

## Percival Willoughby, a 17th Century Derby Physician.

By SAMUEL TAYLOR.

READERS of our Journal will be familiar with the name of Willoughby; it occurs frequently in the history of Derbyshire. Very little, however, is known about Dr. Percival Willoughby whose gravestone lies in the nave of St. Peter's Church, Derby (see *D.A.J.*, XXIV, p. 50). In *D.A.J.*, volume XVI, page 151, there is recorded an entry "1669 Buckes to bee kill'd this grasstyme in Haddon Parke and to be disposed of as followeth Vizt, at least 20

One to Dr. Willoughby."

His genealogy is worked out by the Rev. Henry Lawrance in the volume for 1926/27 and this proves that his father, Sir Percival Willoughby, was the fourteenth in descent from Serlo de Pleasley whose daughter married Ralph de Willoughby, from Willoughby-in-the-Marsh in Lincolnshire. Dr. Willoughby's mother was the last of the Willoughbys of Wollaton, Nottingham. He was the youngest of their sons. He practised medicine, settled in Derby, married Elizabeth,<sup>1</sup> daughter of Sir Francis Coke of Trusley, and died at the age of eighty-nine. This is practically the total of our knowledge of Dr. Willoughby and to it I now make an addition.

Four years ago I was asked by a lady if I knew anything about an apothecary in Derby named Willoughby, but

<sup>1</sup> B. at Trusley 11 Nov. 1599, d. 15 Feb. 1666.—Ed.

I could find nothing about him. The lady said that a friend of hers in Sheffield was interested in such a man. Shortly afterwards Mr. N. L. Edwards, F.R.C.S., asked me for information about one Percival Willoughby who practised medicine in Derby during the 17th century. Professor Phillips, of Sheffield, was anxious to have such particulars as he could gather of the man. In course of time I was informed that Professor Phillip had obtained a book on Midwifery written by Percival Willoughby, and from this book it could be concluded that the author was a man of remarkable personality, combining a strong physique with an enlightened highmindedness; a scientific mind which enabled him to combat the false and cruel practices of his day and to carry on his own practice by methods very similar to those used to-day.

It would have been strange if what I heard had not stimulated my curiosity and, therefore, after waiting for a considerable time to elapse in the expectation that the contents of Dr. Willoughby's book would be made public, I decided to see if I could obtain a copy of it. My enquiries failed to discover more than three copies, the one already mentioned, another in the British Museum and a third in a provincial medical library.<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Miss Smelt, the librarian of the Pharmaceutical Society, for discovering this last copy which made it possible to read it at my leisure.

The title page reads as follows:—

OBSERVATIONS IN  
MIDWIFERY  
as also  
The Country Midwives Opusculum  
or Vade Mecum

<sup>1</sup> It has more recently come to my knowledge that the late Sir William Osler possessed a copy.

BY PERCIVALL WILLOUGHBY GENTLEMAN

edited from the original MS. by

Henry Blenkinsop F.R.C.S.E.

etc., etc., etc.

Da spatium teneremque morem male

cuncta ministrat | Impetus

| Statii Thet Lib x

Warwick

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The Preface runs as follows:—"The curious MS. which is now first printed, was purchased by me some years ago from a Bookseller's Catalogue. It is written throughout with great neatness and bound in old calf. There is a paper amongst the Sloan MSS. (No. 529) which contains a portion of the Observations, but in a condensed form, and there is in the possession of J. H. Aveling, Esq., M.D., of Sheffield, a MS. resembling mine, both in the handwriting and in the binding, though in some respects it is not quite so complete."

There follows a paragraph of thanks and apologies and then,

"I venture to hope that the volume so long promised will be an acceptable addition to the libraries of my professional brethren.

Henry Blenkinsop."

At this point Mr. Blenkinsop introduces a long biographical notice which is not altogether correct; for instance, it is stated that Dr. Willoughby was the sixth son of Sir Percival Willoughby; he was in fact the third son. Sir Percival is also stated to be of the house of Eresby whereas he was of the house of Pleasley. However, I think I cannot do better than quote freely from this notice.

“ It is a curious circumstance in connection with the future pursuits of our author Percival, that his father and mother, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth prayed for a writ *de ventre inspiciendo* against Dorothy the second wife and widow of Sir Francis Willoughby of Wollaton, which Dorothy alleged herself to be with child by Sir Francis. The proceedings are so curious that we make no apology for inserting the following extract from the Law Reports:—

*Willoughby's Case*

‘ Percival Willoughby and Bridget his wife, one of the co-heirs of Sir Francis Willoughby (because Sir Francis Willoughby died seized of a great inheritance, having five daughters, whereof the eldest was married to Percival Willoughby, and not any son; and the said Sir Francis, leaving his wife Dorothy, who at the time of his death pretended herself to be with child by Sir Francis, which, if it were a son, all the five sisters should thereby lose the inheritance descended unto them) prayed a writ *de ventre inspiciendo* out of the Chancery, directed to the Sheriff of London, that he should cause the said Dorothy to be viewed by twelve knights and *ad tractandum per ubera et ventrem inspiciend* whether she were with child, and to certify the same to the Common Bench. And, if she were with child to certify for how long in their judgments and *quando sit paritura*. Whereupon the Sheriff accordingly caused her to be searched and returned that she was twenty weeks gone with child, and that within twenty weeks *fuit paritura*. Whereupon another writ issued out of the Common Bench, commanding the Sheriff safely to keep her within such an house and that the doors should be well guarded and that every day he should cause her to be viewed by some of the women named in the writ (wherein ten were named) and when she should be delivered, that some of them should be with her, to

view her birth, whether it be male or female, to the intent that there should not be any falsity. And upon this writ the Sheriff returned—That accordingly he had caused her to be kept, etc. And that such a day she was delivered of a daughter.' See Coke's *Elizabeth London*, 1669, p. 566."

