

year consist of three terms, or of two? The usual answer by the college has been three, but the two-term colleges are important and tend to increase in number. Certain considerations are of exceptional importance at the Institute. The maintenance of our standard depends largely on the enforcement at the beginning of each term of requirements for admission to subjects, and on the scrutiny of records by the Faculty at the end of each term. The labor of faculty and administrative staff is very heavy and could scarcely be performed three times a year instead of two. If it is to be performed twice, an even division is far better than a one-to-two ratio. At the end of ten weeks many students would not yet have "found themselves;" at the end of twenty some would be past finding.

A division into equal terms separates the winter vacation from Christmas as the alternative for opening and closing the year about five weeks earlier than we now do, and even to make the division fifteen weeks in the first term and nineteen in the second would mean opening the year about Sept. 10, and closing about May 20. The second main fact is then the determination of the winter vacation in such a manner as to divide the working year in halves, by a vacation just about long enough to enable all to resume work with vigor.

Passing from elements determined freely by the Faculty, we come to the four legal holidays—Thanksgiving, Christmas, Washington's Birthday and Patriots' Day. Shall all or any be augmented by additional days? What shall also be said about the student institution, Junior Week? The Institute owes its foundation and continued existence primarily to the work done in and for it by its students. Every day taken out of its relatively brief school year diminishes the opportunities offered to some of its students, and this is particularly important in the case of laboratory work, when a single day may mean a fifteenth of the term's work. Certain economic laws are curiously distorted by occasional undergraduate reasoning. The student comes to the Institute for the sake of its opportunities for work, paying a considerable price in time as well as in money. Thereafter he none the less welcomes a partial withdrawal of the opportunity, and reluctance of the Faculty to grant it may even be deemed ungenerous. This is not in the least to deny the value

of certain temporary substitutes for work, but only to insist on their due subordination to it, and on the fact that an increase of short vacations during the year means logically a shortening of the long one in the summer, to the disadvantage of many of us.

How long should these short intermissions be, bearing in mind that increase in their combined duration will be either at the expense of the short school year or of the summer vacation? Some fifty per cent of the students live within a few hours' journey, and can reach home even for the isolated holiday. A smaller proportion live too far away or are too limited in funds to go home at all unless during the summer. The single day at Thanksgiving and Washington's Birthday represent one solution, the movable three days in April another, the even week at Christmas a third; each of these may be best for a particular minority of students. Beyond a certain limit, different for different persons, a few days' vacation becomes a harmful interruption rather than a means of recuperation. In general it seems to me that the normal student who has his work well in hand loses in momentum in a vacation of more than a day or two during the term somewhat more than he gains in recuperation. Here again, then, the decision by the Faculty must depend on a careful weighing of different interests more or less in conflict with each other.

It is not difficult to infer that the present or any other calendar is the result of numerous compromises and may exactly suit but a small minority. On the other hand, almost any stable calendar is better than one changing from year to year for temporary reasons, and a considerable burden of proof lies against any proposed change of the resultant of many years' experience and experiment.

One advantage of our January vacation may be worth mentioning at this time, only a month before that vacation comes. The attractions of the New England mountains for the vacation pedestrian in summer need no advocate. The end of January is not a less eligible season for a mountain outing, and the student who uses it thus for the first time will scarcely fail to gain a new appreciation of nature and quick exhilaration in the respite of work. But this "is another story."

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