



# A Tune for Benjamin Franklin's Drinking Song "Fair Venus Calls"

Carleton Sprague Smith

THANKS TO A LETTER Benjamin Franklin sent in 1781 to the Abbé de la Roche "at Auteuil," we have the text of a drinking song—"Fair Venus Calls"—which the American Minister wrote in his youth. It was after reading a poem—"Le Bonheur"—by the "Philosophe-Littérateur," Claude-Adrien Helvétius, that the Philadelphian was reminded in 1781 of stanzas "on the same subject, nearly the same plan and many of the same thoughts," which he had composed forty years earlier.

Strange as it may seem, no music scholar has mentioned that the holograph text of the drinking song is in the Yale University Library, and that there is also a collection of "Masonick Musick" published twenty-five years after Franklin's death, with a tune joined to the words of "Fair Venus Calls." This air has a distinct eighteenth-century flavor, and the fact that the text is somewhat modified in all four stanzas suggests that words and tune may have reacted upon one another for a considerable length of time, thus acquiring folksong status. The anthology entitled *The Masonick Minstrel* was the work of David Vinton of Providence, Rhode Island. As editor he was given a free hand and the task must have taken a number of years, for he explains that he "made diligent enquiry in the principal cities of the United States" and "extended his researches throughout the stores of melody . . . from grave to gay, from lively

to severe." Vinton was proud of his own collection (he possessed "a great variety of music"), and his standards were high. Unfortunately, his documentation was casual. Indeed, he was unaware that the verses of "Fair Venus Calls" were by Benjamin Franklin.

## HOLOGRAPH

First a look at the letter in French, containing the English text of the song. It was a very clean copy, save for a spot "which may well be due to some kind of strong spirits."

J'ai parcouru, mon cher Ami, le petit Livre des Poésies de M. Helvétius, dont vous m'avez fait le Cadeau précieux. Le beau Poème sur le Bonheur m'a donné beaucoup de Plaisir; & m'a fait ressouvenir d'une petite Chanson-a-boire, que j'ai fait il-y-a quarante Ans, sur le même Sujet, & qu'avoit à peu près le même Plan, & plusieurs des mêmes pensées. La voici.<sup>1</sup>

### *Singer*

Fair Venus calls, her Voice obey;  
In Beauty's Arms spend Night & Day.  
The Joys of Love all Joys excell.  
And Loving is certainly Living well.

Special thanks are due Israel J. Katz for his stimulating suggestions, scrupulous attention to detail and helpful analysis of the tune.

<sup>1</sup> Franklin was not consistent in his use of accents.



## Chorus

O No!  
Not so!  
For honest Souls know  
Friends and a Bottle still bear the Bell.

## Singer

Then let us get Money, like Bees lay up Honey,  
We'll build us new Hives, and store them well;  
The Sight of our Treasure shall yield us great  
Pleasure,  
We'll count it, & chink it, & jingle it well.

## Chorus

O no!  
Not so!  
For honest Souls know  
Friends and a Bottle still bear the Bell.

## Singer

If this does not fit ye, let's govern the City;  
In Power is Pleasure, no Tongue can tell.  
By crowds tho' you're teased, your Pride shall  
be pleased,  
And this can make Lucifer happy in Hell.

## Chorus

O no!  
Not so!  
For honest Souls know  
Friends and a Bottle still bear the Bell.

## Singer

Then toss off your Glasses, & scorn the dull  
Asses,  
Who missing the Kernel, still gnaw the Shell.  
What's Love, Rule or Riches? Wise Solomon  
teaches  
They're Vanity, Vanity, Vanity still.

## Chorus

That's true,  
He knew;  
He'd try'd them all through,  
Friends and a Bottle still bore the Bell.

C'est un Chanteur que exhorte ses Compagnons de chercher le Bonheur en *Amour*, dans les *Richesses* & dans le *Pouvoir*. Ils repliquent, en choeur, qu'on ne trouve pas le Bonheur en aucunes de ces choses, & qu'on ne peut le trouver que dans les *Amis* & le *Vin*. A la Fin le Chanteur adopte leur Idée. M. Cabanis peut vous expliquer plus particulièrement cette petite Anacreontique. La Phrase, *bear the bell*, signifie en François, remporter le Prix.

