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## The Lawyer - Character

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## THE LAWYER — CHARACTER.

By HON. GEORGE T. PAGE, Judge U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Many of the gibes and criticisms directed against lawyers, as a class, are just,—yet the profession of the law is not, in my opinion, equalled in greatness and importance by any other profession or calling.

Becoming a lawyer is really a serious business, and character, learning, and endless toil must be the young lawyer's inseparable companions, helpers, and taskmasters.

Some enter upon the undertaking of becoming a lawyer merely as a means of livelihood, or of gaining political place and power. But when one becomes a lawyer he thereby becomes a public character. He does not have to first become a candidate for nor a holder of public office. His becoming a public character is one of the main things in and inseparable from the life and calling of every lawyer who gets anywhere in his profession. This is so because it is his business to attend to the business of other people.

If we go to a store to buy merchandise it is ordinarily not to see the merchant, but to see and buy some particular make or brand of goods upon his shelf. Not so in the legal profession.

If a lawyer gains clients it is because his personal characteristics or his personal ability has drawn them and attached them to him.

The relation is always a personal one, and is in addition to the purely social interest which exists between members of society generally. If the lawyer gains a large clientele, then he holds a large share of the community confidence and trust, not enjoyed by anyone else, not even the family physician, nor the minister or priest.

The lawyer often becomes the confidant of men who have conflicting interests, which are known to him. If he fails at any point in entire disinterested fidelity to both, irreparable injury may follow.

I could recount, if space permitted or I deemed it necessary, innumerable relations between the lawyer and client,—relations which make him, to those who are his clients, a man of transcendent importance,—but I think you can see that every lawyer must first and above all be a man with a good character.

You can see that it easily comes first. Character must stand at the head of the trinity,—Character, Learning and Industry. Permit me to assure you that no picture emphasizing the importance of character as the first requisite of a lawyer can be overdrawn.

It seems to me easier to define character negatively than otherwise.

A man of character would not be undependable because he was untruthful. He would not be one that would betray a confidence reposed in him.

He would not be one who would be mean and contemptible in anything.

He would not be a Judas.

"Character" is as broad and all inclusive as Truth itself. It is Truth.

From the very nature of the great confidences and privileges given to a lawyer, it must be easy to see that the lawyer must on his part first meet the situation with absolute fidelity, with a character above all reproach and unassailable.

Your clientele will be built up more on the faith of your fidelity to them, more on their belief in your common honesty, than on ability or anything else. Do not doubt the truth of this because you have heard or know that

there are many men who want lawyers to do dishonest and unconscionable things for them. There are many such and you will not all miss the temptation to serve them, but do not forget that even such as they want their lawyers to be honest with them.

We often fail to see until too late that against every storm of life, against every temptation to unworthiness, whether produced by money, false friends or some injustice done us, character must be our sheet anchor, and often our only protection against what would otherwise be overwhelming disasters that come into the life of every lawyer and will doubtless come into yours.

The building of a character is no easy thing. Unless you know just how weak or how strong you are, you do not know the first element of character building. Know yourself: If you know yourself, and can do and control yourself, you are far on the way to the building of a good character. All you then have to do is to set up a standard and build to it. The trouble with most of us is that we see our own faults pretty well, but having no standards to build to, we minimize and try to cover up those faults and they remain flaws in our character, and turn up to plague us at most inconvenient times and places.

There are a lot of "don't's" that I might urge upon you but I would rather give you a few "do's."

1st. Get fixed in your mind the fact that for your own honor, for the honor of your profession, for the protection of your clients, character is of the first importance.

2nd. That by self-examination you must know yourself and control yourself.

3rd. Set up a standard.

4th. Then day by day continue to know yourself and control yourself. In no other way can you work to reach a standard of character necessary for a lawyer.

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### THE TRANSCRIPT OF 1925.

Work on the Transcript of 1925 has progressed nicely since the last issue of the Review. All of the photographs have been disposed of, and if the present rate of progress continues students may anticipate their annual at a date much earlier than the usual distribution date.

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### FRATERNITY CUP STANDING.

The fraternity cup will abide with Nu Beta Epsilon for the coming semester. A computation of the grades for the fraternity members for the first semester shows Nu Beta Epsilon in the lead, with Delta Chi second. The averages were as follows:

Nu Beta Epsilon.....	1.875
Delta Chi .....	1.756
Delta Theta Phi.....	1.74
Phi Alpha Delta.....	1.688
Phi Delta Phi.....	1.67
Alpha Sigma Iota.....	1.58
Bar and Bench.....	1.424

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