REMARKS

OF

BENJAMIN S. EWELL,

PRESIDENT OF THE

College of William and Mary,

IN VIRGINIA,

Before the Committee of Education and Labor,
House of Representatives,

In support of the Petition of the College for an Appropriation by Congress because of Revolutionary Losses, and because of the Destruction of its Buildings and other Property by United States Troops during the late Civil War—Delivered April 1, 1874, and again January 28, 1876.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COMMITTEE:

For the fourth time I appear before this committee in support of the petition of the College of William and Mary to the Congress of the United States for assistance in its efforts to continue its existence, and to restore itself to the position it once occupied. The case is no ordinary one, or I would not presume to tax your patience by asking you to listen to a brief outline of its career, and a statement of its misfortunes and losses, beginning in 1706, renewed and multiplied in 1776, breaking out afresh in 1859, and again in 1862—misfortunes and losses so great as to be without a parallel in the history of the colleges of the country. To some of you I am repeating a trite story; to others not familiar with the antecedents of the college I may save time and labor.

Within twelve years of the settlement of Jamestown, in 1607, steps were taken by the friends of the colony of Virginia in England to es-
tablish and endow a college. Land was purchased for this purpose, and a competent gentleman, Mr. George Thorpe, was sent from England to be its superintendent.

The Indian massacre of 1622, in which he, with three hundred and forty of the colonists, including nine of the college tenants, perished, effectually defeated the attempt. Again in 1670, and with more success, "provision for a college" was made by the Colonial Assembly. Steps were taken to collect money by subscription. Lands were ordered to be purchased and buildings to be erected.

It did not receive "a local habitation and a name" till 1693, when a charter of the College of William and Mary, conferring valuable privileges and rich endowments, was granted by the English sovereigns William and Mary. Assuming 1693 to be the date of its foundation, it is next to Harvard the oldest college in the country. The charter was not obtained without opposition. When the Rev. Dr. James Blair, the founder, in fact, of the college, went to the Attorney General Seymour with the royal command to prepare a charter, he was met by remonstrances against "the expensive liberality." Seymour declared he saw "no occasion for a college in Virginia." Dr. Blair replied that ministers of the church were needed there, as the people of Virginia had souls as well as those of England, and a college was necessary to educate them. "Souls," exclaimed Seymour in reply, "Damn their souls, let them make tobacco." The charter was, however, soon prepared, and the college entered upon a career of usefulness and prosperity, which it uninterruptedly pursued till the year 1776, with but one serious misfortune, soon overcome, the burning of its just completed building in 1703. During this period the Kings, Lords and Commons of England, the House of Burgesses, Governors and citizens of the colony seemed to vie with each other in their benefactions to this then favored college. The charter gave to it large grants of money and land, the duty of a penny a pound on all tobacco exported from the colonies of Virginia and Maryland, and the office of Surveyor General of Virginia.

It held in trust the Boyle fund, a legacy of the Christian philosopher, the Honorable Robert Boyle, subject to the condition of the annual payment to Harvard of ninety pounds sterling. The House of Burgesses gave it money and the duties on liquors and skins and furs. The private citizens of the colony did their part. In 1776 its revenues amounted to about four thousand pounds sterling, and they were annually increasing in almost geometrical ratio. It was then by far the richest college in America. The duty on tobacco, the fees of surveyors, and the proceeds of the Boyle fund at this time amounted to nearly eight thousand dollars per annum.

By virtue of the office of Surveyor General, the college had the sole power of appointing deputy surveyors, and had the right to a portion of their fees. Thus George Washington, in one sense an alumnus of this institution, for its halls, after an examination by its professors, received his diploma as surveyor; Zachary Taylor, the grandson of the President of the United States who bore the same name; Peter Jefferson, father of Thomas Jefferson, and, a little later, Thomas Jefferson himself, were among those appointed deputy surveyors.

In 1776 it was wealthy and prosperous, and exercised an important and beneficial influence in the colony. The late Bishop Meade wrote that "Williamsburg, while it was the seat of government and of the College of William and Mary, was, to a great extent, Virginia."

But the war that made America "the land of the free," that created an empire equal in power, in wealth and in resources to any, and gave it a government that even those hostile to it acknowledged to be the best the world ever saw, deprived, by its legitimate consequences, the College of William and Mary of its chartered and other endowments, and reduced it to comparative penury.

