CHAPTER VIII
LAST YEARS OF HEMMY'S PRINCIPALSHIP
(1925-1927)

The College was sixty years old on the first day of 1924. Its Golden Jubilee was celebrated at the end of the year. The festivities started on 19 December and ended on 22 December. The formal gathering of the old boys took place on 21 December in the College Hall. Lala Muluk Raj, the oldest living graduate, was introduced and voted to the chair. Four speakers addressed the audience on different subjects. While Principal A. S. Hemmy spoke of the traditions of Oxford and Cambridge, the chairman commented on the system of education in ancient India. Raja Narindra Nath and Sheikh Amir Ali spoke of their college days in a reminiscent vein.

When the speeches were over, the chairman, accompanied by the members of the Jubilee Celebrations Executive Committee, descended from the dais and proceeded to the north of the Hall. Here he unveiled the Jubilee Memorial Shield presented by the old boys. This Shield was a handsome piece of polished teak inset with a smaller silver shield bearing the College coat-of-arms and the motto 'Courage to Know'. The souvenir still occupies the place where it was originally fixed. Old boys of different periods had themselves photographed in small groups in front of the Tower Room. So did the entire body of the old boys present on the occasion. The old boys were at home to the College students in the evening. Sir Ganga Ram, a
millionaire philanthropist, the oldest living old boy, distributed prizes to the winners of various sports events organized for the occasion and advised the younger generation on the choice of a career.

On 22 December the College was thrown open to the old boys. A large number attended. Of particular interest to the visitors was the science conversazione organized by George Mathai and the demonstrations given in the various laboratories. A large garden party was arranged in the afternoon. This was attended by the leading citizens of the town including the Governor of the province. The programme was rounded off by the performance of Twelfth Night, the Governor witnessing the play. Some Jubilee scholarships were instituted to commemorate the occasion. Funds for these were raised by the old boys themselves.

By this time (i.e., 1924) the College had come to be acknowledged as the foremost educational institution in this part of the sub-continent with established traditions of research and scholarship. It enjoyed unstinted financial support of the Government and its alumni were entrenched in the civil services and professions. The first two Ministers of the province under the Dyarchy, Fazl-i-Husain and Harkishan Lal, were both old students of the College and the latter had actually taught here in the beginning of his public career. Internally, the College had improved in several directions. The science block had been completely separated from the main building and the library had been removed to the upper storey of the eastern wing. The College was a well-knit corporate unit. The problems of student discipline were less thorny. The University was largely an examining body and the lead in academic matters was usually given by the College.

The College had been duly affected by the political
storm of the preceding decade. Some of its students had mysteriously disappeared in 1915. They were later reported to have arrived in Kabul on their way to Turkey. At Kabul they joined the larger Indian community working for the emancipation of their country with the help of a Turko-German invasion of the subcontinent via Afghanistan. The émigrés were suspected by their Afghan hosts and their mission proved a complete failure. Some of the muhajarin were allowed to return to their country. Others chose to remain abroad. One member of this party, Zafar Hassan Aybek, who eventually settled down in Turkey and took to journalism, has given graphic details of how the Pan-Islamist students’ group tried to set the College building on fire by means of rags soaked in kerosene oil, how the plan went amiss and how the harassed College authorities pounced upon a peon to stand his trial for arson.

The end of the war was followed by a wave of unrest and lawlessness in the province. Martial Law was proclaimed in Lahore in April 1919. The students of Lahore colleges were ordered to report themselves in the Minto Park four times a day under humiliating conditions. Every student was made to stand between two British soldiers carrying loaded guns. The students of this College were exempted from this order, but they still felt panicky. A League of Order was started in the College to ‘contradict mischievous rumours and help in the preservation of order’. What the League did is not quite known. The College professed to have no politics. But actually politics was uppermost in every mind. A new rule required every student joining the College to sign a pledge to refrain from taking part in politics. The restriction was not unreasonable but coming, as it did, from the functionaries of a foreign
bureaucracy it was promptly interpreted as a sign of bondage.

Lean and short-statured A. S. Hemmy presided over the College. Joining as Professor of Science in 1899, he had risen to the headship of the College in 1919. He had a precise mind and an innate love of order. He aimed at giving even-handed justice to all classes of the King's subjects and was not entirely popular with his European colleagues. His decisions were given after full deliberation and he was seldom known to have reversed his orders. He had a wide range of interests and used to address the College on Saturdays on such varied subjects as 'social life in Spain', 'Turkish conquest of Constantinople', 'system of weights and measures at Mohenjodaro'. The tradition of the Principal addressing the whole College was allowed to lapse after his retirement. The best known of Hemmy's idiosyncrasies was a daily cycle-ride from the Principal's Lodge to the Principal's Office, the distance between the two being no more than a fraction of a furlong.

