



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

(FROM THE CHEVILLET ENGRAVING OF THE DUPLESSIS PORTRAIT OF 1778 IN POSSESSION OF MISS E. F. HARWOOD.)

FRANKLIN'S HOME AND HOST IN FRANCE.

IT was on the tenth day of June, in the year of our Lord 1776, that Caron de Beaumarchais, poet, dramatist, courtier, and speculator, received from the French treasury one million francs, for which he gave the following receipt, which was destined to a greater celebrity than any equal number of lines he ever wrote:

J'ai reçu de M. Duvergier, conformément aux ordres de M. le Comte de Vergennes en date du 5 courant, que je lui ai remis, la Somme d'un million dont je rendrai compte à mon dit Sieur comte de Vergennes.

CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.

Bon pour un million de livres tournois.

À Paris, le 10 Juin, 1776.

The following is a translation of this letter:

I have received from M. Duvergier, in conformity with the orders of M. the Comte de Vergennes of the 5th instant, and which I have remitted to him, the Sum of one million, of which I will render an account to the said Comte de Vergennes.

CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.

Good for a million livres tournois.

Paris, June 10, 1776.

This was the first money contributed by the French government in aid of the revolting British colonies in America.

A little more than three months later, and on the twenty-sixth day of September of the same memorable year, a congress of the re-

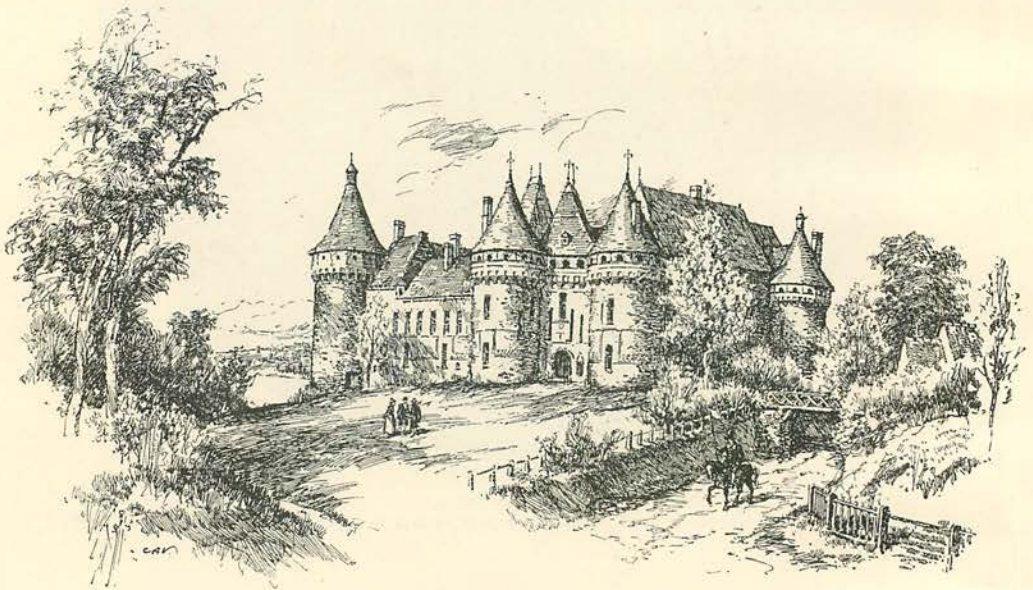
voted colonies selected by ballot three persons to proceed to the court of Louis XVI. and ask his alliance and support. Dr. Benjamin Franklin, then seventy years of age, was unanimously chosen on the first ballot one of these commissioners. When the result of the balloting was announced he is reported to have turned to Dr. Rush, who sat beside him, and to have said: "I am old and good for nothing; but, as the store-keepers say of their remnants of cloth, I am but a fag end, and you may have me for what you please to give."

Upon the next ballot Thomas Jefferson, then in his thirty-third year, was chosen, but in consequence of the delicate health of Mrs. Jefferson at that time he felt obliged to decline the appointment. It was reserved for him to be Franklin's successor in Paris nine years later.

On his arrival, Dr. Franklin accepted temporary lodgings with Silas Deane at the Hôtel Hamburg, in the Rue de l'Université.

The news of the doctor's arrival at Nantes had preceded him to Paris, and almost immediately upon his reaching the Hôtel Hamburg he was waited upon by a gentleman holding intimate relations with the court, and invited to accept for the use of himself and his legation a vacant house on the visitor's estate at Passy, then one of the suburbs of Paris.† The gentleman who made this proffer of hospitality to Franklin was M. Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont, at that time honorary Superintendent of the Hôtel des Invalides, and also honorary Superintendent of Woods and Forests of the department of Berry and Blaison.

The objections to placing himself or his



CHATEAU DE CHAUMONT. (REDRAWN FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY ASSELINEAU.)

Arthur Lee and Silas Deane, both in Europe at the time as agents of the colonies, were finally chosen as Franklin's associates. Three days after this election, which occurred at the most gloomy and unpromising moment in the whole history of the revolution, the news to which we have referred, that the young King of France* had extended his hand to us, reached Philadelphia. Dr. Franklin sailed for France on the twenty-seventh day of October, 1776, and reached Paris on the 21st of December following—less than six months after the colonies had declared their independence.

government under obligations to a stranger and a foreigner yielded to superior considerations which reflection and further information revealed to him.

De Chaumont was then a gentleman of fortune; he held intimate and quite confidential relations with the ministry, and shared

* Louis had succeeded to the throne of France two years before, and was then in the twenty-second year of his age. Vergennes was his Minister of Foreign Affairs, and De Sartines his Minister of the Marine.

† Passy was incorporated into the municipality of Paris during the Second Empire.



DONATIEN LE RAY DE CHAUMONT. (FROM A PORTRAIT BY ROBIN.)

fully the enthusiasm of his countrymen for the struggling colonists and their traditional prejudices against the British government. He was probably selected by the ministry and put forward — though upon this point we have only inferential testimony — as the fittest person to have charge of Franklin and to serve as a channel through which the French and the American governments could communicate secretly and without compromising the official relations of France and Great Britain. All these advantages were duly appreciated by Franklin at a glance. A residence at Passy protected him and all his movements from public observation and officious inquisitiveness, while the opportunities for communicating with the Government which he would enjoy in such close proximity to M. de Chaumont were even greater than those enjoyed by Lord Stormont, the British ambassador, the relations of the French government with Franklin's being at that period far more sympathetic than those with Great Britain. He would here be sheltered from inconvenient curiosity without being inaccessible to friends.

This position also gave him opportunities, in no other way possible, of learning promptly what might be going on in official circles, without any sacrifice of dignity on his part

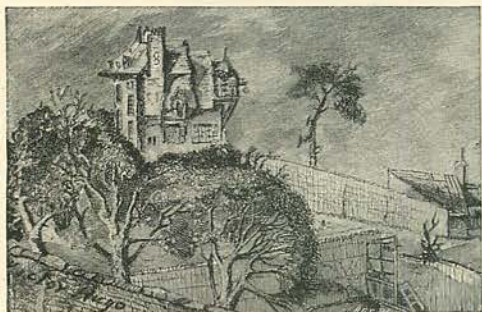
and without prejudice to the government to which he was accredited — not yet prepared for and constantly hoping to avoid an open rupture with England.

