

3 *A clash of ideals*

The Extension Act of 1875 seemed to many a logical step, for a united South Africa under the British flag must soon be created. Then, the University of the Cape of Good Hope would play a greater role than that of an examining board for a single colony. When, two years later, it received its Royal Charter, the question was raised at the Colonial Office in London "whether Confederation might not soon render it preferable to enlarge the title and scope of the University, and to make it the 'University of South Africa' ". Many problems, however, would have to be surmounted before the suggested re-baptism could take place.

Co-operation in the educational field proved as difficult to achieve in the seventies as it did in the political. Students living outside the colonial borders came forward in increasing numbers to take the university's examinations, but governments in nearby territories showed little inclination to make the contribution of R400 a year which would enable their own candidates to enjoy the same bursary privileges as those who lived in the Cape Colony. In Natal, it was a question of standards. Plans to establish a Royal College there in connection with the university in Cape Town were shelved and for many years the smaller British colony stimulated higher education by providing financial assistance for those who wished to attend universities abroad. The Home Scholarships, as they were called, came to be awarded on the results of Cape University examinations. Education north of the Vaal River was still, when the Cape University was young, in an undeveloped state, as appears from the report of the Super-

intendent of Education, J. Vacy Lyle, during the first British occupation which began in 1877. Cape influence showed itself, however, in the setting up of a Board of Examiners in Law and Jurisprudence. It was in the Orange Free State that the University of the Cape of Good Hope might be expected to make its greatest impact.

The Extension Act had attractions for the Cape's northern neighbour and if the university authorities had adopted a more conciliatory attitude over the language question, close relations might early have been established. While Dutch continued to be regarded in Cape Town as inferior to English, however, men like Brill of Grey College would continue to see in affiliation with the Cape University a possible threat to Free State independence. As Brebner, the Inspector of Education in Bloemfontein, realized, the Cape institution would never become truly South African until it placed the two languages on equal terms. This, regrettably, was never done and the Orange Free State began to think of other possibilities for providing higher educational facilities. Relations with the Cape University remained cordial, nevertheless. In 1882, President Brand and Vice-Chancellor Badnall exchanged friendly letters on the subject of bursaries for deserving students.

It is not surprising that the Free State and, later, the South African Republic looked with so much suspicion upon the Cape University as an English institution. Even in the old colony, it was increasingly under attack on the language issue. English was a foreign tongue to many who came forward to attempt the university's examinations and the neglect of Dutch was regarded by most Afrikaners not only as an affront, but also as a real handicap to national progress. From 1890 onwards, the sporadic shots which had earlier been fired in the language battle became a barrage of steadily growing intensity, mounted at first by the Dutch Reformed (*Nederduitse Gereformeerde*) Church and the *Taalbond*. These were joined in the early years of the present century by dissidents who left the South African Teachers' Association because of its language policy and formed the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Onderwijzers Unie* of 1905.

In the early nineties, not much was asked of the Cape University. Most critics would then have been satisfied with compulsory Dutch at Matriculation level and in the School Elementary examination, a Dutch paper and the opportunity to answer questions in other subjects in that language. All that the university Council was prepared to do, however, was to make Dutch an optional subject in the Elementary examination. At this, even English speakers were disgusted. "It is not right", announced the *Argus* in May, 1891, "that, in a country in which Dutch plays so important a part, the language should be bracketed with German as a mere foreign accomplishment". As the tragic end of the century approached, however, and relations between Boer and Briton began to worsen, the language struggle merged into the greater conflict between the two white races. Fewer English voices were heard in defence of Dutch, the Cape University remained unsympathetic and the Superintendent General of Education, Thomas Muir, displayed even more hostility to Afrikaner aspirations than had his predecessor, Langham Dale.

If the Dutch-speaking section in the Cape Colony was dissatisfied with the Cape University, those who lived in the Orange Free State and the South African Republic were understandably far less inclined by the nineties to advocate closer relations with the examining institution in Cape Town. In Bloemfontein, where Grey College was emerging as the probable major centre for higher education in the state, there was so much disappointment with the University of the Cape of Good Hope that President Reitz warned in 1893 that, unless it were prepared to devote itself whole-heartedly to South African interests, the Free State would ultimately be forced to create a rival institution.

In the South African Republic, the Cape University enjoyed no official approval. It had its supporters, however – particularly among the immigrant English speakers who had flocked to the gold mines of the Witwatersrand and whose presence there contributed in so large a measure to the deteriorating relations between Britain and the Boer republics.

In 1892, Nicolaas Mansvelt had made legislative provision for

a Pretoria Gymnasium which might become for the northern republic what Grey College already was for the southern. At that stage, however, the government of the South African Republic looked to the Netherlands for university training. The assistance of the *Nederlandsch Zuid-Afrikaansche Vereeniging* was enlisted to help deserving students and bursaries were awarded for further education. By September, 1896, Mansvelt had also succeeded in obtaining recognition in the Netherlands of early qualifications obtained in the republic. This cancelled the advantage the Cape University possessed in the acceptance by Dutch universities of its Intermediate B.A. examination with Greek and Latin.

Only in Natal, where the population was largely British in origin and therefore in favour of an English language policy, did desire for closer association with the University of the Cape of Good Hope grow. Proposals to this end were made by the Natal Council of Education and were welcomed by Vice-Chancellor Ogilvie and the Cape University Council. Natal's first Prime Minister, Sir John Robinson, was in "full sympathy with any movement to secure common university privileges to both colonies and to South Africa at large". Accordingly, the Amendment Act of June, 1896 was passed. This not only widened the range of degrees offered by the Cape University and increased the size of its governing body, but also made provision for the representation on the university Council of the governments of the neighbouring territories of Natal, the Orange Free State and the South African Republic, on payment of an annual contribution to university funds.

Natal accepted the conditions immediately and decided to give the sum of R800 per annum to the Cape University. In 1897, therefore, Robert Russell, the Superintendent Inspector of Education, joined the Council, together with two Cape men who were asked to represent the smaller colony. These were J. X. Merri-man and Professor Roderick Noble's brother, John, who was replaced later in the year by the former Registrar, James Cameron. Russell, as the *Witness* of Pietermaritzburg described him, was to be the "special messenger" for important debates; the other

two would ensure that the colony's interests would not be lost sight of at regular meetings.

This connection proved to be a valuable one for the colony and a great deal of interest was aroused there on the subject of higher education. University work would not be centralized in one institution for some time, but an increasing amount was being undertaken from the last decade of the century onwards in various Natal schools. Of these, Durban High School and Maritzburg College stood high in public estimation. Among the successful candidates for the B.A. examination at the Durban institution was a future South African Governor-General, E. G. Jansen, who graduated in 1901. The rival school in the colonial capital had been developed to collegiate level by one of South Africa's great Headmasters, R. D. Clark, and was considered by many to be the obvious choice as the basis for a Natal university.

