



CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE DISCOVERY
OF GUIANA

Walter Raleigh

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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by

WALTER RALEIGH



Introductory Note

Sir Walter Raleigh may be taken as the great typical figure of the age of Elizabeth. Courtier and statesman, soldier and sailor, scientist and man of letters, he engaged in almost all the main lines of public activity in his time, and was distinguished in them all.

His father was a Devonshire gentleman of property, connected with many of the distinguished families of the south of England. Walter was born about 1552 and was educated at Oxford. He first saw military service in the Huguenot army in France in 1569, and in 1578 engaged, with his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, in the first of his expeditions against the Spaniards. After some service in Ireland, he attracted the attention of the Queen, and rapidly rose to the perilous position of her chief favorite. With her approval, he fitted out two expeditions for the colonization of Virginia, neither of which did his royal mistress permit him to lead in person, and neither of which succeeded in establishing a permanent settlement.

After about six years of high favor, Raleigh found his position at court endangered by the rivalry of Essex, and in 1592, on returning from convoying a squadron he had fitted out against the Spanish, he was thrown into the Tower by the orders of the

Queen, who had discovered an intrigue between him and one of her ladies whom he subsequently married. He was ultimately released, engaged in various naval exploits, and in 1594 sailed for South America on the voyage described in the following narrative.

On the death of Elizabeth, Raleigh's misfortunes increased. He was accused of treason against James I, condemned, reprieved, and imprisoned for twelve years, during which he wrote his "History of the World," and engaged in scientific researches. In 1616 he was liberated, to make another attempt to find the gold mine in Venezuela; but the expedition was disastrous, and, on his return, Raleigh was executed on the old charge in 1618. In his vices as in his virtues, Raleigh is a thorough representative of the great adventurers who laid the foundations of the British Empire.

To the Reader

Because there have been diverse opinions conceived of the gold ore brought from Guiana, and for that an alderman of London and an officer of her Majesty's mint hath given out that the same is of no price, I have thought good by the addition of these lines to give answer as well to the said malicious slander as to other objections. It is true that while we abode at the island of Trinidad I was informed by an Indian that not far from the port where we anchored there were found certain mineral stones which they esteemed to be gold, and were thereunto persuaded the rather for that they had seen both English and Frenchmen gather and embark some quantities thereof. Upon this likelihood I sent forty men, and gave order that each one should bring a stone of that mine, to make trial of the goodness; which being performed, I assured them at their return that the same was marcasite, and of no riches or value. Notwithstanding, divers, trusting more to their own sense than to my opinion, kept of the said marcasite, and have tried thereof since my return, in divers places. In Guiana itself I never saw marcasite; but all the rocks, mountains, all stones in the plains, woods, and by the rivers' sides, are in effect thorough-shining, and appear marvellous rich; which, being tried

to be no marcasite, are the true signs of rich minerals, but are no other than *El madre del oro*, as the Spaniards term them, which is the mother of gold, or, as it is said by others, the scum of gold. Of divers sorts of these many of my company brought also into England, every one taking the fairest for the best, which is not general. For mine own part, I did not countermand any man's desire or opinion, and I could have afforded them little if I should have denied them the pleasing of their own fancies therein; but I was resolved that gold must be found either in grains, separate from the stone, as it is in most of the rivers in Guiana, or else in a kind of hard stone, which we call the white spar, of which I saw divers hills, and in sundry places, but had neither time nor men, nor instruments fit for labour. Near unto one of the rivers I found of the said white spar or flint a very great ledge or bank, which I endeavoured to break by all the means I could, because there appeared on the outside some small grains of gold; but finding no mean to work the same upon the upper part, seeking the sides and circuit of the said rock, I found a clift in the same, from whence with daggers, and with the head of an axe, we got out some small quantity thereof; of which kind of white stone, wherein gold is engendered, we saw divers hills and rocks in every part of Guiana wherein we travelled. Of this there have been made many trials; and in London it was first assayed by Master Westwood, a refiner dwelling in Wood Street, and it held after the rate of twelve or thirteen thousand pounds a ton. Another sort was afterward tried by Master Bulmar, and Master Dimock, assay-master; and it held after the rate of three