Mr. Blenkinsop proceeds to give some particulars of the life of Percival Willoughby which are taken from a memorandum written by Cassandra Willoughby the second wife of James, the first Duke of Chandos, which was compiled from letters and papers in the library at Wollaton. Percival and his brothers, Thomas and Henry, first went to school at Trowbridge, then to Rugby, then Eton, and afterwards all three went to Oxford. At Rugby they were commended for their great industry.

It is perhaps natural for us to think that the Willoughby family was, if not wealthy, at least far removed from straightened circumstances. Sir Francis died "seized of a great inheritance" and Sir Percival began to exploit the Nottingham coalfields (*D.A.J.*, vol. for 1935) in a rather large way. We must remember, however, that Sir Francis left six daughters and that Sir Percival had a large family to provide for and the upkeep of an estate like Wollaton must have been very great. The evidence is that Sir Percival found the upbringing of his family a tax upon his resources and no doubt he found the financing of his industrial venture difficult.

I cannot do better now than to quote the remainder of Mr. Blenkinsop's preface, adding just such material from the text of the book as will amplify his allusions.

"While Sir Percival was thus grievously oppressed with the want of money, his son Henry and his son Percival (who were at Trinity College in Oxford) suffered under the same calamity.

"There are, in the library at Wollaton [N.B. This section is taken from Cassandra Willoughby's manuscript]

several letters written from Oxford, by Percival Willoughby, to his father, in which he generously expressed his concern for the expense which Sir Percival was at, to maintain him at Oxford, and his desire to free him from that charge.

“ There is a letter from him to Sir Percival dated January, 1619, in which he writ that now a fair opportunity offered itself, for his uncle Robert Willoughby had proposed his being placed with Mr. Frames Van Otten, who, for a hundred pounds, offered to keep him seven years, and to teach him music, physic and surgery; and had promised to use him like a son, maintain him like a gentleman, and allow him the free use of his study, and to teach him the secrets of physic: that under him he should have time for his own private studies, and to keep his public exercises as before. And after this his Uncle Robert had promised that he should live with him, and that he would bring him into his business.

“ In other letters, Percival Willoughby earnestly pressed his father to consent to this offer, and not to scruple his being so placed, as thinking it an undervaluing to him, for, with God’s blessing, he did not doubt but the profession of physic would make him more happy than his two eldest brothers; and by the help of that practice, he believed he should never stand in need of them, but he questioned not that they would stand in need of him.

“ It appears by the old papers that Sir Percival was at last prevailed upon by his son, and did consent to send him for seven years to this famous person, Mr. Frames Van Otten, who used Percival Willoughby with great kindness, but died before his time was out. There is a very melancholy letter from him to Sir Percival upon the death of Mr. Frames Van Otten in which he grievously lamented the loss of such a master.

“ This Percival Willoughby so well improved himself

in the time he served so good a master, that he soon took his Doctor's degree, and became a very eminent Physician.

"He married the daughter of Sir Francis Coke of Trusley, A.D. 1631, and settled himself in Derby town, where he practised physic, and lived in great repute, till he was near ninety years of age. He had by this wife two or three sons, who all died unmarried and two daughters, the eldest of whom married Mr. Hart and the younger married Mr. Burton, of Derby.

"It is doubtful whether the family historian" [we are now obviously quoting Mr. Blenkinsop's own words] "is correct in stating that Percival Willoughby took his Doctor's degree. We have been unable to find any record of it. The passage in the manuscript would naturally lead to the conclusion that he took the degree early in life, and that can hardly have been the case for on February 20th, 1640/1, he was admitted an extra licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of London, and was described as *in villa et comitatu Derbiensi et alibi in Medicina bene et multum exercitatus*, but there was no mention of his possessing a degree in medicine. Neither did he possess it in 1666, when his wife died, if we may draw any inference from the inscription on her gravestone, in which he describes himself as simply *generosus*. It is true that in the inscription on his own gravestone he is described as M.D., but that in itself would not necessarily imply more than physician.<sup>1</sup>

"The statement that he settled in Derby in 1631 [the year of his marriage] is, however, corroborated by our author's reports of cases attended by him, "In June, 1631, there came to my chamber in Derby the wife of Thomas Hood of Hollington", and in fact it is probable that he was practising there in 1630 (one Mrs. Staynes,

<sup>1</sup> Munk. *Roll of the Roy. Coll. of Physicians*, 2nd ed. 1878, vol. I, 231, states that Willoughby was admitted "Extra-Licentiate" after the usual examination.—Ed.

a surgeon's wife, in Derby was delivered of a child in the year 1630), but when and where he first commenced practice we are unable to discern. He must have been in practice as early as 1624, if we may rely upon his statement made in January, 1669, that he had practised 'nigh forty-five years' ['nigh forty-five years have I practised in the midwife's bed, and in it, I humbly thank God for his assistance, and help, I ever delivered all women, to whom I was called, this worthy gentlewoman (Mrs. Alestry<sup>1</sup> in December, 1669) onely excepted and my not delivering her was occasioned by the straitness of the passages and the unusual ill conformation of the bones near adjoining to the womb, with the hardness of the child's skull'].

