

A portrait of Benjamin Franklin, an older man with long, wavy grey hair, wearing a white cravat and a light-colored coat. He is looking slightly to the right with a serious expression. The background is dark and textured.

THE WORKS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

VOLUME 9: 1781 - 1782

The Works of Benjamin
Franklin

Volume 9

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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**CORRESPONDENCE AND MISCELLANEOUS
WRITINGS
1781 - 1782**

DCCCCLXXXIII. FROM ROBERT MORRIS

Philadelphia, 13 July, 1781.

Sir:—

The unanimous appointment to the superintendency of our finances, with which Congress has honored me, and my conviction of the necessity that some *one* person should endeavor to introduce method and economy into the administration of affairs, have induced me, though with reluctance, to accept that office. ^{Ref. 002} Mr. Jay will receive by this conveyance, and forward to you, copies of those resolutions and letters which may be necessary to explain my appointment and powers.

I wish I could as readily effect, as I most ardently desire, the accomplishment of all proper arrangements. Thoroughly convinced that no country is truly independent, until, with her own credit and resources, she is able to defend herself and correct her enemies, it shall be my constant endeavor to establish our credit and draw out our resources in such manner, that we may be little burdensome and essentially useful to our friends.

I am sure I need not mention to *you* the importance of collecting a revenue with ease, and expending it with economy. As little need I detail the time, the authority, the ability, the favorable circumstances, that must combine for

these purposes. But I think that I may assert that the situation of a country, just emerging from dependence and struggling for existence, is peculiarly unfavorable; and I may add that this country, by relying too much on paper, is in a condition of peculiar disorder and debility. To rescue and restore her is an object equal to my warmest wishes, though probably beyond the stretch of my abilities.

Success will greatly depend on the pecuniary aid we may obtain from abroad; because money is necessary to introduce economy, while, at the same time, economy is necessary to obtain money; besides that, a greater plenty of solid circulating medium is required to support those operations which must give stability to our credit, fruitfulness to our revenue, and activity to our operations. Among those things which, after the experience and example of other ages and nations, I have been induced to adopt, is that of a national bank, the plan of which I enclose. I mean to render this a principal pillar of American credit, so as to obtain the money of individuals for the benefit of the Union, and thereby bind those individuals more strongly to the general cause by the ties of private interest. To the efficacy of this plan, as well as to the establishment of a mint, which would also be of use, a considerable sum of money is necessary, and, indeed, it is indispensably so for many other purposes.

Be not alarmed, sir, from what I have said, with the apprehension that I am about to direct solicitations to the court of Versailles; which, after the repeated favors they have conferred, must be peculiarly disagreeable. On the contrary, as I am convinced that the moneys of France will all be usefully employed in the vigorous prosecution of the war by her own fleets and armies, I lament every sum which is diverted from them. Our necessities have, indeed, called for her aid, and perhaps they may continue to do so. Those calls have hitherto been favorably attended to, and the pressure of our necessities has been generously

alleviated; nor do I at all doubt that future exigencies will excite the same dispositions in our favor, and that those dispositions will be followed with correspondent effects. But I again repeat my wish, at once to render America independent of, and useful to, her friends.

With these views, I have directed Mr. Jay to ask a considerable sum from the court of Madrid, to be advanced us at the Havana, and brought thence by us, if it cannot conveniently be landed here from Spanish men-of-war. I say a *considerable sum*, because, as I have declared to him, I do not wish to labor under the weight of obligation without deriving from it any real benefit, and because I consider the advance of small sums rather as a temporary palliation than a radical remedy. Our disorders are such that the former can be of no use, and it would be better to desist in a desultory defence than to put on the delusive appearance of a vigor we do not feel; for this lulls the people into a dangerous security, and softens those hopes of the enemy which give duration and extent to the war. It is the disorder of our finances which has prevented us from a powerful co-operation with our allies, and which has enabled the enemy to linger on our coasts with the dregs of a force once formidable; and it is from this cause that they have been permitted to extend the theatre, and multiply the victims, of their ambition.

America alone will not derive benefit from the advances which Spain may make to her. All the associates in the war will feel the *consequential* advantages. The expense of the American war now hangs a heavy weight around Britain, and enfeebles her on that element which she called her own. An increase of that expense, or the loss of her posts here, must necessarily follow from additional efforts on our part; and either of these must be a consequential benefit to those who are opposed to her. France will derive a small *immediate* benefit from it, as she will thereby get more money here for her bills of exchange than she can at

present procure. But it is not so much from any advantage which may be expected to that kingdom, or from any motives of *interest*, as from the generosity and magnanimity of the prince, that we hope for support. I will not doubt a moment that, at your instance, his Majesty will make pressing representations in support of Mr. Jay's application, and I hope that the authority of so great a sovereign, and the arguments of his able ministry, will shed auspicious influence on our negotiations at Madrid.

