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A STUART PEWTER MEASURE with Interesting Associations

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THE quart measure illustrated is of the type known to collectors as the "hammerhead" from the form of its thumbpiece, a style that was in vogue from the reign of Henry VIII until the latter years of the XVIIth century. Around the body appears the following inscription :

"Henry Langley at Ye Axe in Three Nunn Courte, Aldermanburie, 1670."

There was an Axe Inn on the east side of Aldermanbury, London, and opposite to St. Mary's Church, as early as 1581, and it is on record that the place was visited in 1634 by that thirsty tourist, "Drunken Barnaby." This building, however, was destroyed by the Great Fire in 1666. Edward Jackson was the lessee at the time. With commendable courage he proceeded to re-erect the premises, though not without opposition from

interested parties, at an estimated cost of £1,500, which would of course represent a vastly increased sum nowadays. It is presumed that the building was completed within four years from the date of the Great Fire ; so Henry Langley must have been one of the earliest customers of the restored inn—for lessee he certainly was not.

The importance of the "Axe" in the years immediately following 1670 may be gathered from its situation and dimensions being clearly defined in Ogilby and Morgan's 1677 plan of the City, and in Morgan's 1681 map it is shown with an open courtyard surrounded by the inn buildings said to be capable of providing sleeping quarters for over a hundred guests. Moreover, it appears on a map in Strype's Stow (1720) as being in a court halfway along Aldermanbury on the east side. Thus we can imagine that it was likely to be patronised by well-to-do visitors to the metropolis. Among these patrons was Richard Norris, a prominent man in Liverpool, which, owing to some extent to the accession of a number of London merchants who settled there after the Great Fire, had now rapidly become a great centre of commerce.

Richard Norris was of the old Lancashire family of that name whose seat was at Speke on the banks of the Mersey. (Speke Hall, a lovely old Tudor house, it may be said in passing, is still standing. Liverpool Corporation has recently been granted a long lease of it from the National Trust into whose hands it came some years ago.)

Norris was Mayor of Liverpool in 1700 and one of its representatives in Parliament from 1708 to 1710. Both business and politics took him to London fairly often, and it was at "Ye Axe in Three Nunn Courte, Aldermanburie" that he put up. Whilst there in October, 1705, he heard from Sir Thomas Johnson (a founder of Liverpool's prosperity) with whom he had a business connection, lamenting their joint loss through fraud in the *Mercy's* homeward-bound cargo. Again, on 13th February, 1708, Johnson wrote that the *Ellin*, "in which I have a very great loss," had been captured, doubtless by a French privateer, and taken into St. Malo the previous month. But, the letter added, "I am not able to make you sensible of it." Norris evidently was not interested in the cargo ; and, human nature being what it is, could bear his friend's misfortune without tears. Another correspondent of Norris' was his brother-in-law, William Squire, merchant, a business connection between the two being probable from Squire's advice on 27th May, 1707, that "Mr. Hall has shipped the wine and brandy on the *Peter*," to which was added, "all down in the mouth at the news from the Upper Ryne." The news would be of the French under Marshal Villars having captured the famous lines of Stollhofen, near Strasburg, hitherto deemed impregnable—a major disaster to the Allies, as it placed the entire system of defence which had previously served Central Germany in lieu of an army, in French hands.

Yet another correspondent of Norris' was Henry Watts—but he wrote *from* the "Axe"—the host of the inn in 1706. He was, we are told, the friend of many Liverpool merchants ; being a lively, handy fellow, at once gossip, banker and stockjobber to his country customers. In a letter to Norris on 14th September in the year named, he thanked him for recommending the "Axe" to Foster Cunliffe, for long afterwards an eminent merchant in Liverpool ; and expressed much satisfaction that the siege of Turin had been raised by Prince Eugene, the Duke of Marlborough's brilliant and steadfast colleague.

But, in addition to the foregoing correspondence, all the originals of which are in the possession of the Corporation of Liverpool, there is also in the same keeping a letter dated 16th July, 1795, from Henry Fuseli, R.A., to the banker-historian, William Roscoe, enquiring whether the case with pictures sent from the "Axe" in Aldermanbury the previous month had arrived. Roscoe, perchance, was not a good correspondent, but, of course,

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LITTLE OLD IVORY MAN

BY "TALPA"

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures . . ."