Franklin accepted the invitation of M. de Chaumont.

The arrangements for his reception were soon perfected, and at the expiration of about three weeks from his arrival in France he was installed in the quarters which M. de Chaumont had appropriated to his use.

As Franklin dwelt in this hotel at Passy nine consecutive years and for the full term of his mission; as it was there that he conducted all those negotiations which procured for the colonies the open alliance of France and finally the acknowledgment of their independence by England; as it was there that he penned the largest part of his incomparable autobiography; as it was in his library there, according to the accepted traditions, that Volney conceived the extraordinary book by which he is now chiefly remembered; as it was upon the house he there occupied that he placed the first lightning-rod ever put up in France or in Europe — some account of its as well as of its proprietor's history will possess an interest to the American reader beyond the gratification of an idle curiosity.

The property of which the house occupied by Franklin was only a *dépendance*, and which M. de Chaumont had then owned but a few months, had at one time belonged to the Duchesse de Valentinois and was still known as the Hôtel Valentinois. On this considerable estate were two dwellings, one known and described in the conveyances as *le grand*, and the other as *le petit hôtel*. The larger was occupied by M. de Chaumont, and the smaller was for the remainder of his sojourn in France the residence of Franklin. According to the title-deeds, copies of which we have under our eyes, Madame la Duchesse d'Aumont was proba-



VICTOR HUGO'S DRAWING OF FRANKLIN'S HOUSE.

bly the first private person who ever possessed complete control of the consolidated property, and she converted it into a country residence. This must have occurred as early as 1711, for at that epoch she acquired the right of view across the property lying upon the opposite side of the *Rue des Francs Bourgeois*, and in the exercise of that right caused the upper stories of the houses which interfered with her view to be removed so as to disclose the Seine, the Champs de Mars, and the distant hills of Fleury, Meudon, Sèvres, and St. Cloud. This right of view was still reserved in 1866.

The property had several owners after the death of the Duchesse d'Aumont, and among

* As no record was kept of the purchasers of the articles sold at this fair, it was only a few months since, and after many ineffectual efforts, that I learned what had become of the sketch sent to the United States. In March, 1885, a paragraph appeared in the New York "Critic," giving the history of the sketch up to the time of its sale and inviting information, from those who had any, of its subsequent fate. In the "Critic" of March 6, 1886, just a year later, there appeared a notice of an exhibition of pictures on exhibition at the Avery Art Gallery in New York, among which it referred specially to "Victor Hugo's drawing of Benjamin Franklin's house at Passy, . . . accompanied by the autograph letter which was sent by him with the sketch to the United States Sanitary Commission in 1865." Both were purchased by the late Samuel J. Tilden, and now form a part of his notable art collection. It is to his courtesy we are indebted for the privilege of illustrating these pages with a copy of them.

The following is a translation of Victor Hugo's letter,

them were the Chevalier de Ségur, President of the Parliament of Bordeaux; the Duc de Valentinois, and Lieutenant-General de Stainville, Governor of Strasbourg, who sold it in August, 1776, to M. de Chaumont. A part of it was still standing as late as 1866, and the façade looking upon the garden retained all the characteristics of the original structure of the second half of the eighteenth century. The columns which decorated it; the bull's-eyes surrounded with garlands; the moldings of the windows, sashes, and doors; the arrangement of the veranda,—all conspired to define and preserve the cheerful and characteristic style of the epoch.

In 1865, it was my privilege to transmit to the commissioners of the great fair held that year in New York, for the relief of the sick and wounded in the war, a sketch of the Franklin house which had been made by Victor Hugo, and which he desired me to forward as his contribution to that memorable charity. It came to me sealed, ready for dispatch. It was sold with the rest of the collection. When I was in Paris in 1877, I asked Victor Hugo if he sent the original or a copy of his sketch. He said he sent a copy, but what had become of the original he could not say.* It was somewhere among his papers, but no one would probably know where till his papers passed into other hands. He seemed to think that the task of disinterring it from the accumulated mass of his literary stores was quite beyond his strength.

The quarter of Passy where Franklin took up his abode ranked in those days among the most attractive in the environs of Paris, and is far from owing all its interest, in the eyes even of American readers, to its having been for so many years the residence of their first diplomatic representative. It was the residence of the Marquis de Pontainvilliers, the Prevost of Paris and Lord of Passy; of the illustrious and unfortunate Princesse de Lamballe, whose

a fac-simile of which appears on the next page: "In 1836 I was at Passy one day with M. Raynouard, the author of the Tragedy of the *Templiers*. His white hair fell down over his shoulders. I said to him: 'You wear your hair like Franklin, and you resemble him.' He replied, smiling, 'That is due, perhaps, to the vicinage.' He then showed me a house in sight from his garden. 'It is there,' he said to me, 'that Franklin resided in 1788.'

"I have made a sketch of this house, since demolished. Here it is. I believe this to be the only picture of the house at Passy where Franklin lived that exists, and I offer it to the *United States Sanitary Commission*.

"I am happy that the *Sanitary Commission*, in doing me the honor to address me, has given me the opportunity of renewing the expression of my profound sympathy for the valiant men who struggle so gloriously to deliver the great American Republic from the shame of slavery.

VICTOR HUGO.

"HAUTEVILLE HOUSE, 19th March, 1864."

En 1836, j'étais allé à Paddy, chez M. Reynard,
Auteur de la Fugive de Templeburg. Il avait subi deux fois
très peu de succès. L'un des : Qui pour le donner
Franklin, et M. lui est allé. Il ne répondit en rien : cela
s'en passe au véritable. Et il me mena en maison qu'on
appellerait de son jardin. — c'est là, me dit-il, que Franklin a
dormi en 1778.

S'il est allé en maison, dit-on à quelques-uns. Voici le
détail. Le croix que vous voyez à la maison de Franklin à Paddy
est la seule qui existe. L'offre à l'United States Sanitary Com-
mission.

Le d'avis beaucoup que la Sanitary Commission, en se fai-
sant l'honneur de s'adresser à moi, en donna l'occasion de
remercier l'expression de son sympathie profonde aux vaillants
hommes qui luttent si glorieusement pour défendre la grande
République américaine de cette honte, l'ordure.

