CHAPTER XII

PRINCIPALSHIP OF ERIC DICKENSON
(1945—1947)

Sondhi was succeeded by Eric Dickenson, the senior-most member of the teaching staff. On being congratulated by a pupil on promotion to principalship, Dickenson replied, 'you have lost a good professor and got a bad principal'. Dickenson's principalship lasted for less than two years. He is best remembered by his students for his modest manner, personal charm, artistic outlook and complete absence of racial consciousness. He owned an impressive collection of works of art and his home was jocularly called the Junior Lahore Museum.

There were very few changes in the teaching staff of the College during the days of Dickenson. A. C. Joshi, who filled the professorship of Botany in succession to S. L. Ghose, was to rise later to the Vice-Chancellorship of the East Punjab University in India. The teaching strength of physical sciences was increased by the addition of five teachers, two in Physics and three in Chemistry.

Sondhi had successfully fought the epidemic of numbers. He had managed to reduce the College population from 1300 to 1050. This achievement was made possible by war conditions which sent thousands of young men to army instead of colleges. Those who did come to the College showed a marked preference for the study of Science. A degree in Science commanded a higher market price and was a shorter cut to 'the bread and butter goal.' The Arts classes looked comparatively deserted. Dickenson felt unhappy at
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this situation. The job of presiding over a college of robots was not suited to his artistic temperament. He, therefore, pleaded for the creation of a separate science college as the activities of an Arts college were mere distractions for science students. Dickenson tried to preserve the character of the institution as a Liberal Arts college by larger Arts admissions. The ingress of students successfully claiming admission on the strength of direct or indirect military connections further swelled the College population.

The only notable expansion of the period was the introduction of Honours in Political Science. This affiliation was treated to have lapsed in 1947 and had to be revived in 1954. Qazi Muhammad Aslam was, like G. C. Chatterji, advocating a separate Department of Psychology, a proposal that could not be implemented till 1962. The number of French reading pupils was doubled. A mentionable examination success was achieved by Ram Parkash Bamba who obtained 600/600 marks in the M.A. Mathematics Examination in 1946.

The Union celebrated its Diamond Jubilee on 31 January and 1 February, 1947, by holding all-India debates in Urdu and English and a symposium on the ideals of college life. There was some talk of revising the constitution of the Union. But lovers of tradition successfully mobilized opposition to the proposal. 'Where there is fuss, there is a woman' was the subject of the best attended debate held in the fall of 1946. This was practically boycotted by women students. Boys were the plaintiffs, the defendants and the judges. Only two professors joined the staff versus students debate which declared matrimony to be a folly. The casual attitude of the teachers was resented by a correspondent of The Ravi who complained that the professors
were keeping the boys at arm's length. Other subjects debated were: 'the use of atomic energy in war is unjustifiable'; 'planning is incompatible with democracy'; 'what we need today is not less but more of science'; 'it pays to be handsome in life.'

A trophy to be awarded annually to the winners of an all-India debate held under the auspices of the College Union was donated by Fl.-Lieut. Roop Chand, an old boy, in the memory of his father. The death anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai was celebrated by holding a debate in November, 1946. This was probably the first occasion when the Union showed respect for the memory of a 'rebel' of British rule.

While most of the College societies were inactive, unprecedented political developments provoked the members of the Historical and Political Science societies to apply their learning and ingenuity to the facts of contemporary situation. A teacher of Political Science sketched an incredible scheme for the Balkanization of the sub-continent. Members of the Local History Society, formed under the guidance of Chaman Lal Kapur, paid weekly visits to the Museum and sites of ancient and medieval monuments in and around Lahore. These visits were followed by talks on painting and sculpture. The Sondhi Translation Society published a collection of Urdu translations of Russian short stories. The Discussion Group examined such subjects as the nature of art, the idea of progress in history and the characteristics of western music. The Urdu Majlis reappeared as Majlis-i-Iqbal. The Physics Circle was inaugurated to arrange discussions on problems relating to this branch of Science. It is curious that the East and West Society, the Discussion Group and the Physics Circle did not survive the Partition. The size of The Ravi had been curtailed and it was issued only twice during the
academic year 1945-46. With riots flaring up in the city every now and then, the social life of the College came to a standstill. Political situation was still fluid when Dickenson retired from service in March, 1947, and was succeeded by Ahmad Shah Bokhari who had relinquished the charge of Controller in the All-India Radio some weeks earlier.