

St. Aloysius College, Mangalore.



Part I

What the College Has Come to Be:

.... the greatest glory of Mangalore, let us say it humbly and thankfully." This was what Fr. A. Ambruzzi s.j. the tenth Rector of St Aloysius College, Mangalore, said of it fifty-two ago; and now, in the centenary year of the College, the writer of the present history has no hesitation at all in saying it again;

In the course of a hundred years, St Aloysius College has traveled (as it were) very far. In 1880, it was only an Upper Secondary School meant to prepare students for the Matriculation Examination. Functioning in a single building, it counted on the opening (January 12, 1880) a hundred and fifty students on its rolls and just two teachers (Fr. Jos Willy s.j. and Scholastic Postlewhite s.j.) on its staff. It grew to be a Second Grade College in the third year. In the mean time, in the fifth year, it had come to have a Middle School (or Lower Secondary) Section added on to its Upper Secondary Department. In the twenty-eighth year, it came to have a Primary Section tagged on to its Middle School Department.

Now, in the centenary year, the world of St Aloysius College includes in its grand sweep a First Grade Day College, a First Grade Evening College, a High School, an Evening High School, a Higher Primary School (or Middle School) and a College of Business Administration. Having nineteen buildings of its own (including among others the Centenary Commemoration Building

the College Students' Recreation Centre, the old Academy Hall, the College Auditorium, two workshops, the buildings served as Staff Quarters for a good number of the College teachers, three blocks of the former "Down College" providing residential accommodation for quite a few Middle School teachers and other employees, the three hostels and the former Boarding House where the vocationalised courses are currently held) the College now counts 4,591 students on the rolls of the several institutions in its fold (as against the original number of 150 students) and 148 teachers (as against the original number of two teachers)!

Yet, even in the centenary year, after the College has come to have such a plurality of buildings, when one says, "St Aloysius College," what invariably "flashes upon the inward eye" (bringing to the mind Poet Saldanha's lines quoted above) is that 1885 building on the top of Edyah Hill, 'the Acropolis of Mangalore', that old two-storeyed building 496 feet long, with the magnificent Chapel and the ornate Academy Hall (each 118' x 50') at it two ends, and the Tower rising from its middle, the whole edifice designed somewhat after the Oratory of St Philip Neri in Rome. This happens because, for long years, with its tower it was the tallest building in Mangalore; and though, in course of time, taller buildings have come up on all sides, to this day it is the College tower that rises higher into the Mangalore air than any other building in the city on account of its natural advantage of being perched on the top of Edyah Hill. Moreover there is nothing else comparable to it in terms of majestic lay-out and sheer size in Mangalore.

But what is really pertinent to the present history is not the physical eminence of the College but something else, viz., the fact that the physical eminence is symbolic of the educational eminence that the College has come to have in the district, symbolic of its great age, of its immense prestige and of its very impressive record of service to the district.

In a hundred years, how many able priests, administrators, diplomats, politicians, judges, advocates, doctors, engineers, scientists, industrialists, manufacturers, businessmen, civil servants, men of the Defence Services, teachers, writers, journalists, artists and social workers has not the College given to the country? Therefore what the College has meant to the country in general is not irrelevant to a consideration of what the College has come to be. But, in relation to the second element of the title of the present history, what is more important is what the College has meant to Dakshina Kannada (South Kanara) in particular.

If today Dakshina Kannada is an honored name on the map of India, it is chiefly on account of its spectacular progress in education; and this progress is to be reckoned not merely in terms of the large number of the Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Colleges (both those given to general education and those given to professional education) in the district, nor merely in terms of the very good examination results in these institutions (always above the State averages), but

also and chiefly, in terms of the catholicity, modernity and urbanity of the people of the district and their admirable enterprise. The credit for this progress must largely be given to St Aloysius College. For one thing, it was the only First Grade College for men students in this district for nearly sixty years; for another, when the district went in for a rapid multiplication of High Schools and of Colleges in the first four decades and the next two decades respectively of this century, the first contingents of educational personnel in these institutions had to be, by and large, the products of St Aloysius College.

