YALE COLLEGE: SOME THOUGHTS RESPECTING ITS FUTURE. A SERIES OF ARTICLES

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Yale College: Some Thoughts Respecting Its Future. A Series of Articles by Timothy Dwight

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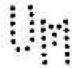
A SERIES OF ARTICLES,

BY

TIMOTHY DWIGHT,
PROFESSOR IN THE THEOLOGICAL DEPARTMENT.



NEW HAVEN:
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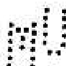
1871.

The Articles, which are here brought together, were originally printed in the New Englander—in the numbers of that Quarterly which appeared in July and October, 1870, and in April, July, and October, 1871. The author, as he now presents them in a collected form to the graduates and friends of Yale College, indulges the hope that they may be of some small service in the way of awakening large and comprehensive views of what the institution needs, and, thus, of promoting the growth of a true University in New Haven. One or two of the suggestions presented in the opening Articles have been adopted within the last six months, (in particular, certain initiatory steps have been taken with reference to a more perfect organization of some of the courses of study in the Philosophical Department,) but the author has deemed it not improper to leave them in their original form, begging the reader to notice the date of their first publication, and to bear in mind their importance as connected with the wisest and most comprehensive plans for the future. He would only add the expression of his confidence that the recently developed enthusiasm of the graduates, in connection with the matter of the Woolsey Fund, will incline them to pardon any repetition, which they may notice, in his earnest appeal to the College authorities to enter upon the work of providing for its most vital present want—the want of greater pecuniary endowments.

YALE COLLEGE,
Nov. 10, 1871.



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YALE COLLEGE:

SOME THOUGHTS RESPECTING ITS FUTURE.

FIRST ARTICLE.

There is a somewhat general feeling, we believe, among those who are most deeply interested in Yale College, that the institution is about entering on a new era of its existence. The work of the last seventy years, it is felt, has been a good and a great one, but it is mainly accomplished. Like that of the first century of the College history, and like that of every epoch in the progress of every growing institution, it has laid the foundation for what is larger and higher than itself—not higher, indeed, in the nobleness of the working, but in that the working is nearer to the final and full completion of the plan. The past now is to open itself toward and into the future, and a great step forward is to be or ought to be taken. Indications of this are seen on every side. The suggestions which are presented by those who think earnestly upon the subject of education; the criticisms of the College which, for some reason or other, have been so frequent of late and which, we regret to say, have not been always made either in a wise or a generous spirit; the proposition to change the governing board of the institution by the introduction of new members from the alumni; and the sentiments and aspirations of the instructors within the College walls, all alike bear witness that the coming years are looked upon as containing within themselves possibilities and hopes, which as yet have been unrealized. What are to be the characteristic features of the new era, and what its peculiar and distinctive work, are, therefore, questions

of much importance, at the present time, and worthy of serious consideration. Our object is to present, in a series of Articles, some thoughts in answer to these questions.

The first and most important work to be done in the years immediately before us is, as we believe, a work of *unification*. Yale College, like most of the older American Colleges, began as a sort of high school. It carried forward the education of the young men who came to it beyond the point which they had reached in the lower schools of the time, and opened the way for them to enter upon their active life. But it was limited in its aims, and in the results which it accomplished, by the limitations of the age. Men had not come, as yet, to take the widest views of education. The various sciences and branches of learning had scarcely begun to develop themselves—some of them had not begun to exist. Even in the department of theological science, which was nearest to the minds of the fathers, the demands and possibilities were comparatively small. A general course, moving on but a little way, was all which, as it would seem, could be devised. The wisdom of the early founders was displayed, not in their accomplishment of the entire work, but in the fact that the plan which they formed was one which would, readily and naturally, enlarge itself to meet every requirement or change of the future, so soon as the demand should arise. The school, which they established, would become a university in the course of generations. The College, which, in their day, was a whole in itself, would gradually become but one among several portions of a greater institution. It would lose something of its own prominence as it associated with itself other departments for more special training, but it would gain a new honor in their company, which it could never know without them. It was after the beginning of the present century that the change came. The new features of the times, and the growth to which we have alluded in all branches of knowledge, gave the opportunity, and, in giving the opportunity, they presented the call for a new work. The sagacious and far-seeing mind of the remarkable man, who, at that period, had the interests of the College in his special keeping, understood the call. He saw that, if the institution lingered in the

