gracechurch Street, Leadenhall Street, Ludgate Hill, Piccadilly, Cheapside, and Southwark. Some left at midnight or one. These night journeys were dangerous. See *The Compleat Compting-House Companion* (London: Johnston, 1763), pp. 253, 271.

[131] In a letter to Strahan, 1781, the work of Didot is praised: 'The utmost Care is taken of his Press-work; his Ink is black, & his Paper fine and white.' *Papers*, XXXVI, pp. 192–93. The implication in both contexts is purity.

[132] Street numbering did not become common throughout London until later in the century. Some sources say that the Postal Act of 1765 was the cause. Letters addressed to Franklin in Craven Street are very often addressed, 'Mrs. Stevensons', as if that alone were enough to locate the house. As Margaret Stevenson ran a lodging house on a street with several other lodging houses, there was almost certainly a signboard out front to identify it.

[133] *Papers*, X, pp. 142–43 (11 August 1762, to Polly Stevenson). The lines are a direct echo.

[134] Ibid. There is no record, apart from this letter, of any romantic interest between William Franklin and Polly Stevenson. Polly was teasingly intelligent, plain, and not wealthy, with few useful connections. She may have been Franklin's type; she was not William's.

[135] See letter from Thomas Bridges to Jared Ingersoll, 30 September 1762, 'A Selection from the Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Jared Ingersoll', ed. by Franklin B. Dexter, in *New Haven Colony Historical Society Papers*, IX (New Haven: New Haven Colony Historical Society, 1918), p. 278. Bridges was Richard Jackson's brother-in-law, and so at some remove from the inner Franklin circle.

[136] *Papers*, X, pp. 147–49 (17 August 1762, to Kames). The slightest hint that William was to take a wife might have implied that he had secured a living. Even to Kames, the Doctor revealed only that 'he stays in England a little longer', unable to be more specific on the one hand, and perhaps unwilling on the other. Of their friends, Strahan alone seems to have been let in on either secret.

[137] *Papers*, X, pp. 142–43 (11 August 1762, to Polly Stevenson).

[138] *Papers*, X, pp. 149–50 (23 August 1762, to William Strahan).

[139] Hart, p. 421 (William Franklin to William Strahan, 4 September 1762). St. George's Church was a fashionable place for weddings even then.

[140] *Papers*, X, pp. 149–50 (23 August 1762, to William Strahan).

[141] *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 7–10 August 1762, reported that the rumour 'of an approaching peace gains ground' (p. 5). A week later, *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, 18 August 1762, ran a letter from the Hague referring to advices 'undoubted and repeated … of an approaching peace between England and France' (p. 2). Spain's answer was expected at London by the end of the month.

[142] *Papers*, X, pp. 149–50 (23 August 1762, to William Strahan).

2

Talkers

AUGUST–OCTOBER, 1762.
At sea.

A light for a sea breeze

It was October when the sea narrowed.

When he ventured out of his cabin and onto the deck it was not an ocean that he looked on but a new, inhabited water. They were off the sea and the Doctor saw that he was two days from home, or three at the most. He could make out the grasses of the salt marshes on the shores of the bay, the mud flats crinkled and black, the little inlets where rowboats were tied up, and the schooners dredging for oysters. The crossing had taken almost ten weeks.

The Delaware would be navigable for another few months when the *Carolina* entered the mouth by New Castle, driving upriver, and if the local people came aboard to sell a few smallish apples to those who still had money with them the Doctor learned then that the crop had failed generally that year. The sky was as immense as it had been on the sea, and on the autumnal river it was the same scene of water and sky reaching forever distant, but with a second vastness in between, primative and dark, where the horizon had been. He beheld it almost as though he were taking it in for the first time, and it did not yet seem to him a wilderness. He could see on the western bank the cluster of old waterfront homes with Dutch step gables more distinct than the forms of any church or civic building. It was not uncommon for a captain to anchor there until morning, for the daylight gave more sign of the dangerous shallows that they would encounter further upstream. After sunset the places where the people dwelt were knowable awhile by a dim flickering in the night.[1]

On the sea the Doctor had felt the separation almost immediately. A vague sense of insecurity persisted in him, even after the convoy had escaped the privateers and the squalls that could strike without warning off the Iberian coast, and he had never been quite at ease. He kept a journal, once, in his youth, which he began on the eve of his first return crossing. At nineteen, carrying within him the infectiousness of London life, he had seen in himself a Ulysses homebound for Ithaca, an adventurer delayed by distraction as much as misfortune. Much of it, he would say later, was rubbish, the thoughts of a young man bored at last with his own waywardness and triumphant by

the same token in having brought himself to the metropolis and back, and searching by his pen – searching for meaning in the narration of such an unexpected chapter of his life. The second time, at the age of fifty-six, he kept no record at all.[2]

The following month he would write to London about the island of Madeira, the oasis that lay far to the south of the shortest sea lanes, where British ships put in to freshen stores. Secure from enemy privateers by the neutrality of the Portuguese, the Doctor found himself so affected by the experience that he wrote of it almost as if nobody had ever been there before; perhaps it was only to show that he had. From the mooring in the Funchal Roads it had been some distance to the rocky banks where two small forts stood east and west of the island's principal and indeed, only city. Mornings he had looked up at the mountain and seen the *quintas*, or country houses, veining up like chalk deposits into the vineyards, and even at the final glimpse thought it strange that the island should support the numbers of people it reportedly did. The convoy had called there 'by way of half-way house', but the refreshments taken on board had seemed somehow exotic, as if produce of a mythical place beyond the reach and reality of war.

The air had been free and pure and cool except in the afternoon, when the streets burned so hot even in the shade of the city's poplars and oranges that the people drew out into the hills on muleback and the place fell very quiet. When the first service cleared out the cathedral became a place for every sort of business. Even girls in the flower of youth could be seen pressed against their lovers in the stony dark beyond the glow of the sanctuary lamps.[3]

'I would give you some account of Madeira,' he wrote to Jackson, 'but that I suspect you know it better than I do'.[4]

But he couldn't resist, and from that one line he made a long paragraph that might have surprised the counsellor for its lyricism. Oranges and mangoes were as commonly seen at the city markets as apples, pears, and peaches 'in great perfection', and it was said the corn and beef were as good as any in England. He noted, as would Cook six years later, that the high and low altitudes produced such a difference in temperature – eight degrees or more – that there was scarcely an edible plant of northern or southern Europe that would not find a climate there. For the Doctor it was a doubleness, he felt with a hint of undisguised envy, which 'affords the inhabitants a singular conveniency, that of getting soon out of its heat after they have done their business, and of ascending to what climate or degree of coolness they are pleased to choose'. He had never been able to stand the airless, buggy summers in the red-brick furnace of Philadelphia.[5]

The island's chief export was wine, made of no particular variety of grape, but rather of all sorts intermixed, and carried famously down the steep mountain tracks in goatskins slung across the shoulders of the local men. So little changed were the skins in their manufacture that the animals they came from could still be recognised: headless, hoofless, and turned inside-out. The Doctor revealed not a trace of unease. On the contrary, he counted himself with only an echo of pride among those gentlemen who had drunk 'of the vine' so near to its source.[6]

It was one of the English merchants who left them, after three days, with the harvest hoarded away in their rooms. When the convoy set sail the ceiling beams of the Doctor's cabin had become a terrace pinned with vine leaves and bunches of black grapes. For weeks the company treated these as postprandial delicacies, gradually diminishing their stock as the leagues grew between them and the wine-producing regions of the world. It was his final taste of Europe. Engrossed maybe in Kames's *Elements* or otherwise too distracted for letters, he wrote nothing.[7]

They kept the windows open to the evening breezes, which eased the derangement of their cabins after the southern three o'clock sun. The weather was so seldom anything but fair, and the tenders so constantly employed in ferrying passengers between ships, that the Doctor was never certain where he might dine on any given day of the voyage. Feeling somehow lost amidst the strangeness of the transition and still taking as premonition the rumours spread by Dr Smith, he discovered a refuge in the proximity of so many 'neighbours' – 'for this was like travelling in a moving village'.[8]

Once at the evening meal, the light smoking madly in a soft wind, the Doctor contrived a vigil lamp using a bit of cut cork threaded with wick and floated in a tumbler partway full of oil. It was the sort that he had seen hanging before sacred images when travelling two summers earlier through the Catholic cities of Flanders, and if water were added the oil would burn down and down and the water would drown the flame safely at the end without attention. He hung it, another sort of harvest, from a ceiling beam.

'There is nothing remarkable in all this,' he would write later, for his makeshift lamp had not yet presented, in a curious intersection of natural philosophy and religious custom, the peculiar behaviour of fluids. But watching it one evening as it swayed above the table in its wire sling, the Doctor seized on a break in the conversation to observe the water rocking beneath the oil. It was rocking wildly with the ship's swoops and swells, reaching up into the oil whose surface remained strangely calm. 'This I was continually looking at and considering,' he confessed, and found himself so distracted

by it that he reintroduced the subject throughout the meal. His interest, though unfeigned, was not uncalculated, for the topic was a favourite with him. When he was a boy he read in Pliny's chapter on the wonders of water, fountains, and rivers that the sea divers of ancient Rome went down with oil in their mouths and by its gradual release stilled the roughness of the sea above them. The oil spread over the surface and made an opening in the waves as though it were a glass that could carry a ray of sun with it into the depths. He had wondered ever since, or until modern principles rendered fanciful all such accounts for him, if the whole sea might be changed with oil, lake-like and transparent.[9]

Nevertheless, he got a hint of it in the summer of 1757 from the deck of the packet-boat that had brought him to England. She was as fast a ship as one could hope for – or so her master, one Captain Lutwidge, had boasted. Within hours of leaving port in convoy with two other mail packets and Lord Loudoun's entire command of warships, the remark had become something of a standing joke. For by a fresh wind she proved to be 'the dullest' of ninety-six sail. It was from that situation, with a prairie of backwash before them, that the Doctor observed to the captain that amidst so many ruffled scars on the sea there were two ships, though no different from the others, that made hardly any at all, but appeared to trail behind them a sort of anti-wake. It made so striking a scene, and the Doctor was so surprised, that he had failed to spot the injury implicit in the comment.[10]

Lutwidge issued what seemed like a gesture of contempt but he answered all the same: it would be the cooks emptying their greasy water through the scuppers, which had slicked the sides of those ships a little, and so suppressed the sea-swell around them. It was the first time the Doctor had witnessed, on so large a scale, an event that seemed to draw directly from legend, and supposing the captain's answer devoid of both sense and learning he promised himself the pleasure of an experiment. But he had not anticipated how easily London would divert his attention and he never developed his insight any further than the almost surreal confirmation that the sea really could be stilled. To the captain's story he gave no weight whatsoever. The truth was that he had had no clearer view of it himself, and still had not, despite his familiarity with all the latest transactions of the Royal Society. But it was more than ten years before he could admit that in a huff of arrogance he had belittled not only the ingenuity of the ancients but also the hard-worn knowledge of the commonest sort of people, the order from which he himself had sprung.[11]

And so the water's wildness in the tumbler was a thing for which the Doctor could not then allow an explanation, and kept infusing into the conversation as a mystery whose parameters he alone should be able to comprehend. In private he wanted to recreate the motion, the lamp oil holding steady before the water's insanity, and to find it beyond the grasp of any of the existing theories.

He was caught off guard when one of the others in the mess flicked away his curiosity. The voice belonged to an old man who had seen the Bermudians spear fish through such oil pools as the Romans made on the sea. And he knew or had heard of another instance of it, wherein the fishermen at Lisbon carried bottles of oil to protect their boats laden low with catch from the high breakers at the mouth of the Tagus. It was a common enough occurance, he said, well-known to himself, and also to men such as these Portuguese for whom each day's work obliged them to prevail over the sea's callousness, and so to do without an ounce of investment in any principles of any so-called philosophy. At the sight of white peaks on the bar it was nothing to empty a bottle over the sides of the craft to smooth its entry into the harbour.

Without any other confirmation it sounded to the Doctor more like a folk story than natural fact, and all the old man could offer to recommend his authority was a lifetime spent at sea.

The Doctor's lamp burned all night for the watch and in the morning it had extinguished and the cork floated in the water in the tumbler. Perhaps it was only the sight of the glass swinging as before, seeming just as it had the previous night except the water now still, still 'as if it had been ice', that impressed the Doctor's mind with an urge to make experiments with the accepted principles of hydrostatics. Perhaps it was the sea dog's undercutting him publicly with what were, he later wrote, 'not very intelligible' statements. At Philadelphia he knew there were only a few men who could attempt to make sense of it; he would devise a way to repeat the behaviour of the water and the oil for them, and if no suitable principle should be found he would not be wrong to write a letter to be read for the Royal Society.[12]

The lamp served the supper table and the night watch, the ship crept west, and every day the effect of the oil on the water was the same.[13]

At the sign of the Bible

Beyond the thin settlements on the shoreline the Jerseys were still thickly covered in parts and totally denuded in others where the woods had been felled to feed glass

furnaces and for roof shingle. Soon the vessel came to the autumn alleys of chestnut and locust and red sumac, the apple and peach orchards stripped and finished for the year, the crude hog pens, fowl huts, and the grain fields cut and baled, and livestock feeding on the bales. Only a practiced eye would make out the city's five steeples, which a stranger would not see until he was already quite upon it, though the clangs of the State House bell could be heard at great distance on the water. The river would sweep around a corner to port and turning reveal the tip of Windmill Island – the first of the small wooded islands there – and the other ships at anchor by the wharves.

The fields came down provincially to the bank. On the city's southern edge, or really quite beyond it, the King's Colours were flying above the wall of a defensive fort. At the dips of the crenels, long and black, were sixteen eighteen-pound cannon, worn out, and some twelve-pounders in even worse shape, and the whole assembly seemed very meagre and tired after the great naval headquarters at Portsmouth. It was built with funds raised by a lottery proposed by the Doctor himself, and he was so proud of the successful effort to overrule the city's leading pacifists that in his memoirs he gave it an arsenal of more and higher calibre guns.[14]

Then came the cottages, clean and right, the Swedish church above the suburb whose Indian name, *moyamensing*, meant pigeon's droppings, and soon the squarely placed houses with their gable ends fronting the water, and the drawbridge over the mouth of the dock creek, whose rank effluence could not be perceived above the smell of tar from the shipyards. When the weather was clear it was possible to see the darkness of the upland hills rising beyond the Schuylkill on the city's western boundary. There, a hundred years since the lay was known of every street that would run between the two rivers, the land was still in a state of indeterminate half-use and provided only for jaunts and picnics, pasture land, and fishermen's bungalows.

He could look between the ships at port and mark the coopers' sheds on the wharves, the trade unloading onto the carts, and follow with his eye the direct line of streets as far as the second or third cross street. He would walk along past the frontages of shops and the taverns he knew, or had once known, and see the people he knew, and whose interest he had made his, and whose public money he had lost by believing a peace to be near. In the dank neighbourhood by the river was the seafarers' tavern where he had slept his first night in the city, windowed alone above the strange night, and listening for the slap of water on the pilings.

It was decades before, but he could recall every meal he caught on the run, or at least the circumstances of them, and in that memory feel perhaps his own empty place at his

father's Sunday table two provinces away, in Union Street at Boston. It was cold and it was the beginning of autumn and he was slipping down through New Jersey with a dirty shirt in his pocket. He set out at dawn by Cooper's Ferry in a rowboat with a company of strangers. They had come downriver so late in the dark of the night before that the city was extinguished and invisible across the water; they row and talk of passing the night in the open, somewhere. He is seventeen years old, and he is to all appearances an escaped servant. The sky is clear and they moor without knowing where, into the mouth of some creek and upstream a ways, and fell an old fence to burn through the night. For him it is the second night in a week spent rough, but this time (there is some mercy) he is on land.

Mid-morning, on the western shore of the Delaware, he will pay the strangers a copper shilling for the use of the boat, though it is he who rows, and suggest by his insistence on their accepting of a fare they have not solicited that he is richer than he really is. At Philadelphia he climbs onto the wharf. Bells are ringing somewhere.

Near the courthouse in the middle of the street he buys bread to eat with swigs of well water. The street is wider than any he has seen. It is so wide that by the wharf he might have taken such a large expanse of dirt for a public square, and where the long covered markethouse extends like a divider from the rear of the courthouse it seems two streets, really. On the bread alone he dines though it was written that 'man shall not live on bread alone' and it was perhaps spoken also over his father's table, but many things were written in the Bible and spoken over the table that he does not care to think of even on the Lord's day. There are woollen stockings in his pockets and more shirts also because the sloop has not arrived with his trunk. He is a drifter who has not eaten or slept properly in several days and if he catches himself reflected in the dark windows along the south side of the market street, or in a bucket of water or in the river he will find he looks it.[15]

He is walking now in the direction taken by the street. After one cross street the walls of that wide corridor stagger, autumn hedge stands in for brick and cedar shingle, and he turns south at the fields. Local inns, homes, he sees, but cannot see where a drifter may eat, lodge, pass some time without there being put questions. Later he will remember the signs, the houses to let. He won't recall the exact frequency of them but rather that it had seemed to him so many, as if all the city were doing just like him, going someplace else. But no: those people would not spend a rough night on the river. They would not walk across the Jerseys in a shower of mud and step bedraggled and feverish into the hospitality of a stranger, and nor would they sink so low, in the proud

finality of the heaving out of place of their whole lives, as to consider turning back and discovering what it was to be a humble creature. But then, he had his trunk coming round the cape to meet him in a few days. He couldn't turn back.[16]

He walks. He is exhausted from the night on the creekbank. It is the hour of services and men and families are in the street going to their meetings.

Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Whether some blessing of his father's echoed in the Doctor's mind or not when he told the story of his running, he did not repeat it except to say that since that occasion he had often had bread without any such accompaniment. It was much later that he put it on paper and when he told it then it was an old story that lodged deep within him. The old defiance of that first flight still resonated strongly with him or he brought to it a new one that would gush along the same channel as storms fill a dry riverbed.[17]

Some new or old defiance followed him back towards the High Street into the meetinghouse where the Society of Friends did its worshipping. There it sat and attended with him the first meeting of the day or the second (for on Sundays three were held), and it was still with him at the end of two hours when it cooled his infidel embarrassment on the bench where he was discovered asleep and removed. It was there, cloaked in wit, when he quipped that it was, strictly speaking, 'the first *house* I was in, or slept in, in Philadelphia'. He was being ironic, if not a little vain, in signposting that universal tourists' mark before one of the city's principal houses of worship:

'Franklin slept here.'

He makes again for the place where the rowboat left him that morning. He thought he might find something to interest him at the tavern in the High Street, or at any rate he will not arouse too much interest himself, for such places were used to entertaining strangers. But as he approaches he hears, 'It is not a reputable house'. He has stopped a Quaker from the meeting who speaks to him in their manner, clean and helpful:

'If thee wilt walk with me I'll show thee a better.'[18]

The better place was not far from the southern edge of town, among the merchant shops in Water Street, but over his meal he had a helping of 'several sly questions' from the types who watered there. They aimed to expose him if he were running, and he was running, but the Doctor did not record the answers he had made or if he had been defiant to them, and he did not record the name or family of the man who had helped him. Perhaps he wondered then if he were still running, after all, and if the dullness that came over him before he had even finished his meal could be taken as evidence that he was not.[19]

When he sleeps it is with the knowledge that he will go in the morning to find work at the sign of the Bible. It was in the street by the Quakers and the covered market and it indicated the shop of one Bradford, the city's leading printer, whose father at New York had said he needed a press man because his other had died. The runaway might have shipped in at some other port but for that supposed vacancy, and he knows it is there now, he has marked it, and will find this Bradford easily when he opens shop in the morning. He will present himself to the printer as a journeyman, or dayworker, and perhaps call himself the former editor of the *Courant* at Boston, which to a degree was the truth for his name was on the imprint. He would not be carrying his laundry in his pockets when he said it.[20]

It was the time of year for oysters, and the women brought them up from the river in barrows to sell in the streets. On the streets they went for nothing, and the hawkers were talkative and could be persuaded to sell what was not oysters and had nourished him in a sense when he had moved through the world as a journeyman. In the streets he had found the sort of low charm that followed a fellow like him, that accompanied strangers and drifters seen once and again and again years later; that floated like the blown seed of a meadow flower floats seemingly without weight and without mass until it settles in a river or a patch of earth and there sets its root. Somehow, he had made himself the rescuer of a girl with a bad husband; but really, when he thought about it later, it was she who had rescued him from such an existence as he was leading. She took him at his promises or his dreams, moved into the house he was renting, and joined herself to him. She took his name for her own and also the bastard child, his William, from whom the Doctor would discover that no word had arrived since he took his leave with the wedding not two weeks away.[21]

The sloop *Carolina* crept in with the earliest hints of winter, before the river iced over north of New Castle. The Doctor was prepared for the deepest of humiliations. He disembarked fifteen miles south of the city, at Chester, and arranged to slip into town under cover of a private car.[22] From Chester it was five hours' ride up along the country road that kept more or less to the banks of Darby Creek, except where it broke suddenly east to cross the Schuylkill at the ferry. It was near the farm of John Bartram, his close friend for almost twenty-five years. The Doctor knew him as a Quaker orphaned early by an Indian raid and become expert in herbalism. At the opening of the lane through the fields he thought perhaps of the letters, prints, and books he had brought over to relay to Bartram. The books included, from the Dutchman Jan Frederik

Gronov, the new edition of his *Flora Virginica*, a personal gift from one botanist to another. Packed with his own library in the hold, it would arrive at Philadelphia with the ship.[23]

More than anything else, he was another man of reason who shared with the Doctor something of the same inclination. The Doctor had not been out of the country six months on his English mission when there came, wrapped within a few pages from his wife, another sheet in the farmer's rough hand,

> *hoping this way we may keep the chain of friendship bright while thee art diverting thy self with the generous conversation of our worthy friends in Europe and adding daily new acquisitions to thy former extensive stock of knoledge by their free comunication of their experimental improvements while thy poor yet honest friend Bartram is daily in mourning for the calamities of our provinces.*[24]

Despite the humour of his pretended suffering, Bartram could be a black man when what he called the 'melancholy fumes' rose in him. He tended to delve inward, winding his prose back towards himself, often without pause, and even in longstanding correspondence the signs of a natural (and incidental) monasticism were evident. The gravity that he wore gave length to his face but he was taller than most, and alongside a frankness that was almost artless was a dignity that seemed unaffected.[25]

He owned a farm at Kingsessing, a few miles west of Philadelphia, that had come to him by inheritance and which he improved by later enlargements. There, by many rides in and out of the city and by many casual kindnesses of James Logan, the province's most educated man, Bartram had taught himself more than anyone else knew about natural creation as it existed in North America. When he was not attending to the work of his farm, or travelling to collect boxes of live plants to ship to a merchant in London, it was learned talk he wanted. He was perhaps too much the Quaker to seek it out. (It was there, perhaps, that the two men's characters differed most.) But he was not enough of one to retain the good graces of the Religious Society of Friends. At the time that he wrote the Doctor in London the elders at the Darby meeting, whose 'ceremonial' or Christian tenets Bartram openly considered unnatural, were preparing to disown him.[26]

It was perhaps Bartram that the Doctor had in mind when he attributed the strikingly intelligent conversation of the farmers in the province to the existence of so many city libraries.[27] Prior to the Doctor's absence, the Kingsessing man had a habit of turning up on his doorstep and staying, without inspiring the slightest resentment, to talk politics in the front room. He did so without relish, for he disliked the topic, and

treated it with icy gusts of cynicism that at times blew on and on. But the way the Doctor could transcend even the worst sort of business with absurd levity seemed a balm to Bartram's foraging, anxious mind. The Doctor saw him too often during his years in the colony to have ever carried their friendship onto paper; but he had written from London, and punctually. Their paths had begun to cross when, twenty-five years before, the Doctor was concretising an almost total rejection of what he called his family's orthodoxy. The household friction left over from his rebellious adolescence had sparked up again, and surged for only two months, but the conviction it bred in the Doctor had made fertile the ground for their friendship.[28]

By the calendar it was early in the spring of 1738, the last snow had gone solid on the ground, and two letters from his father and mother lay unanswerable on his desk. He knew he could not hold off writing, but the subject was a touchy one, and for once he was at a loss for the right words. He was thirty-two then, with a wife, and a nephew living with them, a son of school age, and a younger son who had died during a smallpox outbreak two winters before.

