

The last Will and Testament of Dame
Elizabeth Biconyll,

Widow of Sir John Biconyll [or Bicknell], Knight.

BY A. J. MONDAY.

ABOUT three miles from Frome, in the parish of Beckington, stands an old manor house (long since converted to a farm-house), known as Seymour's Court. On the north side of the chancel of the parish church of Beckington, in Collinson's time, were brass memorials on which were represented two figures, male and female, with a Latin black-letter inscription. The epitaph was to this effect:—"Here lies John Seyntmaur, Esq^{re} and Elizabeth his wife, which said John died the 5th day of October, in the year of our Lord 1485. On whose soul may God have mercy. Amen." Collinson informs us that Elizabeth Seyntmaur, the lady represented on one of these brasses, was a daughter of Sir Richard Choke, a judge of the Court of Common Pleas.* The Chalke, Choke, or Chokke family, originally from Chalke in Wiltshire, was one of considerable wealth and antiquity, seated at Staunton Drew and Long Ashton, in Somersetshire. The issue of the marriage between these two persons whose figures are represented on the memorial were Sir William St. Maur, Knight of the Bath, who married Margaret, daughter

* Collinson II. 201.

of Sir Richard Edgecumbe (who died, leaving a daughter Jane, who died without leaving issue), and two daughters eventually, co-heiresses to their brother (Sir William St. Maur), viz.: Margaret, married to William Bampfylde, Esq., of Poltimore, county Devon; and Anne, married to Robert Stawell, Esq., of Cothelstone, county Somerset. Elizabeth St. Maur married secondly Sir John Biconyll, so that portion of the memorial, as far as it relates to her, may be regarded as a cenotaph, inasmuch as it will be presently shown she was buried elsewhere. Sir John Byconill [or Bicknell], who was returned in the year 1472, together with Sir John Willoughby, as a member of Parliament, for the counties of Somerset and Dorset—sheriff for both counties in the years 1472 and 1473—was possessed of landed estates in Devonshire, Somersetshire, Dorsetshire, and Wiltshire. He probably lived chiefly at his manor house of Pepilpeis, in the parish of South Perrot, Dorsetshire, not far from Crewkerne (Biconyll Johannes, Miles, 5 Blamyr, Somerset House).* The surname of Biconyll or Bicknell, it would appear, was originally Paveley. The Paveleys held the manor of Bikenhull or Bicknell, near Taunton, from the ninth year of Edward I to the first year of the reign of Edward III, by the service of a knight's fee. In the time of King Edward I, a John de Paveley was the chief lord of the manor of Clapton, in the parish of Crewkerne; but in another contemporaneous record,† the name of the tenant *in capite* of the same manor is returned as John de Bikenhulle. The following is the Will of Dame Elizabeth Biconyll, who as Elizabeth Seyntmaur still appears on the monumental brass in the church at Beckington:—

* The Will of Sir John Byconyll, Knight, of Northperot, Somerset, was proved in 1501 [5 Blamyr].

† Supplementary to supply deficiencies in *Kirby's Quest*, 31st Edward I, Somerset Record Society, vol. iii, p. 52.



Hic iacet Johannes Seyntmaur Armiger et Elizabeth uxor eius cum quibus Johannes &
 obiit v' die Decembris A' d'ni millesimo CCC' lxxxv' Quibus die p'icatur v' annu'

**BRASS OF JOHN SEYNTMAUR
 AND HIS WIFE (AFTERWARDS DAME ELIZABETH BICONYLL,)**

In the Church of St. Gregory, Beckington.

Height of Figures 2 ft. 11 in. x 1 ft. 11½ in.

DATE 1485.

In the name of the most gloriouse trinitye amen The last day of June the yere of Crist m v [1500] the sixtth yere of the Reigne of Kyng Henry the vijth I Elizabeth Biconyll late the Wif of Sir John Biconyll knyght beyng hole of mynde but som̄ dele syke but recoūyng helth lauding be to god ordeyne this my laste Will and testamēt as folowith ffirst I bequeth my soule to almighty god and to his blessed moder mary and to all the company of Heven And my body to be buried in the Sepulture of Glastonbery nygh to the place wher as my last husband Sir John lyeth buried It. this is my last testament to beere Witnessse that as to the pfrmyng of my said last husbonds last Will I have truely pformed it according to eūy article as well in mortifying the londs to the Abbot and Covent of Glastonb̄y as in all othyr articles in the same It. I woll and ordeyne that assone as my gostly fader w^t other clerks haue mynistred to me the holy sacramēt vncion That immediatly as by mān erthly it may be pceyved that my soule shuld be from my body separate I hopp in the assignemēt of god by m̄cy and meryte of his payneful passion for my redemption and al manykynde that as sone as the lawe of holy church ordeyneth aft^r the apperyng of the daylight by the advice and consente of myn executors that my discrete preests shall secretly say Dirige and masse for my soule begynnyng the trigentall of saynt Gregory eūy preest to say xxx^{ti} masses and xxx^{ti} Diriges succeeding dayly or other in ther stede till the xxx^{ti} day of ptyng my liff and than from that howre of myn Anele betwixt the howre of the buryng of my body in forme afore Written the said iiij preests say for the helth of my soule neu^{ly} cessing but oon of them to be occupied nyght and day in saying iiij tymes the Saulter of David as the holy church doth use it by the ordeynaunce of most holy saynt Jerom eūy of theym to be rewarded as they de..ve

