as large ones would be unfair. "A confederation upon such iniquitous principles will never last long," he correctly predicted.

p. 315 Franklin's preference for a unicameral legislature would eventually be discarded both by Pennsylvania and the United States, but is was greeted with great acclaim in France, which implemented it (with dubious results) after its own revolution. Another ultrademocratic proposal Franklin made to the Pennsylvania convention was that the state's Declaration of Rights discourage large holdings of property or concentrations of wealth as "a danger to the happiness of mankind." That also ended up being too radical for the convention.

p. 338 But Franklin realized that appealing to a cold calculus of interests was only part of the equation. Better than most other diplomats in the nation's history, he understood that America's strength in world affairs would come from a unique mix that included idealism as well as realism. When woven together, as they would later be in policies ranging from the Monroe Doctrine to the Marshall Plan, they were the warp and woof of a resilient foreign policy. "America's great historical moments," writes historian Bernard Bailyn, "have occurred when realism and idealism have been combined, and no one knew this better than Franklin."

p. 343 "But, sir, I have greater news than that," said the messenger. "General Burgoyne and his whole army are prisoners!" Burgoyne had been defeated at the Battle of Saratoga, and now Howe was indeed isolated.

p. 344 Franklin wrote a renewed proposal for a French-American alliance on December 7, Temple delivered it the next day, and within a week the three American commissioners were meeting with Vergennes. The French quickly agreed to full recognition of America and treaties of trade and alliance. There was one caveat: France needed the approval of Spain, as the two countries had pledged in the Bourbon family pact of 1761 to act in concert. Vergennes sent his courier to Madrid and promised the Americans they would have a response in three weeks.

p. 345 So, during the first week of 1778, Franklin applied pressure. He let word leak to the press that British emissaries were in town and that they might reach a pact with the Americans if the French did not do so promptly. Such a pact, the stories went, might even include American support for Britain's efforts to capture France's islands in the West Indies. He also agreed to meet with Wentworth on January 6, though he made him promise not to offer any personal bribes.

p. 346 That was all the French now needed to hear. Franklin was told that the king would assent to the treaties—one on friendship and trade, the other creating a military alliance—even without the participation of Spain. France made one stipulation: America could not make peace with Britain in the future without France's consent. And so the treaties of friendship and alliance were won.

pp. 346-347 The American commissioners met in Paris on February 5, 1778 for the signing of the treaty. Vergennes's secretary had a cold, however, so the ceremony was put off for a day. At both gatherings, Franklin appeared without his usual brown coat. Instead, he wore a suit of blue Manchester velvet that was faded and a bit worn. Silas Deane, finding this puzzling, asked shy. "To give it a little revenge," Franklin answered. "I wore this coat the day Wedderburn abused me at Whitehall." It had been four years since his humiliation in the Cockpit, and he had saved the suit for such an occasion.

p. 349 "Franklin had won," writes Carl Van Doren, "a diplomatic campaign equal in results to Saratoga." The Yale historian Edmund Morgan goes even further, calling it "the greatest diplomatic victory the United States has ever achieved." With the possible exception of the creation of the NATO alliance, that assessment may be true, though it partly points up the

paucity of American successes over the years at bargaining tables, whether in Versailles after World War I or in Paris at the end of the Vietnam War. At the very least, it can be said that Franklin's triumph permitted America the possibility of an outright victory in its war for independence while conceding no lasting entanglements that would encumber it as a new nation.

p. 351 They were both very smart, but otherwise they had quite different personalities. Adams was unbending and outspoken and argumentative, Franklin charming and taciturn and flirtatious. Adams was rigid in his personal morality and lifestyle, Franklin famously playful. Adams learned French by poring over grammar books and memorizing a collection of funeral orations; Franklin (who cared little about the grammar) learned the language by lounging on the pillows of his female friends and writing them amusing little tales. Adams felt comfortable confronting people, whereas Franklin preferred to seduce them, and the same was true of the way they dealt with nations.

