

within but a few centuries past, is involved in doubt and uncertainty. We scarce know to whom we are indebted for the compass and for spectacles; nor have even paper and printing, that record everything else, been able to preserve with certainty the name and reputation of their inventors. One would not, therefore, of all faculties or qualities of the mind, wish for a friend or a child that he should have that of invention. For his attempts to benefit mankind in that way, however well imagined, if they do not succeed, expose him, though very unjustly, to general ridicule and contempt; and if they do succeed, to envy, robbery, and abuse."³³

It may have been knowledge of the world as much as modesty that kept Franklin from being too explicit or emphatic about his own inventions. Having no envy, jealousy, or vanity in himself, he would not run the risk of needlessly rousing them in others. When the Abbé Nollet, preceptor to the royal family in France, attacked the theories from America, Franklin did not, after a little reflection, bother to answer him. "I concluded to let my papers shift for themselves, believing it was better to spend what time I could spare from public business in making new experiments than in disputing about those already made."³⁴ He refused to patent the lightning rod, often called the Franklin rod, or to profit by it. Though he never lost sight of what was being done in electricity during his whole lifetime, he was perfectly willing to have his contributions to it absorbed in the enlarging science. They were absorbed, and it is now difficult to trace the details of his influence. His *Principia* made only a beginning.

But in one discoverable respect he still survives wherever electricity is spoken of. Franklin appears to have been the first to use, at least in print in English, these electrical terms: armature, battery, brush, charged, charging, condense, conductor, discharge, electrical fire, electrical shock, electrician, electrified, electrify, electrized, Leyden bottle, minus (negative or negatively), negatively, non-conducting, non-conductor, non-electric, plus (positive or positively), stroke (electric shock), uncharged.³⁵ The Philadelphia Prometheus with his kite was also an American Adam in his electrical garden.