

HUGH, 12TH LORD WILLOUGHBY OF PARHAM, A LEADING LANCASHIRE DISSENTER AT AND AFTER THE REVOLUTION OF 1688–9

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The somewhat incongruous figure to be considered here—in part sanctimonious Dissenter, in part acquisitive Machiavellian—began to surface as a public figure in 1688 on the eve of the so-called Glorious Revolution, through an involvement in James II's challenge to the Anglican Establishment. The Anglicans presently took a leaf from his book and in turn (if minimally) tolerated Protestant Dissent. It is astonishing how minimal that toleration was, in view of the fact that from 1689 the English Crown was being shared by a Calvinist; and of course the Tories under Queen Anne succeeded in limiting it, in 1711 barring even ‘occasional conformists’ from office and power. Our bizarre hero, who combined a slightly suspect halo with an unquestionable whiff of sulphur, benefited from both of the calculating bids for the support of Protestant Dissenters, that of the absolutist James II and that of the aristocratic oligarchy which desired to control its monarchs and everyone else through Parliament. It was thus in the last year of James II's reign and for most of William III's that the public career of Hugh Willoughby, 12th Lord Willoughby of Parham, was mainly concentrated, although there was a brief final reappearance in the middle years of Queen Anne when the Whigs temporarily recovered power.

From what has been said so far it will be evident that religion and politics are to figure prominently in this article, but social and economic history will figure too. In the opening

sentence Hugh was described as ‘incongruous’, and that is how many of the established gentry saw him—although he had a lineage more distinguished than almost any of them—for when the Lancashire Willoughbys appropriated the Willoughby of Parham peerage in 1680 there were no lands to go with it. Indeed the Lancashire branch of the family had until then been little better than yeomen farmers clinging to the barest gentility more in virtue of their ancestry than of anything else. A central feature of Hugh’s life from 1688 when, already in his mid-forties, he had his first real taste of power, was the attempt to reduce the incongruous contrast between his noble status and his wretched territorial position.

I

More wretched still appears to have been the material situation of the founder of the Lancashire line, Hugh’s father Thomas, when he appeared in the county as if from nowhere early in 1640 and married the daughter and heiress of a deceased yeoman farmer, Hugh Whittle, who had held a little land for several lives in Horwich under Sir Thomas Barton of Smithills.¹ Thomas Willoughby came from the border between Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, being the elder son of Sir Thomas Willoughby of Newton on Trent (Lincs.), who was fifth and youngest son of the 2nd Lord Willoughby of Parham.² It would seem that some misfortune, mismanagement, or family dispute, exacerbating the injustice of primogeniture, must have been responsible for the fact that the son of a knight and grandson of a peer came to Lancashire and, having no territorial endowment of his own, was content to settle on a yeoman tenement after marrying the girl who had inherited it. How did this transplantation come about? The present writer’s hypothesis, and it is no more, is that it happened through the good offices of the

1 *Chester Marriage Licences*, ed. W. F. Irvine, IV (R.S.L.C., 1911), p. 40; Lancs. R.O., WCW, Hugh Whittle of Horwich 1625.

2 Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical History of the Dormant, Abeyant, Forfeited, and Extinct Peerages of the British Empire* (London, 1866), pp. 586–7.

bride's landlord, Sir Thomas Barton, whose wife came from Ossington (Notts.), near Newton on Trent, and sprang like Thomas Willoughby's mother (a Thornhagh of Fenton, Lincs.) from Nottinghamshire gentry.³ The Thornhaghs could have put in a good word for their unfortunate cousin who, perhaps through no fault of his own, for he appears to have led an exceptionally virtuous life after coming to Lancashire, had been left entirely without territorial prospects in Lincolnshire.⁴

Thomas Willoughby's life before his transplantation to Lancashire is an almost total blank, although it obviously included a degree of education, for he wrote a neat scholarly hand; also the cultivation of financial and legal skills, evident afterwards from his accounts as rent-collector to Sir Thomas Barton and from his leading role in the recovery of Rivington Free Grammar School's endowments;⁵ and the cultivation, too, of Puritan beliefs stronger and more resolute than those of the head of his family—the well-known Parliamentarian commander and renegade Francis Willoughby, 5th Lord Willoughby of Parham, who was his second cousin once removed—beliefs not uncommon among other gentry in and near East Anglia, including his mother's people the Thornhaghs of Fenton. Finally, it seems probable that, like Colonel Francis Thornhagh or his friend Henry Ireton, he had gained some military experience before the Civil Wars, possibly in the Netherlands, for despite his humble territorial position he was rapidly given command of a Parliamentarian company of foot following the outbreak of hostilities.

3 E. Baines, *History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancashire*, ed. J. Croston (5 vols., 1889–93), III, pp. 156–7; John Burke, *Dictionary of the Landed Gentry* (London, 1849), I, p. 192; B.L. Add. MS. 30997 (MS. history of Thornhagh family, 1683); *Lincolnshire Pedigrees*, ed. A. R. Maddison, III (Harleian Soc., LII, 1904), p. 970.

4 Continued contact between the Thornhaghs and the Lancashire Willoughbys is indicated by the fact that the MS. Thornhagh family history written in 1683 (above, n. 3) recorded Thomas Willoughby's acquisition of the peerage in 1680.

5 National Library of Scotland, Acc. 9769 (English Deeds, D3/2/16), holograph accounts of Horwich rents collected by Thomas Willoughby, 1651–8 and 1661–2; M. M. Kay, *The History of Rivington and Blackrod Grammar School* (Manchester, 1931), pp. 77–81.

Such was the austere, high-principled, yet effectively practical figure who in 1640, already in his late thirties and probably upheld by his faith and his Bible, stoically made a new start in an unfamiliar county, married a yeoman's daughter, Ellen Whittle, little more than half his age, and settled in a plain stone-built farmstead on the Rivington edge of Horwich, dominated by bleak moorland and the distinctive outline of Rivington Pike. He found the two strongly Puritan communities of Horwich and Rivington very much to his taste and entered enthusiastically upon the new and Lancastrian phase of his life: in the first Civil War he captained what was described as one of the best companies in Lancashire and in 1644–5 was promoted major;⁶ in 1644 he tried to expand his agricultural programme by renting sequestered Royalist lands at Anderton Ford, south of his Horwich tenement and, although those plans were wrecked by two years of recurrent plundering, he eventually in the early 1650s leased for lives some 120 acres of land in Rivington which conveniently adjoined his wife's Whittle tenement in Horwich;⁷ in 1650 he became a governor of Rivington Grammar School, then in the midst of a financial crisis which had led the master to abandon his duties, and he took the lead in a thirteen-year-long struggle to make the school endowments secure;⁸ last, but most pertinent to our purpose, he became the ardent lover of his young wife who bore him three sons in rapid succession, the third of whom, named Hugh after her father, survived to become the main protagonist of our story.⁹

6 *Royalist Composition Papers* (R.S.L.C., XXIV, 1891), p. 42; Lancs. R.O., DDHu/53/41; *An Exact Relation of the Bloody and Barbarous Massacre at Bolton in the Moors in Lancashire, May 28 [1644]; The Township Booke of Halliwell* (C.S., new ser. LXIX, 1910), p. 4; B.L. Add. MS. 11332, ff. 30v., 32; Add. MS. 11333, f. 91 (Sir William Brereton's letter-book).

7 P.R.O., E 113, Box 4 Part 2, s.v. 'Lanc.': Answers of Thomas Willoughby and others to information of Attorney General, 10 Nov. 1662; Lancs. R.O., Shawcross MSS.: original lease of Knowle lands, Rivington, 2 Feb. 1653; transcript of lease of adjoining close, Knowle Park, 23 Feb. 1654.

8 Kay, *History of Rivington Grammar School*, pp. 77–81, 191–2; Lancs. R.O., DDX/94/95, f. 44.

9 The Rivington lease of 1653 (above, n. 7) named his sons Thomas, Edward, and Hugh in that order of seniority; and, as Hugh's first marriage took place as early as Dec. 1663, the births of all three must have occurred in the early 1640s.

But before we give Hugh Willoughby the stage a word should be said about the Whittles, because that strange combination of sanctity and sulphur which we have already noted in him may owe something, if we can be so unchivalrous as to say so, to his mother Ellen's family. Her uncle Henry who, leaving no issue, had passed on the Whittle tenement to her father Hugh, was unimpeachably respectable, an Oxford graduate and clergyman who, as the minister at Horwich chapel of ease, is likely to have been a zealous Puritan also.¹⁰ Meanwhile before his marriage Ellen's father Hugh Whittle seems to have gone about spreading his seed with no regard for religious propriety whatever. His sanctimoniously phrased will, in which he confidently expected to be 'one of the elected number in Heaven', tells the story of his physical prowess: 'unto my Bastard Doughter Dorathie the some of Tenne pounds . . . unto Jane, Nicholas, Margarett and Marie . . . foure other bastards of mine, everie one of them twentie shillings'.¹¹ Hugh Whittle appears to have been urged late in life to mend his ways, perhaps as a condition of succeeding to his virtuous brother's estates, for he married and—before dying and exhorting his young widow to strict chastity—produced that single legitimate child, Ellen, who married Thomas Willoughby and became the mother of Hugh.

