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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

WILLIAM F. BYRON [ED.]

LEGAL MEDICINE AND TOXICOLOGY.

By T. A. Gonzales, M.D., M. Vance, M.D., and M. Helpern, M.D., with a foreword by H. S. Martland, M.D. Cloth, price \$10.00. Pp. 754, with 244 illustrations. D. Appleton-Century Company, New York, 1937.

The authors have placed in one volume of 754 pages a comprehensive discussion of the subjects of Legal Medicine and Toxicology. Voluminous treatises on either phase of the subject have appeared not only in English, but also in foreign languages. However, Gonzales, Vance and Helpern have included in this volume the most essential phases of this subject which are of value to the physician interested in Pathology and Forensic Medicine.

With the exception of the larger communities in the United States, few of the smaller communities are familiar with or have the facilities and equipment to carry out scientific investigation along lines of Forensic Medicine. The authors described in detail the Medical Examiner's System as it is used in the city of New York, and compare it with the Coroner's System. These two systems warrant a more detailed investigation by the medical as well as the legal profession, so that the benefits of both offices can be used for the improvement of the existing systems that are in vogue in various communities in this country.

Medical students, as well as physicians, are familiar with the laws pertaining to communicable diseases, but very little effort has been made in our teaching institutions (this applies to the legal profession as well) to make both the physician and the lawyer familiar with the laws governing the dead human body. Gonzales and his associates have described this phase in their book and they are to be commended because most other books along similar lines have not gone into this subject. There are one or two monographs, notably one written by Weinmann and published by the National Research Council on this subject, but here again this book is available only to a few interested persons. There is also a discussion of the behavior of the medical witness in court as well as the expert witness.

Chapter III deals with a discussion on the identification of the dead. This is of interest to the pathologist as well as the autopsy surgeon in establishing the identity of the deceased. There is a brief discussion of the method for performing autopsies, but it is hoped that when a physician becomes a medical examiner, an assistant medical examiner, or a coroner's physician, that he have sufficient training as a pathologist to be thoroughly familiar with technique, with gross and microscopic changes and bacteriology to properly observe and evaluate the conditions

revealed in the postmortem examination.

The authors have presented the subject of sudden death as well as shock. The former is of interest for the reason that many physicians as well as lawyers are of the impression that death due to trauma, or death under suspicious circumstances is the type of death investigated by the medical examiner or the coroner's office. However, so-called "sudden death" or unexpected death, and what is still more frequent, death without previous medical attention, should be investigated by the medical examiner or the coroner's office. Gonzales, Vance and Helpern bring out the important statement (p. 86) that even when a thorough autopsy is performed there are times when death cannot be explained on the basis of organic changes.

There is a detailed description dealing with the subject of trauma. In the chapter on bullet wounds, the discussion of purely medical aspects of wounds is very well done. However, the identification of guns and bullets should be made by experts under authority of the medical examiners, or Coroner's office, instead of by the police as is mentioned in the chapter dealing with this subject.

Death due to asphyxia, and physical agents is discussed in detail and several chapters are devoted to the subject of criminal abortion, infanticide and rape. The chapter dealing with the medicolegal examination of blood and iso-agglutination tests for human blood deserves special commendation. For the physician, as well as the lawyer, the chapters on insanity, insurance, survivorship, etc., are of particular interest.

The last third of the book deals

with toxicology. Of this, chapters 28 to 35, inclusive, deal with the occurrence of various poisons, the symptoms which they produce, the fatal dose, postmortem evidences and diagnosis and treatment of non-fatal poisonings. Chapters 37 to 39, inclusive, deal with the technique of toxicological analysis, apparently for the guidance of the occasional physician interested in forensic medicine who may have an occasion to perform a toxicological analysis. For such a purpose the sections on technique will probably be too vague to fulfil his needs. Probably when a revision of this book is made by the authors they no doubt will include more complete accounts of the more recent techniques used for toxicological analysis. An example of this might be cited when one reads the discussion on lead. The analytical method described in the book is that of Fairhall (1922), while newer and more sensitive methods such as the Dithizone test, which has been in common use since 1935, is not mentioned.

