

# Crime out of Mind

**"The Courage of His Convictions,"**  
by Tony Parker and Robert Allerton (Norton. 182 pp. \$3.95), documents the development of an unrepentant young criminal. Ralph S. Banay is medical director of the Civic Center Clinic, an institution for rehabilitation of offenders.

By RALPH S. BANAY

WITH the help of a tape-recorder, Tony Parker has assembled here what purports to be the autobiography of Bob Allerton, an unregenerate criminal who at the age of thirty-three has spent a third of his life in prison and is content to have gambled this time away as a means of living the other two-thirds as he likes. His nine convictions have brought sentences totaling eighteen years, twelve of which he served. His offenses have covered ten varieties of larceny and violence. After telling the sordid story of his conflict with society, the adamant rebel sums up his defiance: "I don't say I've never had a chance, because I have, I've had plenty of chances . . . I've no intention of going straight, I'm just being more careful, that's all."

For the general reader this story may convey, as its blurb boasts, a revealing insight into the mentality of a professional criminal. From a clinical standpoint, however, it merely documents the familiar picture of the criminal psychopath. There is no mystery about the ways of his kind: from Legs Diamond, Dutch Schultz, Dillinger, and Willie Sutton down through a long roll of notorious exemplars, the ruthless outlaw has been redundantly portrayed in his sociological origins, his persistently expanding criminality, his impermeability to corrective measures, his immunity to logic or reason, his evasion of social responsibility, and his determination to go on until a police bullet, execution, or a life term ends his career.

Characteristically, Allerton was a child of a squalid London slum. His ineffective father and mother, the only straight people in his life (a grandfather was a professional pickpocket), struggled hopelessly to guide or cudgel him into rectitude, but the teeming Dickensian streets, where one survived by filching, were the matrix of the



—Ewing Galloway.  
". . . determination to go on until . . . execution or a life term ends his career."

susceptible youth. The confusion of the bomb-wracked war years provided opportunity and cover to progress from petty thieving to robbery, often abetted by violence. A precocious police-news character, the boy shuttled from remand home to reform school to Borstal, fleeing custody, scorning work, hoodwinking would-be mentors, ever aprowl for another chance at smash-and-grab, housebreaking, or safe-blowing. Army service led only to an extension of his criminal enterprise and to further proof, in guardhouses and military prisons, of his incorrigibility.

In a pertinent chapter of his reminiscences, Allerton passes judgment upon the people who at various times tried to reform him. For most of these he expresses only arrogant contempt, either because they did not appeal to him personally or because he sensed in them insincerity or hypocrisy. But he indicates that one school teacher, a discerning magistrate, and the headmaster of a reform school exerted upon him a persuasive charm that, if pursued and cultivated, might have softened his stony resistance. Allerton emerges from his story as an exceptionally articulate and intelligent specimen of his kind. He develops into a budding connoisseur of art and letters, able to appreciate for their own sake the bibelots he steals from a duke. He forswears his earlier penchant for vicious

mayhem, but remains willing to maim or murder again if he finds it necessary. Almost his sole item of remorse is for the childhood theft of two shillings from his mother.

Yet he clings jealously to the blind spot that prevents his acknowledging not only the inexpediency but the stupidity of his way of life. He offers the usual rationalization, based upon the essential dishonesty and hypocrisy of respectable people and the eligibility of the rich for victimization. It should be noted that at least twice he received head injuries serious enough to send him to a hospital in one case and to blind him for several days in the other.

Allerton's self-portrait conforms to the accepted definition of the psychopath as a person who through constitutional defect or traumatic damage or other environmental stresses—or, more probably, through a combination of these—matures physically without developing the superego that might have made him a responsible, dependable social factor. The primitive basis of his personality is overlaid so thinly with the veneer of civilization that, as in Allerton's case, he can habitually rob or assault without compunction.

Though it is easy to recognize and classify these people, attempts to correct or treat them have encountered an overwhelming degree of difficulty. As a rule, they live out their short or long lives in a pseudo-glamour that might dazzle themselves and the uninitiated, but that leads inevitably to their self-destruction.

## FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1004

*A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1004 will be found in the next issue.*

TSEKADBWSG WC D

NDBDO BQWGZ; GSBQWGZ

CPHHKKEC OWJK KMHKCC.

SCHDA VWOEK.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1003

*This world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel.*

—HORACE WALPOLE.

