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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

TRAFFIC COURTS. George Warren. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942. Pp. xxvii, 280.

“First impressions are lasting ones” ran the old proverb, and, supposing the impressions to be strong enough, the saying is founded upon psychological fact. That the great majority of the American public gain their first, if not their only, impression of a judicial system in actual operation in the traffic courts of the land is equally a fact. Such impression is, moreover, usually a lasting one for it is, as opposed to the fictionalized version of the movie screen, made more real by individual participation therein under unpleasant circumstances. If such impressions are poor ones, is it likely that a wholesome respect for law and the judicial process can be instilled in the minds of the American public? The answer is obviously no, but why such should be the case and what can be done to correct it is not quite so clear.

In this book, Mr. Warren, with the assistance of more than 13,000 persons and supported by the National Conference of Judicial Councils and the National Committee on Traffic Law Enforcement, has compiled not only a complete picture of the prevailing conditions in the traffic courts, but has provided a careful exposition of what may be done to remedy the same. It should not be thought, however, that the single purpose of this volume is to prove that the average American's respect for the courts can be improved. Far more significant is the underlying thesis that the proper control of traffic and its attendant problems is vital to public welfare. In this respect, the traffic courts should be more than mere punitive devices, for their real function is a corrective one. Just how that correction may be intelligently provided within law is well depicted. Statistically and diagrammatically supported, the book should be regarded as a matter of personal concern to every prosecutor, judge and justice of the peace. Defense counsel rarely appear as such in the traffic courts, but there are lessons for even them within its covers.

W. F. ZACHARIAS