

THERE are few documents which illustrate more clearly the attitude of people's minds than a man's last will and testament. They not only reveal some of the motives which rule human life ; they afford also a clue as to the testator's belief in a life to come, and what he believes he ought to do in order to attain that life. To begin with, he will desire to clear up his estate so as to make some provision for those who come after him ; his debts must be paid ; all moneys due to him must be gathered in. Apportionments are made to his wife and children, possibly also to a friend. He may wish to found an almshouse, to benefit a church an abbey, a hospital, a chantry, a chapelry, or any of the services conducted and maintained within such religious institutions. He may desire to make a benefaction to his parish priest, or to some ecclesiastic with whom he has been connected during life. It may be his wish to benefit a religious body, e.g. the Franciscan Friars, or the Augustinian Canons, both of which had considerable influence in Bridgwater. And it would probably be his hope—certainly it was so in mediaeval days — so to divide his worldly goods as best to commend himself to the religious ideals of his time. This is especially evident in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, from which period the wills here quoted are taken. Many wills, undoubtedly, were made on the death-bed, although the more elaborate and lengthy ones were prepared with much care beforehand. In nearly every will it will be seen that something is given to the Church, or to the Church's ministers. No sentence is more usual than the euphemistic clause, *For tithes forgotyn* so much. It suggests a squaring up of financial dues owing to the parson of the parish. The testator must leave this world at peace with all men, and specially with his spiritual counsellor.

The numerous gifts made in ancient wills to Church objects and to Church officials are very easily accounted for. In those days every charity, every scheme for the betterment of man's earthly lot, was connected with the Church. There were no poly-technics to endow, and no free libraries to assist. The care of the sick, the poor, the ignorant, the way-farer, the pilgrim fell to the Church's lot. For these there were the hospital, the almshouses, the monastic school ; the abbey with its dormitory, refectory, and food for the passing pilgrim ; the friars' houses, and the great religious foundations dotted over the whole kingdom. Hence it was natural, indeed, it was inevitable, that property

should be bequeathed in the manner indicated by the wills quoted in this chapter. Yet there is another element which is evident in the majority of the wills. It is the strong desire for the prayers of the Church for the departing and departed soul. Behind this desire lay the belief which is the keynote to much that was vital in the pre-Reformation beliefs of our forefathers. This was the doctrine of purgatory. Without defining with exactness the numerous intricacies, variations, and developments of the doctrine, which belong to theology rather than to history, It may be stated simply thus. The doctrine of purgatory was, that in the intermediate state between death and resurrection there are three conditions, in one of which the soul is. The saints go direct to heaven, the lost go direct to the place of punishment, but those who leave this life not accounted to be good enough for saints, neither condemned as being utterly reprobate and lost, go to an intermediate place called purgatory. There, for a longer or shorter time, they remain, suffering a greater or less degree of punishment, according as their deeds shall have been, and with regard to the sincerity of their repentance and belief. Thus Otto Frisingensis, in A.D. 1146, wrote : *Some affirm that there is in the unseen state a place of purgatory, in which those who are to be saved are either troubled with darkness only, or are refined by the fire of expiation.*" Later on the Council of Florence, in A.D. 1438, spoke more directly still. *If any true penitents shall depart this life in the love of God before they have made satisfaction by worthy fruits of penance for faults of commission and omission, their souls are purified after death by the pains of purgatory.* A later Council confirmed this pronouncement, significantly adding to it the clause that *the souls there detained are aided by the suffrages of the faithful.* Here, then, we have the belief which influenced the mediaeval churchman to desire, beyond all other things, the prayers of his church — of the priests, the laity, the poor ; all who could be got to pray for him — that his sojourn in those dark realms might be shortened, and his merited punishment, by the mercy of God, might be in some measure stayed. In order that these benefits might accrue, there were the chantries, at whose altars the chantry priests said masses for the dead ; the parish priest, too, at the altar where the departed had no doubt often knelt while in life, could make his supplication as well. The funeral was a most solemn event, executed with the greatest care, and assisted at by as many people as could possibly be got

together. Here the Mediaeval Church surpassed herself in the wealth of her devotions.