Even when their subsequent streams of educators did not inevitably have to be Aloysians, these institutions continued to be indebted to St Aloysius College: in another way: they chose to emulate it in some important matters. Thus Dr T. Madhava Pai, himself an Old Boy and the far-renowned maker of the vast and varied educational complex at Manipal, who founded not only several Professional Colleges of acknowledged excellence but also six very good Colleges of Arts, Science and Commerce (including M.G.M. College, Udupi, the most formidable rival of St Aloysius College for the title of the College par excellence of Dakshina Kannada) always looked upon St Aloysius College as well worth the tribute of emulation. We have it on the authority of a bulletin of Manipal Academy of General Education that, "to Dr Pai, the educational activities of the Missionaries were a source of inspiration; and today the managers as well as the teachers in his institutions hail the premier college of the district, viz., St Aloysius College, as a model institution so far as academic standards and discipline are concerned. Although each one of these Colleges has its own individuality, each secretly cherishes the desire to be compared (of course, favorably) with the College on top of Edyah Hill." (- *Italics, the Editor's comments* .)

It would be easy to pile up the evidence of the excellent image that the College has projected of itself in the public mind in the course of a hundred years. But, for want of space, the present history has to be content with just one more piece of evidence. Rajesh Mallya, a mere High School lad, gives this interesting piece of information in an article in The Littleman: "There was a time when the boys of St Aloysius were admitted to medical colleges in Ceylon without being required to take the Entrance Examination, which it was necessary for the Ceylonese and other boys to take." Of course, the High School lad, being unexposed to the sophisticated requirements of documentation, cites no authority for his information. The present writer, however, likes to believe that the lad's information is correct. Even if it is not so, it should serve at least as a pointer to the splendid image of the Alma Mater in popular imagination and also to the very understandable proneness of her admirers to invent legends about her, seeing that her reputation is so good and so well-founded that almost any legend about her would gain credence.

Part II

How the College Has Come to Be Such

Before turning from the foregoing summing up of what the College has come to be, to chronicling proper, it should not be out of place to dwell for a while on how the College has come to be such. From the beginning, the Jesuits trained their sights very high. They always had very great solicitude for the spiritual and material good of the students entrusted to their care. Consider, for instance, their reason for choosing to have only the Fifth, the Upper Fourth and the Lower Fourth Classes (i.e., the three classes prior to the Matriculation Class) in the opening year: "It was considered prudent not to start with the Matriculation Class, as our want of experience of Indian examinations might have lessened the chance of passing for prospective Matriculation students."

Further, the Jesuit Fathers insisted on regularity of attendance, good conduct and application to studies. In the first decade in particular, this was an uphill task, given the situation that neither the parents of their scholars nor the scholars themselves used to be sufficiently appreciative then of the value of regularity in attendance at college. The first Annual Report of the second Rector Fr. Cavadini (the Report for 1885-86) has this lament: "We have to complain of irregular attendance in not a few cases." The adverb "still" reveals what the situation must have been during the Rectorate of Fr. Willy earlier. Fr. Cavadini's second Annual Report shows how he would not give up the fight against irregularity; for, accounting for the decrease of the student strength during the course of the year, the Report says: "Some were dismissed on account of their irregularity, others left. Most of the latter belonged to that class of traveling-scholars who, by joining one school, then another, then a third, avoid indeed the strict measures of school discipline".

But such firmness paid good dividends, apparently; for, after Fr. Cavadini's term, the Annual Reports lament neither about irregularity nor about the traveling-scholars traveling away from the Aloysian measures of discipline. In fact, since then student enrolment has always kept mounting, and the cry has ever been "Still they come."

More than these measures of discipline, and also more than precept (such as Fr. Cavadini used to place before the parents of his scholars in his Annual Reports), practice and example must have begun to tell before long both on the scholars and on their parents; for, from the start, the Jesuit Fathers laboured with utter dedication. Consider, for instance, how Fr. John Sergeant and Fr. Ryan dispensed with the luxury of "joining time" when they arrived at the College on January 29, 1880, notwithstanding the fatigue of their four-week voyage from Europe: "As we (i.e., Fr. Sergeant and Fr. Ryan) arrived about midday, the midday meal (we were all hungry) received our first attention. During dinner, Fr. Maffei, who was waiting to take up his work at

Jeppu, and had been teaching for a few days until our arrival, asked me when I should be ready to begin school work. I answered, 'As soon as you like, after dinner.' Accordingly, just before two o'clock, we were taken to the College That afternoon was spent in preliminaries. Next morning Fr. Ryan was sent round the corner of the bungalow and I was installed in the front verandah," to teach the two classes accommodated there.

