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Police Science Book Reviews

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POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by

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GERICHTLICHE MEDIZIN. By *Berthold Mueller*. Springer-Verlag, Heidelberg 1953. Pp. 1080. 138 Mark.

Criminology, police science, and legal medicine, most effective when working as a team have a different background, a different way of thinking, speak a different language. There is rivalry, the same competitive spirit we meet between sundry police agencies. There is no clear-cut demarcation of spheres of action. It looks as if police science and legal medicine had progressed faster and further than criminology. The more should judges, lawyers, prosecuting attorneys be interested to be close at the heels of legal medicine and its recent discoveries. They should learn to understand the terms and the range of ideas presented in their expert opinions.

When dead bodies are found in water, the diagnosis may be doubtful. Farewell letters, left by the drowned man, may seem to throw light on the ambiguous cause of death. Yet the police might examine the letter and furnish the proof that the letter has been forged. The efforts of the police, district attorney, and legal medicine are often interlocking.

Professor Mueller's great work has a large chapter on death and all the phenomena connected with the extinction of life. The time of death is an enormously difficult subject, full of pitfalls. Police and court ask for a precise statement in order to check on alibis. No strict time often can be given by the conscientious expert. In a recent British murder case the judge asked the decisive question: "What limit on either side would you give". The answer of the medical expert was: "I would give two hours limit on either side".

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Four hours are plenty of time to establish a strong alibi.

Professor Mueller provides criminologists and police with an elaborate table for fixing the time of death according to the condition of the diverse organic systems. His discussion of "sudden death" from natural causes is most helpful; instances are death during menstruation, gravidity, sexual intercourse, in spring or fall or during a period of Chinook (Foehn), in hospitals, dentist's offices, beauty parlors, and when large crowds are meeting. This type of sudden death has been noticed at the great Nazi rallies of past years.

The problem: murder-suicide or accident? has a medico-legal angle of great importance, yet many situations remain uncertain and ask for a thorough investigation of the psychological aspects and motivations. The difficulties are growing when we come to the forensic toxicology which has been treated on 280 pages in a masterly fashion. The old poisons (arsenic, phosphorus, chloroform, strychnine, cyanide) are receding—in Germany at least—before the victorious march of the new vermin-killing pastes (Thallium, Zeliograins, and other so-called contact poisons, especially E.605). They are easily obtainable and have turbulently entered the murder and the suicide practice.

Professor Mueller's observations deserve the attention of the criminologist; he is inclined to think that murder by carbonic oxide is much more frequent than we guess. The British Christie case seems to confirm his conjecture. The medical findings cannot be conclusive. The whole situation has to be examined closely; negligence or clumsiness can often not be precluded, especially in old people.

Abortion and infanticide have withdrawn from the foreground of criminological interest because birth control is sapping the human material deeply involved in these criminal acts in former times and because abortion is changing its moral status. Professor Mueller discusses at length the diverse methods of abortion, even the most recent drugs (Hypophysin, Dicumarol). Abortions are performed in Germany at the end of the week and on Sundays.

This handbook of legal medicine can justly be compared with Glaister's famous Medical Jurisprudence. It displays a tremendous factual material, sifted and selected by an eminent and most judicious expert. A careful bibliography of overflowing abundance doubles the usefulness of the work.

HANS VON HENTIG

Toelz/Oberbayern

Book Notes

POLICE DRUGS. By *Jean Rolin*, translated from the French by Edward V. Saher, Philosophical Library, New York, 1956. Pp. 194, \$4.75.

This is a somewhat emotional discussion of the "truth serums". If you are intensely interested in this subject, you might want to

read this book. Otherwise, it is of no value or interest.

ART FAKES AND FORGERIES. By *Fritz Mendax*, translated from the German by H. S. Whiteman, Philosophical Library, New York, 1956. Pp. 222, Illus. 24, \$6.00.

This is an interesting, well written and well translated book. However, most of the material is of interest to the student of art rather than to the person who wishes to learn about the specific methods of detecting art forgeries. The approach is historical rather than scientific.

HANDBOOK OF SELF-DEFENSE. By *John Martone*. Greenburg Publisher, New York, 1955, pp. 111, Illus. 219, \$2.95

This is one of the better books out of the many written on this subject. The material is designed for law enforcement officers and includes defenses against knives, clubs, broken bottles, and similar weapons as well as the more usual holds and breaks. There is an excellent, brief chapter on the use of the club.

The illustrations are generally good, but could be improved by better printing and increasing the size in some cases.

This book is entirely practical and can be recommended.

RICHARD L. HOLCOMB