

The Papers of James Madison. Volume III: 3 March 1781–31 December 1781. Edited by W. T. HUTCHINSON and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963. xxvi, 381 p. Illustrations, index. \$10.00.)

The latest volume of the Madison papers maintains the same high standard of scholarly editing which prevailed in the first two. But the substance of this volume raises sharply once more the question whether this kind of exhaustive collecting and printing of every scrap of paper by one of the Founding Fathers is really worth the immense effort and cost.

The volume covers the months of March through December, 1781. While during that year the fortunes of the embryonic American Revolutionary nation rose from a very low point to victory at Yorktown, it cannot be seriously maintained that young James Madison, in the Congress at Philadelphia, played a part of any consequence. Much of the bulk of the book, in fact, consists of official correspondence between the Virginia congressional delegation and the Virginia governor and of notes and scraps of the proceedings of the Congress itself. Almost none of these papers are Madisonian in any significant sense. He signs communications, along with other congressmen, or a paper is found to be in his hand. But there is no stamp of his mind, nor could any claim be made that he was directing or even influencing policy. Again, a considerable portion of the book is made up of

weekly letters from Edmund Pendleton to Madison relating the week's war news from Virginia. Most of Madison's half of this correspondence is lost. Pendleton was an eminent lawyer and an admirable patriot, but he was no reporter and his letters have little interest for any but specialists. There are some letters from Jefferson, as governor, to the Virginia congressmen, but these are official business transactions whose interest died within weeks or even days of their composition, and they are, in any case, already reprinted in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*.

What is most disappointing about this installment is that it contains almost nothing to show the growth of Madison's mind. The editors, as in previous volumes, endeavor to make something of importance out of Madison's contributions to the discussion of the western lands. But the documents do not support the notion that Madison was either an authority on the subject or gave it any creative thought.

Since almost no personal letters survive, it is impossible to discover from this book what Madison was thinking about when he let his fine, already well-disciplined young mind play upon the ideas then current, or, for that matter, upon anything other than the details of government routine. One phrase, "republican jealousy," which occurs in a letter to Pendleton about efforts to give the Congress more power over the states, is suggestive. Madison felt, as did all of his colleagues, the frustration that inevitably arose from trying to govern without the power to do it. While he believed in a maximum of states' rights and local sovereignty, he sees that there may be in the insistence of the states upon their prerogatives a tendency to diminishing returns. "Republican jealousy" may be, he suggests, a kind of false virtue behind which the states may fail in the common effort to build a nation. One would like to think that there is here a forecast of Madison's vigorous and original thinking about republicanism as it is found in *Federalist X*. But candor requires the admission that such a forecast would be a strained construction.

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