

especial providence of God, none of them either hit or hurt us, though many came close by us, and on every side of us, and some coats which hung up in our baricado, were shot through and through. So after we had given God thanks for our deliverance, we took our shallop and went on our journey, and called this place, *The first encounter*. * * *

1622

JOHN SMITH

1580–1631

One of the most vivid episodes in the literature of colonial British North America is a scene from the writings of Captain John Smith that takes place at the “court” of Powhatan, the mamanatowick (or paramount chief) of the Algonquians in the Chesapeake Bay region. (For more on Powhatan, see the excerpt from “Powhatan’s Discourse” earlier in this volume.) Smith was a leading member of the English company that had established the colony of Jamestown, in what is now Virginia. While on an expedition to discover the source of the Chickahominy River, he was taken captive by some of Powhatan’s men. Arriving at Powhatan’s residence at Werowocomoco—on the York River, north of Jamestown—Smith was greeted with an elaborate welcoming ceremony and feast. Soon afterward, however, he was suddenly dragged before Powhatan and threatened with execution. The mamanatowick’s preteen daughter Matoaka, better known as Pocahontas (c. 1591–1617), pleaded with her father not to kill Smith. When her appeal appeared to be failing, she shielded Smith’s head with her arms and saved his life—or so Smith claimed. Historians and anthropologists have speculated that what Smith describes as a rescue from execution was instead a ceremony designed to make Smith subordinate to Powhatan, thereby transforming Jamestown into a tributary of the Algonquian leader.

The romantic narrative about how Pocahontas rescued John Smith forms one of the central myths of English colonization. It emerges from a short passage in *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624), a historical compilation that Smith produced jointly with several other writers. In the years between Smith’s return from Virginia in 1609 and the appearance of the *General History*, Smith had published other accounts of his Virginia adventures that mention Pocahontas. But the lines devoted to her “rescue” of him appear exclusively in the *General History*. That volume appeared seven years after she died on board a ship while returning from England with her husband—the white colonist John Rolfe—and their son, Thomas. By the time the *General History* was published in London, no one was available to corroborate Smith’s account of his dramatic rescue or clarify its significance. The mythology that has grown out of these few brief lines, sometimes conflating the rescue of Smith with Pocahontas’s subsequent marriage to Rolfe, is a striking example of how some colonial-era texts have accrued layers of meaning that extend well beyond the words on the page.

This scene is not the only romancelike feature of Smith’s writings. The English adventurer deliberately cultivated an aura resembling that of a knight in a chivalric romance—but with important differences. Like Sir Walter Raleigh, the aristocratic English explorer and champion of colonization, Smith pursued adventure

and glory. Unlike Raleigh, he was not an aristocrat but a farmer’s son. This difference in status forms a major element in Smith’s writings. He hailed from the east of England, where his father had a farm on the edge of the Lincolnshire Wolds, an area of considerable natural beauty. The young Smith found the countryside too quiet for his taste. Shortly after his father died in 1596, the restless sixteen-year-old went to the Netherlands to fight for Dutch independence from Philip II of Spain. The fight was part of the European wars of religion, which pitted Protestants against Roman Catholics and, on the eastern front, Christians against Muslims. Smith was one of many planters whose involvement in the colonization of the Americas was colored by experience in these often brutal conflicts. Following his tour of duty in the Netherlands, he fought in the Mediterranean, and he later joined the Austrian imperial army in its war against the Ottoman Empire, which at that time encompassed large swathes of southeastern Europe and the Middle East, as well as parts of North Africa. While fighting the Ottomans in Hungary, Smith earned promotion to the captain’s rank that became an enduring part of his public persona. He claimed, apparently with at least some degree of truth, that he had defeated and beheaded a succession of three Turkish officers in single combat. The coat of arms that he was later awarded showed the three severed heads.

Eventually, Smith was wounded in battle, taken prisoner, and sold as a slave to a Turkish noblewoman. Smith described his developing attachment to this noblewoman in his semiautobiographical work, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Captaine John Smith, in Europe, Asia, Affrica, and America* (1630). The romance might have ended in marriage, with Smith converting to Islam and serving as an Ottoman bureaucrat. Instead, the Englishman killed the noblewoman’s brother in ambiguous circumstances—Smith may have mistaken a form of training for mistreatment—and escaped. Smith later gave place names drawn from his Turkish adventures to areas in New England, such as Three Turks’ Heads (near Cape Ann in Massachusetts), which John Winthrop mentioned in his journal account of the Puritans’ arrival in 1630.