When he laid down his charge, Hemmy could see that a vast change had come over the student mind. The causes of this transformation were complex but it could be largely traced to the mass movements of 1920-21 which had encouraged defiance of all governmental authority. The student of 1927 was less disciplined and less inclined to put up with restrictions which former generations of students had borne cheerfully. The teachers' admonitions did not produce the effects that

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1. He had succeeded Col. Stephenson of the Indian Medical Service. The Colonel was a ripe scholar of Persian and had joined the College in 1906 as Professor of Biology. He achieved European reputation as a zoologist and joined the University of Edinburgh after his retirement. Some time before his death in the 30's, he was admitted to the Fellowship of the Royal Society. The Vernacular Library of the College was named after him and a marble tablet in the eastern wing shows the home of the Library in the 20's and the 30's.
they used to produce before. In Hemmy's own words:

The student of those days [1899] was rarer and therefore more likely to be a picked man, he was more serious-minded, perhaps inwardly more ambitious but outwardly less enterprising, he was less indulgent and less liberal. He was more concentrated and more limited. The spirit of the youth did not pervade the air as now.

These were the first portents of the coming storm. The problem of student discipline was to grow with years and give a chronic headache to preceptors and parents alike.

An important feature of the Hemmy regime was decline of the Khalifas. The fraternity of Khalifas represented the old order. Its members dressed well, ate well and idled away their time. They failed in the University Examinations from year to year and had no idea of leaving the College. Every Khalifa put on a peculiar dress. He could be easily recognized either by his country-made shoes or faultlessly tailored achkan or buttonless sleeves. He regarded himself as a custodian of the College traditions and carried himself with ease and grace. He was found at every College function and did his best to make a success of it.

The Khalifas' favourite resort was the College Hall where they sat and gossiped round enormous tables in the company of their young admirers. Discouraged neither by repeated failures, nor worried by the anxiety of having to make a career, they lived merrily in the present. Prominent orators and sportsmen and energetic secretaries of societies were recruited from the ranks of the Khalifas. Their leadership was the envy as well as despair of some junior teachers. The Khalifa took upon himself the duty of warning the breakers of College traditions and encouraging those who followed the approved pattern. He defended his own rights and respected those of others. He could
approach anybody in the College without the formality of an introduction and was never lavish in praise or rough in censure. Not unoften a Khalifa’s acquaintance with a professor developed into friendship and friendship ripened into intimacy, but he treated it as personal privilege and observed due decorum in the classes. The Khalifa’s easy geniality, however, was not much in evidence in his relations with the hostel superintendent who often took him to task for breach of hostel regulations. The Khalifa paid fulsome compliments to his tormentor in verse circulated by word of mouth or shouted from the College stage. Hemmy made it difficult for the Khalifas to stay on in the College. One of his regulations forbade them from contesting the various elections. Later he denied them hostel accommodation. But these measures were not sufficiently deterrent. Finally, he made them ineligible for admission to the College. This sounded the death-knell of a colourful class whose departure was a serious loss to the social life of the College. The very term Khalifa fell into disuse in course of time.

What was to be the role of the College in the life of the province? Perhaps this question was never clearly formulated or precisely answered. That it had supplied the land with numerous educationists and administrators was a satisfactory answer for most people. The growing inter-communal strife of the decade made it necessary to pose this question and search for an answer. Sir William Malcolm (later Lord) Hailey, the dynamic Governor of the province, stated (1926) that this College was essentially a leader of thought and that its main purpose was to ‘achieve common life, a society far more homogeneous, unyielding to separatist or sectional claims and yielding only to larger interests in problems affecting the people as a whole’. This levelling
role, he said, was foreign to the basic purposes of denominational institutions. He appeared to be accusing the denominational institutions of introducing communal bias into politics and pleading for a Government monopoly of education. He returned to this subject in his next annual visit to the College and reiterated that the future lay with the publicly-managed rather than privately-managed institutions and that he would be happy if denominational institutions were altogether banned in the future. These strictures were not deserved. Voluntary effort has an important place in all fields of human activity. The denominational institutions had accomplished what the Government was either unable or unwilling to accomplish. They had carried College education to the middle and lower middle classes and had carved a place for themselves in the educational system of the province.

But the Governor stood on surer ground when he reproved the educationists for lack of a sense of direction. Amidst all the hurried work of development, he complained, few stopped to reflect on 'the kind of changes we want to introduce in people's mentality'. Our failure to be clear about our goals, he continued, would turn the achievements of one generation into the embarrassments of the next. Though made in a different context and for a different purpose, these observations should provide food for thought to the development-enthusiasts of today.