Again, consider the following from the pen of the same Fr. Sergeant:, "My first day of teaching was a most pleasant one, and a type of all the days I spent in teaching till I left India. I never had a dull day, and until my health failed in 1886, I doubt if I was absent from class for a single hour during the whole period of six happy years."

The example of the Jesuit Fathers in not being absent from class except when their health failed has been naturally very telling,. Hence the lay teachers, too, have generally been very scrupulous in this regard. The Casual Leave account of many a teacher has remained not drawn upon at all, in many a year. Many a teacher has retired without getting to know the rules concerning such varieties of leave as Commuted Leave, Half-Pay Leave, Extraordinary Leave, and what not. Hence Fr. A. Ambruzzi's observation in the Annual Report for 1935-1936: "It is a most pleasant duty to thank all the members of the teaching and clerical staff for their unstinted labor throughout the year. In spite of family and other difficulties, some did not absent themselves from work for a single hour." Hence, again, Fr. A. P. Menezes observation in the Annual Report for 1962-63: "This Institution has not lacked devoted teachers who joined service when young and who have grown old with it. They love teaching so much that they would not appreciate the cancellation of even one working hour in a term. Their first and last lesson is a lesson in discipline and order. The younger men too have quickly fallen in line with the old and imbibed the same spirit of devotion to work and personal interest in their pupils."

The results of examinations have been consistently good, especially after the first decade. In the first decade, when the students had yet to appreciate the value of regularity, the examination results used to be, as Fr. Cavadini put it in the Annual Report for 1885-1886, "not exactly what we might have wished for." But early in the second decade, the examination results began to be good; thus the Annual Report for 1892-1893 notes: "The results of the B.A. Examinations were highly satisfactory, the percentage of passes being greater than that of any other college in the Presidency." Since then the examination results have generally been what we have wished for.

The question arises whether this has been on account of the careful selection of students both for enrolment and for taking the public examinations. The hundred years of the College have, by and large, passed without such careful selection. . Fr. A. P. Menezes disposed of this question

very well in the Annual Report for 1962-1963: "There has been much mud-slinging at private colleges by responsible persons and by sections of the press, of late. If the private colleges secure good results, this is attributed to the fact that only students who secure a first class in the S.S.L.C Examination are admitted to these colleges Suggestions have therefore been made that at least 25 % of the seats in private colleges should be reserved for third class students! At the risk of offending some people and tiring others, may I indulge in a bit of statistical analysis. Of the 442 candidates who appeared for the P.U.C. Examination from this College, 16 were repeaters, 88 had secured a first class in the S.S.L.C, 142 a second class and 191 had just a third class (some after more than one attempt). It is not surprising that, of these 191, 95 failed. But you may be agreeably surprised to learn that, of these 191, 42 secured a second class, and 4 even a first class. Of the 142 candidates who had secured second class marks in the S.S.L.C, 53 obtained a first class!"

In the following year's Annual Report, Fr. Menezes came out with further statistical information tending to the same conclusion: "Lest our success be attributed entirely to careful selection of students at the time of admission and a more careful selection of candidates for the public examinations, let me tell You that, out of 503 students on the rolls in the Pre-University Class, 499 were permitted to appear for the examination; and out of these 499, 122 (i.e. 25 %,,) had only third class marks in the S.S.L.C Examination, and 65 of these had passed after more than one attempt."

What then is the secret of such, success? "A simple word summarizes it: WORK, tireless efforts of the Principal to maintain order, discipline and regularity, tireless efforts by the teachers to . impart excellent instruction and serious effort by every student.

I do understand that work is irksome, and discipline more irksome still. But there is no alternative road to success. The Romans were very realistic when they used the term 'discipline' to signify not only what we generally mean by that term but also the study of any subject, implying thereby that the two cannot be separated." (-Italics, the Editor's)

There is an obvious question that arises in this context: how come that even across a span of a hundred years the lay teachers on Edyah Hill have, by and large, been men of such dedication? The answer is two-fold: for one thing, the dedication of the Jesuit Fathers themselves has been infectious; for another, that very dedication has made the Fathers careful, in the first instance in selecting the lay staff, and thereafter, in approving of their performance as probationers. Every Rector of St Aloysius College has done these two things without fear or favour, not having an axe to grind.

