

### *Texts and Documents*

Hampstead in February 1769. The dispensary was opened at No. 7 Red Lion Square, Holborn, on Monday, 24 April 1769. The speed with which the proposals were carried out says much both for the response of the public and for the determination of its founder. Not only was this the beginning of the dispensary movement, but also, as Still wrote in his *History of Paediatrics* (p. 416), 'the most important step ever taken in this country towards the care of sick children', and it is good to know that a document so intimately connected with that historic event has at last been found, and is in the safe keeping of the Wellcome Library.

## A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY OXFORD LICENCE TO PRACTISE MEDICINE

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FROM their earliest commencements the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge have issued licences and degrees in medicine under Statutes which, with minor alterations, remained in force until the nineteenth century. So far as London was concerned, an Act of 3 Henry VIII, c.11, passed in 1511 was directed towards the control of the practice of medicine and surgery and directed that, except for the graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, all other practitioners must be licensed, after examination, by the Bishop of London. Later, when the Royal College of Physicians was founded they were empowered to license physicians, but the Bishop of London continued to be a licensing body until 1725. Many of those who applied to the Bishop of London had been in practice elsewhere, some were in possession of degrees from foreign universities, but a number received their licence on most slender certification.

In Oxford the Statutes laid down a long theoretical course for their medical graduates, for they had to graduate in Arts before going on to Medicine. Under the *Statuta Antiqua* the course for a Bachelor of Arts lasted for three years with a further three years' study before he received his Master of Arts degree. After obtaining his M.A. the candidate could then proceed to study medicine, and it was possible for him to obtain his degree of Bachelor of Medicine three years later, but if he wished to take his Doctorate a total period of study of fourteen years was required. The necessity for having the M.A. was not infrequently waived.

# PROPOSALS

For administering

ADVICE and MEDICINES

TO THE

CHILDREN of the POOR.

*Very respectfully  
John Armstrong  
The poor school  
Director of Public  
Hygiene*

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P R O P O S A L S

For adminiftring

ADVICE and MEDICINES

T O T H E

CHILDREN of the POOR.

**T**HE many noble Hospitals and Colleges which have at feveral Times been erected and endowed in this Nation for the Relief of the Difeafed, will be everlafting Monuments of its generous and humane Spirit. To the Honour of the prefent Age, what was ftill wanting to remove or alleviate human Mifery has in many Inftances been fupplied by private Contributions and Benefactions. Thousands of pregnant Women have been carefully attended, and fafely delivered. The Small Pox is become far lefs formidable, and even thofe Perfons whofe Complaints are the Fruit of their own Folly, are not left deftitute of Affiftance.

In the mean Time, one main Duty of Humanity is thought by fome not to have been fufficiently attended to; though, without it, the Benefit of all other Charities will in a great Meafure be loft to Individuals, and confequently to the Public; I mean the Care of Infants from their Birth to their Fourth Year completed; in which Period, by the London Tables, one Half of all that are born die. If by proper Means, even a moderate Part of this Lofs can be prevented, the Object feems important, were we to view it only in a political Light.

Children, till they arrive at Three or Four Years of Age, cannot be received into Hospitals (except in Cafes of Accidents and the Stone) for feveral obvious Reafons. It is true, they may be admitted as Out-Patients, and they frequently are; but as none of the Hofpital Physicians fee their Out-Patients oftener than Once or Twice a Week,

Week, and as the Complaints of Children, especially during the tender State of Infancy, frequently require more immediate Relief, if there was a Place established for giving Advice and Medicines several Times in the Week to the Children of the Poor, by a Person, who, from his Success in treating the Diseases of Infants for some Years, hopes he may be deemed qualified for such an Undertaking, the great Mortality of Children might be diminished in some considerable Degree: for it will hardly be denied, that Numbers are lost for want of timely Assistance.

The Situation and Air of Hampstead, where I have lived for the Thirteen Years past, being remarkably dry and healthy, and at a small Distance from the most populous City in Europe, there is constantly a great Number of Children from London bred up here; and, as amongst such Numbers, there must always be some indisposed, I have had more Opportunities of improving myself in treating the various Complaints of Infants, than almost any other Situation in England affords. And having lately communicated my Thoughts upon this Subject to some of the most eminent Physicians, and likewise to some Gentlemen no less eminent for their publick Spirit, they have approved of, and encouraged me to publish, the following

