

BOOK REVIEWS—cont.

a man's mental, emotional and spiritual requirements—often so pathetically slight and easily supplied if only they are realised—a need for security, for a warm, comfortable home, for affection and friends, for a feeling of belonging to a family—because man is by nature a social animal—not a vegetable to be watered and fed that it may flourish and bloom to everybody's pleasure.

Mr. Turner has a firm grasp of difficulties which a man has to face after imprisonment—not only his struggles with his own personality and his readjustment to society, but society's acceptance of him—particularly the man alone in a large metropolis with no ties, no friends except his comrades of the underworld. To answer their unspoken pleas Mr. Turner describes vividly his search for a home—a real home for such men.

All his characters are described with a vivid terseness and reality which might be the envy of a novelist or playwright—a cross-section of all types of human nature. If just occasionally Mr. Turner verges on the over-sentimental, as in his description of Norman House's first Christmas, this is a fault that may be forgiven in one of so Christian a nature. He makes up for it in another chapter and in dialogue scattered throughout the book, where he does not pull his punches about the past inadequacy of certain social agencies.

I would recommend *Safe Lodging* to anyone who loves people and who has a sincere desire to do something practical to help society reclaim some of its prodigal sons—with an honest appraisal of their limitations when approaching a colossal task—rather than merely talking or reporting about such problems.

This book highlights very clearly by its descriptions of *real* people with genuine problems—the difference between the purely intellectual approach, the sociological survey and research—and the practical attack on these problems.

The two former methods have their place, but in the end, it is the realistic tackling of a problem which counts and is of the greatest worth to humanity.

SALLIE TROTTER.

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COMMON SENSE ABOUT CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

C. H. Rolph
Gollancz 6s. 0d.

THE PUBLICATION of this succinct and very readable book at a time when the problems of crime and punishment are causing such widespread concern is singularly apposite. Mr. C. H. Rolph has covered a wide range of topics in the 175 pages of his book, and while no doubt much of the ground will be familiar to the serious student of the social sciences, it is the type of book that is very much needed at the present time. I would strongly recommend this book to all

BOOK REVIEWS—cont.

members of the prison service, particularly as the author has a sympathetic and understanding approach to many of our problems.

Mr. Rolph begins by defining crime and punishment, and then has some pertinent and sceptical remarks to make on the extent of the crime problem in England and Wales at the present time. He has some cogent remarks to make about *The Criminal Statistics* —

No one thinks much of this publication, least of all the highly expert statisticians at the Home Office, to whom it is a kind of reappearing "fat boy" ineducable, unreliable, embarrassing to its parents but warmly welcomed everywhere else because of the flesh-creeping tale it tells.

The book then examines specific forms of crime, their "supposed" causes (there is an important section dealing with the moral atmosphere of our society and its effect upon youth), and then crime prevention and detection. Mr. Rolph, who is a former Chief Inspector of Police, deals at some length with the controversial subject of police-and-public relationships. He discusses the whole question of "voluntary statements" and the irregularities that occur — those familiar with the views of prisoners in group counselling sessions will know how strong their feelings are on this subject. He makes a plea for the use of tape recordings in place of the written statement for the questioned person, which would seem to be a very reasonable and necessary reform.

Capital and corporal punishment are covered in two chapters, where the case for retention and abolition is carefully examined. There is useful material here for essayists and potential debaters, although I doubt if the arguments for abolition will convince majority opinion (estimated at seventy-five per cent of those questioned in a recent poll.)

The most important chapters of the book are those on imprisonment and after-care. One would have wished for these subjects to be treated at greater length. The author writes with passion about the appalling inadequacies of prison buildings, and he rightly makes the point that classification of prisons can have little value at the present time. The perennial problems of prison work and wages are examined, and the author criticises the Trade Unions for their unrealistic fears about competitive prison labour —

... the Trade Unions should be brought to see that their dread of a new force of "slave labour" is about as real, and well founded, as China's fear of Tibet.

The case is made for a greater use of probation, and the desperate need for a revitalised Probation Service is recognised, where the status and remuneration for the probation officer would be truly commensurate with the importance of his work. Official parsimony is also blamed for the limitations of the present after-care services. It is very salutary when one compares the amount of money spent on rehabilitation of offenders in Sweden.

BOOK REVIEWS—cont.

Progressive opinion has long held that there must be an extension of non-institutional forms of training for offenders, and mention might have been made of Training Centres, an extension of the Attendance Centre idea, as suggested by Sir Basil Henriques. Training Centres might provide realistic training, and they would certainly be economical. Perhaps experiments will soon be carried out along these lines.

This book seriously questions many of the principles upon which the administration of justice is based, and perhaps some of them need to be examined again in the light of common sense.

G. P. McNEAL

PROBATION — THE SECOND CHANCE

John St. John
Vista Books 25s Od.

THIS IS an important book. It is the only non-textbook devoted wholly to an objective study of the English probation system and its author is an experienced writer, a skilled observer and an accurate reporter. The result is a picture of the probation officer's work as it really is.

He describes truthfully the background against which it still too often has to be performed; the inadequate office accommodation, the

dingy waiting-rooms, depressing to officer and probationer alike, the squalor and smells ('the bedridden, querulous grandmother; an insanitary, shared lavatory . . . urine, armpits, tired breath . . . very, very old dirt and the reek of boiling mutton bones') of many of the homes and doss houses the probation officer has to visit. This is the real stuff and will be recognised as authentic by anybody who has worked in this field.

The characters that people Mr. St. John's canvas are equally real; troubled, dishonest, feckless, aggressive, unstable, deprived, they are all familiar figures.

The author is conscious, too, of the professional difficulties within the service and indeed of the probation officer's war within himself. He is not uncritical of all that he saw and learned and he recognises the dangers the probation officer himself encounters in his work. Many probation offices will acknowledge, for instance, the soundness of the following observation; 'Despite his rich diet of human relationships and his daily contact with life at its rawest, the probation officer can in fact all too easily become walled in by the small, closed world of the court, the office and the cells: the isolation is in part self-protective and is intensified by long hours and evening visits that leave little time for normal leisure and friendships. There is always a risk, too, that the casework technique combined with the court's authority, gives the probation officer a false sense of omniscience and invincibility.