



\*AMERICAN STATESMEN\*

*Edited by*

**JOHN T. MORSE, JR.**

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# American Statesmen

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JOHN T. MORSE, JR.

American Statesman

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# JAMES MADISON

BY

SYDNEY HOWARD GAY



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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

FEW men, so well equipped intellectually as was Madison, have, by reason of the characteristics of their equipment, been so dependent for success upon the conditions amid which they have been placed. Madison was preëminently what may be called a cabinet statesman. He was better as a thinker than as an actor. He had the constructive quality, and was a master of principles of government; but in the practical application of those principles which he himself had formulated and shaped, if not created, he was not fitted to excel, unless possibly when the current of events was running smoothly. His strength did not lie in the executive or administrative directions. Had he died before he was President, his fame would not have been less than it is to-day, when he is remembered and admired chiefly for his labors in connection with the creation of the Constitution and the foundation of the government. He amply deserved the honor of the presidential office, though it added so little to his reputation; but it really meant that because he had done one task exceedingly well, he was now appointed to do a

very different task much less well. Never was a ruler less fitted to hold the helm in troubled times, and it was hard fortune for him to receive from his friend and predecessor the bequest of a war. Probably no man could have made the conflict of 1812 a success, but Madison hardly knew how even to try to make it so. His career was not picturesque. I remember that Mr. Gay deplored the difficulty which he found in his endeavors to make his hero appear personally interesting. But this was a secondary matter. Madison is one of the men of whom the country has always, and with good reason, been especially proud. It was not alone that his character was high, but his qualities as a statesman have been recognized as of the first order. None of our public men has been more useful to the country. He was in active life for a very long time; he was concerned in all the important events of more than thirty years. The story of his life is the history of the country during all that period. Mr. Gay, in spite of his complaint, has certainly contributed to the series one of its most valuable volumes. He was a writer thoroughly equipped for his task, a scholar in American history. It seems hard that he should not have survived to witness the now prevalent interest in the study of that subject, an interest which he did so much to promote, but which was only beginning to manifest itself

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during his lifetime. What changes he might have desired to make in this volume, had he survived to this day, it is impossible to say; but probably he would have found little to do in this direction. He was too thorough and conscientious a writer to dismiss his book until he had brought it to the best possible condition; and no new material of importance would now be at his disposal. His volume may well stand in the shape in which it came from his desk.

JOHN T. MORSE, JR.

September, 1898.



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