

# INTERNATIONAL CONCILIATION

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## CECIL RHODES AND HIS SCHOLARS AS FACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL CONCILIATION



BY

F. J. WYLIE

Oxford Secretary to the Rhodes Trustees

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American Association for International Conciliation  
Sub-station 84 (501 West 116th Street)  
New York City

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## CECIL RHODES AND HIS SCHOLARS AS FACTORS IN INTERNATIONAL CONCILIATION

Cecil Rhodes was still a young man—not more than 24—when, in a paper of which Mr. Stead has given us the substance in his little book “The Last Will and Testament of Cecil J. Rhodes,” he attempted to formulate the ideas which should govern his life.

“Service of my country,” “betterment of the human race,” “furtherance of the British Empire,” “the end of all wars”—these are some of the phrases that catch the eye in this early document.

And in a Will which he drafted about the same time, and of which also Mr. Stead has given us some account, we find the same note—“extension of British rule,” “restoration of Anglo-Saxon unity,” “the foundation of so great a Power as to hereafter render wars impossible and promote the best interests of humanity.”

These are the ideas for which, while little more than an undergraduate, Cecil Rhodes had determined that he would live and work: and they do not differ in essentials from the ideas which speak to us from the document in which, much later in life, his maturer soul found expression, the Will which established the Scholarships. A difference there is; but not one that touches the fundamental spirit of the thing. Something of the local character has disappeared: a larger experience has modified the predominantly British tone of the first expression: but in essence the ideal

remains the same—the good of his country and the good of humanity.

It was characteristic of his genius, and is some explanation of his career, that the two should present themselves to him as no more than different aspects of the same ideal. For his was essentially a concrete mind. Dreamer in a sense he was: for he possessed in rare abundance the imaginative stuff of which poets, discoverers, philosophers are made. But behind his dreaming, or within it, moved the force which turns men's dreaming into action. We may call that, if we will, a quality of character rather than of mind. But we know in the end that these distinctions are provisional only, and academic, and that, in the chemistry of the living soul, mind and character somehow fuse, and make an individual. And of Cecil Rhodes' personality it is no contradiction, but the barest truth, to say that it was at once imaginative and practical: and that in consequence his thinking, however wide in reach, remained to the last concrete. There have been philosophies which have taught, in one form or another, that the more immediate good bars the way to the more ultimate—that the part is the worst enemy of the whole. But so abstract and timid a philosophy was little congenial to the mind of Cecil Rhodes. For him there was no whole except in the parts, and no ideal which did not realize itself in something near and personal.

If we apply this to our present interest, we may certainly say that for him Internationalism was not an ideal to be reached through the denial of Nationalism. "Pro patria per orbis concordiam." It is a notable and a pregnant motto that the Association for pro-

moting International Conciliation has chosen: it is one, moreover, within which the thought of Cecil Rhodes would have moved freely. Only, he would, I think, have insisted that we must be clear as to its emphasis and significance; that we must not interpret it as suggesting that the true nationalism is internationalism; he would have insisted that the approach must be the other way, through the nation to the brotherhood of man; *ita pro patria ut pro orbis concordia*. In his mind the service of humanity and the service of country ran together as a common fount of inspiration, and we should be untrue to his thought if we attempted to divide them. They are the two forms under which at different moments, or rather from different angles, he envisaged, with quite remarkable consistency, the thing most worth living for, the end of his own personal endeavor.

And he had a very definite and characteristic conception of the means through which he could best further this end. He would do what lay in his power to extend the area within which a special type of character prevailed.\* Character was to be the instrument: for character determines the way in which men approach the problems of society and government, and in the end dictates the solution at which they arrive.

And, inevitably, the type of character which he wished to perpetuate was the type he knew as British—or rather, as he later came to think of it, as Anglo-Saxon. For that type stood, in his belief, for the principles upon which the well-being of nations depends, the principles of justice, liberty, and peace.

Yes, Peace. Not only does the document in which, as early as 1877, he outlined his ideal, connect the

extension of British rule with "the end of all wars," but the Will of the same year, to which I have already alluded, gives the supreme object to which he would desire his wealth to be devoted as "the foundation of so great a Power as to hereafter render wars impossible." And to this end he suggests the formation of a secret society after the Jesuit model, co-extensive with the British Empire, preaching imperial ideas, and effecting its objects through the control of education.

Fourteen years later, in 1891, he sent to Mr. Stead a letter in which he formulates, roughly but unmistakably, what we may well call his creed. The centre of that creed is once more a secret society, and the sum and end of it all is the peace of the world, with a single language universal and triumphant.

Eight years later he drew up his last Will, the Will which founds the Scholarships.

The main provisions of that Will are so well known that I need not here do more than briefly recapitulate them. The bulk of his wealth Mr. Rhodes left to seven trustees, directing them to establish scholarships, tenable for three years, at the University of Oxford, for which should be eligible:

- (1) Colonists from different portions of the British Empire.
- (2) Students from the United States of America.
- (3) Germans.

