

The Papers of James Madison, Volume 4, 1 January 1782—31 July 1782.

Edited by William T. Hutchinson and William M. F. Rachal. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965. Pp. xxviii, 486. Illustrations, notes, index. \$12.50.)

Reviewers' response to the publication of the first three volumes of *Papers* is a mixture of praise and criticism. The editorial work is charged with having gone as far or high as such a thing could go. The footnotes, it is claimed, adequately identify every proper name, and clarify, for the general reader, unusual words and controversial questions. Bibliographical completeness is recognized. The exacting standards of superlative scholarship and the incredible industry of the editors are generally admitted. Yet the editors are charged, too, with the treatment of trivia, and pedantic and even absurd annotation. Reviewers have

accused them of having padded the first three volumes with "piddling documents laboriously glossed," and with "substituting an overabundance of industry for a sense of proportion."

The fourth volume includes two hundred eleven papers of which only thirty-five have, in whole or in part, been printed in earlier editions of Madison's writings. Ninety-three of the documents, the editors assure us, are altogether or partly in Madison's hand, and an additional seventeen record what he said or wrote. Nineteen dispatches prepared by his colleagues in the Virginia delegation to Congress were signed or otherwise approved by Madison. Fifty-two letters addressed to Madison personally, and twenty-four addressed to the Virginia delegation in Congress, are also included. The remaining items consist of motions, committee reports, and editorial comments on misdated or missing documents.

The editorial pattern set in the first three volumes continues in the fourth volume: prodigious industry persists; meticulous annotation is abundant; editorial notes are at times laborious but usually fruitful; the index, typically thorough, conveniently points the reader to documents and footnotes in this and the preceding volumes.

Absurdity, trivia, and disproportion, like beauty, are judged by the beholder—or reviewer. This reviewer, though admittedly lost at times among the documents and their annotations, accepts the intent of the editors and commends them for their success. True, no issue confronting the Continental Congress or the Commonwealth of Virginia was resolved during the seven months encompassed by this volume. Nor is the origin or culmination of any major issue revealed by the documents. But the many references to the continuous problems of western land claims, the shortage of money, illicit trade with the enemy, war debts and congressional requisitions, interstate rivalries, British peace overtures, battles and rumors of battles in the West Indies, will, when the volumes are completed, bring these issues into focus insofar as they relate to Madison. Personal observations and interesting anecdotes, sprinkled throughout the documents, lend local color and delightful detail.

This volume is no compact narrative. No new historical interpretations challenge the reader. No reader will be engrossed in its contents into the wee hours of the morning. The layman probably won't use it, nor will the professional engage his colleagues in arguments about its truth or its philosophy. And for good reason, for these are not the objectives of the *Papers*.

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