

Franklin is the next in prominence at this time. As a man of science his genius was perhaps equal if not superior to that of Black or Davy. In addition to what they possessed, his shrewd and sober nature qualified him to fill the situation of his country's representative at the Courts of London and Paris. We read of him that while in the former capacity, he was exposed at a meeting of the Council, to the most cutting sarcasms and invectives of a practised and clear speaker. He was narrowly watched at the time, and the self-possession which he evinced is described as admirable. We have him depicted by more than one good pen, as appearing at the Parisian Soirées where Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert and Diderot, were among the guests that composed the brilliant reunions. Here too he is represented as distinguishing himself by the self-possession that he shewed. As a scientific man, what he did was very good, but it was not a great deal; as a politician he assisted in carrying out the views of his countrymen, with praiseworthy consistency and prudence. In this capacity he probably conducted himself much better than Newton or Adam Smith could have managed to do. When it is considered how well he united two characters, that have not often been combined, we cannot refuse to acknowledge that he was a remarkable man. Still, especially of late years, his admirers have spoken of him in exaggerated terms. If it be urged in the way of exculpation, that of late years we have not had much to write about, we admit the plea. The finest thing that was ever said of him, is contained in the well known Latin line, which forms his epitaph—"Eripuit coelo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis,"—he snatched the thunderbolt from heaven, and the sceptre from tyrants. It is a beautiful hexameter; never was a magnificent thought more compendiously and vividly expressed. He who rose from the position of a journeyman printer in a young colony, to a station in science and public life, that could suggest such a thought to an elegant scholar, must have been a remarkable person.

Franklin is often spoken of as the parent of that peculiarly trading nature that characterises the American, and that has been diffusing itself over Europe for fifty years back. Selfish and prudent, his scientific attainments gave respectability to these littlenesses, and have rendered them the fashion. No one doubted of the absolute wisdom of poor Richard's maxims, proceeding as they did from one who was an ambassador in London, and drew lightning from the sky with a key and a paper kite. The adage of Juvenal, "Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia," received wonderful confirmation and aid from the writings of Franklin. Hence if we find Carlyle in rapt Ossianic strain, complaining that we are a peddling generation, and that we look in vain around us for what he calls earnest men; if we see Emerson in a style somewhat different, summoning us away from the mundane to the transcendental, we behold the influence that Franklin has wielded, and the reaction against it. There has ever been a considerable fraction of society, that has been regulated