

**LEONARD WOODS: A
DISCOURSE BEFORE BOWDOIN
COLLEGE AND THE MAINE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 1879**

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Leonard Woods: A Discourse Before Bowdoin College and the Maine Historical Society,
Wednesday, July 9, 1879 by Charles Carroll Everett

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CHARLES CARROLL EVERETT

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LEONARD WOODS.

A DISCOURSE

BY

PROF. CHARLES CARROLL EVERETT, D. D.

BEFORE

BOWDOIN COLLEGE AND THE MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

WEDNESDAY, JULY 9, 1879.

BRUNSWICK:

TELEGRAPH PRINTING OFFICE.

1879.

DIED in Boston, December 24th, 1878, LEONARD WOODS, D.D., LL.D.,
late President of Bowdoin College.

RESOLUTIONS

Passed at a special meeting of the Academical Faculty of Bowdoin
College, January 9, 1879.

Desiring to give some expression to our sense of the loss which the College has sustained in the death of Dr. LEONARD WOODS, for many years its honored President, and also to the feeling of personal bereavement in those of us who were permitted to know him in the intimacy of college associations, we, the members of the Academical Faculty of Bowdoin College, do adopt the following memorial resolutions as a tribute of affection to the memory of a cherished friend.

Resolved, That we have heard with deep sorrow of the death of Dr. Woods, who, through a long and brilliant service in the Presidency of this College, filled the best years of his life with unwearied efforts to promote its efficiency, to elevate its intellectual and moral character, to increase its resources and to give it an honorable and influential position among the educational institutions of the country.

Resolved, That we recognize with gratitude all that he was able to accomplish for the College by virtue of his high intellectual character, the fine quality of his mind, his thorough and unassuming culture, the purity of his life and his fidelity to the trusts committed to him; and that we shall always remember with pleasure the grace and dignity with which he represented the College abroad and presided over its regular sessions and its anniversary gatherings at home; the eloquence of his occasional discourses, which were both a charm and a stimulus to those who were permitted to listen to them, and the cordial and kindly relations that always marked his intercourse with his colleagues, with the students and with the Alumni.

Resolved, That we remember with thankfulness the winning courtesy of his manner, the never-failing charm of his intercourse, and his beautiful Christian spirit as displayed in the various social relations of

his life; and though we grieve that these things will henceforth be only memories to us, we rejoice that they will still have power to stimulate and to comfort us.

Resolved, That while bowing in resignation to this dispensation of a wise and merciful Providence, we desire to offer to those most nearly touched by this bereavement the assurance of our respectful and unfeigned sympathy, and also to unite with them in thanks for a life that was so full of beauty, and a death that was so full of peace.

Resolved, That a memorial discourse commemorative of the character and services of this beloved Head of the College and venerated friend, be pronounced at Brunswick during the approaching Commencement season; and that the Maine Historical Society, of which Dr. Woods was a most active and honored member, be invited to unite with the Alumni and friends of the College in such a memorial service, and to unite with the Government of the College in making suitable arrangements for the occasion.

In the Boards of Trustees and Overseers of Bowdoin College, July 10, 1879, it was

Voted, That the thanks of the College be returned to Professor C. C. Everett for his just and eloquent tribute to the memory of the late President Woods, and that a copy of the same be requested for publication.

MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

Brunswick, July 11, 1879.

Voted, That the thanks of the Society be tendered to Professor Everett for his eloquent and discriminating tribute to the memory of the late Dr. LEONARD WOODS, so long our venerated and beloved associate and friend, and that we unite with the College authorities in requesting a copy for publication.

DISCOURSE.

During the last year has died one who forty years ago this summer became the President of Bowdoin College, an office which he held for twenty-seven years. He was for many years the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Maine Historical Society, and one of its most efficient workers. It is fitting, then, that this College, with its Alumni, and the members of this Society, should unite to do honor to his memory. But while his relation to institutions justifies this public service, it does not fully explain it. The tribute that we bring is less official than personal. It is most of all the offering of loving and bereaved hearts.

Our late President, LEONARD WOODS, was born at Newbury, Massachusetts, November 24, 1807. A few months after his birth, his father, whose name he bore, removed with his family to Andover, where he became the first Professor of the Theological Seminary, in the foundation of which he had been largely instrumental. The father was known to the world as a keen disputant, a strong reasoner, a profound and somewhat dogmatic theologian. To his family he was known as one of the tenderest of fathers and the most genial of companions. He possessed a keen wit, which made him both prized as a friend and dreaded as an opponent.