J'ai souvent remarqué, en lisant les Livres de M. Helvétius, que, quoique nous fussions nés & élevés dans deux Pais des differents Cotés du Monde, nous nous sommes rencontrés souvent dans les mêmes pensées; & c'est une

Réflexion bien flatteuse pour moi, que nous avons aimé les mêmes Études, les mêmes Amis\*, & la même Femme.

Propos de bonnes & belles Femmes, il faut vous dire, que Madame de la Frété est furieusement en Colere contre vous. Je suis prié de diner chez elle Lundi prochain. Je veux bien vous y mener, & devenir votre Mediateur. Je crois que cette Paix sera plus facile à faire, que celle entre la France et les Pirates d'Angleterre.

A Passy ce Jeudi 29 Mars 81

\*Mess<sup>rs</sup> Voltaire, Hume, Turgot, Marmontel, Le Roy [Jean-Baptiste], Abbé Morellet, de la Roche, &c, &c.

J'ai parcouru, mon cher Ami, le petit Livre de  
Coffin, de M. Rousseau, & me suis en vain  
Cadeau promis. Le bon Poème sur le Bonheur  
m'a donné beaucoup de Plaisir, & m'a fait réflexion  
sur un petit Plaisir-sabbat, que j'ai fait il  
y a quarante Ans, sur le même sujet, & qui avoit  
à peu près le même Plan, & plusieurs de mes  
vers. La voici.

## Singer.

Fair Venus call, her Voice obey;  
Let Beauty's Arms & Night & Day,  
Thy joys of love all joys exceed.  
And being is certainly living well.

## Chorus.

O No!  
No so!  
For honest Souls know  
Friends and a Bottle still bear the Bell.

## Singer.

Then let us get Money, like Bees lay up  
We'll build us new Hives, & store them well.  
The Sight of our Treasure shall yield us great  
We'll count it, & chink it, & jingle it well.

## Chorus.

O No!  
No so!  
For honest Souls know  
Friends and a Bottle still bear the Bell.

If this does not fit ye, let's govern the City;  
In Power is Pleasure, no tongue can tell.  
By crowds tho' you're teased, your Pride shall  
And this can make Lucifer happy in Hell.

## Chorus.

O No!  
No so!  
For honest Souls know  
Friends and a Bottle still bear the Bell.

## Singer.

Then toss off your Glasses, & scorn the dull  
Who missing the Kernel, still gnaw the Shell.  
What's Love, Rule or Riches? Wise Solomon  
They're Vanity, Vanity, Vanity still.



*Chorus.*

That's true  
He knows  
He's a good man all through,  
Friends and a Bottle will love the Best.

C'est un Chateau qui a brulé ses Compagnons  
De chasser le Bonheur en France, dans les Ruis  
de dans le Couron. Et repliqua, en chassant  
qu'on ne brava pas le Bonheur en un verre de vin,  
et qu'on ne le brava que dans le Vin. Et le Vin  
Le Vin le Chateau adjo les braves. Et cela  
peut vous expliquer, plus particulièrement et ce la hôte  
- Invention, de la Bible, de la Bible, de la Bible  
et Français, respecter le Vin.

J'ai souvent remarqué, en lisant le livre de  
M. Helvétius, que, quoique nous passions nos  
jours dans deux Pais très différents, c'est de nous  
nous sommes rencontrés souvent dans les mêmes  
pensées; et c'est une réflexion bien flatteuse pour  
moi, que nous avons aimé les mêmes Deuses, les  
mêmes Amis, et les mêmes Femmes. —

Après de bonnes et belles Femmes, il faut  
vous dire, que Madame de la Frété, est finement  
en cela contre vous. Je suis prêt de vous  
elle lundi prochain. J'espère bien vous y avoir  
et devenir votre Médicament. Je crois que cette  
Paix sera plus facile à faire, que celle entre  
la France et les Pirates d'Angleterre. —

A Copy of June 29, 1791

\* *Supra* Voltaire

- Home
- Turgot
- Mirabeau
- La Fayette
- M. de la Fayette
- J. L. Rochet, & Co.

