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The General Assembly's Board of Education,

AND THE

AMERICAN EDUCATION SOCIETY.

IN the present aspect of the moral and religious world, there is something very peculiar, distinguishing it from any preceding period. Our world, in all ages, has presented a scene of wide spreading moral desolation, sufficient to call forth the sympathies and exertions of the Christian and Philanthropist. But obstacles, in the way of moral reformation, arising from the prejudices and political institutions of mankind, have existed, appalling to human reason and almost insuperable to the strongest faith in the divine promises. Since the days of the apostles, exertions, corresponding to the magnitude and importance of the object, have seldom been made by individuals, and never by the great body of professed Christians. And not unfrequently those whose hearts were engaged in the cause of God and man, have expended their strength and zeal in the use of means not sanctioned by the great head of the Church. When not groaning under the yoke of oppression, or bleeding beneath the sword of persecution, they have sought the patronage of the civil power, and endeavored, by *carnal weapons*, to secure the victory, promised to be achieved only by *the sword of the Spirit*. The history of Christendom confirms the truth, that God will honor no means in extending and building up the kingdom of the Redeemer, except the voluntary exertions of his people in the use of those bloodless weapons, furnished in the Holy Scriptures; and that these are

mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. Convinced by the fruitless attempts of past ages, that no reliance can safely be placed on the secular arm, Christians have been taught to look for the blessing of God on their own voluntary exertions. And if there are any so unapt to learn, as still to expect from the civil power any favor except protection and security in obeying the dictates of conscience, the fundamental principles of our government utterly exclude the most distant hope. We are reduced to the happy necessity of depending on God alone in the use of the appointed means for the fulfilment of his promises. The patronage afforded by other governments being thus removed, the Church is left to feel the full weight of her own responsibility; that on her unconstrained exertions depend the existence of a Christian ministry, the maintenance of public worship, and under God, the salvation of immortal souls. And we bless God that those who love our Lord Jesus Christ, have not been altogether insensible to the weight of obligation imposed by the circumstances in which they are placed. The various and successful operations of Christian benevolence, in the present day, furnish ample evidence that the gospel imparts to the heart an energy sufficient to sustain any enterprise required by the exigencies of the Church and of the world. It is true, nothing has yet been done commensurate to the spiritual wants of our own country, and much less of the world. But a spirit of Christian enterprise has been awakened, which we trust in God, will not rest, until the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God. Thus far, whenever, spiritual wants have been ascertained, and fields of promising usefulness pointed out; the calls for pecuniary assistance have been answered with a promptitude and liberality, which leave no ground to fear the want of means to accomplish any future enterprise. A heart imbued with the spirit of the gospel, never can be insensible to the claims of a perishing world. As soon as it

is known that the the Bible is needed, and that the people are willing to receive it, money flows from innumerable channels into the treasury of the Lord. In like manner the means of supporting ministers of the gospel to an indefinite extent, may be obtained from those who need their ministrations, aided by the voluntary contributions of the more favored portions of the Church. So numerous are the promising fields opening in our own vast territory, not to mention foreign countries, that laborers, sufficient to cultivate one half of the ground, cannot be obtained. Indeed, the operations of missionary societies are limited, not by the want of pecuniary means, but of competent and faithful men willing to endure privation and labor. A few years ago, when the first Theological Seminary was established in this country, the question was frequently asked, where will these young ministers find employment? Those already in that sacred office receive with difficulty a scanty subsistence. What will become of an additional number? Experience has shown how groundless are these apprehensions. Now, when these institutions have been multiplied ten-fold, the calls for ministerial labor are so numerous and pressing, that our young men are generally engaged before they have finished the prescribed course of study.

The Presbyteries connected with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, report between six and seven hundred congregations destitute of regular pastors. And we venture to affirm, that the churches of other denominations, are not, in proportion to their numbers, more fully supplied. The proportion of ministers, to the population of the United States, is every year rapidly diminishing. The tide of population is flowing to the west, to the north, and to the south; so that in less than one-fourth of a century, cultivated fields, flourishing villages and large cities, will occupy places now the abodes of wild beasts. These colonies, emigrating from Europe and the older states, carry

