

SUMMARY: The document below is the Prerogative Court of Canterbury copy of the last will and testament, dated 20 November 1612 and proved 19 April 1613, of Ralph Sheldon of Beoley, whose daughter, Katherine Sheldon, married Oxford's brother-in-law, Francis Trentham, and whose daughter, Elizabeth Sheldon, married the brother of Thomas Russell, overseer of the will of William Shakespeare of Stratford.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

The testator was the son of William Sheldon (d. 24 December 1570) of Beoley, by his first wife, Mary Willington, the daughter of William Willington of Barcheston, Warwickshire. For the will of William Willington, see TNA PROB 11/42B/642.

The testator had a younger brother and four married sisters, for whom see the will of the testator's father, William Sheldon, TNA PROB 11/53/79.

After his first wife's death, William Sheldon married Margaret Broke (d.1589), the daughter of Sir Richard Broke (d.1529), Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and the widow of Henry VIII's Attorney-General, William Whorwood (d. 28 May 1545).

See the Sheldon pedigree in Phillimore, W.P.W., ed., *The Visitation of the County of Worcester Made in the Year 1569*, (London: Harleian Society, 1888), Vol. XXVII, pp. 127-8 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationcount01mundgoog#page/n143/mode/2up>

See also the Sheldon pedigree in Fetherston, John, ed., *The Visitation of the County of Warwick in the Year 1619*, Vol. XII, (London: Harleian Society, 1877), pp. 2-3 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationcount01britgoog#page/n26/mode/2up>

For further information on the testator's family, including portraits of the testator, see:

<http://www.welshleigh.org/genealogy/oakleyancestry/sheldonfamily.html>

See also:

'Parishes: Beoley', *A History of the County of Worcester: volume 4* (1924), pp. 12-19 at:

URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42847>

For the testator see also the History of Parliament entry at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/sheldon-ralph-1537-1613>

MARRIAGES AND CHILDREN

First marriage

The testator married firstly, in 1557, Anne Throckmorton (c.1540-1603), the daughter of Sir Robert Throckmorton (d.1581) and his first wife, Muriel Berkeley, the daughter of Thomas (1572-1533), 5th Baron Berkeley, and Eleanor Constable (c.1485-1527), daughter of Sir Marmaduke Constable. For the will of Thomas, 5th Baron Berkeley, proved 6 June 1533, see TNA PROB 11/25/28. For the will of Sir Robert Throckmorton (d.1581), see TNA PROB 11/63/176.

By his first wife, Anne Throckmorton (c.1540-1603), the testator had a son, and nine daughters:

* **Edward Sheldon** (1561-1643), who married Elizabeth Markham (c.1565-1630), the daughter of Thomas Markham of Ollerton, Nottinghamshire.

* **Elizabeth Sheldon**, who on 13 March 1574 married Sir John Russell (1552-1593), the half brother of Thomas Russell (1570-1634), the overseer of the will of William Shakespeare of Stratford. For the tempestuous marriage of Sir John Russell and Elizabeth Sheldon, see Hotson, Leslie, *I, William Shakespeare, Do Appoint Thomas Russell, Esquire* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), pp. 29 ff. For the will of Sir John Russell, see TNA PROB 11/92/96.

* **Mary Sheldon**, baptized May 1560, who married Walter Fowler of St Thomas's Priory, Staffordshire.

* **Muriel Sheldon**, baptized September 1566, who married Sir Francis Clare of Caldwell near Kidderminster, Worcestershire. In his will, John Combe (buried 12 July 1614), who in 1602 sold 102 acres of land to William Shakespeare of Stratford upon Avon, bequeathed £200 'to my cousin, Sir Henry Clare', or alternatively, 'to Frances Clare, his daughter'. Sir Henry Clare was the younger brother of Sir Francis Clare, and both were the sons of Simon Clare of Kidderminster by Anne or Agnes Blount, the daughter of Edward Blount of Kidderminster. See the will of Edward Blount of Kidderminster, TNA PROB 11/43/182; the will of Simon Clare, dated 17 May 1580, TNA PROB 11/63/330; and the will of John Combe, TNA PROB 11/126/415. See also the pedigree of Clare of Crome D'Abitot in Grazebrook, George, and John Paul Rylands, eds., *The Visitation of Shropshire Taken in the Year 1623*, (London: Harleian Society, 1889), p. 113 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/visitationshrop00britgoog#page/n166/mode/2up>

See also Grazebrook, H. Sydney, *The Heraldry of Worcestershire*, (London: John Russell Smith, 1873), Vol. I, pp. 114-115 at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=8lMBAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA115>

* **Jane Sheldon**, baptized November 1567, who married John Flower of Whitwell, Rutland.