Franklin took pains to explain how the lead singer urges his bibbing brethren to seek happiness in love, riches, and power, but the chorus rejects such ideas, maintaining that true happiness is found only with friends and a bottle. One gains the impression that unison singing was envisaged, and indeed David Vin-ton places "Fair Venus Calls" in this category:

With regard to those tunes, which are printed without accompaniments, the compiler was of [the] opinion, that they belonged to that description of tunes, to which accompaniments are no auxiliary. Of these tunes there are many instances, especially in Scottish music.

The American diplomat compared himself humorously with M. Helvétius, whose widow presided over a salon in which Franklin was the brightest luminary. The witty envoy confessed that both he and the deceased French encyclopedist prized the same studies, had the same friends, and loved the same woman (Madame Helvétius). An asterisk in the lower left hand corner of the page points to seven important names, the first four being among the most distinguished thinkers of the century.

In the final paragraph the Abbé was warned that Mme. de la Frété was furious with him and Franklin offers to conduct his friend and drinking companion to the lady's house and be his mediator, concluding, "I believe that this Peace will be easier to achieve than that between France and the Pirates of England."

## MASONICK MINSTREL,

A SELECTION OF

MASONICK, SENTIMENTAL, AND HUMOROUS

SONGS, DUETS, GLEES, CANONS, ROUNDS AND CANZONETS

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO THE

MOST ANCIENT AND HONOURABLE FRATERNITY

OF

FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS.

"Oysters' late was drunk with poet's shew;  
Whose golden touch could make sweet and stow,  
Mash tigers' tears, and huge Leviathan  
Forbids unseasoned dregs to dance on earth."

WITH

## AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

A SHORT HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF MASONRY:

AND LIBERIES,

A LIST OF ALL THE LODGES IN THE UNITED STATES.

DEDHAM:

PRINTED BY H. MANN AND CO. FOR THE AUTHOR.

1016.





David Vinton's singing book is an important collection with an unusual amount of information on the title page.

It may seem curious that our editor did not put his name on the initial pages of his ambitious publication. The explanation seems to lie in the fact that the anthology was a Mount Vernon Lodge project, and the task of its most musical member was to make "a selection containing pieces which without, as well as within the pale of Masonry, may occupy a distinguished place and exhilarate the lodge, the parlour, and the social circle." In short, he was first and foremost a music enthusiast contented with the notice: "Copyright granted to David Vinton, of Providence . . . 'Author, Compiler and Proprietor,' October 24, 1815." Like the Biblical Jacob, he had coats of many colors and was known variously as a bookseller, inkmaker, merchant, and music seller. Not being a publisher, and lacking a press with musical type, he assigned the printing to Herman Mann of Dedham, Massachusetts.

#### PREFACE

The Compiler was appointed by Mount Vernon Lodge, in Providence, to procure a certain number of Masonic Song Books, for the use of that Lodge: a book not unlike the following presented itself to his mind, as one which would correspond with the ideas and expectations of the brethren. Under this impression, he made diligent enquiry, in the principal cities of the United States, but nothing like the prototype, figured in his imagination, could be found. He was therefore constrained to choose, whether he would abandon the attempt, execute his appointment imperfectly, or endeavor by his own exertions, to supply the existing deficiency. He preferred the latter. Fortunately, his sources of amusement had already furnished him with a great variety of Musick, and with opportunities of increasing it, to almost any desired degree: this last circumstance exists as well among the pretensions of the work, as among the motives of the author. A statement of those pretensions will not necessarily involve a censure on any other compilation.

Sublime as is the science of Masonry, it cannot be disguised, that from the vast collection of Songs, of which Masonry is the theme, many ought to be rejected, for want of merit either in the poetry, the musick, or the sentiment. The rejection of this number, left a field, in which good taste might expatiate, and twine the fruits of Sentiment with the flowers of Song. The compiler consequently has extended his researches throughout the stores of melody, 'From grave to gay, from lively to severe,' and completed a selection containing pieces, which without, as well as within the pale of Masonry, may oc-

cupy a distinguished place, and exhilarate [sic!] the lodge, the parlour, or the social circle.

But that which must recommend this compilation, in an eminent degree, is, that the tunes, with a few exceptions, are accompanied by one or more harmonick parts, either published originally with the air, or composed expressly for this work, by eminent masters. With regard to those tunes, which are printed without accompaniments, the compiler was of [the] opinion that they belonged to that description of tunes, to which accompaniments are no auxiliary. Of these tunes there are many instances, especially in Scottish musick.

