

SIR WALTER RALEGH

1554 – 1618

Sir Walter Raleigh was one of the leading courtiers, adventurers, and literary figures of the Elizabethan era. Intermittently regarded as a hero and a traitor in his lifetime, Raleigh profited richly and suffered considerably from his proximity to Elizabeth I—but fared considerably worse after James I replaced Elizabeth on the throne. Known for his gallantry, for his fighting ability, for his effort at colonization in Virginia, and for bringing the practice of smoking tobacco into European culture, Raleigh was also the author of literary work that ranged from love poetry to exploration narratives to an unfinished history of the world.

Born into the lesser gentry at Hayes Barton, Devon, Raleigh went to France in 1569 to fight for the Huguenots in the French religious civil wars. By 1572, he was studying at Oriel College, Oxford, only to leave over a year later without a degree. Raleigh finished his education in the Inns of Court, including Lyon's Inn and the Middle Temple, and it was during these years that his first poem was probably printed. It is often difficult to date or even attribute Raleigh's poems accurately, for like many courtiers, Raleigh generally circulated his verses in manuscript.

Raleigh's poetry is characterized by an intensely personal treatment of such conventional themes as love, loss, beauty, and time. The majority of his poems are short lyrics—many of them occasional, written in response to particular events.

After embarking with his stepbrother, Humphrey Gilbert, on an unsuccessful colonizing expedition to North America in 1578, Raleigh spent a year and a half fighting in Ireland. He returned to England in 1581 and caught the Queen's attention, eventually emerging as her new favorite and reaping substantial rewards, including a monopoly over wine licences in 1583 and a knighthood in 1585. A grant of 42,000 Irish acres on which to establish English colonists, made in 1587, brought Raleigh back to Ireland several times, and he was responsible for bringing an acquaintance, Edmund Spenser, back to England and introducing him to the Queen in 1589.

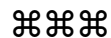
Raleigh's rapid rise to prominence at Elizabeth I's court was abruptly halted in 1592 after the discovery of his secret marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton, one of the Queen's attendants. The Queen had him imprisoned in the Tower of London for several months—the occasion for his long poem, *The Ocean to Cynthia*, Raleigh's lament over Elizabeth's displeasure. This, Raleigh's most ambitious and sprawling poem, is a work that exists only in fragments, the longest of them over five hundred lines long. Five years elapsed before Raleigh was again in the Queen's good graces, a period during which he traveled to Guiana (1595), published a report on his adventures entitled *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana* (1596), developed his Irish plantations, and participated in the attack on Cadiz (1596). Always critical of Spain's colonial and naval power, Raleigh never lost interest in North America, sponsoring reconnaissance and colonizing expeditions in the late 1580s to the areas now known as Virginia and the Carolinas.

Following James I's accession in 1603, Raleigh returned to the Tower of London for nearly thirteen years after a dubious treason conviction for allegedly supporting Arabella Stuart's claim to the throne. Rarely idle, Raleigh kept abreast of the political and intellectual climate during his



imprisonment by entertaining numerous visitors (including James's son, Prince Henry), conducting scientific experiments, compounding drugs, and writing. His most notable work from this period is *The Historie of the World* (1614), a three-volume overview of world events from creation to the second century BCE. Raleigh was released in 1617 to make a second journey to Guiana in search of the gold mine that he claimed to have found on his first voyage. Returning empty-handed in 1618, he was imprisoned under his former sentence for disobeying James's orders to avoid any acts of violence against the Spanish, and then beheaded. Despite a reputation for unorthodoxy and even atheism, Raleigh made a pious if showy end and replied, when asked if he should not face east (toward Jerusalem), "What matter how the head lie, so the heart be right?"

[Please note that an exchange of poems between Sir Walter Raleigh and Elizabeth I appears with other writings by Elizabeth earlier in this volume.]



*A Vision upon this Conceit of
the Fairy Queen*¹

Methought I saw the grave where Laura² lay,
Within that temple where the vestal flame³
Was wont to burn: and, passing by that way,
To see that buried dust of living fame,
5 Whose tomb fair Love and fairer Virtue kept,
All suddenly I saw the Faery Queen,^o *Elizabeth I*
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept;
And from thenceforth those graces⁴ were not seen,
For they this Queen attended; in whose stead
10 Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did pierce:
Where Homer's spright^o did tremble all for grief, *spirit*
And cursed the access⁵ of that celestial thief.⁶
—1590

¹ *A Vision ... Queen* Raleigh's poem was printed in the first edition of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590).

² *Laura* The subject of Petrarch's love poems of the fourteenth century.

³ *vestal flame* Reference to the Roman goddess of the hearth, Vesta, whose temple was maintained by vestal virgins guarding an eternal flame.

⁴ *those graces* I.e., "fair Love and fairer Virtue."

⁵ *access* To achieve an honor or office (accession).

⁶ *Homer's spright ... celestial thief* The Queen has usurped Laura's reputation for purity and chastity, and Spenser has stolen Petrarch's artistic legacy and even threatened the place of Homer in the literary pantheon; *Homer* Author of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.



Detail from a portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh and His Son, 1602 (artist unknown).

