

A SUFFOLK CAPTAIN
OF THE TIME OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

BY COLONEL J. H. JOSSELYN.

In the "Visitation of Suffolk, made by John Raven, Richmond Herald, in 1612, and delivered into the Office of Arms, 1621," is the following pedigree:—

"CHESTON OF MILDENHALL.

"Arms: Gules, three bars wavy per barry wavy Or and Ermine, over all a saltire of the first.

"Crest: A dexter gauntlet fesse ways proper holding a sword erect argent, hilt or, on the blade a man's head proper coupé, with a scroll beneath the head with the motto, 'Ex merito.'

"Robert Cheston of Mildenhall, co. Suff., mar. Agnes, da. of Smyth of Bury St. Edmund's, and had issue—William, son and heir; Anne, wife to Thomas Pope of Mildenhall.

"William Cheston of Mildenhall, son and heir to Robert, mar. Mary, da. of Symon Stokes of Burrow Green, co. Cambr., and had issue—Richard, son and heir; John, second son; Thomas, third son; [here follow the female issue].

"Captain Thomas Cheston of Mildenhall, Esq., the third son of William, mar. Jane, da. of Richard Anger, of co. Cambr., and by her had issue—Richard, son and heir; Thomas, second son; Rose, and Jane."

In an ancient ms. in my possession headed "Extracts out of Mr. Reyce's Breviary of Suffolk in the hands of John Anstis, Esqr., Garter King at Arms, 1728," is the

following account of the valorous and skilful career of this Captain Thomas Cheston :—

“Of Martial Men

“The next that cometh to my remembrance is Mr. Thomas Cheston a man not long since living, born about Myldenhall in Suffolk, descended tho' of mean yet honest parentage, who having an extraordinary spirit above his birth & education wherewith he being no ways content forsooke both Father & Mother & unknown to 'em both betook himself to martial adventures in foreign regions where he profited so much that in a few years, both for discretion understanding and valour above his age, he became employed in many good places and services, wherein I am the bolder because I have seen the several writings warrants and commissions authorising him in his several places charges & employments of all which particularly I have here taken the summary notes & dates as here doe follow.

“Robert Earl of Leicester Baron of Denbigh &c Lieutenant and Captain General of Q. Elizabeth of all her army and military forces employed in the defence and government general of the united provinces of the Low countrys by his letters patents dated at the Hage the 3rd of February 1585 appointed Captain Cheston to the leading of 150 footmen in those wars under her Matie.

“Robert Leicester Lieutenant of Q. Elizabeth and Captain General of all her forces in the united provinces by the counsel of State appointeth Thomas Cheston Marshal of the Camp Provost of the company of 25 horses and 25 harquiboursers, to enter into all villages, townes, and all ways and roads to punish and doe justice of all Brygands, thieves, Robbers &c. under the broad seal, the patents written all in french and dated at the Hage the 17 of September 1586.

“By other letters patents in french dated at Arnem the 8th day of May 1586 Thomas Cheston was appointed Scout master to place all watches Sentinels &c in and about trenches and camps at any time throughout the army.

“Roger Ld North Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire by letters from the privy Counsel appointeth Captain Thomas Cheston to have the charge, viewing, mustering and training of all the foot bands, with the allowance of Armor, Muster master &c. dated at Catlyng the 17 of September 1595.

“By lres of ye Generals Essex and C. Howard dated at London the 27 of March 1596 Captain Cheston had authority to muster assemble and leavie 100 men within the County of Cambridge and Ely for her highnesse present service to conduct 'em to Harwich, from whence with all expedition to be transported to Plimmouth.

“And last of all the said Captain Thomas Cheston for his good service in Ireland his great valour and desert in bringing in the head of

that Arch-Traitor of Ireland the Earl of Desmond, that ever renowned Q. Elizabeth commanded these arms in this sort to be granted to the sd Captain Thomas Cheston.

“Barry wavye of 10 pieces, gules, or and ermyn, above all a Saltier gules, and to the crest upon a helm on a wreath gules or and ermyn an arm or gauntlet for the right hand holding a sword upright and thereon a man’s head cut off all proper with this motto—Ex merito.

“See the original picture of this Captain in the hands of Peter le Neve Norroy King of Arms with these arms on the side thereof in compleat armor at his house at Great Wichingham in Norfolk 1720.

“There are divers other Letters patents appointing the sd Captain Cheston to several services which I omit, because tedious and unnecessary.”

From internal indications the “Breviary of Suffolk” seems to have been written by Ryce in the reign of James II. The full title of the ms. is “The Breviary of Suffolk or a plain and familiar description of the County, the people, the Inhabitants, the customs, the division political and ecclesiastical, the Benefices, houses of Religion, with all their several valuations, the chiefest men of learning as Divines, Privy Councillors, Martial men and navigators of former times with sundry other things of memorable note and observation within this County of Suffolk” and a note in a different hand states “the original is in the Library of John Anstis, Esqr., Garter.”

Robert Ryce or Ryece was of Preston, Suffolk, and a famous Antiquary of his day.

The arms, crest and motto of Cheston, above given, are used by Charles Cheston, now of London, solicitor, (a son-in-law of the late Mr. Edward Packard of Ipswich), and by members of his family, but I do not know with any certainty whether or how they trace lineal descent from the sturdy Elizabethan Captain.