

*John Eldred of Great Saxham.* The old-fashioned early Caroline monument to John Eldred in Great Saxham church is quite well known (though a popular East Anglian writer sends his readers to see it at Little Saxham—a most interesting church, but not the same<sup>1</sup>). A brass inscription says that this rich Elizabethan city merchant had seen Egypt, Arabia, Syria and Babylon, and it ends with the charming, rueful recognition that:

Might all my travels me excuse  
For being dead and lying here. . .  
I had my fate or quite outgone  
Or purchased death's compassion.  
But riches can no ransome buy  
Nor travels pass the destiny.

The painted bust of him looks out from a circular niche, and agrees with the evidence of the brass effigy in the black marble altar-tomb (now let into the pavement below), that his head was pleasant and capacious, that his dark hair was trimmed short and kept beneath a skull-cap, and that the length of his kindly countenance was emphasised by a beard. (Plate XXII).

In the sides and the corners of the marble table, there are brasses with the arms of Eldred and of Rivet (like Sir John Hayward, the contemporary historian, he was connected by marriage to this local family—the Rishangles branch), also the arms of the City of London, and of the Clothworkers, the East India, the Levant, and the Russia Companies. He did extremely well in business, and in 1597 bought the manor and advowson of Great Saxham for £3,000,<sup>2</sup> where he built a typical five-gabled mansion of the period. John Gage records that the vulgar called it Nutmeg Hall.<sup>3</sup>

Less well known to us are the accounts, that Richard Hakluyt was getting together over at Wetheringsett, of Eldred's remarkable travels in Arabia: yet they have much of the vividness of Curzon's and Kinglake's and Warburton's descriptions of the Near East in the nineteenth century, with the additional interest of being Elizabethan. He was there five years, returning in the Spring of the year of the Armada with what he himself claimed to be 'the richest ship of English marchants goods that ever was known to come into this realm.'<sup>4</sup> (It was not till 9 September that year

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Mottram, *East Anglia*, p. 299. He describes the memorial obscurely. Both he and Gage, *Thingoe Hundred*, p. 114, try to preserve the antiquated spelling and both fail. The pursuit of accuracy is admirable, but what are you to think when the parish register shows that Eldred was buried 8 Dec. 1632, and the brass claims to have been placed in position by the dead man's son and heir 7 Sept., 1632?

<sup>2</sup> 'Charta 10 Sep. 1597, *penes* Will. Mills'; quoted by Gage, *op. cit.*, p. 105n.

<sup>3</sup> See illustration facing p. 108 in Gage, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> R. Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations* (ed. Everyman), iii, 328.

PLATE XXII.



JOHN ELDRED OF GREAT SAXHAM.

that Thomas Candish of Trimley recovered the 'long wished port of Plymouth' after voyaging 'round about the circumference of the whole earth' and incidentally acquiring the treasures of the *Santa Anna*; 122,000 gold pezos, with silks, satins, damasks, musks 'and divers other merchandize.'<sup>5</sup>

Eldred's experiences in the Levant were exceedingly profitable, but he was not too busy to describe the scene. Tripoli is 'about the bigness of Bristow': Hama 'standeth on a goodly plain replenished with corn and cotton wool . . . the town falleth more and more to decay' and the Turk will not have it repaired as so many lives were lost in winning it: 'Euphrates at Birrah is about the breadth of the Thames at Lambeth . . . it runneth very swiftly, almost as fast as the river of Trent.' What perhaps pleases us most is John Eldred the antiquarian, standing on the site of 'the old mighty city of Babylon, many old ruins whereof are to be seen by daylight, which I, John Eldred, have often beheld at my good leisure.' (The heat down by the Persian Gulf presumably made it difficult to do much in daylight.)

Here also are yet standing the ruins of the old tower of Babel, which being upon a plain ground seemeth afar off very great . . . sundry times I have gone thither to see it, and found the remnants yet standing above a quarter of mile in compass, and almost as high as the stonework of Paul's steeple in London, but it sheweth much bigger. The bricks remaining in this most ancient monument be half a yard thick and threequarters of a yard long . . . and between every course of bricks there lieth a course of mats made of canes, which remain sound as though they had been laid within one year. . . .<sup>6</sup>

Here is the true antiquarian love of detail. 'By the waters of Babylon we sat down and took notes' is the theme of Eldred's psalm.

But an even more delightful idea is John Eldred's outward voyage, with the First Witch in *Macbeth* in close pursuit. We know that he

'departed out of London in the ship called the Tiger, in the company of Mr. John Newbery, Mr. Ralph Fitch, and six or seven other honest marchants upon Shrove Monday 1583, and arrived in Tripolis of Syria the 1st day of May next ensuing.'<sup>7</sup>

We know that he went inland and up to Aleppo where he 'arrived the 21 of May . . . the greatest place of traffic for a dry town that is in

<sup>5</sup> *op. cit.*, viii, 236.

