

do not fit properly. Big moths get in and, sometimes, there is a wall lizard – a tiki- tiki in my bedroom. He is very welcome but I ask him, “How did YOU get in? If you can get in then the mosquitoes can get in also!” He has not told me yet..... I have to be careful to avoid mosquito bites. Three years ago, in Dhaka, I had dengue fever and, if I get it again, it could be more serious. I have asked the British School to ask the landlord, please get the builders to come back and repair their bad work. The landlord paid for these very nice windows and paid for the builders to put them in but they have done a bad job. Those builders will go on doing this job badly if those who paid them do not insist on them coming back and doing the job properly! When the builders were putting the windows in, no one was checking for gaps!

It is so important, while you are young, to get into the habit of doing everything you are asked to do, to the very best of your ability – and checking. You may say that it is very boring to do your work, any work, very carefully, with the greatest degree of accuracy, checking all the time, but just think how much we depend on others doing their jobs properly. It is not just the person who builds your house and your doctor and dentist but all the people who serve and help us every day. One day, we shall have a lift in our school. Do you want the people who put in the lift for us to say, “That’ll do! We will not bother to check it for safety!” You and I depend for our safety every day on other people who do their jobs better than they need do. Maybe they could get away with doing a worse job, but they don’t – and we are grateful. So you and I should be careful, even fussy, about the way we do our jobs also. It helps to raise the standards, set a good example and also, this is one of the main ways people encourage one another to live better. If you and I are surrounded by people who keep saying, “That’ll do!” then it can be like an infection and we can get like that. Sometimes, in a school, a whole form can be infected with “That’ll do!” But, when everyone is trying to do

their best, that is like a good infection, like a fresh breeze through the window on a hot day. God bless you!



CHECK IT!
Assembly 24 - February 17th 2003

Yesterday, I began to speak to you about the importance of loving accuracy, wanting the work we do to be right – as right as possible. What do some people say if they cannot be bothered to do their best? “That’ll do!” But you and I want our doctors and dentists, our builders and drivers, our servants and teachers to do their work to a good standard.- so why not us also?

I want to encourage you all to get into the habit of doing your best and checking for accuracy because there are so many people who do not think it is important.

One day, I am going to buy a big thick red pen and hire a man and a step-ladder and go round Dhaka correcting all the spelling mistakes in English words on signs and advertisements. People invent new words! There is the lovely word ‘genuine’ meaning something that is not forged or fake or false but true and honest and real but there is a shop that has made it into a noun ‘genuinity’!

One day, our Superintendent and I took the school bus because we wanted to visit Gulshan and, in the bus, we had a tour of many parts of Dhaka. We saw many English Medium Schools and some of them did not even spell their own names correctly or had very strange and illiterate names. There was ‘The English Academe’ - with an ‘e’ instead of a ‘y’ at the end and there was a school called ‘The Kid’s and Child’s International School’ which presumably had one kid and one child in it although I am not sure that I know the difference between a kid and a child except that

'kid' is a slang expression for a child. And I thought how many parents are being deceived into paying for their child's education in such schools in which they cannot even make up an accurate name for themselves?

A very large number of the English Grammarbooks in Bangladesh have huge numbers of mistakes in them. This makes me very angry because some of them are bought by poor people who spend their precious money thinking they are helping their children. While I was teaching in Haluaghat, I used to check the English examination question papers for mistakes. These question papers were bought, by the school, from a business in Dhaka. In one question paper, I found 62 mistakes. You and I may smile but it is not funny. We feel ashamed. We want to be proud of Bangladesh and Bangladeshi work. We do not want to feel ashamed.

Tomorrow I want us to try and understand why people do not want to check their work. Today I just want us to feel determined to change this attitude beginning with ourselves. It is no good asking God to help us unless we are doing what we can to help ourselves. There is an English saying, "God helps those who help themselves." Maybe there is a similar saying in Bengali. We must do what we can. So get into the habit of doing your best and checking – and you will find that ...

.....God will bless you.



PROOF-READING!

Assembly 25 – Tuesday February 25th 2003

This week I have been sharing with you how much your country and mine need people who love accuracy, who want to get things right. We have been thinking of the number of mistakes that are

made in the spelling of basic English words on notices all over Dhaka, in English books and examination question papers. The last example I want to show you is this bag, which I saw in a shop and I had to buy it. There was a world conference in, I think, the year 1998, and people created a good saying, "Education for all 2000". Bangladesh produced a jute bag with this slogan on it and guess what? EDUCATION FOR ALL 2000.'

I do not know whether to laugh or cry but, whenever we feel sad or angry about something, it is a good use of that energy to analyse reasons. Why are there such mistakes? I think a lot of mistakes come about because people cannot believe they are wrong so they do not check. Many people who have had just a little education can be very proud and think they know more than they know. There is an English saying, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Some people who have had a little education think that no one can teach them anything. You, on the other hand, are getting a lot of education and I want you to be so confident that you can be humble enough to say, "Wait a moment! I better check this. Now, who shall I ask who knows more than I do?" There are many people who do not like to admit that ANYONE knows more than they do about anything. But the truly educated person has no problems with that! They think, it is better to look a little foolish now, than to look a lot foolish later! It is very sensible to plan a new noticeboard for your business and then say, before the painter paints it, "I better check this for mistakes." Otherwise you advertise your foolishness.

Maybe, one day, some of you will work as a proof-reader – that is someone whose job it is to read a book that a publisher has printed just a few copies of and the publishing firm have to check it for mistakes before they do the final print-run. The work of a proof-reader is very important. If you miss one mistake in a book, a good publisher will have to print lots of little bits of paper and stick them into the book with the word 'Errata' on – which is