II

Hugh Willoughby's beginnings are, it must be confessed, obscure. No entry of baptism appears to have survived, although on the basis of evidence already adduced we can date his birth confidently to about 1643.¹² This of course makes him a child of the first Civil War and prevents us from asserting with any confidence that he was born in his father's yeoman farmhouse at Horwich, for his father afterwards

10 His will of 1622 (Lancs. R.O., WCW) suggests as much, for he bequeathed his soul to his 'onlie maker and redeemer hoping in his mercie to bee one of the elect Children of God'.

11 Lancs. R.O., WCW, Hugh Whittle 1625.

12 Above, n. 9.

testified that during the conflict his property, in a vulnerable position between Royalist Wigan and Parliamentarian Bolton, was 'several times plundered by soldiers and he, his wife and children banished from his house for two years together'.¹³ We cannot, either, be sure where Hugh received his education. The obvious choice was Rivington Free Grammar School, founded by a Calvinist bishop—when such a phenomenon was possible, in the reign of Elizabeth—and in firm Puritan control. Its incomplete register of pupils tells us that it commonly had charge of later Willoughby children. But for much of the time when Hugh would have wished to attend, it was suffering the worst effects of endowment loss, its master having resigned in 1649 leaving only an usher in control, a situation which lasted until 1654 when improvements due mainly to Hugh's father tempted the master to return.¹⁴

Such uncertainties of detail apart, Hugh probably remembered the 1650s, which transformed him from seven- to seventeen-year-old, as a positive and propitious time when his father, always accorded locally at that time the title of major, reaped his full reward in terms of public esteem from a community whose politico-religious beliefs he heartily shared, and among whom he had taken on in succession leading military and educational roles, besides expanding his agricultural activities using additional land on the Rivington side of the boundary with Horwich. The young Hugh must have sensed the change in the early 1660s as the sinister Clarendon Code barred those not submissive to monarchy and Anglicanism from political, religious, and educational office; and high-principled men who had fought to generate a finer England found themselves members of an oppressed underclass with nothing to expect from those in power but suspicion and victimization. It is significant that, when in December 1663 Hugh married Ann Halliwell, a yeoman's daughter from neighbouring Hordern (in Horwich), their contract was signed by the ex-curate of Rivington chapel of ease, Samuel Newton,

13 P.R.O., E 113, Box 4 Part 2.

14 P.J. W. Higson, 'A Neglected Revolution Family: the Lancashire Lords Willoughby of Parham and their Association with Protestant Dissent, 1640–1765' (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Liverpool Univ., 1970), pp. 232–3.

who had been ejected under the Act of Uniformity; and as the Code reached completion in 1665 his father, a marked man under the new regime, was among those recommended for arrest as a means to defuse the resulting discontent.¹⁵ Nonconformity retreated behind the closed doors of barns or the natural declivities of deserted moorland, and when in 1672 short-lived succour came from an unexpected quarter—the monarch himself—Thomas Willoughby was among those whose premises were licensed for Presbyterian worship.¹⁶

Hugh had settled following his marriage in a house even humbler than his father's (two hearths as against three)¹⁷ on the Rivington portion of the paternal lands allotted him by the contract, and things did not go well with him. The first happy event following Hugh's marriage was incongruously the birth next year of two more children to his father Thomas, then over sixty, and his much younger mother.¹⁸ But whereas from Thomas's house emanated a fecundity which his limited estates could with difficulty support, Hugh's was the scene of tragedy: the early death of his wife, who is ominously unmentioned in the poll tax returns for 1678, and afterwards the death in 1682 of their only child, a son doomed never to reach manhood.¹⁹

III

Into this situation, with the Lancashire Willoughbys sliding towards poverty and obscurity, came the galvanizing news, possibly transmitted by the Thornhaghs,²⁰ that in December

15 National Library of Scotland, Acc. 9769, marriage contract of Hugh Willoughby and Ann Halliwell, 12 Dec. 1663; Higson, thesis, pp. 140–2; 'Sir Roger Bradshaigh's Letter-Book', *TH.S.L.C.*, LXIII (1911), pp. 145–6.

16 *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1672, p. 578; cf. *Cheshire Sheaf*, 3rd ser., LVIII (1963), p. 24; *V.C.H. Lancs.*, V, p. 9.

17 Lancs. R.O., DDKe/2/16/9; P.R.O., E 179/132/355; cf. Lancs. R.O., DDX/498/2/3.

18 Jonathan and Hannah Willoughby were baptized at Deane on 21 Dec. 1664.

19 Lancs. R.O., QDV/13/8. A Thomas Willoughby figures in the two earliest surviving lists of Rivington Grammar School pupils, for Apr. 1678 and June 1681: Lancs. R.O., DDX/94/98.

20 Higson, thesis, pp. 340–1.

1679 the senior male line of the Barons Willoughby of Parham had become extinct. The last of the line, apparently unaware of other branches, had left all the estates to a niece. But the barony itself, created by patent and descendible to heirs male alone, was quite another matter; and the only surviving junior Willoughby line—in England at least, for the representative of an intervening line had emigrated to Virginia—was that headed by Thomas Willoughby of Horwich.²¹ In view of the later evidence we have of Hugh's capacity to seize the main chance promptly and effectively, and of the fact that in 1689 he made it his business to enter the family pedigree at the College of Arms, it would seem likely that he rather than his ancient father, now in his late seventies, was mainly responsible for presenting their peerage claim to the Lord Chancellor, as a result of which Thomas took his seat as Lord Willoughby of Parham 'upon descent' in October 1680.²² As early as the preceding February a royal warrant had been issued for the grant of a £200 annuity in support of Thomas's new dignity, so he and Hugh must have acted very promptly indeed in their pursuit of peerage status.²³

Although the acquisition of the peerage created two new individuals—Thomas, Lord Willoughby of Parham, and the Hon. Hugh Willoughby, Esq., his son and heir—it did not at first entail any new accretion of power. The ancient and austere Thomas had toiled to London, made a brief and no doubt astonishing appearance among the foppish courtiers of Charles II, and promptly returned to his plain Horwich

21 Burke, *Extinct Peerage*, and G.E.C[okayne], *Complete Peerage* (revised edn, 12 vols, 1910–59), under Willoughby of Parham.

22 *Lords' Journals*, XII, pp. 611–12; pedigree ascribed to Hugh at the College of Arms. Interestingly, the Thornhagh family history (above, n. 3) makes Thomas Willoughby's father (Sir Thomas) the brother, not the uncle, of his contemporary the 3rd Lord Willoughby of Parham, which if true would have given Thomas clear precedence over the Virginia branch. The pedigree which Hugh presented to the College of Arms shared the same peculiarity, as did those in the Collins peerages published from 1709.

23 *Calendar of Treasury Books*, 1679–80, p. 436; *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, 1679–80, p. 405. Thomas was signing his name as a peer ('Parham') in Rivington by 22 Apr. 1680: Lancs. R.O., DDX/94/95, ff. 79v.–80.

farmstead known ever afterwards as 'Old Lord's'.²⁴ Indeed, the successful peerage claim created that embarrassing discrepancy between high status and humble circumstances which it would later become Hugh's central purpose, when the opportunity presented itself, to reduce and remedy. For the moment little was gained beyond the possibility of using an impressive title to beg favours from the great and good. Thus in 1681 Bishop William Lloyd of St Asaph placed Hugh's youngest brother Jonathan—at first 'very raw' after attending his 'mean country school' in Rivington—under the tutelage of his chaplains, and afterwards (early in 1684) recommended him successfully to Dr John Fell, bishop of Oxford, for a studentship at Christ Church on the ground that 'His poor Father can do nothing for him'. By then Jonathan was excelling in Greek and Latin, and (the bishop added) 'for his Religion and Morals he deserves singular commendation . . . he eats but one meal a day and thinks no clothes too mean for him to wear. I never knew one of his age a more perfect Philosopher'.²⁵ Sadly, all this promise seems to have come to nothing, perhaps owing partly to the disadvantages attendant upon his being a Presbyterian. Worse, in a tragedy which may reflect that Whittle oscillation between extremes noted already, the scholarly ascetic married in his early thirties and within six weeks, during which he engendered a daughter, was dead.²⁶

IV

It was the machinations of James II which opened the road to power and property for the member of the family most capable of taking it, Hugh. So far as the Lancashire

24 That name also transferred itself to the farmstead on the same site which eventually replaced Thomas's home, and the clifftops behind the dwelling became known as 'Old Lord's Height'.

25 *Letters of Eminent Literary Men* (Camden Society, XXIII, 1843), p. 188; Lloyd to Fell, 29 Jan. 1684; *Alumni Oxonienses*; Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Rawlinson, D.317.

26 Chester marriage licence of Jonathan Willoughby and Eleanor Bane of Anderton, 11 July 1696; his marriage 20 (or possibly 28) July, and burial 5 Sept. following, are recorded in Horwich chapel register: Lancs. R.O.

magistrature was concerned, into which Hugh and his father were presently admitted, those promoted to office in 1687–8 were principally, and at first almost exclusively, Roman Catholic gentry. The Tory clerk of the peace, Roger Kenyon, identified twenty-seven ‘Popish Recusants’ who then gained magisterial office. Ten of them (including the new Lord Lieutenant-to-be, Caryll Molyneux, Viscount Molyneux) appeared in the commission of the peace for January 1687, nearly three months before the first Declaration of Indulgence, and ten more the following July, the Catholic influx being balanced both times by roughly the same number of exclusions.²⁷ It was only in the revolutionary commission of April 1688, issued a few days before the provocative second Declaration of Indulgence, and itself provocatively excluding more than forty Anglicans from office, that along with only four more Catholic names²⁸—the Catholic influx being almost at an end—there appeared certain highly significant non-Catholic ones.

