

Document 1-B (page 1 of 3)

I am not an accomplished lawyer. I find quite as much material for a lecture, in those points where I have failed, as in those where I have been moderately successful.

The leading rule for the lawyer, as for the man of every other calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for tomorrow, which can be done to-day. Never let your correspondences fall behind. Whatever pieces of business you have in hand, before stopping, do all the labor pertaining to it, which can then be done. When you bring a common law suit, if you have the facts for doing so, write the declaration at once. If a law point be involved, examine the books, and note the authorities you rely on, upon the declaration itself, when you are sued to find it when wanted. The same of defenses and pleas. In business not likely to be litigation - ordinary collection cases, foreclosures, partitions, and the like, - make all examinations ^{and note that,} of titles, and even draft orders and decrees in advance. This course has a twofold advantage; it avoids omissions and neglect, saves you labor when once done, performs the labor out of court when you have leisure, rather than in court, when you have not.

Extemporaneous speaking should be practiced and cultivated. It is the lawyer's avenue to the public. However able and faithful he may be in other respects, people are slow to bring him business, if he can not make a speech. And yet there is, not a man fatal ever to going lawyer, then relying too much on speech-making. If any one, upon his own powers of speaking, shall claim an exemption from the demands of the law, his case is a failure in advance.

~~Never~~ ^{Discourage} ~~discourage~~ litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. Point out to them how the nominal win is often a real loss, in fees, expenses, and waste of time. As a peace-maker, the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough.

455

Autograph Document, Abraham Lincoln, Notes for a Law Lecture, c. 1850s, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Series I: General Correspondence, 1833-1916, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Document 1-B (page 2 of 3)

2

Never ~~the~~ ~~star~~ ~~of~~ ~~litigation~~ - A worse man can scarcely
be ~~found~~ ~~than~~ ~~one~~ ~~who~~ ~~does~~ ~~this~~ - Who can be more
nearly a fiend than he who habitually overhauls the Re-
quisites of deeds, in search of defects in title, whereas to
steal up ships and put money in his pocket? A moral law
ought to be infused into the profession, which should
drive such men out of it -

The matter of fees is important far beyond the mere
question of bread and butter involved - Properly at-
tended to, full justice is done to both lawyer and
client - An exorbitant fee should never be claimed
As a general rule, never take your whole fee in advance,
nor any more than a small retainer - When fully paid
before hand, you are more than a common mortal if
you can feel the same interest in the case, as if
something was still in prospect for you, as well as
for some client - And when you lack interest in
the case, the job will very likely, fail to be done
thoroughly in the performance - Settle the amount
of fee, and take a note in advance - Then
you will feel that you are working for some-
thing, and you will do your work faithfully
and well - Never sell a fee note - at least, until
for the consideration same is performed - It leads to negli-
gence and dishonesty - Negligence, by long delay in the
case, and dishonesty, in refusing to perform, when you
have received the consideration to face -

There is a vague popular belief that lawyers are necessarily
dishonest - I say vague, because when we consider to what
extent confidence, and honor, are reposed in, and con-
ferred upon lawyers by the people, it appears incredible
that their infirmity of dishonesty, is very distinct and well
known to the profession, or common - almost universal - Let
no young man, choosing the law for a calling, for a moment

Document 1-B (page 3 of 3)

