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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND CANADA.


[For References, see pages 107 to 110.]

INTRODUCTION.

[Note: It having been suggested that it would increase the value and interest of the Paper read before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania on Benjamin Franklin's Mission to Canada and the Causes of its Failure, were some account given of his part in earlier years in having Canada become part of the British Empire, I have therefore here prefixed portion of an Address before the Empire Club of Canada at Toronto, November 15, 1923, dealing with this little known but very important episode in the life of Franklin and in the history of the world. The Empire Club very gladly gives its consent to the use of this Address by its sister organization, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; and, sending its warmest greetings, hopes that the unity between and among the English-speaking peoples may continue and increase in aeternum.—W. R. R.]

The death blow to the old British Empire was struck in Canada in 1759, on the Plains of Abraham when Wolfe died victorious, cheered in death by the cry, "They run."

The blow, however, narrowly failed of being ineffective; it might well have produced no wound at all, not to speak of one that was fatal; and had it not been for Benjamin Franklin, the old British Empire might have
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not received even a shock but have survived for many years.

Benjamin Franklin, printer, journalist, scientist, diplomatist, moralist, statesman, patriot, all in the first rank, was in 1757, at the age of fifty-one sent to London by the Colony of Pennsylvania with a petition to the King, George II, that Pennsylvania might be permitted to tax the lands of the Penn estates for the defence of the Colony from the French and Indians. It was during his residence as Agent for Pennsylvania at the Court of St. James (Massachusetts and Connecticut also utilized his services) that the ancient Universities of St. Andrews and Oxford honoured themselves as well as him by conferring upon him the degrees of LL.D. and D.C.L. for his literary and scientific attainments; and to his friends and admirers, he was there-after "the Doctor."

He was still in London when Quebec surrendered in September, 1759.

England was weary of war; the Seven Years' War which she had entered in 1756 to save Prussia from destruction by France and her allies—absit omen—glorious as it was, was depleting her resources; and, in 1759, it was not going too well with her ally, Frederick. The Government headed by Pitt were set on prosecuting the war with vigour and were fairly well supported by the country. The splendid victories on this Continent were encouraging but not sufficiently so to prevent voices in some influential—generally, indeed, Tory—circles being raised to stop the war and give up to France the conquered territory. Franklin opposed this step whenever and wherever an opportunity offered. We find him writing to Lord Kames from London, January 3, 1769, saying:—"No one can more sincerely rejoice than I do, on the reduction of Canada; and this not merely as I am a colonist but as I am a Briton. I have long been of opinion that the founda-
tions of the future grandeur and stability of the British Empire lie in America; and though like other foundations they are low and little now, they are, nevertheless, broad and strong enough to support the greatest political structure that human wisdom ever yet erected. I am, therefore, by no means for restoring Canada. If we keep it, all the country from the St. Lawrence to the Mississippi will in another century be filled with British people. Britain itself will become vastly more populous by the immense increase of its commerce; the Atlantic sea will be covered with your trading ships; and your naval power, thence continually increasing, will extend your influence round the whole globe and awe the world. If the French remain in Canada, they will continually harass our colonies by the Indians, and impede if not prevent their growth, your progress to greatness will at best be slow, and give room for many accidents that may forever prevent it."

But Franklin did not confine his efforts to private letter writing: he talked—and he was a most persuasive talker—to all of the slightest influence with whom he came in contact. The suggestion made by "some among our great men" who in 1759 had begun to prepare the minds of the people to surrender Canada because to keep it would draw on Britain the envy of other nations and occasion a confederation against her, that Canada was too large and not worth possessing anyway, he combated "every day and every hour," and, as he rightly thought, with some success. He knew the English people, and he employed with skill and acumen the arguments which would have the greatest weight. The old British Empire was built on the plan of the old Roman Empire—Colonies and Provinces existed and were retained not for themselves but for the Mother Country. There was indeed no direct tribute exacted as in Roman times; but the Colonies paid an indirect tribute in affording a market for English goods
and English trade—England was an essentially trading nation, and all her conquests had been for commercial advantages. The money spent for defending the Colonies was a premium of insurance against loss of trade. Accordingly, Franklin's weightiest argument was that by keeping Canada, the nation would save two or three millions a year, then spent in defending the American Colonies: and, moreover, the Colonies would thrive and increase much more rapidly and so furnish a vast additional increase in the demand for British goods.

