

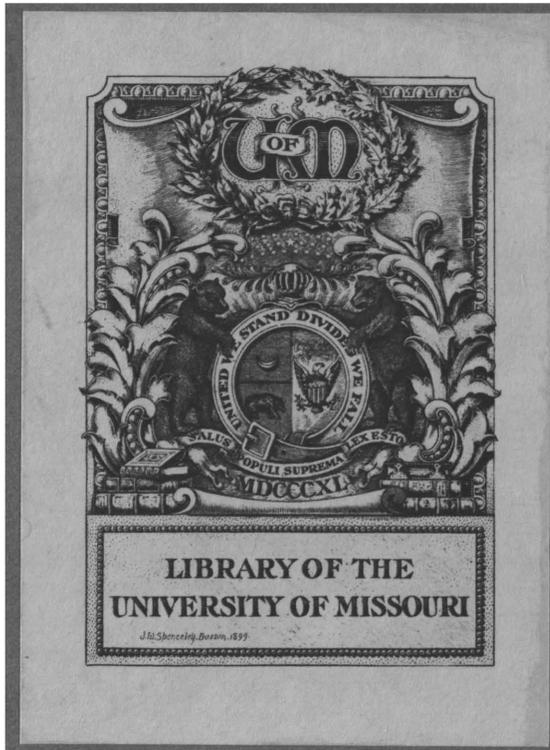
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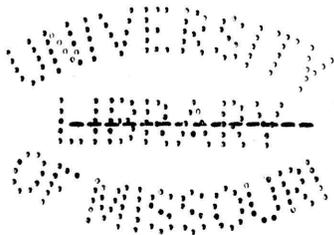




MEDIAEVAL STUDENT LIFE.

by

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# MEDIAEVAL STUDENT LIFE

## CHAPTER ONE

### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIAEVAL UNIVERSITIES.

To understand the origin and development of the mediaeval universities we must turn to those great social, political and religious movements which characterize that period of European history known as the Twelfth Century renaissance. At the close of the eleventh, and opening of the twelfth centuries we find all Western Europe undergoing a great awakening. Ideas and movements of both local and national importance were spreading throughout the countries of France, Germany, Spain, and Italy. In order that these ideas and movements may find expression new institutions were developed, some of which became important educational agencies.

One of the institutions destined to play an important part in the social life and manners of the people was the order of chivalry. With its ideals of liberty, honor, and religion, it was drawing into its ranks thousands of the best young men in Europe. These young knights soon became effective in promoting mediaeval morality and civilization. By practicing such virtues as loyalty, courtesy, justice and respect for women they tended to soften the crude and harsh manners of western Europe. Their high moral standards, their refinement of manners, and principles of courtesy gradually permeated the whole of mediaeval society. Their heroic deeds



and virtues found expression in the chivalric songs and poetry, thus gradually turning their minds in the direction of literature. Those who enjoyed the songs of the Minnesingers and Troubadours would very probably find delight in reading the poems of the ancient warriors if only they had the opportunity. To restore parts of the old learning and open up other attractive fields of study was one of the tasks reserved for the mediaeval university.

This same period saw men asserting themselves in the field of politics. The towns and municipalities of France, Germany, and Italy were now asking for, and obtaining charters of incorporation. The towns were now controlling their own affairs, and from the settled conditions that prevailed therein, trade and industrial organizations began to develop.<sup>1</sup> Elementary instruction for the younger men and boys was at once desired in order that they might improve upon the avocation of their fathers. This led to the organization of town schools. In France, schools were established in Paris, Orleans, and Bordeaux. In Italy, we find schools in practically every important town; while in Germany, we hear of them being established in Lubeck, Leipzig, and Hamburg.<sup>2</sup> In these town schools, boys were taught the elements of reading, writing and simple methods of computation. Inasmuch as these schools were established for the purpose of serving the educational needs of the town-people, we would naturally expect to find the teachers and students using the vernacular language. Such was the case.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Munro, American Historical Report, 1906, 47
2. Laurie, Rise of the Universities, 97
3. Ibid, 98.



The schools were also free from ecclesiastical control. This meant that they were in position to undertake any course of study, or adopt any new educational method which they might desire. As we shall see later, it was not a very long step from these town schools to the more specialized institutions known as the universities.

Not only did the twelfth century find the people of Western Europe interested in such local matters as the order of chivalry and the incorporation of towns, but they were also turning their attention to interests outside their own immediate community. The Crusades had just opened up to the people of Western Europe many new channels of communication to Asia and other eastern countries. These great religious expeditions had affected the intellectual life of Europe in many ways. The isolation which feudalism had been fostering, was now completely broken down. Bonds of common interests were now beginning to unite the lords and tenants, prince and peasant, from all the Christian nations of Western Europe. People from different parts of the continent came together for the first time, and learned of the manners, customs, and practices of one another. The exchange of ideas resulting from these associations struck down forever that narrow provincialism which had so greatly hindered European development. The mediaeval mind was now quickened, and some intellectual progress was inevitable.

But more important perhaps than the intermingling of the different peoples of Europe and the exchange of their ideas, were the reports brought from the east by the returning crusaders. Their journey had introduced them to the art and architecture of the Byzantines and the culture of the Saracens. They had



come in contact with new sciences and arts, new poetry, and philosophy. Those who were not satisfied to enter upon a monotonous ascetic life, now heard of institutions that offered instruction along new lines. Thousands of young men, moved by the restlessness of the crusaders, would soon be flocking over the countries of Western Europe in search of learning.

It was in the midst of these social, religious, and political movements that a great educational revival occurred. Mention has already been made of the various city schools established in France, Germany and Italy. In addition to these there were numerous monastic and cathedral schools scattered throughout these same countries as well as in England. But the intellectual enthusiasm that followed the twelfth century awakening could no longer be confined to the smaller schools.<sup>1</sup> While many of them took on a new life and experienced a rapid growth, yet they were unable to meet the demands for higher education and more specialized training that everywhere appeared. This task was reserved for the mediaeval university.

In turning to the influences that had a more direct bearing upon the growth of the mediaeval universities, we find several. In the first place there appeared in the early twelfth century a number of inspiring and original teachers. These seemed to be "possessed with an ardent love of teaching".<sup>2</sup> Wherever they appeared great numbers of students would gather round them, eager to learn. Two of these famous teachers command special

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1. McCabe's Abelard, 7, gives a good account of the intellectual enthusiasm.

2. Mullinger, History of Cambridge, 72



attention, viz. Irnerius of Bologna and Abelard of Paris.

Just at the opening of the twelfth century Irnerius began teaching at the University of Bologna. His entrance there marked a new epoch in the study of Roman Law. While it is true that this subject had been taught by others before the time of Irnerius, yet he was the first teacher who actually 'revived' this study at Bologna.<sup>1</sup> Upon the invitation of Countess Matilda he compiled portions of the code of Justinian and arranged them for study. Much of the fame of Irnerius is due to his success in winning patronage. He was the first teacher to direct the attention of the emperors to the importance of legal studies.<sup>2</sup> This in turn contributed much to the growth and prosperity of the school at Bologna. The prestige of that university was not confined to Italy alone, but as one writer points out, hundreds of German students were soon attracted by its fame and the teaching of Irnerius.<sup>3</sup> Within a few years the school at Bologna became a cosmopolitan university. For its rapid development, it owed much to the power of Irnerius as a teacher and lecturer.

The part played by Abelard in the development of the University at Paris is well known by all students of mediaeval history. If there can be definite date assigned to the establishment of that university it is the year 1110 when Peter Abelard was appointed to fill its chair of Logic. By his intellectual independence and his new methods of presentation, this young teacher strongly impressed all those who came before him. By his winning personality, his great breadth of knowledge, and his novel method of dealing with debatable questions he

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1. Rashdall, Universities of Europe during the Middle Ages, I, 116
2. Ibid, I, 121
3. Ibid.



soon drew thousands of students around him. His remarkable success in attracting students from all quarters is thus described- "Little groups of Norman, French and Breton nobles chattered together in their bright silks and fur-tipped mantles, vying with each other in the length and crookedness of their turned-up shoes. Anglo-Saxons looked on in long fur-lined cloaks, tight breeches and leathern hose, swathed with bands of many colored cloths. Stern-faced northerners, Poles and Germans in fur caps and with colored girdles and clumsy shoes, all waited impatiently for the announcement of 'Li Mestre'. Pale-faced southerners had braved the Alps and Pyrenees under the fascination of the 'wizard'. Shaven and sandalled monks, black-habited clerics, black canons, secular and regular, some of them heresy hunters from the neighboring abbey of St. Victor mingled with the crowd of young and old, grave and gay, beggars and nobles, sleek citizens and bronzed peasants<sup>1</sup>. Such was the interest manifested on the part of the students in their eagerness to hear this master teacher. With such enthusiasm as this, the day was not far distant when Paris could boast of a real university.

As these famous teachers appeared they introduced new methods of teaching and study. For the first time in the history of education we find Irnerius in his teaching of law, and Abelard in his teaching of logic and philosophy, making definite attempts to arrive at the 'truth' of their respective subjects.<sup>2</sup> In Abelard's 'Sic it Non' the method is presented in detail. That famous little book of one hundred and fifty-

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1. McCabe, Abelard. 75, 76.

2. This was later known as the 'scholastic method'.



eight questions, marks a great step forward in the field of mediaeval pedagogy. There, the author presents many debatable questions without giving his own view, and leaves the student to reason out the matter for himself. This method awakened a great interest on the part of the students in their study and investigations. In commenting upon the effects of this new method, one of the best authorities of mediaeval education has this to say- "In the schools of Paris and Bologna, branches of learning were treated in a new manner! This new method had an attractive power for teachers and scholars of various countries. The cornerstones of permanent abodes of learning were laid. The continually growing number of scholars brought with it the increase of teachers. The desire of both classes for learning was awakened; and this desire with the combative exchange of ideas in the disputations, were effective forces to keep investigation active and the schools themselves from decline..... In Paris it was cultivation of logic with the new method in theology which caused the revolution in the schools of that city"<sup>1</sup>. This method was especially used in teaching the subjects of philosophy, theology, and to some extent, canon and civil law. As other universities developed they took up this new method, and it soon became one of the most important features of the university exercises. <sup>2</sup>

Along with this new method of teaching there came another contribution that played an important part in the development of the universities. This was the introduction of additional subject matter. The higher education and the new methods of study above described, would scarcely have been possible without

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1. Denifle, Die Universitäten des Mittelalters, 45, 46.  
2. These exercises were called 'disputations'. Described in chapter IV.



the addition of some new material. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the people of Western Europe became acquainted with the ancient learning of the Greeks and Romans. Likewise the medical works of the Arabic and Jewish physicians then became the property of the European schoolmen. These new discoveries furnished material for more advanced instruction. When collected and made accessible to the students it played an important part in the development of the universities.

Not only did this period witness the introduction of new subjects but as one writer states, " it also created two new fields of study".<sup>1</sup> Chief of these were - scholastic philosophy, theology, and canon law. Along with these new subjects, textbooks were produced which marked them off as professional studies. Abelard's famous book 'Sic et Non' which has already been referred to, furnished the method of recitation used in all these new lines of study.<sup>2</sup> In Theology, the 'Sentences' of Peter Lombard was used; while Gratian's 'Decretals' furnished the subject-matter for the study of canon law. This latter text book proved to be so popular that it 'created an entirely new class of students, separate from those devoted to Arts, Theology, Roman Law, and Medicine'.<sup>3</sup>

Here we also see for the first time students expressing an eager desire for specialization. The ambitious scholars were no longer content with instruction from a local priest or monk. When they heard of teachers and schools offering instruction in certain professional subjects, they would flock

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1. Norton, Mediaeval Universities, 38  
2. Ibid, 38  
3. Ibid, 57



to such a place in large numbers. If the Doctors at Salerno could instruct them in the art of caring for and prolonging life, they wanted to go there. If the teachers of law at Bologna could classify and explain the new legal codes, they would resort to that place for study. If Paris had any new systems of theology or philosophy to offer, these inquiring students were anxious to receive it.

