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THE LAW QUADRANGLE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

By HOBART COFFEY

I have been asked to speak to you today about the Wm. W. Cook Legal Research Library at the University of Michigan. Instead of attempting to describe in words our library building I have chosen to show you some slides, to let you see the building for yourself; and I have decided to show you pictures not only of the Legal Research Building, but also of the other buildings which form part of the Law Quadrangle, and which are all due to the generosity of Wm. W. Cook.

Mr. Cook, the donor was a native of Hillsdale, Michigan, and a graduate of the University of Michigan Law School in the class of 1882. From that time until shortly before his death in 1930 Mr. Cook practiced law in New York City. As a corporation lawyer and a financier Mr. Cook was extremely successful. He became a wealthy man, and one of the leading members of the New York Bar. He was not, however, interested solely in business or the practice of

the law. He was for many years vitally interested in legal education and in the improvement of standards in the legal profession. Essentially a conservative in his political and social views, Mr. Cook cherished a high regard for American institutions—the Constitution, our particular form of government, and our system of courts. Along with many others, Mr. Cook came to feel that our American institutions were in grave danger of being overthrown. To aid in their preservation was his great concern, the cause to which he devoted his fortune and the later years of his life.

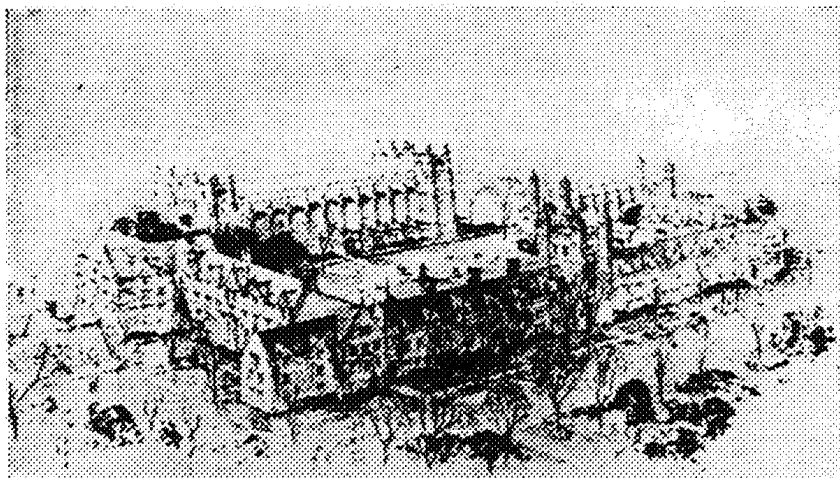


PLATE I. The Law Quadrangle, University of Michigan.

Because of the preponderant influence of lawyers in legislation and in the administration of law, it seemed to Mr. Cook that the preservation of our institutions was the peculiar charge of the legal profession. Grave doubts were felt by Mr. Cook as to the courage and ability of the profession to meet this grave responsibility. He insisted that we must have a better bar—lawyers of sounder character and finer intellect. This result, he argued, could only be brought about through the law schools. Legal education must be improved. This is the genesis of Mr. Cook's interest in legal education.

In deciding to devote his fortune to the improvement of legal education, Mr. Cook's thoughts quite naturally turned to his alma mater. It was not, however, merely the fact that he was a graduate of Michigan that caused Mr. Cook to select that institution as the object of his generosity, but the added fact that the history of Michigan convinced him that the time was favorable for realizing in that institution some of his cherished dreams. If he had not felt this, it is certain that he would have bestowed his generosity on some other institution, or devoted his money to an entirely different purpose. Mr. Cook was no "rah rah" alumnus of the type that follows the fortunes of the college football teams and presides at M-Club luncheons. He was an independent spirit, with a mind and will of his own.

