

THE TECH

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Monday, January 7, 1907.

In pursuance of the editorial printed in the issue of January 2, **THE TECH**, after consultation with a number of the Faculty, **Arguments** presents below a digest **For and** of the arguments **Advanced** both for and **Against** the wearing of caps and gowns at graduation exercises. It may seem that **THE TECH** has not been impartial in setting forth the various arguments, but the number advanced against the innovation is so much greater than the number advocating it that it has become necessary to accord the larger space to the former.

The present desire for academic costume in America is a very recent development dating largely from the great Princeton anniversary about 1893, and arose partly from the fact that when representatives of foreign universities began to attend American academic celebrations they brought with them their academic robes. American university people naturally desire to do likewise, partly perhaps out of courtesy and partly in order not to seem less well arrayed. It was natural that the older universities should adopt academic costumes, at least for the faculties and graduates, although it is less clear why the undergraduates should feel bound to follow suit. It is still less clear why some technical schools should have adopted the custom, because the wearing of caps and gowns has always been academic rather than scientific.

In the opinion of most people, caps and gowns are distinctly out of line with all the traditions of the Institute. President Rogers always avoided anything which looked like imitation of the older and academic institutions. He was opposed to formal graduation exercises and it is largely out of deference to his wishes as well as to our own traditions founded upon his wishes that these exercises have at the Institute always been kept extremely simple. His reasons, as **THE TECH** understands, were mainly, that Technology was an original institution based on nothing academic. He wished never to imitate the academic colleges in any way because the academic men not infrequently despised and sneered at science and technology, even calling the Institute a trade school. The advocates of caps and gowns claim that this feeling toward technical schools has changed, that now the

Institute is on a level with the academic colleges, and that the Institute can assert this fact and also gain more recognition by adopting the customs of these colleges. This argument is answered by the statement that the Institute was founded largely as a protest against the formalism, narrowness, uniformity, and aristocracy of the old colleges and universities; that it should not imitate them in fashions or customs of at least questionable value, plainly derived from the essentially clerical if not monastic institutions of the Middle Ages. Our customs have always been different from those of the older academic institutions and, as long as the Institute remains the Institute, should always be different.

It is advanced in support of caps and gowns that they are more economical than new suits, and that, moreover, the democracy for which the Institute has always stood will be expressed in the similarity and equality of the dress. The plea of economy has some strength in women's colleges, where the graduating dress is regarded as indispensable, but has little force at the Institute where it has been the custom to wear upon graduating day whatever best suit a man happened to have and where the purchase of such a costume would involve some men in a needless even if trifling expense. The plea of democracy seems rather a plea for uniformity, an unfortunate feature of democracy. Moreover it seems that the uniformity is one of aristocracy, that is of rank and class rather than of true democracy — the latter being the plan which is now pursued when every man does substantially as he likes and comes dressed as he pleases.

Finally, those against the innovation, argue that it seems strange that students, who are almost always, sometimes even fanatically attached to traditions and customs, should in this case desire to throw overboard the well-established customs and traditions of the Institute and adopt bodily those of educational organizations whose traditions have always been different from our own.

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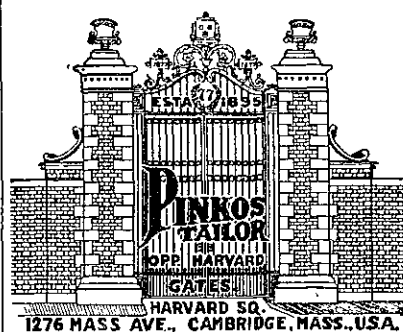
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