

**THE LIFE AND
CHARACTER OF
LEONARD WOODS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649016884

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EDWARDS A. PARK

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Indocher:
WARREN F. DRAPER.
1880.

Request
Prof. H. H. Brown
March 20, 1902.
(977)

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The substance of the following Memorial was originally prepared to be delivered at the funeral of President Woods. It was afterwards remodelled for the purpose of reading it to a circle of his friends in Boston. A portion of it was subsequently and informally read in Bartlet Chapel to members of the Andover Theological Seminary, on the day of the completion of the monument over his grave. Many of his relatives and friends have requested the Memorial for the press, and it is now published in compliance with their desire.

MEMORIAL.

LEONARD WOODS, whose life and character we are now to commemorate, was born at West Newbury, Massachusetts, on the twenty-fourth of November, one thousand eight hundred and seven. He died in Boston on the twenty-fourth of December, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-eight, at the age of seventy-one years and one month. His father was Dr. Leonard Woods, of whom it need only be said, that without his aid, and that of Dr. Eliphalet Pearson, the Andover Theological School would probably have never existed. The mother of Mr. Woods was Abby Wheeler, whose virtues were portrayed by Prof. Stuart, and by other appreciative friends, in a pamphlet which appeared soon after her demise. In his infancy the parents removed to Andover, and here they trained their child in the principles of a strict though kindly Puritanism. Some parts of the following narrative will be unintelligible except in view of the fact, that the surprising memory, the beautiful tastes, the pliant temper, the sweet, obedient, and docile spirit, the filial affection of the boy moulded the character of the Professor and President. 'The child was the father of the man.' His early and peculiar love for his parents and his ancestors bloomed out into a love for an idealized Puritanism which he associated with them. It is a noteworthy incident that all the Founders of our Theological Seminary, and all its early Professors, were attracted to him in his boyhood; and their words of kindness were sometimes recalled by him in his later years with a reverential gratitude. He might have been fitly called the child of the Institution.

At the age of eight years he entered Phillips Academy, and he continued in it eight years. Many still remember him as at that time a boy accurate in the use of the English language, quick in his acquisition of Latin and Greek, not addicted to athletic sports, but absorbed with the classic authors. He was noted for dignity rather than playfulness. What is said of boys as such may be said of him with an emphasis: "Maxima debetur pueris reverentia." Still he was loved not less than admired. His future eminence was predicted by Eliphalet Pearson, the President of the Board of Trustees. That learned President was accustomed to address the students of the Academy at its public anniversaries; and his remarks often aroused the enthusiasm of young Woods. One of these addresses in particular made a life-long impression on the susceptible boy, and stirred him to move onward and upward. It was often suggested to his mind by its closing words: "Juvenes! pergite, pergite ad astra." Among his contemporaries in the school were such men as Dr. Alexander H. Vinton, Dr. William A. Stearns, Mr. Nathaniel P. Willis, Mr. Robert Rantoul, Mr. Osgood Johnson. There were other names forming a bright constellation, but none of them shone brighter than the name of Leonard Woods. At the closing anniversary of his academic life he was the cynosure of all eyes. All the adjectives applied to him were superlatives. On that day it might have been said of him as was said by Dr. Kirkland of Fisher Ames: "He did not need the smart of guilt to make him virtuous, nor the regret of folly to make him wise."¹ Had he been called from earth on that day, we can easily imagine the elegiac strains of many a harp mourning over one flower of genius withered away before it had fully opened.—'The beauty of Israel is fallen on its high places.' 'As soon as men had begun to turn their telescopes toward the star, it faded away.'

Having entered the Academy in September 1815, and left it in August 1823, he was admitted, in the autumn of that

¹ Life and Works of Fisher Ames, Vol. i. p. 17.

year, to the Freshman Class of Dartmouth College. In 1824, however, he transferred his relation from Dartmouth to Union College. Here his plastic mind received a deep and lasting impress from Dr. Eliphalet Nott, the President of the Institution, and from Dr. Alonzo Potter, then Professor of Mathematics in the College, and afterward Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania. Among his intimate friends at Union was Dr. Horatio Potter, the present Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of New York. Several of his college classmates have become eminent. One of them, Professor William Thompson of the Hartford Theological Seminary, says of Mr. Woods: "He stood the first in his college class. I think that he reached the highest mark in every branch of study. His essays and poems were a rich treat to our Adelpic Society, of which he was a member and an ornament. His feats in the composition of Greek Iambics and Hexameters were regarded as wonderful."¹

In the autumn of 1827 he entered the Andover Theological Seminary. In different parts of his Seminary course he was a classmate of Dr. Wm. G. Schauffler, the noted missionary; Dr. Wm. Adams, and Dr. Geo. B. Cheever of New York; Prof. B. B. Edwards of Andover, Prof. Charles C. Jones of Columbia, South Carolina, and also of Columbia, Georgia, and Prof. Thompson of Hartford, Connecticut, who was his roommate at Andover, as well as at Schenectady. No member of the Theological School was better versed than Mr. Woods in the niceties of the Hebrew and Greek languages. He was interested not only in the accents and grammatical forms of these languages, but also in their genius, their spirit, their literature. Not one of his associates had a larger acquaintance than he with the writings of the French, German, and old English authors.

During the second and third years of his Seminary course he was engaged in translating the Lectures on Christian Theology of the German Professor, George Christian Knapp.

¹ Spirit of the Pilgrims, v. 531.