

SIR DUDLEY DIGGES AND *THE TEMPEST*

God, and also in learning the mathematical sciences, military studies, and foreign languages.' At twenty-one he was to devote two years abroad to perfecting himself in the tongues and preparing for the career in public life to which his gifts and inheritance pointed him.

The hard terms of his father's will in regard to money were chafing both him and his mother to the limit of endurance. Dudley was annoyed to have to wait for his patrimony until he was twenty-four, and to see his mother meanwhile selling off some of the valuable leases which as heir he wished to keep, and she was vexed by the bond of £5,000 which kept her from marrying and taking Russell's name. At Alderminster on June 15, 1603, when Dudley was just over twenty, the parties came to an agreement. Dudley persuaded the overseer, Sir Thomas Wilford, to surrender the bond. In return for this and for concessions on his side, Mrs. Digges freed him from his wardship, and let him thus early enter on his estate. The royal licence was, however, not granted until after his return from foreign travel.¹

Leonard Digges, Dudley's younger brother, who at the time of this agreement in 1603 was fifteen and ready for Oxford, afterwards recalled the purport of the settlement:

'To his best remembrance the same was that [Thomas Russell] and his wife should yield up the lands of [Dudley Digges] into his own hands, and free him of his wardship; and that he in consideration thereof was to give [Russell] and his said wife the sum of £1,000, or to make up [her]

¹ Dated July 3, 1606. C 66/1715.

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

jointure of £120 [10] the sum of £200 a year, till the said £1,000 were paid.¹

John Davies of Quinton signed as a witness to these articles. Already revealed as the friend of Shakespeare's John Combe and of Edward Bushell, Davies now emerges as an intimate of the Russell-Digges family. How close and lasting the connection proved, especially with the younger son, Leonard Digges, will appear later. Two weeks after the settlement, Leonard Digges matriculated at Oxford on the same day with Michael Rutter of Quinton, Davies's friend and later executor. William Combe, brother of the Thomas Combe to whom Shakespeare was to bequeath his sword, joined Digges and Rutter at Oxford within a week. All three were fifteen years old.

Two years later, when the King's company came to play at Oxford just before the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 was uncovered, Leonard Digges, still a student at University College, could welcome his stepfather's neighbour and friend, William Shakespeare, and his own former co-parishioners, Heminges and Condell.

Meanwhile the articles of 1603 had removed impeding to his mother's marriage. The couple had been hanging in the bell-ropes more than three years, and now made no delay in seeking the sacrament. Sensitive perhaps about standing up before the parishioners of Alderminster, they slipped off to their manor of Rushock, some twenty-five miles distant, were married there on August 26, 1603, and the Rushock bells were duly rung.

¹ C 24/540/29.

SIR DUDDLEY DIGGES AND THE TEMPEST

We remember that in return for money to pay his debts Francis Brace had given Anne Digges the remainder of his lease of Rushock Manor; and that since she had broken the terms of the will by selling some Digges property to get the money for Brace, her son Dudley showed his dissatisfaction. To quiet him she made over to him the Rushock lease; but when her new husband evinced a strong interest in it, she begged it back from her son, telling him she had intended the conveyance to him only in trust, and gave Russell control of it, although it was still in her name. Russell's counsel then looked into it, and advised him that it was a defective lease and 'avoidable estate.' Having been obliged to sell his inheritance in Broad Campden, and since his lease of Alderminster had not many more years to run, Russell was anxious to get a good lease of Rushock for a long term in his own name. The landlords were the Company of Merchant Taylors of London. Enlisting the aid of his stepfather's cousin, Lord Mounjoy, Earl of Devonshire, Russell got a letter from him favouring his petition to the Merchant Taylors. The episode is detailed in the record of a Court of the Company, held on May 12, 1604:

'Upon complaint made unto the Master, Wardens, and divers of the Assistants by one Thomas Heynam, an undertenant of the manor of Rushock, against one Mr. Thomas Russell, who married Mrs. Digges that had an assignment from Mr. Francis Brace of the ground lease . . . the said Heynam informing that he paid Mr. Russell £40 in consideration that he should make him a lease of