One other influence should be spoken of in connection with the growth of the universities. I refer to the great number of privileges that were granted by church and state authorities to both Masters and students. Beginning about the middle of the twelfth century, we find kings and popes, lords and bishops, giving special recognition to scholars. The first of these privileges was granted by Frederick Barbarossa in 1158.<sup>1</sup> He strongly encouraged scholars to enroll in the university of Bologna, and granted to all those travelling 'for the sake of study' special protection while in his territory. Frederick's act was soon followed by other noted rulers, and before the close of the century, practically every court in Western Europe had extended privileges of one sort or another to university students. No sooner had these privileges been extended, than thousands of young men took advantage of them, and adopted the life of 'wandering scholars'. The universal domination which the Catholic Church had exercised over all Western Europe and the general acceptance of its Latin Language made it possible for the citizens of one country to converse with those of another. Abbeys and monasteries were compelled to establish hostels ('hospitia') in connection with their

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1. Munro, The Mediaeval Student, Translations and Reprints,  
vol. II, no. iii, 2.



monastic schools, where scholars might find shelter and protection while travelling from one school to another. Under such favorable circumstances as these, the rapid growth of the universities was inevitable. Within the next century and a half, these institutions of higher learning were established in every important country of Western Europe. Let us now turn to the various motives influencing the students in entering these universities.



## CHAPTER TWO

### STUDENTS CHOICE OF A UNIVERSITY.

The two important questions which the student had to decide in selecting a university were—first, its accessibility and location; and, second, the profession which he later expected to adopt. Under natural conditions we would expect a student to select the university located nearest him. Such was the case in regard to a large majority of students. Poor methods of travel and the dangers of long journeys made it necessary for many of them to forego the advantages of study in a foreign university. The highwaymen and robbers who lived by plundering mediaeval travellers were also a great annoyance to the defenceless students of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and no doubt prevented many of them from attending distant seats of learning. In fact, the dangers from these highwaymen became so great during the twelfth century in France and England that parents frequently had to send servants along with their sons in order to protect them.<sup>1</sup>

The English Universities of Oxford and Cambridge adopted the plan of sending 'fetchers' out into the country for miles around in order to safely accompany the younger students to their desired destination.<sup>2</sup> This became a great advertising feature for these two universities, and doubtless influenced

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1. Peacock, Ancient documents; Barnard's Amer. Jour. Ed. XXVIII, 105.  
2. These were upper-classmen and masters; they were fully armed and were sent out along the highways to escort the students in safety to the city.



many English students to enroll in the schools of their own country who otherwise would have gone abroad.

In some of the countries of southern Europe, during the latter part of the twelfth century, students were forbidden by law to attend any universities other than those located in their own province or state.<sup>1</sup> One of the writers on mediaeval education, in commenting upon the University of Naples refers to a statute that forbids any of the young men from Southern Italy to study in foreign schools.<sup>2</sup> But this was not true of most European countries. On the contrary, the very greatest freedom was usually allowed the student in his selection of a university.

It would be incorrect, however, to assume that all mediaeval students selected those universities that were nearest and most accessible. Most of the students then as now, had in view some definite and particular interest when entering upon a university career. These interests were many, and they differed in large degree as did the nationality of the students. To the great mass of young men in Northern Europe, the university was simply the door to professional life. A student could look about him and see that practically all the servants of the crown, the secretaries and advisers of the great nobles, the architects, and even the secular lawyers of France and England, had been trained as ecclesiastics in the universities of Paris or Oxford.<sup>3</sup>

Ambitious youths thus realized that

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1. Dollinger. Universities of the middle ages: Barnard's Jour. XX. 737.  
2. This probably the explanation for the sudden and rapid growth of the university of Naples.  
3. Rashdall. II. 696. 697.



if they expected to fill such positions, they too must enroll in one of these universities and pursue the courses there offered. To them, it appeared as if theological or ecclesiastical training was an absolute requirement for professional work. Even the physicians, the legal advisers and the secular agents of kings and bishops were rewarded, not by payment of salaries, but by offering them positions in the church.<sup>1</sup> Thus it was that the great majority of students of Northern Europe selected universities such as Paris and Oxford.

In turning to the students of Southern Europe we find, that while they too had particular interests in view when selecting a university, yet these lay along lines entirely different from those of the northern students. Instead of giving all their time and thought to the study of theology and ecclesiastical studies, they were more concerned with the professional and secular callings. Especially were they interested in the study of law and medicine. We would quite naturally expect to hear of Italian students expressing a desire for legal subjects. During the twelfth century the old Roman Law had been revived and classified by the authorities of the University of Bologna.<sup>2</sup> It was Irnerius, the first great teacher of law at Bologna who arranged for study the 'Digest of the Corpus Juris' in 1141. He there set on foot a movement that brought about a great increase in the enrollment of that institution.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Rashdall. II. 697.

2. Emerton. Mediaeval Europe.p.468. states that aside from the Roman law there were no other legal codes available during the twelfth century.

3. Norton. Readings in the History of Education, Mediaeval universities. 53.



Many students who had previously been considering theological work, now turned to the legal studies. That profession by means of which the old Romans had immortalized their names on the rostrum and in the forum was now strongly appealing to the young Italian students. They soon began to flock ~~in thousands~~ to that seat of learning where legal studies and legal practices could be gotten from first-hand authorities.

There was yet another profession that made new demands upon the Italian students. That was the practice of medicine. It was also during the twelfth century that numerous treatises on medical subjects by Greek, Arabic, and Jewish physicians were translated into the Latin. By means of these translations the works of such men as Galen and Hippocrates became known to the students of Southern Europe. Avicenna had just recently translated the important works of the Arabs for the students and Masters of the University of Salerno.<sup>1</sup> Students who had no particular interests in the study of law or theology now had an opportunity to enter upon another profession.

However important the propinquity of the seats of learning or the particular interests of the students may have been in determining their choice of a university, there is still a third influence which perhaps counted for more than both of those just mentioned. I refer to the special inducements and privileges which the universities themselves held out to the students. From their very earliest development the universities realized the fundamental

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1. Norton. Mediaeval Universities. 78



importance of a large enrollment. In order to obtain this enrollment, all sorts of privileges, inducements, and advantages were promised the students. Popes and emperors, bishops and nobles, vied with one another in extending their protection over the students that came within their realms. As mentioned above,<sup>1</sup> it was the enthusiasm of popes and bishops in extending special privileges to Masters and students that largely brought about this organization of the universities. Likewise it was through these same ~~extended~~<sup>extensive</sup> privileges that increased enrollments were secured.

In 1158 at the Diet of Roncaglia, Frederick Barbarossa issued the famous 'Authentic Habita'. He there granted to "all scholars who are travelling for the sake of learning, and especially the professors of divine and sacred law and their messengers, the privilege to come in security to those places where the studies are carried on and abide there in safety... He also forbade anyone to inflict any injury upon scholars or to impose any fine upon them for offenses which they may commit ....".<sup>2</sup> Frederick charged all local rulers of his empire to see that no one violated these laws. When the students heard of such privileges as these, they were sure to take advantage of them. The increased enrollment at the University of Bologna during the next few years is unquestionably due in part to just such privileges as these.

In 1200 Philip Augustus of France extended his protection over the students and faculty of the University

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1. p.9

2. Munro. Mediaeval student. II, iii, 3.



of Paris.<sup>1</sup> The citizens of that city were ordered to provide for the safety of the students while studying in Paris. Should a citizen strike a student for any offense whatsoever, he would be arrested and thrown in prison.<sup>2</sup> Likewise the citizens had to appear at all trials of the students and swear in their behalf in case any injury had been inflicted upon them. This was the first of a long list of privileges granted by the French rulers. The practice begun by Frederick Barbarossa and Philip Augustus was followed every few years by additional grants.

The popes likewise, saw the importance of inducing students to come with their realm, and from the very beginning of the university development, they too, began to grant privileges. In the old library of the University of Paris, there were found upwards of one hundred and fifty letters written by popes and bishops between the years 1200 and 1250. Every one of these letters refers to special privileges that would be given to university students.<sup>3</sup> Exemption from taxation, freedom from military service, and special trials for all student offenses are only a few of the many privileges which they enjoyed. <sup>4</sup>

To illustrate the importance that popes attached to universities and the student bodies, we need only to refer to the origin of the University of Toulouse. Early in the

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1. Ibid. 4.
2. Norton. 83.
3. Compayre, Abelard. 36.
4. Munro. Mediaeval student documents. II. iii. 5.7.



thirteenth century the Holy See desired to re-establish the Catholic faith in the territory recently disturbed by heresy and the Albigensian war. Accordingly, in 1217, Honorius III wrote to the professors of Paris and tried to persuade them to go and teach at Toulouse, "in that country whose inhabitants wish to return to God; there where it is necessary to prevent venomous serpents from entering, and where it would be fitting to transplant certain men who, by their teaching, their preaching and exhortation would ardently uphold the cause of God".<sup>1</sup>

And when Gregory IX confirmed the erection of the University of Toulouse, he expressed the hope that thousands of students would be soon won to the Catholic faith in that region.

But from our point of view, the special inducements which popes and emperors held out to students are not nearly so interesting as the efforts made by the mediaeval cities and towns to attract the undecided youths. Unlike some of our modern university towns, those of France, Germany, and especially Italy, were very active in their efforts to win students. They were always glad to hear of disturbances in the older student bodies. Upon hearing that a group of students were dissatisfied, they would at once extend them an urgent call to come and study in their city. The invitation was generally followed by a

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1. Compayre, Abelard. 40.



list of privileges which the students might enjoy. One of these disturbances occurred in 1228. Trouble broke out in the student body at the University of Bologna, and the neighboring town of Vercelli at once appealed to the dissatisfied students to come there and study. The town offered to turn over to the students five hundred of the best houses in the city and more if necessary.<sup>1</sup> The city further agreed to lend ten thousand 'librae' to the students at a fixed rate of interest; to secure for them a due supply of provisions; and to supply a competent salary for one Theologian, four Canonists, two Doctors of medicine, two Dialecticians and two Grammarians." They agreed to provide two copyists who would transcribe books for the students at a rate to be fixed by the rectors. The city also promised to send messengers out to all the near-by towns where they would announce the establishment of this university.<sup>2</sup> All these agreements were made in accordance with the city statutes, and were to last for eight years. Following this invitation, several hundred students migrated to Vercelli and there entered upon a new university career.<sup>3</sup>

Another example worth noting occurred in the same university in 1321. One of the students committed rape upon a young Bolognese girl. When the crime was reported, trouble at once broke out between the town authorities and the students. Most of

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1. This is one of the best evidences we have of the large enrollment of the mediaeval universities. Supposing that each house accomodates eight or tem students, (a small number) the enrollment would run up to four or five thousand students.  
2. Denifle. Die Universitaten des Mittelalters, 801.  
3. Denifle, 802.



the students were driven out of the city and took refuge in the neighboring town of Imola. Hearing of these disturbances, the city of Sienna sent ~~some~~ messengers to the students, offering them protection and promised them liberal privileges if they would come to their city. The students accepted, and from this one incident the university of Sienna dates its existence. 1

In Germany also we find the towns making strong appeals to the students when undertaking to establish a university. There is something quite modern in their method of advertising for students. For example when Pope Urban VI granted the town of Ingolstadt permission to found a university in 1365, he took occasion to praise the pure air and the abundance of the necessities of life.<sup>2</sup> It was also pointed out that there was no other university within a radius of one hundred and fifty Italian miles. In like manner, Frankfurt, when attempting to establish a university, was praised for its pure air, its wealth and its abundance of proper lodgings for students. Leipzig was praised, not only for the productiveness of its vicinity, and its favorable climate, but also <sup>because</sup> the citizens were polite and of good morals.<sup>3</sup>

In some cases we find universities boasting of their courses of study and the fame of their teachers. Mention has already been made of the important position held by Irnerius in the University of Bologna.<sup>4</sup> During the early

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1. Rashdall. II, i, 33.  
2. Karl Von Raumer. Hist. of German Universities. Barnard's Jour. VI. 14, 15.  
3. Karl von Raumer. Barnard's J. VI. 15.  
4. p.12.



thirteenth century the University of Salerno boasted of the fact that it was the first and only university that could furnish the students access to the medical writings of the Arabs. Constantinus Africanus, the famous translator and compiler of the Arabic and Greek medical writers was influenced to take the chair of medicine in the University of Salerno, and, through his reputation, influenced hundreds of students to take up the study of that profession.

Such were the invitations and appeals that confronted the mediaeval student when trying to decide what university he would attend. Should he not be content with the advantages of one institution or the privileges of a particular town, he well knew that his presence would be gladly welcomed in scores of others. And it seems safe to conclude that those towns and universities that held out the strongest inducements, were the ones which attracted the greatest number of students.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE JOURNEY TO AND FROM THE UNIVERSITIES.

