

OPENING ADDRESS OF THE COLLEGE OF LAW

By PRESIDENT VILLAMOR.

Through the kindness of Dean Malcolm, I have to-night the opportunity to share with you the enthusiasm with which you are about to inaugurate the classes of 1915-1916.

It is needless for me to say that the College of Law has all my sympathy. As I am an attorney, by reason of similarity, I sympathize naturally with the College that trains students for the legal profession. Of course, by this, I do not mean to underestimate the other Colleges whose aim is to train men and women for different walks of life. I have my highest regard for all, each and every one of them being a constituent part of the same whole—the University of the Philippines.

But the sympathy derived from similarity of professions has a special aspect among the attorneys, the explanation of which it may not be out of place to offer to you on this occasion. To express this sympathy, we have in Spanish a word which is used almost exclusively by attorneys, a word which cannot be translated into English as “colleague” or “brother,” because neither of these words is, in my opinion, broad enough to convey the whole idea. We, attorneys, are in the habit of calling each other “compañero,” a comprehensive expression which synthetizes the noblest ideals of our profession, namely, fraternity and realization of justice in the community.

As I have just stated, the word “compañero” is a common word among the attorneys in the Philippine Islands. In familiar conversation, in and out of the *forum*, we generally address one another with the word “compañero.” And also, when attorneys argue before a tribunal, we repeatedly hear the phrases “distinguished compañero,” “learned compañero,” and so forth. What is the origin of such an old and respectable practice among the attorneys? Why is it that the word “compañero” is uniformly used by attorneys in addressing one another? I believe the reason for this customary use of the word may be inferred from what I am now going to say. Doctors, pharmacists, engineers, veterinarians, agriculturists, dentists, teachers and other professional men can practise their respective professions independently of each other. It is true that sometimes we find two or more of them who practise their profession jointly, but such association or partnership is not essential in order that they may engage in the profession which they have chosen. On the other hand, attorneys, strictly speaking, cannot perform their functions as such, at least, in contentious jurisdiction, without the intervention of another attorney or quasi-attorney as an opponent, and, as a matter of law, it is a grave offense against legal ethics for an attorney to represent both parties to the litigation. It is for this

reason, I believe, that attorneys call each other "compañero," because in a litigation wherein they perform the duties of their profession, they need the company of an opponent to throw light upon the question at issue, as nobody can discuss with himself.

Now, gentlemen, allow me the privilege of using the graphic expression "compañero" for I desire to call "compañero" not only the members of the law faculty, but also all the students of this college.

It was said of Emerson that he used to welcome every person as the possible bearer of some precious blessing. Following this great American thinker, I wish to extend to you, "compañeros," my heartiest welcome, and to express my earnest hope that the members of the faculty, by the example of their personality, and the students, by their industry and progressiveness, will bring to the College, at the end of this academic year, blessings of progress, fresh and brilliant deeds in the field of legal knowledge, thus enriching the achievements treasured by the University in the few years of its existence.

It goes without saying that justice is the motto which the candidate for the legal profession should adopt. To be a successful lawyer, it is essential to be familiar with the letter and spirit of the laws, the study of which should therefore be his constant occupation. Remember what men of old used to say: "*Non intelligas quod quicumque assistunt defensionis causae suae allegant, dicantur advocati; sed illi qui sunt litterati, et studuerunt saltim per quinquarium;*" which means that not all those who take part in the plea of a cause or present briefs therein should be considered as attorneys, but only such men of letters as have studied law for at least five years.