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*Benjamin Franklin*

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

# 本杰明·富兰克林自传

(美) 本杰明·富兰克林 著

Having emerged from the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and bred, to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world, and having gone so far through life with a considerable share of felicity, the concluding means I made use of, which with the blessing of God so well succeeded, my posterity may like to know, as they may find some of them suitable to their own situation, and therefore fit to be imitated.

外语教学与研究出版社

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李梦圆 译

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# 总序

外研社自创立之日起就一贯秉承“记载人类文明，沟通世界文化”的宗旨。上世纪九十年代以来，我们陆续出版了“九十年代英语系列丛书”、“大师经典文库”、“英美文学文库”等系列经典图书，在最大限度满足国内英语学习者阅读需求的同时，也为中华民族引进和吸收海外优秀文化发挥了重要的桥梁纽带作用。

在多年出版实践中我们发现，对原版图书简单地以外语形式呈现，会使一些初级和中级学习者望而却步；而纯粹的译著，在翻译过程中又容易失掉原著中的某些精妙之笔，甚至丢失信息，因为每种语言都蕴含着其他语言无法精确对应的情致、智慧和真善美的洞见。文化交流是一个双向互动的过程，因此在大量引入外文作品的同时，我们也不能忽略本民族文化在世界范围内的推广和传播，即把中国传递给世界。

基于上述考虑，我们应时推出“外研社双语读库”，立足经典，涵盖中外名家名作，涉及社会科学各个领域，以书系划分，采用双语编排，对文化背景附有注释。旨在积累世界各民族精粹文化的同时，向世界传递中国文化，也为广大英语学习者提供更为丰富和实用的学习读物。

读库第一批收录的20部西方经典，多出自十九、二十世纪著名作家、学者、思想家和哲学家笔下，作品题材丰富，类型多样，包括学术作品1部、传记2种、小说3本、游记4部、杂文9辑以及回忆录1册。文章难度介于普及性读物与专业性读物之间，可作为由一般英语学习者向专业英语使用者过渡时的教材使用。

翻开书，这边厢波涛荡荡，那边厢涟漪漾漾。在英语的海洋里戏水，水性再好的人也难免精疲力竭，那就到汉语的礁岛上歇歇脚吧。

买了书是缘，翻开书，则是海边度假了。

# 译者序

《本杰明·富兰克林自传》一书记录了本杰明·富兰克林——这位美国开国元勋从默默无闻到功勋卓著的奋斗历程。

也许很多人在读这本书之前就已经知道，富兰克林是一位在许多方面均有建树的通才，他不仅是杰出的政治家、外交家，还是一位优秀的科学家、发明家和作家。他是美国独立战争的领导人之一，曾参与起草《独立宣言》和《美国1787年宪法》，是美利坚合众国当之无愧的开国元勋；他担任了美国首任驻法国大使，受到法国人民欢迎，享有很高的国际声誉；他热心于公共事务，创办了美洲第一家会员制图书馆，建立了费城学院（常春藤盟校宾夕法尼亚大学的前身），他还成立了全美首家医院；他在电学、气象学等学科上卓有成就，拥有避雷针等多项发明；他的《穷理查年鉴》极为畅销，为当时许多普通民众的自我教育提供了参考，而其自传更是流芳百世，为人称道，其中记述的他自我完善的道德计划激励了许多代人奋发向上，影响十分深远。

《本杰明·富兰克林自传》一书分为四个部分，是富兰克林在不同时期所写。传记依照时间顺序，从对其祖父一辈的简要介绍开始，写到年轻时作者本人如何开始创业、走向事业成功，最后写到作者在公共事务和科学实验两大方面的成就。但第四个部分尚未完成，富兰克林就离开了人世。尽管《自传》只记录到1757年，富兰克林人生后期的辉煌我们无缘从他笔下读到，但这并不影响本书成为一本流传后世的好书。