As the fall of the year approached, small groups of students could be seen gathered at some central place, preparing for the last stage of their journey to the universities. The dangers that they were likely to encounter if travelling alone, made it necessary for them to collect in small groups before setting out on their long journey. Many students would write to their friends weeks in advance, urging them to meet in some particular place in order that they might make the long trip together.<sup>1</sup>

The spectacle presented by these students was quite different from anything seen in modern times. In watching them as they journeyed along the highways and through the towns, one might see there represented the various social classes that comprised the mediaeval student body. There were the sons of the nobles richly dressed and equipped, who travelled on horseback. These students were attended by a large number of servants who supplied their many wants. On the other hand, there were the poor students whose only method of travel was by foot. They carried their few belongings in small bags or possibly even in the pockets of their garments. The servants provided

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1. Numerous accounts of the accidents that befell German and French students while on their way to Italy have been collected by Buoncompagne, a teacher of Bologna. Extracts taken from Haskins; A.H.R. III 203-229



food and attended to the baggage of the richer students, while the poorer class was forced to beg for both their food and clothing. Almost every mediaeval student carried a small pack containing a velvet or satin doublet, a linen shirt, a diary, an album, a letter of introduction and a book - usually a Greek testament or <sup>a</sup> copy of Terence or Ovid.<sup>1</sup> It seems that the album was their universal companion. In it, the student kept a record of the important towns through which he passed, the number of days it took to make the journey, difficulties he encountered, names of noted people he met and other similar memoranda. Professors were often urged to write their names in the album with some classic quotation. Likewise the friends of the student would write mottoes and verses, <sup>and</sup> sign their titles and the 'nation' to which they belonged.<sup>2</sup>

As the students journeyed toward the universities we find them stopping for a few days in the larger cities and towns through which they passed. Here they would gaze on the sights of a new country, learn of the customs of the people, and add something to their supplies. The students usually managed to visit the towns at the time of their annual fairs. This gave them an excellent opportunity to add something to their scanty supplies. The older students would tell fortunes, predict an eclipse, sell some old charm or highly prized relic and unfold

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1. Hewett, University life in the middle ages. Harper's Magazine XCVI, 954.

2. Ibid, 954.



the mysteries of the 'black art'. For all of this they charged small fees. Others would fill their wallets by extemporizing some gibberish over a field of grain or a promising litter of pigs, or by posting some nonsensical notices on the doors of buildings. For performing all of these mysterious acts they exacted cash payments.<sup>1</sup>

After a few days at one of these fairs, they would pass on to the next town. As they travelled along the road they would chaff the honest country people and make love to the maidens by their gay songs and <sup>easy</sup> manners. This spirit of freedom and mirth is seen in their "Songs of the Open Road". Thus they sang:-

"We in out wandering,  
Blithsome and squandering,  
Tara, tantara, teino !

Eat to satiety,  
Drink with propriety,  
Tara, tantara, teino !

\* \* \* \* \*

Brother, best friend, adieu !  
Now I must part from you !

Tara, tantara, teino !<sub>2</sub>

It would be incorrect however to assume that all mediaeval students enjoyed such a pleasant journey as the above description may lead us to infer. On the

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1. Wood, The Mediaeval student, Cornhill Magazine, XIX
2. Symonds, Wine, Women and Song. 57



contrary there were many poor students, some of them mere boys, who were subjected to severe hardships while travelling to and from the universities. The wanderings of these poor students and the hardships which they suffered, occupy a large place in mediaeval student life.<sup>1</sup> Instead of having their food and clothing provided for them in advance, they were forced to beg for the things they ate and wore. Thus a poor scholar sings to a lord whom he meets:-

"I, a wandering scholar lad,  
Born for toil and sadness,  
Oft times am driven by  
Poverty to madness.

These torn clothes that cover me  
Are too thin and rotten;  
Oft I have to suffer cold,  
By the warmth forgotten.

\* \* \* \*

Take a mind unto thee now  
Like unto St. Martin;  
Obthe this pilgrim's nakedness,  
Wish him well in parting."<sup>2</sup>

Judging from the number of these begging petitions that have come down to us, it must have required several such songs as the one just quoted to bring forth the

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1. Wood. op.cit. Descriptions of 'A poor student'. 488.
2. Symonds, Wine, Women, and Song.



desired alms.

We are indeed fortunate in having preserved for us a diary that is almost complete in its description of the hardships suffered by a poor mediaeval student. This is a note-book (an autobiographical record) of a young Swiss student named Thomas Platter.<sup>1</sup> In following young Platter through his university career which extended over a period of five years, we are able to understand those hardships and wanderings which a typical poor student experienced.

When Platter was a mere boy, fourteen years of age, his mother decided that he should prepare himself for the priesthood. Her nephew, who had been a student at Breslau, was then visiting her. She persuaded him to take charge of young Thomas, and take him to the university. Platter and his cousin joined a group of students at Constance, and set out for Breslau. There were nine of them, five 'Bacchants' or older students, and four 'Sharpshooters' or freshmen.<sup>2</sup> It was the duty of the 'bacchants' to advise the 'sharpshooters' in all matters and to give them instruction in the elementary branches. The 'sharpshooters' in turn were obliged to wait upon their seniors, accompany them in their wanderings, beg for them, and if occasion demanded, steal for them.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Wood, Cornhill Magazine, XIX. 466.

See also first part of Monroe's book, Thomas Platter and the Educational Renaissance.

2. "Bacchants" were the upper-classmen or older students.

"Sharpshooters" were the new students, freshmen, boys just starting out on their university career.

3. According to Wood and other writers, the 'bacchants' seldom ever lived up to their share of the contract.

(next page. f.n.)



Thus while travelling through the towns and villages along their route, the 'sharpshooters' were scouting about, begging and stealing for their superiors; while the 'bacchants' usually enjoyed themselves in the alehouses, living and feasting off of the provisions which the poor fags had obtained.

The 'sharpshooters' experienced many close calls while scouting about for provisions.<sup>1</sup> One of these narrow escapes occurred in Silesia, a province of Eastern Germany. As the group approached this province the 'sharpshooters' were informed by the 'bacchants' that all poor scholars were licensed to steal geese, ducks, and provisions in general, throughout that territory. Young Platter of course believed the 'bacchants', and as they drew near the province he became anxious to exercise this privilege. Soon they entered a village, the first in Silesia, and Platter spied a large fat goose crossing the road directly in front of him. He picked up a stone, hurled it at the goose and knocked it over. He then picked it up, stuck it under his coat and started off with it, paying little attention to the owner who was looking on. Within a few minutes, however, Platter was surprised when the alarm was raised and a number of the townsmen came rushing out with clubs to claim the booty and punish the thieves. Young Platter dropped the goose, and he, with his companions, took to their heels and escaped. When they came to talk the matter over, they all agreed that Platter had failed

\* \* \* \* \*

3. (cont.) But woe unto the 'fags' if they failed to perform their part!

1. These stories are taken from Wood, op.cit.



in the act because he had neglected to offer his blessing that morning before starting out.

After several days of weary wandering (for the 'sharpshooters') Platter and his companions reached Breslau. Here they found several thousand poor scholars. In the course of time these poor 'fags' had formed a very characteristic organization. The town was divided into seven parishes, each of which contained a school and a hall. Students living in one parish were forbidden to beg or seek provisions in any other. Should a student violate this rule he would usually be caught, and some drastic punishment would follow. When a 'fag' of one district would catch an intruder in his territory he would give a signal call for help. At once his comrades would hasten to him, and unless the intruder was extraordinarily fleet of foot he was caught and kicked about until he promised to refrain from further violation of the rules.<sup>1</sup>

Oftentimes the comrades of the intruder would hear his cries and go to his rescue. Should the 'bacchants' themselves join in the fray, as often happened, it was sure to become a small riot. Young Platter soon learned the parishes and became an expert in securing provisions. As he puts it "I understood the whole art to a nicety. I could sound the good nature of a housewife at a glance. I knew when to whine and when to laugh, when to sing and

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Wood. op.cit. 470.



when to be saucy. I could instantly discover what was coming- a staff, a gröschen or a piece of meat- from the way they would turn up their lips."<sup>1</sup>

Platter and his party were not satisfied at Breslau, and after a few months stay they decided to go to Dresden. They remained at Dresden only six days; became dissatisfied because the townspeople did not seem very responsive to begging students, and set out for Munich. On arriving there, the 'bacchants' as usual betook themselves to a tavern, leaving the 'fags' to shift for themselves. The party stayed at Munich the rest of the year. By early spring, young Platter had become tired of the school and set out for home. After spending the summer at home, his mother again urged him to go and prepare for the priesthood. Again he left, and went to the university of Ulm. He studied there for a year, then went to Munich and studied for two years. Later he went to Zurich where he met a teacher who greatly impressed him- the celebrated Myconius. Here the wanderings of Thomas Platter ceased. Through the inspiration and teaching of Myconius, Platter became a proficient student of the Greek and Latin languages. He soon entered the teaching profession, and gradually rose into prominence. He closed his remarkable career in great honor as the head of Basel college.

The wanderings of Thomas Platter and his search after knowledge are typical of hundreds and even thousands of mediaeval students. Judging from the number of accounts that have been preserved, it would seem that at least one half of their student career was taken up with journeys

\* \* \* \* \*  
1. Ibid.



to and from the various universities. The spirit of adventure, the desire to travel and see the world, influenced <sup>hundreds</sup> hundreds of students to adopt (for a time at least) the 'wandering student life'. So universal did this practice become during the thirteenth century that an organization was formed known as "The Order of the Wandering Students"<sub>1</sub>.

This organization, as the name implies, consisted of students who spent the major part of their time travelling about from one institution to another. From the songs of the Order, we learn that students of all classes and conditions comprised its membership. The habitual poverty of its members, their favorite pastimes, their love of gaming, their opposition to early rising, are all set forth with some humor - Hear them describe their order in their own words:

"Rich and poor men we receive,  
In our bosom cherish;  
Welcome those the shawlings leave  
At their door to perish.

We receive the tonsured monk,  
Let him take his pittance;  
And the parson with his punk,  
If he craves admittance.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Monroe. Educational Renaissance. 92  
See also, Symonds, Wine, Women and Song 44. 46.



Masters with their bands of boys,  
Priests with high dominion;  
But the scholar who enjoys  
Just one coat's our minion.

\* \* \* \*

This our order doth forbid  
Double clothes with loathing:  
He whose nakedness is hid  
With one vest hath clothing.  
Soon one throws his cloak aside  
At the dice-box's calling;  
Next his girdle is untied,  
While the cards are falling.

No one shall wander forth  
Fasting from a table;  
If thou art poor, from south and north  
Beg as thou art able !  
Hath it not been often seen  
That one coin brings many,  
When a gamester on the green  
Stakes his lucky penny ?



This our order hath decried  
Matins with a warning;  
For that certain phantoms glide  
In the early morning.  
Whereby pass into man's brain  
Visions of vain folly;  
Early risers are insane,  
Racked by melancholy". 1

Those who adopted this life were apparently light-hearted , careless, pleasure-seeking students. They ran a free <sup>and</sup> disreputable course; frequenting taverns perhaps more often than lecture rooms; and, as one writer states, "were more capable of pronouncing judgment upon wine and women than upon a problem of divinity or logic".<sup>2</sup> One of the mediaeval monks writing of the life of this class of students describes them as follows - "they were accustomed to wander through the whole world and visit all the cities; and their many studies bring them understanding; for in Paris they seek knowledge of the liberal arts, of the ancient writers at Orleans, of medicine at Salerno, of the black art at Toledo, and in no place decent manners "<sup>3</sup>

However it would be incorrect to assume that the whole mediaeval student body spent their entire time in wandering about from one university to another. While

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1. Symonds, Wine, Women and Song. 50, 51.

2. Symonds, 20.

3. Helinaud, Mon~~h~~ of Froidmont. From Ge~~t~~sebrecht. Allegemiene Monatschrift.



the specialization of the mediaeval universities made it necessary for a student to journey over half of the European continent before completing his education; yet we must remember that before a settled institution like a university could have developed, it was necessary to have an enrollment that was more or less permanent. And the vast majority of these students, after spending a few months in travelling, would finally settle down for some definite work in one of the many institutions. To the life of these students after they enrolled in a university we will now turn.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### LIFE AT THE UNIVERSITIES

#### (part one)

When the student arrived at the university his name was registered upon the roll as a member of one of the 'Nations'<sup>1</sup>. He had the privilege of choosing the master whose lectures he would attend, and the 'hall' in which he would live. But before taking up definite quarters, the student would usually stop at some inn for a few days in order that he may size up the situation. Here he would be visited by both students and masters. The master would either go in person or send some representative to see the new student, urging him to enroll in his lecture courses.<sup>2</sup> He was invited to attend a few of the masters' lectures on trial, and then decide what courses he would pursue. We might state in this connection that no doubt the masters put forth their very best efforts in these opening lectures, for it was upon these, that their future incomes largely depended.

