

most after extraordinary privileges had been granted to them some members would continue to attend the Society occasionally, and even now and again a wistful elderly stranger would come with an ordinary member—his father or uncle maybe—and reveal himself as erstwhile of our sodality. We respected him as a man of the world; he envied us for what we were. Nevertheless our jokes were as incomprehensible to him, I fancy, as his anecdotes were tedious to us. We were exceedingly polite to him, but young men are far too happy to be sentimental and their hearts do not go out readily to their forerunners. They know not Joseph and they don't want to know him. It was, therefore, not surprising that if I looked forward to the renewal of my speculative youth with eager curiosity, it was also with considerable apprehension.

We dined at the Club before the meeting. That was quite in the tradition; little parties of members used often to dine decorously together on Wednesday nights in each other's homes or Clubs. There was a greater choice of the latter forty years ago when the University and Northern Clubs still existed. Afterwards we took a taxi to the hall of the Speculative which remains autonomous within the curtilage of the University—in the academic world but not of it. In the past the University has, of course, made several famous but abortive litigious attempts to put right what it considered to be an untidy state of affairs. It is unlikely that these attempts will be renewed in the foreseeable future—not so much because the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor are honorary members of the Society as because the University realise that their chances of success in the courts would be somewhat slim. There was a time when it was said that if you hadn't belonged to the Speculative you couldn't hope to become a Senator of the College of Justice. That is not entirely true today but there are still a considerable number of speculators in the Court of Session. We all know, of course, that the judicature is icy in its impartiality, which is one of the chief glories of this country, but perhaps this impar-

tiality would be strained to breaking point where the Speculative is concerned and the University are probably aware of this.

The little entrance lobby where we hung up our coats with its fire, its prints of bygone members and Sir Daniel MacNee's portrait of a rather irascible looking Lord Brougham appeared the same as it had always done, as did the narrow, rather dusty library with its books in their wire cages; the mellow, Turkey-carpeted old hall seemed also just the same as ever, warmed by a roaring coal fire and softly lit by the light from twenty-one of twenty-two candles, one of which on the historic chandelier is cursed to remain unlit in perpetuity from having dropped some grease on a President's head long ago. Francis Horner by Raeburn, Sir Walter by Watson Gordon and William Creech (whose portrait by Raeburn, Lintott has so admirably copied) looked benignly down on us as of old. That all this should have been unchanged was perhaps not surprising but that the ordinary members should have conformed so closely to their prototypes of over forty years ago was more remarkable. Apart from the fact that they wore soft instead of starched shirts and collars with their dinner jackets and were on the average a little younger (for many of the members of my day had served in the First World War before joining the Society) time might have stood still.

We had mostly come, as they did, from moderately prosperous middle-class Edinburgh homes, but we numbered a sprig of the Scottish aristocracy among us and so did they. As had always been the case, students of the law provided the majority of our members and continued to do so—young Advocates and Writers to the Signet—but membership was by no means confined to that profession: there were aspirants to chartered accountancy and actuarial science, and an occasional medical student or young doctor. It is indeed insufficiently realised what a large part medical men played in the early history of the Society: the great Dr Cullen, Sir Astley Cooper