

ELIOT, Charles William, 1834-1926. Harvard President 40 years, 1869-1909. Only son of a wealthy and influential man of Boston and New England, who argued that "a man of affairs could hope for a larger sphere of influence and therefore a better prospect of usefulness than a teacher." Tried business in daytime, and teaching a class of boys and men evenings, in 1854. Studied abroad. Declined attractive offer of ^{position as} superintendent of Merrimac Mills. Became a teacher of chemistry. Had written his mother: "The very maintenance of our free institutions depends upon the education of the people. Surely he holds an honorable and responsible post, who labors in the cause of education." And he added: "I like to teach. I like to understand a subject with that thoroughness and precision which are indispensable to a teacher. I like to keep my own ideas so clear that others can see them." After he was 80 "he wrote nearly 200 books and papers;" and after his 83rd birthday, once remarked: "I am surprised at what I am able to accomplish by doing a little work every day." His "New Education," published in the Atlantic Monthly, February 1869, was "revolutionary and prophetic," and opened his lasting leadership. Harvard has been said to date, not from its founding in 1636, but from his inaugural address, October 19, 1869. His influence on education of less than college grade was no less distinctive. His introduction of the "elective" system, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ was based on his belief that "the individual traits of different minds" had "not been sufficiently attended to;" and was epoch making, in both college and school. And his philosophy included "vocational preparation, as a means of developing individual usefulness and social security." Fuller details in John T. Wheeler article, above, p.

-- R. W. Stimson.

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Eliot, C. W.