



## The First Recorded English Voyage to the West Indies

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- leitir, *an epistle*; acc. sing. litir, 78; pl. dat. leitrib, 65; leitreachaibh, 31, 42; acc. leitreacha, 65
- machtnadh, 43; *wonder, marvel*  
madhmughudh, 74; *act of overthrowing*, verbal noun of madmaighim  
madra, 23; *dog*; madradh, 6  
maér, 24; *mayor, steward*  
maighisdir, 60; *master, maighistir, Four Masters, 1599*  
maithes, *benefit*, gen. maithisi; 66  
marc-sluagh, 45; margsluagh, 35; *horse-host, cavalry*  
math, *good, a noble*; pl. dat. mathaibh, 2; a by-form of *maith*, pl. nom. maithi, *nobles*, 32; dat. maithib, 24  
mí-céillidhe, 14; *senseless*  
mí-dóchas, 16; *despair*  
mí medhón in foghmair, 84; *September*; lit. 'the mid-month of the autumn'  
mí medhón in ghemridh, 28; *December*; lit. 'the mid-month of the winter'  
misider, 78; *messenger*; from Mid.-Eng. *messenger*
- oidhre, *heir*; dat. pl. oidhredhaibh, 42  
oidhrecht, *heritage*; gen. oidhreachta, 54  
oirbert, 33; *prowess*  
ósiseal, 3; *privately*, O'Don. Gr. 268  
othráil, *an offering*; gen. sing. othrala, 19, 45; dat. othraíl, 24; a corruption of *offraíl*, founded on Lat. *offerre*
- papa, 1, 65, 66, 67, 90; *pope*; nom. dual, 67  
pósaim, *I espouse*; pret. sing. 3 do pos, 89; pret. part. pass. pósta, 10, 54, 89; *possta*, 78  
prímh-sollomun, 53; *chief festival*  
prinnsa, *prince*; dat. pl. prinnsadhaibh, 31  
príóir, 65; *prior*  
prisún, 47; *prison*  
procotóir, 82; *procurator, chief governor*
- rabudh, 22; *warning*; better *robudh*
- réidhighim, *I make smooth, clear*; 2nd fut. sing. 3 réidhiochadh, 19  
ridere, 5, 30; *a knight*; pl. dat. ridiribh, 24; gen. rideredh, 33; from A.S. *ridere*  
ríghacht, 1, 64; *kingship*  
ro-chródha, 5; *very hardy*  
ro-doiligh, 5; *very stern*  
saighdeóir, *sagittarius*, gen. pl., 69, 74  
sean-chaislén, 32; *an old fortalice*  
seírbhis, (*divine*) *service*; gen. seirbisi, 54  
sgeiathach, 32; *thorny*  
sgubher, 5, 19, 35, 74; *sguidher*, 12; *squire*, O. Fr. *escuyer*  
sídhhighim, *I make peace* (sídh); pret. sing. 3 do sídhaigh, 58  
smachtachadh, 66; *act of swaying, exercising authority* (smacht)  
socracht, *quiet*; gen. socrachta, 33; *socrachd, undisturbedness*, O'R.  
sódh (sógh?), *prosperity*; gen. soidh (leg. sóigh?), 33; sógh, *prosperity, good cheer*, O'Br.  
sporaim, *I spur*; pret. sing. 3 do spor, 69; denom. of *spor*, spur, and this from A.S. *spora, spura*  
stait, staid, 54; *statute*
- tabhartus, 48, 49, 67; *donation, grant*  
tarcuisne, 48; *disparagement*  
toice, 41; *wealth*  
toisc, 7; *an expedition*; toisc, O'Don. Gr., 3 *treabhadh menman*, 30, lit. 'husbanding of spirit,' seems here to mean *arrogance*  
troichtheach (from traigthech), *foot-soldier*, pl. gen., 5; acc. troichtheacha, 45
- údarass, 65; *authority*; deriv. of *údar*, 42; better *úghdar*; borrowed from Lat. *auctor*  
ullamh, *ready*; compar. úllma, 37; O. Ir. *ellam*  
umhla, 49, 50, 51 *homage*, gen. sing., 69  
urranta, 37; 'bold, daring, dauntless,' O'R.

