

Notes by the Glasgow University Court, on memorials of the Lord Provost, magistrates, and council, and of merchants, &c.; of the city of Glasgow, 20th October, 1863.

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NOTES

BY

THE GLASGOW UNIVERSITY COURT,

ON

MEMORIALS

OF

THE LORD PROVOST, MAGISTRATES, AND COUNCIL,
AND OF MERCHANTS, &c., OF THE
CITY OF GLASGOW.

20TH OCTOBER, 1863.

NOTES by the GLASGOW UNIVERSITY COURT, to be communicated to the SENATUS ACADEMICUS, in terms of the Act of Parliament, and also to the GENERAL COUNCIL of the UNIVERSITY of GLASGOW, for consideration, at their Meeting on 28th October next,

ON A

MEMORIAL of the LORD PROVOST, MAGISTRATES, and COUNCIL of the CITY of GLASGOW, adopted at a Meeting of Council, held on 3d September last, and a Memorial signed by 200 Merchants and Inhabitants of the City, presented in May last.

THE complaint made in these Memorials, of which copies are annexed, is, that in consequence, at least in part, of the Winter Appendix No. 1. Session having been shortened in this University, or rather of the summer vacation having been lengthened, since the beginning of the present century, the number of students in Arts who attend this University, belonging to families resident in the City of Glasgow, has been injuriously affected. It is unnecessary to repeat the statement of figures, by which the statistical fact thus averred is alleged to be proved, or to recapitulate the reasoning, by which the evil is traced to the alteration on the length of the vacation, and by which a return to the former practice is supported. The Court is disposed, on the personal knowledge and experience of several of its own members, to admit, although with much regret, that the number of students, contributed by the City of Glasgow, is not only greatly below what it ought to be, but does not keep pace with the increasing population, and wealth of the City. How far this falling off is due, in any great degree, to the alteration in the length of the sessional attendance at the University, is more difficult of proof. But the Court have, on more than one occasion, placed their opinion on record, in reference to the general interests of the University, that the present length of the summer

vacation is an evil of considerable magnitude. Looking, therefore, to the welfare, not only of the University, but of the City of Glasgow, the Court are desirous to provide a remedy.

But the Court cannot view the subject, solely in its bearing on the interests of the students, who may resort to the University from this City, and its vicinity. Even were the number of such students greatly increased, they would still, in all probability, form only a small proportion of the number sent to the University, from other parts of Great Britain, and from abroad. The University of Glasgow belongs to the national system of Education, and every change proposed must be anxiously considered, as affecting various classes of the community, whose diversity of position, habits, and pecuniary resources, has given rise to antagonistic interests, which require, as far as possible, to be reconciled. Regarded in this light, the question is one affecting, although it may be in different degrees, all the Scottish Universities.

Having made this preliminary explanation, the Court will proceed to the consideration of the subject, submitted to them by the highly influential parties, from whom these Memorials proceed.

The prayer of the Memorial of the Magistrates is, that, failing the adoption of some scheme for a separate summer session in the Arts classes, the University should “return to the custom prevalent “at the commencement of the century, of making the winter “session to commence on the 10th of October, and to be carried “on continuously to at least the 1st day of the following June.”

Although the Court have already pronounced a strong opinion on the desirableness of *some* alteration, whereby a part of the summer vacation may be filled up with study, yet, for the purpose of arriving at a sounder conclusion, as to the best means of carrying out this view, it may be useful shortly to recapitulate the grounds on which such an alteration has been supported, on the one hand, and objected, to on the other.

(1) It is urged in favor of some alteration, that the great length of the vacation deprives the very young students, who generally attend the Arts Classes of a Scottish University, for six months of the year, of that guidance and superintendence of their studies, which, in the great majority of cases, is found essential to success. There is no organized system of reading under Collegiate Tutors,—

no compulsitor to application. No doubt a few voluntary prize essays are prescribed by the Professors, to be written during the vacation, but these are not taken into account, in qualifying for a degree, and are not of practical use, to any large number of the Students. The period, although most beneficially employed by some in private study, and mental culture, is alleged to be too often spent by others in uninterrupted relaxation, if not idleness. The result, in such cases, is not confined to the mere waste of time, but interferes with the acquisition of those habits of application, which form the most valuable reward of continuous academical training. It is stated, as a consequence of this, that in many instances, parents, who are able to afford the expense, are inclined to look elsewhere for the education of their sons, at that particular age, while those who cannot afford it are tempted, perhaps after having had their sons for a session or two at College, to forego the advantage of further attendance, and to place them at once in a course of training for business. At all events, there seems no reason to doubt, that, from Glasgow at least, a constantly increasing number of the sons of the wealthier classes, has been sent to proprietary and Collegiate Schools in England, where tuition is extended over nine months of the year.

