Map of the city of Limerick, adapted from H. G. Leask's 1941 map.
By the 1680s, Limerick had become one of the strongest fortresses in Ireland, and was the chief centre of the civil and military government of the south-west of the country, and second in importance only to Dublin. Other major walled cities and towns were Galway, Athlone, Derry, Coleraine, Carrick Fergus, Dungannon, Dundalk, Drogheda, Dublin, Waterford, Kinsale and Cork. By the standards of the time, it was a considerable achievement - a medieval city that had not outgrown the areas enclosed by its centuries-old walls which encompassed the English and Irish towns. While these were two distinct towns, they also were complimentary to one another, and between them had a combined circumference of 3 miles protecting an area of 70 acres. Although both towns were different in shape and character, they were roughly the same size at 35 acres each, and joining them was only one bridge of four arches, known as Ye Bridge, the Tide Bridge, Baal's Bridge, or the Bald Bridge (Droichead Maol), i.e. a span without parapet walls. It had been built over the narrowest point of the Abbey River in 1340 when it replaced an existing structure. There was a drawbridge on the English Town side at Baal's Bridge North Gate (8).

As the Irish Town was constructed after the English Town, it was much better fortified: its walls were up to 10 ft thick and 40 ft high in places, and had strong towers or bulwarks, some mounting cannon, and five gateways. (15) - (19)

The principal streets were An Boher Mor (Broad Street) which ran south from Baal's Bridge South Gate. (15) Branching from Broad Street was Mungret Street which ran south-west as far as Mungret Gate, (18) and John Street which ran south-east as far as St. John's Gate, (17) also known as Kilmallock Gate.

Mungret, Broad and Palmerstown lanes ran off these streets. The major buildings were Shambles Castle (J), Thomcore Castle (O), St. John's (Protestant) Church (L), the Pest House (hospital) (X), and just outside the walls, St. Michael's Church (M) was situated on a small island linked to the Abbey River. At that time, the Abbey River was known by its Irish name, Gkabal Bkeag, meaning the little island linked to the Abbey River. A direct translation of this inscription reads:

Sancte Iacob
defende nos ab hoste
hic bellona tonat, sedet hic astraena renascens,
Hac piætas ad aquas, ac sacra pandit iter.
Anno domini MDCCCLXVII
R.R. Caroli Dominic Fanning Prætore
David Creagh et Iacobo Sexton vicœs.

A direct translation of this inscription refers to major repair works that had been carried out. In all, there were about fourteen inscriptions and most were in Latin. For instance, built into the gateway (6) at the bottom of Gaol Lane, facing St. Francis Abbey (G) was a niche with a statue of St. James and a tablet which read as follows:

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There were many stone memorials inserted in the walls, usually on or near one of the gates and in some cases the inscription referred to major repair works that had been carried out. In all, there were about fourteen inscriptions and most were in Latin. For instance, built into the gateway (6) at the bottom of Gaol Lane, facing St. Francis Abbey (G) was a niche with a statue of St. James and a tablet which read as follows:

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Some of the surrounding townlands outside the city were Killeely (Kileely), Shanbollye (Shanabooly), Cluoin-dreinagh (Clondrinagh), Cownagh (Coonagh), Cahir Davin, Farrantinoe (Farranshone), Mone Mhahry (Monebraker), Prior's Land, Garryglossie (Garryglass), Rathbane, Corcanrye (Corkanree), Corballie (Corryally) and Gallwone (Galvone). These lands were made up of pasture, arable, meadow, red bog, marshland, dry arable and wooded.

Some of the surrounding parishes were St. Patrick's, St. Laurence's, Kilmurry, Singland (Castle of the Weir) where merrymaking took place. Close by, a plentiful supply of timber was available, called, appropriately, Thomond Fort (W), which read:

This paving was taken out and re-surfaced with stone, and proper drainage was provided. It is the only remaining section of the original fourteenth-century bridge, a relic of which is thought to have been the origin of the name Limerick.

The freighter码头 was, of course, St. Mary's Cathedral (A), with its adjoining college and dean's house (which occupied more

ground than it does today).

Beside the west side of the cathedral was the Quay or Great Quay, constructed almost 200 years earlier (circa 1500), much of it built with money from the forfeited cargo of contraband goods from a Bristol ship. (Limerick appears to have had certain agreements with Bristol, covering such trading transactions, and in 1680 freemen of the city of Bristol did not have to pay any inward or outward tolls here.) The 100ft wide entrance was guarded by two towers, and six pieces of artillery, on the taller southern tower, helped to make the quay a well protected and safe harbour. Between the towers a strong chain was extended for increased defence.

