SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE INFLUENCE OF SCOTLAND IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION*

If I cannot claim any personal experience of academic life north of the border, the subject upon which I propose to offer a few observations — Scottish influences upon South African university education — has greatly interested me through my research into the development of higher educational facilities in this country over the last hundred years or so. It is perhaps surprising that these influences have to date received little detailed attention from the historian, for in the field of education, as in many other spheres of activity in South Africa, much is owed to Scottish ideas and much to the many dedicated men and women who put those ideas into practice for the lasting benefit of the country of their adoption. Samuel Johnson, who rarely missed an opportunity of disparaging the achievements of his future biographer's compatriots, once complained to James Boswell that most Scotsmen could not hold a conversation without introducing the name of another Scotsman into every second sentence. No doubt, then as now, they had good reason to be proud of the renown their fellow-countrymen had earned. For my part, I make no apology for calling attention here to the names of some of those exiles from Sydney Smith's ". . . land of Calvin, oat-cakes, and sulphur" who have rendered such splendid service to the cause of higher education in South Africa, for no student of our university system can fail to be struck by the high proportion of Scotsmen who have, over the years, aided its development.

South Africa's first institutions for promoting higher education, unlike the universities of Scotland, had no teaching function. The University of the Cape of Good Hope, established in 1873, and its predecessor, the Board of Public Examiners of 1858, were closely modelled upon the early nineteenth century University of London. That institution, the product of a new liberal and utilitarian spirit in English higher education, owed much to Scottish example and little, save perhaps in an administrative sense, to that of England's medieval foundations at Oxford and Cambridge. Its architects admired, and adapted to the needs of the examining body, the broad general curriculum of the Scottish universities and their absence of restrictions, other than academic, governing admission to their degree examinations. The London, and hence the Scottish tradition was maintained by the Cape University, which offered a relatively wide choice

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of subjects to students of all races and creeds who were capable of passing its matriculation test.

An examining machine, of course, presupposes teaching colleges to prepare students for its examinations and teachers to staff them, and it was in this field that the Scottish universities provided in generous measure the model and the men for export. The Cape Colony had already turned to Scotland, the home of a network of parish schools second to none in the United Kingdom, to direct and staff its elementary institutions. The practice long continued for schools of all types and occasioned a bitter complaint from an English-trained schoolmaster in the *Argus* newspaper towards the end of the last century that teachers from England were at a decided disadvantage when seeking posts in the colonial education service. Adequate secondary education was deficient at the Cape when the examining University was founded, and more advanced instruction available only to the few. Scottish secondary education was, until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, also inadequate, but there the universities had long filled the gap by teaching, and teaching well, at both high school and undergraduate levels. The few academies of the colony, which aspired to be at once high schools and university colleges, could therefore look with confidence to the inspiration of Aberdeen and Glasgow, St Andrews and Edinburgh, with their excellent professorial methods, derived originally from the Netherlands, and their tradition of sound scholarship. Furthermore, Scottish education was democratic, favouring the "open door" to advancement; a university course was the birthright of all, not, as so often in England, the recreation of a leisured class. In short, the Scottish system was particularly well suited to the needs of a mixed Cape society. The Scots desired a good education; the universities saw that they obtained it. As a distinguished Rector of your University pointed out a little over a century ago: "Youths come to the Scottish Universities ignorant, and are there taught. The majority of those who come to the English Universities come still more ignorant, and ignorant they go away". An echo of John Stuart Mill's assertion appeared in a Cape journal in 1880, when a correspondent called for yet more Scottish professors, for they were so much better than the products of Oxford and Cambridge.

I have already mentioned the influence of Scotland reflected in the London curriculum. In one field, that of engineering, the Scottish model was important direct, for the Board of Public Examiners instituted a diploma examination which followed closely the existing course of study laid down at Glasgow University. This early venture

in technical education, made in the days before the exploitation of South Africa's gold and diamond resources, attracted only two candidates, and was discontinued by the Cape University. It was not until the nineties that a fresh start was made in engineering at university level and here again Scotland was to make a noteworthy contribution. It was Glasgow, too, which provided one of South Africa's potential university colleges with its administrative organisation. Gill College at Somerset East, however, never really became a centre for higher education and after struggling for many years to keep its collegiate classes alive, having at one time more professors than undergraduate students, it was eventually forced to restrict its activities to the high school work which it has continued to undertake so successfully to this day.

