

FRANKLIN IN ALLEGORY.



THE Frenchman's American is Benjamin Franklin. It was so when they first began to know him, when he went in and out among them a living man, and it is so to-day, when an even century has closed around his simple tomb. There is something grand in the personality of this man who was able to inspire such deep admiration and such sinister hatred by the same act. Benjamin Franklin was, without doubt, a strong man—a man of strong and positive character, whose friends and enemies were equally strong in their feelings of like and dislike. The men who were ranged as his enemies have been relegated to a second place on the page of history, while those who were his friends stand out boldly in the front rank of the notable characters of the past. If we were asked to say what was the characteristic in Franklin that made him an idol among the French nation, we should answer his versatility. He was the adroit diplomat and the simple bourgeois, the learned philosopher and scientist, and the gay *bon vivant* and *bonhomme*. He could write a despatch or an epigram with equal facility, and he could control the electric fluid and a smoky chimney with equal success. He at turns could be the chivalric courtier or the simple representative of the infant republic, and whatever he did or whatever pose he assumed he was the same peerless Franklin; and now that he has been at rest these hundred years he stands forth on the page of history as the first American—not even second to Washington himself.

It was a sarcasm of Rufus Choate that Pennsylvania's two most distinguished citizens were Benjamin Franklin, a native of Massachusetts, and Robert Morris, a native of Great Britain; and while the slur is perhaps unfortunately true, Pennsylvania's native sons should be none the less proud of these two first citizens. Yet it would seem from the way she places herself upon record that she rather accepts and emphasizes the slur, and, instead of rising above the prejudice of birth, endeavors to elevate to the foremost place those of lesser rank. If one looks around the rotunda of the Capitol at Washington, at the statues intended to commemorate the first

citizens of the several States, in vain will search be made for the statue of Benjamin Franklin as the first citizen of the Keystone State. Unfortunately kissing goes for favor and not by right, or Peter Muhlenberg and Robert Fulton would not look down from the pedestals that should bear Franklin and Morris, or Penn, or Logan, or Rush, or Rittenhouse, or Wayne, or Mifflin, or McKean.

This digression has taken us some little distance away from our text, but it is suitable matter for introduction.

The French have ever been ready to sanctify their heroes in allegory. It has been a favorite method with them to show how much above ordinary mortals every one of their favorites is; and so it came to be Franklin's turn during his sojourn in France to be embalmed in this way. These historical works of art are not common, and are not familiar to many, even among students of art and history, and it seems as if the present was a proper occasion to bring these allegories to public notice and attention.

It was on the night of Saturday, the seventeenth day of April, 1790, that Benjamin Franklin died, at the advanced age of eighty-four years and three months, and on the following Wednesday the Boston printer-boy, the Pennsylvania lawgiver, the American diplomat, and the world's philosopher was laid to rest in Christ Church burying-ground, at Fifth and Arch streets, Philadelphia.

He had provided for his resting-place by a codicil to his will, dated June 23, 1789:

I wish to be buried by the side of my wife, if it may be, and that a marble stone to be made by Chambers, six feet long, four feet wide, plain, with only a small moulding round the upper edge, and this inscription,

BENJAMIN AND DEBORAH	}	FRANKLIN,
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to be placed over us both.

Unostentatious in life, he desired to preserve the same character after death, and his wishes have been obeyed.

So much has lately been written upon "Franklin in France" that were it not that the theme chosen for this commemorative paper necessitates some reference to his career there, it would be studiously avoided. At the same

France so cordial and enthusiastic. The French people were permeated with the doctrines of Rousseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu, and they saw in the struggling colonies an attempt to put these doctrines into practice: therefore they saw in Franklin the living representative of these ideas. He was immediately received by that brilliant coterie of philosophers, the Encyclopedists, into their circle. D'Alembert, Diderot, Morellet, and Condorcet were his companions, and Turgot and Beaumarchais his friends. By his manners and ways of life he became the most popular man in France, so that when he gained his presentation to the king his future was assured. As he passed through the streets of Paris he was followed by admiring eyes and cheered loudly by enthusiastic voices. A contemporary writes: "A friend of mine paid something for a place at a two-pair-of-stairs window to see him pass by in his coach, but the crowd was so great that he could but barely say he saw him." He was the Frenchman's embodiment of the ideal citizen, republican, philosopher, and friend. He completely captivated and captured the people of France, whom he perfectly understood, and he well knew "that a popular man becomes soon more powerful than power itself." Condorcet said: "It was an honor to have seen him. People repeated what they had heard him say. Every fête which he consented to receive, every house where he consented to go, spread in society new admirers, *who became so many partisans of the American Revolution.*"

