

Originally few of the colleges admitted undergraduates not on the foundation ; but they now opened their gates, and were able to include the whole academical population within their walls, by which they obtained a preponderating weight and influence. This power, however, might have been defeated, if the Earl of Leicester, chancellor of the university, had not obtained, in 1570, an exclusive right to institute new halls, which was afterwards by statute vested in his successors. As the chief magistrate acted usually in concert with the heads of colleges, it was henceforth easy for the colleges to prevent any new hall from interfering with their monopoly ; whereas, previously to 1570, the establishment of a hall was easy, it being only required that a small number of scholars should hire a house, find caution for a year's rent, and choose for principal a graduate of respectable character. The chancellor, or his deputy, could not, in that case, refuse to sanction his appointment.

The new constitution, procured for the university by Leicester, was considerably modified under the chancellorship of Archbishop Laud, who raised the heads of houses to the rank of a public body, called the Hebdomadal Board, to whom the privilege was given of proposing new laws to the House of Convocation. To the latter, consisting of the doctors and the masters of arts, the supreme legislation was still left, but without the power of initiating any measures. The heads were, by the constitution of their colleges, almost all ecclesiastics, and chosen from among the fellows of their respective colleges. Their election was, therefore, subject to all the disabilities and restrictions imposed on the fellows by the caprice of the founder.