

The commissioners are specially charged to divide their counties into a convenient number of school districts; and, when divided, the inhabitants of each of the said districts, are to elect three trustees to manage its concerns, and to vote a tax, to purchase a site, build a school-house; and supply fuel and stationary—the powers and authority of the trustees will merely extend to these objects—the great fund to support the system, and pay the teachers, will be provided at, and distributed from the general treasury of the state.

The commissioners, upon the appropriation of the superintendent, are to apply for, and receive from the state treasury, the quota of money to be assigned to their respective counties, according to the equitable ratio of white population; and apportion the same, to the trustees of the several districts, according to the number of children between the ages of five and fifteen years in each district, which money shall be exclusively applied to pay the teacher of the said district.

The city of Baltimore will receive her allotment of all the funds to be provided, but the regulation and police of all the concerns of literature, in the contemplation of this system, within the city, will be assigned to the corporation.

The funds now appropriated to free and county schools will come in aid of the new system, but be applied according to the act of November session 1812, ch. 79, and its several supplements, and the acts of December session 1817, chapter 16 and 93.

All the funds hereafter to be assigned, the trustees are first to apply to instruction of the children of the least wealthy, in progression, until the said funds shall have become adequate to the complete instruction of all the youth of every class.

The general admission of the children of the rich, as well as of the poor, to a common system of public instruction, will naturally tend to the “annihilation of factitious distinctions,” and prove a “strong incentive for the display of talents, and a felicitous accommodation to the genius of republican government.”

The beneficial effects which have resulted from the operation of a system of education in the state of New-York, from which, in fact, the proposed plan is mainly extracted, are happily portrayed in the recent message of the distinguished governor of that state, to both houses of the legislature; the spirit of philanthropy and genuine wisdom are manifest in the enlightened views of that statesman upon this subject. The first duty of government, and the surest evidence of good government, is the encouragement of education; a general diffusion of knowledge is the precursor, and protector of republican institutions—Under it we must confide as the conservative power, that will watch over our liberties, and guard them against fraud, intrigue, corruption and violence. A good system of common schools may be considered the “palladium of our freedom,” for no reasonable apprehension of its subversion can be entertained as long as the great body of the people are enlightened by education. To break down the barriers which poverty has erected against the acquisition of knowledge, is to restore the just equilibrium of society, and to perform a duty of paramount obligation.

With a view to the illustration of the stupendous munificence herein before referred to, the committee subjoin an abstract from the comparative view of common schools in the state of New York, since the year 1816.