
In this volume the wide range of Franklin's interests and activities is amply demonstrated. Even during the relatively short span of time covered in these pages, Franklin emerges as a scientist of international renown, as a lobbyist and agent in London of the Pennsylvania Assembly, as a lampoonist who abusively ridiculed pomposity, as a practical sage who freely dispensed aphoristic advice, and perhaps most meaningfully as an imperial statesman who worked unceasingly for colonial and imperial unity in the face of the disruptive tendencies which were evident even before the end of the French and Indian War.

Among the more historically significant sources included in this judiciously edited compilation are the accounts of meetings in London between Franklin and the Pennsylvania proprietors, Thomas and Richard Penn, the Board of Trade, and the Privy Council. As the agent of the increasingly intransigent Pennsylvania Assembly, Franklin had the impossible task of reconciling the differences not only between legislative privilege and proprietary prerogative, but also between colonial and imperial designs. His public pronouncements and private correspondence both attest to the futility of this, his primary mission.

Life was not all work for the wily Franklin during his lengthy stay in England. Letters to his wife Deborah, to Peter Collinson, and to William Strahan, to mention his most frequent correspondents, all make reference to his active social life in the imperial capital. Nor did he neglect his lifelong interest in the arts and sciences. Attendance at meetings of the Society of Arts, formal admittance as a fellow of the Royal Society, and tributes from such eminent scientists as Giambattista Beccaria bear witness to Franklin's breadth of knowledge and cosmopolitanism.

The inclusion of Poor Richard improved: Being an Almanack and Ephemeris . . . for the Year of Our Lord 1758, probably written while at sea on his way to England and commonly referred to as "The Way to Wealth," will delights those who equate Benjamin Franklin with the pithy epigrams of Poor Richard. With such weighty aphorisms and maxims as "Sloth, like Rust, consumes faster than Labour wears," "The sleeping Fox catches no Poultry," "Laziness travels so slowly,
that Poverty soon overtakes him,” and “Early to Bed, and early to rise, makes a Man healthy, wealthy, and wise,” Franklin weaved a practical philosophy well-suited to the rustic American environment.

From the variety of sources so painstakingly collected for this important period of his life, the Franklin of historical tradition emerges to take his place as one of the giants of his age. The editors are to be commended for their meticulous scholarship, their elucidating commentary, and most importantly for making available the writings and correspondence of the fascinating and universally respected Mr. Franklin. An extensive index, a chronology, and numerous and, when necessary, lengthy explanatory footnotes greatly enhance the value of this attractive volume for the specialist and layman alike.

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Joseph C. Morton

*Simon Cameron, Lincoln’s Secretary of War: A Political Biography.*


It is remarkable that a politician of Simon Cameron's stature and prolonged public activity should have no full-length scholarly biography until the publication of the volume under review. Lee Crippen, of course, wrote the story very fully up to the outbreak of the Civil War, but unhappily did not live to complete the second volume. Professor Bradley has produced a book which enables us to follow the whole course of Cameron's career.

It takes some courage to prepare a book on Cameron, for many of the essential papers relating to the man still remain out of the reach of historians; scholars cannot be sure whether they have been destroyed or are extant but inaccessible for research. Bradley has had recourse to the standard manuscript collections, has consulted all the major ones, and also had entrée to Lee Crippen’s notes. His main advantage in preparing the biography arose not from source materials to which he had exclusive access, but rather from his prior study of and familiarity with Pennsylvania politics in the era of Cameron’s lifetime. From 1830 to 1880, Simon Cameron exercised a continuing and powerful influence on the party politics of Pennsylvania; and Bradley’s intimate knowledge of the involved story of local politics gives him special qualifications to interpret Cameron and place him in perspective.