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

the message and lands in the occupation of the said Heynam, and now Mr. Russell refuseth either to make him a lease according to promise or to satisfy the said £40; thereupon it pleased the Company to send for the said Mr. Russell (being now in town) and to treat with him concerning the same; who, repairing hither, did confess that he received the £40, and would presently repay the same with consideration, not confessing that he made any promise of a lease, and affirming that he could not make any good lease, because the interest of the ground lease is not in law in himself, although he have the actual possession of the said Manor; but did insinuate that he could procure it at his pleasure. And although he did except very much against Heynam, yet for his wife and children's sake he promised to deal well with him and them; and the Company being not willing to press him further therein, the said Mr. Russell did present unto the Master, Wardens, and Assistants a letter written in his favour by the right honourable the Earl of Devonshire for the renewing of his lease. And after the Company had long debated and considered thereof, in the end they took further time to advise what was fit to be done concerning the same.¹

From Russell's own words in after years we learn one cause of the Company's hesitation, in spite of the Earl of Devonshire's letter. He says that

'one Langley, then clerk to the said Company, had procured from them the promise of a lease in reversion after

¹ Merchant Taylors' Hall. Records, V, 119.

SIR DUDLEY DIGGES AND *THE TEMPEST*
the expiration of the said Brace's lease; and that when [he, Russell] came to take his lease . . . he was fain to give the said Langley £100 to relinquish the said Company's promise; and that some quarter or a half year after . . . taking of his said lease, he presented the said Langley a nag.¹

With these *douceurs* to Langley to smooth the way, Russell at length got his lease in 1604 or 1605, to run for forty years. In return he had to pay the Company a 'fine' or cash payment of £500, and thirty-one pounds a year rent. He remarks ruefully that his predecessor, Mr. Brace, had paid only a butt of sack for his fine, and a yearly rent of some £15 or £16. New times brought higher prices. Still, even at his cautious estimate made in court, Rushock was worth between £140 and £160 a year. He had not made a bad bargain.

Meanwhile his leased manor of Alderminster was a valuable property. The demesne land brought him £425, and the parsonage £105 a year, and the fines on granting of copyholds produced additional income. It was annoying of his stepson Dudley to be so much richer than he, but still he was comfortably well off. The lease of Alderminster had a few more years to run – until 1611 or 1612; and he was reasonably content to live for the present with his newly acquired family of Diggeses at his Alderminster manor house near Stratford.

In Heminges's London parish Shakespear had had opportunity to know the Diggeses, and since from 1600

¹ C 24/529/94.

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

onwards they were united with his friend, Thomas Russell, in his own Stratford neighbourhood, he now saw much more of them. This household which proved so congenial to Shakespeare embodied, on the Russell-Ligon-Berkeley side, the traditions of affluent and old-established country gentry and soldiers; on the Digges-St. Leger side the same, but with an additional strong heritage of scholarship and scientific learning, which the younger son Leonard enriched with his bent for literature.

In all Shakespeare's Stratford circle, indeed, the only person of definite literary talent was his friend's stepson, Leonard Digges; and we know that the younger spirit took heat from Shakespeare's fire and feeling. Fortunate youth, to associate with an unparalleled poet — one who with his actor's training could read aloud superlatively well his 'language exquisite'! Young Digges evidently observed Shakespeare's fluency of composition. It was not *work*, he assures us: 'for to contrive a play, to him 'twas none.' Reading with new eyes, we can now understand the intimacy and enthusiasm of his memorial lines written some seven years after Shakespeare's death:

Poets are born, not made: when I would prove
This truth, the glad remembrance I must love
Of never-dying Shakespeare, who alone
Is argument enough to make that one.

And his contemporary address in the First Folio to the poet's loved memory:

Be sure, our Shakespeare, thou canst never die,
But, crown'd with laurel, live eternally.

214

SIR DUDLEY DIGGES AND *THE TEMPEST*

Students and biographers have formerly remarked on the unsatisfactory circumstance that no recognition of Shakespeare's prowess as a dramatist ever came from any of his Stratford contemporaries. Since we now discover in Leonard Digges — whose well-known praise of Shakespeare is second in warmth only to Ben Jonson's — not only a Stratford contemporary of the dramatist's but a stepson to the overseer of his will, the puzzle proves to be, like many another 'Shakespeare difficulty,' a mare's-nest.

