

**REMINISCENCES OF THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF BENJAMIN WOOLSEY
DWIGHT. JANUARY 1, 1862**

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Reminiscences of the Life and Character of Benjamin Woolsey Dwight. January 1, 1862 by
Benjamin Woodbridge Dwight

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REMINISCENCES
OF THE
LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
BENJAMIN WOOLSEY DWIGHT, M. D.

BY HIS SON,

BENJAMIN WOODBRIDGE DWIGHT.

JANUARY 1, 1862.

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS little volume, of which but a very small number of copies has been printed, has not been prepared at all for general circulation, but only for the use of the immediate relatives and friends of the deceased. Too great reverence for good and noble ancestors is not, certainly, one of the faults of this land, or age. We are glad to remember ours, as given to us of God to carry his banner in their hands, that we might follow in their footsteps to the Land that is above.

A truly beautiful life is the highest monument to the praise of both God and man, that can be erected on the shores of time ; and, while the lives of the good are, indeed, the property of mankind at large, they are specially so of their descendants : theirs, to cherish with peculiar gratitude, and to emulate with peculiar zeal.

This brief Memorial of the loved parents, whose moral portraiture it contains, is dedicated, on the one hand, to their children, who know so well how inadequate is any representation, made in a few

hasty pages, of the full real beauty of lives so pure as theirs, and so productive of every good ; and, on the other, to their grandchildren, no one of whom ever knew either of their honored grandparents as they really were, and to whom, therefore, it has been both a special aim and a special pleasure, to bring the fresh and fragrant recollections of their parents concerning them.

An ancestry of faith is the noblest ancestry, over which any one can rejoice before God. It is recognized in Heaven itself, as the Divine order of nobility upon earth, each one of whom is "a king and priest unto God," forever.

In order that a biography should be true and life-like, it must be, by necessity, quite minute in detail, and paint the real life and character described exactly as they were. The sketches here presented are not intended to be ideals of what our poor humanity might easily be conceived to be, or become, in the tender and divine relationship of parentage, but to be truthful descriptions of what two dear parents actually were, who were not perfect, but who wished and prayed and strove constantly that they might be. Their deeds and their instructions are a precious legacy to their children, and their children's children.

CLINTON, *Jan. 1, 1862.*

IN MEMORIAM.

BENJAMIN WOOLSEY DWIGHT, the second of eight sons of Rev. Timothy Dwight, S. T. D., President of Yale College, was born at Northampton, Mass., on Feb. 10th, 1780. His mother, Mrs. Mary Dwight, who was born at Dosoris, Long Island, April 11, 1754, and, who died Oct. 11, 1845, ninety-one years old and more, was the daughter of Benjamin Woolsey, whose revered name she gave to her son. Benjamin Woolsey, Esq., was when at College (1740-44) a class-mate and room-mate of Timothy Dwight, the father of President Dwight ; and to the end of their lives they continued to be warm mutual friends.

When young Dwight was three years old, his father, who was a teacher in Northampton, and who preached also as he had opportunity in neighboring towns upon the Sabbath, removed to Greenfield, Conn. Here he continued for twelve years, as the settled Pastor of the church in that place ; while being at the same time the Head of a large

and flourishing institution of his own, for the education of youth of both sexes : instructing during that time more than a thousand pupils, who gathered around him from many different States. Six hours, daily, of close and enthusiastic attention to their highest and best progress, he gave to the members of his school. Happy indeed was the lot of his son Benjamin, beyond that of any of his younger brothers, in thus coming up to his 16th year, in all the most formative portion of his life, directly under the full personal care of so accomplished and energetic a teacher, and that, his own deeply interested, loving father. Text-books were then far inferior to what they are now, although in so many cases poor enough still. The course of collegiate study was exceedingly narrow : the study of Virgil being a large part of the course in Latin in College, and that of the Greek Testament, in Greek. Dictionaries, Grammars, and Classical Commentaries were meagre enough. If any one would appreciate better than he now does the progress in helps to study in the Classics from that day to this, let him look at Lily's Latin Grammar then used at Yale and Schrevelius' Greek Lexicon in Latin, in contrast with the ampler and richer aids now furnished in these and many associate directions. But then, as now, with poor helps or with fine ones, it was the personal power and spirit of

the living teacher himself that gave to any course of instruction its highest charm and value.

During all his youth also Benjamin had the high privilege of sitting under that same father's preaching, as twice every Sabbath he discoursed to the people of his charge in fervid strains of extemporaneous eloquence. And at his home what rare opportunities had he constantly of acquaintance with an almost continuous succession of cultivated and distinguished visitors from the beginning to the end of the year, who sought with high appreciation the generous and delightful hospitality of his father's house. Surely a heart nurtured to the full under such strong and combined influences for good, ought to abound in its maturer years in every grace from both earth and Heaven.

While yet an infant asleep in his cradle, his nurse carelessly emptied, in passing by, a basin of cold water upon him that threw him at once into convulsions, terminating in the phthisic, which afflicted him to the end of his days and greatly influenced his subsequent history. It would have been his choice to have been a preacher or educator, or both together, had not his difficulty in breathing been too great for the demands of either one of these high callings; and the profession which he did choose, as answering next to these his largest ideas of an active life in doing good, he was obliged for