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# John Leverett and the Quebec Expedition of 1711: An Unpublished Latin Oration

Leo M. Kaiser

SOME TIME before Commencement Day 1711 President John Leverett<sup>1</sup> of Harvard had begun composing his Latin address<sup>2</sup> for the occasion. But he was not satisfied with his first draft, and leaving it undone began a second. This too he failed to finish, and he started on a third.<sup>3</sup> By this time, however, certain events had occurred which we consider next.

Early in the year, at the urging of Massachusetts Bay, England had determined upon an expedition against Quebec, capital city of the Colony of New France, and in May Admiral Sir Hovenden Walker<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Leverett (1662-1724; A.B. Harvard 1680) was President from 1708 to 1724; see John L. Sibley, *Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Harvard University*, III (Cambridge, Mass., 1888), 180-198; *Dictionary of American Biography*; and Samuel E. Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), pp. 53-75.

<sup>2</sup>The present writer is making a study of early American Latin prose. Much of what has survived is academic and oratorical: commencement orations, inaugural and other installation addresses, salutatories and valedictories, occasional addresses on the visits or deaths of distinguished men, and student disputations and declamations. The earliest extant oratorical prose seems to be the *oratio* by the Reverend Samuel Whiting (1597-1679) delivered at the Harvard Commencement of 1649, though not printed until 1709 by B. Green in Boston. The most illustrious of the orators was Urian Oakes, President of Harvard from 1675 to 1681. Recent editions of his orations are the writer's "The *Oratio Quinta* of Urian Oakes, Harvard 1678," *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, XIX (1970), 485-508; "The Unpublished *Oratio Secunda* of Urian Oakes, Harvard 1675," *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, XXI (1972), 385-412; "Tercentenary of an Oration: The 1672 Commencement Address of Urian Oakes," *HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN*, XXI (1973), 75-87.

<sup>3</sup>Autograph manuscript copies of the three versions are in the Harvard Archives. The writer is preparing an edition of them.

<sup>4</sup>1646?-1728; see *Dictionary of National Biography*. Leverett in his words "Musarum alumnus salutem" seems to settle the disputed authorship by Walker of a volume in the British Museum entitled *Elegies of Old Age, Made English from the Latin of C. Cornelius Gallus* [by H. W.], London, 1688. Another edition appeared in 1689. The Latin elegies are actually those of Maximianus Etruscus, edited by M.

sailed from Plymouth with ten ships and thirty transports carrying some five thousand troops drawn from the Duke of Marlborough's forces in Flanders under the command of General John Hill.<sup>5</sup> The expedition arrived in Boston on June 24th, but then marked time for over a month before moving out. One fruit of the delay was that the Admiral and the General and probably their staffs were able to be present at the commencement exercises of July 4th.<sup>6</sup>

Leverett must have looked forward with considerable pleasure to the presence of his military guests. Four years earlier by appointment of Governor Joseph Dudley,<sup>7</sup> who had organized the expedition of 1707 and who was also in attendance at Commencement, he had served as military counselor on the unsuccessful march against the French at Port Royal; while in 1709 as a very new college president he had gone on a commission to New York to treat, as he said, "upon the defence of our frontiers and concert measures for the carrying on the Warr against the French and Indians of Canada, and to induce the Government of New York to lay aside their neutrality, and join [with Massachusetts] against the common enemy to Her Majesty's interests in America."<sup>8</sup> Perhaps as a result of his efforts, one of the arms of the 1711 expedition was a land force of provincials advancing from Albany under General Sir Francis Nicholson,<sup>9</sup> who had effected a bloodless conquest of Port Royal in the preceding autumn. Nicholson of course was not in the Commencement audience.

As July 4th dawned, Leverett seems still to have been working on his unfinished third draft. But then he suffered some mild indisposition, and over the noon interval hurriedly composed a shorter, substitute oration, one actually more fitting the historic occasion than

Petschenig, Berlin, 1890. Walker described the Quebec expedition in *A Journal or Full Account of the Late Expedition to Canada* (London, 1720).