There are numerous references to Peterson, Haines, and Webster's book on Legal Medicine and Toxicology and to other older textbooks. It is hoped that the next edition will include references to more recent toxicological procedures which are to be found not only in the English literature but also in the Journals of Foreign countries.

The book "Legal Medicine and Toxicology" by Gonzales, Vance and Helpern is beautifully printed and the illustrations are clear and in keeping with the subject discussed. For the physician interested in Forensic Medicine as well as to the pathologist who has occasion to perform autopsies for the

coroner or medical examiner, this volume is recommended for it presents the important and valuable phases of the subject which the physician must be familiar with if he is at all interested in forensic medicine.

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CLINICAL PSYCHIATRY, PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE. By *Morris Braude*, X and 360 pp. P. Blakiston's Son and Co., Inc., Philadelphia, 1937. \$4.00.

1. This book is slow to get under way and is hard to read. Generalizations which have exceptions are stated as unqualified generalizations.

The book is not attractive to new students of the subject, for the hopeful parts are not placed first, nor is the orientation of psychiatry in the constellation of social sciences made manifest early nor definitely. Therein the author failed of his purpose.

2. The hypothetical (illustrative) case histories followed each by an actual case history of the same diagnosis and that followed by a discussion of that diagnostic or clinical entity is well done, is crisply informative and is educational to a wide reader-audience.

3. The chapter on prison psychoses is too brief and is insufficiently inclusive to interest or inform penologists. The criminal conduct disorder of epileptics, however, is of interest to criminologists.

His conclusion is worthy of quoting: "Medico-legal Implication. From all that has been said it must be obvious that no legal responsibility could ever be laid to the door of the epileptic. This

dictum holds particularly for the types of disease which give title to this chapter. Jurists would do well to take cognizance of this fact and render judgment accordingly."

4. Lethargic Encephalitis, often called sleeping sickness, is the cause of many forms of conduct disorder—these disorders are just as truly symptoms, i. e., not under voluntary control, as are the neurological symptoms: "Moral lapses, lying, stealing, offenses against decency and propriety, brutalities, and the use of the vilest language. . . . Not infrequently these youths run afoul of the law because of overt felonious or criminal acts . . . in frenzy (may) kill themselves. They resist (?) all attempts at education and correction, and find themselves in penal institutions instead of psychopathic hospitals."

5. The author skimps on describing types of constitutional psychopathy, and he is optimistic about their improvement to or toward acceptable social adaptation.

6. On malingering the author does not subscribe to the theory that only the borderline psychopaths will, can and could simulate insanity; rather he believes it is human nature to evade. He does say, however, "A plea of insanity or madness in criminal cases may be as justifiable in one case as inexcusable in another." Further, "As the results from the lie-detecting devices are subject to misinterpretation and are not yet accepted unreservedly by courts, nothing need be said about them."

7. Although the book is sound it does not appeal to the non-medical criminologist—prosecutor, defender, jurist or penologist—as particularly helpful or illuminating.

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MENTALITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY.

By *Samuel Kahn*. 249 pp. Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1937. \$3.00.

It is seldom that a reviewer has the unpleasant task of evaluating a volume so lacking in merit as to permit no word of commendation. Dr. Kahn's work, judged by even the least rigorous scientific or literary standards, unfortunately leaves no alternative to this necessity. To avoid drawing unwarranted conclusions, the author's words will, as far as possible, be used to indicate the bases for the reviewer's judgment.

