

Third Annual Speech Day December 10th 1924

The Hippodrome was once more booked for the afternoon staging of the Speech Day and Prizegiving of the School. This time a more ambitious programme was undertaken, with an opening Musical interlude given by the pupils. The Principal Speaker on that day was Sir Henry Hadow, Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University, with Ald. Gabriel Price J.P., Chairman of the Governors, presiding.

Musical Programme

The School Choir sang the Part Songs, "Song o' the Gale" and "Comrades Today (both by Wyles Foster), "In Summer Woods" (John Ireland), "Beauteous Morn" (Edward German) and "Shepherd's Lullaby" (Cyril Jenkins)". A solo performance on the pianoforte was given by Knee C. He played the first movement of Sonata in G (Beethoven) and "Scherzo in B flat minor" (Chopin). Forms IIA and IIB sang the French songs "Berceuse d'Amorique" (Breton Folk Song) and "Petit Oiseau" (Bureau). Miss Morgan Jones sang "A Song of Thanksgiving" (Francis Allitsen), "Phyllis has such Charming Graces" (Old English), and "The Londonderry Air" (Traditional). Carols sung by the choir were; "The Angel Choirs are Singing" (Old English), "Christ is Born, go forth to meet Him" (Old French) and "See amid the Winter Snow" (Old French). The traditional Sea Shanties interspersed in the programme were "The Girls of Dublin Town", "Haul the Bowlin", "Haul Away, Joe" and "Rio Grande".

The Headmaster's Report

In speaking of the recent "Open Day" at the School, it is unclear whether Mr. Jenkinson was referring to the Sports and Parents' Day held on July 26th, or perhaps a separate occasion when parents had expressed to him their interest and pleasure from a visit to the School. There had certainly been a "Hemsworth Education Week" when the Open Day was taken to be a 'stocktaking' for the parents. The Headmaster welcomed the involvement of parents within the school, and stated that only with a thorough insight into the workings of the school could they achieve a successful partnership. Such visits were to be welcomed and encouraged, and he was enthusiastic in proposing an advisory committee of parents, Governors, the local education authority and the School staff which would co-operate in developing the school.

Latin

Mr. Jenkinson once again returned to the subject of the teaching of Latin in school. Latin had been dropped by some pupils in Form V to allow more time for the study of French because it had been difficult for them to learn the two languages well enough in such a new school over less than four years. He hoped to make Latin an alternative subject to Science during the year preceding the School Certificate. Although the Headmaster had not changed his opinion as to the usefulness of learning Latin, he saw that the curriculum was crowded, and choices had to be made between Arts and Sciences. Pupils wanting to take an Arts degree should continue with Latin, but on the Science side this was not so necessary. At any rate, the present situation was that modern foreign languages needed extra study time in school, and particular attention had to be paid to this.

Concentration

'Concentration' was another of the repeated themes of Mr. Jenkinson. He felt that many answers in the annual examination papers had been too sketchy and incomplete, showing that the pupils' knowledge was deficient. Only by the power of determined and concentrated effort would the pupils grasp a deeper understanding of their subjects, and this would be aided to a great extent by home lessons, where problems and meanings had to be worked out by the pupil himself with unassisted effort.

Games

Excellent progress had been made by the boys during the year, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Dickenson and Mr. Crossland. During the cricket season 11 matches were played, and seven won. The boys had shown great enthusiasm with rugby also, and much improvement was made. Of five matches played, only one had been lost, and the team was now meeting the first teams of some schools. "Fives" was also played with keenness and skill, and a pair of boys was mentioned by the Headmaster whom he felt would be a match for any pair from any secondary school in the country. High praise indeed, and yet these opposing players were hard to find. The girls were similarly praised for their progress in hockey, under the careful coaching of Miss Prince and Miss Robinson. Netball and tennis were played during the summer term, but there were no matches. There was the space for more tennis courts to be laid, and this was now a necessity.

Music

Miss Morgan Jones had been a welcome addition to the staff, as she had placed music to the forefront in the school. At the Pontefract Music Festival the choir obtained a first Class Certificate with 172 marks out of 200. Certificates had also been won for country dancing by both boys and girls at Pontefract and Leeds. The Morris Dancing of the boys had reached a very high standard.

Gramophone, Wireless and Library

The School's gramophone had proved useful for country dancing, and the appreciation of good music on wet days. It was found to be of no use in the teaching of French, owing to the poor quality of the records. The school wireless was in constant use receiving broadcasts from abroad as well as from the Home stations. Mr. Storer had spent a great deal of time in building and adding to the set which was used by both boys and girls during afternoons and evenings. Next term it was hoped to acquire a loudspeaker 'of the latest type'. The Library now contained 450 books, and the Headmaster mentioned his hope that every girl and boy would present the library with the gift of a book when they left the school. He also announced that there would be a third issue of the "School Magazine" the following term.

Thanks

Both the Staff and the Governors received the Headmaster's profound thanks and appreciation for their efforts, with Miss Griffiths

and Ald. Price receiving special mention for their assistance in the running of the School - Miss Griffiths for her supervision of the girls; Ald. Price for his "guiding hand, and his strenuous support."

