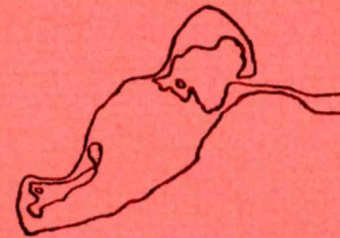


Our Enchanted Island

By

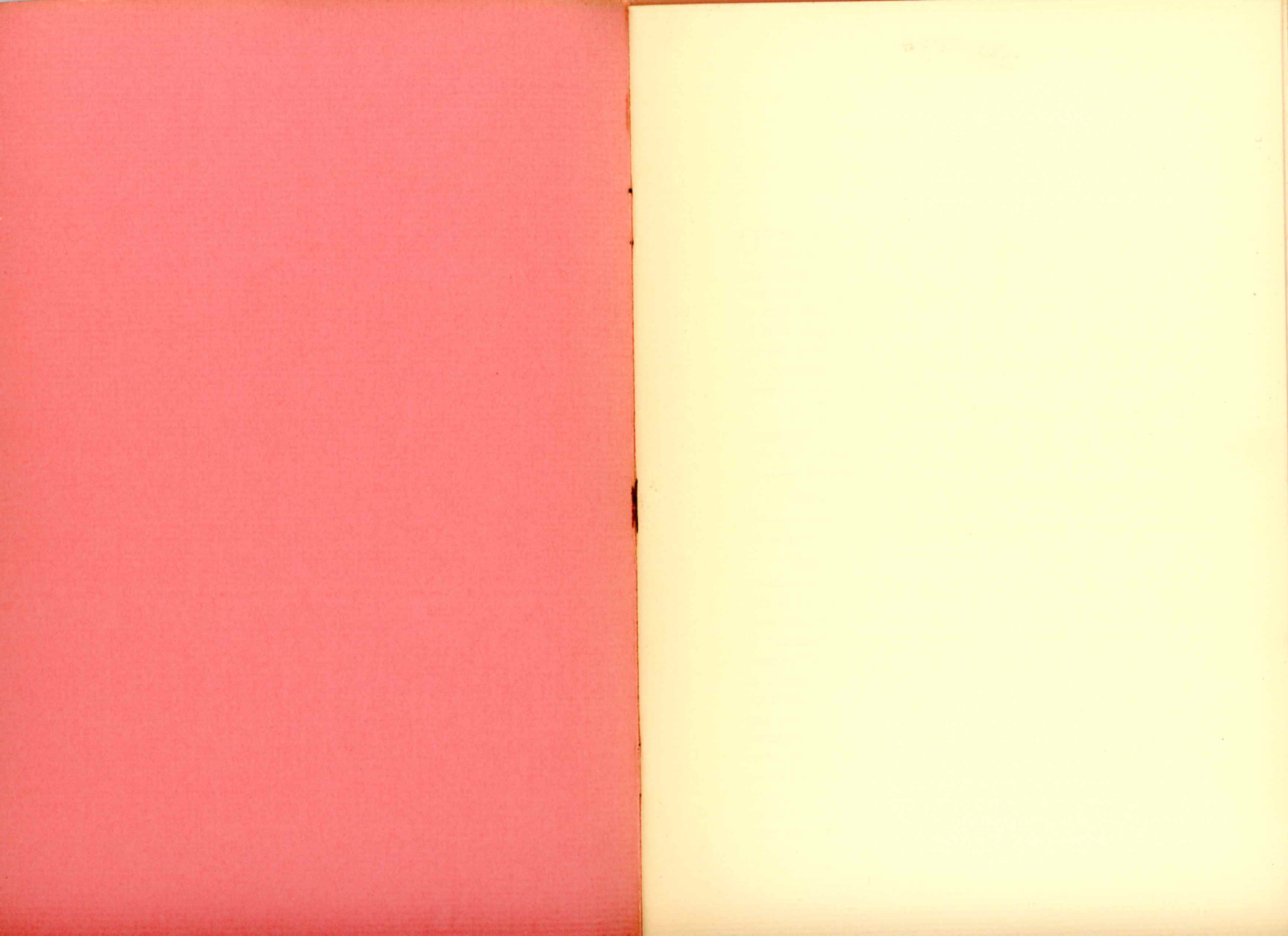
Marshall Shepard



Dukes County Historical Society

Edgartown, Massachusetts

1940



OUR ENCHANTED ISLAND

BY MARSHALL SHEPARD

ON SEPTEMBER FIRST, 1903, the County of Dukes County, Massachusetts, was privileged to be the scene of a most important celebration. The occasion was the unveiling of a memorial to Bartholomew Gosnold and his companions, who in 1602, had erected the first English habitation on the shores of New England. Three hundred and one years had therefore passed since that intrepid explorer, in building his little fort on "Elizabeth's Island", had rolled securely into place the cornerstone of New England's history.

To this island which Gosnold himself had named (now inappropriately called Cuttyhunk) there then journeyed the sons and daughters of the New World to do him honor and proclaim his worth.

There in that very spot where Gosnold piled protecting stones, a wondrous tower of sun-kissed rock arose to perpetuate his memory and New England's birth.

Many unable to attend the celebration that day had recourse to imaginary voyages along the coast that Gosnold had so long ago discovered. Need we picture their experiences? How their visionary barks were wrecked upon the gaping reefs of "Tucker's Terror" and "Shoal Hope", or how, at last, they reached "Martha's Vineyard" where "vines in more plenty than in France" decided them to remain forever? But enough of their musings. Let us rather put sails to our own imaginations and come to a port where men were piloting their way amid innumerable books and documents, that the world might become better acquainted with this master mariner. Let us pause to read the interesting paper one of them considerably places in our hands. I refer to Dr. Edward Everett Hale who needs no introduction here and whose following words delightfully recall him.

In 1902 Dr. Hale addressed The American Antiquarian Society as follows:

"Three years ago I was preparing for a lecture on Gosnold, which I delivered before the Lowell Institute. I read again with great interest the four reports, which we have in the twenty-eighth volume of the Massachusetts Historical Society's collections of Gosnold's voyage of 1602. I had often read them before.

But on this occasion when I came to the cutting of the sassafras logs by the "Gentlemen Adventurers", I could not but recall a fifth writer of Elizabeth's time who spoke of the cutting of logs (undoubtedly of sassafras). I took down my 'Tempest' and read the stage directions which represent Ferdinand entering Prospero's cave "bearing a log".