Colonists are to be brought to Oxford "for instilling into their minds the advantage to the Colonies as well as to the United Kingdom of the retention of the unity of the Empire." Americans are to be included

in the scheme in order "to encourage and foster an appreciation of the advantages which I implicitly believe will result from the union of the English-speaking peoples throughout the world, and to encourage in the students of the United States of North America who will benefit from the scholarships . . . . . an attachment to the country from which they have sprung, but without, I hope, withdrawing them or their sympathies from the land of their adoption or birth." And, finally, fifteen scholarships are assigned, by codicil, to Germany, because "an understanding between the three great powers will render war impossible, and educational relations make the strongest ties."

If we compare this Will with the documents in which Mr. Rhodes gave earlier expression to his beliefs and aspirations, we can only feel that his thought has grown and expanded, even while remaining in one sense the same. It has not altered in fundamentals, for the same ideas are there, dominating the whole: peace triumphant over war; education making for the union of peoples; international sympathy developing, not in spite of, but *through*, national loyalty. But the form which the ideal takes has undergone some change. In the first place, it is now less a question of "British rule" than of "Anglo-Saxon union." The ideal now is one of confederation, not of "absorption within the British Empire." In the second place, Germany for the first time comes within the scheme. The occasion for this addition may have been accidental, the recognition, so he tells us in the codicil, of English as a compulsory subject in German schools: but the real cause must be looked for in something deeper, in some underlying sense of the ultimate affinities of the

German-speaking and the English-speaking peoples—of a common, or at least of a similar, ideal working itself out in the character and history of the three great branches of the Teutonic family.

It may be that Germany never entered so completely into the heart of Mr. Rhodes' dream as did the United States of America: that his dream remained, as a dream, essentially Anglo-Saxon in character. But dreams have in the end to compromise with facts; and Mr. Rhodes at grip with the facts came, apparently, to feel that the destiny of the German race was sufficiently allied to that of the English-speaking peoples to make coöperation between the two for a common end a genuine possibility. Perhaps also he may have come to regard his original vision of the world dominated by one people, and attaining to peace in that way, as, if not fanciful, at least remote; to remind himself that it might be worth while to do something in the meantime to forward the great ideal of justice, liberty and peace, by promoting the coöperation of peoples the similarity of whose history, traditions and ideals might justify the experiment.

And if the extension of the scholarships to Germany sacrificed something of his original dream, the sacrifice brings its own compensation. For it plants the scheme more broadly on the roots of things: it brings us one stage nearer recognition of the fact that the peace of the world is destined to come, not sooner merely, but more wholesomely even, and more irrevocably, through the concerted action of different peoples, whose differences have been merged in a common hunger for justice and peace, than through the predominance in the world of any one Power. It may

be that the fifteen German scholarships make no great show beside the ninety-six American and sixty (or, as they now are, seventy-eight) Colonial. But they have, I think, a significance of their own, of which number is no measure.

So much for the ideals and aspirations of Cecil Rhodes, as they shaped themselves in his brain, and developed, and came in the end to express themselves in the establishment of the scholarships. He must be cold whose blood moves no faster for the splendour of this idea.

I turn to Cecil Rhodes' scholars, to that body of men through whom his ideals are trying to secure to themselves a place and an influence in the world. Who so obvious as they to preach the gospel of international conciliation? It might almost be said that a scholar whose spirit does not answer to the call of the motto "Pro patria per orbis concordiam" is a failure for Cecil Rhodes; a failure for his idealism, and for the efforts which he has very visibly made to translate that idealism into the language of practical life. This does not mean, of course, that a Rhodes Scholar commits himself to any particular belief or doctrine. Election to a scholarship is not initiation into a society admission to which is conditional on the profession of a certain creed. All that Mr. Rhodes demands is that in the selection of his scholars weight be attached to such qualities of mind and character as are likely, in his view, when brought under appropriate influences, to develop a special attitude towards life, in particular a special attitude with regard to social service and the mutual relations of peoples.

But the influence of circumstance on disposition, however ultimately inevitable, is yet not for us calculable beyond the chance of disappointment: and it may be that, in one case or another, the direct contact with the life and thought of other peoples, of which these scholarships are the opportunity, will not issue in widened sympathies, will not generate a zeal for the service of man, will not bring any nearer to us the peace of nations. Well, we can do no more in that case than record a failure—a failure, that is, of Mr. Rhodes' idea, and of the influences upon which he relied. For a Rhodes Scholar who is not willing, on his way through the world, to do his share in the work of reconciling devotion to country with loyalty to the cause of peace is in one sense untrue to the Rhodes ideal: untrue, that is, not in the sense that he is false to any professions of his own—for he has made none—but in the sense, simply, that he was meant (may we not say?), in the great hope of Mr. Rhodes, to grow to a certain attitude or outlook on things, and has not done so.