When the rains came the melt was so great and the break-up of river ice so sudden that the rush of swollen waters not only lifted from their docks the boats and barges that communicated with other ports on the river, but also carried off some of the bridges that crossed its tributaries. It was just as well that the northern post roads were completely washed out, for the lines the Doctor had drafted to put his parents at ease, and assure them his worldliness was not the work of some diabolical new impulse, were so inadequate, and the tone so miserably short of his better judgment, that he hadn't the courage or recklessness to send them. 'God only knows whether all the doctrines I hold for true, be so or not,' he had written almost without any introduction. Then a surprising sting: 'For my part, I must confess, I believe they are not all true, tho' I am not able to distinguish the good from the bad.' The tone was almost accusatory. At the end of his street the wharves were broken up and their moorings damaged, and in a real way the city was cut off for a time. It was maybe circumstantial, but this instinctive response, like the fragments the Doctor would put in his commonplace book as they came to him over the following weeks, has in it the hurried, almost simple sanity of isolation.[29]

Even as he was writing them those first lines brought up some unresolved fury and before he knew it he had blitzed the middle of the page with rich, contemptuous abuse:

> *For knowing myself, as I do, to be a weak ignorant creature, full of natural imperfections – subject to be frequently misled by my own reasonings, or the*

> *arguments of others, to the influence of education, of custom, of company, and the books I read – it would be great vanity in me to imagine that I have been so happy, as out of an infinite number of opinions of which a few only can be true, to select those only for my own use.*[30]

'No – '.

He went on: 'No, I am doubtless in error as well as my neighbours'. But he was thinking neither of himself nor of his neighbours. There followed, without a trace of the irony he had cultivated in the earlier lines, one final missile aimed as much at his father's church as his character: 'Methinks no man can say, *All the doctrines I believe, are true; and all that I reject, are false*, without arrogantly claiming that infallibility which he denies to the Pope'.[31]

The words, slung with a frankness that could not have been more at odds with biblical allegory, were not new. The Doctor had published them, almost verbatim, three years earlier in defense of a local preacher who by delivering heterodox sermons had brought upon himself charges of heresy.[32] But never before had there been a moment when he could have repurposed them in this way, and at close quarters. Whatever he may have felt, and whatever the degree to which the blood-ties intercepted and undercut the maturity of his beliefs, that line of argumentation was too cool, too public, to be appropriated for the family row. The break would have been irreparable.

He would blunt the lines. He would not assume in ironical pronouns his father's voice, and he would drop the courtroom rhetoric, or the pamphleteer's verse, for one less impassioned, soberer, and kinder, but only marginally so. And then he would re-draft it. 'If it were a thing possible for one to alter his opinions in order to please others, I know none whom I ought more willingly to oblige in that respect than your selves', he would write in place of a sunny advertisement to the moral obligations of those holding erroneous beliefs.[33]

By the time he was thirty the Doctor's apostasy was already in common circulation around two cities. In the columns of his own newspaper he had made public what were mockingly called his 'new fangled notions', exposing himself, but for a transparent pseudonym, to the mercy or temerity of his enemies. Later, he recalled that even as a youth in Boston, when he began to let slip hints of his radicalisation by the iconoclastic literature passing through his brother's print shop, he would look up in the street to find himself regarded openly with horror. The glares of his neighbours were just the first showers in the freshet of public scorn that eventually carried him off, when overnight

he quit the press and vanished into the harbour with a trunk and his belongings, never to return except to pay his family the odd, dutiful visit.[34]

Given the timing of it, there could be no doubt in his mind about what had suddenly drawn his father's censure, which was expressed with the greatest possible force by the inclusion of a second letter from his mother. But more than the rumours sailing up the coast, it was the Doctor's religion, or apparent lack of one, that had rankled Josiah Franklin. This he knew. For even in his furious, hasty response the Doctor had made no mention of the affair that had secured his notoriety in the first place, or any attempt to defend himself in it. It seemed evident to him that the Boston prints running Philadelphia news served only to confirm his parents' longstanding suspicions. Perhaps all they had seen were the words 'Free-Masons' and 'diabolical rites', or perhaps all they had understood of the talk about town was that he had exchanged his upbringing under their faithful example for a kind of heresy they knew not what. The truth was that he would never have allowed himself to write such an impassioned response had his father's reproof not come so soon after the worst public smearing he had suffered in the course of fourteen years in his adopted city.[35]

The trouble started the summer before. He and two others appointed by the Court of Common Pleas were at the tavern a block from his printing shop to settle a civil dispute between one of the local ferrymen and a prominent chemist in the high street, Dr Evan Jones. The ferryman was late to arrive. It was while they were waiting that the conversation turned to a prank the chemist had played on his young apprentice. The boy, who was only about twelve and inexperienced enough to be wholly ignorant in the subject, had for some time desired to be initiated into what he had conceived to be 'the Mystery of Free Masonry'. Jones, not himself one of that brotherhood, knew his apprentice to be uncommonly credulous and recognised in his pleas the chance to have a sporting time with him.[36]

The four men laughed in their chairs at the back of the tavern as the chemist, together with his attorney, recounted how they had 'initiated' the boy with a load of the most Rabelaisian shibboleths, hand signs, and mock sacraments that their imaginations had ever thrown up. Now young Daniel Rees, they said, who truly believed himself a Mason, had committed all these to memory, and at the making of one of their obscene 'Masonic' greetings would assume an air of grave importance and reproduce the sign as per their instruction.

'He will never forgive you,' said the Doctor, becoming for a time half-serious when he heard that in the course of the sacramental stage the boy had unwittingly swallowed a

massive dose of purgative and, blindfolded with a strip of physician's gauze, was pushed to his knees before a spectator's naked buttocks and made to kiss the holy book, as it were, while pledging his soul to Lucifer. 'In England,' said another of the company, 'you would be prosecuted'.[37]

In the course of their conversation the boy appeared at the table in order to ask something of his master. It was plain he was slow, and that nobody had made him the wiser since the ceremony earlier in the week. Was it then, on seeing his face, that the Doctor realised he knew the boy's father? He would never mention it but young Rees had been in his shop at least once within the last year on errand for the chemist.[38]

Jones, still in riotous form, gestured across the table. 'That gentleman is a Free-Mason,' he said. 'Make a sign to him.' But the Doctor turned to gaze out at the lawn until the boy went. He said later that he meant to reveal the truth to Daniel Rees, to follow him out then and there and let fall a hint, somehow, out of sensitivity to the boy's pride; but he did not rise in time, and never saw him again.[39]

It was the devil's oath, read out from a sheet the chemist carried with him, that rekindled his humour. Composed by the attorney in what seemed to be a spirit of low satire, it might have expressed the Doctor's own contempt of sacramental traditions. However reserved he was about the boy's abuse the oath struck him, he said afterwards, as a very extraordinary piece of writing indeed, and after reading it again to himself, perhaps to ensure it would not be found too offensive by some others of his acquaintance, the Doctor folded it into his pocket. How often he afterwards regretted his possession of that paper, he would never say. He was never known to have spoken of it, in private correspondence never recalled or alluded to it, and in his memoirs the episode would not appear.[40]

He had the manuscript no longer than a week before it was confiscated by order of the mayor, but in that time so many people had called on him to be let in on the outrage of written blasphemy that he had grown somewhat nervous. According to his own defense he practically thanked the mayor's messenger for relieving him of it, though it would also be claimed that upon hearing of the affair's tragic consummation the Doctor turned informant and submitted the paper himself.[41]

For it was during the course of a second pretended ceremony, whereby Jones's apprentice was to be awarded a yet higher degree, that he received at the hands of his master the burns that would prove fatal. Within hours of Daniel Rees's death the details of his mock 'initiation' ceremonies were known throughout the city and with terrible exactitude. They threw burning spirits upon him, it was said. Someone had

made a crown of horns and worn the hide of a cow to assume the appearance of the devil. It was a dish of brandy that they used to twist their faces by the fumes blazing in blue-green flame like boreal lights. They wanted to terrify the boy, and lost control of the dish; or maybe didn't, maybe didn't lose control at all. In the heat of fresh tragedy, it was easier to believe the worst.

The association with Freemasonry furnished the story with an element of additional scandal. Though the Doctor's name was not among those of St. John's Lodge who publicly expressed their abhorrence to the pretended ceremonies, and though in his written defense the acknowledgment of his Masonry seems strangely oblique, he made no attempts afterward to disguise his membership. In this he was most courageous, or displayed the strongest threads of loyalty, for it was the same month that the papers owned by orthodox Christians were printing the most poisonous libel against the Freemasons in an attempt to transform ignorance into public madness. The reports the Doctor wrote for his *Pennsylvania Gazette* prefigured his striking aversion to the whole affair and the eventual necessity to assert his innocence in it. His strategy was to come down on the accused, and come down hard. When the coroner's inquest concluded that the death, however debased its circumstances, had been accidental, the Doctor printed a rumour that the magistrate had since received 'further evidence' that seemed to suggest something more sinister.[42]

The chemist, his attorney, and one other participant were arraigned on charges of murder. At the trial the Doctor recited none of his prior interest in any part of the matter, gave testimony on the side of the prosecution, and published an account of the accident so awful in its detail, and so absolute in its condemnation, as to smack almost of hypocrisy. The signature on the piece, 'A. B.', deterred none of his enemies from supposing that he was the author. As such, his complete reversal was as abrupt as it was unexpected, and although the jury's verdict – manslaughter – left room to regret the boy's death as avoidable but not deliberate, 'A. B.' seemed adamant in his own judgment, which he indicated by reporting only the prosecution's arguments, that 'the offender, though he had no design to kill, is guilty of murder, of MURDER by MALICE EXPRESS'.[43]

Nobody seemed to know for certain whether the article was the Doctor's handiwork, and not even the most dedicated of his later apologists could discover the source of it. But in publishing such an uneven perspective, and taking so strong a position before the city, the Doctor perhaps meant to distance himself as much as he could from the boy's death and its 'horrid circumstances', in which he had had a part. For he had been

seduced, he knew, by a certain grudge, an antagonism he would never shake but indulged against his better interests, into something that appeared not too unlike complicity when darkened by the shadow of his unbelief. And he was vulnerable. Only the previous October he had amended the imprint of the newspaper – 'Printed by B. FRANKLIN at the New Printing Office near the Market' – by adding the word 'Post-Master' after his name, perhaps to mark the honour that position conferred on him, or to advertise the post office's change of address. In any case, it also implied the final act of ascendency over his rival Andrew Bradford, whose newspaper had been the city's first, and who had been forced by his poor record-keeping to give up the post office. By the end of the week the Doctor learned that a well-worded attack on his character had been received by Bradford's press and would go out in the next news cycle.

The following week, on 14 February, the *American Weekly Mercury* printed what it called 'the naked truth' of Daniel Rees's death. The intent was clear. An eyewitness who called himself 'C. D.' recalled as a matter of record the Doctor's delight in hearing the oath used in the ceremonies, which extended even to his advertising its finer parodies amongst his friends. Bradford could well believe it, in so much as he had known the Doctor ever since the morning of his second day in the city: an accomplished doubter calling at the sign of the Bible.[44]

'When it was first produced to Mr. Franklin,' the eyewitness stated, 'he was pleased to express his approbation thereof by a most hearty laughter, and in friendship desired to have the further perusal of it.' The Doctor had taken it, as everyone knew, well beyond its debased obscurity and made of it an object of debased fascination. Had it not been for the ease with which the talented and increasingly central young printer exchanged an air of moral exemplariness for one of roguish dissent, he might have been forgiven. But as it was, his admiration of a piece of writing that had served no other purpose but to gull and humiliate and ultimately to murder an innocent boy bore well enough the familiar qualities of a stunt. It was to the author of the 'naked truth' merely the latest indication of a pattern of saucy and confrontational behaviour, and the most approximately criminal to date.[45]

For the Doctor (it was announced then in the most devastating terms) possessed about him an air of habitual scorn towards the church, its clergy, and its sacred rites: when he heard the oath read out at the tavern, he was instantly sensible to its religious 'allusion' and its methods of ridicule, because he had so often employed them himself. How could someone, known as well as anything by his 'wonted air and accustomed eloquence in ridiculing those and other religious and sacred points of Divine worship',

now express such abhorrence of it in others? The man who went only by the initials C. D. begged the very question for an already scandalised public: 'How far this part, acted by an accepted Free-Mason … tend[s] to the honour of that Society, I shall not contend about with A. B., but leave an indifferent reader to judge.' The worst part of it was not how much was false, and so betrayed an uncomfortable degree of personal malice towards the Doctor, nor was it even how much was true (more than he would ever own). Rather it was how sensationally he had qualified himself to be sent up as a liability to the most exclusive association of powerful men in the city.[46]

He was so anxious to discredit what he called the 'groundless' and 'scandalous aspersions' that he delayed the *Gazette*'s release one day so that the abuse would not have a week to fester in public uncontested. He used the time to write a defense of his conduct almost black in its severity, ferocious in its accuracy, and searing in its moral authority, even taking the precaution of having it signed before a notary by the other auditors of the Court who were with him at the tavern. On Wednesday, 15 February, he published it partway down the inside page with an initial capital seven lines high. Above the notary's statement of endorsement, the two other signatures, his own, and a conspicuous postscript denying authorship of the first account, he wrote: 'I think I may reasonably hope, that I am so well known in this city, where I have lived near 14 years, as that the false and malicious insinuations contained in the *Mercury*, will not do the injury to my reputation that seems intended'. He didn't quite believe it.[47]

It was the *Mercury*'s account of the trial, not the Doctor's careful defense, that was published first at New York and then in three of Boston's five newspapers. Alongside rumours delivered by less scrupulous sources, the story took hold like a summer fever in the city where he and his brother had made infamous the family name.[48]

Then one day in March, after the rider pulled away from his home that doubled as the post office, the Doctor found among the letters still cold from the journey his own name written out in his father's hand. More than a month since he thought that unfortunate affair behind him, there it was, again, recast in the most personal terms. On another sheet, wrapped within the first, there was his mother's voice: two of her sons misled by false doctrine, one a denier of Christ, the other a denier of the true reach of God's favour.[49] It had cost them as much to send both as it would to send one, because as postmaster the Doctor enjoyed the special liberty of receiving his letters without having to pay the duty. But they might as well have included a hundred more, for what that dual summons would cost the Doctor in grief.

The narrowness, the ignorance, the injustice, and even the cowardliness of orthodoxy: it made him furious. On the subject of the trial he would commit to writing no more of his own words. Perhaps he felt well enough confirmed in his public defense of conduct, or he did not wish to add a personal angle to a mere spat between competitors that, by indulging his own insecurities, he had puffed so far out of all reasonable proportion that it was being repeated across New England as a minor scandal.

No, he would not even grant his father the legitimacy of his concern.

'Honour'd Father & Mother', he was writing, and hesitated.[50]

'W – '.

He drew a line through the '& Mother'. He would respond as one man to another, and without resuming the family battles of what seemed to him almost a former life.

'I have yours of the 21st of March, in whic – '. How could he begin? He ran a shaky line through it.

'I have – '. It was the standard opener, but he did not indent the line so far this time.

He crossed it out.

He had only two words now: 'Honour'd Father'. Then he wrote: 'I have yours of the 21st of March, with another from my Mother, in which you both seem concern'd – '. Even in the draft he used a clerical round hand, a style in which he was not merely proficient but technically perfect, and in whose boldly swooping ascenders and descenders he now disguised an uncertain rush of emotions. For though it was reason that he summoned when he put pen to paper, reason to which he made his appeals, it was resentment that answered. When he finished out, 'for my orthodoxy', he found the last word smaller, lighter, than all the others.

It was enough to ignite him. When two-thirds of the page were full and he was raging, 'with the greatest indignation', he stopped, but other lines followed at some later hour or date:

'I ought never to be angry with any one for differing in judgment from me.'

'For how know I but the point in dispute between us, is one of those errors that I have embraced as truth?'

'If I am in the Wrong, I should not be displeased that another is in the right.'

'If I am in the Right, 'tis my Happiness.'

The lines had come to him, perhaps all at once as a conscious stream of his cooler thoughts, and he compressed them to fit onto the sheet. Calm, he saw value in the few threads remaining between him and his father, and if he did not break the taut one by sounding a note of high irritation it was because he had allowed himself to loosen his

end of it. He wrote at that later sitting with a sympathy that seems not quite his own, and it was as if he were trying to speak for both of them at once. Before putting it aside again, he set down the line that both completed and extended the moral argument. 'And I should rather pity than blame him who is unfortunately in the Wrong.'

In the final moment he threw them all away, except part of the last, which he transformed into the second person and lent wholly to his father. In truth, it was not pity he wanted, and it was not even pity that he felt.

Pity and excuse me, he wrote: 'If after all I continue in the same errors, I believe your usual charity will induce you rather to pity and excuse than blame me.'

Two weeks had passed before this careful edit, composed partly of diplomatic fragments jotted here and there at odd times, couched his former passion in less provocative terms. The lines he kept ('the same may be justly said of every sect, church and society of men when they assume to themselves that infallibility which they deny to the popes and councils') had none of their original force when applied to all of humanity, and so relayed none of the impulse that underlay them, and little of his true sentiment. With a subtle change of tense he found he could play down his own hand in having opened his mind to his stated influences, and attribute to a cause beyond his control the fruits of what had in fact been a deliberate course of study. It was a triumph of extenuation. But perhaps intending to make later use of the first, impulsive draft, he saved it among his papers.[51]

Only in responding to his mother's charge of Arianism did he enter into what might have been a genuine meditation on the elements of his apostasy. But it was merely a rhetorical device, employed alongside a reference to the gospels in order to trivialise her preoccupation with credal particulars. For him it came down to virtue alone. 'At the last day' – this would close the matter entirely, he hoped – 'we shall not be examined what we *thought*, but what we *did*; and our recommendation will not be that we said *Lord, Lord*, but that we did good to our fellow creatures.' He added, driving the point home, an almost superfluous citation to some apt parable in the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew.[52] At that age and under those circumstances, he could not reveal to his mother and father the extent of his rejection of the doctrine into which they had raised him. In this he was only a little betrayed by the citation, for if he had bothered to look he would have found the intended verses not in the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew, but in the twenty-fifth.[53]

By the next post he learned that the letter met with his mother's approval and satisfaction. He was relieved, perhaps by the parental acceptance as much as having

successfully defended his independence of it, and again took care in drafting a gracious, filial reply.[54] The following May he would give an unspecified sum to a subscription for a major building extension at Christ Church, where the family had part of a pew, though it was over four years since he had attended any services. His sabbaths he afterwards confessed to having reserved as 'study days', given to the books and wrong arguments that had misled him in the eyes of his parents. In all truth, the tension expressed in the letter to them would forever be part of his character. 'My conduct might be blameable,' he wrote at the age of sixty-five, when recalling his absence at services, 'but I leave it without attempting farther to excuse it, my present purpose being to relate facts, and not to make apologies for them.' It was a more mature voice, but it had the distance of a lifetime and the advantage of expatriation behind it.[55]

Mere necessaries

It was later that same precarious year, after the scandal of young Rees's death had quieted, that John Bartram discovered in the high woods by the Susquehanna a plant that seemed to fit the description of Chinese ginseng. Few in the city knew what to make of it. Pere Du Halde, whose history of the Orient was published at London two years earlier in the first of three English editions, found the plant's virtues unparalleled, if not a little incredible. Of the extortionate fees it commanded within the medical profession the priest wrote pragmatically that the best Chinese physicians 'mix it in all the compositions that they give to great persons, for the price is too high for the common people', and he made no secret of the astonishing animation it imparted, when given in strong and unpleasant decoctions, to the 'vital spirits' of Tartarian princes. Within half a century, when each of the European kingdoms was preparing an optimistic amount of export-quality ginseng, the Chinese market would be hit with such an overabundance of the drug as to collapse its value and so inadvertently democratise its benefits.[56]

Until confirmed specimens arrived at Philadelphia in those mad days of midsummer, the immaculate corn-husk roots resembling nothing so much as the lower belly of a man, the cure-all that was also quietly believed to be a potent aphrodisiac was not thought to grow anywhere but on the northern faces of mountains and the southern banks of rivers in the region of Chinese Tartary. For the Doctor, who had a longstanding investment in matters concerning not just the treatment of chronic pains but also in the mysteries of supernatural health, it was perhaps the first hint of the

farmer's uncommon abilities as a plant hunter. Without naming the discoverer, he published the news at the end of July as an item of general interest. Then, a few months later, having come across a notice placed in the *Boston Gazette* by an association of physicians calling itself 'a Medical Society of Boston', he became so agitated by the public enterprise expressed therein that he sought Bartram out himself in order to have the author's competence confirmed or refuted.

It was an account made in some detail of the effects produced by the ingested seed of the common thorn-apple and of the methods used to counteract the toxic, amnesic madness that ended with death in a third of the cited cases. But seeing at the bottom of the item a description of the offending weed, recorded 'from the life' to the minutest detail, and reading that eleven hundred different herbs, flowers, shrubs, and trees in the neighbourhood of his former city had been so catalogued, the Doctor took the single published example of the Medical Society's 'strict Botanical' method, the issue for 2 October 1738 of the *Boston Gazette*, to the only one he knew who might be able to qualify such a claim.

He was right about John Bartram: for though the farmer had never seen the weed himself, he could recall 'frequent informations I have met with' that indicated its qualities were no different from those printed in the *Gazette* for the public benefit. If he was unaware of it, the Doctor saw then that such a botanical encyclopaedia as was begun at Boston had existed at Philadelphia for he knew not how long, was growing more complete by the season, and had only to be written. Although neither man made any record of it until at least two months later, it was perhaps then that the vision sprung up before one or both of them for a society dedicated to improving the stock of common knowledge and to cultivating the philosophy of the physical world. (At that time, what neither of them could know was that the Medical Society of Boston was merely a loose association of city physicians whose activities, nominal membership notwithstanding, were the work of just one man.)[57]

The vision did not and never would come to full fruition.[58] By the following spring, Bartram was telling a friend: 'I have an oppertunity I must ask thy opinion thereon'. But after turning over ideas for an academy of arts and sciences, or a society for the study of 'natural secrets', or, at least, a house where he and like-minded others might meet to compare notes, the farmer might as well have gone off to tail ghost-lights in the southern marshes. For seeing it laid down without any punctuation, and ashamed that his coarseness of style was something that could not be helped, he could go no further without asking the fundamental, inescapable question: where were the men who could

populate such a society? He convinced himself that the 'ingenious and curious men' of his acquaintance were sufficient to make a start, and that having once been established, the society should see an increase in its number as ability formerly unknown presented itself. But the reasoning grew heavy under its own hope. The truth was that he was under pressure. For with sudden unnatural pangs of ambition he imagined their every delay to be a boon to a faceless competition, which without even an inkling of the ideas circulating around Philadelphia would plough the ground 'before us and have credit for it.'[59]

For his part, the Doctor kept silent, and it is possible that he was not let into the farmer's dream, or that he was kept out of it by his business. It was the year he bought his third press and began, with two pica typefaces from Caslon's foundry, to replace all the lead in the house. For ten years he had used a combination of differently sized types, from the 14-point English and the 12- and 11-point picas on the large end, to the 10-point long primer on the small, with a limited collection of double English and double pica for headlines, some decorative florals, and a few pounds of rules and astronomical symbols for the almanacs. He would gradually phase out all but the long primer for the news, and later, even this would be superceded by Caslon's 8-point brevier.[60] (As early as 1740, he was planning to set his *Poor Richard* with it.[61]) It was the second and last order of type he would make while the house was under his management. The changeover would allow him to fit more advertisements into his paper, and to set volumes in fewer pages. After three years of lukewarm business he was only beginning to publish again at his own risk.[62]

He pulled his son and nephew out of one school and enrolled them at another. Then, in time for the worst northeastern winds, he packed up his home and the shop in the adjoining house and moved them into a single large building four doors closer to the river so that he would not have to give up the whole of the sitting room to the post office. By consolidating his activities under one roof he could have hoped to reduce his annual expenditure of firewood, and it was perhaps the disappointment of that intention that drove him, before the onset of the next winter, to master all the available literature in at least two languages on the mechanics of heating stoves. It would be a year before a prototype could be ready and the intended gains realised, however, and in the meantime he found by a sudden stroke of bad luck that he was even worse off than he had allowed.

The family were not even two months installed in the new house when they were burgled of five shirts, a sagathy coat, two pairs of worsted stockings, his black

broadcloth breeches, one of his monogrammed handkerchiefs, a pair of shoes with uppers of unblemished calf-skin, and his son's castor hat.[63] No sooner had he found them gone was he able to trace their disappearance to an Irishman who had advertised himself as an itinerant tutor of classical languages.[64]

One of the shirts was a fine, ruffled Holland.

