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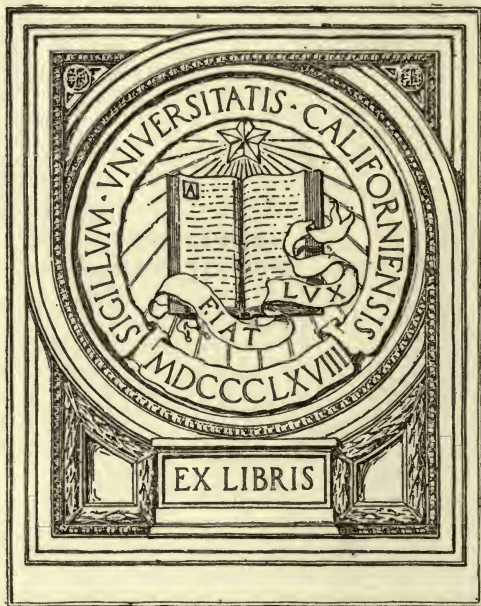


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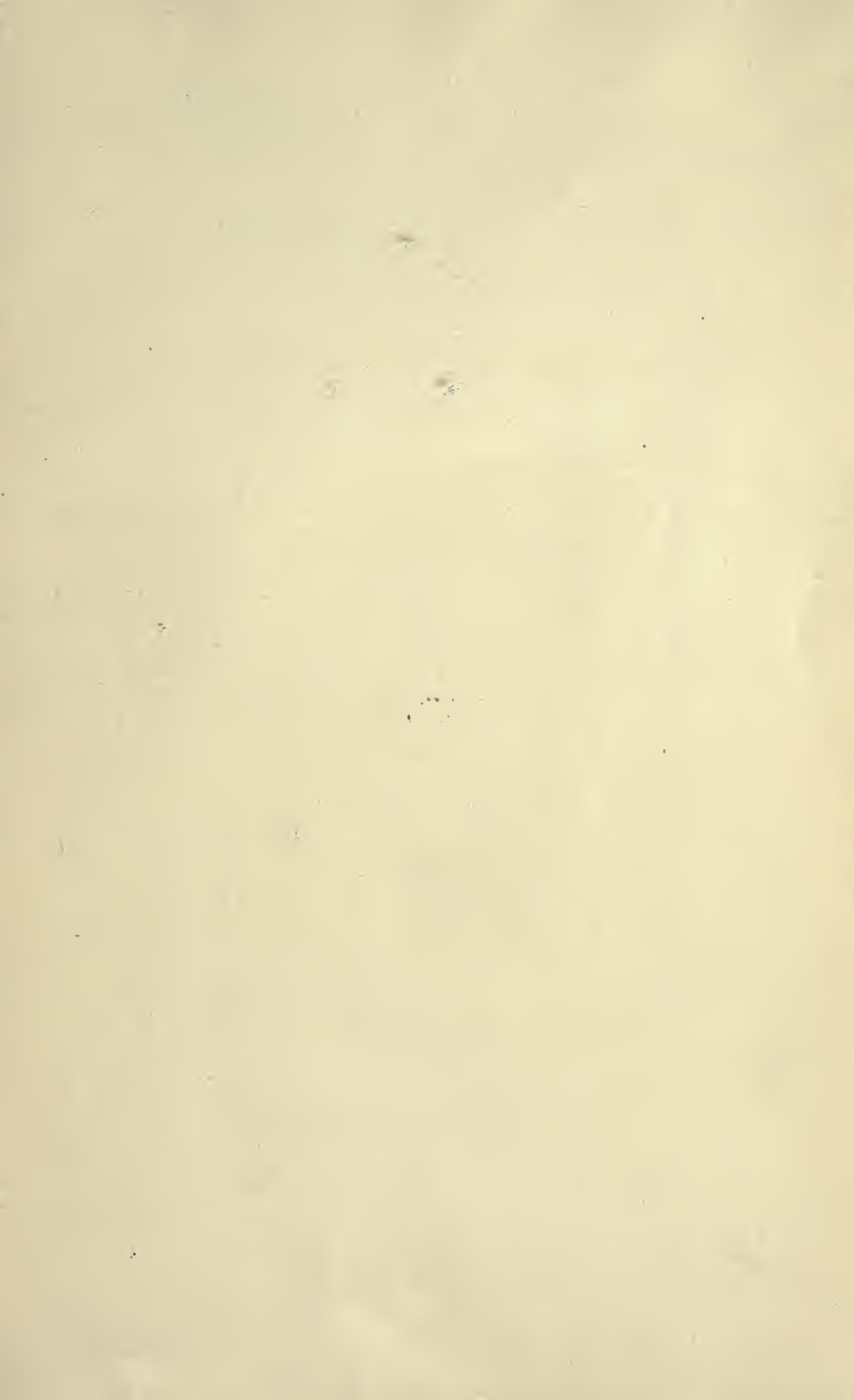
The Presidency of Columbia