In 1922 Mr. Cook, after lengthy negotiations with the officials of the University, announced his first gift to the law school—the Lawyers Club and Dormitory. This was followed in 1929 by the gift of a second unit of the dormitory

and the Legal Research Building; and in 1930 by Hutchins Hall which is to house the class rooms and administrative offices of the law school. In 1930 Mr. Cook died, leaving the bulk of his estate to the University of Michigan, in trust for law school purposes.

Plate I is an architect's sketch of the Lawyers Club and Dormitory, and the Legal Research Building. You will note that the style of architecture is a modified Gothic, usually described as collegiate Gothic, i.e. Gothic architecture adapted



PLATE II. Central Arch, Lawyers Club Dormitory.

to university buildings. We usually think of Gothic in connection with churches, which is in fact the use to which this form was originally put; but the style later came to be used for town halls, houses, and even barns. Gothic was enjoying its period of highest development at the time that many of the English colleges were built. As a type of architecture, Gothic is unquestionably one of the most beautiful, and it is quite understandable that it should have been adopted by American colleges, particularly during the Gothic revival of the nineteenth cen-

tury. Since the first building of the Law Quadrangle was of Gothic design, the style was set for all future buildings. Whether the style was well chosen will be touched upon in the course of my talk.

In Plate II, which shows the front of the Lawyers Club Dormitory, you will note the high central tower with its turrets and Byzantine spires. At each end of the building are lower towers over archways, which constitute the only entrances to the interior of the quadrangle.



PLATE III.

Interior of the Lounge, Lawyers Club.

The interior of the lounge of the Lawyers Club is shown in Plate III. This room, in the style of the Renaissance, is one of the most beautiful rooms in the whole building.

The last unit of the Law Quadrangle, Hutchins Hall, is shown in Plate V. This building, which is still in course of construction, should be ready for occupancy sometime during the coming year. It was designed to provide class rooms for about eleven hundred students, administrative offices, and offices for all members of the faculty. There will also be space for the Michigan Law Review, the Michigan Bar Journal, and the American Judicature Society.

The Legal Research Building, Plate VI, is the largest building in the group. Because of its size and location, it is the dominant building in the quadrangle. Like the other buildings, it is collegiate Gothic in style. The stone used is weathered Massachusetts granite—a stone which is colored a sort of soft reddish-

brown. The trim is Indiana limestone. Note the four huge towers at the corners, and the short Gothic spires. This picture shows the side and front of the building, taken from the inside of the court. The low windows light the alcoves, and the large, high windows the reading room.

As librarians you will be interested in some of the working-parts of the building. The office of the librarian and the assistant librarian communicate directly with the reading room, and with the order department. The reference desk which has shelves for about four thousand reserve volumes communicates

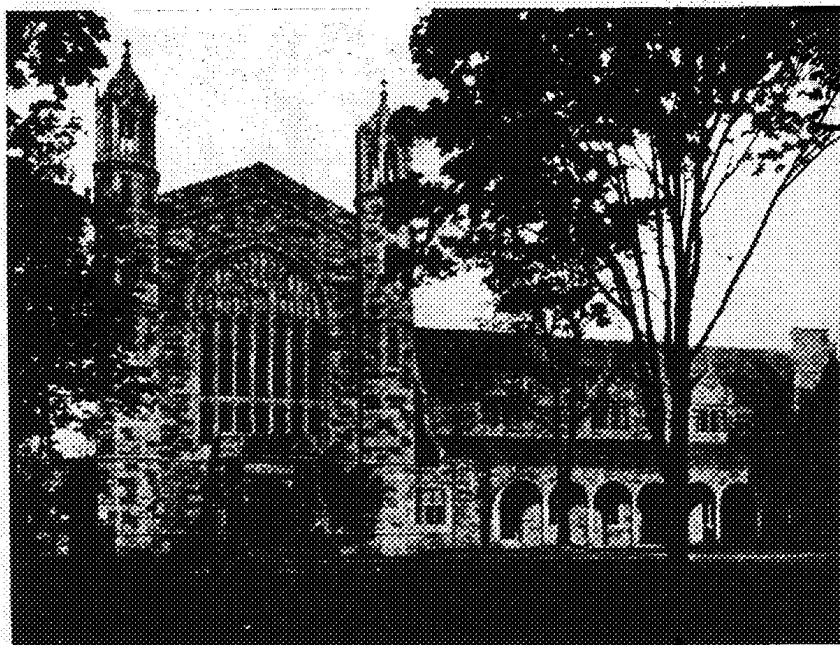


PLATE IV. Commons and Cloister, Lawyers Club.

