

JAMES MADISON. *The Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 4: 1 January 1782–31 July 1782. Edited by William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal, with the assistance of Jean Schneider and Robert L. Scribner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. \$12.50.

In any multi-volume edition of a statesman's works, not every volume can be brimming with matters of the utmost importance. Here we find Madison, the Virginia delegate, busy in the Continental Congress while he awaited news from Europe that the surrender of Cornwallis had persuaded England to acknowledge defeat. The Congress was in the midst of a three-year debate on the disposition of western lands, and Madison was torn between his concern for the national interest and his loyalty to Virginia's claims north and west of the Ohio. Madison's calm leadership was to be crucial in establishing federal title to the Old Northwest.

As this fourth volume appears, we now can see a pattern of extremely heavy footnoting which another observer has termed "monumentally trifling." In many instances the space devoted to the footnotes far exceeds that required for the text of the document. The trained scholar may say: "Give me the documents, carefully collated and transcribed, and don't bother me with footnotes." But no historical editor can, or should, predict the nature of his reading audience or the competence of his readers to make successful use of the documents without judicious annotation. Even the editor attempting to hold his footnotes to a minimum must identify persons and places, deal with

variant passages, and in general make the documents usable to one and all. Generally he feels he has a mandate to go somewhat further. Surrounded by hundreds of supporting references, which he has assembled in his work, and saturated with a knowledge of his subject, which has taken years to acquire, the editor worth his salt will consider himself derelict if he does not pass on some of his insights to the reader. If he is an energetic scholar, excited about his project, he will find it well-nigh impossible to resist the urge.

Where should he stop, short of "total annotation"? The needs of the publisher or sponsoring agency weigh heavily: can the hundreds of extra hours of research be justified when, as in the case of the Madison papers, more than fifty volumes are projected, and only four have been issued since publication began in 1962?

Personally, this reviewer welcomes every footnote—even the tedious ones. The reading of footnotes is not compulsory, and the reader may adjust his use of such aids to his own needs. Let the reader who feels that he is paying extra for all these notes realize that the difference between modest and more substantial annotation, in terms of the retail price of a volume, is far less than he might suppose.

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University of Illinois Press