

WILL OF A SUSSEX CLERGYMAN

THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

EDITED BY MARK ANTONY LOWER, M.A., F.S.A.

THE light which is thrown upon the manners and habits of our ancestors by their last wills and testaments is generally recognized. Many of these interesting documents have already appeared in our "Collections," but few, I am disposed to think, are more curious than that of HENRY MARSHALL, parish priest of Wilmington, which I here transcribe from the registry of the archdeaconry of Lewes (Liber 2, folios 30, 31). It may be regarded as illustrating the domestic life of a country clergyman of the period, his household furniture, his library, his wearing apparel, his social relationships, and to some extent the *vie interieure* which regulated his external actions and his habits of business. Henry Marshall, who, by the bequest of the lease of a Lancashire coal-mine, and a charitable donation to the poor in that county, appears to have been "a northern man denized in the south," lived in an age full of events in church and state. His will, dated in the fifth year of Edward the Sixth, shows him to have been theologically in a transition state between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, for while he makes no provision for masses, "month's mind" and "year's mind" which was almost invariably made in the previous generation, he still adheres to the intercession of the Virgin and some other articles of the ancient faith. He appears to have been a person of substance for the period, as will be seen by the copious array of household stuff which he bequeaths. His great chargers, brass pots, andirons, silver spoons, fire jacks, spits, dripping pans, flesh-hooks, and other culinary and table requisites, bespeak him a man who enjoyed the good things of this life; while the array of feather beds and their appur-

tenances proves that he had the means of providing lodging as well as board for his friends and kinsmen. The inventory of his costume, which may be gleaned from the document, shows us that his wardrobe contained (*inter alia*)—

A best coat;	A long gown for work-
Two fustian doublets;	a-days; and a vel-
Hose;	vet night-cap;
Two bonnets;	A coat of frieze;
A best gown;	Sundry shirts;
A sarsnet tippet; ¹	A pair of shoes;
A worsted jacket for work-	A hat;
a-days;	An old frock;
A best kerchief.	

Mr. Marshall also possessed two suits of armour (harness), and a halbert, which, being a man of peace, he did not use *in propria personâ*, although he was liable to furnish forth, according to the custom of those days, an armed man, for the defence of the country, as occasion required. He probably cultivated the gentler science of music, since a lute formed part of his household stuff. His library must have been a curiosity, comprising as it did a Bible, a *Catena Aurea*, the Pauline Epistles in manuscript, and various works on medicine and distillation. Whether the book called *Opus Aureum* was a theological or a scientific treatise, I know not.

The simplicity of manners which existed three hundred years ago is also illustrated by this document. Our good honest priest not only bequeaths to the great man of the district, Mr. Gage of Firle, forty shillings for taking the oversight of his will, but he remembers other aristocratic neighbours in his testamentary arrangements. Thus Mrs. Burton of Eastbourne gets an angel noble; Miss Burton a pair of sheets and other articles; and Mr. Thomas Parker a diaper table cloth. Of his friends among the clergy he is equally mindful, giving to one his fustian doublet, his worsted jacket,

¹ A kind of hood or scarf much used at this date, and originally made of Saracenic silk, *unde nomen*. In Edward Underhill's autobiography he states that he witnessed the procession of Queen Mary to her coronation, but to prevent recognition by his enemies, he says: "I muffled me with a *sarcenett*, wiche the rude people in the strettes wold murmure att, sayinge, 'What is he? Dare he nott show his face?'" *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation*, by John Gough Nichols, Esq., F.S.A., Camd. Soc., 1859.

and other articles of wearing apparel, and to another (his cousin, and evidently his favourite legatee) a best gown, a tippet of sarsnet, a bonnet, a velvet night-cap, a lectern, the books before mentioned, and many other articles.