The students however had in view a different object to that of the masters when making their calls. They were primarily interested in seeing that the new students received proper initiation into their university life.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. A 'nation' was an organization consisting of all the students coming from the same country, all those of one race. For more detailed treatment see part two of this chapter.

2. Rashdall. II, ii, 606. Masters did not then receive a stated, annual salary. Their income depended upon the number of students taking their course.



It is worth our while to note in some detail the initiation ceremonies practiced in the mediaeval universities. While these ceremonies differed in the various countries, yet, from the many accounts that we have, we can form a rather definite conception of the practice as it existed in the universities of France and Germany during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

All ~~the~~ new students, when entering the university, were referred to (in scholastic Latin) as 'neovisti' (novices), 'vulpeculae' (foxes), 'vituli' (calves), 'blinds', 'innocents', and 'incompletes'. These names they were forced to bear until the older students, who were known as 'dominastri' (bosses), 'absoluti' (absolutes) and 'galli domestici' (cocks of the walk) initiated them into the freedom of academic life.<sup>2</sup> In reading over the initiation ceremonies that were practiced, we can easily understand how the modern practice of hazing originated. In these accounts, the older students entertained the idea that the raw youth who came in from the country was some kind of a wild beast. Before he could be received into the refined society of student life it was necessary for him to lay aside his horns.

Two or three days after the new student had selected his room, a group of upper classmen would call upon him.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Some of the more complete accounts of the initiation can be found in Rashdall, II, ii 631. Barnard's Jour. of Ed. VI, 37 and in Hewett, Univer. Life. op.cit. 954, 955.  
2. Hewett. op. cit. 954



They would pretend that they were investigating the source of an abominable odor that had reached their nostrils. Presently they would discover the source; it was the new student, whom they took to be a wild boar. Upon closer inspection they found it to be a 'beanus'.<sup>1</sup> They had heard of this creature before, but had never seen one. The older students would then become involved in a great discussion about the wild glare in the newcomer's eye, the length of his ears, and the ferocious aspects of his tusks. Pretending to be in sympathy with the poor creature, they would suggest that the horns and other excrescences might possibly be gotten rid of by an operation - the so-called 'deposition'.<sup>2</sup> The victim soon agreed, or was forced to agree, that this should be done. The elder students would then proceed to explain the operation. In many cases they would rehearse the ceremony before the student in order that he might better understand it. One would apparently smear the face of the other with soap or some kind of ointment, and would then pretend that he was cutting his beard, clipping his ears, sawing off his tusks, and removing all unnecessary protuberances. After practicing this ceremony for a few minutes the victim seemed to fear that it would prove fatal, and felt that he must make a confession without delay. One of the students would act the part of a priest, and place his ear upon the victim's lips. He would

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1. 'Beani' derived from French, bec jaune (yellow bill). See Karl von Raumer, Universities of Middle ages, in Barnard's Jour. of Ed. VI, 37.  
2. Rashdall. II, ii, 632. Hewett refers to this ceremony as the 'unboobyizing' initiation.



then repeat the confession which he heard, word for word. The subject was made to accuse himself of all sorts of crimes and enormities. As a penance for these, he was enjoined to provide a sumptuous banquet for his masters and comrades, and was then apparently led off to the 'deposition' proper.

From this sketch, which the older students rehearsed for the newcomers benefit, we can easily infer as to what the actual ceremony consisted of. The victim's face was blackened, a huge cap adorned with horns and long ears was placed upon his head. In each corner of his mouth was inserted a long boar's tusk. Thus he was made to represent a wild beast. He was then planed, sawed, or dubbed into shape by whatever means the wit, ingenuity, or brutality<sup>of</sup> the different students could devise. A pictorial representation of one of the fifteenth century initiations has come down to us and explains the details rather fully.<sup>1</sup> There we see a master leading a procession of students who are wearing all sorts of masquerading costumes. The paring off or planing down process is there represented by the student lying on an extended table. A saw is lying on the ground, which suggests the actual dehorning of the beast.

In some cases, after the students had finished their part of the initiation, the subject was taken before a professor where he was examined as to his

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1. Rashdall, II, ii, 634. Karl von Raumer. op.cit.



early training. After questioning the student as to his educational qualifications, the professor would then dismiss him with the admonition to lay aside all uncleanness\* and adopt a pure life. Following these ceremonies, the new student was ready to enter upon his university work.

As to the entrance requirements which the mediaeval students had to meet, we find them somewhat simple. The chief requisite was the ability to read, write, and speak Latin. One of the statutes of the University of Paris required students, when entering the university to appear before the Rector and state their case in Latin without the 'interposition of French words'.<sup>1</sup> This was to be the test of their scholarship. Should a candidate's knowledge of Latin not prove satisfactory, he was refused entrance. One of the provisions at the university of Toulouse stated that the applicant must be able to 'read, sing and compose twenty-four verses of Latin in one day'.<sup>2</sup> At the university of Oxford the only entrance test was the ability to speak Latin. Thus it seems safe to infer, that the Latin test was the only universal entrance requirement which the mediaeval students had to meet.

COURSE OF STUDY- In turning to the subjects pursued by the mediaeval students we find them divided into two main groups. The first group consisted of the 'arts' course or cultural subjects. These had no special bearing

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1. Rashdall, II, ii, 595.  
2. In most of the university towns there were numerous Grammar schools whose purpose<sup>of which</sup> it was to prepare students in Latin, Grammar and Rhetoric. They corresponded to our modern Preparatory schools in a way.  
3. Rashdall, II, ii, 602.



on the different professions. The second group consisted of the three professional branches - theology, law, and medicine. <sup>1</sup>

The arts course was the basis of all study in the mediaeval universities. This course consisted of the seven liberal arts - those subjects which comprised the Trivium and Quadrivium. Considerable emphasis was laid upon these studies in the student's early university training. Each subject was pursued for some specific purpose. For example, grammar was studied in order to gain a thorough knowledge of Latin. Rhetoric, for the purpose of receiving practical training in Latin composition. Logic taught the use of the various forms of syllogism; arithmetic taught the marvelous properties and virtues of certain numbers. <sup>2</sup>

Raban, a learned archbishop of the eleventh century, left a record giving his view of the reasons for teaching the various subjects in the first few years of the university work. He held that rhetoric should be studied in order that one may better understand the figurative expression of the Holy writ; poetry should be studied so that one might understand the correct rhythm of the Psalms; dialectics should be studied in order to make one able to refute the false conclusions of the heretics; arithmetic, in order that one might be able to decipher the mystic

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1. Sources used for material on the courses of study - Denifle, Die Universitäten des Mittelalters, I, 758. Munro, the Mediaeval student. Translations and Reprints. II, iii, 11. Norton, Mediaeval Universities, 137.  
2. Williams, Mediaeval Education. 135



numbers of the scriptures; geometry, so as to enable one to arrive at correct conceptions of the sacred edifices; and astronomy should be studied in order that one may learn to fix aright the holidays of the church. Thus we learn that even the teachers of the middle ages had, in some degree, a purposful viewpoint in education.

Should the student confine himself to the 'arts' course alone, he could receive the Bachelors' degree in four years. This was true of most all universities. The master's degree required from two to three years additional work. The following list taken from the statutes of the university of Paris show the requirments for both degrees in that institution.

Introduction to the categories of Aristotle.

- 1. The old logic. Categories on, and interpretation of Aristotle  
Divisions and topics, book IV, Boethius.

Prior and Posterior Analytics, Aristotle.

- 2. The new logic. Sophistical Refutations,                    "  
Topics,    "

- 3. Moral Philosophy: Ethics, IIII books,                    Aristotle.

Physics,    Aristotle

- 4. Natural philoso- On the Heavens and Earth,                    "  
phy.

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Hewett, op. cit. 946.



4. (continued)	Meteorics,	Aristotle
	On animals,	"
	On the soul,	"
	On Generation,	"
	On Sense and sensible things,	"
	On sleep and walking,	"
	On Memory and Recollections	"
	On Life and Death ,	"
	On Plants,	"
5. Metaphysics,	Metaphysics,	"
6. Other books.	On the six Principles,	Gilbert de Porree.
	Barbarismus, book three,	Donatus
	Grammar, major and minor,	Priscian.
	On causes,	Costa ben Luca. <sup>1</sup>

Such were the subjects over which the mediaeval students had to grind. The length of time required to master the individual subjects varied from one week on the text of Life and Death, to eight months on such subjects as Physics and Metaphysics.<sup>2</sup> Upon glancing at the above list our first impression is likely to be that it would require a score of years to master such a course. Yet

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1. List taken from Norton, 136, 137  
2. Ibid. 137.



when we realize that almost one third of these books could be completed in one month's time, we see the possibility of mastering the total number in six years. Instruction in all these subjects was given in Latin. The fact that students came from all sections of Western Europe made it necessary to adopt one common language.

In turning to the other group, we find that students could select from three main professional branches - theology, law, or medicine. Of these three, theology with its handmaid philosophy, was considered most important; and it remained so throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Before a student could enter upon this course he must have had the equivalent of an A.B. degree and show some skill in disputation and preaching. The fundamental subjects included in the study of theology were the Bible and the 'Sentences' of Peter Lombard.<sup>1</sup> In some cases the 'Summa' of Thomas Aquinas was added.<sup>2</sup> After the student had mastered the Bible and the 'Sentences' he then had to spend three more years at the university in practice preaching and disputation.

Should a student decide to enter the law course, the chief subjects that he had to study were found in that great compilation of Justinian's known as the CORPUS JURIS CIVILIS (Body of the civil law).<sup>3</sup> The first division

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1. Peter Lombard, a famous Doctor of Paris during the 12th. century. His 'Sentences' were for centuries, an authority on theology.  
2. The entire list of the old Paris thrological library can be found in Munro, Mediaeval Student, II, iii , 15.  
3. Norton. op. cit. 49.



of this was the Institutes, consisting of four books. This constituted an elementary text for the students. The purpose of this part was to afford a simple, clear, and trustworthy introduction to the higher legal studies. The second division was the Code, consisting of twelve books which contained the statutes of the Emperors since the third century A.D. The third division was the Digest, or Pandects. This consisted of fifty books, filled with extracts from the opinions of Roman lawyers on a variety of legal questions. Lastly, there were the Novellae (novels), or the new statutes issued by Justinian himself.

In addition to these, there were numerous papal Decretals along with the various comments, expositions, and opinions of the noted lawyers. A student was required to spend from eight to ten years in the study of the above mentioned divisions. During this time he had to take an active part in the disputation exercises. After passing a rigid final examination the student became a 'Licentiate' or Doctor of Law.<sup>1</sup> He was then ready to enter upon the practice and teaching of the various legal subjects.

In medicine, the course of study extended over a period of seven to nine years. The first two were devoted to elementary work, dealing with certain phases of Avicenna's writings.<sup>2</sup> After completing this preliminary course,

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1. For a detailed account of final exams. see below, page 49.  
2. A celebrated writer of medicine during the 10th. and 11th. centuries. The two other writers most studied were -Galen, who lived during the second century; and Hippocrates of the fifth century, B.C.



the student then entered upon a five year course of study made up chiefly of the works of Galen and Hippocrates. In the University of Cambridge, students were compelled to take the M.A. degree before entering upon the medical course. They then had to attend a prescribed course of lectures for five years and do two years of practice work before receiving their degree. In the University of Montpellier, the most famous medical school of <sup>France in</sup> the thirteenth century, all seniors were required to spend one summer in actual medical practice. Before receiving their degree they had to make a round of visits to the sick, accompanied by one of the older doctors, under whose supervision they would experiment on the patients.

