

**A PLEA FOR THE SMALLER  
COLLEGE. AN ADDRESS  
DELIVERED ON FOUNDERS' DAY  
AT ALMA COLLEGE, JUNE 16,  
1897**

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A plea for the smaller college. An address delivered on Founders' day at Alma college, June 16, 1897 by David M. Cooper

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**DAVID M. COOPER**

**A PLEA FOR THE SMALLER  
COLLEGE. AN ADDRESS  
DELIVERED ON FOUNDERS' DAY  
AT ALMA  
COLLEGE, JUNE 16, 1897**





*Yours truly*  
*John P. Cleveland*

A PLEA  
FOR THE 71236  
SMALLER COLLEGE

AN ADDRESS  
DELIVERED ON FOUNDERS' DAY AT  
**A L M A C O L L E G E**  
JUNE 16, 1897

*from* BY *ack*  
DAVID M. COOPER  
PASTOR EMERITUS  
OF  
MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
DETROIT, MICH.



DETROIT, MICH.  
JOHN BORNMAN & SON, PRINTERS, 12 TO 18 LARNED STREET EAST  
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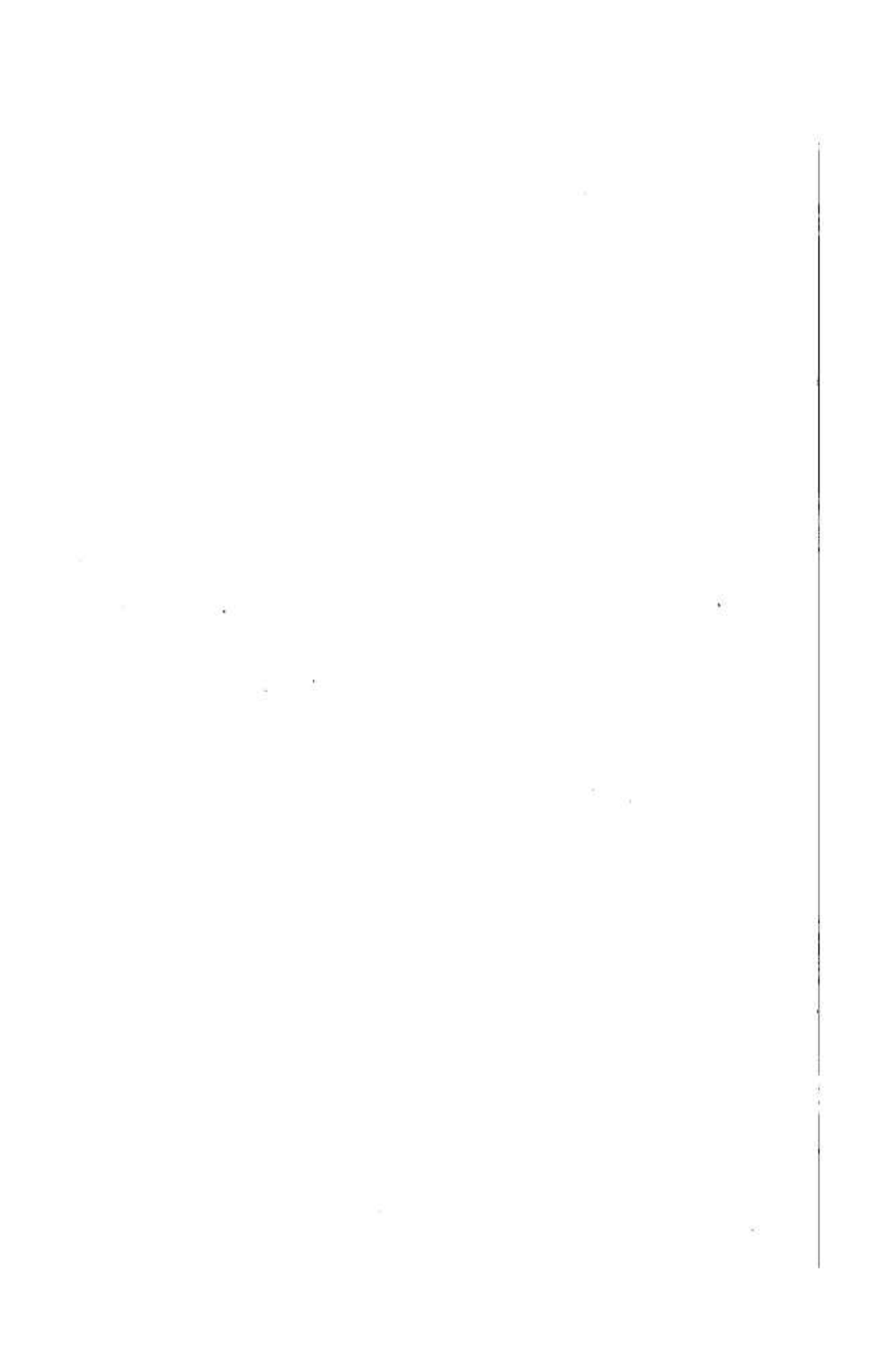
ALMA, Mich., Nov. 24th, 1897.

*Rev. David M. Cooper, D. D.*

DEAR SIR—We, the undersigned, members of the executive committee of Alma College, feel that you did us a great service in preparing for Founders' Day your noble address upon the American College. We are desirous that it shall have a larger audience than that which greeted it last June. We also wish it for reference as a part of the history of Presbyterianism in Michigan. Will you therefore add another to the many services you have rendered the college and the church by publishing the same in such form as will be most agreeable to yourself?

