

**TRANSACTIONS OF THE COLLEGE
OF PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA;
SOME RECENTLY DISCOVERED
LETTERS OF WILLIAM HARVEY:
WITH OTHER MISCELLANEA**

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S. WEIR MITCHELL

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OF PHILADELPHIA

SOME RECENTLY DISCOVERED LETTERS

OF

WILLIAM HARVEY

WITH OTHER MISCELLANEA

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WITH A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HARVEY'S WORKS

By CHARLES PERRY FISHER
LIBRARIAN OF THE COLLEGE



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SOME RECENTLY DISCOVERED LETTERS OF
WILLIAM HARVEY, WITH OTHER
MISCELLANEA.

THE life of William Harvey by Willis has been replaced by the admirable biography we owe to D'Arcy Power, and we still hope to have from this author some more ample history of the life and times of the great physiologist. New material has become available of late, nor have all the sources of information been explored. There are long gaps in the personal story which excite interest, and of Harvey's remoter ancestry we know nothing. He came of highly competent people and the genealogy of genius is always a matter for more than idle curiosity. Despite the information gathered by Sir James Paget, by Aveling, D'Arcy Power, George Paget and others, there are lesser personal data which have escaped the research of the student. In my former memoranda I referred to some of these and as nothing concerning Harvey is to be neglected, I quote there the consultation related in Ho-Elliana and Selden's amusing story, with his reference of an insane man's case to Harvey. Both had been overlooked by the biographers and perhaps regarded as trivial.

My former paper arose out of the purchase of the *Commonplace Book* of Heneage Finch, who married Harvey's

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niece, daughter of his brother Daniel, and whose family is now represented by the Earl of Winchilsea.¹ In this volume William Harvey wrote some medical advice for the young man he calls in his will "Cousen;" and hence my interest in a volume which is otherwise of singular value for its record of the youthful industry of the great Lord Chancellor.

Since printing this last contribution to Harveiana, I have gathered other material of less moment, which taken alone were hardly worth printing, but is quite available for use in connection with copies of the important Harvey letters which by happy fortune have come into my possession.

Before considering what are new and valuable additions to our personal knowledge of Harvey, one may pause to comment on certain matters which seem to have been too easily neglected in the larger interests of his matchless career.

The surname Harvey is presumably Norman. Hervé is found in France, and in England as Hervie, Hervy, and Harvey. The name is frequent in Kent.²

In some of the Clarendon manuscript letters and elsewhere the great doctor's name is spelled Hervie or Hervy.

Thomas, his father, born in 1549, had one brother and three sisters, from whom may have descended other of the many Kentish Harveys. The belief in the descent of this energetic family from a certain Sir Walter Harvey,

¹ Heneage Finch, of Burley on Hill, and others.

² County Genealogies: Kent, by William Berry, London, 1830.

A.D. 1272, appears to be, as D'Arcy Power states, without any firm foundation. It seems to have had its origin in a note by William J. Harvey¹ in his genealogical paper on Thomas Harvey's descendants. He bases it on the resemblance of their coats-of-arms. This is somewhat bewildering. When William Harvey went to Caius College he was described as a lesser pensioner,² the son of a yeoman, and, of course, not armiger.

¹ Not of these Harveys.

² Since writing of Harvey as a lesser pensioner, I find that in America at least the term has been misunderstood, and it is worth while, therefore, to print an explanatory note, which I owe to the constant kindness of Sir William Osler and his correspondent, Dr. J. Venn.

VICARSBROOK, CHAUCER ROAD, CAMBRIDGE.

DEAR PROF. OSLER:

For the last 350 years there has been a three-fold division of students here at Cambridge as at Oxford:

1. Fellow-commoners, gentlemen commoners (Oxf.), *pensionarii majores*.
2. Ordinary students, commoners (Oxf.), *pensionarii minores*.
3. Sizar, servitors (Oxf.), *pau. scholares, mediastini*.

The distinction was marked legally and officially by a difference in the scale of charges and of the table at which the students dined.

Socially, of course, they corresponded to the main three-fold distinction of gentlemen, middle-class, and poor.

The fundamental distinction is between those who paid for their board and lodging (whence the term *pensionarii*) and those who were supported by college funds. This dates from very early times, probably from the foundation of the colleges. The foundationers (fellows, scholars, and sizar) were those for whom the colleges were established; in fact, it was sometimes intended to confine the college to them (All Souls seems a "survival" here). But the convenience of living within the college walls was so great that outsiders were soon admitted for a *pensio*. These pensioners in time subdivided into *majores* and *minores*—probably about the time of the Reformation. Now, the minor pensioners (commoners in Oxford technical language; pensioners in that of Cambridge) have become almost the sole class of student.

Believe me,

Yours very truly,

J. VENN.

When Harvey was leaving Padua, in 1602, he placed his well-known "stemma" on the wall, where he would probably have set his arms had he then possessed them. Certainly, neither Thomas Harvey nor William had any early accredited right to use arms. When they were given this privilege I do not learn from the biographers. One of William Harvey's portraits has in the corner arms which, in the photograph, are not decipherable. A note in W. J. Harvey's paper still leaves this question without satisfactory answer.

The first of these very notable Harveys of whom we hear is Thomas, the father of seven sons and two daughters. He lived in the little seaside village of Folkestone, in Kent, was sometime alderman and mayor, and was described in the books of Caius College, Cambridge, when his son entered, as "yeoman." There could have been no large commerce in the little seaport town, and whether Harvey the yeoman had landed property or not could, I presume, be ascertained.

It is just possible that the fisheries, a great business in those days, may have had to do with the ample means Thomas Harvey must have acquired. To educate William at Cambridge and to give him four years at Padua involved much expense, nor could he as a physician have been able to support himself during his early years of life in London. Before or after Thomas Harvey removed to London, in 1605, he apprenticed five of his younger sons to "Turkey merchants," paying, of course, the fees exacted for receiving apprentices. When later they became

members of the Levant Company,¹ capital must have been required. One daughter married, and certainly not without dowry. Here assuredly was varied need for large means.

Of more moment than this unanswered question of how Thomas Harvey became the fortunate possessor of wealth, would it be to learn why only his eldest son was "bred to learning," and in this little village was so early meant to be a physician.

Harvey settled in London in 1602, became a hospital physician and no doubt was soon busy dissecting and experimenting. But of what he did in these years before his anatomical lectures in April, 1616, we know nothing; yet long before that date the great new truth must have become his assured mental property. A single couplet in a strange and most indecent set of anonymous doggerel of about 1611, concerning London doctors, is quoted in my former memoranda, to the effect that Harvey was dissecting and was notably small in stature. This is all we learn of those busy years.

¹ Memoranda taken from *Queen Elisabeth and the Levant Company*, by the Rev. H. G. Rosedale, and published by the Royal Society of Literature.

The Levant Company were merchants trading in the Levant, and sometimes known as the "Turkey Company." At the close of the sixteenth century Sir Edward Barton was Ambassador in Turkey, and he was not only the nominee of the Turkey Company, but his entire income was derived from the resources of the company, while his every act was done in the name of the sovereign and under the direction of her Ministers of State.

It was to this "Turkey Company" that the younger brothers of Harvey belonged, and it was through their relation to the trade of the Levant that some of them became men of wealth and importance.