

**THEODORE DWIGHT WOOLSEY,  
D.D., LL.D. MEMORIAL ADDRESS  
BEFORE THE GRADUATES OF  
YALE UNIVERSITY, JUNE 24,  
1890**

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Theodore Dwight Woolsey, D.D., LL.D. Memorial address before the graduates of Yale university, June 24, 1890 by Timothy Dwight

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**TIMOTHY DWIGHT**

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MEMORIAL ADDRESS

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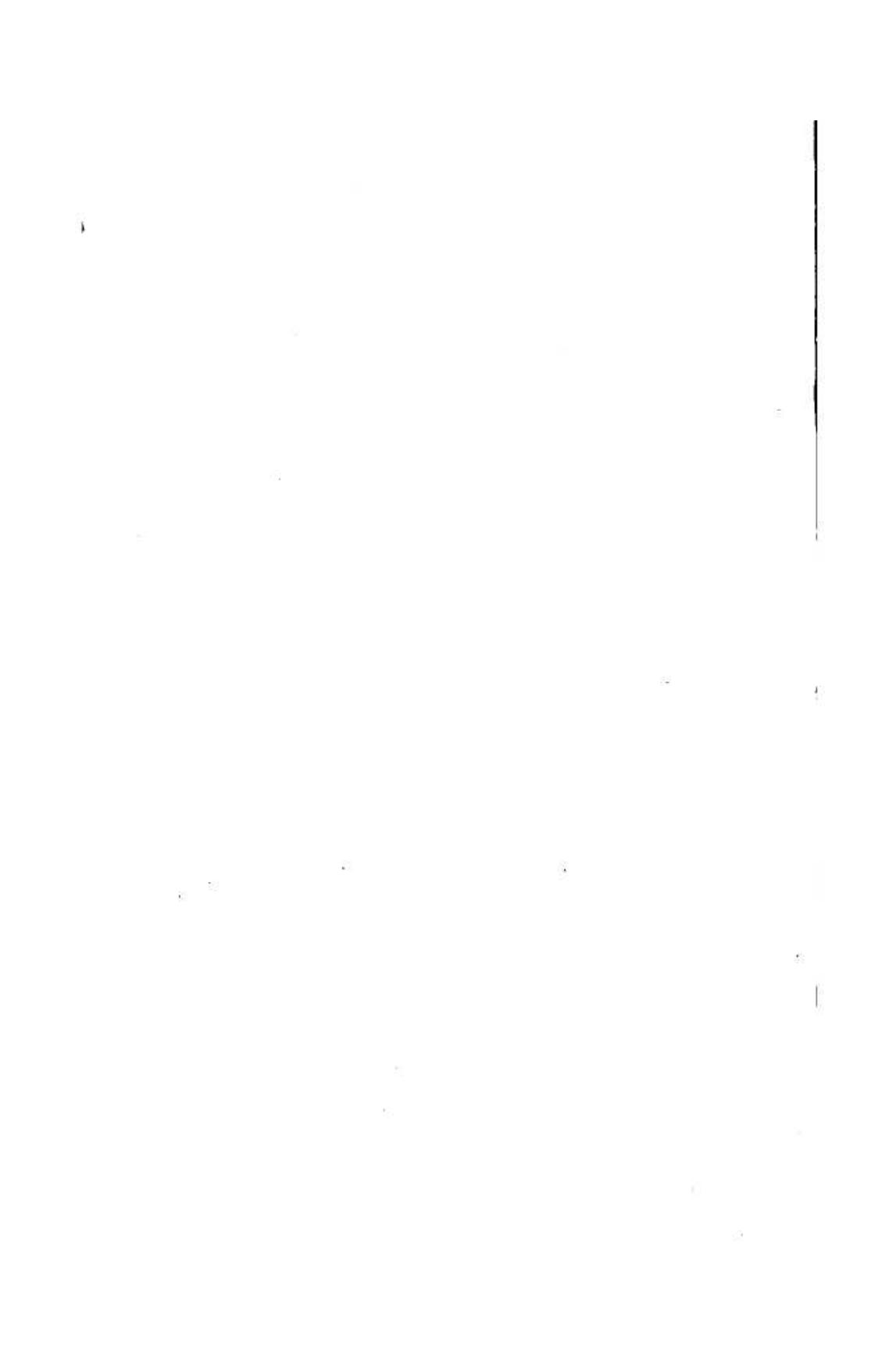
JUNE 24, 1890,

By PRESIDENT DWIGHT.

