

A portrait of Benjamin Franklin, an elderly man with long, wavy, grey hair, wearing a white, high-collared coat. He is looking slightly to the right of the viewer with a serious expression. The background is dark and indistinct.

**THE WORKS OF
BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN**

VOLUME 11: 1784 - 1788

The Works of Benjamin
Franklin

Volume 11

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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**CORRESPONDENCE AND MISCELLANEOUS
WRITINGS
1784 - 1788**

MCCCXVIII. TO M. MELMOTH

Passy [*no date, circa 1784*].

Sir:—

I should have been flattered exceedingly by Mrs. Melmoth's showing the least inclination for one of those portraits, when Mrs. Izard accepted the other, and should have presented it to her with the greatest pleasure. She did not appear to desire it, and I did not presume it of value enough to be offered. Her quarrel with me on that account is pleasing. The reconciliation, when I can obtain it, will be more so. At present another lady has put it out of my power to comply with the terms. M. de Chaumont, at whose pottery in the country they were made, receiving a request from Petersburg for one of them, to gratify the curiosity of the Empress, and having none in town, he got from me the only one I had left, and has sent it away. But I am promised another soon, and shall seize the first moment of making my peace with it. In the meantime, I hope you will intercede for me, in that heart where I am sure you have an interest. Accept my thanks for the books, from the reading of which I promise myself a good deal of pleasure. Please to accept also the trifle enclosed, and believe me with most sincere esteem, etc.,

B. Franklin.

MCCCXIX. TO DAVID HARTLEY

Passy, 3 January, 1785.

My Dear Friend:—

I received your kind letter of December 1st from Bath. I am glad to hear that your good sister is in a fair way towards recovery. My respects and best wishes attend her.

I communicated your letter to Mr. Jefferson, to remind him of his promise to communicate to you the intelligence he might receive from America on the subjects you mention, and now, having got back, I shall endeavor to answer the other parts of it.

What you propose to draw up of your opinions on American negotiation may be of great use if laid, as you intend, before administration, in case they seriously intend to enter on it after the meeting of Parliament; for I know your ideas all tend to a good understanding between the two countries and their common advantage, and in my mind, too, all selfish projects of partial profit are the effects of short-sightedness, they never producing permanent benefits, and are at length the causes of discord and its consequences, wherein much more is spent than all the temporary gains amounted to.

I do not know that any one is yet appointed by your court to treat with us. We some time since acquainted your minister with our powers and disposition to treat, which he communicated to his court, and received for answer that his Majesty's ministers were ready to receive any propositions we might have to make for the common benefit of both countries, but they thought it more for the honor of both that the treaty should not be in a third place. We answered that, though we did not see much inconvenience in treating here, we would, as soon as we had finished some affairs at present on our hands, wait

upon them, if they pleased, in London. We have since heard nothing.

We have no late accounts from America of any importance. You know the Congress adjourned the beginning of June till the beginning of November. And since their meeting there has been no account of their proceedings. All the stories in your papers relating to their divisions are fiction, as well as those of the people being discontented with congressional government. Mr. Jay writes to me that they were at no time more happy or more satisfied with their government than at present, nor ever enjoyed more tranquillity or prosperity. In truth, the freedom of their ports to all nations has brought in a vast plenty of foreign goods, and occasioned a demand for their produce, the consequence of which is the double advantage of buying what they consume cheap and selling what they can spare dear.

If we should come to London, I hope it may still be with you that we are to do business. Our already understanding one another may save, on many points, a good deal of time in discussion. But I doubt whether any treaty is intended on your part, and I fancy we shall not press it. It may perhaps be best to give both sides time to inquire, and to *feel* for the interests they cannot *see*. With sincere and great esteem, I am ever, my dear friend, yours most affectionately,

B. Franklin.

MCCCXX. O JOHN JAY

Passy, 8 February, 1785.

Dear Sir:—

I received by the Marquis de Lafayette your kind letter of the 13th of December. It gave me pleasure on two accounts, as it informed me of the public welfare, and that of your, I may almost say *our*, dear little family; for, since I had the pleasure of their being with me in the same house, I have ever felt a tender affection for them, equal, I believe, to that of most fathers.