After returning to England in the winter of 1604–05, Smith began looking for his next adventure. The twenty-six-year-old veteran had an assertive personality and military experience that were attractive qualities to the members of the Virginia Company of London as they organized their 1606 expedition to establish what they hoped would be England’s first permanent plantation in North America. But those qualities also carried liabilities. Smith sometimes used force unnecessarily, and his hard-to-control temper and stubborn self-reliance could make him a troublesome companion. He ran afoul of the people in charge of the expedition on the voyage to America in 1607, when he was placed under arrest and threatened with execution. Then, in a remarkable turn of events, his name was found on the list of council members that the company had designated to run the colony, which had been kept secret until the group’s arrival. The company had recognized qualities in Smith that they believed would be useful to the group, and so despite his comparatively modest status and his propensity for challenging authority, they gave him a role in the Jamestown colony’s leadership.

Smith set out to organize the men and explore and map the region. Many of the other colonists were from elite backgrounds, and they were often unwilling or unable to perform the hard and dangerous work that settlement demanded. The colonists who survived rampant illness, famine, warfare, and other mishaps increasingly came to value Smith’s leadership, and in 1608 he was elected to the colony’s highest office, becoming the equivalent of its governor. But official status offered little protection in the volatile colonial setting. When Smith returned to Jamestown after being held captive by Powhatan—the episode where he was “rescued” by Pocahontas—he was charged with the deaths of the two soldiers who had accompanied him on the expedition that ended in his capture. Smith was saved from hanging

when the colonists were distracted by the fortuitous arrival of a fleet with much-needed supplies from England. Not long afterward, however, Smith's gunpowder bag mysteriously exploded in his lap while he napped on the deck of an exploring vessel—possibly because a disgruntled member of the company had thrown a match into the powder. Smith left Virginia in 1609, never to return.

Smith is most closely associated with the Virginia enterprise, but he also took an active interest in New England, and his works form an important bridge between these first two permanent English colonies in North America. In 1614 he voyaged to New England, and he, not the Puritans, gave the region its name. He offered the Pilgrims his services as a guide for their voyage in 1620, but they chose instead to put Smith's helpful books and maps in the hands of a more temperate military leader, Myles Standish. If not for this rejection and some unfortunate setbacks that prevented future voyages, Smith might have become more famous for this second aspect of his American career than for the first: he published more works on New England than on Virginia, seeing in the northern region great potential for "middling" English settlers. Smith's New England works have a strong ideological caste, in that they focus more on the idea of America and less on the many challenges of establishing plantations there, doubtless a reflection of his indirect involvement.

Smith published some nine books between 1608 and 1631, including his works on Virginia and New England, books for aspiring seamen, and *The True Travels*. Many of his writings have a distinctly Elizabethan caste to them, though with a difference. In his works, the heroic ideal of the elite adventurer, typified by Sir Walter Raleigh, gives way to the prototype of the independent self-made man. Tales of exploration, piracy, and military adventure had stirred Smith's youthful imagination, and he longed to create his own heroic narratives. Rather than simply reproduce heroic literary conventions, Smith actively transformed them. In contrast to Raleigh, who was associated with the high literary ideals embodied in Edmund Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queen* (1590), Smith wrote prose accounts addressed to the expanding market for popular printed works, which was driven in part by the public appetite for writings about the colonization effort. Though largely untutored in the finer points of style, he had an ear for a good story and a capacity for striking metaphors. Sprinkled with classical allusions and references to the popular theater, his writings also demonstrate his mastery of the humanistic genres of oratory, history, and descriptive travel writing.

The most lasting and influential contribution of his writings was a vision of England's colonies as places where people of all economic backgrounds could support themselves as small farmers, in healthful and pleasant circumstances, with greater liberty than might be possible elsewhere. The outlines of the yeoman farmer ideal that would be so important for Virginia's Thomas Jefferson emerge clearly in Smith's works. The negative aspects of this vision emerge as well in passages revealing how this figure comes to overshadow and dominate those who pursued other modes of life, notably America's indigenous inhabitants. Perhaps Smith's most salient quality as a writer is his special knack for illustrating the connections between the often sordid or brutal details of the colonization enterprise and the imaginative work that propelled it.

