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Constitutional Sanctity

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CONSTITUTIONAL SANCTITY

The great majority of us respect the Constitution and the men who had a part in formulating it. Few of us, however, are idolaters today; in fact, most of us, when we think seriously, agree that our fundamental documents give evidence of finite frailty, they disclose imperfections. The fear, however, that we might do a worse job, outweighs our hope of making improvement. Thus, gradually, we are apt to become accustomed to a process of "side-stepping," particularly with respect to those provisions of fundamental law that encroach upon the field of mere legislation.

Let us illustrate by referring to Section 63, Article 2, of our own State Constitution. It says: "Every bill shall be read three several times, but the first and second readings, and those only, may be upon the same day; and the second reading may be by title of the bill unless a reading at length be demanded. The first and third readings shall be at length."

Now, the day of long-hand bill writing is past; in fact, every bill is made available, in readable print, to every citizen; so we find the lawmaking body, itself, recognizing the time-killing effect of this provision by sanctioning a perfunctory, slipshod, and sometimes "fake" reading of bills. As we have watched "the show go on," as we have seen the "rail birds" leave the emporium of the "voice of the people" with a smirky smile, we have sometimes wondered what part this addition of the ludicrously ridiculous to the general comedy has played in creating some of the disposition to lawlessness that is today giving us such concern.

And so, while the special committee of this Association is hard at work on a survey of the probable cost of a revision and recodification of our statutes, might it not be well, now or later, to extend the activities of that committee by including consideration of a possible revision and simplification of our Constitution?