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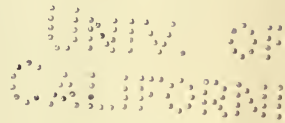


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# The Presidency of Columbia

From the Annual Report made to the Trustees  
November 3, 1921

By  
PRESIDENT BUTLER



NEW YORK  
PRINTED FOR THE UNIVERSITY  
1922

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## The Presidency of Columbia

The presidency of Columbia is an office with a long and honorable history. The original Charter of 1754 empowers the Governors of King's College, or the major part of them, "to elect, nominate and appoint any person to be president of the said College in a vacancy of the said presidentship for and during his good behaviour provided always such president elect or to be elected by them be a member of and in communion with the Church of England as by law established."

It was apparently the plan of those who drafted this Charter that the President should himself be the chief teacher in the College, and that all other teachers were to be regarded as his assistants, since this provision immediately follows:

"And also to elect one or more Fellow or Fellows Professor or Professors Tutor or Tutors to assist the President of the said College in the education and government of the students belonging to the said College which Fellow or Fellows Professor or Professors Tutor or Tutors and every one of them shall hold and enjoy their said office or place either at the will and pleasure of the Governors of the said corporation or during his or their good behaviour according as shall be agreed upon between such Fellow or Fellows Professor or Professors Tutor or Tutors and the said Governors of the said College."

The Charter of 1787, granted by the Legislature of the State of New York, ratifies and confirms the Royal Charter of 1754, with the exception of certain named provisions of that Charter, including that which rendered a person ineligible to the office of president of the College on account of his religious tenets.

The later and final Charter of 1810, being Chapter 85

of the Laws of the State of New York of that year, continues the corporate existence of the College and the office of president as already established.

The Presidents of King's College, Columbia College and Columbia University have been twelve in number.

The first president, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Johnson, has properly been described as one of the notable men of his time in America. He probably ranks next after Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin, as the most eminent American scholar of the 18th century. Born at Guilford, Connecticut, in 1696 and graduated from the College at Saybrook, now Yale University, in 1714, Dr. Johnson served as tutor in Yale for three years. After short service as a Congregational minister he went to England and took orders as a minister of the Church of England. Shortly after he returned to America and settled at Stratford, Connecticut, as a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. He received the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Oxford University in 1743, and Benjamin Franklin personally urged upon him acceptance of an invitation to become first president of the College at Philadelphia, now the University of Pennsylvania. Benjamin Franklin was the printer of Dr. Johnson's books on Logic and Ethics, and was his friend and frequent correspondent. President Johnson associated himself with the movement to establish King's College early in the year 1754, and upon the passage of the Charter became first president, which post he held until March 1, 1763. He lived until January 6, 1772, and was buried in the chancel of Christ Church, Stratford, Connecticut.

Dr. Johnson was succeeded by the Rev. Myles Cooper, Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, who although but twenty-eight years of age, was highly recommended by the Archbishop of Canterbury for his learning and charac-



ter. President Cooper was also appointed to be Professor of Moral Philosophy. Owing to controversies incident to the outbreak of the American Revolution, which incidents form a very interesting part of the history of Columbia, President Cooper beat a precipitate retreat on May 10, 1775, and never returned to America. He was appointed to be Clergyman of the English Chapel, Edinburgh, and died there on May 20, 1785. He is buried in the Churchyard of Restalrig, about two miles from Edinburgh.