Most important of the non-Catholics was Charles Gerard, Lord Brandon, like his father and namesake the earl of Macclesfield an ardent Whig, whom James II had bound to him with a pardon for complicity in Monmouth’s rebellion. Although Brandon served as a Deputy Lieutenant under Molyneux, in August introduced a party of Lancashire Dissenters to James II near Chester when Molyneux presented one of Catholics, and in September was commissioned to raise a regiment of horse for James, he not only retained office after James’s abdication but in May 1689

27 Jan. 1687: Sir Charles Anderton, Bt; Sir Rowland Bellasye; Robert Dalton, Esq.; Sir William Gerard, Bt; Caryll Molyneux, Viscount Molyneux; the Hon. William Molyneux, Esq.; William Standish, Esq.; Thomas Tildesley, Esq.; Richard Towneley, Esq.; and William Walmesley, Esq. July 1687: Christopher Anderton, Esq.; Thomas Brabin, Esq.; Henry Butler, Esq.; Sir Thomas Clifton, Bt; Hugh Dicconson, Esq.; Stephen Husband, Esq.; George Leyborne, Esq.; Richard Sherborne, Jun., Esq.; Thomas Stanley, Esq.; and Edmund Trafford, Esq.

28 Henry Blundell, Thomas Gerard, Bartholomew Walmesley, and Thomas Westby. Making up Kenyon’s twenty-seven ‘Popish recusants’, William Anderton was added in Mar. 1688, and William Gerard of Garswood and William Blundell, Jun., were included in Aug.

became the new Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire. This was thanks partly to the influence of his father, an exiled supporter of the prince of Orange since 1685, but thanks also to the foolishness of the earl of Derby, William Stanley, who, angered by William III's appointment of Henry Booth, Lord Delamere, to his old lieutenancy of Cheshire, declined to accept that of Lancashire alone.²⁹ Without doubt the second most important name to appear in James II's commission of the peace for April 1688 was that of the Hon. Hugh Willoughby, who apparently by attaching himself to Brandon's coat-tails would like him not only ride out the Revolution but take a step upwards, and presently become Brandon's most prominent deputy. Of all those listed in the commission of peace for April 1688, Brandon and Willoughby were highly exceptional in their retention of office into the next reign; for, whereas all Kenyon's listed 'Popish Recusants' were excluded from the commission of December 1688, issued days after James II's departure, virtually all the strange assortment of Protestants made magistrates during his reign—including some with Catholic connections, others with Dissenting ones such as Edward Mosley of Hulme, Roger Sawrey of Broughton Tower, and even Hugh Willoughby's own father—lost office in March 1689.³⁰

Thomas Willoughby, however, never exercised his office as a magistrate under James II, unlike his son Hugh who took up his duties immediately and unhesitatingly, in the company of largely Catholic gentry (Edward Mosley of Hulme being the

29 *Complete Peerage*, under Macclesfield; G. Duckett, *Penal Law and Test Act* (1883), II, p. 276; Historical MSS. Commission, 14th Report, Appendix IV, *Kenyon MSS.* (1894), pp. 187, 212, 234–5; L. K. J. Glassey, *Politics and the Appointment of Justices of the Peace, 1675–1720* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 274–9.

30 Also Christopher Carus, Gabriel Croft, William Crosse, John Girlington, Oliver Lyme, Edward Ogle, William Spencer, Guicciardini Wentworth, and Henry West. Others then expelled had already been magistrates before James II's accession: William Hulme of Broadstone, formerly described as of Kearsley (out of office Apr. to Oct. 1688), Edward Osbaldeston, Curwin Rawlinson, and Nicholas Townley. The newly appointed Robert Holt of Little Mitton was excluded more promptly with the Kenyon-identified recusants in Dec. 1688: Lancs. R.O., QSC/102, 103.

only noteworthy exception) and attended the Easter sessions in 1688 at both Ormskirk and Manchester, followed by the Midsummer sessions at the former and the Michaelmas ones at the latter. His father, moreover, had a different task to perform in the new year when, in his late eighties, he brought his upright but unprosperous life to a fitting climax with his only protracted attendance at the House of Lords (from March to June 1689), during which he voted on some of the key legislation of the Revolution, not, incidentally, including the Toleration Act, which had already been passed before he deigned to respond to repeated requests to appear.³¹ Another friend of Dissent excluded from the commission of peace in March 1689 was Edward Mosley, with whom Hugh Willoughby had worked twice at the Manchester sessions in 1688; but Mosley was knighted in June 1689 and returned to the commission in 1690.³² Sir Charles Hoghton, Bt, of Hoghton Tower, whose family was long associated with Dissent, travelled in the opposite direction and after making no appearance in James's commissions of the peace, which he surely could have done had his scruples permitted it, was included in March 1689 and—after a further absence, it has been suggested because the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had asserted his influence with the commissions—he adorned them again in the later years of William III.³³

It is impossible to estimate how many Lancashire Dissenters, less eager for power than Hugh Willoughby, were offered but declined a stake in local government under James II. Probably a less inclusive view of the social status appropriate for magistrates prevailed then than when Brandon and Willoughby influenced or sought to influence the commissions under William III. But one has the impression that, in view of the strength of Lancashire Nonconformity especially in the south-east of the county, remarkably few representatives thereof figured in James II's commissions of the peace. After the Revolution Hugh found, especially in the Manchester area, some very enthusiastic

31 Lincs. R.O., QSR/82; *Lords' Journals*, XIV, *passim*.

32 W. A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*; Lincs. R.O., QSC/106ff.

33 Lincs. R.O., QSC/103ff.; Glassey, *Politics and Appointment*, pp. 278, 282.

Nonconformist colleagues on the bench who had not been magistrates earlier; and he attempted, as we shall see, to include others who, for socio-economic as well as religious reasons, were deemed unsuitable for office by the snobbish Roger Kenyon.

If the response of Dissenters to the overtures of James II's agents in Lancashire appears to have been mixed—some sharing the misgivings of Richard Baxter and John Bunyan about the incongruity of an alliance between Dissent and absolutism—there was no doubting the heartiness of their response to a regime which offered them even a modicum of toleration when that toleration was conferred by Act of Parliament, and under a Calvinist king. A huge force from Lancashire, far eclipsing the turn-out from Cheshire itself, attended in June 1689 the muster in support of the Revolution summoned to Bowdon near Altringham by Henry Booth, Lord Delamere, the new Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire; and it is clear from an eye-witness account that a very important element in this gathering was the companies of volunteers, supplementary to the militia, raised by Dissenters to whom Brandon had given captains' commissions. They included 'Lord Willoughby's second son [Hugh's brother Francis, born c. 1648] with 72 foot'.³⁴ Behind the very full attendance at this muster lay, of course, not only enthusiasm but also alarm, for James II was now installed in Ireland, the proximity of which, together with the abundance of Catholic gentry in the north and west of the county, made Lancashire Protestants feel extremely insecure.

This situation was soon brought home to Hugh Willoughby after he had returned that summer to his magisterial duties, with a largely different and entirely Protestant set of colleagues. At Michaelmas with his wonted enthusiasm he attended the sessions at both Wigan and Manchester, where he and his colleagues found the populace in a ferment of apprehension owing to the interception of a cache of war saddles destined for a Catholic recipient. More to quell popular panic (they claimed) than because the situation was out of control, they sent a joint letter to the Secretary of State,

34 *Kenyon MSS.*, pp. 213, 222; Lancs. R.O., DDKe/4/9.

Charles Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, asking him to acquaint the king with their ominous discoveries: that many of the younger Catholic gentry had 'absconded' from their homes though they were thought still to be in the county; that there had been 'some modelling of officers and men' with a view to insurrection; and that scarlet cloaks, pistols, swords, and war saddles had been intercepted *en route* to potential rebels.³⁵

The magistrates were right to draw attention to the situation in Lancashire. Ireland, together with their own county, had represented ever since the Armada the Achilles' heel of a nation embattled against Continental absolutism; and only when William III took personal command in Ireland the following summer and defeated James at the battle of the Boyne were a serious threat and weakness reduced. Only after that, and after the defeat of the French fleet off Cape La Hogue in 1692, did the danger from Ireland and from Lancashire's Catholic gentry become arguably unreal, and its actuality a matter of political contention. The later controversial trial of allegedly plotting Lancashire Catholics in 1694, in which Hugh Willoughby and Sir Edward Mosley were prominently involved, would represent a significantly altered situation. At Michaelmas 1689 Hugh, the only Dissenter at the Manchester sessions and probably one of only two Dissenting magistrates in Lancashire, was simply one of eight Protestants and patriots taking an uncontentious course.

Having survived the Revolution through good fortune and a powerful patron, Hugh was no doubt very anxious to demonstrate his whole-hearted commitment to the new regime and to give conscientious service as a county magistrate, which indeed he did throughout the reign of William III.³⁶ Even in that humdrum role, however, he no doubt felt disadvantaged by his family's reduced circumstances. For example not until August 1690, in which month he also signed a copy of his pedigree for entry at the College of Arms, do we find him using a seal of arms like his

35 Lancs. R.O., QSR/83; R. Kingston, *A True History of the Several Designs and Conspiracies against His Majesties Sacred Person and Government* (London, 1698), pp. 19–21.

