

The illustrious Franklin, however, deplored the choice made by his colleagues and compatriots. Writing to a friend in 1783, he declared that he would have given the world the eagle had not been selected as the representative of his country, for he is a bird of a fierce and shameless character, who cannot gain his livelihood honourably. He may frequently be seen, from the top of a decayed tree, carefully watching other rapacious birds in their aquatic depredations, with the view of profiting by a booty which he is too slothful to gain through his own exertions. The moment that one of these birds has seized on a fish, which he destines for his brood, the wretch descends upon him like a thunderbolt, and audaciously snatches it from his beak. He is not the happier for all his swiftness in flight and his supremacy over the other inhabitants of the air. Like the majority of robbers and vagabonds, he lives in poverty, solitude, and wretchedness. In Franklin's belief he was a scoundrel of the worst kind, whom the tiniest wren, frequently no larger than a nut, does not fear to attack with the greatest courage, and to expel from his neighbourhood. The choice of the eagle was not, then, a felicitous one; and it is to be regretted that the founders of American independence, at whose head was a hero so pure-minded as Washington, did not choose a more appropriate emblem for the blazon of their republic.

The letter in which Franklin recorded his sentiments was shown to me by a celebrated Philadelphian bookseller, who preserved it in his collection of autographs; and I confess I am entirely of the opinion of that eminent statesman. My bookseller knew me to be a passionate votary of the chase, and, at my request, he furnished the