... If much of the old prejudice remained, much also had disappeared. Both tendencies are reflected in the various phases of American life—in its legal aspects, its literary output, its human relationships. The most important single gain perhaps was the opportunity for the Catholic to live a normal social life, to slough off his own prejudices and to help his Protestant and deistic neighbor to do the same in the give and take of everyday life.”

With an excellent format, copious notes, exhaustive bibliography, and index, this book is both comprehensive and meticulous but far from pedantic. Its treatment of the controversial religious issues is both exceptionally well informed and eminently fair. Every page reveals the author as a sincere and painstaking research worker who has successfully achieved the historic sense.

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As indicated in an article by the reviewer in the September, 1936, issue of this magazine, the background of the early history of western Pennsylvania is complex and involves many different approaches. In this connection it cannot be overlooked that early western Pennsylvania was, from the point of view of its later history, fundamentally a by-product of the British Empire as it was in the eighteenth century. In these volumes Professor Gipson has endeavored with much success to furnish any interested reader a scholarly survey of the British Empire in the middle of that century. As noted in his preface and demonstrated in footnotes the author has devoted years of laborious research to his subject. It is probable that additional volumes are to follow these three, and it is to be hoped that nothing will prevent their issuance.

To a great extent it is impossible to judge a whole by a mere part, but in so far as this can be done, it may be assumed that this comprehensive work, on its completion, will be a valuable contribution to British imperial historical writing. It is, of course, improbable that the treatment of any particular topic
in these volumes will be of great historical value to specialists in the history of that topic, but students of any one part of the British Empire have much to gain from this general and yet scholarly survey of other parts with which they may not be so familiar. The first volume, on Great Britain and Ireland, for example, furnishes for American historical scholars who have not specialized in English history a valuable picture of British and Irish society in the crucial era of the eighteenth century. To the reviewer the volume seems a valuable supplement to the famous volumes of Osgood. Similarly it is highly probable that the second and third volumes, on The Southern Plantations and The Northern Plantations, will be valuable reading to those in the British Isles not closely familiar with the history of those parts of the empire lying beyond the Atlantic. A synthesis of this type, scholarly, well written, judicious, and unbiased, meets a need. So complex a subject as the British Empire could not well be treated satisfactorily in any other way. These and the volumes that are to follow are to be counted to the credit of the famous vision of Cecil Rhodes and viewed as a partial fulfillment of his hopes and expectations.

In such a work, some shortcomings are inescapable. Minor defects, such as quotations of considerable length without indentation, can be easily forgiven. The omission of important data is more serious—the chapters on New York state and Pennsylvania are inadequate by reason of such omission; and the author also shows a tendency to generalize on the basis of too few documents.

Doubtless later volumes covering topics after 1750 will be of more specific interest to readers of this magazine, but a revealing light is shed in these three volumes on numerous matters that should be studied in acquiring an understanding of the events and situations in western Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century.

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Alfred P. James


A little more than a century and a quarter ago Isaiah Thomas, founder of the American Antiquarian Society, wrote his History of Printing in America.