directly with the public catalog room, the elevators and the stacks. The catalog room is on the opposite side of the stacks from the order department, a separation made necessary by the fact that the plans were altered after the building was well under way. You will be interested in knowing that the original plans of the architects and the donor provided for an enormous reading room, but no space for the librarian or his staff, and no stacks for books. Whatever facilities we have for work rooms and stacks were added later. It had been the original plan to house the books in the basement under the reading room. As a matter of fact, the space under the reading room is almost entirely given over to cloak rooms, rest rooms, corridors, and machine rooms. There is left in the basement space for not more than thirty thousand volumes.

In our cataloging room the desks are separated by book shelves, thus allowing each worker a little alcove of her own. This arrangement may not be the most economical so far as space is concerned, but the privacy afforded probably permits greater concentration and hence better work on the part of the catalogers. The arrangement also gives us the maximum amount of shelf space for books being held for cataloging. The cataloging room contains the catalog cases for the shelf list and the depository catalog. These catalogs are of course used

by the order department and by the assistants at the reference desk. They are, however, not far removed from any of these departments.

The order department is similar to the cataloging room in arrangement, and the same is true of the receiving room, which is on the basement level, immediately beneath the order department. Elevators and an electric book lift connect the receiving room with the order department.

The book stacks are a separate construction of steel, so built that five more floors can be added later. At present we have six levels of stacks, each capable

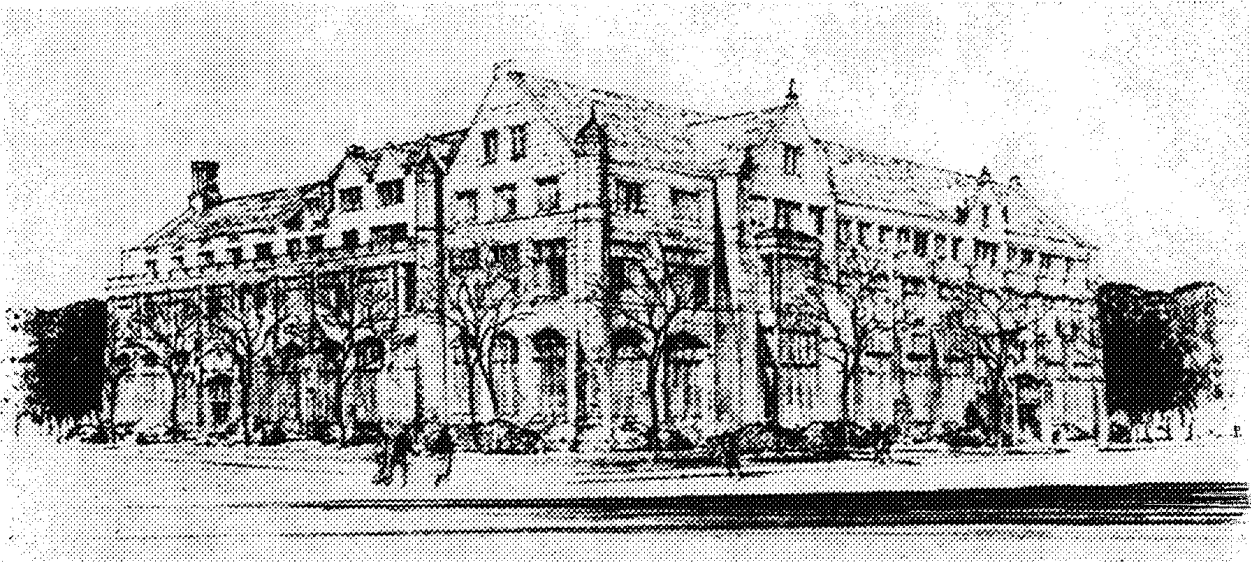


PLATE V. Hutchins Hall, Class Room Building of the Law School.