In the Sarum Manual [writes Professor Swete]. *the rites which follow death begin with a Commendatio animarum... consisting of Psalms intermingled with prayers for the departed. The body is then washed and spread upon a bier ; vespers for the day are said, followed by the vigils of the dead, the special vespers and special mattins commonly known from their respective antiphons as the Placebo and the Dirige or dirge. It is then carried in procession to the church, accompanied by a cross-bearer and acolytes with lighted tapers, a man with a bell going before the corpse to invite the prayers of the passers-by ; after him come the priest and his ministers, in albs, singing Psalms, the body being followed by friends of the deceased bearing torches, with the mourners in black cloaks. In the church the dead is laid with his feet towards the high altar. Mass is then said, or if it be too late for Mass, the body remains in the church until the first Mass of the following day. After Mass the priest puts off his chasuble, and the special office for the burial of the dead (Inhumatio defuncti) begins. The service falls into three divisions ; the first to be said in church at the head of the body, the second on the way to the grave, the third at the grave itself. The first consists of antiphons, kyries, and prayers, the precentor and choir assisting, while the priest censes the body and sprinkles it with holy water. On the way to the grave, the Psalms In exitu Israel and Ad te, Domine, levavi are sung, and the old suffrages said, " Eternal rest grant them, Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them." The grave, of which the priest had previously cut the first sod in the form of a cross, is now opened with the Psalm Confitemini, Domino, quia bonus, and the antiphon "Open to me the gates of Righteousness." Then, the grave having been blessed and aspersed, prayers for the departed follow, and the priest pronounces a final absolution. Earth is thrown crosswise on the body, and the interment is completed during the singing of a psalm; after which the priest says, "I commend thy soul to God the Father Almighty ; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust : in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." On returning to the church the clerks sing the penitential Psalms or the De profundis, and the priest dismisses them with the prayer, " May the soul of this person and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. "**

This service, without doubt, has many and many a time been conducted in the church and churchyard of St. Mary's, Bridgwater.

There were points of beauty in the service, no doubt. But there was also an element of deep gloom in it all. Moreover, there was more to follow. The vigils of the dead and masses for his soul were said from time to time throughout the following month, specially on the third, seventh, and thirtieth day.

The following wills will perhaps best illustrate, without further comment, the mind and habit of men in pre-Reformation days. They are mostly taken from the Somerset Record Society's publications, Vols. XVI and XXI, and from the Rev. F. W. Weaver's *Wells Wills*, published in 1890.

The will of John Davy, Briggewater, a tanner. It is dated June 14th, 1461.

First, I bequeath my body to be buried in the south porch of the parish church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Briggewater aforesaid. I bequeath to the Master of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist there, for my tithes forgotten, 6s. 8d.

To the Vicar of the parish church there, to pray for my soul, 2s. 6d.

To the four fraternities in the parish church aforesaid, to each of them 12d.

To each priest celebrating in the said parish church, 6d.

To the Friars Minor of Briggewater, to pray for my soul, 5s.

To the fabric of the parish church there, 2s. 8d.

Item, I bequeath to Roger Pym my blue gown furred with fyches. Item, to Thomas Eyre one gown of medley, furred. Item, to Richard Grobham one gown of mine embroidered and furred.

Item, I bequeath to Joan, my daughter, all that my tenement wherein I now dwell in the town aforesaid, to her and the heirs of her body lawfully begotten and to be begotten, to hold of the chief lords of that fee. Nevertheless, my will is that Matilda, my wife, shall occupy the said tenement until the day of marriage of my said daughter Joan, by the rents and services thereof due and accustomed.

Item, I bequeath to the same Joan, my daughter, my three tenements with one "Cabyne" in which John Benet now dwells, in the street of the Blessed Mary in the town of Briggewater, going towards the south gate of the said town on the east side, between the tenement in which John Walsh now dwells on the south, and my tenement in which Robert Wever now dwells on the north, to hold as above.

After other bequests to another of his daughters, and to his wife, he leaves *the*

residue of my goods not bequeathed to my said wife, whom I make my executrix. Proved 19th July, 1461."

