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Reverend John X. Pyne, S.J.

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Cover Page Footnote

Chief Judge, New York Court of Appeals

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REVEREND JOHN X. PYNE, S.J.

The Scholar

FREDERICK EVAN CRANE†

JOHN X. PYNE, S.J., will long be remembered by me. Tennyson in "Ulysses" causes his hero to say, "I am a part of all whom I have met." This is a psychological truth, well recognized today, so that we consider the environment of children to be very influential in the development of character. As adults we are also influenced by our associates, except that the influence is so imperceptible at times that it has its effect through our subliminal organism. Occasionally some person has such a marked and striking influence that we recognize it at once and feel the immediate effects of the personal contact. Such has been my relationship with Father Pyne. I did not know him for so many years, but during the comparatively short time that I did know him, we established an intimacy and fellowship which has not developed with many friends whom I have known all my life. We two struck a common interest in law, literature and philosophy which resulted in our meeting whenever I was in New York during the recess of my court. The hours we spent together in discussion were the most delightful and inspiring. As a professor of jurisprudence at Fordham University he kept up with the decisions of the Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court and was able to discuss them from an angle of approach many times unthought of by me. His keen imagination was suggestive of defects or merits in the application of these decisions. One felt, after a discussion of them with Father Pyne, in a very thoughtful mood. He brought to jurisprudence not only the philosophy which is the basis of the law, but also the hope and vision for its further usefulness in the development of peace and of righteousness among men and nations. He was ever mindful of the results of decisions, statutes and of acts of government upon the welfare and happiness and moral condition of the people as a whole. The law was not something separate and apart from life; it was a means for bettering life and developing it to a higher sphere. In other words, the point I am trying to convey is that personally I always left Father Pyne uplifted to a high sense of the importance and majesty of our profession.

That he was well read goes without saying. His background was an

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assurance of this. I doubt very much whether a man can be a good lawyer or a good judge or a proficient professor of law who knows nothing else but law and lacks that breadth of vision and of purpose which comes from acquaintance with the literature of the past, with the philosophers seeking light, and with the lives of those who have made willing sacrifice for the sake of truth as they saw it. What a humdrum existence we would all have but for those few who are able to point out the stars or give us a view of life as a whole beyond earthly horizons.

Father Pyne did that which is the very essence of fine friendship. He passed on to me many a good book. I have them in my library at the present time. When anything particularly interesting struck his fancy in "The Annals" he marked it and sent it over to me. Some of his thoughts I have enlarged upon and put forth in some of the addresses which I have made during the past winters. In fact he was very much in my intellectual and spiritual life, and for his friendship and attentions I am very thankful.

Perhaps I was drawn to Father Pyne and impressed with many of his views because I knew there was nothing selfish about him or them. He sought no worldly profit, place or power, and such a man is indeed an exception in these days. How much we all long for that feeling of justified confidence in the sincerity of others! What was said of another may well be applied to him:

"He cast from himself forever the three dominant tyrannies which in his own age and since have oppressed the souls of men,—'wealth, place and power.'"

Father Pyne! It has been a blessing to know you!

The Man

IGNATIUS M. WILKINSON†

THE Reverend John X. Pyne, S.J., died on May 3, 1937, after a month's illness following a serious operation. He was born in Ayer, Massachusetts, on April 7, 1871. He attended Holy Cross College for a time and subsequently entered the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus, at Frederick, Maryland, on October 7, 1891. He was ordained to the priesthood by His Eminence, James Cardinal Gibbons, on June 28, 1906.

Although Father Pyne had taught both in the College and in the Graduate School of Fordham University at various times beginning in 1907, he did not become known to the students in the School of Law until his advent here as Regent and Professor of Jurisprudence in September, 1927. For the ten years which followed, he met in his classes in Jurisprudence every student who completed a law course in

† Dean, Fordham University, School of Law.

the School. In addition, as Moderator of the Law School Sodality and spiritual adviser to the students, he came into more personal contact with greater numbers of them than was possible in the formal atmosphere of the classroom.

In his earlier days as a member of the Faculty at several Jesuit colleges in the east, he had taught English Literature and Rhetoric as well as various branches of scholastic philosophy. His experience in these fields was reflected in many articles which he wrote for religious publications, as well as in his book, "The Mind," in the field of psychology. He brought this background with him into his work in his course in Jurisprudence in the School. Naturally, therefore, he sought to train his students so as to develop in them a genuine ability to handle abstract problems, together with a facility and a desire to express the results of their labors in well written English—the "habitus scribendi" as he loved to term it. It is needless to point out that he had a well trained and scholarly mind. Although he was not a law school graduate, he pursued a number of courses in the School during his first years here. With his excellent intellectual equipment it was easier for him than it would have been for another, to acquire in this way as well as through extensive reading of legal materials, a rather broad if eclectic acquaintance with law. He loved argument for argument's sake, and his discussions with members of the Faculty as well as with students frequently served to open up some new avenue of approach to the solution of a legal problem which might not have occurred to one whose training in law was that of the conventional lawyer.

Because of his interest in books and history, he was responsible for the acquirement by the library of the School of much material, some of it in the field of legal history and some, which, while not strictly legal in nature, at least came within the penumbra of law.

Perhaps his greatest contribution to the life of the School was his work as Moderator of the Sodality and spiritual adviser to the students. Here his priestly zeal found full expression in his unceasing endeavors to develop in the students sound moral principles and habits, as well as a desire to live in all its fullness the Catholic life, with particular reference to their future work as members of the bar. He thus helped to build up in our graduates those traits of Christian character and moral stamina, the lack of which, not only in many members of the bar but in people generally, lies at the root of nearly all of the problems both political and social of our day and generation.

At all times he was himself. No better description of him can be given, perhaps, than that of the Reverend President of Fordham University, who on the occasion of the Commencement of the School of Law in June, 1937, in remarking Father Pyne's passing, said of

him: "He was a man picturesque, beloved—a rugged individualist, a man who thought, argued and talked for the pleasure of it, forty-six years a Jesuit, thirty-four years a teacher, and sixty-six years emphatically himself."

He will be long remembered both by students and Faculty as one who gave fully of his talents and devotion to the development of the School.

Requiescat in pace.