He did not confine himself to such arguments as this, but indulged in many other topics which he urged on occasion according to the company he was in or the persons he addressed.

Franklin as a man loyal to his Province and his mission, had always in view in these discussions the interests of America; he did not trouble himself then or later about the interests of Canada, and only in a minor degree about the interests of the Mother Country. But Franklin had another arrow in his quiver, more effective still; and that he now sped with marvellous skill. He turned to account his dexterity and ability as a pamphleteer.

It was the age of pamphlets, and it is possible that there were some written by Franklin which have disappeared or cannot be identified as his; but two we know of with certainty. The first in point of importance, and probably in point of time is the celebrated "Canada Pamphlet."

William Pulteney who had been a power in his day had destroyed his political prestige in 1742 by accepting a peerage, becoming Earl of Bath. He was hated by the King, George II, and never again was of importance; although the King, in 1746, invited him to form a government, he failed.

But he was never content with his position: from
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time to time he made public appearances like "an aged raven:" his speeches had a little of the old ring of the times when Walpole feared his tongue more than another man's sword. The Earl had selected as travelling tutor for his son, the Rev. John Douglas, a native of Fifeshire, a graduate of Oxford and a former Army chaplain: he presented the clergyman to two churches and they were close friends. Dr. Douglas (he took his D. D. degree in 1758) had undoubted ability, and at the Earl's direction he wrote several political pamphlets.  

Pulteney early in 1760 induced Dr. Douglas to write a pamphlet on the war: and Dr. Douglas accordingly wrote "A Letter to two Great men on the Prospect of Peace and on the Terms." The "two Great Men" were the elder Pitt and Newcastle who had formed a Coalition Government three years before and had raised and spent money for war purposes with a profusion which appalled more timid financiers—but which would in the recent war have been considered trifling. This pamphlet Walpole calls "very dull": it dealt with the terms necessary to be insisted upon in the negotiations for peace, and gave reasons for preferring Canada to the conquests of the West Indies—Guadeloupe had been taken in January, 1759. This pamphlet was answered by another, by William Burke, entitled "Remarks on 'A Letter to two Great Men,'" which contained opposite opinions on this and other subjects.  

Now was Franklin's opportunity, and he took advantage of it in the "Canada Pamphlet," which was published anonymously in 1760: a second edition eliding certain matter irrelevant to the general purpose and amending the terminology in some respects, appeared in 1761, published with Franklin's name as author and is printed in Franklin's Works. This is really a reply to the "Answer" and only incidentally is the "Letter" considered.

Franklin begins by demanding security from the
"barbarous tribes of savages that delight in war and take pride in murder, subjects properly neither of the French nor the English, but strongly attached to the former by the art and indefatigable industry of priests, similarity of superstitions and frequent family alliances. These are easily and have been continually instigated to fall upon and massacre our planters even in times of full peace between the two crowns, to the certain diminution of our people and the contraction of our settlements." He points out the absurdity of Forts as a sufficient protection against the French and the Indians: and urges that the possession of Canada is the only security. Answering the claim that the American colonists were wanting conquests made for them, he spiritedly says that these colonists "are in common with the other subjects of Great Britain anxious for the glory of her crown, the extent of her power and commerce, the welfare and future repose of the whole British people . . . they have been actuated by a truly British spirit to exert themselves beyond their strength." Then he artfully suggests that if Canada is retained, the people in the colonies will spread over the mountains and take up land making a market for English goods, whereas if not, they must for their own safety remain confined within the mountains, go into manufacturing and afford goods "cheap enough to prevent the importation of the same kind from abroad, and to bear the expense of its own exportation"—"But" he adds "no man who can have a piece of land of his own sufficient by his labour to subsist his family in plenty is poor enough to be a manufacturer and work for a master . . . while there is land enough in America for our people, there can never be manufacturers to any amount or value." Franklin counters: "how can the author of the Remarks counselling the return of Canada to France, justify the retention of Guadaloupe which he represents as of so much greater value?"
Then he goes into the relative value of the two countries in an argument eminently fitted for his audience.\textsuperscript{11}

