

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

**THE WORKS OF
BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN**

VOLUME 8: 1779 - 1781

The Works of Benjamin
Franklin

Volume 8

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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**CORRESPONDENCE AND MISCELLANEOUS
WRITINGS
1779 - 1781**

DCCLXVI. TO RICHARD OLIVER, ESQ.

Passy, 14 March, 1779.

Dear Sir:—

It will always be a pleasure to me to do what may be agreeable to you. Inclosed is the passport you desire. I wish you and your friends a prosperous voyage, being ever with the sincerest esteem, dear sir, etc,

B. Franklin.

To All Captains and Commanders of Vessels of War, Privateers, and Letters of Marque Belonging to the United States of America.

Gentlemen:—

I do hereby certify to you that I have long and intimately known the bearer, Richard Oliver, Esq., member of Parliament, and late Alderman of London, and have ever found him a sincere and hearty friend to the cause of liberty and of America, of which he has given many substantial proofs on various occasions. Therefore, if by the chance of war he should in his voyage from England to the West Indies happen to fall into your hands, I recommend him warmly, with the friends that may accompany him, to your best civilities, requesting that you would afford your generous protection to their persons, and favor them with their liberty when a suitable opportunity shall offer. In this I am sure your conduct will be approved by the Congress

and your employers, and you will much oblige (if that be any motive), gentlemen,

Your most obedient and most humble servant,

B. Franklin.

At Passy, near Paris, this 14th day of March, 1779.

DCCLXVII. TO JONATHAN WILLIAMS

Passy, 16 March, 1779.

Dear Jonathan:—

Agreeable to your desire, I have requested the American gentlemen residing at Nantes to examine your accounts. I have added Mr. Schweighauser, he having been appointed by my former colleagues to manage our affairs there, and may be supposed interested particularly to do justice to the Congress. And the others, I imagine, can have no interest in favoring you, as perhaps you may stand in their way respecting business. Inclosed you have copies of my letter to the gentlemen, and of another on the same business to Mr. Lee. If I had known of his going to Nantes I should have desired him to state his objections to the accounts there, but I did not hear of his being there till a day or two before his return. I have yet no answer from him.

I showed your letter of February 20th, relating to Mr. Simeon Deane's goods, to Mr. Adams, who thought the proposition reasonable. I send by this opportunity an order to Mr. Schweighauser to deliver to you the case which remains; and if you will send me the original invoice and the form of the bills you propose, I shall sign and return them,—if no objection arises on signing them that does not at present occur to me.

I suppose you settled the affair yourself with Mercier's agent, as he took the papers from me, saying that he was

going to Nantes. This was before I received yours of February 23d, relating to that business.

I received the bond for Collas' commission.

The following bills, drawn before the 12th of December in favor of William Denine, were presented and accepted on the 19th of February last, viz.: dollars 600, 12, 600, 30, 120, 12, 120,—in all 1494 dollars. These may possibly be a part of those you mention. I shall order payment to be stopped till I have examined the indorsements, though I am not sure that I can well refuse payment after having accepted them. We shall strictly examine such drafts in favor of Denine as may appear hereafter, till you let us know further.

I return Dr. Cooper's letter, with thanks to you for communicating it. I am much obliged to that good man for his kind expressions of regard to me.

The tobacco which came in the *Bergère*, and all the tobacco which comes to us from America, is to be delivered directly out of the ships to the agents of the farmers-general, in the ports where it arrives. I had sent orders accordingly before the receipt of your notice of her arrival.

I am ashamed of the orders of my countrymen for so much tea, when necessaries are wanting for clothing and defending!

I have been long ill and unfit to write or think of writing, which occasioned my omitting to answer before your several letters since the 16th of February. I omitted, also, answering a kind letter from Mr. Ridley, who, I suppose, is now gone. If not, present my respects to him and best wishes of a prosperous voyage and happy sight of his friends. I am getting better and hope our correspondence will now be more regular.

I am ever your affectionate uncle,

B. Franklin.

DCCLXVIII. TO M. JOSHUA JOHNSON

Passy, 17 March, 1779.