(2) Against any alteration, it is maintained, that, as regards both Professors and Students, the powers of attention are sufficiently strained by a six months' course,—that towards the end of such a course, symptoms of exhaustion very generally shew themselves,—and that no gain would result from prolonging the Session. It is alleged, that the length of the summer vacation is an inducement, to men of much learning and eminence, to seek the Chairs of the Scottish Universities, whereby a higher class of Candidates is secured on any vacancy,—that besides, whatever may be the effect on some students, the suspension of active teaching for six months continuously, enables the Professor to keep up better with the progress of his subject, and to enrich his Lectures, as well as improve his system of instruction,—nay more, that every student, who is at all desirous of improving himself, can employ his summer vacation more beneficially in private reading, in connection with the Lectures he hears during the winter session, than he could do, by attending a prolonged course of Lectures,—and that the independence of mind, and enlarged habits of thinking,

which characterize the Scottish Student, are greatly to be attributed to this self-instruction.

The General Council of this University, some time ago, after consideration of these various conflicting views, made a representation to this Court, in which they suggested a remedy, not merely for the objectionable length of the summer vacation, but for what they regarded as another evil, in connection with the curriculum of arts,—the necessity of four years' study, to qualify for the Degree of Master of Arts. They proposed to institute two sessions in the year, of five, and three months respectively, the attendance on each of which should count as qualifying the student for graduation, so as to enable him to go up for his degree, at the end of three years. This very important suggestion was forwarded, by this Court, to the Scottish Universities Commissioners, who were then about to close their labours; and the friends of University Reform have lately been afforded an opportunity of learning, from the Report of the Commissioners, printed for the use of both Houses of Parliament, the opinion entertained by them, as to the inexpediency of adopting the proposal, in the present state of the Scottish Universities. As this Report contains many valuable observations on the subject now under consideration, and may not have been seen by all the Members of Council, an Extract

Appendix No. 2. from it is given in the Appendix.

The Court, before expressing their opinion, on the proposal for an extension of the Winter Session, will explain their views on the alteration suggested by the General Council, which, if adopted, would entirely supersede the necessity of considering the other.

In the first place, the Court have grave doubts as to their power, under the Universities (Scotland) Act, 1858, to make so sweeping a change, not on the length of the existing Session, or on the period of attendance of Students on the classes, but on the number of Sessions in each year, and the curriculum which is required for Graduation. By such a change, the interests both of the Professors and Students might be seriously affected, and the capacitating powers, given to the Court by the Statute, would be jealously scanned. It would be a very different matter from a mere return to the length of Winter Session, which formerly prevailed in this, and some of the other Scottish Universities.

But, in the next place, it appears to the Court, to say the least,

questionable, whether it would promote a thorough College Education, to allow the period of instruction in Classics, Philosophy, and Science, required for Graduation in Arts, to be condensed, at the will of the Student, irrespective of any entrance examination, into three, in place of four years. The mind of a youth from 14 to 17 or 18 years of age is only maturing, and it would be, at least in many cases, inexpedient to attempt to crowd so much into so short a period.

Lastly, it appears to the Court to be also questionable, whether, if so much as eight months in the year is to be spent at the University, that period should be broken up into two sessions, of five months, and three months, with an interval between them of one month. Admitting that there are strong arguments in favour of short sessions, it would certainly inconvenience a large number of Students, now in the habit of attending the University, to spread the period of public tuition, over so many as nine months in the year.

With reference now to the merits of the proposal, contained in the Memorial of the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of Glasgow, the Court have endeavoured, as far as in their power, to make themselves acquainted with the various interests which its adoption would affect, and have given much consideration to its practicability and working. While they feel disposed to view it favorably, they are not of opinion, that it is the only, or even, perhaps, the best remedy within their reach, and they are glad, therefore, that the amended constitution of the Scottish Universities renders it necessary, that all such matters should be discussed with the Senatus Academicus, and submitted for the consideration of the General Council, and, that any resolution come to, should have the sanction of the Chancellor of the University. It is with the view then of communicating with the Senatus, and of eliciting the opinion of the Council, on the merits of the different plans which might be adopted, that these Notes have been prepared.

