James Hutton was born in London, England, September 14, 1715. His father, the Rev. John Hutton, was an eminent non-juring clergyman, and his mother, Elizabeth Ayscough, a cousin of Sir Isaac Newton. For many years he was a bookseller, his shop at the Bible and Star, near Temple Bar, being the resort of many of the prominent legal, literary, and political characters of the day. After being interested in the religious movements of the Wesleys and Whitefield, he finally united with the Moravian congregation in London, and died May 3, 1795, surviving his friend Franklin five years. Hutton became known to Franklin through the publications of the journals and sermons of Whitefield, in which both were engaged, but their personal intimacy dates from the year 1757, when Franklin, as the agent of Pennsylvania, took up his residence in London. During his subsequent sojourns in England the two booksellers frequently met in social intercourse, and their mutual esteem and friendship increased and only ceased with the death of the American.

In 1777 the English Ministry began to realize the gravity of the task they had undertaken in America, peace commissioners were sent to treat with Congress, and secret ministerial agents were also sent to Franklin in France, to try to draw from him some basis of peace, short of recognizing the independence of the United States, and failing in that, his consent to negotiate separately from France.

Among those who visited Franklin, James Hutton is supposed to have been the confidential agent of the king, for his close relations with both the king and queen, his well-known sentiments as "a peace wisher and promoter," and
his long and intimate friendship with Franklin, would lead to so important a mission.

A correspondent in the *St. James Chronicle* states:

"Politicians inform us that a new favorite has largely engrossed the king's attention—it is no less a person than the deaf Moravian, James Hutton. Whether his Majesty intends to raise Moravian regiments by Hutton's means among the faithful, to propagate the ministerial doctrine of unconditional submission in America, I know not, but this I am sure of, that a conversation between the king and Hutton must be exceedingly entertaining. Hutton is so deaf that a speaking trumpet will scarce make him hear, and the king talks so fast that an ordinary converser cannot possibly keep pace with him. After all, Hutton is an honest, humane and sensible man, and worthy a king's regard."

Hutton left England for Paris the day after Christmas, 1777, to visit Franklin, and five days later was the guest of Ferdinand Grand, Franklin's banker, and a brother of Sir George Grand.

The following extracts from a letter of Sir George Grand to Vergennes, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, informs him of the arrival of Hutton and the object of his visit:

**MR. GEORGE GRAND TO COMTE DE VERGENNES.**

Jan'y. 1, 1778

"... Mr. Hutton, the Moravian, aged seventy years, who left England on Friday, arrived yesterday afternoon at my brother's, where he made use of my name, I having known him well in Switzerland eighteen years ago. He told us that he came on purpose to see his old and intimate friend, Dr. Franklin, who called there during the evening. Their interview was both cordial and affectionate, and their conversation very animated for two hours. This man sees the King and Queen a good deal, by whom he is esteemed, as he is by all who know him, in consequence of his recognized virtues and probity. If he is a fresh emissary, I regard him as more dangerous than any other, because of his merits, of the confidence which he inspires, and of his old ties. He told me plainly during the conversation, that he had had a tête-a-tête conference of an hour with the King; that
that Prince, whom he adores, breathed nothing but peace; that he had given a proof thereof by putting an end to the last war as soon as he could, and that, in order to finish this one, he was disposed to grant to the Americans everything they might ask, except the word *independence*. He added to me that, if the House of Bourbon had sacrificed twenty millions sterling to cause English heads to be broken by Englishmen, the Ministry could not have served it better; that it was time to put an end to this butchery, and to prevent the total ruin of the two people.

"I shall follow, in concert with Mr. Deane, who shares my doubts, the doings of this honest man, in order to report them to you; meanwhile I am very easy as to the probity and fidelity of the Doctor, whom I hope he will not make a proselyte . . . ."

The Duke de Chaumont also informed Vergennes of the arrival of Hutton, refers to some of his movements, and that the object of his visit to Franklin is well understood.

**DUKE DE CHAUMONT TO COMTE DE VERGENNES.**

Jan'y 1, 1778.

". . . . Mr. Hutton, a Moravian chief of superior ability and unquestionable probity, much liked by the King of England and his ministers, came to Paris yesterday to confer with his old and intimate friend Dr. Franklin. At the first interview they spoke of pacification, and appointed next Saturday to meet again. The loyal Mr. Franklin would not perhaps compromise his friend with the English Court, and will perhaps keep silence as to his mission, but I think I can assure M. le Comte de Vergennes that there is nothing to fear from Mr. Franklin so long as he believes that his country cannot be enslaved."

**DE CHAUMONT TO DE VERGENNES.**

Jan'y 5, 1778.

". . . . The Moravian passed the whole of Saturday here, and left yesterday morning: he has reviewed the proverb
that it is useless to preach to him who will not value it. On leaving me he said that if Washington could be beaten, our people would be more tractable.