I did hope to have heard, by the last packet, of your having accepted the secretaryship of foreign affairs, but was disappointed. I write to you now, therefore, only as a private friend; yet I may mention respecting public affairs that, as far as I can perceive, the good disposition of this court towards us continues. I wish I could say as much for the rest of the European courts. I think that their desire of being connected with us by treaties is of late much abated, and this, I suppose, is occasioned by the pains Britain takes to represent us everywhere as distracted with divisions, discontented with our governments, the people unwilling to pay taxes, the Congress unable to collect them, and many desiring the restoration of the old government. The English papers are full of this stuff, and their ministers get it copied into the foreign papers. The moving about of the Congress from place to place has also a bad effect, in giving color to the reports of their being afraid of the people. I hope they will soon settle somewhere, and by the steadiness and wisdom of their measures dissipate all those mists of misrepresentation raised by the remaining malice of ancient enemies, and establish our reputation for national justice and prudence as they have done for courage and perseverance.

It grieves me that we have not been able to discharge our first year's payment of interest to this court, due the beginning of last month. I hope it will be the only failure, and that effectual measures will be taken to be exactly punctual hereafter. *The good master*, says the proverb, *is lord of another man's purse*. The bad one, if he ever has

again occasion to borrow, must pay dearly for his carelessness and injustice.

You are happy in having got back safe to your country. I should be less unhappy if I could imagine the delay of my *cong * useful to the States, or in the least degree necessary. But they have many equally capable of doing all I have to do here. The new proposed treaties are the most important things; but two can go through them as well as three, if indeed any are likely to be completed, which I begin to doubt, since the new ones make little progress, and the old ones, which wanted only the *fiat* of Congress, seem now to be going rather backward,—I mean those I had projected with Denmark and Portugal.

My grandsons are sensible of the honor of your remembrance, and present their respects to you and Mrs. Jay. I add my best wishes of health and happiness to you all, being, with sincere esteem and affection, dear sir, your most obedient humble servant,

B. Franklin.

**MCCCXXI. TO MR. FRANCIS CHILDS, PRINTER AT
NEW YORK**

Passy, 8 February, 1785.

Sir:—

I have received your letter of November 13th, with the preceding one therein mentioned. I had some discourse with Mr. Jay respecting you, and I expressed a willingness to assist you in setting up your business, on the same terms as I had formerly done with other young printers of good character, viz., Whitemarsh and Timothy in Carolina, Smith and afterwards Mecon at Antigua, Parker at New York, Franklin at Rhode Island, Holland Miller at Lancaster, and

afterwards Dunlap, and Hall at Philadelphia, but nothing was concluded between us, and I expected to have been in America before this time, with a very large quantity of types which I have packed up. I still hope to be there in the ensuing summer, when we may carry this proposal into execution, if it shall suit you. In the meantime, I would not have you miss any good opportunity of settling yourself, for I am old and infirm, and accidents may prevent us. The good character given of you by Mr. Jay is my inducement to serve you if I can, and it will give me pleasure if it succeeds. I am obliged to you for the care you took in securing my press; and am, your friend and servant,

B. Franklin.

Sir:— If Mrs. Parker still lives at Woodbridge, perhaps she can show you the agreement between her husband and me, and you may consider the terms of it before my arrival.

MCCCXXII. TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

Passy, 8 February, 1785.

Sir:—

I received by the Marquis de Lafayette the two letters you did me the honor of writing to me the 11th and 14th of December; the one enclosing a letter from Congress to the king, the other a resolve of Congress respecting the convention for establishing consuls. The letter was immediately delivered and well received. The resolve came too late to suspend signing the convention, it having been done July last, and a copy sent so long since that we now expected the ratification. As that copy seems to have miscarried I now send another.

I am not informed what objection has arisen in Congress to the plan sent me. Mr. Jefferson thinks it may have been

to the part which restrained the consuls from all concern in commerce. That article was omitted, being thought unnecessary to be stipulated, since either party would always have the power of imposing such restraints on its own officers, whenever it should think fit. I am, however, of opinion that this or any other reasonable article or alteration may be obtained at the desire of Congress, and established by a supplement.

Permit me, sir, to congratulate you on your being called to the high honor of presiding in our national councils, and to wish you every felicity, being with the most perfect esteem, etc.,

B. Franklin.

MCCCXXIII. TO WILLIAM STRAHAN, ESQ.