LECTURES AND RECITATIONS- One of the very interesting features connected with the instruction in the mediaeval universities was the class room lecture or recitation. The method then employed strikes us as being rather simple when compared to our modern system. As one writer puts it: "The task of the student was merely to become acquainted with a few books, and acquire some facility in debate. The university exercises were shaped to secure this result".<sup>1</sup> The three most important features of these exercises consisted of the Lecture, the Disputation, and the Examinations.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Norton, 107.
2. In addition to these there were minor exercises such as the Conferences, repetitions, and Quizzes. The conferences were informal discussions between the professors and students at close of the recitations. The repetition was a discussion on some point that could not be touched in the lecture. The quiz was a test held to allow the student to make up some deficiency. Norton, 107.



LECTURES- The lectures of the mediaeval professors were quite different from those listened to by modern students. Instead of hearing an original thought advanced from time to time, the poor mediaeval student was forced to sit and copy some dry lecture as it was read from a book or manuscript that had been used for hundreds of years. After copying these lectures, the student was expected to memorize them and repeat them word for word at some later date. An excellent description of the manner in which the lectures were carried on is given by one writer - "The professor would read from the book and the student would listen. To lessen the labor, they hit upon the idea of presenting abstracts, the so-called summaries. Into the narrow frame of the explanation of these few books must be crowded everything worth knowing. Such an artificial process led to all sorts of subtleties and strange interpretations. Hence the advisability of demanding more careful dictation. There soon appeared upon the statutes of the university of Vienna a law requiring every teacher "to dictate honestly and exactly, slowly, and distinctly, so indicating the paragraphs, capitals, commas, etc. as to lighten the labor of copying." In this dictation the students were often badly cheated. The dishonest masters made use of unknown writings containing many errors. He also would make use of the recently penned books of foreign scholars. However, the students were not to be outdone in these tricks. They soon hit upon the scheme of using one another's manuscript, and many of them studied at home, thereby saving

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It. Karl Schmidt, Geschichte der Padagogik, II, 366.



their fees. Especially was this true <sup>of</sup> concerning the students in Italy.<sup>1</sup>

From such a method of lecturing as this, we see that the professors never even attempted to give the results of any original research or independent thought. Everything was based on authority, and the older the authority the better. It was rank heresy for example to question the authority of Aristotle. It is related of an old professor that when a student called his attention to the rumor that spots had been seen on the sun, he replied - 'There can be no spots on the sun, for I have read Aristotle twice from beginning to end, and he says the sun is incorruptible'.<sup>2</sup> The student was dismissed with the injunction to wipe his glasses so that he might see more clearly.

At the University of Bologna the method of lecturing on Roman Law is thus described. "First, I shall give you the summaries of each title (i.e. each chapter into which the books are divided) before I proceed to the text. Second, I shall give you as clear and explicit a statement as I can of the purport of each Law (included in the title). Thirdly, I shall read the text with a view of correcting it. Fourthly, I shall briefly repeat the contents of the Law. Fifthly, I shall solve apparent contradictions, adding any general principles of Law, to be extracted from the passage commonly called "Brocardica", and any

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1. Ibid. 368

2. Williams, Mediaeval Civilization, 142.



distinctions or subtle problems arising out of the Law, with their solutions as far as Divine Providence shall enable me. And if any Law seem deserving by reason of its celebrity or difficulty of a repetition, I shall reserve it for an evening Repetition.<sup>1</sup>

One of the interesting things about the students at Bologna is the control that they exercised over the professors. Then as now, many of the professors seemed to have had some difficulty in covering the entire course within the prescribed time. In order to prevent this, the students passed some severe rules, whereby they imposed heavy fines upon any professor who failed to cover the prescribed course in the time allotted. For example, doctors were ordered to divide their work into sections, and then notify the students of their divisions. If any doctor failed to reach a certain section on a specified date, he was fined three Bologna pounds. For a second offense he was fined five pounds; and for a third and each succeeding violation of the rule, ten pounds. Furthermore, we add, that at the end of a section doctors must announce to the scholars at what section they are to begin with, and they shall be obliged to follow that section even to the end. But if by chance it seems useful to transfer a part of the lecture to another section, he shall be obliged to announce that in his preceding lecture to the scholars, so that those who wish, may make

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1. Norton, 111, 112.



provision beforehand....."<sup>1</sup> A penalty of five Bologna shillings was imposed upon any doctor who violated these statutes. <sup>1</sup> It is needless to say that the professors at Bologna came nearer satisfying their students than did the professors of the German and French universities.

THE DISPUTATION - The 'disputation' was one of the most important exercises of the mediaeval universities. It was shared in by both teachers and students. When a student decided to take part in one of these discussions, he would post his thesis in the classroom or in some public place and issue a challenge to all comers. An opponent, seeing the question, would indicate his willingness to enter the discussion by placing his name opposite that of the proposer's. The disputation would then be arranged for, and would be attended by the other members of the class as well as by the professors. Quite frequently the students would become greatly interested, and would interject caustic remarks. All students were expected to participate in some of these disputations before receiving their degrees.

Had the disputation exercises been conducted in the proper spirit, they would have become of great importance to the mediaeval students. Especially would they have been important, if they had been properly organized and carried on, in bringing to light any new ideas that

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1. Norton, 113.



might have originated in those days when <sup>printed</sup> books and publications were unknown. But the students let them degenerate into mere hair-splitting discussions. They simply became verbal duels in which the opposing parties would argue for victory rather than truth. As one writer states, " it was considered a great honor to be able to prove the most opposite things with equal facility from the same premise", or 'to be able to dispute several successive days about nothing with great dialectic skill'.<sup>1</sup>

The students seemed to have a disposition to select topics of a ridiculous nature. At the opening of the fourteenth century we find the University of Paris busy discussing whether "ego amat" was not as good a phrase as "ego amo". They also endeavored to settle the true pronunciation of the letter 'Q' by appealing to the strong arm of the law.<sup>2</sup> However ridiculous some of these subjects may seem to us, they were quite sufficient to bring the students of that time to blows. Quite often the learned people took sides on some of these worthless quibbles. They would often carry their discussions further than the class room, and frequently settled them with clubs and fists. The weaker party of course, always went to 'the wall' and sometimes a great deal further. After many of these heated controversies, those

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1. Williams. 142.  
2. Ibid. 144



who had been defeated - including both students and teachers- would migrate to some other town. 1

We would be incorrect however in concluding that the training received from these disputations was entirely useless. On the contrary they contributed quite a little to the intellectual development of the middle ages.

By engaging in these disputations the students received practical training in readiness and facility of expression. They in time learned to recognize those facts that were of most importance. Also, after several years of such training, we would naturally expect them to raise doubts and inquiries concerning the real truth of a proposition. Upon leaving the university, the students carried with them some ideas of their own ; ideas of doubt, freedom, and inquiry that might later play an important part in larger movements.

FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADUATION- The crowning event of the mediaeval students' career was the passing of the final examinations. In order to meet these tests, long and elaborate preparations were made. Months and even years were spent in planning and preparing for these most important student exercises. It is rather

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1. Wood, op, cit. 492.



difficult to generalize on the practice of examinations as they existed in all the different universities; but broadly speaking, we find candidates for the Masters' or Doctors' degree passing three general examinations—that of the Bachelor, Licentiate, and Doctorate.<sup>1</sup> The first two of these savored of a real examination, while the latter was chiefly ceremonial. In order that we may understand the nature of these examinations let us note in some detail the manner in which they were conducted in three of the leading universities.

In graduating from the University of Bologna the student had to pass only two general examinations. The first or private examination was a real test of the student's ability; while the second or public examination was nothing more than an elaborate ceremony.<sup>2</sup>

When a student got ready to take the first examination, he would have the councilor of his 'nation' present his name to the Rector or Doctor. The councilor would swear that the candidate had complied with all statutory requirements and paid all fees. The Doctor would then take the student and give him a preliminary test. Should the student prove his ability to continue, the Doctor would then present his name to

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1. Norton, 124

2. Savigny, *Geschichte des römischen Rechts im Mittelalter*, II, 152. Translated in Barnard's *Journal of Ed.* XXII, 285.



the Archdeacon. His name had to be presented at least one week before the day of the real examination. Early in the morning of the examination day, the candidate, after attending mass, would appear before the assembled college. Here one of the Doctors would assign him two texts - one in the canon law and one in the civil law.<sup>1</sup> The candidate would then retire to his room for a few hours study. Later in the day, at some appointed hour he would appear before the Archdeacon and a group of Doctors. After taking several oaths, he would be called on to give a lecture or exposition on the assignments previously made. Following this, the candidate was subjected to an oral quiz by the Doctors present. The examination over, the doctors took a vote, and if the candidate was declared worthy he received the title of 'Licentiate'.<sup>2</sup>

The 'conventus' or public examination in which the 'Doctorate' degree was conferred, would be held either on the same day or a few days following the private examination. It frequently became necessary to postpone this final ceremony on account of the heavy expense accompanying it.<sup>3</sup> Preceding the day of the public examination, the candidate would ride through the town inviting all the public officials, and all his

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1. Savigny, op.cit. 285,286,287. Sometimes both selections were taken from the Roman Law, or both from the Canon law. This was not universal however.

2. Rashdall I, 226

3. See below, p.55.



friends to attend this final ceremony and the banquet that always followed. When the day arrived, the presenting Doctor would accompany the candidate to the cathedral, the candidate would deliver a speech or read a thesis on some point in law. He would be prepared to defend the opinions which he advanced against all opponents. The promoting doctor would then present him to the Archdeacon, who in turn would solemnly confer the license to teach the civil and canon law, by and with the authority of the Pope in the name of the Holy Trinity.<sup>1</sup> The candidate then took a seat in the Magisterial chair, where he was handed an open book- one of the law texts. A gold ring was then placed on his finger, the doctor gave him the paternal kiss and then pronounced the benediction.

Following this ceremony the candidate was escorted in great triumph through the town, the procession being led by the university pipers and trumpeters. Then came the banquet, the most expensive feature of the examination. To this he invited all his student friends and masters. In some cases there were even more magnificent entertainments given, such as tilts and tournaments. However, only the most wealthy students could provide for these.<sup>2</sup> After having furnished all these entertainments and met all the above requirements, the student was then congratulated as a distinguished Doctor of Law.

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1. Rashdall, I, 226-7

2. In some of the universities of Spain the Incepting Doctors were expected to provide a bull-fight for the entertainment of their friends; ~~these were~~ <sup>this was</sup> attended by thousands of people.



The graduating ceremonies practiced at Bologna were, on the whole quite similar to those at Paris and Oxford. However, one of the distinctive features that should be noted in connection with the exercises at Paris is the fact that there, the candidate had to pass through three examinations instead of two. The first examination was called the 'responsions'. This test had to be preceded by four years of study. The candidate then had to appear before a master and dispute with him on subjects of grammar and logic. This test was always held in the month of December. Should the student pass this examination satisfactorily, he was then ready for the B.A. test.<sup>1</sup> This was merely formal in its nature. His record was examined to see if he had met the necessary residence requirements and attended all lectures in the prescribed courses. Should <sup>this examination</sup> ~~these~~ prove satisfactory he was then granted the bachelor of arts degree. (B.A.)

After receiving the B:A. degree it required two more years of study before the student was prepared to undergo the 'Inception' and receive the master's degree.<sup>2</sup> The 'Inception' was the final and most elaborate ceremony for the students of Paris. These exercises all took place before the Chancellor. On the appointed day the successful candidate or candidates,<sup>3</sup> accompanied by the Rectors

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1. (Examen Baccalariandorum). Rashdall, I, 445, 446  
2. The 'Inception' ceremony in Paris corresponded to the 'Conventus' ceremony in Bologna. (described above)  
3. Usually six or eight students would take their degrees at the same time.



and Proctors would appear before the Chancellor. Here they were charged as to the duties of a master and the duties they were expected to render. The candidates then gave a formal lecture or disputation in the presence of the faculty. After this they were handed a book by the presiding Regent, received the kiss of fellowship, and took their seats upon the Magisterial chairs. In the evening the usual sumptuous banquet followed, attended by their friends and masters.

At Oxford the candidates did not take final examinations in the literal sense of the word. When the time came for the final examinations, the candidate would present himself to the Chancellor and declare upon oath that he had read the prescribed books. Also, the Regents would appear before the Chancellor and swear that the student had fulfilled the requirements, and would then testify as to his efficiency. Following this came the traditional ceremony of the book and ring, and the kiss of fellowship. These functions were performed by the Regent of the faculty as at Paris. Following this, the usual banquet took place.