with them the elements of social institutions and Christian churches. They not only receive with gratitude the Christian missionary who visits their new abode, but they send back from the wilderness repeated and earnest entreaties, to give them Bibles and ministers able to teach them to understand what they read. The American Bible Society has said that they shall have Bibles—and the Christian community is responding—means shall be furnished to redeem the pledge. Missionary societies, are saying, we know where a thousand missionaries more than we can command, may be fully and usefully employed; and we know, also, where the means necessary for their support can be obtained. But men of suitable qualifications cannot be procured. Never did a field more extensive and promising present itself to the enterprise of the Christian community. The question is, shall it be left uncultivated until it be overspread with briars, and thorns, and thistles? Shall those who know the value of Christian privileges, and are willing, according to their means, to aid in obtaining them, be permitted to pass off the stage of action, and their children to grow up in ignorance and irreligion, before the heralds of the cross be sent to their assistance? Every one knows that the difficulty of instructing and reforming a people universally sunk in ignorance and vice, is an hundred-fold greater, than when a few are standing ready, at once, to take the minister of the gospel by the hand—to cheer him in his labors, and to aid him by their counsel, their influence, and their prayers. If our vast territory is ever to be filled with a Christian population, it is more economical to take possession, while we have in the bosom of the country, auxiliaries, than to gain possession after it falls, as is the certain consequence of delay, entirely into the hands of the enemy. Now only a part, hereafter the whole of the expense must be borne by the established churches. In the one case, the strength and resources of the Church would be increasing with the growth

of the country. The churches formed, would aid in forming others. In case of present inaction, not only the relative, but the positive strength of the Church would diminish.— For in the moral, as well as the physical world, action is necessary, in order to retain the vigor already possessed. All this is admitted. *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.* Where shall we find men of a right spirit duly qualified for this work? What is to be done in the evident destitution of laborers necessary to collect and secure the abundant harvest now ready for the sickle? Our Master has given the answer—*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.* This prayer has for ages been on the tongues of professed Christians, and is still repeated, whenever the wants of the Church and of the world come into remembrance. But is it accompanied with corresponding exertions? It is self-evident that to pray God to grant a particular blessing, when at the same time we neglect the use of means in our power, necessary to its attainment, is nothing less than solemn mockery. Earnestly to desire an object and not to raise a hand to receive it, when presented, is inconsistent with the invariable principles of human action. Could it be believed that a man, having the perfect use of his limbs, was really thirsty and desirous of a drink of cool water, when instead of going ten steps to a copious fountain, he would sit and beg that it might be conveyed to him by the immediate hand of the Almighty? We pray, and very justly, that the hungry may be fed, and the naked clothed, and yet if we do not minister to their wants according to our means, what advantage are our prayers to ourselves or to the needy? It is true, man cannot make ministers such as would be a blessing to the Church and the world. He cannot give them a new heart, and furnish them with the natural talents necessary to preach the gospel in a profitable manner. Therefore we must pray the Lord

of the harvest, to send forth laborers into his harvest. But is there no human instrumentality to be employed in the conversion of those who are to be preachers of the gospel? Is there no human means to be used in training and preparing them when converted for that great work? It is admitted that God could, if it seemed good, take the ignorant and illiterate, and endow them with the gift of tongues, as he did a great part of the apostles, and make them the instruments of confounding the wisdom of the learned; or he could call those already educated with a view to secular professions, and inspire them with a knowledge of the mysteries of his kingdom, as he did the apostle Paul, and send them forth fully furnished to this great work. But this is not his ordinary mode of proceeding, as well in the kingdom of grace as of nature. God has provided in abundance, timber and stones, and every material suitable for the construction of houses,—but he has nowhere, or at any time, provided houses already built and furnished, without the intervention of human agency. We owe to God primarily our food and clothing, yet bread nowhere springs from the earth, nor garments grow on the trees precisely in the form suited to our use. A similar connection between means and ends pervades the kingdom of grace. *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent.* Now, if salvation be not attainable without this long series of means, how can men be sent to preach without any previous preparation?

At the introduction of Christianity, when miracles were necessary to prove the divine authority of the new religion, our Lord did not send forth illiterate Fishermen to preach the gospel, without previous instruction and preparation.

They were with Him, who taught as never man taught, during the whole period of his personal ministry, they saw his miracles, heard his instructions, were witnesses of his death and resurrection, conversed with him forty days before his ascension, and finally, were endowed with the power of speaking more different languages than any minister of the present day can learn in a lifetime. Paul previously furnished with all the learning and literature of his age and country, was called to the apostleship; and consecrating his high intellectual attainments to the service of his Lord and Master, he became one of the most able, as well as most zealous and successful ministers of the New Testament. To prove the necessity of a learned and able ministry in this country, where the advantages of education are general, and at this period, when every branch of literature and science is cultivated in a high degree, seems wholly superfluous. The experience of ages justifies the opinion now generally entertained by intelligent Christians of all denominations, that in a useful minister of the gospel, mental culture must be connected with ardent and devoted piety. How can a man not furnished with the necessary information, instruct others? Or if he have the requisite knowledge, he must *be apt to teach*, capable of communicating in plain and intelligible language, his thoughts and feelings. Language is usually acquired by imitation and practice. And it is a general rule in the administration of the divine government, not to bestow gratuitously that which may be acquired by human industry. A contrary mode of procedure would hold out an irresistible temptation to indolence and folly. The question then returns, how are ministers of the gospel, equal in number and in gifts, to the exigencies of the Church, to be procured?—We repeat our Lord's answer—*Pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest.* Pray God to pour out his Holy Spirit on schools and colleges, and to convert and dispose young

