

The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series. Volume I: 1 March-30 September 1809. Edited by ROBERT A. RUTLAND, THOMAS A. MASON, ROBERT J. BRUGGER, SUSANNAH H. JONES, JEANNE K. SISSON, and FREDRIKA J. TEUTE. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984. xxviii, 414 pp. \$37.50.

THIS first volume of the Presidential Series covers the opening seven months of James Madison's first term as president. Madison's letters show him to have had a relaxed, casual manner of dealing with cabinet and other officers. Yet Madison was highly deferential to Thomas Jefferson, writing him on mundane details as well as policy decisions. Of policy issues greatest discussion was given to the abortive agreement negotiated with the British envoy David Erskine to stabilize trade relations with Great Britain. Portents of future problems can be seen in Madison's inability to understand the basis of British policy. Madison was puzzled when the British cabinet disavowed Erskine's actions. Among Madison's advisers only Albert Gallatin had a clear understanding of the problems.

The president's range of subjects and correspondents offers a continual source of surprise and delight. One Rebecca Blodget presented a plea on behalf of Aaron Burr but lost her case by calling Jefferson a man whose "principles, religious, moral & political are alike weak & wicked. A shifting, shuffling Visionary" (p. 34). A distant relative, Josiah Jackson, wrote a brief description of some Madison relations and notes that the children go to "a little church called Republickin Methodist" (p. 218). It would be interesting to know Madison's thoughts when he read a letter from his minister to France, John Armstrong, who offered the opinion "that a war with both the great belligerents will be the only sure and safe road to eventual prosperity" (p. 229). Madison himself was generally reticent in his letters, rarely revealing his innermost thoughts.

The editors have culled out and published what they consider to be the most important letters, but all letters not printed are identified. Exclusions include pardons, military appointments, and some consular correspondence. When possible, the reader is given the location of the nonprinted documents. It is surprising, however, that the editors have so often cited the unreliable *American State Papers, Foreign Relations* series. The decision to print the letters between Benjamin Latrobe and Dolley Madi-

son seems inconsistent with editorial policy. But these are quibbles concerning what is a very fine volume. The editors have chosen the letters and annotated them wisely and well.

WILLIAM STINCHCOMBE

Syracuse University