

HAKLUYT OF WETHERINGSETT.*

The writings and correspondence of the two Richard Hakluyts, cousins and geographers in the reign of Elizabeth, is issued by the *Hakluyt Society*, and admirably edited and described by Professor E. G. R. Taylor. In these two attractive volumes are shown the maps of the Elizabethans, maps of fairyland, with savages and wigwams, dolphins flying, broad rivers and tall trees, ships in sail, and all the wonders of the seven seas.

It is not, however, as documents for the geographer and historian that we welcome the *writings of the Hakluyts* in these pages, but rather for their special interest to the antiquaries of Suffolk. The younger of the cousins, whose works make the larger and more absorbing part of the book, and whose life and character emerge the more clearly and attractively therefrom, was for 26 years Rector of Wetheringsett. He had lived in Paris as Secretary to the British Ambassador; he held a prebend at Bristol, and afterwards at Westminster; he was presented to the living of Gedney in Lincolnshire, and tempted with "preferment" overseas by the Virginia Company; but, with the exception of occasional visits to London, he seems to have lived, unlike so many incumbents of that age, continuously "upon his charge." The Wetheringsett Parish Registers record the christening of his son Edmond, June 3, 1593, and the burial of his wife, Douglas, August 8, 1597. Seven years later he remarried, ceased to busy himself with the affairs of the great world, and quietly pursued the duties of a country parish priest until his death in 1616. In his will he describes himself as "person of Wetheringsett" in the countie of Suffolk." After a sincere commendation of his soul to God, and certain quaint directions about his burial, he speaks of "my manour called Bridg-place" in Suffolk, which he gives "unto Edmond Hakluit my only sonne." A neighbouring parson, Mr. Edward Riggs, was to preach the funeral sermon, and to have "twentie shillings and my best cassock," whilst "Mr. Colman my curate" was to have "ten shillings and my old gown."

Although of a Shropshire family, Hakluyt was both in life and work connected with East Anglia. His wife was a Cavendish, his uncle a priest in Norfolk. His *Voyages* were written at Wetheringsett and many of them no doubt were obtained at Lowestoft and Yarmouth and from sailors returning to their Suffolk homes. An Ipswich man, Edmund Barker, lieutenant in the pioneer voyage in 1593 to the East Indies by the Cape, told him the story which he published in the *Principal Navigations* of 1598.

*The Original Writings and Correspondence of the two Richard Hakluyts, with an Introduction and Notes by E. G. R. Taylor, D.Sc., London, 1935.

Hakluyt's genius was not original. "He was plain and practical, loving his Queen, his country, his Church and his fellow-men just as he found them. But he had a passion for the truth, for collecting and sifting evidence," and in winning the way to succeed in it. We hear from himself, in the Epistle Dedicatory to Sir Francis Walsingham, how his imagination became fired with the hopes and ideals which he found in collecting and sifting such lively fruits:

"I do remember that being a youth, and one of her Majesties scholars at Westminster that fruitful nurserie, it was my happe to visit the chamber of M. Richard Hakluyt my cosin, . . . at a time when I found lying open upon his boord certeine bookes of Cosmographie, with an universall Mapped: he seeing me somewhat curious in the view therof, began to instruct my ignorance. . . . From the Mapped he brought me to the Bible, and turning to the 107 Psalme, directed mee to the 23 & 24 verses, where I read, that they which go downe to the sea in ships, and occupy by the great waters, they see the works of the Lord, and his woonders in the deepe, etc. Which words of the Prophet together with my cousins discourse (things of high and rare delight to my yong nature) tooke in me so deepe an impression, that I constantly resolved . . . I would by Gods assistance prosecute that knowledge and kind of literature, the doores whereof (after a sort) were so happily opened before me."

These ideals remained with him, and it was ever a grief to Hakluyt to see his friends interested only in war, and not in discovery and colonisation. Colonisation in Virginia was the answer to the un-Christian argument that peace meant unemployment. "There is under our noses" (he wrote) "the great and ample country of Virginia," where "the superfluitie of every profession in this realme" might find room."

This theme he takes up again and again. "Yea, if we would beholde with the eye of pitie how al our prisons are pestered and filled with able men to serve their Countrie, which for smal robberies are daily hanged up in great numbers . . . we would hasten and further every man to his power the deducting of some Colonies of our superfluous people into those fertile and temperate parts of America . . ." and so, as Anthony Parkhurst wrote, "employ a number there Whose persons may be spared heere." North America was a fair field. The Spanish claim rested upon nothing better than the Donation of Pope Alexander (the unChristlike and futile character of which Hakluyt exposed in detail); nor was it enforced with arms: the power of Spain was passed. Not so the hatred in which she was held. For long her devoted subjects had been ready to tell "How her Majesty may annoy the King of Spain," and Hakluyt with them. It was the one prejudice from which this gentle parson could never escape.

Although he places "one or two preachers" only among the "Things forgotten" in his *Discourse of Western Planting* (as he does also the "phisition"), Hakluyt does not overlook the opportunity, and

obligation, of sending cross and flag together to the new lands. *Fidei Defensor* was not a legend upon the coins but a duty upon the consciences of kings. "Neither oughte this to be their laste worke but rather the principall and chefe of all others, according to the comaundemente of our Saviour Christe." Singularly enlightened are the words which follow upon the problems of a church in savage lands; not unwise the suggestion that contentious Puritans might find a better work to do in a place where the very name of Christ was unknown. It was much more than conventional piety which made him say, "Certes, if hetherto in our own discoveries we had not been led with a preposterous desire of seeking rather gaine than God's glory, I assure myself that our labours had taken farre better effecte."

W. W. LILLIE.