The following texts are from *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith* (1910), edited by Edward Arber and A. G. Bradley.

From The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles¹

From *The Third Book*²

FROM CHAPTER 2. WHAT HAPPENED TILL THE FIRST SUPPLY³

Being thus left to our fortunes, it fortuneed that within ten days⁴ scarce ten amongst us could either go, or well stand, such extreme weakness and sickness oppressed us. And thereat none need marvel, if they consider the cause and reason, which was this:

Whilst the ships stayed, our allowance was somewhat bettered, by a daily proportion of biscuit, which the sailors would pilfer to sell, give, or exchange with us, for money, Sassafras,⁵ furs, or love. But when they departed, there remained neither tavern, beer house, nor place of relief, but the common kettle.⁶ Had we been as free from all sins as [from] gluttony, and drunkenness, we might have been canonized for Saints; but our President would never have been admitted, for engrossing to his private [use], oatmeal, sack, oil, aqua vitae, beef, eggs, or what not, but the kettle;⁷ that indeed he allowed equally to be distributed, and that was half a pint of wheat, and as much barley boiled with water for a man a day, and this having fried some twenty-six weeks in the ship's hold, contained as many worms as grains, so that we might truly call it rather so much bran then corn; our drink⁸ was water, our lodgings castles in the air.

With this lodging and diet, our extreme toil in bearing and planting palisades, so strained and bruised us, and our continual labor in the extremity of the heat had so weakened us, as were cause sufficient to have made us as miserable in our native country, or any other place in the world.

From May, to September [1607], those that escaped, lived upon sturgeon, and sea crabs. Fifty in this time we buried, the rest seeing the President's⁹ projects to escape these miseries in our pinnace by flight (who all this time had neither felt want nor sickness) so moved our dead spirits, as we deposed him and established Ratcliffe in his place, (Gosnold being dead, Kendall deposed). Smith newly recovered, Martin¹ and Ratcliffe were by his care preserved and relieved, and the most of the soldiers recovered with the skillful diligence of Master Thomas Wotton our general surgeon.

1. The Bermuda Islands.

2. The Third Book is titled "The Proceedings and Accidents of the English Colony in Virginia" and is derived from Smith's Virginia book of 1612.

3. The bulk of this chapter may have been written by Smith, although at its publication in 1612 it was credited solely to Thomas Studley, chief storekeeper of the colony. In 1624, Smith added to Studley's signature at the end of this section of the text not only his own initials but also the names of Robert Fenton and Edward Harrington as part authors. Studley died early in the first year, on August 28, 1607, four days after Harrington, so neither could have written much of what is partly attributed to them. Of Robert Fenton nothing is known.

4. By the end of June 1607, after Captain Christopher Newport (d. 1617) left to fetch new supplies from England. "Fortuned" happened.

5. The bark of the sassafras tree, sold for its supposed medicinal qualities, was a valuable commodity in London.

6. I.e., the communal resources.

7. I.e., President Edward Maria Wingfield (c. 1560–1613), a man of high connections in England, would not have been canonized because he diverted many supplies (everything except the contents of the common kettle) for his own use, including sack (wine) and aqua vitae (brandy).

8. "Drink," here used ironically, customarily referred to wine or beer. "Corn": grain.

9. I.e., Wingfield's.

1. Captain John Martin (c. 1567–1632?) was a colonist best known for his contentiousness. "Captain John Ratcliffe" was an alias of John Sickle-more, master of one of the vessels on the voyage over and a member of the local council. The most enigmatic figure in Jamestown, he was elected president of the council in September 1607, but later fell out with Smith. Captain Bartholomew Gosnold (ca. 1572–1607), who had explored New England before the first Jamestown voyage, probably had been responsible for Smith's recruitment to the venture. Captain George Kendall was executed for mutiny later in the year.