The Amendment Act of 1896 was received with less enthusiasm in the northern republics, already beginning to co-operate in the face of renewed fears of British imperialist expansion after the recent ill-fated Jameson Raid. The University of the Cape of Good Hope had, however, a good friend at Bloemfontein in John Brebner. He was, it is true, no admirer of the existing policy which gave pride of place to the English language, but he could see the advantages of the university connection. He pinned his hopes on those at the Cape, among them Sir Henry de Villiers, who favoured a more representative body.

If the fifth Council, due to be selected in 1897, were to prove more reasonable over the language question than had its predecessors, there was a good chance that the Orange Free State at least would be prepared to accept the university. Perhaps the South African Republic might also be persuaded to join a higher educational federation. To this end, Brebner stressed to Mansvelt the need for South African unity, for the peoples of the colonies and states of the sub-continent were really one "van de Kaapstad tot de Zambezi, met gelijke aspiratiën en behoeften". He would have to face much scepticism, although he could count on support from W. A. Macfadyen of the Pretoria Gymnasium staff

and of Chief Justice J. G. Kotzé. His efforts were, however, in vain. The new and enlarged Council showed no inclination to favour the Dutch language.

The South African Republic was not, in any case, particularly interested in an examining university, for such an institution was quite foreign to those who looked to the Netherlands for their models in the field of higher education. The movement in the last tense years before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War was therefore in the direction of a Dutch language teaching university, as soon as the number of qualified entrants should be sufficiently large to meet the expense. In that connection, the Pretoria Gymnasium, under the rectorship of H. T. Reinink, was beginning to show promise of greater things to come. Hopes of reconciliation between Britain and the Boer republics continued to recede and the Free State and its northern neighbour drew close in defensive alliance. The Cape University remained obstinately English and as the Bloemfontein *Express* put it, experience had shown that "mooie praatjes te beginnen met John Bull" on that subject would be a waste of time. In March, 1899, the Council of Delegates representing the two republics recommended the establishment of a joint university, with teaching colleges in each country. A Dutch-language institution, in competition with the University of the Cape of Good Hope, was close to realization when the long war began which would put an end to dreams of political independence and educational autonomy.

If problems of language and nationality prevented the University of the Cape of Good Hope from expanding effectively into the Boer republics, similar differences of outlook hindered the transformation of the examining institution in Cape Town into a teaching university. For at the Cape, as in Britain itself, the examining university was under heavy fire in the last years of the nineteenth century. It was, as the *Zuid-Afrikaan* observed in 1887, a great pity that the colony had chosen an English model to crown its educational system, "en wel van een soort die geheel afwijkt van hetgeen men in bijna alle landen met den naam van Universiteit bestempelt". Moreover, the English tradition was

foreign to the Afrikaner section and “een oprecht Afrikaner die zijn zoon of dochter aan inrigtingen van onderwijs toevertrouwt waar een beslist Engelsche of andere niet Afrikaansche zin heerscht, zal dikwijls bedrogen uitkomen”.

Perhaps a teaching university might take Afrikaner sentiment into consideration; those institutions which offered courses for the examining university's degrees were all too often hostile to it. The nucleus of such a university was, as Professor J. I. Marais pointed out in June, 1889, to be found in the Victoria College, Stellenbosch. Was it not possible that one day a separate foundation would come into existence there, “onafhankelijk van examens namens den Universiteitsraad, en waar men een waar nationaal gevoel voor taal en vaderland zou zien oprijzen”? What, however, was lacking were the funds to carry out such a transformation.

Nevertheless, financial assistance was soon to be forthcoming, although not for the exact purpose suggested by Professor Marais. Cecil John Rhodes, who had become Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in July, 1890, attended an alumni dinner at Grey College, Bloemfontein towards the end of that year. He was greatly impressed by the work carried out there for the youth of South Africa and soon made it known that he planned to do something on a grand scale for higher education at the Cape. In March, 1891, Rhodes publicly announced at the Kimberley Congress of the *Afrikaner Bond* that it was his intention to create a residential teaching institution “under the shadow of Table Mountain”, where the youth of South Africa, both English-speaking and Dutch-speaking, would be able to work and to play together. From this intermingling, Rhodes insisted, would spring a united country. A site for the proposed institution was made available at Groote Schuur and the profits of the De Beers diamond mining company would help to finance the scheme.

Rhodes evidently had in mind a new residential college, restricted, as the existing colleges were not at that time, to matriculated students. The new institution, together with those already preparing students for the Cape University examinations, would

form an affiliation, with the University of the Cape of Good Hope at its centre. The new college at Groote Schuur would bear some resemblance to Oriel College, Oxford, which Rhodes had attended in his youth. A teaching function might perhaps be added to the examining university so that the scheme, in its entirety, would transform the colonial higher educational system into something resembling Oxford and Cambridge with their associated colleges.

Interest was immediately aroused; so, too, were misgivings. Langham Dale, in his last report as Superintendent General of Education, spoke of the intention to encourage "the necessary agencies for providing the highest modern appliances of a fully equipped University"; Merriman approved of the esprit de corps which Rhodes hoped to foster at Groote Schuur; T. E. Fuller hoped to see the new scheme embrace advanced technical studies, similar to those provided at Edinburgh's Heriot-Watt College; William Ritchie felt that the core of any subsequent development in university education must be the South African College.

On the other hand, some wondered whether there was yet at the Cape a sufficiently large leisured class to justify a residential university, or, if it did prove a success, whether the standing of the existing colleges could still be maintained. Moreover, Ritchie's remark touched a sensitive nerve among Dutch speakers. Was not the Rhodes scheme merely a way of improving the status of the South African College by moving it to another site and giving it a greater role to play in Cape education? Not surprisingly, such an idea, as the *Zuid-Afrikaan* put it, "vond bestrijding . . . van Stellenboschen kant".

