

The Papers of James Madison. Volume III: 3 March 1781—31 December 1781.
Edited by WILLIAM T. HUTCHINSON and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. Chicago: The
University of Chicago Press, 1963. xxv, 381 pp. \$10.00.

THIS volume covers the period March to December 1781, deals with an important part of Madison's service in the Confederation Congress, and, indeed, marks distinct progress in his influence and leadership in that body. He had already been recognized for his broad scholarship in matters of government, his speeches being studded with solid fact and logic rather than eloquence. The year began with gloom in military affairs, especially in the South where Cornwallis roamed about almost at will but was lightened in the fall by the triumph of Yorktown. Madison represented a state which for a time had little aid from the northward, saw its towns and plantations ravaged, and its credit and currency nearly worthless beyond its own borders. In that atmosphere he labored on the varied problems that confronted the Congress. Old ones remained while new ones constantly called for solution. Usually, there was more debate than action and sectional cleavages often paralyzed action, at times a single state defeating the will of all others. In this atmosphere, Madison grappled with the varied problems that cried for answer. Finances had to be brought under some sort of unified control; the naval establishment had to be organized; the problems of supply of the Army were perennial and its quotas had to be met; the claims of the states to the Northwest Territory had to be resolved; the people of what is now Vermont had to be thwarted in their movement for independence; our ministers had to be instructed in their negotiations with foreign powers; and declarations of policy on important questions of policy had to be fought out and formulated. The only bond that loosely cemented the states was fear of a common enemy, and Madison labored in an atmosphere of disunion, which doubtless led him at this period to become more of a nationalist, a position which would change a few years later.

When the letters and documents contained in this volume are analyzed, one sees how much material has been lost and how one-sided are individual contributions among Madison's correspondents. There are a number of letters to and from Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Nelson, largely in their public capacities, and usually involving all members of the Congress, rather than Madison personally. Madison had only

one private correspondent with whom he frequently exchanged personal letters. That was Edmund Pendleton, friend of his father and himself, then a member of the High Court of Chancery of Virginia. These letters give much information about public affairs in general and the state of things in Virginia in particular. In this period no letter from Madison to his father has survived, and only one from his father to Madison. There are no letters from other relatives to Madison and only one from him. Moreover, there are only eight correspondents for "out" letters and only twenty for "in." It is not likely that this loss will be repaired because the editors have searched diligently for Madison items in all the likely places.

The editorship of these papers continues to be of the highest order. The editors have a profound grasp of the period covered, as their annotations clearly prove. While the notes are comprehensive, which is possible only when dealing with a character of the first order, such as Madison, they add much to the cost, and one may ask at times why scholars using these volumes should not be required to scratch to some degree for themselves. At any rate, the job is thoroughly done. What one not closely connected with the project wonders about is the method of selection which the editors will adopt when Madison becomes Secretary of State and later President and the official documents pile up. That will require considerable discrimination and difficult rules of exclusion.

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