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978-1-108-00232-5 - Ceremonies of the University of Cambridge

H. P. Stokes

Excerpt

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## THE CHANCELLOR

THE CHANCELLOR has always stood first among the University officials. A list of those who have filled this distinguished post reaches back to the middle of the thirteenth century, and the office is mentioned familiarly quite early in that century. At first the Chancellors were elected annually, and this arrangement held for some three hundred years; but at the beginning of the sixteenth century the celebrated Bishop John Fisher was continued in office for more than thirty years. Afterwards the practice was commenced of choosing some distinguished outsider; the Vice-Chancellor acting as the resident head of University affairs. It may be mentioned that of the first eight Chancellors thus chosen, six perished on the scaffold.

We need not here record the method of the election of the Chancellor, which may be read in Beverley (pp. 123-5); but it may be noted that, in the *Memorandum* of the University Commissioners on the Proposed New Statutes made 29 January 1926, the first particular is "a method of nominating candidates for the office of Chancellor of the University."

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Dealing as we do here with Ceremonies, we may at once proceed to refer to the installation of the Chancellor, which has generally taken place at the private residence of that great official, though it has usually been followed by some public function at Cambridge.

Take, as an example, the following description of the Manner of Installing our noble Chancellor the Earl of Holland, 29 October 1628, as recorded in *Buck's Book*:

About 9 of the clock in the morning, the University met at Southampton House, where they put on their formalities in the Hall, etc., when word was brought us that my Lord was ready, we ranked ourselves in this order: the Junior Bedel went before the Regents in their seniority, 2 and 2 together; then followed the non-Regents and Bachelors of Divinity, in the like manner; then the Taxers and after them the Proctors. The Senior Bedel went before the Vice-Chancellor. The Bishops followed him. Then came our University Doctors, in their scarlet gowns; and after them the Doctors of London, which had no scarlet.

When we were come to Warwick House, the Regents and non-Regents made a fair lane, by siding themselves in the court-yard, for our Chancellor, who came to meet the Vice-Chancellor, Bishops and Doctors, etc. When our Chancellor had given a courteous respect to all, he went up with the Vice-Chancellor next to him into the hall; the Bishops, Doctors and the rest did follow after.

There were 2 chairs placed at the upper end of the Hall, and also a little table before them to keep off the crowd. The Vice-Chancellor, standing before our Chancellor, did make his speech: about the middle of which, he willed the Senior Proctor to read the Patent: which being ended, the Vice-Chancellor delivered the same unto our Chancellor, together with the book of Statutes fairly bound up: and then spoke some things concerning them, etc. Then he went and sat down in the chair upon the left hand of our Chancellor; and, when he had taken

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his right hand in his own, the Senior Proctor gave him this oath, *Domine, dabis Fidem in verbo Honoris, quod bene et fideliter Officium Cancellariatus Academiae Cantabrigiensiis præstabis.*

Then they both rose up, and the Vice-Chancellor went to the table again, and in 3 or 4 lines ended his speech, telling his Honour, that our orator should supply his defects, in a better language.

Then the Orator began his speech; and when he had done, our Chancellor spake something very briefly and softly concerning the preservation of our Charters and Privileges, etc. Then he went up with the Vice-Chancellor and the Bishops and the rest of the Company into the Dining Room, where was a most sumptuous Dinner provided.

After dinner was over, our Chancellor came with the Vice-Chancellor and the rest of the Company as far as the court gate, where he very courteously parted with them. Mem. He stood bare all the time of both speeches.

The Vice-Chancellor caused one of the Bedels to give the servants which kept the gate at Warwick House 10s., and the porter at Southampton House 5s.

Detailed reports of similar functions in connection with succeeding Chancellors may be seen in Cooper's *Annals*; but we may pass to the following brief account of the installation of the present distinguished holder of the office:

On Oct. 29th, 1919, Mr A. J. Balfour [now the Earl of Balfour, K.G.] was inaugurated as Chancellor at 4 Carlton Gardens. The officials of the University journeyed to London, and reached the house at about 11.30 a.m.—the ceremony taking place in the Drawing Room at 12 noon. A procession was formed consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar, the Public Orator, and the Proctors (each Proctor having one constable). On reaching the Drawing Room, which had been arranged on similar lines to the Senate House, the Vice-Chancellor took the Chair. The Senior Bedell then retired to escort the Chancellor Elect into the room; and the Junior Bedell

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escorted the Vice-Chancellor to the door to receive the Chancellor Elect. The Bedells then escorted the Chancellor Elect to the chair—the Vice-Chancellor following. [Here follows the form of Procedure.]

The Chancellor afterwards entertained the company to lunch. Robes were worn. The Senior Bedell wore the chain presented by the Chancellor Elect all through the ceremony. About 30 members of the Senate attended. Full academic dress was worn—Cap, Gown, Hood and Bands.

After the personal installation at his private residence, the new Chancellor generally pays a formal visit to the University, elaborate functions and entertainments being held, and calls being made at the various colleges. At the special gathering in the Senate House, honorary degrees are conferred, and an ode composed for the occasion is generally performed. The classic instance is that of 1 July 1760 at the installation of the Duke of Grafton as Chancellor, when the celebrated ode commencing “Avaunt, avaunt, ’tis holy ground,” was written by Thomas Gray, the poet, the Regius Professor of Modern History, and set to music by Dr Randall, the Professor of Music. The ode, at the commencement following the installation of the Prince Consort in 1847, was written by William Wordsworth, the Poet Laureate, and set to music by Professor Walmisley. It may be added that when, during the Vice-Chancellorship of Dr John Peile, Master of Christ’s, in the year 1892, Spencer Compton Cavendish Duke of Devonshire, succeeded his father

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### *The Senate House*

*as shown on the medals struck at the installation  
of the Duke of Northumberland as Chancellor  
in 1840*

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as Chancellor, the witty Professor of Music (Sir) Charles Villiers Stanford caused applause and laughter among the undergraduates by introducing into his setting of the ode, the repeated refrain of the well-known hunting song, "D'ye ken John Peel?"

