BOOK REVIEWS


With the publication of this volume, Professor Gipson nears the completion of his projected thirteen-volume magnum opus on the British Empire prior to the American Revolution. Although he offers no challenge to Lord Macaulay's superb artistry, Gipson's narrative is at all times readable and frequently suggestive. In all respects, the author maintains those high standards of accuracy, credibility, and discernment which characterize the earlier volumes of this monumental series.

The volume under review takes up the thread of events just after the repeal of the Stamp Act in early 1766 and carries them through to 1770, although the last few chapters deal with issues which extend somewhat beyond the latter date. Within this brief period, Gipson adroitly analyzes both the growth of the Revolutionary movement in the mainland colonies (with special and perhaps deserved emphasis on Massachusetts) and the political upheaval in England which surrounded the decline (both physically and politically) of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, and the emergence for a short time of "Champagne Charlie" Townshend to a position of power and influence. In his treatment of the various parliamentary enactments (such as the Declaratory Act of 1766, Quartering Act of 1766, and the Townshend Duties) and the response they evoked in America, Gipson offers little that is new. Nevertheless, this part of his narrative is useful in that it presents these familiar and exciting episodes with an objectivity often lacking in previous works and a flair which stimulates interest and promotes understanding.

More insightful are the author's observations on the political unrest in Great Britain. With the sure hand of the master craftsman, Gipson demonstrates considerable skill in rendering intelligible both the manifold problems confronting George III and his generally inept ministers and their well-intentioned but often antagonistic attempts to find workable solutions. Faced with the necessity of formulating new colonial policies, of organizing a more efficient colonial administration, and of reducing the already burdensome war debt, the
British government resorted to schemes which only widened the cleavage which was perhaps inevitable anyway considering the ever-increasing divergence of colonial and imperial interests.

Gipson's imperial outlook clearly places him in a category with Herbert L. Osgood, Charles M. Andrews, and the other historians of "the imperial school." Although not as preoccupied with institutional history as many of this persuasion, Gipson nevertheless shares in the conviction that "the colonial period of our history is not American only but Anglo-American." Taking up the narrative where Osgood and Andrews left off but maintaining the imperial perspective, Gipson carries the story beyond the first half of the eighteenth century. With an almost pro-British bias, the author leaves his readers with the impression that England was fully justified in attempting to assert her control over her often obstreperous North American colonies.

Despite the tendency to view colonial conditions through English eyes, Gipson does not neglect the American side of the story. However, in his descriptions of American reactions to the various decrees and acts of the British government, he often fails to comprehend fully the reasons for colonial opposition. Moreover, in his attempt to cover comprehensively the entire story, he is not always successful in showing relationships. Thus the lively and informative chapters dealing with the boundary disputes within the colonies, the developments in the trans-Appalachian region, and the intracolonial "Struggle for Political Equality" seem irrelevant to the main thrust of the book — i.e., the Revolutionary movement in both its American and English phases.

Notwithstanding, this series will take its place alongside Osgood's seven volumes and Andrews' *The Colonial Period of American History* as an indispensable contribution to our understanding of colonial America in its larger, imperial setting. In addition it will, when completed, provide the nearest thing we have to a definitive study of the American Revolution in its pre-1776 phase.

Extensive documentation, lucid language, and a mastery of voluminous source material help to make the reading of this volume an enjoyable and extremely edifying experience. A detailed table of contents, numerous maps, and a complete index all enhance its value for the scholar while the layman will find the few well-chosen illustrations and the eleven-page chronology of benefit.

*Waynesburg College*  
*Waynesburg, Pennsylvania*  

Joseph C. Morton