Mr. Marshall applies to the several clergymen, whom he has occasion to mention, the epithet "Sir," then the usual designation of a priest or curate who had taken his first scholastic degree. See Shakspeare, *passim*. He was himself doubtless "Sir Harry" in the mouths of his neighbours, and a well-to-do personage, since, besides his vicarage house at Wilmington, he had a lodging at Westham, with a gelding to convey him thither and back.

The distribution of alms and drink at a funeral, and the ringing of a *peal* of bells on the same occasion, are curious traits of old and forgotten times.

The good vicar was not unmindful of the work of church-restoration, leaving, as indeed was usual in his day, a small legacy to each of the fabrics of Wilmington and Westham. Nor did he forget the mother church of the diocese, but bestowed upon the "church-works of Chichester" the then considerable sum of forty shillings. We know from the Cathedral archives that, even at the distant period of three centuries, that glorious spire which has but now tottered to its fall was deemed to be in a dangerous condition, and that efforts were made to avert the grievous calamity which it has been reserved for our own time to realize. Early in Elizabeth's reign the plate belonging to the suppressed chantries was sold, and the proceeds were devoted to the reparations of the church and spire, and here, a very few years earlier, we find the incumbent of a parish remote from Chichester, bequeathing a portion of his worldly goods to the same worthy object. May his example of liberality be followed by all—both clergy and laity—without distinction of creed, now that the downfall so long anticipated has taken place, and may all contributors to the pious work live to behold the restoration of that noble fane upon the ancient model,—“pointing with taper spire to Heaven!”

“In the name of God, amen. The IXth day of August, 1550, I, Henry Marshall, prest, vicar of Wilmyngton, beyng

of hole mynd and good remembraunce, thanks be to Ihu Christ, do orden, and make, and declare, this my last will and testament, in maner and forme under writyn. In primis, I bequeth and comend my soule to almyghti god, my creator, redemer, and saviour, unto whose great mercy I do lowly submyt me, and intercession of his most blessyd mother and virgyn, our lady, St. Mary, and the blessed company of hevyn, and my body to be buried in Xten buriall. Item, I bequeth to so many prests as comys to my buriall, [and] dothe minister the most blessyd communion, and prayer for all christen soules, every one xij^d, and to such wel disposed persons as resayvith with them, and will take it, iiij^d. Item, to be distributed among pore people at my buriall, xliij^s. iiij^d. Item, to the reparacons of the church of Wilmyngton, vj^s. viij^d., and for a charitable drynkyng to the parishoners vj^s. viij^d. Item, to the povertie of Wilmyngton, xxiiij^s. iiij^d., to be distributyd accordyng to a bill thereof made. Item, to the povertie of Westham parishe, xx^s.; to the church works, vj^s. viij^d. Item, to make a charitable drynkyng to the parishoners there, x^s.; and if the curate dispose hymself to mynister the holy comunion and praier for all christen souls, a xij^d., and to [every] one that doth prepare to receyve with him iiij^d.; and if the clerke or sextan do cause a peal with all the bells, to move godly people to prayer, and to call to remembraunce that all are mortall, xvj^d. Item, to the poore people of Helsham, iij^s. iiij^d.; at Folkyngham, vj^s. viij^d.; and to the povertie within the parishe of Litlyngton, iij^s. iiij^d. Item, to the povertie within the parishe of Lullyngton, ij^s. Item, to the spytyll at Shoreham² xx^d., and to the povertie at St. James, near Chichester³ xx^d. To the povertie at Padiham⁴ xiiij^s. iiij^d. Item, to John Scrase, iij^s. iiij^d., to John Honye⁵ xx^d., to Bartholomew Hart iij^s. iiij^d.; to Thomas

² There were two hospitals at Shoreham, one of Jesus Christ, and the other of St. James. The latter seems to have survived the Reformation, though it was granted away by Queen Elizabeth. See *Monasticon*, vi. 777.

³ The Hospital of St. James without the east gate of Chichester, some remains of which still exist near the bridge, was an asylum for lepers, and existed as early as the time of King Richard I. or John. See *Hussey's Churches*.

