

THE BATHS OF ABSALOM. By James Pope-Hennessy. (Allan Wingate; 7s. 6d.)

The title of this elegantly written and printed apostrophe refers to the ravine in Martinique where, without undue savagery, though with a fine discernment for the ministry of the five senses, it was composed. Its purpose is to suggest a damning and conscience-stirring contrast between the dreadful social conditions in the British possessions of Santa Lucia and Dominica and the atmosphere of life and vigour in French Martinique. For this contrast as an artistic achievement, it well deserves to be read. Whether it is quite so successful as propaganda is another question. The suburbanism of the British West Indies, 'redolent of Peckham or Tulse Hill', may seem only too obviously lacking in healthy administrative promise when placed beside the self-assured adaptation of the Post Office girl in Martinique: '*Mais, monsieur, vous êtes en France*'. But unfortunately the very readers who should be most embarrassed by it are likely to conclude with some irritation that, after all, it is no more than a question of taste. They will readily understand that from the heights of the 'immensely civilized hotel' above the Fontaine d'Absalon some people prefer it the French way.

A.S.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH. Selected by Philip Wayne. (Oxford: World's Classics; 5s.)

It was a good idea to publish a selection of Wordsworth's letters. Wordsworth, as everyone knows, is often unexciting, and in any case the six volumes of Professor de Selincourt's edition are too much for the general reader. Mr Wayne's book has the further merit of drawing on sources independent of de Selincourt, one of them (*Some Letters of the Wordsworth Family* published by Cornell University) appearing after the six-volume edition had been published.

The selection itself shows a clear sense of what is readable and a catholic judgment. The later correspondence is pruned but not too savagely. And there is a useful index of persons addressed.

J.J.

YIELD TO THE NIGHT. By Joan Henry. (Gollancz; 9s. 6d.)

This is a very remarkable and deeply moving book. In very simple language it expresses the thoughts and emotions of a murderess during the last weeks of her life in the condemned cell: her reactions to her present situation and the people she has to deal with, her re-living of the past, of the murder and the events that led up to it, her sick fear as the end becomes daily more imminent. But the book is not just a brilliant evocation of mounting repulsion and terror: the characters are