

## 29. STORIES OF FRANKLIN

ONE MAN was to have a great share in the last French and Indian War, although he was no soldier. This man was Franklin, and as he is one of the greatest men in our history, it will surely interest you to hear a little about him. Born in a poor family in Boston, the lad was named Benjamin, probably because he was his father's twelfth child.

With so many brothers and sisters older than himself, Benjamin was not spoiled. As they were all very poor, he was often obliged, small as he was, to help his father make soap and dip tallow candles, a work he greatly disliked. But as there had been free schools in New England from the very beginning, Benjamin learned to read out of the New England Primer when only a tiny boy.

Franklin's father was too poor to let him go on with his studies, so at twelve Franklin became apprentice to an older brother, the printer of the fourth newspaper issued in our country. Here Franklin learned to set type and to handle the rude press then in use. He also began to write, and as he did not want his brother to know it, he disguised his handwriting, and slipped his contributions under the shop door at night.

These articles, written by a boy of fourteen, proved so able that the brother read them aloud to his friends, who greatly praised them, little suspecting that they were written by the apprentice setting type in the corner. But Benjamin's elder brother proved so unkind to him that the boy left Boston at seventeen, and, embarking upon a coasting vessel, went to New York, where he vainly sought employment.

There he heard that work was to be had in Philadelphia, then the largest city in our country. Finding employment in Philadelphia, Franklin worked hard, studying as much as he could after hours. Every book he could buy or borrow was eagerly read, and he paid small sums to booksellers for the loan of their volumes overnight, sitting up late and rising early so as to get all he could out of them. Franklin loved books so dearly that he soon learned a great deal about foreign countries. He longed to visit them, and therefore gladly welcomed a proposal to go to England and buy a printing press.

As the governor of Pennsylvania promised to supply the necessary funds, Franklin set out; but upon landing in England he found that the governor had deceived him, and that there was no money to be had. Alone in a foreign land, without means or friends, Franklin again sought employment, and worked for an English printer during the next few years. By dint of hard work and great economy, he managed to save money enough to bring him back to Philadelphia, at the age of twenty.

Then, after working as clerk and printer for a while, Franklin set up in business for himself, and married. Besides printing a newspaper—for which he wrote the articles, set the type, handled the press, and even carted the paper to his shop in a wheelbarrow—Franklin soon began to publish a pamphlet called "Poor Richard's Almanac."

It contained not only the usual information about sunrise and sunset, the moon, tide, and

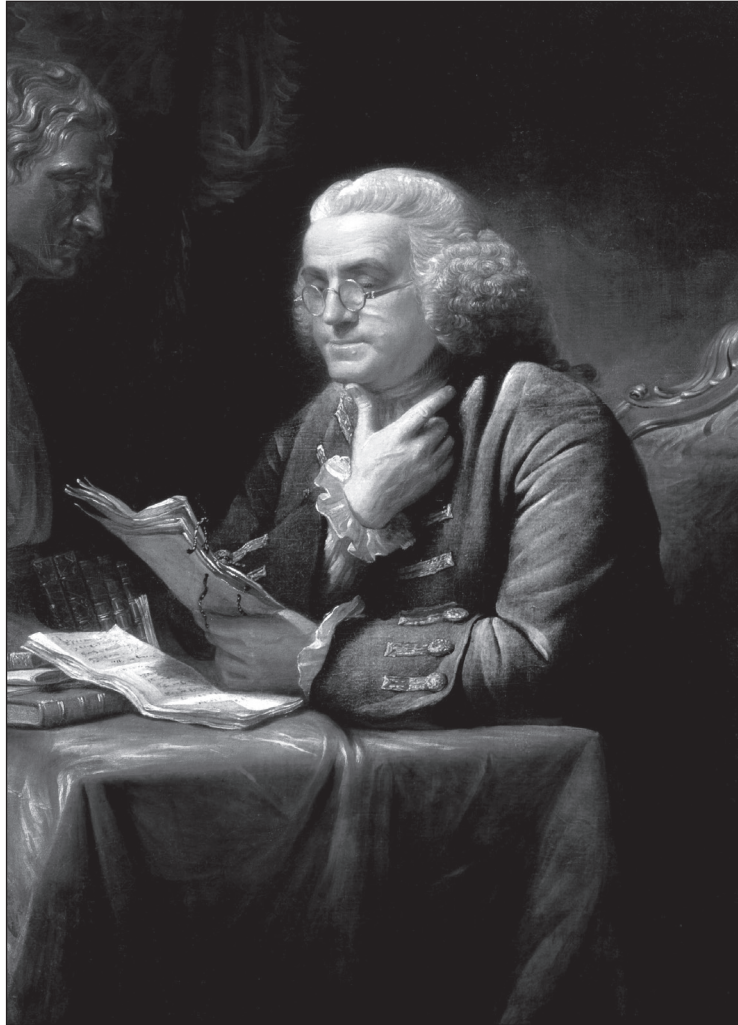
## *The Story of the Thirteen Colonies*

weather, but many short sayings, full of good advice. They were so easily remembered, and so often quoted, that some of them have become household sayings. A few are: "No gains without pains." "Never leave that till to-morrow which you can do today." "Time is money." "Keep conscience clear, then never fear."

