

themselves with sufficient knowledge to care for their own affairs, at least, and we meet with reports of laymen of extraordinary legal knowledge. It had been so from time immemorial in England, and perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the abandonment of knowledge and skill in the law to the specialists came gradually, and had in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries not yet progressed so far as we are apt to assume nowadays. In the fifteenth century, as Holdsworth shows, men learned the law as they learned the rules of sword play, and "every man who had property to protect, if not every well educated woman also, was perfectly well versed in the ordinary forms of legal processes."²⁶ Hubert Hall, in his "Society in the Elizabethan Age", reports that every man was in that period his own lawyer up to a certain point, and that Will Darrell, the litigious hero of Hall's book, was "intimately versed in every detail connected with the law of real property."²⁷ And Harris and McHenry, the editors of the first reports of Maryland decisions (1809), gave as one of the justifications of their labors that it was "of great moment to every landholder, that the principles by which he holds his property should be familiarized to him."²⁸ Furthermore, there were books instructing justices in almost every possible detail of practice in their courts, and all justices in Maryland were required to equip themselves with the statute books of Eng-

26. Holdsworth, II, 416 and 556.

27. Pages 141 and 144.

28. 1 Harris & McHenry, vi.