Some Old Limerick Wills

By Dr. Richard Hayes.

The series of wills given in the 1839 issue of the Journal ended with that of Margaret Meroney (née Creagh). The will given below is that of James Creagh, another member of the same family, and is of some interest, if only as showing the extensive marriage connections of Limerick's leading families at the time—the Creaghs, Meronesys, Bourkes, Quinns, Woulfe's, &c. Valentine Quinn, mentioned in it, was the son of that shrewd old lawyer, Thady Quinn, who was married to Catherine, daughter of Pierce Meroney and Margaret Creagh. Valentine displayed the family acumen in acquiring land and added, by marriage and otherwise, to the extensive properties his father had left him. On the other hand, one thinks if they were not to some extent getting back what had been their own—we find Captain Thady Quinn, for example, attained in 1691 and his estates in County Limerick confiscated. James Creagh's will is dated for the year 1726, and runs thus:

"In the name of God, Amen. I, James Creagh, of the city of Limerick, merchant, . . . do make and ordain my last Will and Testament in form following: As touching my worldly estate, I dispose the same as followeth: Whereas I have an interest in the lands of Coonagh, and in the lands mortgaged to my deceased uncle, William Sarsfield, morting and bounding with said Coonagh, all lying and being in the North Liberties of the city of Limerick, and in a final parcel of ground I hold from Francis Burton, of Buncranny, in the Co. of Clare, Esq., and in a Tenement I now live in, I give and devise all my said Lands, Tenements and Hereditaments unto Valentine Quinn of Adare in the Co. of Limerick, Esq., his heirs, executors and administrators, in trust nevertheless, and to the Intent and purpose that said Valentine Quinn, his heirs, executors and administrators, shall, and are hereby charged, to sell, or mortgage the said Lands, Tenements and Hereditaments shall be laid out at Interest, and proceeds thereof to be paid yearly to my eldest son, Andrew Creagh, during his life, and from and after his decease the said Interest and proceeds thereof to be paid yearly to his children . . . and for want of children of the said Andrew I desire that the said proceeds shall be paid unto my son, John Creagh, and his children . . . and being obliged by all laws to provide for my beloved wife, Ellinor Meroney, I desire that the sum of 900 pounds sterling shall with as much convenient speed as may be put to Interest by my Executors and the Interest and proceeds thereof to pay half-yearly unto my aforesaid wife during her life . . . After the decease of my wife, I desire that the said principal sum of 900 pounds so laid out be paid unto my sons, Andrew and John Creagh . . . I give and bequest 40 pounds sterling to my beloved sister, Catherine Bourke. I bequest unto my brother-in-law, Walter Bourke, and to my sister, his wife, 8 pounds to buy them mourning. Item, I give and bequest unto my niece, Jane Wall, 40 shillings and 3 pounds sterling to buy her mourning. Item, I give and bequest unto my two nephews, my sister Bourke's sons, 4 pounds a piece to buy them mourning. Item, I give and bequest unto Sir James Galway and his lady 8 pounds a piece to buy them mourning, and I do hereby release unto the said Sir James Galway all Debts, dues and Demands . . . I give and bequest unto my father Meroney, mother Meroney, brother Meroney and his wife, sister Power, brother Stephen Woulfe and his wife, uncle Piers Meroney and his two daughters, Catherine and Ellinor, mourning rings value ? guineas a piece. Item, I give and bequest unto my kinsman, James Woulfe Fitz-Richard a mourning ring value thirty shillings. Item, I give and bequest unto Patrick Hickie, Donogh Hickie and Michael Gearan three cates. Item, I give and bequest unto Serjeant Mortogh Quelvy's two daughters 3 pounds a piece to be paid them at their inter-marriage, and I desire the said Mortogh Quelvy may be continued Serjeant at Coonagh during his good behaviour. Item, I give and bequest 30 shillings to the prisoners of both gaols of Limerick to be distributed amongst them. I give and bequest unto my beloved wife and son, Andrew Creagh, all my jewels and plate, the jewels to my wife, excepting a small gold cross, which I bequest to my son, Andrew, being a family jewel . . . Item, I do . . . appoint my beloved uncle, Piers Meroney, merchant of Limerick, and my good friend, Bartholomew Stritch, of the same, merchant, and my beloved brother-in-law, Thomas Meroney, in the Co. of Clare Executors of this my last Will and Testament."

