THE COSTUME OF "THE COLLEGE."

In several comments adverse to the new American College of Surgeons we find the institution objected to on the ground of its exotic character. There is an imputation of a departure from American ways; the sober-minded among the critics discern invidious and undemocratic distinctions, which the facetious exaggerate into the establishment among surgeons of a haughty peerage, possessed of undue privileges. That the founders of "the College" do not intend to cultivate Jeffersonian simplicity is true, as appears from the information which has reached us regarding the official costume of the Fellows: this is indeed exotic and calculated to confirm apprehensions of aristocratic academic pretensions, which we would be at some pains to allay.

The price of the gown awakens no suspicion of the splendor it will purchase. It is $11.90. The amount is probably not the result of a mere caprice of economics. Its rather sudden halt before the dozen suggests a psychological influence. We fancy we see a propensity to prodigality checked by prudence: magnificence there must be, though not at any price, and magnificence there will be. For we read: "Body of Gown, navy-blue mohair. A scarlet velvet facing five inches wide extends around the neck and down each side of the front. The Cap is of same material as Gown with scarlet tassel."

Verily a dainty creation, judging from this description. But the accompanying illustration shows us the familiar cut of the garb of an Oxonian. No sense of incongruity here in translating the traditional vestment of Oxford, which "whispers from its towers the enchantments of the Middle Ages" to where the characteristic note is the last squeal of the butchered pig resounding from the shambles.

It may be urged that an Oxford gown and cap, having been adopted in so many scholastic establishments of America, should not be considered exotic; to which we can only return that the term is applied rather with regard to American principles than to American practices. And, by the way, if the American College of Surgeons is to look to other academic institutions in this country for its models we may yet be apprised of its having adopted a college yell,—for which an imitation of the vociferation of the afore-mentioned victim of the stockyards may be recommended.

But back to the dazzling robe! There are atrabilious critics who deny that scholarly dignity is enhanced by gaudy garments. They must be blind indeed to the advantages of pageantry; and may we not infer that the navy-blue and the scarlet velvet are to serve the purposes of pomp and ceremony? Is there not further foundation for the assumption that gorgeous spectacles come within the scope of the College in the article of its by-laws which states that the object is to "elevate the standard of Surgery"? Unread in the Philosophy of Clothes must he be who would cavil at the costume of "the College" and its variegation. Let such an one turn to his Sartor Resartus and there learn with what a shudder Professor Teufelsdröckh pictured to himself a solemn festival at Court spoiled by the starting of the buttons and the evaporation of solid wool, "the Clothes flying off the whole dramatic corps," leaving common clay where had stood before Majesty and resplendent dignitaries: with a like shock would he contemplate an assemblage of the Fellows, where, just at the moment when perhaps seven thousand degrees are being conferred, the Standard of Surgery drops from its elevation, the tassels cease their waving, the solid mohair evaporates, the velvet slips from the several necks and down each side of the several fronts, the scarlet and the navy-blue fade away, and the whole company stand revealed as ordinary doctors who incise and suture and puncture for a living.

"SOCIAL FERMENT."

Dr. Henry B. Favill, of Chicago, the Chairman of the Council on Health and Public Instruction of the American Medical Association, in an address before the last meeting of the Mississippi Valley Medical Association, opens his subject, "Child Culture the Function of Organized Medicine," with some paragraphs that are well worth repeating. Indeed the whole address is well worth careful reading and we only regret that it is too long for us to give it space in the JOURNAL; a copy can be had, however, by sending a request for it to the Secretary, Dr. Fred. R. Green, 535 North Dearborn St., Chicago, Ills. For something over two years your JOURNAL has been calling attention to the widespread condition of unrest that is to be found all over the country and in all walks of life and to many instances in which it has exhibited itself within the medical profession or without it, but affecting it materially. Of this same condition Dr. Favill says:

"In regarding the field of human thought one is impressed with the intense activity of what may without exaggeration be called social ferment. In every direction which one may look there is evidence of unprecedented stir. Nothing goes in its familiar lines, nothing maintains its accustomed pace. The world is agitated. This is not confined to human action; it is fully as marked in the realm of abstract conception, and through it all penetrates a spirit of intellectual adventure, which beyond doubt is the influence which is ultimately to bring some order out of very obvious chaos. To this activity we react variously. The conservative is disturbed, perplexed and often pained by the radical and iconoclastic temper of the time. The radical is inspired, stimulated and often intoxicated by the wonderful kaleidoscopic readjustments which ensue on agitation of the foundations. Between abide the mass of people, partly thinking, partly dreaming, partly stolidly accepting the dictate of the day. Superficially, the outlook offers opportunity for captious criticism. In the tearing asunder of the social fabric, dignity of life, stability of equilibrium and quality of taste seem to be disregarded. In the desire to see the wheels go round, the delicate mechanism is threatened. In the passion for ultimate knowledge, the beauty of the flower is destroyed."