The third president was William Samuel Johnson, son of the first President of King's College, and probably the first layman ever to be chosen administrative head of an institution of higher learning in either Great Britain or the United States. Born at Stratford, Connecticut, in 1728, William Samuel Johnson was graduated from Yale in 1744. He was trained for the law, and his professional and public services are well known. It is recorded that he instructed the students in the grammar and proper pronunciation of the English language. Perhaps his most eminent public service was as delegate to the Convention which framed the Constitution of the United States. While President of Columbia, William Samuel Johnson served as United States Senator from Connecticut, and with Oliver Ellsworth framed the bill establishing the federal judiciary system, substantially as it now is. When the sittings of Congress were removed from New York to Philadelphia, President Johnson resigned as Senator. He received the degree of D.C.L. from Oxford in 1776. He resigned as president on July 16, 1800, and retired to Stratford, Connecticut, where he died in 1819 at the ripe age of 93. He is buried in Christ Churchyard, Stratford.

The fourth president was Rev. Dr. Charles H. Wharton, Rector of St. Mary's Church, Burlington, New Jersey. He was born in St. Mary's County, Maryland, 1748, and

was educated at the Jesuits' College at St. Omer. He took orders in the Roman Catholic Church, but later adopted the views of the Church of England. For eight years he served as a trustee of Princeton. President Wharton's service at Columbia was almost nominal, since having been elected on May 25, 1801, he retired on December 11 of the same year, having concluded to remain with his Burlington parish. President Wharton was highly regarded as a scholar, and had great influence among the clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church. He died on July 23, 1833, as Rector of St. Mary's Church, Burlington, New Jersey, and is buried in the churchyard there.

Following President Wharton's resignation, the Trustees took action to separate the office of president from any professorship, and provided that the president should thereafter be charged merely with the general superintendence of the institution. Upon the adoption of this policy the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Moore of the Class of 1768, Bishop of New York, was chosen fifth president. President Moore had served earlier as Professor of Rhetoric and Logic. He was never able to give undivided attention to the affairs of the College, and during his official tenure the duties of president were largely performed by professors who served in rotation. The result was so unsatisfactory that we find it recorded that the friends of the College "almost despaired of its resuscitation." In March, 1811, President Moore resigned. He died on February 27, 1816, and is buried in Trinity Churchyard, New York.

Following the resignation of President Moore and in order to secure for the College the services of the Rev. Dr. John M. Mason, a great pulpit orator and afterwards President of Dickinson College, the Trustees established an administrative post additional to that of president, and really superior to it, with the title of Provost. Dr.

Mason was chosen Provost, while the presidency went to the Rev. Dr. William Harris, a graduate of Harvard College in the Class of 1786, and Rector of St. Mark's Church in the city of New York. This plan did not work well, and Provost Mason resigned in July, 1816, after which the duties of Provost were merged in those of the President. President Harris served until his death in the autumn of 1829. He is buried in the Churchyard of St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie, New York City.

The seventh president was William Alexander Duer, a man of quite different type. President Duer was born at Rhinebeck in 1780, and came of one of the best families in the Province of New York. He had served as Midshipman in the Navy under Decatur, had studied law with Edward Livingston, and had seen active service in the Legislature of New York, and when elected President in 1829 was a Justice of the Circuit Court of the State. President Duer served through a troubled period of the institution's history until May 2, 1842, when he resigned on account of failing health. He died on May 30, 1858, and is buried in the old cemetery behind the Presbyterian Church at Morristown, N. J.

The eighth president, Nathaniel F. Moore of the Class of 1802, was a nephew of President Benjamin Moore. He was born at Newtown, New York, in 1782, and after his graduation from Columbia studied law and was admitted to the Bar. A few years later he became Adjunct Professor of Greek and Latin in Columbia College, and then Professor of those languages, which chair he held for fifteen years. After several years spent in travel in Europe and the Orient, Dr. Moore returned to New York and was elected President to succeed Mr. Duer. He resigned the presidency in 1849, and lived in retirement until 1872, when he died at the great age of 90 years. He is buried in the Churchyard of St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie,

New York. The first historical sketch of Columbia College was written by President Nathaniel F. Moore and published in 1849.

The ninth president, Dr. Charles King, was, like President Duer, a man of high position and large influence in the social and public life of New York. He was a son of Rufus King, born in New York City in 1789. He was educated at Harrow, at Oxford and at Paris. After some years spent in business and in journalism he was chosen to the presidency of Columbia in 1849. He resigned his office on March 7, 1864, and went to live abroad. Dr. King died at Frascati in 1867, and is buried in the Churchyard of the Episcopal Church, Jamaica, Long Island.

