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Book Review of Virginia Probate Practice

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BOOK REVIEW
VIRGINIA PROBATE PRACTICE
by Brockenbrough Lamb

The Michie Company, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1957 \$15.00

Most readers commence a book on page one, but at the outset let this reviewer warn all readers that Judge Lamb's new book begins with the "Foreword", for herein is set out the peculiar and unique ideas that mark the originality of a true student of the law, and further, reveal the crotchets of an honest mind—a mind that explores fully rather than accepting blindly all of the old tenets of the law. It is in the "Foreword" that a few verbal licks are delivered to those who approach the teaching of the law backwards; and it is because Judge Lamb feels so deeply about the plight of the uneducated young lawyer that in the midst of his own hectic scheduling he has devoted countless hours to composing a book that will serve as a guiding light to the novice in the field. Such devotion might, without flippancy, be termed a true act of love.

The author himself makes no pretentious claims for his book, he chooses to refer to its future usefulness as a form book for the practitioner. Yes, it is this; but, it is so much more also. While the book admittedly contains every conceivable form needed in a probate practice, it also contains a highly readable text composed of instructions to the novice as well as to the more experienced practitioner, entertaining and pungent comments on inconsistencies in the probate field, recommendations for possible legislative improvements in pertinent statutes, and gentle guidance for the Virginia Supreme Court, which has seemingly erred on a point or two in the last hundred years.

The mechanical make-up of the book is outstanding. Part of the credit for this belongs to the author, part to the publisher. It was the author's choice to insert each illustrative form as an introduction to the textual discussion of the law and practice concerning same, not in the archaic [unenlightened] fashion of old as a dead lump of matter at the end of the book. Further,

it was the author's choice to say what he had to say boldly, not to hide his light of wisdom under the bushel of "scholarly" scholarship—there are no footnotes, no appendix. This book may be read, fully savored, without playing a game of mental hopscotch. It was the publisher's choice [no doubt some preferences of the author were followed] to use a size of print that is most conducive to pleasurable and prolonged reading. Why don't more publishers try this? There is no law that demands that worthwhile publications be set in the smallest type possible while only novels and children's books may be set in a decent size print.

This reviewer predicts a long and useful future for *Virginia Probate Practice*; in the hands of the young practitioner, for whom it was so kindly intended, it will serve as a beacon light during his first stumbling exercises in the practice of law.

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