There are plenty of proofs that both the king and the queen individually were opposed to the cause of America, but the will of the people was beginning already to be felt and here gained its first control. In snatching the scepter from the tyrant, as Turgot wrote, Franklin gave a lesson to France which made Marie Antoinette later exclaim, "To-day we pay dear on account of our infatuation and enthusiasm for the American war." In the midst of the commotion of the French Revolution Franklin died, and France halted and went into mourning for Franklin; while Mirabeau pronounced his eulogy before the National Assembly, in which he said, "Antiquity would have raised altars to the powerful genius who for the good of man, embracing in his thoughts heaven and earth, could subdue lightning and tyrants."

The origin and authorship of this most appropriate inscription for Franklin, "*Eripuit cælo fulmen scæptrumque tyrannis,*" has from time to time been discussed and questioned and generally ascribed to some classic writer of antiquity. There seems, however, to be no reasonable doubt that we owe it to the classic pen of Turgot. These beautiful words

are closely connected with the recognition of American Independence, and have always excited both interest and curiosity. Franklin was asked for his opinion upon a translation into French of this verse, which, he being the subject of, he declined to give, "except that it ascribes too much to me, specially in what relates to the tyrant, the Revolution having been the work of many able and fair men, wherein it is sufficient honor for me if I am allowed a small share." It was especially composed for an "Inscription for a portrait of Benjamin Franklin" soon after the doctor reached Paris on his mission for our recognition, and was very generally so used. This same Turgot, a quarter of a century before American independence, when a mere youth of twenty-three, in a prize essay had foreshadowed that event. He said: "Colonies are like fruits, which do not hold to the tree after their maturity. Having become sufficient in themselves, they do that which Carthage did, *that which America will one day do.*"

Franklin's portrait was everywhere, in painting, in sculpture, and in engraving, until it was said by a gossip of the day "to be found at the hearth of the poor and in the boudoir of the beautiful." It was especially engraved in a circle an inch and a half in diameter for the purpose of being worn in the case of a watch, and an ode was written upon seeing a watch thus embellished. His bust during the festival of Liberty was elevated with those of Rousseau and Voltaire. Writing to his daughter in 1779, upon a certain medallion portrait she had referred to, he said:

A variety of others have been made since of different sizes; 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 anything that would oblige him to run away, as his phiz would discover him wherever he would venture to show it. It is said by learned etymologists that the name *doll* for the images 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 *i-doll-ized* in this country.

These are the playful words of the man of whom a distinguished French historian said: "Men imagined they saw in Franklin a sage of antiquity come back to give austere lessons and generous examples to the moderns. They personified in him the republic of which he was the representative and the legislator. They regarded his virtues as those of his countrymen, and even judged of their physiognomy by the imposing and serene traits of his own. Happy was he who could gain admittance to

see him in the house which he occupied. This venerable old man, it was said, joined to the demeanor of Phocion the spirit of Socrates."

His closing days were filled with apprehensions for his old friends in France. The Revolution, which was the natural outgrowth of the infatuation and enthusiasm felt for our Revolution, had assumed its terrific aspect. Upon astonishment being expressed to him at the course of events in France, he is related to have said:

Why, I see nothing irregular in all this, but, on the contrary, what might naturally be expected. The French have served an apprenticeship to liberty in this country, and now that they are out of their time they have set up for themselves.

"*L'Amérique Indépendante.*"—This is the title of the illustration on page 198, which was designed by A. Borel, 1778, and engraved in line by J. C. Levasseur. The plate is dedicated to the Congress of the United States by its author, and as near as the dates can be fixed it is the earliest effort at apotheosizing Franklin in this pictorial manner, as it is also the most elaborate in design and execution. Franklin is of course the central figure, and appears in the severe classical costume of a Roman senator—bare legs and sandals, toga and tunic, and a wreath of oak leaves upon his head. His right hand rests upon the shoulder of America, represented by a female wearing a crown of chicken feathers, kneeling at the base of a statue of Liberty, whence a tortoise is creeping away. To the right, Mercury with the caduceus and Ceres with her foot on a plowshare are intently watching the tortoise making its way over to Britannia, who has fallen beneath the club of Hercules upon the prostrate body of Neptune, whose trident is snapped in twain. Over Franklin and America hovers Victory. The engraved surface is 14 x 19, and what nowadays would probably be called the *remarque* are thirteen rings linked together around a harp entwined with the legend "*Majora minorib, Consonat.*" Each ring is inscribed with the name of one of the original States. On each side are emblems of peace and plenty.