To the modern student, one of the most interesting features connected with the graduating exercises of the mediaeval students was the expensive banquet given by all successful candidates. Then as now, students had the idea that the severe mental strain incident to final examinations ought to be relieved by frequent festivities. Especially was this idea in evidence when a student graduated. While the ostensible purpose of these banquets

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was to allow the graduate a final opportunity to provide an evening of festivity and revelry for his friends, yet the spirit of many such occasions was often dampened by the enormous expense which they incurred.<sup>1</sup> In fact, students frequently had to postpone the date of their graduation in order that they might have additional time in which to provide the funds necessary for a banquet.<sup>2</sup> One of the most frequent requests made by students in writing to their parents, was for money with which to meet this expense. Thus a student of Paris asks a friend to explain to his father 'since the simplicity of the lay mind does not understand such things, how at length, after much study, nothing but lack of funds for the 'Inception' banquet stands in the way of my graduation!...'<sup>2</sup>

A student of Orleans writes to his parents that he is laboring over the last volume of law and is nearing its completion, and will be able to pass his 'Licentiate' provided they send him a hundred livres for the necessary expenses. A master in Bologna writes to the parents of a certain student announcing his graduation- "Sing unto the Lord a new song, praise Him with stringed instruments and organs, rejoice upon high sounding symbols, for your son has held a gloriouſ disputation which was attended by

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1. Haskins. A.H.R. III, 225 .  
2. Ibid. 222



a great number of teachers and scholars. He answered all questions without a mistake, and no one could prevail against him. He celebrated a famous banquet, at which both rich and poor were honored as never before. He has already begun to give lectures which are now so popular that other class rooms are deserted and his own filled".<sup>1</sup>

Such were the exercises attendant upon the students who graduated from the mediaeval universities. Should we take a careful survey of some of our modern day practices, we will find that we are not very far removed from our mediaeval brethern. In order that we might learn of their daily life and habits, we will now turn to the less formal side of their university career.

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1. Ibid. 223.

During the fourteenth century the expense of some of the banquets became so great that the university authorities had to interfere. For example, the authorities at Oxford passed laws limiting the expense of a banquet for the A.B. degree to sixteen pence. The council of Vienna passed a law in 1311 limiting the expenses of a banquet to 3000 'tournois' (about four hundred pounds English money). Rashdall, I. 232.



# LIFE AT THE UNIVERSITIES

## (Part two )

### (LESS FORMAL SIDE OF STUDENT LIFE)

To understand the actual daily life of the mediaeval students it is necessary to study their conduct and activities while outside the classroom. The manner in which they spent their hours of recreation, the amusements in which they engaged, the clubs and organizations to which they belonged, must all be understood before we can form an accurate conception of their real university life. Let us note therefore, in some detail the way in which these students actually lived.

One of the best means we have of getting acquainted with them is through their clubs and student organizations. The two most important of these were the 'nations' and 'halls'.<sup>1</sup> Unlike our modern universities, those of the middle ages drew upon foreign countries for as large a number of their students as upon the local states. When thousands of students, coming from all the different countries of Europe, found themselves gathered in a university town, they immediately felt the need of some such organization as a 'nation'. They would select one of their number (usually a master) as their head, and delegate to him certain official powers.<sup>2</sup> The chief purpose of the

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1. For more complete account of the 'halls' and the 'Nations' see Rashdall, II, ii, 601.... Wood, Cornhill Magazine, XIX, 438  
2. His chief duty was to represent the students in all troubles, act as their spokesman, appear for them before the faculty, in short, he was their general representative in all important affairs.



'nations' was simply that of uniting all the students of the same country or race into one body. These 'nations' in time, became the chief basis or unit of government for the whole university, and made possible the classification and control of students during <sup>times</sup> ~~the days~~ of turmoil and hostility.

More important than the 'nations' however were the 'halls' or 'inns' of the students. It was the custom for a large number of ~~the~~ students to club together and engage a 'hall' in which to live while attending the universities. They would elect one of their number, usually an upper-classman, as their head regent or 'principal'. In many respects his position was very similar to that of the monitor in our present dormitory system. Whatever authority he exercised came from the voluntary consent of the students themselves. He was expected to purchase all food supplies, see that the meals were properly served, and exercise general supervision over the entire 'hall'.<sup>1</sup> The one undesirable feature connected with the office of the 'principal' was that of being held responsible for the rents of all other students in the hall.

As the student enrollment increased, additional halls and inns were provided for their accomodation. It became a custom during the thirteenth century for some of the

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1. Rashdall, II, ii, 608.



wealthier masters and pious men to establish inns and halls for the purpose of housing the poor students. Near the end of the century, Oxford alone had over three hundred inns, some of which accomodated as many as one hundred students.<sup>1</sup> Another reason for the rapid growth of the inns and halls during this period was the fact that statutes were enacted in France, Germany, and England demanding that students take up residence in some hall.<sup>2</sup> Students were forbidden to remain in a university town for a fortnight without placing their names on the record of some hall.

We must not think however that a student became a prisoner when he entered one of these halls. In fact, judging from the reports that we have, it would seem as if those students who lived in the halls had as gay a time as the 'martinets'.<sup>3</sup> When we learn that their boarding clubs were usually located in the most densely populated section of the town, we can easily imagine the liberties which the students demanded. In general, they were found roaming about the streets at all hours of the night. They usually spent their evenings in the tavern where they indulged in almost unlimited pleasures. Those students who would not join with them in these celebrations were looked upon with contempt -

"Those who cannot drink their rations,  
Go, begone from these ovations !

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1. Hewett. op. cit. 946.

2. The only exceptions to these rules were the sons of the nobles who were rich enough to hire private apartments; and the very poor students who could not afford to pay for his board, but had to work for it.

3. f.p.



Here's no place for bashful boys-  
Like the plague, they spoil our joys,  
Bashful eyes bring rustic cheer  
When we're drunk,  
And a blush betrays a drear  
Want of spunk".<sup>1</sup>

In fact it was only in very rare cases that drunkenness was treated as an offense against the rules of the halls. And it was not till after the third offense that students were expelled for introducing 'suspected women' to their halls.<sup>2</sup> The very fact that a great number of those enrolled in the halls were scholars only in name, but vagabonds in reality, (who simply donned the academic gown to cover up their misdeeds) accounts for many of the charges made against them.

In studying the life of the students as seen in their halls and dormitories, we find the majority of them faring reasonably well. A few of the students, sons of the rich nobles and princes, lived in ease and luxury. But such students were comparatively few. Those who comprised the vast majority of the student body, came from the homes of the middle class. They were the sons of the knights, yeomen, merchants, traders, and thrifty artisans. Also in this class, were found the nephews of many successful ecclesiastics, and other prominent youths

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3, (preceeding page). Students who lived outside the halls were called 'martinets' (sparrows) because of the wild life they lived.

1. Symonds, Wine, women, and Song. 157

2. Rashdall, II, ii, 613.



who had attracted the attention of some nearby abbot or archdeacon.

Below these two classes there were the poor students, those who lived in the direst poverty. The stories of this class form a large part of the mediaeval student life. They either had to beg for a living, or else become the servants of some wealthy student. In many of the university towns there were special halls set aside for this poor class.<sup>1</sup> Such halls were called 'domus pauperum', and the students who lived in them were turned out at regular intervals to beg for provisions.<sup>2</sup> Their proceeds were then taken and placed in a common chest from which all could draw upon. In Oxford, the poor scholars were given permission by the Chancellor to go out and beg.<sup>3</sup> The story is told of three students who were so poor that they had to buy one 'cappa' between them, and take turn about in attending lectures.<sup>4</sup>

A careful study reveals a great number of hardships suffered by the mediaeval students whether rich or poor. This, however, was due less to the poverty of the students than to the lack of comforts and conveniences of the age. One of the most serious hardships and one about which many complaints were made, was the lack of fire.

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1. Vienna, Padua, and Oxford.
2. Rashdall, II, ii, 656, 657.
3. Ibid. 657.
4. Simply a cap, piece of head gear which all had to wear in classrooms.



The only way they had of making the lecture rooms comfortable was by scattering straw and rushes over the floor. To the modern student, it seems almost inconceivable to think that a winter in Germany and Northern France could be endured without heated rooms. Yet such was the case. In a few of the larger halls there was usually one common room that contained a stove or fire-place. However, stoves were seldom permitted in the students' rooms.<sup>1</sup> In some of the German Universities it was customary for students to take their meals in the kitchen on cold winter days; but even this was discouraged as being an effeminate practice.<sup>2</sup> The only possible way that students had of warming themselves was by some form of violent exercise - the most common of which was running about up and down the streets. This was resorted to quite frequently.

The manner in which the students rooms were furnished affords quite an interesting study. Some inventories taken of the students of Oxford during the fourteenth century give us a fair idea of the ordinary students room.<sup>3</sup> The upper-classmen usually had a plain bedstead over which gorgeous covers were spread. The lower classmen slept in trundle-beds which could be pushed back under the larger beds when not in use.

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1. Rashdall, II, 665.

2. Ibid, 665.

3. These records were discovered by Dr. Blakiston among the rolls of Durham College. Found in Rashdall, II, ii, 667, 668.



Most of the students had separate beds, the only exception being boys under fifteen years who had to sleep two in a bed. The rooms were usually provided with a table and a few chairs or 'playne joyned stooles'. A 'trough of lead to wash with and a picher and bolle' are also mentioned.<sup>1</sup> Some of the students had a 'presse or shelves for books'. The accounts also show that some of the more 'sporty' youths had knives, swords, bows, and arrows. Also a hatchet and other articles are mentioned.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Chaucer's clerk represents fairly well the average students desire for books-

"For him was lever han at his beddes hed,  
A twenty bokes clothed in black or red;  
Of Aristotle and his philosophie,  
Than robes riche, or fidel or santie".<sup>3</sup>

If we turn to the students' dining table and note their menu, we also find them faring reasonably well. The great majority of the mediaeval students lived on two meals a day. They had the privilege of providing for the morning meal (simply a lunch) if they so desired, but few seem to have done so. The morning hours, from six to ten o'clock, were considered the most sacred time of day for study and lectures.<sup>4</sup> Dinner was served between ten and eleven. This meal, both in the halls of Oxford and Paris consisted of meat (usually beef), butter, bread and cheese.<sup>5</sup> Beer could always be had ~~as a beverage~~

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1. Rashdall, II 667  
2. Ibid..  
3. Chaucer's Prologue, Canterbury Tales, II, i, 368.  
4. See Norton, 132  
5. Rashdall, II, 663, 664.



if so desired. On the whole this seems to have been a tolerably substantial diet for that time. Following the dinner hour there was a brief period for relaxation and exercise. Lectures were ~~again~~ resumed at one o'clock, and the ideal student was supposed to study until supper time.<sup>1</sup> The supper, which was served between five and six o'clock, consisted very largely of the same fare as the noon-day meal, with an occasional dish of porridge added. After the supper hour, a few of the halls held short disputation exercises, but generally this was the time set apart for student recreation and amusements.

Before taking up the subject of amusements, something further should be said concerning the real hardships which many mediaeval students experienced. Although the above description may lead us to infer that the great mass of students lived in comparative ease, yet on closer examination we find that such was not the case. The "hard-luck" stories that have come down to us indicate the ~~with~~ many struggles which they experienced. Those 'monthly allowances' that play such a great part in the life of the present day student were evidently almost unknown to the mediaeval scholar. The appealing letters that were sent home from time to time, seem to imply that the parents were none too anxious to assist their sons in

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1. Rashdall, II, 654.



their educational career. Several of these letters have recently been recovered, and they tell many stories concerning the hardships and difficulties experienced by those poor students.<sup>1</sup> The majority of them contain urgent appeals for help. The horrible condition in which these students were forced to live are there described.

One of the students at Bologna describes the "terrible mud through which he must beg his way from door to door, crying 'Oh good master', and brings home nothing unless the Lord be with him".<sup>2</sup> From Prague a student writes that he is forced to sleep on straw without any covering. He goes 'without shoes and shirt, and eats—he wont say what'. He writes to his married sister and asks her to send him twenty sous, and two pairs of sheets, without letting her husband know of it.'<sup>2</sup> A student from Dresden, feeling that pressure ought to be brought to bear upon both of his parents writes a letter to each:- To his father he writes- "My most beloved father, first of all receive assurance of my filial obedience. Surely the branch will soon wither which does not receive nourishment from its root. Hence beloved father I am forced to confess to your paternal affection that the rigors of the past winter have quite exhausted the money which you in your kindness sent me. Since I am burdened with divers wants from which I am unable to be relieved, except through

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1. Haskins, Amer. Hist. Review. III, 203 - 229.

