REVIEWS OF BOOKS


The westward movement or the occupation of what is now the United States by a population which, landing on the Atlantic shore, has taken possession of all the region to the Pacific Ocean has been a dominant theme in this generation. The study of this movement has resulted in many different kinds of publication. Some of them have been founded on meticulous scholarship. Others have been highly speculative and literary. It was inevitable that so significant a topic should be popularized and made a vehicle for romantic historical writing.

This interesting volume, by a former instructor in the University of Iowa, who as a pupil of Professor Schlesinger became fascinated by the westward movement theme, is avowedly written in the romantic historical style for which the author evidently has a penchant. But its nearly five hundred pages contain something more than mere romantic and stylistic writing. They show both extensive and intensive reading and scholarship. And they indicate much fruitful contemplation and considerable ability to see relevancies, correlations, and developments. Local history, often based on detail, is placed in excellent perspective. A book of this type is much needed in historical study as a means of interpreting local events in their larger setting. The Whiskey Insurrection in western Pennsylvania may be cited as such a case.

The author of this volume like virtually all the writers of the so-called frontier school of American historians claims too much for the West. At least he claims for the West what properly belongs to European or eastern American influence. And strangely enough, but not at all uncommonly, he makes
the claims while actually revealing the social, economic, and even political influence of older regions. This, of course, is an inevitable by-product of interest, enthusiasm, and allegiance. But while it is possible to pardon such claims, it is not necessary to accept them. On the whole the author has done well what he set out to do. He has pictured in a somewhat dramatic way the expanding and expansive forces in our history.

The volume is unusually free from errors of fact and printing. Inevitably a few errors crept into an account of a movement extending from the settlement of America to the present day. For example, George Rogers Clark is said to have entered Kentucky by the Wilderness Road, whereas he seems to have gone by way of the Ohio River. But a few errors of this kind do not seriously mar an otherwise excellent piece of historical work. The author is to be congratulated on his presentation of his romantic theme and the publishers complimented on their work. Residents of western Pennsylvania will find this volume worth while in putting the romantic and even dramatic settlement of their section in its larger setting — that of the story of the westward movement and the occupation of the continent from sea to sea.

Alfred P. James


Although well known to research scholars, the significant rôle of General Thomas Gage as commander in chief of all British forces in North America from 1763 to 1775 has been strangely overlooked in popular and general history. Only the small fraction of his career connected with his position in Massachusetts in 1775-76 has received adequate attention. To Professor Clarence W. Alvord is due no small part of the credit for a better point of view. His great work, The Mississippi Valley in British Politics, revealed a much wider