Although this selection consists principally of modern pieces, yet no good song has been rejected on account of its antiquity, for it is the strongest proof of the original merit of such a song, that it continues to please—during the lapse of years.

It was the compiler's object, and he believes he has effected it, to enlarge and deepen the fountain of innocent amusement; to blend wit with sentiment, and excite mirth, without tarnishing the purity of manners.

With this letter of introduction, he now casts his 'MINSTREL' upon the wide world; and indulges a hope, that, like the minstrels of ancient time, it will repay the generous protection of its patrons, by exhilarating the festivities and cheerfulness of every mansion, into which it shall find admission.<sup>2</sup>

A glance at the final paragraphs shows how punctilious Vinton was, and how sincere his desire to give credit where credit was due:

#### GENERAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Compiler presents his grateful acknowledgements to the several GRAND MASTERS, GRAND SECRETARIES, and OFFICERS of the various GRAND LODGES in the UNITED STATES, for their prompt and friendly attention in answering his communications, and in forwarding, agreeably to his wishes, a list of the subordinate Lodges under their respective jurisdictions. At the same moment, he presents his sincere thanks to the MASTERS, OFFICERS, and BRETHREN of the LODGES throughout the United States, Nova Scotia, and in Upper and Lower Canada; who have liberally subscribed for upwards of TWELVE THOUSAND COPIES(!).

It is with peculiar satisfaction he acknowledges the receipt of many valuable communications from his correspondents. For their kind offers to continue subscription papers through the approaching season, and their

<sup>2</sup> Vinton's punctuation and spelling do not always conform to the rules. The Preface has been shortened in several places but nothing essential has been eliminated. Also, certain passages are repeated in the body of the essay. One example of Vinton's idiosyncratic spelling: "exhilarate" in this paragraph, line 4.



good wishes for the success of this publication, he is happy in having it in his power, thus publicly, to acknowledge his gratitude to them, and to every patron of the 'Masonick Minstrel.'

## FRANKLIN AND MASONRY

The musical role of the Masonic Lodges in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is remarkable! Freemasonry had a wide appeal. Voltaire, Franklin, Washington, Haydn, Mozart, Goethe, and Schiller were ardent members. The first lodge to be established in the United States was St. John's in Philadelphia (1730). Franklin became a Freemason in February, 1731, and in June was named Warden; he also drafted the by-laws. Two years later he was made Grand Master of St. John's Lodge. One month previously he had printed *The Constitution*, the first Masonic book published in America. In 1749 he was elected Grand Master of the Province and the next year, Deputy Grand Master.<sup>3</sup> Franklin's commitment was unflagging during these years and he helped in the building of the first Masonic Temple in the Colonies. Later on, in France, he was treated as a special Grand Master (Vénérable) and presided at Masonic meetings when health permitted.

## FRANKLIN'S MUSIC INTERESTS

Was Franklin perhaps the composer of a tune for "Fair Venus Calls"? Oscar Sonneck was skeptical:

I do not know whether Franklin himself or one of our early composers tried to compose this jolly drinking song, or, following the custom of the time, tried to adapt some popular tune to it. I believe the latter, and doubt very much that Franklin ever tried his hand at composition . . .<sup>4</sup>

Sonneck's surmise is an educated guess. However, it ignores Franklin's broad knowledge and interest in music. The pragmatic perfecter of the musical glasses was familiar with the world of composition and performance as well as of folksong. Indeed he

had decided views on the nature of melody and harmony. In the present instance it is unlikely that he would have sought out a composer for his drinking song verses—though he might have fitted them to a well-known tune.