The mother of the President was a daughter of Rev. Joseph Wheeler, of Harvard, Massachusetts. She was a woman of marked character and great sweetness of disposition, and an enthusiastic lover of the beauties of nature.

The family consisted of ten children, of whom Leonard was the fourth. This large family included many varieties of disposition and character, but was affectionate and harmonious. If any little difference did arise between the brothers, Leonard was the peace-maker.

His intercourse with his sisters, especially, perhaps with those nearest his own age, was tender and confidential. He interested himself in their studies and reading, and in whatever concerned them. This relation could not have been without influence upon his character, and may have prepared the way and furnished the ideal for those intimacies with ladies of talent and culture that formed so marked a feature of his after life. A classmate, who had admired the purity of his tastes, and the elevated tone of his character in college, writes, that he learned the secret of these when later he became familiar with the home in Andover, from which he went forth to meet the temptations of college life.

His surroundings in his childhood tended also to quicken his intellectual growth. There is a family tradition that the first word he uttered was, characteristically enough, the word *Theology*. We may assume, then, that this was at least among the earliest words he spoke. This shows not merely the capacity of the boy to seize the larger words, but still more the nature of the conversations that were held about his cradle. The group of theologians that used to gather at his father's house, Porter, Griffin, Stuart, and others,—the discussions that they carried on together in regard to the great themes that were interesting the religious world, must have done much to stimulate his thoughts and to direct them to theological inquiry. They would seem to have done more to stimulate and direct his thought than to

mould his opinions. Questions were started in his mind, the solution of which he sought in his own way. One might almost say, indeed, that an independent solution of them came to him without his seeking. It seems as if he were born to a certain course of thought and study, so early does he enter upon it. Here, if anywhere, we might almost accept the theory of pre-existence, or might believe that his spirit had been appointed to enter into life amid the courtesies and reverent religious thought and study of some mediæval court, so early do we meet that gracious presence and that peculiar mental tendency which characterized him in after years.

He was fitted for college at Phillips Academy, and entered Dartmouth College in the spring of 1824. He remained there, however, less than one term, and afterwards entered Union College as a Sophomore. The change was an important one, for it brought him into relations with President Nott, traces of whose influence will meet us as we proceed. At this college he graduated in 1827.

His college associations must have been very pleasant and helpful to him. Professor William Thompson, of Hartford, was his room-mate; President Wayland was a member of his class; and Bishop Potter of New York, though not a classmate, belonged to his more intimate circle of college friends.

When we try to picture him to ourselves as he was at this time, we need do little else than take off from the presence so familiar to us the traces that the fleeting years had left. The light, spare form, and almost feminine softness of features which seemed to bespeak forbearance and sympathy from comrades of a more robust physique, were soon found to be allied with manly firmness, resolution, and capacity for rather uncommon muscular performances. He was fond of solitary musing, but courteous and affable to all; while in his more intimate circles his literary acquisi-

tions and sparkling humor were greatly prized. He was marked, at the same time, by a certain unconventionality which perhaps added to the charm of his intercourse. As a scholar he excelled in all branches. The professors liked to test his knowledge by out of the way questions, and he was always equal to the emergency. In Greek his classmates consulted him with a confidence equal to that with which they turned to their teacher. In debate he stood supreme. Ethical questions in the discussions of the college literary society, had a special attraction for him. He often threw light upon many obscure points. As a poet he showed such promise that many of his friends have believed that poetry was his true vocation. The influence of Byron was then in the ascendant, and his classmates thought that there was something a little Byronic in his poems.

The time which his facility in acquisition gained for him, he devoted to a higher culture than the college routine could offer. His favorite authors were the older and graver English writers, such as Isaac Barrow and Jeremy Taylor. It is interesting to know that he had begun his patristic studies even before he entered college; and that what became later known as his mediævalism, manifested itself even in his college days.

On his graduation he delivered a poem, somewhat singularly entitled "The Suicide." Chatterton was its hero. It is an illustration of the methods of the time, or at least of the methods of Dr. Nott, that both the subject and the metre were assigned to him. He protested against the latter as unsuited to the theme, but no change was permitted. In spite of the cramping effect of this requirement, the poem showed indications of power, and was very warmly received. He closed the exercises of the day by a valedictory address to the class.

President Nott pronounced him on his graduation better