



1936

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Recommended Citation

Boehm, Paul W. (1936) "Pliny the Lawyer," *North Dakota Law Review*: Vol. 12 : No. 12 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://commons.und.edu/ndlr/vol12/iss12/4>

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PLINY THE LAWYER

By Paul W. Boehm, Hettinger, N. D.

Occasionally we come across reading matter that makes us pause; causes us to slow down the hurried gait of our newspaper, magazine and professional reading. Realizing that we have come upon something rarer and better, we stop to sip rather than to gulp down the beverage of finer flavor. This was my experience when I began to read the Letters of Pliny the Younger a short time ago. Of course we had read excerpts from the letters, describing the destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the lower grades of school, but now I was reading the complete letters as Pliny had edited them: and what a revelation! Every lawyer should read those letters. They are full of entertainment and they are pregnant with wisdom and philosophy.

Pliny was first and foremost a lawyer. But he was a politician, a statesman and a philosopher besides. An early military career preceded his careful training in literature, law and dialectics under the best masters (Quintilian and other famous teachers of his time). His aptitude and application soon won for him a wide practice and eventually made him an intimate and trusted friend of the Emperor Trajan under whom the Roman empire reached its greatest extension. Such a career necessarily contained much to interest students of a later age.

In these letters Pliny gives us a vivid picture of a Roman lawyer's life eighteen hundred years ago. His clients from the widow of a friend to rich cities of the provinces, their litigation, the trial courts and their appeals all pass before our eyes in colorful pictures. And he describes their villas, their estates, their meals, their food.

"I had prepared, you must know, a lettuce a-piece, three snails, two eggs and a barley cake with some sweet wine and snow. Olives, beet-root, gourds, onions and a thousand other dainties equally sumptuous. You should likewise have been entertained either with an interlude, the recital of a poem or a piece of music. . . . But the oysters, pork, sea urchins and dancers from Cadiz . . . were, it seems, more to your taste."

We learn of his methods of study, of preparation of cases, and of the trials in the several courts in which he practiced. We are introduced to his intimate family life and read letters to his young wife:

"You will not believe what a longing for you possesses me. The chief cause of this is my love; and then we have not grown used to be apart." (To Calpurnia, LXXIV)

Even a collection letter is preserved among them. It would do credit to the methods of a farm machinery company's collector:

"You must know then, that Valerius Varus, at his death, owed Attilius a sum of money. Though I am on friendly terms with Maximus, his heir, yet there is a closer friendship between him and you. I beg, therefore, and entreat you by the affection

you have for me, to take care that Attilius is not only paid the capital but all the long arrears of interest too." (To Priscus-LXI)

Becoming a famous advocate he became wealthy and received many honors from the electorate and from his sovereign. (Appointed Consul by Trajan 100 A. D.; Governor of Bithynia, etc.)

Pliny arranged, edited and published his own letters. They include everything from the description of a dinner party to ghost stories; legal opinions to descriptions of the spread of the new Christian religion; pictures of habits and manners to a statement of the philosophy of life of a great lawyer in a great age.

BUDGET

The executive committee has approved a budget for the year 1936-1937 as follows:

Bar Briefs	\$ 275.00
Bar Briefs Annual Number	500.00
Postage and Printing	75.00
Secretary, Treasurer, Editor	900.00
Bar Board Referendum	75.00
Committees	1,200.00
Miscellaneous	150.00
	<hr/>
	\$3,175.00

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF U. S. CONSTITUTION

Recently our Executive Committee adopted a resolution endorsing the work of the United States Constitution Sesquicentennial Commission. This commission is perfecting plans for the 150th Anniversary Celebration of the foundation of the Constitution of the United States, which celebration will begin September 17th, 1937, and continue to April 30th, 1938.

Our association, through its Committee on Americanization and Citizenship, of which the Hon. John Knauf is the able chairman, is actively cooperating with this Commission and in fact has been forehanded in the matter having already adopted a plan of co-ordinating different agencies in our state for such celebration.

Our Executive Committee has nominated the following members of the association for the appointment to be made in January, 1937, to the State Bar Board to fill the vacancy caused by the expiration of the term of the Hon. C. J. Murphy of Grand Forks.

C. J. Murphy, Grand Forks; F. J. Traynor, Devils Lake; E. F. Conmy, Fargo; R. H. Bosard, Minot; H. C. Young, Fargo; and I. B. Nelson, Rugby.

The three receiving the highest number of votes will be cer-