Thanks to *The National Tune Index* of Kate Van Winkle Keller, Carolyn Rabson, and Raoul Camus, we have a thematic listing of approximately fifty-thousand eighteenth-century airs which were known in the Colonies. This has been carefully searched and the melody of the *Masonick Minstrel* is not found in any of the pertinent published or manuscript collections. A contrafact solution is therefore highly improbable.<sup>5</sup>

## FRANKLIN'S LETTER TO HIS BROTHER

The problem of finding suitable tunes for texts is discussed in a letter of 1765 written by the practical printer from London to Peter Franklin:

Dear Brother:

I like your ballad, and think it well adapted for your purpose of discountenancing expensive foppery and encouraging industry and frugality. If you can get it generally sung in your country [Rhode Island], it may probably have a good deal of the effect you hope and expect from it. But as you aimed at making it general, I wonder [sic!] you chose so uncommon a measure in poetry that none of the tunes in common use will suit it. Had you fitted it to an old one, well known, it must have spread much faster than I doubt it will do from the best new tune we can get composed for it in London. I think, too, that if you had given it to some country girl in the heart of Massachusetts, who has never heard any other than psalm tunes or "Chevy Chase," the "Children in the Wood," the "Spanish Lady," and such old, simple ditties, but has naturally a good ear, she might more probably have made a pleasing, popular tune for you than any of our masters here, and more proper to the purpose, which would be answered if every word could, as it is sung, be understood by all that hear it . . . I will, however, get it as well done for you as I can.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *The National Tune Index* is a multi-series microfiche publication of University Microfilms. The first part, *18th-Century Secular Music* (1980), compiled by Kate van Winkle Keller and Carolyn Rabson, contains 35,000 tunes. The second part, compiled by Raoul Camus, covers some 14,000 tunes drawn from early American wind and ceremonial music, 1636-1836.

<sup>6</sup> The letter to Peter Franklin in Newport was first published under the title "Criticism on Musick" in the *Massachusetts Magazine* for July 1790, 97-99. See also Sonneck, *Suum Cuique*, 81.

<sup>3</sup> Julius Friedrich Sachse, *Benjamin Franklin as a Freemason* (Philadelphia: Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, 1906), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Oscar G. Sonneck, "Benjamin Franklin's Musical Side," in *Suum Cuique: Essays in Music* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1916), 59-84, 76.



Looking back at David Vinton's introductory material, it is clear that he combed the field and eliminated a large number of pieces:

From the vast collection of Songs . . . many ought to be rejected, for want of merit either in the poetry, the music or the sentiment.

At the same time he explains:

Although this selection consists principally of modern pieces yet no good song has been rejected on account of its antiquity, for it is the strongest proof of the original merit of such a song, that it continues to please during the lapse of years.

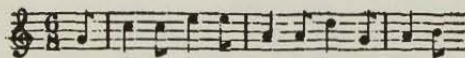
It is to be presumed that any piece coming from the St. John's Lodge would be given careful scrutiny. It might be that a local archivist in Philadelphia for-

warded the words of a drinking song or a text with a tune to Providence, Rhode Island. If so, I am inclined to believe that he would remit a complete piece that had enjoyed some popularity rather than the words of just another bibbing song. Be that as it may, how can one explain the fact that nobody in Philadelphia knew "Fair Venus Calls" was written by Franklin? Probably because the spirit of Masonry stressed the primacy of brotherhood over the individual man. David Vinton may have written tunes and harmonized singable melodies, but he left no details of his role in the *Masonick Minstrel*. Whatever the case, "Fair Venus Calls" appealed to the Providence editor and he gave it a prominent place on page 40, opposite John Hilton's celebrated round, "Come Follow Me," which dates from the early seventeenth century (see Example 1).

## 40

## FAIR VENUS CALLS.

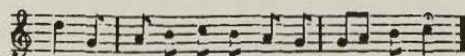
## SONG.



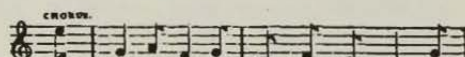
Fair Venus calls, we must obey, In love and



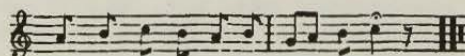
sports spend night and day; The joys of love, all joys ex-



cel, For loving is certainly living well,



Oh, no, not so, all honest souls no, A



friend and a bottle still bear the bell.

If that will not fit ye, we'll govern the city,  
There's pleasure in pride no tongue can tell;  
Though by numbers we're teas'd, yet our pride is well pleas'd,  
And that would make Lucifer happy in hell.  
Oh, no, not so, &c. &c.

Then let us get money, as bees lay up honey,  
We'll build large hives, and store each cell;  
The sight of our treasure, will yield us much pleasure,  
We'll jingle, and jingle it wood'rous well.  
Oh, no, not so, &c. &c.