If you recollect, the conversation which follows has immediate reference to the hardship of this cutting of logs.

FERDINAND—" . . . I must remove
some thousands of these logs and pile them up . . ."

MIRANDA—"I would the lightning had
Burnt up those logs . . .

If you will sit down
I'll bear your logs the while,
Pray give me that, I'll carry it
to the pile."

And in the other group of performers,

CALIBAN—(Enter Caliban with a burden of wood)
"Thou mayest brain him . . .
with a log."

And again,
"I'll get thee wood enough."

And again,
"Here comes a spirit of his, and to
torment me
For bringing wood in slowly."

This suggestion of a bit of local color in the 'Tempest' set me at once re-reading the four narratives of Cuttyhunk, with reference to Shakespere's local knowledge of that voyage of Gosnold's. Any person who gave the account of the Gosnold voyage in brief would say that "Here was a small island, heavily wooded, with little brooks of fresh water where the ship could supply itself." He would describe the arrival of the small vessel in one of those coves from which two parties of men go out, one of whom contracted a jealousy for the other,—the "Gentlemen Adventurers" and the seamen. What the "Gentlemen Adventurers", who write our accounts, say of the seamen is greatly to their discredit. These parties go to work separately, and the gentlemen cut sassafras logs for the return cargo. They are lost out at night in a storm. They are obliged to feed on the products of the island, which prove to be mussels from the streams, pig-nuts dug from the ground and scamels or sea-mews from the rocks. In their description of the island they speak of it as a small island, heavily wooded, with little brooks of fresh water.

Now, when you turn to Shakespere, you find that the vessel arrives at one of the coves of an island after the tempest, from which two parties straggle off into the island, which is small and heavily wooded, with little brooks of fresh water. One of these parties is kept out in the woods in a storm of thunder and lightning, and the food of the island appears in what Caliban says to the sailors when he is trying to persuade them to give him more liquor:—"I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries; with my long nails I'll dig thee pig-nuts, show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how to snare the nimble marmoset. I'll bring thee to clustering filberts; I'll get thee young sea-mews from the rock".