of holding approximately thirty thousand volumes. The stacks were made by the Art-Metal Company. We at first thought that we preferred Snead stacks, and were in doubt as to whether we should be satisfied with anything else. Our experience with Art-Metal stacks has, however, not been unhappy. The stacks seem to be very well designed, and thus far have answered all our needs. The bottom shelf is the same width as the others, and while it will hold quartos there is really not room enough for large folios. These have to be kept in separate folio cases, which are placed between the stacks and the carrels. The Snead stacks, I believe, have a shelf at the bottom which will accommodate folios.

There is no opening between the floor and the shelves, as there is in some stack constructions. We like a solid floor better, because it permits of better regulation of the air circulation. The stack ranges have solid ends, and the shelves are solid instead of being made of strips of metal, as is usual in certain other makes of stack. We believe that the solid shelf is easier to keep clean. The color of the stacks is French grey. This color does not reflect quite so much light as white, but this is of no great importance in our library, since we have to use artificial light in almost all parts of the stacks. The color certainly is more pleasing than a dead white. The floors are made of cork. We used cork in order to keep the stacks as quiet as possible, and to make an easy surface to walk on. We feel that cork is an improvement over glass or marble.

Cork is used in the reading room and in the work rooms and offices as well—in fact everywhere in the building except in the corridors.

The aisles between the stack ranges are lighted by Frink Reflectors, which have thus far proved quite satisfactory. The aisle lights, however, are of a different type, having an exposed lamp which makes a very annoying glare. We

