

The Varsity

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TORONTO, October 30th, 1900.

THE GOWN QUESTION.

The wearing of gowns is now a live question in Varsity corridors. A vigorous attempt to revive the custom has been made, with apparent success. At any rate the success or failure of the present attempt will probably decide once and for all the fate of the custom here. The movement therefore is important, and calls for careful decision and strict adherence to it when formed.

So far as we can learn the main advantage claimed for the gown is sentiment, sentiment based on custom and tradition. Since time immemorial the gown has been looked upon as the distinctive academic garb of University students. Naturally such a custom has found strongest root in a conservative nation such as England, where to-day it is universal, and is dearer to the British heart than ever before. The gown worn at Varsity is modelled after that in vogue at Cambridge that

"Grete College

"Men clepe the Soler Hall at Cantabrege"

which Geoffrey Chaucer himself attended. At Varsity, of course, up to the present moment, the gown had ceased for a time to be a regular feature of the student dress as at Cambridge. The question then which we must consider is, shall we reject English custom and sentiment and sever altogether a bond which connects us with the English College system, thus tending to reduce college life to a purely utilitarian level; or shall we rather retain these things and strengthen such connection as far as possible? In short shall we follow the English system or the German? The answer to this question rests entirely with the student body, as the authorities have left it to them to decide.

Our own opinion is that we should follow England rather than Germany; but sentiment arising merely from tradition and custom will not alone insure the permanence of the gowns at Varsity. They must exercise some real and useful function as well, and this they are supposed to do. The fact that many American colleges, where gowns were never worn before, are now adopting the practice, would tend to prove that they must have some practical value.

The purpose of the gown is something the same as that of the soldier's uniform, in that it marks off a certain distinct class of society. The soldier does not necessarily consider himself superior to other people because he wears a uniform, but he does feel a keener sense of dignity and duty as a member of the army than he would if he wore no uniform. We as students are proud of our position as such and should be proud also to don an article of dress which has for centuries been the distinctive mark of University students and men of learning the world over.

The question arises, however, how far will the gown serve this purpose at Varsity? At Oxford and Cambridge gowns are worn throughout the towns in which the colleges are situated, so that a student is known at once wherever he is. But in Toronto while students in gowns were at one time seen on King and Yonge streets, we are somewhat skeptical as to the likelihood of such an occurrence in these days. The difficulty, however, might perhaps be overcome by a compromise. A college cap of regulation shape might be adopted by the students of the University of Toronto, each college having its peculiar crest. The crests would answer the same purpose as the marks on gowns used in Oxford and Cambridge to distinguish the several colleges. Such a scheme if considered advisable would require organization to carry it out. In the vicinity of University College, however, the gown itself would answer the purpose intended, and should be worn on all occasions possible.

For the cuts used in Mr. Coleman's article we are indebted to the *Canadian Magazine*.

Y.M.C.A. NOTES.

Don't forget the mission study class every Saturday at 7.30. Mr. Chapman will conduct the study of John R. Mott's book.

The hour of next Thursday's meeting is 5 o'clock. Paste this in your hat.

After J. Campbell White's plain statement of the needs of India's students, it ought not to be hard to enlist the sympathies of every man in the College.

Look on the bulletin board to see when your morning prayer meeting meets.

The General Secretary's office hour is 5 to 6. Call and see him.

DINING-HALL NOTES.

The patrons of the Dining Hall will soon be asked to elect a representative on the House Committee.

A room in the Steward's House is being fitted up for the ladies, for lunch only.

Another table is being added in the men's room.

The Juniors will hold a class dinner in the Dining Hall, after the play, Hallow'een.

Racks with holes, numbered for the holding of napkins, are to be placed in the Dining Hall for the purpose of keeping napkins separate.

A dinner was given in the Dining Hall Saturday evening in honor of the Queens' Rugby team, and a most enjoyable time spent.