

PRIZEGIVING -1959

Speech/Report of Headmaster Dr.R L Hayman

Mr.Oorloff, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to our Annual Celebrations. I know that to get here so early in the afternoon-or for that matter to get here at all-requires a big effort and I thank you for making it and trust that you will find it to have been worthwhile.

Sunday will be the twenty fifth anniversary of the last official visit to S.Thomas' College of a former Principal of Trinity College. On that Occasion Mr. J.McLeod Campbell was the chairman at the College Prize Giving, and in his speech he remarked "It is a formidable privilege to be allowed to sit even for a moment in the seat of the Warden of S.Thomas' carrying as I suppose it does, the right to call even the Warden himself to order".

Mr.Oorloff, you yourself are now in a similar position to that of your predecessor so long ago, (though of course, you will make due allowance for the fact that instead of having the Warden of S.Thomas' at your beck and call, you have only the Headmaster of a small branch with whom to cope). But small though we are, when we invited you to be our Chief Guest, we did so because we intended to confer the greatest honour at our disposal on you and on the great school which you represent. We only regret that illness has prevented Mrs. Oorloff from visiting us, and giving away the prizes. We wish her a speedy recovery.

Mr.Campbell went on to refer to a letter he had received describing Trinity and S.Thomas' as "Friendly rivals". He enlarged upon this relationship between the two schools in considerable detail. He pointed out that unless rivalry was in fact friendly it only bred envy, suspicion, and resentment. In contrast to this "friendly rivalry" was a hard but grand school of character and those who become inured to its discipline", till its ethics are in their very bones "are the men who are wanted in the public life of this country, amid the clash of communal, political and ecclesiastical rivalries". That remark strikes home with greater force today than when it was spoken. Our present leaders stress the things that divide and appeal to self-interest and party spirit rather than to what is good and fine.

They will reap what they have sown but it is the ordinary citizen who has to pay the price.

Thirty years ago it was said of the Englishmen of the time "He does not know what he wants, he does not know what he has lost, but he realizes in a confused way that he can never have wanted what he has got" and so it is with us today. What will be the outcome of it all I cannot foresee, but it is clear that schools like yours and ours must foster an atmosphere in which our boys can learn to be rivals and yet friends, proud of their own schools, but appreciative of the good in others, eager in their efforts to attain success, yet never forgetting that the effort is worth more than the prize.

If Mr.Campbell were to visit us today I think he would be delighted to find that though our schools continue their rivalry in the field or sport, they are also rivals in friendship. In this respect, Trinity is perhaps several jumps ahead of S.Thomas' and this is most clearly shown in the advice and help you have so readily afforded to us as for example in offering us from the abundance of your experience much formation about the running of your school farm, and by allowing one of our staff to observe the methods you use in the teaching of woodwork and handwork.

This is not only the day of our Prize Giving, but it is also the occasion of our first Old Boys' Reunion to be held in Gurutalawa. When I heard on Tuesday that at least 70 Old Boys were hoping to attend I was surprised and delighted. It is grand to see you all and hope that you feel the same about being here. Perhaps in imagination at least, you will be able to relive the good old days when you yourselves were members of the School. When perhaps you waited apprehensively outside the office door before lunch and counted up the warning you had received hoping that some of them would be overlooked and that somehow you would escape without a caning. Well I can't offer you that form of entertainment tomorrow, but in the matches that will then be played I hope you will thoroughly enjoy yourselves and will find your successors worthy in skill and spirit to maintain the tradition of the school.

Perhaps this is an opportunity I shall not have again of recording the great debt of gratitude Gurutalawa owes to Father Foster. His inspiration and faith have lain behind every new development whether of its programme, its buildings or its equipment. He himself as a priest, on the playing fields, in the boxing ring and in the class rooms has been an inspiration to every generation of Thomians. Much of the life of the School centres in him. When I meet Old Boys and discuss their schooldays there are few who do speak with gratitude of all that they owed to him. Indeed they are right to do so and many of them owe more to him than they know. At the end of term staff meetings every boy in turn is discussed by the masters, and those who have done badly are often condemned in no uncertain terms. On such occasions it is Father Foster who brings back everything into perspective by finding something to commend in all but the worst delinquents. In this he has been an unknown friend to so many of you and is truly worthy of the title "Advocate of the absent" May he continue in this capacity for long after his return from leave.

