



# A Voyage to Virginia in 1609: Two Narratives: Strachey's "True Reportory" and Jourdain's Discovery of the Bermudas

*William Strachey, Silvester Jourdain*

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To celebrate its fiftieth anniversary, the University of Virginia Press reissues its first-ever publication. The volume's two accounts of the 1609 wreck of a Jamestown-bound ship offer a gripping sea adventure from the earliest days of American colonization, but the dramatic events' even greater claim to fame is for serving as the inspiration for William Shakespeare's last major work, *The Tempest*.

William Strachey was one of six hundred passengers sailing to Jamestown as part of the largest expedition yet to Virginia. A mere week from their destination, the fleet's flagship, Sea Venture, met a tropical storm and wrecked on one of the islands of Bermuda. Strachey's story might have ended there, but the castaways survived on the tropical island for eleven months and—in an act of almost incomprehensible resourcefulness—used local cedarwood, along with the wreckage of their own ship, to construct two seaworthy boats and continue successfully on their voyage.

Strachey's frankness about his fellow travelers, mutinies on the island, and the wretched condition in which they finally found Jamestown kept his document from being officially published initially, but it circulated privately in London, where one of its early readers was William Shakespeare. The second narrative in this volume, by Strachey's shipmate Silvester Jourdain, covers the same episode but includes many fascinating details that Strachey's does not, including some that made their way into *The Tempest*.

Presented with modern spelling and punctuation, this great maritime drama and unforgettable firsthand look at the profound struggle to colonize America offers today's reader the raw material that inspired Shakespeare's masterpiece.



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