From the best returns I have been able to collect, and which are in some measure imperfect, from the confusions and disasters of the Southern States, I find that there are about seven million two hundred thousand dollars due on certificates, which bear an interest of six per cent., payable in France at the rate of five livres for every dollar. Many causes have conspired to depreciate the certificates, notwithstanding the interest is so well secured and has been punctually paid. This depreciation is so great that they are daily offered for sale at a very considerable discount, which is attended with two pernicious consequences: one, that a considerable expense is unnecessarily incurred; and the other, that the public credit is unnecessarily impaired. If I had the means, therefore, I would remove this evil by purchasing in the certificates; and to procure this means I am to pray that you would state this matter fully to the ministers of his most Christian Majesty. The interest being guaranteed by the court of France, they now pay for this purpose two million one hundred and sixty thousand livres annually, a sum which in less than ten years would pay a debt of fifteen millions of livres at five per cent. interest. With fifteen millions of livres, however, prudently managed, the whole of these certificates might be paid. I am sure it is unnecessary to dwell on the advantages which would result from making such a loan for this purpose; and I trust that if this matter is stated to M. Necker that enlightened minister will co-

operate in the plan to the utmost of his ability. I again repeat that I do not wish to lay any burdens on France; but this proposal is calculated to relieve us both; and, in any case, the expense to France will be the same. Should it be adopted, I must request the earliest notice, that my operations may commence; and, in any case, I hope that secrecy will be observed, for the most evident reasons.

I am sorry to inform you that we have as yet no satisfactory news of the ship *Lafayette*; but, on the contrary, her long delay occasions the most alarming apprehensions. If, as but too probable, that ship is lost, you will more easily conceive than I can describe what will be the situation of our troops next winter.

I could wish, as soon as possible, to have a state of all the public accounts transmitted, to the end that moneys due to the United States may be paid, and measures taken to provide for such sums as they stand indebted in to others. Your Excellency will, I dare say, send them as soon as may be convenient; and I hope the public affairs will hereafter be conducted in such a manner as to give you much less of that unnecessary trouble which you have hitherto experienced, and which could not but have harassed you exceedingly, and perhaps taken up time which would otherwise have been devoted to more important objects.

I shall probably have frequent occasion to address you, and shall always be happy to hear from you; but the mischiefs which arise from having letters intercepted are great and alarming. I have, therefore, enclosed you a cipher, and in the duplicate of my letters I shall enclose you another. If both arrive, you will use one; and, in case of your absence, leave the other with such person as may supply your place. Let me know, however, which cipher you use.

The bearer of this letter, Major Franks, formerly an aide-de-camp to General Arnold, and honorably acquitted of all connection with him, after a full and impartial inquiry, will

be able to give you our public news more particularly than I could relate them. He sails hence for Cadiz, and on his arrival will proceed to Madrid, where, having delivered my letters to Mr. Jay, he will take his orders for you. He will then wait your orders, and, I hope, will soon after meet a safe opportunity of coming to America. With the most perfect esteem and regard, I have the honor to be, etc.,

Robert Morris.

DCCCCLXXXIV. TO FELIX VICQ D'AZYR Ref. 003

Passy, 20 July, 1781.

Sir:—

I received the letter you some time since did me the honor of writing to me, accompanied with a number of the pieces that were distributed at the last public meeting of the Royal Society of Medicine. I shall take care to forward them to different parts of America, as desired. Be pleased to present my thanks to the society for the copy sent me of the curious and useful reports relating to the sepulture in the island of Malta. I should be glad of another copy, if it can be spared, being desirous of sending one to each of the philosophical societies in America.

With respect to the length of time during which the power of infection may be contained in dead bodies, which is considered in that report, I would mention to you three facts which, though not all of equal importance or weight, yet methinks it may be well to preserve a memorandum of them, that such observations may be made, when occasion offers, as are proper to confirm or invalidate them.

