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Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW

MAN'S JUDGMENT OF DEATH. By *Lewis E. Lawes*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1924 Pp. 146.

"Man's Judgment of Death" is an admirable little volume by Lewis E. Lawes, who is well qualified to write on the subject, since he has been connected with penal institutions for over twenty years, and has for the last four years been warden of Sing Sing Prison. The book deals with the question of capital punishment, almost exclusively from the statistical viewpoint. It first describes the present status of capital punishment in the United States; showing where it is retained, where it has been abolished, and where there exists a choice between it and life imprisonment as a punishment for murder.

It next considers to what extent the death penalty is actually inflicted in those states in which it is theoretically the punishment for murder, and the relation, if any, between the existence or non-existence of the death penalty and the number of homicides. Warden Lawes is very careful in interpreting his statistics. For example, in comparing the homicide rates of states having capital punishment with those in which it has been abolished, he takes care to select states in the same geographical division of the United States, and having similar population and economic conditions.

Having shown that the American and foreign statistics do not substantiate the claim that capital punishment is a deterrent to murder, Warden Lawes concludes that capital punishment should be abolished because it rests upon wrong basic principles and fails to conform to ideas of modern criminology.

All persons interested in the problem of capital punishment will doubtless desire to read Warden Lawes' book, because of the light it throws upon the problem of whether capital punishment is really a deterrent to murder. As Mr. T. M. Osborne says: "The work will become a classic in no time."

From the fact that Warden Lawes treats his subject from the statistical viewpoint, one would naturally infer that his book is heavy reading. But such is not the case. The body of the book, consisting of eighty small pages, is popular in its appeal and can easily be read in two hours. For those interested in the subject of a scientific viewpoint, there are exhaustive tables in an appendix of over sixty pages.

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S. B. WARNER.