

Introductory Note

Three documents are fundamental in the history of the United States and are destined to be, if they are not already, fundamental in the world's development. These documents are the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Articles of Confederation (1781), and the Constitution of the United States (1789). In view of their importance, it may seem strange—but it is nevertheless a fact—that it is hard to find them within the compass of a single volume, unencumbered with extraneous matter. They are therefore brought together and printed in convenient form without note or annotation, although a few words have been prefixed by way of introduction, kept, however, separate and distinct from the text of these immortal documents.

There are three impelling reasons which justify and require their republication at this time.

International peace is only desirable and can only be permanent if it be based upon justice. To effect this, the conception of the State as possessing unlimited power must be rejected in favor of the conception of the State as the agent of the people creating it, subjecting it to law and to the law of its creation—a conception which has never been put in clearer, more concise, and more revolutionary form than in the Declaration of Independence of the United States. It is upon this kind of a State that we must build, and the society of nations must be composed of nations subjected to law, if the principles of justice controlling the conduct of men are to control the actions of nations.

The Articles of Confederation of the United States furnish an example of a league of independent States associated for limited and specified purposes. The union formed by the Articles was a diplomatic not a constitutional union, and it is therefore of interest and of value to those who would form a league of States of a diplomatic character. Again, the Articles are of importance because they provided in their ninth article a method of settling disputes between States by means