The views of the Court may be shortly explained.

I. The proposed lengthening of the winter session.

The Court recognise the advantages, which an extension of the length of the winter session possesses over every other plan, as being a return to the former practice of the University. They are likewise of opinion, that such an extension would be found to

encroach less on the occupations, and resources of the poorer Students, who come to Glasgow from a distance than the adoption of a short curriculum session in summer. The exact proportion in numbers, which these bear to the Students who are permanently resident in the City, or to those to whom the expense of the session is a subordinate consideration, it is difficult to ascertain. But the Court consider they are so numerous, as to require to have their interests carefully protected.

But, should any increase be made to the length of the session, the Court are of opinion, that it should be such, as to enable the continuous attendance of the Students, in each class, to be enforced during at least seven-eighths of its endurance. Nothing is more hurtful to the successful teaching of a class, than the absence of any large number of the Students, either at the beginning or end of a session. Unless the Court have been misinformed, it was in consequence of such irregularity of attendance, that, about forty years ago, it was resolved, by the authorities of the University, to curtail the session. It is believed, that many members of the Council may be old enough to recollect the unprofitable character of the studies, which then preceded, or succeeded, the commencement and termination of the real business of the class. The whole work of the session ought to be so arranged, as to ensure, not merely, that the subject of instruction shall be regularly and fully treated by the Professor, but, that the progress of the Students shall be, as nearly as possible, alike. The Court would rather not lengthen the session at all, than introduce such irregularity.

In order, however, to secure such attendance, as well as to promote, in other ways, the success of the proposed alteration, it would be highly desirable, if not essential, to obtain the co-operation, not only of the other Universities of Scotland, but of the Church Courts of all denominations, and of the Legal and Medical Corporations, by whom the education of intrants to the learned professions is regulated.

If eight months were fixed by the four Universities, as the stated length of the winter session, with breaks of eight or ten days at Christmas, and of a portion of a week at each of the autumn and spring sacraments, it might be expedient that the University Court should also enact, that a certificate, by the Professor, of attend-

ance by the Student, for not less than twenty-eight weeks of that time, should be necessary, to entitle him to count it as a qualification for his degree, or for other academical promotion.

It may be, that the other Universities of Scotland are, in some respects, differently situated from Glasgow. In particular, the same time for commencing and ending the winter session might not suit all. In Glasgow, the most convenient session would probably be found to be from the 1st October to the 1st June. But there seems to be no objection to different periods of commencement being fixed by different Universities, provided they all agree, that the length of the session, and the rules of attendance in each, shall be the same.

This uniformity of practice is obviously desirable, otherwise the Students might be influenced, in choosing their place of study, by considerations of a character that ought not to be allowed to prevail.

In reference to this part of the subject, it is material to keep in view, that, in case the Court were to call upon the Professors, belonging to the Faculty of Arts, to lengthen their session from six, to eight months, (being one third,) such of them as were appointed since the curtailment of the session, might consider themselves entitled to higher fees. This is a point, on which the Court do not wish, prematurely, and without hearing the Professors, to express an opinion, but it would ultimately belong to the Court, in terms of the Act, to decide it.

One very important point, in connection with the prolongation of the session, remains for consideration.—What would be the best means of securing the benefits, that ought to result from enlarging the period of study in the different Arts classes? The Court do not mean, in noticing this part of the subject, to enter into detail. It would necessarily be left to each Professor, to adopt the means he might think best, for utilizing the additional time, which he would thus be enabled to devote to the instruction of his class. But the Court think it right, in order that the expediency of the proposed change may be fairly judged of, to notice one consideration, which ought to be allowed weight, in deciding the question.

The regular public examination by the Professor, either daily or at short intervals, of the Students attending the classes in Classics, Philosophy, and Science, on the subjects lectured on or taught, is

one of the distinguishing, and most valuable features of our Scottish University system. The Court incline to think, that the additional time proposed to be provided, might, in many cases, be advantageously devoted to an extension of this practice, and to its application, not to the bare subject of the Professors' Lectures, but to the contents of the standard works referred to in the course of these lectures.

