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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

THORSTEN SELLIN [Ed.]

MEDICAL ASPECTS OF CRIME. By W. Norwood East. X+437 pp. P. Blakeston's Sons and Co., Philadelphia, 1936. \$6.50.

This compilation of addresses and papers, by one who has worked up in the British Prison Service from Prison Medical Officer to His Majesty's Commissioner of Prisons and head of the Prison Medical Service in the Home Office, bears the stamp of the scholar and the man of experience. It is not a systematic treatise, but it is almost encyclopedic in the thorough treatment of those topics which it does cover, especially in the three chapters on the history of penology in Britain and the medical aspects of prison administration. Typhus fever, gaol fever from lice, scurvy from insufficiency of vitamine C foods, drunkenness in jails, punishments, bad water and poor air, limited food, inadequate bathing facilities, lack of surgery and dispensary were each gradually eliminated by steps well described. Incidentally the evolving attitude of the intelligent public on crime and penology runs like an *obligato*, and was forced by the distinction between incarcerated debtors and criminals. The discharge of the prisoners on medical grounds and inquiry into the mental state of prisoners began *circa* 1840; however the eminent medical men of the College of Physicians, to whom such affairs were referred, differed among themselves. Among their

conclusions was this: that "the diet ought not to be made the instrument of punishment . . ." Labor, useless and useful, its effects beneficial and crushing, are discussed and the means whereby some prisoners attempted to avoid labor. It was a short step from the realization that many prisoners were mentally afflicted to assume that there were often causal relationships between mental disease including mental defect and criminal conduct, and that in all such cases the usual trials and the usual imprisonment were inappropriate and ineffective. Then inebriates and recidivists came in for special attention.

Dr. East next discusses attempted suicide and analyzes 1000 consecutive cases, and concludes that the two commonest causes are alcoholism and unemployment, and that a person is not to be considered insane because he attempts or commits suicide although it is here (as often) exceedingly difficult to draw the line between sanity and insanity.

"Observations on Exhibitionism" is a lucid, informative chapter. Its limitations or incompleteness is dependent on being restricted to the cases actually studied. Asylum practice would have enlarged the author's concepts. As it stands, perusal of this chapter will help judges and prosecutors.

The relation of the brain to crime is a paper or chapter which is slow

to start but which contains many pithy conclusions while leaving open for further study the many other causative factors for criminal conduct.

Imprisonment in cells prevents the change in attitude needed for success after discharge from prison. The advantages of non-cellular imprisonment outweigh those of separate confinement.

The chapter on mental inefficiency and adolescent crime employs both British and American psychiatric contributions. Constitutional inferiority, moral imbeciles, mental defectives, mental abnormality without defect, functional incapacity and functional inefficiency, conflicting psychological schools of thought, delayed character development without associated delayed intelligence development, excessive emotionalism, psychopathic inferiority or psychopathic personality in adolescence, minor and recoverable grades of Dementia Praecox are all clearly handled; best of all is the differentiation between fatigability and indolence. Dr. East does not attribute the growing incidence or recognition of indolence to the dole; but we may and do, he has fears for indolence in the children in homes supported by the dole.

The chapters on suicide and on drug addiction appear sound. The British attitude toward alcoholism cannot be accepted by American scientists. Alcoholism, to us, does not mean excessive chronic drinking, and there are so many non-drinking Americans that widespread more or less moderate drinking is not taken so much a matter of course that crimes thus inspired are not chargeable to alcohol.

The worth of his opinions on prison labor warrants a larger exposition of his views from experience than one short chapter. "The conception that prison labor should be intentionally punitive in character is ill-advised, degrading to the prisoner and lacking in reformatory effect. Modern thought regards detention as the principal punitive element, and labor as one of the reformatory elements."

The medical aspects of crime are not the chiefest aspects, for if everyone could be made perfectly healthy there still would be crime. Crime is a social problem; and criminals are individuals with intent, unless they be more or less mental and only then should they be under the management and comprehension of psychologists (psychiatrists).

In the prosecution of offenders the moral defective must be differentiated from the habitual criminal, the alcoholic from alcoholism with dementia, the sex depraved from dementia praecox, and the mentally normal from the abnormal: in all such instances psychiatric interpretation is needed and usually is welcomed.

He gives convincing reasons and statistics why sterilization of criminals is bad and worthless.

Murderers attract the greatest attention. Of 338 cases of murder, 131 committed suicide when insane or mentally abnormal, and of the 338 cases there were 88 insane. Intention is not motive, and there may be sane intention based on insane motive. An interesting discussion follows.

Study of prison reaction types leads to consideration of alternatives to imprisonments, and 13,000

cases out of 300,000 were studied as to their mentality. Of the various types malingering is of popular interest, whereas in fact it is very rare. The chapter is encyclopedic.

The law, including the bench and the written law and prior decisions, is not very successful in practicing medicine especially in the abstruse field of psychiatry. Whereas the law outranks science within the courtroom or prison, nevertheless it would do well to study and select what psychiatry has to offer. At present the imperfections of the law are more obvious (and discreditable) than the incompleteness of science in understanding abnormal mentalities. Differences of opinion among scientists, and differences among lawyers, including judges, indicate that both the law and science are fluid and not static (although not flowing exactly parallel or at the same rate).

That the law, at any time, is to be respected but not revered, is more an American attitude than British if one understands the author.

This book by Dr. East is of great value to any criminologist, jurist, or penologist. It is excellently written and well published.

H. S. HULBERT.

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ADJUSTMENT.

By *Laurance F. Shaffer*. xix+600 pp. Houghton, Mifflin Company, Boston, 1936.

As far as the reviewer is aware this is the first volume on mental health that is founded upon a thoroughgoing theory of learning. Both the causes of maladjustment and the technique of readjustment are based upon such a theory.

In the four parts of the book we find the following:

First—The general psychology of behavior as adjustment.

Second—The varieties of behavior: defense, withdrawal, fear and repression as adjustive phenomena.

Third—Personality: the development of traits, their measurement and a critical account of the psychoanalytic theory.

Fourth—Techniques of mental hygiene. In this part, including the last four chapters are many definite suggestions for workers in clinical psychology and descriptions of good practice.

Going back to the first part—we find a reformulation of the Law of Effect: there is a tendency for animals to learn those responses that lead toward a reduction of tension and toward the completion of motivated action. The drive of the organism has its roots in tissue conditions, in the tension of muscles, in the stimuli and in elaborate social motives that coordinate them through associative learning.

In the second part, undesirable adjustments are described as forms of reaction that, in disturbing situations, have brought about at least a partial reduction of tension and that have thus become fixed as habits. Repression is one of these reactions that produces but a partial reduction. One of its effects is a failure of recall and because of this failure it stands in the way of reeducation.

This failure of recall that, for the present, is identified with forgetting, and is considered as conditioned by the passage of time. The mere lapse of time, however, it may

be observed, is notoriously ineffective for forgetting in the case of many of the neuroses.

Throughout, the book is scientific and objective. The description of social motives, for example, is ac-

complished without recourse to pigeonholes such as the instincts and without resort to the mystical concepts of Freudian psychology.

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