Mr John Monteiro, who in the sixties was a probationary Lecturer in the College for a year, and who has been a successful journalist since then, bears frank testimony to this in the course of his reminiscences appearing in one of the Centenary Bulletins: "I have to be grateful to St Aloysius College for much, not in the least for helping me to discover my vocation. After my post graduation, the College was kind enough to offer me a Lectureship. The students were, by and large, tolerant and courteous. So was the Principal. But the interests of the students came first with him. He was firm in telling me at the end of the year that teaching was not my vocation. This from a Principal who bears my own surname and who is the brother of one of my close friends. But he had to weigh the interests of one against those of so many eager students entrusted to his care. This Principal, who has now retired, is one of the people whom I meet faithfully every time I visit Mangalore. The incident reflects the integrity of the Jesuits of St Aloysius College."

This integrity is something that cannot be enough praised, as should be evident from the contrast presented in the following dismal narrative: (a) We are now living in very bad times when corruption is mounting highland mounting fast in our society; employment in the public sector (not to put it more pointedly) is more and more coming to depend upon payments made under the table to sundry personages. (b) There is worse to follow: as employment in private educational institutions is now as gainful as that in government educational institutions, increasing numbers of the candidates for such employment seem to think that, if they must pay the customary "prices" for employment in the public sector, they might as well pay the like prices for employment in the private sector too. Towards the end of his term as the Principal of a private college, the present writer himself found candidates for employment as Lecturers in his College offering not only to give donations to the College, but also to make payments under the table to him if only they would be selected for employment; a few had even gone to the length of making the offers in writing, in the covering letters appended to their applications; such "prices" are offered even for employment in Primary Schools nowadays! (c) The worst part of the narrative is here: already there are Managements, (even in Dakshina Kannada,) that have been caving in before such offers so that the !jobs in such institutions go not to the best-qualified and the most competent but to those who pull their purse-strings the widest.

The integrity of the Jesuit Fathers of St Aloysius College is the only explanation for the phenomenon of their getting such dedicated lay teachers right through a hundred years. Let it also f be said, and not merely in passing, that the lay teachers too have been as much men of integrity as they have been men of dedication.

Having said so much of examination results and of the underlying dedicated effort, it is now necessary to make it clear that the College has not been merely an examination-oriented institution. It is not as if, in a bid to keep up the high academic standards, the Jesuit Fathers have lost sight of the need to work for sound minds in sound bodies. Athletics and games have

ever had their due importance in the College; and the students on its rolls have distinguished themselves in the district as much by their proficiency in games as by their proficiency in studies.

Cricket was developed very early as a St Aloysius College specialty by Fr. Ryan s.j. one of the earliest Jesuits who laboured in the College. At Oscott, he had been dubbed Public Man, "the term applied there to the best all-round student." On Edyah t Hill, "the Public Man of Oscott would take part in Badminton, Tennis, Football, Running and Jumping to show how it should be done. But Cricket was his great game. He stood at the wicket in his lovely white soutane, and showed what 'Forward Play' meant ' and what 'Drive' meant. Cricket was in its glorious days when the College team under Fr. Ryan pitted itself against Military Officers, European Officials and Planters The history of cricket at St Aloysius College might fill a whole volume. But as Dr L. P. Fernandes of Kankanady said recently, if Fr. Ryan had not started cricket in 1885 and earnestly promoted it up to his death, St Aloysius College would not have achieved its unique record in cricket."

Hockey, too, soon became as much the forte of St Aloysius College as cricket. Right through the century, the students of the College have had a hectic career of winning trophies for the College in the matches and tournaments relating to different games. Fr. Joseph A. B. Coelho s.j. the twelfth Rector of the College, stated the St Aloysius College policy in regard to sports and games very well thus: "In Jesuit education, play has its rightful place after study, and with a view to better study".-2

Nor have the Jesuit Fathers at St Aloysius College lost sight of their responsibility for the development of leadership qualities in the students. As early as 1895, the College went in for a Debating Club. Since then the co-curricular activities have been greatly diversified, as should be evident by and by, from the chronicling proper. The amount of money that now goes into student activities in the College might well make old-timers wince. It is significant that, among the prizes awarded at the College Associations Day Ceremony in recent years, there has been one for the Best Outgoing Student. It is a prize awarded by the Staff of the College Department and is meant for a student of one of the Final Year classes who excels in conduct, in studies and in either sports or extracurricular activities. It does credit to the St Aloysius College scale of values that such a prize has been conceived of.

