

Readings on Personal Property (Book Review)

Edward J. O'Toole

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READINGS ON PERSONAL PROPERTY. By William T. Fryer. St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1938, pp. xxxii, 1184.

As the bound volumes of law reviews increase and multiply it seems advisable if not essential that the various topics treated be classified according to subject matter, and as classified be made available under separate covers. As early as 1931 the editors of a similar compilation remarked in the preface "that the law reviews have become the repositories of much of modern legal scholarship" but that "unfortunately a large part of this scholarship has been lost to the profession by the fact that it is scattered through some sixty periodicals comprising over six hundred volumes."¹ When the search for light becomes too arduous, many in this busy world may accept the darkness. Hence, it is that Mr. Fryer's publication is a contribution to the law of personal property. Containing as it does the priceless treasures of "periodical literature on Personal Property, dealing with important property concepts" it makes available to the student who is exploring, and to the lawyer who would serve his client promptly and intelligently, the outstanding critiques on this particular branch of the law.

Assuming, as we must, that an editor of law review material in a specialized field selects the finest there is to be had there remains only the question of assembly and organization. It is here, and here alone, that we find opportunity for the editor to express his individuality. Articles can be arranged in chronological order wherein can be shown the growth and development of segregated concepts; or the arrangement may be designed to stress the existing concept rather than the struggle which brought it about; or again, the articles may be supplemented by extracts from the opinions of the court and also non-legal material where the function of law and its social implications are the desiderata.

Although in his preface Mr. Fryer disclaims any effort to outline the history and interpret the function of property, an examination of the contents will lead to the conviction that although the label has not been attached, the quality of the product furnishes its own identification. For example, under the heading of Possession with reference to wild animals there are to be found four references from law reviews, two opinions of the court (one a dissent), and a clipping from the New York Times. Under the heading of Bailments are to be found some sixteen pages of standard forms of chattel mortgages, conditional sale contracts, etc. It is true that such collateral matter does not stifle the main purpose of the author which is to present "the conflicting views" of law "in the light of social policy." However, the presence of such material is stimulating and enlightening both from an historical and functional viewpoint.

In conclusion it may be said that the title of the book ought not to be narrowly interpreted. Personal Property is, after all, a very general term. The editor has arranged such classifications as possession, bailments, finders, liens, pledges, bona fide purchaser, adverse possession, accession, gifts, fixtures and emblements. Diverse as these topics may appear at first glance, it would seem that the aim of the author is to show the development by conflict of those

¹ SELECTED READINGS ON THE LAW OF CONTRACTS (1931) p. v.

basic principles of the law of personal property which must be understood before the many ramifications can be fully comprehended.

EDWARD J. O'TOOLE.*

* Professor of Law, St. John's University School of Law.