By the revolution of 1776, the cession by Virginia in 1783 of the territory composing the State of Kentucky, and most of the States of Ohio, Illinois and Indiana, and the adoption of the Federal Constitution, the College of William and Mary was deprived of its most productive sources of revenue, namely: the duty on tobacco, those on liquors, skins and furs, and the perquisites of the office of Surveyor General.

Further, the Brafferton and Doxhill estates, in England, purchased with the Boyle fund, to the rents and profits of which the College was entitled, were, after the Revolution, confiscated, and their revenues applied by the English Court of Chancery to a different charity. The fee simple value of those estates was about fifty-three thousand dollars.

It is difficult to compute these losses. If the States composing the Union were yet colonies, the College of William and Mary would, at this day, be the richest institution of learning, not only in America, but in the world.

Do not these facts establish, if not a legal, an equitable claim to your sympathy and substantial assistance? But these were not the only
loses the College sustained by the Revolutionary contest. During the siege of Yorktown, in 1781, its buildings were held as hospitals by the French troops. While so held, one of them, the president's house, was destroyed by fire, with a wing of the main building. The president's house was rebuilt at the expense of the French Government. No compensation was made by the General Government for the injury to the main building, nor for its rent while used as a hospital and while undergoing repairs, nor for the rent of a house for the president during the rebuilding of that burned. And, further, the General Assembly of Virginia gave to the College, in 1784, the "Palace Lands, together with the houses thereon, so far as the public interest therein extends." In June, 1776, the Legislature of Virginia appropriated the palace and outbuildings to the use of the Continental troops as a public hospital. They were so occupied till 1781, on the 23d of December of which year they were burned down. Under the Articles of Confederation the United States were bound to pay the State of Virginia rent for the palace, and to indemnify her for the loss of the building while in their occupation. By virtue of the statute vesting the title to this property in the College of William and Mary, it became entitled to the claim of the State of Virginia of the United States for the rent and for the indemnity.

The foregoing facts are taken from a report accompanying a claim of the College against the United States Government, and presented to the Senate in 1855. The claim was referred to the Senate Committee on Revolutionary Claims. No report on it was made so far as is known.

The total sum thus claimed amounted to one hundred and fifteen thousand dollars. In support of this claim, it was urged that the United States had paid like claims to Rhode Island college for rent from 1776 to 1780, and for damage done the building, to the proprietor of Pennsylvania hospital, and others. The Rev. Dr. Witherspoon was charged with nineteen thousand and forty dollars, in 1779, on the books of the Quartermaster's Department to pay for repairs of Princeton College, and on these claims Alexander Hamilton, then Secretary of the Treasury, states "that it appears to him most consistent with the justice and liberality of the Government, to authorize the allowance of reasonable compensation in all cases in which any place of religious worship or any seminary of learning has been occupied or injured by the troops of the United States, the act of limitation to the contrary notwithstanding." (See American State Papers, 19; Claims Library of Congress).

General McComb paid to the University of Vermont $5,000 a year rent during the war of 1812. (See Thompson's Vermont).

The British Parliament paid the Messrs. Martin, of Virginia, after the Revolution, the value of their property in that State, which they failed to recover. (See "American Loyalist," in Congress Library).

In a letter on file in the State Department, from Count Rochambeau to General Washington, dated Williamsburg, December 24, 1781, the following is found: "We are likewise plagued with fire in this town, where we have no water nor buckets to put it out." The wing of the College where we lodged our wounded officers has begun to be burnt down. Last night the same accident happened to the palace, in which was the American hospital. All the sick were saved, as well as the greater part of the effects." This establishes the fact of the fires.

General Washington wrote a letter bearing on this subject October 27, 1781:

"To the President and Masters or Professors of the University of William and Mary:

"GENTLEMEN—I accept very kindly the address of the president and professors of the University of William and Mary. The reduction of the British force in this State, for which I feel myself highly indebted to the noble exertions of our brave and generous allies, is a circumstance which gives me the greatest pleasure, not only as it affords a return of peaceful security to many of my inactive citizens, but as it will, I hope, in its event, be productive of more extensive good consequences. The seat of literature at Williamsburg has ever, in my view, been an object of veneration. As an institution important for its communication of useful learning, and conducive to the true principles of national liberty, you may be assured that it shall receive every encouragement and benefit which my power toward its re-establishment. The sick and wounded of the army, whom my necessities have compelled me to trouble you with, shall be removed as soon as circumstances will permit, an event which will be as pleasing to me as agreeable to you.

