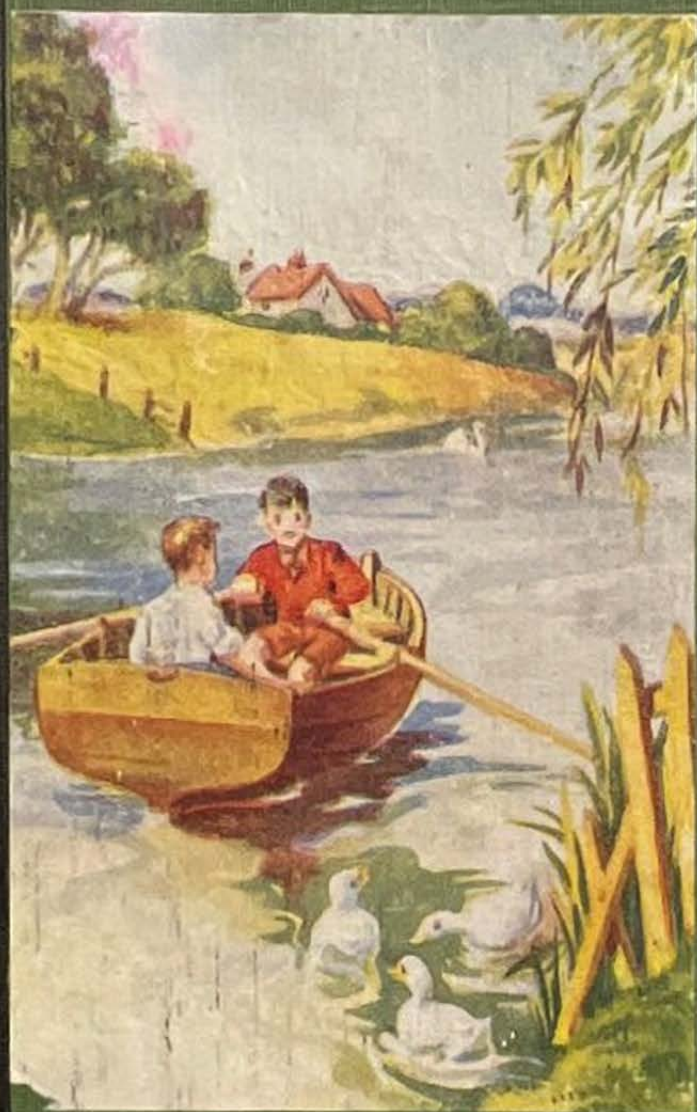


BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



By C. J. L.

Benjamin Franklin.

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WONDERFUL BUT TRUE.



BEN TRIED THEM ALL (D. 9).

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Benjamin Franklin

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CHAPTER I.

A NEW HOME IN NEW ENGLAND.

THE reign of Charles II. forms a dark page of English history. His subjects, who had given him such a loyal and loving welcome when as Prince Charlie he returned from exile in a foreign land, were, to say the least of it, bitterly disappointed when they found that their king was far from being all they had hoped or expected him to be.

But perhaps none felt the disappointment more keenly than those who wished to worship God simply and according to

the teaching of His written word. They found that they would no longer be allowed to do so, for it soon became known that the sovereign expected everybody to attend the services of the Established Church, and to use a written form of prayer, and that any who refused to conform were to be treated as *lawbreakers*, and were liable to fines and imprisonment.

They were forbidden to meet together in public, and even meetings in private houses were sometimes broken up. In many cases those who had Bibles were obliged to hide them, and read them in secret, one of the children being often sent to the door to watch if any of the king's officers were in sight.

But there were quite a number of God-fearing men who with their wives and families soon grew tired of such a state of things and began to talk of leaving their native land, and seeking new homes in America. One of the number was Josiah Franklin, the father

of Benjamin, whose story I hope to tell in the following chapters.

The elder Mr. Franklin did not make up his mind to emigrate very quickly. He was not a man to do anything in a hurry, and he felt that such a step required much thought and prayer. But when he had really made up his mind to go, he sold some things, packed up others, and with his wife, their three children, and several friends, sailed for Boston in New England in the year 1685.

The Boston of those days was very unlike the robust, thickly-peopled city it is to-day, and the Franklins met with many hardships and difficulties, but during the next four years four more children were born to them.

Soon after the birth of her seventh child Mrs. Franklin died, and after a short time Mr. Franklin married again. His second wife proved, like the first, a true helpmeet to him, and several more children, of whom Benjamin was

the fifteenth, were added to their family.

“The fifteenth, and a son too !” remarked Josiah Franklin as he took the infant in his arms ; “he must be named after his uncle Benjamin.”

“Well, a baby is no surprise in your family, I should think,” remarked a relative who was present. “Some men would say that fifteen children was too much of a good thing.”

“Every child is a gift from God, as I see it,” replied the father. “It is a fresh call to parents to be true to the Giver as well as to the gift, be it the first child or the fifteenth. I am only a poor man, and I know we shall have to work hard to support so large a family, but if we live to be old and grey-headed, the children may, and I hope will, be a stay and comfort to us.”

Mr. Franklin spoke out of a full heart ; he was a true Christian, and saw the birth of a child from a Christian point of view. It was Sunday morning, and

he added, as if a new thought had just come to him, "It is only a few steps to the meeting-house, just across the road, and if my wife is willing I do not see any reason why I should not take the baby this afternoon and publicly give him to the Lord in baptism."

When Mrs. Franklin was consulted, she quite approved of the suggestion, saying that it was the desire of both parents that all their children should be the Lord's, and she could not see any reason for waiting. So carefully wrapped in warm blankets, the baby of only a few hours old was carried to the meeting house and baptised on January 6th, 1706.

The Franklin's must have been a busy household. There were no drones in the family hive. Every child as soon as it was old enough to do anything had something given it to *do*, and was expected to *do* it cheerfully.

Benjamin grew up a bright, lovable little fellow, a great favourite with his brothers and sisters, but he did not

remain "the baby" long, as two other children completed the family circle of seventeen. He said in after years that he remembered quite well thirteen boys and girls sitting round the table at meals, who all grew up and married.

