

**THE RIVERSIDE LITERATURE
SERIES;
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**

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The Riverside Literature Series; The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin by Benjamin Franklin

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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The Riverside Literature Series

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

WITH NOTES

AND A SKETCH OF FRANKLIN'S LIFE FROM THE POINT WHERE
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY ENDS, DRAWN CHIEFLY
FROM HIS LETTERS



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, the most famous American of his time, lived for many years in England, where he was agent for Pennsylvania and other American colonies. He was separated from his family, and it was during one of his long-absences, in 1771, that he determined to write an account of his life, which had been an eventful one, for the use of his son William Franklin. He was spending a week at the country-seat of his friend Bishop Shipley, and took that opportunity to begin his narrative. At that time he wrote so much of his autobiography as is included in the first ninety-five pages of this edition, covering, that is, the first twenty-five years of his life.

He began the work with no intention of giving it to the public, but friends to whom he showed this portion urged him to complete and publish it. The years that followed were very busy ones, and it was not till 1784, when he was living at Passy, then a suburb of Paris, that he resumed the narrative which he carried forward to page 114 of this edition, when he was again interrupted, and could not find another opportunity to work upon his book until 1788, when he wrote the remainder, carrying the narrative down to 1757. He intended to go on from this point, and set down the heads of what he meant to write, but the infirmities of his growing age forbade him.

In consequence of these several beginnings, the autobiography is somewhat fragmentary, and the writer repeats once or twice what he has before said. In this edition we have omitted the prefaces which separate the several parts of the work, and we have also omitted one or two brief passages not adapted to school use. The original work is not divided into chapters, but we have inserted chapter headings at natural breaks in the narrative, for the convenience of readers.

Occasional foot-notes have been added where the text seemed to call for explanation or illustration, but no words have been explained which could be understood by reference to a good dictionary. At the close of the autobiography will be found a sketch of Franklin's life, from the point at which he leaves off, to his death.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

I.

PARENTAGE AND BOYHOOD.

DEAR SON: I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors. You may remember the inquiries I made among the remains of my relations when you were with me in England, and the journey I undertook for that purpose. Imagining it may be equally agreeable to you to know the circumstances of my life, many of which you are yet unacquainted with, and expecting the enjoyment of a week's uninterrupted leisure in my present country retirement, I sit down to write them for you. To which I have besides some other inducements. Having emerged from the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and bred to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world, and having gone so far through life with a considerable share of felicity, the conducting means I made use of, which with the blessing of God so well succeeded, my posterity may like to know, as they may find some of them suitable to their own situations, and therefore fit to be imitated.