"Until the year 1655 he appears to have practised in Derbyshire, and to have been resident in Derby, but in that year we find him living in Staffordshire ['whilst that I lived in Stafford'] and it would seem that he was not resident in Staffordshire for a long time before 1655, for he says, 'About the year 1654 I travailed with my guide about the middle of summer, all the fore part of the night and was brought to Bromidgham in Staffordshire.'

"His sojourn then in Stafford was not of long duration for in 1656 we find him in London, and in this instance he gives in a few words the reason for his removal. 'I left Stafford and went to London, there to live for the better education of my children in May, 1656. And by reason of an apothecary, that formerly had lived in Stafford, I quickly had some practice in midwifery, amongst the meaner sort of women.'

"During his residence in London, however, he was not without practice of a higher class for in 1658 we find him with his daughter attending 'Sir Tennebs Evank's lady.'

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Allestree, wife of William, was buried at All Saints' Derby, 17 February 1670. I have not traced this particular William Allestree—Ed.



“ His daughter at this period appears to have been of great service to him. The first mention of her appears in 1655 when he takes her with him to a case at Congerton.<sup>1</sup> (This makes an interesting extraction: ‘ I was sent for from Stafford, to come to a lady beyond Congerton. Her midwife had kept her several days in labour. I took my daughter with me. Wee travelled all night and we were wetted with much rain to our skins. Wee came, by break of day, to the place. But this Lady was dead, undelivered, before our coming. I much desired to see her corps, but the midwife would not permit it. I knew this midwife not to be very judicious in her profession, and I believe, that shee was ashamed that her work should be seen, Anno 1655. This midwife was gentile in habit of clothes but ignorant in the ways of practice of midwifery ’). But in 1656 she [his daughter] appears to have been competent to attend cases without her father’s assistance, and to have practiced in Staffordshire and subsequently in London (‘ Surely you have art in those fingers ’ said Mrs. Wolaston, of Threadneedle Street in London Anno 1657).

“ We cannot positively fix the duration of Willoughby’s residence in London, but in as much as he mentions cases in London, in 1658 and 1659, and in 1660 we find him attending a case eight miles from Derby, it may fairly be assumed that he returned to Derby in the year 1659 or 1660 (when 63 or 64 years old). [He mentions a case in Derby in the year 1657 but from the context it is reasonable to assume that it was a case reported to him and not one which he attended].

“ Here [in Derby] he resumed the extensive and laborious practice which he appears to have carried on until within a few years of his death. His last dated cases are in the year 1672 when he attended at Boyleston and

<sup>1</sup> There is no place of this name; it is probably Congleton, co. Ches.—Ed.

Rodgeway<sup>1</sup> at the age of seventy-six. May I state here in parenthesis that this was by no means a record for the times. Sir Theodore Mayerne was over eighty years of age when he travelled from London to Exeter by coach to attend at the birth of Queen Henrietta Maria's youngest daughter. On his way Sir Theodore called at Oxford to take on with him a younger physician of whose name and age I have no note but my memory says it was Dr. Smith aged seventy years. At a later date Sir Theodore attended the Lord Protector Cromwell and refused payment for his cure. He was told to go to the cellars at Whitehall and take some wine as that was good Royalist stuff and he went off with a dozen bottles frequently took long journeys on horseback through the night, regardless of bad roads and bad weather; now staying several days with a patient in the country receiving all the time important messages from other ladies who required his services; now losing his way in a forest, riding hard to be in time.

"It is possible that his son may have assisted him during the latter years of his practice, for he mentions receiving such assistance in the year 1670 [Through my son's coming to supply my place, I was permitted to visit this worthy good woman'] and it is noticeable that his observations on cases cease about that time. [Probably he did not cease practice in 1672 but wrote his notes in that year and considered them complete].

"He died in the year 1685 at the advanced age of eighty-nine."

Here Mr. Blenkinsop gives an exact reproduction of Dr. Willoughby's notes and observations but before proceeding to analyse them I will insert some further particulars concerning the manuscript which have lately come to my notice.

<sup>1</sup> Probably Ridgeway. The nearest place of this name to Derby is at Heage or it may be a mistake for Rugeley.—Ed.

We have seen that Mr. Blenkinsop retrieved the manuscript about the year 1860, but we must not assume that it had been laid aside and forgotten between that date and 1672 when it was written. It can be proved that that was not so.

The Wollaton Hall manuscripts have been edited and published by the Historical M.S. Commission.

It appears that Cassandra Willoughby left a MS. history of the family in two volumes. Dr. Blenkinsop's notes were made from the second volume which has since disappeared. Probably Dr. Blenkinsop bought the whole MS., and, finding the first volume not germane to his subject, set it aside. The second volume and Percival Willoughby's MS. would be used for publication and may have been lost in the printers' works. Whatever happened to Volume II, in the year 1886, Volume I came into Lord Middleton's possession. This is marked "Hy. Jn. Kearney 1785" and "No. 43 Somerset St., Portman Square," and in a somewhat later hand "Miss Kearney."