### *The First Recorded English Voyage to the West Indies.*

OVIEDO, the official historian of the Indies, in his nineteenth book, published in 1535, narrates the visit of an English ship to Santo Domingo in 1527 (lib. xix. cap. 13). Herrera in his history, published in 1601, gives a different and much fuller account of the same event, which he assigns to the year 1519 (dec. ii. lib. v. cap. 3). Mr. Biddle in his *Memoir of Sebastian Cabot* (1831) and Professor Arber in the introduction to the *First Three English Books on America* accept Oviedo's date, but regard Herrera's narrative as more accurate; and both these English writers identify the English ship with the 'Mary of Guildford,' which sailed from the Thames on 20 May 1527 in company with the 'Samson,' left Plymouth on 10 June, lost her consort in a storm on the night of 1 July,

entered St. John's harbour, Newfoundland, on 3 August, and, according to Hakluyt's informants, returned to England about the beginning of October.<sup>1</sup>

There is an *a priori* difficulty about this identification. If the 'Mary of Guildford' returned from Newfoundland without fresh adventures, it is not very strange that her homeward voyage should have been left unrecorded, so that we hear nothing of her between 10 August 1527 (on which date one of her company, Albert de Prato, wrote to Wolsey<sup>2</sup> from St. John's, Newfoundland) and the beginning of October, when she reached England. But if she visited the West Indies on her homeward voyage, was fired upon from the castle of Santo Domingo, bartered with the Spaniards in Puerto Rico, and then got safe home with the news, it is very strange that there should be no record of such novel and exciting adventures of a king's ship. Hall in recording their departure says: 'If they speed well you shall heere of their return.' He would surely have redeemed this conditional promise if the issue of the voyage had been so remarkable.

A solution of the difficulty is suggested by a Spanish document earlier than Oviedo: this is a despatch sent from Puerto Rico to Santo Domingo immediately after the first appearance of the English ship. The greater part of Herrera's narrative is an inaccurate abridgment of this document. Both on account of this inaccuracy and on account of some chronological and linguistic difficulties it seems best to give this contemporary account of the first English voyage to the West Indies in the original Spanish, as it appears in the thirty-seventh volume of the *Documentos inéditos relativos á las Posesiones Españolas en América*.

*Relación de una náu ynglesa questobo en la Ysla de la Mona e yda para la Española.*

Sancto Domingo: Noviembre 19 de 1528.

Estando el Martes pasado, que se contaron diez e nueve dias deste presente mes de Noviembre, cargando la Caravela de Cacébe, allegó una náu de duscientos e cincuenta toneles de porte, de tres gavias, y creyendo quera náu *Despaña* salió con su batel á ella, e ellos salieron con una pinaca que trayan, que bogaba veinte e cinco o treinta remos, y venian en ella fasta veinte e cinco ombres con el Maestre de la dicha náu, el qual venia por Maestre e Capitan, e todos venian armados de corseletes e cercos e frechas e algunas ballestas; e dos lombardas en la próa con sus

<sup>1</sup> Hall, *Chronicle*, anno 1527; Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, vol. iii. p. 108; Hakluyt, vol. iii. p. 167 (ed. 1809). Hakluyt says one of the ships was named the *Dominus Vobiscum*, but there can be no doubt that he is speaking of the expedition mentioned by Grafton and Purchas. The dates and all the circumstances agree. Mr. Biddle points out how easily the error of name may have arisen; but we need not even suppose any error, for the ship may have changed her name, like Drake's 'Pelican.'