His finances were in such a condition of disorder that by the end of the next summer, and facing again the demands of what would be a difficult winter, the Doctor scrapped the *Gazette*'s charitable policy for new subscriptions, which had been in place for eleven years, and began charging a half-year's payment in advance. In the first October issue of the year 1739 he ran a warning:

'I do hereby give notice to all who are upwards of one year in arrear, that if they do not make speedy payment, I shall discontinue the papers to them, and take some proper method of recovering my money.'[65]

His anxiety was only a little misplaced by the faith he did not possess, or else he was right to believe that the appearance of success (less by sharp words than sharp type) was the surest way to it, but in either case he was in no real danger. By the end of the year he would stumble without effort into the most profitable venture of his career: securing and publishing the journals and sermons of the English Methodist George Whitefield. In the course of a fortnight in November he solicited no less than two hundred individual subscriptions for the works of the man whose arrival into the city was preceded by his reputation as a stirrer of the true spirit of God. It was the start of what was the greatest, most sudden public craze the Doctor would ever witness. But the typesetting, presswork, and binding would take almost half a year to complete alongside his other work, and he would not profit until the following summer, when the volumes were swept from his shelves, through the streets, and over land and sea by the tidal waves of religious fervour. No man had ever been so well-known in the British colonies, or so celebrated. When Whitefield returned to England with donations totalling more than £700 there was not a soul in the city who hadn't felt his own salvation in the strings of exhortation that travelled with surprising clarity from the field at Society Hill as far as the bend in the river.[66]

It was not only in the hearts of the converted but in the shape of the city that the evangelist left his mark. Seven months after the papers printed the itinerary of his walking tour through all the provinces, which would leave off where it had begun, the first bricks of a great auditorium were laid in the field between the city's two principal burial grounds, Anglican and Quaker. People called it the New Building, and nothing

nobler until it was used for a college, for at that time it served no apparent function except to enclose the raptures of the field preacher within a brick testament to the city's salvation. It was only partly finished when, the autumn before his departure from the colonies, the itinerant delivered the first of sixteen farewell sermons from a makeshift pulpit at the front of the vast room covered only by the grey morning sky. On a floor of rough boards laid specially for the occasion, he knelt down and prayed before congregations standing shoulder-to-shoulder:

'Come, poor, lost, undone sinner!'[67]

Crammed amidst the cocked hats and coats, the caps and shawls, the brown workshirts, and the children in arms was the Doctor, whose attendance at ordinary Sunday services had long since lapsed. He went, he said later, out of an esteem for the man if not for the message. Maybe he was struck by the reported frequency with which Whitefield denounced the local clergy of whatever town he was in. In any case it was also to satisfy a curiosity he felt but that he could not well define. Though not yet thirty, George Whitefield was known to be the bringer of a great awakening, for he stirred such spirit among what he later called the dry bones of the city that not even the Psalters, hymnals, and spiritual songbooks that were virtually part of the furniture in the Doctor's shop could be kept in stock anymore. The cry would ring out over the stones, over the grass and the mud, sometimes twice in a day, morning and evening:

'Come just as you are to Christ, and say: if I be damned, I will perish at the feet of Jesus Christ, where never one perished yet. He will receive you with open arms. The dear Redeemer is willing to receive you all!'[68]

So many were received, and the flood continued for so long unabated, that as late as July of 1741 the Doctor would serve William Dewees, one of ten papermakers in the province, with an order for nineteen large reams of what he had taken to calling 'Whitefieldian' paper.[69]

'Come to Christ, and the Lord Jesus Christ will give you a kingdom that no man shall take from you.'[70]

It was then that the Doctor established a correspondence with Whitefield that would never result in his personal conversion and would end only with the latter's death. When exhorted by Whitefield to experience the 'new-birth' the Doctor felt not the slightest pang of the spirit, and in a letter at their first parting allowed nothing for the reasonableness of mere faith. But he requested and was granted permission to write the preacher at London as often as he could.[71]

The consequence of it all was that John Bartram's idea for a philosophical society went unanswered for almost two years. As soon as he could well afford to the Doctor returned to the call that John Bartram had issued in the last months of 1738. Every year for the following three years, with a doggedness due as much to his own good fortune as to a natural restlessness, he would propose or sponsor another scheme or project calculated to stir the public spirit of the city's leading men. The earliest opportunity came at the beginning of 1741, when three feet of snow blanketed the Delaware almost into spring. The season turned out to be so hard that the outrageous cost of heating fuel destroyed all hope for a fundraising campaign that would have enabled the farmer to fallow his fields for several years and catalogue every corner of the vegetable kingdom across four colonies.[72]

It was taken up again the following March at the end of a mild winter, and the Doctor printed a brief advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for which he accepted no payment:

'We hear that a subscription is on foot for the encouragement of Mr. John Bartram, botanist, to travel through the provinces of New York, Pennsylvania, New-Jersey and Maryland, in search of curious vegetables, fossils, &c. of all kinds.'[73]

It was no secret that the farmer or 'botanist' already had an outlet for the produce of his walking tours that had long become regular activities, scheduled around the planting and harvest seasons. For years he had been packing boxes with dazzling collections of American plants – and sometimes live toads, rodents, and insects – and sending them by what he knew to be reliable channels, care of a Quaker merchant who found buyers for them on the London market. These had caught the fancy years earlier of at least one eccentric baron and would forever change the landscape of English horticulture, but the business was a labour of love and supplemented his livelihood to no great degree.

Without the detail of names, it was said that 'many gentlemen of generous tastes' had collectively subscribed £20 per annum, and expected discoveries of fruits, flowers, shade trees, hedge shrubs, and culinary herbs that nobody had ever known, for use in their gardens, and new fossils for their libraries. (None of the Doctor's readership, it seems, required any reminder of the discovery of ginseng some years before, or of its medicinal qualities.) The salary they had already managed to raise was no mean sum, but the truth was that Bartram would need twice that amount if he was to sufficiently equip himself for what were demanding and sometimes hazardous journeys. His expertise qualified him more than anyone else in the province for the proposed employment, but despite the appearance the following Tuesday of the entire text of the subscription

announcement, which ran to five hundred and fourteen words, the campaign to make Bartram the first full-time professional botanist in the New World failed for the simple reason that the current herbals were not found wanting.[74]

It was the building erected for George Whitefield that the Doctor proposed, a year later, might be used for an academy to educate the youth of the city. But this project, too, failed at that time because of the conviction by the only suitable headmaster, an ordained Anglican minister, that the intended site had been irredeemably tainted by the revivalist's lurid theatrics.[75]

Not until the summer of 1743, after four years and two abortive half-starts, did a viable plan come together that resembled at all the original vision of John Bartram. The Doctor was about to set off on a trip to inspect the post offices along the North Atlantic seaboard and to see his parents for the third time in twenty years, and would be travelling for much of the summer. On the one hand, it was not extraordinary for him to pack among the papers he truly needed with him the scheme whose audacity alone set him apart from the usual sort of tradesman. In the two decades since his running he had never set foot in Boston without carrying some such advertisement of his success. On the other hand: what sort of men did he expect to recruit on the road? Perhaps he hoped to cross paths with members of the mysterious 'Medical Society' whose activities he had followed so thoroughly in the *Boston Gazette*.[76]

It was a proposal for what he called, in all innocence, 'a learned society at Philadelphia'. In the course of its two printed pages, and with equal pretense to innocence, he suggested 'that One Society be formed of virtuosi or ingenious men residing in the several colonies' and that such a society be headquartered at Philadelphia. Finally, with a *tabula rasa* charm that could admit no prior attempts by anyone else to do the same thing, he began a list of topics that were to form a correspondence extending from Nova Scotia to Georgia: first, the virtues of all plants, herbs, trees, and roots that should be discovered, the methods of propagating them, and the dissemination of such as might be considered useful; and, secondly, new methods of curing or preventing diseases. There were thirty topics touching upon every technology of the common way of life, except the dying of cloth – but it may have been in haste, only, that the Doctor overlooked his own family's trade. Nowhere was there any mention of the fine arts, of music, of sculpture, or even of theatre, and nowhere the theories then being debated by the most thoughtful philosophers of Europe. He covered all of that in a single line as beautiful as it was meaningless: 'all philosophical

experiments that let light into the nature of things, tend to increase the power of man over matter, and multiply the conveniencies or pleasures of life'.[77]

In truth, the whole thing was merely a statement, a provocation, an answer worthy of the sceptics, a solicitation to men like himself. When Bartram described his own vision four winters earlier to Peter Collinson, the merchant who had found a market for his seed boxes, the response had been easy and dismissive. 'Had you a set of learned well-qualified members to set out with,' wrote the Londoner, 'it might draw your neighbours to correspond with you.' But to bring 'learned strangers' to the city was another matter entirely, for it would require public funding to pay their salaries, and no such funding would be raised. Surely, by a proper consideration of the colony's 'infancy', the farmer could see that much. He could, and had pressed the matter no further.[78]

In preparing the proposal the Doctor had let his mind run over Collinson's dismissal or obstacles of a similar nature. He titled the production 'A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge among the British Plantations in America', typeset it in his splendid new Caslon, and printed it on a large sheet of his best white paper. It was paper for books, and he folded it into quarters as though it had been one, carefully unstitched and freed of its binding. He wrote that there were many men of leisure and ease 'in every province', that the 'mere necessaries' had been provided for, and that the foundations of the colonies had been laid. The men of the New World were no longer settlers. It was a dubious statement, and quite possibly one he knew to be false, but he decided that if he could not entirely avoid the risk of appearing ridiculous, he could smooth it over with formal elegance.[79]

Following perhaps upon Collinson's first point, the Doctor pictured a core set of members composed of seven specialists in seven fields of knowledge: a physician, a botanist, a mathematician, a chemist, a mechanician, a geographer, and a general natural philosopher. Three further men were needed for administrative functions. All of them were to be residents of the city, or near enough, for Bartram was the clear choice for the botanist – but only one was named. The Doctor, whose personal understanding of natural philosophy extended little further than a seasonal tinkering with his wood stove, volunteered himself for secretarial duties. It may not have seemed so, but the position of Secretary was the central and most informed office within the proposed directorial structure, for all communications and all papers submitted for review were to be received, collected, and sorted by him, before being handed to the Society's president. He would have been, in effect, the gatekeeper of natural discovery in the colonies.

The proposal was so comprehensive, with long lists of activities to be carried out, topics to be conversed upon between members, and arrangements for meetings, that upon receiving it as an invitation the physician Cadwallader Colden, an immigrant of Berwickshire and the most conspicuous man in the province of New York, compounded the printer's fastidiousness by scratching with his own pen eleven semicolons and seven commas where he felt the Doctor had overlooked them, and by deleting three *et ceteras* that were stand-ins for indecision or ignorance. Although he made no note of it then, Colden could detect a heavy hand working behind the printed lines, and would grow resentful in time of what seemed to him a fatal mixture of laziness and officiousness.[80]

But the important thing was that Colden had approved the design and accepted the invitation. Later, in reporting the loss of their fledgling society's members to 'other amusements that bears a greater sway in their minds', Bartram would go so far as to write to him that he could, in moments of true revulsion, classify his countrymen according to the different means by which they preserved their ignorance of the natural world. He said: 'Ye first class are those whose thought and study is intirely upon getting and laying up large estates and any other attainment that don't turn immediately upon that hinge thay think it not worth thair notice.'

And then: 'The second class are those that are for spending in luxury all thay can come at and are often ye children of avaritious parents.'

And finally: 'The third class are those that necessity obliges to hard labour and cares for a moderat and happy maintainance of thair family and these are many times ye most curious tho deprived mostly of time and material to pursue thair natural inclinations.' (The Doctor, in those same feverish months, and then in his thirty-ninth year, was completing his infamous advices to a young man wishing to do well in his choice of a mistress.)

'Pray let me hear from thee as soon as conveniency will permit,' the farmer's letter ends. 'For I believe we must be the most active members in our Society.'

'Adieu.'[81]

When the Doctor passed the lane that led to Bartram's house, he had little expectation that the farmer or anyone else had managed to revive the Society without him, or without his knowledge, and in a time of war. By September 1746, only two years after their first meetings at an agreed location in the city, the momentum that once excited a small initial membership had all but vanished, and the Doctor had found that his efforts to charm and flatter and even to shame into being just a handful of publishable essays had been a failure.

To the letters from European philosophers, Gronov among them, expectant of printed transactions from the only philosophical society in America, Bartram could make no answer. It was perhaps the reality of the situation that left the Doctor too humiliated to expend his time reviving the hopeless plan: he took quickly to more solitary pursuits. The concern that had worried Bartram all along, and which Collinson had brought up in the most direct manner, had never really died, for only six of the intended seven fields of knowledge were ever represented at the monthly meetings. In the course of three years, during which it had produced little more than promise, the short-lived American Philosophical Society never had found a suitable chemist.[82]

The Doctor was not returned a month before he learned that the Darby Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends where John Bartram had worshiped since he was a boy, giving as its reason the farmer's disbelief 'in the divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as being perfectly God as well as man', had expelled him from its membership, as a heretic.[83]

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[1] *Papers*, x, pp. 165–66 (7 December 1762, to Collinson). For New Castle's waterfront, see the watercolor by Ives le Blanc, painted later in the century. Peter Kalm records that the Delaware, at its mouth, was 'three English miles broad'; Peter Kalm, *Travels in North America*, I (Warrington: Eyres, 1770), p. 48. See also Rochefoucault-Liancourt, *Travels Through the United States of North America*, III (London: Gillet, 1800), p. 536, and 'Narrative of the Journey of the Schwenkfelders to Pennsylvania, 1733', trans. by David Scholtze, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 10 (1886), p. 179.

[2] For storms in the Bay of Biscay (which were soon to frustrate William Franklin's convoy), see George M. Totten and Seaton Schroder, *Coasts and Ports of the Bay of Biscay* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1876), p. 125: 'In August, heavy squalls and shifts of wind, called *Galernas*, are experienced off the coast of Biscay. They gather over the land during the heat of the sun, rise in the SW., when the horizon becomes obscure, and as they reach W. the weather becomes thick. The wind then soon veers to the NW., whence it comes out suddenly and violently, so that, unless every precaution is taken to receive it, much damage may be done.' The naturalist Thomas Edward Bowdich describes a *galerna* encountered by his ship between the mainland and Madeira. Bowdich, like William, had all his baggage soaked. See Thomas Edward Bowdich, *Excursions in Madeira and Porto Santo* (London: Whittacker, 1825), p. 12.

For Franklin's keeping company with Homer, see the entry for Saturday, 24 September in his 'Journal of a Voyage, 1726', *Papers*, I, pp. 72–99. No record survives of his crossing in 1762 except the fleeting glimpses of his later accounts to John Pringle, Richard Jackson, and William Strahan, which are cited below.

[3] *Papers*, x, pp. 162–65 (6 December 1762, to Jackson); pp. 166–69 (7 December 1762, to Strahan). What Franklin does not supply in detail is to be had from Cook's journals. The journal for the first voyage is most descriptive of the Madeiran experience. Cook sailed for Madeira out of British waters at almost exactly the same day of August as Franklin's convoy had six years earlier. Franklin doesn't give any dates for his three-day sojourn at Funchal. The *Endeavour* made the voyage within about two weeks. The second voyage was illustrated (though the biographer must be wary of romanticism) by the painter William Hodges. See James Cook, *The Three Voyages of Captain James Cook Round the World*, I (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821), p. 10–17.

The later account of Madeira by Bowdich (cited above), Gourlay's *Observations on the Natural History* (London: Callow, 1811), Pitta's *Account of the Island* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1812), the accounts by Joseph Adams (*Guide*; London: Callow, 1808), and one by Robert White (*Climate and Scenery*; London: Cradock, 1851) are also useful.

[4] *Papers*, x, pp. 162–65 (6 December 1762, to Jackson).

[5] Ibid. See also *Papers*, iv, pp. 511–12 (26 June 1753, to Collinson): 'I am now on a Journey to Boston, where I purpose to continue till the Heats are over'.

[6] Pitta, p. 8; *Papers*, x, pp. 162–65 (6 December 1762, to Jackson). The word for one of these goatskins is *borracho*.

[7] Pitta, p. 120; *Papers*, x, pp. 166–69 (7 December 1762, to Strahan).

[8] *Papers*, xii, pp. 158–65 (2 June 1765, to Lord Kames).

[9] *Papers*, xx, pp. 463–74 (7 November 1773, to William Brownrigg); *Papers*, x, pp. 158–60 (1 December 1762, to John Pringle). Another instance of his seeking to confirm empirically some anecdote from antiquity was in his computing the audible radius of George Whitefield's voice: 'This reconcil'd me […] to the ancient Histories of Generals haranguing whole Armies, of which I had sometimes doubted.' *Autobiography*, p. 90.

[10] *Autobiography*, p. 140. See also *Papers*, xx, pp. 463–74 (7 November 1773, to William Brownrigg).

[11] *Papers*, xx, pp. 463–74 (7 November 1773, to William Brownrigg). Franklin may have believed that the oil was in fact suppressing the swell of the sea, though it was merely reducing surface friction – a behaviour unrelated to the fluid mechanics he witnessed in 1762. He seemed to think them connected, however, as is evident in his letter to Brownrigg.

[12] *Papers*, x, pp. 158–60 (1 December 1762, to John Pringle).

[13] This experiment of Franklin's is rarely reproduced in studies of his science, maybe because he was wrong. The effect of oil on a surface disturbed by wind, such as a pond, is unrelated to the effect of oil and water in motion together, which is why oil does nothing to calm the swells of the waves. Both experiments are relatively simple for the intrepid scholar to observe, for instance, in a tide pool using only a teaspoon or so of cooking oil, and then just as Franklin did using water, oil, and a tumbler fastened to a length of garden twine.

[14] John Swift wrote to John White on 12 April 1748 that the cannon received from New York 'are to serve till we can be better provided'. He thought they might enable the militia to 'make some resistance' but no more. In 1750, fourteen eighteen-pounders were sent from England, but a later account suggests that even this was not enough to defend the city. An unnamed French traveller wrote in 1765: 'A l'extremité du sud de la ville il y a une batterie qui est presque abandonné; il peut y avoir 24 cannons en fort mauvaise etat. L'on a bien tout passé cette batterie et quand on est par le travers du milieu de la ville on est hors de sa portée.' *Letters and Papers Relating Chiefly to the Provincial History of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1855), p. 16; 'Journal of a French Traveller in the Colonies, 1765, II', *American Historical Review,* 27 (1921), pp. 70–89. For Franklin's role, see *Papers*, III, pp. 469–72 (28 February 1750, James Logan to Peter Collinson).

[15] The markethouse in 1723 ran from the courthouse at Second Street halfway to Third. See John Fanning Watson and Willis Pope Hazard, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Stuart, 1899), I, p. 363: 'Our court house fronts Cæsarea's pine tree land. | Through the arch'd dome, and on each side, the street | Divided runs, remote again to meet.'

[16] *Autobiography*, pp. 18–19, 53.

[17] Matthew 4.4 is the passage. Cf. *Autobiography*, p. 20: 'I had made many a meal on bread'.

[18] *Autobiography*, p. 21.

[19] Ibid. Philadelphia signage is found in John Fanning Watson and Willis Pope Hazard, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania*, III (Philadelphia: Stuart, 1887), p. 368–69 and *passim*.

Twice in his narrative Franklin alludes to the danger of being supposed a runaway servant, but doesn't seem to have considered the cancelled indenture to be a document that would protect him. Lemay suggests that Franklin's 'suppression' of that detail was merely a literary device calculated to produce a sense of danger – the threat of 'trouble' with 'the authorities'. (See Lemay, I, p. 227.) If so, he was anticipating a dreamily inattentive reader, for he had only just stated that he had received his original indenture 'with a full discharge on the back of it'. There is an unmistakable sense of danger in Franklin's tone, but not one that he had contorted himself to create. After all, perhaps it

was not the law that he feared but rather the sort of men who might abuse someone perceived to be vulnerable, such as an indentured servant on the run.

[20] *Autobiography*, p. 21.

[21] Even the first, pirate editions of Franklin's memoirs contained his confession to having been 'hurried' by a 'hard-to-be-govern'd passion' into dalliances with what he called 'low women' that 'fell into' his way. The mother of his first son was supposed by his contemporaries to have been one of these, an 'oyster wench', or a servant of the household. Lemay suspects – perhaps in a projection from the circumstances of Franklin's estrangement from James Ralph – that she was the wife of an acquaintance, got with child while the man was out of town. See Lemay, II, pp. 5–7; Fisher, pp. 224.

[22] There is reason to believe that this is what happened, though it is undocumented. Franklin wrote that he 'came privately into town', which does not sound to me like he stepped off the gangplank at the Philadelphia docks. Moreover, he said that his friends, had they known of his arrival ahead of time, would have met him 'with 500 horse', which, even allowing the exaggeration, would have been cumbersome in city streets that were perpetually littered with rubbish, carts, and heaps of building materials. Franklin was, however, marched to Chester from Philadelphia under escort of horse on his later voyage to London, in 1764. He could also have debarked at New Castle.

It was not the first time Franklin had avoided such a controversial scene. See his letter to Peter Collinson of 5 November 1756: 'When I was on the Frontier last Winter, a great Number of the Citizens, as I was told, intended to come out and meet me at my Return, to express their thankful Sense of my (small) Services. To prevent this, I made a forc'd March, and got to Town in the Night, by which they were disappointed, and some a little chagrined.'

The relief was only temporary: 'But as I could not fully conceal the Time of my setting out for Virginia, 20 Officers of my Regiment with about 30 Grenadiers, presented themselves on Horseback at my Door just as I was going to mount, to accompany me to the Ferry about 3 Miles from Town. […] I, who am totally ignorant of military Ceremonies, and above all things averse to making Show and Parade, or doing any useless Thing that can serve only to excite Envy or provoke Malice, suffer'd at the Time much more Pain than I enjoy'd Pleasure, and have never since given an Opportunity for anything of the Sort.' *Papers*, VII, pp. 9–15.

[23] *The Correspondence of John Bartram*, ed. by Edmund Berkeley, Jr. and Dorothy Smith Berkeley (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1992), p. 553 (1 April 1762, Collinson to Bartram); ibid., p. 580 (3 December 1762, Bartram to Collinson); *Papers*, X, pp. 165–66 (7 December 1762, to Peter Collinson). See also 'John Bartram', *DNB*. Bartram's son William, the famous botanist and writer, wrote a memorial to his father's life that is reprinted in *Memorials of John Bartram and Humphry Marshall*, ed. by William Darlington (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1849), pp. 38–43. The best scholarly biography is Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, *The Life and*

Travels of John Bartram: From Lake Ontario to the River St. John (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 1982).

[24] *Papers*, VII, pp. 246–47 (29 July 1757, from John Bartram).

[25] Ibid. Reading Bartram's letters, one meets with offhand flashes of his fluency in the natural world, but also with an underlying gloominess of heart – so frequently does he leave off a topic on some note of despair. It is as though he beheld most readily the darker side of humanity, and could not resign himself to it.

[26] Bartram was read out of meeting on the first of April, 1758, though he continued to attend as a non-member and was buried in the Friends' burial ground at Darby. (The meeting posthumously reinstated him in 1993.)

[27] Not once, but twice, for between parts one and two of the *Autobiography* there is a little overlap. The later writing is the more descriptive, and some small details are changed, but the anecdote culminates both times with the claim that colonial tradesmen and farmers were (by implied membership at the libraries) possessed of a notable and striking degree of intelligence. The claim has been challenged by scholars, partly because the membership fees at such libraries were considerable enough that many people could not afford them. Bartram himself was not a member of the Library Company until he was given an honourary lifetime membership in 1743.

[28] 'Pray my dear friend bestow A few lines upon thy ould friend such like as those sent from Woodbridge. They have A Magical power of dispeling malancholy fumes and chearing up my spirits, they are so like thy facetious discource in thy southern chamber when we used to be together.' I have taken 'southern chamber' to mean the front room of Franklin's house on the north side of High Street. However, it could also be an inside joke: the Indian Queen tavern was almost just across the street. It's purely speculative but Franklin perhaps referred to it as his 'southern chamber'. Bartram's speech was not so plain as to deny him a shared bon mot.

[29] *Annals of Philadelphia*, II, p. 365, reports: '1738, April 6, a great storm, at east and north-east, damaged the wharves and much raised the creeks.' Franklin adds his own news in his letter, *Papers*, II, pp. 202–04 (13 April 1738, to Josiah and Abiah Franklin).

[30] Ibid.

[31] There were at least three drafts of this letter, or parts of it, before the final. The first draft (or what looks to be) is given in *Papers*, II, p. 204, in a footnote. The manuscript, however, contains some corrections evidently made in the course of composition; these are silently ignored in the Yale edition. A facsimile of the manuscript is in Lemay, II, p. 296.

