

## Louisiana Law Review

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Volume 5 | Number 4

May 1944

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### Repository Citation

Chas. P. Manship, *JEFFERSON AND THE PRESS*, by Frank Luther Mott, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1943. Pp. 65. \$1.00., 5 La. L. Rev. (1944)

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## Book Reviews

JEFFERSON AND THE PRESS, by Frank Luther Mott, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1943. Pp. 65. \$1.00.

*Jefferson and the Press* is the title of the thin but well-packed volume written by Dr. Frank L. Mott, Dean of the School of Journalism, University of Missouri and published by the Louisiana State University Press. Dr. Mott says the volume was written as a humble contribution to the observance of the bicentenary of Jefferson's birth, but it is a great deal more than that. It is a rich contribution to Jeffersonian literature. The author sees in Jefferson "the foremost exponent in history of the necessity of a free press in any system of popular, or democratic government."

Several years before his death, Thomas Jefferson made this comment in one of his letters to the Marquis de Lafayette:

"But the only security of all, is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted, when permitted freely to be expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary, to keep the waters pure."

Those words, penned more than a century ago, are impressive in our own times, when many once forceful newspapers in continental Europe have passed into the twilight, and thousands of the populace are not properly informed as to world events.

It was after poring over numerous records and letters and biographical works that Dr. Mott was able to present his clear and convincing conclusion that Thomas Jefferson throughout his career held to the conviction that the press is an integral part of the democratic system. "Keep the press free, see that the facts get to the people, and the people will govern themselves wisely; that was his whole doctrine," summarizes Dr. Mott. He offers further proof in a quotation from a Jeffersonian letter, "were it left for me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter."

The book, as Dr. Mott says, was written for the purpose of bringing together the epitome of Jefferson's philosophy of press and to recount briefly his experience with the newspapers of his time. The book is convincing in its summarization of the work

done by Jefferson to guarantee a free press in the Bill of Rights. It was Jefferson who argued for the inclusion of a free press guaranty in the Constitution, holding as he did that without an expressed guaranty the federal government might, through implied powers, seek to control the press. The author's comment "We must admit that time has shown the necessity of that guaranty," is forceful and convincing in the light of present day developments. Dr. Mott's booklet is a valuable contribution both to the history of a free press and to the part that Thomas Jefferson played in its establishment.

CHAS. P. MANSHP\*

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JOHN SHARP WILLIAMS, by George Coleman Osborn, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1943. Pp. ix, 501. \$4.00.

To the older people of Mississippi generally the career of John Sharp Williams is proof not only of nearly all the best copybook adages of their day pertaining to the reward of merit, but as well of particular elaborations and applications, sometimes questioned by the later generation. Outstanding among the latter are such assertions that a statesman can be elected to public office without demagoguery by the present democratic political machinery and that Mississippi can produce such a one, the peer of any produced by other states or nations. The fact that he was born in Memphis is pooh-poohed as insignificant, if mentioned by some outsider, since Memphis itself has always been a product of Mississippi from the time it was Chickasaw Bluffs until it became the hobby of Mr. Crump, another Mississippian, who has been cited, strangely enough, as disproving some of the same copybook adages. Besides, Williams did not spend much time in Memphis. He was merely born there. At the age of eight he went to live at Cedar Grove Plantation near Yazoo City, Mississippi, the home of his maternal ancestors, which was to continue to be his home for the remainder of his life.

After tracing the ancestry of Williams from seventeenth century Virginia to his birth in 1854 in Memphis, Mr. Osborn follows his subject from his youth during the Civil War and the days of reconstruction, through his cultural education at Kentucky Military Institute, Sewanee, Virginia, Heidelberg, Dijon and back to

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