

## THE FIRST SCHOLARSHIP AT HARVARD COLLEGE.

BY ANDREW MCFARLAND DAVIS.

IN the Records of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, under date of June 2, 1641, the following entry was made:<sup>1</sup> "The Court doth intreat leave of the Church of Salem for Mr. Peters, of the Church of Roxberry for Mr. Wells, & of the Church of Boston for Mr. Hibbens, to go for England upon some weighty occasions for the good of the Country, as is conceived." What "the weighty occasions for the good of the country"<sup>2</sup> were appears in a general way from what they did when they reached England. A part at least of the work of this committee was to solicit aid for the Colony and for the cause of education, and although at a subsequent date a doubt was thrown by a committee of the General Court over the extent of the benefit which the Colony derived from the services of these gentlemen, yet it is clear that Harvard College, representing the cause of education and "the advancement of learning," reaped some advantage from their labors. From the records of that institution we learn that "Mr. William Hibbins, Mr. Thomas Welds & Mr. Hugh Peters procured from diverse gentlemen & merchants in England towards the furnishing of the Library with Books to the vällue of one hundred & fifty pounds." In the accounts of Tyng,<sup>3</sup> the Country Treasurer, there is an entry in 1644 which recognizes the existence of a balance due the College for money remitted by Weld and Peters, although the amount

<sup>1</sup> Mass. Rec., i., 332.

<sup>2</sup> See Winthrop, ii., 25.

<sup>3</sup> H. C. Records. See also Quincy, i., 455.

is not stated. Weld rendered an account to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England,<sup>1</sup> of what money was paid himself and others, stating from whom the contributions were received and for what purposes they were given. This account covered all transactions from his first landing in England "until this present 10th of the 2nd mo. 1647." A duplicate, containing no reference to the Society, but headed "Copie," is on file in the Massachusetts Archives. Under the heading "What I rec'd for the Colledge & for the advancement of learning" are the following entries :

The Lady Moulsham gave mee for a Schollership £100, the revenue of it to bee employed that way for ever for wh I entered covenant & am bound to have it performed	£100.
Mr Holbrook Schoolmaster gave me	22.
Mr Bridges his will	50.
Mr Greenhill	7.
Mr George Glover to buy two books	2.
Given by a godly friend of myne who will have his name concealed	50.
	<hr/> 231 <hr/>

The account from which this entry was taken was apparently submitted to a committee consisting of Increase Nowell, William Tyngge and Edward Jackson, who on the 25th of the 8th mo., 1651, accepted and approved it.<sup>2</sup>

In a letter dated at Gates heade, January 2, 1649, Weld alludes to his collections for the Colledge and to the scholarship as follows :<sup>3</sup>

"Others gave to the Colledge and advance of learning which was paid, some little towarde y<sup>e</sup> building of y<sup>e</sup> Colledge per Bill, some to the President for his greate labour taken upon request of y<sup>e</sup> ffeoffees of the Colledge, some laid out for Utensils for the Colledge by their desires (as pewter, brass, Ironware, lynnenn), some laid out in Bookes

<sup>1</sup> N. E. Hist. and Gen. Reg., xxxix., 179.

<sup>2</sup> Mass. Arch., lviii., fols. 3, 4, 5, 6. See also Quincy, i., 473, 474.

<sup>3</sup> N. E. Hist. and Gen. Reg., xxxvi., 63.

to supply their Library and for erecting a school at Roxbury, besides two Scholarships of £5 per annum, a piece settled for ever on the Colledge." And again he says: "Of y<sup>e</sup> lady, y<sup>e</sup> La. Moulsham who (out of Christian desire to advance good learning) gave an £100 to be improved in N. Enge. in y<sup>e</sup> best way for y<sup>e</sup> help of some poore scholar, or scholars in y<sup>e</sup> Colledge, & to be settled for y<sup>e</sup> use, W<sup>ch</sup> being given in upon account to y<sup>e</sup> state there & y<sup>e</sup> pious desire of y<sup>e</sup> Lady signified they settled £10 per annum for ever upon two poore scholars in y<sup>e</sup> Colledges £5 a piece."<sup>1</sup>

