

It is remarkable that the silk gown of the Bench and Bar owes its original use to its having been adopted as a form of mourning at the death of an English Sovereign. Up to the end of the seventeenth century, with the exception of the prescribed dress of the judges and serjeants, no custom was officially recognized in the courts of justice other than that in ordinary use in the halls of the Inns of Court—the cloth or stuff gown of the utter barrister, and the one with black velvet and tufts of silk worn by the readers and benchers—and this continued invariably to be the constant dress of an advocate till the death of Queen Mary in 1694, at which time the present silk gown was introduced as mourning, and, having been found more convenient and less troublesome than the other, has since been continued. The late Sir Frederick Pollock is said to have expressed an opinion in reference to the ordinary costume of the Bar that the Bench and Bar went into mourning at the death of Queen Anne, and have so remained ever since. The court dress—black silk gowns and large wigs—if not first brought into use at the funeral of Queen Anne, certainly came into fashion only about the time of the death of her elder sister, Queen Mary: (See Pulling's *Order of the Coif*, pp. 223-224.)—*Law Times*.

One of the most entertaining legal opinions we have ever encountered was that written by Mr. Justice Irving G. Vann of the New York Court of Appeals in the case of *Smith v. United States Casualty Company*, decided Feb. 8, 1910. This opinion, which was not less able than interesting, was announced in an insurance case, the court upholding without a dissenting voice the common law right of a man to change his name, and his right to recover a policy of insurance issued to him under an assumed name:—

“The history of literature and art furnishes many examples of men who abandoned the names of their youth and chose the one made illustrious by their writings or paintings. Melancthon's family name was Schwartzerde, meaning black earth, but as soon as his literary talents developed and he began to forecast his future he changed it to the classical synonym by which he is known to history.