From the tall tower the wall reached to a height of about 30ft at low-water, and ran for about 600ft eastwards to Quay Lane Gate (10). This section was built on two levels, and the upper level was used as a walk by the people of the city. The wall had undergone major repairs, nearly 50 years before, in 1640/41, during Mayor William Comyn's term of office. Inside the dock was an irregular piece of water made up of quays and jetties. The Great Quay was capable of discharging vessels of 230 tons or more, but the much larger merchant ships could only sail to within a half-mile of the city and, on occasions, no further than Bunratty Castle. The large open area on the landward side of the Great Quay allowed ample space for the discharge and loading of the city's imports and exports. Exports included ale, bacon, barley, beans, beef, butter, cattle on the hoof, corn - for which Limerick was noted - feathers, articles of frieze (wool), hides of cattle, deer, goats and otters, horses, malt, oats peas, pigsties, raisesem, salmon and other types of fish, silver and lead ores, copper, lead, silver and lead. The exports exceeded that of exports, and smuggling was a common practice.

Close to Baal's Bridge and opposite Dominick Fanning's house (U) stood the Thomas' Island stood the ancient Lax Weir, and to protect it was Quinpool Bridge, and six

ports. The

English parliament usually permitted exports to continue to countries it was at war with. Imports consisted of coffee, deal boards from Norway, hops ('best quality') from England, iron, lemons, madder, oranges, sugar from the West Indies, pottery from North Devon, Staffordshire and Buckley, salt, sheep ('to improve local stock'), tobacco (by Richard Pierce) from Antigua in the West Indies and wine. The bulk of these imports came from England, Scotland, Spain, France and Holland. On the whole, the volume and value of imports exceeded that of exports, and smuggling was a common practice.

In the upper part of this two-storey building was the town court, and justices of the peace residing there were John Bourke, Tiege McMahon, John Fitzgerald, John Annette and Edward Lacy. The lower part was an Exchange, spanned by a series of arches, where commercial transactions took place. This was one of the essential buildings in the English Town, but in 1673 the Assembly (Corporation) and the hub of the commercial activity moved from this old building to the newly-built Exchange (F) on the Great Street. This was constructed at the expense of Mayor William York and, some years later, in 1685, Mayor Robert Smith donated 'the Nall', a limestone pillar with a brass top on which tradesmen publicly paid their bills. In the same year he (Smith) repaired the Island Gate (3) fortification and over the portal placed an engraving to commemorate the event.

King John's Castle (B), an irregular five-sided fortress with strongholds at
the angles, dominated the city. The castle's early history is one of neglect: in 1330 it was badly in need of repair, and again in 1576 'the ruins of the King's Castle' were repaired. In 1611, the south-east tower, close to St. Nicholas' Church (6), was replaced by a solid four-sided bastion which overlooked the city and had 5 or 6 cannon on it. The north-west keep, that nearest to Thomond Bridge, is said to be the oldest part of the castle. In 1680, the constable was Lord Viscount Blessington, Sir William King served as governor, and some of the military stationed there were Major McGuire, Thomas O'Callahan, George Crevagh, Gilbert Talbot, Swift Nicks, Francis Jones and John Motlow. From the castle to the Clare side of the river ran a ledge of rock known as Curragour Falls, and at this point it was safe to walk across at low tide. Close by was the ancient Thomond Bridge (built c.1359 at the cost of £30) of 14 arches on which was Bridge Gate (2), an egress and drawbridge. This gate was on the Clare side of the bridge between the 12th and 13th arch. The span was 150 yds in length and only 8 feet - 10 inches in width, with a floor of planks.

Just inside Island Gate (3) was St. Munchin's church (C) which had been built in the 11th century by St. Munchin (or Manchenuis), the first bishop of Limerick, and was originally a wooden structure. It was rebuilt by the Norsemen in the middle of the 10th century and was the cathedral church until the building of St. Mary's Cathedral in the late 12th century. Directly outside Island Gate (3) was a bowling green, a 'house of entertainment' (theatre), a large garden area and a promenade. There were smaller areas or lots let out by the constable of the King's Castle for grazing.