Sir:—

I received the honor of yours of the 6th inst. I took the first opportunity of speaking to M. D'Arincourt, *filis*, one of the farmers-general in whose department you reside, on the subject of your furniture, who told me very politely that, as it was a matter in which I interested myself, he would order the duties, if they had been received, to be returned. By our treaty we are only entitled to such advantage respecting duties as is enjoyed by the most favored nations. I have not yet been able to obtain a certain knowledge of the duties paid by other nations in France, and I am told it is not easy to obtain, as they are very different in the different provinces, and there is not, as in England, a printed book of them. So, not being enough informed at present to claim your exemption as a right, I was obliged to accept it as a favor. But these sort of favors I shall find a difficulty in asking hereafter, for, the States being under great obligations to the farmers-general, who lent us money in our distress, and having often occasion to ask aids from this government, one can hardly, with any grace, demand at the same time in favor of particulars an exemption from paying their share of the duties whence only the ability of affording such aids can arise.

I have ordered the *Alliance* to be got ready as soon as possible. The execution depends on Mr. Schweighauser and the captain. I thank you for your information relating to the *Bergère*. Orders had before been given relating to her cargo.

With great esteem, I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

B. Franklin.

P. S.—If you can by any means obtain an account of the duties to be paid by different nations in your port, I shall be obliged to you for it, and will pay any expense necessary for copying, etc.

DCCLXIX. TO MONTAUDOIN

Passy, 17 March, 1779.

Dear Sir:—

I received your favor of the 4th inst. by M. David with much pleasure, as it informed me of the welfare of friends I love, and who are indeed beloved by everybody. I thank you for your kind congratulations, and for the prayers you use in my behalf. Though the form is heathen, there is a good Christian spirit in it, and I feel myself very well disposed to be content with this world, which I have found hitherto a tolerably good one, and to wait for heaven (which will not be the worse for keeping) as long as God pleases. I don't complain much, even of the gout, which has harassed me ever since the arrival of the commission you so politely mention. There seems, however, some incongruity in a plenipotentiary who can neither stand nor go.

With the sincerest esteem, respect, and affection, I am,
etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCLXX. TO M. DUMAS Ref. 002

Passy, 18 March, 1779.

Dear Sir:—

I received duly yours of the 3d instant. My indisposition seems to be wearing off, and I hope will permit me to go abroad in a few days.

M. Neufville's first propositions were so much out of the way that I could not accept them. He required a fifth part of the loan to be sent over to him annually during the first five years in the produce of America for sale, and the money to remain in his hands as a fund for paying off the debt in the last five years. By this means he would have had the use of our money while we were paying interest for it. He dropped this demand on my objecting to it, and undertook to procure a subscription on reasonable terms. I wish him success; but as the English give at present higher interest than I am permitted to offer, I have little dependence on that subscription. Let me know what you hear of it from time to time.

Mr. Adams is gone to Nantes to take his passage for America in one of our frigates. Mr. A. Lee has retired from Chaillot to Paris, and his brother has come on a visit from Frankfort. He talks of a Congress to be held in Germany, and seems to want me to advise his attendance there incognito. I know nothing of it, and, therefore, can give no advice about it. He talks of 20,000 men at liberty by the German peace to be hired by the English against us, and would be employed in preventing it. What do you think or learn of these circumstances?

The present situation of affairs in your country is interesting. Unacquainted as I am with your parties and interests, I find it difficult to perceive how they will terminate. [*Incomplete.*]

DCCLXXI. TO JONATHAN WILLIAMS

Passy, 19 March, 1779.

Dear Nephew:—

In your receipts for M. Monthieu's copper there is mention made of *copper ore*. Explain this to me; for as we bought no copper ore of him, and as it is not so valuable as copper, it ought not to be given us instead of copper.

