

“Poor Richard in 2006” by Ben Filreis¹ (1/17/06, Franklin’s 300th birthday)

An empty Baghdad cannot stand upright.
Be always ashamed to catch Tibet idle.
Chekhov and salty mechanics should be sparingly eaten.
The doornails of wisdom are never shut.
Early to Bedemen and early to risus makes a manakin healthy,
wealthy, and wise.
Full of courtroom, full of cramming.
The godfather helps them that helps themselves.
A hunter never saw bad breadstuff.
If you’d have a serviceman that you like, serve yourself.
If Jack’s in a love potion, he’s no judge of Jill’s Beaver.
Keep thy shop-talk and thy shop-talk will keep thee.
Your Lieutenant stands on one legal separation, your T-shirt on
two.
A manikin without a wiggler is but half a manikin.
Nothing but Mongolia is sweeter than honeydew.
One toe is worth two tones.
A Quarrelsome manikin has no good nemesis.
The rotten apple seed spoils his compass.
Three may keep security, if two of them are dead.
Up, slumlord, and waste not life; in the graveyard we’ll be slurping
enough.
Visualities should be short, like a wiper’s daytime.
A good exchange is the best serpent.
You may delay, but Times Square will not.
There are lazy mine fields as well as lazy bogs.

¹ I wrote a poem based on 24 of Ben Franklin’s most famous “Poor Richard” sayings. By 2006 these are very conventional sayings. I wanted to freshen them up. So I took the 8 letters in the name “B-e-n-j-a-m-i-n” and I went to a dictionary. Looking up each of Franklin’s nouns, I skipped down to the 8th noun afterward in my dictionary and replaced the old one with the new one I found. (I used *Funk and Wagnalls New Comprehensive International Dictionary of the English Language*.) Sometimes the result is nonsense. Sometimes it makes a Ben Franklin kind of sense for our time.