

## REVIEWS

REMBRANDT AND SPINOZA: A STUDY OF THE SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY HOLLAND. By W. R. Valentiner. (Phaidon Press; 21s.)

This represents a new and very valuable type of approach to art history. It is illustrated admirably with twelve well-chosen plates. The price is remarkably moderate. Everything that Dr Valentiner writes of Rembrandt is of interest, even though it is hard to accept his suggestion that the very female figure of the 'Pallas Athene' was in reality an 'Alexander the Great' or that the bearded Jewish student now in the Cleveland museum was drawn from Spinoza. There is perhaps too much imaginative reconstruction of what he terms 'the glamorous personality' of Rembrandt. It is a pity that he should have chosen Spinoza as the companion study. It is not only that Spinoza's philosophy seems unduly simplified and his personality idealized but there is in fact no evidence that he and Rembrandt ever met. Besides, it is one more indication of Spinoza's isolated greatness that he was so unrepresentative of the Holland of his time. Anyone familiar with seventeenth-century Holland must regret that Dr Valentiner did not write a study in the same format and with the same illustrations entitled 'Rembrandt and Menasseh ben Israel'.

GERVASE MATHEW, O.P.

SEEING ROMAN BRITAIN. By Leonard Cottrell. (Evans Brothers; 21s.)

Mr Leonard Cottrell has done much to popularize archaeology and to evoke fresh interest in it both by his broadcasts and by his *Bull of Minos*. He has now composed the best guide book to Roman Britain. Inevitably an archaeologist will find points to criticize, the occasional exasperating misprint, like the Emperor 'Antonius Pilus', the odd description like 'the child's tea-set' at Corbridge, the quite unjustifiable guess like the 'Gaulish pirates' on Traprain Law and, surprisingly rarely, an omission like the busts and wall-paintings at Lullingstone. But this is more than counter-balanced. Nearly every Roman site of any importance in England, Scotland and Wales is described vividly and so is the way to get to each of them. There is an infectious interest in each chapter and not one dull paragraph; while it is pleasant to find that the archaeologists Mr Cottrell most obviously admires are the two most worthy of admiration—Sir Mortimer Wheeler and Professor Richmond.

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