

Prefatory Note

This volume comprises the papers of Benjamin Harrison and of Grover Cleveland (second term). The events of these two Administrations of eight years, though highly interesting, coming as they do down to March 4, 1897, are so recent and fresh in the public mind that I need not comment on them.

This volume is the last of the series, except the Appendix and Index volume. The work of compiling was begun by me in April, 1895, just after the expiration of the Fifty-third Congress. I then anticipated that I could complete the work easily within a year. Though I have given my entire time to the undertaking when not engaged in my official duties as a Representative, instead of completing it within the time mentioned it has occupied me for nearly four years. The labor has been far greater than the Joint Committee on Printing or I supposed it would be. I had no idea of the difficulties to overcome in obtaining the Presidential papers, especially the proclamations and Executive orders. In the Prefatory Note to Volume I, I said: "I have sought to bring together in the several volumes of the series all Presidential proclamations, addresses, messages, and communications to Congress excepting those nominating persons to office and those which simply transmit treaties, and reports of heads of Departments which contain no recommendation from the Executive." But after the appearance of Volume I, and while preparing the contents of Volume II, I became convinced that I had made a mistake and that the work to be exhaustive should comprise every message of the Presidents transmitting reports of heads of Departments and other communications, no matter how brief or unintelligible the papers were in themselves, and that to make them intelligible I should insert editorial footnotes explaining them. Having acted upon the other idea in making up Volume I and a portion of Volume II, quite a number of such brief papers were intentionally omitted. Being convinced that all the papers of the Executives should be inserted, the plan was modified accordingly, and the endeavor was thereafter made to publish all of them. 36

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Messages and Papers of the Presidents

In order, however, that the compilation may be "accurate and exhaustive," I have gone back and collected all the papers—those which should have appeared in Volumes I and II, as well as such as were unintentionally omitted from the succeeding volumes—excepting those simply making nominations, and shall publish them in an appendix in the last volume. While this may occasion some little annoyance to the reader who seeks such papers in chronological order, yet, inasmuch as they all appear at their proper places in the alphabetical Index, it is not believed that any serious inconvenience will result.

The editor and compiler has resorted to every possible avenue and has spared no effort to procure all public Presidential papers from the beginning of the Government to March 4, 1897. He has looked out for every reference to the work in the public prints, has endeavored to read all the criticisms made because of omissions, and has availed himself of all the papers to which his attention has been called by anyone; has diligently and earnestly sought for same himself, and has, as stated above, inserted all omitted papers in the Appendix, so that he feels warranted in saying that if he has given to the country all he could find and all any critic or reviewer has been able to find he has done his whole duty and reasonable complaint can not be made if any paper is still omitted. In view of the inaccessibility of many of the messages by reason of their not having been entered on the journals of either House of Congress, and of the fact that the Government itself does not possess many of the proclamations and Executive orders, it may be that there yet can be found a few papers omitted from this work; but with much confidence, amounting to a positive conviction, I feel that assurance may be safely given that only a few, if any at all, have been overlooked.

Congress in June, 1897, by law requested me to prepare an index to the entire compilation. I am now and have been for over two years engaged in this work. I hope to be able to give the last volume, which will include the Appendix and Index, as above stated, to Congress and the public in about two months. It would have been completed at this time but for the fact that in addition to making the Index simply an index to the various messages and other papers I have added to it the encyclopedic feature. There will therefore be found in the Index, in alphabetical order, a large number of encyclopedic definitions of words and phrases used by the Chief Executives, and of other politico-historical subjects. It is believed that this feature will not detract in any manner from the Index, but, on the other hand, will add largely to its value and to the value of the entire compilation.

JAMES D. RICHARDSON.

NOVEMBER 24, 1898.