

A PERFECTIONIST

Professor Eric Cyprian

Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan was the embodiment of some of the best qualities of the East and the West. Both as an administrator and as a scholar he was guided by the rigorous standards of the West and by the best in the traditions of the East. What impressed most in him was his passionate and meticulous attention to details. Whether he was drafting a letter, organising a formal ceremony of the college, or just arranging a routine meeting, he would take infinite pains to get things just right. He would be most precise in his instructions and supervise everything himself down to the last minute detail, leaving nothing to chance. In all his work he made heavy demands on his subordinates, but he never spared himself in seeing that work was carried as planned. He was impatient of shoddy work done half-heartedly or carelessly. It was this quality that made Islamia College during the years that he was its Principal, one of the best colleges in the country.

Although he sometimes appeared to be a martinet, he had a wholesome hatred of bureaucratic methods, and under his stern exterior there always beat a very tender heart. He made all his subordinates work hard, but he was always mindful of their needs and feelings especially of his menial staff. His sympathetic care and regard for those who had the good fortune to work under him came from a deep genuine human feeling for those who were less fortunate than himself. Poor students, people in distress and all those who were in any kind of need were always certain of finding in Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan a helpful friend who would go out of his way to render what assistance he could to relieve distress.

Khan Sahib was primarily a scholar, devoted to the things of the mind. His contributions to the development of Urdu, his criticism, his labours as an inspiring teacher are too well known for me to say much on this occasion. In his literary work he was a perfectionist, never satisfied with second rate work.

Professor Hamid Ahmad Khan belonged to a class which is rapidly disappearing from Pakistan and with his passing away it seems to me that a whole epoch of humanist scholarship has also passed away.