

Your Royal Highness, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen.

To-day is a notable day in the life of this School; notable by reason of the gracious presence of Your Royal Highness, and also because - associated with these proceedings to-day - we are celebrating the Jubilee of the foundation of the School. You may, therefore, not think it inappropriate if I claim your indulgence while I refer briefly to the foundation of the School and its chequered history in the early days. When the Boys' School was founded by Queen Elizabeth in the year 1593, it was "for the education of boys and youth", and although it is alleged that from time to time in the following 200 years the Governors debated whether "youth" could be interpreted to include girls, there is probably little or no truth in this, particularly as education for girls in those days was looked upon with very much disfavour. However, in the year 1873, or 300 years after the foundation of the Boys' School, the Governors - or those responsible - were sufficiently enlightened to provide in their new scheme governing the School that £100 per annum ^{of income} should be devoted to the education of girls either by way of exhibitions, or alternatively, to help in the establishment of a school for girls. They decided to spend this £100 on exhibitions of £10 each, but the applications were so few and the standard of the candidates in the main so poor, that these exhibitions were speedily abandoned. However, a few years later, a scheme for the establishment of a girls school was prepared, and this scheme ultimately received the royal assent on May 17th, 1888. A house on the site of the present school

gymnasium was acquired, and the School was opened with 40 pupils on September 20th, 1888, under the headship of a Miss Harland. The venture, however, did not flourish, and in 1895, when closure seemed inevitable, Miss Abbott and Miss King, two mistresses at the School, offered to take it over and run it as a private school. This offer was accepted, and subsequently Miss Abbott undertook sole responsibility. Under her control and guidance, the School grew in popularity to such an extent that, following the passing by Parliament in 1902 of the Education Act, she was able /in the following year/ to persuade the Governors to take control once more, so that it might rank as a Public Secondary School. This change enabled the Hertfordshire County Council to make sorely needed grants for maintenance, and also ^{to make} capital grants for the provision of a laboratory and science and art rooms, ~~in~~ ^{the School} the absence of which ~~the School~~ had ~~been~~ so much handicapped. From now on the growth of the School was continuous, and by 1913, the pupils in attendance had reached 200. The problem which then confronted the Governors was the need for increased accommodation, but the Great War put an end to all plans for expansion, and it was not until 1927 that Ashleigh House with the help of the County Council was re-built. This enlargement made the accommodation adequate for 420 girls, and also much improved the working conditions of the school; incidentally, the new buildings, which are now being opened, will still further increase the available accommodation to 500 places. To-day we think of Miss Abbott with gratitude for her outstanding

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contribution to the success of the School, which, but for her courage and foresight, would undoubtedly have been closed in 1895. For 25 years, she acted as Headmistress, bringing the numbers up from 40 to 400, and raising the standard of work accomplished to compare favourably with other public schools. It is nice to know that so many of her old pupils are with us to-day.

I have no time, Ladies and Gentlemen, to deal with the subsequent history of the School, except just to say that first under the Headship of Miss Clement, and subsequently of the present Headmistress, Miss Griffiths, the progress made in all directions has been continuous.

I venture to think that we can look back with satisfaction over the 50 years which have passed since the School was founded. The age of a school usually commands respect - ^{yet still} fifty years for a girls school is quite noteworthy - but achievements are infinitely more important. I can, with confidence, claim that the School has fully met the educational needs of the districts which it serves, and has also successfully fitted its scholars (for the wider opportunities and responsibilities / now open to women in every phase of life. We can, therefore, without reserve, celebrate the School's Jubilee in a spirit of thankfulness for what has been accomplished.

At the present time, the future of democracy is being very much discussed; [?] is it not true to say that the greatest safeguard

for democracy is an educated and enlightened people? Education alone can provide the real democracy. In this School, we aim to turn out girls with a sound knowledge and understanding of true citizenship, and all that it demands by way of service. We also aim to make our girls physically fit - we believe that the physical side of education is as important as the mental training they receive. Indeed, physical fitness is a matter of primary importance; as the Prime Minister wisely remarked quite recently, good health is the very foundation of happiness and contentment. We want our young people to make the most of their lives, whether they are at work or at play, and the vitality of the body sharpens and concentrates the faculties of the mind. However brilliant the intellect, a neglected body hinders the attainment of the highest capacity possible. An educated body is a balanced body, just as an educated mind, in the true sense, is a balanced mind. The aim of education must be physical, mental and spiritual; these are the qualities on which character is founded. A famous headmaster once remarked:- *that a life, character is more important than attainments;* "I have learnt that life is a battle; that character is acquired by overcoming obstacles; and that if you begin to overcome these in the schoolroom and the playing fields, the better the fighter you will be afterwards." I am glad to think that this School is now fully equipped to provide a balanced education, and I must pay my tribute to the Hertfordshire County Council for having made it possible for us to claim that this School can take its place among the foremost educational establishments in Hertfordshire. We are

grateful to Mr. Alderman Graveson, who as Chairman of the County Education Committee, has shown such an understanding of our requirements here in Barnet, and has also done so much for education in the County generally. To him, and to Sir Joseph Priestley, as Chairman of the County Council, we owe so much, and it is a source of much satisfaction and pleasure that they are with us on this platform to-day.

I must also take advantage of this opportunity to thank Mr. Whittaker, the Assistant County Architect, for designing this very beautiful building, and also ^{Messrs} ~~Mr.~~ Prentice, the builders, and ^{these} ~~the~~ able Foreman, Mr. Perry, for the excellence of their work. I am sure you will agree that they have every reason to be proud of the result. Our Headmistress, Miss Griffiths, has also given much time and thought to the planning and equipment of these new buildings, and I should be lacking in my duty if, on behalf of the Governors, I did not publicly express to her our warmest thanks and appreciation for all that she has done.

It now only remains for me to invite Your Royal Highness to declare this Hall and Buildings open for school use. The Governors, and the whole School, are much honoured that you should have undertaken this task, but I refrain from saying more, because other speakers to follow will voice our grateful thanks and appreciation.