"I am, &c.,

"GEORGE WASHINGTON."

(See Sparks' Writing of Washington).

Thus it is seen that the College property was held and injured by the Continental troops, and precedent and equity justify the College in seeking from the United States some compensation. But, notwithstanding the prospect of these losses and their realization, the College and its teachings, before, during and after the war of independence, remained true and loyal to the great cause of American freedom.

"A child of the revolution of 1688, a revolution second to none that had gone before it," its sons were the warm and enthusiastic advocates of that of 1776." Among them, "Primum inter parcs," was to be found Jefferson, "holding in one hand the bill establishing religious freedom, and in the other the immortal Declaration—the one setting free the
human mind, the other emancipating a continent—the truest representative of the people and of democracy this country ever produced, who first proclaimed, as a fitting motto for free America, "Universal emancipation and universal education;" next, James Monroe, the pure patriot and good man, who shed his youthful blood at the battle of Brandywine, and was distinguished by a long career of valuable public service; then Peyton Randolph, the first President of the glorious Continental Congress, and his nephew, Edmund Randolph, to whose great mind and patriotic labors the Constitution is in part due," and John Marshall, who did good service in the fields of Brandywine, of Germantown, and of Monmouth, and under Steuben—who inspired such confidence in his purity and patriotism that the loftiest honors Washington and Adams could bestow were within his reach;"—the legislator, the statesman, the great Chief Justice; and a host of their peers, whom time will not allow me even to name, "each distinguished for some great quality, and many of them master workmen, who gave aid in building up the fabric of government, Federal and State, and in shaping that system of domestic and foreign policy which has borne America through difficulties and dangers, and placed her in companionship with the most powerful nations of the earth." The College gave to the country four signers of the Declaration, three Presidents of the United States (two of these have been mentioned; the third was the honest and the fearless John Tyler, to whom the credit of the Ashburton treaty and the annexation of Texas justly belongs). "It has given to the nation Cabinet officers, Senators and Representatives, Judges, Officers of the Army—among them a Lieutenant-General, whose conquest of Mexico rivals that of Cortez—and Officers of the Navy—Paladins of the Sea;" in all, more than two hundred sages and heroes, pre-eminentely distinguished in public service and place. Nor is the College limited to the past. Among its living alumni are eminent men who add to its renown.

Excepting Harvard, it has in its national character and services exceeded all of our literary institutions.

In 1859 the College lost by an accidental fire its main building, erected nearly two centuries before. "When this building was erected," to adopt the language of one among the most distinguished of the alumni of the College, and whom I have already largely quoted, "it looked out upon a country in the early infancy of settlement, containing a population not greater than that which at this day is found in the smallest State of the Union.

"It beheld that population expanding over regions bounded by two great oceans, to be counted by millions in place of the scattered thousands of that day. It has seen the colonies shake off the badges of puberty and put on the 'vaga virilita.' It saw the Congress before and after it had assembled under the Articles of Confederation, and those articles of the Constitution under which it now is our happiness to live. It re-echoed the words of the forest-born Demosthenes in 1785, asserting the rights of America to be 'natural, constitutional, chartered;' and in thunder tones, at an after day, its walls resounded to the words, 'Liberty or Death,' uttered by the same eloquent lips. "Under the influence of its teachings, its students threw aside for a season their volumes, and girded on the sword to do battle in the great cause of liberty.

"The calm and silver-toned voice of philosophy heard within its walls has been oftimes hushed by the clangor of drums and trumpets. At one time it gave reluctant shelter to the British troops as they passed on to Yorktown; and, soon after, its gates were opened wide to give willing and exultant reception to the troops, with their tattered banners, which followed Cornwallis to his last retreat.

"Its walls were alternately shaken by the thunder of the cannon at Yorktown, and by the triumphant shouts of the noble bands who had fought and conquered in the name of American independence.

"The boy had gone forth with the surveyor's staff, which it had placed in his hands, into the wilderness of the West, and now returned the hero and the conqueror, and once more stood within its walls surrounded by the chivalry of France and America, wearing on his brow imperishable laurels, and making the name of Washington foremost on the rolls of fame."