It is with the £100 contributed by Lady Moulsham, or as she herself spells the name Lady Mowlson, that we have to deal. From the foregoing extracts we learn that the money was paid to Weld, that he entered into a covenant that it should be applied according to the wishes of the giver, that he paid it on "account to the State there," with a statement of the "pious desires of the Lady," and that the "State" thereupon "settled £10 per annum for ever upon two poore scholars in y<sup>e</sup> Colledges £5 apiece." In the spring of 1645 the money had been received and the General Court ordered thanks to be returned to Lady Mowlson for her gift.<sup>2</sup> Thus the first scholarship at Harvard was founded by a deposit of the money in the treasury of the Colony, and, according to Weld, an undertaking was entered into on the part of the Colony to meet the wishes of the founder by the payment of £5 apiece per annum to two poor scholars in the College.

By diligent search of the records of the Colony and of the College, Quincy collected the main facts concerning the history of this scholarship. It is not probable, however, that he saw the original document which was executed at the time of the payment of the money to Weld and which was forwarded to this country to show what the conditions were for the performance of which Weld had covenanted. This document was mounted in a scrap-book by

<sup>1</sup> "Innocency cleared." N. E. Hist. and Gen. Reg., xxxvi., 68.

<sup>2</sup> Winthrop, ii., 212.

President Sparks, when he overhauled the College archives and had the manuscript papers collected, arranged and bound. It is engrossed upon parchment, and although by its terms it is an agreement on the part of Weld, it bears only the signature of Lady Mowlson. The fact of the gift was set forth in it, the terms on which the money was given, and a covenant on the part of Weld for the specific performance of those terms. It is evident that the attorney who prepared the instrument had two copies engrossed. One to be surrendered after execution to Lady Mowlson, the other to be forwarded to Massachusetts Bay. Through ignorance as to the proper manner in which to execute the papers, Weld probably signed one copy which was retained by Lady Mowlson, while she signed the copy which was kept by Weld. The misunderstanding on this point has preserved for us the precious signature of Ann Mowlson the founder of the first scholarship at Harvard College.

The following is a copy of the document :

Know all men by these presents that I Thomas Wells als Weld Pastor of Roxbury in the Plantation of New England doe by these presents acknowledge that I have received of the Lady Ann Mowlson of London Widdow the full & intire some of o[ne] hundred pounds current English mony the wch she hath freely given to Harvard's Colledge in New England to be imp[roved] by the feofees of the sd Colledge for the time being to the best yearly revenue that may be thought fitt in their wisdome which yearly revenue according to her good & pious intention is to be & remaine as a perpetuall stipend for & towards y<sup>e</sup> per[petual] maintenance of some poor scholler which shalbe admitted into the sd Colledge by the sd feofees or the major pt of the[m] which poore scholler is to enjoy the sd yearly stipend only till such time as such poore scholler doth attaine to ye degr[ee] of a master of Arts & no longer, and then the sd yearly stipend shall by the sd feofees be bestowed upon another poor scho[llar] of the sd colledge whom the sd feofees shall think best deserveing, and soe the sd stipend to goe in succession from [one] poor scholler to another therefor & towards their yearly maintenance in perpetuum in manner & forme as afforesd And in case it shall fall out at such time

as y<sup>e</sup> sd yearly stipend shalbe appointed by the sd feofees to be bestowed upon anoth[er] poore scholler there, then if there shalbe any poore scholler admitted into the sd Colledge that shalbe a kinsman of the sd Lady Mowlson, & shalbe deemed by the sd feofees or the major pt of them to be of a good & pious conversation & to be well deserveing of y<sup>e</sup> sd yearly stipend as afforesd that then [it is] the reall intention & desire of the sd Lady Mowlson that such a poore scholler there being her kinsman shalbe first p<sup>r</sup>ferred & appointed by the sd feofees to have & enjoy the sd yearly stipend in manner & forme as afforesd before any other scholler of the sd college whatsoever that is not her kinsman. And for the p<sup>r</sup>sent the sd Lady Mowlson's desire is that John Weld now a scholler in the sd colledge shall have the sd stipend till he attaine the degree of a Master of Arts. To the dew & true p<sup>r</sup>formance of which good and pious intent & desire of the sd Lady Mowlson I the sd Thomas Weld for myselve my executors & administrators doe cove[nant] and promise to & with the sd Lady Mowlson her executors & administrators in and by these presents that the sd some of o[ne] hundred pounds & the yearly renew thereof shalbe disposed of and employed to the only intent and purpose in y<sup>e</sup> manner & forme as is herein before mentioned and not otherwise. In wittnes whereof I the sd Thomas Wel[d] hereunto set my hand and seale this ninth day of May in the nineteenth yeare of the raigne of or Sovereigne L[ord] King Charles pr. 1643.