The financial position of an Irish country priest at a period when the Penal laws were stringent is indicated in the will of Father Conor Shenan, who was parish priest of the parish of Kildimo at the time of his death in the year 1713. In the recently published volume of his great Trilogy, Archdeacon Begley gives a synopsis of this will and
states that the various sums bequeathed by Father Shenan to his fellow-priests for Masses, but this fact, owing to the Penal Laws at the time, could not be specified in it. Dated 23rd July, 1713, the will is as follows: —

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and Holy Ghost, I Conner Sheanan,* parish priest of Kildimo, in the Barony of Killany, within the county of Limerick, do on being taken with a fit of violent sickness yet of perfect wit and memory, make this my last will and testament, viz., as followeth:

"Imprimis, I bequeath my soul to God my Creator and Redeemer, and my body to be decently buried in the grave.

"Item, I bequeath to the Reverend Dr. James Stritch the sum of ten shillings, to Father William Shaghnassy ten shillings, to father James McMahon ten shillings, to Father David FitzGerald 10s., to Fr. David Lacy 5s., father Dominic White 5s., to Dr. Brien 5s., Moreau Rahaly 5s., to father Patrick Moor five shillings, father Walter Sheanan 5s., Father Daniel Conry 5s., Fr. Jon Quin 5s., Father John Canteon 5s., Christopher Linsaugh 5s.; ten shgs. to the poor orphans and widows.

"Item, to my niece, Jane Sheanan, £1.
"... Chaterina and to her poor mother £1 and 1 cow.
"... Jone Hickie four sheep and ten shillings.
"... Daniel Hicky and to his daughter one pound, 3 lambs.
"... John Hickie one barrell of malt and to James Hickie and his sister one barrell of malt.
"... Derby Colman fourteen shillings.
"... Daniell Lanargane and Derby Sheanan £1—10s., and four sheep, to be equally divided twixt them, altsow to Bess frinch 5 shillings, ten shillings to Brien McMahon's children, ten bandles of frise to John Fitzgerald.
"... Mary Sheanan one cow, another cow to Caty Sheanan.
"... my God child John Brien one genny, the remainder of my sustans to be left to my neveu Cornelius Sheanan if he comes over seas to be managed for the use of his brothers and 2 daughters, Mary and Cate.

"being present to the signing of these
"James O'Brien,
"Elish Fitzgerald,
"Dan Quelly,
"James McMahon."

COR SHENON (seal).

The will of a Catholic physician of the same period is the next of any interest that I can find in my collection. The testator is William Hayes, "of the city of Limerick, Doctor of Phisick." It will be noticed that he bequeaths certain sums to several priests, whose names he mentions without specifying the object of his bequests. It is almost certain, however, that the intention was for Masses, but, again, as in the case of Father Shenan, such could not be specifically expressed in a legal document at that period of the penal regime. One of the priests mentioned is Father Denis O'Connor, who was registered as "prieat of St. John's of Limerick." Archdeacon Begley describes him as "delivering most of his gods to feed the poor" and, at his death, as "not having a halfpenny to provide for his funeral expenses." And Father David Fitzgerald, a Friar of Askeaton Convent, was another beneficiary under the will, which is dated 1728 and is as follows: —

"In the name of God I William Hayes of the city of Lymrick, Doctor of Phisick, being weak of body... do make this my last will. . . .

"Item, All the worldly estate real or personal that I shall dye seized or possessed of I do hereby dispose of the same in manner following, viz.:—First to my dearly loved daughter, Honora Hayes ale. McMahon a bond of Mr. Thomas Armstrong of Moer for one hundred pounds stg. Item, I give my second daughter Mary Hayes ale. Brien a bond of William Armstrong Esquire of Farneybridge for one hundred pounds stg. Item, I give and bequeath unto my deare beloved brother Derby House the sum of one hundred pounds stg. . . . to be divided between him and his three nieces called Bentons in the Barony of Coonagh, said sum lying and being in the hands of Bryan Rourke of Lymrick. Item, I give and bequeath unto my deare loved son Edmund Hayes the priest the sum of one hundred pounds stg. due of Jasperr Rourke of Lymright mercer merchant by bond (provided he takes care to give learning and education to

