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**MADISON THE PROPHET**

If James Madison were here today he would enter a modest demurrer at this change of title but deep in his soul, I am convinced, he would be greatly pleased. He would find joy in this spectacle; he would have a kind of defensible pride that his name is to be attached to a college where the daughters of Virginia are to learn competence and strengthen ideals. But his deep gratification would spring from the nature of this memorial; he would feel that here is something that interprets him.

Monuments, parkways, imposing edifices are good in their way to focus attention upon a personage of the past; but for Madison the memorial, if it is adequately to represent him, should have an intellectual significance. He was himself the mind in action in the realm of political organization; and he discerned the increasing importance of the mind in action through generations yet to come. Here is something more than a tribute to one of the Founders; here is more than a good name, greatly as that is to be desired in colleges as in individuals. Here is a label for an institution that is as suggestive as it is appropriate: here a college validates its purposes in terms of the patron saint of its election.

This modification is in part an evidence of a resurgence of interest in the quiet and non-spectacular man who lived just over these neighboring hills. Surely our thinking has turned to Madison much in these troubled days. The patters that we took for granted are apparently no longer among the political certainties, the political invincibilities. Over the world popular government seems to be in tragic recession. We are investigating anew the basis as well as the procedures of our system. To investigate its philosophy and to understand its method and to glimpse its ultimate hope, we turn to Madison. We shall find from him, moreover, a wondrously prophetic comprehension of the problems which beset the democratic order.

The timeliness and timelessness of Madison, his peculiar permanence of influence in the chronicles of America, may be ascribed primarily to his intellectual eminence. We cannot apprehend his place in our development if we consider merely the external facts of his life, luminous as some of these are with the spotlight of glory. Born of good blood in the agrarian simplicity of colonial Virginia, schooled at Princeton, he entered public life in his early twenties and for forty years “sounded all the depths and shoals of honor;” then he retired for two decades of noble friendship and fruitful contemplations; then he watched autumnal shadows fall slowly upon the same fields from which his infant hands had plucked the daisies of life’s springtime, four-score years earlier.

In the forty years of his public effort, he climbed the steps of fame with constancy of progress from representative of his own county in state assemblies, through continental congresses, through the constitutional convention, into eight years as Secretary of State, and then into the climax of two full terms as President of the United States.

It might be noted in passing that few political careers, resulting in such attainments, have been characterized by such economy of the energy of seeking; usually James Madison was the recipient of distinctions, not aggressively the candidate for them. But the conspicuous fact is that all...
of these momentary prominences did not materially heighten the stature of Madison; he would have been almost as great a man in our thinking if he had never reached the higher levels of office. The wreath upon his brow in the Valhalla of memory is not composed of the swiftly-fading laurels of contemporary recognition.

Emphatically we strike the wrong note if we seek to explain the greatness of Madison in terms of any radiance or even impressiveness of personality. He would not like these particular words any better than some of us like them today, but we may be permitted a modernization of saying that there was nothing about him that press-agents or political boosters could call glamorous or colorful. In a group that we think of as Titans, he was the least titanic in appearance. He was small and slight, shy and prim. He was slow of speech; nothing sparkles in his repartee.

He was in the main unimpassioned, unimaginative, unmagnetic. A Washington barber commented upon the sad state of the nation when it had for president “this little Jim Madison;” Washington Irving, who was completely captivated by Mrs. Madison, adds lugubriously, “Ah, poor Jimmy, he looks like a withered apple-John.” And even the winsome widow who was to share his life for forty years and become almost legendary as the hostess of consummate grace, first referred to her future husband as “the great little Mr. Madison.” It comforts those of us who never reach the standards of masculine movie idols to remember that at least as far as the delicious Dolly was concerned little Jimmy “had what it takes.” But his place in eternity is not due to superficial gifts of the good fairies.

John Fiske, who may be trusted as impartial, says of Madison: “The place of leadership which he won so early and kept so long, he held by sheer force of giant intelligence, sleepless industry and an integrity that no man ever doubted.” This in itself is a fairly good definition of the qualities of the educated man. But there was more. One cannot study his life and fail to be impressed with his unique power of reasoning. To achieve such power, a man must have more than a judicial cast of mind; he must have patience to assemble facts, competence to rise above prejudice, self-immolation to appraise in terms of larger value than personal interest.

Another potency of Madison’s mind that belongs almost to his moral nature, was his vision, his ability to look beyond the present moment, however glamorous or dramatic, and discern the ultimate significance. Madison as practical statesman may be criticized because he was slow to make adjustment to the immediate exigency, but only as some traveler who looks steadfastly upon high hills may stumble over a stone or rut in the path at his feet. There was in him, moreover, a transcendent intellectual conscience.

He wasn’t afraid of his convictions and he never bartered them. His fundamentally sweet spirit could stiffen into inflexible resistances. Again he may be criticized for a kind of party inconsistency but only because he was commanded by authority of his inner loyalties.

It is not safe to reduce any man to a formula but it can be said that this powerful mind of Madison exercised itself chiefly upon one of the age-old problems of humanity brought to his day with the impetus of newly-born hope. He was seeking an equation, or at least an equilibrium between two apparently contradictory forces: these are the surging passion for individual liberty and the inevitable coercions which make for an ordered society.

Perhaps a special emphasis should be put upon Madison’s passion for liberty. In the flaming days of freedom’s renaissance, he made no such speeches as Henry’s, he wrote no such enduring covenants as did Mason or Jefferson; but no man served more effectively the cause of liberty. His first notable public achievement was when he struck
from the original Bill of Rights the phrasing that promised religious tolerance—some condescending permission which a majority might grant to honest dissent—and substituted therefor the eternal principle of the right of each man to his own faith.