True, the trade with the West Indies is a valuable one but it has long been at a stand—limited as our sugar planters are by the scantiness of territory, they cannot increase much and that evil will be little helped by our keeping Guadaloupe: the trade with the people in the northern colonies doubles in about twenty-five years—the exports to Pennsylvania alone having increased in 28 years 17 times, the population having increased but four times. Suppose Guadaloupe does export £300,000 in sugar every year: who profits by it? Why, the French inhabitants of the Island who will not be dispossessed and who will spend no more than before on English manufactures. But Canada retained and so the American colonists made safe, “the annual increment alone of our present colonies without diminishing their numbers or requiring a man from hence is sufficient in ten years to fill Canada with double the number of English that it now has of French inhabitants”—and all will be customers of England.\textsuperscript{12}

The most curious part of this pamphlet is that in which he contests the claim in the Answer that the American colonies would become dangerous to Great Britain if allowed to grow. “Of this, I own, I have not the least conception when I consider that we have already fourteen separate governments on the maritime coasts of the continent: and if we extend our settlements, shall probably have as many more behind them on the inland side. Those we now have are not only under different governors, but have different forms of government, different laws, different interests and some of them different religious persuasions and different manners. Their jealousy of each other is so great that, however necessary an union of the colonies has long been for their common defence and security against their enemies and how sensible soever each
colony has been of that necessity, yet they have never been able to effect such an union among themselves, nor even to agree in requesting the mother country to establish it for them. Nothing but the immediate command of the crown has been able to produce even the imperfect union, but lately seen there, of the forces of some colonies. If they could not agree to unite for their defence against the French and the Indians who are perpetually harassing their settlements, burning their villages and murdering their people, can it be reasonably supposed there is any danger of their uniting against their own nation which protects and encourages them, with which they have so many connections and ties of blood interest and affection and which it is well known, they all love more than they love each other? In short, there are so many causes that must operate to prevent it that I will venture to say, an union amongst them for such a purpose is not merely improbable, it is impossible."

Franklin's task was not yet complete: the cry for peace continued and to meet that by casting discredit on its authors he wrote another article which he sent to the London Chronicle; it was afterwards published in the Gentlemen's Magazine. He pretended to have found in a bookstall an old quarto without title page or author's name, containing discourses, addressed to some King of Spain translated into English and said in the last leaf to be printed in London by Bonham Norton and John Bill, "Printers to the King's most excellent Majestie, MDCXXIX;" he adds "The author appears to have been a Jesuit. . . . Give me leave to communicate to the public a chapter so apropos to our present situation (only changing Spain for France) that I think it well worth general attention and observation, as it discovers the arts of our enemies and may therefore help in some degree to put us on our guard against them." There had been writings and
discourses he says in Britain like those recommended in the Spanish book; and although so far they had little effect as "all ranks and degrees among us persist hitherto in declaring for a vigorous prosecution of the war in preference to an unsafe, disadvantageous or dishonourable peace, yet as a little change of fortune may make such writings more attended to and give them greater weight, I think the publication of this piece as it shows the spring from whence these scribblers draw their poisoned waters, may be of public utility."

Then he copies what purports to be a chapter from the old book.

"CHAP. XXXIV.