While I resided in England, I read in a newspaper that in a country village at the funeral of a woman whose husband had died of the small-pox thirty years before, and whose

grave was dug so as to place her by his side, the neighbors attending the funeral were offended with the smell arising out of the grave, occasioned by a breach in the husband's old coffin, and twenty-five of them, were in a few days taken ill with that distemper, which before was not in that village or its neighborhood, nor had been for the number of years above mentioned.

About the years 1763 or 1764, several physicians of London, who had been present from curiosity, at the dissection of an Egyptian mummy, were soon after taken ill of a malignant fever, of which they died. Opinions were divided on this question. It was thought by some that the fever was caused by infection from the mummy, in which case the disease it died of must have been embalmed as well as the body. Others who considered the length of time, at least two thousand years, since that body died, and also that the embalming must be rather supposed to destroy the power of infection, imagined the illness of these gentlemen must have had another origin.

About the year 1773, the captain of a ship, which had been at the island of Teneriffe, brought from thence the dried body of one of the ancient inhabitants of that island, which must have been at least three hundred years old, that custom of drying the dead there having been so long discontinued. Two members of the Royal Society went to see that body. They were half an hour in a small close room with it, examining it very particularly. The next day they were both affected with a singularly violent *cold*,^{Ref.}
⁰⁰⁴ attended with uncommon circumstances, which continued a long time. On comparing together the particulars of their disorder, they agreed in suspecting that possibly some effluvia from the body might have been the occasion of that disorder in them both; perhaps they were mistaken. But, as we do not yet know with certainty how long the power of infection may in some bodies be retained,

it seems well in such cases to be cautious till further light shall be obtained.

I wish it were in my power to contribute more essentially in advancing the good work the society are so laudably engaged in. Perhaps some useful hints may be extracted from the enclosed paper of Mr. Small's. ^{Ref. 005} It is submitted to your judgment; and if you should find any thing in it worthy of being communicated to the society, and of which extracts may be useful if printed in the memoirs, it will be a pleasure to me; who am, with great esteem and respect, sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

P. S. July 24th.—Since writing the above, I have met with the following article in the *Courier de l'Europe* of the 13th instant, viz.:

Extract of a Letter from Edinburgh, dated June 30th

"I understand by a person just returned from Montrose that the epidemic fever, which has made its appearance in the county of Mearns, ravages that neighborhood with such violence that one of his friends was invited to attend fifteen funerals on the same day. It is said that this malady originated in the ill-judged curiosity of some country people, who, at Candlemas last, opened the graves of some persons who had died of the plague in the preceding century, and who had been buried in the Moss of Arnhall. The circumstances which have happened in the family of Mr. Robert Aikenhead are singularly unfortunate; about the middle of last month he took the infection, which was communicated to the rest of his family, consisting of nine persons; two of whom, together with himself, are dead, and the others not out of danger."

DCCCCLXXXV. TO ROBERT MORRIS

Passy, 26 July, 1781.

Dear Sir:—

I have just received your very friendly letter of the 6th of June past, announcing your appointment to the superintendence of our finances. This gave me great pleasure, as, from your intelligence, integrity, and abilities, there is reason to hope every advantage that the public can possibly receive from such an office. You are wise in estimating beforehand, as the principal advantage you can expect, the consciousness of having done service to your country; for the business you have undertaken is of so complex a nature, and must engross so much of your time and attention, as necessarily to injure your private interests; and the public is often niggardly, even of its thanks, while you are sure of being censured by malevolent critics and bug-writers, who will abuse you while you are serving them, and wound your character in nameless pamphlets; thereby resembling those little dirty insects that attack us only in the dark, disturb our repose, molesting and wounding us, while our sweat and blood are contributing to their subsistence. Every assistance that my situation here, as long as it continues, may enable me to afford you, shall certainly be given; for, besides my affection for the glorious cause we are both engaged in, I value myself upon your friendship, and shall be happy if mine can be made of any use to you.

With great and sincere esteem, I am ever, dear sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

P. S.—With this I shall send an answer to your official letter of June 8th.

DCCCCLXXXVI. TO ROBERT MORRIS

Passy, 26 July, 1781.

Dear Sir:—

I have received the letter you honored me with, of the 8th of June past, ^{Ref. 006} acquainting me that, as Superintendent of Finance, you have named Messrs. Couteulx & Co., at Paris, to receive from his Majesty's ministers the money granted to Congress, that they may be enabled to honor your bills whenever they appear; and you intimate a desire to be informed of the responsibility of that house.