[deserve] by the discrecion of myn seid executors It. I beq̄th to the moder church of Sarum x^s It. I bequeth to Sir John Saunders my Curat of Southpet [Southperot] for negligent tithes and offerings Iij^s iij^d It. I beq̄th to Dame Margaret Seyntmaur late wif to my son Sir Willm̄ Seyntmaur knyght the valure of C m̄rc in plate w^t the bed and hangyng to hir owne chamb^r) next the churchyerde It. I bequeth to the same Dame margarete iij peyre of fyn shets two fyn borde-clothes of twely my best blake gowne of cloth A girdell A payre of beds ij carpetts A coshon of sylke and vj other coshons w^t all myn other stuff at Kainsham w^t an C shepe at Childefrome vpon this condiçon That the seid Dame Margarete do suffer me and myn executors to execute and pforme my said sonys Will in my said sonnes man^s and londs w^{tin} the Countie of Dorset in euy thing According to the true intente of the same Will And if she or any other psōn by hir comaundment or agreement or to hir vse vexe or trouble me or myn executors, so that my sonnes Will cannot be pformed in the same londs and man^s that then I will that this bequest in the pmisses made vnto the said Dame Margarete be vtterley voyde and of none effect and that the same goods to be by myn said excutors disposed to the pformance of my said sonnes Will and for my soule and for that I am bound to pray for It. I bequeth to Jane Seyntmaur, daughtr to my said sonne Sir William the value of an C pounds in plate w^t an C shepp at Childfrome and all my napery shets apparell of chambors stuff of kechon and all other vtensiles of my household excepte thos that I haue or shall otherwise dispose vpon this condiçon that if the said Jane and all other hauyng the said mariage and gyding of the said Jane doo suffre me and myn executors to pforme and execute my said sonnes Will upon the said man^s and londs in the afore-

said Countie of Dorset according to the true intente of the same Will w^tout lett or intrvcion of the aforesaid Jane or of any other that hath the Warde mariage gyding and Rule of the said Jane and also vpon this condiçon that if the said Jane doo leve af^r my decesse to the age of therten yeres of hir birthe And if she shall fortune to decesse w^tin the said áge af^r my dēth Than I will myn executors dispose that seid bequests the oon half to helth of the said Jane ys soule to hir nexte frends to dispose as they will aunswere afore God And the other half my said executors to dispose it for my soule and the soules that I am bound to pray for and all xpen [christian] soules Or if I or myn executors be vexed or Interrupte by the foresaid Jane or by any other hauyng the Warde gwyding and rule of the said Jane So that I nor myn executors cannot pforme my said sonnes Will vpon the said maⁿs and lands then I will that this my bequeste made to the said Jane of the p^misses be vtterly voyde and of noon effecte And that the same goods to be by myn executors disposed to the pformance of my sonnes Will and for my Soule and for the soules that I am bounde to pray for It. I bequeth to e^vry place of the iiij orders of ffreeres in Bristoll xx^s It. I bequeth to the ffreeres of Dorchestr xx^s It. to the freeres of Bridgewat^r xx^s It. I bequeth to the freers of Ilchest^r xx^s It. I bequeth to the church of Southpēt xx^{li} It. I bequeth to Jone Goold my chambr^lmayde x mrcs It. I bequeth to Elizabeth Rowlys my goddought^r x mrc It. I bequeth to e^vry householder of my tenⁿts of Southpēt and Northpēt xx^d It. I bequeth to e^vry of my plough hynds mk iiij^d It. I bequeth to Margery havryes iijs iiij^d It. I bequeth to Sir Stephen Gooldsborough to pray for my soule lxxvs viij^d It. I bequeth to m^r [Mr.] henry Daubney A basin and my Ewer of silu^r w^t iij flysses in the botham It. I bequeth to John Skewis A basin and