Sir Leonard Hakeluyt's will, as follows, is interesting as well exhibiting the desire of churchmen of good position, of that period, to gain all that they could from the sacred offices of their church.

The third of August, a.d. 1413. I, Leonard Hakeluyt Knight. In primis, I bequeath my body to be buried in the church of the Friars Minor of Brudgewater.

Item, I bequeath 40 li. to fulfil the testament of Henry de Cornwayl, deceased. If the testament of the said Henry requires more, I will that the things contained therein be fully performed for the soul of the said Henry and for the souls for which he is bound in celebrating divine services, in distribution to the poor, and in other works of charity.

Item, 40 li. of silver to be distributed in celebration and distribution and the works aforesaid for the soul of Thos. Hakeluyt, clerk, my uncle, and for my soul and the souls of my parents and all the faithful deceased.

To the fabric of the church of the Friars Minors of Brugewater 20 li. of silver to pray for my soul and Margaret, my consort's.

To the parish church of Southbrent one full suit of my vestments newly bought, and 6 marks of silver for a missal to be bought de novo to pray as above. To the parish church of Berrow 5 marks for one pair of vestments, as above. To the parish church of Estbrent 5 marks for one pair of vestments for the high altar, to be bought by my executors, to pray as above. To the parish church of Schepton Malet 20 marks, to pray as above.

To Isabella Burley, my servant, 40 li of silver, a silver cup with a cover, and six silver spoons. To Leonard Stapelton 100s. To Richard Herte, my servant, 10 marks. John Parant, 2 marks. John Mareyn, 10s. Robt. Arundell, 6s. 8d. John Homer, 6s. 8d. To making the way called Conynglane in the parish of Estbrent 100s., and if anything remain I will that it be expended on the way opposite the manor of Grove.

To each indigent poor person coming to the place on the day of my burial 1d.

To twelve poor, carrying twelve torches around my bier on the day of my burial, to each of them a gown with a hood of white cloth. To Richard Pecok, rector of Shepton Malet, 10 marks. To Thomas Jauncy 100s., and William Hastyng 100s.

The residue of my goods I give to Margaret, my consort, and Sir Richard Pecok, rector of

Shepton Mallet, to dispose for my soul, etc. I appoint Margaret, my consort, Sir Richard Pecok, Isabella Burley, William Hastyng, and Thos. Jauncy to execute this will. Dated at Grove in Brentmarsch, Co. Somerset. Exhibited 17 August, A.D. 1413.

Following directly upon the preceding testament is the will of Margaret Hakeluyt, wife of the above.

I, lady Margaret Hakeluyt, 29th July, A.D. 1414, bequeath my body to be buried in the church of the Friars Minor of Bridgewater next the body of Sir Leonard Hakeluyt, knight, formerly my husband.

To Leonard Stepilton 10 li, a cloth of double texture, with a towel and one pair of sheets. To Margaret Stepilton 10 marks. To John Faraway 10 marks. To Joan Reynon, my sister, a silver cup with a cover. To Isabella Burney 20 marks, a gilt cup with a cover, a cloth of a double texture, with a towel.

Item, I bequeath to my poor tenants and to indigent priests 20 li. To the church of Penryn a pair of vestments of green colour of velvet. To the chapel where the bodies of my father and mother are buried one pair of vestments and 40s. To Ric. Hort and Agnes his wife 13s. 4d. To Edith Gonny 13s. 4d. and a red bed with hangings. To John Parent 20s. To the high bridge in the marsh 20s. To brother Geoffrey Pollard of the Order of Friars Minor 100s. To William Hugyn of the same order 100s. and one maser. I will that the said Walter Tylly be my executor.

11th August in the year above, a commission to Master Ralph Canon, canon of Wells, and John Burney, vicar of Puryton, Sir Richard Pecok, rector of Schepton Malet, and John Corps, perpetual vicar of the church of Bridgewater, to receive the proof.