men, now in a course of education, to consecrate their talents and acquirements to the Lord—and let this prayer be accompanied with means suited to produce the effect. In the next place, let the Church take young men of promising talent, and hopeful piety, who are destitute of the means of obtaining a liberal education, and train them up for the service of the Lord. There are many such young men—the fruits of the refreshing influence which God has shed down in various places on the American Churches. This fact is a manifest proof, that the Lord of the harvest has heard prayer, has selected his laborers, and is waiting for the Church to do her duty, in educating the sons He has given her. In our country there are hundreds of young men distinguished for piety and talent, earnestly desirous to serve the Lord in any way he may direct, who are utterly excluded from the hope of obtaining a liberal education by their own resources, or those of their parents. What duty more obvious and pressing, than to educate these young men for future usefulness? They are the children of the Church, she needs their services, and she is bound to take them by the hand, to instruct them, and to direct their steps to a field where their labors are likely to be most conducive to her interest. To this case the general principle of political economy is not applicable; that where labor of any kind is in demand, men will, of their own accord, without artificial stimuli, prepare themselves for the occupation in which service is required. Because in the first place, the ordinary motives of interest do not, or ought not, to operate in the case before us. In this country the Church has no patronage from the civil government—no rich prebends to tempt the cupidity of parents in directing the education of their sons—no splendid livings independent on the will of the people, where the indolent incumbent is secure of his maintenance, in whatever manner he may perform the duties of his sacred office. Such also is happily the state of public

sentiment, that the people will not long support a minister who is not active and laborious, manifesting a greater zeal for their spiritual interests than for his own private emolument. In these circumstances, when a gifted, and well educated young man, regards his own ease, or is ambitious of rising in the world, he usually turns his attention to some secular profession. And when we see a young man in independent circumstances, entering the gospel ministry, as is sometimes the case, we have strong presumptive evidence that he is governed by other motives than those of a worldly character. In the next place, many liberally educated young men lack piety; an essential and primary requisite in a useful minister. To introduce men destitute of piety into this sacred office, would be a curse, instead of a blessing to the Church, and to the world. If such men would answer, the cheaper and speedier way to supply the destitute with religious instruction, would be to raise the emoluments of the clergy. Then the same principle which preserves the equilibrium in secular employments, attracting labor where it is most needed and best rewarded, would operate, and we would have no cause to complain that the laborers were too few. Thus, where the Church is liberally patronized by the State, there is no lack of candidates for the gospel ministry. But such a state of things, when worldly-minded men, for the sake of filthy lucre are induced to intrude themselves into the sacred office, is pestilence and death to the interests of moral reformation, and vital piety. If then, the Church would preserve her holy doctrines pure and unadulterated, if she would hold forth the word of life to the multitudes perishing around her, and provide for the spiritual wants of the rising generation, she must bring into her service, by a course of intellectual discipline, these young men, whose hearts God has prepared for the work, by the operations of His Spirit.

This is no new and untried experiment. It has been

done in an unsystematic, and comparatively small way in the Presbyterian Church, for many years : and the result of the trial has been the most happy and encouraging. The mind of the Christian community seems now prepared to make a mighty and united effort, in this great cause on which every other Christian enterprise is evidently dependent.

While we are agreed respecting the importance of the object contemplated, we may, it is believed, honestly differ respecting the best mode of accomplishing it. Some years ago, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, appointed a Board of Education, to which the management of this concern was committed. We are not informed respecting the plan of operation adopted by the Board, nor of the precise extent of their labors. We know, in general, that nothing worthy the importance of the cause, nothing commensurate to the resources and wants of the Presbyterian Church, has been done. At the late sessions of the General Assembly, a proposition was made and adopted, to re-organize and enlarge the Board of Education, so that it might proceed with greater energy and effect in this important business. It remains yet to be determined whether any thing effective will result from the new arrangement. We know that many intelligent and influential members of the Presbyterian Church are anxiously waiting to see what steps will be taken. Their wishes and their feelings are in favor of the Assembly's Board, in preference to any other. But if nothing decided and effective be done the present year, they will be compelled, although with reluctance, to abandon all reliance on that Body, and to act singly, or to connect themselves with some other Society, pursuing the same object. Others think that the Assembly's Board of Education is wholly unnecessary ; that the object in view may be attained more certainly and speedily, by the members of the Presbyterian Church, forming societies, auxiliary to the American Education Society. That Society, it is said, is