《本杰明·富兰克林自传》具有很高的文学价值，它与卢梭的《忏悔录》、歌德的《诗与真》一起，开创了现代西方自传的文学传统，

成为研究其他传记作品的基础。阅读此书，我们将读到现代传记文学的奠基之作，并能对当时美洲的人情风貌有个大致了解。

《本杰明·富兰克林自传》的主人公富兰克林并非王公贵族，他的父亲为了寻求宗教自由来到美洲，在美洲也仅仅做着油烛匠的生意，甚至连他继续上学的费用都难以承担。尽管出身如此贫寒卑微，但富兰克林丝毫不以为意，他通过持之以恒的自我奋斗，取得了举世瞩目的成就。这种从贫穷到富裕、从卑微到伟大的自我奋斗、自我实现的历程，淋漓尽致地体现了人们对“美国梦”的追寻。可以说，富兰克林是实现“美国梦”最具代表性的人物之一。阅读此书，将使我们更深入地体会美国文化传统和美国精神的真正含义。

富兰克林是伟大的，但他走向成功的方法并非不可复制，正如他的朋友在写给他的信中所说的一样，他的自传“将为自我教育提供崇高的法则和范例”，使年轻人“早日意识到潜心事业、节俭生活以及自我克制的重要性”。所谓见贤思齐，当我们读到这位伟人在走向成功的道路上曾付出怎样的努力、经历怎样的挫折时，当我们看到他为实现道德完善而制定的修身计划时，即使不去刻意模仿，我们中的许多人也会被他的刻苦勤奋、追求上进的精神所感染，从而激励自己在学习、工作和为人处世上努力实现自我完善。伟人就是有这样的感召力，这就是为什么这本书自首次出版就如此畅销，并被尊为成功励志的传世经典之作，得到众多成功学大师的一致推崇。阅读此书，能激励我们不断改进自己、完善自己。

李梦圆

2008年冬

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*Benjamin Franklin*

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## PART ONE

(TWYFORD, at the Bishop of St. Asaph's, 1771.)

DEAR SON: I have ever had pleasure in obtaining any little anecdotes of my ancestors. You may remember the inquiries I made among the remains of my relations when you were with me in England, and the journey I undertook for that purpose. Imagining it may be equally agreeable to (After the words “agreeable to” the words “some of ” were interlined and afterward effaced.—B.) you to know the circumstances of my life, many of which you are yet unacquainted with, and expecting the enjoyment of a week's uninterrupted leisure in my present country retirement, I sit down to write them for you. To which I have besides some other inducements. Having emerged from the poverty and obscurity in which I was born and bred, to a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world, and having gone so far through life with a considerable share of felicity, the conducting means I made use of, which with the blessing of God so well succeeded, my posterity may like to know, as they may find some of them suitable to their own situations, and therefore fit to be imitated.

That felicity, when I reflected on it, has induced me sometimes to say, that were it offered to my choice, I should have no objection to a repetition of the same life from its beginning, only asking the advantages authors have in a second edition to correct some faults of the first. So I might, besides correcting the faults, change some sinister accidents and events of it for others more favorable. But though this were denied, I should still accept the offer. Since such a repetition is not to be expected, the next thing most like living one's life over again seems to be a recollection of that life, and to make that recollection as durable as possible by putting it down in writing.

# 第一部分

(1771年写于特怀福德的圣阿萨夫主教家中)

亲爱的孩子：我历来喜欢搜集我祖先的点滴趣闻轶事。你也许还记得和我同在英国的时候，我曾为此长途跋涉，拜访仍然在世的亲戚。想来你可能也同样想了解我生活的经历，其中许多你还并不熟悉；想到将在乡下度过一周清静无扰的闲暇时光，我就坐下来为你写下这些事情。除此之外，我提笔写作还有其他一些原因。我出身贫寒卑微，童年在穷困中度过，后来竟过上了富足生活，在世界上也有了些名望。我的人生走到今天，经历中有很多运气的成分，承蒙上帝眷顾，我的处世之道还算成功。我的子孙们也许希望对此有所了解，以便日后遇到适宜情况或许可以效仿一二。