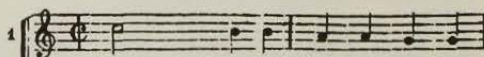
## 41

Then fill up your glasses, and toast those dull asses,  
Who missing the kernel, still know at the shell;  
For love, pride, and riches, wise Solomon teaches,  
Are vanity, vanity, vanity still.

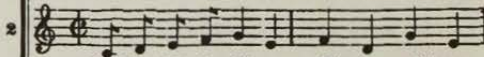
That's true, he knew, for he try'd them all through,  
A friend and a bottle still bear the bell.

## COME FOLLOW.

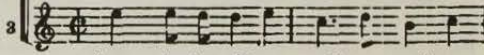
## CATCH.



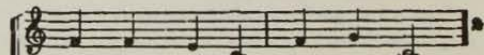
Come, follow, follow, follow,



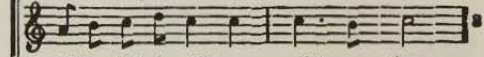
Whither shall I follow, follow, follow,



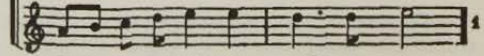
Down by the willow, willow, willow,



follow, follow, follow me:



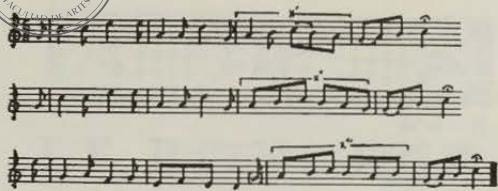
whither shall I follow, follow thee:



down by the willow, willow tree.



THE MASONICK MINSTREL TUNE



Let us now examine the tune and text. As will be seen, the air is distinctly traditional, following the AAB structure common to British, French, and German songs of the eighteenth century, and many were found in ballad operas, *vaudevilles* and *Singspiele*. The tune's formal elements, seen in Example 2, exhibit the time-honored *Barform*; that is, two repeated A phrases (*Stollen*), sung by the solo voice, and a B phrase (the *Abgesang*), rendered by the chorus. It is in the plagal major mode, and comprises an ambitus of a major 9th. All the phrase endings contain the same cadential pattern ('x'), albeit with minor variants. The tune also displays triadic features, particularly in the initial notes of the phrase.

In short, the melody belongs with folksongs rather than "compositions" and is the sort Franklin recommended to his brother Peter: "a pleasing, popular tune . . . proper to the purpose . . . if every word could, as it is sung, be understood by all that hear it."

THE VARIANT TEXTS

It is instructive to compare the wording of Franklin's holograph with the Vinton version (enclosed in brackets), for the latter suggests that the drinking song appealed to a variety of groups—not only Freemasons.

*Singer*

[we must]

Fair Venus calls, her Voice obey

[love and sports]

In Beauty's Arms spend Night & Day

[excel]

The Joys of Love all Joys excell

[For]

And Loving is certainly Living well

*Chorus*

[Oh, no,]

O No!

Not so!

[All] [no]

For honest Souls know

[A friend]

Friends and a Bottle still bear the Bell.

*Singer*

[Franklin's second stanza has been replaced by Vinton's third stanza].

[money][as]

Then let us get Money, like Bees lay up Honey,

[large] [each cell;]

We'll build us new Hives, & store them well;

[treasure, will] [much pleasure,]

The Sight of our Treasure shall yield us great Pleasure,

[jingle, and jingle it wond'rous well.]

We'll count it, & chink it, & jingle it well.

*Chorus*

O no! etc.

*Singer*

[that will] [we'll] [city;]

If this does not fit ye, lets govern the City;

[There's pleasure in pride]

In Power is Pleasure, no Tongue can tell.

[Though by numbers we're teas'd, yet our pride is well pleas'd,]

By Crouds tho' you're teased, your Pride shall be pleased

[that would]

And this can make Lucifer happy in Hell.

*Chorus*

O no! etc.

*Singer*

[fill up] [toast those]

Then toss off your Glasses, & scorn the dull Asses,

[knew at the shell;]

Who missing the Kernel, still gnaw the Shell.

[For love, pride, and riches, wise]

What's Love, Rule or Riches? Wise Solomon teaches

[Are vanity, vanity, vanity]

They're Vanity, Vanity, Vanity still.