p. 354 Some derided the rather histrionic display. One of Paris's more caustic papers accused them of "playing out a scene" of "puerile adulation," and when former Massachusetts governor Hutchinson heard of the "God and Liberty" benediction, he

remarked that it was "difficult to say which of those words had been most used to bad purposes." Mainly, however, the encounter was reverentially publicized throughout Europe.

p. 355 The Académie served as one of Franklin's bases among the intellectual elite of Paris. Another was a remarkable Masonic Lodge known, in honor of the muses, as the Lodge of the Nine Sisters. Freemasonry in France was evolving from being just a set of businessmen's social clubs, which is what it mainly was in America, and was becoming part of the movement led by the *philosophes* and other freethinkers who challenged the orthodoxies of both the church and the monarchy. Claude-Adrien Helvétius, a very freethinking *philosophe*, had first envisioned a superlodge in Paris that would be filled with the greatest writers and artists. When he died, his widow, Madame Helvétius (about whom we will soon hear a lot more), helped fund its creation in 1776.

p. 358 "She promises to lead me to heaven along a road so delicious," Franklin exulted in his reply to her. "I am in raptures when I think of being absolved of the *future* sins." Turning to the Ten Commandments, he argued that there were actually two others that should be included: to multiply and fill the earth, and to love one another. He had always obeyed those two very well, he argued, and should not that "compensate for my having so

often failed to respect one of the ten? I mean the one which forbids us to covet they neighbor's wife, a commandment which (I confess) I have consistently violated."

p. 372 Chess, he said, taught foresight, circumspection, caution, and the importance of not being discouraged. There was also an important etiquette to be practiced: never hurry your opponent, do not try to deceive by pretending to have made a bad move, and never gloat in victory: "Moderate your desire of victory over your adversary, and be pleased with the one over yourself." There were even times when it was prudent to let an opponent retract a bad move: "You may indeed happen to lose the game to your opponent, but you will win what is better, his esteem."

pp. 382-383 Word of his appointment did not reach Paris until February 1779, for the war and the winter hindered the passage of American ships. When it did, Arthur Lee sulked and refused to hand over his papers to Franklin. As for Adams, his biographer David McCullough writes, "The new arrangement was exactly what Adams had recommended and the news was to leave him feeling more miserable than ever." He soon left Paris, at least for the time being, to make his way back to Massachusetts.

pp. 386-387 JOHN PAUL JONES: Born John Paul, the son of a Scottish landscape designer, he had shipped off to sea at age 13, served as the first mate of a slave vessel, and soon commanded his own merchant ship. But the hotheaded captain, who throughout his career was prone to provoking mutinies, got into trouble by flogging a crew member who later died and then, after being exonerated, running his sword through yet another crew member who was threatening an insurrection. So he fled to Virginia, changed his last name to Jones, and at the beginning of the Revolution won a commission in America's motley navy of ex-privateers and adventurers. By 1778, he was making his reputation by conducting daring attacks along the English and Scottish coasts.

P. 393 Adams, on the other hand, was much more of a cold realist. He felt that France had supported America because of its own national interests—weakening Britain, gaining a lucrative new trading relationship—and neither side owed the other any moral gratitude. France, he correctly predicted, would help America only up to a point; it wanted the new nation to break with Britain but not to become so strong that it no longer needed France's support. Franklin showed too much subservience to the court, Adams felt, and on his return in 1780 he forcefully propounded this view. "We ought to be cautious," Adams wrote the Congress in April, "how we magnify our ideas and exaggerate our expressions of the generosity and magnanimity of any of those powers."

pp. 397-398 Adams was appalled at being so shackled to France's will, and he called the instructions "shameful." Jay agreed, declaring that by "casting herself into the arms of the King of France" America would not "advance either her interest or her reputation." Franklin, on the other hand, was pleased with the instructions to follow France's guidance. "I have had so much experience of his majesty's goodness to us," he wrote the Congress, "and of the sincerity of this upright and able minister [Vergennes], that I cannot but think the confidence well and judiciously placed and that it will have happy effects."

