

PRIZE GIVING (August 09,1963)

Speech/Report of the Acting Headmaster Rev A J Foster

During the year under review, a chapter in the history of our school has ended. On March 14th, the first Headmaster, Dr. R.L. Hayman and Mrs. Hayman left us; and on May 12th, the school completed twenty-one years since its foundation. In future, it may well be that people will talk of these twenty-one years as the Hayman era. It is true that Dr. Hayman left for furlough in the latter part of 1946 when the Haymans were married, and returned to act for Warden de Saram for most of 1947. During that time, Gurutalawa was in the capable hands of the present Warden, Mr. C.H. Davidson. But as we look over the whole period, the names S. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa and Hayman go hand in hand. Tributes from men in all walks of public life, from old pupils, from parents and many others, have already been paid to one whose whole life here was an offering of all that he had. On the memorial tablet which stands close to the site of a future Science Laboratory are inscribed the following words; "To spend and be spent in the service of others is his greatest privilege" Mrs. Hayman too in her own special spheres of work gave everything that a good school could wish for. In their final weeks in Ceylon, the Haymans were assured that they were leaving behind them hundreds of people who really cared for them. They were overwhelmed with gifts, invitations, letters and hospitality. Our hearts go out to them today in gratitude for all that they have been, and all that they have done, and we wish them many more years of service in a less arduous setting. The school is very conscious of the great gap which their departure has left. It looks forward to a time when under new leadership it will be able to adjust itself to the rapid changes, which a self-governing Ceylon is now making.

In connection with the Haymans' farewell, photographs were taken of the school, of the staff, and of the servants. At the Old Boys' Association Anniversary Celebrations from March 1st to 3rd the Right Revd. C.L. Wickremasinghe, the Bishop of Kurunegala, an Old Boy, unveiled the portrait of Dr. Hayman which had been painted by Mr. David Paynter, one of the most talented of Ceylon's artists. A memorial tablet which is to be included in the future Hayman Memorial Science Laboratory was unveiled by Dr. Hayman himself when speeches were made by Mr. S.K. Wickremasinghe in English, and Mr. C.S. Ratwatte, M.P. in Sinhalese. At the Anniversary Dinner, when a record number of Old Boys were present speeches were made by Messrs L.W.A. Fernando, R.B. Weerakoon and A.S. Packeer and a presentation was made.

On Sunday, March 10th, an At Home was held for Parents, Mr. G.H.C. Kotalawela spoke on behalf of the parents assembled, and Lt. Colonel J. Halangoda made a presentation.

On Monday, March 11th, the School held a Farewell Dinner at which the head Prefect, R.J. Dobbs, spoke and made a presentation on behalf of the School.

On Wednesday, March 13th, the servants held a Tea Party and made their own gifts. On the same evening, the Staff held a Farewell Dinner, and after speeches by Mr. F.L. Amarasinghe and Mr. O.A. Wright, gifts were presented. On Thursday, March 14th, there was a Farewell Eucharist in Chapel and after breakfast came the final Assembly. The occasion was used to rename Winchester House and it is now called Hayman House. The servants, the Cadets, the boys in their Houses the Scouts, lined the road leading to the Entrance Gate. Dr. Hayman dismounted from the car and walked through the lines of boys to the gate. There the Staff bade Dr. & Mrs. Hayman farewell and the familiar Holden car drove away with them, while the school turned to brace itself for the future.

Speech of Chief Guest Prof. C C De Silva

Canon Foster, Staff & Boys of S. Thomas' College, Ladies & Gentlemen,

I must first of all thank you very much indeed for the very signal honour you have done my wife and me in asking us to be your chief guests this afternoon.

Father Foster sent me a copy of the Annual Report about a week ago but there was not a line of this introductory passage. I think there has been a bit of cheating in this. I did not realize that I was getting this embarrassing report on my past history. He also said that I was very Blue Black and Blue but I am more Blue Black and Blue than he thinks, because my father as well as one of my grandfather's also-were Thomians. In school I was more Black and Blue than Blue Black and Blue.

I need not blush to confess that it has long been a secret ambition on my part to be asked to be the Chief Guest at a prize giving of a school such as this and I jumped at the occasion when it came. I am very curious to know why you have invited me of all persons for this 'prize' privilege especially when I have seen the illustrious names of my predecessors, like Bishops and Statesmen, politicians and educationists.

I am particularly beholden to this school for one thing which has already been mentioned by the Headmaster, that is the influence it had in the moulding of the character of my only son who is now a Research Scientist attached to a big pharmaceutical firm in the United Kingdom. I know that he valued the short time he spent here and especially the close touch he had with Father Foster for whom he has an undying respect, regard and even affection. Father Foster's guidance and fellowship, I have no doubt, has been one of the chief factors that has helped him greatly in his career.