"*Le Docteur Franklin couronné par la Liberté.*"—The "Pennsylvania Gazette" for March 31, 1779, gives the following description of this plate, then lately engraved in Paris:

The principal figure is the Genius of Liberty descending—one foot on the earth, both arms fully extended, and a wreath of laurel in each hand. She is surrounded with light, while clouds, representing Ignorance and Slavery, are driven back by her presence. Before her is a bust of the doctor, which she is in the act of crowning with laurels; and the cause of her doing so is expressed by a globe on his

right hand, America in view, with an olive branch bearing fruit running up it. Behind, and leaning on the globe, is the genius of the doctor, with the sword of justice and other emblems in its right hand; in its left is a scroll, falling upon the globe, on which is inscribed, "Constitution of the Government of Pennsylvania." In front of the globe is a bundle of fasces bound with olive branches, also bearing fruit, representing future union, peace, and plenty. The crowning of the bust expresses the honors which will be paid to his memory. Under the whole is inscribed, "Dr. Franklin crowned by Liberty."

The description of the engraving in the "Pennsylvania Gazette" is not quite correct, as will be seen by the illustration. The bust of the doctor is placed on the globe which has America in view, and not to "his [the doctor's] right hand." The figure representing the genius of the doctor is leaning against the globe with his left arm around the pedestal of the bust, etc. This plate, 7 x 9, is aqua-tinted, giving the appearance of an India-ink drawing.

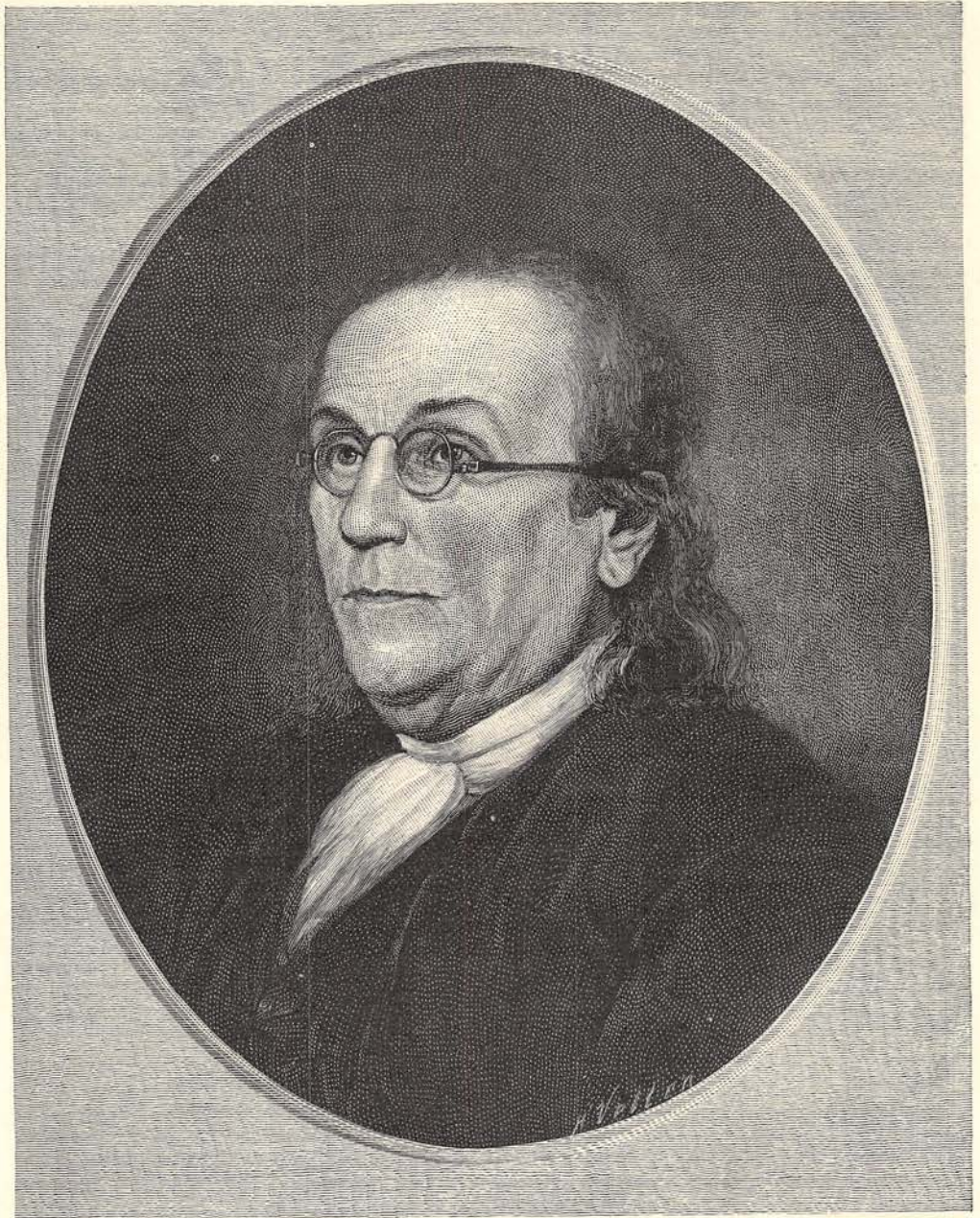
"*Au Génie de Franklin.*"—In the "Pennsylvania Packet," June 3, 1780, we read:

