

Prefatory Note

In compliance with the authorization of the Joint Committee on Printing, I have undertaken this compilation.

The messages of the several Presidents of the United States—annual, veto, and special—are among the most interesting, instructive, and valuable contributions to the public literature of our Republic. They discuss from the loftiest standpoint nearly all the great questions of national policy and many subjects of minor interest which have engaged the attention of the people from the beginning of our history, and so constitute important and often vital links in their progressive development. The proclamations, also, contain matter and sentiment no less elevating, interesting, and important. They inspire to the highest and most exalted degree the patriotic fervor and love of country in the hearts of the people.

It is believed that legislators and other public men, students of our national history, and many others will hail with satisfaction the compilation and publication of these messages and proclamations in such compact form as will render them easily accessible and of ready reference. The work can not fail to be exceedingly convenient and useful to all who have occasion to consult these documents. The Government has never heretofore authorized a like publication.

In executing the commission with which I have been charged 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. The utmost effort has been made to render the compilation accurate and exhaustive.

Although not required by the terms of the resolution authorizing the compilation, it has been deemed wise and wholly consistent with its purpose to incorporate in the first volume authentic copies of the Declaration

of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution of the United States, together with steel engravings of the Capitol, the Executive Mansion, and of the historical painting the "Signing of the Declaration of Independence." Steel portraits of the Presidents will be inserted each in its appropriate place.

The compilation has not been brought even to its present stage without much labor and close application, and the end is far from view; but if it shall prove satisfactory to Congress and the country, I will feel compensated for my time and effort.

JAMES D. RICHARDSON.

WASHINGTON, D. C.,

February 22, 1896.