Victor Hugo

Manuscrit de la h. - 9 mars 1864

chateau was still standing under the Second Empire: and of the Marshal d'Estaing, whose name is so honorably associated with our Revolution. Then, at Auteuil, adjoining Passy, was the residence of Madame Helvetius, whose house was the resort of all the political celebrities of France, and to whom, because of the judicious patronage she extended to people of letters, Franklin gave the name of *Notre Dame d'Auteuil*. To this circle no person seems to have been admitted upon a more intimate footing than Franklin. There was even a tradition that he had offered himself to her in marriage. Of this, however, there is no evidence nor even probability. It was the most attractive salon in Paris; one to which Napoleon on his return from Italy sought, but unsuccessfully, to secure admission. We need look no further for an explanation of Franklin's devotion to its presiding genius. If anything were yet wanting to make Passy fashionable it was to be found in the royal chateau of La Muette, which was a favorite resort of the king. It was from here that he dated the popular edict which suppressed the *Don de joyeux Avènement*. At La Muette was a laboratory constructed by Louis XV. and enlarged by his successor. Franklin was often there, with his friends Le Roy and the Abbé la Roche, both members of the Academy of Sciences, prosecuting his experiments in electricity, on the weight of the atmosphere, etc. Passy was also endowed by nature with a mineral spring renowned in those days for its medicinal properties, and which served as another veil to Franklin's real purpose—he being something of an invalid—in accepting the hospitalities of M. de Chaumont. This spring was the property of a M. le Veillard, first mayor of Passy, with whom Dr. Franklin contracted a great intimacy and life-long friendship.

Before directing our attention more particularly to Dr. Franklin's host, it will be interesting to follow hurriedly the subsequent fortunes of the property to which he was destined to give no inconsiderable part of its distinction.

We have seen that the Hôtel Valentinois was purchased by M. de Chaumont in August, 1776, and only four months before Franklin's arrival in Paris. The social, financial, and political convulsions which occurred in France soon after the peace with America and the departure of Dr. Franklin so deranged the affairs of M. de Chaumont that his property at Passy had to be sacrificed for the benefit of his creditors, and was sold on the 25th of July, 1791, to Messrs. Fulcheron and Grivel, bankers, in Paris. On the 17th of January, 1792, the estate was divided between these gentlemen, M. Fulcheron becoming proprietor of

the Grand Hôtel, and the small hotel remaining the undivided property of the partners. Owing to dissensions among the creditors of the De Chaumont estate, of which Fulcheron and Grivel seemed to have been only purchasers in trust, the property was finally sold under foreclosure on the 12th of July, 1793. The large hotel was rented to and occupied by the then Royal Highness, the Prince of Condé, Duc de Bourbon.

Later, one of the descendants of Ossian's hero, Lord Fingal, occupied this hotel until after the memorable days of 1830. Later still, it was sold to the *Frères des Écoles Chrésiennes*, who transferred to it from the Faubourg St. Martin, on the 3d of April, 1839, a large boarding-school which, in 1866, had 740 pupils. The original structure, besides undergoing some changes, was very much enlarged for the accommodation of the new tenants. Of the original edifice there remained in 1866:

First. In the angle at the left the reception-room, three arcades on the ground floor, and three brackets ornamented with sculptured figures.

Second. The columns of the *porte cochère* and carriage houses on the street.

Third. The angle of the old staircase and the wainscoting in the drawing-room. I have been told by the late Count Henri de Riancey, — then editor-in-chief of the "Union" in Paris, and a resident of Passy, — who had seen them, that they were very remarkable and would pass for masterpieces of taste. They were sold in 1855 at a very high price. Of the small hotel occupied by Franklin, we have already stated that the walls and the façade towards the garden were still standing in 1866, when I visited and went through it with one of the Brothers. It next became the property of M. Dumersan, a well-known dramatic writer. In 1866 it belonged to M. Miensel, who let it to various parties, and among them to the Comte de Riancey already referred to.

Just before Franklin left Paris to return to his country, the Comte de Vergennes, still Minister of Foreign Affairs, addressed a note to M. de Chaumont in behalf of the Marchioness de Monconseil, a favorite correspondent of Chesterfield, to know if she could hire the property, and upon what conditions.

I do not wish you [he says in this note] to make sacrifices to the friendship you have for me. But the friendship I have for Madame de Monconseil, and which is of very long standing, leads me to desire that she may reestablish and fortify her health in the pure air of Passy, and in an abode so attractive as that she wishes to let.

VERSAILLES, 3 JUNE, 1785.

The magnificence of the Valentinois property may be inferred from the rank and distinction of its successive proprietors and

occupants. After an interval of nearly forty years, the impression of its princely elegance was still fresh in the memory of old John Adams, who, while joint commissioner with Franklin, shared the hospitality of *La petite Maison*, as appears by a letter written to a son of M. de Chaumont, in 1818, when the old statesman was in his eighty-second year.

As this letter has, I believe, never been put in print, I will give it entire. The son of M. de Chaumont had become a citizen of the United States and a very large landed proprietor in the northern part of the State of New York, of which we shall have something more to say presently.

QUINCY, February 12, 1818.

SIR: I have received and read with pleasure an address to the Agricultural Society of Jefferson County, in the State of New York, and as I know not from whom it came, who should I thank for it but its author?

I rejoice in every new society which has agriculture for its object, and see with delight that the spirit is spreading through the United States. If I could worship any of the heathen gods it would be old Saturn, because I believe him to be only an allegorical personification of agriculture, and the children he devoured to be only his own grapes and figs, apples and pears, wheat and barley.

I agree with you in the main in every sentiment, particularly relative to grapes and corn, yet we cannot have perfect roast beef, nor perfect roast spare-ribs, nor perfect poultry, without maize. We must, therefore, sacrifice a little luxury to a good deal of public good.

From the style of this address I should not have suspected it to have been written by any other than a native of this country.

Thirty-nine years ago, I little thought I should live to see the heir-apparent to the princely palaces and gardens of Passy my fellow-citizen in the republican wilderness of America laying the foundation of more ample domains and perhaps more splendid palaces. I observed the motto of the Hôtel de Valentinois, which I had then the honor to inhabit.

"Se sta bene non se move."

"If you stand well, stand still." But you have proved the maxim not to be infallible, and I rejoice in it.

The civilities I received from your family interest me so much in their happiness that any information of it would increase that of your sincere well wisher and most humble servant.

(Signed) JOHN ADAMS.

S. LE RAY DE CHAUMONT, ESQ.,

President of the Agricultural Society of Jefferson County, New York.

During my residence in Paris, 1861-67, I

* This proposition, though I decided not to entertain it, belongs now to the history of this historical property, and I need not, therefore, apologize for inserting a translation of it here:

PARIS ARRONDISSEMENT DE PASSY, 1 June, 1866.

MR. MINISTER: I have seen the proprietor of the house situated at Paris-Passy, Rue Basse, No. 40. He would be willing to sell it at the price of 120,000 francs.

On receiving half of the amount, he would be disposed to accord some delay for the payment of the remainder.

He imposes no conditions upon the sale except the fulfillment of the current lease, which expires 1 April, 1868.

