

**ADDRESSES AT THE
INAUGURATION OF PROFESSOR
NOAH PORTER, AS PRESIDENT OF
YALE COLLEGE, WEDNESDAY,
OCTOBER 11, 1871. PP. 11-65**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649019564

Addresses at the Inauguration of Professor Noah Porter, as President of Yale College,
Wednesday, October 11, 1871. pp. 11-65 by Various

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VARIOUS

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AT THE

INAUGURATION OF

PROFESSOR NOAH PORTER, D.D., LL.D.,

AS

PRESIDENT OF YALE COLLEGE.

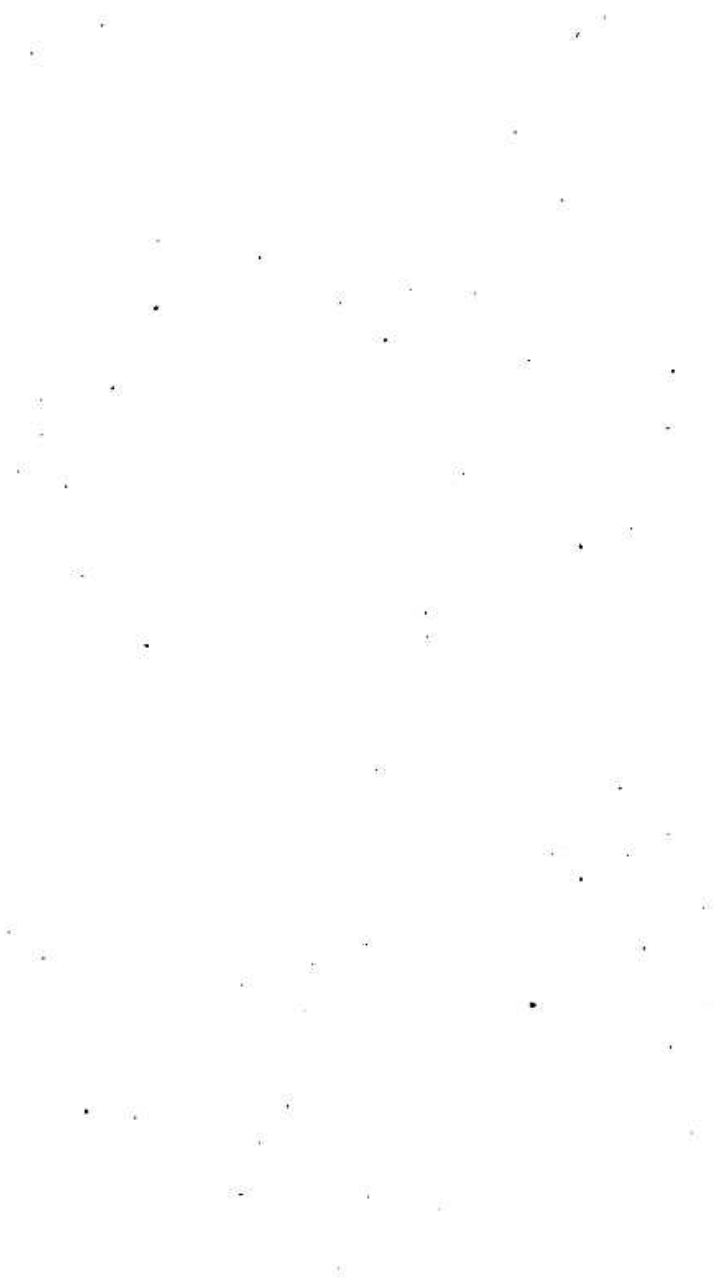
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1871.

NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER AND COMPANY
1871.

ADDRESS OF INDUCTION

BY

PRESIDENT WOOLSEY.



ADDRESS.

I AM happy that I can give thanks to God for his blessing upon this College, and upon the administration of its affairs, during the last quarter of a century. Never were its prospects and hopes brighter than at this present moment. And I rejoice that I can commit the office, which I now formally resign, into the hands of one who is perfectly well acquainted with the affairs of the College, who has been tested by an official connection with it of twenty-five years, who has honored it by his writings, who commands, as I believe, the respect and confidence of all,—of the public, the trustees, the graduates, and the faculties.

To you, Sir, according to a formality of ancient date, I commit this charter and this seal; *a charter* which in its simplicity and liberality has long provided an enlightened and efficient government over the institution, and which, as I hope and believe, by the recent change in one of its provisions, will more effectually pledge the forty-five hundred living graduates to active measures for its prosperity; and *a seal*, which has been affixed with rare moderation to questionable degrees, and which, I augur, will be the certificate of true scholarship, as well as of high scientific and literary reputation, hereafter.

