

abated. He writes in October, 1787, to a friend in France, describing his experience with lightning conductors and referring to the work of David Rittenhouse, the celebrated astronomer of Philadelphia. On the 31st of May in the following year he is writing to the Reverend John Lathrop of Boston:

I have long been impressed with the same sentiments you so well express, of the growing felicity of mankind, from the improvement in philosophy, morals, politics, and even the conveniences of common living, and the invention of new and useful utensils and instruments; so that I have sometimes wished it had been my destiny to be born two or three centuries hence. For invention and improvement are prolific, and beget more of their kind. The present progress is rapid. Many of great importance, now unthought of, will, before that period, be produced.

Thus the old philosopher felt the thrill of dawn and knew that the day of great mechanical inventions was at hand. He had read the meaning of the puffing of the young steam engine of James Watt and he had heard of a marvelous series of British inventions for spinning and weaving. He saw that his own countrymen were astir, trying to substitute the power of steam for the strength of muscles and the fitful wind. John Fitch on the Delaware and