Father Foster has paid a tribute to Dr. Hayman and I must endorse it on behalf of myself and the Board of Governors. No single man had done so much or given so generously, both materially and intellectually to S. Thomas' College, or to any school for that matter in Ceylon at any time of her long history. I think I can pronounce that as an indisputable, incontrovertible statement of fact. He has given of his substance, not till it hurt, but till it has almost paralyzed him. While Thomians young and Thomians old sing *Esto Perpetua* they should and they must link the name of Hayman with the college in that song forever. Let us always praise famous men, wherever they come from, that is the duty of all civilized and cultured people.

S. Thomas' College, has never encouraged sectarianism. Among my best friends are many from other communities and from many other countries, I make friends fairly easily and I keep them for long periods. This is undoubtedly, and to

a large extent mainly due to the early training that I received in the boarding house at Mt. Lavinia where I had to rough it out with Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, to say nothing of a few Burmans and South Indians thrown in. As for religion I hardly knew what another boy's religion was. Did it matter? As long as he played the game, was silent in victory and unsorrowful in defeat, was not a sneak but generous and happy, but not quarrelsome and had a sense of humour, did it matter whether he was a Buddhist or Christian, Hindu or Muslim? These labels have been more responsible for divisive rather than for unifying tendencies in this country. At S. Thomas' College in my time I hope and in yours, and I am sure it is so, we did not judge a boy by what his religion was as the politicians do now, nor by what his father's income or occupation was, but by what he did and the way he did it and by what he said and the way he said it. The more labels you stick on people, the more antagonisms you create. The fewer the labels, the less the divisions. In the new dispensation in Central Schools, where often one language stream is entirely excluded, how can or how does one get this unity in diversity? Isn't this new system responsible for boys tending to despise their colleagues belonging to other communities, speaking other languages and worshipping other religions? Where is this leading us? We are compartmentalizing this country into smaller units whereas what we need above all is unity, not uniformity. We have in this generation created a divided Ceylon which had not been there for long years before it and our system of education is, in my opinion, tending to perpetuate this division. You can take a horse to water but you cannot make him drink. Similarly you can persuade people of different communities to learn one another's languages but you cannot force all communities to accept one language only for each and every purpose. In Scandinavian countries and in Holland by the time a boy gets to the University he is conversant in 4 sometimes in 5 languages. In many Western countries several University students are proficient in at least 3 languages. In the U.S.S.R. every school boy and girl must learn Russian, his own regional language (if that is not Russian, many of them are not) as well as a foreign language. This he starts now at the age of 5 years in the Kindergarten, two years before he starts his proper schooling! They go to school at 7 years, and here we are pushing the teaching of English further and further back.

We are often told by our political leaders that they must follow a certain line of action because the people want it so. I am often amazed at the degree of unanimity of opinion claimed by politicians for doing deeds that will win votes at the next election from certain sections and may be of a spurious value to some groups but definitely detrimental to others. The leaders if they are worthy of the name must lead the people and not be led by them. The people are led to believe that certain actions by the State are for their betterment while all the time the politicians' motives are personal gain, political ambition and thirst for power. He is very seldom motivated by the good of the country as a whole. The trouble is that we have a surfeit of politicians and a deficit of statesmen. What is the difference between the two? A politician thinks of the next election while a statesman thinks of the next generation.

Is it too much to expect every school child in Ceylon to learn Sinhalese, Tamil and English. That is in my opinion the only way to get unity. Every Sinhalese child must be taught Tamil and English and every Tamil child must be taught Sinhalese and English, in addition to their own language of course. English must be given proper weightage. Nehru said it was our window to the outside world. If we shut it, we shall eventually die of intellectual suffocation, material hunger and moral thirst. Over 60% of the World's scientific literature today is in English. Not only that, many of the foreign scientific journals such as Italian, Spanish, German, Scandinavian, Dutch and even Chinese and Japanese have special English editions and the whole of the journal is published again in English. The Soviets are translating many of their best scientific books into English. There will be more and more of these in time. English is the second language in U.S.S.R. and China as well as in almost every other civilized country in the world. In India there is great opposition in different states to Hindi as the official language and English is still the lingua franca between people of culture and will remain so for at least two more generations. The same I believe goes for the two divisions of Pakistan.

