

D.G. Bentliff writes:

I cannot remember exactly when and where I first met Tommy Melluish, but it was more than thirty five years ago, and almost certainly in London. He and I were both Londoners, both brought up and educated in South London, and in the years of our acquaintance before the last war we were both teaching in London schools, and I was at the time living near the Bec School where he served for so long, winning for the school its high academic achievement in Classics.

It was, however, during the latter part of the war, and since, that I came to know Tommy well; and it was not geographical proximity (for although he was still in London, I had moved to Liverpool) that I have to thank for this closer acquaintance, but our membership of the Classical Association and of its newly formed Education Subcommittee.

It was as Honorary Secretary of the Education Subcommittee and then as Joint Honorary Secretary of the Classical Association that he made one of the most important of his many contributions to the cause of Classical teaching.

By appointing the Education Subcommittee the Classical Association expressed the need for a more active concern for those of its members who taught in schools. For this concern to be effective in practice the subcommittee must foster cooperation and understanding between academic and pedagogic elements in the association, between those who taught in universities and those who taught in schools.

To be successful in this, the subcommittee had to command the respect of teachers in universities, and be regarded by teachers in school as being familiar with their problems. As secretary of the subcommittee and then of the Classical Association, Tommy fulfilled both these needs. He was recognised and admired in academic circles as a scholar of distinction, and those who taught in schools saw him as one of themselves, acquainted at first hand with their difficulties, and himself sharing them.

Beyond this work for the Classical Association, his scholarly knowledge of Greek and Latin and his natural delight in the creative manipulation of language led him into other fields of activity, such as his Latin prose session at the A.R.L.T.'s Summer School and his contribution of crosswords, acrostics and verse compositions to 'Acta Diurna' and 'Greece and Rome'.

When in addition we remember his work in the promotion of the Classical Association's Latin and Greek reading competitions for schools or as Honorary Secretary of the committee which produced for the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters the book on 'The Teaching of Classics', or his collaboration with Francis Kinchin-Smith in the production of 'Kepos' — a two year Greek course, and of a school edition of a selection of Catullus' poems, we have an impressive picture of love of the Greek and Latin languages and dedication to the service of those who learn and teach them.

But for us who knew Tommy Melluish personally it is not enough to speak only of scholarly achievement and devotion to the interests of teachers and students. We remember his delightful sense of fun, his keen but genial wit, his shrewd commonsense, his complete lack of affectation and the kindly disposition that endeared him to all who were fortunate enough to be his friends.

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Charles Craddock writes:

The death of Tommy Melluish has taken from us a fine scholar, a warm-hearted companion and a witty friend. He grew up in London, where he was also to spend the greater part of his teaching life. Perhaps it was London, too, that endowed him with the sprightliness of wit which endeared him to his friends and disconcerted his adversaries. In the educational world he lived amidst a scene of rapid and sometimes, as he saw it, irrational change. In spite of the kaleidoscopic innovations of reorganization and the decline of classics in the curriculum he held fast to what he saw to be good and of enduring value. He was an unrelenting champion of the grammar schools. In the teaching of classics he was a no less fervent advocate of prose composition and the linguistic understanding and literary skills which it fosters. At meetings he spoke in defence of these causes with a passionate sincerity and opposed the insubstantial and often untried theories of administrators and educationists with a probing wit and fine scorn to their great discomfiture. His faith came from the experience of a fine teacher and he leaves behind him a large company of men who were privileged to be his pupils.

Those of us who knew him at A.R.L.T. Summer Schools had the good fortune to experience the exhilaration of his classes in Latin Prose Composition. These he conducted with the sure touch of a man who knows his craft. There was something of the Socratic midwife about his method, delivering from all our labours a Prose of vigour and individuality, a healthy child, though sometimes not without the interesting idiosyncracies that so mixed a parentage might be expected to engender. His kindness encouraged the faint-hearted and the bolder spirits were kept in check by a firm but gentle eironeia. There was hardly ever a quiet moment, certainly never a dull one, as the pages of Lewis and Short were rifled on the desks of his acolytes and contributions were proffered as numerous as the leaves in Vallombrosa. The debate often continued through lunch and at intervals during the rest of the day, and we enjoyed his wit and learning as much as we appreciated the feeling of camaraderie that he created.

Tommy's gifts as a raconteur were well known and there was no more delightful public speaker. Whenever he rose to make a vote of thanks, to pose a seemingly innocent question to a speaker, or to read a paper drawn from his own wide-ranging learning, there was among the audience an expectation of good things that was never disappointed. He knew how to be wise and how to play the fool. I once played the part of Thisbe to his Pyramus in a Summer School Fabula. I remember him, diminutive in stature but a great-hearted hero, advancing blindly onto the stage, his vision almost totally obscured by the coal-scuttle which he wore for a helmet. I remember, too, the dexterity of his renderings (ex tempore) of Victorian music hall ballads into not unrespectable Latin and how we sang them on our Sunday expeditions to archaeological sites. It is not surprising that he was a great admirer of Gilbert and Sullivan, and Gilbert would have found in him no unworthy pupil. I have just been listening again to that tour de force, his talk on the Myths of Heracles, with his quirks of voice and his tricks of oratory, his verbal acrobatics and the irreverence that was never less than scholarly. We are fortunate to have these happy memories of Tommy.

As his friends and pupils we are proud to have known him. *Mellitus erat.*

Charles Craddock

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