The love and attachment of the French nation for America is carried at this time to such a degree of enthusiasm as is difficult to be conceived. There are few personages that have borne an interesting part in this contest but have employed the hands of the most famous artists, and the pens of the brightest geniuses of that nation. But among so many illustrious characters the celebrated Dr. Franklin is distinguished in a particular manner; and of the several homages that are incessantly offered to his merit none must ever have been more flattering to him than the provinces of France contending with each other for having given birth to some of his ancestors, and endeavoring to prove by similarity of names that this great man derives his descent from among them—an honor of which, since the days of Homer, who exciting a like dispute among seven of the most flourishing cities of Greece, nobody has even been thought worthy.

The following extract from the "Gazette of Amiens," the capital of Picardy, in France, is the most convincing proof of what has been just now advanced: "Mr. Fragonard, the king's painter at Paris, has lately displayed the utmost efforts of his genius in an elegant picture dedicated to the genius of Franklin. Mr. Franklin is represented in it opposing with one hand the ægis of Minerva to the thunderbolt, which he first knew how to fix by his conductors, and with the other commanding the god of war to fight against avarice and tyranny; whilst America, nobly reclining upon him, and holding in her hand the fasces, a true emblem of the union of the American States, looks down with tranquillity on her defeated enemies. The painter, in this picture, most beautifully expressed the idea of the Latin verse, which has been so justly applied to Mr. Franklin:

Eripuit cælo fulmen sceptrumque tyrannis.

(He snatched the thunderbolt from heaven and the scepter from the hands of tyrants.)



PAINTED BY CHARLES WILLSON PEALE.

ENGRAVED BY H. VELTEN.

B. Franklin



"HE SNATCHED THE THUNDERBOLT FROM HEAVEN AND THE SCEPTER FROM TYRANTS."

"The name of Franklin is sufficiently celebrated that one may glory in bearing it; and a nation prides herself in having given birth to the ancestors of a man who has rendered that name so famous. We think ourselves entitled to dispute with the English nation an honor of which they have rendered themselves so unworthy. Franklin appears rather to be of a French than of an English origin. It is certain that the name of Franklin, or Franquelin, is very common in Picardy, especially in the district of Vimeu and Ponthieu. It is very probable that one of the doctor's ancestors has been an inhabitant of this country, and has gone over to England with the fleet of Jean de Biencourt, or that which was fitted out by the nobility of this province. In genealogical matters there are bolder conjectures than this. There was at Abbeville, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a family of the name of Francklin. We see in the public records of the town one John and Thomas Franquelin, woolen drapers, in 1521. This family remained at Abbeville till the year 1600; they have since been dispersed through the country, and there are still some of their descendants so far as Auz le Château. These observations are a new homage which we offer to the genius of Franklin."

The picture of which we have the above contemporary description, 15 x 19, was etched as well as designed by Fragonard, and is full of spirit and artistic sentiment.