36 Lancs. R.O., QSR/83–96; QSP, *passim*.

fellow magistrates.³⁷ With the Willoughby scutcheon it incorporated crest and supporters, the latter being an adornment few of his colleagues could boast. This was the first sign of his determination to strike back against any who jeered at his supposed lack of gentility. His old father, now living out his last days as a village patriarch in Horwich and Rivington, visited now and then by some sombre Dissenting divine, attending nothing grander than the occasional school governors' meeting—their Calvinist founder had prescribed that at least half the Rivington governors should not even be gentlemen, and some were actually illiterate—can have felt little need to keep up external appearances even though he was a peer of the realm.³⁸ With Hugh it was different: he was already a public figure and soon became more public still when he inherited the peerage and took his seat in the Lords. The problem of incongruity finally leapt at him in its most extreme form after February 1692 when the 'Old Lord', probably in his ninetieth year, breathed his last and was laid to rest in Horwich chapel of ease, incidentally one of many in Lancashire which had been recorded by magistrates after the Toleration Act as meeting places for Dissenters.³⁹

V

Parliament had just risen when the 'Old Lord' died and Hugh did not take his seat until 26 September 1692, and then only at a brief prorogation meeting, but it sufficed to establish that he was indeed a peer of the realm. In the meantime he had adhered to his routine as a magistrate, attending the Easter and Midsummer sessions, but only at Ormskirk.⁴⁰ He nevertheless learnt during this period of a most momentous

37 Pedigree dated 10 Aug., first known use of seal 15 Aug.: House of Lords R.O., Committee of Privileges, Minutes of Evidence, VI, 21; Lancs. R.O., QSP/690/1 and 20.

38 Kay, *History of Rivington Grammar School*, p. 17; Lancs. R.O., DDX/94/95.

39 *Nonconformist Register*, ed. J. Horsefall Turner (1881), p. 80; Lancs. R.O., QSP/668/47.

40 *Lords' Journals*, XV, p. 101; Lancs. R.O., QSR/85–6.

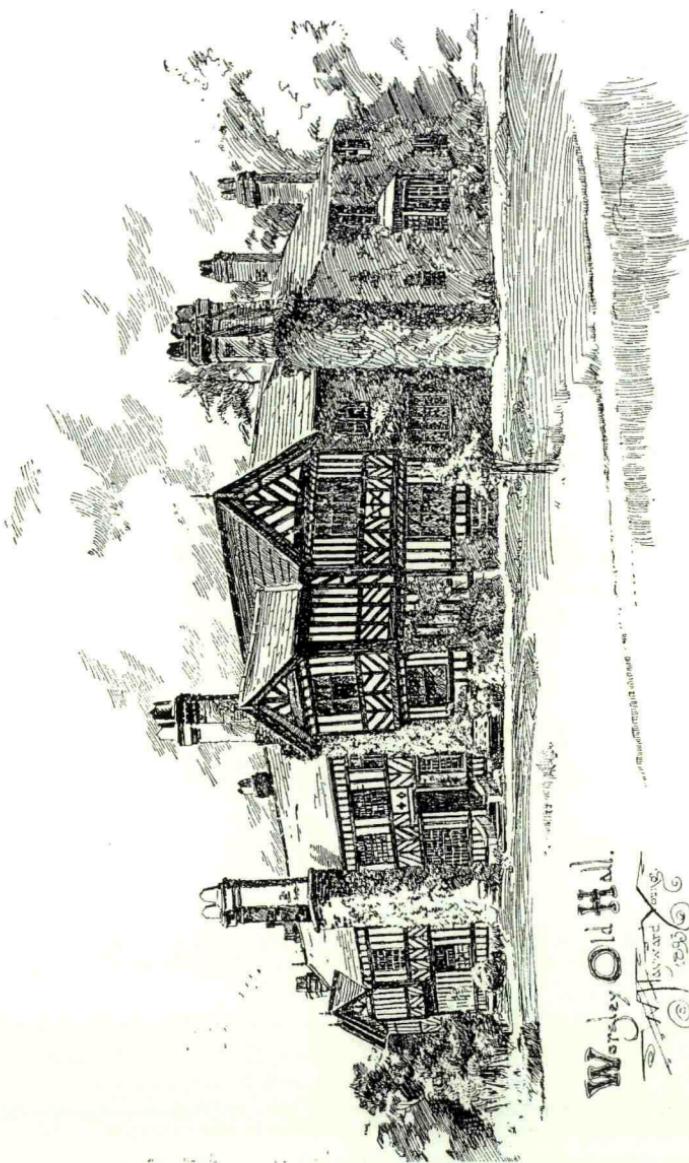


Figure 8 Worsley Old Hall in 1893 (by W. Hayward Young, published in Picturesque Worsley [advertising brochure published for Bridgewater Coals])

development: Sir William Egerton, a younger son of John Egerton, 2nd earl of Bridgewater, had died in London at Lincoln's Inn in December 1691 leaving his widow Dame Honora possessed of a fine country seat and estate near Manchester. This was Worsley Hall (Fig. 8) and its demesne, together with numerous tenements in Worsley and Middle Hulton, which had been assigned as her jointure by the Egertons in 1674.⁴¹ Moreover, a sinister concatenation of circumstances seems to have enabled Willoughby to approach this generously jointured widow, and as we follow his progress the odour of sanctity mixed with that of sulphur becomes very pungent indeed.

Sir William Egerton had died in debt, administration being granted to his principal creditor, Mary Rose (or Misson); and the Worsley agent, Edward Massey, later told Dame Honora that soon after the death 'they' (possibly Mary Misson and her husband James, though Honora's letter was less than explicit) had enquired of him the value of the estate.⁴² 'They'—again Honora did not identify the culprits—were also, presumably at the time of her husband's decease, keeping her confined in James Newton's private madhouse on Clerkenwell Green (Mdx) and at its annexe in Islington.⁴³ (Some decades later, incidentally, Daniel Defoe appealed for the suppression of 'pretended madhouses, where many of the fair sex are unjustly confined, while their husbands keep mistresses, etc., and many widows are locked up for the sake of their jointure'.⁴⁴) To take the story forward, 'they' were threatened with legal proceedings by Lady Littleton, mother of the M.P. Sir

41 Lancs. R.O., WCW: enclosed with the admon. of John Egerton of Worsley (1701) is his father Sir William Egerton's will (1691) and the grant of the latter's admon. to Mary Rose (or Misson) (1693); P.R.O., E 34/8 Wm. III/E 23: Exchequer depositions in the case of John Parkinson v. Hugh, Lord Willoughby, James Misson, and his wife Mary, 1696; Northamptonshire R.O., Ellesmere MSS., uncatalogued vol. 'e': survey of Egerton lands in Worsley and Middle Hulton in jointure to Honora, Lady Willoughby, 1722.

42 Kenyon MSS., no. 894.

43 Cf. W. Ll. Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy* (London, 1972), p. 103.

44 D. Defoe, *Augusta Triumphans: or, the Way to make London the most Flourishing City in the Universe* (1728), p. 30.

Thomas Littleton, Bt, which frightened them into drawing up (as Honora put it) 'private articles with an A[u]nt of mine, to bring me out'—out of the madhouse, that is.⁴⁵ Dame Honora, if not actually insane, seems to have suffered from some disability which made her vulnerable to manipulation by others. At some point during this story, possibly in secret collusion with the Missons, with whom he was later a co-defendant in an Exchequer suit over Worsley,⁴⁶ Lord Willoughby entered the scene. He was no courtier, to put it mildly, and could be graceless, truculent, and bullying in his everyday affairs, as for example in a letter to George Kenyon, son of Roger, about Blackrod school: 'Sir, 'Tis my desire that the business touching Blackrode schoole go on and not sleep as it does soe please to send mee the new Draughts that I may peruse them. I was occasionall of the moneys being paid to Sumner [the schoolmaster] soe wo[u]ld have no farther delayes in this matter.'⁴⁷ It is also clear, however, from the favourable impression he was able to leave with some at least of the Nonconformist ministers who met him—'a very grave, serious Gentleman, [who] speaks with savour of divine things, [and who] showed much respect to me' (that was Matthew Henry)⁴⁸—that Willoughby could, when it suited him, deliver a very plausible line in sanctimonious cant. We have only a few words, written by a thoroughly disillusioned Honora two years later, to indicate the sort of tone he took when he approached her. She was led to conceive 'the greatest hopes of a friend to do me that justice my sad case requires, and which he solomley ingaged to perform, before our marriage'.⁴⁹ That promise of justice related to the ill-treatment which she alleged that she and others had received at Newton's madhouse, but there was, of course, scant chance of the promise being honoured if Willoughby was in collusion with the very Missons who, conceivably, had a hand in detaining her there.

45 *Kenyon MSS.*, no. 894.

46 Above, n. 41.

47 Lancs. R.O., DDKe/9/101/97.

48 H. D. Roberts, *Matthew Henry and his Chapel 1662–1900* (Liverpool, 1901), 14 and 15 May 1706.

49 *Kenyon MSS.*, no. 894.