<sup>5</sup> d. 1735; see *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>6</sup> Leverett himself describes in the manuscript book relating to college affairs (Harvard Archives) how Walker and Hill interceded successfully on Commencement Day that senior John Wainwright, on probation, be granted his degree and go off as an officer on the expedition "with the favour and honour of the College" (Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates: Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College*, V [Boston, 1937], 586).

<sup>7</sup> 1647-1720; see *Dictionary of American Biography*.

<sup>8</sup> Sibley, *Biographical Sketches*, III (1888), 188.

<sup>9</sup> 1660-1728; see *Dictionary of National Biography* and *Dictionary of American Biography*. Nicholson was the author of *Journal of an Expedition for the Reduction of Port Royal* (London, 1711).

his earlier attempts.<sup>10</sup> In it, after paying tribute to Governor Dudley and admitting that ordinarily he would next turn to presenting the candidates for degrees, he remarks that the *splendor advenarum splendidissimorum* compels him to take note of them instead. Welcoming Walker and Hill warmly, he expresses his gratitude to the Queen for her concern in sending these capable military leaders to protect the Colony. He refers to the fame won by Hill and his troops in specific victories of Marlborough, and in a more general way to the talent of Walker, whose fleet he hopes will make "New Britain" (New France) a part of the expanding British Empire in North America. Finally to the absent Nicholson he wishes success and a joyous meeting with the other leaders. There is no more mention of the graduates.

Though not the equal of his predecessor Urian Oakes, Leverett was an exceedingly good Latinist and speaker, as is evident in orations going back to 1686 when he welcomed Sir Edmund Andros to Cambridge.<sup>11</sup> But as his duties increased he turned from an earlier periodical style in the Classical manner to a simpler mode of address less ornamented with the time-honored allusion and quotation. In the present oration, it is true, he had little time to achieve the perfection he was capable of; indeed a few sentences seem to be incomplete despite the re-writing which we have recorded in the notes to the text. There are a few apparent word-coinages,<sup>12</sup> one flash of humor,<sup>13</sup> and at least one brilliant phrase.<sup>14</sup> By and large the address provided a graceful touch to the ceremonies. It is something of an irony that late in August bad weather and poor navigation conspired to wreck

<sup>10</sup> At the "end" of the third draft of his planned oration Leverett wrote: "Caetera desiderantur. Intercepta subitanea aegritudine inque orationis loco substituta fuit orationucula intervallo meridiano excogitata." On the overleaves of the first three pages of the first draft of the planned speech Leverett composed the *orationucula*. It occupies the entire space of the pages and presumably represents all that Leverett spoke on the occasion. How much he revised as he went along is revealed in our notes to the text.

<sup>11</sup> An edition by the writer of the 1686 address will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Manuscripta*, and Leverett's inaugural oration of 1708 in *Classical Outlook*. The commencement address of 1689, also being edited by the writer, is probably Leverett's best effort.

<sup>12</sup> *cordidatus* [?], *immarecensens*.

<sup>13</sup> Leverett declares he does not know whether to address Admiral Walker as a son of Neptune (cf. Dio Cassius 48.48) or a nursling of the Muses, but that it was not Walker's "harmony" that stilled the tempests and charmed the dolphins, but God's blessing.

<sup>14</sup> *Lauros boreales immarecensentes*, occurring in a memorable passage.

the expedition in the St. Lawrence with a loss of nine hundred men on eight transports, and the decision was made to return to England.

The oration is published here for the first time by permission of Harvard University. Leverett's spellings have been retained in general,<sup>15</sup> but not necessarily his punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. A grant from the Research Committee of Loyola University of Chicago made it possible to secure various materials.

Sistunt<sup>16</sup> se ob oculos vestros,<sup>17</sup> ordines Edis Harvardinae<sup>18</sup> illustres, petitores pro gradibus academicis.

