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A Personal Note

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A PERSONAL NOTE

It was Wednesday, October 1, 1902, that I assumed formally the duties as Professor at Dickinson School of Law at the opening session of the School for that year. The members of the faculty were Dr. William Trickett, Dean, Judge Wilbur F. Sadler, Senator Weakley, Professor Sylvester Sadler, afterwards Judge and later a Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, Major Pilcher and Professors Hutton, McKeehan and Swartz. Dr. George Edward Reed, President of the Law School and also President of Dickinson College, presided at these opening exercises and presented to the assembled student body the instructors and all made some remarks appropriate to the occasion save one. In all my years of service I do not recall of Dr. Trickett having ever addressed the assembled student body. He was a man of diffidence and natural shyness, not at ease in addressing an assembled group, particularly where strangers were present, but in the classroom he was monarch of all he surveyed, at perfect ease and mental poise and in private conversation brilliant and scintillating to such a degree as to awe the listener.

Of the faculty at that time assembled there is but one survivor.

Although the Law School has been in existence for over a century at Carlisle it was in the year 1890 that a coterie of men of vision sought and obtained from the Court of Common Pleas of Cumberland County a Charter of Incorporation for Dickinson School of Law, and thus the real mission of this venerable institution was given a more precise sense of direction. The men responsible for this movement were Dr. William Trickett, Judge Wilbur F. Sadler and Dr. George Edward Reed. Dr. Trickett was appointed Dean of the School and retained this position until his death August 1, 1928 at the age of 88 years.

Under the administration of this distinguished and unusual legal scholar the School of Law was soon accorded a distinctive position among the Law Schools of the Commonwealth.

Concerning the work of these corporate founders it may be said of them as has been said of others:

"They builded better than they knew."

I was appointed to succeed Professor Frederick C. Woodward, a graduate of Cornell Law School, who had resigned at Dickinson in the Spring of 1902 to assume a similar position at Northwestern University Law School. This was in the twelfth year of the deanship of Dr. Trickett and the proceedings incident to the installation of Professors McKeehan and myself are recorded in Volume 7 of *The Forum*, the Law School magazine of that day, later succeeded by our present *Dickinson Law Review*. It would be interesting and startling to recount some of the important events, world-wide and others, affecting the practice of the Law which happened in the years from 1902 to the present, but space does not permit at this time at least of such an exploration. Suffice it to say that these

49 years of service constitute the humble contribution of the young professor who assumed the duties of office immediately following graduation from Harvard Law School and just turned 25 years of age.

Looking over some of the musty records I came across two letters as yet in their original envelopes yellowed with age but the enclosed writing still bright and familiar to those who fortunately can yet recognize the handwriting. These letters are quoted in full:

"DICKINSON SCHOOL OF LAW,
Carlisle, Pa.

WILLIAM TRICKETT, DEAN

June 9th

PROF. A. J. WHITE HUTTON

My dear Professor

I am greatly touched by your cordial and affectionate letter. In the 25 years of your professorship you have shown a remarkable devotion to duty, and you have won a warm appreciation from the students of the successive years. I gladly unite with them in their high estimate of the value of your services as professor.

I thank you for your very kind and gracious letter.

Sincerely and affectionately yours,

WM. TRICKETT."

The above letter was written June 9, 1927 on the Dean's birthday and in response to my birthday greetings sent the day before. It will be noted that the day of the month is given in this letter but not the year. Of the many communications received by me from this extraordinary personality all without exception were in the same pattern as to lack of year, although always precise as to month and day, and probably this was the reason the envelopes were carefully preserved.

The other letter is as follows:

"DICKINSON SCHOOL OF LAW,
Carlisle, Pa.

WILLIAM TRICKETT, DEAN

June 9th

PROF. A. J. WHITE HUTTON

My dear Professor

I am gladdened by your very kind letter of yesterday. Birthdays *will* come, if we continue alive. I have had many. If any one had 20 or 30, or 40 years ago said that I should see them, I should have been in-

credulous. Nothing of my ancestral history would have made the prediction otherwise than vastly improbable. But sometimes even the apparently *impossible* happens.

I thank you for your kind note.

Sincerely yours,

WM. TRICKETT."

This letter was posted June 9, 1928 on Dr. Trickett's 88th birthday, his last.

After Dr. Trickett's death the School's affairs were administered for awhile by Professors Hitchler, McKeehan and Reese, and later Professor Walter Harrison Hitchler was appointed as Dean. In these reminiscences the story would not be complete without my paying tribute to Dean Hitchler as a worthy successor of the incomparable Trickett. In assuming the duties of his office the present Dean was confronted with many delicate and intricate problems involving the administration of affairs in the light of the present day and the inevitable March of Time. These problems were met with courage and firmness and the present prosperity of the School and its high standards of scholarship are the result of his labors fittingly enmeshed with the loyal guidance of the Board of Trustees and its executive officers.

In my own years of service professors have come and gone but Dean Hitchler and myself are the survivors of the early period which I have already outlined, his advent being just three years after that of mine. No words are adequate within my vocabulary to express my high esteem.

Last year my request was made for retirement but it did not seem expedient to grant the same especially in view of the death of our beloved colleague, Professor McKeehan. The time is more propitious now and therefore I desire to have this present year as my closing one, impelled by two motives: one personal to myself in that it is desirable to be relieved of the active school duties in order that more time may be devoted to pressing legal literary work, and in this is included continued contributions on legal subjects to our Dickinson Law Review, to continue the practice of my profession and also the desire to indulge in what the late President Coolidge in his valedictory described simply as whittling. The second motive is that frankly I believe that as far as the School is concerned the time has arrived to "change the guard".

To Judge W. C. Sheely, President, and to his worthy colleagues on the Board, to Dean W. H. Hitchler and my faculty associates, to the present student body,

to the faithful and ever obliging secretaries of the School, and lastly to all former students under my instruction during the years 1902-1951, a distinguished group of men and women of whom their instructor is justly proud,

Salutations! Farewell!!

Affectionately and Faithfully yours,

A. J. White Hutton.

June 1, 1951.

All who are in any way interested in the Dickinson School of Law will read with keen regret, but with kindly sympathy, the announcement by Professor Hutton of his retirement from active duty. From the time when he first became associated with the Law School in 1902 until the present he has been unfaltering in his loyalty, intense in his enthusiasm, and assiduous in his labors for the Law School. His attitude toward the Law School quite accurately reflects his attitude toward all the activities of his life. He is a man of steadfast allegiances, ardent optimism, and unremitting endeavor. His character and temperament are reflected in the variety of his interests, the number of his acquaintances, the closeness of his friendships, the charity and benevolence of his disposition, and the successful fruition of his manifold endeavors.

As his ardent student and professional labors, *lucubrationes viginti annos*, will long remain an incentive to all who toil unsparingly in the study and teaching of law, so his career as a whole will demonstrate to youth everywhere the truth of the words of Patrick Henry, "Be of good courage, my son, and remember that the best men always make themselves."

W. H. Hitchler, Dean