2. Haskins, A.H.R. III, 212.



paternal remittance, I therefore appeal to your fatherly affection with humble and devout prayer, that you charitably succor me in my distress and not delay in sending me the trifle of six florins, in order that the sprig which you have planted may be seen to flourish and not wither. In so doing you will cherish your own honor and increase that of your son as well. Your son.

John Snyder, Scholar at Gorlitz.Dresden.<sup>1</sup>

This one he addresses to his mother- To the prudent and virtuous lady,- Mistress B. Snyder; his dearest mother who bore him. Receive first of all constant assurance of filial devotion with true love dearest Mother. Your maternal love will kindly understand that for a long time I have suffered great need in the matter of my linen, as for example bedclothes and shirts; and that I still suffer greatly so that I am robbed of my nights rest. Therefore I earnestly implore and beg of your kindness, you the one who has always shown me fondness and love, that you send me by the bearer of this letter a pair of sheets and three shirts, and that you urge and encourage my father to help me, in order that through your motherly love I may seek to deserve forever the special blessing of God. Your son.

John Snyder. <sup>1</sup>

Students would frequently move their parents by making it appear that nothing except lack of money prevented them from achieving great success in their school

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1. Whitcomb, scientific Amer. Suppl. XLVII, 19584.



work. Thus a student at Oxford writes to his father -  
"My Dear Father; This is to inform you that I am studying  
at Oxford with great diligence, but that the lack of money  
stands greatly in the way of my promotion. It is now  
months since I spent the last you sent me. The city is  
expensive and makes many demands. I have to rent  
lodgings, buy necessities, and many other things that  
I cannot now specify. Wherefore I respectfully beg your  
paternity that by promptings of Divine pity you may further  
assist me; for you must know that without Ceres and Bacchus,  
Appolo grows cold.

Your son.<sub>1</sub>

The poverty stricken condition of the students often  
brought forth appeals from the masters and professors in  
their behalf. Early in the fourteenth century, one of  
the masters at Cambridge went before the church of St.  
Paul and preached a charity sermon, asking for aid on  
behalf of the poor students. This is the way in which  
he pictured their conditions; "Their ten o'clock dinner  
consists exclusively of a 'penye pece of byefe amongst  
IIII, having a few porage made of the broth of the same  
byefe with salt and otemell'. Their 'five o'clock  
meal is not much better, While for lack of fire, they  
are forced to runne up down halfe an<sup>r</sup> houre to get a heate  
on their feet at bed time'.<sub>2</sub>

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1. Haskins, A.H.R. III, 210.

2. Lever's sermon at Cambridge; Rasdall, II, ii, 664.



While it may have been possible to have discovered a few such cases as the one just mentioned, yet one of the best modern authorities states that such conditions were very exceptional.<sup>1</sup>

In turning to the amusements in which the mediaeval students engaged, we find some very interesting accounts. One of the striking features of the universities of that day is the fact, that they made little or no provision for student recreation. It is true that they permitted a few childish games to be played, yet the university would never give its active support to recreations of any sort. About the only amusements they sanctioned were - playing indoor ball (provided a soft ball was used), singing, and playing the lute. Chess playing was permitted in a few of the university halls, but even this was frowned upon in many cases.<sup>2</sup> Statutes were passed against the use of musical instruments or any noises calculated to disturb the study of others. The students of Oxford and Cambridge were forbidden to keep dogs, hawks, ferrets or 'unclean beasts or birds'.<sup>3</sup>

Dancing seems to have been a favorite pastime for some of the mediaeval students. The University of Leipzig for example, gave occasional public balls, the object of which was to introduce the students to 'the honorable and elegant daughters of the magnates, senators and citizens of the towns'.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Mullinger, Cambridge University, I, 371.
2. Rashdall, II, 671.
3. Rashdall, II, ii, 671.
4. Rashdall, II, 672.



The students evidently looked forward to these dance festivals and hailed them with great delight. Thus they sang their invitation to the dance -

"Cast aside dull books and thought;  
Sweet is folly, sweet is play:  
Take the pleasure spring has brought  
In youth's opening holiday !  
Right it is old age should ponder  
On grave matters fraught with care;  
But tender youth is free to wander  
Free to frolic light with air.

. . . . .  
Keep the vows we swore together,  
Lads, obey that ordinance;  
Seek the fields in sunny weather  
Where the laughing maidens dance.  
Like a dream our prime is flown,  
Prisoned in a study;  
Sport and folly are youth's own,  
Tender youth and ruddy".<sup>1</sup>

Dancing was not approved in all the universities. The greatest restrictions seem to have been placed upon the English students. In one of the halls at Oxford statutes were passed against "struggling, chorus-singing, dancing, leaping, shouting, and inordinate

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1. Symonds, Wine, Women and Song. 90, 91.



noises; against pouring forth of water, beer, and all other liquids in tumultuous games in the halls", as they were likely to disturb the occupants of the Chaplains' chamber below'.<sup>1</sup>

About the only amusements which the university authorities actively encouraged were festivals on holidays and feast days. These were enjoyed quite frequently. In most of the universities on the continent- especially at Paris - many 'ecclesiastical disputations' were held. The masters of Paris provided for national mass and national vespers once a week. Following these functions, provisions were distributed to the students at the expense of the 'nation'. In the evenings the authorities condescended so much as to allow the students to 'tell stories, sing carols, and poems around the hall fire'.<sup>2</sup>

It would be a great mistake however to infer that the students complied with all the limitations that were placed upon them. On the contrary, there is no period in the history of education when students enjoyed such liberties and privileges as did those of the middle ages. We should keep constantly in mind the special rights granted the students by both civil and ecclesiastical powers.<sup>3</sup> The students were ever conscious of these, and they soon adopted a life of almost complete independence and disregard for authority. They were always looking for an opportunity to lord it over the town officials,

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1. Rashdall, II, 672, 673.

2. Wood. op. cit. 483.

3. Privileges referred to in chp. one. For a list of those granted see Norton, 81. Munro, Mediaeval Student, vol.II,iii,11.



and if reports are true they seldom ever failed. Had it not been for the hope of sheer gain on the part of the citizens, it is probable that many of the large student bodies would never have been tolerated in the mediaeval towns. The freedom and privileges of the student on the one hand, and the exactions and impositions of the citizens in matters of food and rent on the other, led to many serious disturbances. If we wish to see students living a wild life and exercising undue privileges, it is only necessary to turn to a few of the many clashes that occurred betwixt 'town and gown'.

In 1209 an Oxford scholar, while playing ball, accidentally struck a woman of the town and killed her. The town people rose in a body and attacked the hall in which the offender lived. Not being able to seize him, they captured three of his companions and hung them. Redress was asked for, but denied, and the entire student body left town. Some of the students went to Cambridge and others to Reading. Upon the students request, the pope laid an interdict on the town, and threatened to excommunicate any teacher who pursued his calling there <sup>until</sup> ~~before~~ the citizens made ample reparation. This, the citizens did much earlier than they had planned. The great loss of trade which the town suffered made <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ citizens eager to have the former conditions restored. Soon the students found themselves back in their old quarters with greater



privileges than ever.<sup>1</sup>

This affair was mild compared to one at Cambridge in 1260. There the students were divided into two hostile factions, called the 'north' and 'south' faction (evidently representing the current animosity of that period).

A representative of each of these factions became engaged in quarrel, and finally came to blows. They were soon joined by their respective comrades and a small riot ensued. The Cambridge professors interfered, but were unable to quiet them. They in turn, called upon the citizens of the town for help. The latter responded and for several days, Cambridge presented the aspect of a city taken by 'storm, fire and violence'.<sup>2</sup> Order was not restored until a body of troops were called in.

The continent was no better off. There, as in England, trouble was always sure to follow whenever town and gown mixed. An instance worth noting is one that occurred in Paris in 1229. A drunken student had a quarrel with the keeper of a cabaret because the latter refused to serve him more wine. After a few words, a fistic combat ensued. The citizens of the quarter joined in with the wine-seller and gave the student and his companions a sound thrashing and drove them off. But it was only for that day. Early the next morning the students reappeared with a great number of followers. They broke open

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1. Wood, 442... Wood and Bulaeus have reproduced several of these stories taken from the libraries of Paris and Oxford. Cornhill magazine. XIX, 472.

2. Wood. op.cit. 476.



the wine shop, drank the liquor, smashed bottles, and flogged the wine-seller. Not yet satisfied, they began an indiscriminate attack upon the citizens and took unwarranted liberties with women. By noon, they had the whole town of Paris in an uproar. A group of Parisians hastened to the court of Queen Blanche, "everyone of them with their crowns comfortably cracked", states the annalist, and "wiping their bloody noses, related the incident".<sup>1</sup> The Queen became very wroth and ordered out the guards. It was only after several days of fighting and clubbing that order was restored.

In 1304 a scholar by name of Pierre Barbier was committed to prison for killing a trader. The magistrate ordered him to be executed, the same as any other criminal. Within a few hours however, the Magistrate was made to realize his serious error. All study was instantly suspended. The clergymen of Paris were summoned to assemble in the church of St. Bartholomew. All ecclesiastics, including the archpriests, canonists, and curates assembled with the doctors and students, raised their banners and crosses, and marched to the house of the Magistrate. Having surrounded it in all directions they set up a simultaneous howl, shouting -"reparation ! reparation ! cursed satan ! Dishonourer of Holy Mother church ! Wounder of her rights ! Reparation, or down with you to the pit with Dathan and Abiram !".<sup>1</sup> following up this request they hurled stones and bricks at the doors and windows and completely demolished them. Doubtless the "cursed satan " did not know how to make the re-

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Wood, op.cit. 478.



quired reparation at a moment's notice, but the records state that his life was spared on the following conditions. First he was to be removed from his office, he was then to get on his knees and beg the pardon of the university, was to remove the dead body of the scholar from the gibbet, kiss him on the mouth and then make a pilgrimage in his shirt to Avignon in order to obtain absolution.<sup>1</sup>

Very, very seldom did justice venture to interfere or meddle with student affairs. But on the other hand, if the accounts are true, we find that the students had no hesitancy in opposing the laws of the towns in which they lived. An attorney who kept the register of Valence a town in Italy, reports in the year 1500, that he could not remember a single morning for the past eight years in which the records were not filled with the accounts of the outrages committed by the students on the preceding night. "Whoever stirred abroad after dark was sure to be robbed and beaten if not murdered" says the Registrar.<sup>2</sup> Houses in the outskirts of the town were broken open and robbed. Similar reports are true of many other towns that boasted of universities. One writer states that, it was more because of the acts of the students than of regular thieves that the mystery plays were ordered to be closed by four o'clock during the winter months.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Ibid. 480  
2. Wood. 482  
3. Ibid. 483.



The students were frequently guilty of playing all sorts of outrageous jokes on the townspeople. They would take quills and fill them with all kinds of unpleasant insects and bugs and then carry them to church. While the congregation was worshipping, the students would blow these insects out upon the members. Also the devout worshippers quite often found themselves fastened together by means of small hooks which the students carried with them. They would scatter adhesive burrs and itching powder on the people as they passed by. They would often grease the walks in front of the churches and then watch the antics of the worshippers as they came out. One of their special pleasures consisted in tormenting the watchman. They would capture him and decorate him to suit their own fancy. Should they chance to find him asleep, they would tie him to a post, disrobe him, and leave him in a most ridiculous condition.<sup>1</sup>

We can form some idea of the practices in which the students engaged by noting some of the prohibitions contained in the statutes of the different universities. The students of Paris were forbidden "to destroy trees and crops in the surrounding country". They were also forbidden to 'carry weapons of unusual size'. In the English universities the students were forbidden to

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1. Wood. 483.



'throw water out of the windows on the passersby, to interfere with the hangman in the performance of his duty'. Rules were also passed against giving 'horrible shouts or making unwonted noises, against attending public dance halls without an invitation'. Students were forbidden to engage 'in nocturnal debauchery at houses of ill-fame, and were forbidden to hold weekly drinking-bouts .....'<sup>1</sup>

In spite of these rules, however, the custom of drinking seems to have been almost a matter of necessity to the mediaeval students. Apparently no important feast could be celebrated, or no strenuous assignment undertaken without the presence of the cup. We hear a student lamenting the fact that he could never succeed in composing verse until he was inspired by the wine-

Such my verse is wont to be  
As the wine I swallow;  
No live thoughts enliven me  
While my stomach's hollow;  
Hungry wits on hungry lips  
Like a shadow follow.  
But once when I'm in my cup,  
I can beat Apollo.  
Never to my spirit yet  
Flew poetic vision  
Until first my belly had  
Plentiful provision;

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>1</sup> Klupfels' history of the Universities. Translated in Barnard's Amer. Jour. of Ed. IX. 66..



