sanction of a bull granted by Boniface in the year 1301.@@l The plague which broke out in 1349 nearly ruined the uni­versity, all the colleges and halls having been deserted and shut up during its prevalence. The reign of Richard II. is distinguished by the appearance at this university of John Wycliffe, who was the first warden of Canterbury College, and whose lectures on divinity loosened the shackles of popish thraldom, which Henry VIII. afterwards burst asunder, from motives very different from those which ani­mated the first of the reformers. The succeeding reigns present little that is remarkable in the annals of the uni­versity, except the religious dissensions, which had nearly caused its dissolution. The reign of Henry VII. is en­titled to the proud distinction of having fostered, with more than ordinary success, the revival of learning. Ge­nuine scholarship had, during the preceding century, be­come exceedingly rare, and the Greek language had not only fallen into general disuse, but was affectedly held in contempt by a great body of the students, who formed themselves into an association, under the name of Trojans. So strong indeed was the prejudice against this language, that when Erasmus went to Oxford for the purpose of teaching it, several leading men in the university read lec­tures against him in the schools, and endeavoured to attach ridicule both to the man and to the knowledge which it was his object to disseminate. Through the vigorous ef­forts of Cardinal Wolsey, the Greek language was again received into estimation, and a taste for elegant literature was introduced. In 1518, the cardinal founded seven lec­tures for theology, the civil law, physic, philosophy, mathe­matics, Greek, and rhetoric, and appointed to all of them the men who were most distinguished for their abilities, and for their knowledge in these respective branches of learning. After the commencement of the reformation under Henry VIII., when the monastic orders were dissolved, and their property confiscated, and when the church in its unsettled state presented but few inducements to the study of theology, the number of scholars was very much reduced.@@2 In 1546 only thirteen degrees were conferred ; and in 1552, though the students who had their names on the books were a thousand and fifteen, yet the greater part were absent, and had in effect quitted the university.@@’

The changes which took place in the religion of the court during the reigns of Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth, affected considerably the prosperity of the university. The last- named sovereign granted to both universities the act of in­corporation ; and her successor, in 1603, conferred upon them the privilege of sending each two representatives to the national council. From the period of the revolution the university of Oxford has continued to flourish ; its re­venues have been increased ; and the system of education now embraces the improvements which have been effect­ed in almost every branch of science. The doctrines of the schools, it is true, received favour here for some time after they had been expelled from the northern universities ; but they have now given way to the more rational views of experimental philosophy.

One of the distinguishing peculiarities of the English universities, is the existence of collegiate establishments, some of which were founded at a very early period. We have already mentioned similar establishments in the uni­versity of Paris ; but the English colleges, being more richly endowed, have to a much greater extent engrossed the powers and privileges of the universities. Of the existing colleges of Oxford, three, University College, Balliol College, and Merton College, were founded before the end of the thirteenth century, and in the following century the number was increased to seven. The motive which led to those foundations was the same which has been mentioned in treating of the university of Paris: to furnish the students with lodgings, to relieve the indigent from some portion of the expenses of their education, and to provide more effec­tually for the discipline of the university. In Oxford, the chancellor and his deputy combined the powers of the rector and the two chancellors in Paris ; and the inspection and control, chiefly exercised in the latter, through the distri­bution of the scholars into nations,@@4 under the government of rector, procurators, and deans, was in the former more especially accomplished by collecting the students into cer­tain privileged houses, subject to a principal, who was re­sponsible for the conduct of the members. But the num­ber of the *colleges* in. which provision was made for the support of the members was, for many centuries, small in comparison to *the halls* or *inns,* in which the students lived chiefly at their own expense, and were merely furnished with cheap and convenient lodgings. At the commence­ment of the fourteenth century, the number of halls was about *three hundred,* while the colleges amounted only to *three.* For the establishment of a hall, nothing more was necessary than that a few students, on a mutual agreement to live together, should hire a house, find surety for a year’s rent, and choose for principal a graduate of respect­able character. The chancellor or his deputy could not refuse to sanction the establishment, and to admit the prin­cipal to his office. The halls were in general held only on lease ; but, by a privilege common to most universities, the rent was fixed every five years by sworn taxers, two masters and two citizens ; and houses once occupied by students could not be resumed by the proprietors so long as the rent was punctually discharged. The halls were governed by peculiar statutes, and were liable to be visited and regulated by the university.@@5 The causes which occasioned a dimi­nution in the numbers of the scholars, diminished also the number of the halls, though that of the endowed colleges continued to increase. At the commencement of the fifteenth century, while the students were diminishing, the colleges had risen to *seven.* In the beginning of the six­teenth century, the number of halls had fallen to *fifty five,* while the endowed colleges had increased to *twelve.* In 1546, the inhabited halls amounted only to *eight;* and in 1551, Wood remarks that “ the ancient halls lay either waste, or were become the receptacles of poor religious people turned out of their cloisters.”@@6 As the students fell off, the rents of the halls were taxed at a lower rate ; and they be-

@@@, Ayliffe, i 93. Neither Oxford nor Cambridge being the sent of a bishop, the scholars appear from the very first to have elected their chancellor, subject however in both cases to the approval of the diocesan. The advantages of this are very apparent. Instead of a distant superior exercising only an occasional and appellative jurisdiction, the chancellor was one of their body, and combined the offices which, in the continental universities, were divided between the chancellor and rector.

@@@β Edin. Rev. No. 106, 410.

@@@8 Wood, as cited in Edin. Rev. No. 106, 410.

@@@‘ “ The division of the scholars into nations, which prevailed in all the universities of the continent, was unknown in England ; probably because our insular situation prevented the influx of foreign students. There was a tendency at one time at Oxford to establish a similar distinction between the natives of the counties north and south of the Trent. For some time the proctors were chosen, one from each divi­sion; but the schism was healed. At Cambridge, by the composition between the scholars and the burgesses, in the filty-fourth year of Henry III., conservators of the peace were to be elected annually at the beginning of the academical year, twenty-three in number (the original number of a jury), ten from the town, and thirteen from the university ; and of these latter, five were to be English, three Scotch, two Welsh, and three Irish. This arrangement might easily have given rise to a division of the scholars into nations, each choosing its own conservators ; but it was not attended by any such consequence,” Mulden on the Origin of Universities, p. 108.

@@@4 Wood, as cited in Edin. Rev. No. 106, 410.

@@@∙ Edin. Rev. No. 106, 410, and authorities there cited.