To return from hypothesis to indubitable fact, there is no doubt that Hugh, in his methodical and single-minded way, wooed and won his jointured widow. The marriage licence was issued by the vicar general on 5 October 1692, just nine days after he had neatly underlined his peerage status by taking his seat. He attended the new session of Parliament throughout, from early November 1692 until mid-March 1693.⁵⁰ Then he moved rapidly, descending upon Worsley Hall and having its tenant John Parkinson, who 'seemed not well pleased' by that development, served with notice to quit 'at May Day after'. Willoughby took the view (which he induced the Worsley agent, Massey, to share) that Parkinson's lease from Sir William Egerton was now invalid as Egerton had been only the tenant for life; and Parkinson's position was hardly strengthened by the fact that he had owed more than a year's rent at Sir William's decease.⁵¹ Willoughby also informed the astonished curate of Ellenbrook chapel of ease (who complained to a sympathetic Roger Kenyon) that it was a domestic chapel to Worsley Hall and that in six months he too must withdraw.⁵² It soon became evident that Willoughby intended to install there a Nonconformist minister, an aspiration not surprising in view of his upbringing in the Nonconformist communities of Horwich and Rivington, which had shown resolute determination to control their chapels of ease, and of his recent attempts at quarter sessions in 1691 and 1692 to get Hindley and St Helens chapels licensed under the Toleration Act as Dissenters' meeting houses.⁵³

By early September he was in residence at Worsley: the well-known divine Henry Newcome of Cross Street chapel, Manchester, recorded that 'We went with several others to welcome the Lord Willoughby to house, and stayed till after

50 *Complete Peerage; Lords' Journals, passim.*

51 P.R.O., E 34/8 Wm. III/E 23, depositions of Parkinson, Massey, and Thomas Dunster.

52 Lancs. R.O., DDKe/9/66/6: Revd Myles Atkinson to Roger Kenyon, 15 Apr. 1693.

53 P. J. W. Higson, 'Some Leading Promoters of Nonconformity', *T.L.C.A.S.*, LXXV-LXXVI (1965-6), pp. 150-3.

eight in much freedom; and parted with a psalm and prayer.⁵⁴ Perhaps very significantly, it was in the following month that the late Sir William's creditor, Mary Misson, was authorized to administer from distant London his effects in the diocese of Chester, that is at Worsley.⁵⁵ Willoughby's attempts to extort all he could from the Worsley estate, by 'felling timber and distraining upon the poor tenants',⁵⁶ may be not altogether unconnected with the demands of covertly manipulative creditors still active after the late Sir William's insolvency.

VI

Outwardly, however—and outward appearances mattered much to him—Willoughby now looked impressive. It must have been an altogether more confident personage, with not only a peerage but lands to accompany it, who appeared that autumn, after a lapse in magisterial service of more than two years, at the Manchester quarter sessions. Over the forthcoming period from Michaelmas 1693 to Epiphany 1701, when he was based at Worsley, he concentrated his magisterial duties almost exclusively at Manchester,⁵⁷ in the region of which, moreoever, were concentrated many who shared his religious beliefs. His star was in the ascendant. He was in high favour with his old ally Brandon, one of whose Deputy Lieutenants he had become by May 1692; and in the following February they shared the credit for causing arms brought from London by one John Womball (later implicated in the Lancashire Jacobite Plot) to be intercepted at Wigan.⁵⁸ In 1693 also there was further evidence of Willoughby's prominence in his patron's service when he attended the hotly

54 *The Autobiography of Henry Newcome, M.A.*, ed. R. Parkinson (2 vols, C.S., XXVI–XXVII, 1852), p. 307.

55 Lancs. R.O., WCW (above, n. 41).

56 Kenyon MSS., no. 863; Lancs. R.O., DDKe/HMC/869a.

57 Lancs. R.O., QSR/87–94. No attendances recorded elsewhere, but the rolls are incomplete for 1696, when Willoughby certainly attended Ormskirk Midsummer sessions: below.

58 P.R.O., SP 44/341/324; Kingston, *True History*, pp. 107, 233; Kenyon MSS., pp. 234–5, 273.

disputed Clitheroe by-election to back Brandon's brother, Fitton Gerard, against the Tory contender whose supporters included Roger Kenyon.⁵⁹ Such attempts to influence the course of elections in favour of Gerard-approved candidates recurred throughout the reign.⁶⁰

But it was the year 1694 which brought the most dramatic advance in both the power and the flamboyant vainglory of this fifty-year-old peer who at thirty-five had been an unknown yeoman. In March it was reported to Roger Kenyon that Brandon, who had succeeded as 2nd earl of Macclesfield, was to accompany William III to Flanders and that 'if he had power to depute one to act as Lord Lieutenant in his absence the Lord Willoughby would be the man'.⁶¹ Moreover, Willoughby's influence as Macclesfield's right-hand man in Lancashire was demonstrated by the inclusion in the new commission of peace that month of a significant number of Dissenters, like Samuel Crooke of Coppull, and John Walmesley and Edward Herle of Wigan, who were afterwards active with him in furthering the Nonconformist cause, notably by seeking to appropriate Lancashire chapels of ease.⁶² Then, that summer, the Secretary of State for the North, Sir John Trenchard, assigned Willoughby a central role in the arrest of Caryll, Viscount Molyneux, and the other prominent Catholics suspected of complicity in the Lancashire Jacobite Plot; and Macclesfield (though not present), Willoughby, and Sir Edward Mosley were joined in commission with the judges who tried the prisoners at Manchester in October. The Tory Roger Kenyon did not fail to observe tartly that all three—Macclesfield, Willoughby, and Mosley—had under James II been collaborators with

59 Lancs. R.O., DDKe/27: breviate of John Weddal to be heard at the committee of privileges and elections on 12 Jan. 1694.

60 e.g. 1695 and 1701: Liv. R.O., 920 MD 174: diary of Sir Willoughby Aston, 7 Nov. 1695; National Library of Scotland, Crawford Muniments 47/3/19: Wigan poll book, 1695; Scottish R.O., Hamilton MSS. GD 406/1/4656: Gavin Mason to duke of Hamilton, 28 Dec. 1700.

61 Lancs. R.O., DDKe/1/67/37: Thomas Marsden to Roger Kenyon, 27 Mar. 1694.

62 Lancs. R.O., QSC/114; Higson, 'Some Leading Promoters'.

absolutism and great friends with the Catholic gentlemen on whom they were now sitting in judgement.⁶³ Kenyon, for his part, had in the same period voyaged in the opposite direction and, from protesting against the inclusion of 'Popish Recusants' in commissions of the peace under James, had graduated by 1694 to undertaking the defence of the Catholic gentry accused of a Jacobite plot. The trial misfired, indeed it could properly be described as a farce, and the reality or otherwise of the plot became and has remained a matter of politico-religious contention in which it would be pointless to join. Suffice it to say that, despite the attempts of their Tory enemies in the Commons (Kenyon included) to discredit the judges and to cast doubt upon the reality of the plot, the House of Lords with its strong complement of Whigs later both vindicated them and affirmed its existence.⁶⁴ Richard Kingston's *True History of the Conspiracies against William III*, published in 1698, may be reviled as a Whiggish creation, but it does point up the sense of insecurity which prevailed during William's reign, the feeling that much which was precious hung by a thread. Indeed it did, as the king's would-be assassins of 1696 well realized.

Our point, however, is that in 1694 Willoughby became a figure of conspicuous, if much resented, importance in his county, and there is abundant evidence that his pride blossomed accordingly. This evidence is preponderantly heraldic. By May he had begun to use, on special occasions, a seal of arms quartering with the Willoughby fretty the scutcheons of seven other distinguished families with which his own had intermarried, beginning with the Bekes of Eresby, who had been summoned to Parliament among the lords temporal as early as 1295, and the inheritance of whose estates had been reflected in the first baronial title held by the Willoughbys.⁶⁵ In 1694, too, the College of Arms was induced by some person unknown to 'confirm' for a Whittle family the

63 Lancs. R.O., DDKe/8/8, 17, 36A, 36B; Kenyon MSS., nos. 886, 924; A. Goss, *The Trials at Manchester in 1694* (C.S., LXI, 1864).

64 *House of Lords MSS., 1693–5* (H.M.S.O., 1900), pp. 451–2.

65 Lancs. R.O., QSP/750/26; P.J. W. Higson, 'The Heraldry of the Lancashire Willoughbys', *The Coat of Arms*, IX, no. 72 (Oct. 1967), pp. 284–8.

very coat of arms afterwards quartered in the hatchment of Hugh's much more likeable grandnephew and namesake. There seems every reason for assuming that Hugh (in what would not have been his first approach to the College) was the source of this so-called confirmation, born of annoyance that his widowed mother, the dowager Lady Willoughby, was, like his first and short-lived wife, of no more than yeoman stock. Wife number two was a different matter and at a date unknown, but probably in the triumphalist mood of 1694, he commissioned a superb oak carving juxtaposing the crest and scutcheon of her family, the Lords Leigh of Stoneleigh (Warws.), with his own, and framing both with the Willoughby supporters and motto. Certainly from 1694 dates another celebration of his prestigious second marriage, for he had a large bell cast bearing, with that date, the inscription 'H H [for Hugh and Honora] LORD AND LADY WILLOUGHBY'.⁶⁶

Ironically the very marriage which Willoughby celebrated so proudly in oak and bell-metal was as early as January 1694 in serious crisis. The immediate occasion appears to have been Willoughby's territorial acquisitiveness, for the first report of their 'great falling out' added that 'My Lady had got away . . . deeds and writings by getting a counterfeit key of my Lords [but] his Lordship has since got them again'.⁶⁷ A few days later their domestic enmity was described as 'the talk of the town and country'; and before the end of the year Honora herself had begun to make public, in the first of a series of increasingly frantic letters to Roger Kenyon, her feelings about 'this ungrateful, false and covetous person, who is now my husband'.⁶⁸ Willoughby's old problem of incongruity was surfacing again in a new form, for he and Honora could scarcely have been a more ill-assorted couple: he an ex-yeoman and a Dissenter, she a descendant of Cavaliers and the staunchest of Anglicans.⁶⁹ The early months of 1695 found her frantically attempting, via her

66 Higson, 'Heraldry of Lancs. Willoughbys'; Higson, 'Some Leading Promoters'.

67 *Kenyon MSS.*, no. 829.