After the Revolution he joined Jefferson in the battle for this provision and included it in the catalogue of freedom's immortal details which makes up the first amendment to the Constitution. He was opposed to such measures as the alien and sedition laws because they represented, as he saw them, cruel invasion of the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. He went so far in his zeal for freedom as to recognize the basic injustice of slavery, a display of courage alike in the constitutional convention, in congress, and in the meditations of his last days. He wanted freedom itself to be perfected in the land he loved.

But this authentic love of freedom was tempered by a passion for social cohesive-ness and effectiveness. When Professor Warren, commonly regarded as the latest authority on the constitution, refers to Madison as being called "without dissent" the father of this document, he states a fact well recognized; but its implications are deep. For Madison's connection was far more penetrating than his historical prominence. He did more than any one man probably to get the convention called, more than any one man on the floor of the convention. But his importance is not quantitative; he brought to these considerations a wealth of knowledge of the past and singular capacity for prophecy as to the future.

If I may venture my own judgment, I should say that in this prophetic quality of Madison's mind his excellence most clearly appears. Many of his contemporaries surmised objections and even difficulties that would confront the new plan of government. Madison saw most broadly and most accurately of them all the menaces that lurked down the pathway of the years. He saw the perils of sectional interests, the dangers in the clashing of the various economic conditions. He saw the possibility of aggressive minority blocs; he saw the probability of the overwhelming fusion of these into a majority that would crush all opposition. Such developments in the social order, to which he was devoted, would destroy the individual rights, to which he was equally devoted.

His formula of escape was representative government, a pattern in which he hoped the views of the great majority, often uninformed and sometimes motivated by self-interest, might be enlarged and refined by being passed through the minds of the most intelligent and the most capable of the given age.

Thus he came to education. It was always dear to him but as he studied the future of his beloved land it became a matter of supreme importance.

For one thing education was to him the medium of one of the most precious rights of man. In the tenth paper of the Federalist he suggests "the primary duty of government." When Madison, meticulous in the choice of his words, speaks of the "primary duty" we may well listen. Guessing a bit, we might assume that this primary duty is connected with the immortal rights he stated in that first amendment; but his conception of the primary duty goes below even those deep-grounded verities.

This primary duty of government, he defines as the duty to "protect the diversity of capacity" in the individuals. Do not let the abstractness of that idea confuse the truth. What he is saying is that the fundamental duty of the government is to guarantee the fullest development of the capacity in every man, whatever that capacity may be. For the soul that has the capacity for truth, for the achievement of leadership, the government must give every protection, every encouragement in the direction of this competence. Hence he came to evaluate education as one of the adequate expressions of the deepest right of the individual, one
of the ultimate obligations of society.

But education was for Madison more than one of the modes, perhaps the finest mode, of individual freedom or right. It was the chief protection of the society he helped organize. The secret of his hopes lay in the two-fold program of elevating the general intelligence of the citizenship and of preparing the chosen spirits who should command public policy. Education alone could provide leadership on the one hand and a worthy response to leadership on the other.

Such a conception of education was in no sense exclusive to Madison, perhaps was not original with him. Jefferson had the vision before the Revolution was half over and Washington came to it with increasing fervor during the closing of his life. But Madison championed it with every energy of his public effort and Madison gave to the doctrine a crystal-clarity of relation to the political philosophy of the democratic system.

It is fitting, therefore, that here on a green stretch close to the fields he loved, an institution of higher learning should bear the name of one who not only honored the state which fosters that institution but also evaluated and emphasized the process of learning. It is fitting that this school should weave into the fabric of its nobler ideal something of the spirit of that man. But it is no light profession that you have made. For if this college is to be Madison's in aspiration as in name, then it dedicates itself anew to the unselfishness of education as he saw it.

This college proposes in taking this name to declare to the successive generations of Virginia's daughters that the privilege they here enjoy is granted to them as one of their precious rights, the right to enjoy ranges through all fields of fancy and acquisitions of all knowledge; but that beyond the right is the eternal obligation to give back their fine fruitage in intelligence and devotion to the causes that make for the happiness and the righteousness of all mankind. Francis Pendleton Gaines

THE QUEST FOR WISDOM

MAN is so constructed that in circumstances where want and luxury are relatively absent, and where the total environment is at all fortunate, he constantly engages in letting his thought and imagination go beyond the immediate and the present. Because of this, he creates art, and music, and poetry; out of this urge arise the sciences, and also the religions of the world, the systems of ethics and esthetics, and finally metaphysics or philosophy proper.

It is equally evident that man’s circumstances also shape his philosophy. Pessimism and cynicism are the natural expression of the individual who is cramped in some manner or who lives in a social era which has a cramping type of influence. The dominance of a state religion, a powerful dictator, a continual state of war or of peace have shaped, and will continue to shape, the philosophies of the world. The result is that realism may be as natural and as adequate for one age as is idealism for another; one may seek a single principle or concept by which to explain the riddle of the universe (monism); another, two or more such principles (dualism and pluralism). In time, however, as a body of philosophical speculation is preserved, the philosophy of those who come later is more or less patterned according to one or more of their many predecessors. Schools of philosophy develop and often a philosophic system may seem to be, or actually be, out of step with a given era, unless perchance it be focused on possible future developments.

The question of the practicability or workability of philosophy has always troubled the common man. Philosophy, as the quest for wisdom or the understanding of that universe in which one through no plan of his own finds himself, is bound to the practical and vital just so long as one retains flexibility of thought, and relates his