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THE PRIVATE LAW SCHOOLS

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The term private law schools, to one acquainted with the conditions in the United States, takes his mind to great law schools, turning out thousands of trained jurists and practitioners, and keeping up the highest standard. They are the oldest legal institutions in the country, and have been greatly influential in guiding the course of its legal development. They occupy spacious and beautiful buildings, and possess all the material facilities for work. They include within their faculties the best to be found in the various branches of the law, and to them thousands of eager students come, ready to pay the high matriculation fees and do hard work. Indeed, it may be said that they are the models of efficiency throughout the country.

However much we desire to do it, our mind does not recall any such bright picture when the term private law school in the Philippines is mentioned. Wherein lies the difference? Many answers have been given by different persons, and all of them are to some extent more or less true, but they do not touch the fundamental problem. Some criticise the method of teaching and attribute every ill affecting the schools to that cause; others say the whole trouble is in the personnel of the teaching staff, and still others blame the students. To our mind, however, the whole trouble is, generally speaking, a question of economics: the problem of getting a living is as much a basic concern of institutions as of individuals. An individual must enjoy a certain economic independence before he is able to assert his own personality; in the same way, an institution must needs be economically independent before it can impose its own conditions and ideals. Every man and every institution desire to attain the ideal, the good, the best; but economic short-comings limit their action. The fault lies not in the men, but in the conditions surrounding them. Were the schools of today sufficiently endowed with funds independent of those coming from the students, the so-called evils afflicting these schools would at once disappear. They would then be in a position to demand strict compliance with their ideal standard, and go even as far as the expulsion of students who are inefficient or unwilling to be regular in their attendance, as done in the great American universities. In that way, only the earnest students will come and they in turn would be willing to pay higher fees because of the higher standard established. At the same time, the schools would be able to attract the best legal talent, and these in turn would only be too glad to be connected with such schools because of the added prestige given them, and the opportunities for self-improvement offered.

There are, at present, signs indicating the coming of economically independent law schools, keeping the highest of standard, and enforcing it among its students. The prototypes of the great private law schools in America are already with us. The recent movement among the law schools to impose higher standard among the students marks a new era in the legal education of the country. No longer will students flock to a certain school because it offers the easiest road to an LL. B., but more because it offers the most efficient, and therefore, the hardest course. Low fees alone will no longer be sufficient inducement, but rather thorough training in the law of the land. In other words, the present movement places a premium on the efficiency of the schools, and by that alone will it be judged. In the long run, the ideal behind the new movement will be the most advantageous to all concerned.

What are the schools at present leading this movement of reformation? From the point of view of age, the law department of the University of Santo Tomás stands first, because it was founded one hundred and eighty-two years ago, *i e.*, in 1734. It has today a total enrollment of one-hundred and eighty-four students. For admission it requires a high school diploma or an A. B. degree. The law course lasts five years. Besides the strictly legal subjects, it gives cultural courses in the first year, such as Institutes of Roman Law, Prolegomena to the Study of Law, Political Economy, Metaphysics, Public and Private Ecclesiastical Law, and Public Finance. The degree of Licentiate in Civil Law is given. Those who continue and take Criminal Sociology, Comparative Jurisprudence, Legal Literature and Bibliography and History of Treaties or General Diplomacy are given the degree of Doctor in Civil Law. The following quotation from its last bulletin shows the tendency of the school to adapt itself to changing conditions:

"In this Manila University of Santo Tomás the textbook method has been practiced for years, and consists of classroom recitations and quizzes upon assigned portions of legal treatises. * * * But after the American occupation of the Islands, the so-called 'Case-System' was practically introduced for the examination of new barristers before the Supreme Court. * * * We have therefore combined in the new scheme adopted for the teaching of Law the two methods, devoting three days a week for the textbook, lectures, recitations and quizzes, and two days exclusively to the study and resolution of selected cases, related with the theoretical subjects, studied in the preceding days."

From the point of view of attendance, "La Escuela de Derecho de Manila" stands first among all the law schools in the country, having a total enrollment of three hundred and eight. It was founded in 1899 by the late Felipe Calderón and other public spirited Filipinos, who, in the heat of the political controversy raging at the time, foresaw the need of men trained in the law. Nor, be it said now, were those pioneers in legal education disappointed, for the "Escuela de Derecho" has made a remarkable record, comparatively speaking. It could safely stand the test: "by their fruits ye shall know them," for a glance at the list of its graduates reveals that many

of them are today taking leading parts in the public affairs of the country. Further, its percentage of successful candidates in the bar examinations is very encouraging.

"La Jurisprudencia" has an existence of ten years to its credit. It has a total enrollment of one hundred and twenty students.

"The Academia de Leyes" and the Philippine Law School stand in a class of their own, because they are both hardly one year old, and therefore, have not had a chance to test their efficiency.

The Philippine Law School is also a class by itself because it is the only private school that gives instruction in English exclusively. It has a total enrollment of ninety students. The curriculum is based mostly upon the arrangement followed in the College of Law of the University of the Philippines. As to method of teaching, we are told that "following the best universities and law schools and law colleges of the United States, the method of instruction is a combination of the case-book and textbook methods, and lectures." A glance at the list of instructors shows that almost all of them are graduates of the University of the Philippines, and these will naturally follow the method under which they were trained. There is something in connection with this school which, if lived up to, would keep up its efficiency; and that is the following taken from its prospective bulletin: "All students are required to be in actual attendance. Students who are irregular in their attendance will be dismissed, and no student will be permitted to take an examination in any subject at the end of the semester, where, in the opinion of the Faculty, the work has not been properly completed."

It is earnestly to be hoped that all the law schools in the country would cooperate in further exalting the legal profession by maintaining the highest standard, and making it hard for the easy-going students to get the much coveted law degree.