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1890.



## PRESIDENT WOOLSEY.

MEMORIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED IN BATTELL CHAPEL,  
JUNE 24TH, 1890, BY PRESIDENT DWIGHT.

DR. THEODORE DWIGHT WOOLSEY—what was his life in Yale College, and what was his work for it? Let me try to give you the simple story as best I may, and thus recall to your minds the thoughts and memories of other days. They will be inspiring memories and pleasant thoughts, I am sure, and will come to you most fittingly on this new anniversary of our University—the one which first follows the date of the ending of his long career.

I look backward in my thought, quite beyond the limits of my vision, to a fair autumn day in the year 1816, and I seem to see a slender, gentle youth coming forward with hesitation, and yet with confidence, to the doorway of entrance into the College life. His clear and penetrating eye bears witness of the intellect which illumines it, and his slightly bent figure suggests the scholarly habit and taste which soon make themselves manifest. Evidently of a cultured family and carrying in himself the inheritance of character and refinement, he wins the interest of all who test his fitness for the course of study which he desires to begin. Because of his name he is, of necessity, placed last in the list of the classmates who form the newly-entering company, but by reason of his power he gives promise at the outset of what is realized at the end. He is to be first among them all in the honors and successes belonging to the college years, and in the work and fame which pertain to the future. For the College itself and the students gathered within it for

nearly half a century, he is to become a vitalizing, energizing force of intellectual and moral life. What an interesting day that autumn day was, when viewed as the opening of the coming time. It was the beginning of a life-course, whose record will ever remain as a cherished possession of this home of learning. The youth, who passed within the gates as its hours were closing, was in later years the man whom we revered as he walked along his scholarly and Christian way, beneath the elms, and ever turned our thoughts to the higher things.

We may trace the influences which rested upon him as he entered on his College life as far back as the earliest days of the College history. In the year 1709, his great-grandfather on the paternal side took his Bachelor's degree from the Collegiate school which had been founded only nine years before. Eleven years later, in 1720, his ancestor of the same generation on the maternal side, was sent forth as a young graduate to begin his illustrious career. It seems more than a fancy or a dream of the imagination that, from these two men, there came down, through the century that intervened, the power which made his life what it was, and was to be. The intellectual and spiritual force which dwelt in Jonathan Edwards, and constituted the grand inheritance that he gave to his children, may well have passed, in somewhat of its fullness, to this descendant of his family, as it had done to others in an earlier generation. And the inspiration of the genuine spirit of the College itself could scarcely have failed to come to him from one who had breathed it into himself at the very beginning, as had Benjamin Woolsey. The youth had surely a noble birth-right, and there was, as we might almost say, a Divine pointing, far away in the distance, toward the sphere and the character of his work, when the time for it should arrive. With these influences of the past, those which surrounded him as he began his course of study in the College must have coöperated most happily.



