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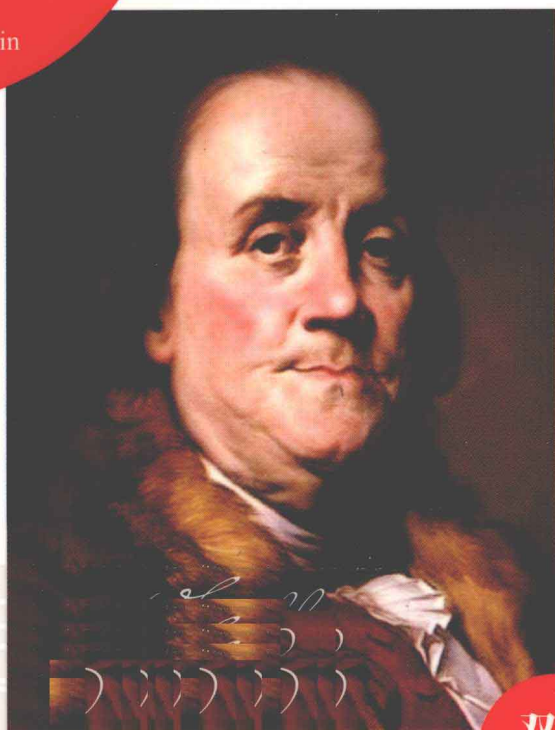
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林弘文 / 译

活出无限可能

富兰克林自传

Benjamin Franklin



双语
典藏本

B. Franklin

▶ 活出无限可能

富兰克林自传

【美】富兰克林 / 著 林弘文 / 译

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译者序

在美国，“本杰明·富兰克林”是一个家喻户晓的名字。富兰克林伟大的影响力，源于他对科学、文学、经济等领域的杰出贡献；源于他成功领导了美国独立战争，起草并签署了《独立宣言》和《美国宪法》，缔造了美国精神；更重要的是，他用一生的奋斗经历，向世人阐述了一个道理：伟大与崇高，皆来源于自平凡中不懈地追求。

《富兰克林自传》正是对这位享有盛誉的伟人一生最好的记录。他自1771年开始动笔写作自传，到1788年完成，其间断续两次，才终于成就了现在最广为流传的这个版本。如今，该书已成为一部影响几代美国人、历经两百余年经久不衰的精神读本。

可以说，是富兰克林放飞了“美国梦”。本人在翻译过程中，有如同一位邻家老者谈天，聆听他的谆谆教诲以及充满睿智的话语。在此，我希望能将这一收获同本版图书一起奉献给读者。

译者

B. Franklen

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第一部
自传



The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin



Chapter 1

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 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.

第一章 故乡生涯

(1771 年，写于都怀伏特镇，圣阿萨夫主教家)

亲爱的孩子：

我一直对收集祖上的各种奇闻逸事相当感兴趣，乐此不疲。我就曾经为了这个目的而四处旅行，你可能还记得，当我们在英国的时候，我就经常向我们家族中的老人们询问、调查有关这个方面的情况。我觉得，同样，你们中的一些人可能也很想知道我的生活情况（就好比我希望知道我的先人的生活一样），因为这其中的很多事情你们是并不清楚的。正好，我现在有一个星期的休假时间，预计在这一个星期的乡村假期里是没有什么东西会来打扰我的。因而，我可以坐下来把我的生活情况原原本本地告诉你。

其实，写这些东西，我还有另外一个目的。我出身贫贱，幼年成长在贫寒的家庭中，后来才获得了财富，并在这个世界上稍稍享有了一些声誉。上帝保佑，我至今一帆风顺，事事顺意。我的处世之道如此成功，我的后世子孙也许想知道它们，并且找到些和他们的境况相适应的立身之术，然后模仿它们。



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.

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.

当我回望、审视这种幸福的时候，我有时候禁不住会想，如果上帝再给我一次机会的话，我会毫不犹豫地重新度过我的此生，一切从头开始。我只要求像作家那样，在修订版本的时候可以改正初版的某些错误，把某些不幸的事情变得稍微顺利些。但是，要是我的这些要求都不被允许的话，我仍然愿意接受上帝的恩赐，按照我原来的样子重新活一次。事实上，既然这种重来是不可能的，那么最接近这种重演的好像就只有回忆了。为了让这种回忆尽可能地保持久远，就只好把它用笔记下来了。

在这里我将顺着老年人常有的偏好，来谈谈他们自己，谈谈他们过去的所作所为。我这样做，将不会使那些尊敬老人的人感到厌烦，他们往往处于尊敬老人的考虑而被迫听我们唠叨。而将之写下来，他们可以看也可以不看。最后，我还是自己承认吧，因为就算我极力否认也没有人会相信，那就是，写这个自传可以极大地满足我的虚荣心。实际上，我经常听到或在书上看到，在人们说完“我可以毫不夸张地说”之类的开场白之后，紧接着的就是一堆自吹自擂的话。绝大多数人厌恶别人的虚荣，但却不管自己有多么虚夸。但是，无论我在什么地方碰到虚荣，我都会给它一个正确的位置。因为我相信，这样做对这些自负的人来说是有好处的，对其周围受其影响的人来说也不无益处。因此，在很多情况下，一个人在享有生活的种种舒适之外，还仰仗着上帝赐予他的虚荣心也并不是怪诞的。

既然提到了上帝，那么我想说，我要以我全部的恭谦来感谢他，我过往生活中一切的幸福快乐都源于他的恩赐，是他引领我寻找到了成功之道。虽然我不该揣测，但我的这种信仰使我相信，上帝仁慈的旨意始终如一地围绕着我，无论是享有幸福，还是承受他人都会遭遇的厄运。因为我未来的命运只有全能的上帝知晓，并且他保佑着我们，甚至是我们的苦难。



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 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.