Feria haec decima<sup>19</sup> qua anniversarium<sup>20</sup> suum festum celebrarunt academici comitiaque peregerunt sub Excellentiae Vestrae patrocinio auspiciatissimo, insignissime D. Domine Gubernator,<sup>21</sup> decimusque<sup>22</sup> annus jam currit<sup>23</sup> ab<sup>24</sup> illo quo aperto diplomate regio<sup>25</sup> atque promulgato conventu procerum<sup>26</sup> Massachusettsensium<sup>27</sup> generali et consensu honorum omnium rerum nostrarum publicarum administrationem suscepisti, perque totum illud tempus<sup>28</sup> quamvis plurima ardua, difficilia atque perplexa, tamen omnia adeo prudenter et feliciter etiam<sup>29</sup> sunt transacta atque administrata, ut nemo non sentit quanta experientia in administrando pollet Excellentia Vestra, quanta cura in defendendo patriam exercuis[set] regimen et promovendo gloriam Dominae Reginae.<sup>30</sup> Eoque nomine strict[e] tenemur Deum Optimum Maximum venerari, qui usque adhuc Excellentiam conservavit atque direxit per varios casus perque tot discrimina rerum<sup>31</sup> consilia tua statuminavit, Reginaeque clementiam celebramus quae tali consulatu Nov-Anglicis indulsit talique patrono atque patre academicis. Commeruisti sane qui consul in decennium nuncupandus, neque

<sup>15</sup> Leverett is guilty of a number of absent-minded spelling mistakes. Deviations from "rules of mood" he shares with other contemporary writers.

Bracketed numbers in the text refer to the overleaves of the manuscript.

Both a microfilm and electrostatic copy of the manuscript were utilized in preparing this edition.

<sup>19</sup> No title in the Ms. This sentence is probably to be deleted.

<sup>17</sup> Sistunt . . . vestros written above uncanceled Adstant jam apud vos.

<sup>18</sup> Edis Harvardinae written above uncanceled Academiae.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Dudley was made Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1702.

<sup>20</sup> Ms. anniversarium, corrected to anniversarium.

<sup>21</sup> Dudley was Governor until 1715.

<sup>22</sup> Ms: estque (cancelled) decimusque.

<sup>23</sup> jam currit written above line.

<sup>24</sup> Ms: rectorus tui (cancelled) ab.

<sup>25</sup> regio written above line.

<sup>26</sup> procerum written above line.

<sup>27</sup> Massachusettsensium [*sic*] written above line, cancelled Nov preceding.

<sup>28</sup> tempus followed by cancelled omnia adeo feliciter.

<sup>29</sup> etiam written above line.

<sup>30</sup> Queen Anne (1665-1714).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.204.

tempus<sup>32</sup> proorsus sed gesta tua te tali titulo C. I. Caesari Senatu Romano renunciato<sup>33</sup> dignu[m] omnino reddidit.

Sistunt se apud Excellentiam Vestram omnesque Academiae ordines illustres petitores pro gradibus academicis, immediateque presentassem, quin splendor<sup>34</sup> advenarum splendidissimorum<sup>35</sup> attraxit ora vultusque hujusce coetus totius, candorque eorum generosus animum me[um] attrahit adeoque ut non possum non istos viros celeberrimos salutare atque gratulari. Invenisti essent Nov-Anglici si non receptum vobis splen[di]dum (splendidissimi viri)<sup>36</sup> dedissent ingrati academici; at non adeo obtusa nec ingrata gestant pectora academici, quin sincero laetoque<sup>37</sup> gratissimoque animo vos recipimus, adventumque vestrum presentiamque gratissimum nobis omnibus et singulis pronunciamus.