ON THE MEANES OF DISPOSING THE ENEMIE TO PEACE"

It is in the main a recommendation to the King of Spain who is supposed to be at war with England to gain by proper Meanes (i. e., bribery) "Menne of Learning (in England) ingenious Speakers and Writers who are nevertheless in lowe Estate and Pinched by Fortune . . . in their Sermons, Discourses, Writings, Poems and Songs to . . . magnifie the Blessings of Peace . . . expatiate on the Miseries of War, the Waste of Christian Blood, the growing Scarcitie of Labourers and Workmen, the Dearness of all foreign Wares and Merchandise, the Interruption of Commerce, the Capture of Ships, the Increase and great Burthen of Taxes. Let them represent the Advantages gained against us as trivial and little Import; the Places taken from us as of small Trade and Produce, inconvenient for Situation, unwholesome for Ayre and Climate, useless to their Nation and greatlie chargeable to keepe, draining the home Countrie both of Menne and Money. . . ." &c., &c.—precisely the arguments which had been used to bring on a peace with surrender of Canada, and precisely the arguments used by the agents of Germany in the late War. Nothing was
better adapted to throw suspicion on the Pacifists, whom Franklin looked upon as dangerous to England, and more dangerous to America.\textsuperscript{15}

Franklin’s argument prevailed: Canada was retained; the fear of French Canadians and French Indians was removed; what Vergennes had prophesied took place: the Thirteen Colonies rebelled and the old British Empire was rent in twain to be in time destroyed and a new British Empire built on the old foundations, but of “practically independent sister States cooperating for the common good,”\textsuperscript{16} whose Prime Ministers meet at the Imperial Conference, the Prime Minister of Great Britain “on terms of perfect equality with him and with each other.”\textsuperscript{17}

[The Paper continues with an account of Franklin’s mission to Canada in 1776 and its failure, and concludes as follows:]

Franklin left Canada a very few days after he entered it, leaving it to work out its own destiny: and so far as is known, he never saw it again.

But Canada has him in great measure to thank for her being as she is the brightest jewel in the British Crown and for her flying the flag that braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze; and she may forgive him for the fruitless attempt to sever her destinies from the rest of the British world. He succeeded because he could persuade Englishmen, he failed because he could not persuade French-Canadians; for both his success and his failure, we are devoutly thankful at this time of Thanksgiving. His success made possible the destruction of the old British Empire—his failure made possible the creation of the new, better and greater British Empire.

\textbf{William Renwick Riddell.}

Osgoode Hall, November 12, 1923.

(Thanksgiving Day)
REFERENCES.

1 "The Americans," Vol. VIII, Art. "Franklin, Benjamin," makes him in the 41st year of his age when in 1757 he was sent to London by his Province; it also says that he spent the next 41 years of his life practically all in the diplomatic service. As Franklin was born in 1706 and died in 1790, these figures should be 51st and 31 respectively.

2 The Life of Benjamin Franklin written by Himself; By John Bigelow; London, 1879, Vol. I, p. 399. This letter as it seems to me may well put an end to the supposition that Franklin had an arrière pensée in writing the "Canada Pamphlet" about to be spoken of in the text. See my Article "The Status of Canada," Journal issued by American Bar Association, June, 1921, pp. 293, sqq.

3 See his letter to John Hughes from London, January 7, 1760; Bigelow, op. cit., p. 402. He ends this letter: "And, on the whole, I flatter myself that my being here at this time may be of some service to the general interest of America." My own opinion is that his being there at that time revolutionized the world and changed the course of human history.

4 The full title is "The Interest of Great Britain considered with regard to her Colonies, etc."—the pamphlet is very rare (my own copy cost me £8). It was almost certainly published by May, 1760; it is probably that referred to in Franklin's letter to Lord Kames dated London, May 9, 1760—Bigelow, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 404—in which he says "Enclosed you have the production such as it is."

