

BOOK REVIEWS

TWO WITNESSES: A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION OF HUBERT PARRY AND FRIEDRICH VON HÜGEL. By Gwendolen Greene. (J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. ; 7/6 net.)

Mrs. Plunket Greene in this personal recollection has given us an admirable study in contrasts, with their effects on herself, in the formation of her mind, character and spiritual development. The two witnesses are her father and her uncle. For her they were two of the cloud of witnesses who have during her lifetime manifested to her the faith of Christ. There were others as well; but triumphantly for her these were the chief two. But the fascination of the book for the reader will be quite as much in the reactions of Mrs. Greene to the influence of these two in their individual characters: it is really a study in the interrelations of the three souls. We confess, however, we find nothing new told us of Friedrich von Hügel. By now he is not only one of the most famous of the lovers of goodness in the past generation, but he is also one whose inner hopes and desires, whose evolution out of a simple acceptance of any Protestant or rationalistic commentary on Scripture into a firmer understanding of the definitely theological conceptions of Christ's teaching and whose progress from a faith, that was instinctive at first rather than instructed, to a faith intelligently arrayed have been placed before us minutely in his own books, addresses and letters. There is hardly any other religious thinker of our time whose inner life has been more openly displayed than his. Hence the fresh interest of the book is its revelation of the character of Hubert Parry, so well known a figure in London and Oxford even twenty years ago. There must be many still left who remember watching him go by with sturdy step and his fine head held erect, his face beaming with humour as he talked in gusts to his companion by his side.

In Oxford he was a frequent visitor. Especially he lives in memory as present at the first Encaenia held by Lord Curzon as Chancellor of the University in which he received his D.C.L. What a motley crowd of distinguished people it was who received their honours that year with him, the Duke of Connaught, Rudyard Kipling, Lord Kitchener, General Booth, Cecil Rhodes, Mark Twain! Imagine Hubert Parry amongst them and then realise from the pages of this book how humorously he must have viewed his fellow doctors! What seemed most clear at the time was the fine figure he made with his black velvet cap and

his scarlet gown, and the healthy face with its close-cropped white hair, so alien from its adornments and yet carrying them so well. Mrs. Greene shows him to us as a person of distinctive character. To start with, he was an artist who was always tidy and was always in time. Order he loved, disorder he hated. As a musician indeed he should have done so, for order is harmony's first law : yet many musicians were not as he. He stands apart. Moreover, he was a musician who loved humour. Now musicians have been witty, but musicians have not often had humour. Again he was intelligently interested in his world, its science, its politics, its dreams, its hopes. Of all artists musicians as a rule have been least interested in their world. In a moment of national crisis or under royal patronage they may be stirred to compose a rousing anthem or to decorate a loyal ode or to chant the praises of freedom : but usually they are self-centred and even narrow in their minds and sympathies. Hubert Parry was little centred on himself : he stood with his back to himself, hiding his emotions and his pains, austere, hard in his bearing, loving the boisterous movement and supreme loneliness of the sea. Even finally we could say that he was unique as a musician in his settled dislike of the Catholic faith. He seems to have thought it weak, emotional, and insincere. He was ignorant of it, of course ; and the Catholicism he disliked he had found only in some human embodiment of it, weak, emotional, insincere. But no one who reads the book will doubt his sterling qualities, his genuine force of heroic constancy, his delicate sense of beauty in its more austere and dreadful forms, his self-mastery, his love of Christ's personal character, his orderly conduct, the deep violence of his love.

The book must have been difficult for Mrs. Greene to write : she has told us almost as much about herself as about her witnesses, partly deliberately, partly beyond her desire. Such a book, however, needed to be written : it is delicate, it is reticent, it will help those who admire strength.

B. J.

MEDIAEVAL SPIRITUALITY. By Felix Vernet. Translated by the Benedictines of Talacre. (Catholic Library of Religious Knowledge ; XIII. Sands ; 3/6.)

Everyone who has studied mediæval piety and prayer will probably have criticisms to offer when he reads this book, either because his favourite authors have been given insufficient prominence or because some writer has been misunderstood. Such reprimands are inevitable. But this summary of an immense