The second volume, at least, must then have passed into the possession of Dr. Kirkland, who lent it to Dr. Denman, and it is pleasant to suppose that reading this MS. inspired Dr. Denman to write his own Treatise.

There is a footnote to page 609 of the publication of the Historical MS. Commission which reads as follows: "The Inspector is indebted for access to this publication<sup>1</sup> to Dr. William Osler" (Sir W. Osler) "Regius Professor of Medicine in the University of Oxford. The work is interesting to the layman for the glimpses it affords of 17th century life. It is, according to Dr. Osler, an important work in the history of English medicine."

In 1787 was published Part I of Dr. Thomas Denman's "Introduction to the Practice of Midwifery,"<sup>2</sup> vol. 1 appeared in 1789, and vol. 2 in 1795. It went through

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Blenkinsop's.

<sup>2</sup> Several editions of Denman's book are in the local collection of the Derby Public Library.—Ed.

five editions during the author's lifetime, and the sixth which was published in 1824 after his death contains a short memoir of his life. It is interesting to note that the early editions are dedicated to Dr. Thomas Gisborne, President of the College of Physicians, another Derbyshire man, and son of the Rev. James Gisborne, who was rector of Staveley from 1716 to 1759.

The Preface is a long and interesting history of medical literature especially that of English origin and in the course of it he writes:

“ Having been favoured by the late Dr. Kirkland with a manuscript written by Dr. Percival Willoughby who lived at Derby and afterwards in London, I am able to give the reader some idea of the practice of that time, many of the cases being dated from 1640-1670. This work is entirely practical and was intended to be published for the use of midwives, there being a title page and two copies with variations. His preface is in this manner: ‘ I have read many bookes, with all the later writers in midwifery, and I do perceive that they all follow a common roade, taking their several schemes and figures one from another. In several of their schemes various things may be perceived which will be troublesome to the labourings of women, which a judicious practitioner will not followe. Let midwives mark what hath been written in my obervations, let them consider the several reports not faigned, or the surmised thoughts, nuctors, or man's fantisies, sitting and meditating in his studye, but which really have been performed in the travailing woman's chamber. From mine and their directions let midwives choose the best and facilest waies of relieving women in affliction, and to decide all disputes let reason be the judge, let experience argue the dubious points of practice, and after a full debate let unspotted truth record to succeeding times what is most fit to be followed and used,’ etc.

“ This is a specimen of his illustration: ‘ Let midwives

observe the waies and proceedings of nature for the production of her fruit on trees, or the ripening of walnutts and almondes, from their first knotting to the opening of the huskes and falling of the nutt; the green huskes sticking so close that it is not possible to separate the huske from the shell, whilst it is unripe, but as the fruit ripenneth, the huske choppeth and with a fissure openeth, and by degrees separateth the fruit without any enforcement.

“ ‘ An egge representeth the wombe: now the henne with keeping the egge warm doth breed the chicken, which when it comes to maturitie doth chip the shell, and is by degrees hatched without injurie. These signatures may teach midwives patience, and persuade them to let nature alone to perform her own worke, and not to disquiet women by their strugglings, for such enforcements rather hinder the birthe than anywaie promote it, and oft ruinate the mother and usually the childe; and let midwives know that they be natures servantes,’ etc. Willoughby’s practice is not much different from that of the present time. He divides labour into two kinds only—natural and unnatural.”

It will be well here to leave Dr. Willoughby for a while and turn our attention to Dr. Denman so that we may get the full significance of his references to the Willoughby manuscript.

Dr. Thomas Denman was the second son of John Denman of Bevercotes, Nottingham, settled as an apothecary in Bakewell, Derbyshire, where he married Elizabeth, daughter of Anthony Burton, a mercer of that town. They had eight children of whom three died in infancy. The eldest son, Joseph, had a good education at Manchester and Wakefield and eventually practised medicine in London. The father was in business about thirty years and died of dropsy at the age of fifty-eight years. Joseph, twenty-one years old at the time, was partly

qualified as a doctor but he took over the business, which was poor, taking £50 in that year. The father's takings had varied between £50 and £100. The statement takings is quite definite but even if it means profits, we can only imagine a hard struggle to bring up a family of five children on that sum, especially when the father was fond of the fishing-rod and ale-house.<sup>1</sup> Let us pay our respects to Mrs. Denman. Dr. Denman says he was well educated at the Free School but we will not follow his biography too closely. He became a naval surgeon and served in the West Indies during naval engagements. On returning to England he obtained a post which proved a sinecure and he was able to start in practice, being appointed a man-midwife at Middlesex Hospital. He spent a part of his time teaching until his practice grew too large. He must therefore have been more than merely impressed by the writings of Dr. Willoughby; he must have spread that impression widely over the large number of students who passed under his hand. One of them was Richard (afterwards Sir Richard) Croft, Esq.,<sup>2</sup> who in the year 1789 married Margaret, the eldest daughter of Dr. Denman. Dr. Denman says that Richard Croft showed a partiality for midwifery and joined him in his practice. This Richard Croft was destined to figure prominently in his profession. He became a Court Physician and attended the Princess Charlotte at her confinement and death. Princess Charlotte had married Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg and his letters to his sister the Gräfin Mensdorff-Pouilly have recently been published (*Cornhill Magazine*, May, 1937). In one of them he says: "Old Croft says the fruit will fall the more lightly from the tree if it is quite ripe. So we hope that God will so allow it." He writes

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written I have found a MS. in the Derby Pub. Lib., which shows definitely that profit was meant, not takings.—*Author*.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Richard Croft was apprenticed to a surgeon at Burton-on-Trent.