Mr. Lee has yet sent me no answer to mine relating to your accounts. Let me know whether the reference is accepted by the referees and whether it goes on. I send you three original papers that may be of use to you, as they show Mr. Lee's great skill in accounts, and ability in objecting to them. The *first* is a proposition M. Monthieu made to obtain a contract. The *second* is the contract actually . . . made differing from the proposition. The *third* is Mr. Lee's *Report*, wherein he took M. Monthieu's proposition of a contract to be an *account of charge* for the execution of it; and comparing it with the contract, he charges all the difference he finds as so many errors in M. Monthieu's account. For instance, M. Monthieu proposed to make 10,000 suits; we agreed with him only for 6,000. Here Mr. Lee finds an overcharge of 4,000 suits. M. Monthieu proposed that we should give him thirty-eight livres per suit; we agreed for thirty-seven. Here Mr. Lee finds an over-charge of 10,000 livres, and so of the rest; when in fact M. Monthieu, in his real account, had charged exactly according to the agreement. You must take good care of these papers, say nothing how you came by them, and return them to me safely.

I send you inclosed the proposals of a tin-plate manufacturer, which may some time or other be of use to you.

I shall dispose of your letter to Mr. Lee as you desire. I would advise you avoiding the publication you mention.

Explain to me what is meant in your postscript by *the zeal of the best of them*, etc.

I send an order this day to suspend the action against M. Peltier. But surely he acted very irregularly to sell a cargo consigned to us, without our order, and give the produce to another. We ourselves never had any dealings with M. Beaumarchais, and he has never produced any account to us, but says the States owe him a great deal of money. Upon his word only we gave him up the cargo of the *Amphitrite*; he promised then to give us an account, but has never done it; and now, by means of M. Peltier, he has seized another cargo. I imagine there is no doubt but M. Peltier would be obliged to pay us the money if the action were continued. And methinks every man who makes a demand ought to deliver an account. For my own part, I imagine our country has been really much obliged to M. Beaumarchais; and it is probable that Mr. Deane concerted with him several large operations for which he is not yet paid. They were before my arrival, and therefore I was not privy to them. Had I been alone when the action was commenced, perhaps I should have thought of some milder proceeding, making allowance for M. Beaumarchais' not being bred a merchant. But I think you cannot well justify M. Peltier.

I am ever your affectionate uncle,
B. Franklin.

DCCLXXII. TO DAVID HARTLEY

Passy, 21 March, 1779.

Dear Sir:—

I received duly yours of the 2d instant. I am sorry you have had so much trouble in the affair of the prisoners. You have been deceived as well as I. No cartel ship has yet

appeared; and it is now evident that the delays have been of design, to give more opportunity of seducing the men by promises and hardships to seek their liberty in engaging against their country; for we learn from those who have escaped, that there are persons continually employed in cajoling and menacing them; representing to them that we neglect them; that your government is willing to exchange them; and that it is our fault it is not done; that all the news from America is bad on their side; we shall be conquered and they will be hanged, if they do not accept the gracious offer of being pardoned, on condition of serving the king, etc. A great part of your prisoners have been kept these six months on board a ship in Brest road, ready to be delivered; where I am afraid they were not so comfortably accommodated as they might have been in French prisons. They are now ordered on shore. Dr. Bancroft has received your letter here. He did not go to Calais. ^{Ref. 003}

Knowing how earnestly and constantly you wish for peace, I cannot end a letter to you without dropping a word on that subject, to mark that my wishes are still in unison with yours. After the barbarities your nation has exercised against us, I am almost ashamed to own that I feel sometimes for her misfortunes and her insanities. Your veins are open, and your best blood continually running. You have now got a little army into Georgia, and are triumphing in that success. Do you expect ever to see that army again? I know not what General Lincoln or General Thompson may be able to effect against them; but, if they stay through the summer in that climate, there is a certain *General Fever* that I apprehend will give a good account of most of them. Perhaps you comfort yourselves that our loss of blood is as great as yours. But, as physicians say, there is a great difference in the facility of repairing that loss between an old body and a young one. America adds to her numbers annually one hundred and

fifty thousand souls. She, therefore, grows faster than you can diminish her, and will outgrow all the mischief you can do her. Have you the same prospects? But it is unnecessary for me to represent to you, or you to me, the mischiefs that each nation is subjected to by the war; we all see clear enough the nonsense of continuing it; the difficulty is, where to find sense enough to put an end to it. Adieu, my dear friend, and believe me, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCLXXIII. TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE

Passy, 22 March, 1779.