"I shall see my Moravian again. On leaving he must have gone to M. de Follerton [Fullerton]. His introductions are to M. Turgot, to M. Dupont, formerly his secretary, and M. L'Abbe Beaudeau. He has also an introduction to Madame Necre. He told me that he had asked permission of the King of England to come recommended to Mr. Franklin's humanity towards the Moravian Brothers who are in America, that neither the king nor the ministers had answered him and that he had left: that he had been advised to get into my good graces; consequently I have recommended him to the kindness of the deputies. Mr. Franklin said to him: you have only left us the option of preaching by you or with you, we have chosen the latter alternative."

Under date of January 10, 1778, de Chaumont drew up the following document, in which he gives the details of an interview he had with Hutton.

"JOURNÉE COMPLÈTTE AVEC LE MORAVE.

"The chief of the Moravian Brethren has made it his business to pump me today, and I see that his object was to find out whether there was a treaty signed by the Deputies of Congress. He said to me: In the preceding war, Washington signed articles with the French, the force of the terms of which he did not understand, and which were dishonourable for him. You ought, addressed he to me, to advise your friends, if they have nobody amongst them who understands French well, to defer to you or else they will be deceived. I replied to this pious speech that, I saw more objections to admitting a third person into important secrets, than to relying on the sense which appears to us the true one, especially in treating with people of recognised good faith, but that I saw no reason to suspect a treaty when there was no offence; that on this hand England appeared to me to be the party most concerned. Yes, replied he, but
do you wish to cause the King and his Ministers to be devoured by the Nation if they accept the Independence.

"It would only be as long as the house of Bourbon joined with us to recognize in a treaty of alliance against all the other powers, and that is what I have insinuated lately, because if the English Nation kicked against recognized Independence of America they would be restrained by the fear of the horrors of a civil war, in which the King's party would be sustained by the Bourbons, and he added to me, that if it were now to the interest of England to ally herself in perpetuity with the House of Bourbon it was no less to the interest of that House to accede thereto in good faith, in order to hold its own to all time against those empires of Northern Europe, whose ambition was increasing in the same ratio as the formidable armies which they kept in the best discipline.

"I appeared very pleased with the grandure of his plan, and I await the sequel thereof, for the good Moravian no longer intends to leave here, in order to be in London before the 20th of this month.

"With regard to the private insinuations, they are not, however, dishonourable. He asked me some questions as to the losses which I might have experienced in the preceding wars, and as to the profits I might expect from this one. I replied, that I thought no money worse earned than that got by privateering, unless it was that taken from a Nation before declaring war against it: that in this respect I had great reprisals to make, but as I still felt myself to be of sufficiently robust constitution to rear my children, I would leave it to them to calculate what I would have done, if I had not been unnerved by that atrocity, and also the care of taking revenge, as they should think fit. . . . .

"But I see that my Moravian is most sensible in appearing to be borne down by the weight of circumstances; his friends would have time to rally and cause the intolerance of our religion to foment as well as the inveterate antipathies of the English and French by inoculating the Americans
with them; they would not forget the means of exciting the jealousy of the Spaniards and the Moravians would end by abandoning the good Catholics, and allying themselves afterwards with the immense powers of the North.”

Hutton finding that the object of his principal mission to Franklin could not be attained, except by conceding the independence of the United States, set out on his return for England on January 25th, and on his arrival wrote to his friend.

**Hutton to Franklin.**

"London, January 27, 1778."

"... I got to my own house in seventy three hours from Paris. I shall never forget your kindness to me and your kind intention to serve my Brethren. The sensation I had of the certain miseries of war, that would attend all parties embarked in it, caused my heart almost to break. I always thought it a sad misfortune that there was such a thing as war upon earth.

"When I left England I fancied that you and Mr. Deane could treat about peace. I wished it ardently; but having no commission, nor anything to offer, I was sorry to hear nothing of your side that I could mention as ground to treat upon, to such as I fancied could give it weight. I was a loving volunteer, loving both people with common ardour; a friend of peace; a hater of discord, with horror at all bloodshed, wishing you secure in your liberties, and guarded forever against all apprehensions. I did before I set out, and I do now still at this moment, and I think on better grounds, believe that anything short of absolute independency would almost be practicable, and could take place. There is such a spirit and temper now in the nation, that I cannot think Independency could be successfully proposed. If you and Mr. Deane could give me a hint of anything practicable, you considering not only your own case but ours, I would venture to try what could be done.

"I know your hand writing as well as I do your heart. Direct your answer to me Queen's Row, Pimlico, Westmin-

ister, under the cover to M. Count de Gebelin, Rue Pompei, Paris, who will put a cover over it and my friend Mr. Fullerton will without examination forward it to me in the packet of Mr. Stormont. . . ”

FRANKLIN TO HUTTON.

PASSY, 1st February, 1778.

“MY DEAR OLD FRIEND.

“You desired, that if I had no proposition to make, I would at least give my advice. I think it is Ariosto who says, that all things lost on earth are to be found in the moon; on which somebody remarked, that there must be a great deal of good advice in the moon. If so, there is a good deal of mine, formerly given and lost in this business. I will, however, at your request, give a little more, but without the least expectation that it will be followed; for none but God can at the same time give good counsel and wisdom to make use of it.