old work, it might increase, indeed, in numbers and in influence, but it could never take the high place which was offered to it among the educational institutions of the country. Professional schools must be established, which should receive the students at their graduation from the collegiate or academic department, and fit them, by a special course of study, for their own peculiar sphere in the world. The beginning, at least, must be made, which should prepare the way for future growth and render possible the completion of the work. Accordingly, at the earliest practicable moment, he established one of these schools, and devised the plan for another, which was founded a few years later. His immediate successors, who had been largely under his influence, carried forward the same plans. All the professional departments of the College were established, or strengthened, until some of them attained a considerable eminence. Finally, within the past twenty-five years, the Scientific School and the department of Philosophy and Philology have made the institution complete in its parts. The work of which we have thus briefly spoken, together with the advancement of scholarship in every branch of learning within the College, has been the work of the past half-century. We have alluded to it, however, not for its own sake, but because we would call attention to a point which is of especial importance. The history of these two great periods of the past shows that the development in this, as in other similar institutions in our country, has not been a development of all the parts together. It has been, on the contrary, a growth for a hundred years of one department alone by itself, and then an addition to this one department of others, which, from their later origin, have seemed to be gathered around it as their center. The life and vigor of our American Colleges—even where they have widened into Universities, as at Yale and Harvard—have continued largely at this center; and the governing powers have regarded the academical department as the object of their peculiar and almost their sole care. The institutions have thus, with all their enlargement and success, been, after all, rather colleges with certain outside sections than universities made up of coördinate and coequal branches. They have not had a well-rounded and perfect development,

but one which has been partial and one-sided in its character. This result has been a natural, perhaps in some measure a necessary, result of the origin and history of the institutions. But of the reality of the fact we think no intelligent observer can doubt.

Now the point, which we have to urge, is, that the future years must unite these departments into a common whole, giving the same care to the growth of all. The age of mere colleges in this country, in a certain sense, is past. Not that colleges will not continue to exist, and to be needed, and to do a good work. But they are not to be the highest institutions to which we look forward, and which we shall ask for hereafter. The great centers of education, like Yale and Harvard, must be centers of universal education; and, if they cease to be so, they will sink to the level of a lower class of seminaries, which make no such claims as they are making. It needs no argument to prove this. The very peculiarity, which distinguishes these higher institutions as a class by themselves, is not the superiority of their instruction for undergraduate academical students or their superiority in respect to the number of their undergraduates. If these things be all which they have to elevate them, they will only reach the higher places among the institutions which have merely an academical course. They will be far in advance, indeed, of the colleges just established in the new states, but they will still belong in their company. If they are to leave their company altogether, they need something more than this. To the university—in the sense in which the word is most appropriately used, that is, as distinguished from the college—what have sometimes been called the "outside" schools are essential. They are, even, *the essential thing*. It will scarcely require any more argument to show, that, if these "outside" schools are to hold their proper place and to maintain a steady and permanent growth, this name, which has been assigned to them because their origin was later than that of the collegiate branch and they were thus added to it, must be laid aside as no longer suited to mark their real position. They must, in a word, become "inside" schools, having each and all of them the same rights and privileges and care with the original academic section of the

university. If they do not have this, they cannot prosper in the long run. If they are left to provide for themselves altogether—in the expressive phrase of recent years, "hanging on the verge of the government"—they may succeed, for a while, through the power and self-devotion of the members of their faculties, but, when these men are called away or die, the institutions will prove to have little or no independent life of their own. They will show that they have rested on the reputation of individuals, and that the want of constant and watchful care from the central power has been fatal to them. We hold it to be even self-evident, that, if the governing body of any institution or of any country give their thoughts to one part of it alone, or if they manifestly place one part in their thoughts above the others, these other portions will, sooner or later, suffer in their life in consequence. Neglect, if it be only partial, always checks and dwarfs the thing neglected. If it be total, it destroys it—not, perhaps, as speedily, but almost as surely as does a violent putting it out of existence. If the medical school of a university, for example, is looked upon as of little consequence, because its number of students is smaller than that of the undergraduate or some other department, or because it is very limited in its funds and it seems a difficult matter to increase them, or because medical science, for the time, is regarded with less favor than physical or theological science, or for any other reason, it will, after a few years at the latest, lose something of its vital energy. It will gradually move towards the level at which others would place it, and, if it finally falls even below that level, it need, surely, be no matter of surprise. The feeling must be—if success is to be attained—a widely different one from this. The spirit of the University must be the spirit of unity and fraternity. If one member suffers, the sentiment must be that all the members, of necessity, suffer with it, and if one member rejoices, that all the members rejoice with it. So far from leaving those that are weaker or younger to move on as best they can, these more needy portions must have so much the greater encouragement and aid. This is the rule in every other institution or body in the world, and the necessity of its observance in these great educational institutions requires only to be stated, in order to be admitted