This same Lady Margaret Hakeluyt affords an instance of widows taking the vows of the religious. The Wells registers record the fact of her taking, in 1413, after her husband's death, the vow of perpetual chastity. Thus, consecrated widowhood was looked upon as an order of the religious life, and might not be abandoned without penalty.

Adam Hamelyn's will, 1493, is a very typical one.

The eve of saint Margarete the virgyne and in the yere of our lord God 1493, I, Adam Hamelyn of Brigewater, make this my present testament and last will as foloweth :

I bequeith my body to be buried in the churche of the towne aforeseid. Also I bequeith to the high alter a cuppe of silver. Also to every alter in the

same church, 12d. Also I bequeith to the seid high alter 2s.

Also I bequeith to Isabell my wife all the occupieng and keepyng of my plate and jewelles for terme of her liffe...

Also I bequeith to John Hamlyn my brother a pipe of wyne and a pipe of wode. To William Burges a cuppe of silver.

Also I give and bequeith to the seid Isabell my wif all my landes and tenementes that I have in Brigewater and in the hundred of Northpederton for terme of her lyf. And after the deceste of the seid Isabell I will that all seid landes in Northpederton aforesaid called Shobell remayne to John Wymer and Margarete and to the heires of the same Margarete; and for defaute of issue of the seid Margarete I will that all the seid landes remayne to John Hamlyn my brother and his heires, and for defaute of issue of the seid John to remayne to my heires that shalbe next of my blode. And for the tenement that I now dwell yn I wull that the Maier, Balliveis and Burges of the town aforesaid, by the way and right of their corporacion, immediatly after the death of the seid Isabell my wif, do enter and sease in the seid tenement, and hit to hold and keep to thayme and their successors undre this condicion to this my will so that of thissues and profittes of the same tenement yerly to be had by the Chantry preste of the perpetuall Chantry in the churche aforesaid be kept a solemyne obite there for my soule and my wife's soule, our faders and moders soules and all our frendes for ever. And the residue of the revenues cummyng of the seid tenement to goo to the augmentacion and contentacion of masses to the seid chapel for ever more....

All other goodes and dettes to me due I give thaym to Isabell my wif, that she doo pay my dettes, and doo for her soule and myne and all cristen soules; the which Isabell I make my hole executrice.

Witnes herof: late being Maier of the seid towne and notary public; John Hamlyn; Robert Kokes; William Burges and meny others. Proved 28th August, 1493.

John Hille, of Bridgwater, was evidently a successful merchant and a typical town citizen of the fifteenth century, and he declares at the beginning of his will that he is sound of mind. He dates the document May 18th, 1481.

In primis I bequeath my soul to God Almighty and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and my body to be buried in the parish church of Briggewater if it shall happen that I die within seven " miliarta " from the church aforesaid.

Item, I bequeath to the Hospital of St. John of

Briggewater, impropriator of the church aforesaid, for my tithes forgotten, 20s. Item, to the vicar of the said church, 3s. 4d. Item, I give and bequeath to every stipendiary priest to celebrate divine services in the said church, 2s. Item, to every altar in the said church, 2s. Item, to the Warden of the House of the Friars Minor in the said town and the brethren of the same house serving God, 20s. Item, I bequeath to Stephen, my brother, for his service bestowed on me, one pipe of wode and one ton of iron.

His remaining bequests are not of special interest, saving a clause wherein he gives the residue of his property to his wife Thomasina, to dispose for the health of his soul and the souls of all the faithful; and also a gift to four of his friends, for their labours, of two pipes of woad.

His wife's will, dated four years later, is of some interest as showing the mind of a prosperous and well-to-do Bridgwater lady four hundred years ago.

Thomasine Hille. My body to be buried in the parish church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the said town, by my husband.

I bequeath to the great altar of the church aforesaid my gown of violet in grayne furred. To Master Richard Croke, the Vicar there, one gown of violet, to pray for our souls. To each altar of the said church, 2s. To each priest serving in the said church, 2s. To the Friars Minor of the same town to pray for our souls, 20s. I bequeath to build anew a sufficient house built for poor men to dwell in for ever in the town aforesaid, 40 li. of lawful money of England, the bequest of my husband in his life, that the said poor men may pray for the souls of John Hill, Thomasina his wife, of our parents, and of all the faithful deceased.