Not only did Scotland provide a model for the Cape, it also encouraged young people from the colony to further their education abroad. Edinburgh was the first overseas university to extend any sort of recognition to the Cape University's certificates and it was to the Scottish capital that large numbers of South African students travelled in order to acquire qualifications long unobtainable at home. This was particularly the case in medicine, and for many years, from the early nineties onwards, there existed a flourishing association of South Africans studying at the University of Edinburg. Yet another Scottish influence deserves to be remembered in those distant days of small beginnings. It was an Edinburgh man, John Borthwick Gilchrist, who established by will an educational trust which provided scholarships for deserving students throughout the British world overseas to study either at University College, London or at Edinburgh. Gilchrist was a canny Scot indeed,for one of the assets which formed the basis of a not inconsiderable fortune was a piece of land adjoining Sydney, New South Wales, bought at the beginning of the last century for R33 (£17.10/-) but which eventually furnished the trust with a capital sum of over R140,000 (£70,000.) The Gilchrist scholarship was attached in the seventies to the London matriculation examination and was awarded to the future distinguished South African Catholic churchman and educator, Monsignor Frederick Charles Kolbe.

It is in the direct impact upon South African higher education of the Scotsmen who helped to administer the old examining University and to staff the teaching institutions that Scotland's great contribution is most obviously apparent. When the Cape Governor, Sir Henry Barkly, appointed the first administrative Council of the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1873, some half of the members

chosen were of Scottish background, while of the graduates selected, over 40 per cent had obtained their degrees from Scottish universities. Already to the Cape colleges and schools had come such men as John Brebner of Aberdeen, soon to move to Bloemfontein to direct the educational system of the Orange Free State, Roderick Noble from Edinburgh, who combined literary work and teaching in Cape Town, thereby gravely undermining an already frail constitution, and gently, kindly James Cameron, Madagascar-born son of a Scottish artisan missionary, who became the Cape University's first Registrar. The tradition was maintained over many years to come in a host of appointments in every faculty of the colleges of South Africa and in mentioning a few names here I am conscious of the injustice of passing over so many others of equal merit.

Among the Scottish professors at Stellenbosch were the Rev. Thomas Walker, "Oom Tommie" to several generations of philosophy students at the Victoria College and a Vice-Chancellor of the Cape University, the gentlemanly Highlander, A. Macdonald, "Ou Mackie" of the classical department, the mathematics professors, A. H. Mackenzie and J. T. Morrison, and William Thomson, another mathematician, with a fine vein of sarcasm, who followed Cameron as University Registrar and was later, as Sir William, Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. At the old South African College in Cape Town taught the triumvirate who did so much to bring the University of that city into being: the wise and popular "Sir Jock" Carruthers Beattie from the borders, a physicist who became the first Principal of the University of Cape Town, William Ritchie from Peterhead, professor of Latin and classical philology, College historian and another Vice-Chancellor of the Cape University, and Lawrence Crawford of Glasgow, who occupied the chair of pure mathematics. Gill College at the end of the nineteenth century had Robert MacWilliam for classics and English studies and James Craib for mathematics and natural philosophy, both Aberdeen graduates. A third Aberdonian, Alexander Petrie, long held the chair of classics at Pietermaritzburg, and the present University of Natal owes a great debt to the pioneering work of that eminent botanist from the Orkneys, John William Bews, whose tragically early death was a great loss to South African higher education. George Corstorphine from Edinburgh helped to lay the foundations of "Wits" in Johannesburg as Principal of the South African School of Mines and Technology in the city, having on his staff John Orr from Glasgow, who, at the age of 28, had been appointed to a chair of mechanical engineering a the earlier mine school in Kimberley. Two Edinburgh University

men were on the staff of the Transvaal University College, now the University of Pretoria, in the early days: John Purves and Alfred C. Paterson. The latter, a genial and witty relation of the Cape politician, John Paterson, was Rector from 1918 until 1924, when he left to play an active part in New Zealand university affairs. Many, too, were the Scots who helped to administer the old Cape University. Among the Vice-Chancellors not previously mentioned were Sir John Buchanan of legal fame, who worked to provide a more fitting home for the University in Queen Victoria Street, Cape Town, Sir Thomas Muir, mathematician and Cape Superintendent General of Education, and Sir Charles Abercrombie Smith, a protagonist of university reform for Scotland which would have reduced the ancient foundations to collegiate status in a federation which happily never came to pass. It is also worthy of note that when the examining University at length gave place to the federal University of South Africa, the Senate of the new institution turned to Scots professors in choosing its first three chairman, Corstorphine, Paterson and Bews.