Please accept, Mr. Minister, the very humble respects of your servant,

AMY.

was urged by several of my countrymen who were familiar with the needs of the American legation to take measures to build or purchase a hotel, to be devoted to the use of our official representatives residing near the French court. They said they would raise the money without difficulty if I would take charge of it; and a good share of all the money that would have been required was at once pledged to me for this purpose. I was led to think favorably of the proposition from the circumstance that part of the old house once occupied by Franklin, with an acre of land or thereabouts, was then for sale, and was offered to me for 120,000 francs.*

Before deciding whether I would accept this trust, I determined not to prolong my stay abroad another year, and not knowing whether my successor would appreciate the need of the ample accommodations which the scheme of my friends contemplated, or would care to accept the responsibility of organizing such an enterprise and carrying it through, I allowed the opportunity of making the aforetime residence of our first Minister the permanent residence of the American legation to escape. It was the one consequence of my retirement from that honorable eminence which I have never ceased to regret.

Turn we now to the proprietor of this noble property,—upon a description of which perhaps we have dwelt too long,—whose timely and judicious hospitality has associated his name only less permanently than Franklin's with the fortunes of the great American republic. M. de Chaumont, before Franklin became his guest, had been one of the council of Louis XV. He was then, and up to the time of his death, grandmaster of the waters and forests and honorary intendant of the Invalides. He seemed to hold entirely confidential relations with the ministry of the young king, and was in the enjoyment of a fortune which, according to a statement made to the writer by his grandson, amounted to two and a half millions of francs, say \$500,000, in addition, it is to be presumed, to the family chateau of Chaumont on the Loire; another at Blessois, which he afterwards tendered to John Adams;† and the Hôtel Valentinois, which

† As appears from the following letter from Mr. Adams declining the offer:

TO M. LE RAY DE CHAUMONT.

PASSY, February 25, 1779.

SIR: I have this moment the honor of your kind billet of this day's date, and I feel myself under great obligation for the genteel and generous offer of your house at Blessois; but if I do not put Dr. Franklin to inconvenience, which I shall not do long, my residence at Passy is very agreeable to me.

To a mind as much addicted to retirement as mine, the situation you propose would be delicious indeed, provided my country were at peace and my family with me; but, separated from my family and with an heart bleeding with the wounds of its country, I should be

he had then recently purchased. The writer has the same authority for stating that the Duc de Choiseul, his neighbor in the country,—the chateau of Chaumont and of Chanteloup being in close proximity,—wished M. de Chaumont to enter the ministry with him, but the invitation was declined from the conviction that he could be more useful as the unofficial intermediary between his government and the American commissioners.

He seemed to have been at one time associated with the Duc de Choiseul in establishing a tannery at Amboise, and afterwards important glassworks on his Chaumont property, for which he imported skilled workmen from England at great expense. He was also seized with an ambition to establish a pottery on his place where he had found clay, which encouraged him to hope that he could compete with the English in that manufacture. It was here and of this clay that the Italian Nini, who was invited to Chaumont, made a class of medallions much sought for by amateurs, and among others one of Franklin which was so much admired as a work of art, and became so much in demand, that the grandson of M. de Chaumont had copies of it made, some years ago, for the gratification of his friends.

Franklin sent one of these medallions to his daughter, Mrs. Bache, to which he makes the following playful allusion in a letter written to her on the 3d of June, 1779:

The clay medallion of me you say you gave to Mr. Hopkinson was the first of the kind made in France. A variety of others of different sizes have been made since; some to be set in the lids of snuff-boxes and some so small as to be worn in rings, and the numbers sold are incredible. These, with the pictures, busts, and prints (of which copies upon copies are spread everywhere), have made your father's face as well known as that of the moon, so that he durst not do

the most miserable being on earth in retreat and idleness. To America, therefore, in all events and at all hazards, I must attempt to go, provided I do not receive counter orders which I can execute with honor and with some prospect of advantage to the public service.

I thank you, sir, and your agreeable family for all your civilities since my arrival at Passy, and have the honor to be, with great respect,

Your most obedient and humble servant,
(Signed) JOHN ADAMS.

* Having occasion, some years ago, to mention the origin of this medallion to my valued friend the late William H. Huntington, whose recent decease has deprived Paris of one of its special charms in the eyes of all who enjoyed the privilege of his friendship, I shortly after received from him a reply in which he says: "It was curious news to me that Nini's medallions were made at Chaumont, though I'd often heard that their place of fabric was somewhere on the Loire. There is no mention of this artist in the 'Biographie Universelle' of Didot, about the only book of biographical reference I have. He must have had a certain vogue in his time, medallions of folks of the superior

anything that would oblige him to run away, as his phiz would discover him wherever he should venture to show it. It is said by learned etymologists that the name of doll for the image children play with is derived from the word idol. From the number of dolls now made of him he may be truly said, in that sense, to be idolized in this country.*

The medallions referred to as being in the Metropolitan Museum were both presented to that institution, with a large and precious collection of engravings and other works of art relating to Franklin, by Mr. Huntington himself shortly before his death. It was no doubt to one of these medallions that Madame de Campan alludes in the following memorable paragraph, in which she reproves the enthusiasm exhibited by the courtiers and tolerated by the king of France for Franklin and the American insurgents:

Franklin appeared at Court in the dress of an American agriculturist. His unpowdered hair, his round hat, formed a contrast to the laced and embroidered coats and the powder and perfume of the courtiers of Versailles. This novelty turned the light heads of the Frenchwomen. Elegant entertainments were given to Dr. Franklin, who, to the reputation of a man of science, added the patriotic virtues which invested him with the character of an apostle of liberty. I was present at one of these entertainments where the most beautiful woman out of three hundred was selected to place a crown of laurels upon the white head of the American philosopher, and two kisses upon his cheek. Even in the palace of Versailles Franklin's medallion was sold under the king's eyes in the exhibition of Sèvres china. The legend of this medallion was "*Eripuit celo fulmen, Sceptrumque tyrannis.*" The king never declared his opinion upon an enthusiasm which his correct judgment no doubt led him to blame. The queen spoke out more plainly about the part France was taking respecting the independence of the American colonies, and constantly opposed it.†

There seems to have been no definite understanding, either oral or in writing, about the

classes from his hand still turning up at sales and in curiosity shops. He did two Franklins—both at the Metropolitan Museum—dated and signed. The smaller one, with the cap '1777 B. Franklin, American,' was among the earliest of the Franklin idols made here, and has been numerous reproduced by French, English, and other engravers. The larger, which is of the more usual size of Nini's work, is much rarer, has never been engraved from, as far as I know, and is to my notion one of the most finely characterized of all the Franklin portraits—1799 (and in some copies MDCCLXXXIX; you will find specimens of both in the museum), with Turgot's lines for the legend. In his letter to his daughter, Passy, 3d of June, B. F. writes: 'The clay medallion of me you say you gave Mr. Hopkinson was the first of the kind made in France.' This must be the one with the cap. If the Ven. F. is correct in his statement, it would curiously seem that his friend Chaumont set Nini at him as soon as he caught the artist, to start (we should now say inaugurate) his furnace at Chaumont with the likeness of his friend.—Letter from W. H. Huntington, dated No. 20, Rue de la Bruyère, Paris, April 5, 1884.

