

# BOOKS

ation. A distinguished German returns to his family and a high security job after some years in a Russian prison. About to greet him on the frontier, his wife is killed by a lorry. The adult daughter has no suspicion that the death was planned murder, and as the reader soon learns, that her supposed father is a Russian who closely resembles him, and lived with him in Russia. However, a young American secret agent is handy, and you will not be surprised that the discovery of the deception is accompanied by romance. This is an impressive study of the extreme in espionage, with accessories to match, as they say on the Woman's Page.

I much prefer John Creasey's Scotland Yard to his extravagances with "The

Toff." Parcel for Inspector West uncovers Post Office thefts in good style.

A woman might say it is easier to cook a roast than to make a light soufflé. I might say it is easier to write a "serious" thriller than a satirically funny one. In *Agent from the West*, an Englishman takes service as tutor to the son of a rebel in a Balkan State, and he and his friends are involved in a series of farcical manoeuvres. Alas, the mixture does not rise.

—A.M.

## FAITH AND WORKS

TESTIMONY TO HILAIRE BELLOC, by Eleanor and Reginald Jebb; Methuen, English price 16/-.

HILAIRE BELLOC was half-French by birth and even more French in his love and understanding of France. He entered Parliament in the Liberal

interest and regained the seat as an Independent. He attacked the system of donations to the funds of political parties, making a strong case against the secrecy attaching to their origin and use, and demanded an act for their Public Audit. (This reform has not yet reached New Zealand.) He resigned his seat the better to attack Parliamentary corruption. This he achieved successfully over the Marconi scandal in spite of a whitewashing Commission. He was a competent historian and an effective controversialist, and in this connection will best be remembered for his demolition of H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* and (in connection with Edward Gibbon) his contribution on the Ebionites which was derived from sources available to Gibbon but neglected by his too trustful successors. He attacked the scandalous

sale of honours, and was offered himself the distinction of Companion of Honour. He received Papal decorations for his defence of the Catholic Faith and was a Chevalier of the Legion d'Honneur. He was a poet and essayist of distinction.

All these and other matters are duly set forth in this interesting and all too brief memoir by his daughter and son-in-law.

—F. J. Foot

## THE BUNGLERS

CONSPIRACY AMONG GENERALS, by Wilhelm von Schramm; translated and edited by R. T. Clark; Allen and Unwin, New Zealand price 16/-.

THE conspiracy, of course, is the July 20 plot to kill Hitler, a badly bungled affair and little credit either in conception or execution to the senior German officers who planned it. This book tells the story of the French end of the affair, as unhappy in its outcome as that in Berlin. True, 1200 Gestapo were arrested and locked up in Paris within a couple of hours, "thanks to the enthusiasm of the troops," without a shot being fired, but plans to end the war in the West by surrendering to the Allies came to nothing through the vacillation of Field-Marshal Kluge. Kluge was Rommel's successor in command of Army Group B, and Rommel was prepared to end the war in France; the conclusion is inevitable that the R.A.F. did the Allies a disservice by machine-gunning him on July 17, 1944.

Schramm, a German war correspondent, has used war diaries and transcripts of telephone conversations to reconstruct the events of the last fortnight of July. But the fruits of his research are spoiled by the over-dramatised presentation, whether by author or translator it is difficult to say. I suspect the hand of the latter, who once or twice is careless about dates and often more careless with his syntax.

—W.A.G.

## BLUNTED SCALPEL

A SURGEON IN PARIS, by Charles F. Bove; Museum Press, English price 16/-.

I HAVE no doubt that Dr Bove is a fine surgeon and a good man. I have his testimony that he was a V.I.P. in the international life of Paris. For twenty-one years he did an heroic job in the American Hospital there, and he met all the Best People: Mistinguette, Lindbergh, Hemingway, and the ghost of Madame de Recamier. Also the worst: Kreuger, Laval, and the invading Nazis. But he is not a good writer. His book is shapeless, superficial, I-charged gossip: a series of instalments for a Ladies' Magazine, by Axel Munthe out of Sava, but lacking the small finesse of either of these unnecessarily popular from-the-inside-of-your-operation writers. Doctors should sharpen their pens, or stick to the scalpel.

—Anton Vogt

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE MARVELLOUS KINGDOM, by Pierre Labat, translated by Maurice Michael; Odhams Press, through Whitcombe and Tombs, English price 15/-. Although written in the form of a novel (and written very well), this is a true story of a group of French Boy Scout frogmen, illustrated with photographs.

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