But now was all our provision spent, the sturgeon gone, all helps abandoned, each hour expecting the fury of the savages, when God the patron of all good endeavors, in that desperate extremity so changed the hearts of the savages, that they brought such plenty of their fruits, and provision, as no man wanted.²

And now where some affirmed it was ill done of the Council to send forth men so badly provided, this incontestable reason will show them plainly they are too ill advised to nourish such ill conceits: first, the fault of our going was our own; what could be thought fitting or necessary we had; but what we should find, or want, or where we should be, we were all ignorant, and supposing to make our passage in two months, with victual to live, and the advantage of the spring to work; we were at sea five months, where we both spent our victual and lost the opportunity of the time and season to plant, by the unskillfull presumption of our ignorant transporters, that understood not at all, what they undertook.

Such actions have ever since the world's beginning been subject to such accidents, and everything of worth is found full of difficulties: but nothing so difficult as to establish a commonwealth so far remote from men and means, and where men's minds are so untoward³ as neither do well themselves, nor suffer others. But to proceed.

The new President and Martin, being little beloved, of weak judgment in dangers, and less industry in peace, committed the managing of all things abroad⁴ to Captain Smith: who by his own example, good words, and fair promises, set some to mow, others to bind thatch, some to build houses, others to thatch them, himself always bearing the greatest task for his own share, so that in short time, he provided most of them lodgings, neglecting any for himself.

This done, seeing the savages' superfluity begin to decrease [Smith] (with some of his workmen) shipped himself in the shallop⁵ to search the country for trade. The want of⁶ the language, knowledge to manage his boat without sails, the want of a sufficient power (knowing the multitude of the savages), apparel for his men, and other necessities, were infinite impediments yet no discouragement.

Being but six or seven in company he went down the river to Kecoughtan⁷ where at first they scorned him as a famished man, and would in derision offer him a handful of corn, a piece of bread, for their swords and muskets, and such like proportions also for their apparel. But seeing by trade and courtesy there was nothing to be had, he made bold to try such conclusions as necessity enforced; though contrary to his commission, [he] let fly⁸ his muskets, ran his boat on shore, whereat they all fled into the woods.

So marching towards their houses, they might see great heaps of corn: much ado he had to restrain his hungry soldiers from present taking of it, expecting as it happened that the savages would assault them, as not long after they did with a most hideous noise. Sixty or seventy of them, some black, some

2. I.e., was in want.

3. Intractable.

4. I.e., outside the colony's palisade.

5. An open boat.

6. Inability to speak.

7. A village near the mouth of the James River whose inhabitants, the Kecoughtans, were members of the Powhatan Confederacy.

8. Fired.

red, some white, some particoloured, came in a square order,⁹ singing and dancing out of the woods, with their Okee (which was an Idol made of skins, stuffed with moss, all painted and hung with chains and copper) borne before them, and in this manner, being well armed with clubs, targets, bows and arrow, they charged the English that so kindly received them with their muskets loaded with pistol shot, that down fell their God, and divers¹ lay sprawling on the ground; the rest fled again to the woods, and ere long sent one of their Quiyoughkasoucks² to offer peace, and redeem their Okee.

Smith told them, if only six of them would come unarmed and load his boat, he would not only be their friend, but restore them their Okee, and give them beads, copper, and hatchets besides, which on both sides was to their contents³ performed, and then they brought him venison, turkeys, wild fowl, bread, and what they had, singing and dancing in sign of friendship till they departed.

In his return he discovered the town and country of Warraskoyack.⁴

Thus God unboundless by His power,
Made them thus kind, would us devour.

Smith perceiving (notwithstanding their late misery) not any regarded but from hand to mouth⁵ (the company being well recovered) caused the pinnace to be provided with things fitting to get provision for the year following, but in the interim he made three or four journeys and discovered the people of Chickahominy.⁶ Yet what he carefully provided the rest carelessly spent.

Wingfield and Kendall living in disgrace * * * strengthened themselves with the sailors and other confederates, to regain their former credit and authority, or at least such means aboard the pinnace, (being fitted to sail as Smith had appointed for trade) to alter her course and to go for England.

Smith, unexpectedly returning, had the plot discovered to him, much trouble he had to prevent it, till with store of saker⁷ and musket shot he forced them stay or sink in the river: which action cost the life of Captain Kendall.

These brawls are so disgusting, as some will say they were better forgotten, yet all men of good judgment will conclude, it were better their baseness should be manifest to the world, than the business bear the scorn and shame of their excused disorders.⁸

The President and Captain Archer⁹ not long after intended also to have abandoned the country, which project also was curbed, and suppressed by Smith.