St. Dominick's Abbey (D) was built in 1227 by Donogh Corbrac (Buried there in 1241) King of Limerick, for the friars of the order of St. Dominick. (This building covered lands in and about the municipality and a chapel on St. Thomas Island.) The monastery had been rebuilt by James Fitzjohhn, 6th Earl of Desmond, in 1462. A papal university was established there in 1644 by Pope Innocent X. Just inside St. Peter's Cell (4) was a nunnery founded in 1172 by Augustinian nuns, dedicated to St. Peter, and was known as St. Peter's Cell.

Outside the ramparts, near Gay Lane Gate (6), was St. Francis' Abbey (G), which for the most part was in ruins. As this priory was outside the city walls, it was officially in the county of Limerick, and the county court sat in this old edifice. On Sundays, it was used as a place of worship by a preacher named Baily. It had been taken over by the Franciscans, on 4 October, 1687 (St. Francis' Day), and was consecrated by the Right Revd. John Moloney, Catholic Bishop of Limerick. Close by Baal's Bridge North Gate (8) stood the priory of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine (H). This south-east corner of the English Town was low-lying and subject to flooding at the bend of the Abbey River. As a result of this problem, the foundations of the priory (H) were undermined and this led to the collapse of part of the building in the 15th century. Across Baal's Bridge in the Irish Town were some of the most prominent buildings were Droumcore (or Thomcore) Castle (O), built by Thomas Corre in 1401. The Citadel (R) was built into the ramparts between 1590 and 1650 (the building we see in the grounds of St. John's Hospital today is still, basically, the same today). Set into the wall close by was a memorial to the effect that on 1 May, 1650, Mayor John Creagh and his sheriffs, David Rochfort and James Bonfield, gave £200 to cover the cost of outworks at the fortress. Inside the walls was St. John's Protestant Church (L), and in the direction of Munget Gate (8) was the newly-built (1688) Capuchin Church (N), where the first Mass was said by Piarist Maurice White from Clonmel. In the north-west wall of the Irishtown was West Water Gate (19), which was one of the more elaborate entrances of the city. (It was probably built in the 14th century, and it is on this gateway that our present coat of arms is based). There was an inner bar, which was a replica of the outer one, for added defence should attackers break through the outer gate. It got its name from its position on the western wall of the Irishtown and from its close proximity to the Abbey waterside, from which a small inlet was constructed and ran almost to the gate itself. This little cove provided access for small boats. A short distance from West Water Gate was St. Michael's Church (M), built in the late 12th century (destroyed by 1651) and its graveyard (which has survived to this day). The church and graveyard were located on an island formed by a diversion of the Abbey River.

The houses of the people were for the most part built of square blocks of stone, with cellars underneath, many with slate roofs, some thatched and some with battlements on top, which gave the place an appearance of strength and dignity. These buildings were impressive, and Limerick had been described as the 'City of Castles'. The dwellings were narrow, an average of 18ft in width and very long - up to 208 ft. A smaller number of habitations were of cagework framed in timber and covered with thatch, slates, tiles or other material. These were beginning to decline in number and were being replaced by the stronger more fire-resistant stone built houses. The cabins of the poorer classes in the back lanes were of wattle, covered with clay and thatch. They were easy victims to some fierce fires that raged from time to time, such as those that destroyed many houses in Creagh, Bonfield's and Hamlin's lane during the early to mid-17th century. The small number of homesteads outside the walls were generally of the cabin type, whitewashed and thatched with straw and leaves, with a hole in the roof, to let the smoke out, and sometimes not, in which case the door was left open. They seldom had a proper floor - just the earth - and only some had windows. Inns, shops and business houses had signs hanging outside which were easily identifiable by people who were unable to read, and these signs also served for advertising purposes. In the main, houses were not numbered, but in the wealthier parts of the city they had developed a system whereby a merchant living at, for instance, number 4 Thomond Street in the Englishtown might have had a small outhouse or cabin for his servants and workers, and this dwelling would have been given the number 4.

There were a total of 80 inns and taverns, including Francis Whitemare's 'The Signe of the Globe' and William Allen's, on the same thoroughfare in the Englishtown, while over in the Irishtown was the 'Old Bear Inn' in Broad Street, which had been rebuilt nearly 50 years earlier, in 1640, by Piers Creagh. It was
less often than today but to consume much more. The populace was not self-indulgent regarding food, and it was considered a sin to eat meat or eggs on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Prayers at meals were said in Latin. Orchards were common and a large section of the Irishtown was covered with them. Some of the fruit trees cultivated were the May Duke Cherry, the Bellegarde Peach, and the Caine Apple, known also as the Irish Strawberry or Arbutus.