† "Private Life of Marie Antoinette," by Mme. Campan. Vol. I., pp. 253-256.

terms upon which Franklin and his colleagues should occupy La petite Maison. Franklin was far too wise a man to suppose that favors of any kind from one's fellow-creatures ever cost in the long run less than they are worth, or are worth more than they cost. When he accepted M. de Chaumont's invitation, he may have expected his government, at some future time, to make some suitable compensation to its proprietor; or, knowing the interest which France had in the success of the colonists and the advantage to her government of having him lodged where he could be accessible without compromising it, he may have regarded his residence at Passy on M. de Chaumont's estate as in itself a satisfaction of all claims against him or Congress, and the French government as M. de Chaumont's real debtor. Whatever the arrangement was, it seems to have proved entirely satisfactory both to Dr. Franklin and his host; for neither during his sojourn at Passy nor on leaving do his obligations constitute a topic of his correspondence, or even a subject of debate. Until separated by death, they lived on terms of the most friendly intimacy; and when Franklin left Paris to return to his native country, in 1785, M. de Chaumont procured for him the queen's sedan chair to mitigate the fatigues of his journey to the coast, and accompanied his illustrious guest as far as Nanterre on his journey.

Messrs. Adams and Lee, the doctor's colleagues, however, either not aware of the understanding between Dr. Franklin and M. de Chaumont, or not contented with its terms, or, perhaps, indisposed to recognize any agreement to which they had not been made parties, endeavored to put their relations with M. de Chaumont upon a more definite and, as they supposed, a more strictly business basis. To this end Mr. Adams, presumably without consulting with Dr. Franklin, addressed the following letter to M. de Chaumont:

PASSY, September 16, 1778.

SIR: As our finances are at present in a situation seriously critical, and as I hold myself accountable to Congress for every part of my conduct, even to the smallest article of my expenses, I must beg the favor of you to consider what rent we ought to pay you for this house and furniture, both for the time past and to come.

Every part of your conduct towards me and towards our Americans in general, and in all our affairs, has been polite and obliging, as far as I have had an opportunity of observing, and I have no doubt it will continue so; yet it is not reasonable that the United States should be under so great obligation to a private gentleman, as that two of their representatives should occupy for so long a time so elegant a seat, with so much furniture and such fine accommodations, without compensation; and in order to escape the danger of the disapprobation of our constituents, *on the one hand*, for living here at too great or at too uncertain an expense, and, on the other, the censure of the world for not making sufficient compensation to a gentleman who has done so much for our convenience, it seems

to me necessary that we should come to an understanding upon this head.

As you have an account against the commissioners, or against the United States, for several other matters, I should be obliged to you if you would send it in as soon as possible, as every day makes it more and more necessary for us to look into our affairs with the utmost precision.

I am, sir, with much esteem and respect, etc.,

JOHN ADAMS.

To this letter, after the interval of a single day, De Chaumont sent the following reply:

PASSY, September 18, 1778.

SIR: I have received the letter which you did me the honor to write to me on the 16th inst., making inquiry as to the rent of my house in which you live for the past and the future. When I consecrated my house to the use of Dr. Franklin and his associates who might share it with him, I made it fully understood that I should expect no compensation, because I perceived that you had need of all your means to send to the succor of your country, or to relieve the distresses of your countrymen escaping from the chains of your enemies. I pray you, sir, to permit this arrangement to remain, which I made when the fate of your country was doubtful. When she shall enjoy all her splendor, such sacrifices on my part will be superfluous or unworthy of her; but at present they may be useful, and I am happy in offering them to you.

There is no occasion for strangers to be informed of my proceedings in this respect. It is so much the worse for those who would not do the same if they had the opportunity, and so much the better for me to have immortalized my house by receiving into it Dr. Franklin and his associates.

There is no doubt that Mr. Adams's mind had been poisoned by his colleague, Arthur Lee, or he would never have written the letter of the 16th of September, which was more or less of a reflection upon his senior colleague, the practical head of the commission. However, he seems to have been entirely satisfied with the result, as all his subsequent relations with M. de Chaumont and his family abundantly testify. Not so, however, Arthur Lee. He was a sort of stormy petrel, only content in foul weather, and his determination to produce bad blood between Adams and Franklin was not abandoned. He renews the effort by a proposal to have the papers of the legation kept at his lodgings, which was promptly rejected.

It cannot be expected [wrote Mr. Adams] that two should go to one, when it is as easy again for one to go to two; not to mention Dr. Franklin's age, his rank in the commission, or his character in the world, nor that nine-tenths of the public letters are constantly brought to this house, and will ever be carried where Dr. Franklin is.

It is a curious coincidence, and an instructive commentary upon Lee's mischief-making propensities, that at the very time he was pursuing this correspondence with Adams, Silas Deane, who had ceased to be an agent of the Government and was working for a settle-

ment of his accounts, was inditing a letter, of which the following is an extract, to the President of Congress:

It is not enough to say that no man in France enjoys a better character for strict honor and probity, both at court and in the city, than M. Chaumont. Justice must add, there is no man enjoys it so universally through the kingdom, among the merchants, the farmers or husbandmen, and mechanics, in all which branches of business he is constantly speculating. This man is the friend of Dr. Franklin; I have the pleasure of knowing him to be mine, and, what is more, the friend of my country, on all and in the most trying occasions. I do not wonder that Mr. Lee should appear jealous of this gentleman, as well as of everybody else, a select few excepted; and very few indeed are those who escape his jealous suspicions, either in Europe or America. It is a melancholy truth, but justice to the public requires my declaring it, that I never knew Mr. Lee, from his first coming to Paris, satisfied with any one person he did business with, whether of a public or private nature; and his dealings, whether for trifles or for things of importance, almost constantly ended in a dispute, sometimes in litigious quarrels.

Mr. Lee lived some time in M. Chaumont's house. M. Chaumont knew him perfectly well, and was not reserved in speaking his opinion of him. I am sorry to be thus long on so disagreeable a subject, a subject which I cautiously waived entering on in my narrative to Congress, not choosing to trouble them with matters which they might deem of a personal nature. I am grieved to have been forced on it at all, and hope never to be obliged to resume it.

From the moment the French government began to take an active interest in the struggle of the colonists, the duties assigned to De Chaumont by the ministry were of the most confidential and responsible character. He sent one ship-load of powder to Boston with instructions to his agent, M. Holker, the French consul-general, to claim no pay unless the Americans were successful in achieving their independence. He also sent a consignment of clothing to the army under the command of Lafayette. He appears to have been charged with purchasing and equipping most if not all of the vessels fitted out by his Government to assist the colonists, and also with the distribution of the prizes which were made by them. This brought him into intimate and constant correspondence with M. de Sartine, the Minister of Marine, and he equipped and directed the operations of five of the vessels of war with which Paul Jones made his name a terror to the inhabitants of the English and Scottish coasts. From the large correspondence preserved by the De Chaumont family, a few extracts will best afford a correct impression of the nature and importance of his part in the complicated instrumentalities by which American independence was achieved.