He was heartened as well by a personal triumph. Over the objections of even such friends as Silas Deane, he was able to get Temple appointed as the secretary to the new delegation. The honor of his new appointment, and the rejection of his resignation, rejuvenated him. "I call this continuance an honor," he wrote a friend, "and I really esteem it to be greater than my first appointment, when I consider that all the interest of my enemies ... were not sufficient to prevent it."

pp. 398-399 That problem was solved in October 1781. The British general Lord Cornwallis had marched north from Charleston, seeking to engage General Washington's forces, and had taken his stand at Yorktown, Virginia. France's support proved critical: Lafayette moved to Cornwallis's southern flank to prevent a retreat, a French fleet arrived at

the mouth of the Chesapeake to preclude an escape by sea, French artillery arrived from Rhode Island, and nine thousand French soldiers joined eleven thousand Americans under General Washington's command. Two four-hundred-man columns, one French and the other American, began the allied assault and bombardment, which continued day and night with such intensity that when Cornwallis sent out a drummer on October 17 to signal his willingness to surrender, it took a while for him to get noticed. It had been four years since the battle of Saratoga, six and a half since Lexington and Concord. On November 19, word of the allied triumph at Yorktown reached Vergennes, who sent a note to Franklin that he reprinted on his press at Passy and distributed the following dawn.

pp. 399-400 "Great affairs sometimes take their rise from small circumstances," Franklin recorded in the journal he began of the 1782 peace negotiations. In this case, it was a chance meeting between his old flame Madame Brillon and an Englishman named Lord Cholmondeley, who was a friend of Shelburne. Madame Brillon sent Cholmondeley to call on Franklin in Passy, and through him Franklin sent his regards to the new colonial secretary. Franklin had known and liked Shelburne since at least 1766, when he lobbied him about getting a western land grant and made occasional visits to his grand country manor in Wiltshire. Madame Helvétius also played a small role; Shelburne had just sent her some gooseberry bushes, and Franklin wrote politely that they had arrived "in excellent order."

p. 403 As he had done with Oswald, Franklin refused to make such a concession. "I gave a little more of my sentiments on the general subject of benefits, obligations and gratitude," Franklin noted. People who wanted to get out of obligations often "became ingenious in finding out reasons and arguments" to do so, but America would not follow that route. Even if a person borrows money from another and then repays it, he still owes gratitude: "He has discharged the money debt, but the obligation remains."

p. 417 Franklin had been instrumental in shaping the three great documents of the war: the Declaration of Independence, the alliance with France, and the treaty with England. Now he turned his thoughts to peace. "All wars are follies, very expensive, and very mischievous ones," he wrote Polly Stevenson. "When will mankind be convinced of this, and agree to settle their differences by arbitration? Were they to do it, even by the cast of a die, it would be better than by fighting and destroying each other." To Joseph Banks, one of the many old friends from England he wrote in celebration, he asserted yet again his famous, albeit somewhat misleading, credo: "There never was a good war or a bad peace."

p. 424 America was creating a society, Franklin proclaimed, where a "mere man of Quality" who does not want to work would be "despised and disregarded," while anyone

who has a useful skill would be honored. All of this made for a better moral clime. "The almost general mediocrity of fortune that prevails in America, obliging its people to follow some business for subsistence, those vices that arise usually from idleness are in a great measure prevented," he concluded. "Industry and constant employment are great preservatives of morals and virtue." He purported to be describing the way America was, but he was also subtly prescribing what he wanted it to become. All in all, it was his best paean to the middle-class values he represented and helped to make integral to the new nation's character.

