

## SENATE....No. 19.

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[Reported by a Joint Special Committee, consisting of Messrs. SUMNER and HUBBARD of the Senate, and Messrs. ROBINSON, of *Lowell*, ALLEN, of *Northfield*, and PALFREY, of *Boston*, of the House.]

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### Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, *Jan. 28, 1842.*

The Joint Special Committee to whom was referred the Petition of the President and Trustees of Williams College, for aid to enable them to rebuild one of the college halls recently destroyed by fire ; also the petitions of Cyrus Stowell and others, Horatio Byington and others, Edward A. Newton, Phineas Allen and others, William A. Hawley and others, Seymour Whitman and others, Walter Laffin and others, James W. Robbins and others, George W. Sterling and others, Ralph Taylor and others, James Bradford, Robert F. Barnard and others, severally, in aid of said petition, having heard the petitioners and considered the subject submitted, respectfully ask leave to present the following

### REPORT :

The petition of the president and trustees sets forth, that Williams College is an institution which has hitherto

offered such inducements on the score of board and tuition, as to enable persons of small pecuniary means, opportunity of obtaining a liberal education, and that for the purpose of extending its usefulness as far as possible, owing to limited funds, the trustees have enforced the strictest economy in its administration, limiting the expenditures, including the compensation to the instructors, to sums unusually low, and for buildings to such amount only, as was absolutely necessary. Under the operation of this system of economy they were able to furnish the requisite means of instruction to the students, and would have continued to do so, but for the severe misfortune which has befallen them, by the loss by fire, in October last, of their largest and most valuable hall. This edifice contained thirty-two rooms, and would accommodate sixty-four students. By the loss of it, the trustees are deprived of the means of furnishing rooms to that number of students, except by private rooms temporarily furnished by individuals. This renders their circumstances difficult and embarrassing. They have no means wherewith to rebuild the edifice thus destroyed. The small amount of permanent funds which they possess is barely sufficient to enable them with its income and the receipts for tuition, to discharge the necessary annual expenses of the institution.

Under this emergency they ask the Legislature for aid; not for the augmenting of their funds, but solely that they may be enabled to repair the loss which they have sustained, in consequence of the calamity above stated.

From the evidence adduced before your committee, the following facts relating to the present funds and expenditures of the college were shown :

Whole amount of productive funds, . . . \$30,244 92

Deduct charity funds specially appropriated, viz. :

State fund, . . . . .	\$7,500	
Woodbridge Little's bequest,	5,700	
E. Starkweather's " . . . . .	1,000	
	—————	14,200 00
Leaves on interest for general purposes,		\$16,044 92

Income for general purposes, viz. :

Interest on \$16,044 92, . . . . .	\$ 962 00
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Rents of real estate, to wit :

President's house—two houses for Professors, and mansion house, . . . . .	500
Term-bills of students, . . . . .	5,000
For degrees conferred, . . . . .	120
	—————
	\$6,582 00

The annual expenditures are as follows :

Salaries, president, . . . . .	\$1,200 00
" Four professors, \$800 each, . . . . .	3,200
" Tutor, . . . . .	400
" Lecturer on chemistry and natural philosophy, . . . . .	300
" Treasurer, . . . . .	200

Repairs of buildings, . . . . .	500 00
Commencement, . . . . .	150
Contingencies, &c. . . . .	350
Library, . . . . .	150
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	\$6,450 00

The first question which seems to claim consideration, is in regard to the policy of sustaining our institutions of learning. And upon this point it is scarcely possible to conceive a difference of opinion. To these institutions Massachusetts is mainly indebted for the high moral and intellectual character she has acquired. What imparts peculiar radiance to her history is the fact that her people in the earliest periods of her existence, amidst every discouragement and trial, persevered with unabated zeal in efforts to establish means of education, not only for the time being, but for posterity. Our ancestors did not permit themselves for a moment to lose sight of the great truth, that without the introduction of these means all attempts to form a free government would terminate in disappointment. They caused not only the importance but the necessity, of cherishing all advantages for the acquisition of learning, to become in their day, an all-pervading sentiment. This sentiment was transmitted to the age in which our constitution was framed and adopted, and in that instrument it is thus embodied: "Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people, being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties, and as these depend on spreading the opportunities and advantages of education in the various parts of the country, and among the different orders of the people, it shall be the duty of legislators and magistrates,

in all future periods of this Commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them." To promote all proper facilities for the diffusion of education, is among the first of duties devolving upon us. Our primary schools, academies and colleges, constitute the grand moral fortifications of the State, behind which, so long as they shall be effectually maintained, virtue will live—truth will prevail—and liberty will flourish. We cannot be true to the past nor faithful to the future, if we cease for a moment to regard the interests of education as deserving our especial care. And should there prevail a sentiment *tending* even to indifference upon this subject, would it not fearfully betoken a departure from that ground whereon our civil institutions and our freedom can alone be securely based?

