

theory was proved again and again during the summer of 1752. He was famous in Europe before he knew it in America.

II

Before that he had thought of another way of proving his theory, and with the help of his electrical kite had drawn lightning from a cloud. The episode of the kite, so firm and fixed in legend, turns out to be dim and mystifying in fact. Franklin himself never wrote the story of the most dramatic of his experiments. All that is known about what he did on that famous day, of no known date, comes from Joseph Priestley's account, published fifteen years afterwards but read in manuscript by Franklin, who must have given Priestley the precise, familiar details.

"As every circumstance relating to so capital a discovery (the greatest, perhaps, since the time of Sir Isaac Newton) cannot but give pleasure to all my readers, I shall endeavour to gratify them with the communication of a few particulars which I have from the best authority.

"The Doctor, having published his method of verifying his hypothesis concerning the sameness of electricity with the matter of lightning, was waiting for the erection of a spire [on Christ Church] in Philadelphia to carry his views into execution; not imagining that a pointed rod of a moderate height could answer the purpose; when it occurred to him that by means of a common kite he could have better access to the regions of thunder than by any spire whatever. Preparing, therefore, a large silk handkerchief and two cross-sticks of a proper length on which to extend it, he took the opportunity of the first approaching thunder-storm to take a walk in the fields, in which there was a shed convenient for his purpose. But, dreading the ridicule which too commonly attends unsuccessful attempts in science, he communicated his intended experiment to nobody but his son"—then twenty-one, not a child as in the traditional illustrations of the scene—"who assisted him in raising the kite.

"The kite being raised, a considerable time elapsed before there was any appearance of its being electrified. One very promising

CHAPTER 6

cloud had passed he was beginning loose threads of another, just as ductor. Struck presented his kn exquisite pleasure was complete. He succeeded, even past all dispute, electric fire very after the electric before he heard

Priestley, writing lin, and writing these minute cir and exact memor what was quite o originality than l kite before his t allowed the Frer about the matter was, and who had kept the electric none of his cor *Gazette*, and app electricity in Phi this latest triumph

Can Franklin that he might pu in his newspaper of his year's new account of the *El* issue advertised a which contained *Secure Houses*, et

"As frequent public papers fr