With regard to the six millions given by the king in aid of our operations for the present campaign, before the arrival of Mr. Laurens, two millions five hundred thousand of it went in the same ship with him in cash; stores equivalent to two millions two hundred thousand more of it were ordered by him and are shipped; one million five hundred thousand was sent to Holland, to go in the ship commanded by Commodore Gillon. Add to this, that Captain Jackson, by his orders, purchased clothing and stores in Holland to the value of about fifty thousand pounds sterling, for which he has drawn bills on me, which bills I accepted, and also agreed to pay those drawn on Messrs. Laurens, Jay, and Adams; expecting aid from a projected loan of ten millions of livres for our use in Holland. But, this loan meeting with unforeseen difficulties, and its success uncertain, I have found myself obliged to stop the money in Holland, in order to be able to save the honor of the Congress drafts, and to comply with my engagements.

By these means you have really at present no funds here to draw upon. I hope, however, that Messrs. Couteulx & Co. will be enabled to honor your drafts; but I trust in your prudence that you will draw no more till you have advice of

funds provided. And, as the laying out so much money in Holland instead of France is disapproved here, and the payment will, therefore, not be provided for, I must earnestly request your aid in remitting that sum to me before December next, when my acceptances will become due, otherwise I shall be ruined with the American credit in Europe.

With regard to the wealth and credit of the house of Le Couteulx & Co., I have never heard it in question. But as Mr. Ferdinand Grand, banker at Paris, and his brother, Sir George Grand, banker in Holland, have been our zealous and firm friends ever since our arrival in France, have aided us greatly by their personal interest and solicitations, and have often been six or seven hundred thousand livres in advance for us, and are houses of unquestionable solidity, I cannot but be concerned at any step for taking our business out of their hands, and wish your future bills may be drawn on Ferdinand Grand; for I think it concerns our public reputation to preserve the character of gratitude, as well as that of honesty and justice. The commission hitherto charged to us by Mr. Grand for receiving and paying our money is a half per cent., which, considering the trouble given by the vast number of small drafts for interest of the loans, appears to me a moderate consideration. With great and sincere esteem, I have the honor to be, dear sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCCCLXXXVII. TO JOHN ADAMS

Passy, 6 August, 1781.

Sir:—

I some time since gave orders, as you desired, to Mr. Grand to furnish you with a credit in Holland for the remainder of your salary to November next. But I am now told that, your account having been mixed with Mr. Dana's, he finds it difficult to know the sum due to you. Be pleased therefore to state your account for two years, giving credit for the sums you have received, that an order may be made for the balance. Upon this occasion it is right to acquaint you that I do not think we can depend on receiving any more money here, applicable to the support of the Congress ministers.

What aids are hereafter granted will probably be transmitted by the government directly to America. It will therefore be proper to inform Congress, that care may be taken to furnish their servants by remittances from thence. I have the honor to be, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCCCLXXXVIII. TO CHARLES W. F. DUMAS

Passy, 6 August, 1781.

Dear Sir:—

I received several letters from you lately, enclosing others for the President of Congress, and for Spain, all of which are sealed and forwarded, except the last for the President, contained in yours of the 26th past, which shall go by the first opportunity. The reading of those letters gave me much information, and therefore pleasure; though, since the fixing of Mr. Adams there, I do not attend so much to the affairs of your country as before, expecting indeed but little from it to our advantage; for, though it was formerly in the same situation with us, and was glad of assistance from other nations, it does not seem to *feel* for us, or to

have the least inclination to help us; it appears to want magnanimity.

Some writer, I forget who, says that Holland is no longer *a nation*, but *a great shop*; and I begin to think it has no other principles or sentiments but those of a shopkeeper. You can judge of it better than I, and I shall be happy to find myself mistaken. You will oblige me, however, by continuing the history either directly to me or in your letters to Congress; but when you enclose a sealed letter in another to me, please to observe to place the second seal on one side, and not directly over the first; because the heat of the second is apt to deface the impression of the first, and to attach the paper to it, so as to endanger tearing the enclosed in opening the cover. With best wishes for your health and prosperity, I am ever, dear sir, etc.

B. Franklin.

P. S.—I pity the writer of the enclosed, though I have no other acquaintance with him than having seen him once at Hanover, where he then seemed to live genteelly and in good credit. I cannot conceive what should reduce him to such a situation as to engage himself for a soldier. If you can procure him any friends among the philosophers of your country capable of relieving him, I wish you would do it. If not, and he must go to the Indies, please to give him three or four guineas for me, to buy a few necessaries for his voyage.

