

## - BOOK REVIEW -

CHARLES RANKIN: *The Pope Speaks*

(Faber and Faber: London, 1940)

(Reviewed by Herbert L. Johnston)

*The Pope Speaks* is a timely and informative volume dealing with the efforts for peace made by "the greatest neutral", Pope Pius XII. Not the least valuable of its features is a preface written by His Eminence, Cardinal Hinsley, a preface which discusses the means at the disposal of the Pope for regaining and preserving peace, and in particular the weapon of excommunication.

The book itself is divided into two parts. In the first part Mr. Rankin, himself a non-Catholic, presents a short biography of His Holiness, describing the various steps in his career which led to his election to the Chair of Peter. There follows an account of his subsequent efforts to prevent the catastrophe of war—the various peace plans and the first encyclical—and to prevent its spread once it had broken out—the interviews with state representatives and the famous five-point peace plan.

The second part of the book is devoted to a full reproduction of the Pope's two encyclicals and his messages and addresses, and allows the reader to follow for himself the Holy See's unremitting efforts to regain peace. For purposes of comparison it also reproduces three encyclicals dealing with war and its effects by predecessors of the present Pontiff, and the peace proposals made by Pope Benedict XV in 1917.

There are several reasons why this book deserves to be widely read. If there should be any who still doubt that the Pope, representing unshakable moral force in the midst of violence and evil passions, is doing all that can possibly be done to terminate this conflict in a manner consonant with justice, this volume will remove their doubts. Further, it will point out the Christian principles that must be ever before the eyes of men of good will if, out of this holocaust, there is to come the peace that all desire, the only kind of peace that will last—peace founded on justice and charity. We are all working, according to our various capabilities, to win the war; we must also work to



win the peace. *The Pope Speaks* shows us the nature of the Pope's efforts in that respect and the direction our own should take, and outlines the principles according to which we may judge, when the day comes, what plans are and what are not worthy of our support.



### MURDER IN A NUNNERY

by Eric Shepherd

(Sheed and Ward: London and New York, 1940)

Reviewed by S. M. P., '41

The call to the Convent of Harrington on a murder case may have surprised Chief Inspector Andrew William Pearson of Scotland Yard, or it may have been just what he would expect from a house of "disappointed people; misfits, so to speak; emotional failures, shirking life and its problems.....", for such was his opinion of nuns. Whatever were his reactions at headquarters, he receives several surprises when he is admitted by the discreet little portress, Mother Peck, to the hallowed precincts of the convent. The story of the reactions of this splendid policeman to this unusual case, and the behaviour of the nuns and other inmates of the convent in an event so exceptional in their lives is the theme of Eric Shepherd's charming story, *Murder in a Nunnery*.

Readers whose ideas of nuns have been gleaned from books in which the "nunnery" is pictured with dungeons, bars, and all sorts of horrors have many surprises in store for them when they see Mr. Shepherd's comparatively true-to-life picture of the interior of a convent, and they, too, may come away as thoroughly changed as was the Chief Inspector.

The light and airy style of the book makes the story flow easily and smoothly, and the pervading touch of delicate humor imparts a refreshing tone. No one can leave Mr. Turtle, "a-sittin' in this 'ere barrer, as you sees me identical", without chuckling, and an encounter with Mother Peck will surely provoke a suppressed smile. The author permits here and there the use of typical American



slang, but Verity Goodchild wouldn't be "Verity" without it, and he hastily assures us that Mother Peagle certainly does not condone it.

A mystery story? Not altogether. The solution of the crime is less important in the story than the characters that are unfolded before the reader's eye as the Chief Inspector works his way to the end of the problem. From Mother Peagle, the wary disciplinarian, to Mr. Turtle, the gardener, the characters are so realistic that they become alive in the pages of the book, and their ways and mannerisms are depicted with delightful variety.

The very title of the book will attract many readers, enemies as well as friends of the "nunnery", the former seeking to justify their already unfavourable opinion, and the latter eager to refute what is to them an unpardonable implication. All will find "Murder in a Nunnery" a very enjoyable story, aptly described by Father Feeney as "a masterpiece of courtesy, humor, and exquisite charity".



### THE ORGANIC STATE

By Ross J. S. Hoffman

(Reviewed by Joseph McLeod, '42)

"The Organic State" is an essay on the social and political problems of the day. The author first makes a brief survey of the political history of the past century, and observes that most of the outstanding men of modern times are those who have made innovations in the political form of society. He treats briefly the defects and weaknesses of democracy, many of which, he says, are the results of the Great War, but thinks that democratic governments can become quite efficient once again if they implement themselves with real authority or, as he says, become organic.

He then describes in some detail the type of state produced by the Fascist regime in Italy. There everyone must function as a mere organism of the one political body, the State. Men are regarded as soulless beings without rights or wishes of their own, and Catholicism is countenanced only because of its capacity to cultivate the virtues which the state needs.



This political theory, while ethically wrong, renders a nation very powerful, and goes a long way in explaining the success which Italy has had until recently in raising the standard of living of her people, in conducting foreign policy, and in waging war.

Fascism has much in common with Communism and Naziism. All three are fundamentally anti-religious, militaristic and contain a threat to world peace and security. In all three the individual has nothing to say, and Catholic principles are held in contempt.

Mr. Hoffman makes some acute observations on the present war, which began before the book was completed. Even as he wrote, he foresaw the possibility of Italy entering on the side of Germany. He regards this as a fatal move, a move which will bring ultimate ruin and defeat to Italy.

He concludes with a discussion of the terrible evils confronting mankind today, and holds that if democracy fights against the atheism and barbarism within its ranks, it will be able to restore the world to its proper course, and overcome the present threatened dangers which all Christianity dreads.

The book is written in a rather pompous style which sometimes makes reading difficult. It is, however, a very enlightening treatment of topics in which everyone is interested at present, and on this account is well worth the time required to read it.



Good-breeding shows itself most where to an ordinary eye it appears the least.

—Addison.

He grieves more than is necessary who grieves before it is necessary.

—Seneca.