Passy, 5 March, 1785.

Dear Friend:—

I received your kind letter by my grandson. I thank you for the civilities you showed him when in London.

I hope to get home this ensuing summer. I shall have an old account to settle then with the family of our friend Hall. There is a particular article of some importance, about which we were not agreed, but were to be determined by your opinion. It was the value of a copyright in an established newspaper, of each of which from eight to ten thousand were printed. My long absence from that country, and immense employment the little time I was there, have hitherto prevented the settlement of all the accounts that had been between us; though we never differed about them, and never should if that good honest man had continued in being. To prevent all dispute on the above points with his son, it is that I now request your decision,

which I doubt not will be satisfactory to us both. With unchangeable esteem, I am ever, my dear friend, yours most affectionately,

B. Franklin.

My respects to Mrs. Strahan.

MCCCXXIV. TO BENJAMIN VAUGHAN **Ref. 002**

Passy, 14 March, 1785.

My Dear Friend:—

Among the thoughts you lately sent me was one entitled: *Thoughts on Executive Justice*. In return for that I send you a French one on the same subject, *Observations concernant d'Exécution de l'Article II. de la Déclaration sur le Vol*. They are both addressed to the judges, but written, as you will see, in a very different spirit. The English author is for hanging *all* thieves. The Frenchman is for proportioning punishments to offences.

If we really believe, as we profess to believe, that the law of Moses was the law of God, the dictate of divine wisdom, infinitely superior to human, on what principles do we ordain death as the punishment of an offence which, according to that law, was only to be punished by a restitution of fourfold? To put a man to death for an offence which does not deserve death, is it not murder? And, as the French writer says, *Doit-on punir délit contre la société par un crime contre la nature?*

Superfluous property is the creature of society. Simple and mild laws were sufficient to guard the property that was merely necessary. The savage's bow, his hatchet, and his coat of skins were sufficiently secured, without law, by the fear of personal resentment and retaliation. When, by virtue of the first laws, part of the society accumulated

wealth and grew powerful, they enacted others more severe, and would protect their property at the expense of humanity. This was abusing their power and commencing a tyranny. If a savage, before he entered into society, had been told: "Your neighbor by this means may become owner of a hundred deer; but if your brother, or your son, or yourself, having no deer of your own, and, being hungry, should kill one, an infamous death must be the consequence," he would probably have preferred his liberty, and his common right of killing any deer, to all the advantages of society that might be proposed to him.

That it is better a hundred guilty persons should escape than one innocent person should suffer, is a maxim that has been long and generally approved; never, that I know of, controverted. Even the sanguinary author of the *Thoughts* agrees to it (p. 163), adding well, "that the very thought of *injured* innocence, and much more that of *suffering* innocence, must awaken all our tenderest and most compassionate feelings, and at the same time raise our highest indignation against the instruments of it. But," he adds, "there is no danger of *either*, from a strict adherence to the laws." Really! Is it then impossible to make an unjust law? and if the law itself be unjust, may it not be the very "instrument" which ought to "raise the author's and everybody's highest indignation"? I read, in the last newspaper from London, that a woman is capitally convicted at the Old Bailey, for privately stealing out of a shop some gauze, value fourteen shillings and threepence; is there any proportion between the injury done by a theft, value fourteen shillings and threepence, and the punishment of a human creature, by death, on a gibbet? Might not that woman, by her labor, have made the reparation ordained by God, in paying fourfold? Is not all punishment inflicted beyond the merit of the offence, so much punishment of innocence? In this light, how vast is the annual quantity of not

only *injured*, but *suffering* innocence, in almost all the civilized states of Europe!

But it seems to have been thought that this kind of innocence may be punished by way of *preventing* crimes. I have read, indeed, of a cruel Turk in Barbary, who, whenever he bought a new Christian slave, ordered him immediately to be hung up by the legs, and to receive a hundred blows of a cudgel on the soles of his feet, that the severe sense of the punishment, and fear of incurring it thereafter, might prevent the faults that should merit it. Our author, himself, would hardly approve entirely of this Turk's conduct in the government of slaves; and yet he appears to recommend something like it for the government of English subjects, when he applauds (p. 105) the reply of Judge Burnet to the convict horse-stealer, who, being asked what he had to say why judgment of death should not pass against him, and answering, that it was hard to hang a man for *only* stealing a horse, was told by the judge: "Man, thou are not to be hanged *only* for stealing a horse, but that horses may not be stolen."