* **Margaret Sheldon**, baptized May 1569, who married (blank) Standen.

* **Anne Sheldon** (baptized December 1571, d. 30 March 1613), who married Sir John Peshall (22 February 1562 – 13 January 1646), the son of Thomas Peshall (d. 28 November 1608) of Horseley, Staffordshire, by Joan Fettiplace, widow of Anthony Windsor, and daughter and coheir of Sir Edmund Fettiplace of Berkshire. See Cokayne, George Edward, *Complete Baronetage*, Vol. I, (Exeter: William Pollard, 1900), p. 101 at:

<http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924092524374#page/n123/mode/2up>

See also Parshall, Horace Field, *The Parshall family A.D. 870-1913*, (London: Francis Edwards, 1915), pp. 122-32 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/parshallfamilyad00pars#page/121/mode/2up>

For the will of Anthony Windsor, see TNA PROB 11/32/517.

For Fettiplace family, see:

http://www.berkshirehistory.com/articles/fettiplace_family.html

It appears Sir John Peshall was related to Katherine Peshall (1483–1540), whose daughter, Elizabeth Blount (c.1500–1539x41), was the mistress of Henry VIII and the mother of the King's illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy (1519-1536). See Parshall, *supra*, p. 111, and the *ODNB* entries for Elizabeth Blount and Henry Fitzroy.

* **Katherine Sheldon** (d.1633?), who married Oxford's brother-in-law, Francis Trentham (d/ 12 October 1626). For the will of Francis Trentham, in which he appoints his brother-in-law, Sir John Peshall (see above) as one of his executors, see LRO B/C/11. For the will of Katherine (nee Sheldon) Trentham, see TNA PROB 11/163/485.

* **Frances Sheldon**, who married Sir Anthony Mayney of Linton, Kent. See Grazebrook, H. Sydney, *The Heraldry of Worcestershire*, (London: John Russell Smith, 1873), Vol. II, p. 365 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/heraldryworcest01grazgoog#page/n8/mode/2up>

* **Philippa Sheldon**, born 1571, who married Sir John Sulyard of Wetherden, Suffolk.

For the testator's children and their marriages, see also 'Biography & Epitaph of Ralph Sheldon c.1537, d.1613', available as a pdf file online.

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In the will below, the testator leaves a silver basin and ewer to each of his married daughters:

And I do give and bequeath to every of my daughters, Dame Elizabeth Russell, Dame Muriel Clare, Jane Flower, Margaret Standen, Anne Pershall, Katherine Trentham and to Dame Phillipp Sulyard one like basin and ewer of silver and of like value, in all which basins and ewers my meaning is there shall be engraved first in the basin and ewer given unto my son Walter Fowler his arms and mine, and in the rest the arms of every the husbands of my said daughters joined with mine.

The testator's daughter, Elizabeth Russell, was also bequeathed a watch:

And I do give unto my daughter Russell my little watch made by Samuel.

The testator's grandson, William Sheldon (1589-1659), son of the testator's only son, Edward Sheldon (1561-1643), is mentioned in the following clause in the will:

And I do give unto Robert Jones, my servant, all mine apparel, only excepting all such garments whereof the outside is either velvet, satin or silk, and also except my finest black cloth cloak, all which garments excepted I do give with all my gold buttons unto William Sheldon, my grandchild, the son of Edward Sheldon.

In 1628 the testator's grandson, William Sheldon, purchased the copy of the First Folio now in the Folger Shakespeare Library (see Chambers, E.K., *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, Vol. I, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 142).

