GEORGE H. DESSION

RICHARD C. DONELLY†

George DeSSION was only forty-nine when he died. The criminal law lost one of its ablest scholars. I lost a friend and mentor.

George’s eminence as a scholar and his reputation in this country and abroad were built on the solid foundation of his published work. This is not the place for a critical appraisal of it; indeed, the full impact of its richness upon basic theory cannot be assessed for some time. He brought to this work deep and germinal insights not only grounded in a thorough knowledge of the law as a social science but nourished by a profound and sensitive familiarity with the arts and humanities. For George was a cultivated man.

As a teacher, his forte was the small seminar. There he brought an invincible curiosity that broadened horizons and quickened thought. He ranged widely without being diffuse or thin. He never sought to startle or impress by an ostentatious display of his wide learning. His intellectual hospitality to every hue of opinion was not the tolerance of intellectual flabbiness or lack of resolution. He had a hard core of philosophy in his thinking which he was prepared to defend without compromise.

George was a gentle and considerate man. I never heard him say an unkind word or make a sarcastic remark. He had a droll humor and a sly wit but he did not wound with the caustic nor resort to grievous words to stir up anger.

When I started teaching criminal law five years ago, I found George then—as he was until the last—always ready with helpful advice when it was sought. But he never tried to impose. At no time was he too busy to discuss a point of law and he always treated my ideas with a respect that was frequently undeserved. It was this quality of kindliness in his relations with his students, with his colleagues and, I dare say, with all who met him, that was the essence of the man we now remember with so much affection.

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