

BOOK REVIEWS—cont.

that "in correctional studies we ought to study, discover, and analyse not only the nature of the correctional services, but their living constitutions, the attitudes, personalities of the people performing them and the manner in which the acts are done."

NORMAN JEPSON

GATE FEVER

Jane Buxton & Margaret Turner
The Cresset Press, 21s. 0d.

THIS IS NOT an important book and it is refreshing to note that the writers do not claim that it is, nor do they believe that they have written a work which will inspire far-reaching prison reforms.

This lack of conceit, rare enough in prisoners to come as a pleasant surprise to those who have been irritated by the vanity of many prison scribblers, shows at least a commendable desire to keep an open mind. It is inevitable that the prisoner sees the worm's eye view but these particular worms have turned quite fiercely from time to time and not allowed themselves to be trampled upon. The fine fury of indignation over medical treatment, for instance, is easily understood coming from a girl with a severe pain locked by herself in the dark in the wee small hours. What could she know or care about the hundreds of women cured in prison of hitherto unsuspected ailments, of the eyes tested, the teeth extracted, the hearing aids supplied, the operations performed on men and women who have been neglecting themselves for years

"outside"? One has to smile about the dead mice and beetles in the jam pots (subsequently washed, it is noted, in a solution of soda strong enough to crack the skin) when one remembers the delicious strawberry jam of one's childhood poured into pots but recently collected, full of slugs and dead roses, from the churchyard.

Criticism of hard-hearted and hatchet-faced officers who nag, or shout, or appear to be disinterested, mellows considerably towards the end of the book when the authors have learnt to work with them and to know them personally. There is a fine scorn for the system in general which, goodness knows, has as many faults as any other system, and one could hear almost identical complaints made about the powers-that-be in any large school, hospital, factory, or barracks.

It is a matter for some surprise that two intelligent and well-educated young women should have been so easily impressed by the pathetic tales told them by other prisoners, either to gain sympathy, or to enjoy the pop-eyed amazement of the "new girl". All the prison chestnuts are trotted out afresh to horrify the reader; drugged cocoa; officers digging graves in secret; cosmetics concealing contraband goods; well, it all makes very pleasurable reading and we have at least been spared the legend about the dead baby in the cell which some old woman usually relates to newcomers with much drama and relish.

Our authors, however, have tried to be fair and have not grudged the praise where they thought it to be

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due. Nor should praise be grudged for this book as a whole. It is well written, excellently observed, and gives a vivid picture of what it feels like to be a prisoner at Holloway. Small evocative details bring the very sights and sounds of the prison before the reader and Jane Buxton's illustrations are both restrained and moving.

M. E. G. STOCKER

THE EXPLANATION OF CRIMINALITY

Gordon Trasler

International Library of Sociology & Social Reconstruction.

Routledge & Kegan Paul.

20s. 0d.

THIS BOOK is not easy reading. Its style varies from a rigorous exposition of scientific method to a somewhat polemical survey of the problems encountered by psychologists working in penal institutions.

That is a pity, because the core of Dr. Trasler's argument is important and cogently presented. He is concerned with the lack of a scientifically based theory of criminality within which research and methods of treatment can be developed and evaluated. He suggests that the modern theory of learning as a conditioning process may provide the necessary basis. This defines social training as the efficient conditioning of anxiety to produce "passive avoidance" behaviour in the face of anti-social temptations, opportunities and even of anti-social thoughts. Its mechanism, the context of the latest sociological findings and the theory's use in indicating profitable lines of

enquiry are discussed in some detail. Criminal behaviour, on this view, is the result of ineffective social training.

However, Dr. Trasler appears to miss-state the psychoanalytic position and consequently to undervalue the current contribution of prison psychologists to treatment. He dismisses analytic method as "intuitive" and unable to produce specific predictions of behaviour. Surely its basic tenets are that each individual seeks optimal satisfaction; that good social adjustment is part of such satisfaction (except where *deliberately* sacrificed for other reasons); that its achievement is often hindered by emotional attitudes carried over from childhood; and that hindrances can be removed by bringing them to consciousness. It is not the *analyst* who has to be convinced of their existence, but the patient who, finding himself liberated from old bonds, can proceed to a better adjustment to present reality. There seems no reason why treatment on these lines cannot be tested by follow-up studies. Specific predictions would seem to be unnecessary.

Dr. Trasler wants prison psychologists to make recommendations which are "the result of theoretical deductions based upon accurate observations, which will usually take the form of quantified test data". Instead, he says, we are given a general picture of such parts of a man's personality and abilities as can be measured by existing tests, which is not necessarily relevant to the *causes* of his criminality. He overlooks the