

**POOR RICHARD'S
ALMANACK**

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Poor Richard's almanack by Benjamin Franklin

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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ALMANACK *by*
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Selections from the apothegms and
proverbs, with a brief sketch
of the life of Benjamin
Franklin.

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LIFE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Opposite historic Old South Church in Boston, on January 6, 1706, was born Benjamin Franklin.

Benjamin was the fifteenth child of Josiah Franklin, whose occupation was that of tallow-chandler or candle-maker. Business was not prosperous, and the Franklin family was reared in very humble circumstances.

As a child, Benjamin hungered for books and knowledge. During the two years that his father was able to send him to school, he showed remarkable aptitude and industry, and rapidly outdistanced his fellow pupils.

The first book which Franklin read was Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress". By trading and borrowing, he managed to secure other volumes. His passion for reading was so intense that he attracted the attention of a kind-hearted Boston merchant, who gave the boy access to his well-stocked library. Franklin read only books which could add to his education, and read them with a thoroughness that extracted every bit of useful knowledge.

After leaving school, Franklin was apprenticed to his brother James in the

printing trade. His wage was very small and he had to live most frugally.

James started a newspaper, and Benjamin set type and distributed the sheets. One day, he anonymously contributed some verses and apothegms and was overjoyed to find them accepted and published.

When his brother discovered that he was the contributor, an altercation broke out between the two, due principally to the ill temper of James. The quarrel was finally the cause of Benjamin's leaving Boston and going to Philadelphia.

In Philadelphia, Franklin obtained work with Keimer, a printer. His lodgings were found at the house of Mr. Read, with whose pretty daughter, Deborah, he promptly fell in love. Mrs. Read, however, counselled the two to postpone the marriage until Franklin should earn sufficient to maintain his own household. He was but eighteen years old at this time.

Sir William Keith, governor of the province of Pennsylvania, became acquainted with Franklin and offered to set him up in the printing business. Franklin, of course, accepted. At Keith's suggestion, he sailed to England to purchase an up-to-date outfit. Arrived there, he found that Keith was without credit. His

beautiful plans went for naught and he was stranded in England without funds or prospects. It took him several years to work his way back to America.

When he returned, the first news to greet Franklin was the marriage of Deborah Read to another man.

At 22 years of age, Franklin had not made much progress toward the goal of his ambition. But nothing daunted, he applied himself with greater industry, greater self-sacrifice and greater perseverance. He kept plugging away at his trade of printer, and entered into business ventures with other men, all of which proved rapid failures. Finally, he struck out for himself. Coincidentally, Deborah Read's husband died and Franklin took her to wife.

The young couple had to live on close margin for a few years. When Franklin was 27 years of age, he evolved the idea which opened the road to fame and fortune. This was Poor Richard's Almanack. The first number had a tremendous sale. His homely, trite, common-sense sayings achieved wide popularity and each succeeding issue found more subscribers than its predecessor. The general recognition and respect gained for Franklin through the Almanack gave him the

opportunity to enter public life. This sphere of activity was greatly to his liking. He held important offices and introduced many splendid reforms into the municipal government.

Franklin's pet project was an efficient institution of learning. When he was 37 years old, his plans materialized into the founding of an academy from which has grown the great University of Pennsylvania.

The scientists of Europe were at this time becoming aware of a mysterious force which they named electricity. Muschenbroeck, a German, came forth with the discovery of the Leyden jar. Franklin immediately devoted himself to a study of electricity. The subject proved to interesting, so full of possibilities that he sold out his printing business in order to devote his entire effort to the new field. His business, started on nothing, brought the handsome price of \$90,000.

When Franklin declared his belief that electricity and lightning were identical, the whole world laughed. He then made his famous kite test, and proved his theory. This demonstration gained world recognition for him as a scientist and won him many honors.

The colonies were now passing through the turbulent period preceding

the Revolutionary War. Franklin was a foremost figure in public life, and became the commissioner of the colonies to England.

The first cause for provocation on the part of the colonies was the Stamp Act, which imposed an enormous tax on deeds, college degrees and printed matter. England sought to meet the expenses of the French-Indian war by this tax. Franklin's efficient representation and effective pleading secured its repeal in 1766.

However, one year later, Parliament enacted a more obnoxious bill, placing a heavy duty on tea, glass and other commodities. Then it was that certain indignant citizens of Boston held their Boston Tea Party and brought upon the heads of the community the ill-considered, hateful Boston Port Bill. The city was virtually put in a state of seizure by the British under General Gage.

This final action precipitated the crisis, and the Revolutionary War was on. Gage made his disastrous march to Concord and Lexington, and Bunker Hill ended in a triumph for American pluck.

Although in favor of settling the dispute by arbitration, Franklin was as zealous a patriot as any. He was a member of the first Continental Congress, and

helped frame the Declaration of Independence. Later he went to Paris as special envoy to France for the colonies. He was received with great acclamation and was accorded many honors. His mission of enlisting France's aid in the struggle was completely successful. Helped by the money of France and by the valor of such men as Lafayette, the Revolution triumphed.

After an absence from America of nine years, Franklin returned. He was given a royal reception. Although 77 years old now, he still gave his country the best that was in him, until his death on April 17, 1790. At his burial 20,000 persons gathered to do him respect and honor.

Franklin's life has been called the most interesting and the most successful lived by any American. And the explanation is found in the rule that guided him throughout his career: To go straight forward in doing what appears to be right, leaving the consequences to Providence.