It was evident from the start that Rhodes would be faced with the problem of reconciling conflicting points of view. Merriman was of the opinion that "some less Elizabethan worthy" would ultimately be left to solve the difficulties, leaving Rhodes "the kudos for the business". Differences of opinion, however, proved to be insurmountable. Rhodes came to regard the Rev. J. H. Neethling of Stellenbosch as his arch-enemy in the matter of the proposed scheme, but he had other opponents. Many Afrikaners

hesitated to sacrifice the college to the interests of its older Cape Town rival and feared at the same time that acceptance of the Rhodes scheme would lead to a further dilution of the Afrikaner's heritage in the ocean of English tradition. Would the products of a new university system constructed along the lines mooted by Rhodes be interested in upholding Afrikaner national character when, after twenty years, they occupied the seats of power in the land? Was bilingualism a practical possibility, or would English become even more dominant? Were there not grave moral dangers to the youth of the Dutch-speaking section if they were to be exposed to alien ways? Perhaps, as "Onze Jan" Hofmeyr suggested, Stellenbosch, a quiet backwater, was the ideal site for a South African university. Certainly, there seemed much in the choice of Groote Schuur to disquieten Afrikaners.

The University of the Cape of Good Hope, vitally concerned in any scheme of reconstruction which would obviously affect its future, had strangely little to say about the Rhodes plan. Vice-Chancellor C. T. Smith mentioned in his address on Degree Day in 1891 that the University of Toronto had been held out as a suitable model for the Cape to follow. There, a secular college and denominational institutions were associated with a teaching university. However, Smith warned that the Canadian system had not been universally approved. He felt that it would be unwise to interfere with the Cape's existing order of things until a plan had been evolved which was satisfactory to all the local colleges.

Merriman, at this time in correspondence with H. B. Webb, the director of a company with South African interests, outlined the probable position of the Cape University in the Rhodes scheme. If the university were to embrace a teaching function, expansion would follow and funds would be necessary to supplement government subsidies. Webb's offer of financial assistance was therefore to be welcomed. However, by the end of 1891, Rhodes had placed his plan in cold storage and the Webb donation remained in the hands of trustees. It was not until many years later, when university reform had been accomplished, that scholarships were instituted in the name of this benefactor.

A teaching university, which the scheme of 1891 seemed to make possible, remained an ideal to be cherished. Rhodes himself felt that something could yet be accomplished, although it might have to await his death. The Jameson Raid, however, destroyed hopes of conciliation and Rhodes gave up his plan in favour of the scholarships designed to satisfy wider needs than those of South Africa alone. Only the university college at Grahamstown which bears his name and which received assistance from De Beers and the Rhodes Trust, recalls on South African soil the former Cape Premier's university ideal. The Rhodes University College of 1904 was, however, a pygmy beside the collegiate giants of the western Cape and far from achieving independent status as a teaching university.

Cecil Rhodes had offered the riches of endowment to Cape educationists, only to withdraw them again. His proposal had shown men what was needed in a material sense to transform the university scene. The Cape had its enthusiasts for a teaching university, among them the Superintendent General of Education, Muir, and the Rev. J. J. Kotzé of Sea Point, who suggested a "Victoria Cape of Good Hope University", with a teaching, as well as an examining function, in honour of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The newspaper, *Ons Land*, into which the *Zuid-Afrikaan* was merged in 1894, was equally anxious to invest the Cape University with a quickening spirit, for it was but a poor thing, an institution "zonder professoren, zonder studenten, die nergens bestaat, doch overal examens afneemt". In the absence of money, however, reconstruction was out of the question and plans for a teaching university remained idle dreams.

Moreover, the reaction to the Rhodes scheme had demonstrated that the generosity of a public-spirited benefactor was not enough to provide South Africa with a worthy higher educational system. The suspicions which had been aroused in 1891 showed how difficult it had become to persuade Boer and Briton to agree. The split between the two sections was to become wider as the decade advanced. After the Jameson Raid, Afrikaners were even more keenly aware of the threat to their existence

from British imperialism and the political differences between Britain and the Boer republics found their echo in the Cape Colony, with its two linguistic streams. From 1897 onwards, the Dutch Reformed (*Nederduitse Gereformeerde*) Church kept a watchful eye through its Vigilance Committee upon any possible developments in the university field which might be inimical to the interests of its adherents.

Reform, no easy task at any time in so heterogeneous a society as that of the Cape, was particularly difficult to effect in those tense days between Jameson's ill-advised exploit and the outbreak of war in 1899. During the long months which followed the firing of the first shots, until the signing of peace in 1902, practical moves to reconstruct the university system were out of the question, although the need was not forgotten.

The war itself did not leave the University of the Cape of Good Hope untouched and its activities were to some extent curtailed. Examinations were being attempted at various levels in both the Free State and the South African Republic before hostilities began. Brill's students at Grey College in Bloemfontein were already studying for the Intermediate B.A. examination at that time; English-medium schools, particularly in Johannesburg, entered pupils for the university's examinations; many, too, living in the northern republics, worked privately for the tests of the examining institution in Cape Town. These contacts between students and the university were necessarily broken for a period, as were those involving candidates living in the districts of the Cape and Natal affected by the war. By 1901, however, when the struggle between the two peoples had changed its nature, many of the old examination centres had been re-established and commissioners were again appointed for the conduct of examinations in such places as Johannesburg, Potchefstroom and Pretoria.

Among the examination arrangements which suffered as a result of the military situation were those in music. Gladys E. Watts, the university's first scholarship winner in this field, was unable to communicate with the Cape University for some time.

She was, to use an expression which occurs more than once in the letters of the Registrar, William Thomson, "shut up" in the Orange Free State. The music examiners also gave the university no small trouble. As they were sent out from England by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools, they naturally knew little of prevailing conditions and were understandably anxious for reassurance. Eaton Fanning was informed in 1901 that "the examinations will be held (De Wet permitting) at Bloemfontein, Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, and at all the old and at some new Centres in this Colony". Thomson also made it clear to him that the cost of living was a far graver danger than the bubonic plague which was then prevalent! It was, at all events, some encouragement to know that the English examiners would be visiting a "now historic centre".

The work of two of the colleges which prepared students for the examinations of the Cape University was seriously interrupted. The seminary of the Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) Church in Burgersdorp was closed for a period and was restricted in its operations by the military. Its theological professor, J. Lion Cachet, was arrested on a treason charge, but the case was subsequently dropped. At Kimberley, the School of Mines was forced to close during the siege of that town and was unable to open again until the second half of 1900. One of the university's examiners in mining, George F. Labram, the American engineer who designed the siege gun, "Long Cecil", was killed by a Boer shell at the beginning of that year; another American, Louis I. Seymour, who had also examined in mining for the University of the Cape of Good Hope, lost his life a few months later while serving with the British forces in the Orange Free State.

