

Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin With Selections from His Other Writings, I Would Rather Have It Said He Lived Than He Died Rich (Classic Reprint)

H. A. Davidson

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The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin is valuable chiefly because it is the veracious record of the life of a self-made man who by his own effort became both learned and great. The Einglish in which it is written is not altogether correct; while the style has wonderful perspicuity and charm, it by no means offers a model for imitation. The real subject of interest is the man who stands forth by his own revelation in the plain, unvarnished, but complaisant narrative of his deeds. The beginning was in an ordinary boyhood, in the colonial epoch, when almost all must earn their own livelihood. For many years, each phase of his life was the replica of scores of others, his contemporaries. The distinguishing characteristics of the man were discerned only when he had become great and exceptional in the esteem of the world. Then, it was apparent that a singular uniformity of aim and method had characterized him from the beginning of his career, so that each period of his activity had prepared him for the next. He passed from small affairs to great as naturally and inevitably as if, from the first, he had foreseen what was to come and had shaped his course with it in view. Nor did he ever attain an eminence which it was beyond his natural qualities to sustain. To the very end of his life, the gravest responsibilities rested upon him; the affairs intrusted to his management required the nicest judgment, the most unvarying patience and good humor, the greatest tact and skill in dealing with men; but in all he was unfailing, and so difficult was it to find among younger men one able to fill his place at the court of France, that the old man, in failing health, was obliged to remain more than two years after the signing of the treaties.

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