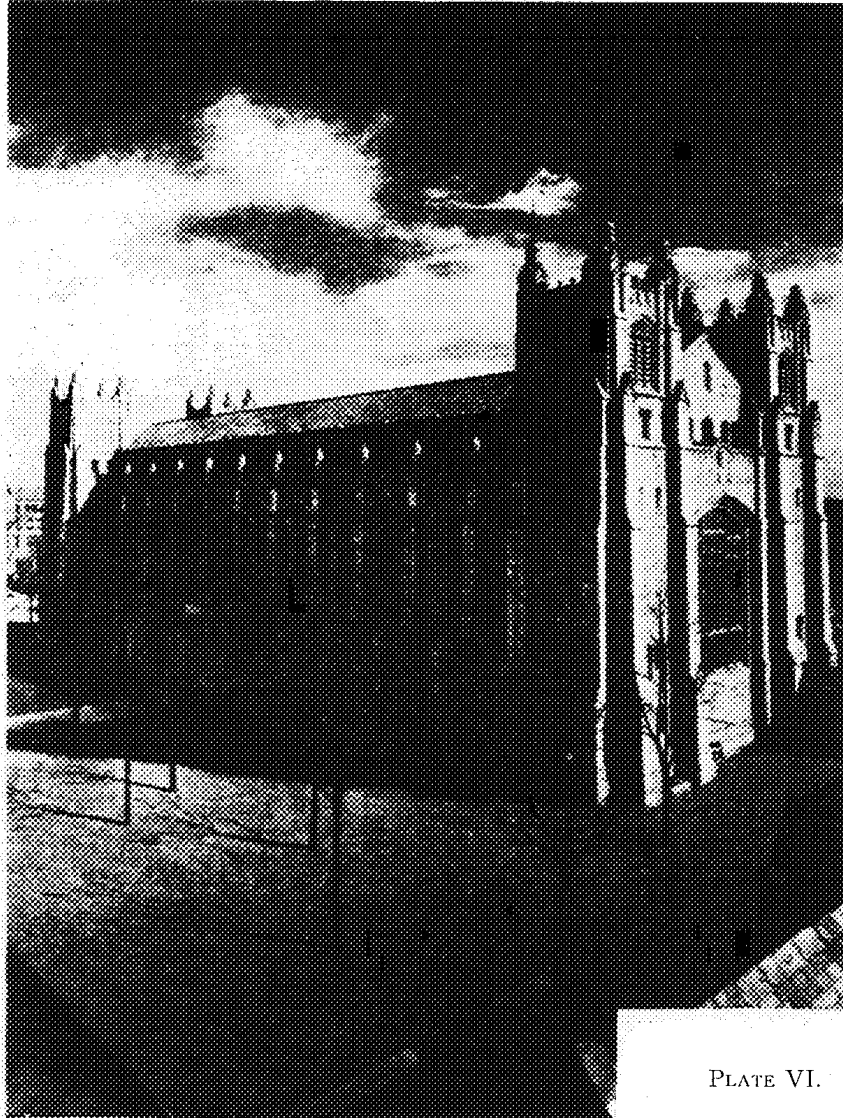


PLATE VI.

Wm. W. Cook Legal Research Building.

are now experimenting with a Snead fixture which I understand was designed especially for the new Yale libraries. This type of fixture, and one manufactured by the Holophane Company are, in my mind, the best fixtures thus far designed for lighting book stacks.

Two features of the stacks merit some brief comment. One is a shelf which can be pulled out, thus forming a little desk at which people can work for brief periods. Much time is thus saved to the user of the library in not having to carry all his books to a carrel or office, and the library staff is spared the trouble

of having to return the volumes to the shelves. Another interesting feature is a book support which was designed in our library and manufactured especially for us. It is attached to the shelf at the front and back, and will not fall off. It gives a firm support even to large quartos, and it will not spear the books. Several other libraries have already adopted this type of book support, the design of which, by the way, is not patented.

On the top floor of the building are forty-two research rooms, intended for the use of faculty and research assistants. Many of them are in suites of three, to take care of a professor, a research assistant, and a stenographer. Each room is furnished with a large desk, chairs, a table, and one or two book-cases. The book-cases are very handsome pieces of furniture, but I must admit that they are not very practical, because they do not hold enough books. The best and by far the cheapest arrangement for a professor's office is ordinary shelving running along the wall—and just as much of such shelving as the room will hold.

In showing you these pictures and discussing the various features of our law school unit, I have not tried to picture an ideal situation. That the unit as a whole is one of the finest that exists anywhere there is no doubt; and generally speaking it is quite satisfactory. It is a paradise as compared with our former accommodations. Yet I cannot represent the buildings as perfect. That they do not more closely correspond to our needs is due largely to the fact that the buildings were a gift. We had to take them more or less as they were offered. The architects, unfortunately, had little experience in library or dormitory construction. The marvel is that they did as well as they have done. Of course, mistakes, sometimes serious mistakes, are made in every library building. Architects, as a rule, are more interested in producing a good-looking building, than in making one that is useable.

In Plate VII, which shows the reading room of the library, I want you first to notice the chairs. They are copies of an old English chair, slightly modified to meet our particular needs. Notice that the seat of the chair slopes back instead of being perfectly level, as is usually the case. These chairs are about one and a half inches higher at the front than at the back. This, I think, makes a more comfortable chair. The back is probably not sufficiently rounded, and many people find that the top hits them in just the wrong place. It is extremely difficult to design one chair that will take care of all types of people, the tall and the short, the fat and the lean. Now, it is a fact that most of our readers are young men, the vast majority slender and tall. The chairs were designed for them. I am frank to say that while the chair is a very handsome piece of furniture, and fits in very well with the architecture of the reading room, it is not the most comfortable chair in the world, and I doubt whether it is as durable as it ought to have been. At certain points we have had wooden pegs or wedges driven in to keep the chair from pulling apart. This scheme has worked very well, but you can see that if the chair ever does come loose at any of these points, repair will be extremely difficult. At one point the chair seems to be particularly weak—at the point where the front legs are driven through the seat. A number of the seats have broken along this particular line, and I am fearful that many more will go the same way. I might mention by the way that the best library chair that I have seen is the one designed for the new Yale library. It is good-looking, extremely comfortable, and solidly built.