The man's answer, if candidly examined, will, I imagine, appear reasonable, as being founded on the eternal principle of justice and equity, that punishments should be proportioned to offences; and the judge's reply brutal and unreasonable, though the writer "wishes all judges to carry it with them whenever they go the circuit, and to bear it in their minds as containing a wise reason for all the penal statutes which they are called upon to put in execution. It at once illustrates," says he, "the true grounds and reasons of all capital punishments whatsoever, namely, that every man's property, as well as his life, may be held sacred and inviolate." Is there then no difference in value between property and life? If I think it right that the crime of murder should be punished with death, not only as an equal punishment of the crime, but to prevent other murders, does it follow that I must approve of inflicting the same

punishment for a little invasion on my property by theft? If I am not myself so barbarous, so bloody-minded and revengeful, as to kill a fellow-creature for stealing from me fourteen shillings and threepence, how can I approve of a law that does it? Montesquieu, who was himself a judge, endeavors to impress other maxims. He must have known what humane judges feel on such occasions, and what the effects of those feelings; and, so far from thinking that severe and excessive punishments prevent crimes, he asserts, as quoted by our French writer, page 4, that—

“L’atrocité des loix en empêche l’exécution.

Lorsque la peine est sans mesure, on est souvent obligé de lui préférer l’impunité.

La cause de tous les relâchemens vient de l’impunité des crimes, et non de la modération des peines.” Ref. 003

It is said by those who know Europe generally, that there are more thefts committed and punished annually in England than in all the other nations put together. If this be so, there must be a cause or causes for such depravity in your common people. May not one be the deficiency of justice and morality in your national government, manifested in your oppressive conduct to your subjects, and unjust wars on your neighbors? View the long-persisted in, unjust monopolizing treatment of Ireland at length acknowledged. View the plundering government exercised by your merchants in the Indies; the confiscating war made upon the American colonies; and, to say nothing of those upon France and Spain, view the late war upon Holland, which was seen by impartial Europe in no other light than that of a war of rapine and pillage, the hopes of an immense and easy prey being its only apparent, and probably its true and real, motive and encouragement.

Justice is as strictly due between neighbor nations as between neighbor citizens. A highwayman is as much a robber when he plunders in a gang as when single; and a

nation that makes an unjust war is only a *great gang*. After employing your people in robbing the Dutch, is it strange that, being put out of that employ by the peace, they should continue robbing, and rob one another? *Piraterie*, as the French call it, or privateering, is the universal bent of the English nation, at home or abroad, wherever settled. No less than seven hundred privateers were, it is said, commissioned in the last war! These were fitted out by merchants, to prey upon other merchants, who had never done them any injury. Is there probably any one of those privateering merchants of London, who were so ready to rob the merchants of Amsterdam, that would not as readily plunder another London merchant of the next street, if he could do it with the same impunity? The avidity, the *alieni appetens*, is the same; it is the fear alone of the gallows that makes the difference. How then can a nation which, among the honestest of its people, has so many thieves by inclination, and whose government encouraged and commissioned no less than seven hundred gangs of robbers,—how can such a nation have the face to condemn the crime in individuals, and hang up twenty of them in a morning? It naturally puts one in mind of a Newgate anecdote. One of the prisoners complained that in the night somebody had taken his buckles out of his shoes. “What, the devil!” says another, “have we then *thieves* among us? It must not be suffered; let us search out the rogue, and pump him to death.”

There is, however, one late instance of an English merchant who will not profit by such ill-gotten gains. He was, it seems, part-owner of a ship, which the other owners thought fit to employ as a letter of marque, and which took a number of French prizes. The booty being shared, he has now an agent here inquiring, by an advertisement in the gazette, for those who suffered the loss, in order to make them, as far as in him lies, restitution. This conscientious man is a Quaker. The Scotch Presbyterians were formerly

as tender; for there is still extant an ordinance of the town council of Edinburgh, made soon after the Reformation, "forbidding the purchase of prize goods, under pain of losing the freedom of the burgh forever, with other punishment at the will of the magistrate; the practice of making prizes being contrary to good conscience and the rule of treating Christian brethren as we would wish to be treated; and such goods *are not to be sold by any godly men within this burgh.*" The race of these godly men in Scotland is probably extinct or their principles abandoned; since, as far as that nation had a hand in promoting the war against the colonies, prizes and confiscations are believed to have been a considerable motive.