perfectly organized, is in successful operation, has intelligent, zealous, and efficient agents, has collected large funds, and established a great number of scholarships, and has given a solemn public pledge that no young man of piety and talent in the United States, shall want the means of obtaining a thorough collegiate and theological education : and further, a large and efficient portion of the Presbyterian Church in the States of New-York and New-Jersey, now auxiliary to the American Education Society, is laboring harmoniously and successfully in the great cause. Why in these circumstances, it is asked, should an attempt be made to destroy unity of counsel and action, so essential to success, in every noble enterprize ? Why distract the attention of the Churches, and diminish the amount of contributions, by applications from different Boards, for the same great object ?

We admit, that there is something very magnanimous and captivating in the idea of a great society, laying aside sectarian names, collecting and disbursing funds in educating pious indigent young men for the gospel ministry, regardless of sect or party. We admit the energy and success of the American Education Society, that it has done more in exploring the spiritual wants of our country, in enlightening public sentiment on this subject, in pressing home on the consciences of Christians, the indispensable duty of engaging heart and hand in this mighty work, than has been done by all others. With unqualified pleasure, we admit also, that the concerns of this Society are managed by men in whose intelligence, piety, and energy, we have the highest confidence. Yet we are persuaded, after the fullest consideration we have been able to give the subject, that the Presbyterian Church, in her ecclesiastical capacity, ought to provide the means, and to direct the education of those who are to be her future ministers, not depending on others to do that which she is abundantly able to do herself. This

may be done consistently with the kindest feelings, and best wishes towards others, who are seeking a similar object in a different way. That portion of the Presbyterian Church, now in no degree connected with the American Education Society, is a field sufficiently large to occupy the time and labor of one General Agent, and several assistants.

The American Education Society has now two Secretaries, or General Agents, constantly and laboriously employed, aided by the secretaries and agents of numerous auxiliaries. And if its operations be extended so as to meet the wants of the whole United States, the labor, and consequently the number of agents, must be vastly increased. The expense of agencies could not, therefore, be saved by a connexion with the American Education Society.

It is believed, also, that the charter of corporation of the Presbyterian Church is amply sufficient for the security and management of the necessary funds. Indeed, we can conceive of no possible advantage to be attained by an union with the National Society. And on the contrary, we think we foresee many appalling evils that would result from such an union.

To this conclusion, contrary to former partialities, we have been led by a recent examination of the fundamental principles of that Society, as well as by noticing, their practical effects, as far as time, would permit their developement. When the claims of the American Education Society were first presented, impressed with the importance of the object, without examining the bearings of its principles, we gave it our approbation, and feeble aid. A closer inspection of its peculiar features, has excited the most serious apprehensions that it may in the end injure the cause which it was designed to subserve.

We are constrained by a sense of duty, honestly to state our objections, and let the Christian community decide whether or not, they are well founded.

1. The details of expenses and receipts, of clothing, of books, of donations from other societies and friends, of profits of teaching and labor, of debts contracted and paid, which young men, under the patronage of this society, are required to make every quarter, are unnecessarily and painfully minute. The design of this requirement is doubtless to guard against extravagance and imposition. These ends, it seems to us, might be attained in a less objectionable way. The committees of examination, or the teachers, under whose inspection the youth are, could judge of these matters with sufficient accuracy. And after all, if imposition be intended, a false report not easily detected might be made. The plan holds out a powerful temptation to conceal the amount of receipts and expenses, so as to form a stronger claim on the aid of the Society; placing the beneficiary in the attitude of a common beggar, whose success depends on the dolefulness of his story. Young men of delicate and ingenuous feelings, shrink from this public development of private and personal circumstances.

We know more than one young man of unquestionable piety, and of exemplary character, who cannot, for this reason, be persuaded to ask, or accept the patronage of the American Education Society. We do not urge this objection, because it may be easily removed. We respectfully suggest it for the consideration of the Managers of that institution.

