

others," he explained, "we should be glad of an Opportunity to serve others by any Invention of ours, and this we should do freely and generously." He went on to publish a detailed sketch of his invention in 1744. Franklin, who dedicated his retirement years to appearing as a generous-minded gentleman, could afford such largess, but a London artisan who, as Franklin later learned, patented the stove and made "a little Fortune by it" abused his generosity. This episode he concluded in his autobiography, was "not the only Instance of Patents taken out for my Inventions by others . . . which I never contented, as having no Desire of profiting by Patents my self, and hating Disputes."<sup>8</sup>

Like many eighteenth-century intellectuals, Franklin did not draw a clear distinction between science and technology. Proud of the practical applications of his discoveries, he saw technology as a derivative of science. Just as the international exchange among scientists advanced science everywhere, so would the dissemination of technological know-how encourage mechanical improvements in every nation. "The rapid progress true Science now makes," he wrote in 1780, "occasions my regretting sometimes that I was born so soon." He fantasized about a future when technological advances would free man from gravity and cure all illnesses, and when agriculture would demand less labor and double its productivity. National and geographical boundaries played no role in this vision. Science through technology was the medium through which Franklin expected universal social and moral improvement.<sup>9</sup>

Franklin could afford to declare: "I have no private Interest in the Reception of my Inventions by the World, having never made nor proposed to make the least Profit by any of them." After all, by the time he was forty-two years old he was rich enough to retire and devote himself to political and intellectual pursuits. Yet Franklin recognized that most inventors were not in his position and that in order to encourage innovation, societies ought to reward individual

## PROFILE of the Chimney and FIRE-PLACE.

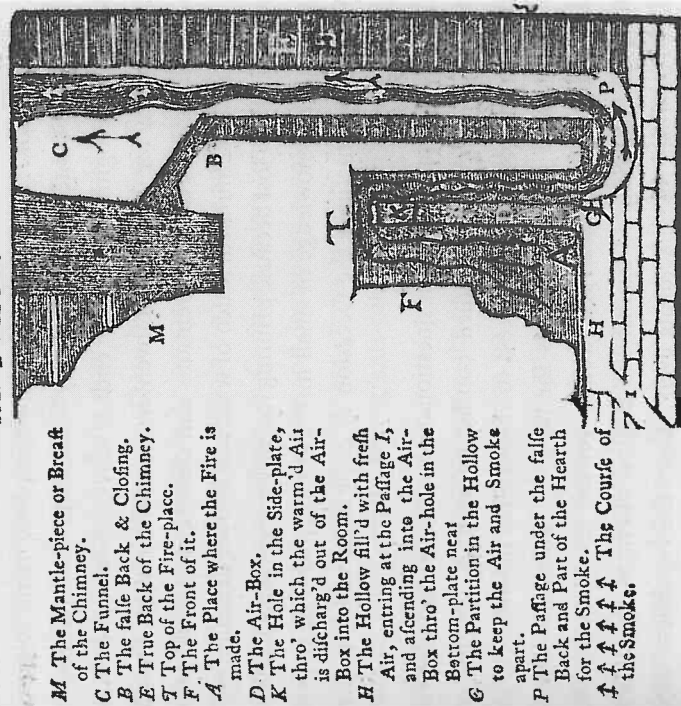


FIGURE 2. Franklin's stove diagram, 1744. The publication of the diagram manifested Franklin's commitment to sharing his inventions with the public rather than profiting from establishing an ownership claim over them. Reproduced from Benjamin Franklin, *An Account of the new-invented Pennsylvania fire-places* (Philadelphia 1744). Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia.

inventors. Widespread access to mechanical improvements, then, must not come at the expense of appropriate compensation for the inventor. He bemoaned the plight of inventors who met much scorn and doubt when they published the products of their genius. "There are everywhere a number of people," he explained, "who being totally destitute of inventive faculty themselves, do not readily conceive