<sup>6</sup> *op. cit.*, iii, 322-5.

<sup>7</sup> *loc. cit.*, 321.

all those parts.' And we can be almost sure that he was on the only voyage in this period that began in the Tiger and ended at Aleppo, a dry town: certainly the only journey of that nature to get publicity. In 1586, when the Tiger sailed again for the Eastern Mediterranean, Hakluyt recorded the voyage: which was to Alexandria.<sup>8</sup>

We know more about Eldred's sea-passage from the letter written by one of his fellow-marchants, John Newbery, to Master Leonard Poore of London.<sup>9</sup> (Newbery and Eldred later parted company, and Hakluyt printed some letters from Newbery to Eldred describing a horrid experience that Newbery was having with the Portuguese in Ormuz. But they were together on the voyage.)

'My last I sent you,' wrote Newbery to Power in May, 'was the 25 of February last, from Deal out of the Downs, after which time with contrary winds we remained upon our own coast until the 11 day of March, and then we set sail from Falmouth; and the thirteenth day the wind came contrary with a very great storm which continued eight days, and in this great storm we had some of our goods wet, but God be thanked no great hurt done. . . .'

The remainder of that voyage of the Tiger was fair, but I am convinced that Shakespeare had been reading these accounts of it when he wrote the famous 3rd Scene in Act I of *Macbeth*.<sup>10</sup> It was just the kind of reading that would appeal to Shakespeare, and *Macbeth* appeared some five or six years after the enlarged edition of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*. The scene, it will be remembered, is 'a heath', and the First Witch is complaining that a sailor's wife, 'a rump-fed ronyon', has refused her some chestnuts and told her to 'aroint' herself. The witch proceeds:

'Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger:  
But in a sieve<sup>11</sup> I'll thither sail,  
And like a rat without a tail,  
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.'

The other two witches offer her each a wind, and she supplies the rest.

'Though his bark cannot be lost

<sup>8</sup> *loc. cit.*, 349.

<sup>9</sup> *loc. cit.*, 272: this name appears as Power in Elizabeth's second charter to the Levant Company, 1592, (Hakluyt, iii, 372).

<sup>10</sup> I proceed on the assumption that the 17th earl of Oxford was not Shakespeare. I was amused to discover in an otherwise excellent little guide to Lavenham, by F. Lingard Ranson, a section on Lavenham as 'the Genuine Shakespeare Country': I hope it sells well in America.

<sup>11</sup> cf. Edward Lear, *The Jumblies*.

Yet it shall be tempest-tost,' she screeches, brandishing  
 '... a pilot's thumb,  
 Wrack'd as homeward he did come.'

We hope the master of the Tiger got home unwracked. His name is not revealed in Hakluyt, though George Gill was purser,<sup>12</sup> and on the 1586 voyage to Alexandria, Robert Rickman was master.<sup>13</sup> Whoever it was, he got John Eldred to Tripoli, despite the tempest of March 1583, in time to go 'Maying upon St. George's Island;'<sup>14</sup> time, in fact, to go gathering nutmegs in May, nutmegs to build a Hall in Suffolk.

NORMAN SCARFE.

*George III Bank Token.* Recently dug up by Mr. George Chambers, of Broome, whilst working at the back of the Angel Inn, Bungay, was a counterfeit Bank Token of George III. This bears on the obverse the King's head 'Georgius III Dei Gratia Rex', and on the reverse:

BANK  
 TOKEN  
 1s 6d  
 1811

Mr. F. M. Cullum, Assistant Curator of Ipswich Museum, to whom this coin was taken for examination, has supplied the following interesting information:

During the great scarcity of silver money in 1797 Spanish Dollars and half-dollars were countermarked with a small punch of the king's head and put into circulation as current coins of the value of 4s. 9d. This stamp having been counterfeited to a considerable extent a different one was made in 1804, but this in turn being much counterfeited the whole dollar was re-stamped with a fresh octagonal device, the king's head etc. on the obverse, and on the reverse a figure of Britannia within an oval, crowned with a mural crown, and having the words BANK OF ENGLAND FIVE SHILLING DOLLAR: 1804.

In 1811 Bank of England Tokens, value six shillings, three shillings, eighteen pence, and other amounts, were also issued.

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<sup>12</sup> Hakluyt, *loc. cit.*, 274.

<sup>13</sup> *loc. cit.*, 349.

<sup>14</sup> *loc. cit.*, 321.