# Progress of Punishment

**"Stone Walls: Prisons from Fetters to Furloughs,"** by **Miriam Allen deFord** (Chilton. 236 pp. \$5), traces the slow evolution of penal methods from barbaric punishment to rehabilitation. Miriam Van Waters was superintendent of the Framingham, Mass., Reformatory for twenty-five years.

By MIRIAM VAN WATERS

**T**O MOST persons there is an irresistible fascination in stories about crime and punishment, court trials and prisons.

Miriam Allen deFord has written a true account of the long history of punishment and imprisonment, and the gradual emergence of ideas of penal reform and the rehabilitation of the offender. She has done an enormous amount of research, and her account is well documented; but while the scholarship is authentic, it is not obtrusive. This is an absorbing book for the general reader interested in social problems.

With the exception of the modern prison program of Israel, the work is worldwide in scope. Europe, India, Ceylon, Japan, England, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, the Philippines, the Near East, Central and South America, Canada and the United States are presented in their attempts to solve the crime problem.

Until it reaches the recent past, this is a history of terror, depravity, and corruption. The progress from fetters to furloughs has been made against the obstacles presented by politicians and by public indifference. Torture, branding with hot irons, flogging, and other forms of physical mutilation have now almost disappeared; but the author notes a barbaric survival in some parts of the United States and elsewhere of third-degree police methods to extort confessions, as well as in the use of the death penalty.

The chief evils of imprisonment are the increase of the inmate's bitterness and hostility to society, and the waste and deterioration of his ability. The author notes that a good prison program includes proper food, medical care, a system of classification, education, work, and religious activities.

It was Sweden that first introduced the furlough, or conditional release for prisoners about to be paroled. This is now part of the correctional system of California. Cleveland, Ohio, originated a prison farm to replace the county jail. These farms and forest camps now flourish in some eighteen states in this country. Mexico and the Philippines have attempted to combat sexual perversion in prison by permitting conjugal visiting.

In the United States the first pioneer in prison reform was William Penn. Then came Dr. George W. Kirchwey, Dean of Columbia Law School and for a time Warden of Sing Sing; Thomas Mott Osborne, and Warden Lewis Lawes. The author mentions also Howard Gill, who in 1927 founded the Prison Colony of Norfolk, Massa-



chusetts. All of these men stressed self-government and community participation.

The author quotes Harry Elmer Barnes's words: "Where punishments are severe and prison sentences long, crime increases"; and she concludes her book with the statement that "the great movement for prison reform, whose often discouraging and yet hopeful history we have surveyed, must in the end, for its real success, be self-liquidating. Its final mission is to bring about the disappearance of prisons."

## Wrong Side Story

**"All the Way Down,"** by **Vincent Riccio and Bill Slocum** (Simon & Schuster. 192 pp. \$3.95), is a blistering report on the life of New York street gangs. Margaret Parton has written many stories on juvenile delinquency for the New York Herald Tribune and the Ladies' Home Journal.

By MARGARET PARTON

**A** FOREIGN correspondent's basic job is to try to convey the reality of an unfamiliar culture to the people of his own culture. This is hard for several reasons. One is that Americans tend to think in stereotypes: "Indians are spiritual. Japanese are clever." And so on. Another is that Americans (like other peoples) find it difficult to imagine what it is like to be someone else, from somewhere else, with different ideas, different values.

Vincent Riccio is as much a foreign correspondent as Abe Rosenthal writing from Japan or Edgar Snow from China. The only difference is that Mr. Riccio is trying to interpret, with an

equally earnest passion for truth, a reality within our own borders: the street gangs of New York City. The dateline may be American, but the culture seems just as foreign to middle-class Americans as any in Africa or Asia. More so, perhaps.

Mr. Riccio is a highly qualified interpreter for two reasons: he himself emerged from the world he is writing about, and he went back to it as a worker for the New York City Youth Board. For five years—until he got fed up with social workers, cops, long hours, low salaries, and the general blindness of society—he shared the life of the toughest kids in the roughest slums, laboriously winning their friendship, desperately trying to convey to them a few elements of social behavior.

He likes the kids; he managed to help a few; but he sees them with clear eyes. "The kid who joins a gang," he says, "needs something that only a gang of similar misfits can give him. He is more often stupid than not; he is without exception an inept, uncoordinated athlete; he is a juvenile dreg needing the company of his own poor kind." The author pulls no punches in describing any of his young hood-