Five hundred men and women, New York correctional institution inmates, of whom "seventy-five were investigated carefully," were the subjects of Dr. Kahn's study, of which the "main object was to diagnose active homosexuality . . . so that the investigator might become oriented with the psychological status of such people." Psychiatrists will wince at the "methods" by which "confidence" was gained in order that the stated "main object" might be pursued. "Our object at first was to withhold from the subject our purpose . . . After a physical examination we led the patient to think that he or she was suspected of being a mental case." Then, through a series of questions (to prisoners who had already "received favors relative to being treated for physical conditions, getting special care, cigarettes, extra medicines, etc.") ranging from "Who is your best friend" to "Who is better, man or woman?" the method of "suggestion" was introduced, after which, "to those who were very suggestible we could disclose our purpose" and "to strike home at this point

. . . asked them . . ." "Of course you are a homosexual or *degenerate?*"* With this evidence "that the examiner was indifferent with regard to any suspicions as to their homosexuality," his disinterested approach was further indicated by such exhortations as "Now come on with the truth. . . . We know about it as well as you do." With more "negativistic" persons, the author resorted to "'peeping'" techniques, using half-exposed pictures.

With no apparent recognition of the statistical weighting indicated in the description of his methods, the author states that "it took very little urging" for those "who were feeble-minded . . . to admit of their abnormalities"; whereas, "with those who were not suggestible and who were strong willed, and had a higher intelligence, it was a rather difficult matter. . . . Here the examination had to last for days. . . . At times they had to be threatened with . . . prolonging their time . . . , transferring to state institutions, etc. On many occasions *these even failed** . . ." It should not surprise us, then, to find Dr. Kahn later concluding (without control non-institutional studies) that "only those homosexuals with lower intelligence become inmates of penal institutions." Perhaps, however, the statistical validity of his findings did not concern the author, since nowhere in the work do we find his material subjected to adequate statistical analysis. With the single exception of a collection of raw data on individual and group intelligence tests, there are no other charts or tabulations. That any available sociological data received not even the consideration given to the so-called "psychological" factors, is indicated by the

author's relegating to the position of "side questions . . . having no definite relationships to homosexuality" such pertinent information as had to do with occupational history and economic levels.

The "conclusions" based on material so gathered and treated are, as might be expected, confused generalizations made without textual material adequate to support them, and frequently obfuscated by ambiguities of reference. Thus under "*Physical*" conclusions we find the following: "Their major troubles appear to be with their sociological and psychological background and with some abnormality regarding their endocrine makeup." However, in the section on "*Diagnosis*," we find no indication of laboratory studies to support supposed findings of "endocrine disturbance." Instead we are given twenty-three diagnostic "factors" of which the following is typical: "History of marital infelicity, and a large number of brothers and sisters in the immediate family."*

In the "*Mental*" general conclusions we are given this contribution to knowledge: . . . "penal homosexuals . . . are moral defectives and constitutional psychopaths" and as such are "individuals whose ethical discrimination between right and wrong does not equal that of normal individuals." Consequently we find as an "*Educational*" conclusion that homosexuals are "sadly in need of moral, ethical and philosophical training." This suggestion for remedial training presages the author's views on "*Treatment*" in which although we are told that "factors in the treatment" are so "numerous . . . that it is unwise and impractical to expound them," we are nevertheless assured that if the doctor is too

busy to "go to the extent of teaching" the homosexual "ethics and ethical qualities" . . . "this can be done by the 'physician's assistant.'" "Prevention" as a mode of treatment is, however, itemized in thirteen points whose general level is manifest in a statement which should have wide appeal, viz., "Parents should not permit adults to be too intimate with their children, whether of the same or opposite sex, and particularly policemen, Y.M.C.A. workers, some ministers, Sunday school and other teachers." Fortunately for the more venturesome who might use the above pointers, Dr. Kahn warns that "homosexuality . . . is a dangerous diagnosis, because it may result in insult, violence, and legal procedure."

It is too bad that this entire work cannot be considered on the same plane of humor as its rhetoric. Presumably published for serious consideration, it adds inaccuracies in proof-reading to the annoyances of a verbigerative style. More than one-third of the volume consists of appendices of dubious value. There is neither index nor bibliography. And finally, we are offered the spectacle of an author who, not content with the acknowledgment of specific gratuities, must burden us with the recital of his annoyance over the "particularly uncooperative and resentful" behavior of an official whom he does not hesitate to mention by name when a publicized reply to these charges is no longer possible. The reviewer can only recommend to Dr. Kahn, in all its implications, the statement of Professor Boring that "good writing is a form of good manners."

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* Italics mine.