我的一位伯父曾经把他的一部笔记交给了我，他也有收集家族奇闻逸事的癖好。这部手记使我了解到我们祖上的一些详细情况。从这部手记中我了解到，我们的家族在北安普敦教区的埃克敦村至少住了 300 年。究竟在这之前还有多少年，我这个伯父也不知道了。（也许从他们采用“富兰克林”为姓开始。“富兰克林”在这之前是一个平民阶层的名称。当时英国各地都在使用的姓氏。）那个时候，他们拥有 30 英亩的自由地，以打铁为副业。一直到我伯父这一代为止，都是这样过活，家里的长子总是被培养来接替打铁的生意。作为一个惯例，伯父和我父亲在对他们的长子的职业安排上也服从这样一个规矩。当我在埃克敦查阅相关记录时，我只找到我的祖先从 1555 年开始的出生、嫁娶和丧葬情况。在这之前这个教区的记录已经没有了。通过那份记录我得知我是前五代人中最小的儿子的儿子。

我的祖父托马斯生于 1598 年，他一直住在埃克敦村，直到他老得不能再干活了为止。之后他就和他的一个儿子——约翰，住在了一起，约翰是牛津郡班伯里的一个染色工。那个时候我父亲在给约翰当学徒。祖父一直生活在那里直到死去，并安葬在那里。我们在 1758 年见到了他的墓碑。他的长子托马斯仍然住在埃克敦，他死后将房屋和土地都留给了他唯一的女儿。他的女儿和女婿（威灵堡一个叫费希尔的人）又把房产卖给了伊斯特德先生，他就是庄园现在的领主。我祖父有四个儿子，他们是托马斯、约翰、本杰明和约塞亚。我手边没有资料，但是我将把我记得的尽量给你写出来。如果资料在我离开期间没有丢失的话，你就会在其中发现更多的详情。



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 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.

*To my Namesake upon a Report of his Inclination to Martial
Affairs, July 7th, 1710*

*Believe me, Ben, war is a dangerous trade.
The sword has marred as well as made;
By it do many fall, not many rise—
Makes many poor, few rich, and fewer wise;
Fills towns with ruin, fields with blood, beside
Tis sloth's maintainer and the shield of Pride.
Fair cities, rich today in plenty flow,
War fills with want tomorrow, and with woe.
Ruined states, vice, broken limbs, and scars
Are the effects of desolating wars.*

托马斯本来一直和他父亲学习打铁，但是由于他天性聪颖，所以当地教区的大绅士帕尔默先生不断鼓励他去求学（他的弟弟们也得到了同样的鼓励），后来他获得了成为一名书记员的资格，成为了地方上相当有影响力的人物，同时也是公众——无论是本村，还是北安普敦镇以及该郡公益事业推动者，他的很多相关事例被广为传颂，并且，他也得到了哈利法克斯勋爵的关注和奖赏。托马斯去世于旧历的 1702 年 1 月 6 日，那恰巧是我出生前四年的日子。我还记得，当听到埃克敦的老人们向我们讲述他的生平和他的性格的时候，你感受到极大的震撼。因为你觉得那些和你了解的我极其相似。你说：“如果他死在您出生的那一天，人们可能会认为您是他的灵魂转世呢！”

约翰被培养成了一名染色工，我觉得他是染羊毛的。本杰明则被培养成为了丝绸染色工，他是在伦敦学的手艺。他是一个很机灵的人。我对他的印象很深，在我小的时候，他曾来到波士顿我父亲住的地方，和我们一起住了几年。他一直活到很大的年纪。他的孙子塞缪尔·富兰克林现在住在波士顿。他死后留下了两卷 4 开本的手稿，里面是他自己写的一些诗，包括他写给他朋友和亲戚的一些即兴短诗。下面是他给我的一首诗，这就是一个样本：

致和我同名的人，基于一份好战的报告，1710 年 7 月 7 日
 本，相信我，战争是一个危险的交易，
 剑锻造好以后也就意味着毁坏。
 它让许多人失败，而不是成功；
 它让许多人贫穷，少数人富裕，更让少数人变的富有智慧；
 它让村镇衰败，田野血迹斑斑；
 它高唱鼓励懒惰的颂歌，保护傲慢。
 洁净的城市，现在河水泛滥，
 明天就会被战争和悲伤填满，
 还有破败的国家，罪恶，残肢和满目疮痍，
 这些都是战争造就的荒凉。



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. 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 in Northamptonshire, Benjamin and Josiah adhered to them, and so continued all their lives: the rest of the family remained with the Episcopal Church.