

The Papers of James Madison, vol. 8, 10 March 1784–28 March 1786, edited by Robert A. Rutland and William M. E. Rachal. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973. xxviii, 560 pp. \$20.00.)

As editorial projects proliferate, an increasing amount of skepticism has been voiced in learned journals about the wisdom of tying up scholarly resources in such ventures. Cost is the most oft-mentioned objection. There is no gainsaying the fact that printed editions are more expensive than microfilm versions; *The Papers of Henry Laurens* are a case in point. Applying funds for microfilm projects exclusively, it has been argued, would increase significantly the number of sources available. Objections have frequently been registered about editorial method. *The Papers of Henry Clay*, for example, has been faulted for lack of annotation, while it has been alleged that the editorial apparatus is swallowing *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*. It has been noted also that projects drag on interminably; almost without exception the editorial time necessary to publish a collection has been seriously underestimated.

The Papers of James Madison have had their share of difficulties. In preparation since October 1956, the first fruits of the effort appeared in 1962. Now, eleven years later, the eighth volume is being published. What was to have been a twenty-two-volume undertaking will probably finish with at least forty to forty-five volumes. (Volume eight ends in March 1786, and Madison's most important contributions and fifty years of his life remain to be covered.) It is anyone's guess how costly the project will be and how many years will elapse until completion. Meanwhile, sharp criticisms have been directed at earlier volumes: charges were made that the editors (then William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal) were being excessively pedantic in identifying irrelevant data and often seemed incapable of distinguishing the trivial from the significant.

Volume eight, however, is the work of a new editorial team. Most notably, Robert A. Rutland (who edited *The Papers of George Mason*) has joined William Rachal in the new Charlottesville, Virginia, headquarters of the Madison enterprise. Although Rutland's role in producing the latest volume is not clear, certain differences are evident. Volume eight covers two years, whereas volume six spanned only four months and volume seven covered ten months. Of course, much material was pre-

sented in volumes six and seven, but volume eight contains even more; in this reviewer's opinion, the reason is that the editors have instituted changes designed to speed up publication of *The Papers of James Madison*. For example, they have curtailed earlier zeal for annotation; events and people are explained in relatively brief compass compared to the extensive annotation found in previous volumes. Editorial notes contain helpful information but do not overwhelm documents, as happened before. Important material is treated as such and is not neglected in favor of less significant items. Finally, the editors now place manuscript identification details at the end of each document instead of at the beginning as done heretofore. Thus users will find a competently edited, but less cluttered, work with more content than previous volumes.

Over 250 documents are presented, one-fifth being acts, resolutions, and vouchers; the remaining four-fifths are letters to and from Madison. Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe were Madison's most frequent correspondents, but there are letters to and from George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, William Grayson, Edmund Randolph, George Mason, John Francis Mercer, and others. These men were interested in a variety of topics: relief for the impoverished polemicist Tom Paine, Anglo-American relations (debt collection by Britain, compensation for slaves lost during the Revolution), Lafayette in America, land speculation, trade with China, separation of church and state, navigation of the Mississippi, Virginia politics, and government under the Articles of Confederation.

Madison emerges from these pages as a dedicated, tireless politico who worked closely with other members of the Virginia dynasty. Using some of the letters from volume eight, one could build a case that Madison was a quasi-human, methodical scrivener. Yet there are other letters that indicate that the Virginian was a normal mortal. Writing to Jefferson, for example, he vented his dislike of Lafayette; he was convinced that the Frenchman was a vain and foppish glory seeker. Many years later, embarrassed by his youthful indiscretion, Madison tried to alter those passages relating to Lafayette. In exposing Madison's attempt to rewrite history, the editors unwittingly buttress the case for letterpress editions because few microfilm readers either will or could compare extant difficult-to-read texts.

Volume eight demonstrates that a change in editorial personnel can be successfully accomplished. Let us hope that future volumes will appear soon and will be as well edited as volume eight.

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