

the author contends, "casting aside the issue of legitimacy of rule, it is doubtful whether within the imperial family—during this important period—a more capable regent than Sophia could have been found." Professor O'Brien points to the vital changes which affected the cultural outlook, economy, and foreign relations of Russia during Sophia's regency and shows how they were largely the result of her enlightened and decisive leadership and that of her appointees. "In the realm of cultural and diplomatic achievement, the tsarevna proved herself a worthy daughter of Tsar Alexis and a distinguished representative of the Romanov dynasty. At home she introduced reforms that were practical in purpose, if moderate in scope. . . . In both Europe and Asia she and her advisers intelligently pursued Russian national interests. . . . It was a government of distinction and promise which held together against great odds. Its policies were both vigorous and enlightened."

Professor O'Brien has contributed to a fuller knowledge of Russia in the years 1682-1689. With the increased attention given to Russian history in American universities, it is essential that more and more studies of this type be made, for Russian history under the tsars consists not alone of the achievements of the outstanding and better known rulers. The book is clearly and interestingly written, and is provided with copious footnotes and an extensive bibliography of works in the Russian language. All in all, the author is to be congratulated on a work well done.

Indiana University

F. Lee Bennis

Howells & Italy. By James Leslie Woodress, Jr. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1952, pp. xi, 223. Bibliography and index. \$3.50.)

One sometimes wishes that scholars were less specialized. A new book by an associate professor of English at Butler University is a case in point.

William Dean Howells was United States consul at Venice from 1861 to 1865. The experience was a determining one in his life. It transformed him from an Ohio newspaperman into a Cambridge author. It served him in lieu of the Harvard education his associates obtained.

Howells & Italy is a literary study of the effect of this stay in Italy upon Howells' literary creations. Woodress finds that five-sixths of Howells' novels have some reference to his Italian experiences.

The first chapter of the book is a resumé of the four years which so influenced Howells. Numerous letters he wrote from Venice to friends are cited; so are the references to Venice in the annual reports of the Department of State. But only one of Howells' dispatches to the department is cited.

Woodress apparently was familiar with the contents of Howells' dispatches, now in the National Archives. But they apparently did not contribute to his literary ends. Thus the book leaves one wishing that one might know something of the official activities of the young consul in Venice. That would have taken little space, since in one year only four American ships called at the port of Venice. But the literary scholar is not interested in political and commercial history, just as most historical scholars would not be interested in the material Woodress has used.

The Indianapolis *News*

Sexson E. Humphreys

Walter C. Woodward, Friend on the Frontier: A Biography.

By Elizabeth H. Emerson with a Preface by Errol T. Elliot. (Richmond, Indiana: Walter C. Woodward Memorial Commission, 1952, pp. 316. Illustrations and bibliography. \$2.00.)

The subject of this biography is well known to members of the Society of Friends as editor of the *American Friend* and General Secretary of the Five Year Meeting of Friends; to others he is not so well known, although state and local historians will remember him as the first director of the Indiana Historical Commission, organized in 1915 to direct the celebration of the state centennial in each community and county of the state.

Walter Woodward was a native Hoosier, born near Mooresville of Quaker parents in 1878. The family moved to the frontier Quaker settlement at Newberg, Oregon, when he was two, and there he grew to manhood. The author gives equal space to his preparation of life with its