Doubtless one of the greatest charms of Russell's home was the presence in it of Leonard's sister, Margaret Digges. Of Juliet's age when she came to Alderminster, she lived there for almost a decade, until she was twenty-three. Then she went to London to marry Sir Anthony Palmer, K.B., and died nine years later. After her short life of thirty-two years was ended, her devoted brothers and husband testified to her beauty of feature, mind, and heart in an unusually moving epitaph:

'She was fairer than most women, wiser than most men . . . Few wives were so respectful of their husband as she was of her brother; few sisters so affectionately kind unto their brothers as she was to her friends; few friends (if any) so cheerfully ready to give counsel, comfort, or relief as she was to the poor, upon whose sickness, lameness, blindness, her charitable hands wrought daily cures like miracles.'

Her surviving children serve to remind her friends of her virtuous knowledge, speeches, and actions, and the 'ever

215

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

witty, pleasing conversation of her whole life, that never knew man's ill affection, woman's envy.'

The characters of Shakespeare's heroines have exercised a subtle and powerful influence on our whole conception of Elizabethan women. I please myself with the fancy that his acquaintance under his friend's roof with this admired, loved, and charming young gentlewoman in the early years after 1600 when he was meditating *Othello*, stimulated his imagining of Desdemona, 'a maid so tender, fair, and happy.' Iago, who is nothing if not critical, said of her, 'She is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, that she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than she is requested.'

In the year after Shakespeare's death her brother Leonard, whom she had nursed through a dangerous illness, showed his gratitude and love in offering to Margaret, 'his much honoured virtuous sister,' his first work - a verse translation of Claudian's *Rape of Proserpine*:

'My dear sister, the dedication of this poem can belong to none more fitly than to yourself; since (next under God) your care of me in a desperate sickness made me live to finish it. It is a translation, and therefore far short of the original, the rather because mine: a work not so pleasing for ladies, being in itself lofty, and harsh in the translation. It was intended to you as a pattern for a piece of needlework I knew you were about; for which purpose, I persuade myself, no poetical author will with more variety furnish you than Claudian. Howsoever he or I fail, yet this first labour may seem as an earnest-

216

SIR DUDLEY DIGGES AND *THE TEMPEST*

penny of my affection, and to tell you that all true happiness in this life, and eternal in the next, is wished unto you by your brother and friend, obliged ever to serve you,
L. D.'

One cannot but feel that Shakespeare's friend had been fortunate in the quality of the stepchildren he found to soften the grief of his own bereavements, and in the wife who had given them birth and education.

Dudley Digges meanwhile had begun to fashion a brilliant career for himself. Returned in 1606 to the great Digges house in Philip Lane, Aldermanbury, from his two years' prescribed study and travel, he took up the duties of his large estates in Kent, and received knight-hood from King James in the year following. His learning, eloquence, and wit took him into Ben Jonson's circle; and on the publication of *Volpone*, Digges offered a tribute in the edition

TO MY GOOD FRIEND MASTER JONSON

The strange new follies of this idle age,
In strange new forms presented on the stage
By thy quick muse, so pleased judicious eyes
That th' once admired ancient comedies'
Fashions, like clothes grown out of fashion, lay
Locked up from use: until thy Fox' birthday
In an old garb showed so much art and wit
As they the laurel gave to thee and it.

Another friend of Ben's, William Strachey, had similarly

217

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

contributed praise to *Sejanus* in 1605, in which play Shakespeare, Heminges, and Condell had all acted; we shall see later that Jonson's dramas were not the only bond of interest between Dudley Digges and William Strachey.

