

BOOK REVIEWS

Mon Cher Papa — Franklin and the Ladies of Paris. By CLAUDE-ANNE LOPEZ. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966. Pp. x, 377. Illustrations, chronology, index. \$7.50.)

Few books evoke eighteenth century France as does *Mon Cher Papa* by Claude-Anne Lopez, assistant editor in charge of French materials for The Papers of Benjamin Franklin at Yale University.

The book covers the period of Benjamin Franklin's eight and one-half years in Paris, 1777-85. Franklin, like all great Americans, has been studied from many angles by many scholars. This charming book, however, presents him from a woman's viewpoint and from feminine letters that flew back and forth in his new milieu. The letters recreate eighteenth century life in France, drawing on hundreds of unpublished documents, showing French intellectual women at their best, and Franklin as charming and gentle, with a "gay impudence." The most important of these women are the accomplished musician, Madame Brillon, the formal Comtesse d'Houdetot, and Madame Helvetius, who gently refused Franklin's offer of marriage.

Our national fate was in the hands of an old man suffering from the stone and gout, who would in normal times have preferred slippered ease in a fireside chair. The colonies were penniless, were losing the war; they had also cut off retreat through the Declaration of Independence. Franklin, through some sleight of hand, was to get supplies, arrange trade, interest good officers to come to America, secure formal recognition and an alliance at war.

At American headquarters, he received little cooperation. The spy, Edward Bancroft, made daily reports on Franklin to the British. Arthur Lee had deep-seated grievances, finding himself "both superseded by his colleague Silas Deane . . . and eclipsed by Franklin." In a letter to Lee, Franklin stated, "Your sick mind which is forever tormenting itself with its jealousies, suspicions and fancies that others mean you ill, wrong you, or fail in respect for you. If you do not cure yourself of this temper, it will end in insanity."

Puritanical John Adams, who replaced Silas Deane in April 1778, felt at times that Franklin was selling out to France for popularity. From Adams' letters Franklin's life was a scene of continual dissipation, while *he* worked for his country. "As for the afternoon, I was always invited with him, until I found it necessary to send apologies, that I might have some time to study the French language and do the

business of the mission. Mr. Franklin kept a horn book always in his Pockett, in which he minuted all his invitations to dinner, and Mr. Lee said it was the only thing in which he was punctual." Adams is the Puritan disapproving of idleness.

Idle? Here are a few of Franklin's accomplishments in eight and one-half years: the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with France, the Treaty of Alliance with France, the exchanges of prisoners with England, the shipment of war material, the securing of loans, the Treaty of Peace with Britain, the Treaties of Amity and Commerce with Sweden and with Prussia.

Career diplomats and cadets at American military academies should find Franklin's methods of accomplishing his aims a profitable field of study. First, he learned the French language, and writing both in English and in French, he set up his little printing press at Passy. He combined "American seriousness of purpose with a French irony of manner." When his "French feminines" and his grammar gave him trouble, he enlisted the help of his delightfully literate French friends. Drafts of *The Bagatelles*, for instance, went back and forth to many men and women until the sketches were ready for printing. On the other hand, Adams learned French the proper way, through competent authorities. But Franklin made friends as he mastered the language, and his printing press popularized him all over France. All literate people knew him. How many knew Adams, in this country always passionately devoted to the printed word? Claude-Anne Lopez makes this interesting comment: "The continental traditional has always demanded that work be disguised by outward nonchalance."

Women, many women, loved Franklin, entertained him, helped him to accomplish his aims. He was that rare man who loves women, not only for their beauty, but for their ideas, their wit. "In the age of the salon, with its delicate network of influence, intrigue, and innuendo, their importance was crucial The late eighteenth-century gentlewoman, a perfectly attuned instrument, was at one with her era as few women, before or after her, have been"

Let us mention three women from the book. First, Madame Brillon, with "the sweet habit" of sitting on Franklin's lap — Madame Brillon of the famous chess game played in her bathroom while she soaked in her tub, which was covered with a wooden plank. She was a fine pianist, and at her musicales Franklin met all the people of influence. Her letters are delightful: "You have loved, my dear brother; you have been kind and lovable; you have been loved in return! What is so damnable about that? Go on doing great things and loving pretty

women; provided that, pretty and lovable though they may be, you never lose sight of my principle: always love God, America, and me above all"

The second woman was Comtesse d'Houdetot, "the kind of woman who makes other women wonder what is it that men see in them." It was for her that Franklin planted the famous acacia, while French women recited reams of verse.

And finally, the queen of them all, Madame Helvetius, whom he wanted to marry, and to whom he wrote at the end of his life: "I cannot let this chance go by, my dear friend, without telling you that I love you always And often, in my dreams, I dine with you, I sit beside you on one of your thousand sofas, or I walk with you in your beautiful garden."

Learning French, printing his ideas in French, loving French women were only part of Franklin's secret. Franklin the scientist was respected before he came to France to work with scientists. He popularized the armonica, a musical instrument. He took part in the investigation of Mesmer. He went to banquets introducing and popularizing the potato. He saw the first balloon ascents. He symbolized America in his coonskin cap and plain clothes. By identifying with the French, he secured help for his country.

A grand man, a fascinating book, and oh, those lovely women!

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Medicine in America — Historical Essays. By RICHARD HARRISON SHRYOCK. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966. Pp. xviii, 332. Index. \$7.50.)

This book deals, in a general way, with "The Medical history of the American People," under various headings such as Medical Practice in the Old South, Basic Science in the Nineteenth Century, Medical Perspective on the Civil War, Sylvester Graham and the Health Movement of 1830-1870, the Historical Significance of the Tuberculosis Movement, The American Physician, Women in Medicine, Medical Thought and Research. These and other headings give in a very clear way the subject material used in the history of American Medicine. Under these headings there is told the difficulties of establishing the first hospitals in the U.S.A. and the need for more to satisfy the wants of the people, the demand for compulsory health