Two further drafts, evidently overlooked both by the Yale editors and by Lemay, are

reproduced in print and facsimile in J. F. Sachse, *Benjamin Franklin as a Free-Mason* (Philadelphia, 1906), pp. 72–76. These also show significant deletions.

I have quoted what appears to be the initial composition, without the corrections that seem to have been made during a second sitting. Franklin added one more half line and let the draft alone, for in the following paragraph the pen nib, line spacing, and tone are new. Over the following days or weeks he seems to have scribbled paragraphs into a commonplace book as they came to him. He eventually scrapped most of the first draft, made a second attempt almost from scratch, incorporating the orphan paragraphs, and then made at least a third and possibly final draft, which is lost. The care he took over this letter shows how delicate was his relationship with his parents, at least when it came to religion, and yet how valued.

[32] See 'A Defence of the Rev. Mr. Hemphill's Observations: or, an Answer to the Vindication of the Reverend Commission', *Papers*, II, pp. 90–126; and 'A Letter to a Friend in the Country [25 Sept. 1735]', ibid., pp. 65–88, extracted below. Franklin argues tolerance for beliefs arrived at through study and reason, even those that may be erroneous – because, after all, they may not be – and suggests that intolerance, or judgment, in matters of religious faith is merely the exercise of arbitrary power.

'Every Subject is equal to any other Subject; their Concerns have nothing to do with this World; every one is accountable for his Belief to Christ alone. Let no Man then presume to judge of another Master's Servant. One Man's Salvation does not interfere with the Salvation of another Man, and therefore every Man is to be left at Liberty to work it out by what Method he thinks best.'

'But to reject a Man in other Respects preferable, to reject him, I say, because he does not in the Whole believe as we do, is to declare we will not upon any Account, or for any Reason, alter our Opinions whatever they be. It is to declare that we are infallibly in the right: It is to profess we will not be taught any material Truth but what we know and are persuaded of already.'

'Now if all Men are right in following their private Judgments, even where the religious Rights of others are affected, will not this justifie any Encroachments upon our religious Rights, that any Man or body of Men shall judge necessary and just? […] Pray what has the Popish Church been doing all this while, but pursuing this very Principle? Has she not judg'd for herself in all the Creeds she has ever published?'

'Let a Man or Body of Men be never so far wrong, let him never so much injure the civil or religious Rights of his Fellow-Creatures in following his private Judgment; yet according to this Scheme, while he is of that Judgment he is in the right to follow it. So that no Protestant whatsoever can condemn a Papist, for doing what he does, while he judges he ought to do so. This is so obvious, that I cannot make it more so.'

[33] *Papers*, II, pp. 202–04 (13 April 1738, to Josiah and Abiah Franklin).

[34] See Obadiah Jenkins, *Remarks upon the Defence of the Reverend Mr. Hemphill's Observations* (Philadelphia: Bradford, 1735), p. 15; *Autobiography*, p. 17. The only personal record of the flight and its circumstances is found in Franklin's autobiography, and whatever he wrote there must be considered with caution. There is no doubt that Franklin and his brother James were walking a thin line with the Puritan government of the city, and posed no small danger to themselves. Indeed, James had already been imprisoned for his written attacks on the government – and even then had taunted the authorities, who made him give up his newspaper, by putting his brother's name on the imprint instead. (The paper continued to bear the name of Benjamin Franklin long after the man – or really youth – it belonged to had left the city.)

Franklin was almost as controversial as James, and had also earned himself the openly expressed 'horror' of the public. All of this is told in Franklin's own memoirs and corraborated by other records. (See *Autobiography*, p. 16, notes.) He ran, he said, because James was given to punching him when provoked, because his father did nothing to stop it, and because when he cunningly broke his indenture ('it was not fair in me to take this advantage') James quickly prevented his finding employment anywhere else. These were what Franklin made out to be his primary reasons, but he carved a space in that story and added three others tumbled together into one sentence. The additional circumstances I suspect influenced his actions more powerfully than the immediate 'difference', as he put it, with James:

'I was the rather inclined to leave Boston, when I reflected that I had already made myself a little obnoxious to the governing party; and from the arbitrary proceedings of the Assembly in my brother's case it was likely I might if I stayed soon bring myself into scrapes; and farther that my indiscreet disputations about religion began to make me pointed at with horror by good people, as an infidel or atheist.'

He was tracked down at Philadelphia by a relative and assured that if he returned 'everything would be accommodated to my mind'. The relative also mentioned something Franklin had not, originally, which was that his friends still possessed 'goodwill to me'.

This is the first we hear of Franklin's having alienated any friends, and it suggests that the story he gave at first is incomplete in some way. He responded by a letter that does not survive but must have been composed as carefully as the others he would write when defending his conduct to his family. Upon being shown it, the governor William Keith did not consider him an impassioned youth with a chip on his shoulder and a runaway servant (which is just what he was). On the contrary, he 'was surprised' to learn that the author was so much younger than his style suggested, and said he showed promise and ought to be encouraged to set up shop himself at Philadelphia.

Could Franklin have written there about his 'obnoxious' 'scrapes' with the

of Massachusetts, if his story had come off so well in the eyes of the governor of Pennsylvania? But if not, what had he written?

He said he had 'stated my reasons for quitting Boston fully' – the city, not just his brother's indenture – and had done so 'in such a light as to convince him [the relative] I was not so wrong as he had apprehended'. Would the Boston printers have refused to hire him, who was very skilled and had a legal document ostensibly proving he was free of the indenture, simply because a competitor had told them not to? Franklin himself showed later in his memoirs that Bradford, the New York printer, had no qualms about cheating the competition. Perhaps the Boston printers were more honest, or perhaps the young Franklin had made himself so obnoxious that he was truly unemployable in that town.

In any case, the relative's letter had given him the opportunity to spin his situation in the best possible light: he admitted to doing as much. No doubt as he settled into Philadelphia, and questions were raised about his ending up there, he came across many more opportunities, until he arrived at what we read, water-tight but for a few details, in his memoirs.

[35] *PG*, 16 June 1737.

[36] The best source for this incident is Julius Friedrich Sachse, *Benjamin Franklin as a Free-Mason* (Philadelphia, 1906), pp. 49–76, in which all the contemporary accounts are reprinted. See also *Papers*, II, pp. 198–202. For more coloured but less reliable interpretations, see James A. Sappenfield, 'The Bizarre Death of Daniel Rees and the Continuity of Franklin Criticism', *Early American Literature*, 4 (1969), pp. 73–85; and Lemay, II, pp. 288–95. Franklin had earlier republished an essay from a London paper entitled, 'The Mystery of Free-Masonry', *PG*, 8 December 1730.

[37] Sachse, p. 63.

[38] '1737, Calendar 7' in J. A. Leo Lemay, *The Accounts of Benjamin Franklin Through 1747*, III, p. 5.

[39] Sachse, p. 64.

[40] Ibid., pp. 60, 64.

[41] Ibid., p. 67.

[42] *PG*, 23 June 1737.

[43] A letter in Bradford's *American Weekly Mercury* the following week presumed that Franklin was the author, though modern Franklin scholarship does not agree. What is of interest to the biographer is that the writer makes his presumption known not by naming Franklin outright, but by alluding to his marked irreligiousness, which was evidently enough to identify him. See ibid., pp. 54–58.

[44] Ibid., p. 58.

[45] Ibid., p. 60.

[46] Ibid., p. 59–60. Sachse notes (p. 71) that the Freemasons were under attack in the press about this time.

[47] Sachse, p. 65. The *PG* page is reproduced in Lemay, II, p. 292.

[48] See Lemay, II, p. 295.

[49] In other words, she accused Franklin of Arianism, and one of his brothers of Arminianism. Several years earlier, on 7 July 1731, the notable preacher Jonathan Edwards preached at Boston his first public attack on Arminianism. ('God Glorified in the Work of Redemption, by the Greatness of Man's Dependence upon Him, in the Whole of It.')

[50] *Papers*, II, pp. 202–04 (13 April 1738, to Josiah and Abiah Franklin). The drafts, as noted above, are found in Sachse.

[51] The letters from his parents, however, are lost.

[52] Franklin had vigorously and publicly defended the Rev. Samuel Hemphill against charges of heresy. Hemphill was afterwards found to have plagiarised his sermons from 'notorious Arians'. *Papers*, II, p. 90. Franklin nevertheless called them 'good sermons composed by others' and was so disgusted with the actions taken against Hemphill by the church that he left the congregation and never returned.

[53] I.e., the wise and foolish virgins, Matthew 25.13. Whitefield would later preach a sermon on it to crowds of Philadelphians, as well as to other cities. But for the Great Awakener, it was not in *deed* that salvation was assured, but in faith: in 'receiving' 'the Holy Ghost'. The argument Franklin makes here would have held considerably less water had he made it three years later. The document that survives is a late draft. Just what he sent to his father and mother is not known though it was probably not so very changed. He may have revised his scriptural reference, or accepted a mild correction. In any case, he had left off risking such citations by the time he wrote his brother John in May of 1745. See *Papers*, III, pp. 26–27.

[54] *Papers*, II, p. 206. This was not the last Franklin was to hear from his family, however. Five years later he wrote to his sister Jane, having received from her an 'admonition': 'You express yourself as if you thought I was against Worshipping of God, and believed Good Works would merit Heaven; which are both Fancies of your own, I think, without Foundation.' *Papers*, II, pp. 384–85 (28 July 1743, to Jane Mecom).

[55] *Autobiography*, p. 66.

[56] Dr Thomas Bond, writing from Paris, thought the discovery unimportant, as Canadian ginseng was abundant and held 'in no esteem'. See Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *The General History of China* (London: Watts, 1736); Edwin Wolf, *Franklin's Library*, item no. 923; 'gin-seng' in Chambers' *Cyclopædia* (1728); Alfred Own Aldridge, *The Dragon and the Eagle: The Presence of China in the American Enlightenment* (Detroit: Wayne State, 1993), p. 57; *Bartram Correspondence*, p. 127 (November 1739, Bartram to Collinson); ibid., p. 112 (20 February 1739, Bond to Bartram).

[57] *Bartram Correspondence*, p. 106 ([after 2 October 1738], Bartram to [Paul Dudley?]).

Little is known about the Medical Society of Boston. It was founded in 1735 by William Douglass and (some sources say) also by Silvester Gardiner, both prominent physicians, and seems to have died out about 1742. (The latest record cited by Weld is dated late 1741.) At least as early as 1736 it was active in dispensing 'queries' to towns in the neighbourhood of Boston. A note in the Yale edition suggests that Cadwallader Colden may have been the instigator of the idea (*Papers*, 1, pp. 378–383, n. 10). In 1728, the natural philosopher wrote to Douglass and proposed a 'Voluntary Society for the advancing of Knowledge'. Douglass called it 'a medical society', not a philosophical society, but Colden's words and the Society's actual activities suggest a broader spectrum of interests. Douglass – who seems to have been the driving force behind the society's activities – was an influential man of the conservative sort. He opposed one of Franklin's acquaintances, Dr Zabdiel Boylston, on the matter of inoculation. (To Douglass's credit, when the science proved him wrong, he changed his mind.) The truth was that he was held in low estimation by his contemporaries, not so much for his potential, but rather for his arrogance. In the words of the physician and travel journalist Alexander Hamilton, he was 'the most complete snarler ever I knew. He is loath to allow learning, merit, or a character to anybody'. See Hamilton's *Itinerarium* in *Colonial American Travel Narratives*, ed. by Wendy Martin (New York: Penguin, 1994), p. 263.

Was it Douglass's irritating way of discovering the faults of others that caused one historian, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, to doubt the very existence of the Society? In all cases, it is interesting that Franklin's earliest notes concerning a philosophical society at Philadelphia – a society whose interests were to be heavily weighted towards medicine and botany – came in the spring of 1743, within a year of the supposed closure of the reputed Medical Society of Boston. Perhaps, though, it is just a coincidence.

See Stanley B. Weld, 'Boston's First Medical Society', *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 19 (1947), pp. 923–35; H. R. Viets, 'Some Features of the History of Medicine in Massachusetts during the Colonial Period (1620–1770)', *Isis*, 23 (1935), 389–405; Josiah Bartlett, 'A Dissertation on the Progress of Medical Science in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts', in *Medical Communications and Dissertations of the Massachusetts Medical Society*, by Massachusetts Medical Society (Boston: Wait, 1813), II, p. 242.

[58] It had not, anyway, by 1762. Later, when Franklin was living in London for the third time, Bartram and others revived the dead society.

[59] In an undated letter written before the summer of 1739, Bartram asked Collinson to advise him in starting a philosophical society. The letter has been trimmed and several lines are half or wholly lost, but in a paragraph not included in the correspondence collected and published by the Berkeleys, Bartram seems to reveal a surprising competitive spirit or influence: 'Sufficient number of ingenious persons for ye … [three words missing] A beginning we should increase our numbers but if wee delayed … before us & have credit for it.' Below the fragment is what seemed to one scholar to be the draft of another letter: 'having by orders of several members of the Royal Society …'. See Francis D. West, 'John Bartram and the American Philosophical Society', *Pennsylvania History*, 23 (1956), pp. 463-466; *Bartram Correspondence,* p. 66.

[60] See C. William Miller, 'Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia Type', *Studies in Bibliography*, 11 (1958), pp. 179–206. Franklin took four years, 1738–1742, to restock his type cases, the conclusion based not on sales receipts or foundry orders but rather on one scholar's meticulous analysis of his surviving publications. Miller suggests that Franklin did not deal directly with the Caslon foundry at that time, but rather ordered his type through an intermediary. For the early orders, this person was evidently not William Strahan (who would have been the obvious choice). Their correspondence did not begin until 1743.

According to Miller, Franklin's most used types were English, pica, and small pica. He makes no attempt beyond the *Gazette*, however, to identify which types were used for the books and pamphlets Franklin published at his own risk. By 1748, when the shop was handed over to David Hall, the type in most dire need of replacement was the 8-point brevier, which had become the standard *Gazette* body type.

Franklin was also selling reading glasses in his shop.

[61] *Accounts*, IV: 1740.

[62] The data published in Leo Lemay's *Documentary History* indicate a dip in business between 1736 and 1738. (The website, which I have archived, can now only be found at the Wayback Machine, <HTTP://**WWW.ENGLISH.UDEL.EDU**/LEMAY/FRANKLIN>.) Franklin's business bottomed out at twelve imprints in 1736 and only regained its former level in 1739. During the down period the number of items he published at his own risk dropped by more than half, to three each for the years 1737 and 1738. Even in 1739, there were just five, as compared to eight in 1734 and ten in 1735.

[63] 'Saggathy: An obsolete woolen fabric, which was woven in a four-harness twill with white warp and colored filling, and given a lustrous finish by calendaring. A worsted warp was used commonly and the two up, two down twill frequently was employed. Average width 30 in. The term is of Roman derivation. Originally made in England and exported to Spain in large quantities, but later also made in Amiens, France. Chiefly used for curtains from the 18th to mid 19th centuries. The term is still applied in some parts of Great Britain to wools woven in a four-harness twill.' Fairchild's *Dictionary of Textiles*, 8th edn (New York: Fairchild Books 2013).

[64] *Papers*, II, pp. 236–37. Lemay suggests that the Franklins moved the end of December, 1738, probably because the shop transactions stop between 27 December 1738 and 1 January, 1738/9. See Lemay, II, p. 277. Franklin advertised his super-efficient heating stove in the winter of 1744 and dated its invention to 1742 in his memoirs; nevertheless, the Yale edition notes convincingly that 'a more likely date' was the winter of 1739–40. See *Papers*, II, p. 419.

[65] *Papers*, II, p. 240.

[66] *Accounts*, IV: 1740. Lemay's online edition is far more complete for the years it covers than the abridged accounts printed in *Account Books Kept by Benjamin Franklin*, ed. by George Simpson Eddy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928). One scholar's personal count put Franklin's sales of Whitefield at above 2,500 individual volumes. See also Frank Lambert, 'Subscribing for Profits and Piety: The Friendship of Benjamin Franklin and George Whitefield', *WMQ*, 50 (1993), p. 541.

[67] This remarkable image is recorded in the *PG* of 13 November 1740 and Whitefield's (seventh) *Journal* (London: Strahan, 1741), p. 64. Related accounts are in the *PG* of 27 November, and in the journals, ibid., pages following.

[68] See the *PG* of 12 June 1740: 'No Books are in Request but those of Piety and Devotion; and instead of idle Songs and Ballads, the People are every where entertaining themselves with Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs. All which, under God, is owing to the successful Labours of the Reverent Mr. Whitefield.' (Quoted in Lemay, II, p. 440.) Lemay also notes that Franklin sold more religious imprints that year than in any other; see *Accounts*, IV: 1740.

[69] *Accounts*, IV: 1741, p. 3; and ibid., 1742, p. 2.

[70] This and the other lines quoted from Whitefield's sermons can be found in Amos Stevens Billingsley, *The Life of the Great Preacher, Reverend George Whitefield* (n. p., 1878), pp. 395–414.

[71] *Papers*, II, pp. 269–70 (26 November 1740, from Whitefield). The letter was reproduced in *A Select Collection of Letters of the Late George Whitefield* (London, 1772), I, p. 226, though no manuscript or draft has been found.

[72] *Annals of Philadelphia*, II, pp. 355, 350.

[73] 'Extract from the *Gazette*, 1742', in *Papers*, II, p. 355.

[74] *Bartram Correspondence*, p. 153 (29 March 1741, Bartram to J. Slingsby Cressy); ibid., p. 166 (Bartram to Collinson).

[75] Franklin's memoirs suggest, probably given Richard Peters's later career, that he declined the offer in expectation of an appointment from the proprietors, which indeed he received in February 1743; he replaced James Logan as secretary to the province. Peters's biographer suggests that the clergyman's aversion to Whitefield generally also had something to do with it. Shortly afterwards, a breakaway Presbyterian sect, following Whitefield and led by Gilbert Tennant, met in the building. See *Autobiography*, p. 91; Hubertis Cummings, *Richard Peters: Provincial Secretary and Cleric, 1704–1776* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), p. 143; Milton J. Coalter, *Gilbert Tennant: Son of Thunder* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 110.

[76] The foundations of the American Philosophical Society are not generally identified in the short-lived subscription, conceived apparently by Bartram and Franklin, to sponsor the former's botanical research. More often, though not always, they are noticed in Franklin's failed scheme to found an academy at Philadelphia. But all three initiatives shared the same architects and the same design, which was to encourage the growth of a colonial core of intellectuals at Philadelphia, and in his memoirs Franklin mentioned the academy and society in virtually the same breath. Both were a sensible step forward after the success of the Library Company. See Raymond Phineas Stearns, *Science in the British Colonies of America* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1970), pp. 683–686 for a good overview of the challenges presented to colonial scientific men by a society far more diverted by material than by intellectual or cultural wealth. For Franklin's diplays of achievement at Boston, calculated at times to inspire envy and possibly mortification, see *Autobiography*, pp. 24, 83; *Papers*, X, pp. 309–11; ibid., pp. 383–84 (28 November 1763, to Jonathan Williams); and less directly: *Papers*, II, pp. 413–14 (6 September 1744, to Josiah and Abiah Franklin); *Papers*, VII, pp. 229–30.

[77] Franklin dated his proposal the second week of May, 1743. 'A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge among the British Plantations in America', in *Papers*, II, p. 378.

[78] *Bartram Correspondence*, p. 93 (10 July 1739, Collinson to Bartram).

[79] *Papers*, II, p. 378–83.

[80] *Papers*, II, p. 378. One of the original pressings is published at the Beinecke Digital Collections, Yale University. Somebody has made editorial changes, probably Colden (to whom it was sent), for a short line of now-faded handwriting under the title appears to be his. These changes are not present on the manuscript at the Library of Congress. See <**BRBL-DL.LIBRARY.YALE.EDU**/VUFIND/RECORD/3432721> [ACCESSED 15 JUNE 2015]. See also *Bartram Correspondence*, p. 262 (7 November 1745, Colden to Bartram).

[81] *Bartram Correspondence*, pp. 252–53 (7 April 1745, Bartram to Colden).

[82] Half of the original members of the APS would later sit on the first Board of Trustees for the Academy. The Society was revived almost a generation later, while Franklin was living again in London, in 1767. It succeeded even without his help and though its activities have shifted considerably through the years, it still exists today, with offices and a reading room in South Fifth Street, Philadelphia.

[83] 'John Bartram', *Friends' Intelligencer*, 41 (1884), p. 402.

3

Blood

NOVEMBER, 1762 – JANUARY, 1763.
Philadelphia.

News of a conquest

The summer had been hot, bone-dry, except for a few sudden downpours that muddied the city and ruined the streets briefly and disarranged the soil of the burial grounds.

The harvest largely failed. The warning slid through the markets that the livestock would not survive the winter if it were a harsh one.

All around him traces of a recent slaughter could be picked out of the hubbub of the streets, obvious as red-faced turkey vultures dozing in the trees by the river, black as the crêpe forms sweeping by the meetinghouses. The first he heard of the fever was perhaps one of the final assurances:

'The town is at present clear.'[1]

But if he allowed it in the weeks that followed, he too could turn coldly alert to every foulness in the air, to the slightest draught in a room, to any flare-up of the gout he had developed on the sea. He could pause maybe an instant overlong at the flash of a sheeted cadaver being fed into the alleyway across from his front door – the weekly grist for a new series of anatomical lectures. But his wife was well, his daughter was well; this was news he could report, anyway, to his sister by the first New England post. He was well, too, except for the gout, which 'my friends say is no disease' at all in the circumstances.[2]

Some said the sickness had been brought into town with a cargo of slaves. Others could trace it as far downriver as Moyamensing, the Swedes' church, the farms that turned marsh at the bank. The physician John Redman would recall in his official report of the epidemic three decades later that after 'some considerable search' it was found to have originated in the new market district south of Pine, among the tenement houses where sailors spent their leave. (It was the neighbourhood of his own practice, and perhaps no doctor was better positioned than he to chart the spread.) He found it had been a provincial soldier who fought the Spanish at the Havana during the terrible outbreak there and returned victorious and infectious, and whose death had not occurred swiftly enough to spare the house where he lodged.

The news shook the Doctor so thoroughly that he could never mention the reduction of the Havana without immediately stirring in the mortal toll they had paid for it.

The fever struck hardest in the usual neighbourhoods – the 'Hell Town' ghetto between High and Race, and by the tanneries that sluiced their broth into the public dock – and deaths carried on into the last days of autumn. Despite all his best efforts he could not conceal his anxiety, which would spill out in awkward combinations of fellowship and contempt. Perhaps it was then that he knew he would evacuate the city when the hot weather returned, and go as far north as he could.[3]

A day of thanksgiving

He had been on the sea when reports of the Havana's reduction blew out of the Caribbean like a prophetic wind. When he looked hard enough into its residue he saw the encampments of the pale dying, their faces stained by a blackish blood, and was brought up short by accounts of the havoc made in 'our little brave army by sickness, now (he wrote) now almost totally ruined'. In his absence the streets had not been paved and the filth in them contributed to the stench of corpses, and the numbers of reported dead spiralled before his eyes, to his horrid amazement.[4]

The Havana was long talked about as the greatest port city in the western hemisphere, older and far more heavily settled than any in the British colonies. Its harbour was admirably equipped with shipyards large enough to build several first-rate men-of-war simultaneously, and through it flowed a steady stream of metals, gems, and cash crops bound for Spain. One hundred ships could be laid up under the protection of its defences. But such prizes were a secondary consideration, for the town's treasury alone was worth three million pounds sterling. So obvious was its centrality to the colonial enterprise that the merchants of Madrid called it 'la Llave' – the Key to the West Indies – and no place in the Americas was better defended. The harbour was naturally sheltered by a narrow channel into the bay, which the Spaniards had improved more than a century earlier by erecting two fortresses at its mouth. On the north side, high on a promontory, was the Castillo de los Tres Reyes Magos del Morro, garrisoned by seven hundred men and armed with sixty-four heavy guns. On the south side, standing before the city wall, were the guns of San Salvador de la Punta. Between them, across the mouth of the channel, a heavy copper chain was laid and daily raised for the past hundred years to seal the city against attacks in the night.[5]

But it was said afterwards, as if to validate claims of a holy purpose, that the strength of the Havana extended beyond what was merely human: beyond the apparent impregnability of its defences, beyond the heroic resolve of the army within to wait out a siege laid upon them since June. The strength of the city extended even to the Cuban summer, which had grown so rancid and inhospitable and finally deadly, that in the end the Spanish losses to artillery bombardment were outnumbered by the English losses to yellow fever.