2. The principle of refunding the monies advanced to young men patronized, is a doubtful, if not a dangerous feature in this institution. The reasons of introducing it seem to us more specious than solid. They are two: first to relieve the beneficiary from the mortification of being considered a *charity* student; and secondly, to augment the means and perpetuate the benefits of the society. We regret, exceedingly, that men of such high intelligence and exemplary piety, as the Directors of the American Education Society,

should have deemed it necessary to form a screen to shelter those who are educated by the piety of the Church, from the unmerited reproach often attempted to be cast upon them. We might as justly say, that sons, educated at the expense of their parents, are charity students, because they defray no part of the expense themselves, and have no expectation of making a pecuniary recompense. The Church sustains a very near and sacred relation to all her members, and especially to the young. She is their parent, their guardian, bound by the most sacred ties to give them spiritual nourishment and such an education as is suited to their capacity, and likely to be useful to the community of which they are members. On this high ground we would fix our standard, and let those, who pleased, hurl the shafts of ridicule and contempt. We would thus show the world that the Church is indeed one family, one body; that each member is the servant of the whole; and that the whole directs and aids the operations of each member. We would say farther, that a civil community, having a wise regard to its future necessities, educates some of its young citizens, in reference to a particular profession, which may be useful to the State. Look at our National Military School—the glory and defence of our country—There young men, the sons of the rich, as well as the poor, are educated free of expense. They are the adopted sons of their country, because they have talents which promise future usefulness. Look at our navy. Lads of fourteen or fifteen years of age, are appointed midshipmen, with pay sufficient for their support, when, for several years, they are incapable of rendering any essential service. In fact, they also are sent to school, free of expense; for they are placed in a situation, the best suited to prepare them for a particular profession. And, yet, in neither case, are bonds given to refund the money expended in their education. They are not even bound to serve in the profession for which they have been educated at public expense. And

what is more, their prospects of wealth and distinction in future life, are as good as those of any other class of citizens. Now, what distinguishes a cadet, educated by his country, and a youth educated by the Church, that the one is stigmatized as a charity scholar, and the other is not? It is this single circumstance, and nothing more—the maintenance of the one is obtained by law, that is, by compulsion,—that of the other is voluntary, springing from the best feelings of the human heart.

The money advanced by the American Education Society is called a *loan*, a *parental loan*. But parents do not usually take bonds of their children, to refund the money expended in their education. They trust to their gratitude, their sense of moral obligation, that they will not permit the parent who has nurtured and educated them, to suffer want in old age; and this security is generally sufficient. If a father bind a son with legal bonds, he, at the same time, cancels that of filial duty.

What, let us consider, for a moment, must be the effect on the future comfort and usefulness of the beneficiaries of these loans, which are to be repaid in *one, two, and three years after their preparatory studies for the ministry shall have been closed; with interest after the same shall have become due*. We ask any one acquainted with the state of the American Churches candidly to say, whether the worldly prospects in the gospel ministry are so flattering as to justify any young man of common prudence, in binding himself to pay five or six hundred dollars in three years after he becomes a pastor, from the salary he expects to receive? In a few cases, where a minister remains unmarried, expends nothing for books, and gives little or nothing to the numerous benevolent institutions, which he must recommend to the liberality of his people, it may be done. But is this consistent with usefulness or duty, to consider the claims

of the American Education Society, prior to all others?

We apprehend the tendency of this regulation will be, to create a calculating craving disposition, manifesting itself in every part of future life; or it is possible that a man of delicate feelings, seeing no prospect of relieving himself from this burden, may sink into despondency and inaction. The individual may also have other claims, equally sacred, resting upon him. As the sum afforded by the American Education Society is not sufficient to pay half the expense of an education in the cheapest college in the United States, he may have received aid from his parents or other friends, who, by a change of circumstances, have a stronger moral claim, than even the A. E. Society; and yet, if the Society chooses to make a demand, the written obligation must have the preference. It is true, the Directors have a discretionary power, and they have pledged themselves to exercise it in extraordinary cases; and we are persuaded, that the present Directors will never abuse their power; but we do not know who are to be their successors.

Some of our Colleges and Theological Seminaries have funds devoted to the education of young men, having in view the gospel ministry. Now, if these institutions aid the beneficiaries of the American Education Society, and take bonds of like tenor, the recipient of this double kindness must inevitably sink under the heavy pressure. And can the A. E. Society reasonably expect that these institutions will give their funds gratuitously to a young man, and permit him to bind himself with legal bonds to another corporation; so that he cannot, if his circumstances otherwise would permit, and his gratitude prompt him to do so, make any return to the source from which, perhaps, he received the most substantial assistance?