This parallel was so close that I immediately looked up the relation of Gosnold's voyage to Shakespere and the 'Tempest'.

It appears at once that the 'Concord', Gosnold's vessel,

was sent out by the Earl of Southampton, Shakespere's patron. The Earl of Southampton was responsible for the whole thing. Immediately on their return to England, having quarreled with each other, all parties must have had to proceed to Southampton's house in London and tell their story. Now observe, that William Shakespere is on Southampton's staff at that moment, probably living with him, and that he is contemplating, already, probably writing the 'Tempest'. I think the critics now all unite in saying that the date of the production of the 'Tempest' is 1603. This corresponds exactly with the time of Gosnold's return. In Southampton's house, Shakespere must have met the drunken sailors on the one side, and the "Gentlemen Adventurers" on the other. He heard there, possibly for the first time, of mussels from the rocks, of pig-nuts, of scamels from the rocks, whatever they were, and the rest of the bill of fare of the island. From the narrative he learned "How lush and lusty the grass looks, how green." "Meadows very large and full of green grass" is Brereton's phrase. And a trace of the unfortunate quarrel between the "Gentlemen Adventurers" and the seamen runs all through the play. One doesn't wonder, indeed, that "Gentlemen Adventurers" who camped out for the first time in the Cuttyhunk woods, were able to supply Shakespere with some suggestions as to Calibans with long nails, as to devils, and as to Ariels.

In brief, I think there can be no doubt that the local coloring of the 'Tempest' is in part derived from the narrative of Gosnold's adventures. This conviction gave me courage to say, before an audience of Lowell Lectures, that we have a right to claim Miranda as a Massachusetts girl.

Here are six or eight of the most obvious of the parallels between the accounts of Gosnold, Archer, and Brereton, on the one side, and Mr. William Shakespere, Caliban, Prospero, and Ferdinand on the other.

BRERETON'S BILL OF FARE:—

"... fowls which breed . .

on low trees about this lake,

whose young ones . . . we ate
at our pleasure."

"also great store of ground nuts,
forty on a string,—which nuts we found
as good as potatoes. Also divers sort
of shell-fish, as mussels . . . etc."

BRERETON'S SCENERY:—

"Lakes of fresh water . . . Meadows
very large and full of green
grass."

SHAKESPERE:—

"How lush and lusty the grass
looks, how green."

Shakespere speaks of a 'marmoset' never in any other play. Did one of Southampton's seamen bring home a flying squirrel?

GOSNOLD'S BILL OF FARE:—

"Stearnes, geese and divers other birds which did breed
upon the cliffs, being sandy with some stones,—and had young."

CALIBAN'S:—

"I'll get thee young sea-mews
(scamels) from the rock."

GOSNOLD'S:—

"... herbs and roots and
ground nuts . . . mussel-shells . .
ground nuts again."

PROSPERO TO FERDINAND:—

"Thy food shall be the fresh-
brook mussels,—roots and herbs."

GOSNOLD'S PARTY:—

"Driven to lie all night in the woods—
weather somewhat rainy . . ." "Solaced ourselves
with alexander,—ground nuts and tobacco."

'TEMPEST', STAGE DIRECTION:—

"A noise of thunder is heard."

"The storm is come again."

GOSNOLD'S ISLAND:—

"Full of oaks . . . Hazel-nut
trees, . . . fowls on low trees
whose young ones we took and ate
at pleasure, . . . "great store of
ground nuts."

CALIBAN AS ABOVE:—

"Sea-mews from the cliffs" and
"Dig thee pig-nuts with my long nails.
I will bring thee where crabs grow"—
not crab apples as the critics supposed,
but shell-fish, as we learn from Gosnold's
voyage: "Lobsters, crabs, and mussels."

FROM ARCHER'S LIST:—

"Strawberries, red and white raspberries,
gooseberries, whortleberries."

CALIBAN:—

"I'll show thee the best springs. I'll
pluck thee berries. I'll fish for thee, and
get thee wood enough."

