

first of his known imprints and the only one extant emanating from London.

As a stranger speaking a foreign tongue he did not secure a remunerative patronage in London, so, together with others of his self-exiled compatriots, attracted by Franklin's championship of the cause of the American Colonies, and his republican and free-thought sentiments, he sought an interview with the American statesman, to inquire regarding the prospects of success and the enjoyment of liberty in America, and was advised to try Philadelphia. Franklin, the real leader of the revolt of the thirteen colonies, at once became convinced of the advantage of securing the services of a French printer, in sympathy with the revolutionary movement, ready, when occasion required, to send into the Province of Quebec to influence its people by press and precept, although alien in race and language, to cast in their lot with this movement, and thus, by extinguishing British rule in America, make the new order a continental congress indeed.

Fortified with a letter from Franklin to Congress, Mesplet, towards the close of 1773, or the beginning of 1774, set sail for Philadelphia with his wife and his printing outfit. There he settled down to business and rented a house belonging to Anthony Benezet<sup>1</sup> at \$112 per annum. He formed a partnership with someone who evidently furnished the necessary capital, but whose name is not recorded, and set up as a master printer. It is not clear whether he hired space for his type and press and used the same printing office as Miller,<sup>2</sup> or had his press-work done there, for Berger writes that his type was at this printer's, and that he had paid him \$176 (due either for space or press-work).<sup>3</sup>

Through the letter of introduction from Franklin he was commissioned by the Continental Congress in 1774, to print a sixteen page pamphlet, addressed "Aux Habitants de la province de Québec."<sup>4</sup> Whatever other orders he may have received from Congress or from the citizens of Philadelphia during that year they did not appear to

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<sup>1</sup> He was a son of Etienne Benezet who came from France early in the 18th century and carried on a successful business in Philadelphia. Anthony was a strong abolitionist and published a number of works against negro slavery. He befriended printers, especially those from his native country.

<sup>2</sup> The Miller here referred to (Heinrich Mueller) held towards the German population of Philadelphia of which there was a considerable number, a somewhat similar position as did Mesplet to the French. Their interests were therefore not likely to clash even though they occupied the same building. One of Miller's imprints is shown on a book described in the "Bibliography of the Algonquin Languages," J. C. Pilling, Washington, 1891, page 544. When Philadelphia was captured in 1777, Miller hid his presses but they were discovered and carried to New York and were used for printing British Proclamations.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix C No. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix A No. 2.