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STATEMENT

of the Trustees of the College of New-Jersey.

The Trustees of the college of New-Jersey feel the painful task imposed upon them by the public the material facts connected with a late combination of the students under their care, to resist the authority of the institution. This combination was founded on the most impartial investigation of facts, and drawn from the most authentic sources, will, they trust, receive the entire confidence of the public. The remote causes which have led to the event are to be found in the pernicious principles and loose manners of some vicinities who have obtained admission to the institution; and still more, perhaps, in the almost unlimited allowance of money, or of credit, given to many others, and which, in a society of young men whose passions are not yet corrected by experience and reflection, are so apt to corrupt minds originally the most innocent. And although the dangerous and unlawful practice of importing spirituous liquors into the college, and of frequenting taverns and other places of entertainment, at late hours of the night, was known or believed to be common among a portion of the students, yet direct and positive evidence of these facts could be obtained only against a few who were immediately dismissed from the society. For the more bold and artful offenders, who by their boldness commonly render themselves popular among their associates had too successfully established among them this false but plausible principle, that to give testimony against a fellow-student, however gross his vices or faults might be, was in the highest degree dishonorable. Any evidence, therefore, against this class of students, on which an act of discipline could be founded, must depend entirely on the vigilance and personal observation of the faculty themselves. And though they were much the smallest class, yet were they, under the protection of this principle, frequently to give great disturbance to the order of the college, at different periods during the late session; and towards the close of it, their insolence assumed a bold tone. The door and windows of the room of one of the tutors, who had been the cause of the detection and punishment of some of them, were broken. Attempts had been made at midnight to destroy certain convenient enclosures, belonging, and contiguous to the college, and one small building was actually consumed by fire. They were informed that, although the Faculty had no authority to punish, except on clear and positive proof, yet that the Trustees, whose property the College is, and who were to assemble in a few days, had power to send away all those students whose presence they esteemed dangerous to the institution; and the misconduct of some of them had now rendered the interposition of that power a measure of indisputable necessity. Those who were most conscious of being exposed to the exercise of that power, which is the last resort of the discipline of the College, from that moment, as has appeared since by the combination of several of the students, planned a combination to resist the authority of the house, and thus to screen themselves, or to diminish their own disgrace by involving others in their fate. This combination was hastened, and brought into immediate operation by an act of the Faculty suspending three of the students for insolence to certain officers of the College in the discharge of their duty, or for other practices contrary to the laws, and clearly ascertained. One of these young men, especially, was popular among his associates. Many of the more orderly students, and some who even deserved praise for their regularity and diligence, were induced to enter into this combination from the notion that it was honorable to come forward in defence of a fellow-student, and, as some of them have since declared, from a belief that a numerous and firm association would induce the Faculty to recall their act, and

yield to the wishes of the associators without producing any further disturbance. They had, probably, no apprehension of the violent effects of the excited passions of such a number of young men who had once thrown themselves loose from the restraints of law. Many have said that they believed no more was designed than a respectful petition to the Faculty, requesting them to review their proceedings in the case of the last mentioned young gentlemen, and under this impression signed without reading the remonstrance which was presented. But the leaders in this combination, had the address to express their remonstrance, which was drawn up under the name of a petition, in such language as could not be received by the government of the college. It contains an imperious demand, which is not even decently veiled by a few modest expressions accompanying it, to re-instate all the suspended persons in their former honorable stations in the college, under a menace, of no equivocal meaning, if their application should be rejected. It contains, further, a most indelicate requisition to certain members of the faculty to retract expressions which, probably, for the particular purposes of the combination, had been reported among the students, to have been uttered by them. And, finally, in the pretended petition, they, in effect, erect themselves into a tribunal to re-judge the decisions of the governors of the institution. It was couched in the following terms.— Common sense is sufficient to interpret their meaning:

To the members of the Faculty of the College of New-Jersey.

GENTLEMEN,

The students of the institution, fully satisfied that the procedure of its officers has been inconsistent with the principles of justice or that they have proceeded precipitately in their decision of the cases of Messrs. Hyde, Metteau and Cumming, do respectfully request the reinstatement of these gentlemen in their former honorable stations. They humbly conceive that the members of the faculty have not made those nice enquiries into their several cases, and have depended solely on the representations of a few who are probably prejudiced against the individuals, or who have formed erroneous conceptions of their general mode of conduct. They therefore request an immediate answer to this petition, since their future proceedings will greatly depend upon the propriety or impropriety of their decision. They, in addition to this moreover request the members of the faculty to retract or contradict certain expressions which have been thrown out by them, tending materially, in their own estimation and that of the community to the destruction of their reputations, individually; such expressions being, in their opinion, destitute of the stamp of truth."

This paper was presented to one of the professors, in the name of the students, by a committee of nine. The Faculty immediately consulted with the only member of the corporation who resided in the vicinity of the college on the measures proper to be pursued, in concurrence with him, determined on such as were at once decided and prompt, and, in their opinion, both necessary and temperate. The students being previously assembled in the public hall, it was represented to them that the laws, those laws which at their admission into the college, and at the commencement of each session, they had solemnly pledged their truth and honor to obey, had foreseen and provided against such combinations as the present, in which a great proportion of them were engaged. The law which relates particularly to this case is in the following words—"If any clubs or combinations of students shall, at any time, take place, either for resisting the authority of the college or interfering in its government, or for concealing or executing any evil or disorderly design, every student concerned in such combination shall be considered as guilty of the offence which was intended; and the faculty are empowered