⁴ Padiham, where the testator had a coal mine, is a township in the great parish of Whalley, in Lancashire.

⁵ Honey was the name of a respectable family who resided at Wilmington for several generations. I have a pedigree of them drawn up by my late friend, Mr. Charles Ade. John Scrase was buried at Wilmington, in 1569. See Pedigree in *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, vol. viii., p. 16.*

Lovard xx^d.; to fyve poore folks, at the discession of my executer, v^s. Item, to Maistres Burton⁶, in recompence of her charges, and costly restoratives, send to me in tyme of my sekenes, one angell noble. Item, to my god-doughter, the doughter of Mast. Jams Burton, a paire of fyne shets, a great charger, and an iron racke for iij potts. Item, to every one of my godsons that will aske it, xij^d.; and every one of my goddoughters, not maried, xx^d., and to every one that is maried, and doth aske it, viiiij^d. Item, to Thos. Dawtry, the fether bed in my great parlor, with bolster, ij pylous, with pylow-bers, a paire of blanketts, a coveryng, a quilt, with curtyns, di' [$\frac{1}{2}$] a dosen napkyns of diaper, a paire of shets, and vj^s. viij^d., and to every one of his children, iij^s. iiij^d. Item, to the church-works of Chichester, xl^s. To William Hakford, my old servant, vi^s. viiiij^d. Item, to my cosyn, Sir John Heighe, a sylver spone, and vi^s. viij^d. Item, to my cosyn, Thos. Rylay, a sylver spone, and to every one of his dowghters, not married, xx^d. Item, to my servant, William Marshall, if he do lerne an honest occupation or handycraft, x^{li}., to make hym a stocke, to be d(elivere)d when he hath sufficiently lernyd the same; and if he refuse so to doo I will that he shall have but vi^l. xiiij^s. iv^d., to be d(elivere)d at tyme of my death, xl^s., and iiij^l. xiiij^s. iv^d. at tyme of his mariage, and the overplus, vj^s. viij^d., to be d(elivere)d to his mother, and iij^{li}. to his iij sisters not maried, by equall porcions. Item, to the said Willm Marshall one fether bedde, ij paire of shets, ij blanketts, a bolster, ij pylows, ij pylow bers⁷, a hillyng⁸, a great chest, my third brasse pot, a great charger⁹, ij platers, ij pewter dishes, iiij saucers, ij candelsticks, a chaffyng-dishe, a table cloth, iiij napkyns, a drippyng-pan, ij awndirons¹⁰, a pewter pott, a lute, my best cote, a rownd pan, a kychyn knyff, and a fire jake. Item, to Elizabeth

⁶ James Burton, Esq., of an ancient family at Eastbourne, married Alice Palmer, of Angmering, who was probably the legatee here so gratefully remembered. The only daughter assigned to her, the 'god-doughter' of the testator, mentioned in the next 'Item,' was Alice, who married Thomas Gilderidge, Esq. The final heiress of the Burtons married William Wilson, Esq., who was created a Baronet 13th Charles II. *a quo* Sir Thomas Maryon Wilson, Bart. See *Berry's Sussex Genealogies*, p. 333.

⁷ "Pillowbere, a pillow-case." *Halliwel*.

⁸ A *healing*, or coverlet.

⁹ A *charger* was a large dish or platter to hold meat. The tyrant Herod presented to the lascivious *danseuse*, in reward for her saltations, the head of John the Baptist "in a charger."