Sir Dudley now made a marriage with Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Kempe of Kent, which considerably increased his large fortune. The town house in Philip Lane had a mistress, and in time an heir, named for the illustrious astronomer-grandfather, Thomas Digges. At the beginning of 1609, we find, Sir Dudley invited his friends Sir Edward Barrett and Mrs. Carew to celebrate their marriage in his house. Barrett was the stepson of Sir John Leveson, the hero of Paul's Chain, brother of William Leveson, Shakespeare's trustee. Shakespeare's bosom-friend John Heminges was also present at the wedding, and witnessed the record of it as churchwarden of the parish.¹

London had now for some time been buzzing with new plans, activity, and preparations for colonizing and planting Virginia, in spite of all past discouragements. Sir Dudley's close friend, Sir Anthony Palmer, K.B., who was later to marry his dear sister Margaret, had in 1607 been appointed a member of the Council for Virginia. Digges himself was among the most enthusiastic of the adventurers, and threw his money and abilities into the enterprise. Early in 1609 the poet John Donne made an effort to get himself appointed 'secretary at Virginia,' but

¹ W. B. Bannerman, *Reg. of St. Mary Aldermanbury*, Harl. Soc. LXI, 82.

SIR DUDLEY DIGGES AND *THE TEMPEST*
found himself passed over in favour of Jonson's and Digges's friend, William Strachey.

Already in June 1607, Shakespeare's trustee, William Leveson, had been selected by the Virginia Company as an energetic and experienced merchant-venturer to raise money for them. At first he was granted a commission of forty shillings for every £100 he collected – although this was afterwards reduced to 26s. 8d. – and was to have an officer of the Company to attend him. 'Omitting his own business,' as he tells us, Shakespeare's trustee did 'labour and travail in the said business' of painting the advantages of investment in the New World, and of loosing reluctant purse-strings with the Jacobean equivalent of high-pressure salesmanship.¹ Though he collected 'great sums,' it was occasionally uphill work. No gold mines had been found in Virginia. Colonists already sent out had failed to thrive, and the investment showed no quick returns. Many of the investors turned from giving to misgiving. The Virginia plantation, they feared, was feeding them with ifs and ands.

In 1612 John Chamberlain wrote from London, 'it is to be feared that [the planting in Virginia] will fall to the ground of itself, by the extreme beastly idleness of our nation, which (notwithstanding any cost or diligence used to support them) will rather die and starve than be brought to any labour or industry to maintain themselves.' And how difficult Leveson's task of collection proved, Chamberlain betrays by a letter to Dudley Carleton of August 1, 1613:

¹ C 8/88/61.

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

'When the business of Virginia was at the highest, in that heat many gentlemen and others were drawn by persuasion and importunity of friends to underwrite their names for adventurers; but when it came to the payment (specially the second or third time), their hands were not so ready to go to their purses as they were to the paper, and in the end flatly refused; whereupon they are sued by the Company in the Chancery, where this action finds such favour that they have ready dispatch, and the underwriters are forced to make payment: which amounts to a round sum between three and four thousand pound. Among the rest your cousin Will Lytton was drawn on by Sir Walter Cope, with persuasion that he should not need to adventure anything unless he list, but only to give his name for encouragement to others, and for a countenance to the cause. But now it comes to the reckoning, he is fain to disburse £40, and his friend Sir Walter cannot protect him. *Et hic solet beare amicos!*'¹

Chamberlain's critical and amused comment represents a real interest in Virginia. A reading of his will shows that he too had purchased an 'adventure' in America. Yet already in 1609, four years before they took the extreme course of forcing payment by law, the vigorous and determined Company had got ready a flotilla for Virginia, 'fraught and furnished with all kinds of necessary provision and munition, and well manned with soldiers and persons of other qualities and conditions fit for such an enterprise.' Under the command of Sir George

¹ S.P. 14/70/4, and 74/49.

SIR DUDLEY DIGGES AND THE TEMPEST

Somers and Captain Christopher Newport, it was to carry a large supply of colonists under Sir Dudley's friend, Sir Thomas Gates, acting governor until the arrival of Thomas West, Lord De La Warr. A London merchant-venturer makes this entry in his book:

'15 May, 1609. On Monday in the morning our 6 ships lying at Blackwall weighed anchor and fell down to begin their voyage toward Virginia, Sir Tho. Gates being the deputy Governor until the Lord Delawaire doth come thither . . . Captain Newport, Captain Sir George Sommers, and 800 people of all sorts went in these 6 ships, besides 2 more that attend the fleet at Plymouth; and there be inhabitants already at Virginia about 160. God bless them and guide them to his glory and our good. Amen.'¹

While the fleet was still fitting out, Hakluyt had written in praise of 'the cheerful adventurers for the advancement of that Christian and noble plantation in Virginia'; and when the expedition had reached Plymouth, the Reverend Daniel Price declared at Paul's Cross in London that 'The Virginian desireth it, the Spaniard envieth us; and yet our own lazy, drowsy, yet barking countrymen traduce it, who should honour it, if it was but for the memory of that Virgin Queen of eternal memory, who was the first Godmother of that land and nation.'

