

Cecil John Rhodes

Cecil John Rhodes, a parson's son, was seventeen years old in 1870 when he was forced to seek refuge from the English climate by joining one of his eight brothers on a farm in South Africa. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley had lured so many adventurers that Rhodes himself was engulfed in the rush, starting out with an oxcart carrying "a bucket and a spade, several volumes of the classics, and a Greek lexicon."

Immediate success in the diamond mines revived Cecil Rhodes's dream of attending the University of Oxford. He was admitted to Oriel College in October, 1873. His plan was to spend the usual three years taking examinations leading to the pass B. A. degree rather than try to meet the more difficult requirements for the honors degree. His enthusiasm to get on with the job was cut short after a few months, however, when his physician told him his heart and lungs were no match for the unfavorable Oxford climate and he had better return to the bracing air and sunshine of South Africa — with "not six months to live."

Fortunately, Rhodes and his dream were not stifled; he staged an amazing comeback. During the next eight years he alternated between attend-

ing Oxford summer terms and exercising his business talents in the diamond fields. During this period he developed his ideas on such problems as the unification of the Dutch and English people in South Africa, the consolidation of the British Empire, closer ties among English-speaking peoples, and the promotion of world peace.

Two results flowed from such activities. First, Oxford conferred upon him B. A. and M. A. degrees in 1881 and the D. C. L. in 1899, after his rise to political prominence. Second, Rhodes incorporated his ideals in a series of six wills. He died near Cape Town on March 26, 1902, and was buried two thousand miles away in the Matopos Hills of Rhodesia. His last will and testament revealed a project for scholarships to Oxford for students chosen from British colonies and dominions, American states and territories, and the German Empire. Rhodes hoped through these educational scholarships to develop an "understanding between the three Great Powers" that would "render war impossible." To the successful outcome of the experiment Rhodes dedicated the bulk of his fortune — £2,000,000, an endowment which had almost doubled by 1952.

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