

DESERT CALLING. By Anne Fremantle. (Hollis and Carter; 15s. 0d.)

Many saints, who have at some point in their lives undergone a profound conversion, show signs, even in the time of their unbelief, of those qualities which, later, give so personal a flavour to their holiness. But this seems not to have been the case with Charles de Foucauld: he was idle, pleasure-seeking and egoistic in his youth, but except during his Moroccan journey, undertaken as he neared conversion, he does not appear to have followed these pursuits with the furious energy and absorption which was so outstanding a characteristic of his later life. It is as hard to reconcile these two phases of his life, as it is to trace in the face of the hermit of Tamanrasset, the dark, insolent young Lieutenant of Hussars.

Mrs Fremantle gives a very full and interesting account of his life and work, telling not only de Foucauld's personal story, but fitting it into that wider frame of political events without which it is impossible to appreciate his unique position. Indeed, it is in this last respect only that her wide knowledge and obvious enthusiasm tend to blur the clear lines of the biography, by admitting a wealth of political and genealogical detail, which has, for the ordinary reader, but a remote bearing on the subject.

This apart, the book is excellent; enjoyable to read, and giving a detailed picture of one who sought obscurity and abjection, and who became remarkable in his own country and in Africa, not only as a marabout, a holy man, but also as an important factor in the conquest of the Sahara.

R.B.H.

HALEVY'S HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE. Vol. 1. (Ernest Benn; 18s.)

It is always a happy thing to realise that there are as many Frenchmen who love and appreciate the English as there are Englishmen whose affection for France is inexhaustible. This work, by such a Frenchman, would be valuable on that account alone, but, in fact, it has a far greater importance. It was published in French in 1913 and in English in 1924 for the first time, and its method of approach and lay-out has profoundly affected all subsequent general history books. M. Halévy divided his work into three sections, of which only one, and that the shortest, dealt with straightforward political history. The second, far longer, dealt with economics, and the third, longer still, with religion and culture. This arrangement can be seen reflected in the works of Professor Trevelyan, for instance, and in the Oxford English History. On its own period, Halévy's work has remained the classic authority, and this reprint, in its excellent format, is more than welcome.

P.F.