当我回忆起那种幸运的时候，我有时忍不住想说，如果有机会选择，我会毫不介意从头至尾再过一遍这样的人生；但只恳求能拥有作家的特权，可以在再版时纠正第一版的一些错误。除此之外，我还想改变某些不幸遭遇，让人生更顺利些。不过，即使这个愿望实现不了，我还是会接受让人生重来一次的提议。但由于这样的重演是不会实现的，而与重演人生最相近的似乎就是回顾人生的一切境遇，并提笔写下这些回忆，让它经久不衰。

Hereby, too, I shall indulge the inclination so natural in old men, to be talking of themselves and their own past actions; and I shall indulge it without being tiresome to others, who, through respect to age, might conceive themselves obliged to give me a hearing, since this may be read or not as any one pleases. And, lastly (I may as well confess it, since my denial of it will be believed by nobody), perhaps I shall a good deal gratify my own vanity. Indeed, I scarce ever heard or saw the introductory words, “Without vanity I may say,” etc., but some vain thing immediately followed. Most people dislike vanity in others, whatever share they have of it themselves; but I give it fair quarter wherever I meet with it, being persuaded that it is often productive of good to the possessor, and to others that are within his sphere of action; and therefore, in many cases, it would not be altogether absurd if a man were to thank God for his vanity among the other comforts of life.

And now I speak of thanking God, I desire with all humility to acknowledge that I owe the mentioned happiness of my past life to His kind providence, which lead me to the means I used and gave them success. My belief of this induces me to hope, though I must not presume, that the same goodness will still be exercised toward me, in continuing that happiness, or enabling me to bear a fatal reverse, which I may experience as others have done: the complexion of my future fortune being known to Him only in whose power it is to bless to us even our afflictions.

The notes one of my uncles (who had the same kind of curiosity in collecting family anecdotes) once put into my hands, furnished me with several particulars relating to our ancestors. From these notes I learned that the family had lived in the same village, Ecton, in Northamptonshire, for three hundred years, and how much longer he knew not (perhaps from the time when the name of Franklin, that before was the name of an order of people, was assumed by them as a surname when others took surnames all over the kingdom), on a freehold of about thirty acres, aided by the smith's business, which had continued in the family till his time, the eldest son being always bred to that business; a custom which he and my father followed as to their

因此，我也会沉浸在老年人的自然爱好中，那就是谈论自己，谈论自己的旧事；我会沉浸其中，但不会使听者厌烦，他们出于对年长者的尊敬不得不听我诉说，而如果把这些事情写下来，读与不读就悉听尊便了。最后（我也承认这一点，因为即使我否认也没人相信），也许我的虚荣心能从中得到极大的满足。的确，我很少听到或看到这样的开场白：“我不存一点虚荣心”等，而自负之语随即就出现了。不管人们自己自负的程度如何，他们大多不喜欢他人狂妄自负；但每当我遇到自负之人，都能予以宽容和理解，因为我相信，这自负不管对于自负者本人，还是与他相处的旁人，都颇有裨益；因此在许多情况下，如果人们因为属于人生诸多慰藉之一的自负心而感谢上帝，倒也并不荒唐。

既然提到感谢上帝，我想非常谦卑地承认，我所提及的过去生活中的幸福都来自上帝的眷顾，是他让我悟出了处世之道并取得成功。这一信念让我怀抱期望，尽管我不应妄定他仍将施与我同样的恩惠，使我继续先前的幸福，或者让我在像他人一样遭遇致命的人生逆境时，依然能够承受得住；只有上帝知道我未来的命运，他会祝福我们，即使这种祝福是以施与苦难的形式。