Dr. King was succeeded by Frederick A. P. Barnard, who was born in Sheffield, Massachusetts, in 1809, and graduated at Yale College in 1828. Dr. Barnard's career in the Universities of Alabama and Mississippi is well known. He was a scholar of national and international reputation and accomplishment before his election to be President of Columbia in 1864. He was a prophet and a seer in the field of education, and his farseeing vision anticipated many of the happenings that have taken place since his death. He died in 1889 and is buried in a chapel erected by the Trustees of the University at Sheffield, Massachusetts.

Following the death of Dr. Barnard, and having in mind the need of closely relating the work of Columbia to the city of New York, the Trustees chose as president Seth Low of the Class of 1870, a man rather of the type of President Duer and President King than of President Barnard. President Low took up vigorously the question of organizing Columbia as a university to attack the problems that were before it, and of rebuilding it upon a new and adequate site where it would find a permanent home. In eleven years these tasks were accomplished,

and President Low resigned to accept nomination to be Mayor of the city of New York. After serving a term in that important office, Mr. Low occupied himself actively with matters of public concern until his death at the age of 66 in 1916. Mr. Low is buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn.

The twelfth president was designated acting president in succession to Mr. Low on October 2, 1901, and was elected President on January 6, 1902.

It appears that of the twelve presidents, six have been clergymen and six (President Barnard being reckoned as a layman) have been laymen, an exceptional fact in the history of higher education in English-speaking lands during the 18th and 19th centuries. Of the twelve, four were graduates of Columbia, three of Yale, one of Harvard, and one of Oxford, while three, namely Presidents Wharton, Duer and King, are not known to have completed an undergraduate college course.

The duties of the President of Columbia have strangely changed since the office was established. None of the duties that devolved immediately upon President Samuel Johnson are now performed by his successor. Very few of the duties and responsibilities that were directly borne by President Barnard, or even by President Low, are now borne by their successor. These duties are performed by the various Deans and Directors and by other chief administrative officers among whom they have been divided. The President of the University is now occupied almost entirely with problems newly arisen out of new developments and new conditions. He must live largely in the future, and must concern himself chiefly with those major policies and acts that affect the prosperity, the influence and the prestige of the institution as a whole. His duties may best be stated in terms of the English political system as those of prime minister holding

the portfolios of foreign affairs and of the treasury. As to all matters of internal administration the President is the counsellor and adviser of those to whom these duties are directly entrusted. In the strict sense of the word, the administrative head of Columbia University is neither a college president nor even a university president; he is President of Columbia University. His duties and occupations are unique because Columbia is unique.

## PORTRAITS OF THE PRESIDENTS OF COLUMBIA

## I. SAMUEL JOHNSON

Painted before 1757, when it was presented to King's College.

*In Trustees' Room, University Library*

## II. MYLES COOPER

Painted in 1768-9 by John Singleton Copley.

*In Trustees' Room, University Library*

Second copy *In Dining-room, President's House*

## III. WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON

Copy by S. L. Waldo of original painted in 1792 by Gilbert Stuart; owned by Mr. Charles Frederick Johnson of Dorchester, Mass.; presented to Columbia College by the New York Historical Society in 1820.

*In Trustees' Room, University Library*

## IV. CHARLES HENRY WHARTON

Copy of original in the possession of St. Mary's Church, Burlington, N. J., by unknown painter; painted in 1897 by William H. Hyde.

*In office of the Librarian, University Library*

## V. BENJAMIN MOORE

By unknown painter; purchased by Columbia College in 1819.

*In Dining-room, President's House*

## VI. WILLIAM HARRIS

By unknown painter; painted in 1819.

*In office of the President, University Library*

## VII. WILLIAM ALEXANDER DUER

Painted by Henry Inman about 1840.

*In Trustees' Room, University Library*

Smaller portrait by unknown painter.

*In Dining-room, President's House*

## VIII. NATHANIEL FISH MOORE

By unknown painter; presented to Columbia College in 1835.

*In office of the President, University Library*

## IX. CHARLES KING

Painted by S. L. Waldo and Charles C. Ingham;  
presented to Columbia College in 1851.

*In office of the President, University Library*

## X. FREDERICK AUGUSTUS PORTER BARNARD

Painted by Eastman Johnson in 1886.

*In Auditorium, Earl Hall*

Second portrait: painted by Franklin Tuttle in 1886.

*In third floor corridor, Students Hall,  
Barnard College*

Third portrait: by unknown painter.

