

Society, including an application on behalf of the library without being signed by its committee, which the board taking into consideration, the committee first appointed were directed to prepare a petition conformably to the tenor of the first application, to be signed by all the directors. This was executed, and the conduct of the Philosophical Society, in transposing the locality prayed for, was very properly set forth. In this petition it is stated, that before the Revolution the library had been opened daily, but owing to the diversion of the funds for the purpose of buying books published in Europe during the war, it was, for the present, only open every other day. That the company was composed of 400 members, and that there are constantly many other persons who take out books. From some cause, the Philosophical Society procured the grant of a lot on Fifth street, and the Library Company got nothing. If a different course had been adopted by the former, there is no reason to doubt that both would have found equal favour. On the 8th of February, in this year, Zachariah Poulson was appointed librarian, and continued to fulfil the arduous duties of his office to the satisfaction of the public and of the directors, for a period exceeding twenty-one years.

Notwithstanding the treatment from the Philosophical Society, on the 11th of August, a committee of the society made overtures to the Library Company, "in order to know on what terms, possibly, a treaty, either of purchase or joint possession, might with most convenience be effected, or whether any other plan might be deemed advisable." A special meeting of directors, on the 15th, met the committee, who being requested to furnish an account of the expenses already incurred, and the plan to be pursued, and not being prepared, the farther consideration was deferred to the next stated meeting, when no further communication being made, its consideration was postponed, and the committee for a lot to build on continued. No proposals being afterwards received, in October, 1787, the directors say they "conceive the negotiation at an end." In February, 1789, Dr. Franklin, as president of the Philosophical Society, endeavoured to revive the negotiation, but it was feared that the dangers from fire would be greater than if the books were kept in a building solely appropriated to their accommodation.

Much credit has been bestowed upon Dr. Franklin for the efforts he was supposed to have used in promoting the prosperity of the Library; and a general impression prevails, not only in this community, where the institution is frequently called the Franklin Library, but also abroad, that his exertions caused the present handsome structure to be erected. That he was one of the first projectors of the design of a public library in Philadelphia, probably the very first, I am not about to deny, nor would I detract from his merits a particle of the credit justly his due. At the same time, the extracts which I shall make from the minutes, will show how far he is entitled to be considered one of the *greatest benefactors* and friends of this highly useful and prosperous company. We have traced him thus far, from the early projector, the faithful director, the Librarian for three months and a day, the agent in London who passed over to a bookseller the money remitted him, and otherwise performed the duties of a London correspondent, in the same manner as has since been done for a much longer period by gentlemen not members of the company; we have recorded his printing a very small catalogue without charge, and a small donation (1783) of six volumes "Natural History of the South of France," and with one other entry in our brief history, we conclude the list of his services, which, from a sense of justice, I am compelled to say, are

by no means equal to those rendered by several succeeding directors. Without spending much time upon this subject, I shall here insert what is matter of record, in relation to Dr. Franklin. 1786.—At a meeting of the directors, January 5th, 1786, I find the following minute, viz:—"It being intimated to the Board, by the Librarian, that Dr. Franklin is desirous of a communication with the Board, Josiah Hewes, Richard Wells, Joseph Pascall, and Dr. Parke, are appointed a committee to wait upon the Doctor." On the 2d of February this committee reported in the following words: "The committee appointed to wait on Doctor Franklin, report, they had a conference with the Doctor, who appeared to interest himself much in the prosperity of the library, and wished some steps could be taken to procure a convenient lot to build on; and intimated that he had a number of valuable books *which he intended for the library whenever there should be a safe place to deposit them in*, which he did not think was the case at present; they thanked the Doctor for his attention, and informed him it had been often considered by the company, and that an attempt had been made to gain permission from the Assembly to build on the State House Square, and that the Philosophical Society had supplanted them therein. The Doctor made a present to the company of a Chinese clearance, which was given to Captain Green, in Canton, for which he received the thanks of the committee." In 1789 he presented a silver and a copper medal, and the library building being completed, Richard Wells produced the following bequest from "the Doctor," viz: *Eighteen volumes*, Qto. entitled "Descriptions des Arts et Metieres," printed at Neuchatel, in 1771. Here our catalogue of his services and patronage ends, and from the circumstance of all the presents and requests being regularly noted at all the meetings, we have the best reason for believing the whole series has been reported.

The statue of Franklin, in front of the building, has been one of the causes of the institution being called by his name, and continues to perpetuate this erroneous nomenclature. Its history is briefly this:—William Bingham, having heard of the intention of the directors to erect a statue of Dr. Franklin, as one of the founders of the library, in a niche in front of the building, stated that he was willing to furnish it at his own expense, but wishing for instructions, a committee reported that they had understood Dr. Franklin "would approve of a gown for his dress, and a Roman head!" An order was forthwith transmitted by Mr. B. to Italy, and the statue, in due time, arrived. A bust was procured from the Pennsylvania hospital, and sent, together with a drawing of the figure, with the order. The likeness is called a good one by his cotemporaries; in their letter of thanks to Mr. Bingham, the directors call it the "*first ornament of their building*," and "the most finished specimen of sculpture America can exhibit," and further remark that "whilst it will have a tendency to perpetuate in the minds of his fellow citizens, a recollection of the public and private virtues of its original, it cannot fail to remind them of the liberality and taste of its donor." They *might* have said, if circumstances would have justified the expression, "perpetuate the memory of the many and great benefactions to the library, made by the generous original;" but it appears they preferred eulogising the "liberality of the donor." In June, 1792, Benjamin Franklin Bache presented to the company "the machine which Dr. Franklin first used, to make experiments in electricity;" a wheel is all that remains of it.

To return from this digression to regular dates.

1787. Early in the year 1787, the project of erecting suitable buildings seems to have been impressed upon