The war caused problems over the examination papers. In those days, Messrs Macmillan and Bowes of Cambridge were the university's printers and there were fears that the priority given to military stores would prevent the English firm from supplying the Cape institution's requirements on time. "Under no circumstances", wrote the Registrar in August, 1900, "should the boxes be sent by any but mail steamers as, owing to the demand for

space at the Docks, it is not unusual for the other steamers to remain in the roadstead for two or three weeks". The siege of Kimberley also delayed the transmission of the draft papers to England for printing, since one of the examiners was "shut up" there.

The great struggle brought about a change in the date of the university examinations. These had always been held in mid-year, but in 1900, after representations from the western Cape colleges, additional examinations were held at the end of the year to compensate students for study time lost as a result of the conflict. The date of this second series of tests became that of the annual examinations of future years.

The war caused bitterness enough in South Africa, but the University of the Cape of Good Hope, which provided syllabuses for students of all political persuasions, remained throughout an impartial bystander. Its examinations were taken in concentration camps and Thomson recalled in later years a visit he had paid to one of them. As he walked through the camp, he noticed a Cape Matriculation certificate affixed to a tent-pole as a public testimony to the qualifications of a young school-teacher there. At the Green Point camp, C. Kewley, a Cambridge graduate and member of the Cape University Convocation, prepared students for the school examinations of the university.

Those interned on distant St Helena had reason to remember the University of the Cape of Good Hope with gratitude. Even before the war, an enquiry had come from the island for examination facilities. On that occasion, the writer had been referred to the University of London. In 1901, however, the university Council agreed to hold examinations for prisoners-of-war there, provided no undue delay was caused. Plans to hold similar examinations for those in captivity on the island of Bermuda were made in 1902, but the coming of peace brought these projects to an end. When the fighting was over and the task of reconstruction had begun, the Cape University was able to assure one prospective candidate that a conviction for high treason would not debar him from entering for an examination. He

would still be required, however, to submit the usual certificate of good conduct!

The Anglo-Boer War was a turning-point in the history of South Africa and in the evolution of the University of the Cape of Good Hope. The examining university would at last become an institution representative of all the colonies and before Union in 1910, a small breach would be made in the apparently impregnable wall of English language exclusiveness which had hitherto surrounded it. The gains, however, could not hide its deficiencies and it was already clear by 1902 that it was suspect in the eyes of most educationists. For although it examined many, it taught none. Its English progenitor, the University of London, had succeeded at the end of the century in transforming itself into a teaching, as well as an examining institution. The change had not taken place without a struggle and the defenders of the old order in the imperial capital had not been entirely routed. Nevertheless, it was a notable triumph for the forces of reform. Their victory did not go unperceived in South Africa.

4 *New approaches*

The years from 1902 until 1910 not only saw the South African colonies move towards political unity, but also the achievement of a greater degree of educational uniformity under the control of the University of the Cape of Good Hope. In the very period, however, when the Cape University attained its goal by becoming the sole degree-conferring body for a sub-continent, a campaign for a teaching university was set in motion which would, after a long and hard struggle, destroy its monopoly and transform its nature.

Connected both with the extension of the Cape University's field of operations and with the ideal of a teaching university was the demand on the Witwatersrand for technological education adequate to the requirements of an industrial region of world importance. A little had been accomplished by the Cape government before the Anglo-Boer War in the foundation of the School of Mines in Kimberley; when the conflict ended, this institution gave way to a Transvaal Technical Institute in Johannesburg, established in August, 1903 and opened the following year. Already in January, 1903, the visiting founder of England's new University of Birmingham, Joseph Chamberlain, had mentioned to an enthusiastic Johannesburg audience the need for a technological university on the Rand. Two years later, the Cambridge classicist, Sir Richard Jebb, who had come to South Africa with other members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, spoke in the same place of the aims of a modern university. Such an institution, he said, should not only dissemi-

nate culture, not only satisfy a demand for technical skills, but also inculcate scientific habits of study. There is no doubt that many in his audience thought chiefly of the physical sciences in this context, for these reigned supreme in an industrial age. Examining universities were not much to the liking of those who regarded the new Transvaal Technical Institute as the germ of the future teaching university to which the British Colonial Secretary had alluded.

Not that the University of the Cape of Good Hope entirely neglected the demands of science. It had already provided mining diplomas for those who took courses at the Cape colleges and the Kimberley institution. These certificates had been requested by the South African College and before long, the School of Mines on the diamond fields was pressing for degrees in mining engineering in terms of the Amendment Act of 1896. These were somewhat tardily approved by Council in 1899. Research had also been stimulated by the award of fellowships to deserving students, of whom the scientist and future member of the university Council, Charles F. Juritz, was the first. The fellowships had not entirely succeeded in their object and were replaced, as a result of changes introduced by Council in 1906, by a D.Sc. degree in pure science, preceded by an M.Sc. in two departments. Juritz was awarded the new doctorate in 1907; in 1914, it was obtained by a woman student, Ethel Mary Doidge, who became a plant pathologist with the Department of Agriculture. Dr Doidge played a part in the early history of the University of South Africa. Science degrees in agriculture were also provided, but the proposal put forward by George Cory of Rhodes University College that a B.Sc. in pure science be instituted to effect a clear separation between the subjects in that field and those in arts was not accepted.

The need for medical training at the Cape continued to be pressed and in the early years of this century, Edward Barnard Fuller began the long campaign which earned him the title of "Father of the Medical Faculty" of the future University of Cape Town. Teaching and research in the sciences and technology,

however, were essentially matters for the colleges; the university merely provided the examinations. Moreover, the University of the Cape of Good Hope was geographically distant from the industrial heart of South Africa and remote in spirit from those who governed the affairs of the Transvaal Technical Institute, renamed in 1906 the Transvaal University College.

H.S. Hele-Shaw, first holder of the Chair of Engineering at Liverpool University College in England, was an early promoter of technical and university education in Johannesburg. Just as the English institution with which he had been associated had developed into a promising civic university, so, too, he felt, should the Rand's major college, of which he was Principal. The University of the Cape of Good Hope might, he stated when he addressed its Congregation on Degree Day in 1904, be allowed to become a controlling board for South African higher education. The day was rapidly approaching, however, when it would be forced to change the character of its association with the teaching colleges.

Not that the Johannesburg institution was yet a real competitor. It had no degree-conferring powers and neither the Transvaal government nor the Cape University would recognize its Matriculation pass. It trained students for some of the Cape University's examinations, but those who succeeded in its own tests had to be content with diplomas and certificates. In the field of mining education, it long engaged in a running fight with the university over courses and regulations. Not until the University of South Africa was created could students convert their mining diplomas into degrees.

