

Edmund Ezra Day

December 7, 1883 — March 23, 1951

Edmund Ezra Day, destined to be the fifth President of Cornell University, was born in Manchester, New Hampshire, on December 7, 1883. His parents were Ezra Alonzo and Louise Moulton Nelson Day. He attended Dartmouth College, and there made a brilliant scholastic record. He was awarded a Rufus Choate scholarship, and thus acquired the nickname of "Rufus," which clung to him all his life. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Theta Delta Chi. He received his B. S. from Dartmouth in 1905 and an M. A. in 1906. He then entered the Harvard Graduate School, and gained a Ph. D. in Economics in 1909.

He began his teaching career as Instructor in Economics at Dartmouth, from 1907 to 1910. He entered the Harvard Department of Economics in 1910, and rose rapidly to become Professor of Economics and Chairman of the Department. During the first World War he served as statistician for the U. S. Shipping Board and the War Industries Board.

In 1923 he left Harvard for the University of Michigan. There he was Professor of Economics, organizer and first Dean of the School of Business Administration, and Dean of the University.

His administrative ability and his understanding of economic and social problems attracted the attention of the great Foundations. In 1927-28 he was associated with the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial; in 1929 he left Michigan to become director for the social sciences with the Rockefeller Foundation. He carried on concurrently the duties of director of general education with the General Education Board. His signal success in these responsible positions prompted his appointment to the presidency of Cornell in 1937.

In the following years he added to his onerous presidential duties many important tasks in educational and social realms. It is impossible here to list more than a few examples. He was president of the New York State Citizens Council, the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, the World Student Service Fund, the American Statistical Association; he was chairman of the American Council on Education, director of the National Bureau of Economic Research, director of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Councillor of the National Industrial Conference Board. He held fifteen honorary degrees. He was the author of "Index of Physical Production," "Statistical Analysis," "The Growth of Manufactures," (with W. Thomas), and "The Defense of Freedom".

In 1912 he married Emily Sophia Emerson, daughter of Dean Charles F. Emerson of Dartmouth College. He leaves two sons and two daughters. One son (Dr. Emerson Day) at present holds a professorship in the Cornell Medical College.

Dr. Day was suddenly stricken by a heart attack on the morning of March 23, 1951.

Dr. Day was President of Cornell University from 1937 until his resignation on July 1, 1949. He was then appointed Chancellor, with the larger interests of the University in his hands. Counseled to disburden himself of such responsibilities for reasons of health, he resigned the Chancellorship on January 31, 1950.

The twelve years of his presidency were a period of rapid growth of the University. The student enrollment and the Faculty lists nearly doubled. New schools and units were established, responsive to new educational and social concerns of the nation: the School of Chemical and Metallurgical Engineering, the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, the School of Business and Public Administration, the School of Nutrition, the School of Aeronautical Engineering, the School of Nursing. The Floyd Newman Laboratory of Nuclear Studies in Ithaca and the Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory in Buffalo were inaugurated.

The physical development of the University kept pace with the new demands. Important buildings were erected, among them Olin Hall, the Newman Laboratory, Savage Hall, Moore Hall, Clara Dickson Hall, and the Administration Building. Arrangements were made for other buildings, now rising on our campus. The Greater Cornell Fund was carried triumphantly to its goal, raising over \$12,500,000 for university needs.

To assess the value of Dr. Day's contributions to the University would require far more space than can be here afforded. This much is clear and certain: that during a period of war, of disorganization and reorganization, of rapid social and economic change, of inflation, insecurity, fear, his strong hand at the helm guided us through the storms to calmer waters. We cannot know how much of his own strength, his own life, he sacrificed to this terrifying task.

The writer of the notice on the death of President Livingston Farrand (in the Necrology of the Faculty, 1940) said: "No doubt every true leader communicates something of himself to his companions. The Cornell of Andrew D. White partook of his indomitable idealism; the Cornell of Jacob Gould Schurman shared his superb, almost resistless energy; the Cornell of Livingston Farrand became somehow more urbane, more kindly, more human." To these words we may now add that the Cornell of Edmund Ezra Day became more socially conscious, more cognizant of its duties to the state and the world, more aware of its function as an organ of the body politic. The

new schools established during Dr. Day's regime were mostly schools of social service. Within the older units of the University a corresponding influence was at work. Such Departments as Sociology and Psychology were reconstituted; the need for social justification was felt throughout the University.

Dr. Day liked to ask provocative and sometimes infuriating questions. He liked to affront a Professor of, for instance, English, with the demand: "What are you trying to do? What is the use of the study of literature?" The Professor of English usually found, after his first bewilderment or anger had died, that the necessity of defining his aims was very wholesome. Dr. Day of course knew his own answers before he asked the question.

His mood was often quizzical. He liked to shock, unsettle, disturb; he enjoyed playing dumb. He was convinced that the great menace to successful teaching is complacency, satisfaction with routine. Tirelessly experimental himself, he could easily be exasperated by the conservatism of the Faculties. And if, as was inevitably the case, Faculty members found themselves in disagreement with him, they had only to visit him to be most cordially received and most fairly heard. In such circumstances his visitors were usually astonished to find how minutely Dr. Day was acquainted with the least operations of his great, far-flung, multifarious University, and how he had given serious attention to the smallest of her problems.

He gained this knowledge by giving to Cornell the best part of his thought and his life. He had little time for recreation, all too little for the intellectual diversions he earnestly desired. His obligation to Cornell came always first, and this obligation never ended, never left him free.

He had planned, on his retirement, to take at last his rewards: the pleasure of friendship, the pleasure of reading, the mere simple pleasure of rest. He did not have time for his rewards. He had never had time. He had time only for his duty.

Morris Bishop, S. C. Hollister, L. A. Maynard