

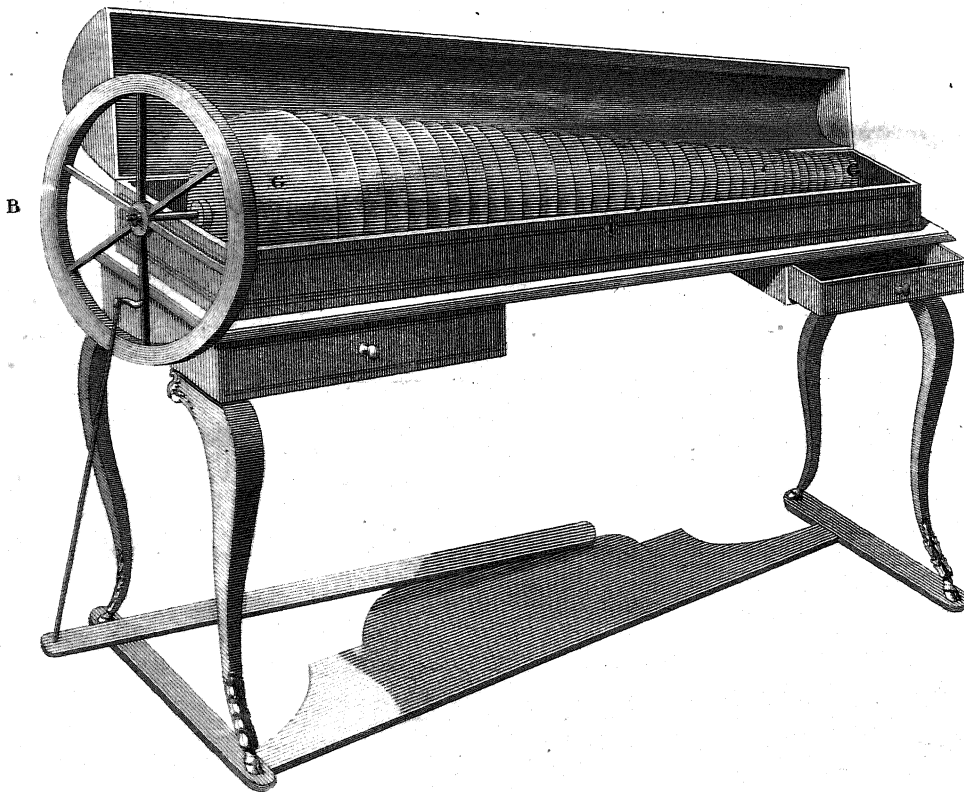
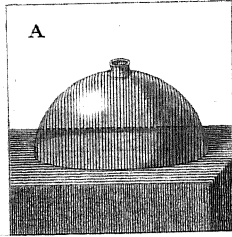
MEMOIRS
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,

LL.D. F.R.S. &c. &c.

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VOL. III.

Plate I to face Title Page
referred to Part IV, P. 339.



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MEMOIRS
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, LL.D.

F.R.S. &c.

MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY

FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AT THE COURT OF FRANCE,
AND FOR THE TREATY OF PEACE AND INDEPENDENCE WITH GREAT BRITAIN,

&c. &c.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF TO A LATE PERIOD,

AND CONTINUED TO THE TIME OF HIS DEATH,

BY HIS GRANDSON,

WILLIAM TEMPLE FRANKLIN.

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED FROM THE ORIGINAL MSS.

COMPRISING THE

Private Correspondence and Public Negotiations of Dr. Franklin,

AND A SELECTION FROM HIS

POLITICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND MISCELLANEOUS WORKS.

LONDON:

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1818.



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1818.

PREFACE

TO THE SELECT WRITINGS.

WITH this Volume the Editor conceives that he has completely redeemed his pledge to the Public, and faithfully discharged his trust as the conservator of Dr. Franklin's literary remains.

It is a common complaint that the reputation of men of eminence in the world ~~of letters suffers by their~~ posthumous works; nothing however of that kind is to be apprehended in regard to the present collection, for many of the fugitive Essays here assembled, and the original Pieces now for the first time brought to public view, are directly referred to in the preceding MEMOIRS and CORRESPONDENCE as elucidatory of particular transactions, or documents of authority for the confirmation of the truth of what is there asserted.

