

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

I.

Franklin's *Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity* was first discussed by Henry Stevens of Vermont in his *Stevens's Historical Collections* (1881), pages 161-163, but the standard bibliographical description of the book is found in Paul Leicester Ford, *Franklin Bibliography*, No. 5, pages 3-5. Ford's account of the book begins with the following sentences quoted from the *Autobiography* and from the correspondence: "At Palmer's I was employed in composing for the second edition of Wollaston's 'Religion of Nature.' Some of his reasonings not appearing to me well founded, I wrote a little metaphysical piece in which I made remarks on them. It was entitled 'A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain.'" I inscribed it to my friend Ralph; I printed a small number. It occasion'd my being more consider'd by Mr. Palmer as a young man of some ingenuity, tho' he seriously expostulated with me upon the principles of my pamphlet, which to him appear'd abominable. My printing this pamphlet was another erratum." (Smyth, *Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, I. 277-278.)

"There were only an hundred copies printed, of which I gave a few to friends, and afterwards

disliking the piece, as conceiving it might have an ill tendency, I burnt the rest, except one copy. . . ." (*Franklin to Vaughan*, in Smyth, *Writings of Benjamin Franklin* VII. 412.)

To these quotations may be added the explanation that James Ralph was one of the Philadelphia group with whom the youthful Franklin associated for purposes of literary and philosophic discussion. These words, too, may be quoted from the *Autobiography*: "... Ralph ... as well as Collins, had been unsettled by me, for which they both made me suffer." (Smyth, *Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, I. 269-270.) At the time of publication of the *Dissertation*, Ralph was in England, beginning a literary career of some distinction.

Ford points out, page 5, that Franklin was mistaken in saying it was the second, or 1724, edition of the Wollaston book that he had worked upon as compositor. The second edition appeared before its author's death on October 29, 1724, but Franklin did not reach London until December 24, 1724, and it was not until a few days later, at least, that he went to work for Palmer.

Copies of the original edition are found in the Library of Congress (Stevens Franklin Collection copy); the British Museum (Ashby Collection copy); private library of William S. Mason (Huth copy); and in the John Carter Brown Library. The present facsimile has been made from the John Carter Brown copy. An interesting

account of the auction room adventures of the book is found in Henry Stevens, *Recollections of Mr. James Lenox*, pages 174-175. The first copy of the book of which a sale is recorded is that which was bought by Henry Stevens about the year 1850 for 2 s. 6 d.; the Huth copy was bought by the son of Henry Stevens in 1913 for £1005.

2.

A second edition of the book appeared in 1733 with the following title:

A || Dissertation || on || Liberty and Necessity, || Pleasure and Pain. || In a Letter to a Friend. || [*Six lines, containing five lines of verse, and reference, "Dryd."*] || [*type ornament*] || Dublin: || Printed in the Year MDCCXXXIII.

8 vo. A⁸; pages 1-16; page 1: title, verso blank; pages 3-16: text, with heading: A || Dissertation || on || Liberty and Necessity, &c. || To Mr. J. R. || ; page 16: "Finis."

Leaf measures, approximately, 7 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

Franklin seems to have been unaware that a second edition of his pamphlet was published, and an examination of the editing of this edition shows a formalized punctuation, changes in expression for the sake of elegance, and the suppression, when possible, of its writer's native raciness of speech—characteristics which make it certain that its author had nothing to do with the

form in which it now appeared. It is possible that the Dublin imprint may have been false, and that the book was surreptitiously issued by a London printer. One may make the suggestion that this second edition was fostered by James Ralph, who would naturally have felt a proprietary interest in the work. Ralph was now becoming prominent in London literary circles as poet, playwright, and political pamphleteer, but now as always he was poor and in search of opportunity for gain.

In a contribution to *Notes & Queries*, 1st series, volume 5, page 6, James Crossley described as in his possession a copy of the *Dissertation*, which, as it contained only 16 pages, must have been of this edition. This may have been the copy now in the Library of Congress (Stevens Franklin collection). There is also a copy of this edition in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

3.

In 1852[?], Henry Stevens issued a line-for-line reprint of the first edition, with different type ornaments, initials, etc., and with this colophon: "[This is a fac-simile reprint by Charles Whittingham, No. 21, Took's Court, Chancery Lane, London, from the original edition in the possession of Henry Stevens, Esq., G.M.B., Vermont House, 49, Camden Square, London.]" This reprint, with a separate title-page and an introduction by Henry Stevens, was announced for

republication in 1881, but according to Ford, page 7, it failed to appear in that form.

4.

The work was reprinted in James Parton, *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*, 2 volumes, Boston, 1882-1884, Volume I, Appendix II, pages 605-617. It was omitted by Albert Henry Smyth (who cites incorrectly its date of publication) from his *Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 10 volumes, New York, 1905-1907, with the explanation: "The work has no value, and it would be an injury and an offence to the memory of Franklin to republish it." (Prefatory Note, II. vi.) To this statement, however, may be opposed another by the same editor: "... Franklin's writings are his best biography." (Preface, X. v.)

LAWRENCE C. WROTH.

The John Carter Brown Library

6 June 1930.

