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A Tribute to Professor Edmund C. Dickinson

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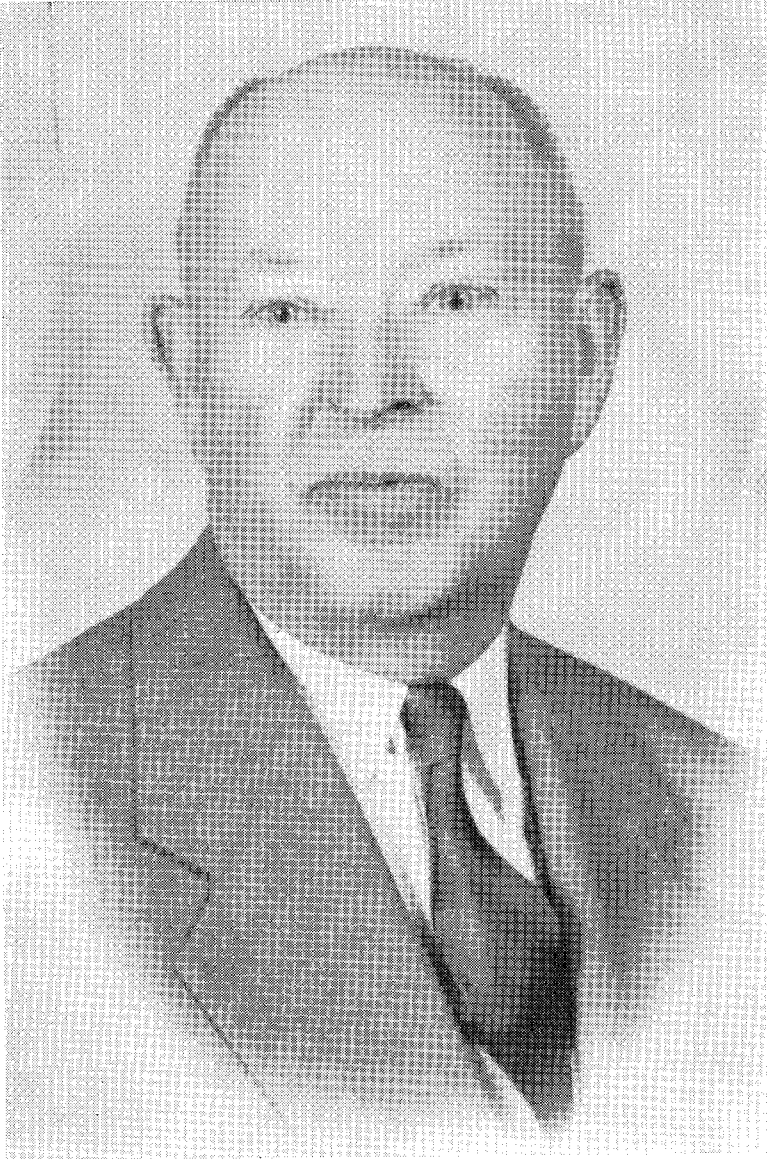
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PROFESSOR EDMUND C. DICKINSON

A TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR EDMUND C. DICKINSON

J. WARREN MADDEN*

I AM honored by being asked to write an appreciation of Professor Dickinson for the *Law Review*. He and I both went to the faculty of the Law School in 1921. I can claim no credit for any part in his selection, because that was done before I was employed. Professor Clifford Snider came at the same time, but he was a bachelor and a West Virginian, while Dickinson and myself were married men with young children, and were Yankees. We and our families became great friends, and have been ever since.

Dick had a fine sense of the purpose and the value of an education, and particularly of a legal education. He regarded it as definitely more important than the football team. He had no patience whatever with lax standards, or compromises with mediocrity in scholarships. He was no respecter of persons, the family background or campus prominence of a student being entirely irrelevant in his teaching and grading. His colleagues were like-minded in these regards, and as a faculty they had a stiffening effect upon the backbone of this writer, the then dean.

Dick was a hardworking teacher. It would have been unthinkable that he should have appeared before a class carelessly prepared. The strict standards to which he held himself gave him the right to expect his students to be well-prepared. In faculty committee work he always did more than his share, and did it well.

One cannot give Dickinson a high mark for tolerance. He was quick to wrath upon certain subjects, most, perhaps all, of which were deserving of his treatment. I have always regarded myself as fortunate at having been under his observation for some years and not having been once the object of his wrath. I understand that he had no patience with the New Deal, but that came after the time that I was his colleague, and I can only imagine the scorn with which he regarded it. I think, too, that he was inclined to be intolerant of changes in the law, and of the modern, accelerated tendency to temper the law to fit the case. But the intolerance for which I shall remember Dickinson is his intolerance of lack of integrity, of sham and pretense, and of mediocrity in high places.

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It would be hard to attach an adequate value to the services which the State of West Virginia, the University, and the Law School received from Professor Dickinson. He came to them in the prime of life and ripe scholarship and served them for thirty-one years. His mastery of the law of the state and the backgrounds and traditions and personalities of that law, were things which a rolling stone such as this writer could never have achieved anywhere. He learned by observing hundreds of his former students at the bar what students need to be taught, and what students do with their learning in the practice of law. His mature thoughts about the right way to teach law, the usefulness of lawyers to society, the ethics of lawyers and judges, should be preserved.

Hundreds of Professor Dickinson's former students must look back with appreciation and gratitude to him for the law, and the standards of diligence and integrity, which he taught them. This is the monument which is erected to such a teacher, happily, while he still lives. I add my appreciation for having had the opportunity to work with, and learn from, this fine citizen, scholar and teacher. I wish for him and his wife many more years of health and happiness.

I wish to endorse what is being written by others in appreciation of my friends and former colleagues Professor Carlin and Dean Hardman.