68 *Ibid.*, nos. 834, 892.

69 Roberts, *Matthew Henry*, 14 and 15 May 1706.

sympathetic neighbours the Kenyons, to solicit the support of her relatives, especially of her cousin William Bromley, M.P. Willoughby for his part, enraged by her visits to Alice Kenyon at Peel (in Deane), sought first to restrict her movements by such devices as the confiscation of the coach horses; and then early in April, after a further 'falling out' and with a visit from Bromley expected, chose to banish her instead as far from Worsley as possible.⁷⁰ By July, however, he had won Bromley to his side and a wretched Lady Willoughby was imploring Roger Kenyon himself to assist her in procuring a separation from her husband, whom she suspected of wishing to hasten her death by ill-usage. His motive in so doing she saw as avarice: 'the hopes of a fortune in the City with money, and one he may have children by . . . to which his having the advantage of having married one of quality and estate will the more recommend him'.⁷¹ Two years later she was still fearful for her life, still pleading with Kenyon to help her break free. Willoughby was, she claimed, 'one of the greatest cheats that ever were, and marries only to rob and plunder all he can, and then, if he could, wo[u]ld sett them goeing, to be at liberty to cheat somebody else, and get, if he could, by the help of this match, one with money in the City'.⁷²

Kenyon tried to find allies—two were needed—who would stand surety for Honora and enable her to part from Willoughby, but his efforts foundered, due mainly to the fact that her relatives were insufficiently supportive. It is possible that her fulminations against Willoughby were not entirely accurate—one reader of her letters has indeed suggested that they betray signs of persecution mania—but the well-informed Alice Kenyon's indignation and alarm on her behalf were obviously genuine, and the picture Honora painted of her husband is not altogether at odds with that to be inferred even from certain of his fellow Dissenters.⁷³

70 Lancs. R.O., DDKe/HMC/940a, 945a, 946a-d, 949b and c.

71 *Kenyon MSS.*, no. 960.

72 *Ibid.*, no. 1047.

73 *Complete Peerage; Diary of Rev. Henry Newcome*, ed. T. Heywood (C.S., XVIII, 1849), p. 48 n.; Henry Pendlebury, *Invisible Realities* (London, 1696), dedication by Revd John Chorlton.

VII

Kenyon had reasons of his own for mounting indignation against Willoughby as the 1690s advanced, reasons arising from his own Tory and Anglican position, and particularly from his role as clerk of the peace for Lancashire. It was his uncompromising view that the commission of the peace should be composed of a limited circle of established gentry of the old school, provided they were not so old-fashioned as to wish to reverse the Reformation. On the other hand, he abhorred some of the more daring ideas unleashed by that movement, notably a Calvinist attempt to apply more inclusively representative principles in local government, and was in particular opposed to admitting to the magistrature persons who were in trade.

In January 1695 Kenyon heard a rumour from two sources that new magistrates were to be appointed from in and near Manchester who were associated with both Nonconformity and commerce. The Manchester magistrate Joseph Yates named Mr Nathaniel Gaskell, Mr Joseph Hooper, Mr Richard Percivall, and Mr Worsley of Platt, implying that they and others unspecified were Dissenters. Kenyon's own wife, who had been listening to gossip, added the names of Edward Boodle (*recte* Bootle), John Diggle (*recte* Diggles), 'young Gaskill' (*recte* Gaskell), and Hilton of Willingrave (*recte* Withingreave, i.e. Withy Grove), and she commented: 'it is thought Lord Willoughby is the cause of their being put on'.⁷⁴ The two lists included names that are very interesting indeed.

Nathaniel Gaskell, gentleman, of Clifton Hall in the parish of Eccles, son of Daniel, was in 1693 one of the purchasers of the land on which Cross Street chapel in Manchester was built, and was friendly with the minister Henry Newcome who that year had welcomed Willoughby to Worsley.⁷⁵ Joseph Hooper, gentleman, was a Manchester tradesman, a feoffee of Chetham's hospital, and in March 1694 had been a signatory

74 Kenyon MSS., nos. 927, 930.

75 Thomas Baker, *Memorials of a Dissenting Chapel* (London, 1884), pp. 69–70; R. Halley, *Lancashire: its Puritanism and Nonconformity* (Manchester, 1872), p. 446; M.C.L.A.D., M3/2/46.

with, *inter alia*, Gaskell, Newcome, and Edward Bootle, of proposals concerning a Manchester charity.⁷⁶ Richard Percivall of Manchester, merchant, was also a feoffee of Chetham's hospital, and had married the daughter of John Tilley, ejected vicar of Deane, whose wife was moreover a niece of Humphrey Chetham, founder of the hospital.⁷⁷ Ralph Worsley of Platt, in Rusholme in the parish of Manchester, gentleman, was a patron of Nonconformity at Birch chapel, and later at Platt chapel which he himself founded in 1697. He was eldest son and heir of Major-General Charles Worsley who died young in 1656 during the lifetime of his father, another Ralph Worsley of Platt.⁷⁸

Edward Bootle of Manchester, gentleman—not complained of by Joseph Yates because he happened to have been since 1682 Yates's own father-in-law—was a prominent and prosperous commercial figure, and his charitable activity has already been noted. One with his surname was a captain of Whig volunteers active with Brandon's authorization in 1689.⁷⁹ John Diggles—whom Mrs Kenyon dismissed in Lady Bracknellish manner as 'a calender man', from his owning the mechanism so called for the processing of cloth—was a Manchester linen draper and like his brother Robert, a Liverpool merchant, became a trustee of Cross Street chapel. Their father Robert, from whom John had inherited the calender, was a Manchester chapman, and both father and mother left bequests to Henry Newcome. It seems very likely, moreover, that we have here the John Diggles who in 1689 brought a company of 120 foot from Manchester to attend Lord Delamere's muster at Bowdon.⁸⁰ The person whom Mrs Kenyon described as 'Hilton of Willinggrave' was James Hilton of Withingreave in Manchester, gentleman or chapman, who had

76 M.C.L.A.D., MS. 373/4273/CI; M3/2/46; *Kenyon MSS.*, pp. 213, 410.

77 M.C.L.A.D., MS. 373/4273/CI; L1/51/8/17; Baker, *Memorials*, p. 75; *Kenyon MSS.*, p. 410.

78 J. Booker, *A History of the Ancient Chapel of Birch, in Manchester Parish* (C.S., XLVII, 1859), esp. pp. 25–7, 160–4; W. Dugdale, *Visitation of Lancashire*, ed. F. R. Raines (C.S., LXXXVIII, 1872), p. 338.

79 *Kenyon MSS.*, pp. 195, 213, 410; M.C.L.A.D., M/C 1429/1685; M63/4/1; L606; Misc/224/23.

80 Lancs. R.O., WCW, Robert Diggles of Manchester, 1685; Baker, *Memorials*; *Kenyon MSS.*, pp. 203, 223, 410.

property in Manchester and Droylsden, and left bequests in 1707 to Henry Newcome's family as well as to the then minister of Cross Street chapel, James Coningham. James Hilton's widow Elizabeth, née Riley, became in 1708 the second wife of Edward Bootle.⁸¹ Finally, the proposed magistrate described condescendingly by Mrs Kenyon as 'young Gaskill' may conceivably be the Nathaniel Gaskell of Clifton Hall identified above, even though according to Baker he would then have been over forty, for he was indeed youthful in comparison with the Kenyons.⁸²

The people whose candidature for the bench Willoughby was rumoured to be promoting in January 1695 were, in short, commercially active figures associated with Nonconformity, playing a leading role in the Manchester community, and in some cases possessed of very presentable country seats so that they rubbed shoulders, and occasionally even contracted marriages, with the gentry. Most of them sported the title of gentleman, but they were not, according to the principles upon which status was awarded at the time, esquires, and they were not the sort of people Kenyon would have been happy to admit into the magistrature. The plan to introduce them, indeed, misfired for some reason, and it was not until March 1696 that the dreaded influx of commercially active Dissenters occurred.⁸³ Only one of the new justices' surnames had already been sported by a rumoured appointee, that of Daniel (not Nathaniel) Gaskell. There is said to have been some confusion over whether Daniel or his brother was the new magistrate. It seems likely that they were the sons Daniel and Nathaniel named in 1681 in the will of Daniel Gaskell of Clifton Hall, gentleman, in which case their dismissal by Kenyon as 'tradeing men' was inappropriately scornful.⁸⁴ So too was Kenyon's dismissal of Matthew Hallowes, another new magistrate of 1696, as 'a trader with Rachdale baise, or some cloth', if as seems likely he was the Matthew Hallowes of Ashworth Hall, near Rochdale, whose