It has been for some time a generally received opinion, that a military man is not to inquire whether a war be just or unjust; he is to execute his orders. All princes who are disposed to become tyrants must probably approve of this opinion, and be willing to establish it; but is it not a dangerous one, since, on that principle, if the tyrant commands his army to attack and destroy, not only an unoffending neighbor nation, but even his own subjects, the army is bound to obey? A negro slave, in our colonies, being commanded by his master to rob or murder a neighbor, or do any other immoral act, may refuse, and the magistrate will protect him in his refusal. The slavery then of a soldier is worse than that of a negro! A conscientious officer, if not restrained by the apprehension of its being imputed to another cause, may indeed resign rather than be employed in an unjust war; but the private men are slaves for life, and they are perhaps incapable of judging for themselves. We can only lament their fate, and still more that of a sailor, who is often dragged by force from his honest occupation, and compelled to imbrue his hands in, perhaps, innocent blood.

But methinks it well behooves merchants (men more enlightened by their education, and perfectly free from any

such force or obligation) to consider well of the justice of a war before they voluntarily engage a gang of ruffians to attack their fellow merchants of a neighboring nation, to plunder them of their property, and perhaps ruin them and their families if they yield it, or to wound, maim, and murder them if they endeavor to defend it. Yet these things are done by Christian merchants, whether a war be just or unjust, and it can hardly be just on both sides. They are done by English and American merchants, who, nevertheless, complain of private theft, and hang by dozens the thieves they have taught by their own example.

It is high time, for the sake of humanity, that a stop were put to this enormity. The United States of America, though better situated than any European nation to make profit by privateering (most of the trade of Europe, with the West Indies, passing before their doors), are, as far as in them lies, endeavoring to abolish the practice, by offering in all their treaties with other powers an article, engaging solemnly that in case of future war no privateer shall be commissioned on either side, and that unarmed merchantships on both sides shall pursue their voyages unmolested. Ref. 004 This will be a happy improvement of the laws of nations. The humane and the just cannot but wish general success to the proposition. With unchangeable esteem and affection, I am, my dear friend, ever yours,

B. Franklin.

MCCCXXV. TO RICHARD PRICE

Passy, 18 March, 1785.

Dear Friend:—

My nephew, Mr. Williams, will have the honor of delivering you this line. It is to request from you a list of a

few books, to the value of about twenty-five pounds, such as are most proper to inculcate principles of sound religion and just government. A new town in the State of Massachusetts having done me the honor of naming itself after me, and proposing to build a steeple to their meetinghouse if I would give them a bell, I have advised the sparing themselves the expense of a steeple for the present, and that they would accept of books instead of a bell, sense being preferable to sound. These are therefore intended as the commencement of a little parochial library for the use of a society of intelligent, respectable farmers, such as our country people generally consist of. Besides your own works, I would only mention, on the recommendation of my sister, Stennett's *Discourses on Personal Religion*, which may be one book of the number, if you know and approve it. ^{Ref. 005}

With the highest esteem and respect, I am ever, my dear friend, yours most affectionately,
B. Franklin.

MCCCXXVI. TO WILLIAM CARMICHAEL

Passy, 22 March, 1785.

Dear Sir:—

I received duly your letter of the 27th past, which gave me great pleasure, as the length of time since I had heard from you made me apprehensive that you might be ill. I immediately communicated the papers enclosed with it to my colleagues, Messrs. Adams and Jefferson, and we have had several meetings on the Barbary affair. Probably by next week's post we may write fully upon it to you, and to Morocco.