Memorandum that it is likewise the intent & desire of the sd Lady Mowlson that such her kinsman as shalbe admitted into y<sup>e</sup> sd colledge shall imediatly from y<sup>e</sup> time of his admittance have the yearly renew of the hundred pounds abovementioned till he attaine the degree of a Master of Arts notwithstanding that it should be oth<sup>r</sup>wise disposed of formerly to anoth<sup>r</sup> poore scholler by y<sup>e</sup> abovesd feofees.

[Signed]

ANN MOWLSON.

Subscribed by y<sup>e</sup> sd Lady Ann Mowlson in  
y<sup>e</sup> presents of

ARTHUR BARNERDISTON  
THO. GOODYEARE.

The mystery which obscured the origin of John Harvard

has been partly cleared away by well directed, intelligent research. Notwithstanding the great interest which attaches to the name of Lady Mowlson, Quincy was compelled to sum up what he could find out about her in the paragraph: "Nothing is known of Lady Mowlson except that she was among the earliest of the transatlantic benefactors of the college." A grateful posterity not content with merely honoring her name and holding up for admiration her liberality in thus generously endowing the distant College in the wilderness, would gladly know more of her. Perhaps a clue to her kinsfolks may be found in the designation of "John Weld now a scholler in the sd college" as the first beneficiary of the exhibition.

Knowledge of the gift by Lady Mowlson may be traced to the College officials in December, 1643, for at the meeting of the Governors of the College at which the seal was adopted Dunster makes the following entry:<sup>1</sup> "ffor the 10<sup>th</sup> P. annum in respect of Lady Moulson's gift of 100<sup>lb</sup>, it's deferred for 2 Reasons first because we have not the monny, And 2 ly we can not give any thing out of the Country Treasury till a General Court. Had we the monny in hand we would presently effect it." It was perhaps in hope that the College might soon have the "monny in hand" that Mr. Pelham was elected Treasurer at this meeting. There were certainly no other funds belonging to the College at that time which were likely to remain in the hands of the Treasurer. However that may be, Pelham does not appear to have qualified for the office, and the Lady Mowlson fund remained in the country treasury for many years after.

In 1655 a petition for relief was presented to the General Court in which the dilapidated condition of the College building, then only fifteen years old, was dwelt upon and the statement was made that the real revenue of the College was "about twelve pounds per annum (which is a small pittance to be shared among four Fellows), besides fifteen

<sup>1</sup>H. C. Records.

pounds per annum which by the donors appointments, is for scholarships." This fifteen pounds per annum for scholarships was the interest allowed for certain funds belonging to the College, of which Lady Mowlson's gift was a part. The deputies having examined the matter reported on the 25th of the 3d mo. 1655, that there was due the College from the country about an hundred and fifty pounds, for which interest was paid and that it was meet that the said £150 should be added to the next country rate. From this conclusion the magistrates on June 21, 1655, dissented, saying they could not consent thereto because the £150 was given by the Lady Mowlson and others, for scholarships annually to be maintained there, which this court could not alter.<sup>1</sup>

Lady Mowlson's hundred pounds was by this act saved, and remained in the hands of the treasurer of the Colony who paid the College interest for its use.<sup>2</sup> During the time that the fund of the scholarship was in the form of a country debt, it finds frequent mention in the statements of the College property which the treasurers were accustomed to submit to the corporation.

In 1654 it is described as "Lady Moulson's gift w. is in the hands of the Country Treasurer for w. £15 per annum for four scholarships."

In 1663 in the "Abbreviate of the accounts of Harvard College for five years past," it is entered as follows: "By so much in y<sup>e</sup> hands of the Country Treasurer being the gift of y<sup>e</sup> Lady Moulson 100<sup>lb</sup>, & of Mr. Bridges 50<sup>lb</sup>, & other small gifts the whole being 162<sup>lb</sup> 16<sup>sh</sup> 4<sup>d</sup>." In an "Account of the Colledge Stock in 1668," "It appears that the Country Treas<sup>r</sup> hath in his hands mony y<sup>t</sup> was y<sup>e</sup> gift of Lady Moulson' 100<sup>lb</sup>," etc., etc.