One of the letters relates to a proposal, from a company of which De Chaumont was the agent or attorney, to supply the French navy with "twenty cargoes of masts, spars, yards,

plank, and other material coming from the forests of North America."

In a letter dated November 8, 1779, De Sartine authorized De Chaumont "to make a simulated sale of the ships *Pallas* and *Vengeance* to neutrals, who will send them to our ports with merchandise not contraband."

With Paul Jones, M. de Chaumont held the most intimate and responsible relations from the commencement to the close of the Revolutionary War. It is scarcely necessary to add that they were not always entirely harmonious. The infirmities of Captain Jones's temper and disposition were such that he was rarely, if ever, so fortunate as to be brought frequently in contact with anyone without such person becoming, sooner or later, the victim of his jealousies and suspicions. The duty devolved by the Government upon M. de Chaumont of purchasing and equipping the vessels committed to Jones's command, of directing to a greater or less extent the sphere of his operations, and of superintending the distribution of the prize money, furnished occasions for antagonisms which no one having to deal with such a nature as Jones's could have been prudent or crafty enough to avoid. Their correspondence shows that De Chaumont was not always able to meet Jones's expectations nor to escape his reproaches. Jones had many of the rare qualities of a hero, but he wholly lacked discretion and judgment. He was only great in conflict. He never was fit to be trusted with an important command, and for that reason he never received the promotion which would otherwise have naturally and promptly rewarded his professional achievements. Though the disputes of Jones with De Chaumont have long ceased to have any interest or importance, it is but justice to the latter to state that Jones recognized the unfairness of his complaints and reproaches in a manner equally creditable to himself and to the best friend he appears to have ever had.

The thoroughly confidential relations which subsisted between M. de Chaumont and his own government on the one hand and with the American commissioners on the other exposed him to perils from which no person holding a position of critical importance can hope to escape entirely. The British minister at Paris came to regard De Chaumont as the holder of the key of the position which his government sought to carry, and sent an emissary to him to find, if possible, the price of his loyalty. Instead of dismissing the emissary rudely, as a more impulsive or a less scrupulous person might have done, he laid the foundation for a second interview, and meantime took M. de Sartine, the Minister of Marine, into his confidence. All that we know

further of this incident is related in the following letters from the Minister of Foreign Affairs to M. de Chaumont :

VERSAILLES, 18 December, 1777.

I thank you, sir, for communicating to me this letter of M. B. Mayne, and can assure you that your confidence shall not compromise your friend. M. de Sartine informed me at the time of the overtures made to you. One might treat them as the scheme of a loyal subject rather than as emanating from the ministry. Now, however, when circumstances extremely critical dispel illusions, it is highly probable that this second approach may have an exalted origin, and on this supposition I think it might be well not to decline it, but to explain that you had never contemplated such a distinguished *role*; that you had not much heeded his first suggestions, which might have been dictated by his humanity and by his personal confidence in you; but, if he persists in regarding you as a proper instrument for so important an enterprise, it would be necessary for you to know the dispositions of those who alone can dictate the conditions, in order that you might have a sure guide for your own language and conduct. You will know how to embroider your canvass so as not to bind yourself farther than you wish. I think also, sir, that it is proper to answer through the channel indicated by M. Fullerton. This precaution may increase confidence. Possibly, too, we shall thus learn of the purposes of the British government. It intrigues in so many ways to penetrate our secrets that we are excusable for trying to penetrate theirs. I have the honor to be perfectly, sir, your very humble and very obedient servant,

DE VERGENNES.

Another letter from the Comte de Vergennes to M. de Chaumont, relating also to the secret service of the Government, shows that, even as early as 1778, it was understood in Paris that the political sympathies of the great Frederick were with the new republic which was germinating on this side of the Atlantic rather than with the government that was trying to crush it out of existence. It further shows that M. de Vergennes made lighter of the commercial rivalry of Prussia than any recent foreign minister of France has done, or any future one is likely to do.

I thank you for the information you give me of the Prussian officer just from America. I do not doubt that he was an emissary from the king, his master, but I am equally persuaded that the latter none the less prays for the independence of America. Be well assured that all that the English gazettes publish is not gospel. It would be very well to entertain this officer with talk about the ulterior advantages to commerce likely to result from liberty in America. *Such a competition, if established, will never be very dangerous to anyone.* I have the honor to be, etc.,

DE VERGENNES.

VERSAILLES, 18 November, 1778.

On the 11th of February, 1780, M. de Sartine acknowledges the receipt from M. de Chaumont of a letter dated the 26th of the preceding month, and thanks him for the details and observations he had furnished in relation to a proposition which a M. de Mauleon had made to the minister for the establishment of a line of packets between France and North

America, and which the minister had referred to M. de Chaumont for a report. This was the first project for a transatlantic line of packets of which there is any record. M. de Chaumont discouraged the scheme, because at that time it was necessary to have fast sailers and armed for the proposed service, and he thought the Government could perform the service with its own ships better and with less expense.

In consequence of the confusion in the financial relations of Beaumarchais with his government growing out of the very mixed character of his operations and the indefiniteness of the line which separated private from public functions, French from American liabilities, diplomatic from commercial services, public beneficence from personal ambition, it became necessary in 1784 to appoint a commission to examine his claims against the French government. M. de Calonne, the Minister of Finance, selected M. de Chaumont as one of the three commissioners to whom this delicate duty was assigned, as we learn from a commission found among De Chaumont's papers.

It appears, however, by a subsequent letter from M. de Calonne, that M. de Chaumont declined this appointment. The reasons are not assigned, but they are not difficult to conjecture. If there is any truth in the proverb that two of a trade can never agree, it is not surprising that M. de Chaumont should have hesitated from motives of delicacy, if from no other, to accept the responsibility of passing upon the accounts of Beaumarchais.

It is manifest, from the voluminous correspondence that has survived him, that in organizing and conducting all the maritime operations of the French government in support of the insurgent American colonies M. de Chaumont was the active and most efficient agent. No vessel seems to have been equipped or commissioned for this service except with his knowledge and coöperation. A most flattering and gratifying success rewarded his efforts, and his influence near his government at the close of our war was only less than that of a cabinet minister. Unfortunately for him, in helping to lay the foundations of popular government in America he was unconsciously preparing the way for his own ruin. The French Revolution was among the first fruits of the revolution in America, and made swift havoc of the fortunes of all whose estates were at all dependent upon public and even private credit; of M. de Chaumont's among the rest. His troubles at home were aggravated by troubles of a different character in the United States.

