

requests for jobs. "There is not a Port in France, and few in Europe, from which I have not received several Applications of Persons desiring to be appointed Consuls for America," Franklin wrote on April 15, 1783 (471). The editors wisely chose to bundle most of those letters—many of which are in French—in an editorial note. The editors provide a brief explanatory note to each letter, but not a condensed translation as in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. They have assumed that users of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* are literate in French, and they clean up or explain the poor spelling of Franklin's francophone correspondents.

Two events reveal Franklin's skill as a diplomat. In February 1783, Franklin negotiated a trade treaty with the Swedish ambassador to France, the Comte de Creutz. To accommodate Creutz's instructions, which barred him from signing a treaty before publication of a general peace treaty, Franklin agreed to a treaty with a blank date. The second event was the commissioning of a medal to celebrate victories at Saratoga and Yorktown and the French alliance. Franklin left France with the impression that Congress authorized the medal as "an official expression of gratitude to France," when, in reality, Congress gave no such permission (552).

Franklin was no stickler for forms. He could not, however, move Great Britain. "Let us now forgive and forget," Franklin wrote the Bishop of St. Asaph (349). But he could not follow his own advice in regard to the Loyalists. "The Society owes him nothing but Punishment," Franklin believed (231). He could not concede any purity of motive to the Loyalists. "Very few if any of these Pretenders had any such Principle, or any Principle but that of taking care of themselves by securing Safety with a Chance of Emolument & Plunder" (358).

In January 1783, Benjamin Vaughan implored Franklin to publish his autobiography. "Your history is so remarkable, that if you do not give it, somebody else will certainly give it; and perhaps so nearly to do as much harm, as your own management of the thing might do good" (112). Vaughan's fears were unfounded. The editors of this volume of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, as in the previous volumes, have made the most complex of the founders accessible to scholars. They have given enough annotation to ensure clarity without interfering with Franklin or his correspondents. This volume, as well as the series as a whole, is a model of documentary editing.

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*The Overflowing of Friendship: Love between Men and the Creation of the American Republic.* By RICHARD GODBEER. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. xii, 254 pp. Notes, index. \$35.)

In a puzzling departure from his earlier work, which included such groundbreaking explorations as "The Cry of Sodom" (1995; a study of homoeroticism in

Puritan New England) and *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (2002), Richard Godbeer goes to great lengths in his new book to squelch any suggestion of improper passion. His focus is on close male-male relations during the early years of the Republic, and so inevitably he addresses the topic of “romantic friendships”—those troublesome pairings that have been the focus of much recent scholarly debate. In letters and diaries from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, men talk about their intimate friends in terms that, to the modern ear, sound surprisingly erotic. Some historians feel that the words may indeed be an accurate reflection of the men’s emotional response. Godbeer gives short shrift to such speculation. “[T]his book refuses to ignore the passionate nature of many such friendships and yet insists that we not impose our own assumptions and sexual categories onto such relationships”(6). In declaring the importance of withholding judgment, Godbeer assumes an untenable stance—he presents extensive evidence of male-male emotional attachments but then insists that the only defensible conclusion is one that presumes no genital involvement. In effect, he takes a position in the debate by declaring certain speculation off limits.

One of the book’s most fascinating chapters explores the complex relationship that developed in the 1780s among three Philadelphians: John Mifflin, Isaac Norris, and James Gibson. Mifflin and Norris were at first deeply involved in a romantic friendship, one that was tested when Norris left for Europe on the traditional “Grand Tour.” Mifflin missed his absent friend with such intensity (“ . . . come, I beseech—I crave you”) that his health suffered (20). When he learned that Norris’s ship had at last docked in New York, he wrote unabashedly, “it was such a burst of pleasure to me that I scarce knew how to deport myself and I believe I behaved myself for a while as if I were a little frantic” (21). Unfortunately, in Norris’s absence, Mifflin had struck up a friendship with James Gibson, an undergraduate at Princeton. This, too, was a grand and overpowering passion, but when he tried to bring his old friend and his new friend together, they found they had nothing (except Mifflin) in common. Norris drifted away, while Mifflin pursued Gibson to Princeton, where the undergraduate abandoned his dormitory room in order to share a boardinghouse bed with his visiting friend. Godbeer has uncovered a trove of correspondence and journals documenting this intense ménage—writings describing deep and transportive passion—but he insists that whatever these young men may have written, they did not *really* mean they were sexually attracted to one another. In the absence of postings on YouTube, we have only their words to go by, and yet Godbeer insists that we not believe their words.

While there is evidence that the English language has changed in some significant ways in the last 250 years, there is no evidence that human sexual response has—and that is why we do not hesitate to make assumptions about historical heterosexuality. When, in an eighteenth-century letter, a man tells a woman that he *craves* her, we accept that word at face value and feel no compul-

sion to explain away its meaning. To insist that *crave* (which the *Oxford English Dictionary* traces in this sense back to the fifteenth century) must mean something entirely different if two men are involved is to fail to acknowledge the full range of human sexuality in all its complexity.

Through extensive and careful research, Godbeer has assembled a rich and varied collection of previously unknown homoerotic writings. That he denies that that is what they are makes this book an important part of a developing debate, and it should be read by anyone with an interest in sexuality and gender in early American history. Take from it what you will.

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*"Liberty to the Downtrodden": Thomas L. Kane, Romantic Reformer.* By MATTHEW J. GROW. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009. 368 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, index. \$40.)

Matthew Grow paints a portrait of a man who was compelled throughout his life to defend the persecuted from the powerful. Thomas Kane (1822–83) was from a wealthy and influential Philadelphia family and joined in numerous reform efforts, including the woman's rights and antislavery movements. But no project occupied Kane's time as much as his defense of the Mormons. His involvement was perhaps atypical of the day, as many nineteenth-century reformers were the ones working hard to end the theocracy and polygamy of the Mormon Church. While many reformers were also evangelicals, Kane, with an ecumenical upbringing and education, was a fundamentally antievangelical reformer who stoutly defended the Mormons from what he saw as evangelical bigotry.

Kane first encountered the Mormons in 1846, when their opponents were driving them out of Nauvoo, Illinois. Many sympathized with the Mormons, but Kane went so far as to visit them in their camps the following year. He was impressed by their sincerity and their kindness in nursing him back to health (Kane suffered from health problems throughout his life), and he formed a lasting bond with them. Determined to defend the Mormons, Kane wrote numerous newspaper editorials and worked closely with government officials to advance Mormon interests. Devastated when he learned they practiced polygamy, Kane did not slacken his efforts, which reached their apex when President Buchanan sent the army to put down a supposed insurrection in Utah in 1857. Kane received permission to act as negotiator between the Mormons and the army. He went to Panama, crossed over the Isthmus to sail to California, and traveled overland to Salt Lake City to intervene. Over the following months, Kane averted the hostilities, convinced the Mormons to accept their new territo-