In the early part of 1861, the College of William and Mary, at Williamsburg, Va., gave every promise of a prosperous and useful career. In its endowments, its appliances (including buildings, library and apparatus), in the public confidence it enjoyed, its friends and patrons had every reason to feel satisfied. Its main building stood on the site of that destroyed in 1859, and was, together with a well-selected library and an ample chemical and philosophical apparatus, entirely new. In May, 1861, when "madness ruled the hour," the existence of actual war on its very threshold (the distance from Fortress Monroe is not more than thirty-five miles) rendered it necessary to suspend its academic exercises and to close its doors, and subjected it to more serious reverses than it had before met during its long and varied life.
The building was immediately seized by the military, and first as a barracks and then as a hospital, held until the evacuation of the Peninsula and the advance of General McClellan, in May, 1862. To a force holding the York and James rivers, Williamsburg is the key to the lower part of the Peninsula. The tides ebb and flow in two deep creeks, one emptying into each river, and both flanked by impassable morasses, within a mile of the town.

The position is a narrow gorge, less than two miles wide, where the roads from above and below converge. It was, therefore, held by the United States forces as an important point from May, 1862, till the termination of the war. At times it was contested for by the opposing troops.

After a conflict, on the 9th of September, 1862, between the garrison and a body of South Carolina cavalry, the latter took possession of the town for a few hours. After the withdrawal of this force (it had gone before 11 A. M.), returning parties of the garrison, in the excitement arising from the contest, fired and destroyed, late in the afternoon of the same day, the main College building, with furniture and apparatus, keeping the citizens of the town from attempting to extinguish the flames.

At later periods, all the remaining houses on the College premises were, with the enclosures, burned, or wholly or in part pulled to pieces. The buildings not fully destroyed and the grounds were held by the Union forces from May, 1862, to September, 1865, for depots of stores and for other purposes.

Of all this, full proof by living eye-witnesses has been furnished. It has been the aim and wish of the College authorities to learn the truth in this matter, and I declare, as my earnest conviction, that, if the College was not destroyed in the manner above described, no faith can be attached to any human testimony, however direct, positive and conclusive.

General Meade thus writes in relation to this destruction:

"I am satisfied, on examination of the facts of the case, that the destruction of the buildings of William and Mary College by our troops was not only unnecessary and unauthorized, but was one of those deplorable acts of useless destruction which occur in all wars.

"In this view, and believing that its reconstruction will tend to cement and strengthen the bonds of union and to give encouragement to the growth and spreading of Union principles, I take great pleasure in recommending the appeal of Professor Ewell to all those who have the means and disposition to assist him in the good work in which he is engaged."

But, notwithstanding this and other outrages, greatly to be deplored, I can testify, as an eye-witness of many of the events of the war, as well in the West as in the East, that no war of equal magnitude and duration was ever waged, in which the outrages were fewer; and in this I am sustained by several of the most prominent leaders of the Southern armies, and among them General Joseph E. Johnston.

That this should have been so, though engaged in a fierce civil war, is to the infinite honor of the American people.

In the next place, I will read from a letter written by Colonel Robert W. Hughes, the former United States District Attorney, in Virginia, and now Judge of the United States District Court, in the same State, to a member of the 42d Congress, on the petition before you:

"A memorial, signed by the Governor and all the members of the Legislature, without distinction of party, has gone to Congress, asking aid for the ancient College of William and Mary.

"The profoundest sympathies of our Virginia people are enlisted in the fortunes of this historic corporation, and we shall look with fond and earnest solicitude to the action which Congress shall take upon this memorial of our Legislature.

"During the War of Independence the buildings of William and Mary were repeatedly occupied by British troops.

"They were in every instance respected, as sacred to the cause of letters, and literature.

"After the close of the war, Louis XVI., the ally of America, caused the building accidentally destroyed by his troops to be replaced, and every injury repaired, doing equal homage to the sacred cause of learning.

"In 1862, when General Sheridan passed through Charlottesville, the seat of the University of Virginia, he detached a faithful guard to protect the institution from all injury, and the fact is recorded, to his enduring honor, upon the archives of the University.

"Thus this noble institution, which Thomas Jefferson gave to our country, was fortunately preserved, although the more venerable college, which America, had fallen a victim to the Mob of war.

"With such conspicuous examples of homage to learning from kings and heroes, presented by the history of these two learned corporations of our State, it is impossible to avoid the injury and the moral loss to the state from which we derive.

