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## Book Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**TRIAL OF PETER GRIFFITHS.** Edited by *George Godwin*. Pp. 219, appendices, illustrations. London, William Hodge and Company, Limited, 1950. \$3.50.

The usual motives of a murderer—gain, revenge, chance, deliberate elimination of an unwanted fellow human—can be applied to spiritual weaknesses and evil impulses common to us all. But there is another criminal drive more difficult to comprehend, that of the psychopathic murderer whose personality urges and whose varied environmental circumstances lead him to commit a horrible crime in a moment of uncontrolled lust. The *Trial of Peter Griffiths* concerns the latter instance and leaves to the reader the decision as to whether a British court erred in declaring the criminal behavior of a twenty-two year old, ex-Irish guardsman to have been that of a rational being who had departed from the social norm, rather than that of a mentally deranged schizophrenic.

The actual circumstances of Peter Griffiths' crime were clear and were confirmed by the defense in every particular. On the night of May 15, 1948, a small girl had been stolen from her bed in the Queen's Park Hospital, Blackburn, England, criminally assaulted and then brutally murdered. The real issue in the trial was not whether the accused was guilty or not; but whether, at the time the crime was committed, Griffiths' state of mind was such that he was legally responsible for his criminal act.

Evidence introduced during the trial showed that Peter Griffiths was not a madman in the sense of plain lunacy, but was insane in a way less obvious to the average layman. His defense was that of schizophrenia or a "split personality," wherein the accused had found reality too difficult and had regressed into a shadowy world of fantasy, from which he temporarily emerged in a moment of maniacal ferocity. George Godwin, who edited this volume in the *Notable British Trials Series*, has organized in competent fashion the court testimony seeking to determine whether the defendant's heredity, personal history, environment, persistent infantilism, and job instability placed him on the side of responsible sanity or in a position of irresponsible insanity. Disagreements between legal and medical experts on the basic question of whether Griffiths' was a schizophrenic and therefore not fully accountable for his act point up clearly the fundamental differences in the interpretation of the nature of the criminal mind as asserted by the law on the one hand, and by the science of psychopathology on the other. Although Mr. Godwin, himself a British lawyer, strongly suggests a miscarriage of justice, the court found Peter Griffiths to be legally sane and sentenced him to death.

The volume contains valuable appendices detailing the medico-legal nature of schizophrenia and suggests further readings upon the subject of mental abnormality and crime.

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**WHO ARE THE GUILTY? A STUDY OF EDUCATION AND CRIME.** By *David Abrahamson*. New York: Rinehart & Company, 1952. Pp. 340. \$5.00.

Nothing new is presented in this essay. The sub-title is misleading, for the book is not a report on a research "study," and only two of the twelve chapters are concerned with the relation between education and crime. In one of those two chapters, incidentally, the author states, "In passing, let me say that some may believe mentioning the schools is outside the domain of this

book." (p. 263). Apparently directed primarily at the lay reader, the book includes a rehash of portions of some of the author's earlier articles and books, a recitation of the usual psychiatric opinions and arguments about delinquency and crime, a reaffirmation of the dogma that psychiatrists alone can understand the criminal, and a number of what may be characterized as "thoughts for the day."

Rather than clear insight into the etiology of criminal and delinquent behavior, we are given here a poorly organized repetition of psychiatric assumptions about such behavior. On the first page of the Foreword (p. vii) the author uses "emotionally disturbed human being" and "delinquent human being" synonymously, thus making the assumption that delinquents are, by definition, emotionally disturbed persons. This assumption is restated many times in many different forms. Thus, the author assumes in advance precisely what we want to know, namely the extent to which emotional disturbances or abnormalities are important in delinquency and crime.

Also, on page 125, the author indicates that he has never found an offender who did not show some mental pathology, and he concludes that the normal offender is a myth. Yet in other places he explicitly states that "it is extremely difficult to find an absolutely normal person" (p. 103), and that "it is difficult if not impossible to determine accurately the influence of abnormal mental processes in the motivation and execution of an act." (p. 143). If we do not know who is normal, and if it is almost impossible to determine the influence of abnormality on acts, criminal or otherwise, then it is logical to conclude that we know practically nothing about the importance of abnormality in crime. But the author cannot draw this conclusion, since he already has assumed the opposite. As a result, his book contains examples of a strange kind of reasoning, sometimes couched in what is almost double-talk. Here are three samples: (a) "When it comes to the point where there apparently are no abnormal findings present, we cannot say how much pathology enters the picture. . . . (p. 143). (b) "When I speak now of the criminal, I do not mean the man who once commits an inconsequential offense. In my opinion he is not so much an offender as he is a sufferer from some mental abnormalities, although the law might not say so." (p. 125). (c) "This man unconsciously wanted revenge for the insults he had suffered in early childhood from his mother. This was strongly repressed in him because in all my examinations he never even gave a hint that he was trying to get at his mother." (p. 198).

