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## Book Notes

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## BOOK NOTES

YEARBOOKS OF EDWARD II (Year Books Series, Vol. XXV). Edited by John P. Collas, B.Litt., B.A., Queen Mary College, London. Selden Society Publications, Volume 81. London: Bernard Quaritch, 1964. Pp. cxxxvi, 327. £4. 4s. 0d.\*

The *Year Book Reports*, our chief record of the development of the English common law from 1290 to 1535, were written in a crabbed and abbreviated Law French which is unintelligible to most Anglo-American lawyers. Between 1481 and 1679 various black-letter versions of parts of these reports were published in printed editions, but the carelessness and lack of scholarship of the publishers is notorious. Between 1866 and 1911 the British government published scholarly editions of the Year Books of 20-35 Edward I (1292-1307) and 11-20 Edward III (1337-46). The Ames Foundation published the Year Books of 11, 12, 13 Richard II (1387-90) between 1914 and 1937. Since 1903 the Selden Society has published an admirable series of the Year Books of Edward II (1307-1327).<sup>1</sup> The present volume, which is the twenty-fifth in this series, covers the last forty cases of Easter Term and the forty-four of Trinity Term, 12 Edward II (1319).

The reports in the volume are preceded by 130 pages of illuminating discussion of problems of language and interpretation and of the manuscript tradition. The record of each case, taken from the plea rolls, in Latin, and the Year Book report in Law French, collated from fifteen extant manuscripts, are printed on the left page, with a scholarly English translation opposite. The reports proper are followed by concordances with the only other printed edition (1679) and Fitzherbert's Abridgement (1514), tables of statutes, forms of action and cases, and indices of words, matters, persons and places. The table of cases includes a digest of each case and, so, a quick view of them all. On the title page is the well-known quotation from Roger North to the effect that Serjeant Maynard so relished the old Year Books that he chose one before any comedy. An American lawyer may not find a Year Book quite so amusing as did the learned serjeant but he will certainly find it less painful to read a Selden Society edition than to stumble over the Law French of the old black-letter editions.

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\*Current regular publications of the Selden Society are distributed without charge to the members of the Society and past publications are available to them at a substantial discount. The work of the Society is described by Colonel Frederick Bernays Wiener, *The Selden Society and Its Significance for the American Lawyer*, 46 A.B.A.J. 611 (1960). Those interested in becoming members should write to the Missouri State Correspondent of the Society, Professor William F. Fratcher, School of Law, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, 65202. The dues are \$10 per year.

1. The Selden Society volumes for 1930 and 1933 contain the Year Books of 1 and 49 Henry VI and 10 Edward IV (1422 and 1470).

(640)

THE LETTERS OF FREDERIC WILLIAM MAITLAND. Edited by C. H. S. Fifoot, M.A., F.B.A. Selden Society Supplementary Series, Volume 1. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965. Pp. xxiv, 397. \$12.50.

The Selden Society has devoted the first volume of its new Supplementary Series to publication of the extant letters of its founder, Professor F. W. Maitland (1850-1906), who has become the patron saint of scholarly research into the details of English legal history. This superbly edited volume contains 501 of Maitland's letters, including 87 to American scholars, such as Professors M. M. Bigelow and John Chipman Gray. They contain much information about the development of the Selden Society's *Year Books Series*, Volume XXV of which was published last year, and interesting speculations on obscure points which Maitland ran across in editing the Year Books.

BRACTON: THE PROBLEM OF HIS TEXT. By H. G. Richardson. Selden Society Supplementary Series, Volume 2. London: Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., 1965. Pp. xiv, 165. £2, 5s. 0d.

This is an expansion of a lecture delivered before the Selden Society in the Hall of Gray's Inn on March 28, 1961. The work is in two parts. Part I, in eight chapters, deals with problems of Bracton's text. Part II gives Bracton's literary sources other than those printed by Maitland in *Select Passages from Bracton and Azo* (Selden Society Publications, Volume 8, for 1894), the text of Bracton being printed on facing pages. Specimen manuscripts are included. There is also a bibliography, and an index of names and subjects.

