

Book Reviews

THE LIFE OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, PIUS X. By the Very Rev. Don Benedetto Pierami of the Benedictines of Val-lombrosa, Abbot of St. Praxede. Published under the auspices of the Postulator-General, with a preface by Baron Ludwig de Pastor. (Casa Editrici Marietti, Rome.)

The chief value of this book lies in the authority of the author, who is no less a person than the Postulator of the cause for Pope Pius X's beatification. It is perhaps permissible to suggest, with all reverence for the writer's dignity and office, that the English version of his book would have had greater success if he had had more sense of humour and a translator with adequate knowledge of English (though it must be admitted that the deficiencies of the second sometimes go far towards supplying the lack of the first). We read that 'the young student underwent a siege of weeping,' or again, 'He also took charge of the youth . . . alluring them to the Church and to a correct mode of living by presenting them with little presents.' The lovable personality of the holy Pope struggles vainly to emerge from under such trappings. There is interest in any record of his almost incredibly manifold achievements, and the startling miracles which he wrought both during and after his lifetime; but those who would know himself will do better to read the entirely charming *Pius X*, by F. A. Forbes (Burns, Oates and Washbourne).

M.B.

THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE. By William Barry. (Longmans; 10/6 net.)

We confess to a difficulty in reviewing this book. The difficulty is due not to the book, but to the author. Catholics in this country are so much indebted to Canon Barry. He has presented the Catholic mind in literature at times when no other Catholic did, even if he could, present it. And so worthily always. He has never let us down.

But this book—his latest! We do not wish to appear ungracious when we say it 'dates.' We have made a list of the names of 'opponents' against whom the Canon argues majestically. They are dead. Their theories are dead. Why flog the dead even with polished whips? What though their names are the names of great men? Spencer, Mill, Tyndall, Crookes, Locke, Hume, Descartes, Clifford, etc., to mention the better known. Or shall we say, names known to the student of nineteenth century materialistic philosophy which is historical but not actual? Bishop Temple was saying only

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the other day: 'Materialism as a philosophy is dead as a door nail. No philosopher of repute defends it.' And Dr. Sheen, at the recent Pax Romana Congress (August, 1928) lamented that contemporaries go busily on refuting Descartes, Mill and Kant. 'Spencer's despair of Truth at last; Huxley's revolt against the cosmic order; Romanes when he denied God,' are interesting phenomena. But to a younger generation they are less interesting than Keith, Alexander, Bergson, Russell, James, Wells. And, unfortunately, the interest of the Canon's contemporaries of the past is diminished by the Canon's style, which—and we confess with all humility—we find hard to read.

The aim of the letters which compose this book is to 'prove that Life and Mind were not secondary, or accidental, or derived from matter and motion, but aboriginal and of necessity everlasting.' Most of the letters 'were written over twelve years ago.' Letter I is dated 1927.

T.F.

LETTERS FROM BARON FRIEDRICH VON HÜGEL TO A NIECE.

Edited with an introduction by Gwendolen Greene. (J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.; 7/6 net.)

The von Hügel of these letters (some of which appeared in the *Selected Letters* published in 1927, while others are now printed for the first time) is the von Hügel of 1918-1924—that is, von Hügel at his best. 'Now that he is gone,' writes Mrs. Greene in an excellent introduction (p. xli), 'and one reads his books as a whole, it is impossible not to be deeply impressed by the lovely growth of his mind and soul within that great Communion. He matures and mellows quite clearly beneath our eyes . . . Those "drops of clear religious wine" he speaks of, have purified him of any imperfection and strain; he is full of a touching humility . . .' It is a point we dwelt on in reviewing here the former volume—his remarkable and refreshing growth in humility, his shedding of all fussiness and attainment of a radiating peace, not superficial, but passing understanding, all the fruit of what he calls in a letter in the present volume (p. 21) 'a sense of the presence, the power, the prevenience of God, the healing Divine Dwarf of our poor little man-centred, indeed even self-centred, schemes.'

'The first and central act of religion is *adoration*, sense of God,' of a God 'infinitely more than a mere assuager of even all men's wants.' This sense was the mainspring of his life, and he could not stand any teaching that watered down