In laying down my office I do not intend to set forth or to defend the principles upon which I, together with my colleagues, have endeavored to exercise the power committed to us by the Corporation in instructing and governing the College. I cannot, however, forbear to mention three points in which the faculties have been greatly favored,—so greatly, indeed, that if they have been unsuccessful, the fault must be laid not at the door of the Corporation, but somewhere else. *One of these is the confidence which the Corporation has reposed.*

in them. The Board, in whose hands the ultimate and highest decision rests, have ever felt that their interference, without the request of the officers of instruction, in the study and order of the institution, would be uncalled for and unwise; that independent, unsolicited action on their part would amount to a censure of the faculties, and would lead to discord and confusion. With scarcely an exception, no law has been passed, no officer appointed, unless after full consultation and exchange of views between the boards of control and of instruction. And hence, if there are defects in our system, the faculties are, as they ought to be, mainly responsible; if an inefficient or unfaithful officer comes into a chair of instruction, the faculties, who know him best, and not the Corporation, are to bear whatever censure is justly due. I hope that this may always continue. I would not indeed have the Corporation a mere organ to carry into effect the will of their subordinate officers; I would have them think and judge for themselves, have their ears open to all complaints against the system of teaching or of governing, and see that the instructions are faithfully and successfully given; but to interfere, "*nisi dignus vindice nodus,*" would be in the highest degree unwise; it would be to reduce the faculties to the condition of mere agents, and to drive away the best officers from the institution.

And growing out of this wise liberty conceded to the officers, there is another favorable point in the position of the college officers, — that, while the general tradition of what a college ought to be is tolerably fixed, *changes have constantly taken place* with the enlargement of the corps of instructors, with the raising of the standard of scholarship, and with the demand for a higher education in the country. The best thing about the changes is that they have been made in all quietness, without flourish of trumpets, each at its time, and not all at once, dictated by the desire of scientific and literary improvement, and not by that of adding to the eclat of the institution. Thus, in the academic department, the Senior year is worth vastly more to the student than it was twenty-five years ago; the methods of instruction have been greatly

improved ; several of the modern languages have been introduced ; the system of examinations is on a wholly new basis ; the students are classified according to their attainments ; and optional studies are allowed without at all overthrowing the old curriculum. So also in the Scientific School, the requisitions for entrance have been made more severe at the risk of deterring many candidates, and the means of instruction have been increased by the self-denial and zeal of the professors, until the School, in its sphere, takes the highest rank in the judgment of the whole country. And to mention but one other mark of progress, the recent enlargement of the course for graduates in philology and science, brought about by the professors themselves, is a most hopeful indication of the future usefulness and influence of the university. So may it ever be ; may the spirit of true science, ever ready to diffuse itself, and acting on a well conceived plan, be more and more the spirit of Yale College, emanating from the teaching faculties and encouraged by the Corporation.

There is a third particular to which I wish to call attention, in which we are, as I think, greatly favored : it is that *the President*, by tradition and in conformity with a right view prevailing here, *takes an active part in the instruction.* This of course is not peculiar to us, but the tendency in so large a seat of learning, is to throw so many affairs into his hands that he can engage in no other duty. If the choice were between a President who did his official business chiefly by a secretary, and one who could give no time to teaching on account of his other occupations, we should not, I think, long hesitate, even if we feared that the occupation of his time in instruction would prevent him from doing some things which would be beneficial to the College. I have always felt that the details of my office were my duty and my burden, but the teaching of willing students and the pursuit of some science with them, my duty and my joy ; so that if the office were to run along in the rut of details and official acts and consultations only, I, for one, would not think it worth taking. The President of a college ought in some department of study to impress himself on his students as a man of learning and

of thought ; he ought to be near to them in the influences of the lecture-room, and to be one of themselves ; his character ought to be so within the reach of their eyes that they can confide in him and respect him, if he is worthy of having such sentiments entertained towards him. Instead of which a mere manager of affairs has no appreciable influence on thought or character ; and it would be well if, feeling the inferiority of his position, he does not make himself of importance in questionable ways of interference.]

I trust, then, that amid all the changes which will come, these advantages, for such they seem to me to be, will be retained in the institution.

And there is another thing which I hope will always be present here, with the consideration of which I will close this brief address. [I hope that, *as long as the College lasts, it will be the abode of religion*, of teachers who believe in Christ and lead a religious life, and of scholars who feel that a noble character is something infinitely more precious than learning.

If indeed it were necessary for the promotion of religion in colleges that their spirit should be sectarian, or even that of a denomination, above all, if it should be proselyting, I should say that a great difficulty lay in the way of a truly good education ; and the question then would be : Ought colleges as they are now conceived of, to exist at all ? For we take into our hands many young minds at an age and a point of culture and discipline when they are not able to be independent guides for themselves. If they came to the halls of science, already mature and prepared to begin their life-study, established in whatever it concerned them to know, except that one science or profession which was to be the lasting occupation of their powers, then there would be some reason for leaving them wholly to themselves in other respects, and for not offering to them that amount of guidance which is consistent with training in manly thought. For they would be able to estimate their responsibilities ; they would have the discipline and the instruments for ascertaining what is true ; they would feel the weight of a speedy entrance into the great world of men. But as things are, in the immaturity of the reason of the actual