

On the Centenary of the Presidency College

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A hundred years! The very phrase
Unsepultures the million'd dead;
Three generations in that space,
Ghosts of the past, have breathed and fled.
Time shakes his hour-glass, and we slide,
We running human sands, away;
Vain, individual atoms, — glide
From name and memory. But the play
Of his chance-reaping scythe stops here:
Our frail race flowers upon its bier,
Man, feeble man, who from his dark
Gets no more, can no more endear
To the stern harvester his year,
Than soaring eagle feels a spark
Of the eternal burn in him. Some ark
That may survive the flood of things
He fashions; not for what so flies
His brief self, but that children's eyes
May see, and children's children, builds
In the void future. There on wings
Indignant Immortality
Lends him, in that abysm of time,
Where no sure certainty can climb,
He fedges his sheer hope; where sings
Some torrent his lone fancy gilds
In mists, the everlasting snows
Above him, nests his brave repose.
High-eyried in posterity.

So thought, so toil'd, so built the men
Our founders whom to-day we laud,
Commemorate; from now to then
Over a hundred years applaud.
To the true-hearted Britons praise!
Those three; from law and church who rose
And shop, this lasting fane to raise
For the lov'd Muses, verse and prose,
Thought, science, numbers: to enshrine
Fair Learning's self, the lamp divine
In God's hand for mortality
To see by. Gulf of "mine" and "thine",

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Though come from o'er the bitter brine,
They knew not; no dividing sea
In race, pride, alien ancestry,
That with such cold estranging wave
Makes severance of us; through our blood
Howls against human brotherhood;
Than towering Himalaya more
Parts land from land; as in a grave
Buries mankind's growth, to congeal
In icy barrier: which with ease
They leap'd. Nor could caste, custom freeze
Their fiery souls, those two, our brave,
Our native founders, who both bore
The name, and the large heart of kings.
To them, while all the patriot springs
To our lips, let the heart's thanks peal.
For they saw, those far-sighting five,
Or, dim-divining, surely felt
Shakespeare in Kalidasa thrive
In Bhababbuti Milton melt.

Through creed, race, colour they saw kin.
The bleeding ransom Calvary's tree
Shed for us, and what under this
Tathagata's thought-agony
Dropped in the dreaming bo-leaf shade
At Gaya. And as, never to fade,
What they in man's adoring soul
Hope, rapture, worship built, they made,
Those Heavenly Founders, one and whole
Like some cathedral's vault to roll,
Or God's blue, o'er humanity
For all to breathe in: so divined
Ours, building earthlier, that mind,
Like soul (that catholic lesson) is
For all men; spreads like empire free
This glorious fabric she uprears,
Britannia. Under the third George
When she pent Europe's splendid scourge
In Helena, they, rapt to see,
Prophets, the large imperial bliss
To be now, when earth's peace is split
By a worse madman, rose and built
This structure of a hundred years.

Calcutta. 1917

Autumn Annual Vol. VIII, 1968