By such means, or by others which would suggest themselves to the Professors, the monotony of a long session might be relieved, and the languor, which often prevails towards the end of it, be prevented. Encouragement should also be given to the Student, not to confine his attention to the Lectures of his Professor, which, however valuable, can convey only a general view of the subject, but to search for himself those rich mines of information and thought, which are contained in the standard literature of our own, and of other countries and times. Such an addition to our present means of tuition, it appears to the Court, would harmonise with, and be likely to promote the efficiency of our existing Scottish University system.

The Court have thus endeavoured to point out the advantages of extending the length of the Winter Session, and to lay down the conditions, without which, it appears to them, it would not be practicable or advisable to do so. But they have now to call the attention of the Senatus, and the Council, to another mode of meeting the wishes of the present Memorialists, which not only possesses the recommendation of being more easily attainable, but aims at working out, for the benefit of those who may be able to avail themselves of it, a more varied system of University tuition.

II. Tutorial Classes.

The Court are desirous, at the outset, to guard against its being supposed, that they mean to recommend the adoption of the tutorial system, as it now exists in the English Universities. Without saying a word either as to the merits, or the abuses of that system, as practised in the Sister Kingdom, the Court will shortly explain what they contemplate, as not unsuited to advance the knowledge, and improve the mental training of the Scottish Student.

In the first place, it is not proposed to interfere with the benefits conferred by the present system of lecturing to large classes, or with the frequent oral examinations of the Students, during the

Winter Session, as matured and practised in this University. On the contrary, the scheme is meant to be subordinated to, and used only as an auxiliary of, the existing mode of University instruction in Scotland.

The object of the Memorialists is to fill up, by means of authorized private instruction, and stated hours of study in the University, some part of the summer vacation between May and November. The parties, who have now expressed themselves anxious for some such change, can well afford to contribute towards the extra expense it may occasion. At the same time it is thought that any plan, to be adopted for these ends, might be so contrived, as not to affect injuriously, the interests of those who, by reason of its costliness, might find themselves excluded from its benefits.

The necessity for increasing the staff of University instructors, in connection with many of the chairs of our Scottish Universities, was ably argued in the Report on the Tutorial System, submitted to the General Council of this University, on the 30th October, 1861. But the question was then viewed chiefly in relation to the greater teaching power required during the Winter Session, in aid of the Professor. With that object, the Royal Commissioners have since made provision for the appointment of assistants, by several of the Professors, and this now forms an important feature of our improved University System.

But the applicability and value of tutorial instruction, to be given in the University, during a part of the long summer vacation, as an auxiliary to the instruction of the winter session, has not yet received the attention which it appears to the Court to deserve.

The Court, therefore, are anxious to give this plan the fullest consideration, and, with the view of doing so, they invite the *Senatus Academicus*, and the General Council, to express their opinion upon it.

The general features of the plan may be thus shortly indicated. It would, at least for the present, apply only to Students in Arts. It would be optional with every such Student, either to prosecute his studies at home, as at present, or to enrol himself in one or more of the classes to be formed, for reading and private instruction, and for promoting chamber study, under Tutors appointed by this Court, on the recommendation of the *Senatus Academicus*,

or of the individual Professors, after such competitive, or other examination, as might hereafter be resolved on. The classes might each meet for two hours daily, during three months of the summer vacation, and the number of Students attending each class might be limited to eight or ten. The subjects to be taught by each Tutor in his classes, and the mode of instruction, would be prescribed by the Professor occupying the chair to which each such Tutorship was attached. The subject would be either that which had engaged the attention of the Students during the preceding winter session, or that which was to occupy their time during the succeeding session. The mode of instruction would be generally by reading and essay writing, both in the class and at home, and by catechetical examination in the class, conducted either *viva voce* or in writing.

The advantages that might be expected to result from such a system, if fairly worked out, are very obvious. The close contact into which the mind of each Student would be continuously brought with that of his instructor—the constant opportunities that would be afforded to the Student for asking explanations, and seeking the solution of difficulties,—and the facilities which would be given to the instructor, in an informal way, to elucidate the matter, and criticise the manner of his author, would all, in the opinion of the Court, contribute to render such an adjunct to the regular lectures of the Professors of the greatest possible value.