DCCCCLXXXIX. TO CHARLES W. F. DUMAS

Passy, 10 August, 1781.

Dear Sir:—

Enclosed I send you a late paper received from Rhode Island. You will see in it the advantages our troops have

gained in South Carolina. Late advices directly from Philadelphia say that the enemy have now nothing left in Georgia but Savannah; in South Carolina but Charleston; nor in North Carolina but Wilmington. They are, however, in force in Virginia, where M. de Lafayette has not sufficient strength to oppose them, till the arrival of reinforcements, which were on their march to join him from Maryland and Pennsylvania.

In looking over my last to you, I apprehend I may have expressed myself perhaps a little too hardly of your country; I foresee you will tell me that we have many friends there; I once thought so too; but I was a little out of humor when I wrote, on understanding that no loan could be obtained there for our use, though the credit of this kingdom was offered to be engaged for assuring the payment, and so much is lent freely to our enemies. You can best tell the reason; it will be well not to let my letter be seen. I am ever, dear sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCCCXC. TO WILLIAM CARMICHAEL

Passy, 24 August, 1781.

Dear Sir:—

On looking over your letters, I am ashamed to find myself so much and so long in your debt. I thank you for making me acquainted with M. Sonnerat. He appears a very amiable man, and is full of intelligence and information.

We are all much obliged to Count de Montmorin ^{Ref.}
⁰⁰⁷ for his friendly assistance in our affairs. Please to present to him my thankful acknowledgments. I thank you also for my being made known to M. Giusti; I saw him

often, and had much satisfaction and pleasure in his conversation.

The Congress have done me the honor to refuse accepting my resignation, and insist on my continuing in their service till the peace. I must therefore buckle again to business, and thank God that my health and spirits are of late improved. I fancy it may have been a double mortification to those enemies you have mentioned to me, that I should ask as a favor what they hoped to vex me by taking from me; and that I should nevertheless be continued. But this sort of considerations should never influence our conduct. We ought always to do what appears best to be done, without much regarding what others may think of it. I call this continuance an honor, and I really esteem it to be a greater than my first appointment, when I consider that all the interest of my enemies, united with my own request, were not sufficient to prevent it. Ref. 008

I have not yet received the works of your Economical Society, or those of its founder. I suppose you have not met with an opportunity of sending them. The letter you propose sending to our Philosophical Society will be very acceptable to them. I shall be glad to peruse the copy you propose passing through my hands. Yours,

B. Franklin.

DCCCCXCI. TO WILLIAM NIXON Ref. 009

Passy, 5 September, 1781.

Reverend Sir:—

I duly received the letter you did me the honor of writing to me the 25th past, together with the valuable little book, of which you are the author. There can be no doubt but that a gentleman of your learning and abilities might make a

very useful member of society in our new country, and meet with encouragement there, either as an instructor in one of our universities, or as a clergyman of the Church of Ireland. But I am not empowered to engage any person to go over thither, and my abilities to assist the distressed are very limited. I suppose you will soon be set at liberty in England by the cartel for the exchange of prisoners. In the meantime, if five *louis-d'ors* will be of present service to you, please to draw on me for that sum, and your bill shall be paid on sight. Some time or other you may have an opportunity of assisting with an equal sum a stranger who has equal need of it. Do so. By that means you will discharge any obligation you may suppose yourself under to me. Enjoin him to do the same on occasion. By pursuing such a practice, much good may be done with little money. Let kind offices go round. Mankind are all of a family. I have the honor to be, reverend sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCCCXCII. TO ROBERT MORRIS

Passy, 12 September, 1781.

Dear Sir:—

I have received your letters of July 13th, 14th, 19th, and 21st, all at once, by way of L'Orient. The originals of those you mention to have sent by Major Franks are not yet come to hand, nor have I heard of his arrival in Spain. Your letters of June 6th and 8th were remarkably lucky in getting to hand. I think I have received seven of the copies you had the precaution to send me. I enclose copies of my answers.

I have now the pleasure to acquaint you that I have obtained a promise of the sum I wanted to pay the bills I

had accepted for the purchases made in Holland; so that your supplying me with remittances for that purpose, which I requested, is now unnecessary, and I shall finish the year with honor. But it is as much as I can do, with the aid of the sum I stopped in Holland; the drafts on Mr. Jay and on Mr. Adams much exceeding what I had been made to expect.

