DEDICATION AND INAUGURATION OF THE VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY; NASHVILLE TENNESSEE; OCT. 3, 4, 1875

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DEDICATION AND INAUGURATION

OF THE

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY.

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE, OCT. 3, 4, 1875.



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Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

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CONTENTS.

Preface	5
4 7 - 1100 4)	
DEDICATION EXERCISES.	
Sermon by Bishop Doggett:	20
Subject—"The Dynamics of Christianity; or, Its System of Moral Forces"	
Dedication Hymn	25
Sermon by Bishop Wightman:	
Subject—"Christ the Center and Bond of the Universe"	27
Dedication Ode	36
\$S	
INAUGURATION EXERCISES.	
Address by His Excellency Governor PORTER	37
Address by the Rev. Charles F. Deems, D.D.:	*
Subject-"Relations of the University to Religion"	39
Address by the Rev. A. A. Lipscomb, D.D.:	
Subject—"Relations of the University to General Educa-	
tion"(3)	67 12:

4	CONTENTS.	
Bisl	nop McTyeire's Address to the Faculties 89	
Cha	ncellor Garland's Response 90	
Inat	guration Ode 93	
Res	olutions of the Board of Trust and the Faculties. 95	
Disc	course by Thomas O. Summers, D.D.:	
	Subject—"Character and Design of the Biblical Department of the University"	

PREFACE.

THIS volume is meant to be the beginning of a series, to be issued annually. Addresses on Commencement and other special occasions, Baccalaureate Sermons, and such Scientific Discourses and Lectures as may be delivered in the Course of Instruction, and be thought proper for publication, will constitute the material for future volumes of the Vanderbury Series, of uniform edition with the present one.

It is proposed, in this way, to make a contribution to general literature that shall possess permanent value. Unlike the justly celebrated Bampton Lectures, and other similar courses of lectures which generous founders have provided for, the subjects of this and following volumes will be found to be various—suited to the times in which they appear; but like them, it is to be hoped, in this—the best thoughts of the best minds on problems most worthy of public attention. A history of current thought, and a defense of truth against present existing objections, will, therefore, be a feature of these publications. The first volume will be accepted as a fair specimen of this style.

The Alumni of the older institutions of learning cannot but regret that productions similar to those herein and hereafter to be preserved—productions of orators and essayists of the first order, stimulated to their highest effort by appreciative surroundings—have never been given to the world. If published, they exist now only in fugitive pamphlets, scarcely to be found, or are bound up with other miscellaneous works of their authors, and not readily accessible.

The candid reader will require no apology for being presented, along with graver matter, with the connecting incidents of the Dedication and Inauguration Exercises which are peculiar to the beginning. And he will also be pleased to have, as a part of this Preface, some account of the foundation of the Institution of which this volume is a kind of first-fruits.

The University owes its foundation to the munificence of Mr. Cornelius Vandershut, a citizen of New York, who, on the 27th of March, 1873, made a donation of Five Hundred Thousand Dollars for this purpose, to which he afterward added more.

The acknowledged want of the means of a higher Christian education than could be obtained within their bounds led several Annual Conferences, in the year 1871, to appoint delegates to a Convention, to "consider the subject of a University such as would meet the wants of the Church and country." The Convention met in Memphis, January 24, 1872, and was composed of delegates from Middle Tennessee, West Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

The Convention was in session four days, and adopted a plan for a University. Under the plan a Board of Trust was nominated and authorized to obtain a Charter of Incorporation, under the title of "The Central University of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South."

