

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM.

UNIQUE VERDICT OF CORONER'S JURY.—"State of Arkansas, County of —, Township of —, an inquisition taken this 4th day of February, 1886, — J. P. for the county aforesaid upon the view of the Dead Doddie of —, who is about 5 ft. 6½ high, weigh about 130 pounds, dark complected, find that he came to his death by — Special Deputy Constable, the said — attempted to kill the said — who after a tussle, managed to shoot him with a shot gun, which shot taken affect in the stomach & killed him the said —, who was proved to be a desperate character from the evidence & according to Law we the undersigned Justice & Jurors find that — did the killing in extreme justifiable homicide and that he done it to save his own life—\$2.15 was found on his person which was used to pay for a coffin and a bottle of whiskey."

There is a painful ambiguity in the last sentence of this verdict. Was the \$2.15 used to pay for the coffin, and for a bottle of whiskey? Or was the bottle of whiskey, as well as the money, found upon the person of the deceased? As there is no probability that the verdict will be amended, there is scope for conjecture. As the deceased was found to be a "desperate character," and came to his end after a "tussle," the presumption would be that any bottle found on his person would be a whiskey bottle, empty, not a bottle of whiskey. We are therefore led to the conclusion that the bottle of whiskey was bought with the money—to console the survivors.—Ex.

THE following is taken from the January number of the *Law Quarterly Review*. It is a very interesting reminiscence:—

OXFORD, 23 June, 1753.

In Michaelmas Term next will begin

A

COURSE of LECTURES

ON THE

LAWS of ENGLAND.

By Dr. BLACKSTONE, of All-Souls College.

THIS Course is calculated not only for the Use of such Gentlemen of the University, as are more immediately designed for the Profession of the Common Law; but of such others also, as are desirous to be in some Degree acquainted with the Constitution and Polity of their own Country.

To this End it is proposed to lay down a general and comprehensive Plan of the Laws of England; to deduce their History; to enforce and illustrate their leading Rules and fundamental Principles; and to compare them with the Laws of Nature and of other Nations; without entering into practical Niceties, or the minute Distinctions of particular Cases.

The Course will be completed in one Year; and, for greater Convenience, will be divided into four Parts; of which the first will begin to be read on Tuesday the 6th of November, and be continued three Times a Week throughout the Remainder of the Term: And the following Parts will be read in Order, one in each of the three succeeding Terms.

Such Gentlemen as propose to attend this Course (the Expence of which will be six Guineas) are desired to give in their Names to the Reader some Time in the Month of October.

* * The broadsheet of which the above is a reduced facsimile, and of which I am not aware that another copy has been preserved, was found by me in a recently purchased copy of the now somewhat rare "*Privilegia Universitatis*." It would be interesting to know more of the circumstances which attended the beginnings of the study of the Common Law at Oxford. Blackstone's brother-in-law and biographer, Clitherow, in the preface to the Reports, tells us that the lectures of 1753 "even at their commencement, such were the expectations formed from the acknowledged abilities of the lecturer, were attended by a very crowded class of young men of the first families, characters, and hopes." In 1758 Blackstone was elected to the newly founded Vinerian Professorship, and Bentham, who had returned to Oxford early in December, 1753, writes as follows: "I attended with two colleagues of my acquaintance. One was Samuel Parker Coke, a descendant of Lord Coke, a gentleman commoner, who afterwards sat in Parliament and the other was Dr. Downes. They both took notes, which I attempted to do, but could not continue it, as my thoughts were occupied reflecting on what I heard. I immediately detected his fallacy respecting natural rights. . . . 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 his lectures were popular, though the subject did not then excite a wide-spreading interest, and his attendants were not more than from thirty to forty" (Works, x. p. 45). Lord Eldon in the case of *Abernethy v. Hutchinson* (1825), 3 L. J. Ch. 209 (for a reference to which I am indebted to the present holder of the Vinerian chair, Professor Dicey), says: "We used to take notes at his [Blackstone's] lectures. At Sir R. Chambers' lectures also the students used to take notes." It must however be remarked that Eldon did not matriculate till 15th May, 1786, the year in which Blackstone finally severed his connection with Oxford, after for some time previous lecturing by deputy. He had resumed his London practice in 1750, and in 1761 had entered Parliament and had become a King's Counsel. The Vinerian Professor's statutory right of reading by deputy, upon which Blackstone had successfully insisted in 1781, was very simply conceded to his successor, Sir R. Chambers, who held the office for three years after he had gone out as a Judge to India (1774-77). The future Lord Eldon was duly appointed to be his deputy, at a salary of £200 per annum, and as such (according to the story which he told long afterwards) had to read, soon after his elopement with Betsy Bartees, "with about 140 boys all giggling at the Professor," a previously unseen lecture, sent to him by Chambers, upon the Statute 4 & 5 Phil. & M. c. 8, for the punishment of such as shall take away maidens that be inheritors, being within the age of sixteen years, or that marry them, without consent of their parents.

T. E. HOLLAND.