There was, however, talk of co-operation between the colonies of the Transvaal, Orange River and Natal which might have led to a federal northern university. This was sufficient to alarm the university Council in Cape Town, which had itself already called for discussions on an inter-colonial basis to regulate the higher education of the sub-continent. Lord Milner, as High Commissioner and Governor of the Transvaal and Orange River Colonies, showed some interest in the Cape University's proposals.

Towards the end of 1905, Sir John Buchanan, lately Vice-Chancellor of the university, took the matter up with Theodore Reunert, the mining engineer and founder member of the Council of Education in Johannesburg, established ten years earlier for the benefit of Uitlanders there.

The Cape University did not want to see the creation of a northern rival and its fears were largely dispelled by the influential support it received in the Transvaal. Neither Milner's successor, Lord Selborne, nor Lieutenant-Governor Sir Richard Solomon felt that the standard of education, beyond the Vaal River at least, was high enough to warrant ideas of another university "for a considerable time to come". At a Cape University dinner held in the Grand Hotel, Pretoria in August, 1906, the Vice-Chancellor, C. Abercrombie Smith, and the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Buchanan, were greatly heartened by the enthusiasm and affection for the examining university expressed by several of the guests. The Transvaal judge, J. W. Wessels, soon to join the Cape University Council, rose in defence of his Alma Mater; so, too, did his legal colleague, Rose Innes, and Lieutenant-Governor Solomon. Reference by Wessels to local "tinpot universities", however, irritated the Johannesburg college, then beginning to extend its influence on the Rand by means of evening classes held in Germiston, Krugersdorp and other towns.

The Transvaal University College had some reason to feel aggrieved. Already enjoying Council of Education support and planning Plein Square extensions which would provide it with a worthier home, even more exciting prospects were held out to it. The mining magnate, Alfred Beit, who had given his Frankwald estate near Johannesburg to the government for educational purposes in 1904, left R400 000 when he died two years later to erect an institution on the site which he described in his will as the "University of Johannesburg". The bequest was to be used for this purpose within ten years of his death. Here at last was endowment on the grand scale and the Transvaal University College seemed to be the only possible recipient.

The University of the Cape of Good Hope was, however, be-

ginning to become what C. Abercrombie Smith felt it should really be called, the "University of South Africa". Before the two northern colonies had attained responsible government, decisions had been taken in favour of contributing to the university funds under the Amendment Act of 1896 and thus of gaining representation on the governing Council. To the sixth Council therefore came two members from Bloemfontein and three to represent Transvaal interests. The members for the Orange River Colony were Brill of Grey College in the capital and Hugh Gunn, the Director of Education. Gunn was succeeded in the seventh Council of 1909 by the future Union Prime Minister, J. B. M. Hertzog, then Minister of Education for the colony. Hertzog resigned in 1911 and his place was taken by the noted cultural leader and churchman, the Rev. John Daniel Kestell.

The Transvaal sent its Director of Education in 1906, J. E. Adamson, who, like Kestell, was later to play a more important role in the affairs of the Cape University's successor. The other Transvaal members at that date were W. Kidger Tucker of the Council of Education and another future Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, Jan C. Smuts. It would be a brief link for Smuts with what his mentor, J. I. Marais, had once described as a "strange heterogeneous body of mutually repellent particles". The comment was made in reply to the brilliant young Stellenbosch student's complaints about the reduction in the value of his Ebden Scholarship when the Cape of Good Hope Bank closed its doors. Smuts resigned his seat in Council when he became Minister of Education for the Transvaal in Louis Botha's government.

The University of the Cape of Good Hope had at last become the recognized examining body for the whole of South Africa, an educational pre-eminence it was to maintain until the end of its days. To celebrate its wider influence, a luncheon was given in November, 1906 to which the delegates from outside the Cape Colony were invited. Many of the strongest supporters of the university were present, among them Sir Henry de Villiers, W. P. Schreiner and F. C. Kolbe. The occasion gave another guest,

J. X. Merriman, an opportunity to dilate upon a popular theme of his. Europeans must, he said, further civilization in Africa and the Cape University was a valuable agent in this great work. Already it had greatly stimulated educational advance in South Africa; now was the time to "spread light . . . to the rest of this dark continent".

Not all, however, by the end of 1906, were convinced that the examining university in Cape Town was, in fact, the best agent to achieve this aim. Other approaches to the problem of South African higher education were mentioned at the Federal Conference on Education convened in London by the League of Empire in 1907. The Cape University was not officially represented, but several leading educationists from South Africa, including three members of the university Council, attended. These were Gunn from Bloemfontein, Thomas Muir, the Cape Superintendent General of Education, and Canon W.O. Jenkins of the Diocesan College. Muir expressed the general pleasure at the reconstruction of the University of London when he spoke at the conference and hoped that the Cape would also have a teaching university before long. The Rev. A. C. Headlam, Principal of King's College in the imperial capital, endorsed Muir's sentiments with regard to London and gave his opinion that South Africa should have two universities – one in Cape Town and the other in Johannesburg, each with affiliated colleges.

The idea of a Transvaal university had been stimulated by Alfred Beit's bequest. Jan Smuts, however, did not show himself greatly in favour of Johannesburg as a higher educational centre when he became responsible for colonial education in 1907. A growing estrangement between the Transvaal University College and the Council of Education on the one hand and the government in Pretoria on the other early made itself felt. Ideas of a Frankenswald university were dismissed, two Johannesburg high schools were permitted to compete with the college by instituting Intermediate B.A. classes and the government at length decided that it would be better to concentrate arts and pure science work in Pretoria. This would leave the Johannesburg

foundation as a mining school. The Frankenwald site could then be used, perhaps, as an agricultural college in a tripartite scheme.

The division between Johannesburg and Pretoria was not popular in the mining metropolis, but Smuts was determined to implement the plan. Accordingly, the Transvaal University College was split into two sections under a joint administrative body. The Pretoria branch began work with a professorial staff of four in Kya Rosa, a house rented for the purpose in Skinner Street. H. T. Reinink of the old Gymnasium and John Purves came over from the Johannesburg college; their colleagues were D. F. du Toit Malherbe and Alfred Croom Paterson. Reinink's main task was to teach Dutch and other modern languages, the Scotsmen, Purves and Paterson, were responsible for English and classical studies respectively and Malherbe, who had been recommended by Hahn of the South African College in Cape Town, took a wide range of scientific subjects, although chemistry was his special field. It is small wonder that in those days, professorial chairs were often referred to as settees! Paterson and Malherbe played a large part in the early deliberations of the Council and Senate of the University of South Africa. The former, who became Principal of the Transvaal University College in Pretoria, later emigrated to New Zealand where he also made a valuable contribution to university life.