The English attempted to introduce a policy of segregation, as illustrated by a bye-law passed (in 1612) which stated: '... that no citizen should be admitted on the Panel (Corporation) as a full burgess, unless he could speak English well, wear English apparel... be a married man...'. This separatist policy was based on a residential qualification, but did not extend to the exclusion of the Irish labour force from the Irishtown during the working day. It was not very successful and was difficult to enforce. In fact, the majority of house-owners were 'Irish Papists' (Catholics), and while they were officially barred from administrative posts, a number of 'Papists' were aldermen. Limerick subjects continued to adopt English manners and customs and remained faithful to the crown. With the accession of King James I in 1685, the Catholic religion was officially recognized, a papist governor was appointed and a change occurred in the religious ascendency of the Assembly. Two years later, in 10 June, 1687, to celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Wales, a son of James II, Mayor Robert Hannan distributed 3 hogsheads (approx. 190 gallons) of wine, at his own expense, among the populace. (Some other forms of measurement were the 'firkin', a small cask capable of holding about 8 gals; 'barrell' was used with almost as much abandon and sometimes the clothes were richly embroidered.

Women's clothes were not as elaborately decorated as the men's, and women did not wear wigs. Their skirts touched the ground and the shoes were made of velvet, leather or silk, and were black or white in colour. Little jewellery was worn, except for a single strand necklace, by some women. Sewing and embroidery, making preserves and cordials, and, of course, the rearing of children was the usual routine of women. Fashionable colours for men and women were green, red, yellow and blue. Pocket watches on chains were carried by the wealthier men, whose day began before dawn with the ringing of the bell of St. Mary's Cathedral (A) at 4 a.m. Afternoons were regarded as time for recreation. To signal an end to the day, St. Mary's bells were again rung at 8 p.m., by which time most people were preparing for bed. At that time, the new year began on 25 March each year, in accordance with the Julian Calendar. The sequence in, for example, 1689 was 25 March, 1689, April, May... November, December, January, February and up to 24 March, 1689, then came the beginning of the next new year, 25 March 1690, and so on. (The Gregorian Calendar came into effect in most European countries between 1582 and 1700, but did not apply in Ireland, England and Sweden until 1752.) gmuc money coins bore the months as well as the year, and so coins marked March, 1689, and March, 1690, were more than likely issued in the same month.

The houses of the upper classes were elaborately furnished with expensive beds, carpets and wall-hangings; they
were also comfortable, but sanitation was undreamt of. Household effects usually included utensils for home-brewing and distilling, large brass pans for boiling beef, a bathing-tub, which for the most part was stored away in a backroom, and some people bought and kept pet monkeys. Those who were well off enjoyed bowls on the bowling green just outside Island Gate. Football was a 'useful and charming exercise' with the ball made of 'leather, as large as a man's head and filled with wind; it is tossed with the feet'. They enjoyed fox-hunting on horseback, and some attended the principal events at the Curragh, County Kilkenny, in March or April, and in September. Others preferred hunting pheasant, grouse, hare, partridge, woodcock and wild duck, with the assistance of hawks, nets or greyhounds. Another recognized form of recreation for gentlemen was shooting with the cumbersome single-barrelled and expensive 'fowling piece'. Indoor games consisted of chess, a game of cards, of Spanish origin, called L'ombre; 'Tables' (dice); 'Playing at tables' (billiards) and shovelboard. People sometimes hired travelling acrobats, jugglers or fire-eaters for their parties at which 'jests' were told and riddles posed. Among the gentry, most men and women played the harp, and in their homes 1 or 2 instruments were to be found. On occasions, a harper was hired to play for them at their meals. These men of leisure, professionals and businessmen, would sometimes transact deals, or just converse over a light refreshment in the city's popular coffee-houses. Besides coffee, a chocolate drink, advertised as 'an excellent West India drink' could be had, and a new beverage was being introduced, through the coffee-houses, known as 'China drink' or 'China ale' (tea).

Clothes were washed only every few months and washday caused considerable unhappiness, with the wealthy could reduce their workload by hiring water-carriers to bring water from a well or the river to the house, to be heated in a cauldron, and yet more water was required for rinsing. The washing was done in the kitchen or backyard while space for drying was a problem in bad weather. Others cleaned their clothes in the nearest river by rubbing them against stone or sand and then leaving them on bushes or rocks to dry in the wind or sunshine. Some houses had their own water supply through lead conduits and cisterns but this source was unreliable as it failed regularly due to the decay of the lead. This type of water supply was used mostly by brewers and water-carriers.