An installation medal was generally struck in connection with the ceremonies at the first visit of a new Chancellor—on the obverse there appears a portrait, and on the reverse a picture of the interior of the Senate House. At the installation of the Duke of Northumberland, in the year 1840, two medals were struck, the reverse of one representing the exterior of the Senate House, with an academic procession.

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## THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

ACCORDING to the new Statutes (D. Chap. III) the Vice-Chancellor is to be elected annually by the Regent House. "At the election of a Vice-Chancellor, the Proctors shall stand in scrutiny with the two senior members of the Regent House present. The scrutineers shall first give their own votes in writing and then take the votes in writing of all persons present who have the right of voting. That one of the two persons nominated, for whom the greater number of votes is given, shall be declared to be elected."

Looking back, we find that the Chancellor was required generally to be in residence, but that, if he were absent for more than fifteen days, a Vice-Chancellor (*vicarius*) was appointed. Dr Tanner, in *The Historical Register*, gives a list of such offices from early in the fifteenth century; two centuries later, when Dr Fisher was chosen as Chancellor for life, the Vice-Chancellor's standing increased in importance; and when the Chancellor was a non-resident magnate, his substitute became the leading official at Cambridge.

It is not necessary here to record all the details of the

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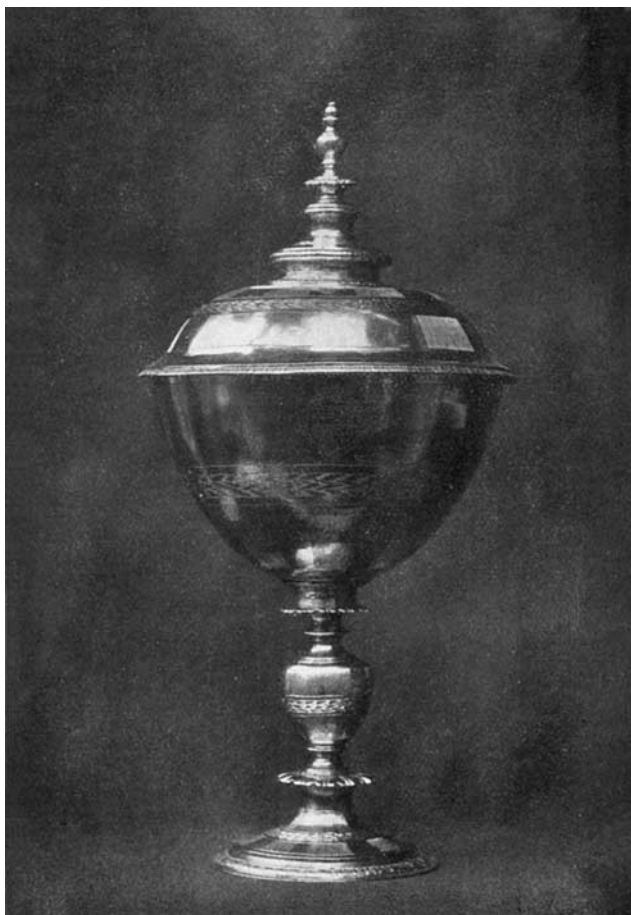
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*The Essex Cup*

*Phot. Palmer Clarke*



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election of the Vice-Chancellor; but certain of the proceedings at his installation may be noticed.

First of all, it may be pointed out that formerly a collection of books descended from generation to generation through the hands of successive Vice-Chancellors. A list of these may be seen in MS. CVI, C.C.C., signed "bie mee Walter Haddon," Master of Trinity Hall, and passed on to his successor Dr Madew in 1550. Again, as pointed out in *The Cambridge Portfolio* (p. 157), there existed at St Catharine's College "a catalogue of ye Vice-Chancellor's bookes delivered to me Thomas Browne by Dr Stanley, and by me to Dr Eachard" 1695. There were more than twenty books and MSS. Some of them are still at the Registry, including Hare's *Collections*.

John Beverley, in his *Account of the Different Ceremonies observed in the Senate House* (1788), pp. 19, 20, says, in describing the resignation of the Vice-Chancellor's office, "the Proctors, preceded by the Bedells, come to the Vice-Chancellor's Place, at the West End of the Senate House; where a Bench is placed for them to sit on. After a little Stay, they go to the Table; and the late Vice-Chancellor delivers to them, the Statute Book; the Seals; Keys; Purse and Plate." These, "together with the other books" mentioned above, were handed to the new Vice-Chancellor on his admission.

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But the full *Order of Proceedings* is given at the end of this section.

Sir Arthur Shipley, in a beautifully illustrated article in *Country Life*, 6 December, 1919, describes some of these *Insignia* or *Regalia*; adding the Maces, and including among the Plate, the Cup and the Rings.

The University Seal is kept at the Registry in an elaborate case, which has three keys, one retained by the Vice-Chancellor, and two declared to be kept by the Proctors; but now in the possession of the Registry. The Plate includes the beautiful Cup presented, in 1592/3, by the second Earl of Essex, and inscribed with the Devereux arms, and the Gold Signet Rings—a large thumb-ring with the University arms, and a smaller ring representing Minerva with her helmet, shield and spear, with a motto, “Si perdam, pereō.” Of this Sir Arthur Shipley (by whose permission they are here figured) gives a humorous translation. On the inner surface is the motto in English, “My only rest.”

The Maces will be described when we treat of the *Esquire Bedells*.