Obviously inspired, this sermon was delivered on the Sunday after James had encouraged the enterprise by granting a patent of incorporation to 'the Treasurer and

¹ Bodl. MS. Tanner 168, f. 2.

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Company of Adventurers and Planters of the City of London for the First Colony in Virginia.' Named in this patent as members of the Council for the Virginia Company are several men of special interest to us. The Earl of Southampton; William Parker, Lord Monteagle, whom we met in Ireland and in Essex's rebellion with Southampton and Thomas West — the latter now to be Governor of Virginia; George Carew, Baron Carew of Clopton, Shakespeare's neighbour, whose house was invaded by the gunpowder plotters; Sir Maurice Berkeley of Bruton, half-brother of Shakespeare's friend Russell; Sir Robert Killigrew, Berkeley's brother-in-law; and finally Thomas Russell's stepson, Sir Dudley Digges.

Setting out on June 2 from Plymouth, with the high hopes of the Company, the fleet encountered a 'cruel tempest' on July 24 which scattered it. When the ships limped into the James River in August, the *Sea Adventure*, their 'admiral' or flagship carrying Gates, Somers, and Newport was missing. The fury of the tempest gave great reason to fear that she had been lost with all hands. Months passed and brought no word of the missing vessel.

Yet even such a disaster did not dull the keenness of Sir Dudley Digges for pushing exploration and trade. While beginning his momentous career in Parliament by being returned for Tewkesbury in 1610, he bent his mind on the problem of discovering a Northwest Passage to the East. In the year of his birth, 1583, his father's friends Dr. John Dee and the navigator Davis had joined Adrian Gilbert in urging the likelihood of such a passage on Sir Francis Walsingham. And in the year before the

SIR DUDLEY DIGGES AND THE TEMPEST

last fight of the *Revenge*, when Dudley was seven, his father, Thomas Digges, was joined in a commission with Sir Richard Grenville to fit out an expedition for exploring Cathay and the South Seas. The twig had been bent. As Dudley grew, the dream of the Northwest Passage grew with him. And now the courage and ability of the seasoned explorer, Henry Hudson, made possible a fresh attempt. Sir Dudley Digges came second only to Sir Thomas Smith in furnishing money for Hudson's voyage in the *Discovery*, which was 'to try if, through any of these inlets which Davis saw, but durst not enter, any passage might be found to the other ocean called the South Sea.'

It was two weeks after Lord De La Warr had sailed with his commission as Governor and Captain-general of Virginia that Henry Hudson left England for the last time. The final surviving entry in the navigator's journal, when he penetrated the straits leading to Hudson's Bay, commemorates the support given him by Sir Dudley Digges: '3 August 1610. He names the cape on the starboard C[ape] Digges, being [on] an island; that on the larboard stands upon the main, named by him Cape Wostenholme.'¹ More than a year had to pass before tidings of the voyage reached England. We shall return to that story. Meantime, in September 1610 came news to stir and gratify Sir Dudley and all those who had the fortunes of Virginia at heart. Long given up for lost, Sir Thomas Gates and Captain Newport arrived in London from America. Theirs was a marvellous tale. How the *Sea Adventure*, shaken and torn by the fearful tempest

¹ See Llewellyn Powys, *Henry Hudson*, 139-40.

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

and taking water faster than the desperate ship's company could pump it out, in a sinking condition had raised the uninhabited coast of Bermuda – the sailor's 'Isle of Devils'; how between the devil and the deep sea, Sir George Somers – at the helm without food for three days and three nights – had risked the devil and set the foundering ship safe ashore between two rocks; how the people rescued much of their goods from the stranded vessel, and in the island found no devils, but hogs, fowl, and fish enough to live very comfortably for nine months, while they built two pinnaces, appropriately named the *Deliverance* and the *Patience*, in which they sailed away for the main, arriving at Jamestown on May 23.