The impoverished of the city were hard-working and supplied practically all their own wants, such as making their own clothes from sheep's wool and brogues (shoes) from cowhide. Some grew 'a square' of hemp or flax which they used for spinning and weaving the family's clothes. Inside their tiny homes there was at least one family who, at night, would sleep, in most cases without sheets, on beds of straw and rushes. Whole families would sleep together fully dressed in everyday clothes lying down in order, the eldest daughter against the wall furthest from the door, then all sisters according to their age; would be shared with these people, and the news from other parts of the country and other countries was passed on. They loved poetry and music, especially sad music of traditional Irish airs. Certain qualities such as hospitality, conservatism, superstition to a remarkable degree, credulity, improvidence, respect for tradition and the aristocratic system, courteousness, love of music, dancing and story-telling were common to all classes. The poorer people tended to be sometimes quarrelsome, curious, 'great liars', hard drinkers and more cheerful and lively than the English. Practically everyone had a great propensity to gambling and it was indulged in at the drop of a hat at any hour of the day or night. They tried their luck at 'tables' (dice), games of cards known as 'Five Cards' or 'All Fours', at public gatherings and in houses. Gamblers stood to lose not only their money but also movable goods, and some were not above cheating on occasions. There were public lotteries, with a chance to win £1,000 for 1/- or 1,900 guineas for 5/- run by the government, and sometimes the profits were allocated to a specific purpose, as was the case in June, 1665, when the money was allotted to the Royal Fishing Company.

In all classes, except the destitute, marriages were arranged by the parents. Upper class alliances were often conclud- ed by the wedding of their quite young children, some as young as 12 years of age. After the ceremony, the juvenile bridegroom and bride were taken back to their respective homes to await an age more fitting to matrimony. The more common age of marriage was 17 to 18 years, large families were produced, and at least half of the children died in infancy. Polygamy was common and, in an attempt to enforce monogamy, the Irish Parliament found it necessary to pass a law over 50 years earlier in 1634, Bigamy was confined to the more prosperous classes, but sexual promiscuity was gen-
eral. Divorces were relatively easy to obtain. After a baptism ceremony, a wealthy couple would celebrate the event by inviting friends to their residence where meat, fish, milk and butter were available, while music was provided by harp, jigs-trumpets or bagpipes. Sometimes, men would cohabit, without condition, with single women, their children were considered legitimate in their father's lifetime but after his death became 'bastards'. Illegitimacy was considered a very serious handicap in life, but when English government had established itself as the undisputed authority, the illegitimate son could no longer hold a position of legal equality compared with the legitimate son/s. The aristocracy thought it no shame to keep a mistress openly. Ordinary people had not a very high sense of morality but were, on the whole, a decent good-mannered lot.

Personal cleanliness was not considered essential by anyone; everyone was dirty, as it was the norm to go for months without bathing. The rich were liberal in their use of perfumes but did not succeed in overcoming the much stronger scent of unwashed bodies; lice in their heads and wigs and bugs in their beds were taken for granted. Nudity in its proper place was not indecent, and many people slept unclothed. All ranks, men and women, were excessive tobacco smokers and most kept a pipe in their possession ' . . . and yea, the very children too . . . ' One habit that was considered absolutely disgusting was that of wind. It was so abhorred that it was hardly ever even mentioned by name.

Superstitious beliefs and practices were many and varied: for instance, all classes believed in the existence of banshees, while those in rural areas believed in fairies. From the very badly off to the aristocratic, the fear of witchcraft was widespread. Any man setting out on a journey in the morning would be upset and probably would return home if he met a red-headed woman. The poorer inhabitants hung a St. Bridget's Cross over the door to secure the house from fire, and under the cross was a horseshoe in bands of 20 to 30, and sometimes as many as 100, with some of the group on horseback. The poor did not always land where he intended because of them. In Limerick, there were a few hackney carriages and sedan-chairs licenced by the Assembly. Communications between Ireland and the outside world were not as backward as those within the country. Weather permitting, there was a weekly sailing from Dublin to Holyhead, and there were other routes such as those from Limerick, Carrick, Waterford and Cork. A passenger did not always land where he intended as a change of wind could result in a ship bound for Limerick ending up in Cork, Waterford or elsewhere. What turned out to be a particularly lengthy journey was undertaken by a Mr. Freke and his son who left Chester in England on 15 August for Dublin, and 'after having bin near seven week cast up and downe . . . every howre expecting the fate of a merciless sea', eventually arrived in Dublin on 25 September. This passage would normally have taken 5 or 6 days. The usual port of departure or arrival in England for ships travelling to and from Limerick, and other ports in the south of the country, was Bristol. People travelling by sea needed 'passes' issued by a man in authority. Lighthouses were beginning to emerge as an aid to shipping. However, dangers were not confined to tempests, unchartered shores or half-rotten food, because crews and passengers had to contend with pirates from as far away as Algeria. They stole the ships and sold the