But independently of a consideration which is sufficient to free this supplementary Volume from the charge of being supererogatory, the several tractates which make up its contents have all a paramount claim to preservation in their present form, on account of their intrinsic merits and relative importance, as connected with the personal history, character, and pursuits, of a man who never adopted any theory but with a view to practical experience, and who, in the true spirit of philosophy, applied all his speculations to objects of general utility.

It would, therefore, have been an act of culpable negligence, to have left even the lightest productions of such a mind to float down the

stream of time, subject to all its fluctuations, and liable to be lost or perverted amidst the perpetual changes which take place in human concerns.

Under the sense of this obligation has the present selection been made, as well to fulfil the promise given in the general title, as to supply that minute account of the Life and Writings of the Author, which has hitherto been so anxiously looked for.

For the sake of uniformity and perspicuity, the papers have been distributed into a systematic arrangement according to their respective subjects, or the connexion which they bear to each other. Those which relate immediately to the public character of Dr. Franklin are brought together in the First Part, which may therefore be considered as exhibiting the rise and progress of the American Republic, from its incipient state of colonial industry and dependence, to the vigor of an internal polity, and the power of a consolidated empire. Here the philosopher, the historian, and the statesman, will find materials for the exercise of profound observation, upon the minute causes, and apparently fortuitous events, which combine in the germination of small but active communities, till they have attained the rank and influence of mighty nations.

Under the Second Part are disposed a number of Essays of a more variegated description, connected with general policy, economy, and commerce, subjects in the discussion of which the felicitous genius of this great man shone with such distinguished lustre, as to render his practical remarks, inquiries, and even casual hints on local topics, valuable for the direct tendency which they had, in common with his more elaborate writings, to promote the welfare of society.

The Third Part is entirely miscellaneous, being composed of papers on

religious and moral subjects, interspersed with a variety of sententious remarks or aphorisms, calculated to make a fixed impression on the mind, and, by their simplicity of operation, to meliorate the condition of mankind in the removal or correction of evils which evidently obstruct the progress of human improvement. The third section of this part, intitled "Bagatelles," is of a sprightlier cast, and displays the cheerfulness of temper which formed so striking a feature in the character of Dr. Franklin, and uniformly enlivened his conversation amidst the cares of business and the infirmities of old age. The origin and design of these lively effusions are explained in a prefatory note, ~~which it is hoped will prove an ample apology, if any such be necessary,~~ for their insertion in this collection.

The Fourth and last Part comprises a selection of letters and papers on philosophical subjects.

At an early period of Dr. Franklin's career, as a man of science, he occasionally imparted to some of his most intimate acquaintance in England, accounts of the discoveries made by him at Philadelphia; and though these communications were far from being intended for the public eye, the persons to whom they were addressed had a higher opinion of them than the Author, in consequence of which they were printed at London, under the title of "Experiments and Observations on Electricity, made at Philadelphia, with Letters and Papers on Philosophical Subjects." That the partiality of friendship had not over-rated the value of these papers, was quickly made evident by the reception which they experienced, not only in this country,¹ but on the continent

¹ Five editions of the same 4to were printed in London previous to 1775.

of Europe, where they were translated into several languages, and by extending the fame of the Author, greatly enlarged the number of his correspondents in different parts of the world. Thus brought as it were, without his own consent, into the circle of the learned, he continued at intervals to prosecute the philosophical pursuits which had crowned him with honor, and to communicate the particulars of his researches to his scientific friends, who received them with avidity. It merits observation, however, that notwithstanding the high eminence which Dr. Franklin attained as an experimentalist, he in reality may be said to have only made philosophy the amusement of his leisure hours, in which it afforded him a pleasing recreation after a variety of more laborious occupations.

Though ~~some of the~~ Essays contained under this head have already appeared, by far the greater portion of the contents of this part, (among which are several of the latest and most ingenious of Dr. Franklin's philosophical Writings,) are now for the first time printed from his own manuscripts.

In conclusion, the Editor trusts that the Volume which now closes his account with the public will meet with the same favorable reception as the two that have preceded it; and that the whole will prove a lasting monument commemorative of the virtues and talents of a man who, in every character, whether as a humble individual or a public diplomatist, as a philosophical inquirer or the legislator of an enlightened nation, constantly proved throughout his long and eventful career, that he estimated his extraordinary talents of no other value than as enabling him to promote, as far as in him lay, the happiness of all mankind.

London, July 1818.

SELECT
POLITICAL,
Philosophical and Miscellaneous
WRITINGS
OF
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

LL.D. F.R.S. &c. &c.

PUBLISHED FROM THE ORIGINALS.

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