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A Sense of the Noble

Foreword

A SENSE OF THE NOBLE

By MAURICE REULER

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The profession of the law is an ancient and honorable one. Certainly our common inheritance springs at least from Magna Charta or before. Indeed in many ways the most splendid impulses of Western civilization have been reflected in the law. Our forebears built an abiding structure for the solution of man's social relations through peaceful communication. This structure is the law. Yet the structure was not built solely by great leaders in the field of our profession nor has it been an edifice constructed of tremendous cornerstones. Rather it has been created by the work of countless laborers in the legal quarries. These unknowns have tended their individual cases with earnestness, zealously and integrity. It is they who have morticed and placed brick by brick the structure forming the law.

Amid the forest of daily tasks encompassing a lawyer it seems that certainly one major beacon that has guided our brethren in the past has been the principle that we are men in an honorable profession whose standards of conduct must remain high and inviolate from the temptations of the market place.

Today our profession is under severe attack, and the question arises as to why should this be so. The answer lies in the fact that many of us have forgotten our inheritance. We have sat passively while those less qualified have usurped our prerogatives—prerogatives which have been earned over hundreds of years and which now threaten to slip away in decades. We have descended into the market place and have thus lost the respect of those with whom we deal. The uniqueness of a lawyer was and ought to be integrity. We should stand like rocks before the storm, remembering that our heritage is one of honor, that ours and our client's interests are one, that we are a source from whom he will receive advice with only his and not someone else's interests at heart. We must reaffirm our faith in ourselves as a bulwark of liberty against the ceaseless pressure of conflicting demands. Upon doing these things we will regain a sense of the nobility of our profession and will once more place ourselves in the forefront of those who seek the high road that leads to justice.

A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE



The familiar maxim that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing is perhaps nowhere more apt than in the field of legal research.

The lawyer who relies upon a case or statute he finds applicable in principle without checking its current status as authority exposes both his client's interests and his own reputation to grave jeopardy. The case may well have been reversed or overruled, the statute amended or repealed or declared unconstitutional and void. Even the simple citing reference adds to or takes from a cited case some significant measure of weight or force.

Reference to the appropriate edition of Shepard's Citations makes instantly apparent the present value as authority of the case or statute in which an attorney is interested. Without such information, his little knowledge concerning that case or statute is indeed a dangerous thing.



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