

"A most useful member of the college he proved. As bursar he put the college muniments in order, he reformed the system of accounts, completed the Codrington Library, and by an essay on Collateral Consanguinity did much to relieve the college from troublesome claims by remote kindred of the founder. As a delegate of the University press he made himself master of the mechanical part of printing, remedied abuses, and rescued the press from the 'indolent obscurity' into which it had sunk. As visitor of Queen's College he was instrumental in building the fine façade of that college which now fronts the High Street. Wherever he went Blackstone brought with him—all his life—an active, orderly, reforming mind, and an enormous capacity for taking pains.

"At the suggestion of Murray, afterwards Lord Mansfield, Blackstone delivered a series of lectures on English law, on his own account, at Oxford, 'and the experiment proved eminently successful. The lectures are attended, we are told, by a "very crowded class of young men of the first families, characters, and hopes," and Blackstone's fame as a lawyer grew in proportion. The King paid him the compliment of asking him to read his lectures to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George III. An addition of the Great Charter and of the Charter of Forest, which he published at this time, added much to his reputation; and so when, a year or two after, a professor was to be appointed under Mr. Viner's bequest to the University, Blackstone was unanimously chosen.'

"Jeremy Bentham, however, who attended the lectures, declares that Blackstone was a 'formal, precise, and affected lecturer—just what you would expect from the character of his writings—cold, reserved, and wary, exhibiting a frigid pride.' But this estimate need not surprise us when we recall the mental attitude of Bentham, who states that to no small part of the lectures he listened 'with rebel ears.'

"For four years Blackstone was Vinerian Professor, a period signalized by the composition of those lectures which became known to fame as the Commentaries, and which, so it is