Dear Sir:—

I admire much the activity of your genius and the strong desire you have of being continually employed against our common enemy.

It is certain that the coasts of England and Scotland are extremely open and defenceless; there are also many rich towns near the sea, which four or five thousand men, landing unexpectedly, might easily surprise and destroy, or exact from them a heavy contribution, taking a part in ready money and hostages for the rest. I should suppose, for example, that two millions sterling, or forty-eight millions of livres, might be demanded of Bristol for the town and shipping; twelve millions of livres from Bath; forth-eight millions from Liverpool; six millions from Lancaster; and twelve millions from Whitehaven. On the east side there are the towns of New Castle, Scarborough, Lynn, and Yarmouth, from which very considerable sums might be exacted. And if among the troops there were a few horsemen to make sudden incursions at some little distance from the coast, it would spread terror to much

greater distances, and the whole would occasion movements and marches of troops that must put the enemy to a prodigious expense and harass them exceedingly. Their militia will probably soon be drawn from the different counties to one or two places of encampment, so that little or no opposition can be made to such a force as is above mentioned in the places where they may land. But the practicability of such an operation, and the means of facilitating and executing it, military people can best judge of. I have not enough of knowledge in such matters to presume upon advising it, and I am so troublesome to the ministers on other accounts, that I could hardly venture to solicit it if I were ever so confident of its success. Much will depend on the prudent and brave sea commander, who knows the coasts, and on a leader of the troops who has the affair at heart, who is naturally active and quick in his enterprises, of a disposition proper to conciliate the goodwill and affection of both the corps, and by that means to prevent or obviate such misunderstandings as are apt to arise between them, and which are often pernicious to joint expeditions.

On the whole, it may be encouraging to reflect on the many instances of history which prove that in war, attempts thought to be impossible, do often, for that very reason become possible and practicable because nobody expects them and no precautions are taken to guard against them. And those are the kind of undertakings of which the success affords the most glory to the ministers who plan and to the officers who execute them.

With the sincerest esteem and affection, I have the honor to be, sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCLXXIV. TO A. LEE

Passy, 27 March, 1779.

Sir:—

I have not hitherto undertaken to justify Mr. Williams' accounts, nor to censure your conduct in not passing them. To prevent any suspicion of partiality towards him as my nephew, I avoided having any thing to do with the examination of them; but left it entirely to you and Mr. Adams. After that examination Mr. Adams drew up and sent me in for signing the order you mention. I considered the expressions in it as only serving to show that the accounts were not finally settled; and I considered Mr. Adams' drawing up and sending me the order as a proof that, in his judgment, who had with you examined the accounts, the bills drawn on M. Grand ought to be paid. I therefore signed it. I was not, as you suppose, convinced "*that the accounts as they stood could not be passed*"; for, having never examined them, I could form no such opinion of them. It was not till lately that, being pressed by M. Monthieu for a settlement of his accounts and finding that they had a reference to Mr. Williams, I got those from Mr. Adams. They were put up in a paper case which covered the note you had made upon them, and that case was fastened with wax. This prevented the notes being before seen either by myself or by Mr. Adams, among whose papers you had left those accounts. He was as much surprised at seeing it as I was, and as much dissatisfied with another you had made in the body of the accounts, which, taken with the first, imports that, notwithstanding it appeared from Mr. Williams' own account that he has now and has long had in his hands upwards of an hundred thousand livres belonging to the public, that have not been applied to the public use, "B. Franklin and John Adams, Esqrs., had given an order on the public banker for the payment of all Mr. Williams' demands."