The Exchange, from John Ferrar's History of Limerick, 1787.
people on board as slaves in North Africa—men and women fetched about £40 each.

Weather had its extremes too. For example, on the 3 November, 1683, a severe frost 8 ft. thick appeared on the Shannon and lasted for over 4 months. Locals took advantage of this by taking a short-cut from the King’s Island to Parteen, crossing the ice on foot with horses and carts.

Men of influence and position had close connections in England, and correspondence between Limerick and London took between 5 to 10 days, but in bad conditions up to a month or more. Correspondents wrote in duplicate (in case a letter got lost), the postal service, established by Cromwell over 30 years earlier, in 1657, pressed on against the odds. Letters, however, were still lost or opened on route. The cost of the post, or ‘the mail’, was relatively high. A letter from Limerick, via Dublin and Holyhead, to ‘Warwacksheare’ (Warwickshire) in England, cost the following:

- Post paid to Dublin 4d (in one hand)
- Forward to London 2d (in another hand)
- From London to Warwacksheare 2d (in yet another hand)

Total 8d.

There was a reluctance to use the mail for short distances and there was no recognized machinery for house-to-house delivery. In some places, the local postmaster delivered letters in English towns free of charge. Prepayment was not the norm, as there was no guarantee a letter would reach its destination if there were no fee to be collected.

Word from other towns and villages was brought by wandering pedlars, who sold small quantities of salt, snuff and tobacco to the poor. There were also weekly newspapers, printed in Dublin or London, such as The Athenian Mercury, The Post Man, The Protestant Mercury, News-Letter, Post Boy and The Flying Post or The Post Master, all made up of 1 or 2 leaves, costing 1d or 2d. These could be found in coffee-houses, and contained snippets of news from Amsterdam, Brussels, Cologne, Constantinople, Cremona, Genoa, Hamburg, Hungary, Lincoln, London, Paris, Rome, Stockholm, The Hague, Venice, Vienna and Warsaw. Most of the news from capital and other municipalities being about armies, imperial forces and ambassadors being sent here and there. There was also information on merchant ships and their cargos at sea, the countries they were coming from and when they were expected to arrive in Limerick or other Irish ports. The news also reported on people found drowned or hanged, the deaths of aldermen and prominent people, thefts of money from shops, people being ‘knocked’ down and robbed by thieves, proclamations from ‘His Majesty’s Castle of Dublin’, murder trials and accounts of notorious tories (highwaymen). Some of the advertisements, were for money, exchequer bills or goods, usually silverware, lost or stolen, with rewards of 1 to 5 guineas being offered. Servants, having ‘ran off’ after robbing their ‘masters’, were described in detail and any information making identification easier was given, for example, ‘he is a speaker of Irish’. There were outlandish notices by quacks claiming medical skills and marvellous remedies: ‘All clap (venereal disease) pains etc. eased by purging in 24 hours’. Medicines from ‘physicians’ that would ‘cure all ulcers, scabs, sores, itch, leprosies, and venereal diseases … at all times of the year, in all bodies, expecting nothing if he cures not’. This cure-all cost three shillings for a quart, or one shilling for a box of the pills, and ‘a better purger … was never given, for they cleanse the body of all impurities, which are the cause of dropsies, gout, scurvy, stone or gravel, pain in the neck and other parts’. The ‘healep’ sometimes ended his message by warning the reader to ‘take heed whom you trust in medicine, for its become a common cheat to profess it’.

The types of fuel used were turf, coal, wood, furze, cowdung and wood which had been dried in the sun.