<sup>2</sup> Purchas, *loc. cit.*

mecheros encendidos; los quales llegados á ellos, el les preguntó de qué tierra eran, e dixeronle queran yngleses de dentro de la Cibdad de Londres, e que la náó era del Rey de Ynglaterra preguntéles que venían a buscar en estas partes, dixéron, quel Rey abia armado aquella Náó, e otra para yr a descubrir la tierra del gran Can, e que yendo les dió un temporal en el camino que se perdió la una de la otra, por manera que nunca más la abian visto; e aquellos syguieron su viaxe e dieron en un Mar elado, e que fallaban yslas grandes de yelo, e non pudiendo por ellas pasar, tomaron otra derrota e dieron en otra Mar caliente, como una caldera quando ierve con agua; e por miedo que aquel agua non les derretiese la pez de la náó, se volvieron e vynieron a reconocer a los vasallos, donde fallaron bien cinquenta naós castellanas e francesas e portuguesas, pescando, e que alli seyeron salir en tierra por tomar lengua de los yndios, e saliendo en tierra les mataron los yndios al Piloto, el qual dixeron quera piamontés de nacion; y de allí partieron e vynieron la Costa de la tierra *Nueva*, donde fué a poblar Ayllon, quatruscientas leguas, e más de allí; atravesaron y vynieron a reconocer a esta Ysla de Sant Xoan; y preguntádoles que qué buscaban en estas yslas, dixéron que querían ver estas yslas para dar razon dellas al Rey de Ynglaterra, e vistas, cargar de brasil, y volverse. E preguntaron por la derrota de Sancto Domingo, e para el puerto, e quién gobernaba la Ysla, que querian yr allá a vella, e se le dixo todo. Ellos lo posieron por memoria, e el Maestre de la náó ynglesa rogó a Xinés Navarro que fuese a ver su náó, el qual fué e la vido toda, e que non traía en ella otra cosa sinon vino e farina e cosas de provysion e algunas cosas de resgates de paños e lienzos, e otras cosas, e muncha artyllería e buena; e que traen carpinteros e erreros e fragüa, e otros ofyciales e aparexo de faser otros navíos si tobiesen dello necesidad; e un orno donde cuezen pan; e que toda la xente quen la náó abía, serían fasta sesenta personas. Disce quel Maestre de la náó preguntó, si sabía leer en latin ó en Romance; porque le queria mostrar la yntencion que traía del Rey de Ynglaterra, e como non sabia leer non la vido; e quel Maestre e fasta e veinte e cinco o treinta ombres, salieron en tierra a *La Mona*, e estobieron allí fasta el Miércoles en la tarde; e salieron todos armados, que embarcaron para Sancto Domingo; e quel Xueves de mañana, tirando dos tiros de lombarda e tocando una trompeta bastarda que traían, se fycieron a la vela e fueron la vía de *Sancto Domingo*, fasta que los perdieron de vista, e el dicho Xinés Navarro estobo en *La Mona*, fasta el Viernes que se vino a esta Ysla.

Este treslado se sacó del orexinal que se ymbió a esta Real Abdyencia, de la *Ysla de Sant Xoan*, el qual se obo de un Maestre de una caravela questaba en *La Ysla de la Mona* al tiempo que la náó ynglesa pasó por allí de caminar para este Puerto de *Sancto Domingo*. DIEGO CABALLO.

This document, translated into English, runs as follows:—

*Account of an English Ship which visited the Island of La Mona (Monkey Island) and departed for La Española.*

Sancto Domingo: November 19, 1528.

On Tuesday last, the nineteenth day of this present month of November, as the caravel was loading with cassava, there came a ship of 250 tons burden, of three masts, and thinking that it was a ship

of Spain he went out in his boat to her ; and they put out with a pinnace which they had with them, which was rowed by twenty-five or thirty oars, and there came in the pinnace about twenty-five men with the master of the said ship, who came as master and captain, and all the men came armed with corslets and shields and arrows and some cross-bows, and two lombards in the prow with their matches kindled ; and when they met he asked them of what country they were ; and they said that they were English from within the city of London,<sup>3</sup> and that the ship was of the king of England. I asked them what they came to seek in these parts : they said that the king had fitted out this ship and another to go and discover the land of the great Khan, and that as they went a storm fell upon them in the way, that one (ship) was lost to the other, so that they never saw her again ; and that they pursued their voyage and came to a frozen sea and found great islands of ice, and not being able to pass by them they took another direction and came to another sea (which was) hot, like a kettle when it boils with water ; and for fear lest that water should melt the pitch of their ship they turned about and went to explore Los Bacalaos (the cod-fishery coasts), where they found full fifty ships, Castilian, Portuguese, and French, fishing ; and that there they proceeded to land in order to have speech of the Indians, and as they landed the Indians killed their pilot,<sup>4</sup> who they said was Piedmontese by nation ; and they departed from there and came (along)<sup>5</sup> the coast of La Tierra Nueva (i.e. the east coast of North America), where Ayllon<sup>6</sup> went to colonise, four hundred leagues and more ;<sup>7</sup> from there they crossed over and came to explore this island of San Juan (i.e. Puerto Rico) ; and when it was asked them what they sought in these islands they said that they desired to see these islands in order to give an account of them to the king of England, and after seeing them to load with brazil wood and return. And they asked for the direction of Santo Domingo, and for the port, and who was governor of the island, for they desired to go thither to see it, and everything was told to them. They took note of it, and the master of the English ship asked Ginés Navarro to go and see his ship ; and he went and saw all the ship, and that he (the Englishman) carried in her nothing but wine and flour and matters of provision and some articles for barter of cloth and linen, and other things, and much good artillery, and that they carry carpenters and smiths and a forge, and other workmen and apparatus to make other ships if they should have need of them ; and an oven where they bake