It was made clear to Smuts that the proposed tripartite scheme would not meet with the approval of the trustees of the Beit bequest; the Colonial Secretary was, however, insistent that Transvaal higher education should be reorganized in his own way. Moreover, after discussions with Alfred Beit's brother, Otto, and with Sir Julius Wernher, he was coming to realize by 1909 that South Africa needed a national teaching university. A Johannesburg university formed no part of his plans. Accordingly, legislation was passed in 1910, on the eve of Union, which further reduced the status of the college there. The uneasy federation was dissolved, Pretoria became the seat of the Transvaal University College and the Johannesburg institution was renamed the South African School of Mines and Technology. A separate

agricultural college was also proposed. Johannesburg's college was, as G. H. L. le May has said, "back where it started, confined to the local and the particular". The dream of a great civic university had faded for the time being.

Nothing came of the proposed independent agricultural college. There was much talk in the last years of Transvaal colonial autonomy about the need for scientific research in the interests of good farming. William Macdonald, editor of the *Transvaal Agricultural Journal*, hoped to see either a national college of agriculture with degree-conferring powers, or a federal university with a strong agricultural faculty, drawing students "from Simons Bay to Zumba and beyond". A graduate in this field of both Cornell University and the University of Minnesota, Macdonald was a great admirer of the progress made in agricultural science in the United States under the beneficial influence of generous endowment. The funds set aside for the establishment of the Transvaal college proposed by Act 2 of 1910 went at length to the university college in Pretoria. In time, it would introduce agricultural studies in the city and courses in veterinary science at Onderstepoort.

No rival to the Cape University was therefore established in the Transvaal before Union; as for the other colonies, there were few who thought in terms of independent universities, except at Cape Town and Stellenbosch. However, with higher education falling to the national government after 1910, both the Orange River Colony and Natal set up – with quite indecent haste, in the opinion of some at the Cape – university colleges of their own. Maritzburg College in Natal was not elevated to higher rank, although it provided the Natal University College, created by Act 18 of 1909, with its first accommodation. The school also loaned it several teachers until the professorial staff was augmented later in the year. For Natal's new institution began life with only two professors: Alexander Petrie, the classicist from Aberdeen, and R. B. Denison, the Professor of Chemistry and Physics, who came from Yorkshire. Both gave many years of devoted service to the college and, in time, to the University of

South Africa. Meanwhile, in Durban, a technical institution had been founded, largely through the efforts of Dr S. G. Campbell, father of the poet, Roy Campbell. The Durban Technical Institute was intended to be a university college eventually and although it never quite attained this eminence, it was the father of both the Natal Technical College of today and the Durban branch of the present University of Natal.

The Orange River Colony already had the nucleus of a full university institution in Bloemfontein. Before laying down his life's work, Johannes Brill succeeded in separating the higher division from that of the school and in raising the standard of education offered to that of the Master of Arts degree level. Act 5 of 1910 crowned his efforts by placing the existence of Grey University College on a legal footing in the month before Union. Among the first professors were Adriaan Francken, W. S. Johnson, George Potts and J. H. Woolston. An Orange Free State member of the university Council from 1913, Woolston was to succumb to war wounds five years later. As at all the small colleges, members of staff were responsible for more than one department of study. Francken, who had earlier taught history, Dutch, English, French and German, was still after 1910 in charge of the first two subjects. Johnson not only lectured in English, but also in logic, Potts in 1910 was in charge of both botany and zoology and Woolston was, until 1911, Professor of Pure and Applied Mathematics.

These colleges in the Orange Free State, Natal and the Transvaal were small indeed at the time of Union. At the end of 1910, the college at Pietermaritzburg had 57 students, nearly half of whom were engaged upon legal studies. Grey University College was somewhat larger, with 73 students, twenty fewer than at the Transvaal University College in Pretoria. The School of Mines had 113 students, almost all of whom were working for mining, engineering and legal qualifications. Most of the Cape colleges were equally small in numbers. The third largest was Rhodes University College in Grahamstown, with 125 students. The Huguenot College had only 53 and the Diocesan College, in its

last year as an institution of university rank, a mere 24. It was the two rival foundations in Cape Town and Stellenbosch which dominated the collegiate scene. Both the South African College and the Victoria College had enrolments which at that time approached the three hundred mark and the student population was well distributed throughout the various fields of study. Both had grown increasingly restless under the examining system; both stood poised upon the brink of a campaign which would transform the university life of South Africa.

Thoughts of change were present from the first years of the present century. In 1901, Morrison and others at Stellenbosch had felt that some kind of university reorganization was needed and some two years later, Merriman and the then editor of *Ons Land*, F. S. Malan, agreed that the Victoria College was ready for independence. The first positive steps, however, were taken by the South African College in November, 1904, when Thomas Loveday, Fremantle's successor as Professor of Philosophy, successfully moved in Senate the setting up of a committee to look into the question of university reorganization. Loveday was an obvious choice as a member of it and he was joined by six colleagues: the classicists, C. E. Lewis and William Ritchie, the Secretary of Senate, Lawrence Crawford, the energetic Caruthers Beattie, P. D. Hahn of the Department of Chemistry and the zoologist, Arthur Dendy.

The committee sought the opinions of leading educationists the world over on the merits or disadvantages of the association of colleges with a single university, having regard to the uneven stage of development and the geographical separation of South Africa's various higher educational institutions. It was hardly to be expected that the final report would be favourable to any form of federation or to the continued existence of an examining university. The climate of opinion in academic circles was everywhere against both, except in very special circumstances. London was no longer just an examining board; the examining university of Halifax, Nova Scotia had long since vanished without trace; the University of Toronto had ceased to be merely an examining

machine; the University of Manitoba was in the process of becoming a teaching institution. Even where the purely examining university survived – in India, Ireland and New Zealand, as well as at the Cape – it was an experiment in higher education largely discredited. As for that closer form of association between colleges in federation, Britain had recently seen the collapse of one such institution – the Victoria University of Manchester – as a result of a desire for independence among its constituents, and particularly at the Liverpool college. The federal University of Wales might have some application to South African conditions, but would be unlikely to appeal to those who saw the South African College as a future university in its own right.

As the University of the Cape of Good Hope was itself seeking collegiate opinion on the future pattern of South African higher education, the South African College decided to publish its Senate committee report. It would be, as Mr Justice Thomas L. Graham put it, a *ballon d'essai* to gauge the degree of support for a unitary university in Cape Town. The views expressed by overseas experts and incorporated in the report were, in the main, highly favourable to South African College pretensions. They were well summed up in a private letter to Beattie from the distinguished British scientist, Lord Kelvin, who wrote in December, 1905: "I agree with you heartily that your College is ripe for a Charter. I think it ought to be made into an Independent Teaching University and I heartily wish all success to efforts for this good object". The South African College had no hesitation therefore in advancing its claim to full university status and Crawford was only sorry that Johannesburg's Transvaal Technical Institute was not planning similar action which would doubtless have strengthened the claims of the Cape Town institution.