"Firmly, therefore, I refer you to the proofs filed with the Committee on Education, &c., of the House, of the facts of burning and destruction, and to various letters in possession of the committee from distinguished personages, for full information respecting the merits of this appeal, on behalf of William and Mary, and especially do I refer you to the letters of Generals Grant, Sherman, Butler, Meade, McClellan, Schurfield, Burnside, and the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and the Rev. Dr. Tyng, generally commending the claims of the College to public favor.

"May I venture the hope that Congress will embrace all such occasions as this application presents of conquering a genuine loyalty at the South by a policy of noble liberality."

Thus it is seen that the people of Virginia, their Legislature, their Executive, and the friends of education everywhere, unite in this petition.

The entire Virginia delegation of the 42d Congress, believing it would be "right and expedient to grant the relief begged for," ask you "to make your action as favorable as your sense of public duty will permit." And all this without distinction of party. It is refreshing and encouraging to find men, in political doctrine and practice diametri-
cally opposite, meeting and harmonizing in support of educational interests. While literature and science know no North, no South, no East, no West, it is equally true that they know no politics, and hence recognize and claim all parties as their protectors and friends. The object of this union in the present case is to beseech you that, as the mission of the Union armies was to save and restore, not to destroy, this ancient College be relieved.

No institution of learning in the South lost so much by the civil war, by actual destruction of property, and by consequent inability to resume its exercises as soon as peace was declared, save two, perhaps. Indeed, so far as I am informed, the losses of William and Mary exceeded those of all other Southern colleges combined, with the exception of the two alluded to.

Apprehensions have been expressed that, if Congress were to give what is now sought, a precedent would be established, and large demands on the Treasury thereby justified.

If my estimate of the damages inflicted by the Union forces on Southern institutions of learning be approximately correct, no great depletion of the Treasury could ensue.

But, remembering the antecedents of William and Mary, and what it lost by the Revolutionary war, and by Virginia's cession of the Northwest Territory, I assert that a precedent could not be established, for the case has, and can have, no parallel.

Colonel Hughes says in the letter before referred to:

"There has been no period in the history of the State in which the cause of education has so largely engrossed the thoughts of our people as at present, in which the necessity of education as universal as the abuse of office and the distrust of each other is general is more acknowledged, more apparent, and more urgent, and in which the people were less able than they now are to accomplish the general desire in this important direction.

"To look over our State at the extent of ignorance, to observe the magnitude of the work needed to be done, and to contrast this with the paucity and feebleness of our means for performing the task before us, fills the hearts of many of our most enlightened men with dismay.

"We are not only wanting in pecuniary means, but we are especially wanting in teachers. These latter can only be supplied by our colleges, and the endowments of our colleges were either lost altogether or greatly diminished during the war. But in no direction have the recuperative energies of our Commonwealth been more distinctly displayed than in the important business of restoring to efficiency its collegiate institutions; and while our citizens are exhibiting such commendable enterprise in this behalf, I am sure that an appeal for aid to Congress, upon a claim of simple justice, such as that presented with so much force and eloquence in the petition of the Rector and President, which has been filed along with the memorial of our Legislature, will be favorably considered."

The College of William and Mary has, notwithstanding crippled resources and ruinous buildings, given gratuitous instruction, since the re-establishment of peace, to not less than two hundred and fifty scholars, unable without such assistance to get an education. It is an earnest supporter of the free schools of the State, and has established a scholarship in each school district of the State, which is filled on the recommendation and nomination of the District Superintendent. It is the only college in Tidewater Virginia, a section destined to become the most attractive in the State, with its wonderful variety of soil, the ease with which it is improved, and its capacity for production, its bland climate, its general health, as good as that of any part of the State, and its cheapness of living. To quote again: "Do not the associations which cluster around the locality render it attractive? Can the young heart maintain a quiet pulse in wandering amid the ruins that tell of a glorious past, and everywhere meets his eye? Will he not gather from the very fragments which lie scattered over the earth at Jamestown, almost in sight, a lesson never to be forgotten, inspiring him with courage and perseverance in the great battle of life? Will not those fragments tell him a tale of hardship and suffering on the part of the early settlers, unequalled in the history of his race, and of an ultimate triumphant conclusion more grand in its results than fancy ever sketched, or poet in wapt imagination ever sung?

