

ROUND THE TABLE.

The sanctum table has lately had the honor of having laid on it a copy—the only copy, in all likelihood, to be obtained now—of the “Rules of Convocation of the University of Toronto,” prior to 1853. It is divided into fourteen titles, in which provision is made for the due ordering of all things pertaining to the *Domum Convocationis*,—the House of Convocation, as it is, being interpreted. The progress of our university has been along lines diverging somewhat from those laid down by the early fathers; and a few extracts from the old pamphlet may not be uninteresting to the graduate and undergraduate readers of THE VARSITY.

Title I, § 2, provided that the Chancellor, before assuming his place in Convocation, shall take the following engagements before the Vice-Chancellor, or Senior Proctor, and shall receive from him the insignia of office:—

(1.) “I do sincerely promise that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, as lawful Sovereign of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of this Province dependent on and belonging to the said Kingdom; and that I will defend her to the utmost of my power against all traitorous conspiracies or attempts whatsoever, which shall be made against her person, crown and dignity; and that I will do my utmost endeavour to disclose and make known to Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, all treasons and traitorous conspiracies, and attempts; which I shall know to be against her or any of them; and all this I do promise without any equivocation, mental evasion or secret reservation, and renouncing all pardons and dispensations from any person or power whatsoever to the contrary.”

(2.) “Tu dabis fidem, quod ea omnia fideliter exequeris, quae ad officium Cellarii spectant.” Answer, “Do.”

(3.) “Tu dabis fidem ad observanda omnia statuta, privilegia, consuetudines ac libertates istius Universitatis.” Answer, “Do.”

It is to be observed that if the Chancellor were afflicted with a cold in the head, his answers would be unqualified negatives in the vernacular.

Title II, § 3, provides that the Deans shall exercise the functions and discharge the duties of Proctors, according to the following rotation:—

“In Michaelmas Term the Deans of Law and Medicine.
In Hilary Term the Deans of Law and Arts.
In Easter Term the Deans of Medicine and Arts.”

By the eleventh subsection of the fifth Title it is provided that “The full academical habit shall be worn at all open meetings of Convocation; and no member shall attend other meetings without some academical habit to which he may be entitled.”

It is a very rare thing nowadays to see an undergraduate bring with him to Convocation a full academical habit, except that of roaring out *validis lateribus* the time-honoured songs,—time, however, being the last thing thought of.

The sixth Title is of Precedence. § 1. The members of Convocation take rank and precedence in the following order:—

1, Chancellor; 2, Vice chancellor; 3, President; 4, Pro-Vice-Chancellor; 5, Proctors; 6, Professors, according to the dates of their appointments; 7, D.C.L.; 8, M.D.; 9, M.A.; 10, B.C.L.; 11, M.B.; 12, C.M.

In the second subsection of this Title, and the greater part of the eleventh Title distinctions are drawn with an admirable fineness seldom met with out of Burke's Peerage.

Title VIII, “Of admission to a seat in Convocation,” reads thus:—

§ 1. The members of Convocation shall wait upon the Senior Proctor previously to taking their places in the house for the first time.

§ 2. The members shall be presented to the presiding officer by the deans of their respective faculties; and previously to admission to their seat, shall take the first engagement contained in Title I, before the Junior Proctor, and the third before the Senior Proctor.

§ 3. When these engagements shall have been taken, the officer presiding shall admit the person in these words:—

“Domine (or Domine Magister or Doctor) ego admitto te in haec domum convocationis.”

Title IX. is “Of Graces for Degrees,” and yet it was more than thirty years before our university did honour to its first mistress of arts!

Title XI, § 9, “Of Conferring Degrees,” read thus:—

“Each graduate, after admission, shall sign his name in the register of Convocation; he shall then retire to the Vestibule, and, having arranged himself in the full habit of his degree, shall re-enter the Hall of Convocation, make his obeisance to the officer presiding, and repair to the place assigned to him.”

The last Title treats “Of Penalties.”

§ 1. “The penalties to which members of Convocation shall be liable are fines, suspension or exclusion.

§ 2. These penalties shall be imposed by the presiding officer and Proctors conjointly; and the offences of which these officers shall take

cognizance shall be, absence without reasonable excuse, and irregular conduct during any meeting of convocation.

