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WILLIAM TRICKETT

JOHN H. WIGMORE*

In the great hall of the University Club of Chicago the stained glass windows are decorated with medallions bearing the crests of all the American colleges, arrayed in the order of their foundation. And there, almost at the beginning of the line, shines the crest of Dickinson College,—a perpetual reminder, to the university graduates from everywhere, of the long and honorable record of that institution in American annals.

The Dickinson School of Law I first became acquainted with when our Faculty (now nearly thirty years ago) succeeded in inveigling from Dickinson into our fold a brilliant young professor, Frederic Woodward (who has since emerged as vice-president of the University of Chicago). At that time I first learned the name of William Trickett, the dean. And ever since then I kept note of him in his original and unique contributions to the Dickinson Law Review.

The greatest minds are sometimes the most modest. One of the attributes of real greatness is to devote oneself to the task that lies nearest at hand and to perform it thoroughly. Few scholar-teachers of great powers have been willing to tie themselves down to the law of the jurisdiction in which they studied and taught. My lamented colleague, Albert Kales, was one of this type, who devoted himself to the law of Illinois; and the lamented scholar of Pennsylvania, whose service to jurisprudence we now commemorate, was another of this type.

He devoted himself to the study and rationalization of the law of Pennsylvania. Year after year, in the Dickinson Law Review, he put forth his comments on almost every branch of the law,—criticizing, straightening, and rationalizing it. Had there been in every State a scholar of similarly acute powers and wide interests, the laws of the several States would have been vastly improved.

It was in the law of Evidence that he showed pre-eminently his powers of reasoning,—his inexorable logic,—his repugnance for fictions, shams, and hollow verbiage. Shrewd sallies of satire enlivened his demonstrations. No fine-sounding formula, however ensconced in popular acceptance, was safe from the piercing shafts of his logic. It was with satisfaction that I was able frequently to draw upon his acutely reasoned demonstrations as ammunition for supporting my views. To find him in accord with my personal hypotheses

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was to encourage me to proceed and to convince me that sound reason was on my side.

His personal word, too, was a most valued encouragement, in the earlier days when I was advancing views that were often novel to bench and bar. He must have had a kind and sympathetic heart, for more than once he took up his pen and wrote to me unsolicited a word of encouragement. When my second edition appeared, in 1923, he wrote: "I wish to congratulate you on the completion of the second edition of your matchless work on Evidence. The debt which the courts and lawyers owe you is immeasurable".

I ought not in propriety to quote this; but I do so because it testifies to the generous spirit of one who thought he saw good work being done by another in the same field. An author seldom receives from a fellow-author such frank words of approval, and such an utterance marks unmistakably the character of the man who writes it.

Circumstances never brought to me the privilege of a meeting other than by correspondence. But I have always wished that I could have enjoyed the advantage of frequent converse with him. And I join with all others in revering the memory of one who so long upheld the high standard of legal scholarship and confirmed the fame of Dickinson College.