BOOK REVIEWS


The merits of this publication are great and numerous. Many of them are stated in the publisher's claims on the jacket and in the author's Introduction. The merits and claims are much fortified by the acknowledgments. The particular merit of excellent publication could not be claimed by the publisher and may be asserted by a reviewer. In a careful reading of the entire volume, no inaccuracies nor bad typography attracted the attention of this reviewer.

The aims and expectations of the author are expressed in the title of the volume. A better title is not easily conceived. But a reader is unavoidably struck by the assumptions involved in such a title. "Founding" is not easily circumscribed. "Nation" is almost indefinable. "History" is more comprehensive than revealed in this volume. "Revolution" is none too well analyzed. "A History of the American Revolution, 1763-1776," might have been the full title but it also seems a supplementary limitation or definition of "The Founding of a Nation."

The central theme of this contribution to historiography is that the American Revolution was originated in 1763 and was established by July 4, 1776. That it had roots in the past and developments after 1776 is not revealed. That it conflicts with the policies of certain patriotic societies is largely ignored.

The organization of the opus is that of three parts. Part One, The First Crisis; Part Two, The Widening Rift; and Part Three, The Final Break. Twenty-five subdivisions are numbered and given titles, but not called chapters, probably for several good reasons.

As implied above, the historical image given the reader is that of the complex background of the Declaration of Independence. The formation of this image involves the gradual, though spasmodic, development of attitudes and institutions. Interest in this image as stated above is not new. Much of it antedates post-Darwinian evolutionism. The author and his collaborators have read widely and worked hard and well on the historical picture of an important era of main development. There is only a slight impression that the highest literary genius might have made the image (or picture) more definite, more
easily grasped and long retained.

Unavoidably this volume is not a complete story nor a full description of the times. Not just one volume but many volumes would have been required for any such full treatment.

In general and friendly criticism, it may be noted that this book has some slight repetitions, that there are too many long citations, that the pages are crowded about forty lines to the page, and that the print is somewhat too small for old eyes, that illustrations could have added much to the image intended, and that maps are lacking.

Whether viewed as historical literature or considered as a reference work, this weighty book has high value. In keeping with much recent historiography, a major emphasis of the volume is that of party politics. One result is the inclusion of much familiar material. Another aspect is the omission of a great many other features of life in Europe and in North America. A brief survey of the Index of the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* will reveal how many general features are not found in this specialized work. Social history, including institutional matters and, especially, economic situations, is usually neglected by writers on the history of politics. As in the case of *The Founding of a Nation* there is not room for any elaboration of that social material without which the ocean of historical fact is somewhat ignored in attention to its whitecaps and surf.

The publication is not a textbook. This would be true of an advanced class on the short period, 1763-1776. It flirts with sacred history but does not embrace it. It deals too much with party politics and biographical data.

All in all, the publication will find a good but not a large sale. English-speaking intellectuals will find it worthwhile, in disregard of its price and of the time necessary for its full comprehension.

Nothing less than congratulations are due the author, his collaborators, and his publisher.

Professor Emeritus of the
University of Pittsburgh

Alfred P. James


Perhaps no one in the American past except Jefferson equalled