<sup>1</sup> Mass. Arch., lviii., 32, 33. See also Quincy, i., 465.

<sup>2</sup> A suspicion naturally arises that the General Court had this fund in mind when in 1644 the order passed that £150 be gathered by the Treasurer for the College out of the money sent out from England for the children. Mass. Records, ii., 84.

In 1669 Danforth in turning over the accounts to Richards took his receipt for deeds and papers. The Lady Mowlson scholarships are described in this receipt as above with the added clause "to pay fifteen pounds per annum."

At a corporation meeting held February 3, 1672, all present, it was "ordered y<sup>t</sup> Mr. Richard Russell be desired to give y<sup>e</sup> Colledge testimony of an 162<sup>lb</sup> 16<sup>sh</sup> 4<sup>d</sup> y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Country hath of y<sup>e</sup> Lady Moulson's gift to y<sup>e</sup> sd Colledge unless there be an assurance of y<sup>e</sup> 15<sup>lb</sup> p. annum or some graunt to y<sup>t</sup> effect."

In 1682 the item is entered in the inventory of the College property as if it were considered a debt due from the estate of Richard Russell :

"Due from the Exr<sup>s</sup> of Rd. Russell, Esqr. for which they pay 15<sup>lb</sup> p. annum. 162<sup>lb</sup> 16<sup>sh</sup> 4<sup>d</sup>."

In 1683, in "an account of the estate belonging to Harvard College under the care of Samuel Nowell delivered unto him by Thomas Danforth," the following entry appears :

"The Country Treas<sup>r</sup> Dr. for 162<sup>lb</sup> 16<sup>sh</sup> 4<sup>d</sup>  
for wch annually they pay 15<sup>lb</sup> in Country pay."

In 1693 Brattle makes the following entry :

"Richard Russell Esqr. late Treasur<sup>r</sup> for the Country Dr. for y<sup>e</sup> Lady Moulson's &c gift 162<sup>lb</sup> 16<sup>sh</sup> 4<sup>d</sup>  
(being 15<sup>lb</sup> per annum) that the sd Russell used to pay, it being let to the Country—Nothing rec'd for many years."<sup>1</sup>

During this period the £100 contributed by Lady Mowlson, which according to Weld's account was remitted with other funds that as a whole footed up £231, became permanently associated with the £50 from Mr. Bridge's estate and £12 16s. 4d. from unknown sources. By this process the income of the £62 16s. 4d., which does not appear to have been specifically given for scholarships, was lumped with that from the Lady Mowlson fund and until all payment of interest ceased, £15 per annum was paid for scholarships. It figured at different times as a debt of the

<sup>1</sup> All the foregoing items are from the H. C. Records.



Country, as the personal indebtedness of Russell and as a debt due from the executors of his estate. In some of the entries the Lady Mowlson fund was charged up as if the principal were £162 16s. 4d., while in others the qualifying “&c.” preserved the record of the fact that it constituted only a part of this item. Still another amount is mentioned for this fund by Felt, in a Memoir of Hugh Peters,<sup>1</sup> who says under date of 1642, “Near this time they obtained £150 from Lady Moulson and other donations from the liberally inclined, for the college.”

In 1693 a petition for this money was addressed by the College to “his Excellency, Sir William Phips, Knight, Captain General, & Governour in Chief of their Majesties Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, and to the Great & General Court or Assembly of the said Province.”<sup>2</sup> In 1695 the petition was renewed. In 1698 the President and Fellows of Harvard College through the President represented to the General Court, “That about 50 years since y<sup>e</sup> Lady Moulson & other well disposed persons in England gave a considerable sume of money to y<sup>e</sup> s<sup>d</sup> Harvard Colledg, wch mony was laid out in England & y<sup>e</sup> produce of it here amounting to £162 16<sup>s</sup> 4<sup>d</sup> Lent & paid in to y<sup>e</sup> Treasury of y<sup>e</sup> late Colony of the Massachusetts, for y<sup>e</sup> use whereof fifteen pounds (in Country pay) was allowed annually by y<sup>e</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Court & duely paid by y<sup>e</sup> Country Treasurer to the Treasurer of y<sup>e</sup> Colledg from y<sup>e</sup> year 1648 to y<sup>e</sup> year 1685, as y<sup>e</sup> Honb<sup>le</sup> Mr Thomas Danforth & Mr James [Richard?] Russell sometime Treasurers of y<sup>e</sup> said Colledg & Country can certify, since w<sup>ch</sup> Time by reason of change of Govern<sup>t</sup> & y<sup>e</sup> Countryes great debts & Charges, nothing has been rec<sup>d</sup> from y<sup>e</sup> Country on that acco<sup>t</sup>, whereby y<sup>e</sup> Colledg has suffered not a little, its Stock being very low, & not capeable of defraying its necessary Charges.