There were Scots who defended the old examining University of the Cape of Good Hope, which with all its faults, did much to raise the standard of education in South Africa; there were others who fought tooth and nail to abolish it. When the full story comes to be written of the great struggle which resulted in the creation in 1916 of the Universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch and South Africa, not the least entertaining aspect must concern the long duel between the Edinburgh graduate, William Thomson, Registrar of the Cape University, and "Jock" Beattie, a fellow-Scot, though born just on the wrong side of the border, who represented the aspirations of the South African College for a teaching university. Although Thomson had the ear of leading members of the Union House of Assembly, not a few of whom had been his pupils at Stellenbosch, Beattie, an excellent mixer, enjoyed much support and generally had the press on his side. Further, through his friendship with Maitland Park of the *Cape Times*, he could count on the sympathetic understanding of the trustees of the generous Wernher-Beit bequest, for the loss of part of which Johannesburg has never quite forgiven Cape Town. Where Beattie perhaps had the edge on Thomson was in his membership of the Cape University Council, for in that way he was able to know many of his opponents' moves in advance. It was a contest worthy of the best traditions of clan warfare, or of those border raids which for so many centuries were a profitable pastime southern Scotland, with on this occasion the Wernher-Beit donation as prize.

I have purposely left the contribution made by the University

of St Andrews to higher education in South Africa out of the foregoing sketch of Scottish influences. In the circumstances, it deserves a special place of its own. Until the link with the college, now the University of Dundee, so liberally endowed by Mary Ann Baxter, who was related to W. Duncan Baxter, well-known in Cape public life and long a Council member of the University of Cape Town, St Andrews was much the smallest of the Scottish universities, with, at one stage at least in its long history, a rather uncertain future. If, in the early period of the Cape University's life, St Andrews does not figure prominently, several names connected with it are conspicuous in South Africa university affairs during the present century. John Clark, for example, an M. A. and LL.D. of your University, held with distinction the most important professorship of English language and literature in the South Africa of his day, the Arderne chair at Cape Town. It took a Scot and a St Andrews man to teach the youth of the Cape something of the beauty and infinite riches of the English tongue. Another graduate of St Andrews and also of Oxford, J. G. W. Ferguson, held the chair of education in Natal for thirty years from 1921, while T. M. Forsyth, the Bloemfontein philosopher, was a lecturer at your University before coming to South Africa. The eminent geologist, Samuel J. Shand, Stellenbosch professor and later of Columbia University, New York, was a St Andrews D.Sc.

The University of St. Andrews can also lay claim to an unusual distinction, for in addition to welcoming South African students to its courses in Scotland, it alone among the Scottish universities extended its examination facilities to students resident abroad. The L.L.A. (Lady Licentiate in Arts) examination established in 1877, when the moral dangers inherent in mixed classes and the possibility that women might not be mentally and physically capable of sustained intellectual effort at higher levels were yet subjects of earnest debate, was taken at many South African centres from the eighties onward. A course for this diploma was offered in pre-Union days by the Transvaal Technical Institute in Johannesburg, the School of Mines and the present University under an earlier name. For a brief period in the early nineties, divinity students at the theological seminary of the Dutch Reformed (N.G.) Church at Stellenbosch were able to graduate there in a field of study for which the Cape University did not then provide a degree course. Professor J. I. Marais, an honorary D.D. of St Andrews, and Professor Walker did much to arrange this distant link with your University, and before the scheme was brought to an end by an ordinance of the Scottish

Universities Commissioners, several students succeeded in obtaining the B.D., among them Professor N. J. Brümmer of Stellenbosch and the Rev. P. B. J. Stofberg, formerly the Dutch Reformed (N.G.) Church minister at Boksburg.

