A dinner was given to him by more than two hundred of his friends on November 10, at Willis's Rooms, at which his reception was most enthusiastic, and which gave him extreme pleasure. Whenever he appeared on any public occasion, as at a scientific meeting or at a public dinner, or was recognized by any chance assemblage of people, he invariably received an unmistakably enthusiastic welcome, which contrasted strangely with the generally hostile attitude of political speakers and of the Press.

In November he learnt that he had been chosen Chancellor of the Cape University. Dr. Dale, the Vice-Chancellor, in writing to announce it, said: "We are still feeling the impetus which your own words and presence imparted to our Art Machinery. . . . The hiatus caused by your departure is felt more keenly every day." In March, 1882, a hospital, built in the Colony at East London, was by acclamation named after him the "Frere Hospital."

As time went on and troubles gathered in South Africa, many of the leading colonists were in frequent correspondence with him, in the hope of his being able to make the true state of affairs known to the British Government and to the public. He made a point of transmitting to the Colonial Office any information which reached him; and from time to time he wrote letters on the subject to the daily papers, and published articles in the magazines. "You can have little idea," he writes to Mr. R. W. Murray (October 21), "of the pertinacity of the ultra-Radicals and pseudo-humanitarians, or of the extent to which they have poisoned our English opinion by false statement of fact." "I do not find the ignorance at all wilful," he writes (January 26, 1881) to Mr. Gordon Sprigg; "people generally are glad to get information, but they do not know where to go for it, and that which comes to them in authentic Blue-books is merely raw material, not