

**WENDELL PHILLIPS;  
THE FAITH OF AN  
AMERICAN**

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Wendell Phillips; the faith of an American by George Edward Woodberry

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**GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY**

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AMERICAN**

**BY**

**GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY**



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THIS ADDRESS WAS DELIVERED ON NOVEMBER 29, 1911  
BEFORE THE WOODBERRY SOCIETY AND ITS FRIENDS  
AT ITS FIRST MEETING, IN THE HALL OF THE GROLIER  
CLUB, NEW YORK, TO MARK THE ONE HUNDREDTH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF WENDELL PHILLIPS





## WENDELL PHILLIPS

### THE FAITH OF AN AMERICAN

**I** THANK you, Mr. President; and, my friends, no words can express the pleasure I take in this welcome, nor my sense of the honor you have done me. I greet the Society at the beginning of its career; and it is a great happiness to find myself asked to link with the occasion the memory of a man who was to me, and still is, one of the masters of my life.

I want to tell you how it was that Wendell Phillips came to be, in my eyes, the ideal American. Do you realize what it was to be a boy in the days of the Civil War? Almost my first clear memory is of the family table when one of my older brothers burst in at the door, crying out, "They have fired on Sumter!" So deeply was that scene imprinted on my eyes that I can still see how every one looked. A few days later a tall tree from the old family wood-

lot lay stripped of its branches in the yard, like a mast,—our flag-pole; and from it the flag floated throughout the war. The young soldiers were camped on the common where I played, opposite the house; and when they went off to war, my father made them the farewell speech. I can see, as if it were yesterday, the reading of the evening newspaper after their first battle, for one son of the house, a cousin, was with them; and I can see the letter which two years later brought the message of his death. I picked lint, as every one did, for the wounded after Gettysburg. My earliest literary treasure, which was the file of my Sunday-school paper, I sent off to the army for soldiers' reading. I suppose it was my dearest possession. I remember the early April dawn when I was waked by the bells ringing for Lee's surrender, and the darker morning of Lincoln's death. I recall that the boy who told me the news was seated on the arm of a wheelbarrow;

and as I ran home, frightened and awed, I saw men crying in the street and heard women weeping in the houses, and while I was telling my tale, the bells began to toll.

Four years of this. I was but a child, but I shared the emotion of a nation. I do not think one can overestimate the power of such an experience to permeate and, as it were, drench the soul. I believe it gave moral depth to my nature, and lodged the principle of devotion to great causes in the very beatings of my heart. I was born at once, from the first flash of my intelligence, into the world of ideas; my first emotions were exercised in a nation's pulses; high instincts put forth in my breast. I was but one of thousands. I do not wish to appear singular, or to exaggerate. This is merely what it was to be a boy in those days. But child though I was, I feel that I cannot exaggerate the passion that was poured along my veins