<sup>3</sup> This detail agrees with Hall, who says : 'The king sent two fayre ships, well manned and well vitayled, having in them divers cunning men, to seeke strange regions. Forth they set out of the Thamys, the xx day of May, if they speed well you shall heree at their returne.'

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Biddle thinks this was the famous Florentine Verazzano, who on his last voyage, some time after 1524, according to Ramusio, was killed and eaten by savages. Mr. J. W. Jones, in his edition of Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages*, shows that the identification is improbable (Hakluyt Soc. Publications).

<sup>5</sup> I read 'por la costa.'

<sup>6</sup> The licentiate Vasquez de Ayllón made a voyage of discovery to 'Florida' in 1524 and explored the region of 'Chicora' (Pet. Martyr, dec. viii. cap. 2). He died in October 1526 in the course of an attempt to plant a colony on the North American coast (Winsor, *Critical and Narrative History*, vol. ii.).

<sup>7</sup> This is an obvious correction of the punctuation.

bread; and that all the men who were in the ship would be about sixty persons. He says that the master of the ship asked him whether he could read Latin or Spanish, because he desired to show him the design (instruction?) which he carried from the king of England; and since he knew not how to read he did not see it; and that the master and about five-and-twenty or thirty men landed on La Mona, and remained there till Wednesday in the afternoon; and they all went out (or landed) armed,<sup>8</sup> that they embarked for Santo Domingo; and that on Thursday in the morning, firing two shots of a lombard and playing on a bastard trumpet which they had with them, they set sail and went in the direction of Santo Domingo, until they lost them from sight, and the said Ginés Navarro remained at La Mona till Friday, when he came to this island (i.e. Puerto Rico).

This copy was taken from the original, which was sent to this Royal Audience (of Santo Domingo) from the island of San Juan (Puerto Rico), which original was had from (the mouth of) a master of a caravel which was at the island of La Mona at the time when the English ship went thither on its way to this port of Santo Domingo.

DIEGO CABALLO.

Notwithstanding the crooked grammar and the queer changes of person and tense, this document, if carefully examined, explains itself. I interpret it as follows: Ginés Navarro, an illiterate skipper, was taking cargo on Tuesday, 19 Nov. 1527, at the island of La Mona (Monkey Island), situated between Puerto Rico and La Española, when an English ship arrived and stayed till Thursday the 21st, on which date she sailed for Santo Domingo. On Friday the 22nd Navarro sailed to Puerto Rico and related all that he had seen and heard. Some official not very skilful with the pen wrote down his story, apparently almost in Navarro's own words, but with some grammatical confusion, Navarro appearing first as *he*, then as *I*, and lastly as *Ginés Navarro*. The story is told not in the order which would be most lucid to the reader, but in the order most natural to the speaker: having just arrived from La Mona, he thinks it superfluous to mention that place, and he begins with the matter which is most important to him: 'the caravel was loading with cassava.' The document so written in Puerto Rico was sent, undated, to Santo Domingo: a copy of it was there made by Diego Caballo, and this copy was sent, also undated, to Spain. The official who received it in Spain seems to have inserted the date, taking the words *Noviembre 19* from the first line of the letter and adding the current year in which the letter reached Spain, 1528. It must be remembered that in Spanish despatches of that time the date is usually given not separately at the beginning, but in the body of the document at the end. If *Noviembre 19 de 1528* is the genuine date of the copy made at Santo Domingo, then this copy was made for despatch to Spain exactly a year after the

