The Sixteenth Century

between Montaigne and Machiavelli are studied in A. Nicolai, ‘Le Machiavelisme de Montaigne’, BSAM, 9, and *L. C. Stevens, ‘Machiavelli’s Virtu and the voluntarism of Montaigne’, Renaissance Papers. M. Parslow, ‘Montaigne’s fat man and the meaning of “Des Coches”’, RN, xii, i, points out that ‘coches’ were a symbol of luxury in those days. An echo of Montaigne is studied in O. Lutaud, ‘Montaigne chez les niveleurs anglais. Walwyn et les Essais’, RLM, xii, i.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

By D. C. Potts, Fellow of Keble College, Oxford

I. General

A year in which few major works of importance have appeared has proved an opportune moment so far as the 17th c. is concerned for the publication of a new volume of the Encyclopédie de la Pléiade: Histoire des littératures, III. Littératures françaises, connexes, et marginales, Gallimard, 2053 pp., which devotes nearly 300 pp. to an up-to-date summary of recent conclusions of 17th c. research and criticism. A. Adam’s chapter, ‘Ouvertures sur le dix-septième siècle’, is especially valuable for its original treatment of the evolution of religious thought at the turn of the century. The same author’s lecture ‘Sur le problème religieux dans la première moitié du XVIIe siècle’, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 24 pp., neatly delineates the fortunes of two important approaches to religious questions, the Augustinian and the Christian humanist, well beyond the chronological limit suggested by the title; it is, however, open to the charge of over-systematization (see rev. by Fletcher, FS, xiv, i).

XVII S, 42/3, a symposium entitled ‘Serviteurs du Roi. Quelques aspects de la fonction publique dans la société française du XVIIe siècle’, offers a useful corrective to the tendency of some lit. historians to oversimplify the sociological background of the period, and warns in particular against the dangers of imposing an over-rigid system of class-stratification on 17th c. society.
2. Thought

One of the most welcome events of the year has been the publication of the first modern edition of a work by Gassendi, *Dissertations en forme de paradoxes contre les aristotéliciens, livres I et II*, Vrin, xv + 519 pp., with Latin text and a French translation by the editor, Bernard Rochot. Presentation and critical apparatus are impeccable, and it is to be hoped that M. Rochot’s edition of the more important *Syntagma* will not be long delayed.

Descartes has rather surprisingly provided nothing of note, but Malebranche studies continue to make headway, and are likely to receive further impetus from the publication of G. Sebba’s *Nicolas Malebranche, 1638–1715. A preliminary bibliography*, Athens (Georgia), Univ. of Athens Press, 90 pp., which contains an annotated description, presented with particular regard for the interests of the lit. historian, of 480 items. A further vol. of the *Oeuvres complètes: V: Méditations chrétiennes et métaphysiques*, Vrin, 6 + xxiv + 254 pp., by H. Gouhier and A. Robinet, takes the text of 1707, the last revised by the author, as basis. Of critical work on the philosopher, G. Dreyfus, *La Volonté selon Malebranche*, Vrin, 1958, 406 pp., contains a minimum of historical exegesis; slighter, but of more interest to the literary scholar, S. Nicolosi’s article in *So*, xxvii, 2, ‘Infussi culturali e fonti della filosofia malebranchiana’, points to the need to distinguish between the apparent sources of Malebranche’s thought and the actual influence of his cultural milieu. A work by M. Guérout, *Malebranche: les cinq abîmes de la Providence* (Aubier, 2 vols) I have not seen.

Those who may have been somewhat daunted by the volume of recent pubs on Jansenism will welcome J. Orcibal’s article in *RHE*, liii, 4, 1958, analysing the work of L. Ceyssens (*YWML*, xx, 84–5) and indicating the conclusions to which it points. G. Delassault has followed up her study of Le Maistre de Sacy (*YWML*, xx, 85) with an interesting *Choix de lettres inédites*, Nizet, 385 pp., selected to reveal the personality of the writer and to show something of his attitude to doctrinal questions.

There has been some interesting and fairly substantial work on Pascal. E. Mortimer, *Blaise Pascal, the life and work of a realist*, Methuen, 240 pp., although offering nothing new to the specialist, is likely to prove a valuable book for the general reader. Comparable