One innovation is the leather cushions made of pig-skin. This may seem to some to be an unnecessary luxury, but I cannot agree with this point of view. Law students spend more time in the library than any other class of students, and cushioned chairs certainly are a great comfort, especially to thin people.

We now pass to the great hall of the building which serves as the reading room. This room is 242 feet long, and 44 feet wide, not including the alcoves. There is space at the tables for about five hundred readers. The tables are fifty-two inches wide—a width none too great in view of the way law students spread out their books and papers. Please notice the arrangement of the tables—a good wide space between them, with wide aisles, so that people going to the alcoves to get books will not disturb other readers.



PLATE VII. Reading Room of the Law Library.

The natural light comes from the large windows which begin about fourteen feet from the floor. There is fine light from all sides, filtered through a softly tinted glass. All of the windows have drapes which can be pulled if the sunlight gets too strong—which very seldom happens except in mid-summer.

The room is lighted at night by the chandeliers which you see in the picture. Note how the long chains on which the fixtures are suspended carry the eye up to the ceiling, and thus give the impression of great height, which is characteristic of Gothic buildings. The chandeliers provide only general illumination—about four foot candles. The lamps are tinted, and of very low candle power, with the result that there is no glare. Light for reading purposes is provided by desk lamps which you see on each table. These were especially designed after careful experimentation in our old reading room. We adopted this type with some misgivings but have been pleasantly surprised with the results. Because of the fact that the ceiling is dark, and that the wall space is pretty well taken up with windows, indirect lighting was out of the question.

This picture (Plate VII) shows you only a very little of the ceiling, one of the most interesting features of the room. It is made of large medallions of plaster, decorated mostly in blue and gold. At present it looks a bit gaudy, but in time the gold will tone down so as to give a soft rich effect.

The shields on the windows were put there for decorative purposes. They are the shields of the various leading universities of the world. The arrangement is by color and design, without reference to the age or importance of the university.

At the left of this picture you will see the alcoves in which the open-shelf books are kept. There are about twenty thousand of these volumes—material such as statutes, reports, digests, encyclopedias, and dictionaries. All other material is kept in the stacks, and is given out over the desk.

The walls are paneled in oak to a height of fourteen feet. The wood is English pollard oak, of a very fine grain. The walls, like the tables, were oiled and rubbed but not waxed or varnished. As a result, the surface does not reflect spots of light.

In the corners of the reading room, i.e. in the towers, we have "Consultation Rooms," eight in all, for students who wish to talk while they are studying. This is one of our schemes for keeping the reading room quiet. Cork floors, as I mentioned awhile ago, also aid materially in keeping down the noise.

I mentioned in the beginning that I should revert to the subject of the Gothic style. The essential characteristics of Gothic architecture are sincerity and directness, a sincere expression of material, and design through structural form. During the Gothic revival of the nineteenth century, architects took the form without the substance. The Gothic style seems wholly inappropriate in a building made of steel, cement and reinforced concrete. Here in this building, for example, the whole structure is supported by a steel frame. The stone which you see is a mere shell about eight inches thick. It supports nothing. These towers support nothing. These flying buttresses do not buttress anything at all. Sincerity has gone by the board.

Historical Gothic is largely dependent for its effect on exquisiteness of craftsmanship and the expression of the personality of the individual designers. In the days when the most beautiful Gothic was produced, the craftsmen were at the same time artists. Today, for the most part, masons are not artists, nor, generally speaking, are architects. This is one reason why the Gothic revival has been a disappointment. Gothic is not in the spirit of the times—it does not belong to the age of steel, cement, and reinforced concrete.