To Thomas Philip two pipes of woad; to Nicholas Jobe and John Stallinch each one pipe of woad. To Joan, daughter of the said Nicholas, my best girdle ornamented with silver and gilt. To Margaret Stallinch my gown of blue colour, and my next best girdle of blue ornamented. To John Stallinch one "Fethirbede" the next best. To his wife Joan, my gown of russet furred with black skin and my red girdle ornamented with silver, and one small red one not ornamented...

To Agnes Russell, late my servant, one pair of beads of "corall."

To Sir John Roche, my chaplain, 20s., to pray for our souls.

She bequeaths the residue of her property, after payment of all claims, to be distributed to the poor to pray for our souls and the souls of all our benefactors and of all faithful Christians

deceased. Master Richard Croke, the vicar of Bridgwater at that time, is one of four witnesses to the deed.

The will of John Wheler, who was one of the chaplains in the parish church at the latter part of the fifteenth century, is modelled on much the same lines as those adopted by the laity of those days. He directs that he shall be buried in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the parish church of Bridgwater.

I bequeath to the perpetual vicar of the church 3s. 4d. To each priest of the said church 8d. To the three clerks of the said church 12d. To the two wardens being in the said church 8d. To the altar of St. Katherine of the said church 3 lbs. of wax and 20d. To the altar of the Holy Trinity 3 lbs. of wax and 20d. To the altar of St. Erasmus 3 lbs. of wax and 20d.

Item, I will and grant that Alice Lye, of Brygewater, shall have and hold half a burgage in "le Weststrete" ... and the quarter of one burgage there which Walter Martyn, Bedeman, now holds, and half a burgage in "le Freryn-strete" there, for the term of her life. After her decease I will and grant that the premises shall remain to John Kendale, Robert Philipp, rector of Chilton, and others. ... The residue of my goods I give and bequeath to John Drewe, to dispose for my soul and the souls of my benefactors as to him shall seem best. And I ordain Sir Robert Philipp, rector of Chilton, and John Bartlett, overseers of this my will. I will that the said Sir Thomas [this is an obvious error for Sir Robert] shall have for his labour one silver cup now in his hands.

A very interesting will of a wealthy layman of strong religious views and of charitable tendencies is found in the testament of James Hadley, of Withecombe besides Dunster, esquier. It is dated July 2nd, 1532. *I will that £37 be paid in the king's estchequer at Westminster for my father Richard Hadley whous soule God pardon.*" Then follows an immense list of bequests to religious purposes, places and people.

I will that £5 be paid of my owne dette to the King's treasure of his chamber, 20 marks be paid to the maister of St. John's in Brigewater by my promys to hym made the day of my marriage; to the high aulter of the temple, Withecombe, Wemedon, St. Decombe, Wiliton, St. John's at Brigewater, and Hethefeld [each] 5s., and to every other aulter in every of the said churches 12d. Cathedral church of Wells, 5s.; to the maister of the temple for tithes forgotten 20d., and to the ... of Withecombe 12d., and to the vicare of Wemedon 5s., and to every high aulter within the hundreds of Taunton, Carhampton, Williton fremanors and North Petherton 12d., and to every curat of the

same as moche. To every secular priest within the diocese of Bath and Wells not beneficed 12d. I will that my wife cause 3 tapers to be made, one to be set before the Rode, the other before our lady, and the third before the hed seynt of the church where I shall happen to be buried, there to borne [burn] in time of Goddis service. To the priory of Dunster 20s. To the priory of Barlinche 20s. To the Abbey of Clef 20s. To every other house of religion within the said diocese 20s., the abbey of Glaston except, to whom I give 40s. To the churches of Withecombe, Wiliton, St. Decombe, Hethefeld and Wembedon [each] 6s. 8d., to have my name upon the masboks [Mass-books].