Let but Bacchus in the brain  
Take a strong position,  
Then comes Phoebus flowing in  
With a fine precision." 1

Again the poor mediaeval student must have been greatly helped by the wine, and must have been deeply indebted to its powers before he could write such words of praise as these -

"Blest be the man who first thee planted,  
Called thee by thy name enchanted !  
Hw whose cups have ne'er been scented  
Dreads no danger that may be.  
Blest the belly where thou bidest !  
Blest the tongue where thou residest !  
Blest the mouth through which thou glidest,  
And the lips, thrice blest by thee !" 2

The drinking festivals were by no means confined to the students. The mediaeval professors were quite free in partaking of this 'inspiring drink'. In fact, they occasionally celebrated a little too freely. An example of their too free indulgence occurred in the university of Prague in 1422. Upon going to the class room one morning the students found this notice posted on the door:- "Daniel Heinsius will not lecture today on account of yesterday's inebriation".<sup>3</sup> In the

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Symonds. 65.  
2. Ibid. 143.  
3. Wood 472.



University of Montpellier there was a professor who claimed to be quite a champion in the art of swilling. Upon one occasion he challenged a notorious bibber to a drinking tourney, and 'laid him dead on the spot'.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the practice of drinking became so widespread among the professors, that 'to have pushed the bottle' ~~theologically~~, was the equivalent for the later expression 'drunk as a fiddle'.<sup>2</sup> Thus the student must have felt himself rather a 'backnumber' unless he made some kind of a showing in that art which was so worthy of his masters.

In concluding this chapter on the life at the university it should, in justice to the students, be said that their conduct and manners did not differ very greatly from the whole moral tone of the mediaeval society. To us of the present day, some of their practices above described may appear as being rather coarse and even vulgar. Yet when we remember the unlimited privileges which those students enjoyed, the freedom which they felt when far from home, and the constant invitation that was held out to them to deride the civil authorities, we can easily account for their conduct. When young men and boys are first removed from the restraining influences of the home, they are apt to display a great amount of freedom. This

\* \* \* \* \*

1. Wood. 472.

2. Ibid. 473.



will perhaps always be true. And while the university students of today do not carry weapons, break into houses and practice downright theft, yet the fact is not due to any great change in the nature of the students themselves; but rather to the great advancement made in our social and ethical standards.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

In concluding this study of the life of the mediaeval students, it may be well to note briefly some of the more general results of their university experience. The views and ideas of education which the students carried with them in leaving the university, and the uses which they made of these in later life are especially worth noticing. While it is true, as we have just seen, that a great number of the mediaeval students devoted much of their time to the amusements and wilder side of university life, yet it would be incorrect to infer that this constituted their sole aim. On the contrary the great majority of them graduated from the university with definite and specific plans in view. The training which they had received and the knowledge which they had gained from extensive travel and varied association would soon be reflected in European society and civilization.

One of the most important results of the association of students from different countries was the cosmopolitan spirit which thus developed. In the larger student bodies young men could be found coming from practically every part of Europe. They naturally differed widely as to their manner of thinking and views of life. But while attending the great universities, we find them intimately associating with one another, both in the classroom and outside. Through such intercourse they soon forgot the manners and ideas of their early environment, and sub-



stituted therefor the best thoughts and ideals of all Europe. With the ready instincts of students they recognized the ideals of culture and civilization then in existence and became the most efficient agents in spreading them.

From their extensive travel and close association with one another the students also learned much of the geography and history of Europe. The stories told by those who crossed the Alps in search of knowledge, and of the hardships which they experienced were eagerly received by their fellow students. Likewise those who had sailed across the sea from England in order to enjoy the advantages of a continental education, contributed new ideas concerning the history and geography of their own country. The experiences related by such students as these tended to create a general restlessness among others. They too, desired that education which comes only through extensive travel. Taking advantage of the protection offered by popes and emperors, hundreds and even thousands of wandering scholars were, at the close of the middle ages, acquiring their knowledge of Europe by visiting each important country.

In connection with the large enrollment of the mediaeval universities, notice should also be taken of the spirit of democracy found in their student organizations. Some degree of self-government was present in practically every large student body. The forms of organization



found in their 'halls' and 'nations' were based upon democratic principals. They elected their own Principal or 'head' and delegated to him whatever powers they desired.<sup>1</sup> They made their own rules and changed them whenever they felt so inclined. At Bologna and other Italian universities the whole responsibility, both of student affairs and the general control of the university, rested in the hands of the scholars. The election of the faculty, the fees they were to receive, the course of study, the length of the school term - in fact the general supervision of the entire university was in their hands. While the students in the universities of France, Germany, and England did not exercise such universal control as did those of Italy, yet we find them demanding a great number of privileges. Here as in Italy, they controlled the affairs of their own 'halls' and 'nations'. They also co-operated with the masters and regents in the general management of the university. Thus it was that the students, following the example of the mediaeval guilds, helped to bring about more democratic ideals. There gradually developed in the European mind a truer conception of correct governmental authority.

Another important result should be noted in connection with the training received by the mediaeval students.

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1. See chapter IV, p. 57.



This is the influence that the university graduates exerted upon secondary education. The degree of 'Licencia docendi' (our modern teachers certificate) was sought after by the great majority of students in the universities of France, Germany, and England. Even in Italy, the teachers certificate was almost as popular as the professional diplomas. The lower schools were making constant demands upon the universities for teachers, and they in turn felt under obligation to supply them.

Mention has already been made of the preparatory (grammar) schools that were established in connection with the universities of Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge. In addition to these there were numerous city schools growing up in most of the larger towns, all of which looked to the universities for teachers. No longer do we hear of such complaints as that made by Guibert de Nogent concerning the scarcity of masters during the twelfth century. Guibert, in lamenting the difficulties which he encountered in securing an education states "that so great was the scarcity of Masters of grammar that scarce anyone could be seen in the country and hardly could they be found in the great towns".<sup>1</sup>

At the close of the middle ages, however, ~~thousands~~<sup>many</sup> of university graduates, realizing the need for trained

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1. Guizot, History of Civilization. III, 94.



teachers in the secondary schools prepared themselves for such positions.<sup>1</sup> While we have no definite information concerning the exact growth of the secondary schools, yet the rapid growth in the universities indicate a marked increase in the growth of the local schools. Into these, the university graduates went, carrying with them the best ideals of European culture and civilization.

Finally, a word should be said concerning the attempts made by the mediaeval students to develop independent thought and originality. While it may be true that their exercises in dialectics and disputation would not compare favorably with some of the mental exercises of the present day, yet they afforded the student the best possible opportunities for that age. Through constant, daily practice in these exercises, they gradually became trained in the power of analysis and clear thinking. This led them to seek for real facts and causes. Authority and dogma were no longer accepted without some inquiry or expression of opinion on the part of the students. This inquiring attitude of mind gradually developed, and toward the close of the fifteenth century the young men of Europe were prepared for that great intellectual awakening known as the Renaissance- a movement which they themselves had done much to bring about.

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1. Williams, History of Mediaeval Education, 156 states that so popular did the degree of 'Licencia docendi' become during the thirteenth century that it was practically the only degree conferred for more than two centuries.



APPENDIX.

I-List, of Lecture in the Faculty of Arts,

German Universities.

Prague, 1366.

	Honorarium Groschen.	Months.
Metaphysics, . . . .	8	6
Physics, . . . .		9
On the Heavens, . . . .	5	4
Generation, . . . .	3	2
Sense and Sensation . . . .		
Memory and Recollection . . . .		
Sleep and Waking, . . . .		
Length and Shortness of Life,		
Vegetables . . . .		
Ethics and Physics. . . .		9
Politics and Physics . . . .		6
Rhetoric and Physics . . . .		9
Boethius de Consolatione . . . .	4	3
The old Logic . . . .	3	4
Prior (ethics). . . .	4	4
Posterior (ethics). . . .	3	3
Topics . . . .	4	4
Treatise of Peter Hispanus. . . .	2	3
Material Sphere . . . .	1	1 1/2
Algorism . . . .		3/4
Theory of the Planets . . . .	2	1 1/2
Six books of Euclid . . . .	8	6
Almagest, . . . .	1	12
Almanach . . . .	10	6
Priscian (major). . . .	2	2
De Graecismo . . . .	6	6
Poetria Nova . . . .	2	3
Labyrinth . . . .	1	1 1/2
Doctrinale, 2nd, part. . . .		



Erfurt., 1449.

	Months.
Physics . . . . .	8
On the Soul . . . . .	3
On the Heavens and the Earth. . . . .	3
On Meteors . . . . .	3
Lesser natural Philosophy . . . . .	2
Ethics . . . . .	8
Politics . . . . .	6
Economics . . . . .	1
Metaphysics . . . . .	6
Euclid . . . . .	6
Theory of the planets . . . . .	1 1/2
Music . . . . .	1
Art, of Metrical composition . . . . .	1
Perspective . . . . .	3
Material Sphere . . . . .	1 1/2
Old Logic . . . . .	3 1/2
Prior (ethics) . . . . .	3 1/2
Posterior (ethics). . . . .	3 1/2
Topics . . . . .	4
Elenchi . . . . .	2
Peter Hispanus . . . . .	3
Suppositions, Amplifications and Restrictions . . . . .	2
Consequences . . . . .	1
Obligatory and insoluble propositions . . . . .	1
Priscian (minor) . . . . .	3
Donatus . . . . .	1
Alexander, 1st. part (doctrinale). . . . .	1
Same, part 2 . . . . .	1
Same, part 3 . . . . .	1
Boethius Consolations of Philosophy . . . . .	1
Loyca Heysbri. . . . .	4
Poetria . . . . .	2
Computus . . . . .	1
Labyrinth . . . . .	2.



Ingolstadt, 1473.

For the Baccalaureate degree,	Honorarium Groschen.
Lesser Logic and Exercise . . . . .	
Old Logic and Exercise . . . . .	24
Elenchi, . . . . .	3
Obligatory Propositions . . . . .	1
Physics and Exercise . . . . .	
Material Sphere . . . . .	3
Euclid, 1st. book . . . . .	1
Algorism, intergers. . . . .	1
Some books on Rhetoric . . . . .	1
Alexander, 1st part., (doctrinale) . . . . .	3
Same, 2nd. part . . . . .	3
Prior (ethics) exercises . . . . .	10
For the Masters' degree	
Ethics . . . . .	
Metaphysics . . . . .	9
On meteors . . . . .	11
On generation and corruption . . . . .	3
On the Heavens and the Earth . . . . .	6
Lesser natural philosophy . . . . .	3
Theory of the planets . . . . .	3
Common Arithmetic . . . . .	2
Topics . . . . .	6
On the Soul . . . . .	11
Posterior (ethics) . . . . .	3

As to the Honorarium (or fee) those who were unable to pay twelve gulden a year, might attend the lectures free. The Professor was not to take more than the fixed fee for each lecture. Nor was he to take less by way of attracting scholars. If the smallness of his audience compelled him to discontinue his lectures, he was compelled to return to them their fees, less a part, proportioned to the lectures read."

Karl von Raumer. German Universities.  
Barnards' Amer. Jour. of Ed. VI 54- 55.



## II- Some of the names applied to the new students.

- 1- Quasimodogeniti.
- 2- Neovisti.
- 3- Crowbills. As if like young crows or other birds, they were yet yellow about the bill.
- 4- Housecocks.
- 5- Heifer-calves.
- 6- Sucklings, As having only just left home, where they had been nursed as infants.
- 7- Bacchant, A name applied to those not fully deposed.
- 8- Innocents, As not having got far out in the world.
- 9- Half-papen, A name given them at Rostock, meaning half-students. All students were anciently termed papen, but the term later became one of abuse.
- 10- Beani, Applied to those not deposed.
- 11- Shovers, Because they pretend to be students too soon, and try not to serve out their pennal year.
- 12- Tapeworms, for it was pretended that they were full of all manner of uncleanness inside, and so they were forced to take all sorts of thin
- 13- Imperfecti, Because they are not declared free from obligations, as opposed to the 'Absoluti'.
- 14- House-pennals; house-goblins; family foxes, these names are given to such as are afraid of pennalism, and stay long at home before going to the university.



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