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RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LAW DEPARTMENT.

BY JEROME C. KNOWLTON.

In 1859 the Department of Law began its work in education at the University of Michigan, with three professors and ninety students. The faculty consisted of Thomas M. Cooley, James V. Campbell and Charles I. Walker. Judge Cooley resided in Ann Arbor and the other gentlemen lived in Detroit. At this time these men were young and inexperienced in educational work and had not achieved in any marked degree, success at the bar. Today the lives of Cooley, Campbell and Walker make up some of the best chapters in the history of the State of Michigan, and the better part of their lives was spent in teaching law at the University of Michigan. These three truly great men and great teachers have passed away, but the walls within

which they taught still stand and the books they wrote still instruct and inspire.

At the beginning there were ninety students in the Law Department. Within ten years the number had risen to over three hundred. In 1890 the enrollment was over five hundred and in 1900 it rose to over eight hundred. This is truly a phenomenal growth, and it must be admitted that it is in a large extent due to the impetus given the institution by the great worth of its first faculty. In a few years there were hundreds of alumni scattered over the country sounding the praises of the "Ann Arbor Law School," and our present attendance would indicate that these praises are still sung, and by a much larger chorus.

During the first twenty-five years of the department's history, the course of instruction covered two years of six months each. During all this time there were no section quizzes, no text-book recitations, no books of cases, no practice court, no marking of seats, no excuses for absence, no examination at the completion of any course, and most important of all, never a meeting of the Faculty that gave a student the slightest concern. I will be more specific as to what was done during the years 1876-77 and 1877-78, simply as indicating the requirements during the first twenty-five years. A student paid his dues and at 10 o'clock in the morning entered a lecture room,—now known as room "G." For two hours he sat and listened to a lecture by a member of the Faculty. The lecture was decidedly interesting and instructive. It was delivered by Judge Cooley, then a judge of the Supreme Court of the State of Michigan. The lecture concluded, the day's work was done. This was the student's first day's work and every other day during the college year was like unto it, except that there was a change of lecturers from day to day. Two members of the Faculty were judges of the Supreme Court and when that court was in session we saw little of them. During this time Professors Kent and Wells occupied the platform from 10 to 12 every day. The Supreme Court adjourned, Judge Cooley and Judge Campbell took up their work again and continued the discussion of Constitutional Law or Commercial Law, according to assignment.

During this period of over twenty-five years there were only two classes,—known as the junior

and senior laws. The seniors occupied the front part of the room during a lecture and the juniors the back part of the room. The lecture was delivered before both classes sitting together in that order. Usually the professor devoted the first fifteen minutes of the two hours to quizzing the seniors upon his previous lecture. The juniors were never asked a question throughout the entire year. The conditions were such that a student might regularly enter the Department of Law as a junior and then not come in sight of the University for one year, and at the expiration of the year return, entitled to be received as a full-fledged senior law, with one year's credit. Literary students with four years' experience on the campus and desiring a degree in law discovered this fact and some of them took advantage of it and obtained a degree, representing two years' study at the University, whereas only one year had been spent here. The writer sometimes feels that his observation and experience on that subject were detrimental to him as a student. This may account for his present consciousness of deficiency in a knowledge of the elementary principles of the common law. Literary students cannot take advantage of that trick today, and have not been able to do so for the past fifteen years.

We have said that there were no examinations at the completion of any course of study. To this there is one exception. At the end of the college year and during the week, before the law commencement, the senior class was examined upon all subjects taught during the preceding two years. For weeks before the final event the students studied and

crammed over their note books. On the day of examination the seniors met in the lecture room and the entire Faculty sat on the rostrum and for two hours the professors took turns in asking questions upon subjects discussed during the two years previous. I took this examination under Professors Cooley, Campbell, Kent and Wells. It was an oral examination and not unlike an every day recitation as now conducted, except that no student's name was called and no mark made to indicate his presence or absence. All seniors passed and received their diplomas and no one was "plucked" on final examination, except, now and then, for immoral conduct.

We do not call up these historic facts by the way of criticism upon the early methods of instruction at this institution. Far from that! The change is interesting, but times have changed. The standard in legal education has risen far beyond the hopes of those who laid here a foundation broad and deep.

We have drifted away from our first recollection. The law building has been built and rebuilt three times in its history. It is the old "blockhouse" that I most distinctly remember, the first law building on the Campus. It was a perfect square, with no architectural pretensions. In the rebuilding, from time to time, President Angell has insisted that the walls

of the room in which the first Faculty taught should not be torn down. Those walls now stand. Room G is the room in which Cooley, Campbell, Walker, Kent and Wells taught and the rostrum now standing is the one from which they spoke from day to day.

What more is there left of the old law building? Much to be remembered. In the early seventies Room B was the general library of the University. In the Practice Court room was the Law Library—what there was of it. No student should enter rooms G or B or the Practice Court room without a feeling of veneration. The space inclosed by the walls of those rooms is sacred to the memory of the great men who have taught in the department and to that of every alumnus of the University.

The old Law Building, during its early history, was the most important building on the grounds. For many years it was the center of University life and activity. Within its walls were the President's office, the General Library of the University, and the offices of administration, and until the past few years the alumni dinner on commencement day was served in the law lecture room. There was then no University Hall, no general library building, no gymnasium, and none of the buildings constructed within the past twenty years.