81 M.C.L.A.D., L1/51/8/17; Lancs. R.O., WCW; Chester marriage licences, 1693 and 1708.

82 Baker, *Memorials*, p. 70.

83 Lancs. R.O., QSC/118.

84 Kenyon MSS., no. 1024; Lancs. R.O., WCW, Daniel Gaskell.

daughter married first the Liverpool merchant James Hamer, then (interestingly) a Nathaniel Gaskell, gentleman, and finally the Revd Joseph Hotteshead, a minister at Cross Street chapel. Hallowes's house had been a port of call of the eminent Dissenting divine Oliver Heywood, who was also known to the Willoughbys and who recorded that he 'sate with my Lord Willoughby' after preaching at Eccles in June 1696, during his last visit to Lancashire.⁸⁵ Again, the dismissal of Thomas Johnson of Liverpool, another newly admitted magistrate, as a 'shopkeeper' was inappropriately contemptuous if Johnson was, as Glassey claims, 'a great tobacco merchant and a future M.P. in eight Parliaments'.⁸⁶ John Molineux of Liverpool was correctly described as an apothecary for he so described himself on marriage in 1674, but he was a leading spirit among the Dissenters.⁸⁷ As for Richard Roughley, another of the new magistrates, Kenyon made him son of the Thomas Roughley already appointed in 1694 and grandson of a 'collier-banksman [pit-mouth overseer] at a colepit belonging to Mr. Bold', adding that their house was licensed as a Dissenters' meeting place. Thomas Roughley had been one of the Dissenting trustees controlling St Helens chapel of ease in 1691; and he was doubtless the Thomas Roughley of Sutton, near St Helens, gentleman, who had received a grant of lands in Sutton and Rainhill in 1679 after marrying (as Thomas Roughley, junior, of Sutton) Hester Leigh of Rainhill the previous year.⁸⁸ Finally Radcliffe Scholefield, dismissed as sometime 'a preacher at conventicles' by Kenyon, represented an old family, seated until recently at Scholefield Hall near Rochdale. There were two of his name at the time: the father, an attorney-at-law at Rochdale and later at Henshaw (in Rochdale parish), who died in 1708; the

85 H. Fishwick, *The History of the Parish of Rochdale* (Rochdale, 1889), pp. 251, 334, 400, 403; *The Rise of the Old Dissent, Exemplified in the Life of Oliver Heywood*, ed. Joseph Hunter (London, 1842), p. 388; Benjamin Nightingale, *Lancashire Nonconformity* (6 vols, Manchester, 1890–3), III (i), p. 3 n.

86 Glassey, *Politics and Appointment*, p. 282 n.

87 Chester marriage licence, 1674; *Kenyon MSS.*, p. 320.

88 *Kenyon MSS.*, pp. 262, 411–12; Chester marriage licences; M.C.L.A.D., L1/50/38/2: Special Commissions, Jas. I to Geo. III, 1245.

son, minister of Hall Fold chapel, Whitworth, and Ringway chapel, Cheshire, who died in 1728. Two further ministers, Richard and a third Radcliffe, continued this remarkable line until 1803.⁸⁹

Kenyon's enmity towards Willoughby seems to have reached a climax in 1696, provoked by the admission of these further Dissenters into the commission of the peace; it was provoked also by the audacity with which Willoughby that summer, before attending the Manchester quarter sessions as usual, attended those at Ormskirk with the result that St Helens chapel of ease was awarded to the Dissenters by a majority of four magistrates to three.⁹⁰ Willoughby appeared a few days later at the Manchester sessions, no doubt with a gleam of exultation in his eye, and signed with his colleagues the Lancashire Association in defence of William III, provoked by an attempt to perpetrate that cowardly alternative to military conquest, assassination. Others added their signatures beneath those of the sitting magistrates: Willoughby's short-lived nephew Thomas, one of the Radcliffe Scholefields, and (no doubt while grinding his teeth) Roger Kenyon.⁹¹

Kenyon's reaction to the St Helens chapel ruse was to organize a protest to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and little by little the intruders of 1696 were whittled away: Roughley and Scholefield the following year; Gaskell, Hallowes, and Molineux in 1698.⁹² There was, one senses, a social as well as a religious motive behind these exclusions, for most of the intruders had been pointedly denied the title of esquire normally accorded to magistrates in commissions of the peace, and were described merely as gentlemen.⁹³ It is noteworthy that while these Dissenters of lesser status were failing to establish themselves, two who were

89 Fishwick, *Rochdale*, esp. pp. 360–3; Nightingale, *Lancs. Nonconformity*, II (i), p. 271; Dugdale, *Visitation*, p. 256; Lancs. R.O., WCW, admon. of Radcliffe Scholefield, 1739.

90 Lancs. R.O., QSP/783/17; DDKe/9/77/15, 16; *Kenyon MSS.*, nos. 1023, 1024.

91 Lancs. R.O., QDV/10.

92 Lancs. R.O., QSC/120 (20 Aug. 1697); QSC/121 (10 Mar. 1698).

93 Lancs. R.O., QSC/118–20.

indubitably gentry did so: in 1696 Sir Charles Hoghton, Bt, of Hoghton Tower, whose inclusion after the Revolution had been reversed the following year; and in 1698 John Andrews of Rivington and Little Lever, who became one of Willoughby's closer magisterial colleagues.⁹⁴ Moreover those higher-status Dissenters—Crooke, Walmesley, and Herle—who had entered the commission of peace in 1694, and brought off with him the St Helens Chapel *coup* in 1696, remained vigorously active and almost succeeded in recording a further chapel (Hindley) as a Dissenters' meeting house in 1697.⁹⁵

One can and should see the Dissenters' point of view on the chapel of ease question. The enormous Lancashire parishes, in the enormous diocese of Chester, had proved less than adequate even before the Reformation; but with the expansion of commerce, industry, and population from Tudor times they had become hopelessly out of date. Hence the proliferation of chapels of ease, that is chapels for the convenience of worshippers, located nearer to flourishing concentrations of population than were the old parish churches. Those new centres not only provided funds for the building of chapels and the maintenance of clergy, they also sometimes germinated Calvinist beliefs, notably in association with the textile trades, and those who paid the piper understandably wished to call the tune. At the Revolution, the Presbyterians had hoped for comprehension within the ecclesiastical structure into which they had effectively built additional units. They were denied it. The result was an understandable attempt to detach their places of worship from the parochial structure, and to draw closer to the Independents who operated on the population-based 'gathered congregation' principle with no externally imposed structure whatever. That Willoughby had associated himself with this 'united ministers' movement in Lancashire is indicated by Sir Henry Ashhurst's reference in 1695 to the

94 Lancs. R.O., QSC/118 (20 Mar. 1696); QSC/121 (10 Mar. 1698); QSR and QSP, *passim* for 1698–1702.

95 Higson, 'Some Leading Promoters', p. 150; J. Lowe, 'The Case of Hindley Chapel, 1641–1698', *T.L.C.A.S.*, LXVII (1957), pp. 45–74.

countenance he gave to serious piety ‘wherever you find it among all the different parties that we are so unhappily broken into’;⁹⁶ and during his second protracted attendance at the Lords, between December 1697 and March 1698, Willoughby presented the king with an address from the United Ministers and was duly thanked afterwards for his ‘care and pains’ in so doing.⁹⁷

Meanwhile he had been involved in one of the most bizarre incidents in the religious history of Lancashire, an altercation between Anglicans and Dissenters with which the chapels of ease controversy, then at its height, became illogically entangled. The Dissenters claimed to have diagnosed, and cured, a case of demonic possession at ‘Surey’ near Whalley; and Willoughby as a magistrate, and no doubt as a Dissenter sympathetic to this claim, played a prominent role in the collection of sworn testimony, at Holcombe with Ralph Egerton of Shaw in 1695, and at Blackburn with William Hulme of Davyhulme in 1697.⁹⁸ Not a few worthy local ministers were impressed by the ‘Surey Demonic’, and the great Richard Baxter was prevented only by death from including the case in his book, *The World of the Spirits evinced by Apparitions, Witch-craft, etc.* However, the Dissenters, who vaunted the authenticity of their demonic and their miraculous cure, collecting and publishing the two sets of testimony at different stages in the conflict, were opposed for the Anglicans by the Revd Zachary Taylor, who dismissed the whole episode as a ‘fanatical imposture’, and a pamphlet war of increasing acrimony raged from 1697 to 1699.⁹⁹ The Revd Thomas Jollie, for the Dissenters, chided Taylor for undervaluing all the evidence gleaned by Egerton because some of it had been collected in collaboration with Willoughby, a known

96 Dedication to Willoughby in H. Ashhurst, *Some Remarks upon the Life of Mr. Nathanael Heywood* (London, 1695).

97 *The Minutes of the Lancashire Association of United Ministers* (C.S., new ser., XXIV, 1891), p. 360.

98 *The Surey Demoniack* (London, 1697), pp. 51–8; T. Jollie, *A Vindication of the Surey Demoniack as no impostor; or, a Reply to a certain Pamphlet Publish'd by Mr. Zach. Taylor, called the Surey Imposter* (London, 1698), pp. 62–8.

