

CONVOCATION.

CONVOCATION HALL has rarely been filled with a better audience than were present at the opening of the fifty-fourth session of Queen's on the evening of University Day. Every available seat was occupied (which is something unusual at the fall Convocation), and the gallery was so quickly filled by students that a large proportion of them were forced to look for seats in the body of the Hall.

The Principal presided, and after prayer by Rev. Dr. Bell, presented their scholarships to the successful competitors at the matriculation examinations in July. Then followed the presentation of prizes to the winning athletes of the day's sports, amid the customary pertinent and complimentary remarks from the gallery.

Prof. Dupuis, the Dean of the new Faculty of Practical Science, then delivered his inaugural address.

PROF. DUPUIS' ADDRESS.

The question as to what should constitute a university course, or rather as to what subjects should be taught in connection with a university, has often been a matter of thought and discussion by those having to do with higher educational matters.

It appears to me that our answer to the question must take into consideration so many things which are constantly undergoing a process of evolutionary development that it cannot be made applicable to all conditions and to all times.

A university has had in all ages, and always must have, reference to the state of civilization of the people for which it is intended, and also to some extent to the state of civilization of the leading nations of the world; it must have reference to the progress of society and to the wants and needs of the people; and it usually has more or less reference to the religious ideas of the people.

It may not be amiss then, as an introduction to what I have to say, to sketch briefly the rise of the university.

It is useless to ask the date when the first school or academy, or whatever you have a mind to call it, came into existence. Probably there never was a first school, but like most good things in man's history, the school was a gradual evolution from parental instruction, or something of like kind.

We have some idea, however, of what was taught in first historical schools of the earlier civilization. It was subjects related to mathematics, and especially geometry. Geometry formed the foundation of the most of Egyptian and early Greek education; and in some cases it constituted also the superstructure and even the cope-stone.

In those early days, long before the invention of the decimal system of notation, the man who could

multiply together numbers rising into the thousands was a scholar, and he who could perform a corresponding division was a great scholar—the result of which was that those ancient people who developed mathematics to any particular extent did so along the line of the synthetic geometry.

The first account which we have of any of the scholars of Egypt is found in the Rhind Papyrus. Ahmes, who lived somewhere before 2000 B.C. and 1500 B.C., was a mathematician and a scholar of Egypt, and he has left us a considerable portion of his work. This work is believed, however, to be a copy, with emendations, of a much older treatise of about 3400 B.C.

Ahmes' work deals with arithmetic and geometry in so far as he knew them, and it is certain that he was acquainted with the geometrical relations of the sides of a rightangled triangle, the discovery of which was afterwards wrongly attributed to Pythagoras, and was known under the name of the Pythagorean problem.

Thales, one of the seven sages of Greece, and of Phœnician origin, was an engineer and geometer who founded the first school of mathematics in Greece, about 600 B.C. So also Pythagoras, Democritus, Hippocrates and Plato were geometers first and philosophers afterwards. To these early students and to the followers of the schools which they founded geometry was the divine science, the introduction to all subsequent education, and the means by which they hoped to gain some insight into the great problems of nature and of mind.

Even so late as the fourth century after Christ the school at Alexandria was celebrated for its geometrical teaching under Hypatia, the daughter of Theon.

This notable and noble woman up to the time of her death at the hands of a fanatical Christian mob, occupied the chair of mathematics which was so ably filled by the immortal Euclid about 600 years before.

Soon after the death of Hypatia the Alexandrine University was closed because the Christians of the time did not want heathen teaching or heathen knowledge, and Greek geometry and Greek philosophy ceased to be taught in Christian countries, and was not introduced again for something near a thousand years. But the mathematics did not fare as badly as the philosophy, for the former was taken up and pursued by the Hindoos, and later on by the Arabs and Moors.

During the whole of this long period in Western Europe the university was practically the Church, and the Church was the university. They had a smattering of arithmetic and a smattering of geometry, and a smattering of astronomy founded upon mistaken interpretations of Scripture rather than