*Sir Walter Raleigh to His Son*⁷

Three things there be that prosper up apace^o *quickly*
And flourish, whilst they grow asunder^o far, *apart*
But on a day, they meet all in one place,
And when they meet, they one another mar;^o *damage*

⁷ *Sir Walter Raleigh to His Son* Raleigh's son, Wat, had a reputation for being wild. He died during his father's second voyage to Guiana.

5 And they be these: the wood, the weed, the wag.¹
 The wood is that which makes the gallow tree;
 The weed is that which strings the hangman's bag;
 The wag, my pretty knave, betokeneth thee.
 Mark well, dear boy, whilst these assemble not,
 10 Green springs the tree, hemp grows, the wag is wild,
 But when they meet, it makes the timber rot,
 It frets the halter, and it chokes the child.
 Then bless thee, and beware, and let us pray
 We part not with thee at this meeting day.
 —c. 1600

*The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd*²

If all the world and love were young,
 And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
 These pretty pleasures might me move
 To live with thee and be thy love.

5 Time drives the flocks from field to fold
 When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,
 And Philomel³ becometh dumb;
 The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton^o fields *unrestrained, unruly*
 10 To wayward winter reckoning yields;
 A honey tongue, a heart of gall,^o *bitterness, rancor*
 Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
 Thy cap, thy kirtle,^o and thy posies *tunic or skirt*
 15 Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten—
 In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,
 Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
 All these in me no means can move
 20 To come to thee and be thy love.

¹ *wag* Joker, mischievous boy.

² *The Nymph's ... Shepherd* Response to Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love."

³ *Philomel* I.e., the nightingale doesn't sing. In classical mythology, Philomela, the daughter of the King of Athens, was transformed into a nightingale after being pursued and raped by her brother-in-law, Tereus, King of Thrace.

But could youth last and love still breed,
 Had joys no date nor age no need,⁴
 Then these delights my mind might move
 To live with thee and be thy love.
 —1600

The Lie

Go, soul, the body's guest,
 Upon a thankless errand;
 Fear not to touch the best;
 The truth shall be thy warrant.
 5 Go, since I needs must die,
 And give the world the lie.

Say to the court, it glows
 And shines like rotten wood;
 Say to the church, it shows
 10 What's good, and doth no good.
 If church and court reply,
 Then give them both the lie.

Tell potentates^o they live *powerful rulers*
 Acting by others' action;
 15 Not loved unless they give,
 Not strong but by a faction.
 If potentates reply,
 Give potentates the lie.

Tell men of high condition,
 20 That manage the estate,^o *the state or body politic*
 Their purpose is ambition,
 Their practice only hate.
 And if they once reply,
 Then give them all the lie.

25 Tell them that brave it most,⁵
 They beg for more by spending,
 Who, in their greatest cost,
 Seek nothing but commending.
 And if they make reply,
 30 Then give them all the lie.

⁴ *Had joys ... no need* If joys had no ending, and aging did not bring with it its own needs.

⁵ *brave it most* Dress extravagantly.

Tell zeal it wants^o devotion;
 Tell love it is but lust;
 Tell time it is but motion;
 Tell flesh it is but dust.
 35 And wish them not reply,
 For thou must give the lie.

Tell age it daily wasteth;^o
 Tell honour how it alters;
 Tell beauty how she blasteth;
 40 Tell favour how it falters.
 And as they shall reply,
 Give every one the lie.

Tell wit^o how much it wrangles *intelligence, understanding*
 In tickle points of niceness;¹
 45 Tell wisdom she entangles
 Herself in overwiseness.
 And when they do reply,
 Straight give them both the lie.

Tell physic^o of her boldness;^o *medicine / presumption*
 50 Tell skill it is pretension;
 Tell charity of coldness;
 Tell law it is contention.
 And as they do reply,
 So give them still the lie.

55 Tell fortune of her blindness;
 Tell nature of decay;
 Tell friendship of unkindness;
 Tell justice of delay.
 And if they will reply,
 60 Then give them all the lie.

Tell arts they have no soundness,²
 But vary by esteeming;³
 Tell schools⁴ they want profoundness,
 And stand too much on seeming.

¹ *wrangles ... niceness* To waste time with trivial, or overly subtle matters.

² *arts* The seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music; *soundness* Freedom from weakness, based on fact.

³ *they have ... esteeming* They have no basis in solid and unchanging fact; they are subject to opinion.

⁴ *schools* Systems of philosophy.

65 If arts and schools reply,
 Give arts and schools the lie.

Tell faith it's fled the city;
 Tell how the country erreth;
 Tell manhood shakes off pity
 70 And virtue least preferreth.⁵
 And if they do reply,
 Spare not to give the lie.