—*Author*.

more of Croft who was popular, but that suffices to show that Willoughby's examples had been passed on to him through his father-in-law more than one hundred years after it had been first used. It is interesting to observe here that Sir Richard Croft was obstinate and preferred to work alone and when Princess Charlotte died shortly after giving birth to a still-born child, he shot himself.

We have now traced a great part of the history of Dr. Willoughby's manuscript. We have seen it pass from hand to hand, always treated with respect and admiration and always read, not as a curiosity, but as a substantial contribution to medical literature. Let us look at the book itself.

It is written in two parts, the first is in the main a case book and the second an enumeration of the principles which should guide a midwife in her work.

It is no part of my intention to describe Dr. Willoughby's methods except that I must say that as he recounts them they seem to be simplicity itself. This is one of his charms and perhaps the best proof of his greatness that he could make all things simple and could recount them in simple language. He wrote for the midwife of his day and he shows very plainly what she was like, and it was not always a "she." Anyone can understand what he has to say. He writes that, given reasonable conditions, he can secure an awkward delivery in "the half of one quarter of an hour," but against that we must put his statement of a very difficult case—"I was wearied and spent with fainting, through much endeavouring . . . For some time I was enforced to leave the work to recover again my strength. The work came on very slowly by little and little . . . I believe I was an hour or more in striving to get the body forth. She patiently suffered all the time." What humanity there is in that last sentence! He started practice in a world where the sickroom was full

of ignorance and cruelty and when midwifery was carried on with an almost unbelievable brutality. His own evidence is full of instances of this. He advises "learning the use of the crochet rather than pothooks, pack-needles, silver spoons, thatches-hooks and knives to show their imagined skill. I have known the midwives and the places where they have used these follies on their women." Many of the cases cited are those in which Dr. Willoughby was called in to mend the mischief of ignorant people. He was called to Brincliffe near Sheffield for such an occasion and again he went from Derby into Staffordshire to another where "they showed me the knife full of great notches." In 1646 at Twyford he found "midwives tormenting the woman." Fortunately he had a sense of humour and it must often have saved him. One can see it in the year 1650 when he gives a long account of a "whimsical conceited woman with a schrimshaw midwife who nearly killed her."

In 1670 he went to Tutbury to mend the unbelievable cruelty practised by their midwives on Katherine Kay who herself said "she would have kicked the midwife into the fire had she had strength." Those who know the details of the barbarities by means of which a man was hanged, drawn and quartered cannot be surprised at the practice of cruelty on other occasions, but there is no doubt about the wrath of Dr. Willoughby at the conditions prevailing around him. The destruction and even the tearing apart of a limb was not uncommon. There came to him at a friend's house in Derby a woman carrying a basket in which wrapped in a linen cloth was an arm as an earnest of the need there was for his help. She was Thomas Hofe's wife of Willington. He saved her. Here is another entry for 1657—Mrs. Wolaston in Threadneedle Street in London, a watchmaker's wife by the Old Exchange. The midwife got three women to hold her by the waist and pull whilst others pulled the woman's



body the other way. "The child came by the violence like the report of a pistol." Afterwards Mrs. Wolaston employed Percival Willoughby's daughter, as I have already noted.

This was the kind of world to which Dr. Willoughby came and to which, when he had worked out his system, he offered the key which would help to unlock the difficulties of birth. Is it any wonder that this capable, wise, humane and Christian man was wrathful when the key was refused? However, he got his satisfactions. There were people living recently in a village near Derby whose name is the same as a goodwife he attended in the year 1635. The midwife said the child was dead, but he knew better for he says the child clutched his finger with its hand. He saved both mother and son and we can imagine the pride with which he notes in his book that he saw the mother and child in 1660 and the son in 1668 when he was thirty-three years old. That was one of his early successes.

I have endeavoured to show the kind of world into which Dr. Willoughby introduced order and a system which has persisted much longer than the memory of its author. A few quotations will throw a light upon life in the 17th century.

"1667. Derby. A poor foole Mary Baker gave birth in an open windy cold place nigh to a house of office. She was destitute.

"Then came a woman from Nottingham unto me at Derby; some two years afore, both the bones of her arms were broken, and in all this time the bones did not knit again."

"1647. In the unfortunate days when Sir John Gell, Baronet then Colonell of Derby and Mr. Thomas Gell, his brother, Lieutenant and Recorder of Derby<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Gell was elected a member of parliament for Derby, 12 Nov. 1645, in place of William Allestree, disabled to sit. He also succeeded Allestree as Recorder of Derby.—Ed.

Mullanus Evankt his Major Lieutenant<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Dolton Major [Glover does not give the name as Mullanus Evankt but Mollanus, I shall have occasion to write of this later]. There happened that a comely well-favoured servant was gotten with child in Derby." [The child was born without suspicion and she hid the body in a feather tub and covered it with feathers]. "It was then the custome of Derby souldiers to peep in the night through windows, when they espied lights. By them, her secret doings were discovered, and at the Sessions in Derby shee had afterwards her trial. But in those lawless days, the jury would not find her guilty of murder, for that she was an handsome comely creature, and beloved of the souldiers, that then pitied her misfortune. For which reason John Shaw, the foreman of the jury, pitying the woman and willing to ingratiate the souldiers to bee his friends, would not find her guilty and said, hee thought it not reason that a woman should be hanged for a mistaken harsh word or two in the statute. The souldiers smiled and rejoiced at her delivery. But some of the Derby magistrates frowned and were offended, but they durst not show or utter their thoughts in words, or deeds, for the cause aforementioned."

