

THE LATE MR. F L WOODWARD

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We recall with deepest gratitude the good work done by the late Mr. F.L.Woodward as Principal of Mahinda College. The most enduring monument to his memory is undoubtedly the life and work of hundreds of his devoted pupils who are scattered all over the country.

The ideals that guided him are recorded in his numerous writings. Nurtured, as he was under the English tradition of education, he came to us as a lover of our spiritual heritage. It was his desire to mould the youth entrusted to his care not after an alien pattern but in a manner best suited to the needs and aspirations of our people.

The late Mr. Woodward became convinced that "Empires have flourished and passed away with their languages and civilizations, but the East has still the password to the common treasure of all, enshrined in Pali and Sanskrit, Tamil and Sinhalese, and here must be sought the way of progress in real life."

Therefore he censured the Sinhalese who despised their own language. He said, "Young Sinhalese, who have acquired a knowledge of English, seem to me to be ashamed to be heard conversing in their own language. They even talk together in English, which is all very well if done for practice or for a certain object, but can you imagine two Frenchmen conducting their conversation in English (except for display), or two Englishmen talking French together?"

He quoted this dictum of Tacitus: "The language of the conqueror in the mouth of the conquered is ever the language of the slave." And he attributed the habit among the Sinhalese of conducting their conversation in a foreign tongue to a lack of knowledge of the nation's past and ignorance of, and indifference to, its possible future. He asserted that of all the fundamental stones on which the nation is built, the main and corner-stone is the national language, and therefore in the national scheme of education he wanted the first place for the national language and the second for English.

The late Mr. Woodward was a supporter of the Ceylon University Movement that began in 1906. The National Review of which he was a co-editor held that the effect of education in most of the College was to anglicize rather than to broaden, and demanded not an anglicizing University, or a copy of London, Cambridge or Oxford but one "especially adapted to the requirements of the East, and making a special feature of Eastern languages, and Eastern culture and history; a university to educate and not merely estimate the amount of knowledge possessed by various examinees."

Such were the views of the great educationist whose death we mourn today.