So when thou hast, as I
 Commanded thee, done blabbing—
 75 Although to give the lie
 Deserves no less than stabbing—⁶
 Stab at thee he that will,
 No stab the soul can kill.
 —1608 (WRITTEN C. 1592)

Nature that Washed Her Hands in Milk

Nature that washed her hands in milk
 And had forgot to dry them,
 Instead of earth⁷ took snow and silk,
 At love's request to try^o them, *test*
 5 If she a mistress could compose
 To please love's fancy out of those.⁸

Her eyes he would^o should be of light, *wanted*
 A violet breath and lips of jelly,
 Her hair not black nor over-bright,
 10 And of the softest down her belly;
 As for her inside he would have it
 Only of wantonness^o and wit.^o *sexual appetite / intelligence, understanding*

⁵ *Tell manhood ... virtue least preferreth* Tell humanity that it refuses to feel pity, and that it prefers virtue less than all other things.

⁶ *Deserves no less than stabbing* To accuse someone of lying would likely cause a duel.

⁷ *Instead of earth* The Bible recounts the creation of Adam out of the dust of the earth. See Genesis 2.7.

⁸ *To please love's fancy out of those* At the request of love, Nature attempted to make a mistress out of snow and silk.

At love's entreaty, such a one
 Nature made, but with her beauty
 15 She hath framed a heart of stone,
 So as love by ill destiny
 Must die for her whom nature gave him
 Because her darling would not save him.

But time, which nature doth despise,
 20 And rudely gives her love the lie,¹
 Makes hope a fool, and sorrow wise,
 His hands doth neither wash nor dry,
 But being made of steel and rust,
 Turns snow, and silk, and milk to dust.

25 The light, the belly, lips, and breath
 He dims, discolors, and destroys,
 With those he feeds, but fills not death,
 Which sometimes were the food of joys;
 Yea, time doth dull each lively wit
 30 And dries all wantonness with it.

Oh cruel time which takes in trust
 Our youth, our joys, and all we have,
 And pays us but with age and dust,
 Who in the dark and silent grave,
 35 When we have wandered all our ways,
 Shuts up the story of our days.

—EARLY 17TH CENTURY

[*The Author's Epitaph, Made by Himself*]²

Even such is time, which takes in trust
 Our youth, our joys, and all we have,
 And pays us but with age and dust,
 Who in the dark and silent grave
 5 When we have wandered all our ways
 Shuts up the story of our days.

¹ *gives ... the lie* Offers a challenge; in this period, to a duel.

² *The Author's ... Himself* This short poem is variously titled in different manuscript sources; "Sir Walter Raleigh's Epitaph on his Own Death" is one variant. The poem is an expanded and slightly revised version of the final stanza of "Nature that Washed Her Hands in Milk" (see above). Raleigh is said to have written it in his Bible on the night before he died.

And from which earth, and grave, and dust
 The Lord will raise me up, I trust.
 —1628

from *The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and
 Beautiful Empire of Guiana*,³
 with a relation of the great and golden City of
 Manoa,⁴ which the Spaniards call El Dorado ...

*To the Right Honourable my singular good Lord and
 kinsman Charles Howard*,⁵ *Knight of the Garter,
 Baron, and Councillor, and of the Admirals of
 England the most renowned; and to the Right
 Honourable Sir Robert Cecil*,⁶ *Knight, Councillor in
 her Highness's Privy Councils.*

PART I, PREFACE

For your Honours' many honourable and friendly
 parts, I have hitherto only returned promises; and
 now, for answer of both your adventures,⁷ I have sent you
 a bundle of papers, which I have divided between your
 Lordship and Sir Robert Cecil, in these two respects
 chiefly; first, for that it is reason that wasteful factors,⁸
 when they have consumed such stocks as they had in

³ *Empire of Guiana* Raleigh's Guiana is located predominately in the Orinoco basin of present-day eastern Venezuela.

⁴ *Manoa* The European myth of El Dorado, "the gilded one," resulted from conflated reports of several indigenous peoples' practices. Once a year, a king, or a chief, was anointed with gold dust and paddled to the center of a lake, believed to be in an upland area beside the golden city of Manoa, where he would make gold offerings. The location of El Dorado, or Manoa, was variously held to be in Colombia, Surinam, Guyana, and Venezuela.

⁵ *Charles Howard* Baron Howard of Effingham (1536–1624), Earl of Nottingham, Lord High Admiral, Commander-in-chief of the English fleet against the Spanish Armada in 1588. Howard contributed a ship, the *Lion's Whelp*, to Raleigh's expedition.

⁶ *Sir Robert Cecil* Earl of Salisbury (1563–1612), Secretary of State. Although an ally of Raleigh's at the time of the Guiana expedition, Cecil would later turn James I against Raleigh by suggesting his involvement in the plot to place Arabella Stuart on the throne.

⁷ *adventures* Commercial investments in Raleigh's voyage.

