

## Becoming an American

By A. C. STRANGE, Oregon State Director of Americanization Schools.

[This article which is the sixth in a series of letters written by A. C. Strange, former Superintendent of City Schools in Astoria, Oregon, and published under the title "Becoming an American", are particularly written for the benefit of those who are seeking citizenship and studying for naturalization. The letters which began in January were published monthly until May, when insertion was discontinued for the three summer months of June, July and August. With the beginning of the school year and the opening of classes for adults, the concluding articles of this series, which will run for the balance of the year, will be of greater value to those who are preparing themselves for naturalization. Mr. Strange who recently accepted the appointment of State Director of Americanization Schools in Oregon will from now on give his entire time and attention to the problems of the thousands of aliens in this state who are seeking citizenship and necessarily need the training which must precede their naturalization. These letters may primarily be for those who seek the technical knowledge of our government and our institutions, but they should also furnish interesting and beneficial reading to a great many people, men and women, foreign-born and native-born citizens who have forgotten much of the essentials in citizenship since they became "old enough to vote" or were naturalized, oh, so many years ago. Follow the series from now on till its conclusion and if you are interested in the preceding articles, subscribe for back-numbers until the supply has been exhausted. —Editor.]

### VI.

#### THE EXECUTING OF THE LAWS

**I**N THIS letter I shall write about carrying into effect of the laws. In my last letter I said that there are three distinct functions of government,—the law-making, the law-executing and the law-explaining and justice-enforcing departments. Furthermore, I stated that of these the law-making is the most difficult responsibility.

It is not enough, however, to make laws. They must be put into execution. Ordinarily when a law is passed, if the machinery for its execution is not already in existence, money will be set aside and officers provided to put it into effect. The officers who make up this machine are the executive officers. Highest of all is the president, but in addition there are thousands of others, such as cabinet officers, state governors, state secretaries and attorney generals, county judges, clerks and auditors and members of numerous commissions. All of these operate parts of the great machine of government. Upon the faithfulness and thoroughness with which they do their work depends the economy and efficiency with which the machine works.

Let us consider for a little while the head of the machine, our president. His term of office is four years and he can be reelected as many times as the people are willing to reelect him. In the Constitutional Convention there was considerable difference of opinion about the length of his term of office and the manner of his election. Many members of the Convention were very fearful that the government might grow into a monarchy, a type of government which they distrusted. Hence they were unwilling to consent to the long term urged by the few advocates of a strong central government. We must remember that there were two lines of cleavage in the Convention. One party strongly desired a strong central executive power, the other strong state governments merely confederated or allied together, the central government to be more largely advisory than executive. To settle this difference of

opinion it was finally agreed that the term should be only four years and that the number of times the president could be reelected should not be mentioned. The great patriot and military leader, George Washington, became the first president. He was reelected for a second term but declined a third, thus setting a precedent of two terms only for the president, which has always been followed.

There was also much difference of opinion about the manner of electing a president. There were a few delegates who favored the direct election method, but most of the delegates believed the plan impracticable because of the difficulty of communication among the states at the time making it almost impossible for the voters to learn or know much about the candidates and because the large, thickly settled states would be able to elect whom they pleased. So another compromise plan was adopted. This provided for an electoral college or convention to which there should come from each state as many electors or delegates as the state had representatives and senators. In this convention a president and a vice-president should be chosen. The plan, however, did not work out as well as the makers of our Constitution thought it would. Hence the electoral college has grown into a mere device for counting the popular vote and for giving the smaller states a little advantage because of their equal representation in the senate.

Presidents at first were nominated by little groups of party leaders. This placed too much power in the hands of the few so about one hundred years ago there was devised the Convention plan. By this plan each party holds a convention to nominate president and vice-president. These conventions are held usually in June or July of election year, the election is held the following November and the newly elected president and vice-president take their seats the following March the fourth.

If the president dies, the vice-president succeeds him in the office, and if he die the members of the Cabinet in a certain order are in the line of succession.

If the president is guilty of some serious misdemeanor, such as treason or bribery, he may be impeached or charged with the crime by the House of Representatives. The Senate then becomes a court presided over by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, to try him. If he is found guilty by a two-thirds vote, he is removed from office. One president, Andrew Jackson, was impeached but he was acquitted in the trial which followed.

The president is in many respects the most powerful ruler in the world, in that his powers are not only executive but also, to some extent, legislative and judicial.

As the head executive, it is his business to put the laws into effect. In this capacity he directs the work of his departments, he appoints to office many important officials and he issues many important regulations.

He shares in the law-making power in that he may call Congress together in special session, may make recommendations to them and may approve or veto bills passed by Congress.

His judicial power lies in the fact that he is allowed

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