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Review of “American Family Laws, Vols. 3-4,” By Chester G. Vernier

Ralph F. Fuchs
Indiana University School of Law

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Book Reviews

AMERICAN FAMILY LAWS, by *Chester G. Vernier*. Vol. III, Husband and Wife, pp. xxix, 684; Vol. IV, Parent and Child, pp. xxi, 491. California, the Stanford University Press, 1935, 1936.

In 1931 there appeared the first volume of Professor Vernier's projected five-volume work on American Family Laws. Devoted to the contract to marry and to marriage, it was followed a year later by Volume II which dealt with the law of divorce. The two volumes under review will be followed by a final one dealing with incompetents and dependents.

The later volumes follow the same admirable pattern as the original one, previously noted in these pages.¹ As a reference work, with its comprehensive treatment of statutes and its useful citations to the literature as well as to cases, it is uniquely valuable—the sort of thing without which adequate study of American law is impossible. Admirably clear in outline, the work is equally clear in its presentation of the material within each section. Brief textual treatments are followed by references and frequently by tabular presentation of the statutes. For the practitioner who wishes quick, accurate statement of the law of a particular jurisdiction the new volumes, like their predecessors, are by far the best tool available. For the scholar who seeks comparative material there is no substitute for Professor Vernier's work.

It is not alone in the provision of a reference tool, however, that Professor Vernier makes his contribution. His critical comments and constructive suggestions lend interest to his volumes as books to be read. They are the shrewd observations of a socially-minded lawyer rather than the products of sociological research. No legislator or planner of the family law of the future would wish to overlook them.

In short, Professor Vernier has performed a difficult, important, self-assigned task superlatively well. It is difficult to comment at length upon it because the work itself says the last word.

RALPH F. FUCHS.

Washington University School of Law.

STORM OVER THE CONSTITUTION, by *Irving Brant*, with an introduction by *Henry A. Wallace*. Indianapolis, the Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1936. Pp. 294.

American constitutional literature receives an important addition in Mr. Brant's book. The author develops the thesis—not entirely new but still far from widespread in its acceptance—that the Federal Government, the creation of Hamilton's statesmanship, must and can under the Constitution be harnessed to the service of Jefferson's democratic ideal. Such, indeed, has been the course of history since Jefferson signed the Louisiana Purchase, notwithstanding the steady opposition of the advocates of states' rights whom economic self-interest has successively projected on to the political scene. Confronted by twentieth-century economic problems which have called

¹ Book Review (1932) 18 St. Louis L. Rev. 89.