Speech Of The Chief Guest Mr.Oorloff

Dr.Hayman, Bys of St.Thomas', Ladies and Gentlemen, Mrs.Oorloff and I count it an honour to be your guests today. We are sensible of and grateful for the compliment St.Thomas' have paid us; neither of us feels we have deserved it; but both of us will try very hard to be as little unworthy as possible. For your sentences of welcome, for the kind words you have spoken of us we say "thank you very much".

On behalf of all of us guests here today. I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on the implications of your report. May I slip in first a private word of congratulation on its brevity? For nine years now, I have tried every trick I knew to write a prize-day report that would end before at most 25% of the audience had fallen asleep. For nine years I have failed. But now, that I have had so fine an example set me, it is not impossible that I shall be able to cut out at least one page of reporting next year! But to come back to the implications of your Head master's report; how much you lads at Gurutalawa have to be grateful for! You have all the variety of life the larger urban schools have and none of their disadvantages. Your numbers are small enough to ensure that you are treated as persons in a family and not numbers on a roll. You have something that no other school I know in Ceylon can boast of a riding school! I was delighted too, to find you had a hiking club. There are, to my way of thinking, few happier occupations for one's leisure than hiking – especially over such country as you find in Uva. And I expect every parent here will be proud to know that when Gurutalawa wants walls, it is their sons who build them whether the walls be needed for a squash court or a poultry pen! You have not, of course, yet produced the man who, when Gurutalawa wants, heifers, can ensure that all calves born are heifers. But no more have we! Bull calves predominate at Trinity too. Best of all, you have Dr.Hayman as your head. Quiet and unassuming, but efficient and understanding, he has set an example to the whole country of how schools should be run. May he continue for many decades amongst us.

There is a grouse in his report that I am moved to echo, his complaint that boys of this generation do not read widely. It is true not of Gurutalawa only, but of Kandy and Colombo too, and it is a tragic truth; because no one can even begin to have a true education unless he reads, and reads widely. I was listening to a man of great experience talking to a group of teachers the other day. He kept emphasising the fact that a good education depended on three things, facts, the ability to use facts, and a true sense of values; and all these we can acquire only by sharing the thinking of the doers and thinkers of the world, that is, by reading widely.

Facts are not always easy to recognize. In this modern age or propaganda they are almost unrecognizable except to the most critical. Have you ever asked yourself as you listened to some juicy gossip or read a newspaper account of some matter of contemporary interest or a political speech, or as you listened in to the official news broadcasts, say during the communal riots of 1958 have you ever asked yourself, what are the *facts* of the case? If you have, and if you have then got down to ascertaining those facts, you will have found that nine tenths of what you read or hear is just blarney, nothing more nor less. And you will be amazed at the adroitness with which facts can be used to *hide* the truth. Not so long ago the Head of an important Government department

was transferred at twenty four hours notice after a campaign waged against him in the press and in other quarters that he had for some years manoeuvred men of his own community only, into the more lucrative posts in his department. It was indeed a fact that for some years all the best posts had gone to men of his own community. But it was also a fact that firstly all these appointments were made by a Board of three, two of whom belonged to another community altogether; and secondly that all the senior men in the Department were, by a pure accident of history of the same community as the Head. This aspect of the situation was suppressed and a gross injustice was perpetrated. Newspapers are especially prone to mislead us in this way. Quite naturally (for their owners are out to make money and the circulation of a paper depends on its popularity) they play up to the thirst of most people for sensation, for something that will titillate their readers' depraved tastes. A people get the newspapers they deserve! Here in Ceylon, our papers make so much of murder and divorce that the impression is created that we do nothing in this country but kill or divorce one another. That is not really true. The Commission of Enquiry into the desirability of continuing capital punishment in this Island, revealed after examination of statistics, that if the growth in population is taken into account, there has been no increase worth talking about in the incidence of murder. All the newspaper propaganda, then is based on a lie. As for divorce, we have to remember that happy marriages are alas! of no news value!