Second marriage

After the death of his first wife, Anne Throckmorton (c.1540-1603), the testator married, as her fourth husband, Jane West (1557-1621), the daughter of William West (c.1519-1595), 1st Baron De La Warr, adopted heir of his childless uncle, Thomas West (1472-1554), 8th Baron West and 9th Baron de la Warr, whom he had allegedly attempted to poison in order to gain the title early (see the *ODNB* entry). Jane's first three husbands were Thomas Wenman, James Cressy, and Sir Thomas Tasburgh (1528-1604). For Lady Tasburgh's parents and first three husbands, see also:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~hwbradley/aqwg3299.htm>

Thomas Tasburgh had earlier been the second husband of Dorothy (nee Kitson), widow of Sir Thomas Pakington (d.1571). For her will, see TNA PROB 11/59/313.

OTHER PERSONS MENTIONED IN THE WILL

For the testator's litigation with Thomas Hord referred to in the will below, see also:

Harley, John, *The World of William Byrd: Musicians, Merchants and Magnates*, (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing 2010), p. 207 at:

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=xd6hAgAAQBAJ&pg=PA207>

The testator and Thomas Hord may have been distantly related. Joyce Hord married Sir Edward Grey (c.1472 - 14 February 1529) of Enville, Staffordshire, by whom she had a daughter, Cassandra Grey, who married Henry VIII's Attorney-General, William Whorwood (b. before 1505, d.1545). After Cassandra Grey's death, William Whorwood married Margaret Broke, who after his death married the testator's father, William Sheldon. See Hord, Arnold Harris, *Genealogy of the Hord Family*, (Philadelphia, J.B. Lippincott, 1898), pp. 22-3 at:

<https://archive.org/stream/genealogyofhordf00hord#page/22/mode/2up>

See also the History of Parliament entry for William Whorwood at:

<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/whorwood-%28horwood%29-william-1505-45>

Cassandra Grey's half sister, Elizabeth Grey (b.1505), married William Clopton (d.1560), owner of New Place, later purchased by William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon. For the will of William Clopton, see TNA PROB 11/43/118.

LM: T{estamentum} Rad{ulf}i Sheldon

In nomine dei Amen. I, Ralph Sheldon of Beoley in the county of Worcester, esquire, effectually considering and earnestly calling to mind the frailty and great uncertainty of this natural life, and that nothing is more certain than death, neither anything more unsure or more troublesome than the hour and time of death, and how the disposition of the same resteth in the deep wisdom and providence of Almighty God, the due case whereof doth invite every man daily to dispose of himself well during his life for the salvation of his soul, and also to order and distribute those wordly [sic] goods and livings whereof by the blessing of God we have any use, as thereby every person to whom by nature, duty and friendship we stand bound unto may enjoy such necessary relief by our means according to our abilities as may preserve them from the miserable conditions whereunto necessity tempteth every human nature;

Therefore this present twentieth day of November 1612 and in the tenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, being at Skilts in the county of Warwick, in perfect memory (thanks be to God), do ordain and make my testament containing herein my last will in manner and form hereafter following:

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First I commend my soul into the hands of the holy, blessed and undivided Trinity, steadfastly hoping and verily believing that by the merits, death and bitter passion of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ I shall have free pardon and clear remission of all my sins, that I shall be raised again at the later [=latter] day, be of new clothed with this my flesh, be placed on the right hand of mine omnipotent God and merciful Judge, and then live with him in joy forever;

And I do protest to live, and by God's grace and assistance do hope to die, in the verities of the Catholic Church, and to become a member of the church triumphant forever;

And I will that my body shall be buried in the north aisle of [f. 222r] the church of Beoley aforesaid lately erected and builded by me, and in the tomb last erected wherein my wife lieth, with such funerals and money to be bestowed amongst the poor as shall seem convenient to my executor, wherein I desire to have all superfluties avoided;

And I will further that all such money as my grandfather and father by their several wills devised to be bestowed about the mending of highways or in the marriages of poor maids shall be paid by my executor, or rather in discharge thereof, because the same is uncertain, to give unto the same uses the sum of thirty pounds;