⁸ *factors* Those who buy or sell for others, agents.

trust, do yield some colour¹ for the same in their account; secondly, for that I am assured that whatsoever shall be done, or written, by me, shall need a double protection and defence. The trial that I had of both your loves, when I was left of all but of malice and revenge, makes me still presume that you will be pleased (knowing what little power I had to perform aught,² and the great advantage of forewarned enemies) to answer that out of knowledge, which others shall but object out of malice. In my more happy times as I did especially honour you both, so I found that your loves sought me out in the darkest shadow of adversity, and the same affection which accompanied my better fortune soared not away from me in my many miseries; all which though I cannot requite, yet I shall ever acknowledge; and the great debt which I have no power to pay, I can do no more for a time but confess to be due. It is true that as my errors were great, so they have yielded very grievous effects; and if aught might have been deserved in former times, to have counterpoised³ any part of offences, the fruit thereof, as it seemeth, was long before fallen from the tree, and the dead stock only remained. I did therefore, even in the winter of my life, undertake these travails,⁴ fitter for bodies less blasted with misfortunes, for men of greater ability, and for minds of better encouragement, that thereby, if it were possible, I might recover but the moderation of excess, and the least taste of the greatest plenty formerly possessed. If I had known other way to win, if I had imagined how greater adventures might have regained, if I could conceive what farther means I might yet use but even to appease so powerful displeasure,⁵ I would not doubt but for one year more to hold fast my soul in my teeth till it were performed. Of that little remain I had, I have wasted in effect all herein. I have undergone many constructions;⁶ I have been accompanied with many sorrows, with labour, hunger, heat,

sickness, and peril; it appeareth, notwithstanding, that I made no other bravado of going to the sea, than was meant, and that I was never hidden in Cornwall, or elsewhere, as was supposed. They have grossly belied me that forejudged that I would rather become a servant to the Spanish king than return; and the rest were much mistaken, who would have persuaded that I was too easeful and sensual to undertake a journey of so great travail. But if what I have done receive the gracious construction of a painful pilgrimage, and purchase the least remission,⁷ I shall think all too little, and that there were wanting to the rest many miseries. But if both the times past, the present, and what may be in the future, do all by one grain of gall⁸ continue in eternal distaste, I do not then know whether I should bewail myself, either for my too much travail and expense, or condemn myself for doing less than that which can deserve nothing. From myself I have deserved no thanks, for I am returned a beggar, and withered; but that I might have bettered my poor estate, it shall appear from the following discourse, if I had not only respected her Majesty's future honour and riches. . . .

from PART 5

. . . To speak of what passed homeward were tedious, either to describe or name any of the rivers, islands, or villages of the Tivitivas, which dwell on trees; we will leave all those to the general map. And to be short, when we were arrived at the sea-side, then grew our greatest doubt, and the bitterest of all our journey forepassed; for I protest before God, that we were in a most desperate estate. For the same night which we anchored in the mouth of the river of Capuri, where it falleth into the sea, there arose a mighty storm, and the river's mouth was at least a league broad, so as we ran before night close under the land with our small boats, and brought the galley as near as we could. But she had as much ado to live as could be, and there wanted little of her sinking, and all those in her; for mine own part, I confess I was very doubtful which way to take, either to go over in the pestered⁹ galley, there being but six foot water over the

¹ *colour* Specious or plausible reason, pretext.

² *aught* Anything.

³ *counterpoised* Bring to or keep in a state of balance.

⁴ *travails* Labor.

⁵ *powerful displeasure* Raleigh's secret marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton in 1592 incurred Queen Elizabeth's wrath; he was imprisoned in the Tower of London for several months and did not regain the queen's favor for some years.

⁶ *constructions* Trials.

⁷ *remission* Pardon.

⁸ *gall* Bitterness, rancor.

⁹ *pestered* Troubled.

sands for two leagues together, and that also in the channel, and she drew five; or to adventure in so great a billow, and in so doubtful weather, to cross the seas in my barge. The longer we tarried the worse it was, and therefore I took Captain Gifford, Captain Caulfield, and my cousin Greenville into my barge; and after it cleared up about midnight we put ourselves to God's keeping, and thrust out into the sea, leaving the galley at anchor, who durst not adventure but by daylight. And so, being all very sober and melancholy, one faintly cheering another to shew courage, it pleased God that the next day about nine o'clock, we descried¹ the island of Trinidad; and steering for the nearest part of it, we kept the shore till we came to Curiapan, where we found our ships at anchor, than which there was never to us a more joyful sight.

Now that it hath pleased God to send us safe to our ships, it is time to leave Guiana to the sun, whom they worship, and steer away towards the north. I will, therefore, in a few words finish the discovery thereof. Of the several nations which we found upon this discovery I will once again make repetition, and how they are affected. At our first entrance into Amana, which is one of the outlets of the Orinoco, we left on the right hand of us in the bottom of the bay, lying directly against Trinidad, a nation of inhuman Cannibals, which inhabit the rivers of Guanipa and Berbeese.² In the same bay there is also a third river, which is called Areo, which riseth on Paria side towards Cumana, and that river is inhabited with the Wikiri, whose chief town upon the said river is Sayma. In this bay there are no more rivers but these three before rehearsed and the four branches of Amana, all which in the winter thrust so great abundance of water into the sea, as the same is taken up fresh two or three leagues from the land. In the passages towards Guiana, that is, in all those lands which the eight branches of the Orinoco fashion into islands, there are but one sort of people, called Tivitivas, but of two castes, as they term them, the one called Ciawani, the other Waraweeti,³ and those war one with another.

¹ *descried* Caught sight of.

² *Berbeese* Berbice River in eastern Guyana.