It is to be observed also, that the only trees mentioned
in the 'Tempest' are oak, pine, and cedar.

In closing this paper I may say personally that my own
convictions that Shakespeare worked from close conversation
with the people from the 'Concord' is confirmed by the
observation that the 'Tempest' does not contain one tropical
allusion. Here was Shakespeare who must have met Hawkins
and Drake and many adventurers, from the Gulf of Mexico and
tropical seas. He is describing an island which is in
communication with the 'next Bermoothes'. Yet there is no
allusion to an orange, a banana, a yam or a potato, a feather
cloak or a palm tree, or a pineapple, or a monkey, or a parrot,

or anything else which refers to the Gulf of Mexico, or to the
tropics. Does not this seem as if he meant that the local color
of the 'Tempest' should be that which was suggested by the
'Gentlemen Adventurers' and the seamen who were talking of
Cuttyhunk, its climate and its productions, as they told
travelers' stories up and down in London?"

Shades of Prospero! Why had it taken two hundred
and ninety-two years to find these sources of "The Tempest"?
Could it have been that one of Ariel's magic spells was
responsible for withholding these matters from us until Gosnold
had been fittingly honored? Had Dr. Hale taken down, as it
were, some telepathic receiver in time to hear the spirits of
Shakespeare and Gosnold conversing? If indeed, something of
this kind did not take place, what chance would there be of
having Dr. Hale's theory in the world today? Surmise and
conjecture how we will, it is pleasant to find our questions so
simply answered by that "good old lord, Gonzalo", with whom
we most readily agree that "All . . . wonder and amazement
inhabits here."

When Sir Walter Raleigh ran his finger over that keen
blade which was to yield him the supreme discovery, with what
satisfaction must he have reflected that he had settled the New
World. We are here today because Raleigh made it possible.
Without a martyred Raleigh there would have been no Virginia,
and with no Virginia there would have been no "Mayflower".
Neither, indeed would Shakespeare have written "The Tempest",
for, here again, it was the settling of the New World which
both inspired and staged his play.

Sir Sidney Lee* has written that, "In 'The Tempest'
Shakespeare accepted two main cues, one from pre-existing
romantic literature and the other from current reports of
contemporary adventure." His observations regarding these
reports and adventures are as follows:

"In the summer of 1609 a fleet bound for the new
plantation of Jamestown in Virginia, under command of Sir

*"A Life of William Shakespeare" by Sir Sidney Lee—1916 Edition

George Somers, was overtaken by a storm off the West Indies, and the Admiral's ship, the 'Sea Venture' was driven on the coast of the hitherto unknown Bermuda Isles. There they remained ten months, pleasurably impressed by the mild beauty of the climate, but sorely tried by the hogs which overran the island and by mysterious noises which led them to imagine that spirits and devils had made the island their home. Somers and his men were given up for lost, but they escaped from Bermuda in two boats of cedar to Virginia in May, 1610, and the news of their adventure and of their safety was carried to England by some of the seamen in September, 1610. The sailors' arrival created vast public excitement in London. At least five accounts were soon published of the shipwreck and of the mysterious island, previously uninhabited by man, which had proved the salvation of the expedition.

'A Discovery of the Bermudas, otherwise called the Isle of Divels', written by Sylvester Jourdain or Jourdan, one of the survivors, appeared as early as October. A second pamphlet describing the disaster was issued by the Council of the Virginia Company in December, and a third by one of the leaders of the expedition, Sir Thomas Gates. Shakespeare, who mentions the 'still vexed Bermoothes', incorporated in 'The Tempest' many hints from Jourdain, Gates, and other pamphleteers. The references to the gentle climate of the island on which Prospero is cast away, and to the spirits and devils that infested it, seem to render unquestionable its identification with the newly discovered Bermudas.

There is no reasonable ground for disputing that the catastrophe around which the plot of 'The Tempest' revolves was suggested by the casting away, in a terrific storm, on the rocky Atlantic coast, of the ship bound in 1609 for the new settlement of Jamestown.

Prospero's uninhabited island reflects most of the features which the shipwrecked sailors on this Virginian voyage assigned to their involuntary asylum, where they imagined themselves to be brought face to face with the elementary forces of Nature."