The University of the Cape of Good Hope asked the colleges to report on three main alternatives: maintenance of the existing system, collegiate affiliation with the university or separate charters to individual institutions or to groups of colleges. The South African College viewpoint was made sufficiently clear in

its Senate committee report. In general, the other colleges, particularly the smaller ones, preferred amalgamation with the existing university, in part, as Rhodes University College explained, to maintain standards. The Diocesan College was already concerned about the possibility of losing its higher work. Canon R. Brooke would later accuse the South African College, its Stellenbosch neighbour and Rhodes University College of trying to eliminate the Anglican institution through their representatives on the university Council.

The Huguenot College, which was to become a full university college in 1907, with a representative of the Cape University on its governing Council, was seriously concerned to encourage more girls to enrol for its courses. It was therefore in favour of closer association with the examining university if only to obviate the constant competition between the colleges for places. There was much jealousy between the rival institutions and the activities of the college tout did nothing to improve relations. Another solution to its problems occurred to the Wellington foundation at this period. It could, perhaps, amalgamate with its neighbour at Stellenbosch. However, it was not anxious to lose its autonomy and the idea was successfully resisted.

At the Victoria College, there were differences of opinion upon the best course to adopt. Some on the governing body demanded independence, but Senate much preferred the system of affiliation, by means of which the colleges would be brought into closer and more clearly defined relations with the examining university. The differences were finally resolved and a loose federal arrangement was proposed, with separate examination papers for the colleges.

These divergencies in the views of the various colleges were emphasized in a lengthy Convocation debate which took place in April, 1906. The motion which was finally carried was put forward by Morrison of Stellenbosch and Martin of the Diocesan College. It requested that the Council of the University of the Cape of Good Hope "prepare a scheme of reorganization, which, while securing to the various Colleges all wholesome freedom for

their courses of work, will maintain the principle of a single central academic authority". This was a rebuff to the South African College and a solution which was widely canvassed at that time. What was important, as Martin pointed out, was that the university system should keep Dutch and English, north and south, together in a country seeking unity. The whole question of organization was in fact being discussed against the background of desires for consultation between the colonial governments on the higher educational issue. With this in mind, W.A. Russell, who had first-hand knowledge of the educational needs of the Orange River Colony, secured an addition to Morrison's motion that Council "take steps to arrange for . . . discussion . . . with representatives of the various South African States".

The University of the Cape of Good Hope had been made aware that the South African College proposal did not enjoy universal support and that many considered its demand for independence premature. Council was prepared to make changes, but it did not consider that the university's usefulness was at an end. Certainly, the colleges should have a greater say in university government and it had, in that connection, already made a small start by allowing assessor members to join Council committees as a sort of embryo Senate. However, at meetings in March and April, 1906, the representatives of the South African College on Council, particularly Beattie and Ritchie, continued to stress the advantages of unitary universities. At the suggestion of H.C. Notcutt and T. Walker of the Victoria College, the university Council decided to appoint a committee to discuss reform again.

The committee consisted of the Vice-Chancellor, C. Abercrombie Smith, his deputy, Sir John Buchanan, F. C. Kolbe, Advocate M. W. Searle, Ritchie and Beattie of the South African College, Morrison and Viljoen of Stellenbosch and the Rev. W.O. Jenkins of the Diocesan College. It was to prepare two schemes for further consideration. The first was for federation or affiliation; the second, for single college universities. The schemes were in due course presented to the colleges and colo-

nial education departments for comment, before they were discussed by the governing body in February, 1907.

Reactions were predictable. The South African College was against federation; the other colleges were in favour, although the Transvaal University College in Johannesburg preferred to await the findings of an inter-colonial conference on education. The Cape University Council wanted a federal solution; so, too, did Convocation, although it, like the Johannesburg college, felt that the views of the other colonies should be taken into consideration. The university Council seems to have been greatly enamoured of its federal proposal and rather reluctant to commit it to the mercies of educationists sitting in inter-colonial conference. However, it came to accept the need and adjourned further discussion of its scheme *sine die*.

The inter-colonial conference, long delayed, at length took place in Cape Town under the chairmanship of Sir William Bisset Berry, then a member of the university Council. The Cape University's nominees, C. Abercrombie Smith, Ritchie, Morrison and Macfadyen, were not given official instructions, but were permitted to reflect the views of "different interests of education". All the members chosen, with the exception of H. J. Hofmeyr of the Witwatersrand School Board and Rhodesia's Attorney General, C. H. Tredgold, were members of the university Council. The Cape government appointed Berry, Schreiner and Muir; from the Orange River Colony came Brill and Gunn; Natal sent C. J. Mudie and Dr James Hyslop; the Transvaal's nominees were, in addition to Hofmeyr, Adamson and Wessels. Ritchie found no seconder for the idea of unitary universities and the conference report of 1908 proposed a federal university, with all colonies represented on the governing body and with a professorial Senate. The conference, however, made one fatal mistake. It decreed that English should be the language of the proposed federal university. The reaction from Dutch speakers throughout South Africa was immediate and violently hostile. *Ons Land* was indignant, Hertzog in Bloemfontein called the *Taalbond* South Africa's second university and there was some

WILLIAM RITCHIE was born on 12 October, 1854 at Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, where he received his early education. An outstanding classical scholar at the University of Aberdeen and at Oriel College, Oxford, he also studied at Göttingen.

