

Handbook of Roman Law, by Max Radin

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Handbook of Roman Law, by Max Radin, LL.B., Ph.D., Professor of Law, University of California. 1 volume published by West Publishing Company, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1927. Price \$4.50.

The value of any book, whether it deals with the subject of law or not, can be found by comparing the completed book with the purpose for which it was written. Had Professor Radin intended to write a text for the serious scholar of Roman Law, a critic might object to certain qualities in the Handbook. But that was not the author's purpose. What he sought to do, and succeeded in doing most admirably, may be found in the opening chapter of the introduction, namely, to write a brief and simple account of Roman Law for those who otherwise would know little or nothing about it.

The Anglo-American legal profession is notoriously self-centered. Those of us who have been nourished upon the cases of the Common Law are quite apt to feel that in it alone can be found legal salvation and that beyond its limit is only exterior darkness. We are prone to look upon the science of Roman and Civil Law much as the medieval scholars looked upon alchemy and sorcery, things which might prove interesting to the initiate but which were veiled in forbidden mystery.

Radin has done much to correct this attitude. He has written a book which is both readable and accurate. But the most important fact is that he has adopted a style and a treatment which render his subject familiar and not remote. Throughout the book the reader feels that he is meeting everyday legal problems which might arise in Wisconsin or Ohio or New York but which actually happened to arise in Rome a few centuries ago.

The quality of verbal compression, which enables the learned author to confine his subject, including the necessary introductory chapters on Roman history, within 485 pages of text, necessarily prevents a thorough examination of principles and authorities. The fact that he has the Common Law always in mind limits his freedom of treatment. After all, to obtain abstract perfection, Roman law can best be treated by a Roman lawyer who writes for other Roman lawyers according to the spirit of his peculiar science, without bothering whether his words may be read by strangers. But had Radin adopted this method or had he spun out his paragraphs into a second or third volume, he would have failed in his purpose, for his work would have been unattractive "to those who have neither law nor Latin" and to those "lawyers and law students who wish to become acquainted with the more elementary notions of the great system which has successfully disputed the domination of the modern world with the law of England."

D. J. MCKENNA

Human Jettison, by Frederick C. Hicks.

"A sea tale from the law" published by the West Publishing Company of St. Paul, Minnesota. This self-styled "sea tale" is told in an interesting narrative style by a Professor Ashley who has developed a large amount of research on the case. The story, as it unfolds, discloses a ship that is wrecked by icebergs and seventy some-odd survivors crowded into two small boats. One boat is in danger of being swamped, so a seaman, at the insistence of the mate, throws sixteen passengers overboard to lighten the load. The seaman is tried for murder and the chronicle is largely a report of the case. Very interesting reading if one is minded toward tales woven out of the law.

HARRY ALLEN