

MAY 15, 1850.

Report of the Executive Committee for the care, management and government of the Free Academy, on power to remove Assistants. Received and ordered to be laid upon the table, and printed under the direction of the Committee.

EDWARD B. FELLOWS,
Clerk.

The Executive Committee for the care, management and government of the Free Academy, respectfully submit their views upon the expediency of vesting in said Committee hereafter, greater control than it now possesses over the Assistants in the Institution. As the term of the present Committee is now nearly concluded, they can approach this subject, which they regard one of importance in the future management of the Institution, without indelicacy or embarrassment. If the suggestion should meet the approval of the Board, the power conferred will be for the successors of the present Committee to exercise.

There are now in the Free Academy four Assistants, and when the number of students shall be increased, additional ones will be appointed from time to time. At no distant day, a large proportion of the instructors in the Institution, will be of this class. They will, as a general rule, be young men, engaged at a moderate rate of compensation, whose success in their various positions will be demonstrated after they have entered upon the service. They will not have acquired the reputation and experience which those qualified to occupy the rank of professors have attained, and may, therefore, with propriety, be placed on a different footing, as to the permanency of their position. It will, without doubt, be desirable and necessary to make frequent changes in this class of

teachers, and it will be for their interest, as well as for that of the Institution, that these changes should be made with as little noise as possible.

The removal of any individual, whether professor or assistant, by a public vote of the Board of Education, is a grave matter. It would be a serious injury probably to the individual removed, and would be regarded generally, whatever the circumstances of the case might be, as an evidence of his unfitness for the post of teacher anywhere. On this account, in part, removals would seldom be made. The individual concerned would make a desperate struggle, and bring to bear upon the minds of the members of the Board what influence he could control. He would present his case with favorable explanations, and would always awaken sympathy more or less. The probability is, that no removal would be made, except the case were so flagrant, that the individual would be ruined permanently by the exposure of his incompetency or misconduct.

If, on the other hand, the power of removing Assistants should be vested in the Executive Committee, it can be managed without difficulty and without publicity. An intimation from them of dissatisfaction would lead to a resignation, if this method of disposing of any particular case were desirable. The removal of a teacher would occur just as quietly as similar changes take place in our Ward Schools. No irreparable injury is done to the individual. He is not embarrassed in entering upon any new sphere where he may be successful.

This power would impart efficiency in the management of each department in the Free Academy, and at the same time the subordinate teachers would be sufficiently protected against caprice or injustice by the interposition of the Executive Committee and their judgment upon the case. Each Professor must be held responsible for the proper management of his department, and must therefore exercise direction and control over the Assistants under him. There must be harmony and unity of action in each department, in order that the operations of the Institution shall be conducted successfully. Incompatibility of temper, a want of conformability in method, inattention to minor points of discipline or instruction, may be here exceedingly mischievous. An Assistant

may be a man of talent and qualified to teach well if acting in an independent position, and yet be entirely unfitted to occupy a subordinate place in an institution organized like the Free Academy.

If the tenure of office of the Assistants is to be the same as that of the Professor, if they are to retain their places, under any circumstances, so long as they shall choose to remain, until removed by a solemn public vote of the Board of Education, there is absolutely no power to control them in these manifold and daily occurring little things, which, when examined singly, may appear to be trifling matters, but which, taken in the aggregate, determine the usefulness and constitute the business of the man.

There are reasons why it may be desirable to discharge a teacher in such an institution, independently of marked incompetency, or want of conformity to the methods or the disposition of the head of a department. He may be a tolerably good teacher and disciplinarian, but not good enough for the demands of the Institution. If the institution is to be conducted successfully, it must be managed with the same vigor with which an individual manages his private business. If a teacher slackens in his exertions, if he is not the very best man that can be found for the place, he must make way for that man.

The vesting of the power to remove Assistants and instructors in the Executive Committee, would also have a very beneficial influence in other particulars. It would give weight to their suggestions, and enable them to arrest at once any remissness. It would operate also as a powerful restraint and incentive upon the minds of the teachers, who would feel that they could and would be reached if not performing their duty fully.

There is this consideration in favor of increasing the power of the Committee in the particular recommended, that a greater responsibility will rest upon them for the proper management of the Institution. If the teachers are beyond their control, their responsibility will be greatly diminished. The true theory in regard to this subject, as appears to the undersigned, is to give to the Committee such powers as may be prudently conferred, and hold them accountable for the successful management of the Institution. In the selection of the members of the Committee from

time to time, it will be for the Board itself to exercise proper discrimination and select fit persons to whom to commit this important trust.

It is not proposed to give the Committee the power of appointment to any vacancies. The power might not be abused, nor lead to favoritism, in removing one teacher to make place for another, but it does not seem to be necessary. It will be well for the Board to retain in its own hands the regulation of the number of Assistants, their allotment in the various branches of instruction, the control of all salaries, and the appointment of teachers generally.

The suggestion presented in this report does not extend to the removal of Professors. They will generally be men of known reputation and experienced in the business of instruction. They must be selected with great care, and will perhaps be generally chosen from among a large number of competitors. But when once appointed, their position should be a permanent one, until they should choose to resign, or the Board of Education should deem it proper on consideration to make a change. The power of removing the occupants of places of so much importance seems to be too great to be placed in the hands of a Committee.

The rule which now regulates the tenure of offices in the Free Academy is as follows :

“The engagement of all Professors, Teachers, Lecturers and Officers in the Free Academy, unless where a specific agreement shall be made, shall be terminated at the pleasure of either party, on giving notice of the same, and the salary shall thereupon immediately cease.”

The power proposed may be conferred by a slight modification of this Rule, and the following resolution is therefore presented to the consideration of the Board :

“Resolved, that the rule regulating the term of the engagement of Professors, Teachers, &c., in the Free Academy, be amended by adding the following clause :—
“And the Executive Committee, for the care, management and government of the Free Academy, are authorized and empowered to give said notice, in the case of any Assistant or Teacher, not bearing the title of Professor or Assistant Professor.”

All which is respectfully submitted.

ROBT. KELLY.
J. S. BOSWORTH.
THOMAS DENNY.

New York, May 15th, 1850.