I had been informed that the Congress had promised to draw no more bills on Europe after the month of March last, till they should know they had funds here; but I learn from Mr. Adams that some bills have been lately presented to him, drawn June 22d, on Mr. Laurens, who is in the Tower, which makes the proceeding seem extraordinary. Mr. Adams cannot pay these bills, and I cannot engage for them; for I see by the minutes of Congress you have sent me that, though they have stopped issuing bills drawn on the ministers at Madrid and the Hague until they shall be assured that funds are provided for paying them, they have left open to be sold those drawn on their minister at Versailles, funds or no funds; which, in the situation you will see I am in by the letters of the Count de Vergennes, terrifies me; for I have promised not to accept any drafts made on me by order of Congress, if such should be after the time above mentioned, unless I have funds in my hands, or in view, to pay them. After its being declared to me that such bills could not be provided for, and my promise not to engage for them, it will be impossible to ask for the money, if I should accept them; and I believe those bills of Mr. Ross must go back protested.

The projected loan in Holland has of late some appearances of success. I am indeed told it is agreed to by the States; but I do not yet think it so certain as to venture, or advise the venturing, to act in expectation of it. The instant it is assured, I will send you advice of it by every opportunity, and will, from time to time, send parts of it in cash by such ships of war as can conveniently take it.

I cannot write to you fully by this opportunity. I will not, however, delay acquainting you that, having the fullest confidence in your assurances of enabling me to pay them, I shall cheerfully accept your bills of four hundred thousand livres. Captain Gillon has sailed from Holland, without taking under his convoy the two vessels that were freighted to carry the goods purchased by Captain Jackson in Holland. There has been terrible management there; and from the confusion in the ship before and when she sailed, it is a question if she ever arrives in America.

They are hard at work here in providing the supplies to replace those lost in the *Marquis de Lafayette*. With best wishes of success to you in your new employment, and assurances of every aid I can afford you, I am, dear sir, etc.,
B. Franklin.

DCCCCXCIII. TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

Passy, 13 September, 1781.

Sir:—

I duly received the two letters your Excellency did me the honor of writing to me, both dated the 19th of June, together with the letter addressed to the king and the three commissioners with the instructions relative to the negotiations for peace. I immediately went to Versailles and presented the letter, which was graciously received. I communicated also to Count de Vergennes a copy of your instructions after having deciphered them. He read them while I was with him, and expressed his satisfaction with the unreserved confidence placed in his court by the Congress, assuring me that they never would have cause to regret it, for that the king had the honor of the United States at heart, as well as their welfare and independence.

Indeed, this has already been manifested in the negotiations relative to the plenipotentiaries; and I have had so much experience of his Majesty's goodness to us, in the aids afforded us from time to time, and of the sincerity of this upright and able minister, who never promised me any thing which he did not punctually perform, that I cannot but think the confidence well and judiciously placed, and that it will have happy effects.

I have communicated to Mr. Adams and to Mr. Jay the purport of your despatches. Mr. Adams already had received the same; by the first safe conveyance, I shall acquaint the Congress with the steps that have been taken in the negotiation. At present I would only say that the settling of preliminaries meets with difficulty, and will probably take much time, partly from the remoteness of the mediators; so that any relaxation of our warlike preparations, in expectation of a speedy peace, will be imprudent, as it may be pernicious.

I am extremely sensible of the honor done me by the Congress in this new appointment. I beg they would accept my thankful acknowledgments; and, since they judge I may be serviceable, though I had requested leave to retire, I submit dutifully to their determination, and shall do my utmost to merit in some degree the favorable opinion they appear to have of me. I am the more encouraged in this resolution, as within the last three months I find my health and strength considerably re-established.

I wish, however, that the consul-general may soon be appointed for this kingdom; it would ease me of abundance of troublesome business, to which I am not equal, and which interferes with my own important functions.

The king having graciously complied with my request, of replacing the supplies lost in the *Marquis de Lafayette*, many hands are employed in providing them, who work hard to have them ready and shipped so that

they arrive before winter. With the highest respect, I have the honor to be, etc.,

B. Franklin.

P. S.—The copying machine for Mr. Secretary Thomson is in hand, and will soon be finished and sent to him.

DCCCCXCIV. TO DANIEL OF ST. THOMAS JENIFER
Ref. 010

Passy, 13 September, 1781.

