

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

*Impressions
of Life and Law
by*

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CHOICE OF PROFESSION

A character in Southey's *Doctor* says: 'Far happier are they who always know what they are to do, than those who have to determine what they will do.' In my case law's serious call seemed unanswerable. I had grown up in a legal atmosphere and it was obvious that if I went to the Bar there were certain chances in my favour. My father had enjoyed a considerable position as a common law barrister; and without filial partiality I may claim that he was a very popular member of that profession, popular with both the Bar and the Bench. It is true that Law as a subject never appealed to me. The great drawback of English law is the 'case law': the law reports are endless in variety of quality and quantity; and, as they are distinguished by initials almost identical, searching through these interminable volumes is a tedious and vexatious process. I always sympathized with that great judge, Mr. Justice Maule, who in a case where *Espinasse's Reports* were cited said with some emphasis that he did not care 'for *Espinasse* or any other ass'.

Case law is sometimes alleged to be the price we pay for not having our law codified; but the truth is that the administration of law under conditions of modern civilization is so complex, the issues so varied and so indeterminate, that the result is bound to be amorphous. Nor is codifying as simple as it sounds. The largest law library in the world consists of the books written to explain the *Code Napoléon*.