

doing mischief. (Franklin in his own copy of the pamphlet carefully credited Hopkinson, Kinnersley, and Syng with the discoveries they had made.¹⁷)

France was more hospitable to the new idea. A bad translation of Franklin's book came into the hands of Buffon, then keeper of the Jardin du Roi, who advised Thomas-François D'Alibard to make a better version, published in Paris early in 1752. Scientists and public were at once excited. The king himself saw the "Philadelphian experiments" performed by "M. de Lor, master of experimental philosophy." Buffon, D'Alibard, and de Lor determined to carry out the greater experiment which Franklin had proposed. D'Alibard, first to be successful, did nothing that might not have been done in Philadelphia. In a garden at Marly, six leagues from Paris, he set up an iron rod, an inch through and forty feet long, pointed with brass. Having no cake of resin with which to insulate it from the ground, he used a stool which was merely a squared plank with three wine bottles for legs. At twenty minutes past two on the afternoon of 10 May 1752, there was a single clap of thunder followed by hail. D'Alibard was just then absent. A former dragoon named Coiffier, left to watch the experiment, heard the thunder and hurried to the rod with an electric phial. Sparks came from the iron with a crackling sound. Coiffier sent a child for the prior of Marly, who had heard the thunder and was already on his way. Meeting the child in the road, he began to run. The villagers, believing that Coiffier had been killed, ran after the prior through the beating hail. Terrified, they stood back ten or a dozen paces from the rod, but in broad daylight they could see the sparks and hear the crackling while Raulet the prior drew off all the electric fire. He sat down and wrote a letter which Coiffier took to D'Alibard, who three days later made his report to the Académie Royale des Sciences. Following the course which Franklin had outlined, he said, he had arrived at incontestable proof. Franklin's idea was no longer a conjecture.¹⁸

On 18 May the experiment was repeated by de Lor in Paris. The Abbé Mazéas was commanded by the king to send word to the Royal Society in London that he greatly applauded Franklin and Collinson. John Canton made a successful experiment in London 20 July. In England as well as France, and in Belgium, Franklin's