Because of the different currencies of the several colonies, and the depreciation of the colo-

nial paper, the accounts of M. de Chaumont with our Government could not be, or at least were not, adjusted. To stimulate Congress to a consideration of these claims, M. de Chaumont sent his son Le Ray to the United States, either with or immediately after the return of Dr. Franklin, in 1785, to look after them. Le Ray, as I shall call him by way of distinction from his father, was then only twenty-five years of age. He bore letters from Dr. Franklin, John Jay, Lafayette, Rochambeau, Count de Montmorin, and others. He was specially commissioned to claim from Congress the face of the depreciated paper money held in large quantities by French subjects. Barbé Marbois, the French *chargé d'affaires*, was instructed to second his efforts.

The government of the Confederation, however, was so weak, and its credit so impaired, that it was finally deemed impolitic to press these claims, and they shared the fate of all other claims against the revolutionary government; not, however, until Le Ray had exhausted his influence with others and his personal resources. Among the letters to which these efforts gave rise there are two, though written nearly four years after Le Ray's arrival in the country, which may find a suitable place in this stage of our narrative. They were from Dr. Franklin, one to President Washington and the other to Le Ray himself, who appears to have applied to the doctor for a loan or an indorsement. Meantime, De Chaumont the father, yielding to his embarrassments, had made an assignment to his son.

FRANKLIN TO WASHINGTON.

PHILADELPHIA, 3 June, 1789.

I have made a rule to myself that your Excellency should not be troubled with any solicitations from me for favors to any even of my nearest connections, but here is a matter of justice in which the honor of our country is concerned, and therefore I cannot refuse giving this line for your information. Mr. Le Ray de Chaumont, father of the young gentleman who will have the honor of waiting on you with this, was the first in France who gave us credit, and before the Court showed us any countenance trusted us with 2000 barrels of gunpowder, and from time to time afterwards exerted himself to furnish the Congress with supplies of various kinds, which, for want of due returns, they being of great amount, has finally much distressed him in circumstances. Young Mr. Chaumont has now been here near four years, soliciting a settlement of the accounts merely, and though the payment of the balance, to be sure, would be acceptable, yet proposing to refer that to the time when it shall better suit the convenience of our Government.

This settlement, if the father had it to show, would tend to quiet his creditors, and might be made use of for that purpose; but his son has not hitherto been able to obtain it, and is detained in this country at an expense that answered no end. He hopes, however, now, that your Excellency may prevail to have some settlement made of those accounts, that he may carry

home to his father the statement of them; and I the rather hope this likewise, that we may thereby be freed from the imputation of adding ingratitude to injustice.

FRANKLIN TO LE RAY.

PHILADELPHIA, October 31, 1789.

DEAR FRIEND: I was too much indisposed yesterday to write in answer to your affecting letter, but I have considered the case very attentively and will now give you the results. In the first place, what you demand of me is impracticable, the sum I have to draw upon in France being but little more than half of what you require; and upon that small sum, though my late extraordinary expenses have much straitened me in furnishing my ordinary expenses, I dare not draw, under the present circumstances of affairs in that country, lest through the lowness of the funds I should lose perhaps half my property in selling out to pay the bills, or in case of public bankruptcy, which I find is apprehended by many as a possible case, my bill should be returned under a protest, which, besides the damages, would extremely embarrass me. By the last accounts I received, I suffered a loss of fifteen per cent. in the sale of my funds to produce money for the payment of a bill for ten thousand livres which I sold towards the end of the last year; and we now learn from the public prints that the new proposed loan of thirty millions does not fill, and that Mr. Neckar is discouraged and in bad health, which, together, has occasioned the funds to fall much lower. In the next place, it seems to me that in your present circumstances (excuse my freedom in presuming to give you my advice) it would be more advisable for you to remain here a few months longer, in order to finish your affair with the Congress.

They meet again in the beginning of January, and there is no doubt but the officers through whose hands such affairs must pass will be present, and your accounts having already been examined and passed, I am of your opinion, that they will probably be some of the first paid. Money, I think, will not be wanting, as it is thought the immense importation of goods lately made into this port must produce at least one-fourth of the impost expected from the whole of the United States.

If you should be absent at the next meeting of Congress it may occasion a still further delay of payment, for want of somebody present to solicit the business, which would be a further prejudice to the creditors. If you should conclude to stay I would write a letter to your father, which he might show to them, expressing that your stay was by my counsel, with the reasons, and that as soon as the Congress should meet I would support your application for immediate payment with my strongest interest. This delay of two or three months, I should think, cannot make much difference in your father's affairs, the present disorders of that country being considered; or, if you apprehend, as you have mentioned, that the creditors may suspect your having an intention of assuming to your own use the property of your father, you may, to prevent such suspicion, offer the creditors to deliver up to them, or to any person they shall please to appoint, all the papers ascertaining your father's claim upon the Congress; thereby enabling them to solicit for and receive the same. I wish I could give you still better counsel; but this is what occurs (in my present inability of otherwise serving you) to your affectionate friend,

(Signed) B. FRANKLIN.

It appears by a letter from M. Luzerne, the French ambassador at London, that M. le Ray had aspirations for the place occupied by M. Marbois as the diplomatic representative of the French government in the United States. He was promised the cordial coöpera-

tion of M. Luzerne, but if there was at any time a chance of his aspirations being crowned with success, it was swept away by the revolutionary whirlwind which was already threatening France.

Pending these operations Louis Chassanis, a brother-in-law of Le Ray, acting for an association of gentlemen in Europe, purchased several large tracts of land in the northern part of the State of New York. The purchasers formed themselves into a land company with a view of disposing of these lands to refugees. The scheme of colonization was perfected and put forth only a few days before Louis XVI. was guillotined.* Five commissioners were charged with the management of this property, two to reside on it and three in Paris. The two commissioners sent here, Simon Desjardiniens and Peter Pharoux, arrived in New York in September, 1793. At Albany they fell in accidentally with a young exiled countryman whose address and accomplishments impressed them so favorably that they invited him to join them, and made him their captain. He became a shareholder in the company and ultimately the proprietor of five hundred acres of land. Later, he and Pharoux were employed to survey a canal that should connect the waters of the Hudson and of Lake Champlain,—the first canal ever surveyed in this country. This young man, then only twenty-four years of age, who laid the foundations of his fame as an engineer in the wilds of northern New York, was Mark Isambard Brunel, since famous as the founder of the machine shops of the Royal Navy Yard at Portsmouth in England, the builder of some of the most magnificent railway structures in the world, the engineer of the Thames tunnel, and the father of Mr. I. K. Brunel, the builder of the steamer *Great Eastern*.

The venture not proving as successful as was expected, the stock of the company was divided into 680 shares, and Gouverneur Morris, on his return from the French mission, was appointed the agent of the company on the 2d of January, 1800. A deed for half the tract, or 220,000 acres, was then executed to him, and the following day a deed was given for the other half to Le Ray. In 1809 Morris retired from the agency, taking with him a title to 26,840 acres to cover his expenses and commissions.