1665 at Thurneston<sup>2</sup> the second of twins "a very swarthy muddy colour and had two teeth in the lower jaw. After a small time became reddish and well-favoured. The teeth were very black and others white, later he cast the black teeth."

1671. He described some flesh as "thickish and quobby"<sup>3</sup> which seems a good word. He notes "The inhabitants of our towne, being foule-mouthed and apt

<sup>1</sup> In the *Memoirs of Lt.-Col. Hutchinson*, 1806, he is called "Major Molanus, of Derby . . . an old dull-headed Dutchman," and in the 9<sup>th</sup> Report of H.M.C., Chandos-Pole-Gell MSS. he is referred to as Mollanus. I shall have occasion to write of 'Evankt' later.—*Author*.

<sup>2</sup> Probably meant for Thurvaston.—Ed.

<sup>3</sup> See Oxford Eng. Dict., s.v. *quab*, the adjective means, 'slimy, shapeless.'—Ed.

to cursing, and the midwives of no good disposition, ever thrusting their ignorant carriages on others, made me unwilling to use the crochet."

1631 May. "I travelled all night and came to Nottingham at sunrising to one Mrs. Rising." He tells how "thinking the child lived was reluctant to interfere, but on the advice of the clergy did so and removed a child which lived only a short while; it was baptised at once" and again "curious to see what was the opinion of a Divine who thought I should save the mother at the expense of the child." On another occasion (1632) he writes "and a priest standing by willed me whether the child should be living or dead to proceed, not valuing the child's life saying 'That without all doubt the child already was or shortly would be a Saint in Heaven' wherefore I quickly drew the child with the crochet. Both child and mother died."

One of the most remarkable of his accounts given under the heading "In Middlesex anno 1658 my daughter, with my assistance delivered Sir Tenebs Evank's Lady of a living daughter" is so interesting that I am going to quote it in full, noting here that there was a prejudice against male-midwives amongst many people.

"All the morning my daughter was much troubled and told mee. That she feared the birth would come by the buttocks, and that she foresaw the same by the falling down of her belly.

"About 7 a clock that night labour approached. At my daughter's request unknown to the lady I crept into the chamber upon my hands and knees, and returned, and it was not perceived by the Lady. My daughter followed me and I, being deceived, through haste to go away, said that it was the head, but she affirmed the contrary, however if it should prove the buttocks, that she knew how to deliver her.

"Her husband's gestures, and oliverian powers, with

some rash expressions, that hee uttered flowing too unhandsomely from his mouth dismayed my daughter: She could not be quieted, untill I crept privately again the second time into the chamber, and then found her words were true. I willed her to bring down a foot, the which she soon did. But being much disquieted with feare of ensuing danger, she prayed me to carry on the rest of the work.

“ The Lady was safely laid of a living daughter by the foot. The child cried strongly and loudly and was spritful and very lively.

“ Had this birth come by the head, I believe that it would have proved difficult and more troublesome to the Lady, not without some desgraceful reflections upon mee and my daughter.

“ For the child’s head from the breast was great. It would have slid very difficultly through the bones, and so the midwife could not have helped more, than by anointing the body and with patience waiting and expecting, when that nature’s force, with the throwes would have driven forth the child.

“ For six days this child was not suffered to suck, and, in the meantime was unfittingly nourished. The seventh day (and not afore) a nurse endeavoured to give it the breast, but the child had forgotten how to suck and then it began to be sick. The eighth day the red gumme appeared and for want of little care died about the tenth day. “ I will never think otherwise, but that, in the knight’s thoughts, as well as in his actions, and wayes, errours, defects and mistakes might apparently be seen.

“ It is not impossible to find, in London, or Westminster, honest women and healthful nurses free from unhandsome diseases. Had the child had such a nurse, that, in due time, might have given it the breast, I believe the child might long have lived. For there was no probable signe

indicating the child's death or any weakness perceived in it, until the last two days.

"When I moved him earnestly to get a nurse, he replied and said 'That hee scorned that his child should suck any pocky nurse in or about London. He well knew many unworthy women in that, and other places.'

"He loved variety of places and several pastures. Hee reported in Derby (to disgrace me) that I would not come near to help his wife before that he had given mee an hundred pieces. He was never so worthy, as to give, or offer mee the worth of a penny. And, if ever it be found out, what his true name was, and when he lived, and died, let this postscript affirm. That he would not let me see his wife after her delivery. And, although I came several times, yet hee did not afford me so much civility as to offer me a cup of ale, or beer, or that even he did give me the worth of a brass farthing for my oft visiting her afore her delivery; or for my being with her in her labour, and helping of her, or for my several visits after her delivery.' This case presents a nice little problem as to who Sir Tenebs Evank was. It will be remembered that the Major Lieutenant of Sir John Gell is named, by Dr. Willoughby, Mullanus Evankt. Towards the end of his case book he uses the word Evankt again but as a adjective in a very disparaging sense as it were "cantankerous."