¹⁰ Andirons, or fire-dogs—doubtless of Sussex manufacture. See *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, ii., 179, *et seq.*

Marshall, his mother, my lease which I have of the Colmyne at Padiam, with the profetts, and vj^s. viij^d., and to every one of her iij sons, John, James, and Lawrance, vi^s. viij^d., and every of her iij dowghters, not married, xiiij^s. iiiij^d. Item, I forgyve Richard Marshall all suche detts as he owes me, so that he do suffer his mother, Elizabeth Marshall, peaseably to occupie the said Colmyne duryng the lease; and els I bequeth the said dette to Elizabet his mother, and will that such as I do put in trust wth this my last will shall asiste and ayde the same Elizabeth to recover the said dette. Item, to John Mathew, the poore man, a cote of frice,¹¹ pc. (price) iij^s. iiiij^d, a shirt, pc. xvj^d., a doblet of fustian, and a paire of showes. Item, to his wiff, in recompence of her payns takyn with me and my servants in tyme of my sekenes, a matres with bolster, pylow, a coverlett, a paire of shets, with the clothes about it, as my servant dyd ly upon hit, my white barow hogge, a pygge of my great sowe, a bz (bushel) of malt, and the mylke of my cowe to Mychaelmas, [she] fyndyng the pasture. Item, to ether of her ij sons, iij^s. iiiij^d. Item, to Jone Mathew, in recompense of her payns takyn in my howse, a pot of Iron, a brode possenet¹², a rownd pan with bryms, a skellett pan, a lytill spyt, a paire of pothangers, ij plates, ij pewter dishes, ij sawcers, a candelsticke, a lytill chest with locke and keye, and a paire of canvas shets. Item, to her syster Kateryne, a plater, a pewter dishe, a sawcer, and xx^d. Item, to Sir William Chranche, my best fustian doblet, a shert, my hose, a bonet, my worsted jakett which I waire the worke dayes. Item, to Kateryne Rylay, my long gowne which I were the worke dayes, the bedde whereon she lyeth with that [which] perteynyth thereto, my best kercheff, my hat, and the chest in the parlure, with all my woole in her chamber, and an old frocke. Item, to Lawrence Rawston, vi^s viiiij^d. Item, to Mr. Thomas Parker¹³, a table-cloth of diaper, conteynyng iiiij yards. Item, to my godson, Thomas Jorden, an ironbon chest,¹⁴ a great balance of iron, the grete chere (chair) in my

¹¹ A coat of friese—a kind of narrow cloth originally imported from Friesland. It was usually worn by plebeians, while patricians invested themselves in cloth of gold. Hence a well-known antithetical rhyme.

¹² A *posnet* is defined by Bailey as "a skillet or small boiling vessel." They were generally of brass, and Sussex was famous for their manufacture in later times. See *Suss. Arch. Coll.*, ii., 196.

¹³ Of Ratton, in Willingdon. He died in 1580.

¹⁴ Iron-bound. The Jordans were an old Wilmington famil.

chamber, and a complete harnes with a halbert. Item, to the mendyng of the hye way betwix the church of Wilmyngton and the *grene strete*¹⁵ xi^s. under this condition that the parishoners will se it well bestowed within a year and di' (half) next after my decease, and els to remayne to the mariage of vj of my god daughters within the parishe, whose nams shall appere by a byll of my hand. And if any of them decease afore tyme of their mariage, that then the porcion or porcions of the deceased shal be gyvyn to other poore maydyns, by the discretion of the curate and parishoners. Item, I wyll that my executor shall do well and truly all suche tokyns and bequests as I have appoyntyd in a byll of my hands to my frynds and povertie. Item, I forgyve all such as are indettyd to me, and not able to paye without great hynderance, and suche as are able to paye, and yet denye their dewties, onles the matter be very playne, my mind is that rather than that they should pise (punish?) their conscience, to take as they wilbe content to pay (*sic*). Item, to my Cosyn, Sir Mylies Rylay, whom I do orden and make executor of this my last will, for his payns, my best gowne, a typett of sarcenet, a bonet, a nyght cappe of velvet, a lettron¹⁶ for a boke, with locke and keye, a boke callyd *Cathena Aurea*, *Pauls pistyls* in parchement, *Opus Aureum*, a Bible, with my boks of distillacon and phiseke, and such other boks as are necessary for hym, and not bequethed. Also a paire of my best andirons, a fire chaffer, an iron rakke, a spytt, a hangyng pan, a posenet, a fire pan, a dreyng pan, a chaffyng dishe, a fire prong, a kychyn knyff, a flesshe hoke, a grate for breade, my round table at Westham, a cheyre, a chest, a harnes, ij lytyll tables, a crosse mattoke, and such other

