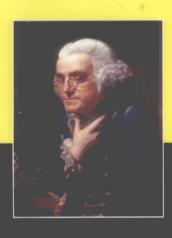
The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin



富兰克林自传

[美] 本杰明・富兰克林 著 房利娟 邹妍洵 译

本书是美国传记文学中拥有读者最多的传记,是每一位美国青年必读的精神读本,也是举世公认的改变了无数人命运的励志奇书。每一位阅读本书的读者都会努力成为一个像作者一样优秀而善良的人。

在我的一生中,能让我佩服的人只有三位;第一位是本杰明·富兰克林,第二位也是本杰明·富兰克林,第三位还是本杰明·富兰克林。

―― [美] 乔治・华盛顿(美国第1任总统)

富兰克林是他生活的时代和国家中最伟大和最出色的人。 ——[美] 托马斯·杰斐逊(美国第3任总统)





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● 中国字形 x 版 it · 北京 ·

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

富兰克林自传 = The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin: 英汉对照/(美) 富兰克林 (Franklin, B.) 著;房利娟,邹妍洵译. 一北京:中国宇航出版社,2010.1

(金牌励志系列)

ISBN 978 -7 -80218 -688 -0

I. ①富··· II. ①富···②房···③邹··· II. ①英语 - 汉语 - 对照读物 ②富兰克林,B. (1706~1790) - 自传 - 青年读物 Ⅳ. ①H319. 4:K

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2009)第 242596 号

策划编辑 杜芬

封面设计 03 工舍

责任编辑 杜 芬

责任校对 郝瑞华

出版 中国字形公路社

发 行

社址 北京市阜成路8号

邮 编 100830

(010)68768548

网 址 www.caphbook.com/www.caphbook.com.cn

经销销 新华书店

发行部 (010)68371900

(010)88530478(传真)

(010)68768541

(010)68767294(传真)

零售店读者服务部

北京宇航文苑

(010)68371105

(010)62529336

承印 北京嘉恒彩色印刷有限公司

版 次 2010年1月第1版

2010年1月第1次印刷

规格 880×1230

开本 1/32

印张 14.5

字 数 438 千字

书号 ISBN 978-7-80218-688-0

定 价 28.80 元 (随书附赠精选 MP3 光盘)



1706年1月17日,本杰明·富兰克林出生在北美波士顿一个小商家庭,家里有17个孩子,他排行15。他8岁人学读书,后来由于家庭经济困难,便辍学回家帮父亲照顾店面;12岁,到哥哥经营的印刷所当学徒;17岁,离开波士顿,分别到费城和英国伦敦印刷所当工人;20岁,返回费城,开始独立经营印刷所,印刷和发行《宾夕法尼亚报》,并出版了《穷理查德历书》,当时被译成多种文字,行销欧美各国,不到28岁便成了依靠勤劳致富的成功商人。富兰克林一生只在学校读了一年书,但是他的学习从未间断过。他利用一切空余时间刻苦自学,完全靠自学精通英语,苦练写作,大量阅读欧洲各国历史、哲学、文学等方面的著作。他16岁开始在报上发表他的第一篇文章,不到30岁便以百科式的学识和过人的才华在北美享有盛誉。正是由于他的刻苦勤奋,以后他才取得了许许多多成就。

他是美国历史上第一位享有国际声誉的科学家和发明家。为了探索电的秘密,他做了闻名后世的"风筝引电"实验,并因此发明了避雷针,最早提出了电流的理论。新式火炉、电轮、三轮钟、双焦距眼镜、自动烤肉机、玻璃口琴、高架取书器、新式路灯等一系列高度实用的发明创造也都归功于他。在其他科学领域——光学、热学、声学、数学、海洋学、植物学等方面,他也颇有建树。

他也是一位杰出的社会活动家,为北美殖民地的文化和社会福利做了大量的工作。他组织建立"共读社"、创办费城图书馆、组建费城消防队、改革费城警务、创建"美洲哲学学会"、组建费城国民自卫军、筹建高等学院(即后来的宾夕法尼亚大学)、帮助创办费城医院、提案铺设费城街道、赴英请愿反对业主在殖民地的免税特权。他还改革了北美殖民地的邮政制度,建立起北美殖民地统一的邮政系统。