CHAPTER II.

A SMALL BOY'S MISTAKE.

WHEN Benjamin Franklin was seven years old, he had not been to school for a single day, yet to the surprise of every one who knew him, he was a good reader, and could spell correctly. No one quite understood how he had learnt; when asked about it he said that he could hardly remember a time when he could not read.

A few children, but I think there are only a few, seem able to learn almost as much without the help of a teacher as others who have all the advantages of a school. But on the morning of a public holiday something on the lines of what we know as a Bank Holiday, the heart of the seven-year-old boy was

overflowing with happiness, he was to have a whole holiday, and had for the first time in his life a little pocket money to spend just as he pleased.

“See that you spend your money wisely, Ben, and keep out of mischief,” said his mother as she gave him a few coppers. To his great delight, his father added a few more to his spending money, saying as he did so, “Don’t waste your money, Ben ; see that you make a good use of it.” A few more parting words and the little fellow was off, his mind filled with bright visions of all the pleasures the day was to bring him.

There were no toys in the Franklin family ; day after day there were so many real needs to be provided for, that there was no money to spare for playthings. Benjamin had seen toys in shop windows, and had perhaps longed for a wooden horse, or a toy engine, but had never possessed either.

He had not gone very far before he saw a boy blowing a whistle he had just

bought. Ben had no idea of the price of a whistle, but then and there he made up his mind that if he had money enough to purchase such a toy, he must and would have one. Heedless of all he might have seen on his way, he started running and never stopped till he reached the toyshop. There were not many toys, though a number of other things were offered for sale, but the boy saw nothing, cared for nothing, but a whistle.

Without asking the price, he said to the shopkeeper, "Have you any whistles?"

"Yes, plenty; do you want one?"

"Yes, if I have money enough to pay for it."

"How much have you?"

Ben emptied his pockets on the counter, where the salesman placed a row of whistles, saying, "Take your pick."

Ben tried them all, and chose the one from which he could get the most noise. The storekeeper swept *all* Ben's coppers into his till, and the boy left the shop,

blowing his whistle, and still well pleased with his purchase.

Ben hastened homewards, thinking that his mother would be as much pleased as himself, but her first words were not encouraging ; she said, “Why, Ben, where did you get that noisy thing ? You must not blow it in the house, my head won’t stand it.”

Attracted by the sound of the new toy the other members of the family gathered round him, and an elder brother asked, “How much did you give for the whistle ? ”

“All the money I had, and the shop-keeper took it.”

“Did you ask the price ? ”

“No.”

“Why, you have paid four times as much as it is worth ; you should have asked the price, then you would have had enough left to buy candy, or apples for us all. You have paid too dear for your whistle. You will never make a tradesman if you spend money like that.”

Poor Ben saw how foolish he had been, and burst into tears. For a little while his sobs almost choked him, then his mother came to comfort him, saying kindly, "Don't break your heart over it, Bennie. You have been a foolish boy, but you have learnt a lesson and will do better next time. It is not kind of your brother to tease you as he has done."

Mr. Franklin joined the group saying, "Now, Ben, dry your tears and listen to me. Will it surprise you to hear that more than once *I have paid too dear for a whistle*, and I have known boys and girls, and grown-up men and women, too, who are doing just the same thing. I once knew an old man who was very rich, but very unhappy. He was a miser. All through a long life he had set his heart on getting and saving money. He would not allow himself common comforts, and never tasted the pleasure of helping others or doing good with his money. He had not one true friend ;

he lived unloved, and died without any hope for eternity. *He paid too dear for his whistle.* Do you understand me, Ben? You will not, I think, forget the lesson you have had to-day."

"No, father, I will not forget," replied Benjamin, and the lesson of that day was of use to him all through his life.

As I write I am thinking of some very solemn words spoken by the Lord Jesus Himself, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Do not miss the *best* things, dear boys and girls. Do not put off eternal things for a little short-lived pleasure, or you will find that you have paid *sadly too dear* for your whistle.

CHAPTER III.

IN SCHOOL AND OUT OF SCHOOL.

AS you will remember, Benjamin Franklin had, when an infant of only a few hours old, been given to the Lord in baptism. Both parents saw that he was a remarkably bright, intelligent child, and as it was their great desire that he should grow up to be a faithful, useful preacher of the gospel, they were anxious to give him the best education their circumstances would permit.

He had just passed his seventh birthday when Mr. Franklin said to his wife, "It is quite time for Benjamin to begin to attend school, and I have quite decided to send him the next term, though I may not be able to keep him there long enough to get the education I should

desire for him." Mrs. Franklin replied, "I am so glad that you have made up your mind to that. Let us go on from day to day, and trust in the Lord to open up a way for our little son ; even if it should not be exactly the way we should choose, we will believe that some useful life is in store for him."

The only grammar school at that time in Boston was under the care of a Mr. Williams, who as a master had proved himself able not only to secure the obedience, but to win the affection of his pupils.

Benjamin was delighted on hearing that he was to attend school. He took hold of his lessons with a will, and made such rapid progress that Mr. Williams found after he had been at school only a few months that his new scholar possessed uncommon talents, and meeting his father one day said to him, "You will give that boy of yours a good education, won't you, Mr. Franklin? Though he has been at school so short a time he

is already the head boy in his class ; but I must soon remove him into a higher class, for he knows more than any boy of his age in my school. He ought to remain at school for several years.”

“I should very much like him to do so,” replied Mr. Franklin, “but I fear I shall not be able to leave him with you more than a year. I have, as you know, a large family ; my expenses are heavy, and my business does not increase as I should like.”

As Benjamin loved his school and his teacher, and as out of school he was always ready to help in the house or run errands, his school year was a very happy one. Changes were, however, taking place in the Franklin household. One of Benjamin’s elder brothers, John, who had learnt his business of a tallow-chandler from his father, was about to be married and set up business for himself in a town at some distance from Boston. As Benjamin’s school year drew near its close, Mr. Franklin said to his wife, “I am very

sorry, but I have thought it all over, and there seems no other way for it, but as soon as John leaves home I must take Benjamin from school and have him to help me in the candle factory. He will not like the business, I know, but every boy at some time or other has to do, or learn something he does not like.

