The Personality of a Magazine:
An Editorial

In contrast to some European publications, American historical journals are of a relatively impersonal nature. This doubtless conforms to American taste. Even in this country, however, something of the character of the sponsoring body, and of the interests and standards of the editors, seeps into and colors the personality of the journal. *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* is no exception to the rule. So far as I am aware, the *Magazine* exhibits the oldest continuous file among American historical journals; and through its seventy odd years, its contents have reflected in a general way the changing outlooks and activities of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The cumulative Index to the *Magazine*, the manuscript of which is now almost completed, will therefore afford access to much that is significant in the history of the Society.

In a more immediate way, the *Magazine* has reflected the interests and standards of its editors. To go no further back in the story than 1935, one recalls how much the Society owed to Mr. Julian Boyd who became Editor at that time. Mr. Boyd upheld the best scholarly standards, and under his direction the *Magazine* acquired a national reputation. At the same time, fully aware that the Society was not a body of professional historians, he did not lose sight of the interests
of the educated public. Mr. Boyd, who resigned as Editor upon becoming Librarian of Princeton University in 1940, was succeeded by Mr. William Reitzel, formerly of Haverford College. Mr. Reitzel, who maintained the standards of the Magazine, gave up the work a year later when he joined the United States Naval Reserve.

The present Editor has served during two interim periods; the first, for about a year after Mr. Boyd’s resignation, the second, during the period following Mr. Reitzel’s departure. This service was of a temporary nature; and now that Mr. Richard Norris Williams, II, has become Director of the Society, he will assume the editorship—taking over with the July issue this year. This seems a fitting time, therefore, to comment briefly on a temporary stewardship, to express appreciation of those who aided me in this responsibility, and to congratulate the Society on the selection of so able an editor for the future.

The major endeavor in recent years has been to maintain the editorial standards established during the last decade. This was not altogether easy during the war years. In so far as the ideal was realized, it was largely owing to the assistance of the diminishing number of contributors who continued to devote themselves to studies in Pennsylvania history. Partly because of the declining number of articles available in this field, the Publications Committee of the Society decided to emphasize in the Magazine the history of adjacent states as well as of Pennsylvania. A more lasting motive for this, in addition, was the realization that—all parts of the country—the Middle Atlantic area was most lacking in a regional historical tradition, and the only one which possessed no regional historical journal. This view was expressed in a number of editorials. Although it has not yet proved possible to secure adequate materials on our neighboring states, it is hoped to make the Magazine in effect a journal for the Middle Atlantic area centering in Pennsylvania.

The Editor has been indebted to the unfailing support of the Officers and Council of the Society. Notable has been the complete freedom extended in regard to both policy and standards. Such shortcomings as appeared have therefore been entirely the responsibility of the Editor. In recent years, we have also been aided by the advice of a distinguished group of scholars in neighboring institutions
who served as an Editorial Board. The Magazine owes much to the loyal and efficient work of Miss Margaret Bailey, the Associate Editor, who is about to leave us to accept an appointment with Colonial Williamsburg. Miss Bailey, however, will continue her work as Editor of the Index to the Magazine.

Most fortunate for the Society is the present appointment of Mr. Williams, which restores the traditional and logical combination of Director and Editor in the one person. Mr. Williams’ long association with the Society, his wide knowledge of and devotion to its interests, assure the Magazine—as well as all other activities of the Society—of able leadership.

Richard Harrison Shryock