§ 3. The amount of fine shall not exceed one pound, nor the period of suspension one term, unless with the consent of the majority of members of the house present; which consent shall also be required in every case of exclusion.”

One cannot but regret the changes which so distinctively mark off our time from the good old days when these rules were the law. One would forego a great deal, could he say to the fellow-gownsmen on the lawn, “Haven't a blessed shilling about me, old chap! The Senior Proc has just done out of fi' pun ten damages for”—well, well, wouldn't it all be so delightfully like Oxford, don't you know?

Words can scarce depict the agitation in our midst these last two weeks. The sanctum has re-echoed with the thunder of debate and din of wordy strife. Indeed, such was the turmoil that I half expected that the Table, solid and substantial as it is, would betake itself to a more tranquil scene. What a loss were that, my countrymen! No more of our pleasant saunterings along the highways and by-ways of literature; no more halting by the way, as fancy might prompt, to pluck some quaint conceit of other days; no more laughter at merry jest and sober reflection on subject grave and weighty. The whole trouble grew out of certain editorial utterances on a subject of never-failing interest—Did I hear any of you say scholarships? Not so fast, my impetuous friend, you are quite mistaken; better wait another time until I have done. You did not give me time to tell you that these appeared in the *Mail* and that the subject was Shakspeare.

The storm centred around the critic and our poet. The poet, you are to understand, is a thoroughgoing hero-worshipper, and the chiefest of his idols is Shakspeare. This the critic well knew, and took the opportunity to give him a rub. This was done, if we are to trust at all in his protestations, out of kindness; for, unless our poet is occasionally teased about his foibles, there is danger, perchance, that he may become too much enamoured of his own perfection. The latest “discovery,” as developed in the *Mail* editorials, furnished the critic with excellent ammunition. If genuine, the letters and documents now published prove that the great dramatist did not hesitate to impale for all time whoever had the misfortune to incur his dislike. There was a shrewd strain of meanness in all men of genius—was the general statement. Not content with this shot, the critic went further in his iconoclasm, by defending the position that, in the light of such evidence, Shylock, Shallow and Slender were not creations of a poet's imagination, but caricatures and travesties.

Our poet was at once up in arms, and to our consternation the battle went on, with varying fortune and no quarter. The warmth of our poet placed him at some disadvantage, and he was forced to adopt some bold expedient to escape with honour. Now I have noticed that our poet has a habit of throwing up a great cloud of words when in a tight place, in much the same way that a cuttle-fish darkens the water to evade pursuit. So when our poet becomes voluble, we are generally safe in assuming that he has been building up a little theory of his own, and finding it likely to collapse, he takes this means of standing from under. On this occasion he fairly overwhelmed the critic. Here follows a portion of his concluding remarks.

“So you have the simplicity to suppose that in the British Museum, whose treasures have been examined over and over again, a collection of MSS. remained unknown till a Yankee iron-monger by some occult means smelt them out—a Chicago man who tells this story:—That he first constructed a system of chronology to suit himself, then modestly requested the loan of all papers covering these dates; and when copies finally came to hand, embedded in these were letters from a firm of sharks, by the name of Shallow & Slender, from a usurer calling himself Mordecai Shylock, who had a daughter Jessica, and says sufferance is the badge of all our tribe. That Bottom was a fourth-rate actor in the Globe Theatre. I tell you that these letters would never have been written, if Shakspeare's plays had not been, but were concocted either in Chicago or Toronto. My belief is that the esteemed *Mail* editor, wearied with political writing, has amused himself in this way, putting his fraud on a mythical Chicago man—as if Chicago had not already enough to answer for. But he was too clever; in the words of youth—‘it fits too soon.’”

By great and timely exertions we turned the conversation on the poet's own verse, and by judicious flattery restored our wonted harmony and quiet. Thus it is that we still survive to tell the tale.

When we speak of the Faculty, all or singly, it is with a certain largeness of phrase set to a tone of respect that was joined rudely by the ingenious man's remarking, as he did the other night, that after Professor Hutton's lecture last March he was shocked to hear one of the young ladies say—with a volubility that left no room for the capitals and the punctuation necessary for the preservation of the genial lecturer's orthodoxy—that “nothing could be finer than Professor Hutton's pagan virtues and pagan theories of life!”

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