If then we want to be of any use to our community, our country, we must learn to get down to the facts, to wade through the welter of tainted propaganda to the spring of pure truth, to cut through the dense foliage of sensationalism to the root of the matter. We must know the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

But facts are not enough. The educated person must know what to do with them. Otherwise he becomes like a Statistical office which never issued a report. I have already touched indirectly on what not to do with facts. There is another use of them less deliberate, less culpable perhaps, but far more deadly in effect, and that is the acceptance of the facts discovered by science as the be-all and the end-all of life. People call this an age of technology, and they use the phrase as proudly as if it were a golden age. They ought to apologize for it, rather. They might as well say that man is 59% H₂O, 18% Protein, 18% Fat, 4.3% Mineral Matter. They might just possibly concede that man is mind also. But that concept of man is a caricature of the truth. Man is body, man is mind, but most significantly man is spirit, and it is because we have forgotten that third of the trinity that we find ourselves in the mess we are in. The extermination of mankind by the power of nuclear fission or nuclear fusion is the logical outcome of science divorced from wisdom. The Tower of Babel was a parable of man aspiring to be god. Man, rejecting God, and worshipping Science has an Atom Bomb for his symbol.

I repeat that if we want to consider ourselves truly educated, we must get our facts right and we must acquire the ability to use those facts aright; but above all we must make sure that our sense of values is right. For in the last resort it is that, that will decide the manner in which we use our facts. What I mean by a sense of values is a right standard of judgement. Last Saturday some of you boys, were, or rather, should have been in Kandy at the Central Group Athletics Meet. Times and distances were there carefully measured for the purpose of records. Those times and distances would be utterly worthless unless stop-watches and measuring tapes had previously been checked with

the most accurate clocks and measures available, that is the standards at the observatory in Colombo. Of what use will it be to you to have done the 100 yards at the Public Schools' Meet in October in ten seconds if it is discovered that the watches that the time-keepers used were inaccurate? In art, in music, in literature, you would be a fool to say that this work or that is good or bad if you were not yourself acquainted with the best music and the best art and the best literature. Nothing but the best can serve as a standard of reference for us in these things. How much more careful then must be of our standards, of our sense of values, in matters of human conduct, of human relationships!

And where do we get this sense of values? Not from science but from what are called the humanities, from literature and poetry and philosophy, and from the written or oral traditions of the great teachers of the world. That is why I shudder at the emphasis now laid on science in our schools, that is why I am always pleading with parents to let our brighter boys go into the Arts classes instead of packing them all into one or other of the Science sections. For a large part of the prevailing lack of balance between science and the humanities the University is, I think, to blame, for our bigger schools must gear their teaching to University Entrance requirements, and those requirements mean that a boy who wishes to make sure of his place in the University must start specializing when he is fourteen. The effect of this is deadening, as far as the boy is concerned and quite dangerous as far as society is concerned, I have seen for myself the disastrous consequences of this kind of early specialization. I have talked with men who have a so-called higher education but cannot carry on an intelligent conversation, with a medical man, who cannot talk interestingly except about medicine, or with an engineer, who cannot talk except about bridges and culverts. Contrast with this a former Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in our own university who won a scholarship on Western Classics, did no Physics and Chemistry till he went to England, then became a highly qualified Doctor of Medicine, and yet can talk interestingly to you on any subject under the sun. It is men like that the world needs, engineers to whom Shakespeare and Tagore are not just names, medical men who know the Bible and the Bhagavad-gita, priests who can till the soil like any goiya.

And so I say to you boys get down to the facts; never be satisfied with vague assertions, insist always on accuracy; and in the next place, learn while you can, how to apply those facts to your living and thinking, and finally make sure that your standards are as perfect as they can be in this fallible world. Everything depends ultimately on what your response will be to the three eternal questions about man himself. Whence come, why here and whither bound? If you believe that man is the measure of all things, you will have to be satisfied with a world that is circumscribed by the finitude of man's mind. If you believe, on the other hand, that man was born for worship of God then you are on the threshold of an infinitude of truth and beauty, besides which the best that earth has to offer pales into insignificance.

Between these two you will have some day to make a deliberate choice. May your years here at St. Thomas' equip you to make that choice wisely.