

pose half a million of bonds, ever authorized the mere beginning of a building the ultimate cost of which was to greatly exceed the amount set apart, and beyond which they had no right to go. The sum appropriated contemplated payment in full for a finished building, not to lay the foundation and rear outer walls, merely partially to construct the edifice, but to finish it in all its detail and in every part. If any other purpose was contemplated it does not appear upon the face of the law, and the commissioners are not at liberty to go beyond its clear requirements, nor could the mayor and city council grant any powers to them in the premises not previously authorized by the Legislature.

The mayor and city council in their powers are limited by legislative enactments, and the commissioners are limited by the ordinance, and neither can go beyond them. If the commissioners appointed under the ordinance of 1865 or the mayor and city council had the power to exceed the sum authorized, then they could as well have proceeded without any authority. To exceed the law is as grave an offense as to proceed without law, and to do so is so grave an offense that the seal of public condemnation should be set upon all who participate in it.

The continued increase of the debt of Baltimore city is a subject of painful anxiety to its citizens. Each returning year has brought its augmentation, until now the burdens are intolerable, and its effect must be disastrous to the prosperity of the city and to the State also. From the fear of heavy taxation, capital will shun us, personal property will hide itself, and thereby the basis of taxation will diminish while the debt increases, and thus the burden must and will in the end fall with crushing weight upon real estate.

The effect of public debt upon communities is the same as debt upon individuals. It shuts the doors of hope—dispirits and paralyzes their energies. A public debt is a public calamity that curses the living and wastes the estate of the dead. Its enormity at this time in the several departments of our government is a source of serious alarm to the prudent and thoughtful. So great is the debt of the Federal and State governments that when added to those of a local and municipal character, an army