

1946

## Editorials

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## EDITORIALS

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### "AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A BANDIT"

#### A Lawyer's Reaction

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A prominent member of the Bar of Washington, D. C., William E. Leahy, Esq., has written his reaction to "Autobiography of a Bandit" by Dr. Benjamn Karpman of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, as published in the last number of this *Journal*. His comment is considered as of sufficient importance to justify quoting from it in this place.—EDITOR.

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". . . I suppose it is impossible to set up any system under which a psychiatric assessment could be made of criminal behavior in the instance of each individual defendant arrested for the commission of crime.

"I think anyone who has had any experience with criminals will agree that our system of handling sentences and punishment of those convicted of violating the law is so inadequate and unfair that it ought to be abandoned. The whole procedure, however, seems to have become so fixed in an ancient mould that mental aberration is suspected of anyone who would propose a corrective modification. I guess the same old mistakes will be repeated and rehabilitation made impossible for too many of those who learn new ways of violating the law while they are serving sentences imposed for a first violation which should never be considered as justifying incarceration in an institution with others who, far from improving the first offender, will act only as his instructors in the art of committing heinous crimes upon his release. Dr. Karpman's study has shown indubitably that the criminal mind cannot be corrected with a bludgeon or a horse-whip. The irony of the administration of criminal justice becomes sardonic when disconnected entirely from any rational comprehension of human behavior, its causes and its complexes.

"I wish others might read the article with some serious purpose of learning something from it and not just pursue it as another subject of quite interesting reading."

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#### DR. VON HENTIG AND THE MONATSSCHRIFT

Dr. Hans von Hentig has written in a recent communication that he will resume the editorship of the *Monatsschrift fuer Kriminalpsychologie* in which he was formerly (until 1934) associated with Dr. Gustav Aschaffenburg. Shortly thereafter Dr. Aschaffenburg came to the United States. He died more than a year ago in Baltimore. In other times, as Dr. von Hentig truly says, the passing of this great man and distinguished scholar would have been a subject for world wide comment.

But in the tumult of the great war he died, all but unnoticed — a victim, in a sense, of the world wide cataclysm.

Dr. Aschaffenburg began his career with Dr. Emil Kraepelin, at the Heidelberg Psychiatric Clinic. When the Prussian government began adding psychopathic wards to the great prisons he was appointed Director of the Annex to the prison in Halle. Here he wrote the book as Dr. von Hentig says, which made him famous all over Europe: *Das Verbrechen und seine Bekämpfung* (Crime and Punishment). The book was translated into English under the auspices of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology of which this *Journal* was then the official organ.

Shortly after this literary success Aschaffenburg was appointed head of the Psychiatric University Clinic at Cologne. Here the *Monatsschrift* was founded. In less than ten years, scarcely interrupted by the first World War, it attained international fame and undisputed weight. In its pages a criminological League of Nations combined its efforts: Americans, Russians, Chinese, South Americans and scholars of all European nations.

Gustav Aschaffenburg has passed away, but the *Monatsschrift*, proud of its founder, will carry on his legacy and his endeavor as soon as restoration of academic freedom will permit it.

Since Dr. von Hentig came to the United States he has been associated with the University of Colorado and with the Iowa State University. From 1940 to the present he has made a major annual contribution to the pages of this *Journal*. We hope there may be many more in the future, and that the *Monatsschrift* under his editorship may be eminently successful, in all senses of the word, during many years to come.

ROBERT H. GAULT

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#### CORRECTION

Dr. Frank J. Curran, co-author with Dr. Gustav Bychowski of: "Current Medico-legal Problems" in our last number, has written us that he overlooked a few errors in the Bibliography while reading proof.

On page 34, item 25, the volume number should be 81, not 31 as printed. The articles referred to in items 26 and 27 were written by Professor Sheldon Glueck, not by Dr. Bernard Glueck.

R. H. G.