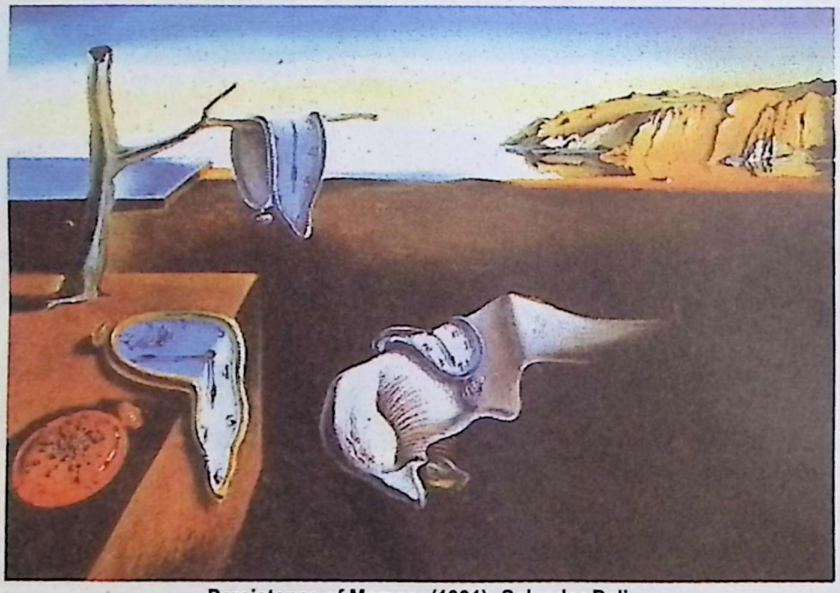
All the Teachers who have Passed On

SYED BADRUL AHSAN

THE last time I met Professor K.M.A. Munim was in the autumn of the last year of the last century. He was editor of The Bangladesh Observer, the newspaper where I had spent close to three years before going off to London on a diplomatic assignment. At the Observer, though, he was still my teacher, one who had guided me through Shelley at Dhaka University and let me in on the finer details of English Romantic poetry. My teacher was a devout Muslim and knew full well that there was something of the irreverent in me, though he was not quite ready to believe that I was incapable of being religious someday in the times to be. At that final meeting, in the presence of quite a few of my journalistic colleagues, he told me loud and clear that it was in me to promote the cause of Islam. I do not quite know if I have been able to do anything of the sort, but the point is that Munim Sir had in him the charisma and the nobility which subdued the arrogance in the callow milling around his table.

I have remembered my teacher since he died quietly, and some would say alone, a few years ago. And I have had cause as well to recall some of the other men and women of liberal intellect who have made me what I am and have then passed on to the other world, wherever that may be. Allahyar Malik was the first individual who kindled my interest in Shakespeare, way back in 1969, as he taught Julius Caesar to me and my classmates in school. On the first day of class, as he explained all that arcane Shakespearean language to us, I kept on nodding. He stopped at a point, looked irritated as he let his gaze fall on me and then told me not to nod without understanding anything. That was the beginning; and then came three years of intense pleasure as he taught me increasingly more Shakespeare. When the Bangladesh war broke out in 1971, he and I parted company as I made my way to my occupied country in July of the year. I went visiting him a quarter of a century later, in distant Quetta, a place I have always known as home. He was recovering from a stroke. We spent three afternoons and evenings speaking of old times. On the day I said goodbye to him --- and it was a terribly cold January day --- he broke down. It was my shoulder he placed his head on. I wept with



Persistence of Memory (1931): Salvador Dali.

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