Great Sayings by Great Lawyers, by G. J. Clark

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NOTICES

(These Notices are preliminary; they do not preclude Reviews later.)


This book purports to bring together famous sayings by distinguished lawyers and arrange them with an adequate index so that they can be used. There is undoubtedly a real field of usefulness for such a book; and this book may well serve the needs of the profession and others until a better book in the same field is prepared.

It is a matter of great pleasure and value to have access to a large number of the significant comments on different matters, especially in the field of the law, which have been made by distinguished lawyers. Undoubtedly this book in point of selection and quantity fills the need very well. The book contains 800 pages and the print is small though not hard to read, a great deal of matter being placed on each page. Here the reader will find a great many of the famous sayings with which he may be casually familiar but which he has never seen in accurate form. The index, while not exhaustive nor accurate as the indices are to the standard books of quotations, is nevertheless reasonably dependable for ready reference. It is a delight to be able to turn to some of the famous sayings by Joseph Choate, Luther Martin, Patrick Henry, William Work, Wirt Dexter, Daniel Webster and the long line of distinguished lawyers in England. The subjects upon which they have commented are of especial interest to the lawyer in so far as they deal with professional matters but many of them will be delighted because the range of subject is as broad as the humanities themselves.

The reviewer speaks of certain defects not to detract from the book itself but in the hope that such reference may bring to our attention the importance of a better book in the field for the future. Bartlett's Familiar Quotations and the other books in this field that have succeeded it are at once of universal service and delight. Should not the legal profession within its particular field have a work of similar accuracy, completeness and scholarship? Compared with these famous books of quotations, Mr. Clark's books seems unsatisfactory. For one thing his picture adorns the frontis-piece with his signature underneath it and the reviewer is so far narrow-minded as to feel that that sort of thing is out of place in a book of this kind. Underneath the title of the book, "Great Sayings by Great Lawyers" we have a second title, "Immortal Thoughts Snatched From Oblivion." The reviewer feels further that this second title is on somewhat the same level in point of taste as the frontis-piece. The book itself is inaccurate in containing a number of sayings by men who were not lawyers and had no legal training whatever. We are all unanimous in our admiration for George Washington, Henry Ward Beecher, and Theodore Roosevelt. Their comments may be of much greater value than those by many lawyers; yet it seems inappropriate to include quotations from them in a volume that purports to cover only sayings by lawyers. In certain instances the editor has placed a short biographical note at the beginning of quotations from certain lawyers; it would seem that such brief biographical notes should
appear in every instance. Usually the editor has placed the name of the author first and then listed quotations from him following his name. But this is not always the case and in some instances it is confusing to find an isolated quotation that does not appear under the name of any individual. The reader is indebted to the editor for occasional cross-references and notes in explanation of certain quotations. These seem to be admirable; where they appear they are often fuller and more helpful than corresponding records in other books of quotations. The reader has the impression, however, that they have not been supplied in every instance where they would be helpful.


This is an admirable book. The American reader must feel that the book would be of real usefulness to the legal profession in Scotland while he himself is grateful to have such a work before him for comparative study. Since the civil law prevails in Scotland, though in a much diluted form, the law of intestacy in that country in its contrast with the law of intestacy of England is a very interesting subject. We see here the workings of the common law theories of inheritance with the retention of many of the old Roman law terms, and at the same time, see the incursions of the common law theory and the certain amount of compromise between the two systems. The common law extends itself slowly but it takes a tenacious hold upon any territory which it has once invaded. Thus in Scotland, the invasion by the common law had been somewhat limited, but it seems fair to say that its conquest will be permanent. This is not true merely because it brings all the civil law in Scotland or interprets the common law changes in the high courts of the British Empire but also because of the nature of the common law itself.

American lawyers should find great interest in this book. Not only in England but in other leading countries of the world there has occurred a very considerable change in the law of inheritance within recent years; he would have considerable hardihood who alleged that no extensive though different overhauling of the law of inheritance would occur in our states in the near future. When changes in this field are demanded, it is of the first importance that our lawyers should be familiar with the efforts and the principles and the achievements that have occurred elsewhere, not that we may copy their work but that we may learn from it and proceed in our own work more effectively.


By statute in 1924 the legislature of Massachusetts created a council for the continuous study of the Judicial system. The council is composed of a distinguished group of judges and practicing lawyers in Massachusetts. In its report it points out the importance of giving efficient and inexpensive justice in keeping with modern needs. The report shows that the cost of the courts and the Industrial Accident Department for the current