## P R O P O S A L S.

- I. That I shall attend in *London*, to give Advice *gratis* to poor Children Four Days in the Week; *viz.* on the *Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays*; and at first, Two Hours on each of those Days. If that Time is found to be insufficient, it shall be prolonged to Three Hours or more, as Occasion shall require. But as Advice without Medicines would be of little Service, as several of those Patients will require Trusses, which are costly, as there is already provided a House in *Red Lion Square* conveniently situated, for the Children to be brought to, and as the Assistance of Two or Three Servants extraordinary will be wanted, it is proposed,
- II. That these Expences be defrayed by private Subscriptions, on the following Terms. That is to say, that every Person subscribing One Guinea per Annum, shall be intitled to have always One Patient at a Time under my Care; and every Person subscribing Two Guineas, to have Two Patients; and so on in Proportion.
- III. That the Parents or Friends of every Patient be obliged to give an Account to me of the Success of the Medicines administered, otherwise to be excluded the Benefit of the Charity for the future.
- IV. That I shall keep as fair an Account as possible of the Success of the Medicines, according to the best Intelligence I can procure, to be laid before the Publick at the End of the First Year, so as they may judge whether the Charity deserves further Encouragement or not.

The

The first Time that Application is made to me on Behalf of any Infant, a Printed Recommendation will be put into the Hands of the Person so applying, to be signed by any of the Subscribers to whom that Person can most conveniently apply.

N. B. Accidents and Cases in Surgery must be excepted.

*Hampstead, Feb. 1769.*

G. ARMSTRONG.

The undermentioned Physicians have most obligingly signified their Readiness to favour me with their Advice in extraordinary Cases, and a Committee will be appointed to meet once a Quarter, to examine the Books, Medicines, &c.

*Dr. Addington.*

*Dr. Baker.*

*Sir William Duncan, Bart.*

*Dr. Ford.*

*Dr. Huck.*

*Dr. Hunter.*

*Sir John Pringle, Bart.*

*Dr. Watben.*

*Dr. Watson.*

*Dr. Wilbram.*

### *Texts and Documents*

A candidate could, however, obtain a licence to practise either medicine or surgery some time after taking his Arts degree, without proceeding to Bachelor of Medicine, and on the recommendation of the Regius Professor, separate licences being issued for either medicine or surgery. In 1636 the *Statuta Antiqua* were replaced by those of Archbishop Laud, and under these the regulations for medicine were slightly altered, and some of the older ones more rigidly enforced. In the new Statutes a candidate must be in possession of his M.A. before doing medicine and must be a Bachelor of Medicine before he could obtain a licence. As well as the Regius Professor, all the Doctors of Medicine within the University had to certify their approval of the applicant. It would appear that the candidate could apply for his licence at about the same time as he took his Bachelor's degree. The licence which he obtained enabled him to practise medicine, or surgery, anywhere in England. The training which the graduate received certainly gave him a broad education, but so far as medicine was concerned it was entirely theoretical; and it was possible for him to graduate without ever having seen a patient, for the practical aspect of his profession was ignored. His practical training came after graduation in the hard school of experience. Because of the length of study laid down by the University, it is only natural that the number of graduates in any one year was small.

It would seem that very few of these Oxford licences have survived, and the opportunity is therefore taken to describe one in the possession of the author which was issued in 1658. The document is written on a vellum sheet measuring  $11 \frac{3}{8} \times 9 \frac{5}{8}$  inches with the dependant seal of the University. The seal, which measures  $3 \times 1 \frac{7}{8}$  inches, is that granted to Oxford early in the fourteenth century, and is probably an impression from the original matrix. The seal was broken when first obtained, but was repaired by the Public Records Office, London; with the missing portion added, its inscription reads:

SIGILL. C[AN]CELLARI[I: ET UNIVERSITAT]IS  
OXONIENS

The text of the document is as follows:

Cancellarius Magistri et Scholares Universitatis Oxon Dilecto nobis in Christo Guilielmo Turges Baccalaureo in Facultate Medicinæ e collegio Wadhami intra Universitatem prædictam Salutem in Domino sempiternam. Cum omnia nostra studia consilia et actiones ad Dei gloriam et Fratrum salutem referri debeant; cumque Medicina ad hæc inter reliquas facultates plurimum conserat: Hinc est quod Nos Cancellarius Magistri et Scholares antedicti (pro ea opinione quam de scientia tua