The British historian Ramsay Muir visited the College in 1926. He was greatly impressed by the creative work done by the teachers of History. The Government College, he stated, would be a full-fledged university if it were not controlled from outside. The observation was not wholly accurate. It applied only to a limited sector of College life that came under the
historian's notice. In fact, the College combined the functions of a university, a college and a Public School. (That is why it has meant different things to different people). The continued existence and growing size of the Intermediate classes tended to obscure the real place of the College 'as leader of thought' in the intellectual life of the province. It appeared necessary, therefore, to relieve the College of its responsibility for Intermediate teaching. The proposal for housing the Intermediate department of the College in a separate non-residential institution had been actually advanced by the Governor. But the plan had to be abandoned on account of the depression that broke out in 1929.

In the last days of Hemmy's stay at the College, facilities for research were extended by the addition of seven rooms in the Biological Block. Similar additions were made to the Chemical Laboratory. The M.A. teaching in Psychology was started in collaboration with the Forman Christian College then occupying the site of the present Bank Square. The Laboratory for Experimental Psychology was opened in the Physics Department. Its equipment, which had to be imported from America and Germany, took long in coming and longer in installation. The new subject did not attract many students. Even if it did, accommodation was scarce. After the departure of C. H. Rice from the Forman Christian College in 1930, the burden of teaching this subject had to be borne mainly by the teachers of this College.

Ganesh Chandra Chatterji, who headed the combined department of Psychology and Philosophy believed like a true psychologist that his science held the key to all social problems. He expressed the hope that the Government College Psychological Laboratory would develop into a centre of research and training for the
employees of the various Government departments in the particular branches of Psychology with which they were concerned. This remained a hope and an expectation. It was only with the establishment of a clinic 25 years later that the Psychology Laboratory began to serve the needs of individuals unconnected with the College.

There are not many changes of staff to record for the brief period covered by this chapter. In 1926, J. R. Firth went on a year's holiday and resigned on the expiry of his leave. A man of vigorous personality, Firth was severely critical of the methods of teaching English followed in the sub-continent and freely indulged in mimicry to drive home his point to his classes in phonetics. The grammarian in him questioned the competence of Nesfield to expound the rules of grammar; 'Nesfield', he used to say, 'knows no grammar'. He often emphasised the indispensability of good health for efficient scholarship: 'learning in a broken body is like a sword without a handle', was one of his quotable quotes.

The pride of place among the College societies has always belonged to the Union. The Principal being the ex-officio President of the Union, the highest student office-holder was known as Vice-President. The Union Executive included some four or five professors. The annual elections were held in the month of October. The Union met, on the average, once in two months and debated such subjects as: 'whether self-advertisement is the most effective policy for advancement in life'; 'hostel life is more useful for the young under-graduates than home life'; 'the League of Nations is not compatible with true national development'; 'the League can be an effective means of preventing war'; 'the moral judgement is passed on the person doing rather than the act done'.
The College could boast of several outstanding speakers, but the quality of debating, on the whole, was rather indifferent. A debate is a misnomer for a speaking contest in which the participants come to the rostrum with memorized speeches and do not answer each other's arguments. The only remedy is a long and arduous training in the art of speaking. Matters could also be improved by inviting well-known public speakers to take part in the College debates. This latter suggestion was taken up but fell through for want of support. Debating remained a student affair and developed without outside help.

The provincial councils set up under the Reforms of 1919 were modelled on Western parliaments. They were a novelty in the land. The young collegians were keen on playing parliamentarians. The Union used to organize an annual mock parliament whose members 'represented' constituencies named, or, rather code-named, after the idiosyncrasies of prominent students known only to their friends. This parliament was inaugurated by the Principal with a 'speech from the throne'. The 'question hour' showed the existence of real parliamentary talent in the College. Quite a few members of the 'government' faced the 'opposition' with confidence and answered the barrage of questions relating to hostel regulations, the quality of food served in the dining rooms and the different kinds of fines imposed on students with pungent humour.

