When the Federal Convention met at Philadelphia in May 1787 to frame the present constitution, Washington was present as a delegate from Virginia,

though much against his will; and a unanimous vote at once made him the presiding officer.

Naturally, therefore, he did not participate in debate; and he seems to have spoken but once, and then to favor an amendment reducing from 40,000 to 30,000 the minimum population required as a basis of representation in the House. The mere suggestion, coming from him, was sufficient, and the change was at once agreed to.

He approved the constitution which was decided upon, believing, as he said, that it was the best constitution which could be obtained at that epoch, and that this or a dissolution awaits our choice, and is the only alternative.

As president of the convention he signed the constitution, and kept the papers of the convention until the adoption of the new government, when they were deposited in the Department of State.

All his vast influence was given to secure the ratification of the new instrument, and his influence was probably decisive. When enough states had ratified to assure the success of the new government, and the time came to elect a president, there was no hesitation. The office of president had been cut to fit the measure of