



CAPTAIN · JOHN · SMITH ·



POCAHONTAS SAVING CAPTAIN SMITH ·

## CHAPTER VI

# John Smith

1579-1631

THE failures of Gilbert and Raleigh taught the English people that it would not be an easy matter to establish a colony in the new world. Such expeditions were seen to be more expensive than one man could afford to undertake, even if he were a rich courtier, favored by the queen. Therefore but little more was done for many years, until another century had begun and another ruler had come to the throne of England.

When the idea of colonization was again taken up, it was decided that several men, united into a company, would more likely be successful than a single adventurer. Accordingly, the new king, James I., gave a charter, which formed a few men into a company. To this Virginia Company was given the right to make settlements in the new world, to control and govern them, and to make all the profit it could out of

them, if it would pay the king one-fifth of the gold and silver which might be obtained in its possessions.

Nearly twenty years after the arrival of White and his band upon the shores of Roanoke Island, a fleet set sail from England, sent out by the Virginia Company. Leaving port in December, the three small vessels sailed south, along the coasts of France and Spain, to the Canary Isles, and then westward nearly in the track of Columbus to the West Indies.

From here the voyage was northward. A severe storm was encountered, and, being at the mercy of the wind, Captain Newport was unable to bring his ships to Roanoke Island, as he had intended. As the fleet sailed into Chesapeake Bay, the headlands on either side were named Cape Henry and Cape Charles, in honor of the two sons of King James.



WHERE JOHN SMITH EXPLORED.

The pleasure of the immigrants with the quiet waters into which they had come, after the trials of the four months' voyage, has been commemorated in the name of Old Point Comfort. Continuing their sail up a broad river, which they called the James, they chose a little peninsula for a settlement, and named it Jamestown.

Thus was begun the first permanent English settlement in America, in **May, 1607**. By the first stroke of the axe to fell trees for the houses of the little village, the colony of Virginia was started, the first step was taken in forming

what was to be the United States of America. The little band of colonists at Jamestown succeeded in doing what no earlier company of Englishmen had accomplished. They kept the colony alive; they did not abandon it; and they prevented their own destruction by the Indians.

That success came to them seems almost a miracle. Of the one hundred and five men, for there were no women, nearly fifty were "gentlemen," unaccustomed to do any work with their hands; twelve only were laborers, and these were mostly body-servants of the gentlemen; four were carpenters, one a blacksmith, one a bricklayer, and one a mason. Probably very few had had any experience in cutting trees; not any were accustomed to cultivating the land; there were no bricks for the bricklayer and the mason; and three of the carpenters had but partly learned their trade.

The beautiful month of May saw their arrival in Virginia, the best season of the year in that climate. But soon the warm June came, then the hot July, and the sultry August. The peninsula of Jamestown was hardly more than a swamp; many fell ill with malaria, which the extreme heat greatly increased. Before the cooler weather of autumn arrived, nearly half of the entire colony had perished.

Had it not been for the courage and enterprise of one man, Jamestown would have met with a fate similar to that of Roanoke Island. John Smith proved to be the right man in the right place. He knew what was necessary to be done, he saw clearly what should be avoided; he was able to conduct the colony through its trials, where others had failed. Always cheerful, always ready in an emergency, never cast down by any ill-fortune, John Smith saved the Virginia colony.

This young man, for he was less than thirty years of age,

had already passed through more dangers and disasters than often came to men in a whole lifetime, even in the heroic days of old. While scarcely more than a boy, he had fought bravely in Holland. Afterward he had traveled through Europe, even into Egypt, from which country he returned to enter the war against the Turks, in Hungary. Here he won great renown in many single combats, but he was finally wounded and captured. Sold as a slave in Constantinople,



JOHN SMITH EXPLORING THE RIVER.

he was put at the hardest kinds of labor, until, rendered desperate by his cruel treatment, he succeeded in escaping. He traveled through the dense forests of Russia, pushed his way across Europe, and, alone and worn with fatigue, reached England, just in time to join the expedition to Virginia.

This was the man who had thoroughly learned human nature; he could control the colonists, even in cases of rebellion; he could fill the Indians with a fear of himself. He also realized that food was of more value to starving men than gold. John Smith guided in building the houses; he

taught the colonists how to till the soil; he obtained the much-needed food from the Indians; and he kept the disheartened settlers from sailing for England until winter set in. Then heat and disease were gone, and a more hopeful, cheerful spirit filled all hearts.

When the Virginia Company sent out the colonists, it laid three commands upon them: one was to seek Raleigh's "lost colony"; the second was to find gold; and the third was to search for a northwest passage through America to the Pacific Ocean. Although Smith realized that neither of these objects could be accomplished easily, yet he was more than willing to set out on any exploring expedition.