³ *Ciawani* ... *Waraweeti* Warao sub-groups, now called Siawani and Warawitu.

On the hithermost⁴ part of the Orinoco, as at Toparimaca and Winicapora, those are of a nation called Nepoios, and are the followers of Carapana, lord of Emeria. Between Winicapora and the port of Morequito, which standeth in Aromaia, and all those in the valley of Amariocapana are called Orenoqueponi, and did obey Morequito and are now followers of Topiawari. Upon the river of Caroli are the Canuri, which are governed by a woman who is inheritrix⁵ of that province; who came far off to see our nation, and asked me divers questions of her Majesty, being much delighted with the discourse of her Majesty's greatness, and wondering at such reports as we truly made of her Highness' many virtues. And upon the head of Caroli and on the lake of Cassipa are the three strong nations of the Cassipagotos. Right south into the land are the Capurepani and Emparepani, and beyond those, adjoining to Macureguarai, the first city of Inca, are the Iwarawakeri. All these are professed enemies to the Spaniards, and to the rich Epuremei also. To the west of Caroli are divers nations of Cannibals and of those Ewaipanoma without heads. Directly west are the Amapaias and Anebas, which are also marvellous rich in gold. The rest towards Peru we will omit. On the north of the Orinoco, between it and the West Indies, are the Wikiri, Saymi, and the rest before spoken of, all mortal enemies to the Spaniards. On the south side of the main mouth of the Orinoco are the Arawaks; and beyond them, the Cannibals; and to the south of them, the Amazons.

To make mention of the several beasts, birds, fishes, fruits, flowers, gums, sweet woods, and of their several religions and customs, would for the first require as many volumes as those of Gesnerus,⁶ and for the next another bundle of Decades.⁷ The religion of the Epuremei is the same which the Incas, emperors of Peru, used, which may

⁴ *hithermost* Nearest.

⁵ *inheritrix* Female heiress.

⁶ *Gesnerus* Conrad Gesner (1516–65), Swiss zoologist, author of *Historia animalium* (1551), a compilation of information, both ancient and contemporary, concerning animals.

⁷ *bundle of Decades* Richard Eden's *The Decades of the Newe World of West India* (1555), was a translation of Pietro Martire d'Anghiera's *De Orbe Novo* (1511–30); the first printed book to use the name "America" is the anonymous *Of the newe landes* (1520).

be read in Cieza¹ and other Spanish stories; how they believe the immortality of the soul, worship the sun, and bury with them alive their best beloved wives and treasure, as they likewise do in Pegu² in the East Indies, and other places. The poni bury not their wives with them, but their jewels, hoping to enjoy them again. The Arawaks dry the bones of their lords, and their wives and friends drink them in powder. In the graves of the Peruvians the Spaniards found their greatest abundance of treasure. The like, also, is to be found among these people in every province. They have all many wives, and the lords five-fold to the common sort. Their wives never eat with their husbands, nor among the men, but serve their husbands at meals and afterwards feed by themselves. Those that are past their younger years make all their bread and drink, and work their cotton-beds, and do all else of service and labour; for the men do nothing but hunt, fish, play, and drink, when they are out of the wars.

I will enter no further into discourse of their manners, laws, and customs. And because I have not myself seen the cities of Inca I cannot avow on my credit what I have heard, although it be very likely that the emperor Inca hath built and erected as magnificent palaces in Guiana as his ancestors did in Peru; which were for their riches and rareness most marvellous, and exceeding all in Europe, and, I think, of the world, China excepted, which also the Spaniards, which I had, assured me to be true, as also the nations of the borderers, who, being but savages to those of the inland, do cause much treasure to be buried with them. For I was informed of one of the caciques of the valley of Amariocapana which had buried with him a little before our arrival a chair of gold most curiously wrought, which was made either in Macureguarai adjoining or in Manoa. But if we should have grieved them in their religion at the first, before they had been taught better, and have digged up their graves, we had lost them all. And therefore I held my first resolution, that her Majesty should either accept or refuse the enterprise before anything should be done that might in any sort hinder the same. And if Peru had so many heaps of gold, whereof those Incas were princes, and that they

delighted so much therein, no doubt but this which now liveth and reigneth in Manoa hath the same humour,³ and, I am assured, hath more abundance of gold within his territory than all Peru and the West Indies.

For the rest, which myself have seen, I will promise these things that follow, which I know to be true. Those that are desirous to discover and to see many nations may be satisfied within this river, which bringeth forth so many arms and branches leading to several countries and provinces, above 2,000 miles east and west and 800 miles south and north, and of these the most either rich in gold or in other merchandises. The common soldier shall here fight for gold, and pay himself, instead of pence, with plates of half-a-foot broad, whereas he breaketh his bones in other wars for provant⁴ and penury. Those commanders and chieftains that shoot at honour and abundance shall find there more rich and beautiful cities, more temples adorned with golden images, more sepulchres⁵ filled with treasure, than either Cortés⁶ found in Mexico or Pizarro⁷ in Peru. And the shining glory of this conquest will eclipse all those so far-extended beams of the Spanish nation. There is no country which yieldeth more pleasure to the inhabitants, either for those common delights of hunting, hawking, fishing, fowling, and the rest, than Guiana doth; it hath so many plains, clear rivers, and abundance of pheasants, partridges, quails, rails, cranes, herons, and all other fowl; deer of all sorts, porks, hares, lions, tigers, leopards, and divers other sorts of beasts, either for chase or food. It hath a kind of beast called cama or anta,⁸ as big as an English beef, and in great plenty. To speak of the several sorts of every kind I fear would be troublesome to the reader, and therefore I will omit them, and conclude that both for health, good air, pleasure, and riches, I am resolved it cannot be equalled by any region either in the east or west. Moreover the country is so healthful, as of an hundred persons and more, which lay without shift most sluttishly, and

³ *humour* State of mind.