You might think that Franklin was busy enough with all this work; still, he managed to learn a great deal besides French, German, Spanish, and Italian, which he studied alone and at night. He founded the first public library in Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania, and the first fire brigade, the first insurance company, and the first hospital in the city. Besides that, he invented the first good stove, advised paving the streets, and was constantly in political office from the time he was thirty until he died, at the age of eighty-four.

Franklin was so interested in sciences that he studied them closely; and in 1752, after thinking the matter over a long while, he decided that lightning must be the same thing as the electricity produced by rubbing

a cat's fur. He therefore determined to bring lightning down from the clouds, to find out whether he was right. After many experiments, he built a kite, fastened a sharp point to it, and flew it one stormy day. He had taken all his measures so carefully that he thus really drew down some electric sparks from the sky.



*Benjamin Franklin*

As Franklin was a very practical man, he immediately made use of this knowledge to invent lightning rods for protecting churches and houses from thunderbolts. His discovery, ridiculed at first, soon became known abroad, and thus Franklin was the first American who won a European reputation.

Franklin's kite-flying paved the way for all the wonderful discoveries since made in electricity, many of which he then foretold, although people thought he was only joking. Indeed, we are told he even demonstrated the deadly effect of a live wire by killing a turkey on the other side of the river! When his discoveries became known in Europe, they created a great sensation, and the "Franklin experiments" were for a while all the fashion.

### 30. BRADDOCK'S DEFEAT

IN 1754, Franklin, deputy postmaster-general of the colonies, was sent to Albany, where, as we have already seen, a congress of delegates from the colonies met to discuss the best way of opposing the French. Franklin, knowing that it was only by working all together that the best results could be reached, now made a plan for the union of the colonies. He illustrated his point with snake cut into pieces, representing the colonies. Under this picture he wrote the motto: "Join or die."

Although the colonies did not adopt Franklin's plan of union, they nevertheless voted men and money for the war. The British, on their part, sent over General Braddock, one of their best officers, to take charge of the campaign. Meeting the governors of the different colonies in Virginia, Braddock decided that, while one army marched north from Albany to take Forts Ticonderoga and Crown Point before going on to Quebec, a second should move westward from the same point to Lake Ontario and Niagara.

In the meantime, a fleet was to sail from New England to join the first army in besieging Quebec. But the fourth and principal expedition, led by Braddock himself, was to march across Pennsylvania to Fort Duquesne, so as to drive the French out of the coveted Ohio valley. This plan was very fine; but Braddock, used to the European way of fighting, little knew how to carry on war with the French and natives in the pathless forests.

Washington knew it would be best to advance rapidly and surprise Fort Duquesne;

but the army moved slowly until, at about eight miles from the fort, it was suddenly attacked by the French and natives. The British soldiers, clad in red and marching in close ranks, made fine targets for their enemies, who, as usual, hid behind every tree and rock, whence they poured a deadly fire upon them. Braddock bravely rallied his men again and again; but not knowing how to fight unseen foes, they were helplessly slain. The general himself was mortally wounded and had to order a retreat.

In the midst of this horrible scene, Washington and his Virginian soldiers alone kept cool. Four bullets passed through Washington's coat, and two horses were killed under him, for they aimed specially at him. But all their bullets failed, and they afterwards said with awe that he surely bore a charmed life, and that no shot could ever touch him.

Nearly all the officers were killed, but Washington managed to cover the retreat of the British, and their wounded general was picked up and borne off the battlefield of the Monongahela.

The army marching westward from Albany had, in the meantime, paused discouraged at Oswego, while the one moving northward beat the French on the shores of a lake, which they called George, in honor of the victory won for their king (1755). The French officer Dieskau was captured there.



This Constitution provided that the lawmaking part of the government should be carried on by a new Congress, consisting of two houses. One was to be called the House of Representatives. The men forming it were to be elected by the people, who at first had a representative for every thirty thousand inhabitants, though they now have only one for about six times as many people. But it was then agreed that as there were many slaves in the South who could not vote, the Southerners should consider five slaves equal to three white men in taking the census, or counting the population. At the same time, to please the men of the South, the North agreed that Congress should not forbid the importing of slaves until 1808.

