

Law Enforcement & Corruption

PAY-OFF! By Walter Arm. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. 267 pp. \$3.

MURDER, INC. By Burton B. Turkus and Sid Feder. New York: Farrar, Straus & Young. 498 pp. \$4.50.

By HAROLD B. HINTON

THE growing bibliography on organized crime—a subject that may become of major importance in the forthcoming Presidential election—offers the student of this fascinating subject a confusing choice between conflicting estimates by self-styled experts. Earnest and sincere as these exposers seem to be, they are unable to agree among themselves on the exact nature of the evil or the proposed cures for it.

These two books are good examples. In a way, they are two sides of a coin. Messrs. Turkus and Feder recall the trials of the Brooklyn killers in 1940, while Mr. Arm turns his attention to the police scandals of last year in the same borough. To one who reads them together, there is a disturbing similarity in the sordid tales they have to relate.

Both volumes should serve as useful warnings to complacent citizens of any sizable community in the country that these things do not happen only in Brooklyn. They should stimulate us all to look around our own neighborhoods to see whether something of the kind is taking place under our very noses.

The theme they have in common is the corrupt associations of law enforcement officials with top-flight criminals. By its very nature this problem is susceptible of only occasional factual attack. Mr. Arm, an obviously competent police reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune*, has written interestingly and analytically of the Brooklyn grand jury's investigation which resulted in applications for retirement by some five hundred New York policemen under a quirk of law which permits an officer to refuse to waive his rights against self-incrimination if he is on retired status, but not if he is on active duty.

His account of the creeping paralysis which seems to afflict most law enforcement machinery in the country

points out that the young, conscientious policeman is usually first led astray by you or me handing him two dollars to forget a ticket for a traffic violation which would have cost the offender five dollars. It is only too easy for the rookie, overhearing cynical cracks from his seniors, to assume that petty graft of this kind is really part of his salary—that part which the lawmakers forget to write into the statutes so that he can have a living wage.

Cases are cited of detectives of considerable standing taking as little as \$300 or \$500 as a bribe. Sometimes they were influenced by suits of clothes they could order from a Broadway tailor, or shirts from a smart New Jersey chemist, the charge to go to the account of a mobster for whom they had done a service. An officer as high as an inspector was led astray merely by tickets to Madison Square Garden for prize fights. On the other end of the scales a police lieutenant could not account for \$135,000 he had "saved" out of his pay.

Naturally, the underworld leaders took pains to disseminate the philosophy that a cop has to do something on the outside to provide for himself and his family. The grand jury established that a patrolman's take-home pay, in his early years, amounts to forty dollars a week in Brooklyn.

Harry Gross, a big-time gambler, apparently distributed something like \$1,000,000 a year in "ice," as the gangsters call protection money. He told the grand jury he did not consider himself a danger to municipal government. His opinion did not greatly impress a grand jury of twenty-three men and women who sat for two years for pay of three dollars a day when actually on duty.

Mr. Turkus, co-author of "Murder, Inc.," was assistant district attorney of Kings County during the sensational trials in 1940 which sent a half-dozen leading gang executioners to the electric chair. He is justly proud of this achievement, but it is obvious that his book, written ten years after the event, is actuated by a lively dislike for the Kefauver Crime Investigating Committee and a long-nourished resentment against William O'Dwyer, now United States Ambassador to Mexico. Mr. O'Dwyer was his boss during most of the investigations and prosecutions which are recalled.

As a literary collaborator Mr. Turkus chose Sid Feder, a former Associated Press reporter. Between them, they have furnished an inter-

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N. Y. Times Book Review



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Harold B. Hinton, a member of the Washington staff of The New York Times, covered the Kefauver investigation for his paper.