an Ewer of silu It. I bequeth to the monastery of Mountague xli It. I bequeth to ij children of my daughter margarete Bamfeld [Bampfylde] xxli in money or plate at the discrecion of myn executors It. I bequeth to ij children of my daughter Anne xxli in money or plate at the discrecion of my executors It. I bequeth to my suster Wroughton A Ring of the passion A blake gowne and A bonet and A frontelett I bequeth to be devided amongs the monks of Glastonbry at the day of my burying xli It. I will ther) be ordeyned A sadde preest w^toute cure by the discrecion of myn executors to syng A trentall during my hole yere aft^r my decesse taking for his labor xls It. I will and ordeyn that v children be hadd and founde to gramer) Scole by the discrecion of myn executors ther as they thinke most expedient for theym to the tyme they be able to goo to Oxford eu^y of them xxvjs viij^d A yere to praye for me and my frends that I am bounde to pray for It. I bequeth to ij highwayes of Southpēt and Northpēt xli It. I Will and ordeyne of this my last Will the forenamed Ric. Bear lord Abbot of Glastonbery John Skewys and Sir Stephen Gooldisborough p^rson of Northpēt myn executors to dispose for my soule toward my burying beside the fore rehersed somes Cli in funⁿall expencs And all other of my detts and goods to dispose and distribute for my soule and for the soulis of my goode husband Sir John Byconyll and Jane his wif John Seyntmaur for the soule of Sir Willm Seyntmaur my sonne the soules of my fader and my moder godfader and godmoders the soule of my brother Chock and for my brethern and sustren soules and all xpen [christian] soules that I am Detbounde to pray for as they Woll aunswer, at the day of dome geving and bequething to my forseid lord of Glastonb^y toward the biolding of or lady chapell xxli To the foresaid John Skewys xli And to

the foresaid Sir Stephen V m̄rc It. I bequeth to the Chapelle of Glastonb̄y late Bielled by myn husband Sir John Byconyll and me for the mayntenaunce of the ornaments of the same x^{li} It. I bequeth to the highway betwixt Shirborne Shaftynebery x^{li} It. I beq̄th to A high way besids Bekeyngton callid Chepmans slade v^{li} It. I will that such goodes as by me bequethed to Jane Saynt-maur daugh^t vnto my son Sir William Reste in the custody of my ij executors vnto the comyng home of my lorde of Glastonb̄y And aft^r his comyng home the stuffe to be deliued vnto hym And so to rest in his hands to the tyme she be of the age of therten yeres afore-rehersed And if it shall fortune hir to decesse then I will they be disposed by myn executors for the Welth of my soule as they woll aunswer^e before god It. I will that such goodes as by me be disposed to my dough^ts childern rest in the custody of myn executors to the tyme of their marriage And if it shall fortune theym before the day of mariage to dye then I will they be disposed by the advise of myn executors for the welth of my soule as they woll aunswere at the day of Judgement It. I ordeigne of this my testamēt supvisors and ousears my lord Daubney and Sir John mordaunte knyght bequething to my said lord for his labor xl m̄rs and the said Sir John mordaunte xx m̄cs So that they be aidyng and socoryng myn executors to the pformaunce of this my last will and of my said sonnes Will It. I will that if any of them to whom I haue bequethed any of my goodes intrupte vexe or trouble any of myn excutors in the pforming of this my last Will in any of my causis That than I will that my said bequeste be to them voyde In witnefs whereof to this my p̄sent testamēt and laste will I have putt my seale And the day and yere aboue specified thies psons [persons] then beyng p̄sent and heuing this my last Will and testament Redde Robert more

Bernard Oldom clerk John Saunds clerk John Calneley Clerk Richard Hervy John Smyth sen^r w^t moo Proved at Lamethith [Lambeth] xv day of the month of July 1504. (Somerset House 13 Holgrave).

The brasses to the memory of John St. Maur and Elizabeth his wife, are now in the centre of the chancel of Beckington church, in front of the altar rails; but the inscription with somewhat strange inconsistency has been separated from the brasses, and placed where it can, with great difficulty be read, on one of the risers of the altar steps. These memorials represent an esquire in armour, together with his lady wearing costume of the period.

The St. Maurs or Seymours of Beckington, like those of Wulfhall, Wiltshire—the ancestors of the first Duke of Somerset and his kinsmen—were descended from the St. Maur family of Penhow and Wondy, Monmouthshire. A very good account of the Seymours of Wulfhall appears in the Wiltshire Archæological Society's Magazine for the year 1875, by the late Rev. Canon J. E. Jackson.

I have referred to the fact of the manor house of the Seymour family, at Beckington, having been used as a farm house. Adam Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, in order to show that owing to the increased wealth of the country, not only furniture, but likewise houses, get into the hands of people for whom they were neither made nor built, states that what was formerly a seat of the Seymour family, was then an inn on the Bath road.

To A. S. Bicknell, Esq., of 23, Onslow Gardens, South Kensington, a member of our Society, I am greatly obliged for the use of his valuable notes on this subject.