

Chapter on Peace Conference: or Peace Conference Lecture Chapter

Two things I emphasized, two things which had disturbed the efforts of the Peace Conference for me high above all of the turmoil and disputes which had so distressed me, the compromises which had awakened so many fears. The first of these lay in the covenant itself, the article which gave the least the right to despise a treaty when it became inapplicable. I found that to many people this was news. They had looked on the treaty, as the makers unquestionably wished them to look, as something unbreakable, not to be corrected. I felt too strongly that no human instrument will ever stand that does not carry with it the opportunity for its own correction. As this I emphasized.

And then there was the idea behind it all, the idea of world unionism. I suppose it was the emphasis that Lincoln had always put on unionism, that had made it as it certainly was for him, a shocking idea which capped all others. Whitman said when brooding over Lincoln's devotion to the union, "It is a new kind of virtue with him." And so it had come with me.