

R/W

Manley

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School days at Jamaica College

Tough and

unsentimental youngster

SECOND instalment of the special GLEANER serialisation of 'Notes for an Autobiography' by the late Rt. Excellent Norman Washington Manley.

I WENT TO J.C. in 1906 — aged 13. It was a tough school in those days with above 150 boys — 100 board-

ers and 50 day boys. Bullying was rampant and there was a good deal of homosexuality, for the most part not carried to extremes. I suffered a lot from bullying and was the target of one lout who made life a burden. I had fully made up my mind in my second term to run away and go home.

Then one morning I tried to fight it out and by great good luck

the Headmaster's son, a fine man of about 40 was passing by just as the fight started. He prevented the crowd from interfering, as they surely would have done in favour of the

older boy and against the comparative newcomer. So it was a straight fight and I won. I suppose largely through desperation. I regret to say that for the rest of that term I turned the tables quite remorselessly. But it was an isolated case. I devoted a large part of my time to trying to suppress bullying — not without success where I had the physical advantage.

I was not a supporter of law and order at school and by the middle of 1907 became the ringleader of a group of boys

who deplored discipline and set ourselves to undermine the authority of any master we thought shewed signs of weakness. This went on till I was sixteen years old and then, greatly influenced by my mother's ambitions for me and by her death, I decided to turn over a new leaf by going to the Headmaster and announcing I intended to try for the Rhodes. To say that he was shocked is to put it mildly.

I had done little work and shewed no special promise at anything. In those days a Rhodes Scholar took the same paper as a Jamaica Scholar and that was strictly based on two to

three years specializing in a particular subject like Languages or Mathematics or Science. I was reminded by the Headmaster that not only was I far behind in study but also had a thoroughly disreputable reputation which would make it almost impossible for him and the other masters to make the report on leadership and good character which was basic in the scholarship award. However, I insisted almost out of stubbornness, but largely because it had been my mother's wish and she, shortly before her death, had actually engaged Mr. R. M. Murray, of blessed memory, to take me on as a private pupil and see if by coaching he could discover any hope for me in mathematics, the only subject in which I had up till then shewed any aptitude.

TURN A NEW LEAF

SO I WAS ALLOWED to try. My first job was to break with the rebels of whom I was ringleader. This I did with such complete ruthlessness that one day the Headmaster sent for me to tell me he had had many complaints about my conduct by other boys. I explained that I was merely "turning a new leaf" and that the process was unpleasant for them. To that he only replied "That it was good to see the change but that I must never forget that mercy should always temper justice!" I was not discouraged by these wise words.

Very shortly after this mother died. She had been ill for a long time and when she was moved to Kingston where treatment and care were better it was too late to save her life. I doubt if the nature of her illness was ever diagnosed. She was only forty-four years old and her death was in 1909, just when I became 16 years old. I owed a lot to her faith in my future — a faith that had so little to support it. I would never under modern conditions have survived in short till I was 16 years old, but I think the Headmaster knowing what a gallant fight she was making with her four children saved me from myself for her

sake. And I owe all the rest of my life to R. M. Murray's belief that there was some hope for me and to the zeal and energy he brought to our relationship. He was the most brilliant teacher I ever met in all my life.

When mother died the family, including the co-owners, decided to lease Belmont and my eldest sister Vera, already established in England as a music teacher, got the rest of the family and a younger sister, Dr. Muriel Manley, and my youngest brother Douglas, later to die in 1917 in the third battle of Ypres in Flanders in 1917, joined her in England — leaving me to work for the Rhodes in Jamaica and to spend my holidays with friends of the family or at Jamaica College itself.

To be frank I enjoyed being on my own. I was a tough and unsentimental youngster. Work, and I worked very hard, and sports, and I did a bit of everything — track athletics, cricket, football, riflshooting — filled my life. I taught at Farm School, at J.C. and in 1914 for six months at Titchfield School, a co-educational secondary school where I taught English and Mathematics, never failing to end every maths class with half the girls in tears. I suffered from a quick flaring temper which it took me half a lifetime to learn to control. Indeed I doubt if I ever learnt. Constant inhibiting violent efforts at control gradually wore it down till it seemed to disappear with its place being taken by a sort of arrogant indifference which was constantly mistaken for the real me.

NEARLY KILLED ME

IT IS CUTTING what would be a long story to say that I won the Rhodes in 1914 and while still waiting to go off to England, I finished a teaching term at Titchfield, and while spending time with a lifelong friend in Falmouth, Mr. Leslie Clark I picked up a very bad attack of typhoid fever. Those were not the days of antibiotics and anyway I had been going around with my iron strength for four days with a temperature of 104 degrees before I was finally diagnosed and sent off to Nuttall Hospital, then located at East Street. This illness, which nearly killed me, had a great effect on my life and character. Forgive me if I talk a little about it.

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