“But as John will not be leaving us for some months, and as Mr. Williams says that Benjamin does not take to arithmetic as kindly as he does to his other studies, and his writing needs to be improved, I shall try to send him for a year to a private school kept by Mr. Brownwell, who though he only teaches two subjects, arithmetic and penmanship, is, I hear, a very good teacher of both.”

“I am truly sorry,” replied Mrs. Franklin, “but I cannot say I am much surprised; I have expected this for some time. You can neither manage the business alone, nor afford to pay such wages as a hired man would expect.

It will be a great disappointment to Benjamin, but we must submit, and trust and pray that something more suitable may open up for him. But you will not tell Benjamin of your intention until the day really comes, will you ? ”

Benjamin's next and last year at school passed quickly and pleasantly. He really wanted to be useful and to help his father, but he hoped he should not have to go into the candle factory.

The day came at last when Mr. Franklin had to tell his son of his intention of taking him from school and employing him, for a time at least, in his own business. The boy was, as his parents felt sure he would be, greatly disappointed. He said, “Father, I know I must soon earn my own living, and I want to be a help to you, but I do not see how I can be of much use to you. John had to learn the trade before he was of any great use. What could I do ? ”

The time of which I am writing was

about a hundred and seventy years before any one thought of lighting shops and houses by gas or electric light, and tallow candles were used everywhere and by every one. "There are many things," his father replied, "that you can do as well as a man, and not only save me the high wages I must pay to one, but you can help in many ways that will save my time and strength. You can cut wicks, fill the moulds with tallow, sweep and dust the shop. And I have a good deal of running about to do; your young feet will get over the ground more quickly than mine, so that I shall be able to give more time to the business."

CHAPTER IV.

TWO YEARS IN THE CANDLE FACTORY.

THE home in which Benjamin Franklin spent his first eleven or twelve years was one in which both parents required prompt, cheerful obedience from all the children, and there is no room for doubt that the habit of obedience thus early formed had much to do with the formation of his character.

When he found that his father had really decided that he should leave school and help him in the business, he did not murmur or rebel, but, much as he disliked the prospect, he wisely made up his mind to make the best of it, to do all he could to help his father, and still to hope that something he liked might be in store for him.

He had, as his father said he would, a good deal of outdoor work in the way of going errands, and to that part of the business he had no objection.

Perhaps the smell of melted tallow and soap boiling did not agree with him, or it may have been that day by day his dislike to the work increased, but whichever way it was, when he had only been at it a few months, he drooped, grew pale and thin, and seemed altogether different from the bright, happy boy he had been. His parents noticed the change and were sorry, but as at the time they did not see any suitable opening for him, decided to say nothing to him on the subject.

It was about this time that thoughtlessness and a boyish love of fun led into wrong-doing. When he had a little free time he was in the habit of joining his old schoolfellows and boy friends on a marsh that was always flooded at high water, where they amused themselves by catching minnows. They had a small

boat, and from quite a small boy Ben was good at swimming and rowing.

“Who’s for a sail,” said Ben, as he leaped into the boat. “I,” and “I,” and “I,” answered several voices, as they jumped in after him. “Now we’ll make oars fly,” said their leader. The boys enjoyed their sail, but Benjamin had a new idea. “What a mess the marsh is in with mud,” he said. “If we could build a wharf or landing, what a good thing it would be for fishing, and good for the boat too.”

“We couldn’t carry all the stones we should want,” said one boy.

“We need not carry them far,” said Benjamin. “Look, here’s a fine heap of stones only a few feet from the edge of the marsh.”

“How did they get there?” asked Fred.

“Why, the workmen brought them in a cart; they are building a house near the marsh.”

“They won’t thank us for stealing their stones,” said John Collins.

“We won’t wait for their thanks,” said Benjamin. “We are not going to steal the stones, only to borrow them; they will be as good for their building when we have done with them. Let as many of us as can, come this evening, and set to work with a will. Who’ll help?” Several boys agreed to do so. Perhaps they had not the courage to say NO to what they must have known was not right.

“Some of the stones are so large I don’t think two of us could carry one,” said a boy more cautious than his companions.

“What two of us can’t carry, I expect three of us could,” was Benjamin’s reply.

The boys met in the evening and worked with a will. In about two hours a small wharf was built, with which all the young workmen were much pleased.

“It’s worth all it cost,” said one boy.

“Wait a bit,” said another, “it may cost more than we think.”

“It is late,” said Ben, “and I must hurry home, or I shall get into trouble.”

He made haste home, and was soon in bed and asleep. In the morning he did not feel quite happy as he thought of how they had been employed the previous evening; he hoped his father had not heard of it. Nothing was said during the day, and he began to breathe more freely. But in the evening his father asked, “Where were you last evening, Benjamin.”

“Down at the marsh with the other boys.”

“What were you doing there ? ”

“Building a wharf.”

“What were you building with ? ”

“Stones.”

“Did the stones belong to you ? ”

“No.”

“Then you stole them.”

“Oh, no, we only borrowed them.”

“You stole them. To take anything that does not belong to you is as much stealing as if you stole money. The

owner of the stones has been to see me to-day, and is very angry about your thoughtless act. I have encouraged your going out in the evenings, as I did not think it was good for you to spend all your free time reading, but you have betrayed my confidence, and from this time I forbid it. You will spend your evenings at home."

"God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. vi. 7.) The solemn words of scripture are as true for the boys and girls as for the grown-up people. Our words and deeds are like tiny seeds that will one day bear fruit. It is well to stop and ask, "What will the harvest be ?"

CHAPTER V.

CHOOSING A TRADE.