<sup>1</sup> N. E. Hist. and Gen. Reg., v., 237.

<sup>2</sup> H. C. Records.

Your petitioners do therefore humbly pray y<sup>e</sup> said matter may be taken into your Consideration & that now y<sup>e</sup> Country is out of debt, you will be pleased in yo<sup>r</sup> great equity & goodness to give order for y<sup>e</sup> [ ] of said principall sume of 162.. 16.. 4<sup>d</sup>, with wt remains unpaid of y<sup>e</sup> use thereof &c.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1712 the matter was again pressed by Leverett and this time the effort was successful.<sup>2</sup>

In Brattle's book in the Harvard College Archives, under date of March 29, 1713, there is the following entry :

“Cash rec'd of Mr Taylor Province Treasur<sup>r</sup> £426 10<sup>sh</sup> 4<sup>d</sup> being £162 16<sup>sh</sup> 4<sup>d</sup> of it y<sup>e</sup> principal remaining due of monies borrowed by y<sup>e</sup> late Colony of y<sup>e</sup> Massachusetts Bay of y<sup>e</sup> College & £263.. 14/ being for sd sum at 6 pr c. p. anno from the year 1685 to this time less pd Mr Addington for a warrant to y<sup>e</sup> Treasurer to pay me sd sum pursuant to a resolve of y<sup>e</sup> Genl Court at their last session in March last 2/.”

“Memd<sup>m</sup> This £162 16/4<sup>d</sup> w<sup>s</sup> w<sup>t</sup> w<sup>s</sup> due from my Lady Moulson's &c gift to o<sup>r</sup> College lent y<sup>e</sup> Country a<sup>o</sup> 1648 & they pd Int. for till 1685.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus the College was in 1713 for the first time placed in possession of the principal of the Lady Mowlson scholarship. The College records as a rule are particularly full as to the disposition of exhibition funds. They are singularly barren with reference to this scholarship. For the twenty-eight years immediately previous to this payment, there had been no income from the fund received by the College, and consequently there could have been no distribution to the students. But, even before that period, when there is no reason to doubt that the interest was regularly paid by the Colony, the rule which prevailed as to recording the disposition of the income of the exhibition funds does not

<sup>1</sup>See Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc., vol. vi., 343.

<sup>2</sup>Quincy, i., 206.

<sup>3</sup>See also Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc., 1862, p. 343.

seem to have been applied to this. By the terms of this gift the College officials were the persons who were to assign the scholarships. If they exercised the privilege they made no record of it. After the receipt of the principal, this exhibition stood upon the same footing as all others of which the College was the depository of the funds, and it would have been natural that the same careful record should have been kept of the annual distribution of the income, as was customary with the others. Such was not, however, the case, and it is only through a chance record in 1743, where £9 are appropriated out of the income of the "Lady Moulson" fund, and another similar entry in 1746,<sup>1</sup> that we are able positively to trace the separate existence of the fund at these dates.

When the College accounts were opened in double-entry bookkeeping, the outstanding exhibitions were merged in an "Exhibition Account," and from that time the individuality of the several exhibitions collected in that account was lost. Some of the more important scholarships which were thus consigned to oblivion have been rescued by President Eliot and restored to separate life. If an analysis of the exhibition account should fail to reveal the fact that the Lady Mowlson's gift is hidden in its depths, let us still hope that the "good & pious intentions" of the worthy founder of the first scholarship at Harvard may not be disappointed, but that some means may be found through which a "perpetual stipend" to be known as the Lady Mowlson scholarship will pass from "one poore scholar to another" and thus preserve the memory of Lady Mowlson.

---

<sup>1</sup>H. C. Records.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.