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

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BLACKSTONE'S COMMENTARIES ON THE LAW. Edited by
Dean Bernard C. Gavit. Washington Law Book Co.,
Washington, D. C. 1941.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, Mary Bigg, the
daughter of Lovelace Bigg, a member of the landed aristocracy, mar-
mied 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 Ox-
ford 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 Ameri-
can 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 Mar-
shall, 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 Ger-
man, 9 in Italian; editions in most every language including the

¹⁰The 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.