and twenty thousand pounds a ton. There was some of it again tried by Master Palmer, Comptroller of the Mint, and Master Dimock in Goldsmith's Hall, and it held after six and twenty thousand and nine hundred pounds a ton. There was also at the same time, and by the same persons, a trial made of the dust of the said mine; which held eight pounds and six ounces weight of gold in the hundred. There was likewise at the same time a trial of an image of copper made in Guiana, which held a third part of gold, besides divers trials made in the country, and by others in London. But because there came ill with the good, and belike the said alderman was not presented with the best, it hath pleased him therefore to scandal all the rest, and to deface the enterprise as much as in him lieth. It hath also been concluded by divers that if there had been any such ore in Guiana, and the same discovered, that I would have brought home a greater quantity thereof. First, I was not bound to satisfy any man of the quantity, but only such as adventured, if any store had been returned thereof; but it is very true that had all their mountains been of massy gold it was impossible for us to have made any longer stay to have wrought the same; and whosoever hath seen with what strength of stone the best gold ore is environed, he will not think it easy to be had out in heaps, and especially by us, who had neither men, instruments, nor time, as it is said before, to perform the same.

There were on this discovery no less than an hundred persons, who can all witness that when we passed any branch of the river to view the land within, and stayed from our boats but

six hours, we were driven to wade to the eyes at our return; and if we attempted the same the day following, it was impossible either to ford it, or to swim it, both by reason of the swiftness, and also for that the borders were so pestered with fast woods, as neither boat nor man could find place either to land or to embark; for in June, July, August, and September it is impossible to navigate any of those rivers; for such is the fury of the current, and there are so many trees and woods overflown, as if any boat but touch upon any tree or stake it is impossible to save any one person therein. And ere we departed the land it ran with such swiftness as we drave down, most commonly against the wind, little less than an hundred miles a day. Besides, our vessels were no other than wherries, one little barge, a small cock-boat, and a bad galiota which we framed in haste for that purpose at Trinidad; and those little boats had nine or ten men apiece, with all their victuals and arms. It is further true that we were about four hundred miles from our ships, and had been a month from them, which also we left weakly manned in an open road, and had promised our return in fifteen days.

Others have devised that the same ore was had from Barbary, and that we carried it with us into Guiana. Surely the singularity of that device I do not well comprehend. For mine own part, I am not so much in love with these long voyages as to devise thereby to cozen myself, to lie hard, to fare worse, to be subjected to perils, to diseases, to ill savours, to be parched and withered, and withal to sustain the care and labour of such an enterprise, except the same had more comfort than the fetching of marcasite in Guiana, or

buying of gold ore in Barbary. But I hope the better sort will judge me by themselves, and that the way of deceit is not the way of honour or good opinion. I have herein consumed much time, and many crowns; and I had no other respect or desire than to serve her Majesty and my country thereby. If the Spanish nation had been of like belief to these detractors we should little have feared or doubted their attempts, wherewith we now are daily threatened. But if we now consider of the actions both of Charles the Fifth, who had the maidenhead of Peru and the abundant treasures of Atabalipa, together with the affairs of the Spanish king now living, what territories he hath purchased, what he hath added to the acts of his predecessors, how many kingdoms he hath endangered, how many armies, garrisons, and navies he hath, and doth maintain, the great losses which he hath repaired, as in Eighty-eight above an hundred sail of great ships with their artillery, and that no year is less infortunate, but that many vessels, treasures, and people are devoured, and yet notwithstanding he beginneth again like a storm to threaten shipwrack to us all; we shall find that these abilities rise not from the trades of sacks and Seville oranges, nor from aught else that either Spain, Portugal, or any of his other provinces produce; it is his Indian gold that endangereth and disturbeth all the nations of Europe; it purchaseth intelligence, creepeth into counsels, and setteth bound loyalty at liberty in the greatest monarchies of Europe. If the Spanish king can keep us from foreign enterprises, and from the impeachment of his trades, either by offer of invasion, or by besieging us in Britain, Ireland, or elsewhere, he hath then brought the work of our peril in great forwardness.

