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Reader's Courtroom

Technically Innocent It Ain't What You Say Living Obligation

By Will Bernard, LL.B.

State laws vary. For personal juidance, see your local attorney

If You Take Somebody Else's Gloves By Mistake, Are You Technically a Thief?

After seeing her husband off at a depot, a woman noticed a pair of gloves lying on a bench. Mistakenly thinking they were her husband's she took them home. The next morning she saw a lost-and-found ad in the newspaper, describing the gloves she had picked up. She thereupon returned them to the owner. Now, it so happened that



the owner was a very crotchety in dividual. Instead of being grateful, he had the woman arrested on a charge of stealing. The man insisted that, technically speaking, anybody who takes someone else's property is a thief. But the court felt otherwise and found the woman not guilty of the charge. The judge said that her "crime" lacked one necessary element: criminal

Should a Person Be Judged By What He Says— Or By How He Says It?

A cabbie was hurt in a collision, and sued the other driver for damages. When the motorist was held liable, his lawyer appealed the case to a higher court. The lawyer pointed out that his client had told a smooth, logical story-while the cabbie had used awkward, halting phrases. But the court was not impressed and turned down the appeal. The judges said that even more important than the words themselves are "the furtive glance, the blush of shame, the hesitation, the sneering tone, the yawn, the sigh, the brazen face of the liar, the honest face of the truthful one. A witness may give testimony that reads, in print, as if falling from the lips of an angel, and yet not a soul who heard it believed a word. Another may testify so that it reads brokenly in print, and yet some thing about him carried the conviction of truth to everyone who heard BOTTLERShim speak."

If a Man Dies, Do His Obligations Die Too?

A wealthy broker decided to give his wife a custom-built car, tailored to suit her taste. He placed the order, at a price of \$7500, but shortly before the gift was delivered the broker was killed in a plane crash. The executors of his estate flatly refused to pay for the car, arguing that the man's death made it "impossible" to carry out the contract. However, the court disagreed and ordered the auto maker paid in full. The judge pointed out that all the broker had contracted to do was to pay \$7500and his executors could do that just as well as he!

Must You Be Considerate Of Your Neighbor's Likes and Dislikes?

A young couple who lived on the outskirts of town kept a small hen house in their back yard. As it hap-pened, the lady who lived next door was a very nervous person. The noise and smell from the hens bothered her so much that she finally went to court for a stop-order.



However, the court turned down her request. The judge said the hen house was perfectly lawful in that district, so long as it wasn't of-fensive to ordinary folk. His Honor added that a home owner need not curb his own activities, just bebor who is ultra-sensitive.

A manufacturing firm announced plans to erect a huge electric sign alongside a busy highway-right in front of a sharp curve in the road. The highway commissioners retorted that, if the sign went up, they would build a screen right in front of it! They explained that they didn't want motorists' minds taken off their driving. The manufacturing firm promptly took the matter to court, but the judge ruled that the commission was justified in taking such a step, as a matter of highway safety.

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