9. "Square order": formation. "Particoloured": i.e., painted for battle.

1. Several. "Targets": small shields. "So kindly": in such a way.

2. Smith elsewhere defines this term as referring to the "petty gods" of the Algonquian-speaking peoples, but here it may mean priests.

3. I.e., in mutual contentment.

4. A village on the south side of the James River.

5. I.e., none of the settlers, despite their recent sufferings, gave any thought to gathering a store of provision for the future.

6. The region along the Chickahominy River, which empties into the James River a short distance west of Jamestown.

7. Shot for a small cannon used in sieges and on shipboard. "Discovered": revealed.

8. I.e., it is necessary to recount these troubles and lay the blame on the responsible individuals (Wingfield and Kendall), rather than let the whole "business" of the colony suffer ill repute.

9. Gabriel Archer (c. 1575-1609?) had been an associate of Bartholomew Gosnold before the Jamestown voyage. Having gone back to England in 1608 as a confirmed opponent of Smith, he returned to Virginia the following year to head an anti-Smith faction but died during the starving time the next winter. Ratcliffe (Sickle-more) was still president.

The Spaniard never more greedily desired gold than he victual,¹ nor his soldiers more to abandon the country, than he to keep it. But [he found] plenty of corn in the river of Chickahominy, where hundreds of savages in divers places stood with baskets expecting his coming.

And now the winter approaching, the rivers became so covered with swans, geese, ducks, and cranes that we daily feasted with good bread, Virginia peas, pumpkins, and putchamins, fish, fowl, and divers sorts of wild beasts as fat as we could eat them, so that none of our Tuftaffety humorists² desired to go for England.

But our comedies never endured long without a tragedy, some idle exceptions³ being muttered against Captain Smith, for not discovering the head of Chickahominy river, and [he being] taxed by the council to be too slow in so worthy an attempt. The next voyage he proceeded so far that with much labor by cutting of trees asunder he made his passage, but when his barge could pass no farther, he left her in a broad bay out of danger of shot, commanding none should go ashore till his return; himself with two English and two savages went up higher in a canoe, but he was not long absent but his men went ashore, whose want of government gave both occasion and opportunity to the savages to surprise one George Cassen, whom they slew and much failed not to have cut off the boat and all the rest.⁴

Smith little dreaming of that accident, being got to the marshes at the river's head twenty miles in the desert,⁵ had his two men slain (as is supposed) sleeping by the canoe, whilst himself by fowling sought them victual, who finding he was beset with 200 savages, two of them he slew, still defending himself with the aid of a savage his guide, whom he bound to his arm with his garters, and used him as a buckler,⁶ yet he was shot in his thigh a little, and had many arrows that stuck in his clothes but no great hurt, till at last they took him prisoner.

When this news came to Jamestown, much was their sorrow for his loss, few expecting what ensued.

Six or seven weeks those barbarians kept him prisoner, many strange triumphs and conjurations they made of him, yet he so demeaned⁷ himself amongst them, as he not only diverted them from surprising the fort, but procured his own liberty, and got himself and his company such estimation amongst them, that those savages admired him more than their owne Quiyoughkasoucks.

The manner how they used and delivered him, is as followeth:

The savages having drawn from George Cassen whither Captain Smith was gone, prosecuting that opportunity they followed him with 300 bowmen, conducted by the King of Pamunkey, who in divisions searching the turnings of the river, found Robinson and Emry by the fireside; those they shot full of arrows and slew.⁸ Then finding the Captain, as is said, that used the savage

1. I.e., Smith wanted to find food for the colonists as much as Spanish conquistadors wanted to find gold.

2. Self-indulgent persons who might be given to wearing lace. "Putchamins": persimmons.

3. Objections.

4. I.e., only through fault of their own did they fail to wipe out Cassen's whole party. "Government": discipline.

5. Wilderness.

7. Behaved.

8. I.e., these are the two men mentioned above as having been killed while they slept by the canoe (the fireside being by the canoe). John Robinson was a "gentleman"; Thomas Emry was a carpenter. "King of Pamunkey": Opechancanough, Powhatan's younger half-brother (d. 1644) and Smith's captor, who led the Powhatan Confederacy's attack on the colonists in 1622 and as late as 1644 attempted one last time.

that was his guide as his shield (three of them being slain and divers other so galled)⁹ all the rest would not come near him. Thinking thus to have returned to his boat, regarding them, as he marched, more than his way, [he] slipped up to the middle in an oozy creek and his savage with him, yet dared they not come to him till being near dead with cold, he threw away his arms. Then according to their composition¹ they drew him forth and led him to the fire, where his men were slain. Diligently they chafed his benumbed limbs.

