

The Papers of James Madison. III. *March–December 1781*; IV. *January–31 July 1782*; V. *1 August–31 December 1782*. Edited by WILLIAM T. HUTCHINSON and WILLIAM RACHAL. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1963, 1965, 1967. Pp. xxvi, 381, illus.; xxviii, 486, illus.; xxx, 520, illus. \$10.00; \$12.50; \$12.50 (US).

READING THESE VOLUMES is a little like panning for gold. In Volume III, covering some ten months of the year 1781, there are, in some 347 pages, by rough count, twenty-two letters from Madison to various correspondents (most of them to Edmund Pendleton) and twenty-four or twenty-five from Pendleton to Madison. Of the twenty-four Madison letters, not more than a dozen are of real interest. The rest of the volume is taken up with drafts of committee reports, motions made in Congress, reports of the Virginia delegates to Governor Jefferson, Madison's credentials to Congress and such matters, plus, of course, the exhaustive footnotes that we have come to expect in editorial works of this scope. I would estimate that these footnotes take up at least half the text, but one should not grumble for they make up the more interesting part for all that.

Unfortunately, Madison was not a particularly lively letter writer. He addressed himself soberly and thoroughly to the task at hand. There are very few, if any flashes of wit or trenchant phrases. All very sober and very Puritan. He allows himself a brief tirade against the British: "They have acted more like desperate bands of Robbers or Buccaneers than like a nation making war for dominion. Negroes, Horses, Tobacco &c not the standards and arms of their antagonists are the trophies which display their success. Rapes, murders & the whole catalogue of individual cruelties . . . are the acts which characterize the sphere of their usurped jurisdiction." Typically, there is a footnote to the mention of British atrocities and another observing that even when writing to close friends (in this case Philip Mazzei), Madison refrained from remarking on the fact that lightning had struck his boarding house two days before.

In Volume IV things pick up somewhat. There are forty some letters from Madison and fifty-four from his correspondents. Fortunately, Madison outstrips Pendleton or we should have been inclined to propose retitling the first two of these volumes.

Volume V is rather more of the same. The tendency of recent editorial projects of this kind to tell us rather more than we need or want to know has already been commented upon by many reviewers and it is ungracious to carp, I suppose, about a work as conscientiously done and as handsomely printed as this one. I can only say that, in my opinion, great letters and revealing diaries should be published, but I confess I find it hard to understand why, with the availability of microfilm, routine letters and documents have to be published. Reviewers seem almost uniformly reduced to the same round of complaints and the same encomiums on the typography, binding, design, editorial apparatus, and so on.

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