

THE "NEW PHILOSOPHY" AGAINST WHICH
STUDENTS AT YALE COLLEGE WERE
WARNED IN 1714.

[ADDITIONAL NOTE TO VOLUME X., NEW SERIES, PART 2, PAGE 235.]

BY EGBERT C. SMYTH.

A REMARK in his biography of President Samuel Johnson, D.D., has been understood to mean that the late Rev. Dr. Beardsley thought "the Berkeleian philosophy had been heard of at Yale so early as 1714, when Johnson graduated." Since Dr. Beardsley's opinion was presumably founded on some statement by Johnson, the supposition that Jonathan Edwards, when a student at New Haven, knew of Berkeley's idealism, seemed to gain a degree of evidence. In referring to this suggestion at the close of a paper read to this Society in October, 1895, I ventured the opinion that "not unlikely, so far as Dr. Beardsley's statement may be founded in fact, something other than Berkeley's philosophy is implied." Attention was also called to the opposition to Locke's philosophy in England, and the remark was added: "It is easier to suppose that in 1714, young men in this country were cautioned against Locke's philosophy than against Berkeley's." Subsequently, though not in season for the printing of the paper referred to, I found that Dr. Beardsley's statement appeared to be related to that of an earlier biography in such a way as to suggest that the original source of information contained no implication of Berkeleianism.

Through the efficient kindness of our associate, Professor Franklin B. Dexter, and the courtesy and favor of a descendant of President Johnson, I am now able to present the

latter's exact words, which I have copied from his manuscript autobiography. After referring to certain tutors and text-books, he says: "They" [the students] "heard indeed in 1714 when he" [Mr. Johnson] "took his Bachelour's Degree, of a new philosophy that of late was all in vogue, and of such names as Des Cartes, Boyle, Locke and Newton, but they were cautioned against thinking anything of them, because the new philosophy, it was said, would soon bring in a new Divinity and corrupt the pure Religion of the Country."

This shows plainly who the philosophers were, against whom the students were cautioned, and what was the threatening "new philosophy."

Another manuscript of Dr. Johnson is of interest. I examined it cursorily, and will use the language of another who studied it more carefully. It is "entitled: 'A Catalogue of Books read by me from year to year since I left Yale Colledge, *i. e.*, after I was Tutor of the College.' The first year thus recorded is 1719/20, and is evidently reckoned from October to October, that is, from one birthday to another. Pretty late in that year comes 'Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding.' In the year 1721/22 comes Isaac Newton's *Principia*. In the year 1727/8, pretty late in the list, and therefore evidently in 1728, comes 'Berkeley's Principles of Human Knowledge'; and this entry is repeated under 1728/9.

"Nothing of Berkeley's earlier; but later, under 1729/30, with the date of August, which must be August, 1730, is 'Berkeley's Dialogues between Hylus and Philonous'; and later in the same year, 'Berkeley's Essays towards a New Theory of Vision.'"¹

¹ I take this opportunity to say that the word "appears," p. 218, l. 13, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, Oct. 23, 1895, should read "disappears."

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