The Court are prepared to find that various practical difficulties lie in the way of such a plan, and in particular that there is an important financial difficulty. But all these, it is believed, might ere long be overcome. The Court are of opinion that the class fees payable to the Tutors, might, without undue pressure, be fixed so high, as, along with the endowments, to be expected from wealthy individuals in and around this great city, to afford an adequate remuneration to the Tutors. Already some such endowments have been conferred on this University, and others are talked of; while the Professors' Assistants would probably not feel disinclined to co-operate in the good work, thereby securing an immediate staff for the purposes contemplated.

The whole details of the plan, and its execution, should be strictly academical, and be subject to the control of the *Senatus Academicus*, and of this Court.

At the end of last winter session an attempt was made to originate a plan of instruction during a part of the summer vacation, but its object was not made known to the public, in such time as to enable Students to make the necessary arrangements to avail themselves of it, and its details were also perhaps not sufficiently matured.

In conclusion, the Court will be happy to receive from the Senatus Academicus, and the General Council, such observations on the alternative plans now explained as they see fit to address the Court.

APPENDIX No. 1.

MEMORIALS TO THE GLASGOW UNIVERSITY COURT.

THE MEMORIAL of the LORD PROVOST, MAGISTRATES, and COUNCIL of the CITY of GLASGOW.

Sheweth,—That your Memorialists regard the establishment of a University in Glasgow, as a circumstance which, in remote ages, materially contributed to enhance the importance of the city, and, in later times, has exercised an elevating influence, not only on its native population, but also on that of the whole of the West of Scotland.

That they, therefore, hold the institution in the highest estimation, and as deserving of the respect and support, as well of the inhabitants at large, as of those elected to exercise the municipal authority, and watch over the general welfare of the community.

That the number of young men, natives of Glasgow, who received their education in this University, was, in former times, very considerable in proportion to the population; and, in particular, from the commencement of the century to the year 1813, the number of Students in the gown classes had increased threefold, but since that period the numbers have

diminished, and have never even equalled those of 1813, notwithstanding the rapid increase of the population, especially of this city.

That your Memorialists are of opinion, that the arrangement of the periods of teaching, by which a long summer vacation is given, has been one great cause of the change which they lament.

That, to go no further back than the beginning of this century, the summer vacation has been in the interim extended by one-half,—beginning as it then did on the 1st, or even 10th of June, and terminating on the 10th of October; while now it commences on the 1st May, and ends on 1st November,—the consequence being, that a continued cessation from study takes place for at least six months each year, besides shorter periods of holidays during winter.

That one consequence of this arrangement is, that Students of Latin, Greek, Logic, &c., many of whom are very young in years, and not always disposed, of their own accord, to pursue in private, during summer, the instructions received during the winter session, are left without the inducement to perseverance, which a more continuous course of tuition would afford; often spending in absolute idleness the whole summer vacation; not advancing, but retrograding from the point at which they had arrived at its commencement; and thus, not only losing their time, but losing what is even more precious—the habit of industry and application.

There can be no doubt that the danger of such a result, forms one great cause why many of our wealthier citizens, with whom a desire to see their sons well educated, must hold a prominent place, prefer to sacrifice this wish, rather than expose them to the influences of the present system; or perhaps, by way of avoiding these, seek at a distance that education, which should be attainable at home.

That your Memorialists would deeply regret the continuance of any impediment to the citizens of Glasgow, and the people of the West of Scotland generally, availing themselves of a university education. They feel persuaded, that it would tend greatly to intellectual elevation, and the advancement of true social enjoyment in the community, were an increasing number of the sons of our citizens to devote their earlier years to the systematic course of study, pursued in the University. That thereby would be avoided the too frequent error, of introducing youths to the pursuits of business, with a meagre and superficial education, while scarcely advanced beyond boyhood, and when the value of their services must be inconsiderable, as compared with the sacrifice of the golden opportunity which youth affords, of enlarging their acquirements in science and literature.

That your Memorialists are aware, that the subject of extending the annual period of tuition, has already been brought to the notice of the

Court, by the General Council of the Univerity, and also through a Memorial, signed by many most respectable inhabitants, which was placed before the Court some months ago. They are also aware that, during the summer of the present year, the opportunity of tuition, by the assistants of certain of the Professors, has been afforded; and your Memorialists cannot but commend this arrangement, as evincing a desire, on the part of the Professors, to meet the wishes and necessities of the Public. They believe, however, that advantage has not been very extensively taken of these classes; and it is probable this may continue to be the case, so long as such summer classes form no part of the regular University course.

