

[From a Correspondent.]

THE LATE DR. WILLIS, PHYSICIAN IN ORDINARY TO KING GEORGE III.—HIS RUMOUR MURDER.

For some time past a strong feeling of excitement has prevailed throughout the county of Lincoln, by the circulation of reports of a nature tending to lead to suspicions that the death of the late Dr. Willis, physician in ordinary to his late Majesty, King George III., who died on the 25th of September, 1835, did not arise from natural causes, as was at the time alleged and believed, but from the effects of more subtle agents. The first public announcement of the existence of doubts as to the nature of the death of Dr. Willis, who left a personality amounting to the enormous sum of £300,000, appeared in the Lincoln and Stamford Mercury of the 25th of February last, which stated that "Society around Stamford is at this time agitated by a most extraordinary story relating to the death of Dr. Willis. The story now current is, that a person in the domestic establishment of the deceased on his death-bed lately, made a confession that he poisoned the doctor, and circumstances are added which seem to make it necessary that, remote as the period is at which the event occurred, an investigation should take place. At present we cannot say more on so delicate and important a subject, and it is only the great respectability of the circles in which the matter is daily discussed that warrants us in making an allusion to it."

It will here be necessary to state that subsequent to the death of George III., Dr. Willis for years, and up to his death, resided at Greatford in Lincolnshire, where he kept race horses, and was himself a constant attendant at Lincoln Races, at which his horses were entered. During his residence in Lincolnshire he was a frequent visitor at the residence of the Rev. P. Curtois, rector of Bramston, near Lincoln, where he was staying at the time of his death, which was represented at the period of its occurrence to have taken place in a fit while in the act of dressing on getting up in the morning. In stating that that was the fact, the Lincoln and Stamford Mercury of March 3 states, "With reference to the extraordinary report of the murder of the late Dr. Willis, of Greatford, to which we alluded last week, we can say positively that an investigation is now going on, under the proper authorities, and that the remains of the deceased have been (or will be) exhumed for the purpose." The same paper of March 10, in allusion to the affair, says, "We are assured the rumours in circulation will be met with the most perfect frankness by the family of the late Reverend P. Curtois, and with a determination that the cause and circumstances of his death shall undergo the most rigid investigation," which paragraph is immediately followed by an *ex parte* statement, which the editor had received from the Reverend Atwill Curtois (son of the late Rev. P. Curtois), the present incumbent of Bramston, relating to the health of Dr. Willis, and the incidents of his death, and tending to show that his health had been for some time previous in a precarious state, and that his death took place in a fit caused by water on the chest, according to the opinion of Mr. Hett, a surgeon, and Dr. William Cookson, who were called in, but neither of whom, it appears, made a *post mortem* examination of the body. From the statement it further appears that no inquest was held, on the ground that the two medical gentlemen did not consider it necessary, and Mr. Curtois told his daughters that Dr. Willis had always expressed his horror of inquests, and had, on one occasion, said, "What an abominable shame it was that people should be exposed to such a thing after death."

It further appears that the publicity given to the rumours in the local papers, has caused much conversation at the different clubs at the west end of the town, which has led to inquiries into the matter being made by direction of the Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police, from which it is stated that it has been ascertained that James Ganes, who was for 38 years valet to Dr. Willis, and was in attendance upon him on the morning of his death, is still living, and that he states that his master was quite well on the morning of his death, about half-past eight o'clock, after he had assisted him to dress; that finding him not come down to breakfast, he went up to see about him and found him dead; that he begged of the Rev. P. Curtois to call an inquest, which was not, however, done. The Lincoln and Stamford Mercury, in its edition of March 17th, further acquaints its readers: "We are informed that the most eminent police solicitors are employed in the investigation to which we have referred, and that the London Police Commissioners have entrusted the affair to Mr. Inspector Tedman, who was engaged in the investigation of the murder of Lord William Russell."

From later enquiries made on the subject, it has been ascertained that the body has not yet been exhumed, the chemists and medical men consulted in the case, giving it as their opinion that after such a lapse of time it will be impossible to discover any description of vegetable poison, while they admit that there would not be so much difficulty should a mineral poison have been used. Until a *post mortem* examination is made nothing positive can be said on the subject, while a thousand rumours are in circulation from one end of Lincolnshire to the other.