⁴ *provant* Allowance of food.

⁵ *sepulchres* Tombs.

⁶ *Cortés* Hernán Cortés (1485–1547), Spanish conquistador, conqueror of Mexico.

⁷ *Pizarro* Francisco Pizarro (1476–1541), Spanish conquistador, conqueror of Peru.

⁸ *anta* Tapir.

¹ *Cieza* Pedro Cieza de Leon (1518?–60), Spanish soldier and explorer, author of *Chronicle of Peru* (1553?).

² *Pegu* Capital of the United Burmese kingdom during the sixteenth century.

were every day almost melted with heat in rowing and marching, and suddenly wet again with great showers, and did eat of all sorts of corrupt fruits, and made meals of fresh fish without seasoning, of tortugas,¹ of lagartos or crocodiles, and of all sorts good and bad, without either order or measure, and besides lodged in the open air every night, we lost not any one, nor had one ill-disposed to my knowledge; nor found any calentura² or other of those pestilent diseases which dwell in all hot regions, and so near the equinoctial line.

Where there is store of gold it is in effect needless to remember other commodities for trade. But it hath, towards the south part of the river, great quantities of brazil-wood,³ and divers berries that dye a most perfect crimson and carnation; and for painting, all France, Italy, or the East Indies yield none such. For the more the skin is washed, the fairer the colour appeareth, and with which even those brown and tawny women spot themselves and colour their cheeks. All places yield abundance of cotton, of silk, of balsamum,⁴ and of those kinds most excellent and never known in Europe, of all sorts of gums, of Indian pepper; and what else the countries may afford within the land we know not, neither had we time to abide the trial and search. The soil besides is so excellent and so full of rivers, as it will carry sugar, ginger, and all those other commodities which the West Indies have.

The navigation is short, for it may be sailed with an ordinary wind in six weeks, and in the like time back again; and by the way neither lee-shore,⁵ enemies' coast, rocks, nor sands. All which in the voyages to the West Indies and all other places we are subject unto; as the channel of Bahama, coming from the West Indies, cannot well be passed in the winter, and when it is at the best, it is a perilous and a fearful place; the rest of the Indies for calms and diseases very troublesome, and the sea about the Bermudas a hellish sea for thunder, lightning, and storms.

This very year (1595) there were seventeen sail of Spanish ships lost in the channel of Bahama, and the

great Philip, like to have sunk at the Bermudas, was put back to St. Juan de Puerto Rico; and so it falleth out in that navigation every year for the most part. Which in this voyage are not to be feared; for the time of year to leave England is best in July, and the summer in Guiana is in October, November, December, January, February, and March, and then the ships may depart thence in April, and so return again into England in June. So as they shall never be subject to winter weather, either coming, going, or staying there: which, for my part, I take to be one of the greatest comforts and encouragements that can be thought on, having, as I have done, tasted in this voyage by the West Indies so many calms, so much heat, such outrageous gusts, such weather, and contrary winds.

To conclude, Guiana is a country that hath yet her maidenhead,⁶ never sacked, turned, nor wrought;⁷ the face of the earth hath not been torn, nor the virtue and salt of the soil spent by manurance. The graves have not been opened for gold, the mines not broken with sledges, nor their images pulled down out of their temples. It hath never been entered by any army of strength, and never conquered or possessed by any Christian prince. It is besides so defensible, that if two forts be builded in one of the provinces which I have seen, the flood setteth in so near the bank, where the channel also lieth, that no ship can pass up but within a pike's length of the artillery, first of the one, and afterwards of the other. Which two forts will be a sufficient guard both to the empire of Inca, and to an hundred other several kingdoms, lying within the said river, even to the city of Quito in Peru.

There is therefore great difference between the easiness of the conquest of Guiana, and the defence of it being conquered, and the West or East Indies. Guiana hath but one entrance by the sea, if it hath that, for any vessels of burden. So as whosoever shall first possess it, it shall be found unaccessible for any enemy, except he come in wherries, barges, or canoes, or else in flat-bottomed boats; and if he do offer to enter it in that manner, the woods are so thick 200 miles together upon the rivers of such entrance, as a mouse cannot sit in a boat unhit from the bank. By land it is more impossible to approach;

¹ *tortugas* Turtles.

² *calentura* Disease experienced by sailors in the tropics, characterized by fever and delirium.

³ *brazil-wood* Brownish hardwood used to make a red dye.

⁴ *balsamum* Aromatic resin of the balsam tree used for medicines.

⁵ *lee-shore* Shore on which the wind blows.

⁶ *maidenhead* Literally, hymen; i.e., Guiana is still a virgin country.

⁷ *wrought* Worked.

for it hath the strongest situation of any region under the sun, and it is so environed with impassable mountains on every side, as it is impossible to victual any company in the passage. Which hath been well proved by the Spanish nation, who since the conquest of Peru have never left five years free from attempting this empire, or discovering some way into it; and yet of three-and-twenty several gentlemen, knights, and noblemen, there was never any that knew which way to lead an army by land, or to conduct ships by sea, anything near the said country. Orellana,¹ of whom the river of the Amazon taketh name, was the first, and Don Antonio de Berreo, whom we displanted, the last: and I doubt much whether he himself or any of his yet know the best way into the said empire. It can therefore hardly be regained, if any strength be formerly set down, but in one or two places, and but two or three crumsters² or galleys built and furnished upon the river within. The West Indies have many ports, watering places, and landings; and nearer than 300 miles to Guiana, no man can harbour a ship, except he know one only place, which is not learned in haste, and which I will undertake there is not any one of my companies that knoweth, whosoever hearkened most after it.

Besides, by keeping one good fort, or building one town of strength, the whole empire is guarded; and whatsoever companies shall be afterwards planted within the land, although in twenty several provinces, those shall be able all to reunite themselves upon any occasion either by the way of one river, or be able to march by land without either wood, bog, or mountain. Whereas in the West Indies there are few towns or provinces that can succour or relieve one the other by land or sea. By land the countries are either desert, mountainous, or strong enemies. By sea, if any man invade to the eastward, those to the west cannot in many months turn against the breeze and eastern wind. Besides, the Spaniards are therein so dispersed as they are nowhere strong, but in Nueva Espana only; the sharp mountains, the thorns, and poisoned prickles, the sandy and deep ways in the valleys,

the smothering heat and air, and want of water in other places are their only and best defence; which, because those nations that invade them are not victualled or provided to stay, neither have any place to friend adjoining, do serve them instead of good arms and great multitudes.

The West Indies were first offered her Majesty's grandfather³ by Columbus, a stranger, in whom there might be doubt of deceit; and besides it was then thought incredible that there were such and so many lands and regions never written of before. This Empire is made known to her Majesty by her own vassal,⁴ and by him that oweth to her more duty than an ordinary subject; so that it shall ill sort with the many graces and benefits which I have received to abuse her Highness, either with fables or imaginations. The country is already discovered, many nations won to her Majesty's love and obedience, and those Spaniards which have latest and longest laboured about the conquest, beaten out, discouraged, and disgraced, which among these nations were thought invincible. Her Majesty may in this enterprise employ all those soldiers and gentlemen that are younger brethren, and all captains and chieftains that want employment, and the charge will be only the first setting out in victualing and arming them; for after the first or second year I doubt not but to see in London a Contractation-House⁵ of more receipt for Guiana than there is now in Seville for the West Indies.

And I am resolved that if there were but a small army afoot in Guiana, marching towards Manoa, the chief city of Inca, he would yield to her Majesty by composition so many hundred thousand pounds yearly as should both defend all enemies abroad, and defray all expenses at home; and that he would besides pay a garrison of three or four thousand soldiers very royally to defend him against other nations. For he cannot but know how his predecessors, yea, how his own great uncles, Guascar and

¹ *Orellana* Francesco de Orellana was the first Spaniard to descend the entire length of the Amazon river in 1541–42. Orellana renamed the river "Amazon" from "Marañon" after encountering a group of female warriors.

² *crumsters* Merchant ships used as warships that accompanied Spanish galleons. The crumster could carry a great deal of cargo and firepower.

³ *her Majesty's grandfather* Bartholomew Columbus, brother of Christopher, approached Henry VII of England to raise money for Columbus's western route to India, but Columbus had already contracted his services to Queen Isabella of Spain.

⁴ *vassal* Humble servant.

⁵ *Contractation-House* Seville's Casa de Contractacion controlled all aspects of the Spanish trade with the Americas.

Atabalipa,¹ sons to Guiana-Capac, emperor of Peru, were, while they contended for the empire, beaten out by the Spaniards, and that both of late years and ever since the said conquest, the Spaniards have sought the passages and entry of his country; and of their cruelties used to the borderers he cannot be ignorant. In which respects no doubt but he will be brought to tribute with great gladness; if not, he hath neither shot nor iron weapon in all his empire, and therefore may easily be conquered.

And I further remember that Berreo confessed to me and others, which I protest before the Majesty of God to be true, that there was found among the prophecies in Peru, at such time as the empire was reduced to the Spanish obedience, in their chiefest temples, amongst divers others which foreshadowed the loss of the said empire, that from Inglatierra² those Incas should be again in time to come restored, and delivered from the servitude of the said conquerors. And I hope, as we with these few hands have displanted the first garrison, and driven them out of the said country, so her Majesty will give order for the rest, and either defend it, and hold it as tributary,³ or conquer and keep it as empress of the same. For whatsoever prince shall possess it, shall be greatest; and if the King of Spain enjoy it, he will become irresistible. Her Majesty hereby shall confirm and strengthen the opinions of all nations as touching her great and princely actions. And where the south border of Guiana reacheth to the dominion and empire of the Amazons, those women shall hereby hear the name of a virgin, which is not only able to defend her own territories and her neighbours, but also to invade and conquer so great empires and so far removed.