King James set up a mint of his own in the deanery house next to St. Mary’s Cathedral (A), and one of the commissioners in charge was Walter Plunket. Here ‘gun money’ was minted from brass. However, the normal everyday currency was made up of foreign coins from England, Scotland, Spain, Portugal and France. Those in circulation were as follows (their value being determined by weight): gold coins were the double ducat (£0-18-0); guinea (£1-4-0/£1.20); riders (£1-2-6); Spanish or French quadruple pistole (£3-4-0) and Spanish suflrain (£1-8-0). The silver coins were the ducaulon (£0-5-9); English crown (£0-5-5); English shilling (£0-1-1); Mexico or old Peru pillar piece and French Louis (£0-4-8); Portugal Royal (£0-3-8) and the rix dollar or cross dollar (£0-2-4). Other coins were the farthing, halfpenny, penny, sixpence, groat (2½p), shilling (1½), half-crown and crown, with farthings, halfpennys, and pennies making up the bulk of change in daily use. The standard of engraving was sometimes poor, and it was not easy to determine the official issue from counterfeit money. There were also tokens, privately struck, on thin copper, brass or lead flan, in denominations of 1d, ½d
and 1/4d. The blanks came in all shapes and sizes, but round ones were most common. They were used in the same manner as cash, and the people generally accepted them as a form of money even though they could only be redeemed for goods. Tokens were issued by merchants, chandlers, butchers and apothecaries such as Anthony Bartlett, John Bennet, Edward Clarke, Rowland Creagh, Thomas Linch, Thomas Marten, Richard Pearce and Edward Wight.

Everyday items cost:

- ale (hogshead) £3
- butter (1lb) 8d
- cabin of a poor man was valued at 5/-
- chicken 8d
- cow £3
- Douay Bible 10/8d
- dogs (sporting) £6
- eggs (20) 1d
- gloves (ladies) 6d
- haircut 4d
- hat 20d
- hearth tax, 4/-
- her 1/6d
- horse £20 to £60
- horse nag 5/- to £1
- knife or fork 2d
- meal in a tavern 1/6d
- military despatches by footman to Waterford and Cork 34/-
- mutton (a quarter) 8d
- pig 3/-
- postage, Limerick to Dublin or Cork 4d
- salmon 10d
- sheep, 10/-
- shirt (of fine quality) 3/-
- stockings 6d
- wine (quart) 4d
- wool (per ton) 8/-

The whole annual expense of a poor family of 2 adults and 4 children was about 55/-, while at the other end of the scale, an income of about £500 was required for all the wants and luxuries of a family mixing in fashionable circles. Interest rates for a mortgage were as high as 10%, and for borrowing money 8%, compared with only 4% in Holland. The poor were forced to pawn their clothes or other necessary implements, and for the sum of £1 would repay 6d every week. The mayor’s salary was £200 annually, plus his out-of-pocket expenses; his chef was paid £10 per year and given a free linen cloak; scavengers earned £6 annually and labourers were paid 4d a day and their dinner. Doctors’ fees were very high; for instance, Dr. Thomas Arthur of Munget Street visited his patients (doctors did not have consulting facilities in their own homes) and charged 10/- to £1 in the ‘big houses’ and half-a-crown to the less-well-to-do.

In summer, the gates of the English and Irish towns opened at 4 a.m. and closed at 10 p.m. and in winter 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. The tolls levied at these gates when goods were passing in or out of the city varied from 1/4d on a sheep, to 3d on a barrel of wine, aquavitae (whiskey), a pack of cloth or 12 hats, horse-drawn trailers of hides or timber 4d, and boat-loads of rapeseed coming into quay 1/-. The freemen were exempted from the tolls or duties normally payable at the gates and, on becoming one, each new freeman paid an initial fee of almost £1 to the Assembly. If one were not a freeman, one could not belong to one of the trade guilds (or corporations). The freedom of the city was occasionally presented, with considerable ceremony, to a distinguished man as a mark of the city’s respect and honour. From time to time, freemen were asked to forego one or other of their privileges. Nearly 20 years earlier, in 1673, they were required to pay the tolls, as the extra money was needed to repair Thomond Bridge, and in 1679 lost the same immunity for 2 years, as the money went to meet the heavy costs incurred in protracted litigation with Sir George Preston concerning the Assembly’s salmon weir.