## Chorus

That's true,  
 He knew;  
 [For he'd]  
 He 'ad try'd them all through,  
 [A friend] [bear]  
 Friends and a Bottle still bore the Bell.

The first two lines of each opening stanza had different emphases. Line one of the holograph reads:

Fair Venus Calls, her Voice obey  
 In Beauty's Arms spend Night & Day

while the printed version became:

Fair Venus Calls, we must obey  
 In Love and Sports spend Night and Day.

The key word "Sports" introduces a new element: the Hunt. One immediately thinks of the Gloucester Fox Hunting Club of Philadelphia—particularly of Richard Bache, Franklin's son-in-law, who was one of its founders in 1766. Furthermore, Bache was known in musical circles because of his bass voice. In 1781, he sang the part of the High Priest in *America Independent, or The Temple of Minerva*, "An Oratorical Entertainment," by Francis Hopkinson.<sup>7</sup> Bache may well have known "Fair Venus Calls" and members of the Hunt have raised their

<sup>7</sup> *America Independent* was first performed on March 21, 1781, at the home of Chevalier de la Luzerne, French Minister to the Continental Congress, Philadelphia. It was presented again in Philadelphia, on December 11, 1781, at a concert attended by George Washington and his wife commemorating the friendship between America and France. The libretto was published anonymously in the *Freemason's Journal* (Philadelphia, December 19, 1781). John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music*, Third edition (New York: Thomas A. Crowell, 1946), 40, described the work as "an allegorical-political opera or dramatic cantata, consisting of an overture, arias, ensembles, and choruses in praise of the American alliance with France."

The complete story can be found in Gillian P. Anderson, "The Temple of Minerva and Francis Hopkinson: A Reappraisal of America's First Poet-Composer," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 120 (June, 1976), 166-177, and a performing edition, under the title *America Independent*, was prepared and provided with notes by G. P. Anderson, and with harpsichord realization by Lisa and Penelope Crawford (Washington, D.C.: C. T. Wagner, 1978). See also G. P. Anderson, "Samuel the Priest Gave up the Ghost and Temple of Minerva: Two Broad-sides," *Notes* 31 (March, 1975), 493-516.

voices at Hugg's Inn, after a day's run, singing this emended version.

At Auteuil in 1781 the drinking song was rekindled in the mind of Franklin. He and his Paris friends were accustomed to make music together and, thanks to Mme Brillon de Jouy, they not only sang carols but also heard instrumental pieces. Her harpsichord was often moved to the hotel of Mme Helvétius, and Dr. Charles Burney admired her playing.<sup>8</sup> Franklin also performed on his improved musical glasses called the *armonica*. The Abbé Morellet shared the versatile American's love of singing and had a very pleasing voice himself. Other participants would have included William Temple Franklin (his grandfather's secretary), Pierre-Georges Cabanis (progressive young scientist mentioned in the 29 March 1781 letter), and the Abbé de la Roche (a secularized Benedictine, distinguished bibliophile and *bon viveur*).<sup>9</sup> Not to be outdone by the American envoy, Morellet composed a *Chanson à boire* "Hommage à Franklin" to a well-known eighteenth-century tune, "Camarades lampons," which, translated into the vernacular, may be rendered "Boys, bottoms up!"

Our next encounter with "Fair Venus Calls" is in the *Masonick Minstrel*, copyrighted in 1815, and my discovery of the Franklin connection was a piece of

<sup>8</sup> In 1769 Luigi Boccherini's Opus 5 was published as *Sei Sonate di Cembalo e Violino obbligato, Dedicate a Madama Brillon de Jouy*. See Yves Gérard, *Thematic, Bibliographical and Critical Catalogue of the Works of Luigi Boccherini* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), nos. 25-30. See also Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy* (London, 1771).

<sup>9</sup> Several of the participants who lived at Passy have left accounts of their meetings with the American envoy: William Temple Franklin, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, Second edition (London: H. Colburn, 1818; 3 vols.), esp. Vol. I, 309-311; André Morellet, *Mémoires inédits* (Paris: Baudouin, 1823; 2 vols.), esp. Vol. I, 296-298; Gilbert Chinard, "Abbé Lefebvre de la Roche's Recollections of Benjamin Franklin," *American Philosophical Society Proceedings*, xciv, No. 3 (Philadelphia, 1950), 214-221; and Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis, *Oeuvres philosophiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1956; 2 vols.), II, 342-344.