The reports were staggering: 'More have fallen by the climate than by the sword.'[6]

Of the fourteen thousand men who had sailed earlier that summer from Spithead and colonial ports, half were dead, and 'not above 700' fit for duty. It could even be verified that one regiment, the Royal Highland, despite extensive prior service in the West Indies, had fallen into such a 'deplorable state' that for every able man there were seven with the fever. No sooner was the victory secure than it became one of the first to be carried up the coast in a flotilla of putrescence, with instructions to put in at some 'northern climate' for a change of air. When the men arrived at New York a few weeks later, bedridden and dying, General Jeffery Amherst had the barracks at Elizabethtown, New York, and Perth Amboy converted to hospitals. By the end of September, with the methodical caution for which he was later known, he had ordered the same done at two New Jersey towns on the Delaware, and at Philadelphia.[7]

Designs for a campaign on the gulf coast now smacked of fantastic optimism, or even inexperience, and were quietly withdrawn. Yet even as the scale of the outbreak became clear, it could not be doubted that the conquest had demonstrated the immediate hand of God. Fireworks smoked the summer sky above New England, bonfires lit the nights, and into houses of worship from Charleston to Boston came the message of the Lord's deliverance: 'Let us then sacrifice praise to the God of armies, who has led our victorious troops into this strong city, of which our enemies were ready to boast, as if it was invincible…'.[8] Public days of thanksgiving were declared and sermons delivered that echoed the warrior's verses of the eighteenth psalm. The wall of Jericho tumbled again by no earthly means but the reverberations of hymns lifted to heaven like the horns of rams, that swirled around the king's bust in eddies of dust and ash and left through the openings in the belfry. If the walls of the Castillo de los Tres Reyes Magos del Morro, which took its name from the three biblical Magi, had not fallen quite so automatically or as obediently, it was a detail of no importance. For in any case, where all greatness, all power, all glory, and all majesty belonged to God, so it followed (in a sermon delivered before both houses of government at Boston) that the conquest did, as

well. But what the ministers could not bring themselves to say was that within two months the tropical hills had swallowed the bodies of seven thousand Englishmen, as though the fever were itself a weapon of nature employed against the victors.

At London the news reached St. James's before sunset on the twenty-ninth of September. The king, in town again following a month at Windsor, had not waited even until dawn to announce the grandest victory of a reign not yet in its third year. The destruction of the Havana would cripple the Spanish colonial project for years to come, and push the negotiators back to the table – this time over terms more favourable to England. Within hours of the announcement the Tower cannon were rumbling over the moonlit city, and carried on until one o'clock in the morning, with the urgent delight of a nation no longer to be rivalled anywhere in the world. The next day the *Public Advertiser* devoted all but its back page to two accounts of the siege and its aftermath from the commanders of the land and naval forces, as well as the articles of capitulation signed by the Spanish governor. The *Chronicle* published them again with the same zeal, along with the returns of the British regiments, the state of the defending garrison, and even the record of the event made in daily increments over five weeks by the chief engineer. Two extra pages were required to accommodate all of it. The talk in the coffeehouses would be of making 'a good peace', on the one hand, and of holding onto the captured lands, whatever the war's duration, on the other.[9]

By the time the Doctor came into Philadelphia on the first of November, everything was ready to receive the second wave of veterans who, by all the accounts travelling up the river, were in 'a very ragged and sickly' state. Transports improvised as hospital vessels were expected daily at the wharves, and would unload the sick to be taken to the army barracks in the Northern Liberties. The outlook for them was grim. Rumours coming in from parts north indicated that those already landed at New York were succumbing 'by dozens' each day, and their number reduced already by half. The Doctor was pushed almost to the verge of horror, and it was over a month before he could make a proper celebration of 'that enterprise'. Even then he added, with a sense of overall regret:

'I hope it will, in the making of peace, procure us some advantages in commerce or possession that may in time countervail the heavy loss we have sustained'.[10]

To his friends in the colonies he found it impossible to express anything at all on the subject. It was typical of him to wait for the transfigurations of wit to reframe the matter rather than to speak so soon, as Bartram could, and so darkly. Once, in the last war, after news came down of a prayer offered by the besiegers at Louisbourg in order

to speed the capitulation of the French garrison on the other side of the gates, he had written to his brother at Boston a line of mock assurances. It was his way of requesting intelligence on the attack that had been the talk of the colony's congregations since the beginning of the year. 'You have a fast and prayer day for that purpose; in which I compute five hundred thousand petitions were offered up to the same effect in New England, which added to the petitions of every family morning and evening, multiplied by the number of days since January 25th, make forty-five millions of prayers; which, set against the prayers of a few priests in the garrison to the Virgin Mary, give a vast balance in your favor.' He had added, with a smirk:

'If you do not succeed, I fear I shall have but an indifferent opinion of Presbyterian prayers in such cases, as long as I live.'[11]

What the Doctor did not need to make explicit was that he believed prayer to be even less likely a weapon of warfare as it was a means of personal salvation, but it was a point he rarely resisted in family correspondence: 'I should have more dependence on works, than on faith'. He had already said as much to his parents, but with his brother he had been able to take a lighter tone and dispensed altogether with the allowance of ambiguities. War was man's business, and the devils lurking among the enemy garrisons 'are not to be cast out by prayers and fasting, unless it be by their own fasting for want of provisions'. If there was scripture in what he wrote ('I believe there is'), he was too rushed, and too forgetful, to 'adorn the margin' with chapter-and-verse. Perhaps, in leaving it at that, he was sparing himself the embarrassment of another incorrect citation.[12]

The summer fever had not quite subsided when the productions of colonial ministers began to circulate in print, thick with the usual references to Canaan and Jericho and framing the victory at the Havana as a sign from above. 'What great and marvellous successes has our gracious Protector granted to us against our heathen and antichristian enemies? Our perfidious and common enemy can't but see, and know, that the God of the English Israel, has exhibited glorious acts of his power, in behalf of the Protestant cause'. To the Doctor, who had long since established his doubts about divine providence, the pitch of such sermons, the substitution for grace of a bloodlust divinely shared, could not have been more alienating. By mid-December, the city now populated with officers who had served at the battle, he was letting slip indirect commentary that revived his old antagonism in a tone of cheerful half-mockery. For where once it was the starvation of Louisbourg, now they rejoiced at the Havana, their prayers slicked with the blood of papist boys and the rotted guts of English ones, and lit their bonfires

and spoke of the empire as God's true kingdom on earth. Perhaps it was the talk of providence that reminded him of the tour he had made the summer before through one of the Catholic regions on the Continent, and he wrote pointedly to an old friend in Connecticut to describe the state of the Sabbath in Flanders: 'In the afternoon both high and low went to the play or the opera, where there was plenty of singing, fiddling and dancing.'[13]

'I thought of your excessively strict observation of Sunday; and that a man could hardly travel on that day among you upon his lawful occasions, without hazard of punishment – while where I was, everyone travelled, if he pleased, or diverted himself any other way'. He recalled that the Catholic cities were well built and full of inhabitants, the Catholic markets filled with plenty, the Catholic people well favoured and well clothed, their fields well tilled, their cattle fat and strong, and their fences, houses and windows all in good repair. And yet they had dared the roads on a Sunday.[14]

'I looked round for God's judgments but saw no signs of them … which would almost make one suspect, that the Deity is not so angry at that offence as a New England justice.'[15]

It was the first week of December when informed men of the city, drawing on letters recently arrived from London, began to assert privately that 'a peace is not far off'. But in the ashes of the bonfires and the transparent jingoism of the 'thanksgiving' sermons, the Doctor thought he could detect a resurgence of support for the war. He was not wrong. For as much as the English papers accused Spain of inflating even the smallest victory as if it marked a turning point in her fortunes, the captures of Martinique and the Havana had set the London coffeehouses to rumbling with talk of making good the king's gains, expanding the empire, establishing total dominance over the colonial project. He had uttered the same after the reduction of Quebec, after Guadalupe: let the sugar islands go, and keep Canada for Britain. But for him there had not been any question of God, or of states and princes, and no, not even one of new markets, though he had assumed such a posture when it held more sway than his more honest reasons. For him it had been a question of security: the French were behind the Iroquois raids on the frontier counties that had culminated in official declarations of scalping wars. Forty pieces of eight for an Indian scalp delivered to the state house; half as much for boys under twelve and women. The Doctor was astonished that such a brutal measure had even been considered, let alone passed as law, because the Indian retaliation would be permanent, or the tribes corrupted by French intrigue would be exterminated to a man, and either way the frontier would be made a slaughterhouse.[16]

He had poked a black finger at those who argued for the restoration of Canada. Did they worry the back settlers were growing too tall?[17]

It had been easier to print such sentiments behind the careful mask of a pseudonym in Strahan's newspaper. A greater care needed to be taken now, and given the religious esteem in which some colonials held the empire, it was only with his innermost circle of friends that the Doctor could be so open in writing. Those sailors and soldiers now plaguing the port cities, those conquests, whatever glory they might be said to reflect upon England: it was all for the sake of a good peace after. Intimidation and humiliation were not ends in themselves. And so it was with the Havana; and maybe a spot too much of the fortifying stuff, really, for in sparking off the coffeehouse preachers and the warriors in the pulpit, the very rallying seemed in danger of replacing the original motivation. Wars had a way of rousing the darker elements of the spirit, of outlasting their just occasions.

A trade of terror on the river, a visible haemorrhage at the wharves of the recent violence, fever packing the fields: it was enough. For maybe the first time he was inclined to think the whole conflict with Spain an unnecessary manufacture of English swagger, a reckless (even inebriate) investment of lives and livelihoods. He took the most freedom in a letter to a neighbour in Craven Street, when after putting the Havana in terms of the peace he hoped it would force, he added with a dash of Caribbean spice: 'if John Bull does not get drunk with victory, double his fists, and bid all the world kiss his arse; till he provokes them to drub him again into his senses'. He was voicing a warmth so divergent from his usual temperament in correspondence that he went so far as to hide the lines in the copy he kept for himself, and would not repeat them to anyone else. But in language less fired by frustration it became his angle on the matter.[18]

Homecoming

The hands of his English pocket-watch had stopped on the sea, frozen upon a minute when he had been as London knew him. When he looked now at its face and held it, soundless and heavy, he could recall the very moment when the reverberations of the city had begun to fade away within him. For 360°, nothing in sight; only sea and sky and time immeasurable. The ship had not got even so far as Madeira.[19]

It had been for the purpose of some personal experiment that he was keeping it wound, so as to keep its predictable loss of a few minutes per day. Perhaps it was on

specific instructions of its maker John Ellicott, F. R.S., and royal clockmaker in Sweeting's Alley, as though the crossing should be accounted an informal test of some new design of the firm's. There were men within the Royal Society who had had clocks on the mind since the astonishing report earlier that spring of a ship en route to Jamaica, the so-called Longitude Expedition, whose reckoning had been corrected as she passed near to the Madeiras and so had averted a potential catastrophe. For it was discovered that the original course on which the captain had settled was so far from the mark as would have taken her by the intended stopover at the islands without so much as a sighting of them.[20] It was true, as Ellicott confessed, that one of the men on board had steered her right 'on the shortest space of time' by the simple expedient of a new machine said to resemble a large pocket-watch. The device was being billed as a 'sea watch' that contained in its mechanism a novel means of compensating for temperature changes in different latitudes. Just how such a measurement should be taken, however, the clockmaker could not say.[21]

The machine's designer was none other than John Harrison, the maverick of the Midlands, hitherto known for the manufacture of complicated, bulky affairs of swinging metal that (rather famously) hadn't been fit for purpose. His designs had inspired a small stipend from the government, was all, which had allowed him to relocate his family to London and to continue his work at a pace so slow as to have established himself less as a gentleman of consequence than as a public curiosity. He kept the three prototype 'longitude clocks' at a house in Red Lion Square and supplemented the stipend by charging visitors half a guinea for a look. The Doctor himself had not resisted the urge, and on a morning not long into his residence at London had gone across town to behold the scene and appurtenances of a singular, thirty-year obsession.[22]

The young man who had gone over with the ship was Harrison's son. It was said that certificates deposited at the Admiralty Office were signed not only by the Jamaican governor but also by the ship's officers, and that there was little reason to think the trial would be found insufficient by the Board of Longitude when it was next convened. If there was law in England, some had declared, John Harrison would be richer a prize of £10,000. The Doctor would never confirm whether in winding his watch on the sea he was trying to repeat Harrison's success for his own amusement or simply to satisfy himself of the method's utility. But he had been so set on making the experiment that on learning that the Board would meet shortly after he left London, he had asked for the minutes to be sent to the post office at Portsmouth so that he might understand all

he could about how such a thing should be done. He was to travel some of the same waters as the Longitude Expedition and he couldn't doubt but that Ellicott would be glad to test his own watch's accuracy against Harrison's, which had erred by a mere 23 seconds. As for himself, he valued any reason to begin a correspondence with a friend in the Royal Society.[23]

It was for nothing, though, because he had gone and wrecked it. There had been a quick pop and vibration and in an instant the key turned and turned without any resistance. When he unscrewed the plate that concealed the works he discovered, upsettingly, that Ellicott's mainspring had broken. It was a new one and more accurate than the original, which the Doctor had kept in case of such an eventuality as this. Suppose it had coughed in London: he could have had it repaired at the firm that made it. It was too late for that. He returned to his own country and brought it to a clockmaker in Philadelphia along with the old mainspring. The hands had awakened. But he left off tuning it to any degree of precision and couldn't really explain why. It could not keep the time as well as it might, as well as it used to do, and he would have to set it daily. Perhaps in dropping the hint to Ellicott he was hoping for a replacement spring to be sent over.

For months the watch beat at his rib its mechanical beat, measuring the ghost of London time, tuned to an absent mainspring, even as the patterns of an earlier existence were taking him in again. And what disappointing words he must write to Ellicott would not find their way to his pen. 'I am sorry I cannot give you an agreeable account', was a sentence that would wait, stalled in a muddy rut of disorientation, or disappointment, until April when a page arrived from Sweeting's Alley begging a new errand. He would make every effort, then, to renew his interest to the Royal Society man, if it took him a year.[24]

Looking back on the first weeks of November, when his front door remained neither open nor shut, the Doctor would go so far as to say that if anyone had known that he was arriving by the *Carolina*, he might have been marched into the city and to his very doorstep by a cavalcade of five hundred horse. So he wrote to Strahan at the beginning of December, brushing away the caked mud of the summer. Sensible that so extravagant a claim would have to be justified, he added:

'Excuse my vanity in writing this to you, who know what has provoked me to it.'[25]

Nobody but Strahan could read that brief note of triumph for what it was because nobody but he had been present with both parties over the letter written by the parson William Smith to prevent the Doctor's having honours from Oxford. It was Strahan

who had extracted from Smith the promise of a retraction, and he who alone could have guessed the true significance of Smith's line that the Doctor's faction at home had abandoned him. The retraction had not yet been written, and never would be; the slander had gone to the Doctor's heart until, not long after he had crept silently back across the sea, he found to his relief that the 'intelligence' Smith claimed to have brought over from Philadelphia was baseless. By separate ships he sent reassurances to London: 'My fellow citizens while I was on the sea, had, at the annual election, chosen me unanimously, as they had done every year while I was in England, to be their representative in Assembly.'[26]

But even if he had been able to overcome his insecurities and sooner recognise in the parson's words the advertisement of party politics, the Doctor would not have altered a single thing about his arrival into Philadelphia after so long an absence. The truth was that nothing more readily produced in him the barren nausea of apprehension than the military ceremonies that threatened to attend his every movement into or out of the city. He would never forget the morning in 1756 that he set out for Virginia on some errand for the post office. No sooner had he fixed the chair and mounted the saddle horse than he had found himself in a forest of bared swords. A regiment of militia large enough to draw the attention of every house on High Street took him as far as the ferry road on the western edge of town, all the while bestowing upon him an honour reserved for generals and princes. (Honest innocence! he would claim later.) But such a public display did not go unnoticed by his political enemies. That summer, when news had come over from London of his being chosen a member of the Royal Society, it was accompanied by expressions of bafflement at his parading through the province like a usurper. In denying any wrongdoing, the Doctor pled ignorance on behalf of the twenty officers and thirty grenadiers of the city militia.[27]

'The people happen to love me,' he said. 'Perhaps that's my fault.'[28]

But he had dreaded such attention ever since, anticipated and obstructed it, and had once gone so far as to make a forced march through a rain-beaten February night in order to forestall another military escort into town. That his return from London had not been the cause of a public display of celebration was the consequence of what in later years would develop into an almost paranoid attention to modesty.[29]

It was at that altar that he left to a neighbourhood empty of fanfare, to five hundred phantom horsemen, only the rumour that he had arrived.

As soon as word got out that he was among them the friends he worried were lost drew into his home, or their letters came instead, and he found himself shamed a little for his secrecy around the crossing and toasted dually for the marriage and the governorship of his son. The convoy had been so slow to cross the sea that all the English news had arrived before him, and the only part of Billy's marriage that remained a secret was the breaking of his own heart. When asked about the date of his son's return and of the new bride's introduction the Doctor delivered the line he had repeated to the point of staleness: a little longer, a little longer. In truth, he did not know. The letter he perhaps expected to find waiting on his desk containing the particulars of Billy's travel arrangements had not come, and after so many weeks without any sign or word he was not at all sure it had even been written. Uncertain of his footing, he would fish for news from Strahan:

'My son is not arrived, and I begin to think he will spend the winter with you.'[30]

The real question after so invisible a courtship was whether he approved the match. It was only a few months earlier that one of the Shippen sons, having completed his medical studies in Edinburgh beyond the oversight of his family, returned married to the very woman who had once passed through Philadelphia disguised in the coat and breeches of a gentleman in order to pursue an illegitimate liaison. No one except the girl at the house where she had lodged had any idea which of the local bachelors had so intoxicated her heart, for her true identity was no sooner discovered than she had taken passage on a ship bound for London. It was there that the Doctor had seen her at a neighbour's house but it's possible that he never knew that the object of so wild an affection had been his own son. After two years her reappearance on the arm of young Dr Shippen, one of the city's most promising physicians, had been cause to lift the scandal for one brief moment from the boneyard of old gossip before the talk of mésalliance was packed up along with entire households and scattered beyond the reach of the summer's fever.[31]

The Doctor's having left the metropolis prior to Billy's wedding could be put down merely to the desperate irregularity of wartime shipping, but in company he avoided the necessity of saying so. In short he made as little mention of it as could be managed within the bounds of politeness, as though it were an event (and the bride little more than a name) with which he was but partially familiar. He discovered that he was able to make the most dutiful assurances of the groom's capacities as a husband without giving so much as a mention to the bride, or to her capacities as anything, or letting slip even a syllable indicative of his objection to the match. Of his true feelings for the other

woman, Polly Stevenson, whom he had made his daughter in spite of everything by a vow of enduring affection, the Doctor betrayed so little that not even his most intimate confidants ever spoke of his regret.

He gushed instead over several sheets of paper made out to his former address at the lodging house, in two letters to Polly's mother and one at great length to her, and posted them by separate ships. The first went out early enough that the cranberries he wished to send weren't ready, or weren't collected yet. But a promise was evidently got out of him before he sailed, and he complied with it despite the immediacy of his days, to assure his landlady that he was alive in name as well as body.[32]

It was as though he were entering a deliberate last word in a longstanding conversation, for it was Mrs Stevenson who had put aside the enjoyment she found in an edition of Smith's collected sermons and had taken against the man immediately she was informed of his assaults on her lodger's character. And it was she who pressured the Doctor to invert what might remain of their alliance, no matter whether such measures could be strictly justified, and so consider the parson forever an enemy. But he had delayed giving her any answer until he might be able to prove to himself that the act of disloyalty was founded entirely upon malice, and not the product of some political instruction. The Doctor hid himself so well that not even Smith knew the colour of his 'temper' when he left London in the middle of August, and as if to compound the confusion he had found time amid the jumble of last-minute errands to offer to personally convey the parson's transatlantic post.[33]

Not until 9 November did he hear any news of the fundraising mission, when the Board of Trustees of the College, Academy, and Charitable Schools of Philadelphia held its monthly meeting for the first time since the outbreak of fever. Smith had given him letters and a journal to deliver to the treasurer. He attended also, and more sincerely, with an intention to press the interest of the English master, Kinnersley, who was the only other man in the colonies whose knowledge of electricity rivalled his own. But the opportunity never arose, and he instead sat through the reading of an excruciating letter from London detailing Smith's success in securing his brief from the king, which would enable him to take an offering at every parish church in the country. If the president of the Board told him that his activities against the interest of the college had been secretly included with Smith's report, the Doctor would never say.[34]

Distances new and familiar

He could not rest in Philadelphia. In a dense rush the city forced in upon him, the slide of cartwheels on the street, the cooing of pigeons at roost, the blotchy face of Deborah's washerwoman, the dogs barking in the night. There again was his own likeness, the English portrait he had commissioned the first year, stark and understated, fleshier than he looked now because London had thinned him; again the calls before sunrise of the hour and the weather: 'Past two o'clock and a starlight morning'; again his second son, Franky, in paint grinning pink and healthy; again the books and pamphlets he had left behind, laid out for him, dusty, untouched for over half a decade; and the items he had chosen or accepted from the proprietress of the lodging house and shipped over every few months, now unbound and made and used, now part of the daily activities of what was to be his life.[35]

He heard voices, women's voices, women conversing, commanding, delighting, quipping. No longer did he listen for the replies of a girl. No longer, at social events, did he scan the card tables and the rooms for the figure of a girl, because there was no longer any girl. But even so, he had hoped in returning to find his daughter still young and incomplete.

But at nineteen Sally was almost stubbornly secure in her place, as though she were stitched into the fabric of the city like the tiny crosses she made so effortlessly now with her needle. When he was away she had put aside the last vestiges of her childhood like an old plaything, she had learnt to ride into the country, she attended the assemblies where soldiers went and danced, and she had grown enough in her moral sensibilities to prefer the sermons of one minister over another. She played her harpsichord with such skill after just ten months' practice that not only could she accompany the armonica as soon as the Doctor had demonstrated it for her, but she completed the ensemble with the further addition of her voice. Soon he would be writing to Strahan to send printed arrangements of folk songs, like the Scotch ballads sold near St. Martin's by the violoncellist and composer James Oswald. He could have wished her more fluent in his own interests – as Polly had become with genuine reverence – and more worldly, and on one quiet day of correspondence he busied her with copying out his account of Madeira.[36]

Ever since the day of her birth, seven years after Franky died, the Doctor had considered Sally to be something akin to an autonomous extension of himself. As a child she showed no natural proneness to Deborah's pessimism and shyness, and so typical of his own family line were the shape of her profile and the bright fullness of her

eyes that until the separation of his English mission it had been easy to make himself believe that he shared with her an intimacy exclusive even of her mother. She had not yet reached her seventh year when he began to run advertisements of her virtues by the channel of his correspondence. To his mother at Boston he reported her to be obliging and 'perfectly dutiful' not only to her parents but, he added, 'to all'.[37] He liked to picture her already grown, a woman of uncommon mind; sensible, notable, and in short, worthy. He stopped before she could grow worthier in word than she was in life:

'Perhaps I flatter myself too much.'