That these five accounts yielded "The Tempest" invaluable material there is no question, but that these documents comprised the limit of Shakespeare's knowledge of the New World is incredible.

The reply made by Ariel to Prospero (Act I, Sc. II, 266)* reporting his care of the King's ship after the storm is suggestive of New World events previous to those connected with the Bermudas.

Ariel's words will be recalled as follows:

"Safely in harbour

Is the King's shippe, in the deepe Nooke, where once
Thou calldst me up at midnight to fetch dewe
From the still-vext Bermoothes, there she's hid . . ."

Commenting on these lines, Professor William J. Rolfe, in 1895, wrote as follows:

"Prospero's command to Ariel to 'fetch dew from the still-vex'd Bermoothes' makes it certain that the Bermudas are not the scene of 'The Tempest', though strangely enough, it has produced the contrary impression on many minds; but this reference to these islands, and allusion to their storm-vexed coast, connects itself naturally with the publication of Jourdan's narrative."

Prospero's island has been regarded by another writer† as a ". . . land of faerie in Shakespearian seas . . .", but was it not rather a projection of genius developed by Shakespeare from the discourse and records of his day? That a drama reflecting attempts to settle the New World could have been written in 1611 without its author being fully cognizant of the first book printed in English regarding America is inconceivable.

"Brereton's Relation" of Gosnold's voyage, printed in 1602, was one of the New World's most poetic and valuable descriptions, and together with its related documents were as

*H. H. Furness—"The Variorum Shakespeare", 1920 Edition

†C. M. Gayley—"Shakespeare and the Founders of Liberty in America", 1917 Edition.

unquestionably studied by Shakespeare as the accounts of the Bermuda voyagers.

But in order better to determine the value of Dr. Hale's findings let us study more closely "The Tempest" and the Gosnold accounts, giving careful consideration to the following points of resemblance.

Crabs of Elizabeth's Island and The Tempest

ARCHER OF E. I.:—

"This island in the western side admitteth some in creeks, or sandy coves, so girded as the water in some places of each side meeteth, to which the Indians from the main do oftentimes resort for fishing of crabs."

"I commanded four of my company to seek out for crabs, lobsters, turtles, etc."

CALIBAN TO TRINCULO, II, 2, 176—

"I pre'thee let me bring thee where Crabs grow . . ."

Regarding Tortoises

BRERETON OF E. I.:—

"This lake is full of small tortoises."

PROSPERO TO CALIBAN I, 2, 374—

"Come thou Tortoys, when?"

Note—(In 1902 it was found that the pond of Cuttyhunk was still filled with small turtles.)

Lustie Soil and Lusty Grass

BRERETON OF E. I.:—

"The soil is fat and lustie!"

GONZALO II, 1, 56—

"How lush and lusty the grasse looks?"

Relative to Standing Lakes, Brooks, and Groves

BRERETON OF E. I.:—

"Near to the seaside, is a standing lake of fresh water."

BRERETON OF M. V.:—

"A great standing lake of fresh water, near to the seaside."

PROSPERO V. 1, 40—

"Ye Elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,"

Note—(Archer speaks of "pleasant brooks" and "stately groves.")

Indians of the Gosnold Voyage

ARCHER:—

" . . . The next morning offered us fast running thirteen savages . . . They brought tobacco, deer skins, and some sodden fish. These offered themselves unto us in great familiarity, who seemed to be well conditioned."

BRERETON REFERRING TO THE SAME INCIDENT:—

"They gave us of their fish readie boiled (which they carried in a basket made of twigs, not unlike our osier) which we did eat and judged them to be fresh water fish."

ARCHER OF GOSNOLD'S ARRIVAL UPON THE MAINLAND:—

" . . . Immediately there presented unto him, men, women, and children, who with all courteous kindness entertained him" etc. "These are a fair conditioned people."

GOSNOLD'S LETTER TO HIS FATHER:—

"The inhabitants . . . being of tall stature, comely proportion, strong, active," etc.

