

January 1961

Book Review: The World of Law

Karl P. Warden

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Recommended Citation

Karl P. Warden, Book Review: The World of Law, 38 Dicta 246 (1961).

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able practices of his predecessors are shown by Birks and perhaps even a somewhat biased attorney is enabled to obtain a fresh insight into the mirror by which he is seen. Inroads into this vision of the shady practitioner have been made from time to time, and this book chronicles some of these reforms by the government, the lawyers as individuals, and the Law Society.

"Gentlemen of The Law" is replete with examples of the solicitor as seen through diaries, records, and letters of the men of the various periods. This reviewer feels that author Birks might have had a better pace had he let some of these characters remain in their anonymity. The book leans heavily upon the historical anecdotes and, while some are very amusing, others are only tedious. On the whole, "Gentlemen of The Law" is very readable and gives historical perspective to some of the curious practices in the legal profession that belong to the English past as well as to our own.

Joyce Cocovinis†

THE WORLD OF LAW. Edited by Ephraim London.¹ New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960. Pp. volume I 654, volume II 780. \$17.50.

Nothing is more frightening than the prospect of reading and reviewing a two volume work. Visions of tired eyes, limp mind and other assorted anatomical irritations flit through the semi-conscious thoughts of the poor soul who, in a moment of weakness,

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said to a smiling book review editor, "Yes, I'll do the review for you." Such was my unhappy frame of mind when, quite reluctantly, I opened volume one to page one in the set called *The World of Law*. But soon I found myself caught up in the pages with such delightful intensity that since that fateful evening, I have ignored my work, neglected my wife and lost most of my friends — but I've read the books. The writings to be found in *The World of Law* were written by the masters and have been assembled with the utmost care and taste.

There are dozens of books purporting to be collections of writings designed "especially for your lawyer friends." These range from dreary compendiums of flat humor to overwhelming (and usually unread) tomes compiling the writings of the "great" legal philosophers. Most of these books leave the reader with a distinct feeling that the editor threw together the first twenty-five writings he could collect that seemed to fit into his theme without any real regard for their worth or appropriateness. These are usually preceded by a long flowery introduction meaning nothing. It can honestly be said that Mr. London's *The World of Law* does not fall into that category.

In the modestly short (two pages) introduction, Mr. London describes the criterion he used for the selection of the materials in the books in this fashion:

There is no Plimsoll line, to borrow a metaphor from the law, for the judgment of literature. Great literature should ignite or inspire; but whether it does or not depends in part on the reader. I believe each work included here met that test when I read it, though in some instances the flame gave more light than heat. No other test or system was used in the selection of the material, except that I avoided technical writings that would not be understood by a reasonably intelligent person untrained in the law.

To list all the selections found in these volumes would far exceed the limitations placed on a short book review. Even to take a few under the heading of a representative sampling is to detract from the book. Yet, such is considered *de rigueur* and I dare not violate an honored tradition, so here are a few of the multitude of titles in Volume One of *The World of Law*: From *The Apocrypha* — "Susanna and the Elders;" from *Don Quixote* — "The Cases Judged by Sancho Panza;" from *The Pickwick Papers* — "The Trial of Bardell v. Pickwick;" Terence Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy* (in play form); Agatha Christie's *The Witness for the Prosecution* (much better ending than the movie version); Arthur C. Train's "The Dog Andrew;" Anatole France's "Monsieur Thomas;" and from Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, "On Judge Bridlegoose and Lord John the Loony."

Volume one of this set is designated as "The Law in Literature" and contains only writings produced by those outside the legal profession as they gaze in our windows. These lookers-in seem to have a delightful ability to look into lawyers and the law with such sharpness of vision that there is generated in the lawyer reader an uneasy feeling that his world is not so remote and mysterious as he might prefer.

Volume Two is designated as "The Law as Literature." In this part, Mr. London has included writings by lawyers and judges engaged in an intramural pinching and patting of the Goddess Justice. It must be said that Mr. London has not remained exactly true to his chosen title for the second volume, for here one finds much also from the pens of lookers-in.²

Volume Two contains such titles as: Gandhi's plea for the severest penalty upon his conviction for sedition; Mr. Justice Holme's dissenting opinion in *United States v. Schwimmer*; Damon Runyon's historic account of the troubles of "Daddy" and "Peaches;" H. L. Mencken's blistering reports from the Scopes Trial; "On the Science of the Law" from *Gulliver's Travels*; and Judge Jerome Frank's provocative *Courts on Trial* is called upon for "On Law-suits as Inquiries Into the Truth."

If you are a lawyer, or if you want to give a really fine present to someone who is, or wants to be a lawyer, then this is the best set of books you can find for many pleasant hours of reading enjoyment. *The World of Law* is a world of reading delight. To Simon and Schuster, the publishers, and to Ephraim London, the editor, my cap is doffed!

Karl P. Warden*

² I am mindful, however, that, by local custom, a lawyer should approve a title if at all possible. Thus, the cloud referred to is not sufficient to render these books unmarketable.

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