¹⁵ The phrase 'Green Street' is applied to many localities on, or forming part of, Roman roads, and it is certain that the *via* which connected Anderida (Pevensey) with Lewes and the west of Sussex, ran through a part of Wilmington parish. It has been clearly traced at Polegate eastward, and at Berwick Common and Glynde westward, of Wilmington. With respect to this 'Green Street,' the Rev. G. M. Cooper, the present Vicar of Wilmington, observes: "There is a turf road leading up the slope of Windore Hill from the foot to the summit. It is sometimes designated amongst ourselves 'The Monks' Walk,' but without authority. This goes out of the ancient road which was once the principal line of communication through the villages between Eastbourne and Lewes, though now utterly neglected. I imagine (he continues) that Mr. Marshall's bequest was for the repair of that part of this road in the direction of Folkington (at present called Gillatt's Lane), between the east end of Wilmington church and the point where the above-mentioned green path turns off and pursues its course up the side of the hill."

¹⁶ A *lectern*, *lettern*, or reading-desk.

thyngs as remaynyth there of myne, a brasse pott, and my geldyng. Item, I desyre my frend Sir Lawrance Waterhouse, parson of Terryng,¹⁷ to be associate with the said Sir Mylis, and to help hym with his counsell and aide in all the doying of this my testament, when he shalbe thereunto desyred, and for his so doying, I bequeth him xx^s. and his costs. And in my humblist wise I beseche the Right Worshipfull Mr. Edward Gage, esquier,¹⁸ to assist and aide my executor with his good cowncell and furtherance in the causes of this my testament, and to be supervisor thereof, and I bequeth to his mastership in recompence of sum parte of his payns xl^s. The resydew of my goods, my detts paid, with charges of this my last will and testament, I will shalbe devided into iij partes, whereof one parte to be distribute to my nerist and porest kynsfolks, by the discession of my cosyns, Sir John Heighe, priest, and Thomas Rylay, or suche other as my executer will appoint, and the other ij parts by evyn porcions and bylls indentyd to be d(elivere)d to the churchwardens, and iiij or sex of the honest parishoners of Wilmyngton and Westham, in the presens of the parishoners upon a sunday or holy day, at tyme of divine service, and to remayne in the poore men's chests unto suche tyme and tymes as it shalbe thought necessary to make distribucion to the povertie within the said parishons (*sic*) and they openly, upon sundays and holidays in the presens of the people assemblid, to heare divine service, the curate and churchwardens, with assent and consent of iiij or more of the honest parishoners, to distribute, after their discessions as nede shall requyre, and to indorse the sum of the said distribucions upon the bill indentyd. Witness hereof myselff, which wrote this with my hands, Sir Lawrance Waterhouse, parson of Terryng, and Thomas Jorden the elder. Approbat' in eccl(es)ia p(ar)ochiali exempt(æ) jurisdic(tionis) de Bello,¹⁹ 17 Februarij, 1550, et anno R(egis) Edwardi Sexti quinto.—S(u)m(m)a I(nventor)ij 65^{li} 17^s. 3^d."

¹⁷ Tarring-Neville, near Newhaven.

¹⁸ Of Firlle Place, high sheriff of Sussex and Surrey, 4th Queen Mary.

¹⁹ For an account of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Abbot of Battle, which still exists, including all rights of visitation, of holding courts, of *granting Probates*, and Administrations and Licences for Marriages, within the Leuga, in as ample a form as was possessed by the Bishop of Chichester, see vol. vi., p. 62. It is not obvious, however, why the will of the Vicar of Wilmington should have been proved at Battel.