pp. 424-425 His antipathy to excess wealth also led him to defend high taxes, especially on luxuries. A person had a "natural right" to all he earned that was necessary to support himself and his family, he wrote finance minister Robert Morris, "But all property superfluous to such purposes is the property of the public, who by their laws have created it." Likewise, to Vaughan, he argued that cruel criminal laws had been wrought by those who sought to protect excess ownership of property. "Superfluous property is the creature of society," he said. "Simple and mild laws were sufficient to guard the property that was merely necessary."

p. 429 Jefferson dined often with Franklin, played chess with him, and listened to his lectures about the loyalty America owed France. His calming presence even helped Franklin and Adams get along better, and the three men who had worked together on the Declaration now worked together at Passy almost every day throughout September preparing for new European treaties and commercial pacts. There was, in fact, a lot that the three patriots could agree on. They shared a faith in free trade, open covenants, and the need to end the mercantilist system of repressive commercial arrangements and restrictive spheres of influence. As Adams, with uncharacteristic generosity, noted, "We proceeded with wonderful harmony, good humor and unanimity."

p. 445 After Maryland and Virginia were unable to resolve some border and navigation disputes, a multistate conference was convened in Annapolis to address them along with larger issues of trade and cooperation. Only five states attended and little was accomplished, but James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, along with others who saw the need for a stronger national government, used the gathering to call for a federal convention, ostensibly designed merely to amend the Articles of Confederation. It was scheduled for Philadelphia in May 1787.

p. 447 First, he was far more comfortable with democracy than most of the delegates, who tended to regard the word and concept as dangerous rather than desirable. "The evils we experience," declared Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, "flow from the excess of democracy." The people, Roger Sherman of Connecticut concurred, "should have as little to do as may be possible about government." Franklin was at the other end of the spectrum. Though averse to rabble rule, he favored direct elections, trusted the average citizen, and resisted anything resembling elitism. The constitution he had drafted for Pennsylvania, with its popularly elected single-chamber legislature, was the most democratic of all the new states'.

pp. 448-449 Franklin had long favored a legislature with only one directly elected house, seeing little reason to place checks on the democratic will of the people, and he had designed such as system in Pennsylvania. But in its first week the convention decided this was, in fact, too democratic by half. Madison recorded: "'The national Legislature ought to consist of two branches' was agreed to without debate or dissent, except that of Pennsylvania, given probably from complaisance to Dr. Franklin, who was understood to be partial to a single House of Legislation." One modification was made to the Virginia plan. To give the state governments some stake in the new Congress, the delegates decided that the upper chamber,

dubbed the Senate after the Roman precedent, would be chosen by the state legislatures rather than by the House of Representatives. (This procedure remained in effect until 1913.)

pp. 453-454 The point Franklin was about to make, no doubt, was the same one he had made in the Pennsylvania state convention in 1776, when he argued against a two-chamber legislature because it might fall prey to the fate of the fabled two-headed snake that died of thirst when its heads could not agree on which way to pass a twig. Indeed, in a paper he wrote in 1789 extolling Pennsylvania's unicameral legislature, he again referred to what he called "the famous political fable of the snake with two heads." He had come to accept, however, that in forging the compromise needed to create a national Congress, two heads could be better than one.

p. 456 "There are two passions which have a powerful influence in the affairs of men. These are *ambition* and *avarice*; the love of power and the love of money. Separately, each of these has great force in prompting men to action; but, when united in view of the same object, they have in many minds the most violent effects ... And of what kind are the men that will strive for this profitable preeminence, through all the bustle of cabal, the heat of contention, the infinite mutual abuse of parties, tearing to pieces the best of characters? It will not be the wise and moderate, the lovers of peace and good order, the men fittest for the

trust. It will be the bold and the violent, the men of strong passions and indefatigable activity in their selfish pursuits."

p. 457 And thus it fulfilled the motto on the nation's great seal, suggested by Franklin in 1776, of E Pluribus Unum, out of many one.