WHEN Benjamin Franklin had been about two years in the factory, Mr. Franklin said to his wife, "I cannot feel that we are doing right in forcing our son to continue in a business he so thoroughly dislikes. Not that I have much to complain of. Benjamin is on the whole a good boy, obedient and punctual. I have never known him to be late at his work, but his heart is not in it. He seems to dread it, and a boy will never succeed in what he really dislikes. I will talk to him, and we will try if we cannot find some employment for which he is really better suited."

Mrs. Franklin replied that no decision of her husband's could have given her

greater pleasure. She too had noticed how sad and spiritless the boy often appeared, and though she had done all she could to encourage him to go quietly on, she felt sure that a change would be good for him.

A few evenings later Mr. Franklin said to his son, "Benjamin, what kind of work would you really like to do?"

"Oh, father, I should like anything better than melting tallow, and boiling soap! But what I think I should like best of all would be to go to sea."

"I will never give my consent to that, Benjamin. When my eldest son, Josiah, went to sea, it nearly broke my heart, and I feel I could not go through the strain a second time. There are plenty of honourable, useful occupations on land. I will take you round to some of the workshops, and let you choose for yourself."

Benjamin was delighted. "Thank you, father, it is good of you. When shall we begin?"

“To-morrow morning,” was Mr. Franklin’s reply.

As Mr. Franklin had a nephew Samuel in Boston, who about a year before had opened business as a cutler, with every prospect of being able to work up a good trade, it was decided that his workshop should be the first visited. He gave a cordial welcome to father and son, and was quite willing to shew his cousin his tools and tell him, in answer to his bright, intelligent questions, about the business. Benjamin said he thought he should like to be a cutler, but his father said, “Do not decide so hastily, wait till we have visited other trades.” Their visits were to the shops of a silversmith and a brazier. It was quite a new interest to Benjamin to see any one working in metals, and he was greatly interested. It took the best part of several days to visit all the workshops in Boston. At the end Benjamin said he thought he should like to be a cutler, so another visit was paid to Samuel’s workshop,

when Mr. Franklin suggested that before settling the terms of apprenticeship it might be well for Benjamin to go for a few weeks, or months, into his cousin's shop, as it would not only give him an opportunity of learning more about the business, but give him time to decide if he liked it well enough to make it his life work.

The arrangement seemed to give satisfaction to all parties concerned, and though Benjamin did not become a cutler, he said in later years that during the time he spent in his cousin's shop, he learnt not only many things about the uses of various tools, but other things that were of use to him in his manhood. He put his whole heart into the business, as he did into other things. He did not do anything by halves, and that was, I think, with the blessing of God, the secret of his success.

But when the time came to prepare the indentures that, as was then the custom, would bind him apprentice to his cousin until he was twenty-one years

of age, Samuel Franklin asked a larger fee than Benjamin's father could afford to pay, so to the disappointment of both father and son, the twelve-year old boy had to return to the candle-factory till some really suitable opening could be found for him.

He was good at rowing, and all the boys of Boston seemed to look up to him as a leader, for he was almost as much at home in the water as on land. He could swim, dive and float better than any of his companions. He told them one day that he had invented something that would, he believed, enable him to swim with much greater speed, and shortly afterwards made his appearance among them with wooden paddles strapped upon his hands, and something not unlike the webbed feet of a duck fastened to his feet. He gained in speed, but was forced to own that the weight of the paddles made him so tired that he could not use them for long distances.

On another occasion he surprised them all by going among them carrying a large new kite ; holding the string firmly in his hand, he threw himself into the water, and allowed himself to float, without any effort on his part, across a large pond, a distance of nearly a mile.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” (Eccl. ix. 10.) I do not know if Benjamin took the words I have just quoted as his life motto, but it is one that is good for us all to remember. There is no blessing upon careless, half-hearted work.

CHAPTER VI.

PRINTER BOY.

WHILE Benjamin was waiting for an opening, and growing every day more tired of the candle factory, his brother James, who was a good deal older than himself, returned to Boston from England, where he had spent several years. He had gone to learn the art of printing, and when he returned had acquired a thorough knowledge of the trade, and as he intended to open a printing office in Boston, had brought with him from England a printing press, types and other things that were, he knew, likely to be required in the business.

It was not many days before Benjamin and his father paid James a visit. Benjamin was much interested in all he saw

and heard, and when his father said, "It is quite time to apprentice you to some useful trade, how should you like to be a printer?" Benjamin replied, "I think I should like it very well, but it will be nine years before I am twenty-one, and it seems a little strange to be apprenticed to my own brother."

Mr. Franklin replied, "I think James will make a good teacher, and as you are fond of reading, you will have an opportunity of improving your education by reading many useful books, as all books have to pass through the hands of printers."

James was quite willing to take Benjamin as an apprentice, and as his father was able and willing to pay a small fee for him, his indentures were made out in a way that we should think very strange and old-fashioned, though at the time of which I am writing, about one hundred and eighty years ago, it was quite the custom.

One thing tried him a good deal at

first : he had to leave home. There were so many boys and girls in the Franklin family that there was no room for James, and Benjamin was to board and lodge with him. He was not far away and could look in almost every day, still, it was leaving home, and he felt it.

He applied himself to his new employment with a will, learnt quickly, and soon became of real use to his brother. It did not take him long to learn to set type, a part of his work in which he soon became skilled and rapid.

In reply to a question asked by his mother, as to how he liked his work, he replied, "Better and better every day ; I think it just suits me. It takes more brains to put a single paragraph into type than it does to fill a whole regiment of candle moulds."

When Benjamin had been about three years in his brother's printing office, he was surprised to hear James say that he had made up his mind to edit and print a weekly newspaper. There were only

two at that time in Boston, and though some of his friends thought that there was not room for a third, others advised him to make the venture.

Benjamin was greatly pleased with the proposal, and was anxious to help to the utmost of his ability. Had either of the brothers foreseen how much trouble would be the result of the new departure, I hardly think they would have attempted it.

“What is the title of the paper to be ?” Benjamin asked.

“The New England Courant,” was the reply.

“How many copies will the first issue number ?”