To my poure tenants of Withecumbe 20s. and this quarter's rent; the same to my tenants of Wiliton, Hethefeld. To my tenants in Brigewater and N. Petherton 10s. [each]. To my tenants of Sydeham, Bower, Slap, Donwere, Baudrip and Chilton 10s. [each place]. Forty pence to my tenants of Batelborow, and 13s. 4d. to the maintenance of Horsey Chapell. To reparacion of the Reliks being in Withecombe church 40s., and to every man-servant taking wages his whole yere wages and to every woman taking wages as moche. Bequests to my mother, my brother Sir Henry, my brother George, my brother Sir John, at Bruiton my brother Sir William, at Barlinche, and to every of my godchildren. To have a priest to sing for 5 yeres, I will he have out of my lands as before 8 marks by the yere and to sing where my body shall happen to be buryed.

An honest preste shall from the daie of my burying singe in Withecombe aforesaid for 15 yeres praying for the soules of my father Richard, my mother Phelep, my sowle, James, Friswide, Ellen and Elizabeth my wiffes and all our children, kynsfolkes and all Christian sowles, and after the same 15 yere to the end of the world, as my wife and children executors will answer before God at the dredfull daie of jugement.

I give to every howseholder in Dunster, Wachett, Tanton, Brigewater, Lamport, Bruton, Yevelchester and Wells 4d., and to every hospitall of lozare and poure people within the shire of Somerset 12d. Prisoners of Yevelchester, 13s. 4d.; to the quiete prisoners of Wells 5s.; prisoners in Bristowe, 5s. And for as moche as I have beyne negligent to visit holy places and in going of pilgremage, therefore I give and bequeath to Our Blessed Lady of Cleve 5s., St Saviore of Porlock 5d., St. Culbone 3d., St. Saviore of Tanton, Bradford and Brigewater, each 5d.; to St. Jophe 3d., blessed King Henry of Windsor 3d., Maister John Shorne 3d., Holy blode of Hayles 5d., Our Lady of Walsingham 3d., St. Thomas of Canterbury 5d.

Elizabeth, my wife, sole executor ; my eldest and youngest sons to be brought up to the law, and they to have in Stroud every of them 10 marks, or in the ins of court every of them ;£10. The lands purchased at Sydenham by me of John Pike be to whom my said wife shall limit so that they shall keep an obit for me in St. John's, Brigewater. Forty shillings to Brigewater bridge, £5 for the making of a chapell in the honour of the visitation of B.V.M. and St. Christopher. My monethes mynde to be kept at Wemedone, St. John's, Brigewater, at the parish churches of Brigewater, Withecombe, Wiliton St. Decombe's and Hethefeld, and also my tweloe months mynd.

Proved March 26th, 1537.

Poor James Hadley ! Not only have masses for his soul not been sung *to the end of the world*, as he directed ; they were not even sung for the special term of fifteen years upon which he had set his heart In 1547, 10 years after the proving of his will, the chantries were suppressed, their endowments passed into the hands of Henry VIII's nobles and favourites, and masses for the dead came to an end. In 1549 the first Prayer Book came into existence, and a new order of things was ushered into being. Wills not only tell us what things men can do ; they reveal what they cannot do. Testators in 1537 little dreamed of what was coming within the period of ten brief years. James Hadley's legacies helped, probably, to fill the pockets of those who were eager enough to batten upon the spoils of the monasteries and chantry lands. Change of some sort there was bound to be ; the nation expected it. But few suspected how drastic the changes would prove to be.

A further inspection of Bridgwater wills makes it clear that money and gifts, very much akin to what have been detailed in the previous wills of this chapter, continued to be left to the chantries and monasteries and kindred objects right up to the time of their dissolution. In 1530 George Matthew of Bridgwater left money to every altar in St. Mary's Church. Richard Edney, in 1529, left to Wells Cathedral 4d. ; to the high altar in Bridgwater parish church 4d. ; to every altar in the same church 2d. Richard Grygg, in the year 1530, desired to be buried in the church of St. John's Hospital

for the which I bequethe to the sadye bouse a pere of sylver ... and a salt with a cover of sylver and 5 coshyngs of carpett worke ; unto the convent of the said howse to feche me [this would imply a procession with cross, lights and banner] to the church and to pray for me, a table cloth of dyaper.

