

Dr. Mohan Singh Dewana

Professor Shafi

When I joined the Punjab University Oriental College in 1928, the late Prof. A.C. Woolner presided at the destinies of the University and supervised Oriental research at its premier constituent College. Woolner administered not ruled ; he suggested not imposed. He was generous in everything except in sanctioning casual leave and granting promotion. It was he who suggested "*Hir and Ranjha*" as my first item of research ; it was he who despite opposition, allowed me to work on "A History of Punjabi Literature" for the higher degree (D. Litt.) after I had obtained Ph.D. from the Calcutta University for my thesis on "Characteristics and Tendencies of Modern Urdu Poetry". When he died in 1936, some of us wondered if Woolner traditions would be followed ; it was not only carried on by Dr. Shafi but carried forward bettered.

Soon after my joining the institution, Prof. Shafi, Vice-Principal, Professor of Arabic and editor of the Arabic-Persian-Urdu section of the Oriental College quarterly asked me for an article. I submitted to him the first instalment of a longish article on History, Geography, Customs, Superstitions and Mores in *Hir*, a Panjabi poetic romance by Damoder, who had actually flourished under Jehangir and not under Akber as he pretends to have done, for Damoder clearly mentions the use of tobacco. When the calligraphed copy and the original came to me for comparison and correction, I noticed here and there linguistic changes in Prof. Shafi's hand. So ! I said to myself, every word has been read, and "amendments" made. This was my first appreciative intellectual impression of Prof. Shafi, the responsible editor who spares no labour in the discharge of his duty, and the very catholic researcher for whom every probe into Orientalism is valuable, whether it be into Arabic Culture or Hindwi Culture. Headstrong and self-confident as I have always been at least in youth, I refused to accept some of the amendments and changed the calligraphed copy to tally with my original fearing that I was going

DR. WOOLNER AT OXFORD

From the first, in the eyes of all who knew him, Woolner appeared to be essentially one who was "for contemplation formed." His sagacious, well-ordered and well-argued talk, his broad and understanding outlook, and his steady bearing made him appear like a man who was older in his years than he actually was. He lived simply and worked hard; but he took his proper share in the social life of what was admittedly a very friendly College; and he shone in debate as a wise counsellor in the making. He also bore about him an aura of poetic and artistic culture, derived from home sources, which was beyond the equipment of the average product of the Public School. Though not an athlete in the commonly accepted sense, he had great powers of endurance; for as a walker he excelled. Oxford was then innocent of motor cars, and the county roundabout was easily opened up by a good pair of legs. Woolner could do five miles an hour without effort, and after an hour or two many quite good walkers would find it hard to keep up with his unabated stride. Once he did the famous walk, with another Trinity undergraduate, from Oxford to London in a day, returning in the evening by train; neither walker was unduly fatigued. That feat is probably less attempted in these days of heavy motor traffic and ever expanding suburbs than it used to be and Woolner may have been one of the last to accomplish it, though it was done by another Boden Scholar, the late H. Normon, soon afterwards. In Ireland, in Wales, and in North Devon, where memory recalls that Woolner spent parts of his studious long vacations, Woolner could also put 30 to 40 miles a day to his credit.

{*C. W. Brodribb*}

days, seemed both natural and imposing. He could not pass unnoticed in any company, but he often gave the impression of extreme austerity. Then, all of a sudden, his face would be lit up by the merry twinkle in his eye and the real man that was within him would appear.

It is impossible, as I have already suggested, to think of Woolner apart from his wife. They were inseparable. They tramped the Himalayas together ; they walked along the canal bank together ; they studied in France together ; they played tennis together ; they read together. But, for a time, they are now parted. Woolner will long be remembered as a university administrator and a scholar ; but perhaps the most enduring of his achievements was the influence which he and his wife spread around them both in India and beyond.



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For about seventeen years I had the honour of being Dr. Woolner's Colleague. This period I look upon as the most productive and useful period of my life. He had created an atmosphere of peace around us, which made good work possible. He had confidence in his colleagues. He fought their battles so that they could do their work undisturbed.

The memory of such a man is sacred to one and one loves to cherish it.

(Prof. Mohammad Shafi)

Woolner was a man of wide interests and accomplishments. He was a linguist of no ordinary calibre ; he included Spanish among his acquirements and, as occasional lectures showed, was familiar with the writings of Ibanez in the original. He was ever ready to widen his interests and was a great traveller. He paid frequent visits to the College of France in Paris, and the life of a student was always congenial to him.

These scholarly gifts and wide interests gave Woolner a position in the life of Lahore that few have attained ; and this position was used unostentatiously as a means for softening the differences which were ever around him ; and, in particular, for uniting all races and communities in a bond of learning and fellowship. For many years, he and Mrs. Woolner ran almost single-handed—it is impossible to regard them as anything but one—the Minerva Club and thus provided frequent opportunities for study and discussion. Their home became a natural meeting-ground, in which the differences of race and religion had no place.

Woolner was no bookworm. Though he possessed little proficiency in games, he loved his game of tennis. It was often my joy and privilege to make a fourth with him and Mrs. Woolner (wielding her Cochet racket) and though our skill was defective, we enjoyed ourselves as much as if we had been Davis Cup champions. Woolner was also a great walker and made light of distances which would have proved too exacting for most other men. On most evenings of the week (unless there were university meetings) he and his wife were to be seen striding along the canal bank outside Lahore. And he usually preferred to walk while he discussed. On many occasions did I go over to his house for discussion. 'Let's go into the garden, were often the words which greeted my arrival ; and for hours at a stretch would I struggle to keep pace with him as he walked. After these visits, I used to return rich in the advice that he had given, but at the same time footsore and weary. It was on these occasions that I learned to know and to respect the man ; it was his kindness and his judgement that made to me the greatest appeal.

I would add a few words on Woolner's exterior. He was well built and of somewhat massive proportions ; his presence was dignified and stately ; and his beard, which he wore even in his Oxford