

Review.

THE LIFE OF JOHN HUNTER, by LESLIE S. HUNTER,
Hodder & Stoughton, 12s. 6d. net.

THIS volume of nearly three hundred pages, tells with admirable taste the life story of one who, in his own way, was undoubtedly a leader. He was essentially a free lance, nominally a Congregationalist, but carrying all his days a rooted antipathy to conventional ecclesiasticism. He belonged to the school of Carlyle, Ruskin, F. D. Maurice, and Charles Kingsley, and was a strong voice in favour of what has come to be called the social applications of the Gospel. His ministry in Glasgow was by general testimony a most stimulating and ennobling influence in the life of the city, and his catholicity of spirit, which at the time was somewhat rare, evoked a ready response.

However, it was chiefly by his insistence on the pre-eminence of worship that he came most deeply to influence the religious life of Britain. He loved to quote Emerson's saying that public worship is the most important single function in the life of a nation, and he strove by all the means in his power to make his own services helpful, varied, and attractive. His book, *Devotional Services*, ran into many editions, and there are few ministers to-day who have not used it or been influenced by it. Probably more than any other he gave that impulse to modern nonconformity which is leaving it still to search after more adequate forms of worship, and giving it courage to claim in this realm its heritage of freedom. Many to-day would agree that our first need is of a deeper devotion.

On another point also his biography challenges our thought. He had a very clear idea of what a church should be, an ideal which he followed with unwavering loyalty. One wonders whether our weakness is not in part due to the fact that so often our ideal is nebulous and ill-defined, and whether a better understanding of what the church ought to be in worship, fellowship, and service is not the first step to greater progress. He believed in one great fellowship uniting all Christians, but had no hope of any organic union. "It is discord we ought to mourn over, not diversity."

His biography is a valuable addition to his public service, and no one who wishes to estimate the various religious movements of our time will be able to ignore it. For all his shyness and aloofness he had an understanding of his age, and the forces that moulded him, and to which he in turn added strength, are still informing the minds of many lesser men.