他更是一位伟大的政治家和外交家。从 1736 年开始富兰克林投身政治,先后担任宾夕法尼亚立法机关秘书、议会议员。1754 年他作为宾夕法尼亚代表出席在奥尔巴尼召开的殖民地代表大会,提出著名的"奥尔巴尼联盟计划"。1775 年,他作为宾夕法尼亚州代表参加第二次大陆会议,成为美国《独立宣言》起草人之一。他奉大陆会议派遣出使法国,以其坚忍不拔的耐心和灵活巧妙的外交手腕,促成缔结《美法同盟条约》,争取了法国的支持和援助,确保了美国独立战争的胜利。美国独立后,他当选为宾夕法尼亚州州长并成为宪法起草委员会委员,力促美国宪法通过。

富兰克林被美国和欧洲授予"第一个伟大美国人"的称号。

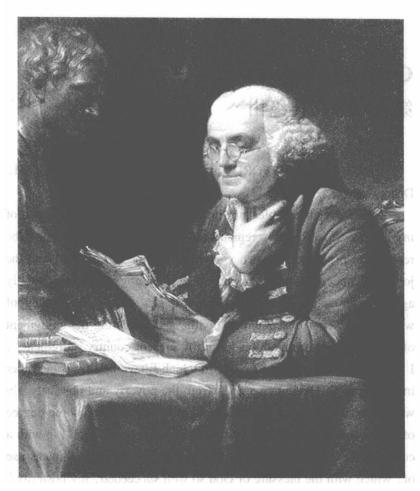
《富兰克林自传》的写作始于 1771 年,当时富兰克林在英格兰都维夫圣·阿萨福主教的乡村住所度假。正如他在文中最开始所言,写《自传》的最初目的仅仅是想将自己丰富的人生阅历和生活经验记载下来,以便他的儿子威廉·富兰克林及其子孙后代能从中学到可资借鉴的经验教训,在人生道路上少走弯路。《自传》第一部分对自己生平事迹的叙述止于 1730 年。由于各种原因,这部分《自传》手稿辗转到了他的朋友艾贝尔·詹姆斯手中。詹姆斯和另外一位看过手稿的朋友均强烈建议富兰克林续写《自传》,并建议他将预期的读者由家人改为公众,因为他们一致认为该自传能够引导青年人奋发向上,为青年人提高自我修养提供一个极好的范例。于是,自 1784 年富兰克林开始续写《自传》,直到 1790 年他去世。此时《自传》只写到 1757 年,他的后半生没有来得及在《自传》中提及。当然,囿于富兰克林所处的时代,他的个别观点(如对于印第安人的看法)也不免存有偏见。

《富兰克林自传》是一部影响了几代美国人、历经两百余年经久不衰的励志奇书,它包含了人生奋斗与成功的真知灼见,以及诸种善与美的道德真谛,被公认为是改变了无数人命运的美国精神读本。编辑特别 聘请外籍专家为本书的精彩篇章录音,听读励志经典,定会让读者受益。



Chapter	
第一章	写传缘由
Chapter	
第二章	家世和童年 ······ 8
Chapter	Three
第三章	酷爱学习的少年印刷工 30
Chapter	Four
第四章	17 岁独闯费城
Chapter	Five
第五章	伦敦的印刷工生涯
Chapter	
第六章	磨砺费城, 计划创业
Chapter	
第七章	组建共读社
Chapter	
第八章	在秦城成家立业

Chapter	Nine		
第九章	续传缘由	94	
Chapter			
第十章	建立会员制图书馆	10	
Chapter			
第十一章	ī 我的修身立德计划····································	20	
Chapter	Twelve		
第十二章	記 启发民众,关注公益	250	
Chapter	Thirteen		
第十三章	值 组建民团,发明新式火炉 ·················· 2	292	
Chapter	Fourteen		
第十四章	章 创办大学,建立医院	312	
Chapter	r Fifteen		
第十五章	章 关心市政建设······	332	
Chapter	r Sixteen		
第十六章	章 倡议统一,协助英军	348	
Chapter	r Seventeen		
第十七章	章 亲自领军,建成防务	386	
Chapte	er Eighteen		
第十八章	章 我的自然科学成果·····	408	
Chapter Nineteen			
第十九章	章 赴英请命,终获成功	418	
附录	富兰克林生平大事记······	456	



本杰明・富兰克林 (1706—1790)

Chapter One

第一章 写传缘由

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

Dear son,

I have ever had a 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 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 conducing[®] 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.