*Sheanan is the Irish O Sionain, often anglicised Synan according to Father Woulfe.
his nephews, and to keep one of them with himself, and in the case of his not doing so, said sum to be equally divided amongst my two daughters aforesaid. Item, I give and bequeath to my aforesaid brother, Darby Hays, the sum of ten pounds sig. due of Joseph Franklin of Lymerick by his note lying and being together with the aforesaid bonds in the hands of John Brennan of Lymerick. Item, I alsoe order and ordain the sum of twenty pounds sig. shall be expended by executors in my funeral expenses. Item, I bequeath unto Revd. Fathers David FitzGerald and John Davis the sum of six pistoles ... Lastly, I do hereby nominate ... Doctor Malachy Ryan and John Brennan executors of this my last will and testament. In witness thereof &c., &c.

"W. M. HAYES (locus signo)"

Soon after the accession of Charles the Second to the throne, there was, largely owing to the king's vacillating policy, much disaffection among all parties in the tangled Ireland of the time. For example, the new landowners, settled on the soil by Cromwell, were uneasy lest they should lose their ill-gotten estates. Rumours of plots and counter-plots were the order of the day, and in 1672 an old Cromwellian officer, named Walcot, was charged with secretly conspiring to stir up a revolt against "Popery and Prelacy." Part of his plan, it was alleged, was to seize Limerick Castle and bring in the Dutch. Several of those whom he took into his confidence regarding the supposed conspiracy appeared in evidence against him when, after his arrest, he was arraigned before the Privy Council for treasonable practices. One of these, Captain Cullen, swore that Walcot "privately bewailed" to him the condition in Ireland of the English in general, "for the Irish were likely to have all again"; and he further stated that Walcot arranged to send the great store of wool in Limerick to Holland in exchange for arms and ammunition. It was further charged against Walcot that he had carried a mine from the cellar of his house under the street to the Castle of Limerick—but this was proved later to be a "malicious scandal." William Yorke, the Dutch merchant, who was more than once Mayor of Limerick at this period, seems to have been mixed up in Walcot's plottings, and was said to be in correspondence with certain persons in Holland. And another notability of the time, Mountiff Westropp, Comptroller of the Fort of Limerick, was also supposed, but wrongly, as will be seen, to have been taken by Walcot into his confidence. Westropp gave on oath an amusing account of an incident in which he and Walcot and Yorke were participators, and he swore that he knew nothing of any secret plotings. The incident, as described by him, is given in the Calendar of State Papers (Domestic Series), 1672-1673:

"Four or five years ago, the Informant being with Captain Walcot, William Yorke and others in a tavern in Limerick, some small falling-out happened between the Informant and Yorke, so that they twice left the rest of the company and fought with their fists, and the second Informant threw Yorke down, who strained his leg and was carried home. Then Captain Walcot clapped the Informant on the shoulder and said:—'Now I command you; you have outraged Yorke, and I see that thou hast mettle in thee; and if the king would bestow a trop on me, I would make thee my Cornet, for thou fightest and bleedest, and bleedest and fightest again, and I like such a blade.' The Informant replied he would willingly be a Cornet if it would cost him nothing. Walcot said it would not cost you about 120£. The Informant answered that was more than he was worthther, and soon after they parted. He never had any other discourse with Walcot about any other employment ... and never heard anything of his plot or who were his accomplices before the public news thereof."

Westropp died in the year 1725, and his will runs as follows:

"In the name of God ... I Mountiff Westropp of Altyfhill in the County of Limerick, Esqr. ... do make this my last Will and Testament, ... Item, I give and bequeath unto my daughter Mary Hickman the sum of Ten Pounds ster to buy her mourning, to be paid her by my Exeqr., hereinafter named. Item, I give and bequeath unto my daughter Jane Westropp the mortgage for One Thousand pounds ster I have on the lands of Drumagrose, etc., assigned to me by Richard Southwell Esqr. Item, I give and bequeath unto my daughter Gertrut Westropp the sum of One Thousand pounds ster, viz the Two Hundred pounds ster mortgage I have on the lands of Hillmore, etc., assigned to me by Joseph Demur Esqr. and the remainder of the said One Thousand pounds to be immediately raised and paid to her by my said Exeqrs, out of my ready money and stock. Item, I will and bequeath unto my daughters Ann Westropp and Susanna Westropp and to each of them One Thousand pounds ster to be paid them and to each of them when they shall severally marry. Eight hundred pounds whereof I do hereby order and bequeath that the lands of Killkenry and my other lands and estate in the parish of Killoflin and County of Clare shall stand charged with and liable to the remainder of the said Two Thousand pounds ster, to be raised immediately out of my personal estate in the said Exeqrs, and in case my personall estate shall not prove sufficient to answer this said charge, then my will is that all my real estate shall stand charged therewith and lyable thereon, and to so much thereof as cannot be raised out of my said personal estate. I further will is that my said daughters Ann and Susanna Westropp shall have and receive the sum of ten pounds ster. p. annum each of them, to be paid them half yearly on the first day
of May and the first day of November in each year out of my issues and profits of my real estate until they shall severally marry, and of my will is that my wife, Elizabeth Westropp, whom I have appointed my sole Exeq. shall give and provide for the said Ann and Susanna Westropp convenient Diet and Lodging while they shall continue unmarried. I give and bestow unto my wife Elizabeth Westropp the House, Lands Tenements, and Hereditaments of Attynn and Ballybronoge for and during her natural life. Item, I give and bequeath unto my son John Westropp all my real estate in the County of Clare subject to above named Incomes, as also all my real estate in ye County of Limerick after the decease of my said wife Elizabeth to have and to hold the said Estates in manner and form following, vizt. the lands of Kilkerrin and all my other estate in the parish of Kilfen in the County of Clare, to him the said John Westropp his heirs male lawfully begotten, and for want of such heirs unto my brother Ralph Westropp and his heirs male, subject to the above Eight Hundred pounds charged thereon towards the portions of my said daughters. As to my estate of Killard and Cahirlane in the Barony of O Briear and County of Clare to the said John Westropp and his heirs male lawfully begotten, and for want of such heirs unto my brother Thomas Westropp and his heirs male lawfully begotten, and for want of such heirs to Robert Westropp, third son of the said Thomas Westropp and his heirs male and so forward as to my said estate in the County of Lymrik to the said John Westropp after the decease of his mother the said Elizabeth Westropp and his heirs male lawfully begotten, and for want of such heirs to the said Mountifort Westropp and Robert Westropp as above provided, and my will is that my said son John Westropp shall have power to settle a joynture not exceeding One Hundred and Fifty pounds sterling per annum on any wife he shall hereafter marry to be charged on all or any part of the said lands or premises, but in case the said John Westropp shall die without leaving heirs male of his body then my will is that the said lands of Attynn and Ballybronoge on the County of Clare and the said lands of Killard and Cahirlane in the County of Clare shall stand charged with and liable to the further sums of Four Thousand pounds sterling to be equally divided between my said six daughters and their heirs Esqs. and Admrs. Item, my further will is that in case my daughters Ann and Susanna or either of them shall happen to dye before they are married that the portion or fortune of her so dying shall go to my said John Westropp. Item, I give and bequeath unto my said son John Westropp all my Plate and Jewells and household stuff but my will is that my said son John Westropp shall permit and suffer his said mother Elizabeth to make use of the said Plate and Jewells and household stuff during her life. Item, I do hereby constitute and appoint my said wife Elizabeth Westropp sole Exeq. of this my last Will and Testament and doe appoint Thomas Westropp and Robert Westropp Esqrs. guardians of my said son during his minority and overseer of this my will. Item, I do hereby further declare that my sone in law Poole Hickman is indebted to me on no further sum or sumes then the said thousand pounds on the said lands of Donogroge, etc. and said Two Hundred pounds on the said lands of Hillmore, etc. Item, I do hereby further declare that my Exeq. shall pay all my Debts.

"Dated this 25th of Jan., 1722."

"MOUNTIFORT WESTROPP."

More or less contemporary with Westropp was Sir William King, who was, too, an outstanding figure of the time. His residence was at Kilpeacon, a few miles from the city, where its ruins are still a prominent landmark. Representative in Parliament for the county in 1661, he was several times mayor and was Governor of the city in 1690. On that occasion he was made prisoner by the Irish forces, but, making his escape, gave valuable information to King William as the latter was advancing on the city. A black marble slab in the church at Kilpeacon recounts his virtues. In 1678, during his governorship, anti-Catholic measures were rigorously enacted in Limerick. Once Father Jasper White, P.P. of St. John's, was arrested while celebrating Mass in his parish. He was led through the streets in his vestments to the guard house by a company of soldiers, but Sir William King, on recognising him, ordered his immediate release.