Minime verba valent quibus exprimamus quam grate accipimus istos heroes, summum terra marique militiae prefectum,<sup>38</sup> atque classis regiae admirallum in mari Americano summum.<sup>39</sup> Sint extensa brachia sy[m]bola distentorum pectorum nostrorum quibus luben[2][tissim]e atque lactissime viros istos insignissimos tota comitante caterva generosorum.<sup>40</sup> Animus meus provocat eos qui mandata ha[bc]nt in Israele, qui sponte se offerunt in populo. Benedicite [Ie]hovae. Plane usitato more, cordidatissimo<sup>41</sup> tamen, Excellentiam Vestram, insignissime, inclytissime, praestantissime Domine Hill imperator illustrissime, saluto, almaeque Academiae nomine gratulor humillime<sup>42</sup> adventum appulsumque his legionibus<sup>43</sup> salvum sospitemque ab intimis praeordiis<sup>44</sup> gratulamur nos ad unum omnes. Excipimus nos<sup>45</sup> Novanglici Excellentiam Vestram ut favorem a serenissima Domina Regina regium supplicationibus enixis populorum indigorum, imo plane ut<sup>46</sup> munus divinum<sup>47</sup> a patre caelesti misericordi[que],

<sup>32</sup> Cancelled sane [?] after tempus.

<sup>33</sup> Ms: ob (cancelled) renunciatus. Leverett is referring here to the granting to Caesar of the dictatorship for ten years.

<sup>34</sup> splendor followed by cancelled hujusce conventus celeberrimi.

<sup>35</sup> advenarum splendidissimorum written above line.

<sup>36</sup> Parentheses in the Ms; the sentence as it stands is ungainly.

<sup>37</sup> lactoque written above line; gratissimoque underscored, perhaps to indicate deletion. Leverett echoes Vergil, *Aeneid* 1.567 here: non obtusa adeo gestamus pectora.

<sup>38</sup> General John Hill.

<sup>39</sup> Admiral Hovenden Walker.

<sup>40</sup> A verb is missing — if not other words — which might help explain the puzzling sentence following.

<sup>41</sup> Leverett first wrote cordidato. Neither form exists. The standard word cordatus, furthermore, does not possess the sense "sincere" which Leverett seems to want here.

<sup>42</sup> Ms: humilime.

<sup>43</sup> his legionibus written above line.

<sup>44</sup> ab intinis praeordiis written above line.

<sup>45</sup> nos written above line.

<sup>46</sup> ut written above line.

<sup>47</sup> Ms: divinus.

qui precibus suorum liberorum ardentissimis exaudivit clementer benigneque tractavit. Amplissimis elogiis Dominae Reginae clementiam recognoscimus, qua<sup>48</sup> adeo has suas provincias, quassatas diuque [c]ussatas et debilitatas<sup>49</sup> curasset, ut arte ac virtute imperatorum belli<sup>50</sup> peritissimorum restaurentur et redintegrentur, et hostes<sup>51</sup> perfidi et immane crudeles amoveantur et profligentur.

Deo Optimo Maximo omnium Conditori rerumque Britannicarum Moderatori summo ac benignissimo, qui cor regium inclinavit ad haec suscepta, teque movit ad haec dubia suscipienda et Excellentiam Vestram cum copiis Britannicis incolumem, infractis<sup>52</sup> et omnino<sup>53</sup> illaesis,<sup>54</sup> gratias summas agimus et habemus.<sup>55</sup> Duxisti tecum copias Flandriae Gallicae domitores, illustrissimi Ducis Marlboro<sup>56</sup> sequaces intrepidus. Sit istis<sup>57</sup> magnis<sup>58</sup> fortuna invariata<sup>59</sup> tibi<sup>60</sup> comes constans; seu potius sit Dominus, quem nos omnes unice veneramus et appraecamur, ille arbiter atque omnium moderator summus, Deus exercituum,<sup>61</sup> vobiscum, coeptaque vestra secundet<sup>62</sup> fortunetaque sospitet[que]. Deus ille montium pariter atque vallium,<sup>63</sup> qui stabilivit imperatorem illum consummatissimum in altitudine Höchstet,<sup>64</sup> qui eundem statuminavit in Campestribus Ramilliae,<sup>65</sup> quique deduxit arma foederatorum illustrium in munitam<sup>66</sup> Lisiam<sup>67</sup> aliasque civitates<sup>68</sup> Flandriae Gallicae civitates, perque sylvas Sar[t] et Iansart,<sup>69</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The antecedent of qua is probably clementia.

