

Arthur L. Corbin

*Fleming James, Jr.**

Forty years ago last fall I was a student in Arthur Corbin's course on Contracts. Even at that time we students revered him as a senior member of the faculty.

He was then a man of great physical and intellectual vigor, and of a rugged honesty in thought and dealing. He deceived neither himself nor others. And all of these things informed his personality. We liked and respected him.

Arthur Corbin's course was admirably organized. He elicited a great deal of student participation and gave latitude to pursue inquiry, but he had thought out the problems and knew where he was going. He ran a tight ship. He was by no means without a sense of humor but he did not use humor or anecdote as pedagogical tools. He held our interest by the subject matter itself and the problems it presented.

Arthur Corbin himself had a disciplined mind and was concerned with careful definition of the concepts and words he used and the distinctions among them. Hohfeld's memory was still fresh in the School. Corbin greatly admired the analytical system found in Hohfeld's *Fundamental Legal Conceptions* and insisted on our using it throughout our course. As I look back on the process of my own education two teachers clearly stand out for the contribution they made to whatever intellectual discipline I have learned; Arthur Corbin and a high school Latin teacher.

Another characteristic of Corbin's teaching was his lucidity. This marked the way he talked as well as the way he wrote.

These qualities made Arthur Corbin a powerful man, and we students recognized it. By our time the Law School had become vigorous and exciting. Swan was Dean and the faculty included many teachers who had become great or were on their way to doing so. But in that able group Corbin held a special place. He was the one—so student tradition

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had it—who more than any other single man had brought the School to the recently gained preeminence of which we were so aggressively proud. According to this tradition he could have been Dean on more occasions than one but chose a different role. He was always influential with the faculty and the University administration, and he had much to do with choosing Dean Swan and the faculty and moulding the School's educational policy; but he chose to remain king-maker and not be king.

At this time Corbin was already working on his book. Indeed—again according to tradition—he had been doing so since time immemorial. We joked about this, but we did not doubt that this strong, able man would one day finish his task. In this, I was later to find out, we were better prophets than some of his colleagues.