Then why is it that only in our country there is this insensate haste to throw away a precious heritage in order to satisfy the adolescent cravings, selfish desires and childish ambitions of certain groups? Every child in this country whether from town or village, from palace or hut should be given an adequate knowledge of English. That is my firm belief. The medium of instruction should of course be in the mother tongue. I wish mine had been in it, but do not. I beg you, ever think that you will be a better Sinhalese because you know less English and no Tamil. The most cultured and civilized people in this world are those who know many of its languages and it is primitive savages only that without exception know only one language. Today at the University we are getting scores of students who think, read, write and understand only one language. This is a terrible tragedy not only for themselves, but, this country as a whole.

I hope science will be taught in Swabasha at the University within a short distance of time and I pray that it will be so, and I have written so publicly in the daily press but I have also said that, and I repeat it here, whatever the medium of instruction, every student following a technological or science course must have an adequate comprehension of English. It will be detrimental to the whole future of Ceylon if we closed this window.

It is impossible in my view to translate frequently repeated editions of standard text books. Besides the cost is prohibitive. For instance the standard work in anatomy will cost between 300/- and 400/- Rupees per copy in Sinhalese. It is not necessary to translate books if students are able to read and understand English. In Israel, Indonesia, Thailand and, I believe, also in Burma, most if not all lectures by nationals are given in the national language, but all reading by the students is done in English, French or German. It was only yesterday that a

Dutch doctor told me that she studied her medicine in German, her surgery texts in French and her obstetrics and pediatrics in English for her final examination. Her medium of instruction in school and college had all been in Dutch. They why in heavens name can't our students do the same? Indonesia has also transliterated most of the international technical terms thereby easing the student's burden. In Ceylon we are wasting hours and days of busy scientists' and linguists' time and energy in attempting to coin long and laborious new terms from Pali and Sanskrit for simple words like Aorta, Femur, Pancreas etc which are universally used and known throughout the world! What a waste of labour! After a few years these new sanskritised terms will be forgotten and the intelligent student will return to the international one. The chief danger of segregation of a whole nation into one language block is a slow and dangerous mental malnutrition ending in intellectual starvation and death. The leaders know this but are afraid to act because of pressure groups who are working for power for themselves today and not for the glory and prosperity of this country.

The pundits in the department of education reported in the daily press as having pronounced ex cathedra that a student whose medium of instruction in school has been in Swabasha is incapable of reading and understanding English scientific text books in the University. This depends of course on the amount of English he has learnt in school but it may interest those gentlemen to learn that in Lumumba University in Moscow, which I visited only last month, there are over 2000 Afro-Asian students from several Afro-Asian countries, they are given an intensive course in Russian for 6 months only. At the end of this they follow lectures and read text books with help. For a further period of 6 months they have a less intensive course of Russian plus tuition in their chosen subjects. At the end of this time i.e. one year, they can follow all their lectures in Russian and read text books in Russian with the minimum of help or no help at all. Very, very few of these students have had any contact with any Russian, which is a very much more difficult language to learn as the alphabet is entirely different. In one month I managed to master the alphabet, that was all. So why in heavens name cannot our students with 6 months of intensive coaching in English do the same? They have a letuna, a free period, between the time they sit for the University Entrance examination and the time they start the University term and I have suggested that in that periods after they finish their examination, they should be given an intensive course of English for 5 hours a day for 5 days a week for 5 months and with their previous knowledge of English I believe that 90% of them will be capable of understanding and reading any text book in their chosen subjects. And this they will not do because they are either too lazy to sit down and work this out or they have various pressure groups saying that do not want English.

I also wish to say a few words to the teachers. What we are getting at the University are youth with well trained memories with very little capacity to work out intellectual problems for themselves. We are getting a generation of plodders, not pioneers; good crammers but bad writers; very willing workers but very feeble thinkers. I am of course speaking in general terms. There have been and I

hope there always will be brilliant exceptions. But if one compares a body of Western students with ours, the chief difference lies in the fact while that ours, take copious notes each time the teacher opens his mouth, and proceeds to learn by heart these words of wisdom often mixed with folly, the Westerner hardly ever takes a note except at didactic lectures and even here he is discouraged from doing so. I know they learn these by heart because foolish things I say in my lectures come back in the examination papers. The Westerner does much independent reading by himself Father Foster has already mentioned this, in the libraries and often thinks out the solution to a problem himself; He does not accept everything, in fact he accepts nothing he is taught without checking it, while our students on the whole just swallow anything the teacher says like Holy Writ never to be questioned on pain of failure and are quite incapable of questioning and arguing a point with their masters. The joy of teaching to a good teacher is a battle between questioning minds. The bad teacher wants no questions, the good welcome them. I never enjoy teaching as much as when some intelligent student, not very often asks some penetrating question which makes me doubt by own pompous pronouncements. This does not happen often because students have not been encouraged to find flaws in a teacher's argument. They have not been trained how to think but how to memorize.