A young man under the patronage of the American Education Society, if he have no property of his own, must receive additional aid from some quarter; for it is not pretended that

seventy or eighty dollars are sufficient to meet all his necessary annual expenses for clothing, boarding, books, tuition, fuel, lights. Now, if private associations, or Churches, or Presbyteries make up this additional sum, they in fact become auxiliary to the National Society, and throw gratuitously whatever they contribute into a stock, pledged to refund all that has been received through the hands of the parent society. And from what source, permit us to ask, are these funds to be ultimately derived? On the supposition that the young man has no property when he commences his ministry; that he does not in some unforeseen way become heir to an estate; that he does not engage in some lucrative secular employment, the means of refunding must come from the congregation which he serves. If the salary now paid to ministers be barely sufficient to support their families, it is evident an addition must be made, in order to liquidate the debt for which they are legally bound. Thus, every congregation, which shall call to the pastoral office a beneficiary of the A. E. Society, virtually becomes tributary to that corporation.

And what becomes of these monies when refunded? The bond given by the beneficiaries shows that they go directly into the hands of the parent Society; and according to the constitution and rules of the Society, are entirely and absolutely under its control. The annual income of scholarships and donations are pledged to the auxiliaries, by whose means they were obtained, and are subject to their directions. But the monies refunded by beneficiaries, are not thus pledged to the auxiliaries from whom they originally came. For example, suppose the Presbyterian Branch in New-York educates an hundred young men, and after a few years one-half of them return what they have received, amounting to twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars, the Branch in New-York cannot, unless it be the good pleasure of the Parent Board, touch a cent of that money. Suppose farther, that

all the Presbyterian Churches in the United States were to become auxiliary to the American Education Society, the monies refunded by all their beneficiaries, as well as their annual surplus, must go to the Parent Board, and be entirely beyond the reach of the Branches. Add these monies refunded to the permanent funds and scholarships intrusted to the immediate care of the Parent Society, and it seems to us that if this process were to go on for half a century, a height of independence must be attained, sufficient to make even good men's heads turn giddy. From the very constitution of the society, whose claims to universal patronage we have presumed to examine, it must every year be growing more and more independent, not only of the original contributors, but also of the auxiliaries; and it must also be acquiring a more extensive influence over the ministers of the gospel in the United States. Let us suppose that some twenty or thirty years hence, one half of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church shall have been educated under this system, and that the bonds of many of them remain unpaid in the hands of the Directors in the vicinity of Boston, and that in these circumstances a proposition were made in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, to change some important feature in her discipline or doctrines, and that the Directors of the American Education Society were known to think favorably of these changes—what would be the consequence? We all know how wonderfully interest influences the opinions even of good men, and how prone they are to coincide in sentiment with those on whom they are dependent.

We are far from intimating that any such influence is now intended to be attained, and if it were attained, that it would be improperly used. We have the happiness to be personally acquainted with some of the Directors of this great concern, and we know the reputation of all; and we believe them to be as pure in their intentions, as single in their purpose, and as devoted to the cause of evangelical piety, as any men on

earth ; and we disclaim any knowledge of a single act in their management of this great charity which has the most remote sectarian bearing. But the confidence justly reposed in their integrity, has a tendency to throw into their hands unlimited power ; and this power will be delivered to their successors, and from the nature of the case, will be a rich blessing, or a tremendous curse to posterity. What security have we, that this mighty engine of life or death, of salvation or perdition, will for half a century remain in the hands of men possessing the same spirit ? We answer, none, except the integrity and prudence of frail man. The promise of God assures us that he will always have a Church. But whether the descendents of this family or that family, the successors in this corporation or that corporation, shall maintain the pure doctrines of the gospel, and feel their power, we know not.

3. The first article in the constitution of the American Education Society, defining the manner of obtaining membership, connected with the second, authorizing the Directors to form a permanent fund of "bequests, legacies, donations, and grants, thus appropriated by the donors," and of any other property of the Society, at pleasure, we consider very liable to abuse, and highly dangerous. The first article is as follows : viz. "Any person who shall subscribe, and shall pay into the treasury at one time, one hundred dollars, or if a clergyman, forty dollars, shall be an honorary member ; and shall have a right to sit and deliberate in all meetings of the Society. But all members hereafter added to the Society *who shall be entitled to vote, shall be chosen by ballot*, at an annual meeting."

To this article, we should have no material objection, if it were not connected with permanent funds of an indefinite amount ; because there would be little or no temptation to abuse ; but as it is so connected, it appears truly alarming. We are disposed to attribute the origin of this article to the