Yours with the greatest regard,

A. W. WRIGHT,  
E. A. BAGLEY,  
N. B. BRADLEY.





ADDRESS  
ON  
FOUNDERS' DAY, ALMA COLLEGE

JUNE 16th, 1897



**I**T was with some reluctance that I accepted the invitation to address you to-day on a topic already made familiar by the eloquent inaugural address of Geo. F. Hunting, D. D., your first President, and by the admirable History of Alma College prepared by the Rev. Dr. Bruske, and so widely circulated. Nevertheless, the fact that even during the decade that has elapsed since the organization of Alma College some who were eminently active at its birth have entered into their rest, renders it incumbent upon those of its founders who yet remain, but who must soon follow them, to place on record—each as seen from his own angle of vision—what were their motives and aim in an undertaking which, to many at the time, seemed visionary and impracticable.

While hesitating as to my fitness to discharge the duty assigned to me, with credit to myself and profit to you, my eye fell upon a little verse composed by the Rev. Dr. Deems, that appears upon the frontispiece of his recently published Autobiography, that inspired me to begin:

“ That man is blest  
Who does his best  
And leaves the rest:  
Then do not worry.”

Founders' Day, which we now inaugurate, suggests two ideas, viz: **FIRST**, the history of this institution. **SECOND**, the aims of those who participated in laying its foundation.

In rehearsing anew the history of Alma College it shall be my purpose, omitting lengthy details, to emphasize the fact that this Institution was born of God and was not the contrivance of man; and then, by taking as my theme "a plea for the smaller college," to embody in that theme the motives and aims of those men whom God chose to employ as instruments in carrying out his design.

You have now become acquainted with the fact, the knowledge of which has so long been kept in such abeyance as to be almost forgotten, that the idea of a college under the auspices of the Synod of Michigan is not a new one, but as old as the history of the State.

The name of John P. Cleveland, D. D., you must have noticed, appears in the Minutes of Synod as the second in the roll of Moderators in 1835, and again as Moderator in 1843. The honor to have been thus twice chosen appears never to have been conferred upon any other man, an indication of the high estimation in which he was held by his brethren. He also acted as Stated Clerk from 1834-7. In the year 1837 Dr. Cleveland resigned his pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church of Detroit and was installed pastor of the church at Marshall, and took charge of a preliminary school as President of the Institution.

Marshall was at that period prospectively the most promising interior town of the State, scarcely excepting Ann Arbor. It was near the center of the Lower Peninsula, on the line of its only railroad, in the midst of a fine agricultural region, and peopled by stalwart men, of whom the Hon. Charles T. Gorham, at one time Assistant Secretary of the Interior under Senator Chandler and subsequently our Minister at the Hague, stands as a fair representative. He still remains among us, vigorous in health and staunch in his devotion to our beloved church.

In the month of February, 1840, the Presbytery of Detroit took the following action, and this action was four years before the late William B. Wesson, of Detroit, its first student, and who constituted the entire class for the year 1844, was matriculated at our State University:

*"Resolved,* That in the opinion of this Presbytery no action of civil government on the subject of education, however liberal, can *fully* meet the moral wants of a community, and that volun-

tary institutions sustained and controlled by the church, are imperiously demanded.

*Resolved*, That this Presbytery do accordingly recommend to the prayers and charities of the church under their care the college recently incorporated at Marshall by the exertions of a committee heretofore appointed by a unanimous vote of the Synod of Michigan."\*

By a sad and mysterious providence this laudable design of our Synod was frustrated. Dr. Cleaveland's wife was seized with a severe illness. By mistake her attendant administered to her the wrong medicine, which proved fatal. She was a lovely woman, who exercised a wholesome restraint over her husband, who was of a fiery, impetuous nature. Broken-hearted and dispirited, he resigned his position, and, with his resignation, the college adventure came to an end. I doubt if ever he recovered fully from the stunning blow.

We hear of him afterward as pastor for a brief period at Cincinnati, then as chaplain in the Union army, and finally of his death at Newburyport, Mass. Dr. John P. Cleaveland was no ordinary man. He first came into prominence in connection with the meeting of the General Assembly in 1837, when our church was divided into the so-called Old and New School parties. When the Moderator of the same refused to recognize the commissioners sent up by the excised Presbyteries, or even to put any motion looking to their recognition, Dr. Cleaveland, then a member of the

\* The first meeting of the Synod of Michigan was held at Ann Arbor, Sept. 25, 1834. At its second meeting, held at Adrian, Oct. 1, 1835, the following minute was adopted:

*Resolved*—That more systematic arrangements ought to be immediately made in this Territory to secure the advantage of a thorough literary and evangelical education. Taken up and discussed, and Messrs. Beach, Ellis and Hallock were appointed a committee on nomination to report a suitable Committee on Education, or Board of Trustees, whose duty it shall be to consult on the best location for a college for this Territory; to use all proper means for securing the necessary funds for the commencement of the Institution, and in case they find it practicable, and in their judgment important, to determine said location and proceed as Providence shall direct in the organization of the Institution, with instructions to report at the next meeting of Synod.

In the minutes of the fourth meeting, held at Detroit, Oct. 25, 1837, we read: "The College Committee presented the following report, which was accepted and adopted, viz.: 'That they have endeavored to push forward the enterprise as far and fast and possible; that a preparatory school is in operation at Marshall; that a president has been appointed and accepted the office, and that they have secured funds to the amount of several thousand dollars, and that they are now striving to devise further means to accomplish the object of their appointment. They further report that they are anxious to have all their movements fully understood and approved by the Synod, and to that end are ready to answer any inquiries which Synod may be inclined to propose.'"