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REFLECTIONS ON HANGING. By *Arthur Koestler*, The MacMillan Company, 1957, Pp. 231, \$4.50

It is rare that a literary work concerned with a controversial topic will contain material valuable to diversified groups of readers. "Reflections on Hanging" is a sociological study, it is a psychological investigation, it is a profound legal case, a humanitarian plea, a philosophical consideration, and a who-done-it tale. Readers of Mr. Koestler's latest work should be warned that they will be most comfortable if they possess strong stomachs acute reasoning ability, and a sharp sense of humor.

Arthur Koestler approaches his subject matter, capital punishment ("legal homicide"), from varied avenues; history, law, economics, psychology, philosophy, and horse sense. His method of investigation in each approach is scientific, detailed, comprehensive, exhaustive. In addition to factual data, Mr. Koestler presents his readers with the opinions of learned judges, lawyers chaplains, executioners, and prisoners. Throughout the work the author's unrelenting logic demands of the reader the application of clear reason where previously archaic tradition, vengeance, fear, and superstition have dictated. There are grisly eyewitness accounts of executions, there is bitter satire, and always there is the stark picture of man's barbarism toward man.

Foreign correspondent, journalist, novelist and essayist, Mr. Koestler knows how to present a scholarly work in an energetic, dramatic style. "Reflections on Hanging" makes fast reading, and once begun has a fascination which makes taking a break difficult. There are no dull moments in this work, no lethargic phrases or sentences.

"Reflections on Hanging" is fully documented. Appendix I consists of a succinct, statistical account of the experiences of foreign countries with and without capital punishment. Appendix II, *Patterns of Murder*, is "A Survey of Men and Women Executed in England, Scotland and Wales During the Five Years, 1949-1953." A great portion of the book deals with law in England, but emphasis of its appropriateness for American consumption is supplied by a "Preface for Americans", written by Edward Cohn, Professor of Law, New York University. Mr. Koestler has produced an unusual adventure in reading, both for the professional social scientist, and for the browser. Don't miss it!

JOHNSON LEVERING

Ass't Executive Director  
John Howard Association  
Chicago

THE HANGOVER, By *Benjamin Karpman*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1957. XXIII + 531. \$9.50.

This is another book of case histories! The kindest thing which may be said about it is that it is long. Of the 531 pages, the author has deemed fit to grace only 49 pages with his words; including the prefatory remarks and acknowledgements. The remainder is composed of an excellent index, title pages and the maunderings of an assortment of alcoholics whose common failing, aside from the excessive ingestion of alcohol and resultant hangovers, seems to be an overweening desire to unburden themselves verbally. One can almost not be too unkind about this "work" which purports to be "A Critical Study in the Psychodynamics of Alcoholism."

Neither critical nor a study, it is a collection of the case histories given verbatim by seven men and seven women, with a brief page or two following each case—"Interpretation." The summation is likely to include, "in short, we have merely the picture of an essentially unhappy man; unhappy because he is neurotic, and alcoholic because he is neurotic." For whom are such statements designed? Surely not for the professional psychiatrist, psychologist, or social worker, whose files already bulge not only with more, better and shorter case histories, but whose philosophies are on a somewhat higher conceptual level than that indicated by the above-cited statement. We are also left in the final "Comparison of Male and Female Cases" with such epics as, "Summing up, we cannot say that there is any appreciable or outstanding difference in the hangover on the basis of a differentiation in sex" and "we are left with the impression that the men possess far greater insight into their alcoholic problem than do the women; but this may not necessarily be true."

The author has indicated strongly that he considers "hangover" as being "crucial" in studies of alcoholism. Crucial of *what* is left unanswered in this book, as is the answer to any other question. It just seems that there must have been some mitigating circumstance to permit this type of material to be published, but the present reviewer can find none.

A. STANLEY WEBSTER

Eastern State Hospital,  
Knoxville, Tenn.