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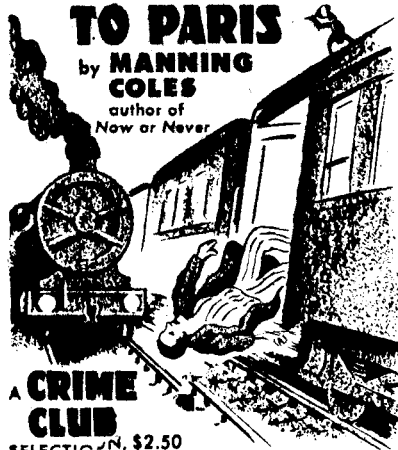
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esting, well-documented background
account of the current and continuing
crime problem, which is only slightly
discounted by the personal indigna-
tion Mr. Turkus cannot keep out of
the narrative.

His main quarrel with the Kefauver
Committee has to do with the alleged
existence of a tightly knit national
crime syndicate, able to fix policies,
decree executions, divide territories,
and exercise the other attributes of a
well-organized business. Senator Estes
Kefauver and his colleagues reached
the conclusion that such an organiza-
tion does not actually exist, although
there are friendly relations between
local mobs designed to avoid duplica-
tion of effort.

Mr. Turkus is positive that an
efficient national crime organization
was set up in 1934, when the repeal
of the prohibition amendment forced
the mobsters to look for new fields
of activity. "It was—and it is today
—big business, with all the appurte-
nances of big business, except, pos-
sibly, formal incorporation papers and
a department for advertisement and
publicity," he writes. "Had it been a

registered corporation, the Federal
Trade Commission would long ago
have investigated it for monopoly and
general unfair trade practice."

He is so convinced of the present
activities of such a syndicate (he de-
plores the loose usage of this term to
designate such minor mobs as the
S & G in Miami Beach) that he says
"an organization such as this could
not and cannot exist on a national
scale without top-level protection,"
which, he writes at one point, must
be available "even to high places in
the national capital." Unfortunately,
he does not sharpen this generality
into specific charges, although New-
bold Morris may do so.

Mr. Turkus suggests a national (not
Federal, as he explains) bureau of
identification to facilitate exchange of
information on all mobs, big and
small, between the officials trying to
enforce the law. The main require-
ment, however, as underlined in both
books, is the continued, courageous
interest of the average citizen in the
moral health of his own community—
an uncomfortable and dangerous
chore.

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	Crime, Place, and Sleuth	Summing Up	Verdict
WHICH I NEVER L. A. G. Strong (Macmillan: \$2.50)	Lesser felonies provide Chief Inspector McKay of Scotland Yard with umbrella for lively investigation of highly hush-hush deviltry.	Slightly loose-endy, but amiable handling of characters and pleasant if non-pertinent asides provide sound enter- tainment value.	Diver- ting
BOOKS FOR THE BARON Anthony Morton (DSP-LB: \$2.50)	Family crisis in English manor-houses gives the Baron (Robin Hood type) chance to shoot dog, climb tree, tear library apart, snag killer, rescue beauty.	Three-ring-circus activ- ity sometimes over- reaches saturation point; no laughs in this one.	So-so
THE CAT'S PAW Marion Armour Salter (Rinehart: \$2.50)	N. Y. dept. store ad tycoon flips down elevator shaft; gal copywriter in hell of a mess.	Accent on psychological overtone rather than on detection of culprit; pursuit angle swallowed in emotional tangles and past performances.	Feverish
THE CASE OF THE CORNER COFF- TAGE Christopher Bush (Macmillan: \$2.50)	Star op of London agency knocked off; Boss Ludovic Travers dogs killers, even wangling trip to Ireland; Yard picks up crumbs.	Cast oversized, plot over-ramified, but story moves amiably with- out exceeding speed limit.	Standard
THE THREE WIDOWS Bernice Carey (Crime Club: \$2.50)	Elderly Omaha couple, mo- toring down California, wonder to good purpose about three scattered de- cedents, all male.	Tourist-camp setting nicely handled; blun- dering of amateur eye funny and plausible; climax a little—er— we	Good

—SERGEANT CUFF