He demanding for their captain, they showed him Opechancanough, King of Pamunkey, to whom he gave a round ivory double compass dial. Much they marveled at the playing of the fly² and needle, which they could see so plainly and yet not touch it because of the glass that covered them. But when he demonstrated by that globe-like jewell, the roundness of the earth, and skies, the sphere of the sun, moon, and stars, and how the sun did chase the night round about the world continually, the greatness of the land and sea, the diversity of nations, variety of complexions, and how we were to them antipodes,³ and many other such like matters, they all stood as amazed with admiration.

Notwithstanding, within an hour after, they tied him to a tree, and as many as could stand about him prepared to shoot him, but the King holding up the compass in his hand, they all laid down their bows and arrows, and in a triumphant manner led him to Orapaks, where he was after their manner kindly feasted, and well used.⁴

Their order in conducting him was thus: Drawing themselves all in file, the King in the midst had all their pieces⁵ and swords borne before him. Captain Smith was led after him by three great savages holding him fast by each arm, and on each side six went in file with their arrows nocked.⁶ But arriving at the town (which was but only thirty or forty hunting houses made of mats, which they remove as they please, as we our tents), all the women and children staring to behold him, the soldiers first all in file performed the form of a Bissom⁷ so well as could be, and on each flank, officers as sergeants to see them keep their orders. A good time they continued this exercise and then cast themselves in a ring, dancing in such several postures and singing and yelling out such hellish notes and screeches; being strangely painted, every one [had] his quiver of arrows and at his back a club, on his arm a fox or an otter's skin or some such matter for his vambrace, their heads and shoulders painted red, with oil and pocones mingled together, which scarlet-like color made an exceeding handsome show, his bow in his hand, and the skin of a bird with her wings abroad⁸ dried, tied on his head, a piece of copper, a white shell, a long feather with a small rattle growing at the tails of their snakes tied to it, or some such like toy. All this while, Smith and the King stood in the midst, guarded as before is said, and after three dances they all departed. Smith they conducted to a long house where thirty or forty tall fellows did guard him, and ere long more bread and venison was brought him than would have served twenty men. I think his stomach at that

9. Wounded.

1. Agreement for surrender.

2. Compass card.

3. On the opposite side of the globe.

4. "Treated." "Orapaks": a village located farther

6. Notched; i.e., with their arrows fitted on the bowstring ready for use.

7. From an Italian term denoting a snakelike formation.

8. Outspread. "Vambrace": forearm protection.

time was not very good; what he left they put in baskets and tied over his head. About midnight they set the meat again before him; all this time not one of them would eat a bit with him, till the next morning they brought him as much more, and then did they eat all the old, and reserved the new as they had done the other, which made him think they would fat him to eat him. Yet in this desperate estate, to defend him from the cold, one Maocasater brought him his gown, in requital⁹ of some beads and toys Smith had given him at his first arrival in Virginia.

Two days after, a man would have slain him (but that the guard prevented it) for the death of his son, to whom they conducted him to recover the poor man then breathing his last. Smith told them that at Jamestown he had a water would do it, if they would let him fetch it, but they would not permit that, but made all the preparations they could to assault Jamestown, craving his advice, and for recompence he should have life, liberty, land, and women. In part of a table book¹ he wrote his mind to them at the fort, what was intended, how they should follow that direction to affright the messengers, and without fail send him such things as he wrote for. And an inventory with them. The difficulty and danger, he told the savages, of the mines, great guns, and other engines² exceedingly affrighted them, yet according to his request they went to Jamestown in as bitter weather as could be of frost and snow, and within three days returned with an answer.

But when they came to Jamestown, seeing men sally out as he had told them they would, they fled, yet in the night they came again to the same place where he had told them they should receive an answer and such things as he had promised them, which they found accordingly, and with which they returned with no small expedition to the wonder of them all that heard it, that he could either divine³ or the paper could speak.