The other house of Congress was called the Senate, where each state, large or small, was to send two members, called senators.

After a new law had been talked over and voted for in both houses, it was to be sent to the President for him to sign. If the President did not wish to sign the law he was not obliged to do so, and if he vetoed it—that is, if he said, “I forbid it”—the law was to be sent back to Congress. There it was to be talked over again, the votes of the houses taken once more, and if, on counting, it was found that two thirds of each house still thought the law was best for the country, it was to be put in force without the President’s consent.

As Congress thus had the right to make the laws, it was to be called the lawmaking, or legislative, part of the government. Now you know it is not enough to make laws: you must have somebody to see that they are obeyed, or to execute them. The Constitution said that this part of the work was to be done by

another part of the government, to be called the executive.

Several persons cannot well give orders at once, so it was thought best that one man should be the executive. This man was to be called the President. He was to be chosen every four years by electors, each state having as many electors as it had senators and representatives in Congress. The duty of the President was to see that the laws made by Congress were properly carried out, and to call out the soldiers in case of war. A Vice President was also to be chosen in the same way as the President. His duty was to be head or president of the Senate, and to take the President’s place if the latter died.

The makers of the Constitution knew that there would surely be disputes between states, which ordinary state courts could not settle; so they further decided that there should be a third part to the government. This was to be the judiciary, or justice-dealing part, composed of judges chosen by the President. These United States judges were to form a Supreme Court, where all such cases could be tried, and they were also to settle all disputes concerning the laws of the nation.

Each state was still to govern itself in home matters, but treaties with other countries, questions of trade, war, etc., were to be settled by the United States government. Thus, you see, it had the right to coin money, keep the post office, tax the people, and see that the nation was ruled in the very best way.

The Constitution thus made did not quite suit everybody; but most of the members of the Constitutional Convention felt like Washington, who once said that it was the

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best Constitution which could be obtained at that epoch; and all knew that unless it was accepted the thirteen states would fall apart. That, you see, would have been very bad; for while they could hold their own when they were united, they were too small and weak to stand alone.

James Madison had taken a large share in all this work. He had made many speeches, taken notes, tried to coax the members to agree, and had labored so hard to suit everybody that he is generally called the "Father of the Constitution." This important paper, the "title deed of American liberty," begins with the words: "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

The Constitution having been drawn up, read, and signed by the members of the convention, it was sent to the Continental Congress at New York, which forwarded copies to each state. It was provided that when nine or more states approved of it, the new Constitution should go into effect for those states.

The disputes had been so bitter in the Constitutional Convention that it had often seemed as if no agreement would ever be reached. So when Franklin came forward to sign the Constitution, he quaintly said, pointing to the back of Washington's chair, upon which was carved a sun: "In the vicissitudes [changes] of hope and fear, I was not able to tell whether it was rising or

setting. Now I know that it is the rising sun." Franklin was right. The sun was rising for our dear country, and we hope it will go on growing brighter and brighter for many a year yet to come.

All the delegates present, except three, signed the Constitution, which was accepted by Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, and Maryland just as it stood. Massachusetts, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, and New York accepted it, but at the same time proposed a few additions called "amendments." Thus, in August, 1788, all the states had adopted it except Rhode Island and North Carolina, which, however, joined the Union soon after.

When so many states agreed to the Constitution, there were great rejoicings everywhere. Bonfires, illuminations, and processions were seen in all large cities, and many fine speeches were made. In one procession there was a big float, representing the Constitution as the "Ship of State." It rested upon a platform where Alexander Hamilton's name was written in huge letters, for he too had a great share in making it, and in persuading the people of his state to accept it.