“Not a great many ; we will begin with a few, keep the type set, and it will be easy to print more if we find the paper sells,” said James.

“I think I shall be able to sell a good many on the street,” suggested Benjamin. Many people were looking with interest for the newspaper. We do not

know if Benjamin called the papers about the streets, in just the same way that newsboys do now, but he proved himself a good salesman.

Setting type for "The Courant" was interesting certainly, but the printer boy had a great desire to write for it, and at first he could not see how his desire was to be gratified. He felt quite sure that if he told his brother he would not meet with any encouragement. At last he made up his mind to try; he need not sign his real name. But James would know his handwriting; he must disguise that. So his first paper was written and slipped under the door of the printing office, and found by James when he unlocked the door the following morning.

Benjamin kept steadily on setting type, but watching his brother's face as he read and re-read the roll of MS. he had picked up. After a time James said, "It is really very good, and I think I shall be able to print it in our next issue, but I should like to know who wrote it.

It is signed Silas Dogood, and I do not know any one of that name.”

James read the paper to several of his friends who during the day paid him a visit, and they all agreed that it was very good and ought to be printed ; they made several guesses as to who the writer could be. Benjamin listened, smiled, and kept his secret.

CHAPTER VII.

A WRONG STEP AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

THOUGH we remember that Benjamin Franklin was the son of christian parents, and had been given to the Lord in baptism only a few hours after his birth, he had never owned himself to be a sinner needing a Saviour. His naturally kind and generous disposition had made him a favourite not only in the home circle, but among the young people of Boston; but he had no sure guide, or any higher wisdom than his own in which to trust, so we shall not be surprised to find that under the pressure of great temptation he was easily led into wrong-doing.

Having chosen the business of a printer, he put his whole heart into his work,

and soon became a skilful compositor. We must not linger over the first two or three years of his apprenticeship; they were far from being happy ones. His elder brother James, who was also his master, treated him with great unkindness, never seeming to be pleased with him, even when he had tried very hard to please him, and often giving him a severe beating.

That James was jealous of the ability his younger brother had displayed as a writer there is hardly any room for doubt. This may have been one cause of his unkindness and unbrotherly conduct. Then a year or two later, when James got into trouble with the council, and was forbidden to edit his newspaper, Benjamin took up the work, and for six months, though at the time he was not quite seventeen years of age, proved himself an able editor. His success only made his brother more angry. As an apprentice Benjamin would not have been allowed to edit a paper; so he

was obliged, though unwillingly, to give his brother his indentures.

After some months James was again the editor. But things in the printing office seemed to get from bad to worse. The jealousy of James allowed his angry feelings towards his brother to grow into actual dislike, till at last Ben made up his mind that he could and would no longer put up with his brother's unkindness, but would run away from home and go to New York, a journey of not less than three hundred miles.

There was only one person to whom he ventured to say a word about his intention, and that one was his boy friend, John Collins, who kept his secret, and as far as he could helped to secure a passage. The sloop on which Benjamin had taken passage was a slow sailer, and it was almost three days before it anchored in the harbour of New York. During the voyage he had plenty of time to think, and to ask himself if he had acted rightly in leaving the home

and friends of his boyhood in the way that he had done. His mother! When he thought of her tears filled his eyes, and he had to force back a great sob, for he knew she would be almost broken-hearted as days grew into weeks, and there was no letter from her absent boy. His father too would be sad and anxious, and his brothers and sisters would miss him, oh, so much! Yet he thought he could not, dared not write.

When he landed on the quay at New York, he felt that he was indeed a stranger in a strange city. He had very little money left, and he did not know one person. His first care must be to try to find employment, if he could, in a printing office.

He had heard of a Mr. Bradford, a printer who had removed from Philadelphia to New York some time before, and his first call was upon him.

“Can I get employment in your office?” he asked.

“I am not in want of any extra help

at present," was Mr. Bradford's somewhat discouraging reply. "Are you a printer?"

"Yes, sir; I have been three years in a printing office."

"Three years! You ought to have learnt your trade thoroughly. I am sorry I cannot employ you, but things here are very dull just now."

"Do you think I shall be able to find work in any other office here?"

"I am afraid not. Everything is very quiet. I believe you might if you could get to Philadelphia. My son has an office there on the same lines as mine; his best workman died only a week ago, and if you could get there, I think it is very likely he would employ you."

"How far is it to Philadelphia?"

"About a hundred miles."

"Thank you, sir; if I cannot get work here I'll go to Philadelphia, even if I have to walk the whole way."

He tried to get employment at every office he could find or hear of, but with

no better success, and so in a few days his pockets were almost empty.

“What is the best way of getting to Philadelphia?” he asked.

“You can get a boat for half the distance, and then take another. You have my good wishes, and I hope you will soon get work. Trade is not so quiet there as it is here.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIALS OF A RUNAWAY.

“ I ALMOST wish I had not ran off in such a hurry,” said Benjamin to himself, as, tired and disappointed, he turned from the last publishing office he could find in New York, his application for employment having met with the usual reply that no extra help was needed. “I can’t go back, though,” he continued, still speaking to himself. “I want work, and work I must find, for I am very short of money. I have been told that I can get employment in Philadelphia, so to Philadelphia I must go.”

But other trials, different from any he had yet known, lay before him. After some delay, he found a boat that would, he hoped, take him half-way to the city

he was so anxious to reach ; but they had been hardly two hours at sea before a violent storm of wind and rain came on. A squall caught the boat, tearing the rudder sails into ribbons, and driving the little craft upon Long Island, at a point where there was no landing. "I see men on the shore," said Benjamin, "let us call to them for help." The captain shouted, and the crew joined him, but whether the noise of the wind and waves drowned their voices, or whether the men on the island did not wish to help, no one knew, for they were soon lost to sight.