The truth was that even then, and from the time she could walk, Sally had had a suitor in the eldest of Strahan's three sons, a boy to whose existence she remained indifferent until the day she received, wrapped in a letter from her father, an indirect proposal of marriage. In advising Deborah on the matter, the Doctor feigned a surprise he could not have genuinely felt, for not only had he brought Sally's likeness to London with him, he had in fact pushed the arrangement for years. At one point, when the intended husband was about ten, and she about seven, he included in a line to the boy's father a dutiful assurance of the fine growth thus far exhibited and the titillating probability of his daughter presenting 'an agreeable person'.[38] And it was with the eye of an auctioneer that he recognised at such a premature stage of her life not just the tradesman's twin idols of industry and frugality but also the seeds and tokens of every female virtue. Nevertheless, in an unsparing attempt that was only half-ironic to reduce the future outlay of her dowry, he maintained the guarantee of her worthiness with an irresistible pun: 'She will, in the true sense of the word, be *worth* a great deal of money, and consequently a great fortune.' But he repeated it too often to have believed it.[39]

What she could never be was an assistant, a partner in his network of presses, or a political ally. That she, from the day she came into the world, represented to him a financial liability was almost more than he could conceal, but he concealed it within the unrelenting cultivation of her character. Her education, which the Doctor had the patience to oversee himself, differed from that of her peers in the single respect that its expense was to be recouped in part almost from the beginning, because he intended not only to buy her schoolbooks wholesale to stock in the shop, but also for her to make out the orders herself as soon as her hand was legible. The titles he chose for her made up a curriculum of self-improvement derived from the one he had imposed upon himself, an extensive lesson in the patterns of social success and of self-awareness through the habitual mimicry of the highest ideals. Perhaps its proudest point was the correction of his own youthful flights of fancy. It had worked, in part, for the day he lost track of the

volumes she borrowed on his library subscription was the same day he realised that she had acquired the addiction he had nurtured his whole life.[40]

Then all at once, distanced by his embassy in London, the only authority he had been able to conjure over her learning and improvement was in continuing to supply the sorts of reading material as might refine her deportment and tastes, and in critiquing the penmanship of her letters. It was necessarily to Deborah's care, to what he had called her 'prudence', that he entrusted the lessons at the dance school, the tuition in the French language, and the training in music whose commencement he had overseen. Though he had made no independent provision, he doubted of his wife's ability to follow through and hoped his instruction had cured Sally of the habit of abandoning creative work. He had not waited even two days after leaving Philadelphia to remind Deborah of her responsibilities 'with a father's tenderest concern'. Then unexpectedly, the family was reunited once more, when Lord Loudoun's temporary embargo had provoked him into New Jersey in a huff of exasperation. He took advantage of the setback to send for his wife and daughter at Philadelphia and together tour the countryside for natural wonders so that Sally might begin to appreciate what he had not at her age. And then he and William were gone.[41]

For the first time Sally and her mother had lived almost alone together in the house, except for a maid and a black boy for help. The Doctor left them as much cash as he could spare after the expense of his voyage, but he knew it was too little, that they would eat and live by the rents of his properties and the collection of debts owed him. They continued for some time in the family home on the north side of High Street between Third and Fourth, but when the rental term expired they moved into one of the new builds on the south side, having packed up and carried a lifetime's worth of domesticity across the street. For more than a year the Doctor's only presence in the house he had never so much as seen was by proxy of the likeness sent from England.[42]

It was in such a situation that the two women had come to understand one another. At a time when the Doctor was reduced to trying upon his daughter's tastes a popular conduct novel put into French from the native English, so that she might learn not only to welcome but also to retain the attentions of polite society, Deborah knew the titles of every book she kept on her nightstand. It was Debby who nursed her through a serious case of measles that lingered in her lungs even after the rash cleared and the scales had fallen from all over her body. Then she suffered for months from a hacking cough that grew so troublesome that her only relief from it had come by way of an open carriage

driven daily from the house of a neighbour with orders not to return with her until she had felt the benefit of the country air.[43]

Despite the fabulous tone that Billy had struck in his letters home, in the accounts of their tours in Flanders and Scotland that he merely summarised, promising fuller details in person, neither father nor brother had been able to persuade Sally to join them across the water. It simply was not, for her, a thing worth imagining. At the age of twelve, the year the Doctor had left for England, Sally hadn't been further from home than the towns across the river, and then only to attend the weddings of cousins and the funerals of aunts. (Billy was not much older when he had been dragged from one of the vessels at port, where he was recommending himself in an effort to escape to sea.) Like her mother she would make content with maps, which if not confined to a private room contributed a paradoxical sense of entrenchment that was admirable in a city with so many recent strangers.[44] Her days were spent in rendering neighbourly duties, calling on friends and staying to assist them if they were ill, and staying to relate the news about town when they had recovered. She passed long stretches at her needle, or at her book, and later at the keys of the harpsichord that the Doctor shipped from London.[45]

He had told Strahan once, in regards to the proposal of marriage, that he could never live permanently at such a distance from his daughter. As the effects of his long absence became clear, the Doctor began to wonder if in the promise he made at Portsmouth he had been right to take his daughter's agreement for granted. For in the space of five years, when she had been under no one's influence but her mother's, Sally had grown to resemble her. Now the truth was that she would never understand her father, not completely, for the uncomfortable reason that she had never shared his inclination to peer beyond the boundaries of family and friends, of community and country, and then to leave them all behind.

A bar of iron, placed in a high situation

Across the street he could see his lightning rod on the corner of the old chimney, its gilt point tall and tarnished above the brick. Pointed at the end, he had told the painter Chamberlain that summer when he sat for a portrait at his studio. For there was to be a window, roof tops, one of his rods at the fore. Inside the room, just where the turn of his torso exposed the chair back, was to be a set of Professor Gordon's electric bells situated much closer than one would have thought quite safe, a desk, a pen in hand, and before him papers that suggested some function of law or government. The old Virginian

colonel, a neighbour in Craven Street, desired the likeness for one of his rooms. The Doctor's schedule had not been too full to oblige him. It was during his final weeks in London but he cabbed up to Spitalfields on the other side of the city to sit for the limner chosen personally by the colonel.[46]

All the light in the picture was to be lightning, flashes of it, striking and destroying a meetinghouse in the distance. Left intact was a nearer dwelling that reared the Doctor's iron conductor boldly at the sky. Here was the remarkable Doctor Franklin in London, the picture said, here was the one they called 'the Electrician'. But the imagery was a fiction: he hadn't even put a conductor on the house where he lodged. He said, paint a point at the end of it, not a knob. It isn't a weathervane.[47]

Mr Chamberlain could only imagine; there were none as yet erected in England to show him. Nor were there calls for any. Churches and cathedrals stood unprotected, ships went to sail without them. The Doctor put the scepticism down to popular superstition, to fear, to ignorance, but it was difficult to dislodge. He had had to clarify publicly that by drawing the electrical fire the rods either prevented an actual strike or conducted it safely to the ground. The truth was that lightning seldom struck in Great Britain as it did in America and in France, so that there was hardly any need for them anywhere on the island.[48]

At Philadelphia they had put one on the Academy building, one on the State House. Several of the city's landowners had one stapled along an outside wall of their homes, grounded in the dirt some distance away. His own landlord, the German wine merchant John Wister, had been sympathetic to his experiments even when they required alterations to the house, to the rooftop and stair, and given only the Doctor's assurances that the thing was perfectly safe in principle. But then his brother Caspar had produced the viridescent electrical tubes at his glass works for years, at the Doctor's suggestion, and sold hundreds as philosophical instruments and salon curiosities.[49]

Would the new landlord be so amenable? He was young, also German, and a builder, but confirmed instances of the promised protection were rare. The Doctor had taken to collecting any reports, however unlikely, to put with the papers he supposed might one day bulk out a second edition of his book. One had come to him in London: the shop of William West, the salt merchant in Water Street, was apparently struck for he and his clerk beheld the flash and crack of thunder the same instant that the clerk, standing just then by the exterior wall, felt the hair bristle on back of his neck. The conductor's brass tip, blunted and reduced by several inches, had been recovered by one of the masters at the Academy, as though it were some sort of philosophical gubbin. Certainly,

such visible exterior damage (if damage it was, and not mere weathering) bolstered the clerk's story. But that lightning had struck the house at all could be confirmed only by the account of a patron in the shop opposite who had witnessed the bolt sliding out 'over the pavement' where conductor met ground. Was the witness reliable? Was the brass tip as shortened as the merchant had claimed? By some twist of logic the primary piece of physical evidence presented for the conductor's success was as like to indicate the absence of any strike at all: West's house was still standing.[50]

Maybe there were two or three more cases, all of them in the lower colonies. That was unfortunate. Such stories could be lost amid the regular brew of wild and unfounded reports from that part of the world, where the unlearned spoke boldly in their isolation, easily to be dismissed. But something more seems to have been behind the Doctor's shyness over setting the accounts into print, something he would not indicate in correspondence.

In any case he had gone further than any of these early adopters. It was after reading of the work of the Scottish professor Andreas Gordon that he had persuaded his landlord to let him run his conductor through a short tube of glass fixed between the roof shingles, down into the house, and through the well of the staircase. There, opposite his bedchamber, he had made a reproduction of the professor's famous bells. He had capped the ends of two rods – one coming down from the chimney, another attached a level below to the household water pump – with a pair of brass bells, and put a bead between them for a clapper: 'a contrivance obvious to every electrician'. So far as he knew the device was the first of its kind in the colonies and produced a shrill alarm at the conduction of electrical fluid through the house.[51]

Once he had satisfied to himself that it was the same sort of electricity kindled by rubbing a glass tube against the thigh of his breeches, he could charge a jar from the rod-bell directly with none of the usual exertion. His family – Debby, Sally (then nine), the servants – had been warned to take caution. Absent a charge the clapper hung on its silken thread, silent and still as a snake on a rock. But even a gust of wind could set it off, the bead alternately receiving a charge from the rod-bell and discharging into the other, many times per second. Debby had never liked that ghostly rattle, which held a bite for the one who passed too near, though on two occasions when travel prevented his doing so she had followed his instructions and held to it the wire of a Leyden jar in order to catch the lightning.[52]

The spring of the year he left she wrote to him sick with its ringing in the storms. It frightened her, as if the thunderclaps weren't enough, to know that the device was

drawing lightning out of the clouds and down into her domestic business. He had said to her:

'Tie a piece of wire from one bell to the other, and that will conduct the lightning without ringing or snapping, but silently.'[53]

But he added an appeal: 'Though I think it best the bells should be at liberty to ring, that you may know when the wire is electrified'. He seemed not to realise that he was giving her the solution to only half the problem and blaming her for its incompleteness.

From time to time he would become sensible to the presence of living matter and discover the bells sparking and crackling with a miniature fury; above them, the clapper, frozen in weightless repulsion as though held by some invisible hand. Only once, though, had he followed to the stair the sound of splitting wood and witnessed a jet of white flame, an open torrent of lightning running between the conductors, whose diameter could not be discerned for the blinding density of its brightness. He had been unable to do more than stare at it in amazement and wondered afterwards at the sheer volume of electric fluid that had passed before him. Might it be possible, if such a quantity could be drawn out of the sky at will, to safely empty an approaching thundercloud of all its destructive venom? The image had sprung into his mind; something, perhaps, like a modest forest of his steel spikes on the city boundary, a lightning-proof fence. A little odd, yes, but what argument could be justly raised against so certain a preserver of property and lives?[54]

He had written it out, a winding, twisting stream of thought punctuated by such flights of romantic fancy, governed only by his utilitarian imagination, in a letter for Peter Collinson. With stars and optics and bodily humours he did not then concern himself. If he had vision it was of a warm, homely variety that outlined the performance of parlour tricks as proofs of a hidden natural order. What other use, if any, might come of these observations? He liked best to include hints in his letters, not merely for the creation of spectacles, but also to show the depth of his imagination. One could always draw sparks from the gilded spines of books, but the effect was fleeting and miniscule.[55]

Collinson, the broker of Bartram's seed-boxes and Fellow of the Royal Society, was the Doctor's only connection to the fertile minds of Europe. He was the benefactor to the city's subscription library of its philosophical books and of the wonderful glass tube that had dazzled the Doctor, then obsessed him. It was partly Collinson's political influence that helped to secure the donation of the entire electrical apparatus by whose use the Doctor had come to be known throughout Europe as the designer of 'the Philadelphia experiments'. Collinson, the instigator of American electricity, was the

only channel by which the Doctor had reports of 'what is new and curious' and he, only, by whom experiments must be communicated back and their significance weighed. But at such a distance the Doctor could never completely allow himself to trust the novelty of his own conclusions:

'In going on with these experiments, how many pretty systems do we build, which we soon find ourselves obliged to destroy!'[56]

Those first years were marked by a mental excitement that was unprecedented. Like the *Spectators* in his youth, the glass tube had opened an eye onto a new dimension of the world. He could not turn away, and only dropped the course of experimentation when the days became too hot and languid for thought. At the end of one winter, 'chagrined a little' at having failed after two years' study to devise anything except a hazardous new variety of entertainment, he laid down plans for a philosopher's picnic on the banks of the Schuylkill:

'A turkey is to be killed for our dinners by the electrical shock, and roasted by the electrical jack, before a fire kindled by the electrified bottle; when the healths of all the famous electricians in England, France and Germany, are to be drank in electrified bumpers, under the discharge of guns from the electrical battery.'[57]

Always he would return to it in seriousness, though without clear purpose, acting as though driven by an inexpressible yet inexhaustible rivalry with peers he neither knew nor had wanted to know. As he began to sense the threshold of the world's knowledge he became self-sure and mistook his findings on more than one occasion. Without the resource of any philosophers' clubs at Philadelphia, he shared and stirred his passion by writing long letters for Collinson to read out at the Royal Society meetings. Sometimes he had followed up such letters with a note sent by an urgent route, reversing some conclusion, some 'principle' he thought he had been the first to discover, but which further observations unmasked as the creation of his own vanity. *Errata*. But it was welcome patronage, and Collinson's natural caution protected the Doctor from his own foolhardiness.[58]

Then all at once, here was something: a conductor, an iron rod 'to draw the lightning down into my house' but which, he thought, might also channel any strike to the ground and so escape the usual consequence. In correspondence he worded the paragraphs as well as time would allow, but it had not been as polished a piece as the advertisement he printed in his almanac for that year:

'It has pleased God in his goodness to mankind, at length to discover to them the means of securing their habitations and other buildings from mischief by thunder and

lightning. The method is this —'. And he, or rather the persona he adopted for his almanacs, had described the design of it and how to staple it to the chimney, all humble and correct, so that nobody could mistake him for a merchant of unpunishable vice. Yet it had roused the devout for whom every avenue of his curiosity betrayed a presumption too far, and who believed the invention to be merely an apostate's unholy defence against the Lord's due wrath.[59]

It was not long after the publication of his letters at London in a small, half-crown volume that he received from Collinson the message informing him that not only had his lightning rod caught the notice of certain men on the Continent, who took to verifying its principle, but in France had inspired compliments from the highest quarter. 'These applauses of his Majesty' having excited the French philosophers, they had erected at a garden at Marley 'a pointed bar of iron, of 40 feet high', which was observed sooner or later to draw 'sparks of fire' from a storm cloud that passed overhead. Then the demonstration was repeated at Paris where a yet taller bar produced sparks 'like those of a gun' – the same noise, the same fire, the same crackling as was known to occur when a glass globe was rubbed with a cushion lined with buckskin.[60]

He read the lines with such astonishment and a sense of pride that was so great that his first instinct was to keep the whole thing a secret. There were letters, however; letters from abbés and professors and at least one man at London, all of whom had confirmed the Doctor's wonderful, fantastic, horrifying hypothesis 'that a bar of iron, placed in a high situation upon an electrical body, might attract the storm, and deprive the cloud of all its thunder'.[61]

He must keep it secret, because he scarcely knew what to make of it, and in truth had no way, no humble way, no way of communicating it to anyone that would preserve him afterwards. The advertisement in the *Almanack* would not be adequate, for Collinson had promised that the next *Transactions* from the Royal Society would print the European accounts; in the same letter, he found that the Quaker was not totally insensible to the charges of unholy vanity in store for him:

'If any of thy friends should take notice that thy head is held a little higher up than formerly, let them know: when the grand monarch of France strictly commands the Abbé Mazeas to write a letter in the politest terms to the Royal Society, to return the king's thanks and compliments in an express manner to Mr. Franklin of Pennsylvania, for the useful discoveries in electricity, and application of the pointed rods to prevent the terrible effects of thunderstorms; I say, after all this, is not some allowance to be made if the crest is a little elevated?'[62]

He had added, in the end perhaps unable to conceive how different from London were the conditions for the Doctor at Philadelphia:

'I think now I have stuck a feather on thy cap, I may be allowed to conclude in wishing thee long to wear it.'

What is new and curious

The Doctor pressed a chalked finger to the edge of a glass and there came, it seemed from nowhere, a silvery note. The note waxed and waned against the low rumble of the foot pedal, now loud, now faint, never dying away entirely. He had had the armonica installed in the front room so that he could attach it to the other successes of his mission.

It was the beginning of December. He was playing the glass machine for the mother of Elizabeth Graeme, the girl whom his son had courted five years earlier across partisan lines and had promised to marry upon his return from England, another of his jilted loves.

The lady was beside him, silent, close enough to touch the instrument herself. He had returned home from some business and she was there with her husband, Ann and Tom Graeme, close friends of the Penns and of Parson Smith. They had waited a month to visit.

Their daughter was not with them. The letter he had written to her, tender and deliberate as those he had used to write almost as her father-in-law before the engagement was called off, or (as he now understood) left off: that letter had passed before them. Of that he could be certain. (Had William believed it was over between Betsy and himself, or merely pretended to? Maybe she had broken it off, after all. Maybe he had, or thought he had. But Betsy had not thought so, after all, and had taken ill at the news of his marriage.) During the Doctor's absence in England the Graemes had lost their other daughter, the mother of their grandchildren, who were now under their care. Tom was frail from a cough that was said to be chronic.[63]

The Doctor was reticent, thinking, perhaps, of Polly Stevenson, and grieving quietly the loss of another worthy child he had almost made his own.

They had talked of polite things, not of the girl who was, it seemed, staying in the country with a heart like his own, doubly broken by the suddenness of the betrayal as much as by the thing itself. He felt sorry for her but out of propriety he gave nothing, not a hint that would open the subject to her parents. Deborah asked when Betsy would

be in town again. The lady answered that her daughter had been a great while going, her hostess was very fond of her and, she supposed, would detain her as long as she could. The subject dropped, she had gestured at the mahogany box of glasses in the room. She couldn't have known that its sound was infinite sadness.

His son hadn't written to the family, or to anyone, it seemed, of his intention to marry in London. Betsy had come to town herself weeks before to confirm the intelligence that had reached her with the Doctor's return. Her continued belief until that moment in William's commitment to her was perplexing, but nevertheless real. It was a misunderstanding that the Doctor would leave no record of having acknowledged, and among the correspondence compiled after his death nobody would ever discover the letter to him in which Elizabeth Graeme expressed her grievances with the raw eloquence of a poet.

After about a half an hour, the ease somewhat restored between the families, the Graemes left.[64]

People of every social rank called for him at all hours of the day. So continuously was his time employed that between the attentions of half the city and those of his own family (one of whom had come from New England for a loan) the Doctor had hardly enough time to tie the mouth of a tumbler with a length of pack-thread so he could witness again the fluid mechanics of water and lamp oil. But as the hours thinned and a chill blew in over the river the instinct of long habit was preparing his spirit for the slow, dark seclusion of winter. In moments of inactivity he found himself vulnerable to a jarring sense of absence that bore no expression except to stir up certain echoes of his old life on the Thames. It was perhaps too early to tell but by spring, when a batch of correspondence arrived from London, he would suffer a surge of disillusionment. He would answer then, the snowmelt creeping out to sea, as if he half wanted to follow it. The trigger would be a letter from Polly, who had written from the Hawkesworths' house at Kensington not two weeks into November. In her large, proficient hand she was grieving before him the loss of a close friend who had married a planter and was bound for Jamaica in the new year. Flooded with the memory of his own parting grief, he would console her with as much sincere sympathy as he ever allowed in correspondence. For it was less a parting, the experience had shown him, than a separation.

'The reflection that she is going to be more happy when she leaves you, might comfort you', he wrote, partly echoing the words he had written her on the eve of his own departure. But with a bitter turn he added, 'when the country and company she has

been educated in, and those she is removing to, are compared, one cannot possibly expect it'.[65]

He was overcome: 'It was a sweet society!'

For him it had been, above all else, a life of grand proximity, and he had acclimatised to its charm with a swiftness that was astonishing. It was as though in reaching London in the summer of 1757 he had reached the end of a volume of his life, a volume bound and finished with its own covers, and had five years later only the loose pages of the next, with a cast of characters that was utterly new and who might inhabit the book without him.[66]

It was one of these men, the front half of the mercantile firm Whitefoord and Brown that neighboured the lodging-house in Craven Street, who distinguished himself in writing by the September packet. Had the Doctor expected this, a lone Londoner – and with a few presents enclosed – when older friends from that neighbourhood had apparently left him without even a line?

Whitefoord's return to London from Oporto more than five years earlier had just about coincided with the start of the Doctor's residence. He was a Scotsman, at twenty not much younger than Billy, and a gentleman whose casual pursuits had bred in him abilities far beyond those essential to his vocation. At London he was the heir to both a comfortable security and a few good connections, and was already in such adept possession of the best forms of badinage that if the Doctor was not already put in mind of himself at that age, the two could nevertheless connect along the lines of a shared social marginalia.

The young merchant's first chance to entertain the Doctor was perhaps in reflecting on the Mediterranean spirit of the miracles attending the great earthquake at Lisbon in 1755, to which he had been a sort of spectator. It was because he was living elsewhere on the Continent at the time that he had missed the most ruinous tremors, but he was soon able to confirm that the destruction was so entire that the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in publishing the correspondence of eyewitnesses to the event, had not been wrong to introduce the city to its readers in the past tense. Whitefoord too had written by the London ships, amazed but not horrified by what he was seeing, as if the preponderance of other reports had loosed all discretion and he was free to play tourist to the devastation around him. (He joked at the beginning of one letter, 'I am now landed, I wish I could say on *terra firma*'.) It was true, despite what the Doctor might have read to the contrary, that thousands of Lisbonites were left squatting in the hills, living in makeshift huts, and looking out over a great amphitheatre of rubble that had been their

city and rendered blind to the sea by the smoke of fires that nobody was left to put out.[67]

But not even the sight of the ruins of the Church of the Trinity, whose smell alone betrayed the '7 or 800 people' crushed beneath, could completely cure the young Scot of an almost absurd levity occasioned by the unconvincing leadership of the clergy. Aftershocks that followed one upon another for months, he remembered, were said to be nothing less than the successive rumblings of a punitive wrath that no one could remember provoking. Soon the people of the city were so reduced in spirit that when the priests sought refuge in the words of a dead saint who had predicted not only the plague of earthquakes but also its imminent conclusion, nobody seemed to question the tardiness of the discovery. But the tremors continued all the same, and further heavenly assurances had to be spread with renewed authenticity among a populace now robbed even of the certainty of sacred prophecy. At last, in an attempt to calm the nerves of a laity hoping for nothing less than a miracle, one of the stone figures in the wealthy barrio of Bethlehem was found to have transformed its mouth into living flesh for as many moments as it took to utter a prayer for mercy. What was more, the statue was no less a personage than the Virgin herself, who had grown weary of the aftershocks and was applying for a cessation of them in her capacity as a mother.

Whitefoord relished the anecdote, which the *Gentleman's Magazine*, either from ignorance or good sense, had neglected to print. What could not have escaped the Doctor's interest was that some of the clergy, in the face of such relentlessness on the part of the earth's crust, had been forced into the vocation of journalist-correspondents of the Lord, reporting now and again that Christ 'seemed a little backward' but that Our Lady 'had scolded him heartily' and was mustering all her maternal authority 'to bring him to compliance'.[68] On his return Whitefoord had joined the same expatriate circle of lettered Scotsmen that so readily accepted the Doctor. He soon revealed himself to be a gentleman whose capacity for jest outfoxed all constraints of industry and useful application, and one whose style of dress was so much the relic of a past age that he seemed to possess a measure of life beyond his true years. For the Doctor, his company presented the uncommon challenge of keeping up with him, an exercise of wit warmly enjoyed, for in truth Caleb Whitefoord could have leapt intact from the pages of *The Spectator*.

At Philadelphia he could sigh at the prospect of two years beyond the reach of such people, and within a few months he could not think of them without a sensation of envy. One day he had taken from the window the musical invention that Whitefoord,

not long before they parted, had presented to him as a memento of their friendship. It was a wind harp or lyre (he could not remember which) of the type advertised now and again in the classifieds and sold in a shop across the Strand by a composer named Oswald, who made them. The sound of the gut-strings trembling on a breeze was like the angelic wail produced by his own box of glasses. Ethereal, disembodied, and ebbing, it seemed by some poetic impossibility either greater than or otherwise not quite to the texture of ordinary sound. Apart from anything else, it was now the token of what had been the Doctor's most salient, and most tragic quality: that he must finally go. Touching the strings with his fingers, he forced from the hollow of wood the traces of a harmony.[69]

I am now waiting here only for a wind to waft me.

But it was a private form of longing. He hadn't yet raised the question of going back over, and he knew not when or how he would. (It would not be before news of a peace. Of that much he was already certain.) Did he know that he would go alone, if it should come to that?[70] Slipping into an Orphean dream he would have his hands become the wind, the swells and the distance of the sea, and he played over the harp-strings not to draw out a tune but as though by playing he might calm the terrors that had kept his little family from crossing to be with him; had kept, and would keep.[71]

In the weeks to come he would grow to miss the regularity that brought length to the autumn days, and it was with pangs of nostalgia that he made plans on those afternoons in the week when he had almost always dined away. Mondays, in Cornhill at the George and Vulture. Thursdays, at the Mitre in Fleet Street if he could secure an invitation from John Canton or some other Royal Society Club-man by the end of the morning – he never had settled on paying for a membership. Then, fed and jovial, across to the house at the end of Crane Court, where his own letters had once been read out for the Society. Wednesdays, when he wasn't overbusy, the Society of Arts had nominated him to a handful of committees. 'Never be discouraged', he declared once, in his first communication as a member, 'by any apprehension that arts are come to such perfection in England, as to be incapable of farther improvement'.