我的一位伯父曾交给我一些笔记（他和我一样爱好搜集家族趣闻），让我对我们家族先人的某些事情有了了解。从这些笔记中我得知，我们家族在北安普敦郡的埃克顿村居住了300年，在这之前还有多少年他不得而知（“富兰克林”原本是一个社会阶层的名字，后来全国各地的人们都开始采用姓氏时，“富兰克林”开始被他们当作姓，也许我们家族从那时起就在此居住了），我们的家族拥有约30英亩的自由土地，并以铁匠生意为副业，一直经营到伯父那个时候，都是由家里的长子继承这门生意的，伯父和我父亲都遵循了这一传统。我查询了埃克顿的登记册，

eldest sons. When I searched the registers at Ecton, I found an account of their births, marriages and burials from the year 1555 only, there being no registers kept in that parish at any time preceding. By that register I perceived that I was the youngest son of the youngest son for five generations back. My grandfather Thomas, who was born in 1598, lived at Ecton till he grew too old to follow business longer, when he went to live with his son John, a dyer at Banbury, in Oxfordshire, with whom my father served an apprenticeship. There my grandfather died and lies buried. We saw his gravestone in 1758. His eldest son Thomas lived in the house at Ecton, and left it with the land to his only child, a daughter, who, with her husband, one Fisher, of Wellingborough, sold it to Mr. Isted, now lord of the manor there. My grandfather had four sons that grew up, viz.: Thomas, John, Benjamin and Josiah. I will give you what account I can of them, at this distance from my papers, and if these are not lost in my absence, you will among them find many more particulars.

Thomas was bred a smith under his father; but, being ingenious, and encouraged in learning (as all my brothers were) by an Esquire Palmer, then the principal gentleman in that parish, he qualified himself for the business of scrivener; became a considerable man in the county; was a chief mover of all public-spirited undertakings for the county or town of Northampton, and his own village, of which many instances were related of him; and much taken notice of and patronized by the then Lord Halifax. He died in 1702, January 6, old style, just four years to a day before I was born. The account we received of his life and character from some old people at Ecton, I remember, struck you as something extraordinary, from its similarity to what you knew of mine.

“Had he died on the same day,” you said, “one might have supposed a transmigration.”

John was bred a dyer, I believe of woolens. Benjamin was bred a silk dyer, serving an apprenticeship at London. He was an ingenious man. I remember him well, for when I was a boy he came over to my father in Boston, and lived in the house with us some years. He lived to a

发现只有1555年以后关于他们出生、婚嫁和丧葬的记录，此前的记录在该教区均已无据可考。从那本登记册上我了解到，我是家族里五代人中最小儿子的最小儿子。我的祖父托马斯生于1598年，一直住在埃克顿，直到因年老而不能打理生意才搬到牛津郡的班伯里和儿子约翰一起住。约翰是个染工，我父亲还曾给他当过学徒。祖父后来在牛津郡去世，并葬在了那里。我们曾于1758年见过他的墓碑。他的长子托马斯住在埃克顿的房子里，后来把房子与土地留给了他的独生女。女儿的丈夫是韦灵伯勒一个叫费希尔的人，他们把土地卖给了伊斯特先生，他现在是那块领地的主人。祖父有四个儿子长大成人，他们是托马斯、约翰、本杰明和乔赛亚。我没把关于他们的记录带在身边，我只能尽我所能向你描述他们的状况，如果那些记录在我不在时不会丢失的话，你可以从中了解到更多细节。

大儿子托马斯跟着他的父亲学了打铁，但他天资聪颖，当时教区的大绅士帕尔默先生鼓励他（我的其他兄弟们也都一样）继续学习。后来他获得了文书资格，在那里颇有影响，还是北安普敦郡、乡镇以及本村所有公益事业的主要推动者。我听人们讲述了他的许多事迹，他还得到了哈利法克斯勋爵的赏识和资助。托马斯于旧历1702年1月6日去世，而我恰好在他去世四年后的那一天出生了。我记得当时我们听完埃克顿的一些老人讲述他的生平和性格后，你着实吃惊不小，因为这和你所了解的我很相似。

“如果他在你出生的日子去世，”你说，“人们会以为你是他的转世。”