The men whom he met here were men of inspiring power, and men who, in the manliest and most generous way, had consecrated themselves to the institution. The chief among them was the great teacher of his generation—a man, according to the universal testimony of his contemporaries and pupils, of lofty character, of peculiar magnetic power, and of wonderful gifts of mind and heart. He was nearly allied by blood to the youthful student, and had been an object of his admiration in his earlier years. The life of this honored man came to its end, indeed, a few months after the date of which we are thinking, but we cannot doubt that the relationship and association between the two had given, before the end, much of the best impulse for true living to the one who was so ready to receive it. The other teachers were the men, then in the freshness and vigor of their manly years, who carried forward the institution so brilliantly and successfully during the first half of the present century—Day and Silliman and Kingsley. These men were full of the scholarly life and spirit which was then beginning to be awakened in the country. They were enthusiastically given up to the studies which they had chosen, and as enthusiastically devoted to the interests of the students and the College. They had taken into themselves the spirit of the founders of the institution. They were heirs of its freedom, its genuineness, its love of true learning, and its honest Christian faith. They believed in it, and lived for it. The lessons which such men taught were lessons characteristic of the place. They spoke not only of learning in itself, but of this home of learning, and carried always to the student's mind the influence of the latter intermingled with the more general influence of the former. The atmosphere of the College was thus adapted to the youth who was enrolling himself in its membership. It quickened, as he breathed it, the life-powers which had been given him from his ancestors. The Divine working

for the early development of his educated life was in the line of the Divine pointing long before it began. The manhood, which was to be the result, could scarcely realize in itself any other character than that which had been prepared for it. The inheritance and the education united in making the intellectual scholar fashioned after the Yale type and characterized by the Yale spirit.

Such, as we picture him to ourselves, was Dr. Woolsey in the autumn of 1816—a bright, intelligent, studious youth, just closing his fifteenth year, with a mind eager for knowledge, a heart full of good impulses, a soul deep and rich enough to receive into itself whatever might strengthen it for right living. The gifts imparted by nature to himself and those which were transmitted to him from his ancestry combined to fit him for a life of highest usefulness in the intellectual sphere. They combined also, and in like measure, to make him ready, in his preparatory years, for everything pertaining to that sphere which could be offered to him. Once entered upon his College course, he gave himself readily and appreciatively to the appropriate work of the place. Immediately he took a prominent position as a scholar, commanding thereby the respect and esteem alike of his teachers and his fellow-students. He was retiring in his manner, unassuming in his disposition, indisposed to press himself forward. His intellectual clearness and vigor, however, were recognized by all. He grasped every subject, to which his thought was turned, with ease and with force. His mind was open on many sides. He was thoughtful, conscientious, earnest. He was sincere and truthful, having deep convictions, and being true to them with a manly honesty. He followed a quiet pathway through his college life, but it was a pathway of honor and success. He moved along his course in closest, yet friendly, rivalry with Solomon Stoddard, his classmate who afterwards stood in the foremost

rank among the Latin scholars of his generation, and in kindly association with Leonard Bacon, who became one of the leaders of men for the fifty years that followed. He surpassed the former in his scholarly record in the college years, and won from the latter the word of commendation which pronounced him the first of the whole brotherhood of the class as a man of intellectual power.

On leaving College he gave himself, for a year, to the study of law under the instruction of the eminent jurist, Mr. Charles Chauncey, of Philadelphia, and then, for nearly two years, to the study of theology at Princeton. The former study he seems to have taken up for the purpose of mental discipline and the broadening of his education, but without any intention of entering upon the legal profession. The latter study was the one which he thought of as opening the way for him to the work of life. The Divinity School of Yale College was not established, as a separate part of the institution, when he went to Princeton, but after his return to New Haven as a Tutor in the College, in 1823, he was connected with the school for a year. He received license to preach near the end of his theological course, and we may believe that, for a time, he regarded himself as a candidate for the preacher's office. His self-distrust, however, with reference to his fitness to reach the high standard of this office, as he conceived of it, made him hesitate to undertake its duties. Moreover, the scholarly tastes, which had grown stronger with the passing of the few years since his graduation, were turning his mind and his desire towards another sphere of life. We may not doubt, also, that the keen-sighted mind of Professor Kingsley, under whose charge the linguistic studies in the College were then placed, perceived the capacity for true scholarship which the young graduate possessed, and that he used his strong influence to secure him for the scholar's field. The call to the Tutor-