BEN FRANKLIN AND THE KITE

Those of you who live in towns have seen the streets lighted by electricity. But in Ben Franklin's time there were no such lights. People knew very little about this strange thing called electricity.

But Franklin found out many things about it that nobody had ever known before. He began to think that the little sparks he got from electricity were small flashes of lightning. He thought that the little cracking sound of these sparks was a kind of baby thunder.

So he thought that he would try to catch a little bit of lightning. Perhaps he could put it into one of the special little bottles used to hold electricity. Then if it behaved like electricity, he would know what it was. But catching lightning is not easy. Now don’t try this yourself, but how do you think he did it?

First he made a kite, and it was no ordinary kite. He wanted a

kite that would fly when it rained because rain would spoil a paper kite in a minute. So Franklin used a silk handkerchief to cover his kite, instead of paper.

He put a little sharp-pointed wire at the top of his kite. This was a kind of lightning rod to draw the lightning into the kite. His kite string was a common hemp string. To this he tied a key, because lightning will follow metal. The end of the string that he held in his hand was a silk ribbon, which was tied to the hemp string of the kite, since electricity will not follow silk.

One night when there was a storm coming, he went out with his son. They stood under a cow shed, and he sent his kite up into the air.

After a while he held his knuckle to the key. A tiny spark flashed between the key and his knuckle. It was a little flash of lightning.

Then he took his little bottle fixed to hold electricity and filled it

with the electricity that came from the key. He carried home a bottle of lightning so that he could find out what made it thunder and lighten.

After that he used to bring the lightning into his house on rods and wires. He made the lightning ring bells and do many other strange things, and today we use electricity for many, many things.