Le Ray, who had become proprietor of 126 shares of the stock in his own right, bought the company out on the 17th of September, 1810, opened an office for the sale of lands, built roads, mills, docks, ship-yards, and managed to effect large sales of land, but, unfortunately, not to the class of emigrants who build up a new country. He sold 4480 acres

to Lord Augustin de Caulaincourt, who afterward sold them to Count Réal, Chief of Police under Napoleon. He also sold to Count de Grouchy, to General Dufernaux, and, as appears by the following note from Gouverneur Morris, to Madame de Staël:

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS TO MADAME DE STAËL.

MORRISANIA, August 23, 1807.

I flatter myself then, Madame, that next spring you will sail for America. For this purpose, about the middle of April you can embark for New York. As soon as you arrive, you will come to Morrisania, partake what our dairy affords, and refresh yourself. In the beginning of July you shall set out to visit your lands and the interior country, and return by the middle to repose after your fatigues, to gather peaches, take walks, make verses, romances—in a word, to do whatever you please.

Necker, the father of Madame de Staël, also became one of Le Ray's clients and a New York land-holder.†

But the most distinguished party to this speculation was Joseph Bonaparte (Count Survilliers), who seems to have fallen a victim to his good nature rather than to any desire of gain. How it was brought about is thus related by Hough in his "History of Lewis County":

Mr. Le Ray de Chaumont was at his estate in Touraine in 1815, when he heard of Joseph Bonaparte's arrival at Blois. He had known this prince before his great elevation and was his guest at Morte-fontaine when the treaty of September 30, 1800, between the United States and France was signed there, but he had ceased meeting him afterwards. Seeing, however, that misfortune had assailed the prince, he remembered the man and hastened to Blois. The prince, having invited Mr. Chaumont to dinner, said suddenly to him: "Well, I remember you spoke to me formerly of your great possessions in the United States. If you have them still, I should like very much to have some in exchange for a part of that silver I have there in those wagons, and which may be pillaged any moment. Take four or five hundred thousand francs and give the equivalent in land." Mr. Le Ray objected that it was impossible to make a bargain where one party alone knew what he was about. "Oh," said the prince, "I know you well, and I rely more on your word than my own judgment." Still Mr. Le Ray would not be satisfied by his flattering assurances, and a long discussion followed, which was terminated by the following propositions, immediately assented to by the prince: Mr. Le Ray Chaumont would receive four hundred thousand francs, and would give the prince a letter for Mr. Le Ray's son, then on the lands, instructing him to convey a certain designated tract, if, after having visited the country (whither he was then going), the prince confirmed the transaction; otherwise, the money to be refunded.

As Count Survilliers was an alien, and therefore could not hold a title to real estate in New York, a deed for 150,260 acres of land was made out to the learned Peter Duponceau of Philadelphia, in trust, to secure the

* The original of this scheme is to be seen now in the State Library at Albany.

† See "Life of Gouverneur Morris."

repayment of the \$120,000 which Le Ray had taken.

It can hardly be necessary to say that the count was obliged to accept lands instead of money when the loan came due.

Le Ray had only postponed the disaster which was inevitable. He became land poor. The abundance of better land in less rigorous climates, and the completion of the Erie Canal, which opened the States on the Ohio River to emigration, operated disastrously upon all the large land proprietors in the East — providentially, no doubt, for the country. He was unable to make head against the sea of trouble on which he found himself embarked, and at last was compelled to apply for the benefit of the insolvent laws, and, like his father before him, surrender his estates in turn to his own son for the benefit of his creditors.*

His landed property in the State of New York at the time of making the assignment consisted of

30,759 acres in Franklin Co., valued at	\$ 22,500
73,947 " in St. Lawrence Co., valued at	106,000
143,500 " in Jefferson Co., valued at	574,000
100,000 " in Lewis Co., valued at	133,000
<hr/>	<hr/>
348,206 acres	\$835,500

The winding up of his affairs was so managed as to satisfy in full all the claims of his American creditors; but Count Surveilliers (Joseph Bonaparte), as early as 1820, had consented to accept 26,840 acres of land, valued at that time at \$40,260, in discharge of his claims. To hold this land, the New York legislature passed an enabling act in March, 1825. In June, 1835, the count sold his land to John La Farge of New York City for \$80,000, and thus dropped the curtain upon the last act of this disastrous enterprise. It gave a chill to the spirit of emigration from France, from which it never recovered. Had Le Ray invested in lands on or near any of our great water-ways, or even in a more congenial climate, it might now be the descendants of the French, rather than of the English, who would be making the laws of the United States.

Le Ray seems to have been an amiable man, and a liberal and popular landlord. The towns of Raysville and Chaumont perpetuate the remembrance of his name, his rashness, and his misfortunes. He founded the Jefferson

* As a justification of his course, Le Ray published a statement entitled "Acte de transmission par M. Le Ray de Chaumont à son fils de ses propriétés, 4to,

County Agricultural Society, and was its first president. He was also one of the earliest presidents of the New York State Agricultural Society. He returned to France in 1832, and died at Paris on December 31, 1840, in the eightieth year of his age.

Le Ray's son, Vincent Le Ray de Chaumont, to whom in his troubles he assigned his property, and who at the age of eighty and upwards frequented the American colony in Paris as late as 1866, lost no time in winding up the estate, all of which has long since passed entirely out of the De Chaumont family. Charles Le Ray de Chaumont de St. Paul, great-grandson of Le Ray, and of course great-great-grandson of Franklin's host, if still alive is now the only representative of the family. As he has been many years married and is childless, with his death the name will probably become extinct.

If the De Chaumonts did not secure the Golden Fleece in America, they secured in the United States what was of far greater value — American wives. Le Ray married a Miss Coxe, and their son married a Miss Jahel, both of New York.

From a letter which appeared in the "New York Evening Post" on the 19th of November, 1885, dated from Royat, Puy de Dôme, and devoted to an account of "The Treasures of French Country Houses," I make the following extract, which fitly concludes this account of a family whom the people of the United States can do no less than hold in grateful and honored remembrance:

It was in Blois that I first rummaged among these shops, whose attractions are almost a rival to those of the castle, though this is certainly one of the most interesting in France. The traveler will remember the long flight of stone steps which climbs the steep hill in the center of the town. Near the foot of this hill there is a well-furnished book-shop; its windows display old editions and rich bindings, and tempt one to enter and inquire for antiquities. Here I found a quantity of old notarial documents and diplomas of college or university, all more or less recently cleared out from some town hall, or unearthed from neighboring castles, and sold by a careless owner, as no longer valuable to him. This was the case with most of the parchments I found at Blois; they had been acquired within a few years from the castle of Madon, and from a former proprietor of the neighboring castle of Chaumont (the *calvus mons* of medieval time), and most of them pertained to the affairs of the *seigneurie de Chaumont*. Contracts, executions, sales of vineyards and houses, legal decisions, *actes de vente*, loans on mortgage, the marriage contract of a M. Lubin — these were the chief documents that I found and purchased.

pp. 70, Paris," in which, says Hough, he vindicated himself satisfactorily. See "History of Jefferson Co." by Franklin B. Hough.

John Bigelow.