Those princes that abound in treasure have great advantages over the rest, if they once constrain them to a defensive war, where they are driven once a year or oftener to cast lots for their own garments; and from all such shall all trades and intercourse be taken away, to the general loss and impoverishment of the kingdom and commonweal so reduced. Besides, when our men are constrained to fight, it hath not the like hope as when they are pressed and encouraged by the desire of spoil and riches. Farther, it is to be doubted how those that in time of victory seem to affect their neighbour nations will remain after the first view of misfortunes or ill success; to trust, also, to the doubtfulness of a battle is but a fearful and uncertain adventure, seeing therein fortune is as likely to prevail as virtue. It shall not be necessary to allege all that might be said, and therefore I will thus conclude; that whatsoever kingdom shall be enforced to defend itself may be compared to a body dangerously diseased, which for a season may be preserved with vulgar medicines, but in a short time, and by little and little, the same must needs fall to the ground and be dissolved. I have therefore laboured all my life, both according to my small power and persuasion, to advance all those attempts that might either promise return of profit to ourselves, or at least be a let and impeachment to the quiet course and plentiful trades of the Spanish nation; who, in my weak judgement, by such a war were as easily endangered and brought from his powerfulness as any prince in Europe, if it be considered from how many kingdoms and nations his revenues are gathered, and those so weak in their own beings and so far severed from mutual succour. But because

such a preparation and resolution is not to be hoped for in haste, and that the time which our enemies embrace cannot be had again to advantage, I will hope that these provinces, and that empire now by me discovered, shall suffice to enable her Majesty and the whole kingdom with no less quantities of treasure than the king of Spain hath in all the Indies, East and West, which he possesseth; which if the same be considered and followed, ere the Spaniards enforce the same, and if her Majesty will undertake it, I will be contented to lose her Highness' favour and good opinion for ever, and my life withal, if the same be not found rather to exceed than to equal whatsoever is in this discourse promised and declared. I will now refer the reader to the following discourse, with the hope that the perilous and chargeable labours and endeavours of such as thereby seek the profit and honour of her Majesty, and the English nation, shall by men of quality and virtue receive such construction and good acceptance as themselves would like to be rewarded withal in the like.

The Discovery¹ of Guiana²

On Thursday, the sixth of February, in the year 1595, we departed England, and the Sunday following had sight of the north cape of Spain, the wind for the most part continuing prosperous; we passed in sight of the Burlings, and the Rock, and so onwards for the Canaries, and fell with Fuerteventura the 17. of the same month, where we spent two or three days, and relieved our companies with some fresh meat. From thence we coasted by the Grand Canaria, and so to Teneriffe, and stayed there for the Lion's Whelp, your Lordship's ship, and for Captain Amyas Preston and the rest. But when after seven or eight days we found them not, we departed and directed our course for Trinidad, with mine own ship, and a small barque of Captain Cross's only; for we had before lost sight of a small galego on the coast of Spain, which came with us from Plymouth. We arrived at Trinidad the 22. of March, casting anchor at Point Curiapan, which the Spaniards call Punta de Gallo, which is situate in eight degrees or thereabouts. We abode there four or five days, and in all that time we came not to the speech of any Indian or Spaniard. On the

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Exp ora ion

The name is derived from he Guayano Indians, on he Orinoco.

