

WARD WRIGHT

It is an arresting paradox of this time and place, dedicated to the pursuit of action, that when the pursuit is done, achievement counts only as an exemplification of character. Everyone who talks to me about Ward Wright talks about what he was—not about what he did.

The details of his legal career were shaped by the circumstance that he was nephew to the Hon. N. W. Rowell. When we first met he was twenty, entering Osgoode Hall Law School, articulated with Rowell, Reid, Wilkie, Wood & Gibson. The boys knew it as Ward Wright's firm from then on, although it was thirty years before his name came first. The well-earned prestige of Mr. Rowell's name, among both lawyers and laymen, of course brought much important business to the firm, and as he became more and more devoted to public service, Ward got the chance for which his talents and his development of them had prepared him. In no sense was his success any other man's work; but he had in the highest degree the faculty for seeing and using his opportunities.

Comment on the contrast between the two is commonplace: the uncle of fragile frame, ascetic life, religious fervour, razor-edged mind delighting in minutely diligent and exhaustive study of legal problems; the nephew robust, full of deep-voiced laughter and enjoyment of life, impatient of legal niceties, seizing the essential point and going on from there; the only apparent common quality was an amazing energy and vitality. Ward spoke of his uncle as I have written; in his eyes his legal opinions were the law; what the uncle thought of Ward one never knew.

However that may be, clients who came to Rowell remained with Wright. Banking, trusts, corporate finance, company law boards of directors, these were his metier. He shunned Courts: "I'm afraid of Judges, I never know what they will do," he often said. His interest in affairs, all kinds of affairs, was insatiable, and his knowledge was immense—and invaluable in his field. Ward did not claim to be a great lawyer: "I make more mistakes than anyone will ever know," he would say, "but no one can beat me at getting out of them." The ingenuity and resourcefulness which he first showed in getting through, in the few hours his other pursuits left available, his law school examinations did not diminish as time went on. Once at a dinner-table the hostess, of whose husband it was true, was praising the law

as a field where ability brought its due reward. One guest demurred: "Look at Ward and me, I've got more brains than he has, but"; Ward's retort was instantaneous—"Of course he has; the trouble with him is, he doesn't know how to use them!"

All his energy, skill and resource were devoted to the business of his clients, singlemindedly; and if, as sometimes happened, the result was hurt to a friend, he found a way to make unexpected, often illogical amends. Once he actually helped to finance a suit by a friend against a corporation whose action, which caused the litigation, he had approved and advised—and told his client what he was doing. And when his quick temper flashed, he balanced that off too.

For Ward Wright's best talent was a gift for friendship, and his primary interest was people. These qualities made him the local head of a student fraternity at Osgoode Hall, its international head two years later. Inevitably he went to the old War, where he was badly wounded at the Somme. He was President of the Toronto Canadian Club in 1918. He was a political power behind the scenes. It is unnecessary to dilate here upon his interest and activity in the Canadian Bar Association. We all know the service he gave as Vice-President for Ontario. We all know that, if he had not burned out, he would now be its well-loved President.

Pass, friend.

KENNETH MACKENZIE.

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