The psychiatric dogma that only psychiatrists can understand crime also is expounded many times. (See, for example, pages 21, 50, 57, 123, 125, 126.) Using an analogy with instruments used in physical and biological science, the psychiatrist is considered as a kind of x-ray machine or microscope, available for use by laymen and social scientists who ordinarily are unable to view the invisible, unconscious, mysterious, mental "germs" which are said (by psychiatrists) to produce criminality. But if this book is considered a report on what becomes observable ("instinctual manifestations," "emotional tensions," "mother fixations," and the like) through this kind of microscope, it may be concluded that the lens must be both cloudy and misshapen. At least the microscopes do not seem to have improved very much since the first microscope, Freud, and they do not seem to have the degree of precision necessary for scientific research.

In addition to repeating psychiatric assumptions and arguments, the book treats us to homely advice of the sort ordinarily reserved for poor boys about

to go out into the cold, cruel world to seek their fortunes. We are told, for example, that power-laden men really have great anxieties and frustrations (p. 7), that genuine happiness is measured only by the happiness in one's heart (p. 264), that if one believes in what he is doing and likes to do it he cannot fail (p. 264), that "corruption is more dangerous than disease. The mind may die of it." (p. 9). Although such "thoughts for the day" are given relatively little space in the book (as compared to the space given to discussion of such topics as "basic instincts," "emotional strivings," "family tensions," "the Reality Principle," "criminal tendencies," and kindred concepts), their presence makes one curious about the extent to which the counsel on criminological problems is based on a "folksy" philosophy of life, rather than on scientific investigation.

In one place (p. 134), the author says that "there has been altogether too much literature on the market—and bland acceptance of it, what's more—to the effect that offenders act out their aggressions and therefore get rid of them all." He makes this statement because he disagrees with the opinions advanced in the literature. By the same token, since many persons will disagree with almost all the opinions advanced here, it could be asserted that there is on the market too much literature of the type represented by this book.

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TRIAL OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS. Edited by *A. Francis Stewart*. Pp. 206, illustrations. 2d ed.; London and Edinburgh, William Hodge and Company, Ltd., 1951. \$3.50.

Historians have long studied the bitter personal and political duel between Queen Elizabeth of England and Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, a struggle which ended in February, 1587 when Mary, proud and unyielding to the very end, was led to the executioner's block. After nineteen agonizing years during which Mary was a prisoner of her royal cousin, the contest for power moved swiftly to a dramatic climax when the Stuart queen was tried for high treason.

Mary Queen of Scots, the political pawn of scheming European statesmen and Papist plotters, was enticed into a conspiracy formed by one Anthony Babington to assassinate Elizabeth and welcome the Spaniards into England. When all appeared to be ready, the conspirators were seized, and forcefully compelled by torture to confess their guilt. By the terms of an Act of Association passed several years before, Mary's life was declared forfeit for voluntarily entering into the plot. A special commission heard the evidence and unanimously condemned the Scottish queen to be executed; Star Chamber and Parliament confirmed the judgment; and, after a period of indecisive hesitation, Elizabeth signed the death warrant.

Two points entered into the trial—the facts proving treason and the legality of jurisdiction. The Crown spun a convincing web of circumstantial evidence, some real but much that was distorted and fraudulent, that Mary had committed high treason against the state of England. The Scottish queen, allowed no notes or legal counsel, ignorant of English law, and unaware of the incriminating testimony that could be produced against her, disregarded much of the factual evidence and based her defense upon vigorously challenging the legality of the entire proceedings. Arguing that no law or fellow sovereign could touch her, an anointed queen, Mary Stuart maintained, in her own words, "I have no other judge than God!" In her opinion, a royal statement that the accusation and the corroborating documents were false