In the year 1661 he attended Mrs. Jane Molineux, wife of Rutland Molineux, Esq., of Woodcote, in Nottinghamshire who came to Derby, and again in 1665. Then after her husband's death she married Mr. Thomas Wildbore of Newborough and he attended her again in 1667. She came the fourth time to Derby, Nov. 10th, 1669, "when I was engaged at Newborough with a good Lady who permitted me to go." He gave her advice and "I desired her, when she had any signs of labour to send for me. She promised for that occasion to have a good horse

ready in the stable and to send a messenger as did well know the way over the Forest of Needwood." Three days later she sent a poor horse and an ignorant messenger. "In the forest we were separated and lost. I wandered alone nigh two hours and came nigh again to Newborough and was necessitated to procure a guide. Afterwards nigh to the forest gate her messenger and I did casually meet again. Her messenger's horse did tire after an hours riding. I was forced to go on alone. I put on and rid very fast. About two and a half miles I espied two men riding, with speed, from Derby. They proved to be her messengers, they entreated me to make haste, that she was in great extremity." Then he gives a long account of a bare success after a midwife had caused trouble and he finished off "Finis! And this is a true relation of a savage narration."

1661. He attended the wife of Edward Holorentius<sup>1</sup> and in the same year he records how a midwife at Ticknall quartered the skull of a child, took out the brains, hurt the woman and then sent for him to retrieve the situation, in which of course, he failed. The same thing happened in the same year at Spondon.

"I travailled all night to Chesterfield and was greatly pelted (after some three hours riding) with flashes of fire, dreadful thunderclaps and storms of rain."

1637. "I was sent for by a right Honourable Countess" . . . "She had suffered a flux of blood." ". . . I let her blood. Her Honour was too squeamish, to her great prejudice. So two Doctors of Physic were sent for (Hatton and Audley was the other Doctor)." They left her "indifferent well" for eight days and then there was a return of the flux. Dr. Hatton was recalled "he would have let her blood again. At which my Lord was troubled. For this doctor had formerly (but in private) informed my Lord That I had done ill to let her

<sup>1</sup> Probably meant for Ollerenshaw.—Ed.

blood and that now (forgetting himself) hee would have let her blood again himself. My Lord would have had me call him a knave for his private wronging me with his back-biting words. But I was silent and did not obey my Lord's command, although he deserved ill at my hands." She had another haemorrhage and so the doctor desisted. He gave her "sometimes purges and sometimes cordials. And I think he was puzzled in his judgments."

1634. He attended Goodwife Oldham a fisherman's wife in Derby. He describes a Mrs. Beaumont as young and passionate when he means greedy.

1671-2, January 30th. He attended a case at Boyleston which was complicated by convulsions. Here he took the cawing of rooks for an omen. His patient died, he got no pay and was glad to go.

1633. He attended the wife of Mr. Robert Ring, an apothecary in Derby.

1634. Mrs. Crafts of Long Eaton who was tumorous "But she grew weary of me and took to a runagate doctor that greatly boasted of his cures. He was found at last to be a fugitive broken butcher that could neither read nor write. She died cancerous." He tells also of a woman suffering from cancer who came from Lichfield to Derby and eventually visited a divine who had turned doctor "And he gloried much that by his medicines he had driven forth two cancers out of her body. In the conclusion shee and her physician disagreed and hee was so vexed that in his passion hee threatened to send her a letter that should twist her ears together."

In 1671 he attended Margaret, the wife of Francis Hallows the usher of Ashbourne School, she died of haemorrhage after the birth of her tenth child.

There is an account, which is probably heresay, of the pact made between Mr. Jennings described as "the noted apothecary in Newark," and his wife. They were so afraid of midwives that her husband undertook to lock

her up in her room alone until delivery was over, with a successful result.

Whilst he lived in London he was visited by some "subtle cheating knaves" who took him to a house in Shoe Lane to deliver a poor woman. They took him down such vile alley-ways that he thought robbery was their motive. However they directed him through a house and finally to a room in which a dirty man was sleeping on a dirty bed. When he asked where the woman was, an old hag showed her to him as she lay on the floor in another room. He demanded the bed for his work and secured it. After a successful delivery he found that the young woman had no food and no money, so he gave her half-a-crown to get food. When he called the next day he found that the mother-in-law had taken the money and he made her give it back again and there the story ends.

It would be impossible, without republication of the book, to recount all the odd and peculiar circumstances with which he had to deal. I think by now that his character and work are fairly definite and I will end this section of the account by a final quotation: "Let me acquaint you that now Apothecaries leaving beating their mortars turn Doctors."

There are about 150 cases recorded which are his own and not reported from other sources.

Arranged in point of date we have the following list:—

- 1630. Weston, Derby.
- 1631. Hopton, Nottingham, Chesterfield, Hollington.
- 1632. Derby, An Honourable Lady, Nottingham.
- 1633. Bunny, Derby.
- 1634. Brailsford, Derby, Long Eaton.
- 1635. Ockbrook.
- 1636. Littleover.
- 1637. An Honourable Countess.
- 1638. Spondon, Kirk Hallam.