Then they led him to the Youghtanunds, the Mattapanients, the Piank tanks, the Nantaughtacunds, and Onawmanients upon the rivers of Rapahannock and Potomac, over all those rivers, and back again by divers other several nations,⁴ to the King's habitation at Pamunkey where they entertained him with most strange and fearful conjurations:⁵

As if near led to hell,
Amongst the devils to dwell.

Not long after, early in a morning, a great fire was made in a long house, and a mat spread on the one side as on the other; on the one they caused him to sit, and all the guard went out of the house, and presently came skipping in a great grim fellow all painted over with coal⁶ mingled with oil, and many snakes' and weasels' skins stuffed with moss, and all their tails tied together so as they met on the crown of his head in a tassel, and round about the tassel was as a coronet of feathers, the skins hanging round about his head, back, and shoulders and in a manner covered his face, with a hellish

9. Payment.

1. A notebook.

2. Weaponry.

3. Perform magic. "Expedition": speed.

4. Other Algonquian-speaking groups. The named groups were part of the Powhatan Confederacy.

5. Incantations. However, Smith derived the following couplet from a translation of the ancient Roman writer Seneca published by Martin Fotherby in his philosophical treatise *Atheomasix* (1622).

6. I.e., charcoal.

voice, and a rattle in his hand. With most strange gestures and passions he began his invocation and environed⁷ the fire with a circle of meal; which done, three more such like devils came rushing in with the like antic tricks, painted half black, half red, but all their eyes were painted white and some red strokes like mustaches along their cheeks. Round about him those fiends danced a pretty while, and then came in three more as ugly as the rest, with red eyes and white strokes over their black faces. At last they all sat down right against him, three of them on the one hand of the chief priest, and three on the other. Then all with their rattles began a song; which ended, the chief priest laid down five wheat corns; then straining his arms and hands with such violence that he sweat and his veins swelled, he began a short oration;⁸ at the conclusion they all gave a short groan and then laid down three grains more. After that, began their song again, and then another oration, ever laying down so many corns as before till they had twice encircled the fire; that done, they took a bunch of little sticks prepared for that purpose, continuing still their devotion, and at the end of every song and oration they laid down a stick betwixt the divisions of corn. Till night, neither he nor they did either eat or drink, and then they feasted merrily with the best provisions they could make. Three days they used this ceremony; the meaning whereof, they told him, was to know if he intended them well or no. The circle of meal signified their country, the circles of corn the bounds of the sea, and the sticks his country. They imagined the world to be flat and round, like a trencher,⁹ and they in the midst.

After this they brought him a bag of gunpowder, which they carefully preserved till the next spring, to plant as they did their corn, because they would be acquainted with the nature of that seed.

Opitchapam, the King's brother,¹ invited him to his house, where, with as many platters of bread, fowl, and wild beasts as did environ him, he bid him welcome, but not any of them would eat a bit with him but put up all the remainder in baskets.

At his return to Opechancanough's, all the King's women and their children, flocked about him for their parts,² as a due by custom, to be merry with such fragments:

But his waking mind in hideous dreams did oft see wondrous shapes,
Of bodies strange, and huge in growth, and of stupendous makes.³

At last they brought him to Werowocomoco,⁴ where was Powhatan, their Emperor. Here more than two hundred of those grim courtiers stood wondering at him, as [if] he had been a monster, till Powhatan and his train had put themselves in their greatest braveries.⁵ Before a fire upon a seat like a bedstead, he sat covered with a great robe made of raccoon skins and all the tails hanging by. On either hand did sit a young wench of sixteen or eighteen years and along on each side [of] the house, two rows of men and behind them as many women, with all their heads and shoulders painted

