BOOK REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

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Virtually all his life John S. Duss has been under the influence of the Harmony Society, and when it was in extreme peril he rescued it from insolvency. Historians will be grateful to him for committing his recollections and observations to print. Aware of his unique knowledge, he has probably for a long time felt an obligation to write and publish his memoirs. The history and ethos of Harmonie are apt to elude the outsider, however great his scientific acumen may be. The only people who really know a community are those who have been stirred and renewed by its fellowship. Mr. Duss, though born some years after the death of the founder, was during his youth in constant association with old members whose minds were still full of the personalities and enterprises of the early days. Subsequently, as the last and perhaps the most gifted of its leaders, he had access to the records of the society and was himself the principal participant in the events that terminated the discordant career of Harmonie. Even if the book were a half-literate apology, it would rank high as a source. We hasten to assure the reader that it is quite outside the category of sanctimonious trash, not only because the author writes from a high level of general culture but also because he takes a detached view of the persons he portrays and the events he narrates.

Out of the depths of his erudition, which he owes largely to his years of absorption in lawsuits, Mr. Duss corrects not a few errors concerning the constitution and the discipline of the Harmony Society. He maintains that it was not a religious society at all. While this is true in a legal sense, Mr. Duss is temperamentally indifferent to doctrine. George Rapp's religious beliefs are dismissed too summarily, and his faith as a motivating force is imperfectly apprehended. Mr. Duss correctly traces some of the articles of Rapp's creed to Böhme. Thus it becomes evident that Rapp had affinities with Beissel and the other Böhmiasts who founded conventual associations. The author makes it clear that the life in the three settlements of the society was not monastic. On the contrary, the Rappites ate five meals a day and fell far behind the Ephrathites in the mortification of the flesh. Rapp advocated celibacy but did not cram it down the throats of his followers. Although he may have been a martinet, his autocratic inclinations were curbed by his disciples. His sectaries were never in bondage to him as the enthusiasts of Ephrata were to their ghostly director.

If his touch in religious matters is slightly uncertain, Mr. Duss is pro-
foundly conversant with economic and financial questions. When the society after years of slovenly management was on the verge of disaster, he met its obligations, inaugurated a sane policy, and with energy and dexterity contrived to keep the wolf from the door and the trustees out of jail. The hours he spent in conflict with lawyers intensified his devotion to music. In discussing his exploits as a conductor he has drawn too freely on his scrapbook. The rhetorical transports of the critics need not have been quoted at length.

A careful scrutiny of the proofs would have saved the volume from a few blemishes. Proper names are sometimes spelled inconsistently. Mis-spellings occur. One sentence (p. 361) is unintelligible: "The number of bonds here and there, fluctuating in number, as they did, from time to time, according to how many were pledged as collateral on large loans, the number redeemed or used as attorney's fees—I am dealing in sum totals—not in exact figures." An index would enhance the usefulness of the book. Mr. Duss makes brisk and penetrating comments on journalists and others who have written about Harmonie. He should have appended a bibliography. If it was impossible to use footnotes extensively, the sources should have been named and succinctly discussed. Mr. Duss' knowledge of Harmonie so far surpasses other people's that he will do himself an injustice if he does not catalogue, or commission somebody else to catalogue, the literary remains of the society.

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Out of the Sand. By E. George Lindstrom. (Cleveland: High Twelve Publishing Company, 1943. 246 pp. $2.50.)

Mr. Lindstrom has written an historical novel that will appeal to those readers who like tales of frontier exploitation, labor conflict, romance, adventure, chance, failure, and success. The setting for the story is in the drainage basin of the Allegheny River of western Pennsylvania during the 1860's. Fourteen characters are historical and all the rest fictitious.

John Spears and Katherine Campbell are the main characters of the story. John was a ten-year-old orphan boy whom the Spearses took in and later sent to Meadville (Pa.) Academy, where he became interested in petroleum drilling. Katherine, John's sweetheart, was opposed to his interest and participation in prospecting. She wanted him to settle on the land of his adopted parents and be a farmer or business man in the local town. This he was not willing to do; the story of Drake's find had captured his interest. He went to war and came back an individualist interested in acquiring wealth. He drilled where others had not tried and always struck oil pools which yielded quick and abundant returns, but he always squandered his money and had to start at the bottom again.

The book is certainly underwritten. The petroleum development is often compared to the wild races for gold in that towns were places of filth, dangerous fire traps, gambling centers, wild financial investments resulting
in great profit or great loss, transient labor, and carefree people. The author has been very careful not to exaggerate the truth. Many times one wishes he had developed certain events to a more detailed and historic end. The rivalry between pipe-line men and teamsters is a good instance in which the author might have carried the story to a fighting finish. This book is an outgrowth of the preparation of material for screen, radio, and stage work. Six photographs of Pithole are typical of the boom town; unfortunately they are poorly reproduced.

Mr. Lindstrom is to be congratulated on this historic novel. It is true to fact, and the action moves fast enough to keep one reading until the end is reached.

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