<sup>8</sup> There is some confusion or omission here.

occurrence; for the document relates what happened on 19, 20, 21, and 22 Nov. 1527. The 19th Nov. fell upon a Tuesday in 1527: this fact, coupled with the testimony of Oviedo, fixes the date with practical certainty. It is worth noting that Oviedo's wife and children were living at Santo Domingo in 1527: he himself visited the place in 1530 on his way from Central America to Spain; and in January 1533 he succeeded Francisco de Tapia as alcaide of the fortress of Santo Domingo, in which place he wrote this part of his history: he can scarcely be mistaken as to the year.

As far as Navarro is concerned the English ship disappears when on Thursday 21 Nov., blowing her trumpet and firing her guns, she sailed away in the direction of Santo Domingo, until 'they lost them from sight.' But we know from Oviedo that she visited Santo Domingo, and being inhospitably received sailed eastwards again past La Mona to Puerto Rico. Oviedo's account is as follows:—

In the year 1527<sup>9</sup> an English corsair, under pretext that he was going to discover, came with a great ship in the direction of Brazil on the coast of Tierra Firme,<sup>10</sup> and from there crossed over to this Isla Española and came near to the mouth of the port of this city of Santo Domingo; and sent his boat fully manned and asked leave to enter here, saying that he came with merchandise and desiring to treat; and on the instant the alcaide Francisco de Tapia commanded a shot to be fired at the ship, which was coming straight to the port. And when the English saw this they retired outside, and those in the boat turned and went after their ship. And in truth the alcaide made a mistake in that which he did, for supposing he (the Englishman) had come in armed, he could not have got out (*or* landed?) against the will of this city and of this castle. Accordingly, seeing the reception that was being made for them, they drew off in the direction of the island of San Juan (i.e. Puerto Rico), and having entered into the bay of San German they had speech with the people of that town and begged for provisions, complaining of the people of this town (Santo Domingo), saying that they came not to annoy but to treat with their money and merchandise, if they would receive them; and some provisions were given to them, and their ship gave in payment pewter and other things, and went on her way in the direction of Europe, where it is supposed that she never arrived, because no news was ever had of this ship.<sup>11</sup>

The story which Navarro heard and repeated, that the ship came from North America, is far more probable than Oviedo's

<sup>9</sup> Ramusio, in his Italian translation of Oviedo, by a mistake of one figure puts this event in the year 1517. Hakluyt, quoting from Ramusio, repeats this error, and naturally, but erroneously, supposes that Sebastian Cabot and Sir Thomas Pert, who sailed to Newfoundland in 1516, continued their voyage to the West Indies.

<sup>10</sup> This is a literal translation, but I do not think it represents Oviedo's meaning. He was probably confused in his mind by the geographical error which is presently explained.

<sup>11</sup> Oviedo, *Hist. Ind.* lib. xix. cap. 13.

account that she came from South America: the communication of the Englishman with the shore at Santo Domingo was brief and violently interrupted: he possibly used the word *Tierra Firme* in the general sense of *mainland*, not knowing that it was already becoming the accepted geographical term for the more familiar southern lands: and when he explained that he came 'for brazil' he was probably supposed to be talking of Brazil. It must be remembered that Ginés Navarro, although illiterate, was a sailor: he would clearly understand, and would therefore remember correctly, the story told by the Englishman. Furthermore his narrative is contemporary, whereas Oviedo probably gathered the story in Santo Domingo some years after the event.