I am glad you are likely to succeed in obtaining the liberty of our silly countryman. The discipline they have granted him is, however, not misapplied. Mr. Grand, being now in cash, your bills on him for your salary will be fully honored. I mention your drawing on him, because probably I may not be here, as I expect daily the permission of Congress to return home, and shall embrace the first opportunity. Wherever I am, be assured of the invariable esteem and attachment of, dear sir, your affectionate friend,

B. Franklin.

MCCCXXVII. TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

Passy, 12 April, 1785.

Sir:—

M. de Chaumont, who will have the honor of presenting this line to your Excellency, is a young gentleman of excellent character, whose father was one of our most early friends in this country, which he manifested by crediting us with a thousand barrels of gunpowder and other military stores in 1776, before we had provided any apparent means of payment. He has, as I understand, some demands to make on Congress, the nature of which I am unacquainted with; but my regard for the family makes me wish that they may obtain a speedy consideration and such favorable issue as they may appear to merit.

To this end, I beg leave to recommend him to your countenance and protection, and am, with great respect, etc.,

B. Franklin.

MCCCXXVIII. TO JONATHAN WILLIAMS, ESQ.

Passy, 13 April, 1785.

Dear Cousin:—

I received your letter of December 16th, relating to Jonas Hartwell. I had before written to our minister at Madrid, Mr. Carmichael, requesting him to apply for the release of that man. Enclosed I send his answer, with copies of other papers relating to the affair. The simpleton will be discharged, perhaps, after being a little whipped for his folly, and that may not be amiss. We have here another New England man, Thayer, formerly a candidate for the ministry, who converted himself lately at Rome, and is now preparing to return home for the purpose of converting his countrymen. Our ancestors from Catholic became first Church-of-England men, and then refined into Presbyterians. To change now from Presbyterianism to Popery seems to me refining backwards, from white sugar to brown.

I have written to Dr. Price, of London, requesting him to make a choice of proper books to commence a library for the use of the inhabitants of Franklin. The parcel will be sent directly from thence.

Jonathan and his family are well. He expects to be with you soon. I continue very hearty and well, except my malady of the stone, which, however, is hitherto very tolerable. My love to cousin Grace, etc., and believe me ever your affectionate uncle,

B. Franklin.

P. S. April 14th.—I send enclosed a bill drawn by W. Vernon, junior, on his father, for 840 livres, which I request you would receive and deliver to my sister Mecom.

MCCCXXIX. TO JOHN INGENHOUSZ

Passy, 20 April, 1785.

Dear Sir:—

I thank you much for the postscript respecting my disorder, the stone. I have taken heretofore, and am now again taking the remedy you mention, which is called Blackrie's Solvent. It is the soap lye, with lime-water, and I believe it may have some effect in diminishing the symptoms and preventing the growth of the stone, which is all I expect from it. It does not hurt my appetite. I sleep well and enjoy my friends in cheerful conversation, as usual; but as I cannot use much exercise, I eat more sparingly than formerly, and I drink no wine.

I admire that you should be so timid in asking leave of your good imperial master to make a journey for visiting a friend. I am persuaded you would succeed, and I hope the proposition I have repeated to you in this letter will assist your courage and enable you to ask and obtain. If you come hither soon, you may, when present, get your book finished and be ready to proceed with me to America. While writing this I have received from Congress my leave to return; and I believe I shall be ready to embark by the middle of July, at farthest. I shall now be free from politics for the rest of my life. Welcome again my dear philosophical amusements!

I see by a full page of your letter that you have been possessed with strange ideas of America; that there is no justice to be obtained there, no recovery of debts, projects of insurrection to overturn the present government, etc., etc.; that a Virginia colonel, nephew of the governor, had cheated a stranger of a hundred thousand livres, and that somebody was imprisoned for only speaking of it; and the like very improbable stories. They are all fictions or misrepresentations. If they were truths, all strangers would

avoid such a country, and foreign merchants would as soon carry their goods to sell in Newgate as America. Think a little on the sums England has spent to preserve a monopoly of the trade of that people, with whom they had long been acquainted; and of the desire all Europe is now manifesting to obtain a share of that trade. Our ports are full of their ships, their merchants buying and selling in our streets continually, and returning with our products. Would this happen, could such commerce be continued with us, if we were such a collection of scoundrels and villains as we have been represented to you? And insurrections against our rulers are not only unlikely, as the rulers are the choice of the people, but unnecessary; as, if not liked, they may be changed continually by the new elections.