<sup>49</sup> Ms: dibilitatas.

<sup>50</sup> belli written above line.

<sup>51</sup> hostes written above a cancelled inimicos.

<sup>52</sup> Leverett first wrote infractum.

<sup>53</sup> omnino written above a cancelled minime.

<sup>54</sup> Leverett first wrote illaesus [?]. The sentence needs revision.

<sup>55</sup> After habemus these cancelled words appear: Sit tibi comes fortuna sunt transfertasti [?].

<sup>56</sup> John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722), one of history's greatest military commanders.

<sup>57</sup> Leverett first wrote isti.

<sup>58</sup> Ms. magni.

<sup>59</sup> Leverett first wrote fortunae invariatae [?].

<sup>60</sup> tibi written above line.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. the common Dominus exercituum of the Old Testament.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 1.40: audacibus annue coeptis.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. 3 *Kings* 20.28.

<sup>64</sup> At Höchstädt in Bavaria Marlborough defeated the French and Bavarians in August 1704 in what is known as the Battle of Blenheim.

<sup>65</sup> At Ramillies in Belgium the allies under Marlborough defeated the French in May 1706.

<sup>66</sup> Leverett first wrote munitissimam.

<sup>67</sup> Lille. The heavily fortified town capitulated to Marlborough in December 1708 after a four-months siege.

<sup>68</sup> This occurrence of civitates is probably to be omitted.

<sup>69</sup> "through the forests of Sart and Iansart." Leverett thus refers to Marlborough's costly victory at Malplaquet in September 1709 where much action was carried on in the woods adjacent.

deducat te in edomandam<sup>70</sup> Canadam munitamque Quebecam, paratque tibi lauros<sup>71</sup> boreales immarcescentes,<sup>72</sup> teque donet coronetque muralibus civicis coronis, semperque virescant in caput tuum divinae clementiae insignia, germinantque flores gratitudinis in cordibus honorum omnium in secula seculorum.

Appulsumque tuum, perquam honorande Domine Hovenden<sup>73</sup> Walker, miles insignissime, Oceani Atlantici admiralis politissime,<sup>74</sup> ab imo pectore gratulor. [3] An<sup>75</sup> te filium Neptuni an Musarum alumnum salutem animo haesi; illud vero non morabor; neque his [ne]que illi immolare honoresve mactare didicimus.<sup>76</sup> Neque propria tua harmonia ventos tempestatesque quietasti caelosve immanes et noxios incantasti, vel delphinos hominum amantes allexisti. Salvum sanumque<sup>77</sup> vestrum adventum cum onere preciosissimo ascriptum Deo fluctus ventosque compescenti putamus omnes, cui soli sit laus summae gloria. Compescat in futurum iste omnipotens omnium rector, qui<sup>78</sup> in abyssum<sup>79</sup> sedet, Rex in seculum, mare boreale turbulentum; quique ventos in vota sua tenet tantum impleat vela leni zephyro, perque Syrtes<sup>80</sup> et saxa carinas vestras salvas et intactas<sup>81</sup> tran[s]vehat, classemque regiam<sup>82</sup> disponat<sup>83</sup> ordine terribili ante moenia Quebecae. Forsan thesauros Vegae<sup>84</sup> minime reportaturus, subacta Canada; verum enimvero hac victoria parta<sup>85</sup> adjungatur Nova Britannia caeteris Britannicis<sup>86</sup> Provinciis in America Septentrionali,<sup>87</sup> imo extendetur Imperium Britannicum<sup>88</sup> ad ipsum polum, nomenque suum<sup>89</sup> atque fama ibunt ad astra poli.<sup>90</sup>

Immemor essem officii omnimodique obsequii si subsilentio praeterirem bene-

<sup>70</sup> Ms: edomnaam.