二儿子约翰学做了染工，好像是染羊毛的。三儿子本杰明成了丝绸染工，在伦敦当学徒。他是个聪慧灵巧的人。我很清楚地记得他，因为在我还小的时候他来波士顿找过我父亲，和我们一起住了几年。他活得年岁很高，他

great age. His grandson, Samuel Franklin, now lives in Boston. He left behind him two quarto volumes, MS., of his own poetry, consisting of little occasional pieces addressed to his friends and relations, of which the following, sent to me, is a specimen. (Here follow in the margin the words, in brackets, "here insert it," but the poetry is not given.) He had formed a short-hand of his own, which he taught me, but, never practising it, I have now forgot it. I was named after this uncle, there being a particular affection between him and my father. He was very pious, a great attender of sermons of the best preachers, which he took down in his short-hand, and had with him many volumes of them. He was also much of a politician; too much, perhaps, for his station. There fell lately into my hands, in London, a collection he had made of all the principal pamphlets, relating to public affairs, from 1641 to 1717; many of the volumes are wanting as appears by the numbering, but there still remain eight volumes in folio, and twenty-four in quarto and in octavo. A dealer in old books met with them, and knowing me by my sometimes buying of him, he brought them to me. It seems my uncle must have left them here, when he went to America, which was about fifty years since. There are many of his notes in the margins.

This obscure family of ours was early in the Reformation, and continued Protestants through the reign of Queen Mary, when they were sometimes in danger of trouble on account of their zeal against popery.<sup>1</sup> They had got an English Bible, and to conceal and secure it, it was fastened open with tapes under and within the cover of a joint-stool. When my great-great-grandfather read it to his family, he turned up the joint-stool upon his knees, turning over the leaves then under the tapes. One of the children stood at the door to give notice if he saw the apparitor coming, who was an officer of the spiritual court. In that case the stool was turned down again upon its feet, when the Bible remained concealed under it as before. This anecdote I had from my uncle Benjamin. The family continued all of the Church of England till about the end of Charles the Second's reign, when some of the ministers that had been outed for nonconformity holding conventicles



的孙子塞缪尔·富兰克林现居波士顿。本杰明死后留下两卷四开本的诗集手稿，都是他自己创作的，其中有些是题赠给朋友和亲戚的应景小诗，下面这首写给我的小诗就是个例子。（在此页空白处有个括号，里面有“在此插入”的字样，但没有给出小诗。）他还自创了一种速记方法，并把它教给了我，只是我从未练习过，现在都忘了。当时他和我父亲感情特别好，所以我的名字也是随他起的。本杰明是个虔诚的教徒，一直坚持去听当时最了不起的牧师布道，并用自创的速记法记下来，他还留有好几卷这样的布道笔记。他还是位出色的政治家，也许就他的地位而言，他在政治上倾注的精力过多了。我最近在伦敦得到一本他搜集的集子，涵盖了1641年至1717年间所有关于公共事务的重要论文。从编号来看，文集中的许多卷已经缺失了，但是仍然留下了8卷对开本、24卷四开本和八开本。一位旧书商偶然得到它们，因为我有时在他那儿买书，所以他认识我，于是就把这些书送到了我这里。这似乎是我伯父去美洲时留在这里的，距今大约已有50年了。书页空白处还留有許多他做的笔记。

我们这个卑微的家庭很早就响应了宗教改革，玛丽女王统治时期也始终信仰新教，他们有时还因强烈反对天主教而陷入险境。家里有一本英文《圣经》，为了隐藏和保住这本《圣经》，他们把它打开，用胶带绑在折叠凳的背面。高祖父向全家颂读《圣经》时，便把折凳翻过来放在膝盖上，再翻开藏在胶带下的书页。这时会有一个孩子站在门口把风，如果看见宗教法庭官员来了就赶紧报信儿，高祖父就把折凳翻转回来放在地上，于是《圣经》仍像先前一样藏在折凳下面了。这则轶事我是从本杰明伯父那儿听来的。直到查理二世统治末期，家人都一直信仰英国国教，后来有些因不信国教被开除教籍的牧师在北安普敦郡举行秘密集会，本杰明和乔赛亚改信了他们的教派且终生不渝，家里其他人则始终信仰国教。

玛丽女王统治时期，强行恢复天主教，血腥镇压新教徒，天主教有了短暂的复苏。