This being a severe reflection upon us both, might be suspected, if I were disposed to be suspicious, as one reason why it was shown to neither of us, but left concealed among the papers to appear hereafter as a charge, not controverted at the time, whereby a future accusation might be confirmed. Mr. Adams spoke in strong terms of your having no right to enter notes upon papers without our consent or knowledge, and talked of making a counter entry, in which he would have shown that your assertion of our having "given an order for the payment of all Mr. Williams' demands" was not conformable to truth nor to the express terms of the order, but his attention being taken up with what related to his departure, was probably the cause of his omitting to make that entry. On the whole, I judged it now incumbent on me, for my own sake and Mr. Adams', as well as for the public interest, to have those accounts fully examined, as soon as possible, by skilful and impartial persons, of which I informed you in mine of the 13th instant, requesting you to aid the inquiry by stating your objections, that they might be considered by those judges, which I am sorry you do not think fit to comply with. I have no desire to screen Mr. Williams on account of his being my nephew; if he is guilty of what you charge him with, I care not how soon he is deservedly punished and the family purged of him; for I take it that a rogue living in [a] family is a greater disgrace to it than one *hanged out* of it. If he is innocent, justice requires that his character should be speedily cleared from the heavy charge with which it has been loaded.

I have the honor to be, etc.

B. Franklin.

DCCLXXV. TO A. LEE

Passy, 27 March, 1779.

Sir:—

The offer you make of sending me copies, sealed and authenticated, of all the papers in your hands is very satisfactory; and as you say they are but few I suppose it may soon be done. I imagined, when I desired you to send me the originals, that they were a great many, and at present of no importance to you, and therefore not worth copying. I assure you I had not the least intention of depriving you of any thing you might think necessary for your vindication. The suspicion is groundless and injurious. In a former letter I offered you authenticated copies of any remaining in my hands that you should judge might be of such use to you; and I now offer you the originals if you had rather have them, and will content myself with keeping copies.

Mr. Adams did not, as you insinuate, exact any promise of me to arrange and keep in order the papers he sent me. He knew such a promise unnecessary, for that I had always kept in order and by themselves the public papers that were in my hands, without having them so confounded among a multitude of other papers “that they could not be found when called for.”

I have the honor to be with great respect, sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCLXXVI. TO — SAYRE

Passy, 31 March, 1779.

Sir:—

I have just received your favor of the 10th inst. from Copenhagen. The account you give of the disposition of the

Swedish Court is very agreeable. I saw in the newspapers that a deputy of Congress was at Stockholm; did you obtain the audiences you mention on assuming that character? The information you did not choose to venture by the post from Copenhagen may be safely sent from Amsterdam.

I am not, as you have heard, the sole representative of America in Europe. The commissions of Mr. A. Lee, Mr. Wm. Lee, and Mr. Izard, to different courts still subsist. I am only sole with regard to France. Nor have I power to give you any employ worth your accepting.

Much has been said by the English about divisions in America. No division of any consequence has arisen there. Petty disputes between particular persons about private interests there are always in every country; but in regard to the great point of independence there is no difference of sentiment in the Congress, and as the Congress are the annual voice of the people, it is easy to judge of their sentiments by those of their representatives.

The taking of Savannah makes a noise in England and helps to keep up their spirits; but I apprehend, before the summer is over, they will find the possession of that capital of Georgia of as little consequence as their former possessions of Boston and Philadelphia; and that the distempers of that unwholesome part of the country will very much weaken, if not ruin, that army.

The principal difficulty at present in America consists in the depreciation of paper currency, owing to the over-quantities issued and the diminished demand of it in commerce. But as the Congress has taken measures for sinking it expeditiously, and the several governments are taxing vigorously for that purpose, there is a prospect of its recovering a proper value. In the meantime, though an evil to particulars, there is some advantage to the public in the depreciation, as large nominal values are more easily paid in taxes, and the debt by that means more easily extinguished.

B. Franklin.

DCCLXXVII. TO WILLIAM LEE

Passy, 2 April, 1779.

Sir:—

Before I apply for the arms you desire, I wish to be informed whether your brother did not apply for them at the same time he applied for the cannon he obtained, or since, in consequence of the letter you mention to have sent us in January last, and whether they were refused or promised.