"Will not that broken steeple, reared centuries ago in honor of the living God, preach to him like an aged minister, and impress upon his heart the all-governing truth, that without Divine assistance nothing great and nothing good can ever be accomplished? Does he seek incentives to an ardent and burning patriotism, let him visit the ruins of the old Capitol, and ponder there till his heart expands and his lips give utterance to that exclamation which aroused a continent from its slumber. Let him then find his way to the old Apollo, and mix with the noble spirits in their deliberations on the great crisis that had arisen. Those who had assembled there were, for the most part, his elder brothers, sons of the same Alma Mater. After this he will in fancy accompany his fellow-students of another day to the palace of the royal governor, with the settled purpose to recover the arms provided for the public defence, which had been improperly removed, and to restore them to the Powder magazine, where they belonged. A few hours thereafter he will find himself wandering over the entrenchments at Yorktown, behind which British power made its last retreat. Tell me not that these memorials of the mighty past are mute and voiceless. They speak more eloquently than the Roman or Athenian of old before the Senate, or the assembly of the people. They tell of past glory and
are the oracles that unveil the future. Sinking deep into the youthful heart, they inspire it with lofty desires, which make ambition virtue.”

The aggregate of the losses of the college from 1861 to 1862 is at least eighty thousand dollars. Indeed, this sum is not sufficient to put the college in the condition it was in 1861.

“These last losses,” the petition before you declares, “were the effects of a lamentable civil war. In no war can civilization look upon ravages like this of William and Mary College without the sternest reprehension, and without appeal for all the repair that can be made. But in the late war of the Union with the States, the very end and aim of the Union was to save, not to destroy. This was an unauthorized act or accident of war, the end of which was to save everything precious to the care of a parental government, or which was peaceful in the conflict of arms, or useful to the country, or sacred to learning, arts, science, or religion. This act was done against the patriotic purposes of Congress, against its own moral and Christian sense, and now will not Congress restore, in a case of this kind, what it did not save? Will it not manifest its condemnation of this unlicensed act of war by the most appropriate mode of reparation? Does not the patriotic policy of restoring harmony and peace call for an example of maternal protection?

“Grant the prayers of petitions like this, and no more ever will the Union need arms to save the people, or their families, or their schools, or their houses of charity and learning, or their houses of God, from the ravages of civil war. This mode of treating the wounds of the past would be a salve indeed, and heal them.

“This appeal to Congress, made not in support of a claim, but for a benefaction in behalf of education, is based on two distinct grounds: the first is because of Revolutionary losses of chartered rights for property confiscated by the British government, and for the use and destruction of the College property by the Continental and French soldiers, and is founded in equity and justice; the second is because of losses by the accidents of war during the late civil contest, and peace and protection are thereby sought, and not justice stricta jura.” It asks Congress to raise up again a venerable mother of instruction, to repair the forbidden blow at a college, and by so doing Congress will vindicate its own character and motives of civilization and parental government.

“And the College, if this prayer be granted, will rise with renewed vigor, with improved faculties to repay any beneficence which Congress may bestow, by giving again to the Union, what money cannot buy, another host of mighty men to guard constitutions and laws, and the love of the nation as devotedly as even its liberties.”

NOTE.—It may not be improper to state, that since the petition for aid in the restoration of the College was presented to Congress, the authorities of the institution have received expressions of sympathy and encouragement from many prominent gentlemen of the North and West, including distinguished authors and educators, and also from the Press. The two following extracts will suffice. The first is from a letter written to the President of the College, by Prof. B. Silliman, of Yale, dated July, '74:  

“...I have read the memorial delivered before the Committee on Education in behalf of the College of William and Mary, and am deeply moved by the simple eloquence of the facts it narrates. It seems unanswerable, and I really believe it must prevail. You must not relax your efforts. Congress will not always be in the same vocative case it was last winter. You will find it some day in the dative. Fortunately, your case establishes no precedent, as there is no such case beside yours; and if there were, and the facts were proved, it should be granted also.”