"What are we going to do now ?" asked Benjamin ; "a wild, rough night is before us." "Yes, it will be a bad night," said the captain, "but I've known a worse. There's only one thing we can do, wait patiently for the morning, and for the wind to change." So they all crowded under the hatches to pass as best they could a night of great discomfort. Sleep was out of the ques-



"I SEE MEN ON THE SHORE" (p. 44).

tion, for the waves dashed over the hatches, and found their way in. Perhaps during the long, weary hours of the night Benjamin thought of his father's God, of his mother's Saviour, and wished he too were a Christian.

The long dreary night wore slowly away; Benjamin was rejoiced to see daylight, and when, though feeling very stiff and uncomfortable, he struggled to his feet, his clothes were all dripping; he could not change them, for his small trunk had been sent on to Philadelphia.

"You're not used to sleeping in such wet blankets," said one of the boatmen.

"Not exactly," replied Benjamin as cheerfully as he could under the circumstances, "but it can't be helped, so I'm going to make the best of it."

"Do, if you can," said the boatman.

As soon as the gale had spent its fury they got off the sandbank, and were at sea again, but it was night before they got to port, after having been thirty hours on the water without food or

drink. When he landed, tired and hungry, the rain was still falling fast, but his first care was to find something to eat. Seeing a small shop he went in and bought some gingerbread, and learnt to his dismay that the boat on which he ought to have taken passage had sailed the day before, and that there would not be another for four days. What was he going to do? He could not afford to go to an hotel, but he *must* find food and shelter somewhere.

Returning to the shop where he had bought the gingerbread, the shopkeeper, a pleasant, kindly-faced woman, agreed to board and lodge him for a small sum till the boat was ready to start.

He was to go to Philadelphia sooner than he expected. He had dinner with his hostess, and toward evening went out for a walk; going to the wharf he saw a boat with several people in it.

“Where are you going?” he inquired of a middle-aged man who seemed to be in command.

“To Philadelphia.”

“That is just where I want to be,” said Benjamin ; “can you take me ? I lost the boat, and I don’t like waiting about.”

“Don’t mind if I do. Can you row ? ”

“Yes,” answered Benjamin.

“Jump in, young man, we must be off.”

He did not wish to act dishonourably towards the kind shopkeeper, but the boat could not wait while he returned to explain his sudden departure ; so he jumped in, wondering what she would think and say. Benjamin rowed with a will, taking more than his share of the work. They reached Philadelphia about midnight ; but when he offered to pay his passage, the skipper refused it, saying, “Put your money in your pocket, lad, you’ve earnt your passage, and done it well too ; you might be an old sailor by the way you handle an oar.” They remained on the boat till daylight.

Benjamin was very hungry, having

eaten nothing since his dinner with the shopkeeper the day before. Seeing a boy eating a piece of bread, he said to himself, "That's what I want," and to the boy, "Where did you get it?" "Over there," said the boy, pointing in the direction of a baker's. He went in and asked for some biscuits.

"We don't make biscuits."

"Well, give me a threepenny loaf."

"We haven't got any."

"Never mind, give me threepenny-worth of any bread you have." Three large penny rolls were laid on the counter. Benjamin went out of the shop eating one, and with the two others tucked under his arm.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW SCENES AND NEW FRIENDS.

AS Benjamin walked on with the two rolls still under his arm, he found himself again at the landing-stage.

Two persons were there, a poor, weary-looking woman and a little boy ; they had been fellow passengers with him in the boat from New York to Philadelphia. The child turned wistful, hungry eyes to the rolls Benjamin was carrying. "Are you hungry, little man ?" he asked kindly.

The child did not answer, but looked just ready to cry. The mother said, "Yes, we are both very hungry." Benjamin pressed the two rolls into her hands, and turned away without waiting for thanks, saying to himself as he did so, "Food must be cheap here. For

threepence I bought bread enough to satisfy three hungry people. If other provisions are equally low-priced my last dollar will last longer than I expected.”

He could not afford to remain out of employment, so set off in search of a printing office. He had no great difficulty in finding that of Mr. Bradford, and greatly to his surprise and delight found there the Mr. Bradford, the father of the young printer, whom he had met in New York, and who had advised him to go to Philadelphia. Both father and son received him kindly, but it was very disappointing when the younger man said, “I am sorry I cannot offer you work; I have just filled the place left vacant by the death of Brooke, but there is another printer in the town; my father will go with you to his office, and I think he may be able to employ you.”

They found the other printer, Mr. Keimer, not only busy, but expecting

Government work. After some conversation with young Franklin, he told him to take a composing stick and shew them what he could do. He set to work with a will, and after about an hour's work, both printers were surprised and pleased to find how quickly and correctly he set type.

How glad he was that he had formed the habit of doing everything as well as he possibly could. And here for a few moments we will leave Benjamin, while I tell you of another boy quite as poor, or poorer than Benjamin, who by the blessing of God became a useful and prosperous man by doing whatever he had to do as well as he possibly could.

"You have not cleaned your shoes very well, Harry."

"Oh, father, it doesn't matter; I'm going out again, and the roads are a bit muddy."

"Go and clean them properly, and then come to me in the library."

When Harry got to the library his

father said to him, "Nearly forty years ago I knew a very poor boy ; his mother was a widow, and had to work very hard to keep their little home together. When Frank was not more than eleven years old he had to leave school and earn his living. His first place was as house-boy. He had to run errands, wait at table, clean boots and shoes, and do many other things. As his mother bade him a tearful good-bye she said, 'My dear boy, will you promise me to remember two short sentences ? One is a Bible verse, "*Thou God seest me*" (Gen. xvi. 13) ; the other has been a help to me all through my life : "*Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well.*"' Frank kissed his mother and promised to remember ; he really did try, by always doing his BEST. A year or two later a boy was wanted in the shop, and his mistress said, 'I hardly know how to spare Frank, he takes such pains with his work, but I think you would find him useful in the shop.' So he went into

the shop as errand boy. Two years later more help was wanted in the office, so Frank was promoted, and became office boy ; he went on attending an evening school, and when a junior clerk was wanted, he was ready to fill the vacant desk. He rose rapidly from one position of trust to another ; to-day he is a partner of the firm, and through the blessing of God, a well-to-do man. Harry, *I* was that poor boy.

