

Charles Evans Hughes- Professor

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CHARLES EVANS HUGHES — PROFESSOR

HARRY L. TAYLOR

As I look back over a life of varied activities, I think that I enjoyed teaching most of all. I had a taste of it after leaving college and, following graduation from the Law School at Columbia, I held law "quizzes" there for three years and had private classes in addition. So, when I was offered the appointment at Cornell, the lure of an academic refuge from the drive and strain of an active practice in New York, and of an opportunity for quiet study and research, was irresistible. But Cornell was a hive of industry and, while there was immunity from one sort of demands, there was an abundance of others and the strenuous life was lived in another sphere. The Law School was young and its faculty small, but there was the enthusiasm of youth, and the intellectual climate—like the physical—was most invigorating. I have never known more earnest students and there was plenty of work. I had the courses in Contracts, Partnership, Bills and Notes, and Evidence, and also, in one year during the absence of the professor of international law, I had the University course in that subject. Whether my efforts were of benefit to the students I cannot say but they were of incalculable benefit to me. It was for me the equivalent of a post graduate course with a lively sense of responsibility and an immeasurable zest.

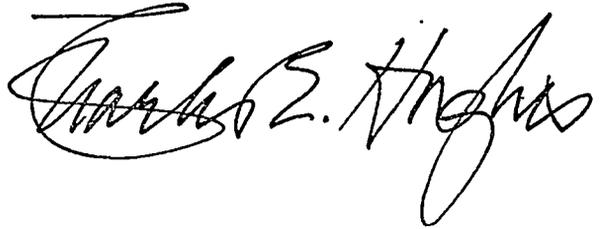
Added to this was the privilege of association with men of outstanding talent. Among the leaders at Cornell at that time were Jacob Gould Schurman, head of the School of Philosophy (who soon became President of Cornell University), Benjamin Ide Wheeler, head of the Greek department (who became President of the University of California), Harry B. Hutchins, acting Dean of the Law School (who became Dean of the Law School, and later President, of the University of Michigan), J. Laurence Laughlin (who became head of the department of Political Economy at the University of Chicago), and Liberty Hyde Bailey (who became Dean of the College of Agriculture at Cornell). These were young men who gave tone to the university life and set pace to ambition. We had our homes on the campus and enjoyed the intimacy of an informal society of congenial spirits.

When I went to Cornell in the Fall of 1891, the physical equipment of the

Law School was pitifully meager. Classes were held on the top floor of one of the old college buildings (Morrill Hall), but in the following year we were housed comfortably and adequately in the new Boardman Hall. Now the School has the advantages of Myron Taylor Hall, the gift of one of the Law School class of 1894. The Law School has fulfilled its promise and won an enviable prestige, taking rank among the leading law schools of the country. I regard its Law Quarterly as one of the best legal periodicals. I send my heartiest congratulations to the members of the faculty and to the students. While my association with the School was for a brief period, and long ago, the memory of it is very vivid and I count that experience as one of the happiest of my life.

The law schools of America have a unique place. In training students, they practice and develop the fine art of criticism, providing a continuous review of the work of the courts of the country. That service, when well performed, is an invaluable aid to the judicial process through which we seek to assure the proper interpretation and the fair and impartial application of our laws. May the Cornell Law School continue to maintain its high standards in training and critical exposition.

Very sincerely yours,

A large, elegant handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Charles E. Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

Charles Evans Hughes came to the Cornell Law School in the autumn of 1891. This, had he remained, would have been his fiftieth year as a teacher of law. It is not difficult to go back over the years to the young man in his late twenties as we law students first saw him at Ithaca. Some attributes of the teacher which impressed themselves upon us I distinctly recall, and these may be of interest.

The group of students encountered by the new professor was typical; that is, it was made up of young men not intolerant, perhaps, not inclined to be unfair, but affected somewhat by skepticism as to "professors" and willing to be "shown." It can not be said that Mr. Hughes was not well cast in the

The above message from Chief Justice Hughes was sent to the Cornell Law School at the request of the Board of Editors of the CORNELL LAW QUARTERLY.

part of professor. He bore himself with dignity but without aloofness. There was nothing of the frivolous about him; he was constantly "on the job." He created in all of us respect for his extensive and (so far as we could judge) accurate learning, his uncanny memory and his ability to "put over his messages." He never produced in us any feeling of doubt as to his genuineness or as to his desire to help us on our way to become lawyers. He grew in favor with his students as their experiences with him progressed. He was especially happy in his conduct of oral examinations of each of us privately at test times. When one left him after such a session it was with a feeling that here was a man not only capable but kindly, a man truly desirous of assisting us to develop ourselves, not a bogey man looking for a chance to "bust" someone. The result of all this finally was a deep-seated regard for the man as well as the professor, something which had been growing until it was ripe and thoroughly felt and understood by us all. None of us, I am sure, will ever forget that last lecture he gave us when, at the end, he laid aside the law books and showed us his true self without restraint. He said: "Young men, I have been here on this hill for a short time trying to help you young people to learn some law. My work here is ending. I have been very happy in it. I want you to know that I am a friend of every one of you and that I want each one of you to be my friend." It was the first thing even bordering on the sentimental we had ever heard him say. We liked it. We knew how he felt but we were glad to have him tell us, and the room rang with applause as he went back through the door out of our sight.

"Professor" Hughes has been seen since he passed through that schoolroom door in 1893. He has been much observed and fully tested. It is not for me to comment here upon his development or his stature as counsellor, advocate, governor, statesman, jurist. But an element of full manly growth is kindness, and we discovered that in our law professor. We were all young in 1893, and our hearts—his and ours—were more easily stirred than now, when we are all traveling down the hill toward the terminal. But I am confident that the spirit which filled the minds and hearts of those who were in that schoolroom that last day over 47 years ago will be again felt and understood by all those there present who may read what I have been saying, including the present Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.