Herrera's account need not be quoted: it is a careless abridgment and fusion of the two passages already given, an inaccurate compilation with the spelling corrected and the grammar smoothed out. He makes the date 1519, having probably misread the first line of Navarro's account as *November in the year nineteen*. He omits the words *donde fué á poblar Ayllon*, which are inconsistent with this date, and he substitutes for them an inventive reminiscence of Peter Martyr's account of Ayllon's exploration in 1524, saying that the Englishmen 'coasted (from the Baccalaos) as far as the river Chicora.' He omits the interesting but rather surprising detail about the instructions written in Latin and Spanish, a detail which may be an error of the illiterate Navarro, but may very probably be correct, seeing that the English captain seems to have spoken Spanish. He places the first arrival of the English ship and the interview with Navarro not at La Mona, but in Puerto Rico, a mistake which most readers would probably make on a first cursory perusal of Navarro's account. This mistake naturally confuses the rest of Herrera's narrative; <sup>12</sup> thus he makes the English ship spend two days at Santo Domingo, inconsistently adding the fact, which is evidently true, that the alcaide of the castle immediately on the arrival of the ship sent to the Audience to ask for orders, and receiving no reply fired on the ship, which thereupon speedily recalled her boat and put to sea. In consequence of this hasty action the alcaide, says Herrera, was imprisoned by the Oidores. Oviedo not unnaturally omits a detail so disparaging to the memory of his predecessor and to the dignity of his own office.

Mr. Biddle and Professor Arber, although probably mistaken as to the precise identification, are doubtless right in connecting this event with the despatch of two ships by Henry VIII, 'having in them divers cunning men to seek strange regions,' which sailed

<sup>12</sup> The incautious reader might possibly gather from Mr. Biddle's account (p. 111), which is taken from Herrera, that *San Juan* (i.e. Puerto Rico) means St. John's in Newfoundland, and that Navarro was carried off by the English skipper from Newfoundland to Santo Domingo, to show him the way.

from the Thames on May 20th, 1527. Hakluyt was told—long afterwards, it is true—by Sir M. Frobisher and Richard Allen that ‘sayling very farre Northwestward one of the ships was cast away as it entered into a dangerous gulph between the North part of Newfoundland and . . . Meta Iognita. The other ship returned home about the beginning of October of the yere aforesayd’—that is to say, about six weeks before the appearance of the English ship in the West Indies.

John Rut, captain of the ‘Mary of Guildford,’ wrote a letter or report<sup>13</sup> to Henry VIII, dated at St. John’s, Newfoundland, on Aug. 3rd, 1527: the superscription, as Purchas calls it, runs thus:—

Master Grube’s two ships departed from Plymouth the 10th day of June, and arrived<sup>14</sup> in the New-found land in a good Harbour, called Cape de Bas, the 21st day of July: and after we had left the sight of Selle (Scilly) we had never sight of any land till we had sight of Cape de Bas.

The document is in ‘bad English and worse writing,’ as Purchas says; but one sentence is clear.

The ‘Samson’ and wee kept company till within two days before we met with all the Islands of ice, that was the first day of July at night, and there arose a great and a marvailous great storme and much foule weather; I trust in Almighty Jesu to heare good newes of her.

The rest of the paper relates confusedly how the ‘Mary of Guildford’ went north to latitude 53° and then came south along the mainland (which she reached in latitude 52°), and after watering at Cape de Bas ‘departed toward the Southward to seeke our fellow,’ and on August 3rd entered the harbour of St. John’s and found ‘eleven saile of Normans and one Britain (Breton) and two Portugall barkes, and all a-fishing.’ That she was still at St. John’s on August 10th we know from the Latin version of Rut’s report, which was made by Albert de Prato on that day.<sup>15</sup> Supposing that she started on the return journey about a fortnight later, she would probably reach England about the beginning of October. Professor Arber has found that John Rut, still commanding the ‘Mary of Guildford,’ was carrying wine from Bordeaux for Henry VIII in the latter part of 1528.

Another point suggests itself. John Rut with his ‘bad English and worse writing,’ the author of this confused, contradictory report, seems unlike the English captain who described his voyage

<sup>13</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, vol. iii. p. 108.

<sup>14</sup> He means that one of them arrived, as he goes on to explain.

<sup>15</sup> Purchas calls these documents letters; but it is not evident how they were sent or intended to be sent to England: if by a homeward-bound Norman boat, the mode of despatch would surely have been mentioned in the letters. It seems more probable that Rut on reaching St. John’s wrote a report of his voyage to be presented to the king on his return. What Purchas calls the superscription is not an endorsement by the receiver, but a summary of contents by the writer, being expressed in the first person.

to Navarro, apparently speaking Spanish. Is it too hazardous a surmise that John Rut was only second in command, and that his superior officer,<sup>16</sup> the commander of the whole expedition, was the captain of the other ship, which visited the Antilles?