99 Copies in B.L., at shelfmarks 719 g. 16, 49–50, 52, 54; G. 19149 (4–5).

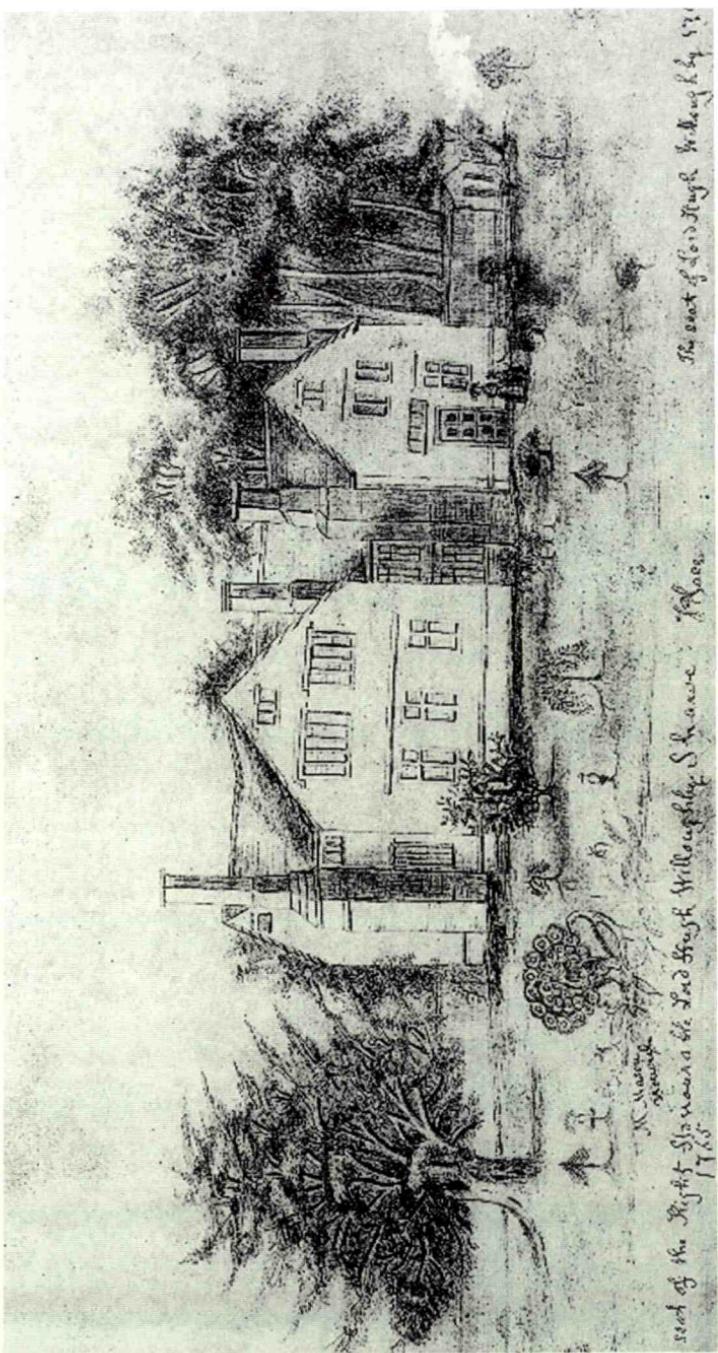


Figure 9 Shaw Place, Heath Charnock, in 1765 (original drawing by M. Mason in possession of author)

Dissenter.¹⁰⁰ As tempers frayed, the totally irrelevant issue of the chapelries raised its ugly head, and Taylor railed at the Dissenters for appropriating the consecrated chapel of St Helens, while his opponent railed at the Anglicans for appropriating the unconsecrated chapel at Hindley. It was an extraordinary conflagration to have been caused by what was probably an admittedly rather spectacular case of epilepsy.

VIII

Although the flames of the Surey Demoniac controversy raged unrelenting until 1699, fed partly by Willoughby and some of those Dissenters he had promoted to the bench, the hour when his ascendancy faltered and faded was not then far away. His inveterate Tory enemy Roger Kenyon died in 1698; but ominously in December 1699 the predominantly Tory House of Commons ordered his son George, who succeeded him as clerk of the peace, to send them an exact account of the Lancashire commissions of the peace for the last eight years.¹⁰¹ Coincidentally, that was the period during which Willoughby had been a peer and the earl of Macclesfield's leading Deputy Lieutenant. Moreover, earlier that year Willoughby had taken steps, in March and May, towards the acquisition of Shaw Place in Heath Charnock (Fig. 9), a barely genteel country house near to his old homes at Rivington and Horwich, as if aware that his tenure of the much grander Worsley Hall would probably soon come to an end.¹⁰² The reason for his apprehension was no doubt the poor health of his stepson John Egerton, Sir William's only son and heir by Honora, which had been a matter of public report and speculation since 1696.¹⁰³ It was evidently the death of the sickly youth in

100 Jollie, *Vindication*, p. 17.

101 Lancs. R.O., DDKe/9/99/30: Thomas Leffever to William Patten, received 11 Dec. 1699.

102 National Library of Scotland, Acc. 9769: release 1 Mar. 1699; assignment 26 May 1699.

103 Salford Archive Centre, uncat. letter from Edward Massey to Hester Egerton, 30 Aug. 1697; Lancs. R.O., DDKe/HMC/929a, Alice to Roger Kenyon, 18 Jan. [probably 1695].

July 1700—after which John, 3rd earl of Bridgewater, representing the senior Egerton line, promptly began scrutinizing his own rights of inheritance at Worsley¹⁰⁴—which was decisive in terminating Willoughby's tenure there, and in ending after January 1701 his quarter sessions attendance and political ascendancy at Manchester. After that, his third and last protracted attendance at the Lords, from March to May 1701, brought him face to face with one of the attempts by the Tory Commons to impeach ministers of the king, a depressing development even though thwarted by his fellow Whigs in the upper house. That was probably the last time he saw and acted with his Lord Lieutenant, Macclesfield, who after a period abroad from July died the following November. Willoughby attended quarter sessions not at Manchester but at Wigan or Ormskirk until the end of the reign, when the strong Tory John Leveson-Gower, Lord Gower, became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the earl of Derby finally recovered his Lord Lieutenancy, with the result that in July 1702 Willoughby, his close Dissenting colleagues Crooke, Walmesley, Herle, and Andrews, and some thirty Whigs were excluded from the commission of the peace.¹⁰⁵

Willoughby put in a few brief token appearances at the Lords in November 1703 when Queen Anne opened Parliament, but he was never afterwards seen there again. Parliament seemed to offer no more attraction to him after 1702 than it had done to his father, the 'Old Lord', before 1689. Even in the middle years of Anne, when Whig power revived and in 1706 he recovered magisterial office, he never attended quarter sessions, confining his activities to privy sessions mainly with old Dissenting colleagues; though he was active again as a Deputy Lieutenant, just as his nephew and eventual successor Edward was apparently active as a militia captain, at the time of the attempted Jacobite invasion of Scotland in 1708.¹⁰⁶ His main interest in the early 1700s

¹⁰⁴ Northants. R.O., EB 915.

¹⁰⁵ Lancs. R.O., QSC/130.

¹⁰⁶ Lancs. R.O., DDHo/475/1; QSP/978/3; *The Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire*, ed. Frank Tyrer and J. J. Bagley, I (R.S.L.C., CX, 1968), p. 166.

seems to have been the refurbishing of Shaw Place, where the outbuildings were extended, the oak carving of his and his wife's arms hoisted into a position of ostentatious prominence, and the initials 'H H' and the date 1705 carved into the lintel of the new coachhouse door. Honora was with him still, perhaps holding her own more effectively as his health grew less robust; and perhaps it was a snub from her which caused the visiting Nonconformist divine Matthew Henry to record in 1706 that she was 'much for the Church'. That woman who had written so frantically of Willoughby's supposed attempts to dispatch her in the 1690s in fact survived him by nearly twenty years and died at the ripe age of 81.¹⁰⁷ Willoughby's loss of office in 1702 had given the Church an irresistible advantage in neighbouring Rivington and, with the chapel of ease slipping from their grasp, the Presbyterians built themselves a new chapel there in 1703, where Willoughby thenceforth worshipped in his own distinctive canopied pew which stands there still.¹⁰⁸ But when, on 3 July 1712, the contentious 12th Lord Willoughby of Parham gave up this life, his remains were interred, like those of the 'Old Lord' before him, at Horwich chapel of ease which was still in Dissenters' hands.¹⁰⁹

IX

A century and a quarter later, some friends of Mrs Gaskell the novelist happened to visit Shaw Place, by then a sinister Poe-esque skeleton, for the Willoughbys were long extinct and their meagre estates had been so subdivided among coheirs that none had the means to inhabit the old mansion. Only the kitchen wing was occupied, as it still is, by small farmers. One of Mrs Gaskell's friends asked to be admitted into the mansion proper so as to explore its deserted rooms, but (as she

107 *Complete Peerage*, under Willoughby of Parham.

108 Higson, 'Some Leading Promoters'.

109 National Library of Scotland, Acc. 9769; *Nonconformist Register*, ed. Turner, p. 258; F. Gastrell, *Notitia Cestrensis*, ed. F. R. Raines, II (C.S., XIX), p. 43 n.; Lancs. R.O., QSP/668/47.

reported) 'The woman of the place looked aghast at the proposal, for it was twilight, and [she] said: They dare not go to that part of the house, for Lord Willoughby walked, and every evening was heard seeking for law-papers in the rooms where all the tattered and torn writings were kept'.¹¹⁰ Mrs Gaskell's account of Shaw Place in 1838, filtered through the testimony of friends, was understandably a little vague and garbled; but the spectre she described as haunting it bears an uncanny resemblance to the restlessly acquisitive and litigious soul with whom this article has mainly been concerned.

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110 *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, ed. J. A. V. Chapple and A. Pollard (Manchester, 1966), p. 32.