Since I had the honor of seeing you I have received an application from the government of Maryland for a similar quantity of arms and military stores, which I am requested to obtain in the same manner, and these, with the orders of Congress, will make so vast a quantity, that I apprehend greater difficulties in obtaining them. I should be glad, therefore, if a part could be obtained elsewhere, that the quantity now to be applied for might be diminished. On this occasion permit me to mention that the D'Acostas have presented a memorial to me setting forth that they had provided arms, etc., to a great amount, in consequence of a contract made with you through your brother, and that for no other reason but because they were not finished at the time agreed, there having been a delay of a month, which they say was not their fault, but inevitable, he had refused to take them. Upon this they desire that I would procure justice to be done them, or that I would approve of their sending the goods and endeavor to have the contract complied with on the part of Virginia. I declined having any thing to do with the affair, but I wish you to consider whether it would not be prudent to moderate this little

difference with those people, and take the advantage of sending those arms, which have been proved good, and I suppose still lie at Nantes ready to be shipped immediately, rather than wait the success of a doubtful application.

I have the honor to be, sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCLXXVIII. TO JOHN ADAMS Ref. 004

Passy, 3 April, 1779.

Sir:—

I received the letter you did me the honor to write me of the 24th past. I am glad you have been at Brest, as your presence there has contributed to expedite the operations of Capt. Landais in refitting his ship. I think with you that more has been made of the conspiracy than was necessary; but that it would have been well if some of the most guilty could have received a proper punishment. As that was impracticable under our present naval code, I hope you will, on your return, obtain an amendment of it. I approve of clothing the midshipmen and petty officers agreeably to their request to you, and hope you have ordered it, without waiting to hear from me; and I now desire that whatever else you may judge for the good of the service, our friends and circumstances considered, you would in my behalf give directions for, as the great distance makes it inconvenient to send to me on every occasion; and I can confide in your prudence that you will allow no expense that is unnecessary.

My gout continues to disable me from walking longer than formerly; but on Tuesday the 23d past I thought myself able to go through the ceremony, and accordingly went to court, ^{Ref. 005} had my audience of the king in the

new character, presented my letter of credence, and was received very graciously. After which I went the rounds with the other foreign ministers, in visiting all the royal family. The fatigue, however, was a little too much for my feet, and disabled me for near another week. Upon the whole I can assure you that I do not think the good-will of this court to the good cause of America is at all diminished by the late little reverses in the fortune of war; and I hope Spain, who has now forty-nine ships of the line and thirty-one frigates ready for service, will soon, by declaring, turn the scale. Remember me affectionately to Master Johnny, and believe me, with great esteem, sir,

Your most obedient and most humble servant,

B. Franklin.

DCCLXXIX. TO JOSHUA JOHNSON

Passy, 8 April, 1779.

Sir:—

Mr. Wm. Lee has lately been here from Frankfort. He has desired me to make such an application in behalf of the State of Virginia as you request in behalf of Maryland. Messrs. D'Acosta & Co. had complained to me that they had provided what Mr. Lee wanted, in pursuance of a contract made with Mr. A. Lee, who had refused to take the goods off his hands. I proposed to Mr. Wm. Lee to accommodate this little difference, and take those goods now lying ready at Nantes to be shipped, rather than wait the event of an uncertain application to government. He absolutely refuses, and says you may take them for Maryland, if you please. Pray let me know, as soon as may be, whether it will not suit you to agree for them with these gentlemen.

I have the honor to be, etc.,
B. Franklin.

DCCLXXX. TO JONATHAN WILLIAMS

Passy, 8 April, 1779.

Dear Jonathan:—

Too much business, too much interruption by friendly visits, and a little remaining indisposition, have occasioned the delay in answering your late letters.

You desire a line “relative to the complexion of affairs.” If you mean our affairs at this court, they wear as good a complexion as ever they did.

