

James Madison

by Jean Remy

In the home of his grand-fath-er at Port Con-way, Vir-gin-i-a, was born, in the spring of 1751, the small boy who was to be our fourth Pres-i-dent. He was ver-y young, though, when he went to live at Mont-pel-ier, his fath-er's great farm in Vir-gin-i-a, and here he led much the same life as George Wash-ing-ton did when a boy. He was but a small boy when the French and Eng-lish War be-gan, and when Brad-dock lost the day, a great fear of the In-di-ans spread to the ver-y door of his home; and he grew up with the name of George Wash-ing-ton ev-er in his ears, as a great he-ro.

His school days were much like those of Jef-fer-son. He was a young boy when he could read French and Span-ish with ease, and was as well hard at work at Greek and Lat-in. In 1769 he went to Prince-ton Col-lege, and here, as well as when he was at home, Jef-fer-son was a great help to him. The old-er man wrote to the boy in the qui-et old col-lege town, a-bout the scenes of war; he told him much of the Brit-ish troops in the Bos-ton streets, of young John Ad-ams and of Wash-ing-ton. So, when in 1771 he left col-lege, he knew a great deal a-bout the strife of the day, and had deep, clear thoughts a-bout it. At home he led a qui-et life with his books, un-til 1774, then he was put at the head of a few men, who were to guard their own town if the Brit-ish troops came there. In this post he showed such a wise, clear mind and did his part so well that in a short time he was put in a high place in his State, and from there in 1779 was sent to Con-gress. Jef-fer-son was at this time Gov-ern-or of Vir-gin-i-a, and the two men were close, warm friends.

For twen-ty five years Mad-i-son was one of the first men in this land. He had no taste for war, but he soon took a high place with those who made the laws of the land. One of the great things he did was to help draw up the Con-sti-tu-tion of the U-nit-ed States.

In 1794 this grave and qui-et man mar-ried, as Wash-ing-ton and Jef-fer-son had done, a young and love-ly wid-ow. She was but twen-ty-two years old, twen-ty years young-er than he, and her name was Mrs. Dor-o-thy Payne Todd. Lat-er on, the folks who grew to love this fair la-dy so well, gave her the name by which we know her to-day—"Dol-ly Mad-i-son." She was a Quak-er-ess, and so fair and sweet was she, in her qui-et lit-tle gown of gray, that once a friend said to her: "Dol-ly, tru-ly thou must hide thy face, so ma-n-y stare at thee."

For one year af-ter his mar-riage, Mad-i-son lived at Mont-pel-ier; then a-gain he went in-to pub-lic life, first in his State, and af-ter that, in 1800, as Sec-re-ta-ry of State un-der Jef-fer-son.

Now, be-gan the gay life at the White House, for which "Dol-ly" Mad-i-son won so much fame. Jef-fer-son's wife was dead, and it was the wife of his friend that helped him en-ter-tain the White House guests. Well did this love-ly la-dy do her part, and in 1808 when, as the wife of the Pres-i-dent, she be-came the real mis-tress of the White House, more than ev-er did the peo-ple love her. To-day, of all the pic-tures of the Pres-i-dents' wives that hang up-on the White House walls, none is more love-ly than that of the gay and pretty "Dol-ly Mad-i-son."

Mad-i-son was most of all a man of peace, and yet it was while he was in of-ice that the U-nit-ed States was drawn in-to the War of 1812. Eng-land, then at war with France, said she had the right to search A-mer-i-can ships to see if they were tak-ing aid to France. A-mer-i-ca would not give this right to Eng-land, and so the war be-gan. In 1814 the Brit-ish came to the cit-y of Wash-ing-ton, and for the

on-ly time in A-mer-i-can his-to-ry the Pres-i-dent had to leave his home.

Mad-i-son, with the Sec-re-ta-ry of State and some friends, went to a lit-tle inn near Wash-ing-ton, and here they were met by Mrs. Mad-i-son, who had stayed as long as she could at the White House to save some things from the hands of the Brit-ish. She had brought the great Dec-la-ra-tion of In-de-pend-ence, and had cut from its big frame the pic-ture of Wash-ing-ton and brought it safe-ly a-way. The Brit-ish troops set fire to the White House, the na-vy yard, the Cap-i-tol, and in fact the whole town. They left in great haste, though, when they heard that our troops were on the way, and the next day Mrs. Mad-i-son put on the dress of a wash-wo-man, so folks would not know her, and made a start for her home, but the British had set fire to a bridge she had to cross on the way and then she begged an A-mer-i-can sol-dier to row her o-ver the riv-er. He would not do so un-til she told him who she was, and then he was ver-y glad to take this brave lit-tle la-dy in his boat. On-ly black ash-es marked the spot on which the White House had once stood, so she had to go to her sis-ter's home, where the Pres-i-dent soon joined her.

The Eng-lish troops now tried to take Bal-ti-more, but our brave men drove them back; and when they tried to make a raid on New Or-le-ans, Gen-er-al Jack-son and his troops fought so hard that the foe could not get in-to the cit-y.

This was the last fight of this war, and peace was signed at Ghent, De-cem-ber 24th, 1814. From that day Eng-land has had to leave our ships a-lone and to treat A-mer-i-ca as one of the great nations of the world.

In 1817 Mad-i-son was not sor-ry to go back to his old home, and here ma-ny hap-py years were spent, for the fair la-dy of the White House kept o-pen house in her own home, and guests from far and near were glad to come here. One of Mad-i-son's dear-est friends was old Thom-as Jef-fer-son, who oft-en rode o-ver from his home at Mon-ti-cel-lo, which was on-ly thir-ty miles from Mont-pel-ier.

Mad-i-son wrote a good deal at this time; and once a-gain was seen in pub-lic life. In 1829 he was at the head of the great change made in all the laws of the whole land.

He died af-ter a long sick-ness at his home in Mont-pel-ier on June 28th, 1836.

Source:

Remy, Jean. "James Madison." *Lives of the Presidents*. New York: A.L. Burt Company Publishers, 1900. 25 – 28. Electronic.