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BOOK NOTES

The Prevention of Repeated Crime. By John Barker Waite. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1943. Pp. xi, 221. \$3.00.

Here is a book of 221 pages having for its title and theme song: "The Prevention of Repeated Crime." In 89 pages the author examines the purposes of treatment, concludes that punitive treatment is a failure, evolves the philosophic repudiation of punitive methods, outlines the legislative authorization of non-punitive methods and the extent to which these methods are actually used. In the remaining pages he collects statutes and related materials bearing on the topics previously discussed.

The book aims to answer the following questions:

"What then is the now prevalent treatment of known offenders, and upon what theory is it based? To what extent is it satisfactory as a preventive of further crime by those who are subjected to it? Through what reasonably acceptable changes in theory and practice, and in the content of legislation, can prevention be made more effective? To these questions the writer here offers his own opinions in answer."

In the effort to answer these questions the author makes no attempt "to gather new data either as to the amount and type of repetitious criminality or as to methods of treatment of known offenders. Ample material to justify sound, even if disputable, conclusions has already been collected in one form or another."

He does not seek to extend the frontiers of knowledge, but to examine what has been going on in the territory already staked out, in part occupied, in lesser part cultivated, and in still lesser part productive of results which give promise for a better day. This job was worth doing, and he has done it well.

He groups legislation authorizing non-punitive treatments under four main headings: avoidance of character-destruction contracts—including release without imprisonment and after imprisonment and separation of different types of prisoners; segregation during the whole period of dangerousness—including repetitious offender statutes, indeterminate sentence statutes, and statutes permitting segregation "until cured"; rehabilitation—including training in trade skills, trade training, general education, medical and surgical treatment; assistance after release from confinement.

He calls for more and better legislation

"as a clear expression that newer procedures are desired.

"The new legislation must be such as to eliminate the faults which cause the failure of the punitive system. Hence:

"It must limit the possibility of character degradation. . . .

"It must keep dangerous persons under supervision, or even in segregation from society, for so long as their freedom is manifestly a danger. . . .

"Above all it must set up every reasonable facility and procedure for correcting the conditions which make an individual prone to crime and for increasing his capacity as well as his will to abstain therefrom. . . .

"And when it has done all that, and returns him to social freedom, it must continue its protection and must actively assist him in law-abiding conduct."

Social Causation. By Robert M. McIver. New York: Ginn & Co. 1942. Pp. x, 414. \$3.50.

Mr. Justice Cardozo, whose opinions are recognized as masterpieces of clarity and persuasiveness, once said that "there is an accuracy that defeats itself by over-emphasis of details. I often say that one must permit oneself, and that quite advisedly and deliberately, a certain margin of misstatement. . . . On the other hand, the sentence may be so overloaded with all its possible qualifications that it will tumble down of its own weight. . . . The picture cannot be painted if the significant and insignificant are given equal prominence. One must know how to select."

Here is a book which often lacks the directness and brevity which can result in stimulating interest in a problem. Cumbersome details, narrow distinctions, and even contradictory statements serve to create a confusing, foggy impression of the problem of causation. A clearer, more balanced discussion would have given a better analysis of the problem, even at the expense of its being a less thorough exposition. While all the implications and relationships dealt with by the author do not make this book all but "tumble down of its own weight," more selection would have resulted in a more substantial dissertation.

In the preface appears a brief statement of what it purports to do: "It can scarcely be doubted that if we could learn better how to investigate and how to interpret the phenomena of social change the social sciences would advance to a higher level. This work is devoted to that cause."¹ It is a study of causes, and of interpretation, in terms of human experience and behavior. Principles of procedure in investigating social cause and effect is the real problem it intends to meet.

¹ Preface, p. v.

The approach is more than descriptive; it attempts to attack the problem of understanding such change in a thoroughly practical fashion.

But if its methods defeat this purpose, it should, in all fairness, be remembered that the problem of causation is inherently a difficult one, because it is intangible in addition to being complex. Peculiar difficulties, limitless and interrelated with all of reality, make it next to impossible to look at any factor in change objectively, to isolate it long enough, or completely enough, to study it at all. It loses its significance alone; yet it cannot be justly evaluated, entangled and dependent as it is. Exactness is virtually impossible.

Furthermore, it should be said that the author makes no claim to perfection. He recognizes that difficulties prohibit finality, and asks for indulgence. His geniality compels it. Finally, in spite of the abstract nature of the subject, he is to be commended for injecting some logical, down-to-earth material, and specific case studies of interest, while still maintaining his subject on a properly erudite plane.

In spite of weak techniques, it still seems well that an attempt has been made to make a contribution to this heretofore unexplored field. For some mind may be challenged by these shortcomings, or stimulated by this hopeful beginning, to add to the effort to learn how to investigate social cause and effect.