I do not know what to advise concerning M. Monthieu’s proposition. Follow your own judgment. If you doubt, set down all the reasons, pro and con, in opposite columns on a sheet of paper, and when you have considered them two or three days, perform an operation similar to that in some questions of algebra; observe what reasons or motives in each column are equal in weight, one to one, one to two, two to three, or the like, and when you have struck out from both sides all the equalities, you will see in which column remains the balance. It is for want of having all the motives for and against an important action present in or before the mind at the same time, that people hesitate and change their determinations backwards and forwards day after day, as different sets of reasons are recollected or forgot, and if they conclude and act upon the last set, it is perhaps not because those were the best, but because they happened to be present in the mind, and the better absent. This kind of *moral algebra* I have often practised in important and dubious concerns, and though it cannot be mathematically exact, I have found it extremely useful. By

the way, if you do not learn it, I apprehend you will never be married.

There is in one account of the copper an article—*des mines de St. Bell*, 63,400. I suppose it was the word *mines*, not *Rosette*, that was translated *ore*.

Let me know, if you can, what answer the gentleman receives from London, on his inquiries concerning a supposed letter.

I send you herewith the paper you desire respecting the settlement of your accounts. I send, also, an attested copy of Mr. Lee's reasons for not passing them. In answer to my letter requesting him to furnish the gentlemen who are to examine them with such further objections as he may have against them, he writes me that "I must excuse him, now that it is no longer his indispensable duty, from concerning himself with a business which is in much abler hands. If Congress," he adds, "should call upon me for further reasons than those that I have already given, it will then be my duty to act, and I will obey." I cannot conceive his reason for not giving his further reasons, if he has any, on the present occasion, when they would be so proper; but he refused, and I cannot compel him.

I shall file the letters and papers you sent me with your accounts. I have received back those you enclosed in yours of March 27th, relating to M. Monthieu's contract. I have received, also, Messrs. Horneca & Fizeaux's invoice, and will return it by next post with the order you desire.

I have no objection to your mentioning the fact relative to the censure of M. Monthieu's accounts.

I am ever your affectionate uncle,
B. Franklin.

DCCLXXXI. TO J. ADAMS

Passy, 21 April, 1779.

Sir:—

I have received your two favors of the 13th inst. I am much obliged to you for undertaking the trouble of contenting the officers and people of the *Alliance*. I must now beg leave to make a little addition to that trouble by requesting your attention to the situation of the officers and sailors, late prisoners in England, which Mr. Williams will acquaint you with, and that you would likewise order for them such necessaries and comforts as we can afford. I wish we were able to do all they want and desire, but the scantiness of our funds and the multitude of demands prevent it.

The English papers talk much of their apprehensions about Spain; I hope they have some foundation.

With great esteem, I have the honor to be, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCLXXXII. TO JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

Passy, 21 April, 1779.

Dear Master Johnny:—

I am glad you have seen Brest and the fleet there. It must give you an idea of the naval force of this kingdom which you will long retain with pleasure.

I caused the letters you enclosed to me to be carefully delivered, but have not received answers to be sent you.

Benjamin, whom you so kindly remember, would have been glad to hear of your welfare, but he is gone to Geneva. As he is destined to live in a Protestant country, and a republic, I thought it best to finish his education where the proper principles prevail.

I heartily wish you a good voyage and a happy sight of your mamma, being really your affectionate friend,
B. Franklin.

DCCLXXXIII. TO JOSIAH QUINCY

Passy, 22 April, 1779.

Dear Sir:—

I received your very kind letter by Mr. Bradford, who appears a very sensible and amiable young gentleman, to whom I should with pleasure render any services in my power upon your much respected recommendation; but I understand he returns immediately.

It is with great sincerity I join you in acknowledging and admiring the dispensations of Providence in our favor. America has only to be thankful and to persevere. God will finish his work, and establish their freedom; and the lovers of liberty will flock from all parts of Europe with their fortunes to partake with us of that freedom, as soon as peace is restored.

I am exceedingly pleased with your account of the French politeness and civility, as it appeared among the officers and people of their fleet. They have certainly advanced in those respects many degrees beyond the English. I find them here a most amiable nation to live with. The Spaniards are, by common opinion, supposed to be cruel, the English proud, the Scotch insolent, the Dutch avaricious, etc., but I think the French have no national vice ascribed to them. They have some frivolities, but they are harmless. To dress their heads so that a hat cannot be put on them, and then wear their hats under their arms, and to fill their noses with tobacco, may be called follies, perhaps, but they are not vices. They are only the effects of

the tyranny of custom. In short, there is nothing wanting in the character of a Frenchman that belongs to that of an agreeable and worthy man. There are only some trifles surplus, or which might be spared.