Sir Henry Hadow

Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield University (1919-30)

During the 1920s and 1930s Sir Henry Hadow (1859-1937) chaired a consultative committee that was responsible for several important reports on education in England. In 1926, a report entitled 'The Education of the Adolescent' looked at primary education in detail for the first time. It prioritised activity and experience, rather than rote learning and for the first time discussed the specific needs of children with learning difficulties. The report also made the important recommendation of limiting class sizes to a maximum of thirty children, and abandonment of all-age schools with the creation of secondary modern schools. Later on, in 1931, another report was published: The Primary School, which was influenced by the educational ideas of French psychologist, Jean Piaget, and advocated a style of teaching based on children's interests

There were two reasons, according to Sir Henry, why he was delighted to be attending Hemsworth Secondary School's third Speech Day. Firstly, because it was a new school it was interesting to watch the growth of such an undertaking from its very beginnings. The establishment of traditions and the sowing of the seeds which would later be garnered was like seeing the beginnings of the growth of the pupils themselves. The other reason he was glad to be there was that such a good start had been made at the school, with the doubling of its numbers within three years, that there was much evidence to be seen of its continued progress. Not only was the school increasing in size, but also, according to the Headmaster's report, in its achievements.

Music

As a man to whom music meant a great deal, Sir Henry was impressed by the musical achievements of Hemsworth Secondary School. He asked the audience whether they had noticed where the eyes of the singers were during the excellent performance of the choir. They were fixed on the pianist, which was exactly where they should have been. This demonstrated not only a fondness for the music, but good teaching and good discipline, which resulted in a first-class choral ensemble. Added to this, he said that when one found the second form of a school singing in French, with the audience understanding everything, it showed abilities of which many much larger and older schools might well have been proud. The music of the school deserved great praise.

Advice to the Parents

In listening to Mr. Jenkinson's descriptions of the subjects offered by the school, Sir Henry thought that the wide variety of serious and also lighter options was impressive. Concerning the teaching of Latin, he urged those who thought that Latin was an unnecessary luxury to think again. Some parents said they did not want their children to spend time learning something they would not use in later life, but this was not a valid objection. If parents looked back and tried to remember everything they had learned at school, they would find there was not a large amount recalled, and this was good. "Education should not be about filling a child's head with facts, but with things that would strengthen the child's mental and moral muscles; enlarge its outlook and make it more capable of dealing with the problems of life."

On the subject of home lessons, or homework, Sir Henry appealed to parents to allow as much time as possible for the children to do the work they had been given from school. He acknowledged that there was a danger to make children "useful" helping in the home, and urged parents to remember that there was but a short time allowed for children to acquire their education, and overworking would result in tiredness and strain, to the detriment of lessons. Another important thing to bear in mind was for parents to allow their children to complete the full school course until the age of 16. Parents had a difficult course to steer between apathy about their children's education, and too much interference. Both were to be avoided at all costs.

To the Staff and Pupils

Sir Henry also had some direct advice to the teaching staff of the school. He had no doubts that they were doing their work efficiently, but would ask them, and all teachers in all schools and colleges to have an illuminated card-board sign hung in their bedrooms, so that they may see it day and night, saying "Remember what you were at their age." There was general applause to this. To the pupils, Sir Henry spoke directly of their responsibility to ensure that they remembered they were the school. Everything existed within it solely for their sakes and because they were there. They were the centre and core of it, and the future of the school depended on what they gave it. This was more important because it was a new school. Their welfare was its welfare. There was every reason to be proud of their school, and they should ensure that they lived their lives so that it was proud of them.

In ending his address, Sir Henry suggested that the balance of work and play in the school might be adjusted by requesting of the Headmaster and Governors an additional half-day's holiday. This inaugural tradition was acceded to by Ald, Price on behalf of the Governors to the great enthusiasm of the audience.

The Prizewinners

Mrs. Alice Schorah, in the absence of Lady Mabel Smith, presented the prizes to the following:-

Form Prizes; V - E. J. Barker;

IV - A. Mart;

III - Hilda Gaunt;

IIa - Winnie Sadler; IIb - Jennie Hodgson; IIc - Doreen Schorah;

I - Phyllis Howe.

English - E. J. Barker, Edith Gaunt, Clarice Allen, R. N. Slatcher.

History - Frank A. Rothera, Adelaide Branford, Doreen Schorah.

Geography - Lilian Dykes, Winnie Sadler, Jennie Hodgson.

French - Freda Swaine, Olive Tooth, Nellie Chilton.

Latin - E. J. Barker, R. V. Williams.

Mathematics - E. J. Barker, Hilda Gaunt, Doris Miles.

Physics - Stanley Hawkesworth, A. Stanton.

Chemistry - R. N. Slatcher, Raymond Wilkinson.

Art - Sybil Ghent, Philip Bull, E. Taylor.

Singing - N. Miles.

Needlework - Winnie Penn.

Woodwork - T. E. Dickinson.

Scripture - Kathleen Jagger, G. C. Mellors.

General Progress - A. Thorpe (22 places), Winnie Penn (16 places).

Reading Competition - Miriam Wass, May Bull, R. White.

General Intelligence Examination - Mary Hodgson, Olive Tooth, H. Gorner, Kathleen Jagger.

Star Prizes - E. J. Barker, Winnie Sadler, Doris Miles, R. N. Slatcher.

[Names have been augmented where possible]

House Challenge Cup - Talbot House (607 1/2 points), Holgate House (394 points)

On the proposition of Mrs. J. Guest, seconded by Mrs. G. Price, Sir Henry Hadow was thanked for his presence and Mrs. Schorah for having distributed the prizes.