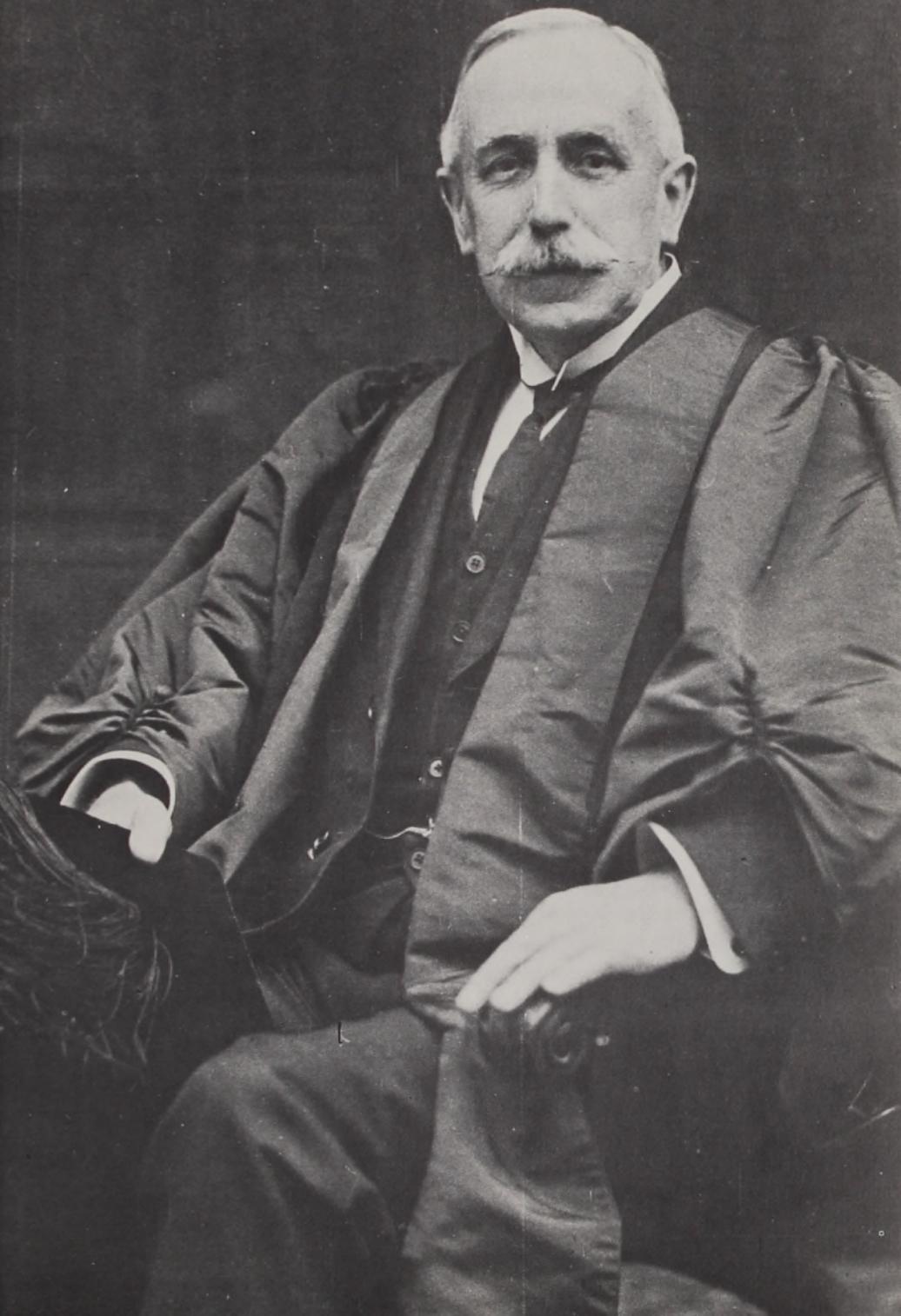
He began his teaching career as a private coach at Oxford and in 1879 was appointed to the staff of the Grey Institute, Port Elizabeth. In 1882, he accepted a professorship at the South African College, where he remained for 47 years and helped to lay the foundations of the University of Cape Town of today.

Ritchie was a classicist of distinction and published several translations from Plautus and Terence. His detailed *History of the South African College* in two volumes appeared in 1918. His scholarship and contributions to higher education in South Africa did not go unrecognized. In addition to the honorary LL.D. degree conferred upon him by the University of Aberdeen, he received doctorates in literature *honoris causa* from the University of South Africa in 1925 and the University of Cape Town four years later.

A member of the Council of the University of the Cape of Good Hope from 1888 until 1918, he was Vice-Chancellor between 1913 and 1916.

His death occurred at Entebbe in Uganda on 7 September, 1931.

*Professor William Ritchie, M.A. (Aber. and Oxon.), LL.D. (h.c.),
D.Litt. (h.c.) (S.A.), D.Litt. (h.c.) (Cape Town)
Member of Council 1888–1918
Pro Vice-Chancellor 1911–1913
Vice-Chancellor 1913–1916
President of Convocation 1904–1914*



hostility in the Transvaal legislature to the continuance of an annual grant to the Cape University. The Pretoria *Volkstem* published a declaration by over forty prominent Transvaal citizens, among them the Rev. H.S. Bosman, Professor J. Lion Cachet of Potchefstroom, N. M. Hoogenhout, D. F. du Toit Malherbe and G. S. Preller. It stated that no new university should be created "welke niet aan de Hollandse en Engelse talen een gelijk status zal toekennen".

The conference achieved nothing positive, except that it intensified the campaign for the acceptance of Dutch, forcing the university to give ground on the language issue, and made even more evident the general dissatisfaction with an examining institution. Not surprisingly, the Convocation election for members of the seventh Council in 1909 was the most hotly contested in the history of the University of the Cape of Good Hope. Candidates were put forward on the ticket of the Dutch-speaking teachers' association, the *Onderwijzers Unie*, and another list was presented by the colleges, with support from the rival professional organization, the South African Teachers' Association. The college ticket was markedly successful and the composition of the new Council was not greatly different from that of the old. Its members were to guide the fortunes of the Cape University through momentous years in the history of South Africa and of higher education there.

The new Council did at least begin by making concessions with regard to the use of both official languages in the new Union of South Africa which came into being in 1910. From the following year, candidates could write the Junior Certificate examination in Dutch as well as in English and from 1912, this rule applied also to the Senior Certificate and Matriculation examinations. Hostility to the "English" examining university would, however, be hard to overcome, for, although South Africa had been united politically, sectional differences between English speakers and Afrikaners remained strong. This aspect of South African community life would play a large part in the great debate on higher education which, in 1910, was about to open.

The major problem which overshadowed the future of the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1910 was, however, its restricted function as an examining board and the growing demands to replace it, or to supplement it, by creating a teaching university. If the campaign in this direction had, in the years before 1910, made little progress, the reason is not far to seek. Teaching universities cost money and endowment on a grand scale is needed. Funds were limited in colonial days. The Rhodes gift had been withdrawn and diverted to another purpose and the Transvaal government had seen fit to delay action over Alfred Beit's "University of Johannesburg". Nevertheless, moves were being made behind the scenes in the months before Union and soon a gift was to be offered which would drastically change the higher educational scene and bring into being a "General University of South Africa". The transformation, however, was to take six years of time-consuming discussions, of proposals and of counter-proposals. When the final solution was arrived at, the old University of the Cape of Good Hope would emerge in a different form under a new name and in a new home.