

THE PAPERS OF JAMES MADISON. Edited by William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal. Volume I, 1751-1779. xlii, 344 pp., Volume II, 1780-1781. xix, 344 pp. The University of Chicago Press, 1962. \$10.00 each volume.

THE PAPERS OF JOHN C. CALHOUN. Edited by Robert L. Meriwether. Volume I, 1801-1817. xlii, 469 pp. University of South Carolina Press, 1959. \$10.00.

THE PAPERS OF HENRY CLAY. Edited by James F. Hopkins. Volume I, 1797-1814. xv, 1037 pp. University of Kentucky Press, 1959. \$15.00.

AMERICANISTS are familiar with the collection of Franklin papers and with the Jefferson and Adams projects which are in process. Not as widely known, perhaps, are the recent opening volumes of the collected papers of James Madison, John C. Calhoun and Henry Clay. Their respective editors envision Madison's papers running to twenty volumes, the Calhoun papers to fifteen and the Clay papers to ten.

Each of the illustrious political figures was active during whole half-centuries of time. Madison's life connects the end of the colonial period with the early national period. His prominence at the Constitutional Convention is well known, as is his presidency. Until recent years,

¹³ Miller, p. 156.

however, Madison has stood in the shadow of his fellow agrarian Jefferson who was, in addition, our pre-eminent political philosopher. Madison outlived Jefferson by ten years, and it was after his death that his notes on the Constitutional Convention were published. These are now a standard source of information for the deliberations of that body.

John Caldwell Calhoun was of the succeeding generation. His career coincides with the early industrial growth of the country and then with its developing sectionalism. There were two Calhouns. The first was the young nationalist, vintage 1812, who hoped that industry would take root in the South. The second was the mature sectionalist-nullifier who saw that South Carolina and the South generally were destined to be agrarian.

Henry Clay was of Calhoun's generation and, indeed, was almost his precise contemporary as well as rival. Both were War Hawks in 1812, both were politically ambitious, although Clay doubtless more so. Clay, however, remained essentially a nationalist, if one with strong western sympathies. Although he desired the Presidency perhaps as much as any man who ever lived, he never achieved it owing to the unpredictable nature of mid-nineteenth-century politics. When he could have won he was not nominated. When he was nominated his attractive personality was not sufficient to carry him to the White House against such an issue as the annexation of Texas, on which he took a belated stand. He would probably have made a better president than most of his contemporaries, some of whom achieved the supreme prize. However that may be, his contribution to American political history is nevertheless momentous through the compromises which he engineered at crisis moments: the Compromise of 1820 permitting Missouri's entrance as a slave state and establishing the historic line of 36°30'; the compromise tariff of 1833 which permitted South Carolina to climb down from its threat of nullification; the Compromise of 1850 which probably postponed the War for Southern Independence.

The editor of the Madison papers informs us that his project will include "all extant writings of Madison which appear to have been wholly or in large degree the product of his mind." A few insignificant items, however, which do not reflect his thought will be omitted. Speeches of Madison recorded by someone who heard him will be included. "Included also are letters and other papers, addressed to him and known to have received his careful attention." In short, the editor proposes to reproduce any document of at least modest significance with which Madison was personally involved as author or recipient.

The first volume contains items from 1751 through 1779 beginning with the record of his birth and baptism and continuing through a variety of documents, mostly letters. The second volume presents items from only

two years, 1780 and 1781, when Madison is about thirty years old. The reason for the slower pace of volume two is that Madison takes his seat in the Continental Congress in March 1780, and his mind begins to be preoccupied with political matters. For example, he serves as a member of the Board of Admiralty and co-sponsors resolutions dealing with western lands. Both of these activities produce a spate of documents. It would seem that from now on the profusion of documents is going to be such that only a few years can be covered in each volume.

Robert L. Meriwether, the now deceased editor of the Calhoun papers, planned the Calhoun series with a two-fold purpose: to reproduce the most important of Calhoun's letters, reports and speeches, and to provide a Calendar of unprinted papers, appended to each volume, which would serve as a guide to the comprehensive Calhoun Collection of the South Caroliniana Library. Hence this series will print the most important Calhoun documents and will, in the Calendar, summarize and list others.

Here in the first volume of the series we have nothing reprinted from his life until his nineteenth year in 1801. Then only a handful of documents per year are included until we come to 1812 where we find items dealing mostly with the War of 1812. In fact, the bulk of the volume deals with events falling between 1812 and 1817—the war and such problems as the United States Bank and internal improvements.

The Papers of Henry Clay will offer Clay's incoming and outgoing correspondence, his business papers, his legislative proposals and committee reports, his diplomatic papers and his reported speeches and notes of speeches. Many formal documents will be summarized, but many routine matters will be omitted, as will be Clay's court work. Unfortunately, as it seems to this reviewer, the Clay volume offers no table of contents, as do the Madison and Calhoun volumes. The researcher, therefore, will have no foreknowledge of what each volume will contain and will have to proceed by year. Each page of the volume is dated, but the researcher will have to know the chronology of Clay's life if he expects to use the book expeditiously. Nor does this project apparently intend to provide a chronology to correspond to the items printed in each volume as do the Madison and Calhoun projects. This first Clay volume contains documents dating from 1797 to 1814.

Collections of documents are likely to be dull reading unless the items are selected with a view to intrinsic interest. Comprehensive collections such as these are probably doomed to be regarded as intellectual catalogues. They will not be read by anybody. They will, however, be consulted because they will be basic and invaluable source material for the scholar in American Studies, particularly in political history. As these

volumes come to life it will become increasingly necessary for the specialist to consult them with reference to the political history of the first half of the nineteenth century.

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