

AN AMBASSADOR TO RUSSIA IN THE EARLY  
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

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Monumental representations of burials at sea are probably exceedingly rare, and the one here described is perhaps the only one of its kind. In Canterbury cathedral is an interesting memorial of an individual being committed to the deep in the days of Elizabeth. When in 1589 an expedition left these shores for the support of Don Antonio, a natural son of the house of Braganza, and a claimant to the Portuguese throne, Sir James Hales, of the good old Kentish family of that name, was appointed treasurer to the forces. He died on the outward voyage and was buried at sea. As many are aware, it was the custom in such cases, in former times, to wrap the dead man in his hammock, and also to place a few shot in it so that the corpse should sink at once. In this case, however, a more striking ceremonial was observed, and the dead knight was lowered over the side of the ship in his armour just as he would have met the forces of the Spanish invader, had he lived to take part in the expedition on shore. The monument, which was partially painted, shows the ceremony of lowering the body into the sea over the ship's side with a ball attached to the feet, and was erected, not by any of the deceased's kin, but by the second husband of Sir James's widow, Richard Lee. Sir James had married Alice daughter of Thomas Kempe of Ollantigh, who became the first wife of Richard Lee, brother to Sir Henry Lee elected to the order of the Garter in 1597. Richard was apparently a member of the Russian company, a body of traders about which but little is known. Richard Lee subsequently married another widow, the relict of Sir G. Croker of Hook Norton in Oxfordshire, and in 1601 he was knighted by Elizabeth, who had already bestowed so many favours on his elder brother. Sir Richard was sent as ambassador to the Russian court and the instructions given him are preserved in the

Cottonian manuscripts. He returned in July 1601 and died in 1610, being at the time the parliamentary representative for the borough of New Woodstock. He appears to have resided mostly in Kent, for in his will he describes himself



THE BURIAL OF SIR JAMES HALES AT SEA :  
FROM HIS MONUMENT IN CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

as of Dane John, Canterbury, and speaks of his stepsons, Samuel Hales and John Croker, as those 'from whose houses I have had my best means to live.' He also mentions Philippa Wotton, wife of Sir Nicholas Bacon, as his niece. Sir Richard had in 1588 gone in the ship *Revenge* to venture

his life in the queen's service. To Sir Thomas Bodley's library at Oxford he left some Tartar books, and a gown of young Tartar lamb given him by the emperor.

The honour of going as ambassador to Russia was in those days not one which every man cared to accept, and we know that Sir Thomas Overbury was sent to the Tower for refusing it. It had been better for him to have gone, for it was during his incarceration that he met his death by poison owing to the machinations of his former friend Carr earl of Somerset and his wicked wife. Even later we find the Russians spoken of as uncivilised, for Evelyn in his *Diary* under the year 1681 contrasts the Russian ambassador to the court of Charles II very unfavourably with the 'civil heathen, the Moroccan ambassador,' while Charles Bertie, in a letter to viscountess Campden, speaks of the 'Grand Czar's Envoye with a lamentable attendance of lousy fellows.'

The following story is told in Pepys' *Diary* of an English ambassador in 1583, Sir Jerome Bowes, who evidently could take his own part at the Russian court. The story appears under date 5th September, 1662 :

'Dining with Mr. Bland met all the officers of the Customs very grave fine gentlemen and I am very glad to know them . . . and among other pretty discourse some was of Sir Jerom Bowes Ambassador from Queene Elizabeth to the Emperor of Russia, who because some of the noblemen there would go up the stairs to the Emperor before him, he would not go up till the Emperor had ordered those two men to be dragged downstairs with their heads knocking upon every stair till they were killed. And when he was come up they demanded his sword of him before he entered the room. He told them if they would have his sword, they should have his boots too. And so caused his boots to be pulled off and his night-gown and night-cap to be sent for, and made the Emperor stay till he could go in his night-dress since he might not go as a soldier. And lastly when the Emperor in contempt to show his command of his subjects did command one to leap from the window down and broke his neck in the sight of our Ambassador, he replied that his mistress did set more by, and did make better use of the necks of her subjects, but said that to

show what her subjects would do for her, he would and did fling down his gantlett before the Emperor and challenged all the nobility there to take it up in defence of the Emperor against his Queen : for which the name of Sir Jerom Bowes is famous and honoured there.'

The view of the monument of Sir James Hales is from the very faithful engraving in Dart's *Canterbury*. The position of the memorial makes a clear photograph impossible.