And I do give unto my well-beloved son-in-law, Walter Fowler, one basin and ewer of silver of the value of twenty and five pounds, to whom also I do release and forgive all sums of money as he, the said Walter, doth owe unto me;

And I do give and bequeath to every of my daughters, Dame Elizabeth Russell, Dame Muriel Clare, Jane Flower, Margaret Standen, Anne Pershall, Katherine Trentham and to Dame Phillipp Sulyard one like basin and ewer of silver and of like value, in all which basins and ewers my meaning is there shall be engraved first in the basin and ewer given unto my son Walter Fowler his arms and mine, and in the rest the arms of every the husbands of my said daughters joined with mine;

And I do give and bequeath unto my son-in-law, John Flower, the debt of £50 which he doth owe unto me, with all such other sums of money as he is indebted to me;

And I do give unto my son-in-law, Anthony Manny, ten pounds to be bestowed in some piece of plate at his pleasure to remain as a remembrance of me;

And whereas by the wilful and hard dealing of Mr Thomas Hoord, esquire, deceased, to whom by the mediation of his friends and mine I was to have paid, part in lands and part in money, the sum of four and twenty thousand pounds, viz., six hundred pounds land improved at twenty years' purchase in lieu of twelve thousand pounds, and in twelve years the other twelve thousand pounds by one thousand pound yearly in consideration and for the discharge of all debts, duties, reckonings, rents, annuities or other demands whatsoever pretended by the said Mr Hoord to be due unto him by me;

And whereas by a forfeiture made by him, the said Mr Hoord, to the King's Majesty my lands and goods have been extended, and I charged to pay unto the Queen's Majesty, upon whom the said forfeiture was bestowed, the sum of twenty and one thousand pounds, being then also and standing nevertheless charged and answerable for and with one yearly rentcharge or annuity of fifty-four pounds granted out of my lands unto one Allen Hoord, brother unto the same Thomas Hoord, and to his heirs, with a recognizance of twelve hundred pounds acknowledged by me to the said Allen for the performance and due payment thereof, being included in the said agreement and to be discharged with all other rents, annuities and recognizances in like manner acknowledged and made to the friends in trust of the said Mr Hoord, and being within the account of the said twenty and four thousand pounds, nevertheless in satisfaction and discharge whereof I have paid unto the heir of the said Allen Hoord the sum of one thousand pounds, I hope I may with safe conscience hold myself fully discharged of all reckonings, debts, duties and demands which were to be demanded by the said Mr Hoord or by any other person or persons to his use;

And where by order and decree in th' Exchequer Chamber the friends in trust for the said Mr Hoord, to whom the said rents or annuities were granted and made and to whom the said several recognizances were acknowledged, were ordered and enjoined to bring in the said deeds and grants of rents or annuities to th' end they might be cancelled, and further were ordered and enjoined to make and knowledge releases to th' end they might be enrolled, and thereby to acquit me my lands, leases and goods for so much as concerneth the releases in form aforesaid, is performed by them, and I have good cause to hope that if there shall be any further assurance or act to be done by them for the discharge of me, my lands and goods, that they will willingly assent and agree thereunto, the rather because divers of them were actors and privy to the end made between Mr Hoord and me, and thereby could not be ignorant how hardly and unconscionably I was charged, all other circumstances and gratuities proceeding from me to the comfort and good of Mr Hoord duly considered;

And touching the payment of my other debts, I do require my executor, as he will answer his duty unto Almighty God and the love and duty of a child to me, to see them fully satisfied and paid as they are set down in my book of debts, or as by due proof shall appear to be due, although not expressed in my said book of debts;

And I do [f. 222v] give and bequeath unto every of my household servants which shall serve me at the time of my death so much as shall amount unto his or hers one whole year's wages, all which my will is shall be paid to every of my said servants at the feast of St Michael th' Archangel or the Annunciation of Our Blessed Lady the Virgin which shall first happen next after my death;

And moreover I do ordain, constitute and make my son, Edward Sheldon, mine executor of this my last will and testament, which I require him to take upon him and to execute and perform the same according to my will, devise and meaning;

And I do give unto the said Edward Sheldon all my plate, jewels and ready money, leases, household stuff, goods and chattels and all other my goods whatsoever which be not by this my will otherwise bequeath[ed] and given;