best motives; to suppose (for we have no knowledge of the fact) it was intended, by giving the present members the power of choosing their successors, to prevent the management of the Society from passing into unfaithful hands. Whatever may be the effect of this arrangement in preventing or retarding the perversion of the funds from the original purpose, it certainly increases the power of the Officers and Directors to an almost unlimited extent. It enables them, if so disposed, to select the persons who are to vote in choosing Officers and Directors; so that in fact they might as well be elected for life, with the power of nominating their own successors. Suppose that at any time a majority of the acting members of the Society are in favor of the measures adopted by the Directors, the Directors can, through their friends, have new voting members chosen, favorable to the same course; so that it will in the end amount to the same thing, as to give the Directors the power of appointing their successors. The distant members, who have a right to vote, can seldom attend the anniversaries; so that from the nature of the case, the election of officers and new members, can always be under the control of those residing near the place of holding the annual meetings. If at any time, the concerns of the Society should be mismanaged, it is evident from the very terms of the compact, that the branches and distant contributors, have no means of effecting a reformation; because they have voluntarily surrendered their rights into the hands of a body politic in the State of Massachusetts. And as this corporation can hold real estate, whose annual income shall equal ten thousand dollars; can increase permanent funds, and scholarships, to any extent; can dispose at pleasure of the annual surplus of the auxiliaries, and the monies returned by beneficiaries, and has also a veto on the appropriations of the branches; its power must become immense.* And the organization is so adjusted, the machinery

* See Rules, Chapter vi. 9.

is so admirably arranged as to concentrate the whole power in a single point ; so that the hand of an infant, touching a lever in Boston, can control, and manage, and direct the whole Christian community, south and west of the Connecticut, interested in this concern.

As long as the Directors remain, such as we believe they now are, intelligent, active, and devoted to the cause of evangelical doctrine and vital piety, every thing, which the interests of the Church and of the world demand, will be done. But if the fountain should by any means become corrupt ; if the mighty reservoir, whose streams are intended to pervade and refresh, and fertilize every part of our vast territory, and even to flow to Africa and Asia, and regions yet unexplored, should be poisoned, how shall its deadly overflowings be checked ; what antidote can be cast in to restore the salubrity of the waters ? No human power or human skill, it seems to us, can be of any avail ; because no external force can touch the internal spring which moves the whole machine. Let the American Education Society proceed as it has commenced ; let it accumulate in its own hands all the funds destined for the education of pious, indigent young men, and then the character and qualification of a large portion of the ministers of the gospel in the United States, will be suspended on the piety and integrity of a few men located in the same vicinity. Every man, and every corporation, think power to be safe in their own hands. But who can guarantee that no change will take place in the sentiments and character of the next, or succeeding generation ? It may happen, (for it has often happened,) that one man of talents and influence, may change the religious views and feelings of a whole neighborhood or city. If such a change should take place in the Board of Directors, how shall the sacred funds of the American Education Society be snatched from their grasp ? The danger of committing permanent funds of a large

amount into the hands of bodies politic, from the frequency of perversion, has become proverbial. No guards or precautions, heretofore invented, have been found effectual. And what security, not previously tried in vain, is given in the case before us? We say, none. The power is in the hands of a few men, not responsible to the donors nor to the Christian community at large, responsible only to the voting members of the Society, whom they can create at pleasure. The security is even less than what has repeatedly been ineffectual. Funds devoted to sacred uses, and guarded with creeds and formularies, and subscriptions, have been perverted from the object of the pious donors; and that, too, when those into whose hands they originally came, were men of incorruptible integrity and ardent piety. We could appeal to a well known instance, in the vicinity of Boston. Can it be a doubtful question, whether the funds belonging to the Hollis Professorship in Havard University, are now used for a purpose totally at variance with the intention of the original founder? Who could have thought fifty years ago, that so entire a change would have taken place in the sentiments of those who manage the concerns of that venerable and splendidly endowed institution?

Piety and talents are the only qualifications prescribed in the charter and constitution, to limit the appropriation of the funds belonging to the American Education Society. Admitting that genuine piety is one of the best religious tests that can be proposed; yet the opinions of men are so various respecting it, that this qualification cannot possibly be any restraint to a corporation, wishing to introduce into the ministry, young men hostile to the fundamental principles and spirit of the gospel. We would confide in the judgment of the present Directors, and also of their examining committees, as far as they are known, yet we must again repeat,—we know not who are to be their successors.

