

Professor CHARLES E. NORTON read the following extracts from letters which he had received about a year ago from the late Mr. Charles Darwin, containing interesting facts about the friendship existing between Franklin and Mr. Darwin's father:—

“DOWN, BECKENHAM, KENT, April 30, 1881.

“I have thought that you might perhaps like to hear the following details about Franklin, whom all Americans justly reverence.

“My father, while very young, studied medicine in Paris, and he often saw Franklin, who was very kind to him, either on account of his father (Erasmus Darwin) or on his own account. My father always spoke of Franklin with the greatest reverence and even affection. In looking over some few memoranda in my father's handwriting I found one of which I enclose a copy. It is, however, of more interest with respect to Louis XVI. than to Franklin himself.

“I remember my father saying that one or two young men, nephews I think, were with Franklin at this time, and they were what would now be called rather flashy young men, and they seemed to be ashamed of Franklin for the simplicity of his appearance and manners. They often treated him with gross disrespect, which never seemed to ruffle Franklin in the least. On one occasion my father was quite shocked at their behavior; but when they left the room, Franklin said to my father with a smile, ‘Poor young men, they do not know what they are saying or how they are acting,’ or words to this effect. Pray forgive me if you do not care at all for these trifling anecdotes.

“*Dr. Franklin. Written by Dr. R. W. Darwin, Nov. 1, 1803.*

“In the spring and summer of the year 1785 I used to dine occasionally at the house of that great man at Passy, near Paris. On one of those days it was remarked that an edict the king had published in the morning respecting some regulation of provisions showed much humanity in his disposition. A gentleman present said that probably the king had neither heard of the scarcity nor of the edict. Dr. Franklin: ‘It is, I fear, too common in all absolute governments that the monarch is the last person who hears either of the oppressions or benefits dispensed in his name. That, however, is not the case in the present instance, for to my own personal knowledge the humane regulation in question proceeded from the king himself.’ After a pause he added, ‘Perhaps no sovereign born to reign ever felt so much for other men, or had more of the milk of human nature than Louis XVI.’”

“DOWN, BECKENHAM, KENT, June 1, 1881.

“I write a line to thank you much for your letter, and to say that none of Franklin's letters to my grandfather have been preserved. Every scrap of information, manuscripts, &c., which are still extant, were sent to me by the grandchildren by his second marriage when I

was preparing my little notice of him. I was very inaccurate about Franklin's nephews (as I imagined them to be), but I hope that I said that I felt quite doubtful whether there was one or two, but am positive about their (or his) rudeness, and about Franklin's manner of taking it.

"I am ashamed to say that I never read Sparks's 'Life of Franklin,' and knew nothing about the letter of which you have so kindly sent me a copy.\* My father used to repeat the anecdote, which I presume has been published, of the Queen of France having said to him (when he came to court in plain clothes) that 'you not only teach the world wisdom, but you teach the court of France etiquette,' or something to like effect."

Colonel HENRY LEE spoke of a portrait at the State House said to be that of the Rev. Francis Higginson. After careful study, and comparison with another picture possessing similar claims, it is believed that the one at the State House is an original.

Dr. ELLIS remarked that before the time of Blackburn and Smibert there must have been a portrait painter in Boston, as is proved by the existence of several well-authenticated portraits.

Mr. SMITH, from the committee on memoirs of deceased Resident Members, communicated the following Memoir of Dr. T. W. Harris by his son, Mr. Edward D. Harris.

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\* Referring to the letter of Erasmus Darwin to Franklin, printed in Franklin's Works, vol. vi. p. 410. — Eds.