However this may be, it seems reasonable to suppose that the 'Samson,' which parted company with the 'Mary of Guildford' on July 1st, was the English ship which appeared at La Mona on November 19th, when her captain described to Ginés Navarro the separation from his consort and his own subsequent adventures. After she sailed away northeastwards from the Antilles 'no news was ever heard of this ship,' as Oviedo says: it would naturally be supposed in England that she had perished in the 'marvailous great storme' in which her consort lost sight of her.

It is then a probable conclusion that the 'Mary of Guildford,' commander John Rut, had an uneventful voyage home from Newfoundland in the course of September 1527, and that her consort, the 'Samson,' commander unknown, after an adventurous voyage southward, northward, and then southward again, visited the Antilles in the last part of November of the same year, and sailing homewards across the Atlantic in December was lost with all hands. Thus the earliest English voyage to the West Indies was recorded in the archives of Spain, but not in those of England.

The precise definition of events, however interesting, has little historical importance without some examination of the meaning and motive of action. Hall says that the ships were sent 'to seeke strange regions;' Hakluyt says they were sent 'to discover the north parts;' the captain of the 'Samson' told Navarro that they had been sent 'to discover the land of the great Khan.' These statements all agree together, and the story of the expedition agrees with them: Hakluyt says 'they sayled very farre north-westward.' The 'Mary of Guildford' reached latitude 53°, and only turned south to Newfoundland when the 'Ilands of ice' stopped her. They were evidently sent to continue the quest of Cabot for a westerly route to the far east in northern latitudes—in fact, to search for a north-west passage. Rut, it is true, in his report of August 3rd, vaguely speaks of still attempting to reach 'that Ilands that we were commanded,' and Mr. Biddle thinks that this means the West Indies; but it seems far more probable that 'that Ilands' means the region of furthest Asia, the 'islands' of Cathay and Cipango, or some spice isles still to be discovered. It may be that John Rut made another effort to circumvent the mainland before he turned homewards on the approach of autumn. But in any case the attempt to rival in northern latitudes the

<sup>16</sup> There is a strong temptation to suppose that Master Grube was the captain of the 'Samson;' but this is only a guess.

achievement of Magellan in the south was obviously the main object of the expedition.

This view does not, however, exclude a secondary or alternative design. The commander of the 'Samson' may well have had general instructions, in case of failure in this first design, to explore the lands to the south. These alternative orders would not appear in those instructions from the king of England which he was so ready to show. It can hardly have been by accident that, avoiding the Great Antilles which lay directly in his route, the Englishman first appeared at the insignificant island of La Mona and there acquired the information he needed. Only sailing by a chart could he have passed so accurately between La Española and Puerto Rico; the Piedmontese pilot must have possessed and left behind him a chart of the West Indies. Too much stress must not be laid upon the Englishman's prompt explanation that he came for a cargo of brazil wood, although this speech at least indicates readiness in respect of commercial geography; but his knowledge of Spanish and the instructions written in Spanish ready to be shown to all inquirers are more significant. It may well be that King Henry VIII shared the curiosity of the king of France, who desired to see the testament of Adam, in order that he might be assured that the whole of the new world was assigned to His Catholic Majesty.

In any case, whether the expedition aimed exclusively at the north-west passage or not, the whole story serves to remind us that all the English experiments in westward discovery and plantation, from the work of John Cabot in 1497 to that of the Virginia company in 1607, were undertaken in imitation and rivalry of Spanish and Portuguese enterprise.<sup>17</sup> F. A. KIRKPATRICK.

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*James VI and Rome.*

THE following letter, which has only recently come to light, possesses some interest in relation to the dealings of James VI with Rome, when he was intent upon securing catholic support for his succession to the English crown. How far he committed himself in this dangerous policy is a matter of doubt. In 1608 a stir was made by the discovery of a letter said to have been written by him to Clement VIII in 1599, with the object of procuring a

<sup>17</sup> Mr. Biddle, who first drew attention to the passage in Purchas containing John Rut's report, is the true author of this investigation. The original Spanish despatch had not been published in his time: if he had seen it he would, I doubt not, have modified his conclusion. The present paper is merely an emendation of an error which at that time was unavoidable.