And likewise that my executor, Edward Sheldon, and all and every other person or persons who shall be my heir or heirs shall make such further assurance or assurances unto every such person and persons and to their heirs and assigns, if they or any of them do or shall demand the same, who have contracted with me and bought of me either lands, tenements, woods or leases as shall be by them or their learned counsel reasonably devised of all such lands, tenements, woods or leases as have been to them by me bargained, sold and assigned or set over according to the true intent and meaning of my former bargains, sales, contracts and assignments made unto them;

And likewise I will that my said executor or any other person or persons who shall be my heir or heirs shall make unto the heir of my cousin, William Sheldon of Abberton, such assurance as he at any time hereafter shall reasonably devise or require of that portion of tenths and tithes which was purchased and bought by me rising, renewing or growing within the manor or lands in Abberton in the said county of Worcester whereof and wherein at the time of my death I shall have or at any time before had any estate, right, title or interest;

And further I do give unto my cousin, Francis Sheldon, son and heir of the said William Sheldon, the next advowson or right of presentation which shall happen or chance to fall next after my death to the parsonage of Abberton aforesaid if the same do happen to fall void in the lifetime of my said cousin, Francis;

And I do give unto my cousin, Thomas Sheldon, the son of Francis Sheldon, my uncle, deceased, for the term of his life one annuity or yearly rent of twenty pounds, to be paid unto him quarterly by £5 every quarter, viz., at the feasts of the Nativity of Our Lord, at the Annunciation of Our Blessed Lady the Virgin, the Nativity of St John Baptist and the feast of St. Michael the Archangel;

And further my will is that he shall have his diet and lodging with my son, Edward Sheldon, or in consideration thereof £10 yearly paid unto him;

And I do give unto my cousin, Thomas Sheldon, the son of my cousin, Thomas Sheldon of Shenington, deceased, the sum of £10 upon condition that he do bring in and deliver unto my executor all such bonds of mine which remain in his custody and were contrived as matter of trust between his said father and me, whereupon there is no penny due by me, and upon condition also that he do release all claims or demands touching a gift of Hewell fields and others given by Ralph Sheldon, esquire, my grandfather, to be employed for the education of myself and of Ralph Sheldon of Bradney(?), Ralph Sheldon of Wickwar and of the said Thomas Sheldon of Shenington, to whom and to them all full recompense hath been made by my father and by myself above the worth of the said Hewell fields and other;

And I do give unto Robert Jones, my servant, all mine apparel, only excepting all such garments whereof the outside is either velvet, satin or silk, and also except my finest black cloth cloak, all which garments excepted I do give with all my gold buttons unto William Sheldon, my grandchild, the son of Edward Sheldon;

And I do give unto the said Robert Jones my grey ambling mare or £6 13s 4d in money, at the choice of the said Robert Jones;

And I do give unto my dear and good friend, Mr Doctor Blencowe, my best rode [sic?] gelding or nag which I shall have at the time of my death;

And to my like good friend, Mr Thomas Allen, so much fine black cloth as will make him a long cloak, and £10 in money to be delivered and paid unto him within one month next after my death;

And I do give unto Edward Sheldon my striking clock which I do usually carry with me;

And I do give unto my daughter Russell my little watch made by [f. 223r] Samuel;

And whereas John Bolt hath long served me without any recompense other than one annuity or pension of £5 by the year which I gave unto him in respect of his yearly service, my will and desire is and I require mine executor to pay unto him within three months next after my death the sum of twenty pounds, or to grant unto him the reversion of any copyhold in Brailes for the term of his life, at the election and choice of the said John Bolt;

