

The education of youth, we consider as an object of the greatest importance to our community; the stability and welfare of governments depend more on good morals, the information and knowledge of citizens, than on laws; indeed the latter, though ever so wisely framed, have been found ineffectual for the preservation of those societies in which the former have been corrupted.

It will not be denied, that a good education impresses on the mind, at an age when impressions are most easily made, and are most lasting, habits of application and of virtue, and that it excites a desire of knowledge, of emulation, and the love of honest fame. Can these happy propensities in human nature be cultivated and improved in any other way so well as in those seminaries of learning, where, under the eyes of vigilant, enlightened, and exemplary teachers, youth are instructed in the elements of science, its utility is explained, emulation excited, vice discountenanced and restrained, and the necessity of virtue frequently inculcated. Influenced by these considerations, our predecessors thought that colleges, so endowed as to induce men of talents and virtue to engage in the instruction of youth, would be the most effectual method of securing to the community a succession of able and upright legislators, and of citizens capable of judging wisely of their acts and merits. Liberal public donations were accordingly made to the two colleges; relying on the public faith, that these would be inviolate, while not abused, many individuals, by private gifts, contributed their generous aid to these rising establishments. What proof has been adduced that they do not answer the end of their institution? Have you any well founded cause even to suspect that the monies granted have been misapplied? If you suspect misapplication, should suspicion alone, unsupported by proof, authorise, in a free government, the arbitrary resumption of grants on the mere allegation that they were improvidently made? The allegation, however, has not been made; if made, we believe it cannot be maintained. To us it appears, that the donations of the public were applied to the most useful, the most important of objects. You admit the utility, nay, the necessity, of diffusing knowledge among free citizens, but you insinuate that this knowledge will be more generally diffused by the erection of free-schools in the several counties: If we resort back to experience, it will not make much in favour of the assertion, or your opinion; no great benefits, we have understood, were derived from the free-schools formerly established; for after the experiment of a long period, they have been diffused, their funds alienated, and appropriated to other purposes with the consent of the trustees.

We, however, do not deny that free-schools, under proper regulations duly observed, might be rendered useful, by teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, and the principles of grammar of the English, Greek and Latin languages; thus the pupils of the most promising talents might be better prepared for a collegiate education; for in colleges only, or in universities, the elements of the higher sciences can be taught to advantage; if in free-schools the scholars are well grounded in the rudiments of general grammar, and arithmetic, it is as much as is performed in the best of these schools, and can be reasonably expected from their scanty endowments, and the ordinary talents of the masters commonly employed to teach in them: The boys too taught in them, are commonly too young to feel the beauties of classic authors, or to be instructed in the theories of law and government, or to study and comprehend the higher branches of the mathematics.

Will it be asserted, or can the assertion be maintained with any colour of truth, that the mere acquirements of a grammar school are sufficient to qualify our citizens for the important trusts of legislation and judgment? Of boys, who in these schools discover a promising genius, the parents, if able, will go to the expence of completing their education in the colleges, if unable, friends may not be wanting to assist them, and if these should fail, there are charitable foundations for the reception of such boys in both colleges; these foundations may, and probably will be enlarged in time by public and private contributions, when the advantage of a finished education shall be better understood, more prized, public and private benevolence more expanded, by the increased means of gratifying it. As we have not denied the utility of free-schools, under proper regulations, so we shall always be willing to co-operate with you towards their establishment, under a well digested system, that all the learning they can afford may be as widely diffused as possible amongst the great mass of the people. In the preamble to your first bill, you have urged as an argument for depriving the colleges of their funds, that the wealthy only can reap the advantage of an education in these seminaries: A numerous and middle class of citizens, neither opulent nor needy, we doubt not, will educate their children in them; poor citizens, we acknowledge, cannot support the expence of such an education, without the assistance of friends. Shall the children of the former be debarred of a collegiate education, because the latter will be excluded from its benefits? Have not the wealthy already largely contributed to found these colleges? Destroy them by withdrawing the funds given by the public, and what will be the consequence? Why this, the rich, instead of educating their children in this state, will send them to the neighbouring states, or to foreign universities, for their education, and thus the money expended on it will be lost to the state of Maryland.

The foregoing observations, and reasoning upon them, have convinced us, that it would be improper to take away the public donations given to Washington and Saint-John's colleges; that they may carry the same conviction to your minds, is our earnest wish. We are as desirous as you can be to ease our constituents of unnecessary burthens, to observe the strictest œconomy, and if savings of public money must be made, other means may be resorted to, without depriving those seminaries of the funds formerly granted, which, if withdrawn, they will inevitably go to decay, the sums expended in the erection of the buildings will be thrown away, and the well founded hope of their rising utility untimely and entirely blasted.

By order,

W. PERRY, jun. clk.

Which was read.

The following address: