

THE HISTORIE OF
TRAVELL INTO VIRGINIA
BRITANIA (1612), BY
WILLIAM STRACHEY

Louis B. Wright and Virginia Freund



THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

The Historie of Travell
into Virginia Britania (1612),
by William Strachey, gent

Edited by
LOUIS B. WRIGHT and VIRGINIA FREUND

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published by Ashgate Publishing

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Founded in 1846, the Hakluyt Society seeks to advance knowledge and education by the publication of scholarly editions of primary records of voyages, travels and other geographical material. In partnership with Ashgate, and using print-on-demand and e-book technology, the Society has made re-available all 290 volumes comprised in Series I and Series II of its publications in both print and digital editions. For information about the Hakluyt Society visit www.hakluyt.com.

ISBN 13: 978-1-4094-1469-8 (hbk)

WORKS ISSUED BY
THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

THE HISTORIE OF TRAVELL
INTO VIRGINIA BRITANIA

SECOND SERIES
No. CIII

ISSUED FOR 1951

COUNCIL AND OFFICERS

OF

THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

1952

PRESIDENT

MALCOLM LETTS, Esq., F.S.A.

VICE-PRESIDENTS

Professor E. G. R. TAYLOR, D.Sc.,
JAMES A. WILLIAMSON, Esq., D.Lit.

COUNCIL

(with date of election)

MARCEL AUROUSSEAU, Esq. (1948)	F. B. MAGGS, Esq. (1951)
Professor C. R. BOXER (1948)	J. V. MILLS, Esq. (1949)
SIR ALAN BURNS, G.C.M.G. (1949)	GEORGE P. B. NAISH, Esq. (1950)
REAR-ADMIRAL A. DAY, C.B.E. (1951)	G. NICHOLSON, Esq., M.P. (1951)
ESMOND S. DE BEER, Esq. (1950)	J. PACKMAN, Esq. (1951)
E. W. GILBERT, Esq., M.A., B.Litt. (1952)	N. M. PENZER, Esq., Litt.D., F.S.A. (1947)
C. C. LLOYD, Esq. (1951)	TRACY PHILIPPS, Esq., M.C., Hon. D.C.L. (1947)
Royal Geographical Society	Professor D. B. QUINN (1952)
(G. R. CRONE, Esq.) (1949)	

TRUSTEES

J. N. L. BAKER, Esq., M.A., B.Litt.
E. W. BOVILL, Esq. MALCOLM LETTS, Esq., F.S.A.

TREASURER

J. N. L. BAKER, Esq., M.A., B.Litt.

HON. SECRETARIES

(Publications) R. A. SKELTON, Esq., B.A., F.S.A.
(Administration) J. V. MILLS, Esq., M.A.

HON. SECRETARIES FOR OVERSEAS

Australia: Professor R. M. CRAWFORD.
British West Indies: Professor C. Y. SHEPHARD.
Canada: Professor G. H. T. KIMBLE.
India: Dr. N. P. CHAKRAVARTI.
New Zealand: C. R. H. TAYLOR, Esq., M.A.
South Africa: DOUGLAS VARLEY, Esq.
U.S.A.: W. M. WHITEHILL, Esq., Ph.D., F.S.A.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Cap. i. Cosmographia.

1. The Latitude and Boundles of Virginia Britania
2. extension upon a right line
3. first Division & the quality of the Mountaines, and description of the High-Land
4. second Division
5. Cape Henry
6. Cape Charles
7. mention of South-Virginia
8. Description of North-Virginia-Britania
9. the Temperatures
10. winds
11. Soyle
12. valleys, Playnes, Marshes of North-Virginia-Britania
13. a Degression not altogether unnecessary the Observation

The height in
of Virginia
from Lynce

The boundles

Virginia Britania, is a country in America, that lyes betwene the degrees of 30 and 44 of the north latitude: the boundles whereof may well be thus layd: on the East, running to the west, Ocean or mayne Atlantick Sea: on the South, lyes Florida on the North, the Carolinas as for the westward, the limits are uncertaine, only it is supposed there may be found the descent into the South-Sea by the Spaniards called the Strait of Narrows is meeting on the back side (as yt were) of the that doubtfull Northwest passage which leades into the East to the East-Indies the Moluccas & now ymagined to be discovered by our country-man Hudson, and therefore for the more certainty thereof the searche anew this year 1612. undertaken by Capt. Button, Capt. Nelson, Capt. Smith and many about the height of the Bay of St. James the the the (where yt is by the the picture, made by the the made sometyme of aboad: there and digged downe out of the mountaine wth his dagger, having no other instruments at that tyme) is well thought to be on the west-side of the w^{ch} yt is supposed South-Sea: albeit there be who affirme, that yt there should be a third Land-locked Sea, which hath no outflowe at all wth the Ocean, (like the the) and the the (in the) yt may lye (by reason of the Northwest streight, the where yt is supposed, that the may some the and the together) upon the Northwest of America: when yet againe Gemma fristus reports, three Brethren that went the passage, and lost a name but the streight of Anian (where the Sea freeth South into the the the beyond America) whereby that streight is now called the. We doe read likewise of a Portugal that

Anian the North
western streit

A page from the Princeton manuscript.
The heading and marginal notes are believed to be in Strachey's hand.

THE HISTORIE OF TRAVELL
INTO VIRGINIA BRITANIA

(1612)

By William Strachey, gent.

Edited by

LOUIS B. WRIGHT

and

VIRGINIA FREUND

LONDON

PRINTED FOR THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

1953

G 'W' HIS

(90)

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD,
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	page ix
NOTE ON THE TRANSCRIPTION OF THE PRINCETON MS.	xi
INTRODUCTION	xiii

The First Book of the First Decade

A PRAEMONITION TO THE READER	7
CAPUT 1. COSMOGRAPHIA	31
CAPUT 2.	41
CAPUT 3. DE ORIGINE, POPULI	53
CAPUT 4.	63
CAPUT 5.	70
CAPUT 6.	77
CAPUT 7.	88
CAPUT 8.	104
CAPUT 9.	112
CAPUT 10	117

The Second Book of the First Decade

LIBER SECUNDUS	137
APPENDIX A	174
APPENDIX B	208
INDEX	215



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

ILLUSTRATION AND MAPS

A page from the Princeton Manuscript *Frontispiece*

This shows the opening of Caput I. The heading and marginal notes are believed to be in Strachey's hand. Reduction $\frac{1}{2}$.

'The Draughte by Robarte Tindall of Virginia Anno:

1608' *opp.* p. 31

Redrawn from the original in the British Museum, MS. Cotton Aug. I. ii. 46.

Indian Tribes of Virginia, *circa* 1609 *opp.* p. 41

Popham Expedition, 1607 *opp.* p. 161

Note on Tindall's 'Draught of Virginia', 1608

Robert Tindall, gunner to Henry Prince of Wales, and an original colonist of Jamestown, took part in the exploration of the James and York rivers during May 1607 and February-March 1608. This is the earliest surviving map by a colonist of the new Virginia.

Although geographically slight and inaccurate, the map provides the ethnologist with valuable intelligence on the early location and settlements of the Indian tribes. A detailed appreciation of the map from his point of view, and in relation to the written records of Strachey and Smith, has been made by Maurice A. Mook, 'The ethnological significance of Tindall's map of Virginia, 1608', in *William & Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, ser. II, vol. xxiii (1943), pp. 371-408, with a reproduction. A coloured reduced facsimile of the map was published in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. lviii (1925).

The original vellum map, which has been redrawn for reproduction here, measures $18\frac{1}{2}'' \times 33\frac{1}{4}''$ and is oriented with south at the top. It gives 21 names of places or rivers, among which are two named after the cartographer: 'Tindalls shoaldes' [shoals] near Jamestown, and 'Tendales fronte' [now Gloucester Point] on the York river.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The editors are indebted to the authorities of the Princeton University Library for permission to reproduce the Percy Manuscript. We wish to thank particularly Dr. Julian Boyd, librarian, and Mr. Alexander Clark, curator of manuscripts. Mr. R. A. Skelton, secretary of the Hakluyt Society, has been especially helpful with advice on many doubtful points. Father James A. Geary of the Catholic University, Washington, D.C. has provided us with an authoritative statement of the Indian vocabulary. Mr. William Freund of Washington, D.C. has assisted in making the sketch maps. We are particularly indebted to Mr. Samuel Culliford for the use of his doctoral dissertation on William Strachey, and we have made grateful acknowledgment to his excellent work in various notes.

L.B.W.

V.L.F.

Washington, D.C.

April 12, 1952



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

NOTE ON THE TRANSCRIPTION OF THE PRINCETON MS

The text is intended to be an exact transcript of the Princeton MS, with original spelling and punctuation retained. The scribe's inordinate love of an upper case C for practically all words beginning with that letter has been humoured, but we have omitted the lines placed over final *n*'s and *m*'s which appear to have no significance as the words are already complete. Contractions with superscriptions have been expanded. Words and phrases underlined in red and written in an italic hand in the manuscript have been italicized to retain some of the flavour of the original. To prevent misreading, quotation marks have been placed around long quotations as in modern usage, except where the scribe used the italic hand in the manuscript.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

INTRODUCTION

I

Previous Publication of Strachey's *Historie*.

ONE of the early publications of the Hakluyt Society was William Strachey's *The Historie of Travaile Into Virginia Britannia*, edited by R. H. Major, from a manuscript in the British Museum. Strachey apparently was unable to get it printed in his own time. Because this document was composed by the official secretary to the struggling English colony at Jamestown, the Hakluyt Society considered it of primary importance in the history of English expansion in the New World. Since the original edition is long since out of print and virtually unobtainable, the Hakluyt Society is bringing out a new edition, this time based on the Percy Manuscript now owned by Princeton University.

II

The Three Manuscripts

The *Historie* exists in three manuscripts, all substantially the same and all in a professional scribe's hand, but showing alterations and corrections in what is apparently Strachey's own hand.

The Princeton MS is the most carefully prepared of the three. It was presented by Strachey to Henry Percy, the ninth Earl of Northumberland, and remained in the library of his descendants until it was sold at Sotheby's on April 24, 1928. It then passed into the possession of Cyrus H. McCormick, a collector of early Americana. After Mr. McCormick's death, it was part of a collection presented by his widow in 1947 and 1948 to Princeton University.

The Princeton MS is described in detail in Sotheby's *Catalogue of . . . Americana . . . from the Library of Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland (1564-1632) . . . Sold by Order of His Descendant, the Right Honble. Lord Leconfield . . . the 23rd of April, 1928 and the Following Day*, pp. 63-69. It consists of 122

leaves and includes John Smith's map of Virginia (1612) and twenty-seven engravings from Theodor DeBry's 1590 edition of Thomas Hariot's *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*. These engravings are original pages taken from DeBry and are carefully coloured by hand. The plates are accompanied by written descriptions, in some instances slightly different from the descriptions printed in Hariot. These descriptions and various alterations and corrections in the MS appear to be in Strachey's hand. Because these engravings have been so frequently reproduced, we have omitted them in the present edition.

Greater care was taken with the Princeton MS than with the other two to give it a striking appearance. Not only are the engravings coloured but the margins are ruled in red ink and many words, especially Indian words and proper names, have been written or underlined in red. Neither of the other two MSS shows so much effort at decoration.

The dedication to the Earl of Northumberland outlines the plan of the book and bears in conclusion the autograph signature of William Strachey.

The second MS, preserved in the Bodleian Library as Ashmole MS 1758, was copied about the same time as the Percy MS and presented to Sir Allen Apsley, purveyor to the King's Navy. Though written in a fine, large hand, and presenting a neat appearance, it lacks the decoration of the Princeton MS and is even less elaborate than the third manuscript, preserved in the British Museum as Sloane MS 1622. This third manuscript was presented to Sir Francis Bacon in 1618 and was the basis of Major's edition in 1849. The Bodleian MS has less elaborate headings even than the British Museum MS and contains no marginal notes. The Indian vocabulary appended to the end of the Bodleian MS has many words not found in the British Museum MS, though it lacks some words which the British Museum copy contains. This dictionary was not included in the Princeton MS.

The British Museum copy is the only one which supplies the small drawings which the text calls for in the Second Book where various islands are described.¹ It is also the only one which con-

¹ These drawings were probably copied or traced from Davies' *Relation*, the original manuscript of which was Strachey's source for this section, and which contained drawings in corresponding places in the text.

tains chapter headings in the Second Book; both of the other two present the Second Book as a continuous narrative, though the Bodleian has the heading, *Caput 1*, at the beginning of the Second Book.

The Princeton copy appears to be the most accurate of the three. There are numerous places where a few words, or even whole phrases, are lacking in the British Museum copy. In most such cases the Bodleian agrees with the Princeton copy. In the Second Book there are several cases where such omissions in the British Museum copy make the text incorrect, specifically in passages which derive from the supposed Davies' *Relation*. The Princeton copy agrees with Davies' *Relation*.

In regard to variations of phraseology, the Bodleian copy most often agrees with the Princeton, but sometimes it agrees with the British Museum, and there are some cases where the Bodleian presents phraseology which differs from both of the other MSS. There are also several places where a lengthy phrase has been omitted from the Bodleian copy and a blank left as though it were to be supplied later. One of these is a passage from Hakluyt supplied almost verbatim in the other two MSS.

In his dedication to the Earl of Northumberland in the Princeton copy, Strachey refers to the manuscript as 'the first Catagraph or Draught, as I haue had tyme to digest into forme and Method, out of my Iournall or diary bookes'. This suggests that perhaps each of the copies was composed anew from Strachey's rough draft. If the Bodleian copy had been done directly from the Princeton copy, for instance, it would be hard to understand the omission of the passage referred to in the paragraph above. But if Strachey had a rough draft of the narrative blocked out in his notes the three manuscripts would still agree in general form and yet present minor variations.

Topical references and allusions to past events indicate that the *Historie* was completed in 1612, though it was clearly begun as early as 1609. The following passages help to establish the date:

1. 'Virginia was a thing once so full of expectaunce (and not aboue 3 years since)'—in Princeton and Bodleian MSS only [Dedication, p. 1]. If Strachey is referring to 1609 when he went

to Virginia himself, this would indicate 1612; or if he refers to the departure of the first expedition to Jamestown in 1606, 1609 would be indicated.

2. 'the first Shippes that Columbus carried thither were but in Anno 1492 which is now since 120 yeares'—same in Bodleian and British Museum MSS—indicating 1612. [Praemonition, p. 11.]

3. 'Madoc . . . in the year 1170 (which may be 439 years synce) . . . at last setteled in the West Indies'—same in Bodleian and British Museum MSS—indicating 1609. [Praemonition, p. 11.]

4. 'break into our Plantations . . . (as most despightfully did Pedro Melendes into the French-Colonie 44 yeares synce in Noua Francia'—same in Bodleian and British Museum MSS. Since Pedro Menéndez de Avilés destroyed the French Fort Caroline in 1565, this would indicate 1609. [Praemonition, p. 16.]

5. ' . . . this present yeare Anno 1612'—no date in Bodleian and British Museum MSS. [Caput 1, p. 31.]

6. 'The Cape of this Bay on the South-side, we call cape Henry in honour of our most royall Prince'—same in Bodleian MS. The phrase has been crossed out and 'in honour of that our most royall deceased prince' inserted above in the British Museum MS. Henry, Prince of Wales died on November 6, 1612. [Caput 1, p. 36.]

7. 'The North-Foreland . . . we call Cape-Charles, in honor of our princely Duke of York'—same in Bodleian. 'in honor of our now prince, at that time Duke of York' inserted in British Museum MS. On the death of Prince Henry in 1612, Charles, Duke of York, became the heir-apparent. These alterations are another indication that the Princeton and Bodleian MSS were written at least as early as 1612 and the British Museum MS later. [Caput 1 p. 36.]

8. 'Tsenacommach, of which we may the more by experyence speak being the place wherein our abode and habitation hath now well neere 6 yeares consisted'. The Princeton and the Bodleian MSS agree, but the British Museum MS has been altered to read 11 years, which would seem to indicate 1612 for the Princeton and Bodleian MSS and 1617 for the British Museum MS. [Caput 1, p. 37.]

9. 'this portion of America which we call ours, and wherevnto,

both Sir W. R. 20 yeares synce and vpward, and we haue now for these 6 yeares, addressed our diuers forces and severall colonyes'—same in Bodleian and British Museum MSS. Queen Elizabeth gave a Patent to Raleigh in 1584, and the same year he sent Amadas and Barlow to explore from Cape Florida north. If the 6 years refers to the departure of Newport's expedition in 1606, this again indicates 1612. [Second Book, p. 140.]

Since 2, 3, 4, and 9 exist in all three MSS, they are of help only in dating the earliest MS. There are two references to dates which would indicate 1609 (3 and 4) and one which could be so construed (1). There is, however, the definite statement of 'this present yeare Anno 1612' (5) found (with the date) only in the Princeton MS, and the reference to Prince Henry and Charles (6 and 7) which give the Princeton and Bodleian MSS a date at least as early as 1612, the alterations in the British Museum MS indicating a later date.

The evidence would seem to show that the Princeton and Bodleian MSS, and probably the British Museum MS, were written or at least finished in 1612. Strachey may have commenced to write the narrative in 1609 while in Virginia, and the time references pointing to that year as the date of composition may therefore be the result of oversight in correcting the text before the presentation copies were made. A comparison of the Dedications to the Princeton and Bodleian MSS shows identical phraseology in places (notably reference 1) which makes it seem even more probable that they were written at about the same time. The manner in which the British Museum MS is altered to allow for a time lapse may mean only that Strachey thought of these necessary changes which had not been made when that particular copy was written, but more likely it indicates that all were written at the same time and the alterations made in the British Museum MS on presentation to Sir Francis Bacon several years later. The fact that all three MSS are in the same hand, not the author's, reinforces the belief that all three copies were made in 1612. Though not impossible would it be likely for the same scribe to make the British Museum copy five or six years later?

III

The Author and His Work

When Major edited the *Historie* in 1849 he began by saying that he 'was extremely desirous of commencing this introduction with a short biographical notice of William Strachey, the author of the following pages; but notwithstanding that he has used his best exertions, he has been unsuccessful in discovering anything more respecting him than such few points as connect him immediately with the subject of the work itself'. Fortunately for the present editors, much of their work has been done for them by Dr. S. G. Culliford in *William Strachey, 1572-1621*, a thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of London in 1950 and at present unpublished. Dr. Culliford has combed the records for evidence of Strachey's life and work, and has succeeded in linking him with a vigorous group of writers and expansionists. Dr. Culliford has deposited a manuscript copy of his thesis in the Folger Library and the editors have made wide use of his work as the footnotes indicating their indebtedness will show.

William Strachey, the author of the *Historie*, was born in 1572 in Saffron Walden in Essex. For a century Stracheys had lived in that neighbourhood and had gradually risen from the status of yeomen to minor gentry. Strachey's father, also named William, was the possessor of 300 acres of land and seventeen houses in Saffron Walden and Wimbish, a neighbouring parish. Besides he owned a brewhouse, five dwellings, stables, and a wharf in St. Margaret's, Westminster. Soon after he inherited this property he received a grant of arms from the College of Heralds.¹ Thanks to this grant of arms to his father, William Strachey the author was, like William Shakespeare, a second-generation gentleman. In further pursuit of advancement, he entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, on February 14, 1588. How long he stayed at Cambridge and what he did is unknown, for he left few traces. A record in a deed of 1605, however, indicates that by this time he was in London and a member of Gray's Inn, one of the most important of the Inns of Court.²

¹ S. G. Culliford, *William Strachey, 1572-1621*, p. 38.

² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

In the meantime Strachey in 1595 had married Frances Forster, daughter of a landowner resident at Crowhurst in Surrey. Strachey apparently lived for a time at Crowhurst but did not give up his connection with London. He appears to have had a modest annuity but the records do not make clear how he subsisted. His father had married a second time and had fathered five daughters by his second wife. When he died in 1598, he made his wife sole executrix and gave her a life interest in his property. Litigation followed and William Strachey, the titular heir, came into possession of some of the property. In 1602 his step-mother died and he acquired the remainder of his inheritance, which, however, was not sufficient to keep him out of financial difficulties.

In London, and particularly at Gray's Inn, Strachey came into contact with some of the literary profession. In 1604, he wrote a commendatory poem to a book entitled *The view of Fraunce* which his friend Francis Michell, secretary to John Whitgift, late archbishop of Canterbury, had prepared for the press and for which he had written the dedicatory epistle. The next year, 1605, Strachey contributed an uninspired sonnet in commendation of Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*. Sometime later Thomas Campion, a fellow member of Gray's Inn, addressed an epigram *Ad Gulielmum Stracheum*, which was published in 1619. These bits of evidence show that Strachey was moving in sophisticated literary circles of London and was probably a minor aspirant to literary reputation.

That Strachey's interest may have been something more than merely belles-lettristic is indicated by litigation showing that in 1606 he was a shareholder in the acting company known as the Children of the Queen's Revels which had taken over the Blackfriars theatre from Richard Burbage. Ben Jonson wrote for this company and John Marston, the playwright, was also a shareholder.¹ In a deposition Strachey testified that he was accustomed to come to the Blackfriars, 'sometymes once, twyce, and thrice in a weeke',² a familiarity which suggests that he must have known most of the theatrical group, including Shakespeare who later used material from Strachey in *The Tempest*. Whatever his connections with this society, they did not prove financially

¹ *Ibid.*, 67-69.

² *Ibid.*, 69.

rewarding and we find him in 1605 mortgaging his property to raise money for his present necessities.¹ The next step was to find some more remunerative employment. To that end he obtained a post as secretary to Thomas Glover, who in 1606 supplanted Henry Lello as English ambassador to Constantinople and agent of the Levant Company.²

Strachey sailed with Glover in the Levant Company's ship, *The Royal Exchange*, which made a leisurely voyage through the Mediterranean, stopping at Algiers, Chios, and other ports. At Chios they encountered Hugh Holland, an English Catholic, who embarked with Glover for Constantinople. Once in Constantinople, Glover, a flamboyant and quarrelsome character, was soon engaged in a violent row with Lello, who had remained in the city and was something less than eager to co-operate with the ambassador who had displaced him, he believed, by underhanded means. Lello was a scholar and a man of letters, utterly unlike Glover, who appears to have had few ingratiating qualities. Strachey and Holland were soon finding the hospitality of Lello's house a pleasant relief from Glover's company, a situation which the ambassador naturally resented. In a rage at what he termed Strachey's disloyalty, on March 17, 1607 he dismissed the secretary.³ By June 1608, Strachey was back in London. He had sought the aid of Sir Henry Wotton, English ambassador at Venice, in finding another post in the Mediterranean, but had had no success. His friend Holland, who had accompanied him part way home, left him at Chios and apparently continued on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.⁴

At home again and in need of money, Strachey did what many another indigent gentleman of the day was doing. He planned a trip to the New World in the hope of recouping his fortune. At the time, the Virginia Company of London was organizing the largest expedition which had yet sailed to the colony on the James River. By the end of May 1609, a fleet of seven ships and two pinnaces lay in Plymouth harbour ready to sail. Sir Thomas Gates was going out to be governor of the little colony as deputy for Lord De La Warr. The admiral of the fleet was Sir George Somers, a seasoned mariner and soldier. Commanding the admiral's

¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

² *Ibid.*, 83.

³ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

vessel, the *Sea Venture*¹ was Captain Christopher Newport. It was in this ship that Strachey found passage. Previously he had contracted to pay for two shares in the Virginia Company, and later, after the drowning of Matthew Scrivener, secretary of the colony in Virginia, he himself was named secretary. But his appointment as secretary did not occur before he left England.²

The fleet sailed from Plymouth on June 2, 1609, and instead of the usual route by the West Indies, it headed directly for Virginia, leaving the Canaries one hundred leagues to the east. In case of separation Somers appointed a rendezvous in the Bermudas.

When the fleet was within seven or eight days' sailing of Cape Henry in Virginia, disaster struck. Captain Gabriel Archer, who sent back the first message to England, reported that 'upon St. James day (July 24), being about one hundred and fiftie leagues distant from the West Indies, in crossing the Gulfe of Bahoma, there hapned a most terrible and vehement storme, which was the taile of the West Indian Horacano; this tempest seperated all our Fleet one from another, and it was so violent that men could scarce stand upon the Deckes, neither could any man heare another speake; being thus divided, every man steered his owne course. . . .'³ Since most of the vessels were blown so far on their course to Virginia, they continued and all except the *Sea Venture* finally limped into the James River. The flagship, however, driven off its course, had run aground on one of the islands in the Bermudas.

The best account of the disaster to the *Sea Venture* was written by Strachey himself in a letter to a certain 'noble lady' and it was this letter, presumably known to Shakespeare, which is believed to have provided background which the dramatist used in *The Tempest*. The letter was published in 1625 by Purchas in his *Pilgrims* as 'A true reportory of the wracke, and redemption of Sir Thomas Gates Knight; upon, and from the Ilands of the Bermudas: his comming to Virginia, and the estate of that Colonie then, and after, under the government of the Lord La Warre, July 15. 1610. written by William Strachey, Esquire'.⁴

¹ The name of the vessel is given variously as 'The Sea Adventure' and 'The Sea Venture'. See Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus Or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (Glasgow, 1906), XIX, 1, 40.

² Culliford, 126.

³ Purchas, XIX, 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XIX, 5-72.

The identity of the noble lady has never been established. Dr. Culliford, Strachey's biographer, makes a plausible suggestion that she was Dame Sara Smith, wife of Sir Thomas Smith, treasurer of the Virginia Company.¹ That suggestion seems more reasonable than an earlier identification as Lady Elizabeth Howard of Walden.² The truth is that one can not be sure of the lady's identity or how Shakespeare came to see the letter. The Virginia enterprise, however, was attracting a great deal of interest at the time. Because of the excitement aroused by reports of the shipwreck of the leaders of the expedition of 1609, Strachey's vivid account undoubtedly had considerable circulation among members of the Virginia Company and their friends. Since Shakespeare had contacts with members of the Virginia Company, there can be no great mystery as to how he came to see Strachey's *True Reportory*.³

This narrative, long enough for a sizeable pamphlet, described the shipwreck, the subsequent life on the island for eleven months, the building of two small vessels out of native cedar and oak timbers salvaged from the *Sea Venture*, the voyage to Virginia, and the plight of the colonists there. At the moment the Virginia Company was doing its best to discount unfavourable reports coming back from the New World and was carrying on a campaign of propaganda to convince the public that the Virginian enterprise was still potentially profitable.⁴ Strachey's narrative was therefore too realistic in its picture of the unhappy conditions in the colony to make it desirable for publication and it had to wait fifteen years until Purchas put it into print.

The *True Reportory* is a minor epic of hardship and heroism. Strachey reveals himself as a seasoned voyager and close observer as well as a man of letters. His writing is picturesque but factual. His account of the West Indian hurricane and the shipwreck is told with economy, vividness, and accuracy. 'I had bin in some stormes before', he comments, 'as well upon the coast of Barbary and Algeere, in the Levant, and once more distressfull in the Adriatique gulfe, in a bottome of Candy . . . Yet all that I had ever

¹ Culliford, 188.

² *Ibid.*, 186.

³ For one conjecture see Leslie Hotson, *I, William Shakespeare* (New York, 1938), pp. 225-26.

⁴ Louis B. Wright, *Religion and Empire: The Alliance between Piety and Commerce in English Expansion, 1558-1625* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1943), pp. 84-114.