When the country became independent in 1947, and an awakened social conscience called for a change of attitude on the part of the haves towards the have-nots, the College encouraged the students to engage themselves after working hours in social work among the poorer sections of the society. Thus was born the Social Service League of the College during the year

.1947-1948. The League went on diversifying its activities from year to year so that within a few years its activities came to include adult education at night in a plurality of centers in Mangalore, the adoption of specific villages for rural development projects, medical relief work in leper asylums and colonies, work camps during vacations and so on. Latterly, with the Government of India itself getting the colleges in the country to implement the National Service Scheme (i.e. the N.S.S.) under the supervision of the appropriate universities, the old Social Service League has made way for the N.S.S. Unit of the College. The work of the N.S.S. unit serves to make the young realise the dignity of labor, to bring home to them the problems and needs of the poor, and above all, to develop compassion in them.

Right through its first century of existence, the College has striven to give a good moral training to the students and to prepare them for their proper places as citizens of this great country. By means of the Sodality (which has been there right from the start), the Students' Missionary League (i.e., the S.M.L., which came later on) and the Catholic Service in the University (i.e. the C.S.U., which came in the sixties), a determined effort has been made all along to give the Catholic students the firm spiritual grounding so necessary for a Christian life. Annual Retreats for Catholic students have been a special feature of St Aloysius College. In recent years the closed retreats, the C.S.U. cells and leadership camps have been additional facilities for the Catholic students to practice their religion.

Hence Fr. A. Ambruzzi very rightly made this claim for the College in 19-)8' "The College has ever maintained its tone of a thoroughly Catholic Institution. No one has failed to recognize this-from Cardinal Lepicier, who felt at home in the Catholic atmosphere of the College, to the last non-Christian pupil who, on first crossing the thresholds of our classrooms, hears the prayer we address to God our Father and to our Heavenly Mother."

Nearly half a century later, Fr. A. P. Menezes had no hesitation in making the claim again: "In all the activities of the year, we have not forgotten the *raison d'etre* of the Institution. St Aloysius College was established to provide the Catholic youth of S. Kanara with a sound liberal education. Although no discrimination is made of caste or creed at the time of admissions, or during the year, we have felt justified in giving additional facilities to our Catholic students in the practice of their religion."

It is small wonder then that the spiritual atmosphere of the College has proved congenial soil for vocations. The following statistical information (up-to-date in 1955) is significant: "No less than a hundred of its pupils have entered the Society of Jesus; 50 have entered other religious orders; about 450 are either priests or are preparing for priesthood." If the present writer had more up-to-date information, it would be more impressive indeed.

Space must be found. here for a detail (very rightly figuring) in the 1946 Report on the New Extension Scheme of Fr. Jos. A. B. Coelho for the College Department: "Bombayites were glad to hear that the Catholic student was intently national and non-committal, and that the non-communal atmosphere in the College was responsible for the election of Catholics as Presidents of the College Union for three years in succession."

As for the non-Catholic students, their moral development, too, has been taken care of. As early as 1897-1898, Fr. Frchetti the fourth Rector, introduced the teaching of what he called General Ethics - it used to be a course in Practical Philosophy conceived for the benefit of the non-Catholic students. The teaching of General Ethics has continued to the present time, though with a change of name; it has latterly been called Moral Science. It has always made the desired dent on the taught., What Dr Taxeira, the then Bishop of Mylapore, said in 1929 (at the Prize Distribution Ceremony in the College) still holds good: "As to the non-Christian element in the College,, I understand that it compares well with the Catholic in the practice of the civic and natural virtues, another index of the efficiency of the educational endeavor here."

Part III

How It All Began

Apparently the leaders of the Catholic community in Mangalore were among the first people in the country to feel the need for modern education imparted especially by a body of religious men who could very well be trusted to set about the tasks of education with utter dedication. Being aware of the excellent work done in education by the German Jesuits in Bombay, the Belgian Jesuits in Calcutta and the French Jesuits in Trichy, they petitioned the Holy See "as far back as 1858,114 and prayed that the Mangalore Mission be handed over to the Society of Jesus so that the very Society that had been doing so handsomely by Bombay, Calcutta and Trichy might do likewise by Mangalore.

The 1858 petition was followed by further petitions during the next twenty years. At long last, in 1878,5 Pope Leo XIII acceded to the request and issued a Brief assigning the Mangalore Mission to the Society of Jesus "mainly with a view to start a College;" and then "Very Rev. Fr. Beckx, the then General of the Jesuits, assigned the Mangalore Mission to the Jesuit Province of Venice.