For the earlier period, I confess that I mention St Andrews with some hesitation. One distinguished graduate of your University, active on the colonial educational scene before the coming of the Cape University, was James Adamson, minister of the Presbyterian Church in Cape Town and professor at the South African College. He left that institution in 1850, however, and in the succession lists of the Cape University during its first twenty-five years of existence, the names of your graduates are few indeed. Most, too, are merely inscribed as members of Convocation, that not very effective congregation of graduates home and colonial who periodically elected a proportion of University Council members, chose the Chancellor and passed resolutions, carrying little weight with the governing body, on matters of policy. These men included William H. Ross, sometime Table Bay health officer and surgeon-superintendent of the old Robben Island asylum, J. Inglis, the Paarl schoolmaster, and James Key, who added to his arts and medical qualifications from St Andrews by successfully obtaining a Cape law degree. However, the first Council of the University contains the names of two men with St. Andrews degrees, Peter Gordon Stewart and Henry Anderson Ebden. Both these gentlemen were Rondebosch medical practitioners, the former Scots-born, the latter a Cape-born member of the well-known English merchant family there. Alas, not even the stuanchest friend of St. Andrews would claim that the University was, in the mid-nineteenth century, famed for its medical training. It was, in fact, roundly condemned by one of the Scottish university commissions of that century of reform for conferring, with no medical faculty of its own, more degrees in medicine than any university in the United Kingdom. I need not deal at length with the chaotic state of medical training and licensing in Britain before the Medical Act of 1858; suffice it to say that standards in the earlier part of the century were very variable, and that training seems to have consisted mainly in walking the wards of a hospital, attending one of the many schools of medicine which flourished in every big city and appearing for an hour's *viva voce* examination before one or other of the two score and more licensing authorities in the country. The schools varied considerably in standing; some enjoyed no very great reputation and it was unfortunate that one of the better ones in Dublin began its life in the hired rooms of a washerwoman's house which bore the not inappropriate sign over the front door: "Mangling done here".

Although St Andrews had in 1826 instituted stricter regulations for medical degrees than had previously obtained, now requiring evidence of a sound general education, adequate medical training and an examination by the University, it did not provide a full medical course until the conjoint school of the nineties, and I am reasonably confident that neither Dr. Stewart nor Dr. Ebden actually studied there. However, as they are the first graduates of St Andrews to play a part in the development of higher education in this country after the foundation of the Cape University, a few words about them may not come amiss. Both were well-liked general practitioners of high social standing, their impressive, heavily bearded faces lending dignity to that august body which controlled the profession at the Cape, the Colonial Medical Committee, of which both were members and Ebden long the President. If they appear in an early photograph as typically Victorian "solid citizens", they seem to have been in reality of very different character. It was said of their "rounds" that Ebden visited his patients far too often and Stewart not frequently enough, but I believe that this has ever proved a problem which few doctors have been able to solve to everyone's satisfaction. Ebden, who had earlier served in the Bengal army, was evidently the more serious-minded of the two; Stewart had the reputation of possessing a lively sense of humour and certain endearing eccentricities. It was said of him, for example, that he would never allow a fellow-doctor to apply a stethoscope to his chest in case someting wrong should be discovered of which Stewart had not been aware. Working in the same area of Cape Town, they would often consult together on cases. It is reported that on one occasion when Ebden called Stewart in, the latter could not be persuaded to discuss the patient's condition at all, as he was so overcome by the appearance of a good lady whose beauty had been reported to him that all he could find to say about her, now that he had met her professionally, was that she was the ugliest woman he had ever seen in his life. Peter Stewart at length retired to his native Scotland where he died from the effects of a chill caught while trout-fishing in that treacherous northern climate, but Ebden remained at the Cape and continued to take an active interest for a number of years in the affairs of the Cape University, campaigning unsuccessfully for the extension of the courses offered to include medical degrees. This development had to await the establishment of a teaching university, however, although the South African College began lectures in anatomy and physiology in 1911, under Robert Black Thomson and William A. Jully, both from Edinburgh.

This sketch of some of the influences of Scotland on universitv

work in South Africa has inevitably left much unsaid and necessarily omitted the name of many a Scot who has given good service to this country's higher educational system. I hope, however, that these remarks of mine have made it clear that the Scottish contribution, as befits a land which has always enjoyed the deserved reputation of appreciating that an educated population makes a great nation in the truest sense, has left an indelible mark on the pattern of university development in South Africa.

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