



1964

Clarence Darrow: Verdicts Out of Court edited by Arthur and Lila Weinberg

Stephen Palmer

Follow this and additional works at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/klj>

Right click to open a feedback form in a new tab to let us know how this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Palmer, Stephen (1964) "Clarence Darrow: Verdicts Out of Court edited by Arthur and Lila Weinberg," *Kentucky Law Journal*: Vol. 52 : Iss. 3 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://uknowledge.uky.edu/klj/vol52/iss3/8>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Kentucky Law Journal by an authorized editor of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.

Book Reviews

CLARENCE DARROW: VERDICTS OUT OF COURT. Edited by Arthur and Lila Weinberg. Quadrangle Books, Chicago, Illinois (1963).

If America's attorneys were asked to select our country's most outstanding lawyer, there would be many nominations. But if laymen were assigned the same task, one person would get most of the votes: Clarence Darrow. Like it or not, he is the stereotype for America's legal profession.

While Darrow's life spanned some four score years and the most important cases for half a century. *Verdicts Out of Court* is not about his advocacy; rather it is by and about the man himself. After a lengthy introduction, the book divides itself into seven sections and is a collection of edited lectures debates, and essays on what one opinionated lawyer thought about the world in which he lived.

Under one section, Darrow gives his views on various social issues: the right to revolution, the problem of the Negro, the open shop, the ideal labor union, prohibition, divorce, the immigration law, the NRA and "Fair Competition." While several of these items have a definite dated tone, his ideas on the Negro are refreshingly current. In a 1901 lecture to a Negro men's club, Darrow told his audience:

If the white race insults you on account of your inferior position they also degrade themselves when they do it. Every time a superior person who has position invades the rights and liberties and the dignity of an inferior person, he degrades himself, he retards and debases his own manhood when he does it.

Perhaps the most interesting portion of the book deals with men: Robert Burns, Walt Whitman, Leo Tolstoy, Oman Kayyam, and A. E. Housman. In writing the passages about these men, Darrow reveals himself. The reader finds himself playing a game of armchair psychology, trying to understand how Darrow's life echoed the principles and elements of greatness that he saw in others. In Burne, he found a noble savage who poured out the uninhibited and unaffected sentiments of a sympathetic heart. While greatly admiring Walt Whitman's optimism, Darrow was unable to accept it but did find Whitman's tolerance for others desirable. Tolstoy reinforced Darrow's impressions of nobility's responsibility to the poor, weak, and unprotected. From Omar Kayyam and A. E. Housman, Darrow drew his pessimistic view of the shortness and insignificance of life. However, he also accepted

their philosophy of living actively now, or as Omar said, "take the Cash, and let the Credit go."

A second source of constant interest is Darrow's own philosophy of life. The two main recurring themes of his conceptual dichotomy are: the need to protect the poor, weak and ignorant against the rich, powerful, and wise; and secondly, the futility of life. Darrow believes that man is the divine king of rights, but that even with all of his rights, man is still pretty insignificant.

Better than a biography, *Verdicts Out of Court* is more like having several mid-morning coffee-break discussions with a great attorney on his attitudes and opinions. Each short section is poignant with Darrow on Darrow—from his failures to his faith. While a good many of his conclusions are highly arguable, if not boldly wrong, the book is invigorating enough to bring Darrow to life as a three-dimensional person. In short, the book provides an excellent opportunity for the reader to reach back into the past and meet the dynamic Clarence Darrow as himself.

Stephen Palmer

MADAME DE STAEL AND FREEDOM TODAY. Roberta Forsberg and H. C. Nixon. Astra Books (1964).

This charming study of Madame De Staël, a real flesh and blood Frenchwoman who Lord Byron said "thinks like a man, but . . . "feels like a woman," and who, without serious interruption of political activity, had "a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed," could well be placed on either the shelf of political science, history, or literature.

The emphasis of the authors is on the political prophecies of this rather prolific cosmopolite who, because of her uncompromising devotion to liberty, dared to defy Bonaparte himself, and who, as a result of that defiance, experienced the burning of thousands of copies of one of her publications that complimented England too much to please the "Little Corporal."

The authors of this laconic book have shown that Gouverneur Morris and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom she admired greatly, were strongly influenced by both the writings of and the personal exchange with this peripatetic political prophetess. Her admiration for America and Americans, however, did not deter her from issuing strong criticism of Jeffersonian isolationism. In a letter to the third President, she not only expressed a real enthusiasm for young America but also