我出身低微,幼年在贫寒的家庭中长大,后来竟能够生活优裕,并在 世界上赢得了些许的声名,迄今为止我的一生总是好运相伴。我的为人处 世之道,承蒙上帝恩惠,让我有了今天这些成就。我的后代子孙们可能想 了解这些处世之道是什么,也许他们会发现其中的某些情况跟他们的情形有相似之处,因此可以用于借鉴和模仿。

1771 年写于都维夫圣・阿萨福教堂的主教家中。

吾儿:

我一贯喜欢搜集自己祖上哪怕是点点滴滴的珍闻轶事。你可能还记得,为此我曾特意去过英格兰,跟那些依旧健在的族中老人们打听这些事,当时你也随我一同前往。想到你可能也同样乐于了解我一生的境遇,而且,有许多的经历是你不曾知晓的,加之在现住的乡间别墅里,我恰好有大概整整一个星期不受任何人打扰的悠闲时光,于是坐下来,想把这些事情记述出来给你看。除此之外,之所以写这些东西,我还有一些别的目的。我出身低微,幼年在贫寒的家庭中长大,后来竟能够生活优裕,并在世界上赢得了些许的声名,迄今为止我的一生总是好运相伴。我的为人处世之道,承蒙上帝恩惠,让我有了今天这些成就。我的后代子孙们可能想了解这些处世之道是什么,也许他们会发现其中的某些情况跟他们的情形有相似之处,因此可以用于借鉴和模仿。

① anecdote 轶事, 短而有趣的故事

② ancestor 祖先、祖宗

③ unacquainted 不熟的,不知道的

④ retirement 幽静地方、偏僻地方、隐居处

⑤ inducement 动机、诱因

⑥ emerge 脱颖而出

⑦ obscurity 无名的人或地方,低微的处境

[®] affluence 富裕, 丰富

⑨ felicity 幸福, 幸运

⁽¹⁰⁾ conducing 有助的, 有益的

① posterity 后裔, 子孙

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.

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.

每次回想起自己一生中碰到的好运气,我总是忍不住感慨,如果 再给我一次重新选择人生的机会,我也不会反对将自己的人生从头到 尾再重演一次,只希望能像作家们在作品再版时会校正初版的错误一 样,可以对人生做一些小小的修正。除了能改正其中的一些错误以外, 我可能还会把人生中的某些不好的事情和事件做一些变动以利于他人。 但是,即便没有这种修正的机会,我仍然愿意将自己的人生重新过一 遍。当然,人生是不可能重复去过的,那么最接近于重演人生的方式 莫过于回忆自己的一生,将这些回忆尽可能地付诸笔端了。

借此,我可以像大多数老年人那样絮絮叨叨地说一说自己的过去。而且用写作的方式叙述往事,不致于让年轻人因为出于对我年龄的尊敬而假装洗耳恭听,也不致于让人生厌,因为读与不读这些东西,就在他们自己了。最后一点(我还是自己承认的好,因为即便我不承认,别人也不会相信),写自传在很大程度上也满足了我的虚荣心。说老实话,我经常听到或者看到"可以毫不自夸地说"之类的开场白,然而接下来说的却往往都是些自卖自夸的话。虽说每个人或多或少都会自夸,但大多数人都不喜欢别人自夸。但我碰到自夸之人时,往往报以宽容之心,因为我觉得这对于他自己和他周围的人而言往往也不会有什么坏影响。因此,在许多情况下,如果一个人把自己的虚荣心当做生活中的一种慰藉并因此而感谢上帝的话,也算不上是什么荒谬的事情。

① induce 引诱、劝导、诱发

② sinister 不祥的, 有害的

③ recollection 回忆, 往事

⁴⁾ put down 记下来

⑤ hereby 由此, 借此

⑥ indulge 沉迷、纵情享受

⑦ inclination 倾向,爱好

[®] tiresome 令人厌倦的,累人的

⑨ confess 承认, 坦白

⁰⁰ gratify 满足

① vanity 虚荣心, 自负

② scarce 几乎不

⁽¹³⁾ vain 自夸的、爱虚荣的

⁽¹⁴⁾ be productive of 可能产生……的结果

⁽¹⁵⁾ absurd 荒谬的, 荒唐可笑的

And now I speak of thanking God, I desire with all humility^① to acknowledge that I owe^② the mentioned happiness of my past life to His kind providence^③, 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^④ reverse^⑤, which I may experience as others have done, the complexion^⑥ of my future fortune being known to Him only in whose power it is to bless to us even our afflictions^①.