and directed to break up all such combinations as soon as discovered, and to inflict a severer punishment on each individual than if the offence intended had been committed in his individual capacity, whatever be the number concerned, or whatever be the consequence to the college." On the ground of this law, the students were informed that nothing could be conceded to combination. On the contrary, if those who were concerned in this transaction did not return to their duty and renounce the principle of uniting together to control the government of the college according to their humors, they would render themselves liable to be immediately suspended. Every argument was used to induce them to a proper conduct and time was offered them to reflect on the part they had to act. But their leaders had their minds already prepared. One of them rose, and said they had all concurred in the same resolution, and would not retract any thing they had done.—He left the hall, and the rest followed him with great tumult and disorder. The faculty then pronounced the sentence of suspension on all who had departed in this tumultuous manner. The more thoughtless and intemperate among them were proceeding to acts of considerable violence, and still greater were threatened; but by the prudent precautions which were employed, no serious injury was done to the college edifice.

That this combination did not originate entirely from sympathy with the young gentlemen on whose account ostensibly it was chiefly formed, but had a deeper root, and probably the same which has already been pointed out, appears from the following considerations: In the first place, the combination was much too extensive and violent for the occasion; for, although three persons are named in their remonstrance as unjustly suspended, yet one of these is understood to have been the object of their principal concern. But, in the next place, if this were not so, and all three stood equally high in the estimation of their fellow-students, it was well known that the Board of Trustees was called to meet in a few days, and they were informed that to them lies an appeal from every sentence of the Faculty by any student who thinks himself aggrieved.—To this tribunal, therefore they would have had recourse if their pretensions had been sincere; if, indeed, the combination and revolt had not been previously resolved on by a great part of them, for other causes than those mentioned in the remonstrance. Lastly, the young gentleman himself, whose fate is said to have given the chief occasion to the combination, in a letter addressed to the Trustees, renounces the principle of combining among the students for attaining any object from the government, and condemns the whole proceeding in his own case.

The Trustees of the College convened on the 8th of April. Shortly after their meeting, a paper was presented to them signed by six persons as a committee on behalf of the combination, and desiring to be heard before the board in that character. The Trustees directed this paper to be returned to them with an intimation that they could receive no committee who appeared in the name of students combined against the laws and government of the institution; but, if any student had any grievance to complain of in his own case he should be heard. Some persons in consequence of this intimation appeared before the board, renounced the principle on which they had associated together to resist the lawful authority under which they were placed; and pledged themselves to future submission and obedience. Others, more resolute in error, openly avowed, in the presence of the board, the principle of combination and resistance, whenever they thought themselves or a fellow student, aggrieved by any proceeding of the Faculty. They spoke much of rights, comparing the College to a state of civil society in which the people, if they are dissatisfied with the government, have a right to rise and resist,

or even overturn it. This analogy would have been more perfect if they had founded the College, and appointed its officers; but since the College is the property of the Trustees, and students reside in it only by permission, for their own improvement, and during good behavior, this analogy is most absurd. Every student who is not contented with the administration of the laws, or the modes of instruction in the institution, has a right to withdraw from it; but while he remains in it, and subject to its laws, his right is obedience, both by the nature of the thing and his own solemn promises. He has surely no right to come to it only to violate its laws, and subvert its government.

The Trustees, after the most patient and diligent enquiry into all the circumstances of this insurrection, and taking into their most serious consideration the true and permanent interests of the institution, resolved by a unanimous vote, finally to expel eleven of those who, in their opinion, were the most prominent leaders in the disorder, and to dismiss without a public expulsion six whose improper conduct in other respects, had rendered them unsafe members of such a literary and moral society. In regard to the residue, many of whom, through misrepresentation, misconception of the object of the combination, or menace, had been induced to join in it, the board, after confirming the sentence of the Faculty, thought proper still to leave the door open to their return to the college, upon their public and explicit renunciation of a principle which has led to such serious evils, and the manifestation of a proper penitence for their past fault.

Finally, letters were directed, on behalf of the board, to be addressed to the parents or guardians of the members so expelled, dismissed, or suspended, expressive of their regret at being compelled to adopt this apparently severe but necessary measure, and requesting such parents or guardians to co-operate in giving efficacy to the discipline of the college. A circular letter has also been addressed to the different colleges and universities in the United States, to which is annexed a correct list of the persons so expelled, dismissed, or suspended, that they may be apprised of the circumstances under which these young men have left this college, if any of them should apply for admission into any other institution.

And because dissipation has been found to be encouraged, and the spirit of insubordination emboldened, by an excessive allowance of money, or credit, to many of the students, measures have been adopted which will be laid before the public in a separate address, to restrain as far as may be in the power of the board, both these evils.

From the foregoing statement of facts the public will easily perceive, that the single alternative left to the trustees is either to govern their own institution by their own officers, or resign it to the government of inconsiderate boys, and passionate young men, whenever a popular offender is pleased to call an assembly of students.— In a government continually liable to combinations, and revolts, there is an end of all just subordination.

If those who are sent to obey undertake to dictate.—If they are to be subject to no control, but such as they think reasonable, all who have any acquaintance with human nature must know that a foundation is laid for the practice of every vice—for indolence, ignorance, and eventual ruin. Better far that no college should exist, than to exist on such terms. The numbers of the students will be diminished, for the present, by cutting off so many dangerous members from the institution; but the public will have a pledge in this act, of the vigour with which the trustees intend to preserve their discipline. It will even invite parents to confide their children with more security to the guardianship of those, who, with such firmness and such faithfulness, are determined to superintend their morals, as well as their improvements in science. Is