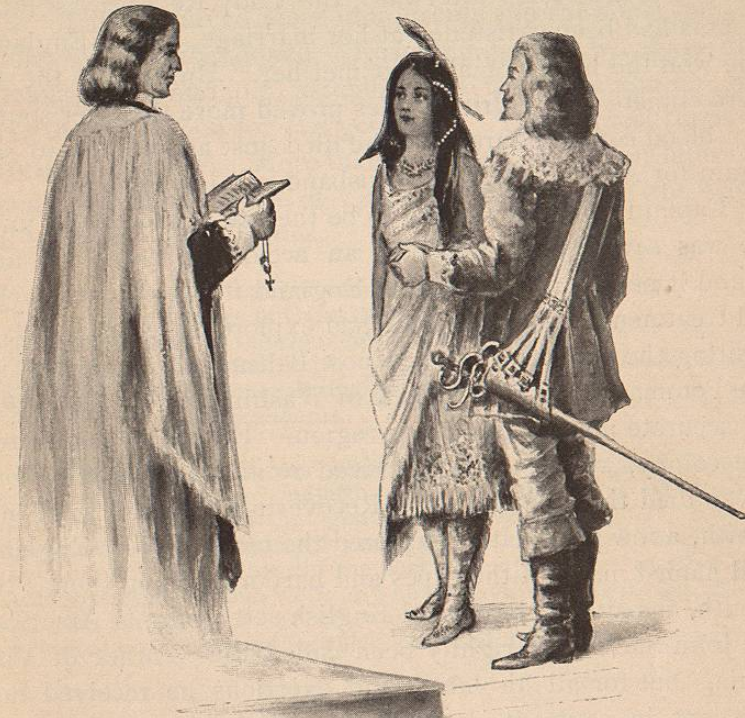


INDIANS WONDER AT SMITH'S WRITING.

He rowed up the Chickahominy River as far as his boats could go, proving that the Pacific could not be reached in that way. He continued his journey into the country and was captured by the Indians. He saved his life for a time by showing them a pocket compass. They were greatly impressed with his genius, and were filled with wonder when he conveyed a message to his friends at Jamestown by sending them a written letter.

The Indians determined to send their captive to the great chief, Powhatan, at his royal residence near the present city of Richmond. There a council of war was held, which decided to put Smith to death. Pocahontas, the twelve-year-

old daughter of Powhatan, throwing her arms around the neck of the captive, begged her father to spare his life. The chief could refuse nothing to his beloved child, and Smith,



THE WEDDING OF POCAHONTAS.

instead of suffering death, was treated with the utmost friendship.

Pocahontas continued to be a friend to Smith and the colonists. She often conveyed them food in the hard times that

followed. Five years later she helped to make a firmer band of union between the Indians and the white men by her marriage with John Rolfe, an Englishman of high family. When, a few years afterward, the Lady Rebecca, as Pocahontas had been christened at her marriage, visited England, she won the hearts of all who met her. Unhappily, the severe climate of the British Isles proved more than her southern blood could endure, and she died just as she was to sail again for America, with her husband and infant son.

Captain Smith continued to be the life of the colony until he was severely wounded by an accidental explosion and found it necessary to return to England for the proper surgical treatment. Meanwhile he had explored Chesapeake Bay, visiting the harbor of what is now Baltimore and sailing up the Potomac River past the site of Washington; he also made an accurate map of the entire region. He had so conducted the colony, with its newly arrived reinforcements, that but seven died the second year. Recovering from the accident, Smith, a few years later, explored the coast of New England and named many of the capes and harbors, among them Plymouth, the site of the second English settlement in America.

John Smith has rightly been called the "Father of Virginia," but for all his labors and exertions he received not one cent in payment; not one foot of land, not the house he himself had built, not the field his own hands had planted, nor any reward but the applause of his conscience and the world.

After the departure of Smith the Jamestown colony began to lose ground again, and in six months the four hundred and ninety persons in the settlement had been reduced to sixty. Three years after the first arrival at Jamestown the wretched survivors embarked in four small vessels and permitted the

tide to carry them down the river, for they had decided to give up the colony and to sail for England.

Fortunately, the next morning, before they reached Point Comfort, the fleet of the new governor, Lord Delaware, was met. This contained more immigrants and supplies, and the colony was not abandoned. Reaching Jamestown again, the colonists, new and old, assembled in the little church and gave thanks to God for His goodness. The hardest times in Virginia were past. More than a century and a half later the colony became the State of Virginia, the largest of the original thirteen United States.

State the result of Raleigh's failures.

Describe the voyage of Captain Newport.

Give an account of the character of the colonists.

Tell the story of John Smith: as a young man; as a leader in Virginia; among the Indians; during his later life.

Tell the story of Pocahontas.

How much money do you suppose the kings of England have received from Virginia as "one-fifth of the gold and silver" obtained in that colony? What did the "gentlemen" seek in Virginia? Did the Englishmen in the seventeenth century hope to find the same things that Columbus did? How did the pocket compass save Smith's life? Smith governed Virginia well; did he do anything else for his fellow-men? Do you know of any other men besides John Smith who did not receive proper reward for the good which they did?

SIGNATURE OF KING JAMES I.