NOTHING is as despicable to average human nature as the miser's hoard. To each of us there is one or more inanimate object that becomes a treasure. It may be some wax flower, or a stuffed fish, or a rug that mother had. The things that find a warm place near our hearts may be anathema to others. Those little bits collected "for a home one day"! Some may survive in our affections. Some will grow old, and as they grow, become more graceful and more valued with the years. Some will be cast aside as questionable progress, changed surroundings, or a different outlook, alter our affections. What can account for taste? Who can predict their own opinions twenty years ahead?

Yet from the arts of all the ages there *are* enduring things. I have one piece only that hunger or privation could force me to part with. It is a Little Old Ivory Man.

No! He was not a bargain. Nor was he loot from bloody battle. My father-in-law found him, lonely and dusty, in a back street Brighton shop.

He is too old and frail to travel on a soldier's journeys. So he stands on a Sussex mantel. He can see out over miles of countryside to wooded slopes of South Downs.

Photo: Forgeron

LITTLE OLD IVORY MAN

"He was not a bargain—nor loot from bloody battle. He was found lonely and dusty in a Brighton back street shop"

His smile comes with me where I go.

Waiting in a Frontier Tangi, whilst the column halts for the advance guard to clear away the snipers from the hills, a startled Cee-Cee will bring him back to mind. I wonder what he would think if he could hear the toc-dum of a bullet far away, or the crack behind the ear of a near miss? Would he scorn to use a modern weapon for his hunting?

I wonder whose hands fashioned him? In far-off China I suppose. Was the artist poor? Was he too a falconer? Has anyone else carved a quite so live expression?

The column moves and work ousts speculation.

Perhaps it is a peregrine, stooping at a wounded teal in a Central Indian jheel, that next reminds me. Then I wonder if the Little Old Ivory Man has survived the dozens of dustings and spring cleanings. I like to think of him, too, reminiscing. There is a pair of kestrels that nest near the garden every year. The hunting parents hover over the heather that surrounds the house. I hope he sees them.

It may be that the sight of two red-headed merlins brings his smile to me again. They are my favourites among the falcons. Then I wonder what it is that the Old Man watches! Is it some memorable battle with a heron, such as thrilled the Kings of England years ago? Or has he sent his smaller hawk on some exacting task at which it has just triumphed?

When I come home he is still there. His love of countryside and sport still lights his withered face. He takes me back again to the East. His rice straw gaiters, and the plaited cape that he wears behind, bring pictures of paddy fields and snipe and evening flighting.

I wonder at his carrying of his hawk slung by a cord hanging head down from his hand. Do they carry them like that in China still? Surely the artist who could do such work would never make mistakes. He has no gauntlet; that I can understand, for even these fierce hawks would feel him friend.

Then I think of Northern Indian nullahs and that rough pointer dog. Such a grand dog he was. He seemed so happy despite the red pimples of untreated eczema. He was hardy, too, and quite oblivious of the spear grass that defeats imported English dogs. His owner, the Nawab, refused point blank to sell him to me at any price. He worked in front of the line to find the partridges that were never missed by the Nawab's hawks, I see the stoop, and kill, then the nasty business of the lure, coaxing the cruel-eyed falcon from its paralyzed prey. I am reminded that Nature is not always kind.

Then I look at the old ivory face again. I know for sure that sport cannot be evil, though it, too, is sometimes cruel. I make a resolve to keep it as little cruel as can be.

A STUART PEWTER MEASURE

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it is possible that he had not been advised of the despatch of the case, and that it had gone astray. Such things happened then as now. It may be mentioned, incidentally, that it was from this old inn that the first regular line of stage wagons from London to Liverpool was established towards the middle of the XVIIth century.

Well, who was Henry Langley, for it is plain that he had no connection with Liverpool? There was a Henry Langley, salter, of Southwark, as is proved by a token he issued; and he was owner or lessee of the ancient Spur Inn there. But he cannot be identified with the "Axe" gentleman. Nor can he be traced through the record of the Salters' Company, as these, unhappily, were destroyed in the Great Fire; and his name does not transpire subsequently. Elsewhere appears a Henry Langley, whose will was proved on 5th October, 1659. He was a tallow chandler of St. George's, Southwark, and had a son of the same Christian name, and it may have been he who took his morning draught at the "Axe." But this is a surmise and nothing more.

The aforesaid Stuart pewter measure, once in daily use in that old hostelry, the remnant of which was demolished early in this century to make way for the erection of a huge Insurance Corporation building, has been presented by the writer to the Liverpool Athenæum, not inappropriately, as the William Roscoe mentioned above was in 1803-4 president of the ancient "institution" (as it was originally termed) founded in 1797, and since then the foremost cultural club in the city.