That, as your Memorialists cannot but look on the present arrangements, as insufficient to meet the wants of the Public, and as diminishing the usefulness of the University, they earnestly recommend to your honourable Court, to whom the regulation of the system and periods of study has been committed by Act of Parliament, to take the matter into early consideration, and, in default of some wider scheme, involving a separate summer session, as suggested by the General Council, to make such provision for extending the period of tuition, particularly in the Arts classes, as would include at least eight months in each year, exclusive of all holidays, thus leaving still four months, for relaxation to Professors and Students. In the meantime, and failing the adoption of what may appear to be preferable, your Memorialists would respectfully urge the propriety of returning to the custom, prevalent at the commencement of the century, of making the winter session to commence on the 10th of October, and be carried on continuously to at least the first day of the following June.

THE MEMORIAL of the undersigned MERCHANTS and INHABITANTS
of the CITY of GLASGOW, to the MEMBERS of the
UNIVERSITY COURT.

Sheweth,—That the Memorialists deeply regret that the existing arrangements, in the popular classes of Humanity, Greek, Logic, Mathematics, &c., of the ancient University of Glasgow, do not admit of the sons of our citizens being educated in a suitable and satisfactory manner, and that in consequence, it has for many years past, been usual to send youths from home at a tender age, to obtain, in England or elsewhere, that liberal education which, under better arrangements, might have been obtained for them in their native city.

That the present long vacation, of six or seven consecutive months, is a great disadvantage to the University students, who, during this large portion of the year, are deprived of the instruction so essential at their age.

That fifty or sixty years ago, the University course extended over seven or eight months of the year; and, at that period, the attendance at the classes increased from year to year, in proportion to the increase in the wealth and population of the City.

That in thirteen years, from 1800 to 1813, the number of Students in the gown classes was tripled. That since the year 1813, although the population of Glasgow has increased fourfold, and the wealth of the City in a much greater ratio, the numbers attending the gown classes have scarcely been maintained, while a very much smaller proportion of the Students than formerly, are natives of the City.

That for these reasons, the Memorialists beg leave earnestly to entreat the University Court, to restore the ancient practice, approved by former experience, of not less than eight months' annual instruction by the Professors, aided by competent Assistants, such period being divided into two sessions, with a short and long vacation, affording ample relaxation to the Professors, as well as to the Students. That the Memorialists cannot doubt, that such an alteration would be speedily followed by a great increase of Students, more especially in all the popular classes.

APPENDIX No. 2.

EXTRACT FROM GENERAL REPORT of the SCOTTISH UNIVERSITIES
COMMISSIONERS, dated 14th May, 1863.

LENGTH of the SESSION in the FACULTY of ARTS.

In connection with Degrees in Arts, it may be right for us to advert to a question, which has lately been much discussed in some of the Universities, as to the expediency of instituting Summer Sessions for Students in the Faculty of Arts. At present, the classes included in the ordinary course of study in that Faculty, assemble during the Winter Session only, which, in each University, extends over a period of from 23 to 25 weeks, —from the end of October, or beginning of November, to the beginning or end of April. There is thus a continuous vacation in each University of fully six months. It was represented to us, that evils arise from the suspension of the studies of young men at the University, for so long a period; and many persons, who are persuaded of the existence of such evils, advocate strongly the introduction of a different arrangement, by which instruction in the Faculty of Arts may be extended over a portion of the summer.

This subject, from its importance, engaged our attention at an early

stage of our proceedings, and we made careful enquires regarding it. In answer to these enquiries, the most opposite views were expressed to us, and we found that, even admitting it to be desirable, that opportunities of instruction in the Faculty of Arts, should be afforded to Students during the summer months, any arrangement, prolonging the necessary attendance of the Students at the University, over a much larger portion of the year than is now required, was surrounded with very serious difficulties. The objection, with which we were most strongly impressed, lay in the difficulty which, it was said, a departure from the present system, would throw in the way of poor Students, in completing their studies at the University. It is undoubted, that a very large number of the Students in the Scotch Universities are in exceedingly poor circumstances. Many of them engage during the summer in teaching and other employments, in order to gain the means of supporting themselves at the University, during the winter;—and, even with the Winter Session at its present length, the Professors receive, in the last few weeks of its course, frequent applications from Students, to dispense with their longer attendance for the session, on account of their scanty funds being already exhausted. We were told by many persons, having the best opportunities of forming an opinion, that the institution of a compulsory Summer Session, would have the effect of depriving many deserving young men altogether, of the advantages of a University education.