Although its title is somewhat misleading, Claude-Anne Lopez's *Mon cher Papa Franklin and the Ladies of Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966) is written with great sensitivity and a complete mastery of the subject. The "Académie d'Auteuil" enabled Franklin to enjoy music, brilliant conversation, news of the day, and ideas of the century—all in most congenial surroundings.



good fortune. Richard J. Wolfe's *Secular Music in America (1801-1825)* (New York, 1964) lists *The Masonick Minstrel* (no. 9493) and notes correctly that "Fair Venus Calls" is found on pages 40-41, but he was unaware of its relationship to the youthful Philadelphia Freemason.

CLAUDE-ADRIEN HELVÉTIUS AND  
HIS POEM "LE BONHEUR"

Claude-Adrien Helvétius (1715-1771) died in his prime at fifty-six. A Farmer General, a philosophical Hedonist, an active participant in the *Grande Encyclopédie*, a thoughtful writer on education, a Masonic Leader, he was also a respected poet and a magnetic talker whose ideas fascinated a wide variety of persons. His was the dominant voice in the *Lodge of the Nine Sisters*, and Voltaire became the successor of his apron. Helvétius's *De l'Esprit* (intended as a rival to Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*) was published in the *Encyclopédie* in July 1758. The reaction was electrifying. Denounced as a résumé of the false doctrine of the Encyclopaedists that included physical sensualism, the book was consigned to the flames.

"Le Bonheur" was republished several times after the author's death, occasionally with a false imprint. The edition presented to Franklin by the Abbé de la Roche reads "Londres, 1781," though the Hague was the real place of publication. While never finished, "Le Bonheur" appealed to readers partly because the six completed "chants" were concerned with one of the most popular subjects of the eighteenth century: "the Pursuit of Happiness."<sup>10</sup> The "Arguments" of the individual sections treat such subjects as love, riches, and study. However, there is nothing of the drinking spirit in the work. Nor can the verses be sung to any everyday tune. Let literary historians ponder this fact. The sample page shown here will make clear the character of "Le Bonheur."

<sup>10</sup>See Claude Adrien Helvétius, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: M<sup>me</sup> V<sup>e</sup> Lepetit: 1818-1819; 3 vols.), Vol. 1, 309-311; Victor Cousin, *Philosophie sensualiste au dix-huitième siècle*, Fifth edition (Paris: Didier, 1866); Albert Keim, *Helvétius, sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1907); and Ian Cumming, *Helvétius: His Life and Place in the History of Educational Thought* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1955).



LE BONHEUR,  
POÈME.

CHANT VI.

ARGUMENT.

*Le progrès des connoissances peut seul faire le Bonheur général & particulier. Les Rois instruits verront que le plaisir de faire du bien est le seul plaisir réel que donnent les grandeurs. Les hommes éclairés & bien gouvernés se rendront heureux en contribuant au Bonheur des autres. Mais le monde est encore loin de cet état. Sous le joug de l'oppression des Rois & des Prêtres, le Sage doit jouir des Arts, du plaisir d'aimer, & de celui d'éclairer les hommes autant qu'il lui est possible. Fable d'Oromaze & d'Ariman.*

COMPAGNE des Vertus, sublime Vérité,  
Qu'instruit par tes leçons, guidé par ta clarté,  
L'Homme apprenne de toi que c'est le plaisir  
même,  
L'âme de l'Univers, le don d'un Dieu suprême,

Chant VI

Le progrès des connoissances peut seul faire le Bonheur général & particulier. . . . Les hommes éclairés & bien gouvernés se rendront heureux en contribuant au Bonheur des autres. Mais le monde est encore loin de cet état. Sous le joug de l'oppression des Rois & des Prêtres, le Sage doit jouir des Arts, du plaisir d'aimer, & de celui d'éclairer les hommes autant qu'il lui est possible.

The advancement of knowledge can only result in [both] general and personal happiness. Enlightened and well disciplined individuals rejoice in contributing to the happiness of others. But the world is still far from that condition [of happiness]. Under the yoke of kings' and priests' oppression, the wise person must find his pleasure in the arts, in loving, and in doing as much as possible to enlighten his fellow beings.