<sup>71</sup> lauros boreales immarcescentes written above line.

<sup>72</sup> immarcescentes is an apparent coinage of Leverett.

<sup>73</sup> Ms: Hevenden.

<sup>74</sup> politissime written above line.

<sup>75</sup> Haereo animo stands underscored in the Ms before An, and is doubtless to be omitted.

<sup>76</sup> Ms: dedicimus.

<sup>77</sup> sanumque written above line.

<sup>78</sup> A cancelled ventos after qui.

<sup>79</sup> abyssum written above a cancelled aquas. Possibly before abyssum the word in should also be deleted, and sedet construed as the subjunctive of sedare. In the two sentences here Leverett does not seem to have produced a final version.

<sup>80</sup> Ms: Syrtos.

<sup>81</sup> et intactas written above line.

<sup>82</sup> classemque regiam written above line.

<sup>83</sup> Leverett first wrote disponatque.

<sup>84</sup> Probably the district in Spain known as the Vega of Granada, early famous for its fertility.

<sup>85</sup> After parta are the cancelled words adeo late patebit.

<sup>86</sup> Ms: Britannicis.

<sup>87</sup> Septentrionali written above line.

<sup>88</sup> Ms: Britannicum.

<sup>89</sup> Leverett first wrote tuum.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid* 9.641: sic itur ad astra.

ficentem benignumque Nicholsonum,<sup>91</sup> qui quidem, si aderat, Academiae<sup>92</sup> gratulationes, imo et<sup>93</sup> totius Novangliae mil[li]ecuplas<sup>94</sup> gratias jure optimo sibi vindicare posset. Absentem illum bonum non possumus<sup>95</sup> salutare gratularive, commemorare vero votisque optimis prosequi nostrum est et officium et institutum. Estque hoc quod in votis habemus, ut Deus omnium miserationum Pater hujus consilia stabiliret, vires adaugeat ad<sup>96</sup> fatigationes omnes subeundum atque superandum,<sup>97</sup> detque ut salve<sup>98</sup> lacos transvehatur, prostraret munimentum Shamble,<sup>99</sup> penetraret Montem Regium,<sup>100</sup> profligaret omnes inimicos, prosterneret quodcumque offenderet progressum suum aut tardaret victoriam. Sitque congressus ubicunque Deo placuerit inter Quebecam et Montem Regium praefectorum summorum gaudibundus et triumphalis, modulenturque epinicum<sup>101</sup> 'Gloriam Patri' angeli vestri nostrique, qui exercitibus<sup>102</sup> classique ministrant in sacris<sup>103</sup> concinantque<sup>104</sup> isti caelestes<sup>105</sup> qui castra metantur circa timentes Domini.

<sup>91</sup> Gen. Francis Nicholson.

<sup>92</sup> Academiae written above a cancelled nostras.

<sup>93</sup> et written above line.

<sup>94</sup> millecuplas a rare medieval word meaning "multiplied by a thousand."

<sup>95</sup> non possumus written above cancelled non nostrum est.

<sup>96</sup> ad written above line.

<sup>97</sup> Ms: superandam.

<sup>98</sup> Ms: salvo.

<sup>99</sup> Shamble probably a phonetic spelling for Champlain.

<sup>100</sup> Montreal.

<sup>101</sup> Ms: epinicum.

<sup>102</sup> Ms: exercitibus.

<sup>103</sup> After sacris stand the cancelled letters adj; in sacris seems left hanging.

<sup>104</sup> concinantque written above an original contententque.

<sup>105</sup> After caelestes a cancelled fratres.

## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

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