

(It has been thought desirable to append the following notes and schedules. They appeared in vol. xlvii of the Register of the New England Historic-Genalogical Society, by whose permission they are re-produced here.)

INDEX OF WILL-REGISTERS AND CALENDARS IN THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY.

Will-registers of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.

From time immemorial these MS books have been labelled with, and identified by, names—not numbers nor dates. The inaccuracy, and consequent inconvenience, inseparable from the use of numerals for such purposes sufficiently show the advantage of (and perhaps the reason for) the method adopted in the prerogative office. No doubt it was found impracticable to adhere rigidly to any particular plan in selecting names for the successive volumes, but at any rate the designations were, from whatever cause, chosen on different systems at different periods.

With the exception of book "Crumwell," the 54 earliest registers bore the names of the testators whose wills happened to occur first in the respective volumes.

Register "Crumwell" (1536-40) took that title from Thomas Crumwell,* at that time the King's Vicegerent in ecclesiastical (including of course testamentary) matters. This volume is, in many respects, distinct from the main series, and there is a strong presumption that it represents a jurisdiction which the Vicegerent claimed and exercised, independent of the Archbishop's prerogative.

From and after the 55th volume ("Peter") the registers down to 1650 are still, with a few exceptions, named from the first will occurring in the book, but it had become customary to place in that position the will of either a peer, a knight, or some deceased official of the court. From 1651 to 1840 the names given to the yearly registers were taken arbitrarily from the lists of wills proved during the respective years, such names being usually those of persons distinguished in the State, Church, Army, Navy, Law, etc., but the nomenclature during the latter part of the period in question was derived in large proportion from the surnames of proctors and other officials of the Prerogative Court.

It is to be borne in mind that when in process of time the number of wills proved in the year became too large to allow of the transcripts being bound in one volume, the same distinguishing name was applied to the whole of the volumes, few or many, pertaining to the particular year. From 1384 to 1840 inclusive there are 198 of these bulky volumes; at the extinction of the ecclesiastical courts (Jan. 11, 1858), the number had increased to 2263, and at the end of 1888 the total was 2821. These few notes are to a great extent founded upon information collected some time ago by Mr. George H. Rodman, the Record Keeper, and very kindly placed at my disposal.

J. C. C. SMITH

* His surname is repeatedly thus spelt in the preamble to this register, though it is usually written "Cromwell" and mis-pronounced accordingly.