He added, just as recklessly: 'As yet, the quantity of human knowledge bears no proportion to the quantity of human ignorance'.[72]

So had he savoured the delicacy of such evenings, as though each had been another minute in the steady setting of a day that was to be five years and now washed away in dusk. 'Why should I fear they will ever forget me,' he would write not long afterwards. *Why should they forget me, when I shall ever remember them?*

For not the first time in his life he was sensible of a strangeness when he travelled the streets of his own country. He told himself that it was nothing more than his having grown used to the rich bustle of London, the buildings of four and five storeys, the rows of glass shopfronts, the river taxis that oared by the timber yard not far from his door, the Strand itself. He could (they all could, the purposeless, the anonymous who came to the city) despair of relating home its hues and textures, its ornament, its shape and shadow, its fragrances, its formal abundance and variety, because all of this was merely the stage for a production both greater and subtler than ordinary life, an agency and ceaselessness impossible to describe. Solitude was different in London.[73]

'I shall never touch the sweet strings of my British lyre without remembering my British friends,' he mused the second week of December, in time to catch Captain Friend on his outward voyage, and he corrected himself: Whitefoord had called it a harp.

Perhaps that was it, the thinness, the emptiness he perceived around him. For who besides he would know, as John Bartram had once envied him, the generous conversation, the free communication of improvements to all categories of knowledge between the names whose persons he had courted, and shared, and (from his place among them) extended then to others? Who but he knew their speech, their faces, the very clasp of their arms; the warm glow that wound out across the arch of St. Michael's alley from the passage of the George and Vulture where they met, the skylit yards of crisp new brick; and that cloister of shouldering back-ways off the fair commercial district? Who but he had drunk of that punch with a mixture of awe and pride; and again, mid-week, dined with many of the same people before hearing papers read to the Royal Society, month after month, year after year? He would think of them, that autumn and winter, singing and chattering, without him – Foster, the ironmonger; the Antiguan Baldwin; the moon-faced young Smeaton, whose genius for philosophical instruments no one equalled; Aubert, the portly bachelor; the Cambridge rector Dr Michell, whom he had even managed to warn against Smith's collection before departing; Ellicott, of course, who first opened their club to him; and any number of foreign guests, like the Swede Bengt Ferrner, touring Europe with his pupil and conversant in the latest projects of British engineering – seated at their private table. Most of them were traders, skilled inventors, men whose powers over matter were steady growing; and he, so furnished with all the latest of error and discovery, was among them as often as other business would allow. For fear of the political trouble he

might attract he had never been able to relate in correspondence just how often that was.[74]

For notwithstanding that early hint he sent to Deborah that he had bought silver place settings for playing host to a coterie of 'polite company' in Craven Street, it was an occasional dinner that he took at the lodging house.[75] If ever he dreamt of gathering a new junto of philosophers around him, it was an intention he hid and abandoned, and instead cabbed across town as a guest at the clubs or 'conversations' established already by others. Even Sunday afternoons he would have his hired coach brought out and trotted over to Pall Mall and St. James's Square, where in King Street the military physician John Pringle hosted weekly philosophical dinners. At one of these the two had met very soon after the Doctor arrived, or they had been introduced at the club gathering in Fleet Street, where they connected without effort over a mutual interest in the treatment of paralysis by means of electrical shocks. In the years that followed the topics of their conversation extended into other areas: General Wolfe's heroic capture of Quebec, the subsequent acquisition of Canada, and the tantalising prospect of a northwest shipping passage. Pringle's was never a dull table, never a solitary one, never a meal that couldn't be counted on to fill the spirit as well as the belly. Here, before very long, was another of the Doctor's Scots.

It was on one of those afternoons, not long before he sailed, that the two had fallen neck-deep into a debate over the authenticity of the account by Bartholomew de Fonte, admiral of Peru and New Spain, of what some said was an impossible voyage. It had happened, according to the admiral's published diaries, in the spring and summer of 1640. With a fleet of four ships he had sailed from the port of Callao and up the western edge of the Americas. Then, some time afterwards, he had faithfully recorded his arrival at the shore of the Hudson Bay, having traversed half a continent by a labyrinth of rivers and inland seas. He made no map, it was true, but indicated his way only by hints of the landscape so articulate and so familiar with the peoples and customs to be found in various regions of Canada that the Doctor could not imagine how any idle forger could have conceived of them. In this he had broken with popular belief, for even the Spanish denied the account any authenticity:

'They deny it, however, but faintly.'[76]

And they seemed far from being convinced that there was no practicable water communication between the two seas by the northwest, as evidenced, he said, by the work of one Miguel Venegas, a Mexican Jesuit, whose anxiety over securing the South Seas against a transcontinental English fleet had become so urgent as to have moved

him to make a declaration of it in print. In more than fifty years since de Fonte's success was made public no one had managed to retrace his path but, the Doctor had maintained, that was not to say that no one ever would, or could, when possessed of the facts. On a few of these Pringle had pressed him and provoked him so eloquently that he had carved a day out of the few weeks that remained before his passage to dedicate almost four thousand words to the subject in a letter that ended, finally, with a postscript on its thirteenth page.[77]

They saw each other at least twice a week, Sundays in St. James's Square and Thursdays at the meetings of the Royal Society. More recently, in discussing the ridiculous ease with which the British navy had relieved the Gum Coast of its Frenchmen, the Doctor put forward a novel means by which to preserve the health of the new garrison against the feverish West African climate. Pringle, who was as eager a conversationalist as he was a relayer of conversations, knew how to put the idea where it would do the most good: into the hands of the prime minister, Lord Bute. In that year of transition the Doctor knew his friend to be so well placed and so dedicated to the advancement of new discoveries that he thought him something of a springboard for untested or half-formed ideas that might one day bear fruit. In the weeks anticipating his departure he had even enabled Pringle, in the event of a fatal accident at sea, to claim from his executors a bundle of papers which he said could prove beyond any reasonable doubt that de Fonte's voyage was so far from being an invention that an expedition mounted with modern equipment was virtually guaranteed to locate the same 'passage for boats' as that capable Spaniard had steered through the Canadian wilderness. So certain was the Doctor that his arguments, if given to Pringle, would end up before Bute that in recalling the episode later in life he would leave the intermediary out of it altogether.[78]

Had he not been better, his existence cleverer, for such company? Would his clubmen preserve his place in jest? *Now, there is Franklin, gentlemen, in that stool; make sure you see him, keep clear and mind his toes*. The thought caught him sometimes, but he could not mention how agreeably it did while the question of his returning was unsettled.[79]

There it had been, his place at the table. There was the society for his own, freethinking sort. Few, indeed few outside of England matched the abilities of any one of them, and it had calmed him amidst the whirlwind of difficulties he faced at Whitehall to visit a circle into which politics were forbidden to creep, and delight weekly in the generosity of discovery. There had been a time, once before he left the colonies for London, when he had told himself such a group might be teased out of the

trees, or might be manufactured from volumes shipped across from English booksellers, but he soon confronted his error. It was a small island, a stepping stone in a brook compared to America's vastness, but it would be long before the colonies could hope to match the sense, the virtue, the elegance of thought that sprung as though with easy brilliance from almost every neighbourhood of it.[80]

For the breadth of talent assembled there he had become a primary channel for innovations out of and into the colonies, the project once championed by Peter Collinson. The first glass tube, the first air pump, the latest books on electrical discovery, the Royal Society's *Transactions*: Collinson enclosed everything in the very audacity of his encouragement. During the years when the Doctor's appetite had grown voracious he sent whatever new productions he could find on electrical experiments so long as they were in print (if not always in English). One autumn he had even sent the naturalist Professor Kalm over from Sweden with Swaine's first volume on the Northwest Passage and a letter of introduction. Now, with Collinson too old to render colonial improvements the regular encouragement he once had, it was the Doctor who had become the go-between, transmitting across the water specimens of new seed (a prize-winning strain of rhubarb) and making inquiries of his London set into the properties of North American timothy grass; it was the Doctor who had personally cultivated a knowledge of viticulture and sericulture with the intention of encouraging their use in the colonies, and of the methods of pickling sturgeon for British markets, of replacing tallow with myrtle wax in candles, and of raising hemp, dye trees, and opium.[81]

Adrift in the headiness of London, how easy it had been to distance himself from the realities of settlements that were not, some of them, even a century old. The truth made a striking contrast to the indulgence with which he had multiplied his interests, and was brought home to him as plainly as Collinson had put it to John Bartram. In the end, sobered by a provincial winter, he had had to admit:

'After the first cares for the necessaries of life are over, we shall come to think of the embellishments.'[82]

Though it was an admission he only half believed, he would begin the Assembly session in the new year with a foreign governor's combination of briskness and benevolence. Hours tabled out at meetings and lost in the inconsequential swashbuckling of partisan spats were, he knew now more than ever, hours that might be better spent.[83]

He craved correspondence, but only Whitefoord had written, warm and jocular, coming across in writing as foppish as he had done in person. Enclosed was the latest political news by way of a cartoon by Hogarth, and another by Whitefoord's own pencil of the Doctor himself. (Whitefoord's closest friends knew that he was only nominally at the head of the firm of Whitefoord and Brown, having left all the bookkeeping to his partner – who was thereby styled 'the Count'.) In the absence of anything from Strahan or Jackson, from Polly or her mother, the lonely line had gone straight to the sore place in the Doctor's heart. His friends thought the cartoon bore him a strong likeness, though so much of the portrayal was in the parody that the Doctor wondered blackly if his enemy, Parson Smith, could have accomplished the same. Nevertheless, he wanted to tug a little, to reciprocate with an innovation of his own neighbourhood, but all he had to hand were 'lispings' of American verse that he had begun to gather both in print and in manuscript, the blooms of a child-plant 'which I hope your motherly critics will treat with some indulgence'. He would send them separately to others who he thought might place them to best advantage.[84]

In truth, it was nothing more than proof of a position taken earlier, when he had tried and failed to start a society for the improvement of knowledge: for though lispings, these were undoubtedly life's embellishments. He was satisfying the personal anticipation of more than twenty years. He let it wash through him without remark, but it was as though he needed to put something between himself and the past, the inclinations of the past, the encompassment of the past. In leaving England he had promised himself the continuation of his friendships by correspondence ('in which I am sure to be the gainer') but it was turning out to be an unsettled existence, and not one of his ingenious Philadelphians could give him a single explanation of the water's restlessness beneath the layer of oil in the tumbler. 'Those who are but slightly acquainted with the principles of hydrostatics, &c. are apt to fancy immediately that they understand it, and readily attempt to explain it,' he wrote, and grumbled at what he would later consider to be a lack of elegant minds outside of England:

'But their explanations have been different.'[85]

His papers were still an abyss of disorganisation, and he was faced with a degree of cultural remoteness he had not felt in years. Time had slowed down, just as he thought it might, but despite the expectation of enforced leisure that he shared with Kames and others he was already shifting to accommodate it. He told himself it was only a temporary quarantine, until he could settle his affairs in Philadelphia so that he might have convenient management of them from England. Meanwhile, he sent across a few

sheets of observations, beginning with the taking aboard of lamp oil at Madeira and continuing on through to his disappointments at Philadelphia. It was little more than a bud ripe for experimentation, for producing a branch: connective tissue. As he had once written to Collinson, so he took up the chain with Pringle by the first London mail:

'I think it is worth considering. For a new appearance, if it cannot be explained by our old principles, may afford us new ones, of use perhaps in explaining some other obscure parts of natural knowledge.'[86]

All the time he was keeping an ear out for the post horn. 'I hope there is a letter on its way to me,' he complained, and told Jackson to write him 'frequently'. The same week, anxious to remain inside what he called 'the secret of affairs', he begged Strahan to send 'all the politics'. He was still waiting for an answer when the knock and creak of ships coming in to dock had drawn in and were supplanted by the knock and swish of ice skates on the frozen river.[87]

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[1] Although William Allen reported at the end of October that the city was 'clear' of the fever, Dr Redman wrote that he had two patients with yellow fever the first week of November. *Burd Papers*, p. 52. John Redman, *An Account of the Yellow Fever as it Prevailed in Philadelphia in the Autumn of 1762* (Philadelphia: College of Physicians, 1865).

[2] *Papers*, x, p. 153 (11 November 1762, to Jane Mecom).

Franklin knew the lecturer, Dr William Shippen, Jr., well enough never to have relied on written correspondence, and they had shared a handful of London friends: Fothergill, Pringle, Dr William Hunter, and Col. Philip Ludwell. Another of Hunter's students was William Hewson, the future husband of Polly Stevenson. See Caspar Wistar, *Eulogium on Doctor William Shippen* (Philadelphia: Dobson, 1818), p. 11. Within ten years Shippen, answering charges of bodysnatching, claimed to have sourced all his cadavers from the gallows and the potter's field.

[3] In the outbreak of 1793, fever deaths were most concentrated along Dock Creek and in the neighbourhood north of High Street called 'Hell Town'. These were the poorest areas of the city, and it is likely they were hardest hit in the outbreak of 1762 as well. The dock creek was then, if anything, even more polluted than it was at the end of the century; see 'Yellow Fever Deaths 1793', map by Sivitz and Smith, Montana State University, published digitally in 'Philadelphia and Its People in Maps: The 1790s,' *Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities, 2016) <**PHILADELPHIAENCYCLOPEDIA.ORG**/ARCHIVE/PHILADELPHIA-AND-ITS-PEOPLE-IN-MAPS-THE-1790S> [ACCESSED 14 AUGUST 2015].

[4] In his letter of 7 December, Franklin pictured for Strahan 'the havock made in our little brave army by sickness' and again on 9 December, for Caleb Whitefoord 'the terrible havock made by sickness in the brave army of veterans'. Invalids had already arrived at Philadelphia and were being treated at the army barracks. About a month earlier, on 12 November, Thomas Barnsley, a captain in the army, wrote Col. Henry Bouquet from Philadelphia of the rumours then circulating: 'there is Dismal accts of the Havvock the Clymate makes with our Troops since the Conquest'. In his letters, Franklin is echoing or relaying the reports flying around the city. *Bouquet Papers*, x, p. 147.

[5] Erica Charters, *Disease, War, and the Imperial State* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014), p. 65.

[6] When proclaiming a day of public thanksgiving on 7 October, the Massachusetts governor Francis Bernard invited his audience to 'comtemplate the glorious and important conquest of the Havana; which, considering the strength of the place, the resolution of the defendents, and the unhealthiness of the climate, seems to have the visible hand of God in it, and to be designed by His Providence to punish the pride and injustice of that Prince who has so unnecessarily made himself a party in this war'. See C. C. Hazewell, 'Conquest of Cuba,' *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1863, p. 470.

[7] *Bouquet Papers*, x, p. 168 (26 November 1762, Lieut. James Dow to Col. Henry Bouquet); Charters, p. 74; *Journal of Jeffery Amherst*, ed. by J. C. Webster (Toronto: Ryerson, 1931), pp. 292-93.

[8] Joseph Sewall, *A Sermon Preached at the Thursday Lecture in Boston, September 16, 1972* (Boston: Draper, 1762).

[9] *PA*, 30 September 1762; and *LC*, 25–28 September 1762, p. 2, and 30 September–2 October 1762. See, also, Boswell's 'dialogue at Child's,' in *Boswell's London Journal*, p. 74ff. None of the American sermons seems to have entered into Boswell's conversation.

[10] *Bouquet Papers*, x, p. 134 (27 October 1762, William Plumsted and David Franks to Henry Bouquet); ibid., p. 111 (6 October 1762, William Plumsted and David Franks to Henry Bouquet); *Papers*, x, pp. 166–69 (7 December 1762, to Strahan).

[11] *Papers*, III, pp. 26–27 ([May?] 1745, to John Franklin). A fast was held at Boston, 2 May.

[12] Ibid.

[13] *Papers*, x, pp. 174–76 (11 December 1762, to Jared Ingersoll). It is curious that in none of his letters to other Americans did Franklin mention the taking of the Havana. It was a topic he took up only with his London friends. Perhaps he was too cautious to associate himself with one side of so politically sensitive a topic (as Boswell noted) in a way that was easily broadcast.

[14] Ibid. George Washington discovered in 1789 that even the President was unable to travel freely on the Sabbath, a fact that apparently coloured his entire day. He complained in his diary: 'Sunday 8th. It being contrary to Law & disagreeable to the People of this State (Connecticut) to travel on the Sabbath day and my horses after passing through such intolerable Roads wanting rest, I stayed at Perkins's Tavern (which by the bye is not a good one) all day – and a meeting House being with in a few rod of the Door, I attended Morning & evening Service, and heard very lame discourses from a Mr. Pond.' George Washington, *Diaries*, v, ed. by Dorothy Twohig, Mark A. Mastromarino, and Jack D. Warren, Papers of George Washington (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987), p. 495.

[15] Ibid.

[16] *Burd Papers*, p. 62 (4 December 1762, William Allen to D. Barclay & Sons): 'by what you write, and by other advices, a peace is not far off, which makes it not adviseable to buy in any more stock'.

Such laws were on the books in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts Bay as rewarded the capture of Indian scalps: up to £40 for a man's, and half as much for those of women and children. First-hand accounts possibly written by Franklin were published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 6 and 8 January 1756. A week later, Franklin wrote to the governor, Robert Hunter Morris, to enquire among other things about 'the Determination your Honour and the Commissioners may have come to, for the Encouragement of Volunteer Scalping Parties'. Morris had offered forty pieces of eight per head, which is to say, scalp. *Papers*, VI, pp. 357–60; also pp. 348–52.

[17] Security from the Indians was still the primary gain Franklin saw in the outcome of the Seven Years War. *Papers*, X, pp. 208–15 (8 March 1763, to Richard Jackson): 'Since all the Country is now ceded to us on this Side the Missisipi, is not this a good time to think of new Colonies on that River, to secure our Territory and extend our Commerce; and to separate the Indians on this side from those on the other, by intervening Settlements of English, and by that means keep them more easily in order?'.

[18] *Papers*, X, pp. 171–73 (9 December 1762, to Caleb Whitefoord); see n. 2.

[19] *Papers*, X, pp. 248–50 (13 April 1763, to John Ellicott). Franklin says the spring broke 'soon after I left England' and does not mention the watch's performance in southern latitudes.

[20] *LC*, 30 March–1 April, 1762. In March 1762, John Harrison's son William returned from Jamaica on the HMS Merlin. The voyage had proved (at least in the eyes of some) to be a successful trial of his father's watch, H4, in aiding the calculation of longitude at sea. Franklin was a member of the Royal Society council that advised the Board of Longitude on the equipment to be taken on the voyage. It was the firm of John Ellicott, who supplied the pocketwatch to Franklin, that outfitted the earlier voyage of Harrison's rival, Nevil Maskelyne. By 1762 Franklin had long been aware of Harrison's activities and was even sent a summary at Portsmouth of the Board's meeting on 17 August. See the letter to John Winthrop, 23 December 1762, in *Papers*, x, pp. 179–80.

Although he outfitted Maskelyne, Ellicott does not seem to have made himself known as any kind of competitor in the longitude contest. If Franklin were somehow trialling a 'sea clock' – one wonders just how or on what point he was to make an account – it would have been a secret, or it would have been so casual a thing as not to warrant mention. However, it would not have been uncharacteristic of him to have attempted to track the ship's longitude privately and to correct, if necessary, the reckoning as young Harrison had done. The idea that Ellicott's watch would have made a passable 'sea clock' was not such a ridiculous one, for even apart from his reputation as a watchmaker of the first rate, Ellicott and Harrison employed similar technologies. Though they did not compete for the first successful marine chronometer both men had by the time of Franklin's crossing already designed and manufactured bimetallic pendulums for longcase clocks. Ellicott's writing on the subject was published in the Royal Society's transactions.

[21] Some details of Harrison's mission, as I have noted already, were public. The communication between Franklin and Ellicott prior to Franklin's return voyage has not been found, but must have touched upon the latest iteration of the marine chronometer, which in a radical departure from the three earlier prototypes had been modeled somewhat on the design of a pocketwatch. Ellicott was known as one of the two finest watchmakers in London (possibly in Europe), published experiments with improvements to clock mechanics, and no doubt followed Harrison's work closely.

[22] One day in December 1757, after spending the previous evening at the Royal Society dinner, Franklin paid coach fare and a fee of ten shillings on a visit to John Harrison 'to see his Longitude Clock'. George Simpson Eddy, 'Account Book of Benjamin Franklin kept by him during his First Mission to England as Provincial Agent 1757–1762', *PMHB*, 55 (1931), p. 106.

[23] The Board of Longitude's decision was that the trial had been inconclusive. Franklin cautiously sided with Harrison against the Board and was still praising his innovative sea watch the following summer. *Papers*, x, pp. 300–03 (27 June 1763, to John Whitehurst).

Franklin's intention may be deduced, though without complete certainty, by the circumstances, by Ellicott's involvement, and by his own inquisitive nature: all of the sea

voyages for which evidence exists of his shipboard activities were spent, at least in part, in scientific observation. This is true from when he was a teenager describing a 'moonbow' in the night sky to when he was an old man verifying sailors' stories of a warm-water 'gulf stream'.

[24] The new errand did take Franklin a year. See letters to John Ellicott, 13 April 1763, *Papers*, X, pp. 248–50; and 23 June 1764, *Papers*, XI, pp. 232–34.

[25] *Papers*, X, pp. 161–62 (2 December 1762, to Strahan).

[26] Ibid.; also, pp. 166–69 (7 December 1762, to Strahan).

[27] *Papers*, VI, pp. 425–26 (21 March 1756, to Deborah Franklin); *Autobiography*, p. 129.

[28] *Papers*, VII, pp. 9–15 (5 November 1756, to Peter Collinson).

[29] This, anyway, is the story Franklin told to Collinson in order to show that he was so averse to military displays in his honour that he would suffer such hardship to avoid them. The truth was perhaps more nuanced. Franklin was rushing back to Philadelphia from the campaign at Gnadenhütten to attend a session of the house of Assembly called by the governor, Robert Hunter Morris. Leaving preparations evidently had taken longer than he expected, and he missed the first four days. See Lemay, who adopts Franklin's angle on the event, in Lemay, III, p. 514.

[30] *Papers*, X, pp. 166–69 (7 December 1762, to Strahan).

[31] The story was recorded by Deborah Norris Logan and is summarised in Whitfield J. Bell, *Patriot-Improvers*, II (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1999), p. 19, n. Logan, however, was not born until 1761 and had the rumour from someone who had lodged in the same house as the love-struck imposter, Alice Lee. Although Bell considers it an 'improbable account' ('William Franklin's chronology alone refutes some of it'), it is corroborated in large part by the letter from Col. George Mercer to Col. Henry Bouquet, 12 August 1762: 'Young Dr. Shippen who went Home to take his Degrees as a Physician, has alarmed and disturbed his Family here very much, by marrying a Lady who was here in Disguise in 1760 and called herself Mrs. Clark [Mr. Clark?] in short who was Miss Lee of our Dominion of Virginia'; see *Bouquet Papers*, X, p. 54. Bell makes no reference to this contemporary account of the scandal. William Franklin probably met Alice Lee when he accompanied his father to Virginia in 1756.

Alice Lee's uncle, Col. Philip Ludwell, resided near Franklin in Craven Street. There can be no doubt but that she became part of Franklin's society of expatriate Americans. Once there, however, she would have found her beloved's attention already engaged.

[32] *Papers*, X, pp. 231–35 (25 March 1763, to Polly Stevenson). Franklin's November 1762 letter has not been found, but was mentioned in Polly's of 11 March 1763; see ibid., pp. 216–17: 'My Mother receiv'd yours of [?] November and another a few days ago, of a la[ter date] in which you tell her you have sent som[e ?]presents by Capt.

Friend…'.

Captain Friend sailed on 9 December, carrying several of Franklin's letters written by that opportunity. Franklin wrote an earlier batch of short notes for London friends in the first week of December, hoping to get them across on a ship out of New York. If he wrote to London in November, it was not to Strahan or Jackson (or Pringle or Collinson or Edward Nairne or Caleb Whitefoord), for his letters of the first weeks of December make it clear they were his first to them. Yet there was a letter to Margaret Stevenson dated November: it was either very late in the month and went by the New York batch, or earlier. In any case, the news of his arrival made it to London in time for it to be published by Strahan at the end of December – and to allow for an autumn crossing, Franklin must have written to someone there early in November. (The letter could not have crossed with those he wrote the second week of December and sent via *Carolina*, for the ship was taken by a privateer and held up in a Spanish port for months.) If the missing Stevenson letter went to the print house, perhaps it was lost there, though it's also possble that someone else wrote the news to London. The 'presents' are not identified, but Franklin probably sent cranberries from New Jersey, which Margaret Stevenson mentioned later in an undated letter probably from 1763; see *Papers*, x, pp. 427–49.