coast we saw a fire, as we sailed from the Point Carao towards Curiapan, but for fear of the Spaniards none durst come to speak with us. I myself coasted it in my barge close aboard the shore and landed in every cove, the better to know the island, while the ships kept the channel. From Curiapan after a few days we turned up north-east to recover that place which the Spaniards call Puerto de los Espanoles (now Port of Spain), and the inhabitants Conquerabia; and as before, revictualling my barge, I left the ships and kept by the shore, the better to come to speech with some of the inhabitants, and also to understand the rivers, watering-places, and ports of the island, which, as it is rudely done, my purpose is to send your Lordship after a few days. From Curiapan I came to a port and seat of Indians called Parico, where we found a fresh water river, but saw no people. From thence I rowed to another port, called by the naturals Piche, and by the Spaniards Tierra de Brea. In the way between both were divers little brooks of fresh water, and one salt river that had store of oysters upon the branches of the trees, and were very salt and well tasted. All their oysters grow upon those boughs and sprays, and not on the ground; the like is commonly seen in other places of the West Indies, and elsewhere. This tree is described by Andrew Thevet, in his *France Antarctique*, and the form figured in the book as a plant very strange; and by Pliny in his twelfth book of his *Natural History*. But in this island, as also in Guiana, there are very many of them.

At this point, called Tierra de Brea or Piche, there is that abundance of stone pitch that all the ships of the world may be

therewith laden from thence; and we made trial of it in trimming our ships to be most excellent good, and melteth not with the sun as the pitch of Norway, and therefore for ships trading the south parts very profitable. From thence we went to the mountain foot called Annaperima, and so passing the river Carone, on which the Spanish city was seated, we met with our ships at Puerto de los Espanoles or Conquerabia.

This island of Trinidad hath the form of a sheephook, and is but narrow; the north part is very mountainous; the soil is very excellent, and will bear sugar, ginger, or any other commodity that the Indies yield. It hath store of deer, wild porks, fruit, fish, and fowl; it hath also for bread sufficient maize, cassavi, and of those roots and fruits which are common everywhere in the West Indies. It hath divers beasts which the Indies have not; the Spaniards confessed that they found grains of gold in some of the rivers; but they having a purpose to enter Guiana, the magazine of all rich metals, cared not to spend time in the search thereof any further. This island is called by the people thereof Cairi, and in it are divers nations. Those about Parico are called Jajo, those at Punta de Carao are of the Arwacas (Arawaks) and between Carao and Curiapan they are called Salvajos. Between Carao and Punta de Galera are the Nepojos, and those about the Spanish city term themselves Carinepagotes (Carib-people). Of the rest of the nations, and of other ports and rivers, I leave to speak here, being impertinent to my purpose, and mean to describe them as they are situate in the particular plot and description of the island, three parts whereof I coasted with my barge, that I might the better describe it.

Meeting with the ships at Puerto de los Espanoles, we found at the landing-place a company of Spaniards who kept a guard at the descent; and they offering a sign of peace, I sent Captain Whiddon to speak with them, whom afterwards to my great grief I left buried in the said island after my return from Guiana, being a man most honest and valiant. The Spaniards seemed to be desirous to trade with us, and to enter into terms of peace, more for doubt of their own strength than for aught else; and in the end, upon pledge, some of them came aboard. The same evening there staid also aboard us in a small canoa two Indians, the one of them being a cacique or lord of the people, called Cantyman, who had the year before been with Captain Whiddon, and was of his acquaintance. By this Cantyman we understood what strength the Spaniards had, how far it was to their city, and of Don Antonio de Berreo, the governor, who was said to be slain in his second attempt of Guiana, but was not.

While we remained at Puerto de los Espanoles some Spaniards came aboard us to buy linen of the company, and such other things as they wanted, and also to view our ships and company, all which I entertained kindly and feasted after our manner. By means whereof I learned of one and another as much of the estate of Guiana as I could, or as they knew; for those poor soldiers having been many years without wine, a few draughts made them merry, in which mood they vaunted of Guiana and the riches thereof, and all what they knew of the ways and passages; myself seeming to purpose nothing less than the entrance or discovery thereof, but bred in them an opinion that I was bound only for the relief of