

maturity, possessed professors and masters of the first eminence in every branch of science directed to be taught, and contained a numerous band of the most promising youths; who had been drawn thither by its fair report, not only from distant counties of the state, but from the neighbourhood of ancient seminaries; that it had fair to rival and surpass those institutions which had long been the pride and boast of our sister states;—but that, just at this period, when the general prosperity of the state had nearly kept an even pace with the condition of the college—when agriculture and commerce were more flourishing than they had ever before been known—when no pretext could be drawn from a derangement of finances, a load of public debt, or a misapplication of the funds, an act was passed by the legislature for arresting the annual public donation to the colleges—an act, violating that public faith which had been so solemnly pledged to various descriptions of men—to subscribers, who, on that faith alone, had contributed, and who supposed they thereby secured to their descendants an opportunity of enjoying the inestimable privilege of a liberal education—to trustees, who, on that faith, had devoted their time, labour and talents—to the professors and masters, who, on that faith, had reposed their all, had relinquished other pursuits, and had given up every other employment—to those ardent aspiring youths, who had chosen St. John's college, at which they might be sure, by diligence and study, to lay the foundation of future eminence as statesmen and patriots—and lastly, to those numerous virtuous citizens, whose country is the state of Maryland, whose interest is connected with their country's welfare, and who relied on that faith for a succession of men, to be supplied by these colleges, to administer law, to enact wholesome and wise provisions, to love mercy and justice, and to protect them from tyranny, either open, barefaced and avowed, or dark, secret and disguised.

That St. John's college is an institution belonging to the public, and that therefore its funds may be disposed of according to the will of the majority, is an idea which can never be maintained, when it is considered that the legislature, by the same act, appropriated funds to secure the annual donation, and invited citizens to contribute their money to the work. Is there a man, versed in the laws of his country, who would hesitate to declare, if the case existed between two private persons, that each of them had an interest in the whole, of which he could not lawfully be deprived by the act of the other. So long then as there remains a single subscriber, who withholds his consent from the resumption, the proposed act cannot take place, without a direct violation of justice. The principle on which individuals have been compelled to discharge their subscriptions, would apply to the state, if for that purpose the courts of justice possessed a competent jurisdiction.

But if policy, or the real good of their country, required the resumption of the funds;—or if, without them, the college could be supported agreeably to the intention of its founders, the trustees would not for a moment question the right, or, in any manner withstand the measure.—They have declared, and again they repeat, that, as trustees, they have no private interest whatever in preserving the institution; and as subscribers, or citizens, they have no concern, which is not strictly compatible with the true welfare of the state.

It is an assertion as unfounded on reason as it is common in the mouths of particular classes of men, that the benefits afforded by the college are confined to the rich. It is indeed difficult to convince the poor, or their advocates, that government has, in any manner whatever, consulted *their* rights and interests. It might with equal propriety be contended, that as the poor contribute little or nothing to the public revenue, they have little or no title to have *their* will or advantage consulted on any occasion whatever. But both positions are false. The government which neglects the poor, is a government against the natural rights of man. But in what manner, or by what measure, it can more effectually consult their interests, than by providing a succession of honest and able men to protect their rights, it is difficult to imagine. There needs here no comment on that singular provision, by which five poor boys of promising genius are to be continually maintained and educated at the expence of the college.

No man has hitherto been hardy enough publicly to assert, that St. John's college hath not had a tendency to answer the avowed purpose of its institution; although it has been frequently said, that country schools would better promote that purpose, by more widely diffusing the advantages of education. It is not, however, even pretended, that the erection of St. John's college has rendered it more difficult for the poor to educate their children. No country school whatever has been broken up on its account. King William's school hath indeed consolidated the greater part of its funds with the funds of the college; but that school was carried on in Annapolis, and every advantage it afforded, is now enjoyed, with addition, from the college.

It is impossible so soon to forget, that on the very experience of the incompetency of such schools, the idea of establishing the college was principally founded. If it were now proposed to have a college or academy in every county, embracing a complete system of education, if this idea could be carried into effect, if there were men in every county capable of planning and superintending the work, then indeed might it be said, that schools in each county would be preferable to a college on each shore. But such an idea hath never been in contemplation. The public cannot sustain the expence of providing masters of every kind for the youths of each county; and all that ever could or can be expected from country schools, is this, that they shall afford a common education, and serve as nurseries for rearing those more vigorous and thriving plants, which, at a proper season, may be removed into a better soil and situation, there to take root, attain a fuller growth, and spread abroad their branches, under whose shade the weaker plants may receive protection.

It may indeed be essential to the best interests of the community, that country schools be again instituted. It is not improbable that hereafter they may better succeed. Nothing is more certain, than if they should be established they will be the more flourishing for the institution of colleges, if it were only