Wonderful and welcome, this news was soon published in two narratives, which it is agreed Shakespeare must have read – Jourdan's *Discovery of the Bermudas* and the more official *True Declaration of the estate of the Colonie in Virginia*. The latter was prepared in part from a third, more important account of the tempest and the adventures in Bermuda from the pen of the secretary, William Strachey, who remained in America. Strachey's manuscript took the form of a letter to an unnamed Excellent Lady, and though it was not printed until 1625, it is clear that Shakespeare not only read it in 1610, but used phrases and ideas from it in composing *The Tempest*.¹

Strachey's letter contained too much bald truth about the deplorable state of the colony for the eyes of a public already sceptical. It was, however, allowed to circulate

¹ C. M. Gayley, *Shakespeare and the Founders of Liberty in America* (1917), 40–80.

SIR DUDLEY DIGGES AND *THE TEMPEST*

among the members of the Virginia Council; and one of them, probably Sir Edwyn Sandys or Sir Dudley Digges, prepared from it the *True Declaration* for public consumption. Our question is, how did Shakespeare get his chance to study Strachey's letter?

Shakespeare's connection with Russell and the Digges affords an excellent occasion. Suppose him in 1610, according to the generally accepted belief, withdrawn from most of the activities of his London life to his home circle in Stratford, and consequently more frequently a visitor in the Russell-Digges household at Alderminster.

I find that two months after the arrival of Gates with the letter, and a fortnight after the *True Declaration* had been entered at Stationers' Hall, Sir Dudley Digges came to Alderminster to make a settlement of money affairs with his stepfather. Articles were drawn up and executed in the presence of John Hanford, esquire, Russell's friend and mediator, on November 22.¹ The agreement concluded, Russell drinks with his learned and eloquent stepson. And since they have had some 'jars,' and do not always see eye to eye in the matter of family business, what is more likely than that Russell brings out his trump card to distract and charm Sir Dudley – his friend the all-admired poet Shakespeare? Sir Dudley is full of the story of exploration and colonization. His friend Gates, 'best able to inform,' has told him more circumstantial and fascinating details of the adventure than have appeared in any accounts, and Sir Dudley has with him a copy of Strachey's letter. Russell will be deeply inter-

¹ C 2 Chas. I/R 45/54.

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

ested; his brother, Sir Maurice Berkeley, is a colleague of his stepson's on the Virginia Council. And Shakespeare — with his brave notions and gentle expressions, who could make a better audience? He had been struck by certain features of the strange and romantic story when it first came out; and he finds this intimate account stirring him still more. Digges is glad to trust his discretion with the copy of Strachey's letter. It is not long before the poet's quick imagination has shaped and transformed something of what he has heard and read.

Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play.

Why may we not take the afternoon of a poet with Sir Dudley Digges as the stimulus for some of *The Tempest's* mighty magic? It would be strange if the child of England's greatest astronomer, wholly possessed with the vision of adventure and discovery far away, should not strike delicate sparks from the poet's brain — a brain apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes.

If we bear such a picture in mind on visiting Shakespeare's London church of St. Helen's the Great, we find a new appropriateness in the poet's being joined there with Sir Dudley Digges as neighbours in stained glass! Shakespeare's window in the north choir, and Digges's arms in the Rolls Chapel. And we remember that only a few yards from St. Helen's stands St. Ethelburga's Church, where the 'experienced English pilot', Henry Hudson, received the Lord's Supper before sailing on his

SIR DUDLEY DIGGES AND *THE TEMPEST*

first voyage in search of an Arctic passage to Cathay.