*In office of the Dean of Barnard College,  
Milbank Hall*

## XI. SETH LOW

Painted by Daniel Huntington in 1899.

*In Auditorium, Earl Hall*

## XII. NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER

Painted by Frank D. Millet in 1907.

*In Law Library, Kent Hall*

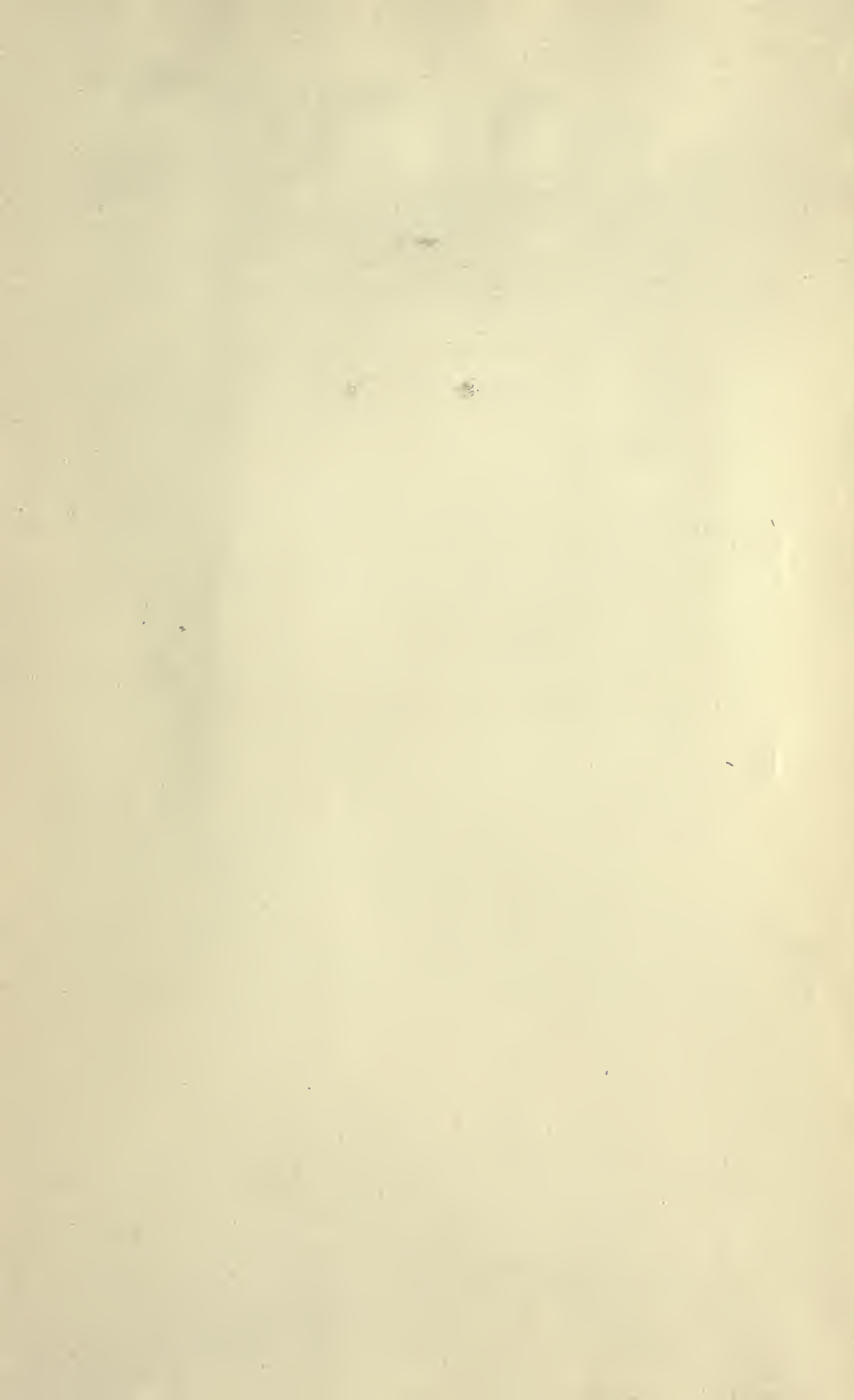
Second portrait: painted by Irving R. Wiles in 1907.

*In University Library, University of Berlin*

Third portrait: painted by A. Muranyi in 1918.

*In Dining-room, President's House*





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