5 Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, says in a letter to the Countess of Ossory from Strawberry Hill, July 17, 1792, that Pulteney "had gobbled the honour but perceived his error too late for on the day that he entered the House of Lords, he dashed his patent on the floor in a rage, and vowed he would never take it up; but it was too late—he had kissed the King's hand for it." Walpole's Letters, Cunningham's edition, Vol. IX, p. 379; see also do. do. Vol. I, p. 143. Walpole certainly got the better of him; and he himself said "he lost his head and was obliged to go out of town for three or four days to keep his senses." See D. N. B., Vol. XLVII, pp. 28, sqq.

6 He should be remembered for his vigorous, able and successful defence of John Milton from the charge of plagiarism made against him by William Lauder, another Scotsman, and M. A. of Edinburgh. See D. N. B., Vol. XV, pp. 337, 338.

7 Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, says in a letter to George Montagu, from Arlington Street, January 14, 1760: "There is nothing new but a very dull pamphlet, written by Lord Bath and his chaplain Douglas, called a 'Letter to Two Great Men.' It is a plan for the peace and much adopted by the City, and much admired by those who are too humble to judge for themselves." Walpole's Letters, Cunningham's
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edition, Vol. III, p. 278. Walpole does not seem to have mentioned the Answer or the Canada Pamphlet. I have not seen either the Letter or the Answer: the former I have seen advertised for sale only once and I failed to acquire it: I have never seen the latter advertised: the substance of them, however, is made sufficiently clear in the Canada Pamphlet. Bigelow does not notice them.

It would seem that Franklin wrote this pamphlet on the request of Lord Kames. Writing to Kames from London, May 9, 1760, Franklin says: "I have endeavoured to comply with your request in writing something on the present situation of our affairs in America in order to give more correct notions of the British interest with regard to the colonies than those I found many sensible men possessed of. Enclosed you have the production such as it is. I wish it may, in any degree, be of service to the public." Bigelow, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 404, thinks this the "Canada Pamphlet," and I agree with him.

David Hume seems to have criticized the language of the pamphlet: Franklin in a letter to him from Coventry, September 27, 1760, thanks Hume for his "friendly admonition relating to some unusual words in the pamphlet. It will be of service to me." He admits "pejorate" and "colonize" are not in common use and gives them up as bad, "for certainly in writings intended for persuasion and general information, one cannot be too clear; and every expression in the least obscure is a fault." He thinks "unshakeable" clear but he gives "it up as rather low;" and "the word inaccessible though long in use among us is not as yet, I dare say, so universally understood by our people as the word uncomeatable would immediately be which we are not allowed to write." Bigelow, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 412. "Pejorate," to make worse, is still an unusual and stilted word: Franklin in the first edition of the "Canada Pamphlet" in the "observations concerning the increase of mankind, &c.,” omitted in the second edition used the word in the sentence "Slaves also pejorate the families that use them." The Works of Benjamin Franklin, LL.D., 2d Ed., London, Vol. 2, p. 388. This essay was written in 1751. Robert Louis Stevenson uses the word (1893) in his Catriona: I do not recall its appearance elsewhere. It sounds odd to hear the word "colonize" characterized as obscure—it had been in use from Bacon's time, 1622; and is one of our commonest and most generally understood words; I do not know of a word to take its place. Franklin used it in the second edition, see p. 139. "Inaccessible" had been in use at least for two centuries and it is very common at the present time—"uncomeatable" is still taboo in literary circles but not unusual in familiar parlance.

The Works of Benjamin Franklin, ut suprâ, Vol. 3, pp. 89-143—this edition being readily available, I shall cite it in this paper. It was "printed for Becket," London, 1761. Two editions of the "Canada Pamphlet" also appeared in Boston: and a long answer also was published. It seems quite certain that while Franklin supplied most of the information, Richard Jackson did most of the work on the "Canada Pamphlet," at least two-thirds of the text being his.
There never was a more astute diplomat than Franklin and he was extraordinarily able in feeling his audience and adapting his methods accordingly.