p. 464 Franklin's views had been evolving as well. He had, as we have seen, owned one or two household slaves off and on for much of his life, and as a young publisher he had carried ads for slave sales. But he had also published, in 1729, one of the nation's first antislavery pieces and had joined the Associates of Dr. Bray to establish schools for blacks in America. Deborah had enrolled her house servants in the Philadelphia school, and after visiting it Franklin had spoken of his "higher opinions of the natural capacities of the black race." In his 1751 "Observations on the Increase of Mankind," he attacked slavery strongly, but mainly from an economic perspective rather than a moral one. In expressing sympathy for the Philadelphia abolitionist Anthony Benezet in the 1770s, he had agreed that the importation of new slaves should end immediately, but he qualified his support for outright abolition by saying is should come "in time." As an agent for Georgia in London, he had defended the right of that colony to keep slaves. But he preached, in articles such as his

1772 "The Somerset Case and the Slave Trade," that one of Britain's great sins against America was foisting slavery on it.

pp. 464-465 One of the arguments against immediate abolition, which Franklin had heretofore accepted, was that it was not practical or safe to free hundreds of thousands of adult slaves into a society for which they were not prepared. (There were about seven hundred thousand slaves in the United States out of a total population of four million in 1790.) So his abolition society dedicated itself not only to freeing slaves but also to helping them become good citizens. "Slavery is such an atrocious debasement of human nature that its very extirpation, if not performed with solicitous care, may sometimes open a source of serious evils," Franklin wrote in a November 1789 address to the public from the society. "The unhappy man, who has long been treated as a brute animal, too frequently sinks beneath the common standard of the human species. The galling chains that bind his body do also fetter his intellectual faculties and impair the social affections of his heart."

p. 476 Out of this grew many related divides in the American character, and Franklin represents one strand: the side of pragmatism versus romanticism, of practical benevolence versus moral crusading. He was on the side of religious tolerance rather than evangelical

faith. The side of social mobility rather than an established elite. The side of middle-class virtues rather than more ethereal noble aspirations.

p. 478 This Age of Enlightenment, however, was being replaced in the early 1800s by a literary era that valued romanticism more than rationality. With the shift came a profound reversal, especially among those of presumed higher sensibilities, in attitudes, toward Franklin. The romantics admired not reason and intellect but deep emotion, subjective sensibility, and imagination. They exalted the heroic and the mystical rather than tolerance and rationality. Their haughty criticisms decimated the reputations of Franklin, Voltaire, Swift, and other Enlightenment thinkers.

p. 479 American transcendentalists such as Thoreau and Emerson, who shared the romantic poets' allergic reaction to rationalism and materialism, also found Franklin too mundane for their rarefied tastes. The more earthy and middle-class backwoodsmen still revered Franklin's *Autobiography*—it was the one book that Davy Crockett carried with him to his death at the Alamo—but a backwoodsman as refined as Thoreau had no place for it when heading off to Walden Pond. Indeed, the first chapter of his Walden journal, on economy, has tables and charts that subtly satirize those used by Franklin. Edgar Allen Poe, in his

story "The Business Man," likewise poked glancingly at Franklin and other "methodical" men in describing the rise and methods of his aptly named antihero Peter Proffit.

pp. 492-493 All of this made him the most accomplished American of his age and the most influential in inventing the type of society America would become. Indeed, the roots of much of what distinguishes the nation can be found in Franklin: its cracker-barrel humor and wisdom; its technological ingenuity; its pluralistic tolerance; its ability to weave together individualism and community cooperation; its philosophical pragmatism; its celebration of meritocratic mobility; the idealistic streak ingrained in its foreign policy; and the Main Street (or Market Street) virtues that serve as the foundation for its civic values. He was egalitarian in what became the American sense: he approved of individuals making their way to wealth through diligence and talent, but opposed giving special privileges to people based on their birth.