“You have lost by this mad war, and the barbarity with which it has been carried on, not only the Government and commerce of America, and the public revenues and private wealth arising from that commerce; but what is more, you have lost the esteem, respect, friendship and affection of all that great and growing people, who consider you at present, and whose posterity will consider you, as the worst and wickedest nation upon earth. A peace you may undoubtedly obtain by dropping all your pretensions to govern us; and to your superior skill in huckstering negociations, you may possibly make such an apparently advantageous bargain, as shall be applauded in your Parliament; but if you cannot, with the peace, recover the affections of that people, it will not be a lasting nor a profitable one, nor will it afford you any part of that strength which you once had by your union with them, and might (if you had been wise enough to take advice) have still retained.

“To recover their respect and affection, you must tread back the steps you have taken. Instead of honouring and
rewarding the American advisers and promoters of this war, you should disgrace them; with all those who have influenced the nation against America by their malicious writings; and all the ministers and generals who have prosecuted the war with such inhumanity. This would shew a national change of disposition, and a disapprobation of what had passed.

"In proposing terms, you should not only grant such as the necessity of your affairs may evidently oblige you to grant, but such additional ones as may shew your generosity, and thereby demonstrate your good will. For instance, perhaps you might by your treaty, retain all Canada, Nova Scotia, and the Floridas. But if you would have a really friendly, as well as able ally in America, and avoid all occasion of future discord, which will otherwise be continually arising on your American frontiers, you should throw in those countries. And you may call it, if you please, an indemnification for the burning of their towns, which indemnification will, otherwise, be some time or other demanded.

"I know your people will not see the utility of such measures, and will never follow them, and even call it insolence and impudence in me to mention them. I have, however, complied with your desire, and am, as ever,

"Your affectionate friend,

"B. Franklin."

About ten days later Franklin again wrote to his old friend as follows:

FRANKLIN TO HUTTON.

"Passy, February 12, 1778.

"Dear Old Friend:

"I wrote the above some time before I received yours, acquainting me of your speedy and safe Return, which gave me Pleasure. I doubted after I had written it, whether it would be well to send it. For as your proud Nation despises us exceedingly and depends and expects absolute and hum-
ble Submission, all Talk of Treaty must seem Impudence, and tend to provoke rather than conciliate. As you still press me by your last to say something, I concluded to send what I have written, for I think the advice is good, tho’ it must be useless; and I cannot, as some amongst you desire, make Propositions, having none committed to me to make; but we can treat, if any are made to us, which, however we do not expect. I abominate with you all Murder, and I may add the Slaughter of men in an unjust cause is nothing less than Murder; I therefore, never think of your present Ministers and Abettors, but with the Image, strongly painted in my View of their Hands red, wet, and dripping with the Blood of my Countrymen, Friends and Relations. No peace can be signed by those hands. Peace and Friendship, will, Nevertheless subsist forever between Mr. Hutton and his affectionate
B. F.”

In the postscript of a letter to David Hartley, Franklin refers to the recent mission of Hutton. Hartley was a member of Parliament, an intimate friend of Franklin, and always deplored the folly and madness of the American war. His relations with Lord Rockingham caused him to be selected to act as plenipotentiary in Paris, where he assisted to draw up the treaty of peace between Great Britain and the United States.

FRANKLIN TO DAVID HARTLEY, M. P.

“Febry 12, 1778.

“P. S. An old Friend of mine, Mr. Hutton, a Chief of the Moravians, who is often at the Queen’s Palace, and is sometimes spoken to by the King, was over here lately. He pretended to no Commission, but urged me much to propose some terms of Peace, which I avoided. He has wrote to me since his return, pressing the same thing, and expressed with some Confidence, that we might have every thing short of absolute Independence, etc. Inclosed I send my answers,
that you may read them, and, if you please, copy before you deliver, or forward them. They will serve to show you more fully my Sentiments, tho they serve no other purpose.

"B. F."

After the treaty of alliance between France and the United States had been concluded, and Franklin and his associate Commissioners had, on March 20th, been received at Court as the representatives of the United States, the following letter was written:

FRANKLIN TO HUTTON.

"PASSY, 24th March, 1778.

"My dear old friend was in the right not to call in question the sincerity of my words, when I say, February the 12th, we can treat, if any propositions are made to us! They were true then, and are so still, if Britain has not declared war with France; for in that case we shall undoubtedly think ourselves obliged to continue the war as long as she does. But methinks you should have taken us at our word, and have sent immediately your propositions in order to prevent such a war, if you did not choose it. Still I conceive it would be well to do it, if you have not already begun the war. Assure yourself, nobody more sincerely wishes perpetual peace among men than I do; but there is a prior wish, that they would be equitable and just, otherwise such peace is not possible, and indeed wicked men have no right to expect it.

"Adieu. I am ever yours,

"Most affectionately,

"B. Franklin."