"*Le Tombeau de Voltaire.*" — Voltaire returned to Paris in February, 1778, after an exile of twenty-eight years, and three months later he was dead. The story of the meeting of Franklin and Voltaire, and the benediction of "God and liberty," which the latter pronounced upon the little grandson of the for-

mer, and how, upon their first joint appearance in public, the people clamored for the two philosophers to embrace according to the custom of the country, calling forth the exclamation that "Solon embraced Sophocles," are too trite to bear repeating here; but the way the people of France joined the two men in their thoughts is noticeable and aptly shown by this illustration. The incident represented was suggested, most probably, by an account of the meeting of the Masonic Lodge of the Nine Sisters to commemorate Voltaire, when "a huge sepulchral pyramid reminded the audience for what purpose they were gathered." When the eulogy had been pronounced "the pyramid vanished, and in its place stood a huge picture of the apotheosis of Voltaire." This was followed by placing a crown upon the head of Franklin and others, which they, in turn, laid before the apotheosis as a tribute to the dead sage of Ferney. It doubtless was as a reminiscence of this occasion that the print under consideration was produced which is "Dédié à Madame la Marquise de Villette, Dame de Ferney."

The following is a translation of the description that appears upon the print:

Near a cloistered Gothic portal is seen a tomb and a pyramid raised to the manes of the singer of Henri. The four quarters of the globe are personified — Europe by the illustrious D'Alembert; Asia by Catharine II., Empress of the Russians; Africa by the sovereign and learned Prince Oronoco; and America by the erudite and liberator, Franklin. These sovereigns and genii, after having shed their tears upon the tomb of the father of the fine arts, are making ready to ornament it with crowns and palms, when suddenly they find themselves repulsed by the foolhardy and pitiless prejudice of Ignorance, who, armed with rods and supported by infernal wings, rushes from his cavern and endeavors



DR. FRANKLIN CROWNED BY LIBERTY.



MIRABEAU CROWNED BY FRANKLIN.

to oppose himself to the homage about to be rendered from the four quarters of the earth. Another monument is disclosed in the distance—that of the philosopher of Geneva, who reposes in “l’Isle des Peupliers,” consecrated to him by kind friends. Many persons of all ages are expressing by their actions the philosophy of his “Émile.”

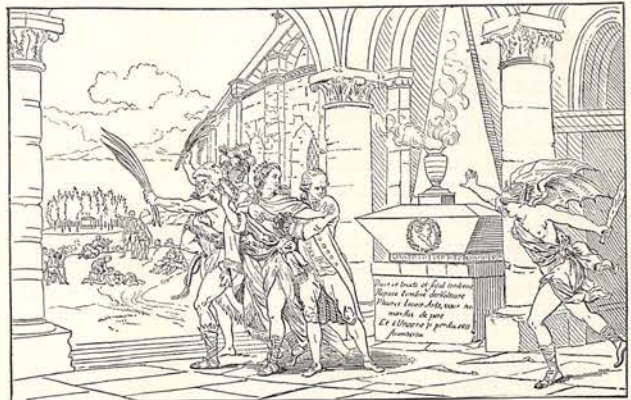
Franklin here again appears in the severe garb of the ancients, excepting the headdress, which this time is nothing less than the old fur cap handed down in Cochin’s portrait of him; and the big bone glasses, too, are upon his nose. In his outstretched hand he carries a palm branch. The ludicrous combination of bare legs, sandals, toga, fur cap, and spectacles is hardly what one would expect from a Frenchman treating so serious a subject. There are two plates of this picture, both the same size, 8 x 12, which would indicate that it was considerably in demand by the many admirers of Voltaire.

“*Mirabeau arrive aux Champs Élysées.*”—This is the title of a plate, 9 x 13, designed by J. M. Moreau and engraved by L. J. Masquelier. The Genius of Liberty, represented by a winged cherub, is floating above Mirabeau, bearing a banner with the inscription “*La France libre,*” Mirabeau advances towards Rousseau and presents him with a “*charte constitutionnelle.*” Genii follow him laden down with his works. Franklin is placing a crown of evergreen oak on his head. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Mably, and Fénelon are coming forward to receive him. In the background Demosthenes and Cicero are conversing about the French orator while they look intently upon him.

