

BOOK REVIEWS

THE CASE OF SACCO AND VANZETTI. By Felix Frankfurter, 118 pp. Little, Brown and Company, Boston. 1927.

This book is a "critical analysis for lawyers and laymen" of the proceedings which resulted in the execution of two Italians for murder. No well informed person can afford to be content with an opinion on this much discussed case without a thorough reading of the facts and evidence which the author has here set forth. The evidence upon which the jury's verdict was predicated is carefully reviewed, together with the grounds upon which the subsequent motions for a new trial and appeals therefrom were argued. The conclusion seems inescapable, upon the facts presented in this book, that no reasonable and intelligent person could fail to entertain serious and grave doubts as to the guilt of these two men. The book is thoroughly documented and every fact set forth can be verified by reference to the records of this horrible trial.

The author's views are in no sense concealed in the presentation of the material of the book, but it is only fair to state that the material is such as to veritably compel the reader to share those views. There is abundant evidence to justify the conclusion that Sacco and Vanzetti were denied the very fundamentals of a fair trial, as such is understood in Anglo-American law. There is imposing data to indicate that the two Italians were railroaded to the electric chair and that a Massachusetts judge connived in the process. While this challenging proposition might well rest upon Mr. Frankfurter's unimpeachable reputation as a legal scholar, such is unnecessary. He has but marshalled facts and evidence available to any investigator who familiarizes himself with the records of the case.

But the fact remains nevertheless that reasonable minds *have* differed upon the question of the fairness of the trial, and some of these have been minds of men whose intelligence is unquestioned. It may be significant that some of the disinterested investigators have been men untrained respecting the technical questions involved. Be that as it may there have been differences of opinion among men whom it is folly to accuse of stupidity or of unreasonableness. The book emphasizes what the whole Sacco-Vanzetti case has signified to many thinking men, namely, that error of opinion will be encountered among reasoning and thinking men as long as training, habits of life and thought, and social and economic surroundings vary as they must necessarily do. As to where the error of opinion lies in this particular instance, he must be indeed, a presumptuous reviewer to designate. One thing is certain, however, and that is that only through free and unbiased discourse and study, and by means of a complete unrestricted exchange of ideas can problems worth the study be intelligently worked out. And, if it adds anything to the review of this book, he who can longest postpone the formation of his opinion, forms the safest grounds upon which to base it.

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