There is, fortunately, a modern architecture, beautiful in its own way, and having the qualities of simplicity, sincerity, and directness. Excellent examples of modern architecture are already to be found in this country, and even, in a modified form, on our own campus. Many consider it unfortunate that our architects could not have chosen a style which would have harmonized with the age in which we are living, and which would have fitted in better with the newer buildings at Michigan. This, however, I can say in favor of Gothic—if there is a department for which Gothic is fitting, it is the Law, which has changed less than most things since 1400. The law has scarcely reached the machine age. We still speak a language which the medieval lawyer could have understood.

Perhaps it is not unfitting that we should live in the kind of house in which the mediæval lawyer passed his days.

Chairman Parma: That gives us a wonderful picture, I think.

Mr. Mettee: He told us all about the building, but he hasn't told us about the cost of maintenance, the number of students he has in his Legal Research, whether it is maintained by separate endowment, and so on.

Another thing, we are all having trouble, and the question is whether a poor man's son has an equal show these days with a rich man's son. We have the type of men coming in from universities—Harvard, Columbia, Yale, and, I suppose, the University of Michigan—who impress upon you that it is a great honor, that they have come to the library, that we should be glad they come into our library, and somebody should stick a \$10-note in their pockets for it.

They are maintained in luxury, and when they come to the Bar association library, how are we going to provide such lounging rooms?

Mr. Coffey: I think that is a very good question. We do not give them \$10-notes; at least we have not started that custom yet, but it is true that the buildings are on a scale that most of the young lawyers will not be able to keep up when they get out. That is an objection which is very commonly raised. Personally, I do not think it makes a very great difference; at least, my experience in life has been that after two or three days I can change my habits of living and never notice a difference.

Those accommodations are as fine, I believe, as you will find anywhere in America. The accommodations are almost unexcelled—beautiful furniture and everything one could wish, yet a great many students do not care to live there. They live there a year and then go to a rooming house or a fraternity house, where there are perhaps three or four packed away in a small room.

You asked about the number of students. We have, during the winter time, about 550 students. The university does derive some revenue from tuition, but it is only a small part of the total cost to the university. The tuition at the University of Michigan is somewhat lower than it is at the Eastern schools. Tuition for students outside the state is slightly higher than for those who reside in the state of Michigan.

As to what effect this will have on Bar association libraries after the students get out, I should hope that it might have one effect: I should hope that, having become accustomed to an excellent collection of books, the lawyers, when they go out into practice, would insist upon that in their Bar association libraries. Of course, it is one thing to insist and another to get those things, but if you have lawyers who want a good library, and have enough of them, it will be provided. If a man can practice law by ear, as a great many of them do, and get law from two or three books when he is a student, when he gets out he will not ask for any more. He will be satisfied with two or three.

I think that the finest thing that can happen is to get a great many young men trained in the use of books in large libraries. I do not know whether I have answered all your points; I don't suppose I have.

Mr. Mettee: I find that the young man does not want to put up the money. He does not want to pay anything at all. As a matter of fact, he will put up a special pleading to evade payment.

Mr. Coffey: A great many Bar associations, and I think some Bar association libraries, have a graduated fee. I do not know how general that is. In Michigan, for example, after this year, the young men who have just been graduated and who have just entered the Bar will be given membership in the Bar association for two years, I believe, automatically, without cost at all. Then, after that, it is \$5; and after you reach old age, as I have, it is \$10.

Mr. Mettee: I have the figures here in my satchel on our budget. I do not want to get into any cross-questioning, but I am not in favor of any graduated fee in Bar libraries. You can not go into business without both capital and brains. If you have brains, some firms or corporations will take you in fifty-fifty. I think the young man who comes in should come in with the understanding that he is going into business. It is a profession, but there is a business side to it, just as there is a business side to church, and he should pay the same fee that everybody pays.

Mr. Coffey: Of course, you do not all pay the same fee in church, you know.

Mr. Mettee: I have a little different library from yours, but my policy is that when a man puts his money on the table he doesn't need an envelope.

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