The five plates here described,

from the writer’s collection, are the only ones known devoted to the title subject of this article. There is, however, an engraving of Franklin in an oval frame after the portrait ascribed to Madame le Filleul, which, while not strictly coming under our title, yet is so near akin to it that it should be mentioned. Diogenes is leaning over the portrait holding his lantern in the right hand while with the left he points to the portrait of the honest man. Beneath is the inscription, “*Stupete Gentes Reperit vivum Diogenes.*” A large plate, entitled “*L’Apôtre de la Liberté Immortalisé,*” was published after Franklin’s death by one Barincou Monbrun, but it is so absurd as to be little better than a vulgar caricature. It, with most of the others mentioned, can be found in the important collection of Washington and Franklin iconography given to the Metropolitan Museum by the late William H. Huntington of Paris.

The portrait of Franklin which accompanies this article is from the last known to have been painted from life, and seems to express the individuality and character of the man, as shown by his life, more satisfactorily than any other we know. It was done by Charles Willson Peale in Philadelphia during the sittings of the convention to frame a constitution for the United States. Peale’s ability as a portrait painter is very much underestimated, and for the reason that his work is familiar chiefly through his inferior productions, those made for his museum gallery. But any one who saw the examples from his easel in the exhibition of historical portraits in Philadelphia, two years ago, will be very sure to have a marked



THE TOMB OF VOLTAIRE.

respect for the man who painted them. The picture from which our engraving is made is one which will do him no discredit. From this painting he made a mezzotinto with the following inscription: "His Excellency B. Franklin, LL. D., F. R. S., President of Pennsylvania and late Minister of the United States of America at the Court of France. C. W. Peale pinxt. et fecit, 1787." This mezzotinto is exceedingly scarce and valuable, but some impressions doubtless found their way to France, for two of the few located came thence, and a French print in colors by P. M. Alix, published towards the close of the last century and purporting to be after a picture by Vanloo, is evidently a copy, by an awkward and inferior hand, of Peale's picture, and not, as Mr. Hale in his late book thinks, Peale's copy of this French picture. The original painting from which this portrait has been engraved belongs to Mrs. Joseph Harrison of Philadelphia, and a replica of the head, with accessories, hangs

in the hall of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Benjamin Franklin was what is vulgarly called a self-made man, but he was in truth a God-made man, for he was born with the spark of genius in his blood which developed him into the *Vir* he finally became. His strongest characteristic was quick perception, that most valuable quality of mind, that can as readily grasp the salient points of a question as it can disregard those of minor importance, to which in him was united a sound, agile judgment. With all his transcendent abilities he has not left a single monument that alone can be pointed to as proof of his power. His career, stamped as it was with great successes, and left as it has an imperishable mark upon the page of history, is much like the career of a great lawyer whose powers and abilities have contributed largely to build up the body of laws we call government; yet the finger can point to no one great controlling act—his was the rounded whole.

Charles Henry Hart.

MY HOLLYHOCK.

AH me, my scarlet hollyhock,
Whose stately head the breezes rock,
How sad, that in one night of frost
Thy radiant beauty shall be lost,
And all thy glory overthrown
Ere half thy ruby buds have blown!
All day across my window low
Thy flowery stalk sways to and fro
Against a background of blue sea.
On the south wind, to visit thee,
Come airy shapes in sumptuous dyes—
Rich golden, black-edged butterflies,
And humming-birds in emerald coats,
With flecks of fire upon their throats,
That in the sunshine whir and glance,
And probe the flowers with slender lance;
And many a drunken, drowsy bee,
Singing his song hilariously.
About the garden fluttering yet,
In amber plumage freaked with jet,
The goldfinches charm all the air
With sweet, sad crying everywhere.
To the dry sunflower stalks they cling,
And on the ripened disks they swing,
With delicate delight they feed
On the rich store of milky seed.

Autumn goes loitering through the land,
A torch of fire within her hand.

Soft sleeps the bloomy haze that broods
O'er distant hills and mellowing woods;
Rustle the cornfields far and near,
And nuts are ripe, and pastures sere,
And lovely odors haunt the breeze,
Borne o'er the sea and through the trees.
Belated beauty, lingering still
So near the edge of winter's chill,
The deadly daggers of the cold
Approach thee, and the year grows old.
Is it because I love thee so
Thou waitest, waving to and fro
Thy flowery spike, to gladden me,
Against the background of blue sea?
I wonder—hast thou not some sense,
Some measure of intelligence
Responding to my joy in thee?
Almost I dream that it may be,
Such subtleties are Nature's, hid
Her most well-trodden paths amid;
Such sympathies along her nerves;
Such sweetness in her fine reserves.
Howe'er it be, I thank the powers
That gave me such enchanted hours
This late October, watching thee
Wave thy bright flowers against the sea.

Celia Thaxter.