To speak more at this time I fear would be but troublesome: I trust in God, this being true, will suffice, and that he which is King of all Kings, and Lord of Lords, will put it into her heart which is Lady of Ladies to possess it. If not, I will judge those men worthy to be kings thereof, that by her grace and leave will undertake it of themselves.

—1596

¹ *Atabalipa* Atahualpa.

² *Inglatierra* England.

³ *tributary* I.e., tributary nation, one which pays tribute in the form of goods or money to a sovereign nation.

*Letter to His Wife*⁴

YOU shall now receive (my deare wife) my last words in these last lines. My love I send you that you may keep it when I am dead, and my counsell that you may remember it when I am no more. I would not by my will present you with sorrowes (dear Besse) let them go to the grave with me and be buried in the dust. And seeing that it is not Gods will that I should see you any more in this life, beare it patiently, and with a heart like thy selfe.

First, I send you all the thankes which my heart can conceive, or my words can rehearse for your many travailes, and care taken for me, which though they have not taken effect as you wished, yet my debt to you is not the lesse: but I pay it I never shall in this world.

Secondly, I beseech you for the love you beare me living, do not hide your selfe many dayes, but by your travailes seeke to helpe your miserable fortunes and the right of your poor childe. Thy mourning cannot availe me, I am but dust.

Thirdly, you shall understand, that my land was conveyed *bona fide*⁵ to my childe; the writings were drawne⁶ at midsummer was twelve months, my honest cosen Brett can testify so much, and Dolberry too, can remember somewhat therein. And I trust my blood will quench their malice that have cruelly murdered me: and that they will not seek also to kill thee and thine with extreme poverty.

To what friend to direct thee I know not, for all mine have left me in the true time of tryall. And I perceive that my death was determined from the first day. Most sorry I am God knowes that being thus surprised with death I can leave you in no better estate. God is my witsse I meant you all my office of wines or all that I could have purchased by selling it, halfe of my stufte, and all my jewels, but some one for the boy,

original spelling

⁴ *Letter to His Wife* The following letter was written after Raleigh had been convicted of attempting to conspire against the Crown, and sent to the Tower of London; he believed he would be executed the next day. That did not happen, but he did remain imprisoned in the Tower for most of the rest of his life, and was finally executed in 1618.

⁵ *bona fide* Latin: in good faith.

⁶ *the writings were drawne* The documents were made out.

but God hath prevented all my resolutions. That great God that ruleth all in all, but if you live free from want, care for no more, for the rest is but vanity. Love God, and begin betimes to repose your selfe upon him, have travailed and wearied your thoughts over all sorts of worldly cogitations, you shall but sit downe by sorrowe in the end.

Teach your son also to love and feare God while he is yet young, that the feare of God may grow with him, and then God will be a husband to you, and a father to him; a husband and a father which cannot be taken from you.

Baily oweth me 200 pounds, and Adrian Gilbert 600. In Jersey I also have much owing me besides. The arrearages of the wines will pay my debts. And howsoever you do, solues sake,¹ pay all poore men. When I am gone, no doubt you shall be sought for my many, for the world thinkes that I was very rich. But take heed of the pretences of men, and their affections, for they last not but in honest and worthy men, and no greater misery can befall you in this life, than to become a prey, and afterwards to be despised. I speake not this (God knowes) to dissuade you from marriage, for it will be best for you, both in respect of the world and of God. As for me, I am no more yours, nor you mine, death hath cut us asunder: and God hath divided me from the world, and your from me.

Remember your poor childe for his father's sake, who chose you, and loved you in his happiest times. Get those letters (if it be possible) which I write to the Lords, wherein I sued for my life: God is my witsse it was for you and yours that I desired life, but it is true that I disdained my self for begging of it: for know it (my deare wife) that your son is the son of a true man, and one who in his owne respect despiseth death and all his misshapen & ugly formes.

I cannot write much, God he knows how hardly I steale time while others sleep, and it is also time that I should separate my thoughts from the world. Begg my dead body which living was denied thee; and either lay it at Sherburne (and if the land continue) or in Exeter-Church, by my Father and Mother; I can say no more, time and death call me away.

The everlasting God, powerfull, infinite, and omnipotent God, That Almighty God, who is goodnesse it selfe, the true life and true light keep thee and thine: have mercy on me, and teach me to forgive my persecutors and false accusers, and send us to meet in his glorious Kingdome. My deare wife farewell. Blesse my poore boy. Pray for me, and let my good God hold you both in his arms.

Written with the dying hand of sometimes thy Husband, but now lasse overthrowne.

Yours that was, but now not my own.

Walter Rawleigh

—1603

¹ *solues sake* So long as you are solvent.