Is Williams College deserving of aid? This is the particular inquiry, and in this place a brief historical sketch of the institution and its founder may not be inappropriate. The foundation of the college was laid by Col. Ephraim Williams, a native of Newtown. He commanded for a time the line of Massachusetts forts on the west side of Connecticut river, making his residence at a fort about three miles east of Williamstown. During his command and under the protection of the forts the first settlers in western Massachusetts commenced improvements. He became much attached to the localities of that section,—was much conversant with the people, and his kind and obliging disposition led him to sympathize strongly with them in the dangers, difficulties and hardships they were compelled to encounter. For their encouragement, he promised he would make some beneficial provision in their behalf. Subsequently he joined the army in the war between England and France, and in Sept., 1755, was slain

at the battle with the French and Indians near lake George.

This brave and generous soldier (being without family) bequeathed nearly all his estate, which was not large, to be applied to the support of a literary institution "in a township west of fort Massachusetts, provided the said township fall within Massachusetts upon running the line between Massachusetts and New York, and provided the said township when incorporated be called Williamstown." Both conditions took place. By the provident and faithful management of his executors, the fund thus given was annually increased, and in 1785 an application was made to the General Court for an act of incorporation and granted, in order to carry into effect the benevolent intention of the testator. The late Judge Sedgwick with seven others were incorporated trustees of the donation, and by its aid, with \$4000 obtained under the auspices of the Legislature, and \$2000 raised by the citizens of Williamstown by subscription, a brick building 82 feet long, 42 wide, four stories high, was erected, containing twenty-eight rooms for students and a chapel occupying the space of four rooms. The expense of the building was about \$11,700. The funds then remaining at interest amounted to about the same sum. The institution was opened in October, 1791. It consisted of two departments, a grammar school or academy, and an English free school. It soon became highly prosperous and useful, and was resorted to, not only by youth from the county and vicinity, but from distant parts of the country. Such was its reputation and usefulness that in June, 1793, the Legislature incorporated it into a college, and in honor to Col. Williams called it WILLIAMS COLLEGE. The act of incorporation was accompanied by a grant of \$4,000, payable

out of the treasury of the State in four annual instalments. The college was organized under its charter in October of the above year. Its first commencement was held in 1795.

The grants which the institution has at different times received from the State (including grants of eastern lands) amount to about \$53,000. The last grant was made about twenty-eight years ago. Between 1789 and 1799, about \$28,000 were expended for the necessary buildings, library and apparatus. Since 1814, new buildings have been erected, at an expense equal to more than half of those before in possession; the library has been doubled, the philosophical and chemical apparatus increased three-fold, and a valuable mineralogical collection formed.

From the foregoing statements, it is apparent that the college is not in possession of funds to enable its managers to repair the loss sustained. There is other evidence on this point. For the purpose of making additions and improvements, which were necessary in order to keep pace with improvements introduced into other colleges, and not having college funds to justify appropriations therefor, the professors, receiving the small salary of \$800 each, reduced it in 1833 to \$700 each. The president's salary, formerly \$1,400, besides house-rent and the fees for degrees, was reduced to \$1,200, as his entire compensation. A year ago the professors' salaries were refixed at \$800. In 1837, an astronomical observatory was erected, at an expense amounting to \$2,500, which was borne mainly by one of the professors. In like manner, the cost of a magnetic observatory, being about \$800, has been defrayed.

These instances of self-sacrifice, while they show the limited pecuniary means of the college, at the same time

exhibit examples deserving high commendation and reward.

The location of the college is worthy of notice. In one respect the location is unfavorable. It is not so situated as to attract the gaze of cities. Seclusion from the eyes of the wealthy is one great reason, undoubtedly, why donations to its funds have been small. But after all, not the smallest recommendation of Williams College, is its seclusion. Environed by hills, exhibiting in the same view scenes of unsurpassed beauty and sublimity, the student here is removed from corrupting influences, and is brought into communion with those salutary moral agencies, that are alike calculated to form virtuous character and promote intellectual improvement.

The location is healthy. For the past twelve years not a death among the students attending the college has occurred.

Such an institution is not only valuable—*it is needed*. Nearly fifty years ago, the Legislature of Massachusetts, by act of incorporation, evinced the propriety of establishing the college, and the successive legislative grants made at five different times, are as so many memorials that such establishment was wise and proper.

Its usefulness has been developed in each year of its existence, and in fact the importance of sustaining it does not, in the opinion of your committee, admit of a question.

Under the severe calamity which has befallen the institution, without fault, the trustees implore succor. They ask for no sum beyond what is necessary to repair the loss. They only implore that the students may be furnished with a shelter. It is a case resting upon grounds alike peculiar, urgent and deserving, and it can hardly be

conceived, that the appeal thus made to the Legislature can be made in vain.

The committee report the accompanying Resolve.

By order of the committee,

I. SUMNER, *Chairman.*

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts.**

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In the year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Forty-Two.

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**RESOLVE**

On the Petition of the President and Trustees of Williams  
College.

*Resolved,* For the reasons set forth in said Petition, the sum of fifteen thousand dollars be allowed and paid out of the treasury of the Commonwealth to the treasurer of Williams College, for the time being, in five instalments, of three thousand dollars each : the first payment shall be made on the first day of July next, and the subsequent payments on the first day of July annually, in the four years succeeding said first day of July next.