I think this attitude of reverence for the teacher and his opinions without question is bred in our schools. It is the ancient guru-golaya relationship which has been our national heritage for centuries. If we want to become a modern, progressive, technological nation and to make our own contribution to the advancement of knowledge and the search for truth, then we must break this pattern. Right from the Kindergarten the child must be encouraged to think more than to memorize. He must learn how to learn under his own steam. I tell my students never to believe anything anyone says, least of all what I teach them, till they have tested it for themselves, read about it from other sources and satisfy themselves that what I have said is true. **Never ask the child to take anything on trust.**

I believe that one of the chief reasons for the lack of adequate scientific research in this country lies in that one facet of our education. We are breeding generations of good memory trainees who are quite incapable of a single original thought and are woefully lacking in imagination. I hold our system of education and our teachers in the primary and secondary schools and our parents mainly responsible for this. It is probably due to the fact that you teachers were taught in the same way and so were your teachers and so it goes on and on but the men who make history are those who break the mould, who have the courage to be pioneers and act wisely as well as bravely as their conscience tells them, and do not shirk extra work if that is the only way to do what is right and in the best interest of the pupils.

Will you consider seriously the import of my words? My prayer is that one of my successors will be able some day to return to this school to honour the first great Ceylonese scientist to achieve world fame.

That depends on you teachers and you parents more than on the boys themselves.

We have boys and girls of the highest intellectual calibre. I have no doubt of that. I have been to over 30 countries and have seen students of all these countries. They are as good as anywhere in the world, but they are lacking in a spirit of pioneering. They are afraid to experiment. Must we continue to be a nation of mendicants in the world of science? No modern nation can progress unless it discovers the truth for itself.

You parents and teachers, do not cloud your children's horizons with the fear of examinations. These are important, I wish they could be abolished but there is nothing better, but there are other things far more important - character and guts. One can only develop these by encouraging independence of thought and discouraging conformity. I feel like a dangerous revolutionary to say that in these august surroundings, but I do believe that the curse of our educational system, which is not peculiar to Ceylon by any means, is this insistence on conformity, to the point of stifling all enterprise and initiative. The student who is above average is made to conform to the general average.

There is less and less initiative and leadership in the right things displayed by our students in the University. This again is due largely to the poor upbringing at home. Too much protection you fathers and mothers leads to too little production; too much molly-coddling produces pretty dolls but bad leaders. Parents must give children more independence in the home. To mix my metaphor - loosen your apron strings as early as possible and let the fledglings fly.

When politicians talk of a national system of education, what do they mean? I don't think any two of them will agree. To me a national system of education must first instill and stimulate scientific humanism. To have less faith in astrology and more in astronomy. Someone the other day actually wrote in the daily press that astrology is now an exact science and that even in the USSR, there are official astrologers attached to Mr. Kruschev! I have just been to that great country. I never encountered one but having learnt something of the character and thinking of the Soviet citizen, I think that an astrologer will have a very short life in that country! If astrology is an exact science, then Chemistry and Physics cannot possible be because they act on diametrically opposed premises? Think that one out.

I was very glad to have read the condemnation of astrology by the Professor of Buddhism of the Vidyalandara University. He called consulting

astrologers unbuddhistic activities. Yet how many of our leaders can honestly say that they have never consulted an astrologer? Ceylon is the only country in the world that boasts a Faculty of Astrology in one of her Universities. Though there is a Chair of Astrology I understand there is not a single student. Whether the Income Tax Department classifies this Professor's salary as earned or unearned income is an interesting field of research for someone! I wonder who the people are whose need had to be filled but which is still unfulfilled by this unwarmed chair!

A national system of education must breed unity, not uniformity. Boys and girls must cease to think in terms of community, language and religion and be taught to think only in terms first of Ceylon and then of the world. We are fast becoming citizens of one world and it is to my mind anachronistic nonsense to talk of Sinhalese education, Tamil education, Buddhist, Christian or Hindu education these days when one can breakfast in London, lunch in Ankara and dine in Colombo, all within 24 hours. So my hope and prayer is that a national system of education must ultimately be an international one. I was very glad to see only this morning or yesterday that there was going to be a seminar in Anuradhapura within a month of all Afro-Asian students to develop one system of education. Well that is something that we must encourage and that is that scientific humanism is the only principle we must teach. That is the main thing and all these other labels I think are out of date and are leading to much greater harm than to progress and prosperity in this country.