“You will not, I feel sure, Harry, forget my story, but I should wish you also to remember that we have the same wise counsel in the inspired words of the Apostle Paul, ‘Whatsoever ye do, do heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.’” (Col. iii. 23.)

But we must return to Benjamin Franklin, whom we left in Mr. Keimer’s printing office. He was engaged as an assistant, and his new employer helped him to find a boarding-house where the expense of living would not be beyond his slender means.

He might have been really happy in his work, had it not been for thoughts of how wrongly he had acted in running away from his parents and his home. Sometimes he thought of writing and asking their forgiveness, but pride prevented him doing so. "No," he said to himself, "I will wait till I can tell them I am really doing well in Philadelphia."

And so the days grew into weeks, and the weeks into months, and the home letter was not written.

CHAPTER X.

A GOOD WORKMAN.

“YOUR printing-press is a good deal out of repair, I see; I expect you bought it second-hand.” The speaker was Benjamin Franklin, and it was his employer, Mr. Keimer, who replied, “Yes, I did not feel free to purchase a better press than I could afford to pay for. I know it is very much out of order. I know too that we cannot get high-class work upon such a shaky press, but I do not think we could get a skilled mechanic nearer than New York, and that would mean not only expense but loss of time.”

“I see just what is wrong with it, and I believe I can put it to rights, if you are not afraid to trust me,” said Benjamin.

“What, do you understand a printing-press well enough to repair one ? ”

“I can repair this one,” said Benjamin, “and it won’t take me very long either.”

“Well then, get to work at once ; I will go on setting up type while you are busy with the press,” said Mr. Keimer, surprised and pleased that the printer-boy from Boston was able to put his press into good working order.

Benjamin set to work, and the press was soon doing better work than it had done since it came into Mr. Keimer’s possession. He afterwards repaired another press belonging to the younger Mr. Bradford.

It was a great surprise to young Franklin, who still believed that his family were in complete ignorance of his whereabouts, to receive a letter from his brother-in-law, begging him to return, or at least to write. The letter was somewhat as follows :—

“MY DEAR BENJAMIN,—I have just had an interview with some one who

comes from Philadelphia, and heard to my great surprise that you are and have for some months been living in that city. You do not, cannot know the sorrow your rash and thoughtless act has caused to those who truly love you. Your mother seems almost broken-hearted, and your father looks careworn and much older since you left home. I write to advise and entreat you to return ; you need not doubt your welcome ; all the family are longing to see you. I shall very soon hope to hear from, or perhaps even to see you.

Yours affectionately,

“ROBERT HOUSE.”

The letter took Benjamin by surprise. His friends knew where he was, though how they could have found out was more than he could tell. Yes, he would write and ask to be forgiven for running away. Work hours that day seemed to him longer than usual, and it was only by a strong effort he was able to pay proper

attention to his work. Evening came at last, and hasting to his boarding-house he wrote quite a long letter, from which we give a few extracts :—

“DEAR BROTHER,—I received your letter this morning. I need hardly say it was a great surprise to me. How you found out my whereabouts is a mystery to me. However, I feel sure it is all for the best.

“Your letter gives me an opportunity of telling why I left Boston so suddenly ; the sole cause was the unkind treatment I received from James. He forgot, I think, that I was his brother, and shewed himself a hard and cruel master.

“The violent temper and frequent severe beatings I received from him made my daily life as hard and bitter as the worst negro slavery could have done. Perhaps at times I was saucy and provoking, but I cannot see that James had any right to treat me so unkindly.

“It was a long time before I could

make up my mind to run away in the way I did, and I hardly think I should have done so if my father, who had always treated me with great kindness, had not taken part with my brother.

“I am truly sorry for all the anxiety and unhappiness that has been caused in the home circle by my conduct, but I am now in good work ; and if industry, economy and perseverance will help me to win in the battle of life, I still hope to do so,—Your affectionate brother,

“BENJAMIN.”

The letter from which I have copied a few sentences seems to me on the whole a very sad one, for though there was a great deal that was lovable in the character of the bright, clever youth with whom our story has to do, yet he had not turned to God with the cry, “Father, I have sinned,” so he did not, could not know how glad and tender *that* Father’s welcome would have been. Do you know it, dear young reader ?

CHAPTER XI.

A FALSE FRIEND, AND A VOYAGE TO ENGLAND.

NOT many days after young Franklin had replied to the letter from his brother-in-law, he received an unexpected visitor.

“That’s Governor Keith,” said Mr. Keimer to Benjamin as he looked out of the window of the printing office one bright, sunshiny morning. “That tall man on the other side of the street, walking with a gentleman.”

“I see,” replied Benjamin, “it looks as if they were coming here.”

“Yes, they are, for they have crossed the street,” said Mr. Keimer, and he hurried downstairs to open the door, for he did not receive such visitors every day.

“I wonder what they are coming for ?” thought Benjamin ; but he was not left to wonder long, for the tall man who had been pointed out to him as Governor Keith said, addressing Mr. Keimer, “Does Benjamin Franklin work here ?”

“He does,” replied Mr. Keimer, much surprised, and at a loss to understand what the Governor could want with his young workman.

“Can I see him ?”

“Certainly. Will you walk upstairs ?”

“This is the young man you wished to see,” said his employer, as he introduced him.

“I am pleased to make your acquaintance,” said the Governor ; I met your brother-in-law in Newcastle a few days ago, and told him I would find you out and pay you a visit. This gentleman is Colonel French of Newcastle, who also wished to see you.”

Poor Benjamin was not at all at his ease. He would not have been quite so

much surprised at the visit of an officer from Boston sent to arrest him as a runaway apprentice.

“If Mr. Keimer can spare you for a little while, we should like to have some conversation with you,” continued the Governor. Leave being given, the three were soon seated in a coffee-house at no great distance.

“What I want to talk to you about is setting up a printing business on your own account,” said the Governor. “From what Captain House told us, we judge you thoroughly understand the trade, and we think there is a first-class opening for you in this city.”