[33] Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Archives & Records Center, Minute Books of the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania Minute Books, 1, p. 224; Smith Mss, William Smith to Richard Peters, 14 August 1762.

[34] See the Trustees' Minute Books, 1, pp. 173–83. Smith's public letter, which is transcribed therein, pp. 176–79, may have accompanied his private letter of 14 August to Richard Peters, cited above, or one sent not long after.

[35] Charles Coleman Sellers, *Benjamin Franklin in Portraiture* (London: Yale University, 1962), p. 409. Just how the night watchmen announced the time and the weather at Philadelphia was recorded by Franklin's descendant, Elizabeth Duane Gillespie, *A Book of Remembrance* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1901), p. 13.

[36] *Papers*, x, pp. 162–65 (6 December 1762, to Jackson), n. 5. This letter is unusual in that the others written to London around this date survive only in first and second drafts (if at all). It's possible that Sally Franklin copied more or all of her father's letters at this time. See also *Papers*, x, p. 385 (11 December 1763, to Alexander Dick); xi, pp. 449–50 (8 November 1764, to Sally Franklin); xii, p. 64 (14 February 1765, to Deborah Franklin).

[37] *Papers*, iii, 474–75 (12 April 1750, to Abiah Franklin).

[38] That is, an agreeable figure. *Papers*, iii, pp. 478–80 (2 June 1750, to Strahan).

[39] Franklin loved this construction and repeated it at every opportunity. See, for example, the letter to Jane Mecom, 21 May 1757, in *Papers*, VII, pp. 215–16. Later, on the subject of intermarriage between the English colonists and recent German immigrants, he returned to the theme from a new angle: 'Nor would the German Ideas of Beauty generally agree with our Women; *dick und starcke*, that is, thick and strong, always enters into their Description of a pretty Girl: for the value of a Wife with them consists much in the Work she is able to do. So that it would require a round Sum with an English Wife to make up to a Dutch Man the difference in Labour and Frugality'. *Papers*, V, pp. 158–60 (between late 1753 and January 1754, to Collinson).

[40] It cannot be denied that Franklin cared for his daughter, whose birth (seven years after the death of his second son), when Deborah was about 35, was perhaps unexpected. Nevertheless, for children as liabilities, see the famous letter concerning the choice of a mistress, third reason: 'Because there is no hazard of Children, which irregularly produc'd may be attended with much Inconvenience'. *Papers*, III, pp. 27–31. For book orders, see *Papers*, IV, pp. 224–25 (24 December 1751, Deborah Franklin to Margaret Strahan), and *Papers*, VI, pp. 277–79 (27 November 1755, to Strahan). See also *Papers*, XII, pp. 292–99 (6–13 October 1765, from Deborah Franklin): 'Salley has the Southroom two pairs of Stairs[. I]n it is a beed a burow a tabel a glase and the pickter shee youst to have in her room a trunke and books but thees you cante have aney noshon of[.]'

[41] *Papers*, VII, pp. 173–75 (5 April 1757, to Deborah Franklin); ibid., pp. 363–65 (21 January 1758, to Deborah Franklin); p. 213 (12 May 1757, William Franklin to Elizabeth Graeme), n. 9. The 'little Excursion in the Jerseys' was the first of its kind for both of Franklin's children.

Although the young Franklin made the unlikely acquaintance of Sir Hans Sloane by what seems to have been the accidental possession of an asbestos purse, his sea journal of 1726 skips almost without comment over natural phenomena such as a lunar rainbow. At that time he was still far more interested by other forms of knowledge he thought more socially valuable. See both the journal and letter to Hans Sloane, 2 June 1725, in *Papers*, I, pp. 72–99 and pp. 54–56.

[42] Hannah Benner Roach, 'Benjamin Franklin Slept Here', *PMHB*, 84 (1960), pp. 166–68.

[43] *Papers*, VII, pp. 272–79 (22 November 1757, to Deborah Franklin); *Papers*, XXXV, p. 277 (17 July 1781, from Sally Franklin).

[44] The influx of Germans, Scotsmen, Irishmen, and others into Philadelphia was unprecedented during the decade of 1750 to 1760, during which time the population doubled. I cannot find direct evidence of a map in the Franklin household but there was, in the front room of his childhood house, a map that his father kept on the wall. The printing shop advertised regularly for maps sold there 'in great variety'. Even after his retirement, and before 1762, he wrote Strahan for maps on several occasions; see letters of 28 April 1754 (*Papers*, v, pp. 267–69), 23 June 1752 (*Papers*, iv, pp. 322–24), and 28 November 1747 (*Papers*, iii, pp. 213–14). He also sent them, for instance, to Collinson. During his first English mission he wrote to Hall to request two of Nicolas Scull's maps of Pennsylvania (8 April 1759, *Papers*, viii, pp. 317–22), and once instructed Polly Stevenson, his landlady's daughter, to 'cast your eye on the map of North America' (November 1760, *Papers*, ix, pp. 247–52).

[45] *Papers*, ix, pp. 36–68 (10 October 1761, William Franklin to Sally Franklin).

[46] Franklin's lightning rod or one like it is supposed to have passed down through the Wister family, and is now stored at the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia. Item number 740 in the Frankliniana Collection, Franklin Institute, Inc., Philadelphia. If he met with Chamberlain's finished portrait before he sailed he gave no hint of it. It was undoubtedly a better likeness than his own commision, years earlier, by the natural philosopher Wilson, without any of Wilson's ambitious reaches of style.

[47] For 'the electrician' see *Papers*, vii, pp. 109–11, n. 9.

[48] Franklin's friend John Canton, in describing nine electrical experiments, complained of the infrequency of summer thunderstorms at London – a hindrance to his observations. *Papers*, v, pp. 149-154. For misunderstanding the use of lightning rods, see *Papers*, vi, pp. 97–101 (29 June 1755, to Thomas-François Dalibard).

[49] *Autobiography*, pp. 130–31; *Papers*, iii, p. 134 (25 May 1747, to Collinson), n. 4; Lemay, iii, p. 65; Arlene Palmer, 'Glass Production in Eighteenth-Century America: The Wistarburgh Enterprise', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 11 (1976), pp. 75–101. A photograph of one of Wistar's electrical tubes, twenty-three inches long and blackened at the ends, is reproduced in the Palmer, p. 90. Franklin noted in his *Experiments and Observations on Electricity* that the tubes produced at Philadelphia (actually at Wistarburgh) were '27 or 30 inches long, as big as can be grasped'. In early editions he added: 'Electricity is so much in vogue, that above one hundred of them have been sold within these four months past.' See *Papers*, iii, p. 134, n. 4.

[50] *Papers*, ix, pp. 282–94 (12 March 1761, from Ebenezer Kinnersley).

[51] Franklin's landlord, the German immigrant John Wister, lived in the house next door (he owned four in that stretch of Market Street) and so there was no hiding from him the fact that the household lightening rod incorporated this rather alarming deviation from the popular design. Wister was probably not difficult to convince, however. His brother, Caspar Wistar, had for years been blowing green glass tubes for electrical experiments.

For unconventional wiring, see *Papers*, XIX, pp. 244–55 ('Experiments Supporting the Use of Pointed Lightning Rods', 18 August 1772). Originally printed in *Political, Miscellaneous, and Philosophical Pieces...by Benj. Franklin*, ed. by Benjamin Vaughan (London, 1779), pp. 487–99.

Following a more general pattern, the device is now known as 'Franklin's bells' although Franklin made no claims to its invention. He first described it in a letter to Peter Collinson, September 1753, as 'a contrivance obvious to every electrician' – as well it would be, since its true inventor, the professor Andrew (or Andreas) Gordon, was widely read within the scientific community. See *Papers*, V, pp. 68–79.

[52] *Papers*, V, pp. 68–79 (September 1753, to Peter Collinson); *Papers*, VIII, pp. 90–96 (10 June 1758, to Deborah Franklin).

[53] Ibid.

[54] *Papers*, XIX, pp. 244–55 ('Experiments Supporting the Use of Pointed Lightning Rods', 18 August 1772).

[55] Beyond such performances, and the joys of his imagination, in Franklin's early letters there was little to be said for the practicality of the study of electricity. (He once hinted that the discharge from a battery of Leyden jars cooked a better turkey.) What such a performative course of experimentation could do was rapidly increase the celebrity of the so-called 'electricians', as ballooning later did for balloonists, helped not a little by the dangers inherent to it. For some of his parlour tricks, such as animating a 'counterfeit spider', see *Papers*, III, pp. 126–135 (25 May 1747, to Collinson); 'experiments' 20–22 in *Papers*, III, pp. 352–365 (29 April 1749, to Collinson).

[56] *Papers*, III, p. 171 (14 August 1747, to Collinson); *Papers*, IV, pp. 5–6 (11 July 1750, from Collinson).

[57] *Papers*, III, pp. 352–65 (29 April 1749, to Collinson).

[58] For a straightforward example, see the letter to Collinson, 14 August 1747 (*Papers*, III, p. 171), wherein Franklin realises he has been foolish and hasty in declaring some of his recent 'principles': 'I have lately written two long Letters to you on the Subject of Electricity, one by the Governor's Vessel, the other per Mesnard. On some further Experiments since, I have observ'd a Phenomenon or two that I cannot at present account for on the Principles laid down in those Letters, and am therefore become a little diffident of my Hypothesis, and asham'd that I have express'd myself in so positive a manner.' He ends: 'I must now request that you would not expose those Letters; or if

you communicate them to any Friends, you would at least conceal my Name.' Franklin sent the letter by way of Dublin, an unusual course, but perhaps the first available. He confessed in his letter to Collinson, 21 May 1751, that his writing 'via Ireland' was for the sake of promptness; see *Papers*, IV, pp. 134–36.

Franklin's letters to Collinson are full of instances of mistaken originality.

[59] The advertisement went out in the 1753 edition of *Poor Richard's Almanack*.

[60] *Papers*, IV, pp. 465–67 (12 April 1753, to Jared Eliot); ibid., pp. 315–17 (20 May 1752, Guillaume Mazéas to Stephen Hales).

[61] Ibid.

[62] Franklin copied Collinson's praise in his 12 April letter to Jared Eliot; see note above. The original from Collinson has not been found, and was not printed with the other correspondence in *Experiments and Observations on Electricity*.

[63] It may be evidence of a tendency especially prevalent in Franklin scholars to recognise his description in the unnamed 'extraordinary quarter' who, according to Thomas Graeme, wrote Betsy 'from town' with 'all the integrity that should accompany sincerity and truth, and with all a complaisance and I may say a veneration for you which cannot be well feigned'. (Apart from anything else, why disguise the correspondent's identity, unless he were a party to the scandal?) Years later, Elizabeth Graeme remembered that Franklin had written her 'some of the kindest and fondest letters' when her marriage to William seemed likely. Deborah Franklin called her 'my Miss Graeme', and on his second English mission Franklin knew that his wife would be interested to hear that Betsy was lodging near him. It would not have been out of character for him to have written her something at Philadelphia; after all, he had written Polly from Portsmouth to express a similar sentiment. Thomas Graeme went on that, 'This conduct in so able a master in the knowledge of human nature could not fail of soothing and softening you under your disappointed innocence.' The letter, along with the others Franklin wrote her, is lost. Anne M. Ousterhout, *Most Learned Woman in America: A Life of Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson* (University Park, Pa.: Penn State Press, 2010), pp. 72–75.

[64] The whole anecdote is related in Ann Graeme's letter to her daughter, 3 December 1762. See Simon Gratz, 'Some Material for a Biography of Mrs. Elizabeth Fergusson, née Græme', *PMHB*, 39, pp. 269–71. Ann Graeme seems to imply that her daughter had the news of William's marriage, or confirmed it, in the Franklin house: 'We parted with great ease, and Politeness on all sides, so you see he [Franklin] is at full liberty to act towards you as he thinks fitt. but how did I feel while he was playing and I by his Chair, to know You had been there in such perturbation of mind as you must have had on that occasion.'

[65] *Papers*, X, pp. 231–35 (25 March 1763, to Polly Stevenson).

[66] Franklin's arrival at London in 1757 is, in fact, where his memoirs end.

[67] W. A. S. Hewins, ed., *The Whitefoord Papers* (Oxford, 1898), p. 127.

[68] *Whitefoord Papers*, p. 129. The anecdote was communciated to the Earl of Stair with a good deal of irreverent humour; that he repeated it to Franklin is not at all unlikely, given the probable delight of the listener and the stirring effect of the catastrophe on European religion. Whitefoord's travels through Portugal in the aftermath of the earthquake would have won him the interested conversation of many following the publication throughout Europe of Voltaire's novella *Candide* (*'or, All for the Best'*) in the first months of 1759. See also T. D. Kendrick, *The Lisbon Earthquake* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1955).

[69] In June, before he sailed, Franklin recommended the cellist James Oswald for membership at a meeting of William Shipley's Society of Arts. (He had recommended another Scot, Caleb Whitefoord, only six months prior.) Having settled in London more than a decade before, Oswald was arranging Scottish folk ballads during Franklin's first mission and composing for the English guittar, a cittern-like instrument. His shop in St. Martin's churchyard had become a hub for London-based Scots who worked in the arts. A few years later Franklin would go so far as to identify Oswald with his idea of great music, when he wrote to Kames on *The Elements of Criticism*:

'Most Tunes of late Composition, not having the natural Harmony united with their Melody, have recourse to the artificial Harmony of a Bass and other accompanying Parts. This Support, in my Opinion, the old Tunes do not need, and are rather confus'd than aided by it. Whoever has heard James Oswald play them on his Violoncello, will be less inclin'd to dispute this with me. I have more than once seen Tears of Pleasure in the Eyes of his Auditors'. *Papers*, XII, pp. 158–65 (2 June 1765, to Kames).

Franklin's preference for 'the old tunes' – he meant, in this case, the Scottish tunes Oswald was arranging for various instruments – was not unique, but rather part of a general revival of interest in ancient folklore, music, and forms. He was living in London during the years that James Macpherson was publishing his Ossian poems. Soon after its publication, Franklin had the first of these books sent to the Library Company at Philadelphia.

In his letter to Caleb Whitefoord at the beginning of December, Franklin waxed nostalgic for his Craven Street society: 'I shall never touch the sweet Strings of the British Harp without remembring my British Friends'. This is the first of two references to the instrument he later referred to as, simply, a harp. Yet he was apparently unsure just what to call it, for he had originally written 'lyre' before cancelling it and replacing 'harp'. No such instrument as a 'British lyre' or 'British harp' ever existed, and since Franklin's does not survive, its identity has remained a mystery. See *Papers*, X, pp. 171–73 (9 December 1762, to Whitefoord).

The inaccuracy of language is revealing: why call it 'British' and why cancel 'lyre' to write 'harp'? And what had the strings of a harp to do with friends across the sea? The

answer to both questions may be intuited from Franklin's friendship with Oswald, who was also a maker of instruments. In the 1750s Oswald had begun to advertise for sale an oblong, stringed box, or 'wind harp', which in time became a common curio in affluent houses, identifying himself as the inventor. He called it the harp of Æolus, in reference to the mythical ruler of the winds, or the Æolian harp. 'Lyre' was another term for it, current in classified ads and used later by the poet Shelley ('Ode to the West Wind'). (Coleridge, in his poem, called it a lute, for by that time the instrument had taken on an entirely metaphorical sense in the popular Romantic imagination.) On his return from London Franklin showed the harp to John Bartram, who liked it so much that he made or ordered one for himself; see *Memorials of John Bartram and Humphry Marshall*, ed. by William Darlington (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1849), p. 49. It made the sort of resonant, melancholy sound that also distinguished Franklin's glass armonica. When Franklin wrote to Whitefoord about the 'sweet Strings of the British Harp' and 'my British friends', the element that bridged the two for him was the wind.

No further references to the instrument occur in the record, but there is one clue that suggests how Franklin may have thought about his cleverly automatic sound box. In the delightfully gossipy *Annals of Philadelphia*, an anecdote attributed to Edward Duffield, Jr. has Franklin, while in France, mischievously fashioning such harps in the houses where he stayed while traveling 'by stretching a silken cord across some crevice where air passed'. The story seems consonant with Franklin's well known prank of stilling the water of the pond on Clapham Common by waving his walking stick over it, and with such spooky parlour tricks or 'experiments' as accompanied his early study of electricity. But: 'On one such occasion, in repassing such a house after an elapse of years, he found it deserted because of their hearing strange but melodious sounds, which they deemed good evidence of its being haunted'. Probably not, but he may well have fooled his own visitors that way.

See 'James Oswald,' *DNB*; Stuart and Hazard, *Annals of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1899), 1, p. 533; Thomas L. Hankins and Robert J. Silverman, *Instruments and the Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 91–108.

[70] Possibly. On 7 December he wrote to William Strahan, 'In two Years at farthest I hope to settle all my Affairs in such a Manner, as that I may then conveniently remove to England, provided we can persuade the good Woman to cross the Seas.' The phrasing is a little strange for someone so unsure of his plans. If he weren't certain of 'removing to England' without Deborah, why settle his affairs at all?

[71] Franklin had once cast his relationship with Deborah in mythical terms. When he first returned from London in 1726, lines from Pope's recent translation of Homer were running through his head. In his journal of the voyage he drew on imagery of Ulysses' ship returning to Ithaca – 'while the black ocean foams and roars below' – where Penelope awaits him amidst her pack of suitors. But when Franklin arrived at Philadelphia, he found that the girl he had left two years earlier with nothing but

promises, hearing no more from him, had caved to pressure from her friends and married another man. Ulysses was too late. 'Errata.'

[72] *Papers*, VI, pp. 275–277 (27 November 1755, to William Shipley).

[73] Franklin wrote to Richard Jackson, 8 March 1763: 'to me the Streets seem thinner of People, owing perhaps to my being so long accustom'd to the bustling crowded Streets of London'; and Boswell: 'Indeed there is a great difference between solitude in the country, where you cannot help it, and in London, where you can in a moment be in the hurry and splendour of life'. See *Papers*, X, pp. 208–15 and Boswell's *London Journal*, p. 96.

[74] The area off Cornhill where the George and Vulture had stood as long as anyone could remember was burnt not long before Franklin's visit, and rebuilt. For the emptiness of the city, see *Papers*, X, pp. 208–15 (8 March 1763, to Richard Jackson). For Franklin's letter to John Michell against Smith's collection, see Smith Mss, William Smith to Richard Peters, 24 April 1763: 'Mr Franklin, before he sailed, had wrote to one Mr Mitchel his Correspondent, that our Collection was no way necessary, & that the Public in Pennsylvania would support our College, were it not a Party Affair, with an exceptionable man at the Head of it.'

[75] Here Franklin's practice agreed with Boswell's, for whom dinners with his landlord became slightly wretched affairs after so many taken at other houses and, one presumes, in better company.

[76] *Papers*, X, pp. 85–100 (27 May 1762, to John Pringle). I find it fascinating that Franklin's first measure of the letter's authenticity was its lack 'of the features of fiction', by which he meant that it sought neither to entertain with visions of wonder nor to entice exploration with promises of wealth. It was, in effect, 'a mere dry account of facts', whose credibility, to Franklin's mind, was recommended not a little by its very uselessness.

[77] What Franklin missed in reading only the translation of Venegas's book – *A Natural and Civil History of California*, printed at London in 1759 – which excluded the final two of the original's seven appendices, was 'a thorough refutation' of de Fonte's account and the hypothetical map subsequently inferred from it. See ibid., notes; and Glyndwr Williams, *The British Search for the Northwest Passage in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longmans, 1962), pp. 154–155. The omission on the part of the English publisher perhaps explains why Franklin believed the Spanish to have denied the de Fonte letter 'but faintly', and Williams speculates that 'the apparent silence' 'remained to bedevill' other English theorists as well.

Franklin's long letter to Pringle was found in the nineteenth century among the papers of Lord Bute, bought, and transferred into the possession of the library at Princeton University. See 'Benjamin Franklin Defends Northwest Passage Navigation',

Princeton University Library Chronicle, 19 (1957–58), pp. 15–33, with a wholesome introduction by Bertha Solis-Cohen.

[78] It is striking to witness how Franklin, in his letter to Pringle of 27 May 1762, makes use of de Fonte's record of naturally occurring phenomena to defend the authenticity of the account, which was, in fact, a hoax.

For the conversation about the Gum Coast, see *Papers*, x, pp. 267–270 ([May? 1763], from John Pringle). Pringle doesn't specify what it was that Franklin thought might afflict 'the health of our garrison at Senegal', but it may well have been fever, since Franklin himself was obsessed by it, perhaps caused by air temperature fluctuations. Whatever it was, the idea may have been expressed in Franklin's letter to Pringle of 1 December 1762, which exists only in abridgement and not in manuscript, or in an earlier letter sent from Portsmouth or Craven Street, or in person. It would be reasonable to believe that Franklin dropped the idea into a paragraph relating to the fever outbreak at the Havana, which had quickly spread to Philadelphia, but his thoughts on that matter were expressed in language almost identical across several letters written the beginning of December, and in none of these did he mention any securing of the Senegal garrison. Also there is no mention of it in what survives of his letter to Pringle on the first. I suspect the ideas Pringle relayed to Lord Bute were communicated when Franklin was in England, since he mentioned them directly after a reference to 'the last letter I received from you before you sailed' – evidently lost. See *Papers*, x, pp. 158–60 (1 December 1762, to John Pringle).

The man who provided Pitt with the intelligence of France's valuable but poorly defended colonies in West Africa was Thomas Cumming, a Quaker merchant who lived for some years at New York and had met Franklin during a visit to Philadelphia.

Franklin apparently told John Adams on or before 19 June 1783 that he had given the information directly to the Earl of Bute; see *Papers*, x, p. 100, n. 1.

[79] *Papers*, x, pp. 248–50 (13 April 1763, to John Ellicott): 'The Monday scarce comes round but I think of you and am present with you in Spirit; and shall take it kindly, if, when you are not crouded, you would order a Chair for me, and only caution one another not to tread upon my Toes.'

[80] Franklin wrote something like this to Polly Stevenson, 25 March 1763. See *Papers*, x, pp. 231–35.

[81] *Papers*, ix, pp. 396–98 (10 December 1761, to Joshua Babcock); and Allan, D. G. C., '"Dear and Serviceable to Each Other": Benjamin Franklin and the Royal Society of Arts', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 144 (2000), pp. 251–53.

[82] *Papers*, x, pp. 231–35 (25 March 1763, to Polly Stevenson).

[83] See, for example, an extract from the diary of Samuel Foulke, describing an Assembly meeting on 1 February 1763 over compensations to be paid to masters of apprentices who enlisted in the military during the war, thereby cutting short their terms. 'In the Consideration of this Affair a very Close & tedious Debate arose, by reason of the Obstinate & interested bias of Some of the Members, of whom, Saml. Roads and Geo. Ashbridge were ye Most unreasonable, who seem'd determined to Shut out Conviction & pay no regard to reason, untill at last Benj. Franklin Engaged (who by ye way is never forward to E[n]gage), and man[a]geed the dispute so wisely, with so much Clear ness & strength of reasoning as left them not a word more to say in Opposition.' Samuel Foulke, 'Fragments of a Journal Kept by Samuel Foulke, of Bucks County', ed. by Howard M. Jenkins, *PMHB*, 5 (1881), p. 64.

[84] To Caleb Whitefoord, 9 December 1762. Whitefoord's letter has not been found, possibly because Franklin's papers had not yet arrived and he had no place to file it. (Several other letters from this month are also missing.) Editors of the Yale edition posit that 'the humorous and sensible Print you sent me', undoubtedly a political cartoon, was Hogarth's 'The Times' (plate 1), which issued within a month of Franklin's departure. The tone of Whitefoord's will be guessed not only by referring to the correspondence printed in the *Whitefoord Papers*, but also by the response Franklin made him in kind.

[85] *Papers*, xi, pp. 97–100 (14 March 1764, to John Canton); *Papers*, x, pp. 158–60 (1 December 1762, to John Pringle).

[86] Ibid.

[87] *Papers*, x, pp. 162–65 (6 December 1762, to Jackson); ibid., pp. 166–69 (7 December 1762, to Strahan).

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LC — *London Chronicle*, London, British Library

LEP — *Lloyd's Evening Post and British Chronicle*, London, British Library

PA — *Public Advertiser*, London, British Library

PG — *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Philadelphia, 1728–1800, Accessible Archives <HTTP://**WWW.ACCESSIBLE-ARCHIVES.COM**>

PMHB — *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*

WMQ — *William and Mary Quarterly*

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