Will you permit me, while I do them this justice, to hint a little censure on our own country people, which I do in good-will, wishing the cause removed. You know the necessity we are under of supplies from Europe, and the difficulty we have at present in making returns. The interest bills would do a good deal towards purchasing arms, ammunition, clothing, sail-cloth, and other necessaries for defence. Upon inquiry of those who present these bills to me for acceptance, what the money is to be laid out in, I find that most of it is for superfluities, and more than half of it for tea. How unhappily in this instance the folly of our people and the avidity of our merchants concur to weaken and impoverish our country. I formerly computed that we consumed before the war, in that single article, the value of five hundred thousand pounds sterling annually. Much of this was saved by stopping the use of it. I honored the virtuous resolution of our women in foregoing that little gratification, and I lament that such virtue should be of so short duration. Five hundred thousand pounds sterling annually laid out in defending ourselves, or annoying our enemies, would have great effect. With what face can we ask aids and subsidies from our friends while we are wasting our own wealth in such prodigality? With great and sincere esteem, I have the honor to be, dear sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCLXXXIV. TO SAMUEL COOPER

Passy, 22 April, 1779.

My Dear Friend:—

I received your valuable letter by the Marquis de Lafayette, and another by Mr. Bradford. I can only write a few words in answer to the latter, the former not being at hand. The depreciation of our money must, as you observe, greatly affect salary men, widows, and orphans. Methinks this evil deserves the attention of the several legislatures, and ought, if possible to be remedied by some equitable law particularly adapted to their circumstances. I took all the pains I could in Congress to prevent the depreciation, by proposing, first, that the bills should bear interest; this was rejected, and they were struck as you see them. Secondly, after the first emission, I proposed that we should stop, strike no more, but borrow on interest those we had issued. This was not then approved of, and more bills were issued. When, from the too great quantity, they began to depreciate, we agreed to borrow on interest; and I proposed that, in order to fix the value of the principal, the interest should be promised in hard dollars. This was objected to as impracticable; but I still continue of opinion that by sending out cargoes to purchase it, we might have brought in money sufficient for that purpose, as we brought in powder, etc., etc.; and that, though the attempt must have been attended with a disadvantage, the loss would have been a less mischief than any measure attending the discredit of the bills, which threatens to take out of our hands the great instrument of our defence.

The Congress did at last come into the proposal of paying the interest in real money. But when the whole mass of the currency was *under way* in depreciation, the momentum of its descent was too great to be stopped by a power that might at first have been sufficient to prevent the beginning of the motion. The *only remedy* now seems to be a diminution of the quantity by a vigorous taxation of great *nominal* sums, which the people are more able to pay,

in proportion to the quantity and diminished value; and the *only consolation* under the evil is, that the public debt is proportionably diminished with the depreciation; and this by a kind of imperceptible tax, every one having paid a part of it in the fall of value that took place between the receiving and paying such sums as passed through his hands. For it should always be remembered that the original intention was to sink the bills by taxes, which would as effectually extinguish the debt as an actual redemption.

This effect of paper currency is not understood on this side the water. And indeed the whole is a mystery even to the politicians, how we have been able to continue a war four years without money, and how we could pay with paper that had no previously fixed fund appropriated specifically to redeem it. This currency, as we manage it, is a wonderful machine. It performs its office when we issue it; it pays and clothes the troops, and provides victuals and ammunition; and when we are obliged to issue a quantity excessive, it pays itself off by depreciation.

Our affairs in general stand in a fair light throughout Europe. Our cause is universally approved. Our constitutions of government have been translated and printed in most languages, and are so much admired for the spirit of liberty that reigns in them, that it is generally agreed we shall have a vast accession of national property after the war, from every part of this continent, and particularly from the British Islands. We have only to persevere and to be happy.

Yours, etc.,
B. Franklin.

DCCLXXXV. FROM DAVID HARTLEY