I own you have cause, great cause, to complain of —, but you are wrong to condemn the whole country by a single example. I have seen many countries, and I do not know a country in the world in which justice is so well administered, where protection and favor have so little power to impede its operations, and where debts are recovered with so much facility. If I thought it such a country as has been painted to you, I should certainly never return to it. The truth, I believe, is, that more goods have been carried thither from all parts of Europe than the consumption of the country requires, and it is natural that some of the adventurers are willing to discourage others from following them, lest the prices should still be kept down by the arrival of fresh cargoes; and it is not unlikely that some negligent or unfaithful factors sent thither may have given such accounts to excuse their not making remittances; and the English magnify all this, and spread it abroad in their papers, to dissuade foreigners from attempting to interfere with them in their commerce with us.

Your account of the Emperor's condescending conversation with you concerning me is pleasing. I respect

very much the character of that monarch, and think that if I were one of his subjects he would find me a good one. I am glad that his difference with your country is likely to be accommodated without bloodshed. The *Courier de l'Europe* and some other papers printed a letter on that difference, which they ascribed to me. Be assured, my friend, that I never wrote it, nor was ever presumptuous enough to meddle with an affair so much out of my way.

Yours, etc.,
B. Franklin.

MCCCXXX. TO BENJAMIN VAUGHAN, ESQ.

Passy, 21 April, 1785.

Dear Friend:—

I received your kind letter of the 23d past by Mr. Perry, with the other bottle of Blackrie. I thank you much for your care in sending them. I should have been glad to be of any use to Mr. Perry, but he had placed his children before I saw him, and he stayed with me only a few minutes.

We see much in parliamentary proceedings, and in papers and pamphlets, of the injury the concessions to Ireland will do to the *manufacturers* of England, while the *people* of England seem to be forgotten, as if quite out of the question. If the Irish can manufacture cottons, and stuffs, and silks, and linens, and cutlery, and toys, and books, etc., etc., etc., so as to sell them cheaper in England than the *manufacturers* of England sell them, is not this good for the *people* of England who are not manufacturers? And will not even the manufacturers themselves share the benefit? since if cottons are cheaper, all the other manufacturers who wear cottons will save in that article; and so of the rest. If books can be had much cheaper from Ireland (which

I believe, for I bought Blackstone there for twenty-four shillings, when it was sold in England at four guineas) is not this an advantage, not to English booksellers, indeed, but to English readers, and to learning? and of all the complainants perhaps these booksellers are least worthy of consideration. The catalogue you last sent me amazes me by the high prices (said to be the lowest) affixed to each article. And one can scarce see a new book without observing the excessive artifices made use of to puff up a paper of verses into a pamphlet, a pamphlet into an octavo, and an octavo into a quarto, with scab-boardings, whitelines, sparse titles of chapters, and exorbitant margins, to such a degree that the selling of paper seems now the object, and printing on it only the pretence. I enclose the copy of a page in a late comedy. Between every two lines there is a white space equal to another line. You have a law, I think, against butchers blowing of veal to make it look fatter? why not one against booksellers blowing of books to make them look bigger? All this *to yourself*; you can easily guess the reason.

My grandson is a little indisposed, but sends you two pamphlets, *Figaro* and *Le Roy Voyageur*. The first is a play of Beaumarchais, which has had a great run here; the other a representation of all the supposed errors of government in this country, some of which are probably exaggerated. It is not publicly sold; we shall send some more shortly.

Please to remember me very respectfully and affectionately to good Dr. Price. I am glad that he has printed a translation of the Testament; it may do good. I am ever, my dear friend, yours most sincerely,

B. Franklin.

Scene IV: Sir John and Wildmore

Sir John.

Whither so fast?

Wildmore.

To the Opera.

Sir John.

It is not the ——?

Wildmore.

Yes it is.

Sir John.

Never on a Sunday.

Wildmore.

Is this Sunday?

Sir John.

Yes, sure.

Wildmore.

I remember nothing; I shall soon forget my Christian name.

If this page was printed running on like Erasmus' *Colloquies*, it would not have made more than five lines.

MCCCXXXI. TO M. CADET DE VAUX

Passy, 28 April, 1785.