King died in the year 1706. His will, dated September 1704, is as follows: —

"In the name of God, Amen. . . . Item, I bequeath unto my brother Richard Kings Esqre the sume of one hundred pounds ster to be paid unto him on the first day of November or first day of May, whichever shall first happen after my decease. Item, I bequeath unto my sister Frances Kinge the sume of Tenn pounds ster to buy her a ringe to be paid as aforesaid. Item, I bequeath unto my niece Mary Kinge alias Villiers the like sume of Tenn pounds ster to be paid in manner as aforesaid. Item, I bequeath unto my kinsman William Kinge grand son to my uncle William William Kinge, who was recommended by my worthy kinsman Henry Coley of Castlcray Esqre the sume of Fifty pounds as the sume paid in manner as my brothers hundred pounds is to be paid. Item, whereas my dear and entirely beloved wife and my dear children are now interred in a small vault in the church of Kilpeacon and that I am desirous to be laid with them if I shall happen to die any where near the said church, my will is that if I do itt not myselfe before my decease my Executors do raise and erect a small monument whereon shall be expended Fifty pounds at the lesse. Item, I bequeath unto my nieour Margaret my Coach and Coach Horses. Item, my will is that all my goods now in my house at Kilpeacon and all my Plate shall be joynd by my nephew George Kinge during his
life and after his decease shall descend into the next heir in possession after him in Taille and so to descend successively to each heir in possession as long as they shall last, that so the said house shall not come to any one of them naked. Item, I bequeath unto the Poor of the Towne of Kilpecon the sume of five Pounds to be distributed as my nephew George shall deem meet. My will is that Edmond Syers and Ann Harrold widow shall enjoy their Houses and Gardens rent free during theire lives. Item, I bequeath unto my servant Mathew Harris all my Close, Linen and Woolling together with Five Pounds ster over and above wt wages shall be due to him at my decease. Lastly, I doe hereby appoint my said nephew George Kinge my sole Executor of this my last Will and Testament. In witness whereof I have hereunto sett my hand and seale this sixth day of September 1704."

From the remainder of the collection of wills in my possession I select, as of some interest, that of the ill-fated eighteenth century Limerick poet, Daniel Hayes. Going to London as a young man to study law, he lived there a life of dissipation till his death in 1767. Various editions of his poems were published in Limerick and the English capital. In his will he bequeathed practically his entire fortune to the county of Limerick Hospital, but his relatives successfully contested it. His death-bed wish to be buried at home was carried out, and on the day of his interment in St. Mary's Cathedral in Limerick a funeral oration was preached by Rev. Deane Hoare, and an anthem was sung over his body.

His will was as follows: —

"I, Daniel Hayes, of the parish of Kensigton, in the county of Middlesex . . . last will and testament.

"First and principally I commend my soul . . . And as for such of my worldly estate and effects which I shall be possessed of or intitled to at the time of my decease, I give and bequeath the same as followeth.

"In the first place, I positively order that all my just debts be discharged by sale of lands or other methods most easy and satisfactory to my fair creditors. In the next place, I will that my body shall be carried (first being embalmed) in a leaden coffin, to the city of Limerick in Ireland, there to be interred, and that a white marble stone be put over it: —

D. HAYES
AN HONEST MAN
AND A LOVER OF HIS COUNTRY

with the year, month and day of my decease.

"As to legacies, I have but few to dispose of, which are as follows: —

"First, I bequeath unto James Browne of Limerick, merchant, the sum of fifty pounds to buy a ring, which I know he will wear for my sake, as I am glad fortune has put him above the reach of every other testimony than this small manifestation of gratitude.

"Secondly, I bequeath unto Richard Balf, the younger son of Richard Balf, Printer of the parish of St. Martin, Ludgate, London, the sum of one hundred pounds ster.

"Thirdly, I give and bequeath the residue or overplus of my estates, real and personal, if any should be, to the Trustees and managers now in being or hereafter nominated, for the erecting an HOSPITAL for sick and wounded at Limerick; and in case no such HOSPITAL is founded or begun to be founded within the space of ten years, then the residue to be paid unto the University of Dublin to augment the sizers' fund.

"And lastly, I do hereby nominate, constitute and appoint the aforesaid James Browne of Limerick, merchant, my sole executor.

"Signed, sealed &c. in the presence of the said testator."