

Book Reviews

The Papers of James Madison, Volumes 1-2. Edited by William T. Hutchinson and William M. E. Rachal. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962. Vol. 1: *16 March—16 December 1779*. Pp. xlii, 343. Vol. 2: *20 March 1780—23 February 1781*. Pp. xix, 343. Illustrations, notes, indexes. \$10.00 per volume.)

These two volumes constitute the first installment of the colossal effort at publishing a complete, scholarly edition of the papers of James Madison. The effort involves the collaboration of a number of individuals, libraries, universities, historical organizations, and foundations. The editors are attempting to print in chronological order every paper of any significance that they can find that is probably in whole or in part the product of Madison's mind whether written by him or quoted from him and summarized by someone else. Also included are papers submitted to him that presumably received his careful attention.

In the first volume the editors give a description of their methods; a history of movements of the papers; an account of previous efforts at publishing selections, including the efforts of Madison at selecting, arranging, correcting, and discarding; and a table of contents listing in chronological order each paper. In this volume appear few papers that in themselves are too important. There are some notes that Madison had taken from his reading of treatises; some thirty letters that passed between him and William Bradford, son of the famous publisher, during the period between his graduation from New Jersey College and his service in the Virginia Revolutionary convention; his amendment to the Virginia Bill of Rights concerning religious liberty; and some thirty warrants and orders signed by Madison and other members of the Virginia Council of State while he was a member of that body in 1778-1779. The earlier letters between Madison and Bradford discuss the whereabouts of their former college classmates and their own uncertainties about choosing a vocation. But by 1773 Madison becomes excited over religious persecution of dissenters in his state and associates church establishment with oppression and loss of liberty in general. By 1774 the letters are filled with support of resistance to Britain.

The second volume is composed almost entirely of papers originating while Madison was one of the Virginia delegates to the Continental Congress during the last year of its existence. He was a member of some twenty of that body's committees and chairman of a few important ones. He with others signed the reports of these committees and offered motions in their behalf to Congress. Some of these reports and motions can be identified as being primarily of his authorship. He with other members of Virginia's delegation signed reports to the governor and to the general assembly of that state. He drafted the instructions to John Jay and to Henry Laurens, the ministers who assisted Franklin and Adams in negotiating the preliminary Treaty of Peace with England.

The value of the papers may be divided into at least two classes. Some of the papers are such that by themselves they give the historian the answer to an important question. Such are the documents revealing the evidence of Madison's devotion to religious liberty; the evidence of his attitude on the cession of Virginia's western lands; and the evidence of his defense, in his instructions to Jay, of claiming the West up to the Mississippi and the freedom of navigation on that stream. The other value of the papers comes from reading all the documents in succession. The reader will then be impressed through the repetition of the statements of certain facts in all kinds of documents by all kinds of writers. Lack of swift and accurate communication is revealed in these documents. In the midst of Revolutionary struggle no one seemed to know accurately what was going on. Again and again rumors of military engagements, movements of armies and fleets were followed weeks later by reports that the rumors were unfounded. There was repeated mention of jealousy by one state of another, of suspicion by Americans of the motives of their allies, of rivalry between factions in Congress and in states, and of mistrust of political leaders. The reader will be impressed by the repeated references to the economic anarchy and the confusion caused by the currency. He will be amused at the lack of organization in forwarding supplies and raising recruits and then probably puzzled that no one mentions the possibility of quitting.

The editorial work has gone about as far or high as such a thing could go. The net has been spread far and wide to drag in everything written by or to Madison that can be uncovered at this time. The footnotes at the end of each item, on the average, occupy as much space in the book as the original document itself and in most cases contain many times as much information. The footnotes attempt adequately to identify every proper name, explain words and statements that might not be understood by the general reader, state the difference of views on controversial questions, and cite in bibliographical completeness the authorities for the contributions in the footnotes. The volume includes maps of Virginia giving rivers, counties, and places for the period of Madison's life. There are portraits of pertinent personalities. The index is complete and usable with cross-references that make it almost impossible to fail to find quickly anything in the writings or footnotes that is there. It is to be hoped that this work will be carried to its completion on the level on which it has been begun.

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