Benjamin wondered if they knew about his being a runaway, but he only said, “It is very kind of you, but it takes money to start a printing-office, and I have not any money.”

“I am aware of that,” said the Governor, “but perhaps that could be arranged. Your father might be not only able but willing to help you.”

“Perhaps he might be able, but I doubt if he would be willing,” said Benjamin.

“I will write to your father,” suggested Governor Keith, and tell him that there is a splendid opening for you here, and ask his help. I advise you to go to Boston as soon as ever you can, and shortly after to sail for London, where you will be able to buy a good printing-press and all that is needed to run a first-class office much better and cheaper than you could in America. I will give you letters of introduction to friends of my own who will do all in their power to help you.”

When Benjamin returned to the office he found Mr. Keimer very curious to know what the Governor could have wanted with his young workman. Benjamin only repeated part of the conversation, saying he had been advised to go to Boston to see his relations, and intended doing so on the first opportunity.

After a rather rough passage, Benjamin arrived safely in Boston. He had only been away seven months, but to him it seemed a much longer time, and his heart beat quickly, and his hand trembled as he rang the bell at the door of his father's office. The door was opened by Mr. Franklin himself. "Benjamin!" he exclaimed, "how glad I am to see you!" and taking one of his son's hands in both of his, he led him in.

"Not more glad than I am to see you, father. It is good to be home again."

Mrs. Franklin, hearing something unusual had taken place, joined them. "Mother!" "Benjamin!" and his mother threw her arms round him, weeping tears of joy.

They sat down together, a happy family party. "My son, my son, I had wept over you as dead; where have you been?"

"In Philadelphia. Did not my brother-in-law tell you where I was?"

"No, we have not heard from him,

but I thank my God that to-day I can say, 'This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. I do not think I should have shed more tears if you had died here, and I had stood by your grave.'

"I am truly sorry to have caused you all so much pain. But, father, will you read Governor Keith's letter while I go and see James? I am anxious to see him, though I do not know how he will receive me. I am ready to forgive and forget."

James gave him a very cold reception, and Benjamin was deeply pained by his brother's attitude. The Governor proved himself anything but a true friend. He was either unable or unwilling to keep his promises, the letters of introduction were not given, and when some months later Benjamin arrived in London, it was to find himself without friends and almost without money, a stranger in a strange land.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE COURT OF ST. JAMES.

PERHAPS we lingered too long over the years of Benjamin Franklin's boyhood to allow ourselves much space to dwell upon those of his manhood. They were busy, useful years, though there could hardly have been a more trying position than that in which he found himself on his arrival in London. He did not give way to despair, but began at once to look for employment, and after some delays and disappointments obtained it in the office of a large publisher's firm.

His influence over his fellow-workmen was for good. More than one, who had been in the habit of drinking more beer than was good for him, was by his influence and example persuaded to become a water drinker.

After some ups and downs the way opened for him to return to Philadelphia. Almost the first person he called upon was his old employer, Mr. Keimer, who was pleased to see him, and was again anxious to secure his services.

“What were you doing in London ?” asked Mr. Keimer. “Working at my own trade,” was the reply. “It did not take me long to find employment.”

“Is London a good place for printers ?” “Yes, a grand place. I know two firms who employ more than fifty hands each.”

“Did you get good pay there ?”

“Yes, very good.”

“Now you are again in Philadelphia, will you be my manager, and take entire charge of my printing office ?” The proposal was declined, for Franklin had other plans. Shortly afterwards he married, and opened a printing office on his own account. His customers were pleased at the neatness and speed with which their orders were executed, and year by year his business grew. Perhaps

the death of his first-born child, a bright and lovable little boy aged four years, may have been used by God to lead him to seek "the things that are eternal," but from that time there is reason to believe that he was a sincere Christian.

When George Whitefield, who as an evangelist was so greatly used by God, visited America, a warm and lasting friendship grew up between the two men.

For very many years Benjamin had not seen or even heard of his brother James. Both were middle-aged men, when he received a message that James, who was very ill, was anxious to see him. He went at once, and found his brother in a very weak state, suffering much in body and seeming distressed in mind. He asked his brother if he could forgive him for all his unkindness to him in his boyhood, and on being assured of his forgiveness, said, "I have a favour to ask: I have a son, a bright little boy just ten years old. I am dying a poor man, and cannot provide for him; will

you take him, give him an education, teach him our trade, and when he is able to earn his own living allow him to return to his mother ? ”

“You may trust me,” replied Benjamin, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.”

The promise was faithfully kept, and his nephew grew up a useful and prosperous man. Franklin filled a number of public offices, and when he became a member of the council, took quite an important part in the government of the then newly-formed United States of America.

He also did a good deal for the improvement of Philadelphia. Owing to his industry and enterprise, the inhabitants were persuaded to accept a plan he had drawn up for the better lighting and cleaning of the streets.

“Seest thou a man diligent in his business ? he shall stand before kings ; he shall not stand before mean men.” (Prov. xxii. 29.) In the later years of Franklin’s

life he was able to retire from the printing office and enjoy a well-earned leisure, but his love of work still kept him fully employed.

He was not only a printer, but an author and publisher. Under the *nom de plume* of "Poor Richard" he for several years prepared and published an almanack, which was circulated by thousands. He reaped large profits from its sale.

In the year 1736 he was chosen Clerk of the Council, and in the following year was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia. In a city where a great number of houses were built of wood, fires were frequent, and one of his inventions was a fire extinguisher which proved of great use.

Though honours came thick and fast upon him, it must have been a matter of no small surprise when he was chosen to represent the United States at the Court of St. James, and to attend the sittings of the House of Commons. He

spent about two years in England, but they were stormy, troubled years, and during his absence from America his wife died, but it was only just before he had taken his passage to return that the news of her death reached him.

Benjamin Franklin died at a good old age on 17th April, 1790. His story from printer's boy to the Court of St. James is indeed no common one, but in closing I should like my young readers to remember that "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job xxviii. 28.)

C. J. L.

THE END.