As this institution is intended to "*continue for genera-*

tions and ages to come," and as consequences the most tremendous, that can be conceived, must follow from a perversion from its original design, it becomes us to examine well the foundation on which its security from abuse rests. We ought not to be dazzled with its wonderful success and the good which it has already achieved, so as to lose sight of remote consequences. We should recollect the profound remark of the Roman Senator, *Omnia mala exempla ex bonis initiis orta sunt*. Nations never voluntarily resign their liberties into the hands of a known tyrant. They must be dazzled with the splendour of foreign victories—They must see the spoils of conquered cities brought home in his triumphant chariot.—They must share in the corn and the wine he distributes in profusion—and then they will hail him as their master, and bind themselves with chains, which neither they nor their children's children can burst asunder. Religious vassalage is commenced and consummated in the same manner. An open and confessed heretic seldom begins the work of corruption; but he succeeds to the confidence and power acquired by some zealous and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus, and then he employs the authority with which he is invested in spreading around him moral pestilence and death. Men of corrupt principles have not usually zeal enough to commence a religious charity, or liberality enough to contribute the necessary funds: but when the funds are collected, they see an object sufficient to excite their ambition, and they are not deficient in expedients to gain the management and control of what men of a different spirit have accumulated. Suppose such an event should happen in regard to the American Education Society—it is not more unlikely than some things that have occurred in the same vicinity not fifty years ago—and then all the power and resources now lodged in the hands of the present gifted and eminently devoted Secretary, and of his equally distinguished counsellors, would be brought to bear against the cause of evangelical

doctrine and vital piety. It would remain for the friends of gospel principles, stripped of the means provided by their pious predecessors to weep and pray in secret. They must again retreat to the mountains and retired vallies, recruit and discipline their forces, and again come forth and meet an enemy formidable in numbers, insolent with victory, and clad in burnished armor recently seized by stratagem.

For reasons similar to these stated, there are many intelligent and influential men belonging to the Presbyterian Church, who cannot connect themselves with the fortunes of the A. E. Society. They see and feel the importance of the general object, but they dread the dangers to which they conceive this institution is exposed. They dislike also, the negligence and want of energy which have hitherto characterized the proceedings of the General Assembly's Board of Education, and they are now waiting with anxious and prayerful interest the result of the new organization. It is believed the Churches are ready to sustain the exertions of the Board, if an active, intelligent, and faithful agent would lay before them the want of able and well furnished ministers in the Presbyterian Church. And if there be evils and dangers connected with the operations of the A. E. Society, (as we verily believe there are,) they are not to be corrected and averted by finding fault and complaining, but by immediate and spirited exertion. The work to be done is important and urgent. Those who love our Lord Jesus Christ, will not listen with indifference to the calls for ministers of the Gospel, by whatever agent they are communicated. And if a channel for their liberality, such as they would prefer, be not speedily opened, it will flow in some other way.

Perhaps it may be asked, whether funds in the hands of the Board of Education will not be liable to the same abuse dreaded in the hands of the A. E. Society. We answer, No. First, because if young men be educated by

the Presbyterian Church, they will not be under the influence of a foreign institution, and in the deliberations of her judicatories, they will be at liberty in all matters to decide according to the dictates of their own judgment and conscience, unawed by the frowns of a displeased creditor. In the next place the General Assembly which appoints the Board of Education is not a permanent and fixed body. It does not elect its own members. It is annually dissolved, and a new Assembly is chosen by the Presbyteries in various parts of the United States, each member expressing the views and wishes of the Churches he represents, and accountable for every vote he gives. For this reason it is impossible that funds deposited in the hands of the Assembly for a sacred purpose, can be perverted from their original object, until the whole Church, or at least a large majority of the Presbyteries become corrupt. And if permanent funds for religious purposes be secure from perversion any where, it is under the management of a body thus constituted. And further, business is not conducted in the General Assembly in the same manner as in the annual meetings of voluntary associations. Here the reports of different Boards are read, and submitted to a rigid examination. All their plans and acts are canvassed, and if any thing be radically wrong, it is competent to the Assembly to change the members of the Board. In the annual meetings of the other, there is, strictly speaking, no deliberation or examination of the measures pursued. The report of the Directors is read, eulogies prepared for the occasion, are pronounced, and a vote of approbation passed by acclamation. There is, in reality, no meeting of the contributors, nor of their representatives, but only of the voting members chosen by those who had the previous management of the concern, drilled to respond Aye or No, as they may have been previously instructed. We do not say any thing like this has taken place. Our perfect confidence in the integrity of the Directors, forbids the slightest sus-

picion. Our meaning is, that there is nothing in the constitution, or in the manner of conducting the annual meetings calculated to prevent it. We have discharged an important, and in some respects an unpleasant duty. We had long noticed things in the arrangements of the American Education Society which seemed strange and novel; but so full was our persuasion of the importance of the sacred cause, in which it was laboring, that we did not dare permit ourselves to think there was any error. A closer examination of the constitution and rules, has convinced us that so imminent are the dangers connected with the operations of that Society, it would be treason to the cause of piety, any longer to be silent. We have not designedly distorted a single feature of the great Society whose claims to universal patronage we have canvassed. And we most devoutly pray God, that none of the evils anticipated may ever happen, that the exertions of the Society, in a cause so noble and sacred may be a rich and lasting blessing to the Church and to the world.