The Biological Society achieved some prominence for the regularity of its meetings and the quality of papers produced by its members. The Round Table was a forum of discussion for economic problems. The reorganized Hindu Association was full of life and met with clock-like regularity. The Sikh Association and the Muslim Association were also up and doing, though
the latter was somewhat handicapped by poor publicity. The Bazm-i-Sukhan, headed by Mirza Mohammad Said, stood at the meridian of its popularity. Its main job was the holding of Mushairas which attracted student poets as well as outsiders. Mirza Muhammad Said’s transfer to Rohtak left it anaemic and it was soon pushed aside by a more vigorous rival. Two new societies came into being at the end of 1926. The first was the Shakespeare Reading Circle which enrolled V Year students and was meant to promote the habit of reading for pleasure. The other was the Punjabi Society whose organizers took their cue from the observations made by Chaudhari (later Sir) Shahabuddin in the course of a speech that he made in the College on the occasion of Guru Nanak’s birthday. The Chaudhari stated: ‘I want neither Persian, Arabic nor Sanskrit, Hindi. I want only Punjabi and Punjabi I will have at all costs’. Headed by Shiv Ram Kayshup, the Society represented the beginning of a Punjabi movement in the College. It drew its office bearers from all communities, though it was particularly active on Sikh religious festivals.

Hockey was a favourite game at the College. Its players maintained a high standard of the game and presented a picturesque sight in their uniforms in the course of their practice matches in the Oval every evening. However, the students’ interest in sports was not much in evidence. The Ravi complained that very few collegians went to witness the University matches and those who found time to go to the University grounds stood like deaf and mute spectators. The cheering parties of the former days were no longer visible. The only College club mentioned in the despatches was the Bicycle Club which arranged races on every Sunday, the competitors turning up regularly.
Dilawar Hussain was easily the most outstanding sportsman of the period. He became a legend for his exploits on the cricket field. With every throw of cricket ball he used to send out the cry: ‘Hai Allah Ji’. ‘Our College has not produced the like of him for many years’, was the parting tribute of the College magazine when he left in 1926. Later he went to Cambridge where he studied History and Law, played cricket and was described as a friend of peers and princes.

Abdul Hamid, who earned the nickname ‘tooty’, was rising to fame for the style, speed and energy of his sporting feats at the College and University sports. It was literally impossible for him to carry all the prizes that he won on the Sports Day and he had to bring along his younger brother to help take home a bagful of trophies.

The available hostel news for the period shows that musical concerts had superseded other forms of cultural activity. The ordeal of compulsory morning jerks was resented by easy-going students who filled the pages of The Ravi with spirited protests against the callousness of College authorities. The Quadrangle did not stand high in the affections of its residents. Its cubicles were cubicles only by courtesy. Actually they were pigeon-holes, each room being separated from the next by a wooden partition slightly higher than human height. The partition was completed by running a wire-net from the upper end of the partition wall to the ceiling. This allowed little privacy to the inmates of this hostel. A slight whisper in any one of the rooms could be heard in the entire row of adjoining rooms. An irate resident suggested that this hostel deserved to be bombed out of existence along with the neighbouring slums of Changar Mohalla. The residents of the New Hostel suffered from no such disability. Here one was
not compelled to be social and was free to make himself scarce by shutting himself up in his cubicle.

Many of the College teachers were active members of the Society for the Promotion of Scientific Knowledge and some of them produced substantial works on their respective subjects. Notable among these publications was Garrett's *Mughal Rule in India*, written in collaboration with S. M. Edwardes of the Indian Civil Service, which continues to maintain its place in the historical literature of the period.

The College magazine for the years 1925, 1926 and 1927 carries pen-pictures of the office clerks who invariably appeared severe and distant to the students. The fee clerk, in particular, was *persona non grata* with his clients. Anxious to prevent spurious coins from going into the College chest, he took a long time in examining them, tossing them in the air and scrutinizing their edges minutely. Every student asking for Principal's testimonial was first examined by the Head Clerk. He received prompt attention even if he was a petty office-holder of an unknown society. Others were treated like plebs and had to wait for their turn.

There is not much to mention about the College magazine except a remarkable editorial in the Urdu section which complained of the stiff and formal manners meticulously cultivated by some professors who apparently enjoyed keeping their students at a distance. The same article chalked out a scheme of educational reform which included a change of the medium of instruction, compulsory military training and religious instruction and a more rational system of examinations. Examinations are perhaps the most maligned feature of our education. They are generally dismissed as a test of memory and not of brain power. It is easily forgotten that a good memory is a priceless asset to
occupants of responsible positions. It is interesting, however, that an intelligence test and a memory test given to 1 year entrants of 1926 revealed that high places in the Matriculation Examination were won on the score of intelligence and not that of memory. The accusation to the contrary is so widespread that the validity of this conclusion needs to be tested again.

A. S. Hemmy retired in the Autumn of 1927. The number of students on rolls was 753 when he read out his last Annual Report. The Muslim students constituted roughly one-third of that number. The number of post-graduate students was steadily rising. When he left, the College had completed nearly 64 years of its life, had well formed traditions and was proud of its achievements.