A liberal Charter was obtained that year, and the Board of Trust met January 16, 1873, and completed its organization. By-laws were adopted, and agents appointed to solicit funds. A University in fact, as well as in name, had been determined on; in the words of the Convention, "An institution of learning of the highest order and upon the surest basis, where the youth of the Church and the country may prosecute theological, literary, scientific, and professional studies to an extent as great, and in a manner as thorough, as their wants demand." The members of the Convention were not ignorant of the vastness of the undertaking, nor of the magnitude of funds essential to success. Their judgment in the matter was expressed in the form of a resolution declaring that One Million of Dollars was necessary to perfect their plans and realize fully their aims; and so important was it, in their estimation, to avoid an abortive effort, that they refused to authorize steps toward the selection of a site and the opening of any department of the University until the public showed itself to be in sympathy with the movement by a valid subscription of Five Hundred Thousand Dollars.

Such, however, was the exhausted condition of the South, and so slow its recuperation under the disorganized state of its labor, trade, and governments, that the first efforts to raise funds showed the impossibility of the enterprise. The yearning desire of our people seemed destined to disappointment for this and following generations, and the well-laid scheme was already—in the judgment of some of its warmest friends—a failure. At this crisis Mr. VANDERBULT came to their help. In his sympathy for a people struggling to revive their fortunes, and to secure for their posterity the highest blessing of Christian civilization, he stepped forward and, by his princely gift, gave form and substance to the plan. The Board of Trust, in accepting the donation, as an expression of gratitude resolved to change the name of the projected Institution to Vax-DERBUT UNIVERSITY; and on their petition the Charter was so amended. Thus the Vanderbill, like the more successful institutions of learning in our country—as Harvard, Amherst, Dartmouth, Cornell, Peabody inherits the name of its founder.

The following important paper—the original proposition of Mr. Van-

PREFACE.

DEBBILT concerning the University—is here inserted as the fundamental fact in its history:

New York, March 17, 1873.

To Bishop H. N. McTvrire, of Nashville:

I make the following offer, through you, to the corporation known as The Central University of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South:

First-I authorize you to procure suitable grounds, not less than from twenty to fifty seres, properly located, for the spection of the following work.

SECOND-To erect thereon suitable buildings for the uses of the University.

THIRD—You to procure plans and specifications for such buildings, and submit them to me; and, when approved, the money for the foregoing objects to be furnished by me as it is needed.

FOURTH—The sum included in the foregoing items, together with the "Endowment Fund" and the "Library Fund," shall not be less in the aggregate than Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$500,000); and these last two funds shall be furnished to the corporation so soon as the buildings for the University are completed and ready to be used.

The foregoing being subject to the following conditions:

First—That you accept the Presidency of the Board of Trust, receiving therefor a salary of Three Thousand Dollars per annum, and the use of a dwelling-house, free of rent, on or near the University grounds.

SECOND—Upon your death, or resignation, the Board of Trust shall elect a President.

THIRD—To check hasty or injudicious appropriations or measures, the President shall have authority, whenever he objects to any act of the Board, to signify his objections, in writing, within ten days after its enactment; and no such act is to be valid unless, upon reconsideration, it be passed by a three-fourths vote of the Board.

FAURING—The amount set apart by me as an "Endowment Fund" shall be forever inviolable, and shall be kept safely invested, and the interest and recemes, only, used in carrying on the University. The form of investment which I prefer, and in which I reserve the privilege to give the money for the said Fund, is in soven per cent. First Mortgage Bonds of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company, to be "registered" in the name of the corporation, and to be transferable only upon a special vote of the Board of Trust.

FIFTH-The University is to be located in, or near, Nashville, Tennessee.

Respectfully submitted:

C. VANDERBILT.

At a called meeting of the Board of Trust, on March 26, 1873, the above letter, containing Mr. Vandershit's proposition, was duly presented, and the following resolutions were adopted:

RESOLVED, That we accept with profound gratitude, this donation, with all the terms and conditions specified in said proposition.

RESOLVED, That, as an expression of our appreciation of this liberality, we instruct
the Committee hereinester mentioned to ask the Honorable Chancery Court to
change the name and style of our corporation from The Central University of the
Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to The Vandershitz University; and that
the Institution, thus endowed and chartered, shall be from henceforth known
and called by this name.

Mr. VANDEERILT afterward added to his original gift, without any mate-