

THE TECH

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In charge of this issue: L. H. KING, 1909

Wednesday, December 5, 1906.

The Institute calendar has often been a subject of discussion among students, some of whom fail to understand the advantages of the present arrangement of a long Institute summer vacation with exceptionally short intermissions during the year. In this connection it is appropriate to quote from a paper by Professor Tyler:

"The present calendar represents, on the whole, a sort of equilibrium, not necessarily stable, among various forces, a variation in which may lead to changes.

"The length of the year is determined, apart from general usage, by a belief that it corresponds with the maximum efficiency both of teachers, who must do much more than teach if they would teach best, and for maturing students, taking due account for both, of intensity of application during the school year. If the school year were lengthened with proportionate reduction of intensity of application, some might benefit—as some actually do by taking summer courses—but there would be much disadvantage to those teachers and students who now make summer engagements of value in one way or another. The student of slender means would lose both in earning power and in increased cost of living.

"We now come to the four legal holidays—Thanksgiving, Christmas, Washington's Birthday, and Patriot's 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.

"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 in the summer. The single day at Thanksgiving and at 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.

"One advantage of our January vacation may be worth mentioning at this time, 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.

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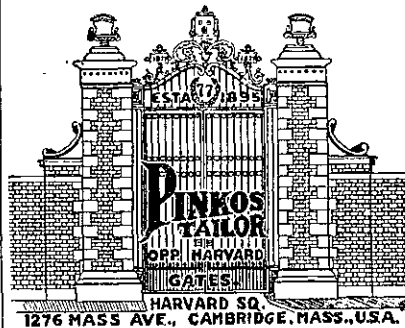
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