To Sir Will. Alyn, my gostly father, my best gowne.

William Chute begs to be buried in Bridgwater churchyard, and leaves a cow for each of the altars of St. Katherine, St Mary and the Holy Trinity.

Harry Bodman, in 1533, bequeaths to the hye auter of the parish church of Bridgwater 8d., to Trinity auter 4d., Our Lady's auter 4d., St. George's auter 4d., Rode auter 4d., St Katheryn's auter 4d. Sir John Strete, perpetuall vicar of Bridgwater, for my tithes forgotyn a bussell of whete."

William Chrystopher of Brygwater in 1533 left to *Johane my daughter on condicion she and her assigns to kyepe yerely anniversary for the space of thirty yers for my sowle, my wiff and children's sowles, with all my frynds sowles in the parish church of Brygwater with all the prists and clarks belongyn to the forsaid church, gyving them suffycyently for their labores."* Numerous similar instances might be given.

The Bridgwater Friars Minor, or Franciscan Friars, were, to judge from the many bequests made to them in all parts of the county of Somerset, exceedingly popular. In Bridgwater itself, naturally, they were highly esteemed. Between 1528 and 1536 they received bequests, inter alia, from the following : John Anger, of Charlinch ; Will Davye, rector of Chilton Trinity ; John Pyme, of Chilton Trinity ; Thos. Preston, of Dowlish Wake ; Joan Wedmore, widow, of Dunster ; Robt. Jankyn, of Dunster ; George Stonys and Thos. Skynner, of the same town ; Geo. Elsworth, rector of Exford ; John Vicar, of Exton ; Edmund Taylor, of Lyng ; Johane Nycholl, of Munksylver ; Joh. Markes, of Westmonkton ; John Nekke, of North Petherton ; Robt. Andersay and John Burgys, of the same place ; John Everard, of Stokelond Gaunts ; Margaret Bere, of Stowcurgy ; and many others. The list, indeed, might be greatly lengthened.

Up to the very close of the pre-Reformation period (and indeed, though more silently, long after it) the intense desire remained in the minds of men that they should be remembered after their death. It was not only the wish to escape the pains of purgatory, it was the fear of being forgotten and out of mind. Hence came the request in the will for *my buriall, my monjrthes mind, twelve monyth mynd, done and kept for my sowl.* At the end of the month, and of the year. Mass was to be said for the deceased ; his relatives and friends would gather around the altar to hear his name read out, to think of

him, and to pray for him. *I am wylling to have a preste syng for my sowle and all crystyn sowles the space of a hole yere,*" James Kyng, of Weston-in-Gordano, directs in his will of 1531. He wished that his name should be read out aloud from the Bede Roll, i.e. the list recited in church at the four Ember Seasons of the faithful dead. Similarly, Joan Roke, widow, of Taunton, declares in her will that *my son's daughter shall have the house that I dwell in the space of sixty years after my decease, not to meddle with it during my life, so that she or her assigns will keep an obit every year once in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene during the term of the said three score years, for the souls of John Roke and Joan his wife, etc., with seven preestes and Mr. Vicarye and two clerks.* Albert Rowley, of Taunton, directs in his will, dated August 16th, 1530, that on the day of his burial *a trentall of thirty Masses be songe for my sowle.* A trental was a service of thirty Masses, sung either simultaneously or *de die in diem.* No priest could celebrate Mass more than once a day, so that the services of thirty priests would be needed in one day in order to carry out the precise directions of Albert Rowley's last wish.

Such were the beliefs of our Bridgwater folk, and of all English people, three and a half centuries ago, in reference to the religious services which they held to be fit and comely when a man passed from out the portals of this world into the greater Life beyond. We have left these ideas behind, and a nobler view — as it seems to us — has replaced them. But our forefathers clung to their convictions with great tenacity, and they believed in them, heart and soul. And since conviction is at the root of all action and healthy life, we are bound to admit that their strenuous faith sufficed them well for the battle of their daily lives.



* *Church Services and Service Books before the Reformation*, p. 166

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