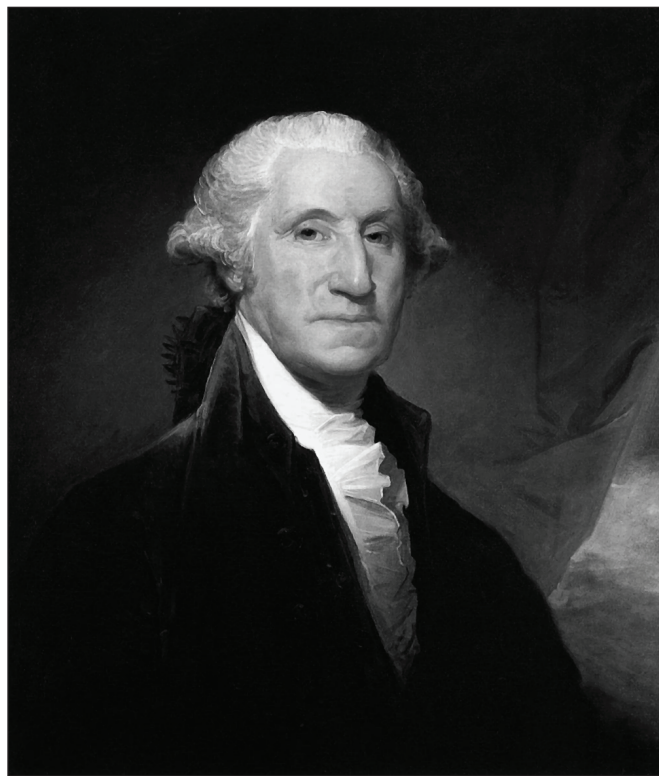
## 49. THE FIRST PRESIDENT

THE NEW CONSTITUTION having been accepted by enough states, the Continental Congress decided that its rule should end, and the new Constitution go into force, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, 1789. Having arranged for the beginning of the new government, the Continental Congress, after ruling our country nearly fifteen years, ceased to exist.

As had been decided, the electors chosen by each state met in February to vote for our first President. Each man wrote Washington's name at the top of his ballot, and thus the "Father of his Country" was chosen first President of the United States of America. Now, it had been settled in the Constitution that the man who received the next largest number of votes should be Vice President. But while all were agreed that Washington was the best man in the country, and voted for him, the second name was not the same on every paper. Still, when the votes were sent to Congress and counted, it was found that John Adams had received more than anyone else, and he became our first Vice President.

Owing to the slow means of travel, Congress had assembled on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, instead of on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, as had first been planned; and Washington's inauguration did not take place till the 30<sup>th</sup> of April. The inauguration took place on the balcony of Federal Hall in New York before the admiring American people.

Laying his hand upon a Bible, which has been carefully preserved, he then publicly took this oath: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President



*George Washington*

of the United States, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

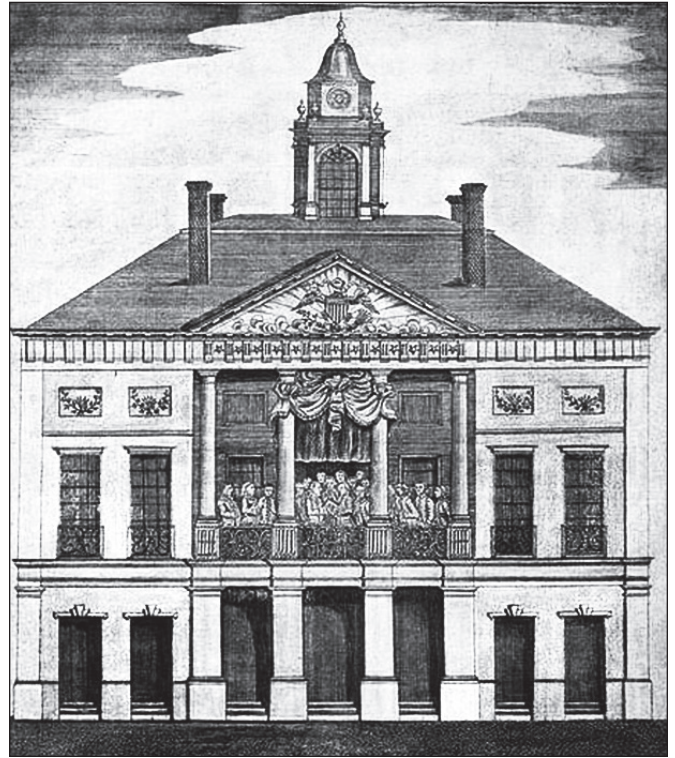
Washington, who was addressed as "Mr. President," chose Jefferson, Hamilton, Knox, and Randolph to help him govern, and they formed what is now called the Cabinet. He also selected judges, making John Jay the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and sent ministers to the principal countries in Europe.

Congress was very busy for several years, for the money affairs of the United States were in a bad condition. Some of the members said that our country would never be able to pay all the money it owed. But it was finally decided that not only the debts of the Continental Congress should be paid,

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but also the state war debts. This was a large sum, amounting to about seventy-five million dollars; but Congress promised to pay it, saying it would be as dishonest for a country to refuse to pay every penny owed, as for a private person to do so. Congress also put a tariff upon goods brought from abroad; arranged, in obedience to the Constitution, that a census should be taken every ten years; and decided that the United States should have a national bank, and a mint to coin the money used in the country.

Hamilton had a great deal to do with arranging money matters; and he suggested that instead of using the English money table, we should adopt the dollar as the unit of money. This unit was then divided into hundredth parts, or cents, coins which were first used by our government in 1793. In fact, Hamilton's ideas proved so good that the great orator Webster once said in speaking of him: "He touched the dead corpse of public credit, and it sprang upon its feet."



*Federal Hall, New York*