

The degrees having been conferred, the LORD CHANCELLOR proposed a cordial vote of thanks to the Lord Lieutenant for his presence on the occasion.

The Chancellor of the University having conveyed to Lord Spencer in graceful terms the thanks of the Senate, his Excellency rose to express his acknowledgment, and was loudly cheered.

Before the assembly separated three hearty cheers were given for the Queen.

*From the Melbourne  
World August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1882*

## THE WORLD.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 3, 1882.

### MELBOURNE AND SYDNEY DOCTORS.

A wave of mild agitation is ruffling the calm surface of academic life in our local University just now, and carrying a large outflow of both spoken and written discussion. The incident that has given rise to the commotion is one of so entirely commonplace a kind that an uninitiated outsider can hardly comprehend how small a matter can produce so great an effect. It is nothing more than an application made to the Council of the University for the degree of M.D. by Dr. ROWAN, a well-known medical gentleman, of Collins-street east. The ground on which this very reasonable application is based is the possession of an M.D. degree from the University of Sydney. Holding such a clear title to the honour he asks for, Dr. ROWAN, naturally enough, did not, in the least, expect that his request would be refused. But he was mistaken. The Council of the University referred it to the Faculty of Medicine, and the Faculty, having given the matter consideration, made up their minds to recommend the Council to reject it. So the matter stands at the present moment. The Council will deliberate and decide on Dr. ROWAN'S application, at their meeting on Monday next; and there is a lively expectation on the part of many of those Melbourne doctors who have graduated, or are graduating at our own University, that the Council will accept and confirm the recommendation of the Faculty of Medicine.

At first view the attitude of haughty superiority and antagonism assumed by the Melbourne academics towards their Sydney brethren seems quite unaccountable to an unsophisticated layman. Why should not an M.D. degree of Sydney be accounted of exactly the same value as an M.D. degree of Melbourne? By what right does Melbourne assume authority to rank itself above Sydney? The two colonial Universities hold an exactly equal position in the eye of the imperial law, and of the civilised world. Their charters are alike, their status is the same, their privileges are equal, and the imperial charter puts the same distinctive stamp of equality, relatively to those of the home Universities, upon the degrees of both. This latter point appears to have been strangely overlooked in the discussion. It is an axiom of mathematics, that lines which are of equal length with the same line are equal to

one another. Now, in the charters of the Melbourne and Sydney Universities it is expressly provided that the degrees they confer shall be held equal to those conferred by London, or Cambridge, or Oxford. The plain inference from this is, that the imperial law implicitly declares the equality of the corresponding degrees conferred by the two colonial Universities. The imperial charter, it need hardly be added, has all the force of law. Is it not, then, we ask, a plain and palpable violation of the spirit—if not exactly of the letter—of the imperial law, to set up a distinction, and a most invidious distinction, between the Melbourne and the Sydney degrees, in favour of the former? Has the council of the Melbourne University any legal right to do this? We, for our own part, are decidedly of opinion that they have not. They have just as little right to declare, in the teeth of the terms of the imperial charter, the superiority of the Melbourne degrees to those of London, for example, as they have to declare the inferiority of the Sydney degrees. Who, let us ask, made *them* supreme controllers of the rights and privileges of all the colonial Universities? By what authority do they presume to put a neighbouring and sister University under the ban? Such an act would be one of supreme arrogance at best, and a most unkindly, ungenerous, and unfriendly act as well. If the colonial Universities shall thus begin to fight and wrangle amongst themselves, and to issue prohibitory edicts against one another, the academic world abroad will say of them, that they are unfit to hold the privileges they possess, are degrading their functions, and bringing the higher culture into universal contempt.

We would respectfully urge this point of the illegality of the very ungracious act they are asked to ratify and sanction, upon the serious attention of the Council of the University. Before they venture to give a decision, we would strongly recommend them to consider whether they are legally empowered to do this thing. Does the imperial charter, or does it not, authorise them to evaluate their own degrees, as against those granted by any other chartered University in the British dominions? We submit that it does not. Does not the imperial charter, in express terms, assign and fix the value of the colonial degrees relatively to those of the Home Universities? It certainly does. Would it not, therefore, be a distinct violation of the spirit of the imperial charter to begin differentiating those values which it clearly declares shall be held equal? Most assuredly it would. The law of the land declares, we repeat, as plainly as words can express it, that the corresponding degrees in the colonial Universities are of precisely equal value. But in steps the Council of the Melbourne University with an arrogant and authoritative declaration that they are not equal, and that Melbourne degrees take precedence of Sydney degrees. If this be not a manifest breach of the law, we are at a loss to know what illegality means.

But more than this. It is a case of diamond cut diamond. The little game of academic prohibition is one that any two colonial universities can play at. If Melbourne puts Sydney under the ban, Sydney can return the compliment. If Melbourne can refuse an *ad eundem* degree to a Sydney M.D., Sydney can equally refuse an *ad eundem* degree to a Melbourne M.D. Or, if Sydney should choose to return good for evil, benefit for injury, blessing for insult, to what