### *Texts and Documents*

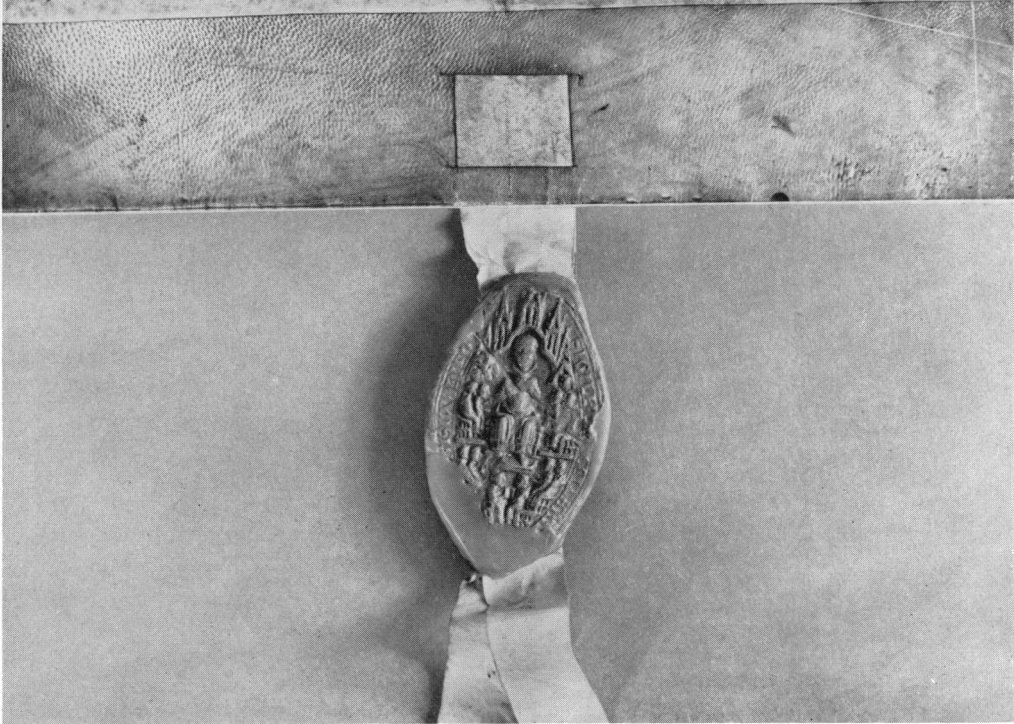
vitaque et morum integritate habemus) liberam tibi tenore praesentium concedimus potestatem at facultatem practicandi in Medicina et ea omnia faciendi quae ad eam spectant facultatem ubivis per Universam Angliam in perpetuam duraturam. In quorum omnium maiorem fidem et plenius testimonium Sigillum Universitatis Oxon commune quo hac in parte utimur Praesentibus apponi fecimus. Datum in domo Nostrae Congregationis vicesimo septimo die Mensis Julii Anno Domini Millesimo Sexcentesimo Quinquagesimo Octavo.

#### TRANSLATION

We the Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford give everlasting greetings in the Lord to William Turges, Bachelor in the Faculty of Medicine, of Wadham College in this University, beloved to us in Christ. Whereas all our studies, plans and actions should be related to the Glory of God and the wellbeing of our brothers and since Medicine among the other Faculties greatly contributes to this: Therefore we the aforesaid Chancellor, Masters and Scholars (in view of the opinion which we have of your knowledge and the integrity of your life and character) have granted you free power and permission, within the sense of this present document, to practise Medicine and of doing all those things relating to that permission, which is to last forever, anywhere in the whole of England. For the greater assertion and fuller testimony of all which we have caused the Common Seal of the University of Oxford, which we use for this purpose, to be set on the present document. Given, in the house of our Congregation, on the twenty-seventh day of the month of July in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred and fifty-eight.