1640. Willington, Lady Griffin.  
 1641. Derby.  
 1642. Derby.  
 1643. Derby.  
 1646. Chesterfield, Derby, Scropton, Sudbury, Twyford.  
 1647. Derby, Osmaston, Wollaton.  
 1648. Derby.  
 1649. Staffordshire, Derby.  
 1650. Derby, Cheshire.  
 1651. Derby, Staffordshire, Sutton Coldfield, Risley.  
 1652. Derby.  
 1654. Bromidgham, Colton, Lockington, Wossall.  
 1655. Derby, Colton, Congerton.  
 1656. 4 miles from London.  
 1657. London and a reported case in Derby.  
 1658. London.  
 1660. Spondon, Derby, Lockington.  
 1661. Derby, Woodcote, Ticknall, Upper Bonsall.  
 1662. Derby, Staffordshire, Elton, Wavercliffe.  
 1663. Derby, Church Mayfield.  
 1664. Derby, Chellaston, Twyford.  
 1665. Thurneston, Okeover.  
 1666. Derby, Ticknall, Cosall March.  
 1667. Derby, Nottingham, Horsley Woodhouse, Church Broughton (twice), A night from Derby, Newborough, Okeover, Derbyshire, Church Mayfield, Tamworth.  
 1668. No place named, Walton in the Wolds, Derby, Duffield, Lockington, Stafford, Staffordshire, Castle Donington, Aston, Newborough.  
 1669. Derby, Allestree.  
 1670. Derby, Tutbury, Lichfield.  
 1671. Derby, Ashbourne, Newton Staffs.  
 1672. Boyleston, Rodgeway.

This list must, I think, be judged a sufficient testimonial to a worthy man. It is eloquent of industry, strength of

body and mind and some bravery in days when each of his journeys was something of an adventure. It tells of an increasing reputation reaching a climax in the days of the Great Plague. We must remember that these reported cases are those which have some unusual character.

The *Materia Medica* of the book does not call for much comment. The seventeenth century was a period of transition in the use of medicines from the crude abominations of the middle ages to the vegetable and chemical products which were at hand. The evidence of the book goes to prove that Percival Willoughby was well ahead of his day. It was very seldom that he used anything more than the vegetable products he could find round about him, or such earths and chemical bodies as might be expected to have the properties he required.

He quotes many formulæ for medicines and some of them read more like the witches' broth from Egdon Heath than remedies for ill, but he makes no mention of using such products. Most of these formulæ are taken, appropriately enough, from the book of one Dr. William Sermon who seems to have dosed his patients, inwardly and outwardly, with powdered eels, dung and other abominations.

Willoughby used the materials which were at hand, for example:—"In country villages where nothing but herbs, milk and eggs with some course sugar was, at the most, to be had, I have made clysters with such materials and have used them with great success." and again, "But the richer and more wealthy sort I advise them to take oil of sweet almonds to the quantity of one ounce in two ounces of parietary water, or in white wine possets, or in thin broth."

Of herbs he mentions: chamomile, filipendula (or drop-wort), saffron, parietary (or pellitory-of-the-wall), cumin, aniseed, sweet fennel, linseed, calamint, penny

royal, diascordium (an electuary made from water-germander), powder of acorns in their husks, rice aleberries, maidenhair, shepherd's purse, orange peel, rhubarb, aron roots.

He always used oils copiously and his choice was oil of sweet almonds. Oil of lilies made from *L. candidum* flowers and olive oil, oil of charity, amber oil, capon's or hen's grease, salad oil.

He used a balsam hystericum very freely as well as a plaster of the same name. Other plasters were galbanum and smegmate (soap).

Lucatella's balsam and its chief ingredient venice turpentine, myrrh, castoreum, white amber, gum galbanum, were all used as well as a number of mineral products, tin infused in white wine for sweatings, lapis osteocollae to bind a broken bone, borax, armenian bole.

A typical example of this kind of medicine was given in consultation with three doctors in physic to an "Honourable good Lady" and contained red coral, pearl, iron ore, sealed earth, saffron, crab's eye, burnt sponge, expressed oil of nutmeg, sugar and rose water.

In 1669 he was called in to treat Mrs. Elizabeth Parker who had a "convolvulus in the gut ileon." He gave her four ounces of mercury in a posset drink with almond oil and manna. Some of the mercury came away twelve hours after and other at later times. Some such treatment would have been used towards the end of the last century.

I am sorry to say that he records one occasion on which he lapsed into barbarity. In 1667 he says "I steeped hog's dung and strained it forth without pressure and put some sugar and nutmeg to it and gave it her to drink and the flux stopt."

On the occasion he revived infants by squirting aqua vitae up the nostrils.

I suggest that the pil pacifica he used several times was one containing opium.

I have now dealt at considerable length with this unusual book and I hope that I have conveyed to my readers some impression of the work and character of a remarkable man. There is one more note to pass on, one which proves that though Willoughby has been almost forgotten and unacknowledged for two centuries and a half, in his own day he was recognised. He records that Dr. William Harvey<sup>1</sup> visited him and discussed his methods with him in Derby, an honour that I am sure fell to few men. "There came into my house at Derby my honoured good friend Dr. Harvey, 1642 . . . we were talking of several infirmities incident to the womb." It is quite evident that in his day Percival Willoughby was an honoured citizen of Derby and we, in our turn, should be proud to live on the scene of his labours. It would be fitting if we recorded that pride by naming some part of our town after him and I am sure he himself would have rejoiced could he have known that some section of the Derby Royal Infirmary was called the "Willoughby Ward."

<sup>1</sup> (1578-1657), discoverer of the circulation of the blood.—Ed.