Sir:—

I received the very obliging letter you did me the honor of writing to me the 20th of June last. It gave me great satisfaction to find, by the unanimous choice you mention, that my services had not been unacceptable to Congress; and to hear also that they were favorably disposed towards my grandson, Temple Franklin. It was my desire to quit public business, fearing it might suffer in my hands through the infirmities incident to my time of life. But, as they are pleased to think I may still be useful, I submit to their judgment, and shall do my best.

I immediately forwarded the letter you enclosed for Mr. Lowndes; and if in any thing else I can do you service or pleasure here, please to command me freely. I have the honor to be, with great regard, sir, etc.,

B. Franklin.

DCCCCXCV. TO RICHARD BACHE

Passy, 13 September, 1781.

Dear Son:—

I received yours of June 20th. It gave me great pleasure, as it informed me of the welfare of yourself and the dear family.

I have read Mr. Wharton's pamphlet. The facts, as far as I know them, are as he states them. Justice is, I think, on the side of those who contracted for the lands. ^{Ref. 011} But moral and political rights sometimes differ, and sometimes are both subdued by might. I received, and thank you for, several copies of the Indian *Spelling Book*. I received also the German and English newspapers.

Among my papers in the trunk, which I unhappily left in the care of Mr. Galloway, were eight or ten quire or two-quire books, of rough drafts of my letters, containing all my correspondence when in England, for near twenty years. I shall be very sorry if they too are lost. Do not you think it possible, by going up into that country, and inquiring a little among the neighbors, you might possibly hear of and recover some of them. I should not have left them in his hands if he had not deceived me by saying that though he was before otherwise inclined, yet that, since the king had declared us out of his protection, and the Parliament by an act had made our properties plunder, he would go as far in the defence of his country as any man, and accordingly he had lately, with pleasure, given colors to a regiment of militia, and an entertainment to four hundred of them before his house. I thought he was become a staunch friend to the glorious cause. I was mistaken. As he was a friend of my son's, to whom in my will I had left all my books and papers, I made him one of my executors, and put the trunk of papers in his hands, imagining them safer in his house (which was out of the way of any probable march of the enemy's troops) than in my own. It was very unlucky.

My love to Sally and the children. I shall soon write to all my friends. At present I am pinched in time, and can only add that I am ever your affectionate father,

B. Franklin.

DCCCCXCVI. TO FRANCIS HOPKINSON

Passy, 13 September, 1781.

Dear Sir:—

I have received your kind letter of July 17th, with its duplicate, enclosing those for Messrs. Brandlight & Sons, which I have forwarded. I am sorry for the loss of the *Squibs*. Every thing of yours gives me pleasure.

As to the friends and enemies you just mention, I have hitherto, thanks to God, had plenty of the former kind; they have been my treasure, and it has perhaps been of no disadvantage to me that I have had a few of the latter. They serve to put us upon correcting the faults we have, and avoiding those we are in danger of having. They counteract the mischief flattery might do us, and the malicious attacks make our friends more zealous in serving us and promoting our interest. At present I do not know of more than two such enemies that I enjoy, viz. — and —. I deserve the enmity of the latter, because I might have avoided it by paying him a compliment, which I neglected. That of the former I owe to the people of France, who happened to respect me too much and him too little, which I could bear, and he could not. They are unhappy that they cannot make everybody hate me as much as they do, and I should be so if my friends did not love me much more than those gentlemen can possibly love one another.

Enough of this subject. Let me know if you are in possession of my gimcrack instruments, and if you have

made any new experiments. I lent, many years ago, a large glass globe, mounted, to Mr. Coombe, and an electric battery of bottles, which I remember; perhaps there were some other things. He may have had them so long as to think them his own. Pray ask him for them, and keep them for me, together with the rest.

You have a new crop of prose writers. I see in your papers many of their fictitious names, but nobody tells me the real. You will oblige me by a little of your literary history. Adieu, my dear friend, and believe me ever yours affectionately,

B. Franklin.

DCCCCXCVII. TO JOHN INGENHOUSZ

Passy, 2 October, 1781.

It is a long time, my dear friend, since I have had the pleasure of writing to you. I have postponed it too often from a desire of writing a good deal on various subjects, which I could not find sufficient time to think of properly. Your experiments *on the conducting of heat* was one subject; the finishing my *remarks on the stroke of lightning in Italy* was another. Then I was taken ill with a severe fit of the gout soon after you left us, which held me near three months, and put my business and correspondence so far behindhand that I was long in getting it up again. Add to this, that I find indolence increases with age, and that I have not near the activity I formerly had. But I cannot afford to lose your correspondence, in which I have always found so much pleasure and instruction. I now force myself to write, and I fancy this letter will be long.

