

THE CANADA  
EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY  
AND SCHOOL MAGAZINE.

MAY-JUNE, 1883.

QUEEN'S COLLEGE CONVOCATION.

CHANCELLOR FLEMING'S ADDRESS ON UNIVERSITY DEGREES.

WHATEVER the origin of university degrees, whether they may be traced to a single controlling circumstance or to the public exigencies, which from time to time have arisen, it cannot be doubted that the practice of granting such distinctions and the usages connected with them are of great antiquity. The period when degrees were first conferred cannot be distinctly stated; it has, however, been traced back generally to the foundation of universities, and although there is much which is traditional with regard to the earliest of these institutions, we have in this circumstance a clue to the history of the long-established usage.

Admitting that academic degrees are coeval with universities, and there seems to be little doubt on this point, we can trace the ceremony to be celebrated in this hall to-morrow far back among the centuries, certainly to the Middle Ages, if not to a remoter period.

Taking the four universities of Scotland, the oldest, St. Andrews, was founded by Bishop Wardlaw in 1411. In Ireland, Trinity College, Dublin, was founded under the authority of Pope John XXII. in 1320. In England, Oxford, the oldest, was performing the functions of a university before the end of the 12th century, while the University of Paris and other European continental schools were marked by great activity at even earlier dates.

On this continent we do not claim any great antiquity in scholastic establishments; but if we take a general view of Europe we find a distinct historical record of antecedent scholastic life during which we are warranted in assuming that the ceremony of conferring degrees has been observed. We find that this record extends in Scotland, Ireland, Switzerland, Spain, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden, over four and a-half centuries.

In Germany and Austria over five