The miserable survivors of Hudson's last voyage, after being gone a year and a half, managed to reach England in September 1611. They brought a carefully prepared story of a mutiny, a fight, and the abandonment of Hudson in an open boat. We cannot recount that tragic tale here. What concerns us is the fact that the record of the voyage only fired Digges still more. To the project for discovering the Northwest Passage he now threw in the North Pole as an added attraction, and submitted the following motives of piety and profit to induce the gallant, intelligent young Henry, Prince of Wales, to patronize the undertaking:

'A glorious state and renowned Great Britain would be, had the same discovered the North Pole [the North Pole terrestrial, a magnificent and pure virgin yet undiscovered] and passage into the South Sea unto the rich countries of China, Cataya, and Japon, with the islands of Moluccas and Phillipinas, and many other, . . . there to set forth the name of Jesus Christ and preach the gospel of joy where multitudes of people are not yet called, and where plenty and abundance of many rich wares are to be had at low prices and at the first hand, where all our home commodities might be vented at a great rate . . .

'There are many of noble births, great livings, and due desert desirous of this society and to be adventurers, which upon their own charges will prepare ships and men with victuals and munition for the discovery aforesaid . . .

[Postscript] 'The pith or spirit of this project is not here

I, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DO APPOINT THOMAS RUSSELL, ESQUIRE . . .

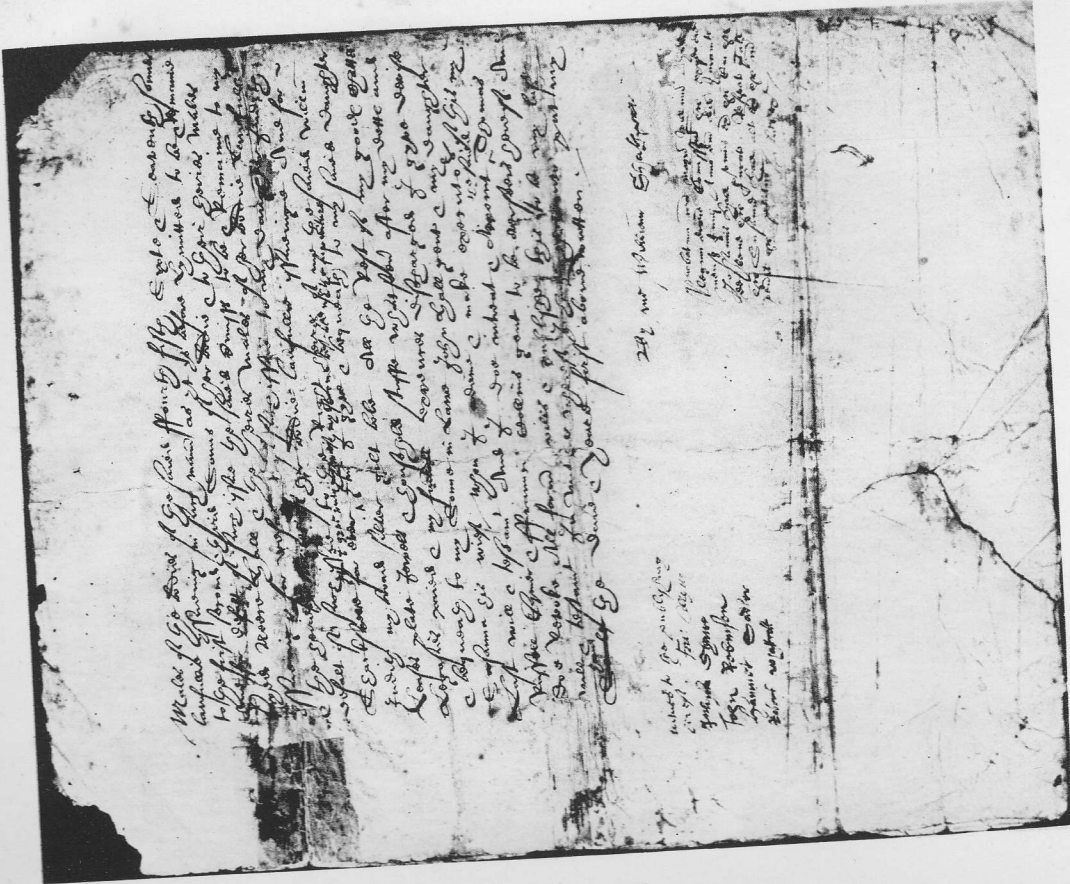
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SHAKESPEARE'S WILL (THIRD SHEET)