

**THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF  
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND A  
SKETCH OF FRANKLIN'S LIFE  
FROM THE POINT WHERE THE  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY ENDS**

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The autobiography of Benjamin Franklin and a sketch of Franklin's life from the point where the autobiography ends by Benjamin Franklin

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*Benj. Franklin*

After a painting by Duplessis in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts

The Riverside Literature Series

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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

WITH NOTES AND A CHRONOLOGICAL  
HISTORICAL TABLE



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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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THE Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin has probably been more extensively read than any other American historical work, and no other book of its kind has had such ups and downs of fortune. Franklin 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 his son William Franklin, then about forty years old. William Franklin had been with his father in England, as the first paragraph of the Autobiography shows, and had been admitted to the bar there, but finding favor at court had been appointed Governor of New Jersey, and was in that position when Franklin was writing. He held to the royal cause and was thereby estranged from his father, though before Benjamin Franklin's death they were partially reconciled.

In 1771 Franklin was spending a week at Twyford, England, at the country seat of his friend Dr. Jonathan Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph, and there began the writing of his autobiography. The room in which it was written long bore and perhaps still bears the name of "Dr. Franklin's Room." He began his work, as he says, for the pleasure of his own family, but there is little doubt that as he went on he anticipated

publication. At this time he wrote so much of the autobiography as is included in the first ninety-five pages of this edition, covering, that is, the first twenty-five years of his life.

*inserted*  
75-84

The years that followed were very busy ones, and it was not until 1784 that he again took up the narrative, being especially urged to this by his friend Benjamin Vaughn, to whom as to others he had shown meanwhile what he had already written. He was living at this time at Passy, then a suburb of Paris, where he was Minister of the United States to France, and William Franklin's son, William Temple Franklin, was secretary to his grandfather. He carried forward the narrative 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 brought the account up to the 27th of July, 1757, being page 216. Finally, in the last year of his life he wrote the few pages which leave the narrative still very incomplete. In consequence of these several beginnings, the autobiography is somewhat fragmentary, and the writer repeats once or twice what he has before said; but the publication of the work had even stranger vicissitudes.

Immediately after Franklin's death in 1790, the first portion of the autobiography, that written in England, was published in French at Paris, and it is conjectured that the translator had become possessed of a manuscript copy surreptitiously and had published his translation without authority. Curiously enough, this French version was made the basis of the earliest English editions, for in 1793 two separate and distinct translations back from the French were published in London, and one of these translations continued to