And whereas contention hath heretofore been between Sir Philip Keightley [=Kighley?], knight, deceased, on the behalf of the heirs of my cousin, Thomas Sheldon of Bradney, and me touching the advowson and right of presentation of the parsonage of Flyford in the diocese of Worcester, and whereas I presume the right thereof remaineth in me and my heirs, my will nevertheless and desire is that my executor do pay unto the heirs of the said Thomas Sheldon the sum of £50, to be paid by £10 yearly until the said £50 be fully paid, which I do give as satisfaction or recompense, notwithstanding I do conceive the right to descend and fall upon me and my heirs by the intent and meaning of Ralph Sheldon, esquire, my grandfather, who did give his lands in Flyford unto the heirs of Baldwin Sheldon, his son, which were afterwards by assurance made by my father and me ratified and confirmed, and the reason which leadeth me to conceive my grandfather's meaning to be so was that he giving the manor of Abberton unto my uncle, Francis Sheldon, and to his heirs, yet left the inheritance of the patronage of the church and parsonage of Abberton unto my father and his heirs;

And whereas by consent and good agreement between the Lady Jane Tasburgh, my wife, and me and by the mediation of our friends it was agreed that my said wife should have the free disposition and use of all her lands, leases and goods to be bestowed and used at her pleasure, and in like manner in case it should please God that she did overlive and survive me that then she should make no demand nor claim to any my lands in respect of

jointure or dower or to any my leases, goods and chattels, but should hold herself fully satisfied, as with good reason she might, all which on my part have been performed, as well by joining with the said Lady Tasburgh to convey and assure the greatest part of her jointure as by joining with her in the sale of divers parcels of lands wherein by agreement with Sir Richard Wenman, her son, she had an estate of inheritance, and by divers other acts done by me whereby I did fully conclude and bar myself of my right, title or interest in or to any the lands, chattels or goods of the said Lady Tasburgh, my hope and trust is that after my death she will by way of release and by such other assurance as shall be reasonably devised by the counsel learned of my heir or heirs or of my executor convey and assure all her right, title or interest which by any means she may pretend to have of, in or to any my lands, leases and goods, and thereby fully to conclude herself, in consideration whereof and upon condition that she do perform the same, I do give unto the said Lady Tasburgh, my wife, the sum of one £100, to be paid unto her upon the making, knowledging and doing of the said release or assurance;

And whereas Sir Richard Aldwell, vicar of Beoley, holdeth in the right of his wife a house and certain lands in Beoley whereupon he now inhabiteth, by whose death his estate is therein determined, my will and meaning is that he shall nevertheless have, occupy and enjoy the said house and lands during his life if he survive his said wife, yielding and paying the rents now payable and keeping the houses and buildings, fences and hedges in good repair;

And whereas I have granted unto Edward Hensha(?) the reversion of a tenement and certain lands belonging thereunto for the term of his life, which tenement and lands are holden by the widow Wollaston for the term of her life, forasmuch as he is not to take or receive any profit or commodity during the life of the said widow, I have given unto him certain lands called Suffields, to have and to enjoy the same until the foresaid tenement and lands shall fall and become void according to the true meaning of my said grant, the which my grant I do require my heir or heirs or my executor to ratify and confirm;

And I do renounce and revoke all former wills and testaments made by me before the date of this my last will, viz., the twentieth day of November 1612. Ralph Sheldon.

Probatum fuit Testamentum suprascriptum apud London coram venerabili viro Domino Iohanne Benet milite legum Doctore Curie Prerogatiue Cantuariens{is} Mag{ist}ro Custode siue Com{m}issario legitime constituto Decimo Nonno Die mensis Aprilis Anno Domini millesimo sexcentesimo Decimo Tertio Iuramento Edwardi Sheldon filij n{atu}ralis et l{egi}timi dicti defuncti et Executoris in eodem Testamento nominat{i} Cui com{m}issa fuit Administrac{i}o bonorum Iurium et Creditorum dicti defuncti De bene et fideliter Administrando &c ad sancta Dei Evangelia vigore Com{m}issionis in ea parte al{ia}s Emanat{e} Iurat{i}

[=The above-written testament was proved at London before the worshipful Sir John Bennet, knight, Doctor of the Laws, lawfully constituted Master, Keeper or Commissary

of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, on the nineteenth day of the month of April in the year of the Lord the thousand six hundred thirteenth by the oath of Edward Sheldon, natural and legitimate son of the said deceased and executor named in the same testament, to whom administration was granted of the goods, rights and credits of the said deceased, sworn on the Holy Gospels to well and faithfully administer etc., by force of a grant in that part elsewhere issued.]