富兰克林的雕像

说到感谢上帝,我必须谦恭地承认,我过去人生中的一切幸福与快乐都是拜仁慈的上帝所赐,是上帝给我指出了为人处世之道,并引导我利用这些为人处世之道走向成功。尽管我不该去臆断,但是这样的信念仍让我希望,上帝在未来会依旧赐予我同样的恩惠,无论是让我的幸福与快乐延续下去,还是让我像别人曾经经历的那样,去忍受命中注定的逆厄——毕竟,未来的命运如何,只有万能的上帝知晓,在我们遭受痛苦与不幸时依旧在保佑我们。



100 美元纸币的正面是富兰克林的头像

① humility 谦恭, 谦逊, 谦卑

② owe (to) 把……归功于

③ providence 天意, 上帝的保佑

⁴⁾ fatal 致命的

⑤ reverse 倒退、挫折、失败

⑥ complexion 情况,局面

⑦ affliction 痛苦、折磨、忧伤

Chapter Two

第二章 家世和童年

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 particulars² 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 order³ 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 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 他喜欢时常邀请一些头脑明智的朋友或者邻居来家里进餐叙谈。他总是特意精选一些独特的或是切实有用的话题让大家来讨论,可能是想借此锻炼孩子们的思维吧。通过这种方法,他把我们的注意力都转到关注自己生活中哪些行为是合理的、可取的、审慎的,而很少或者根本不去注意桌子上的食物,不去想饭菜的优劣,烹调的好坏,菜肴的时令,也不会去和同类菜肴作比较。我就是在这样的环境中长大的,所以对餐桌上的菜肴从来都不在意,以致于到现在如果有人在饭后几小时问我吃了什么的话,我可能根本答不出来。这倒给我的旅途带来了极大方便,因为我的同伴们从小在这方面了解较多,他们经常因为旅途中没有可口的食物满足他们挑剔的口味和食欲而牢骚满腹。

我的一个伯父跟我一样,喜欢搜集家族中的珍闻轶事。他的一些笔记后来传到我手里,让我详细了解了许多关于我们祖上的事情。从他的这些笔记中,我了解到,我们的家族在诺桑普顿郡的埃克顿区的一个小村子里已经住了300年,究竟之前已经住了多少年,他也无从知晓了。("富兰克林"一词原来是对某一个阶层民众的称呼,当英国的民众都开始使用姓氏的时候,我们的祖先便把"富兰克林"当做自己的姓氏,可能从那时候起他们便在此居住了。)他们有30英亩的土地,世代以打铁为副业。家族中的长子都会被培养成打铁匠来继承这门手艺,这个传统祖辈传了下来,一直传到这个伯父那代,他和我的父亲也遵循了这个老传统,让自己的长子学打铁。我曾查阅过埃克顿教区的登记簿,发现只有1555年之后的出生、嫁娶和丧葬记录,在此之前没有任何记录可循。通过这个登记簿我了解到,不仅仅我是家中最小的儿子,从我往前的5代祖先都是家中最小的儿子。我的祖父托马斯生于1598年,一直生活在埃克顿,直到年迈不能继续从事劳动时才跟着儿子约翰住。约翰是牛津郡班伯雷区的一个染匠,我的父亲就

¹ furnish 供给、提供

² particular 详情,细节,事项

³ order 阶层、团体

¹ freehold。不动产的) 所有权

⑤ parish 教区

⑥ preceding (时间或地点上) 在先的,在 前的

Banbury, in Oxfordshire, with whom my father served an apprenticeship^①. 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^② there. My grandfather had four sons that grew up, viz. ^③: 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 his 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[®]."