I have now before me your several favors of December 5th, 1780, February 7th, April 7th, May 23d, and August 29th, 1781. I was glad to find by the first that you enjoyed a

good state of health, and that you had leisure to pursue your philosophical inquiries. I wish you that continued success, which so much industry, sagacity, and exactness in making experiments have a right to expect. You will have much immediate pleasure by that success, and in time great reputation. But for the present the reputation will be given grudgingly, and in as small a quantity as possible, mixed, too, with some mortification. One would think that a man so laboring disinterestedly for the good of his fellow-creatures, could not possibly by such means make himself enemies; but there are minds who cannot bear that another should distinguish himself even by greater usefulness; and, though he demands no profit, nor any thing in return but the good-will of those he is serving, they will endeavor to deprive him of that, first, by disputing the truth of his experiments, then their utility; and, being defeated there, they finally dispute his right to them, and would give the credit of them to a man that lived three thousand years ago, or at three thousand leagues' distance, rather than to a neighbor, or even a friend. Go on, however, and never be discouraged. Others have met with the same treatment before you, and will after you. And, whatever some may think and say, it is worth while to do men good, for the self-satisfaction one has in the reflection.

Your account of the experiments you made with the wires gave me a great deal of pleasure. I have shown it to several persons here, who think it exceedingly curious. If you should ever repeat those experiments, I wish your attention to one circumstance. I think it possible that, in dipping them into the wax, and taking them out suddenly, the metal which attracts heat most readily may chill and draw out with it a thicker coat of wax; and this thicker coat might, in the progress of the experiment, be longer melting. They should therefore be kept so long in the wax, as to be all and equally heated. Perhaps you may thus find the progress of heat in the silver quicker and greater. I think, also, that, if

the hot oil in which you dipped the ends was not stagnant, but in motion, the experiment would be more complete, because the wire which quickest diminishes the heat of the oil next to it, finds soonest the difficulty of getting more heat from the oil farther distant, which depends on the nature of the oil as a conductor of heat, that which is already cooled interfering between the hotter oil and the wire. In reversing the experiment also, to try which of the metals cools fastest, I think the wires should be dipped in *running* cold water; for, when stagnant, the hot wires, by communicating heat to the water that is near them, will make it less capable of receiving more heat; and, as the metals which communicate their heat most freely and readily will soonest warm the water round them, the operation of such metals may therefore soonest stop; not because they naturally longer withhold their heat, but because the water near them is not in a state to receive it. I do not know that these hints are founded; I suggest them only as meriting a little consideration. Every one is surprised that the progress of the heat seems to have no connection with the gravity or the levity of the metals.

B. Franklin.

DCCCCXCVIII. FROM JOHN ADAMS

Amsterdam, 4 October, 1781.

Sir:—

Since the 25th of August, when I had the honor to write to you, this is the first time that I have taken a pen in hand to write to anybody, having been confined, and reduced too low to do any kind of business, by a nervous fever.

The new commission for peace has been a great consolation to me, because it removed from the public all

danger of suffering any inconvenience, at a time when for many days together there were many chances to one that I should have nothing more to do with commissions of any sort. It is still a great satisfaction to me, because I think it a measure essentially right, both as it is a greater demonstration of respect to the powers whose ministers may assemble to make peace, and as it is better calculated to give satisfaction to the people of America, as the commissioners are chosen from the most considerable places in that country.

It is probable that the French court is already informed of the alteration, nevertheless I should think it proper that it should be officially notified to the Count de Vergennes; and if you are of the same opinion, as you are near, I should be obliged to you if you would communicate to his Excellency an authentic copy of the new commission.

I should think, too, that it would be proper to give some intimation of it to the public in the *Gazette* or *Mercure de France*, the two papers which are published with the consent of the court; and if you are of the same opinion, upon consulting the Count de Vergennes, I should be glad to see it done.

Have you any information concerning Mr. Jefferson, whether he has accepted the trust, whether he has embarked, or proposes soon to embark, etc. I saw a paragraph in a Maryland paper, which expressed an apprehension that he was taken prisoner by a party of horse in Virginia. ^{Ref. 012}

I feel a strong curiosity to know the answer of the British court to the articles to serve as a basis. I should be much obliged to your Excellency for a copy of it, if to be procured, and for your opinion whether there will be a congress or not. I have the honor to be, with the greatest respect, etc.,

John Adams.