BRERETON SPEAKS OF THE INDIANS AS,

" . . . of a perfect constitution of body, active, strong, healthful and very witty"—"of stature much higher than we." "These people as they are exceeding courteous, gentle of disposition, and well conditioned, excelling all others that we have seen, so for shape of body, and lovely favor, I think they excell all the people of America."

Indians of The Tempest

STAGE DIRECTIONS III, 3, 24—

"Enter several strange shapes, bringing in a Banket; they dance about it with gentle actions of salutations, and inviting the King, etc., to eate, they depart."

GONZALO III, 3, 39—

"If in Naples

I should report this now, would they believe me?
If I should say I saw such Islands;
(For certes, these are people of the Island),
Who though they are of monstrous shape, yet note
Their manners are more gentle, kind, then of
Our humane generation you shall find
Many, nay almost any."

ALONZO III, 3, 50—

"I cannot too much muse
Such shapes, such gesture, and such sound expressing
(Although they want the use of tongue) a kinde
Of excellent dumbe discourse."

SEBASTIAN III, 3, 56—

" . . . No matter, since
They have left their Viands behinde . . ."

GONZALO To ALONZO III, 3, 60— When we were Boyes

"Faith Sir, you neede not feare: (viz, to eat their food)
Who would beleewe that there were Mountayneeres,
Dew-lapted, like Buls, whose throats had hanging at'em
Wallets of flesh? or that there were such men
Whose heads stood in their breasts?"

Note—(Throughout the play Caliban is referred to as
"An Islander", a "Dead Indian", "Savage", and "Men of Ind.")

In these comparisons of "The Tempest" and Gosnold
Indians, we should first note that Shakespeare probably found
his idea for a banquet in the boiled fish, tobacco, and deer
skins with which Gosnold and his companions were welcomed.
Archer tells us that on another occasion Gosnold was "enter-
tained . . . with all courteous kindness."

It is not unlikely that Shakespeare obtained the idea
of referring to the natives as "shapes" from Brereton's state-
ment that ". . . so for shape of body and lovely favor I think
they excel all the people of America." Shakespeare's reference
to the Indians, as being of "monstrous shape" simply reflects
the repeated statements of the voyagers in referring to the

unusual height and size of these Americans. When we read
of the Indians' "courteous kindness" and "courteous and gentle
disposition" and then listen to Gonzalo telling us to "note
their manners are more gentle, kind, then of our humane
generation you shall find . . .", it almost seems as though we
had stumbled into Shakespeare's study to find him absorbed
in contemplation of the Gosnold accounts.

Concerning the Grains

BRERETON OF E. I.:—

"In mid May we did sow in this island (for a trial) in
sundry places, wheat, barley, oats, and pease."

STAGE DIRECTION IV, 1, 68—

(A masque. Enter Iris)

IRIS:—

"Ceres, most bounteous Lady, thy rich Leas of Wheat,
Rye, Barley, Fetches, Oats, and Pease . . ."

Note—Brereton speaks of the soil where the above four
grains were planted as "being apt for these and the like grains."
Shakespeare in adding the rye and vetches was simply carrying
out this idea for his poetical purpose.

Regarding Chalk

ARCHER:—

(When Gosnold first reached our coast eight Indians
boarded the "Concord", and in the words of Archer these)
". . . with a piece of chalk described the coasts thereabouts."

GONZALO V, 1, 238—

" . . . Looke downe you gods and on this couple drop a
blessed crowne: for it is you, that have chalk'd forth the way
which brought us hither . . ."

With Dr. Hale's evidence and these proofs before us,
can we longer doubt that "Elizabeth's Island" provided
Shakespeare with all the qualities required for the setting of

his loftiest play? Has not, indeed, the moment arrived for us to discard this subject as a theory, and accept it for what it is, a discovery—the discovery of Dr. Edward Everett Hale?

ELIZABETH'S ISLE

Forever breaks the dawn on things of good.

A Gosnold's hope, a Raleigh's will

With each succeeding hour yields something more;

Their shining faith's the vision at our door.

Fair island of Elizabeth!

Thou jewel of a Queen's own name,

Today's bright sun shall write thy lasting fame!

For news has come that Shakespeare loved thee well;

Sang all thy praises to our World,

Inwapt us with thy spell.

