to have incorporated the commissioner's rules into the volume under review.¹⁰

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In the early part of the eighteenth century, Mary Bigg, the daughter of Lovelace Bigg, a member of the landed aristocracy, married a common tradesman. Her husband, Charles Blackstone, was but a silk merchant living in Cheapside. From this union was born a child, William Blackstone, who rose from his poor surroundings to become a professor in one of England's largest universities, a Knight of the realm, and a justice of the King's courts of that country.

It was during Sir William's years as a professor of law at Oxford University that the groundwork for his Commentaries on The Law was formulated. They originated in the course of lectures repeated every year for fifteen years, and at the end of that time were published with such success that Blackstone realized over eighty thousand dollars from the publication—and this a book of law. Blackstone was the first to give the law the air of science. "He found it a skeleton and clothed it with life, color and complexion. He embraced the cold statue and by his touch it grew into youth, health and beauty."

Influence of the Commentaries in training and inspiring American statesmen can not be accurately measured. For over 150 years it was a "first" book for lawyers, students, scholars and the cultured public. This book was the turning point in the lives of John Marshall, Daniel Webster and many others. Sixteen signers of the Declaration of Independence knew it from cover to cover. Abraham Lincoln found a copy in a barrel—and it changed his life, and the life of our nation. 73 editions in English, 56 in French, 11 in German, 9 in Italian; editions in most every language including the

¹⁰ The added cost involved in including the rules and their rather tentative character have been assigned by the commissioner as reasons for failing to add them as above suggested.
Chinese attest to the fact that Blackstone is a landmark in literature as well as the law.

Numerous editions of the work have appeared, more or less abridged, and usually copiously annotated. The result has been to confuse the reader and divert from the original text. Dr. Samuel Johnson once said that "the general effect of any work is weakened by notes of commentators; the mind is chilled by such interruption, and the thoughts diverted from the original subject; until the reader, wearied by perusal of the notes and comments, at last discards the book itself, for its beauty is no longer discernible." It is gratifying to discover that the Gavit edition includes none of the authorities which Blackstone cited in the original text, and has reduced the text itself to almost half its original size. Since this volume was intended for the layman, as well as students and lawyers, no effort was made to elaborate in detail upon the various matters discussed. At the end of each chapter there is a brief commentary by the editor of this edition, Dean Gavit, for the purpose of explaining some of the more technical portions of the law as described by Blackstone, and indicating the development of this law in the United States since Blackstone's time.

Dean Bernard C. Gavit is a member of Phi Delta Phi, Phi Delta Theta, Order of Coif and Phi Beta Kappa. He is the author of numerous books and a contributor of articles to legal publications. Dean of the Law School at the University of Indiana since 1929, he is listed in Who's Who in America. His present edition of Blackstone's Commentaries on The Law is recommended reading for all.

ROBERT W. COOK

Book Review Editor.
By William Blackstone, Esq. Vinerian Professor of Law, and Solicitor General to Her Majesty. Oxford. In this situation he was led, both by duty and inclination, to investigate the elements of the law, and the grounds of our civil polity, with greater assiduity and attention than many have thought it necessary to do. And yet all, who of late years have attended the public administration of justice, must be sensible that a masterly acquaintance with the general spirit of laws and the principles of universal jurisprudence, combined with an accurate knowledge of our own municipal constitutions, their original, reason, and history, hath given a beauty and energy to many modern judicial decisions, Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books. Notes selected from the editions of Archibald, Christian, Coleridge, Chitty, Stewart, Kerr, and others, Barron Field's Analysis, and Additional Notes, and a Life of the Author by George Sharswood. In Two Volumes. About This Title: A two volume edition of the classic work on English law by Blackstone. This edition is interesting because it includes the commentaries of at least 5 previous editors of Blackstone's work along with additional notes by Sharswood, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Vol. 1 contains the Introduction to the Study of the Laws of England, Book I Of the Rights of Persons, and Book II The Rights of Things. The Commentaries is divided into four books. The first, introduced by Stanley N. Katz, deals with what Blackstone called "the rights of persons," what a modern lawyer would call constitutional law, the legal structure of government. Book II includes an introduction by A. W. Brian Simpson and describes the law of property. Book III, introduced by John H. Langbein, analyzes civil procedure and remedies. The last book, which is devoted to criminal law and procedure, includes an introduction by Thomas A. Green. Now regarded as a literary, as well as a legal classic, Blackstone's Com... The first volume of Blackstone's Commentaries on the Law was published in November of 1765. It was a best-selling work and was printed in seven editions by 1780. It is considered a masterwork in English law and formed the foundation of the construction of law in America. It was a standard reference work in the courts of the thirteen colonies at the time of the American Revolution and lawyers such as Thomas Jefferson relied heavily upon it for their legal practice. Our principle interest in Blackstone in re: Montauk is the power of escheat of land to the original grantor, or lord of the manor. Begin with Blackstone's Commentaries. So replied Abraham Lincoln to J. M. Brockman, who, in 1860, asked the future president about the best mode of obtaining a thorough knowledge of the law. Lincoln was referring to William Blackstone's multivolume Commentaries on the Laws of England. Blackstone (1723-1780) composed the work from his Oxford lectures on English law the first of the sort ever given at an English university. When Mike Dukakis was asked by CNN's blunt Bernard Shaw during the 1988 presidential debates whether he would support the death penalty if his wife, Kitty, had been raped and murdered, the Massachusetts governor famously responded, "I don't, Bernard, and I think you know that I've opposed the death