The subject was again brought under our notice, shortly before the expiration of our powers, by a Minute of the University Court of the University of Glasgow, of 5th November, 1862, transmitting to us, along with certain resolutions of the Court, a carefully considered and elaborate Report, prepared by a Committee of the General Council of the University. That Report recommended the shortening of the Winter Session to five months, beginning with the second Tuesday of October, and the institution of a Summer Session of three months, beginning with the second Tuesday of April; and it embodied a scheme, for the completion of a course of Study for a degree, in three Winter, and three Summer Sessions. It contained also, much valuable information, and many important suggestions, worthy of serious and careful consideration.

At the same time, after giving to the Report the attention which it well deserved, we were not induced to alter the opinion, at which we had previously arrived, that it would not be desirable to require, of all candidates for a degree, attendance during a much longer period of the year than at present. Allowing the system pursued in the English Universities—under which, mainly by the occurrence of more frequent vacations, the period of study at the University, is made to extend over a larger portion of the year—to be preferable in theory, to the usage of the Scotch Universities, it must yet be borne in mind, that the English system is

comparatively an expensive one, and is suited for persons of more liberal means, than many of those, who receive their education in the Scotch Universities, possess.

But, further, we think that the present arrangement, even with a view to the benefit of the Student, is not without advantage, and that it is possible to attach too exclusive importance to mere attendance on lectures at the University. The object and advantages of a University education, are not confined to the instruction received within the class-room. Besides imparting information, the lectures of the Professors are intended, in a great measure, to guide and to stimulate private study, and for this, the long vacation affords the best opportunity. The Student is then enabled to revise, by himself, and at leisure, the subjects of his University studies, and to consider more fully, and carry out to their legitimate conclusions, the principles which he has heard enunciated by his Professors. The encouragement thus given to independent thought, has an importance not lightly to be disregarded.

It must also be borne in mind, that under existing regulations, opportunities of instruction in the various branches of Natural Science, are afforded during the summer months, from May to August, and that it is unnecessary, therefore, that the studies of young men at the Universities, should be suspended during the whole of the long vacation. It is true, that at present no attendance on these branches is required for a degree in Arts, except in the University of Aberdeen, but still the opportunity of attending them is presented, if Students, or those who have the guidance of their education, think it desirable, that they should avail themselves of it. It is, further, open to any of the Universities, by the institution of summer courses of lectures, on the branches embraced in the ordinary curriculum, to enable Students, if they please, to prosecute their studies at the University, in these branches, during a portion of the present long vacation. Such a course, we understand, is about to be adopted in the University of Glasgow, and is free from the objections, which would apply to an arrangement, making it imperative on all students, to prolong the period of their attendance at the University, much beyond what is now required.

For the present, a careful consideration of the subject has satisfied us, that the sudden introduction, as a measure compulsory on the Students, of any great change from long established usage, in regard to the University session, would be attended with serious danger.

The expediency of forming, by Ordinance, a Winter Session of uniform length for all the Universities, was also pressed on our attention, by various persons. But, in consequence mainly, of the half-yearly sacramental fast days occurring, under existing arrangements, at different periods relatively to the beginning and close of the session, at the different University seats,

it would be difficult, without making the session materially longer, or materially shorter than at present, to establish complete uniformity in regard to it. Practically, however, there is now little real difference as to the length of the session in the different Universities; for, although in one, the session may be nominally a week or a fortnight longer than in another, the nominally longer session will be found to be interrupted by a larger number of holidays. Thus, in Glasgow, where the session is nominally longest, there is a considerable number of holidays, including a week at Christmas, and a period of nearly a week at the time of the sacramental fast, in the beginning of April; while in Aberdeen, where the session is apparently shortest, the only holidays throughout its course, are Christmas day, and New Year's day, and occasionally, two additional days, when those usual holidays occur towards the end of a week.

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