The next is from “Our First Hundred Years,” by C. Edwards Lester, in his section on Institutions of Learning in the Colonies, page 263:

“Last spring a petition was presented by the College for an appropriation by Congress, on account of Revolutionary losses, and because of the destruction of its buildings and other property, by the United States troops during the late civil war. It was ably supported before the Committee of Education and Labor of the House of Representatives, and I would gladly give place to the entire argument, for it is one of the most touching, noble and just appeals in behalf of the injured cause of education ever pronounced. Its eloquent utterances will be heeded at no distant day, when an American Congress shall assemble which shall represent, if not the magnanimity which always inspires the generous conqueror, at least the sense of justice which lives in the breasts of the true-hearted people of the North. * * * * * * * * * * *

“The best words, perhaps, uttered in the debate on the petition, fall from the lips of one of Massachusetts’ noblest representatives, and they came with the more grace from the State which held the venerable University of Harvard, which had for generations enjoyed the Boylee benefaction through the faithful hands of William and Mary. Hon. Geo. F. Hoar said: ‘To spare, and, if possible, to protect, institutions of learning, is an obligation which the most civilized nations impose on themselves. Whenever, by accident or design, these institutions have been injured in war, such governments desire, if possible, to make reparation. History contains many conspicuous and interesting examples of this generous recognition. * * * In her bloodiest and angriest civil strife, all factions in England have revered her institutions of learning. Her schools and colleges, whatever side they may have taken in civil war, have enjoyed immunity from its injuries, when even her steeple and venerable cathedrals have not been spared. Think what permanence these schools enjoy, shielded from the storms of war by the beneficent principle we invoke. Whorever civilization exists, wherever men are humane and Christian, the college or the school, wisely founded, shall endure. I purchased at Eton, a few years since, a little book containing the history of the two great schools of England. I was struck in looking over it to see dates of their endowment: Eton in 1440; Winchester, 1589; Westminster, 1560; St. Paul’s, 1569; Merchant Taylor’s, 1563; Charter House, 1611; Harrow, 1571; Rugby, 1567; Shrewsbury, 1549; Christ’s, 1552; while the origin of Oxford and Cambridge is lost in the darkness of antiquity.
These schools have survived all the changes of dynasty, all the changes of Institutions and manners; Puritan and Cavalier, York and Lancaster have fought their battles, and yet, in the wildest tempests of popular excitement, they

Lift not their spears against the Masses' bower.

At Winchester, William of Wykeham founded, in 1380, a school which still stands, and has remained through four dynasties. Gloucester, Hanover, Tudor, York, Lancaster, Plantagenet, have successively struggled for and occupied the English throne, while in the building which Wykeham in his lifetime planned and built, the scholars of Winchester are still governed by the statutes which he framed.

You will easily find an instance in England or America, where a school or college wisely founded has died. Whatever perishes, that shall endure.

But William and Mary has also her own peculiar claim on our regard. The great principles on which the right of man depend, which inspired the statesmen of Virginia in the period of the Revolution, are the fruits of her teaching. Next to Harvard she is the oldest of American colleges. The gift of the famous Robt. Boyle was held by her for many years, on condition of an annual payment £20 to Harvard. Boyle was a friend of many of the early friends and benefactors of Harvard, and a correspondent of one of its first presidents. Each of these two seminaries, in its own part of the country, kindled and kept alive the sacred fire of liberty. In 1743, the year Jefferson was born, Samuel Adams maintained, on taking his degree of Master of Arts at Harvard, the affirmative of the thesis, whether it be lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate, if the Commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved? In this hour of the calamity of her sister college, I am glad to believe that Harvard does not forget the ancient tie. The mother of the Oisles and Adamses would gladly extend her right hand to the mother of Jefferson and Marshall. If civil strife or foreign war shall ever again disturb our peace, every college in the land will be safer if Congress shall to-day make this solemn recognition of the rule we invoke. To deny it is to deny to the college of Washington the justice he did to Princeton. To deny it is to deny to Virginia the generous treatment which Connecticut received from Tryon, Philadelphia from Cooke, and William and Mary herself from Louis XVI of France. The hallowed associations which surround this college prevent the ease from being a precedent for any other. If you had injured it, you surely would have restored Mount Vernon; you had better honor Washington by restoring the living fountain of learning, whose service was the pleasure of his last years, than by any useless and empty act of worship or respect towards his sepulchre.

No other college in the country can occupy the same position. By the fortune of war that sacred institution, which has conferred on the country a hundred fold more benefit than any other institution or college in the South, has become a sufferer. I desire to hold out the olive branch to the people of Virginia, to the people of the South, to show them that we will join them in rebuilding the sacred place, laid waste by the fortunes of war.

"If claims like these, enforced by such eloquence, were heeded by the men who were styled "the Representatives of the American People," some of us will live to thank their successors for justice crowned with a generosity which will have atoned for the delay.

"When the nation pays the great debt which she owes to William and Mary, this venerable school of learning will once more shine with its original lustre."