

BOOK REVIEWS

THE PAPERS OF JAMES MADISON. Volume I, 1751-1779; Volume II, 1780-1781. Edited by William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1962. xlii, 345; xix, 345 pp. \$10.00 per Volume.

Following in general the great example set in the new edition of Jefferson, the editors of *The Papers of James Madison* have improved on the format and legibility of the earlier work. Two complaints are voiced frequently if faintly against the Jefferson edition: 1) that its footnotes are in such small type that they are often painful reading, and 2) that the reservation of the identification of correspondents and persons mentioned for a final volume of a work clearly many years from completion leaves the present reader groping and unsatisfied. The Madison papers have employed a larger and clearer type in the footnotes, and the editors have identified quite fully correspondents and persons mentioned. The result is a pleasantly readable text of letters and documents to and from our fourth President, including a number of official and semi-official pieces.

As carefully as Julian P. Boyd in his *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, editors Hutchinson and Rachal here have outlined at the outset (pp. xxxiii-xxxix) their standards of selection and method in presenting the documents. They also trace the rather complicated history of Madison's literary remains, with the attendant problems accentuated by the author's own attitude toward his writing.

Volume I contains a great deal to interest the student of literary as well as general American culture. Madison's training under the Scot, Robertson, and his youthful reading are illustrated in the contents of his earliest commonplace books. His notes on the *Memoirs* of the Cardinal de Retz, Montaigne's *Essays*, and the Abbé du Bos's *Critical Reflections* on painting and poetry, and his selections of poetry from the *American Magazine* and of essays from the *Spectator* indicate his early interest in generalizations about social and individual conduct and an interest in literary style as strong as that of his friend Benjamin Franklin.

The reminders of his stay at Princeton are equally indicative of the books and men who went into the forming of his mind. President Witherspoon, H. H. Brackenridge, William Bradford, Philip Freneau, and Samuel Stanhope Smith, his teachers and fellow-students, discussed aesthetic, religious, and social ideas and ideals with him. With Bracken-

ridge and Freneau he indulged in collegiate doggerel—satire on political subjects—and Madison's is by far the worst of the three so far as versification goes. But, as the editors point out, the frequent charge that he was an overly serious and sober student in these college days is hereby refuted.

Indicated here already is the lifelong Madison appetite for books—almost as keen as the Jefferson voracity. Madison asks his Philadelphia friend Bradford for news of books from London. Several times he records this interest, and makes clear that he wants belles-lettres as well as philosophical, political, and legal works. One must read the last, he feels, for every gentleman is obligated to have “a tolerable acquaintance” with the laws and constitution of his country.

Madison's taste in the early years was quite clearly in wit and poetry combined with philosophy. Gradually he turned more and more to politics and political theory, though he never lost his interest in his earliest intellectual delights.

These records of the years before 1782 depict him as a working and directing member of county, state, and national committees and legislatures. It was experience in these he would combine with his wide reading to produce the great essays of *The Federalist*, and to prepare himself to argue cogently and compromise effectively in the great debates on the Constitution. It was experience and training quite usual for the Virginia gentleman. To this training and experience Madison brought unusual abilities.

One may be disappointed that so much of the material in these first two volumes is *to* rather than *by* or *from* Madison, but in such proportion do the papers survive. One quibble on editing: the title of *Reverend* before a proper name is certainly preferably preceded by the definite article. It never so appears here. But clarifying headnotes, most informative and not garrulous footnotes, and careful textual presentation combine to make this on the whole one of the most thoroughly satisfying of the editions of major statesmen-authors now in progress. The example will be most useful to the editors of belletristic authors now getting their projects under way.

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