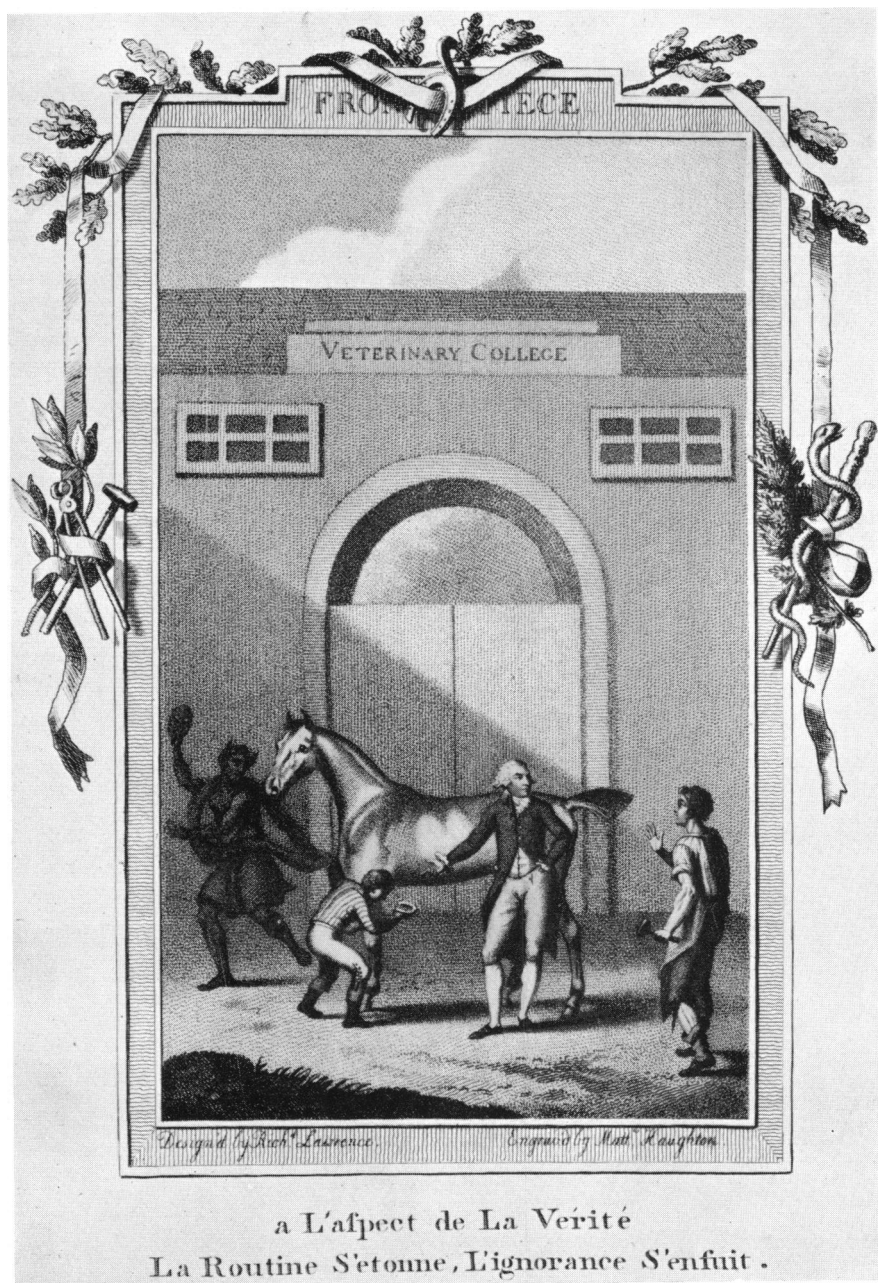
William Turges (*b.* 1630) of Upavon, Wiltshire, was admitted to Wadham College on 7 September 1649, at the age of nineteen. He matriculated on 14 November 1650, obtained his degree of Bachelor of Arts on 4 February 1652–53, and his Master of Arts on 22 June 1655. He then studied medicine, obtained his degree of Bachelor of Medicine on 22 July 1658, and, as we have seen, was issued with his licence to practise five days later. He was admitted a Fellow of Wadham College on 20 October 1654, acted as Bursar 1657–58 and was elected Dean on 10 August 1660. He remained at the college until 1661, after which date his name no longer appears in the list of Fellows. Some time after 1661 Turges went to Bristol, for on the back of his licence are the endorsements that it was examined by Robert Blenkarne in that city on 23 October 1679, and again on 2 October 1682. The date of his death is not known.

Cancellarius Magistri et Scholares Universitatis Oxon Dilecto nobis  
in Christo Guilielmo Turges Baccalario in Facultate Medicina e  
collegio Wadhani intra Universitatem praedictam Salutem in Domino  
sempiternam. cum omnia vestra studia consilia et actione ad Dei gloriam  
et Fratrum salutem referri debeant: cumq; Medicina ad haec inter reliquas  
facultates plurimum conferat. Hinc est quod Nos Cancellarius Magistri et  
Scholares antedicti (pro ea opinione quam de scientia tua vitaq; et morum  
integritate habemus) liberam tibi tenore praesentium concedimus potes-  
tatem et facultatem practicandi in Medicina et ea omnia faciendi quae ad  
eam spectant facultatem vobis per Universam Angliam in perpe-  
tuum duraturam. In quorum omnium maiorem fidem et plenius  
testimonium Sigillum Universitatis Oxon commune quo haec in  
parte vltimur Praesentibus apponi fecimus. Datum in Curia  
Nostra Congregationis vicesimo septimo die Mensis Julij Anno Domini  
Millesimo Sexcentesimo Quinquagesimo Octavo.



Seventeenth-Century Oxford Licence  
to practise Medicine





Frontispiece to Sainbel's  
*Lectures on the Elements of Farriery*, 1793  
(See page 40)

*Texts and Documents*

*ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

Grateful acknowledgements are made to Sir C. M. Bowra, the Warden of Wadham College, for the information which he supplied on the academic career of William Turges, and to Professor H. A. K. Hunt of the Department of Classics, University of Melbourne.

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