We have seen that it was an idea constantly present to Mr. Rhodes that he might found a society copied from the Society of Jesus—"a secret society," he writes in 1891, "gradually absorbing the wealth of the world, to be devoted to this object," viz.: "to securing the peace of the world for all eternity." His idea may not have been destined to realize itself in just the form of which he dreamed. That after all is a small matter. The bigger a man's idea, the less can he tell what time may make of it. That is the penalty he must pay for the privilege of giving birth to something which has life in it.

But it may well be that in the process of the years the Rhodes society shall yet appear: not, in the event, as a secret society, nor composed of millionaires, nor expressing itself necessarily in any definite organization, but for all that a very real and living "society," a fellowship of men who have a common experience and are inspired by a common hope, of men who in partaking of the Rhodes benefaction have entered also into the inheritance of the Rhodes ideals; a fellowship, in one word, of his Scholars.

It is pertinent to ask how Mr. Rhodes hoped to produce through the scholarships the results at which he aimed. Well: that is all part of the idealism of the man, part of his gorgeous optimism. In the hasty judgment of the world, ignorant of much which could only become matter of public knowledge after his death, Mr. Rhodes' name stood for cynicism, perhaps for materialism. Those who knew the real man protested, for the most part in vain, that no judgment could more cruelly misjudge: and history is already writing its endorsement of the judgment of his friends.

Assuredly, no cynic ever took his dreams as seriously as Cecil Rhodes took his. Nor would cynicism ever have suggested to him that in bringing together in Oxford year after year some 200 young men, that they might associate with each other and with others of their kind, and be brought within the reach of certain influences and traditions, he was putting his hand to a work which should contribute to the peace and happiness of the world. Yet that is, in all literalness, what Cecil Rhodes believed, with a simplicity of conviction which might have been comic if it had not

succeeded in being magnificent. He believed that it is in the long run ignorance alone that divides: that knowledge undermines race prejudice, and weakens, if it cannot wholly dissipate, the hatred of nations. And it is just of mutual knowledge that a Rhodes scholarship is the almost unique opportunity. It gives a man, at an important moment of his life, three years of contact with new institutions, new types of character, new ways of looking at things. It gives him, quite apart from the time he spends at Oxford, opportunities of learning something of the literature and the life of European peoples; or perhaps, not to be immodest in our pretensions, we had better say, of some one European people. It gives him, indeed, more than that. For it is the opportunity at once of travel and of something more. Travel is much in education, but not the whole. And certainly from the point of view of the sympathetic understanding of our neighbors, the knowledge which travel gives is at the best incomplete. Illuminating it may be, but its light is still upon the surface. We need to supplement it with something more intimate and penetrating; something which only friendship can give. Travel widens the outlook, and brushes away the insularity that blurs the vision of so many, even of those whose homes are not in islands; but its work is preparatory and cathartic; and when prejudices are cleared away, it still remains for insight and understanding to come in and occupy their place. But the surest way to insight, perhaps even the only sure way, is through friendships. And a Rhodes Scholar who spends three years in the rare intimacy which Oxford College life encourages can hardly fail to form just such friend-

ships—friendships that count because they open the way to understanding.

It will indeed be strangely disappointing if a Rhodes scholarship does not make at least for sanity of judgment and breadth of sympathy.

We have heard sometimes of the risk of “denationalizing” a college boy by sending him for three years to Europe. Now a Rhodes scholarship, like other good things, admits of abuse; carries, in that sense, its own risks. But the particular risk suggested, viz. : that a man may find himself on his return unfitted for taking his place promptly and effectively in the life for which he has nominally been preparing, is, surely, so small that we can afford to disregard it. It may be an argument against sending to Oxford a man who has had no experience of college life at home. But if men are selected for the scholarships who have already found their manhood, and realized their citizenship, in their own country, the experience they gain elsewhere should fall into place, and, so far from disturbing them, should only fit them the better for efficient membership of the society within which their life’s work lies.

It has seemed natural here to speak mainly of what the Rhodes Scholar may get from his scholarship. But that is far from being the only side to it. He gives as well as gets. The influence, however, of individuals upon the tone of a society is as subtle as it is leisurely; and there is so much of hazard in any premature attempt to connect results with conditions that one shrinks from dogmatism. I will therefore content myself with saying that I believe the great majority of those who know the younger Oxford of

to-day would agree, both that it has become in these recent years more catholic in its sympathies and broader in its outlook, and that the contribution of the Rhodes Scholars to that result has been material if unobtrusive. This aspect of the question, however, is away from my present purpose, which has been partly to ascertain whether the principles of international conciliation are at one with the ideas which inspired Mr. Rhodes, and partly to consider how far the actual conditions under which the Rhodes scholarships are held justify us in hoping that those who may have enjoyed them will be among the men whose lives are found, in the issue, to have done something, however modest, for the advancement of the cause of Justice and Peace in the world.

For my own part—if I may be allowed to close with a personal expression of belief—the consideration of these questions leaves me with the conviction that always among the forces making for the harmony of peoples ought to be found, and will be found, the Cecil Rhodes Foundation.

F. J. WYLIE

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