To indicate the strong feeling in favour of the retention of Guadeloupe it may be mentioned that Pitt in his Speech in the House of Commons, December 9, 1792, on the motion to approve the Preliminary Peace Treaty—he was so excessively ill that the House unanimously desired him to speak sitting—said that he had been blamed for consenting to give up Guadeloupe. . . . He wished to have kept the Island: he had been overruled on that point: he could not help it: he had been overruled many times on many occasions. He had acquiesced, he had submitted. . . . The Parliamentary History of England (Hansard), Vol. XV, col. 1264. The motion passed the House, 319 to 65, Pitt generally approving—he had left the Government with Temple shortly before on the question of War with Spain: the Papers relating to his negotiations with France are in do. do. cols. 1018-1210. The Peace was actually signed February 10, 1763.

The expectation expressed concerning the French population of Canada is interesting. "Those who are Protestants among the French will probably choose to remain under the English government; many will choose to remove if they can be allowed to sell their lands, improvements and effects; the rest in that thin-settled country will in less than half-a-century from the crowds of English settling round and among them be blended and incorporated with our people both in language and in manners."

When Canada was retained on the Peace of 1763, it was confidently expected that it would soon be settled by an English-speaking community and not a few merchants came in to Quebec and Montreal from Britain and the American Colonies to the South; the Royal Proclamation of 1763 promised the protection of the English law; and free lands were offered to settlers. The expectation that many French Canadians would remove proved fallacious, as but a negligible part went to France, although they had full leave to dispose of their property and had eighteen months in which to do it. No great English-speaking immigration set in until the Revolutionary War; and the French refused to blend with the newcomers in language or in customs—rather the reverse was the case. The movement to unite the Canadas in 1822 was in essence a movement to overwhelm the French Canadians; and Lord Durham's scheme of Union (1840) had the same result in view. All these designs proved vain imaginings—the astute statesmen failed to reckon with the virility and love of their language of the French and the fertility of French mothers.

In Pepperrell's expedition against Louisbourg, 1745, were troops from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Hampshire—Pennsylvania declined to join. Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia wrote to his brother in Boston: "Fortified towns are hard nuts to crack, and your teeth are not accustomed to it; but some seem to think that forts are as easy to take as snuff"—and he used his influence against Pennsylvania joining.
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Probably the reference in the text is to the American contingent in the war then going on; troops were contributed by Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, North and South Carolinas, New Jersey—not all at the same time or in the same expedition. "The Royal American Regiment" took part as an Imperial contingent in the campaigns of 1759, 1760.

14 No doubt, Franklin had seen such a colophon: Bonham Norton (1565–1635) was a King's Printer: D. N. B., Vol. XLI, pp. 225, 226: but the book is a myth. The date of Franklin's production is not certainly known but Sparks says "its contents show it to have been written towards the close of the French war and probably in 1760 or the year following. Under the disguise of a pretended chapter from an old book and an imitation of an antiquated style he throws out hints suited to attract attention and afford amusement." I think Sparks quite underrates the purpose and effect of this communication: it is a most ingenious and telling document calculated to cast suspicion on the advocates of peace. The Ency. Brit. 11th Ed. Vol. II, p. 25, says it "had a great effect." I think, however, it is in error in dating it before the "Canada Pamphlet." See Bigelow *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 414, 415 and note. Franklin signed the communication to the London Chronicle, "A Briton."

While Franklin frequently declared that in the "Canada Pamphlet" he received considerable assistance from a learned friend who was not willing to be named but who is now known to have been Richard Jackson, Agent for Massachusetts and Connecticut, no one has ever doubted that Franklin was the sole and only author of this production.


16 The language of the Prince of Wales, as true as it is inspiring.

17 The language of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, the Rt. Hon. Stanley Baldwin and of the former Prime Minister of Canada, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Borden.