Trades in the city were those of bakers, bricklayers, brogue (shoe)-makers, butchers, carpenters, carvers, chandlers, confectioners, cooks, cooperers, curriers, dyers, glover, gunsmiths, joiners, linen-weavers, locksmiths, malsters, masons, millers, periwig (wig)-makers, pewterers, plasterers, ropemakers, saddlers, sailors, sailmakers, schoolmasters, shearmen, ships carpenters, slaters, smiths, tailors, tanners, tobacco-makers, weavers and wool-combers. The profession of the bard was the most honoured in the country, and these scholars could write in Latin with as much ease as they did in Irish. Such banking as was done was in the hands of brokers who were usually goldsmiths. The majority of the population could not avail of medical aid. As the science of surgery was still in its infancy, it was regarded almost as a trade rather than a profession and was practised in a very rough and ready way by barbers as a sort of spare time job. The connection between hairdressing and surgery was accepted and officially recognized, as there was a glut of barber-chirurgeons (surgeons). Printing was provided by a Mr. Reid and Samuel Terry. The tanning of hides provided much employment, and many tanneries were located inside the east wall of the Irish town and in parts of the English town. There were 4 corn mills worked by the coming and going of the tide (an unusual feature at the time); the Queen’s Mill and Thomas Arthur’s Mill, built near the Curragour Falls on the River Shannon; the other two were on the Abbey River, one, Nicholas Arthur’s Mill, was midway between Baal’s Bridge North Gate (8) and Creagh Lane Gate (9), and opposite it, near St. Michael’s Church (M), was the Prior’s or Common Mill. There were also several
horse-operated works inside both towns. Practically every craft had its organized guild which was governed by strict rules.

Two big markets were held each year, the fairs of St. John the Baptist and St. James, which lasted for 2 weeks. During the latter, no arrest for debt could be made, and to show that this was the case, a white glove was hung outside the Exchange (F). It was at fairs and other such gatherings that the town crier or a bellman would make announcements of public interest. Causes of complaint from tradesmen and sellers were the large number of hawkers coming in from the country to sell their wares, poultry, wild-fowl and rabbits, in the streets, and they also obstructed the movement of traffic through the city. Attempts were made to keep them out but the regulations had little effect. Dealers and traders also complained of the noise from the shambles (slaughter-houses), and the strong smells from the fish markets, which they sought to confine to certain areas.

Outside the walls, on the Clare side, was the extensive Thomond Forest which supplied the city with timber for building and fuel, and which was also exported to England for the building of galleons. In the forests, among the animals to be found and hunted, were badgers, foxes, wolves and squirrels; pine martens were scarce and their fur valuable.

An organized system of policing was unknown and, as the streets were dangerous at night, it was the military, who were seldom available when required, that was called out. The soldiers were easily bribed, and just as easily intimidated. In criminal court cases, particularly where the accused were poor men, miscarriages of justice were frequent. Debtors found themselves in prison, if unable to discharge their liabilities, for the greater part of their lives. In many cases, they were incarcerated without trial, and some died of starvation inside prison. Bribery and corruption were part and parcel of the system and permeated the whole government service, even to the customs officers who would pass gentlemen's baggage when bribed to do so. There was great difficulty in executing impartiality, as many of those in power were protected by officers and were also protecting others. Most officials had their price. One exception to this general rule occurred in 1670 when Mayor Robert Shute was accused at the Assizes of raping his maid and of other serious crimes. Crooked dealings and dishonesty in business were rare, but petty thieving was common. Allowing for the relative scarcity of valuables, the incidence of burglary was low. Poaching of deer, cows and sheep was commonplace, and they were also attacked by dogs and wolves. Perjury was somewhat rare, and one of the punishments for this crime was to have 1 or 2 ears nailed to the pillory, but it was not rigorously enforced. Forgery resulted in the loss of 1 or 2 ears. The perpetrators of murder were publicly either burned alive or hung, drawn and quartered at Gallow Green (V). While the death sentence was applied to all 'serious' offences, it was not applied in cases of the then equally serious crime of witchcraft, probably because of the general air of superstition.

The population was increasing and was publicly either burned alive or hung, drawn and quartered at Gallow Green (V). While the death sentence was applied to all 'serious' offences, it was not applied in cases of the then equally serious crime of witchcraft, probably because of the general air of superstition.

The people of Limerick had the ability to withstand the rigours of sieges, such as that by Oliver Cromwell's son-in-law, Henry Ireton in 1651. Their spirit would soon be put to the test again, as two more sieges were to follow in 1690 and in 1691. On Thursday, 17 July, 1690, John Stevens, a regular visitor to Limerick, had this to say: '... when first I saw this city, about 4 years before, it was inferior to none in Ireland but Dublin and not to very many in England. I have lived to see it reduced to a heap of rubbish ... Such are the effects of war.'

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