Sir:—

I return your paper relating to maïs, which I have perused with pleasure. I am glad to learn that good beer may be made of it, which is new to me. I send herewith some observations on the use of that grain, of which you are at liberty to make such use as you may think proper. Your Patisseur has done wonders; I am delighted with his

productions, and shall wish to take a quantity of them with me to eat at sea.

With great esteem, etc.,

B. Franklin.

MCCCXXXII. TO JOHN INGENHOUSZ

Passy, 29 April, 1785.

My Dear Friend:—

. . . Lady Dowager Penn was here about the time of the treaty, and made application to me with great complaints, but I found she was not well informed of the state of her affairs, and could not clearly show that she had suffered any injury from the public of Pennsylvania, whatever she might from the agents of the family. Her husband's lands, I understand, were not confiscated as represented; but the proprietary government falling with that of the crown, the Assembly took the opportunity of insisting upon justice in some points, which they could never obtain under that government. A kind of compromise then was made between the Assembly and the family, whereby all the vacant lots and unappropriated wilderness lands were to be henceforth in the disposition of the Assembly, who were to pay £130,000 sterling to the family within three years after the peace, all other demands on both sides being thus abolished. I am told that this arrangement was satisfactory to most of them. But as the lady intended to send her son over to solicit her interests, I gave him a letter of recommendation to the governor, proposing it for consideration whether it might not be advisable to reconsider the matter, and if the sum of £130,000 should be found insufficient, to make a proper addition. I have not heard what has since been done in the affair, or whether

any thing. In my own judgment, when I consider that for nearly eighty years, viz., from the year 1700, William Penn and his sons received the quit-rents which were originally granted for the support of government, and yet refused to support the government, obliging the people to make a fresh provision for its support all that time, which cost them vast sums, as the most necessary laws were not to be obtained but at the price of making such provision; when I consider the meanness and cruel avarice of the late proprietor in refusing, for several years of war, to consent to any defence of the frontiers ravaged all the while by the enemy, unless his estate should be exempted from paying any part of the expense, not to mention other atrocities too long for this letter, I cannot but think the family well off, and that it will be prudent in them to take the money and be quiet. William Penn, the first proprietor, father of Thomas, the husband of the present dowager, was a wise and good man, and as honest to the people as the extreme distress of his circumstances would permit him to be, but the said Thomas was a miserable churl, always intent upon griping and saving; and whatever good the father may have done for the province was amply undone by the mischief received from the son, who never did any thing that had the appearance of generosity or public spirit but what was extorted from him by solicitation and the shame of backwardness in benefits evidently incumbent on him to promote, and which was done at last in the most ungracious manner possible. The lady's complaints of not duly receiving her revenues from America are habitual; they were the same during all the time of my long residence in London, being then made by her husband as excuses for the meanness of his housekeeping and his deficiency in hospitality, though I knew at the same time that he was then in full receipt of vast sums annually by the sale of lands, interest of money, and quit-rents. But probably he might conceal this from his lady to induce

greater economy, as it is known that he ordered no more of his income home than was absolutely necessary for his subsistence, but placed it at interest in Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, where he could have six or seven per cent., while money bore no more than five per cent, in England. I used often to hear of these complaints and laugh at them, perceiving clearly their motive. They served him on other as well as on domestic occasions. You remember our rector of St. Martin's Parish, Dr. Saunders. He once went about, during a long and severe frost, soliciting charitable contributions to purchase coals for poor families. He came, among others, to me, and I gave him something. It was but little, very little, and yet it occasioned him to remark: "You are more bountiful on this occasion than your wealthy proprietary, Mr. Penn, but he tells me he is distressed by not receiving his incomes from America." The incomes of the family there must still be very great, for they have a number of manors consisting of the best lands, which are preserved to them, and vast sums at interest well secured by mortgages; so that if the dowager does not receive her proportion, there must be some fault in her agents. You will perceive by the length of this article that I have been a little *échauffé* by her making the complaints you mention to the Princess Dowager of Lichtenstein at Vienna. The lady herself is good and amiable, and I should be glad to serve her in any thing just and reasonable; but I do not at present see that I can do more than I have done. . . .

B. Franklin.

MCCCXXXIII. TO JOHN INGENHOUSZ

Passy, 29 April, 1785.

My Dear Friend:—