

THREE MEN OF LETTERS

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Three men of letters by Moses Coit Tyler

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MOSES COIT TYLER

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OF LETTERS**

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BY

MOSES COIT TYLER



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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PREFACE.

Of the three chapters in literary biography and criticism here brought together, the first was an incidental ~~product~~ product of the researches which I made some years ago when working upon my "History of American Literature during the Colonial Time;" and while the subject of this monograph could hardly fail to throw a curious and a not unpleasing side-light upon the conditions and moods of intellectual life in America during the half-century just prior to the Revolution, it could not properly be included in the book in connection with which it was written. As it has never been in print, except in a form well-nigh inaccessible to the general reader, I hope I shall not offend him by now revising it, amending it, and giving it a place in this little book. I will not deny that I shall be very glad if, by seeking a larger publicity for my paper on Berkeley, I may succeed in extending somewhat the memory

and the appreciation of our great debt to one of the wisest, friendliest, and helpfulest of European visitors who ever touched on these shores.

The last two monographs here given were prepared for a work on which I have been for a considerable time engaged, and which is soon to be sent to the press,—“The Literary History of the American Revolution ;” but as the chief activity of the two writers thus dealt with belongs to the period immediately after the Revolution, I have deemed it best to exclude them from that work. Without question, however, for our literary history during the first thirty or forty years of the independent republic, these two writers are representative men ; and both for their own sakes, and for their obvious use in the interpretation of American thought and life in that period of national gestation, I have hoped that the monographs devoted to them might have some value even in this detached form.

M. C. T.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY,
2 November, 1894.

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I.
GEORGE BERKELEY AND HIS AMERI-
CAN VISIT.



I.

GEORGE BERKELEY AND HIS AMERICAN VISIT.

- I—Berkeley's arrival at Newport in 1729—Personal appearance and ways—His settlement at "Whitchall"—His sojourn here a subject of mystery and suspicion at the time—Its real import characteristic of an idealist and a moral enthusiast.
- II—His early life—Distinction as a student and fellow at Trinity College, Dublin—His benevolent enthusiasm—Great range of his talents and accomplishments—As a preacher—His ideal theory of the universe—Its use in the refutation of atheism.
- III—Leaves college to study men and their ways—His brilliant success in London society—His long sojourn upon the continent.
- IV—Convinced that the corruptions of the Old World are incurable and portend some dire catastrophe—His "Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain"—Turns from the Old World to the New—His plan for saving the latter from the follies and crimes that have brought the former to the verge of ruin—His belief in America as the predestined seat of the world's civilization—His celebrated poem embodying this dream—Two things needful for realizing it, learning and religion—Resolves to found a great American university—His preparation therefor.
- V—His return to Dublin, 1727—His legacy from Dean Swift's "Vanessa"—Becomes Dean of Derry in 1724—Returns

to London to arrange for his great project—Dean Swift's letter about it—Publishes his "Proposal"—His success—Parliamentary grant—Walpole's promise of twenty thousand pounds—Berkeley sails for America—Why he first went to New England—Walpole's delay and final refusal.

VI—Berkeley's disappointment—The reaction upon his mind of his American visit—Seen in his sermons, in "Alciphron," in "Siris."

VII—Effects of his visit as regards American life and civilization—Especially upon intellectual activity in the colonies—His influence on the cultivated society of Newport—Visited by philosophical and other pilgrims—The stimulus he gave to higher education—His friendship for existing American colleges—His generosity to Yale and Harvard—The Berkeleyan scholars at Yale—His permanent interest in America after his return to Europe—Suggests the plan of King's College—Later American recognitions of his influence.

VIII—Berkeley's place in the long line of distinguished European visitors to America—Failure of his dream of preventing corruption in the New World—His remedy for corruption.

I.

ON the 23d of January, 1729, a British ship of about two hundred and fifty tons was seen hovering off the coast of Rhode Island and making signals for a pilot. In response to these signals two pilots boarded the ship. It proved to be the hired vessel of an eminent