

## REVIEWS

BATH. By R. A. L. Smith. (Batsford: 12s. 6d.).

The house of Batsford 'publishing only such volumes as they are proud should bear their imprint' has added to its monographs on Oxford and Cambridge, a third, rather slimmer one devoted to Bath. The letterpress of this charming book was completed, shortly before his death last April, by Lieutenant R. A. Lendon Smith, R.N.V.R.; it shows on every page that this gifted and erudite young man possessed in a high degree '*l'enthousiasme*' which the moralist in the play declared to be '*la seule vertu*.'

Enthusiastic the writer certainly was. 'Bath at a first glance seemed to him 'like a city out of an Eastern romance, a new Jerusalem built by some magic hand in England's green and pleasant land.' Even the sordid details of the growth of *Aquatæ Sulis*, through the filth and disorder of Tudor and Stuart times to the elegant restraint imposed on eighteenth-century Bath by Beau Nash; by Dr. William Oliver, who invented the biscuit; by Ralph Allen and by the elder and the younger Woods, do not dim his vision of a queen of cities. His eulogy connects a series of realistic passages from early monkish and epistolary sources. Quotations from Horace Walpole, the Pickwick Papers, and the best part of a chapter from *Persuasion* carry the story on to the evening in 1938 when the Duchess of Kent opened the restored Assembly Rooms and danced there: then, jumping four years, it reaches that sudden night which saw this and other restorations reduced to rubble by the captains of the Luftwaffe—missing their way to Filton and determined to wreck *something* before they returned home.

There are omissions, of course; the whole story of Bath needs more than one slim volume for its development. It would have been pleasant to meet the shade of Miss Muloch, pursuing John Halifax Gentleman into Norfolk Buildings; or to watch Mrs. Thrale exchange greetings with Fanny Burney in Gay Street; also, because Lady Miller of the Vase is given several paragraphs, a line should have been found for the Swan of Lichfield whose taste in poetry often coincided with that of her hostess at Batheaston.

It is also to be hoped that, since he clearly had not found it on earth, this enthusiast may yet read, in some corner of a celestial library, that masterpiece of crisp, satiric fiction in which Caroline Mordaunt, the governess, describes a soirée at Bath and the appearance there of The Child of Nature.

The illustrations, end-papers and jacket design of this lively tribute are worthy of the purpose they fulfil. In these it is possible to see how wealth has ruined with plate-glass the beautiful proportion of the original panes in so many of the sash-windows of the

Crescents and Terraces, and to enjoy the excellent pinch of salt the selector of so many suave and elegant reproductions of the work or J. C. Nattes, W. Watts, A. Woodroffe—and the photographic artistry of Paul Fripp, has added to his work by interspersing them with half a dozen of Rowlandson's satires. There should be an annotated list of these illustrations to complete the value of this monograph.

NAOMI ROYDE SMITH.

THE CLUE TO PASCAL. By Emile Cailliet. (S.C.M. Press; 6s.).

Of the making of clues to Pascal there is no end. And it is good that it should be so for his work is one of the world's great contributions to Christian literature. His apologetic, like that of Newman, has a powerful appeal. But he died at 39, and because of the fragmentary condition of his writings, many Pascal-lovers have chosen what they would in them, emphasised some particular aspect, or interpreted them with some bias. This book, dealing with Pascal and the Bible, is a curious example. It is full of erudition, for the author has spared no pains in studying what has been written about Pascal. Speaking as one who is not, or is no longer, a Catholic, he pays in the last eight pages (106-114) explicit testimony to Pascal's ardent Catholicism. He touches rapidly on the question of his Jansenism: too rapidly to be conclusive seeing that, as he truly says, Jansenism 'cannot be considered as a unit' (p. 111) and the whole controversy is rather 'sterile.' In that devout Catholicism, however, he finds the explanation of the mental torment, the famous *angoisse* romantically attributed to Pascal. He 'cannot entirely rest on the message of the Good News such as he finds it in his Bible' (p. 104); and a certain dualism 'was to bring anguish to him as an assiduous reader of the Bible, and as a faithful Roman Catholic' (p. 107). This is, of course, a personal and Protestant opinion to which no Catholic with an inner grasp of the faith could subscribe.

No such 'dualism' does in fact exist: to assert it comes from a real misunderstanding of the Catholic position, surely also from too *simpliste* a view of the spiritual world and of the workings of God in human souls. Indeed it appears to us that, for all Professor Cailliet is alive to the danger of transposing Pascal 'into Protestant language' (p. 106), he has in fact through 104 pages made him appear as an incomplete Protestant. The suggestion is there when he calls the Bible the 'Book' (in Filleau de la Chaise *un livre unique, ce livre*, without the capital); speaks of the 'evangelical spirit' where the English adjective has a connotation absent from the French; frequently opposes Scholasticism and the Bible as though they excluded each other. Then in dwelling most of all on Pascal's personal meditations on the Scriptures—deeply moving and a great incentive to imitation—he has done something less than justice to