7. Encircled.

8. Prayer. "Wheat corns": i.e., five kernels of Indian corn.

9. A flat, wooden dish.

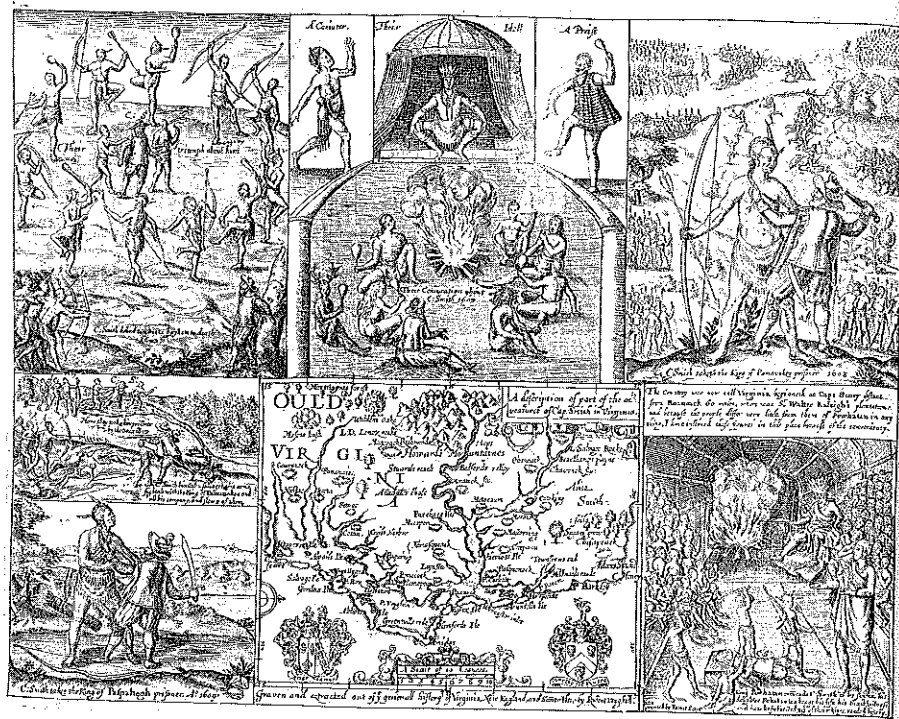
1. Actually the chief's half-brother; he succeeded Powhatan in 1618.

2. Gifts.

3. From a translation of the ancient Roman writer Lucretius by Fotherby.

4. Powhatan's village on the north shore of the York River, almost due north of Jamestown.

5. Finery; i.e., costumes.



"Map of the old Virginia," by Robert Vaughan, from John Smith, *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624). This map of Old Virginia, the part of coastal North Carolina where the first English explorations and settlements took place in the 1580s, is surrounded by images portraying John Smith's warlike encounters around Jamestown some twenty years later. The panel in the lower right corner shows the intervention of Pocahontas in the supposed execution of Smith.

red, many of their heads bedecked with the white down of birds, but every one with something, and a great chain of white beads about their necks.

At his entrance before the King, all the people gave a great shout. The Queen of Appomattoc⁶ was appointed to bring him water to wash his hands, and another brought him a bunch of feathers, instead of a towel to dry them; having feasted him after their best barbarous manner they could, a long consultation was held, but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan; then as many as could, laid hands on him, dragged him to them, and thereon laid his head and being ready with their clubs to beat out his brains, Pocahontas, the King's dearest daughter, when no entreaty could prevail, got his head in her arms and laid her own upon his to save him from death, whereat the Emperor was contented he should live to make him hatchets, and her bells, beads, and copper, for they thought him as well of all occupations as themselves.⁷ For the King himself will make his own robes, shoes, bows, arrows, pots; plant, hunt, or do any thing so well as the rest.

6. Opossunoquonuske was the weroansqua, or leader, of a small village (Appamatuck) near the future site of Petersburg, Virginia. In 1610, she was killed by the English in retaliation for the

deaths of fourteen settlers.

7. I.e., they thought him as variously skilled as themselves.

They say he bore a pleasant show,
But sure his heart was sad.
For who can pleasant be, and rest,
That lives in fear and dread:
And having life suspected, doth
It still suspected lead.⁸

Two days after, Powhatan having disguised himself in the most fearful manner he could, caused Captain Smith to be brought forth to a great house in the woods and there upon a mat by the fire to be left alone. Not long after, from behind a mat that divided the house, was made the most doleful noise he ever heard; then Powhatan more like a devil than a man, with some two hundred more as black as himself, came unto him and told him now they were friends, and presently he should go to Jamestown, to send him two great guns and a grindstone for which he would give him the Country of Capahowasic and for ever esteem him as his son Nantaquoud.⁹

So to Jamestown with twelve guides Powhatan sent him. That night they quartered in the woods, he still expecting (as he had done all this long time of his imprisonment) every hour to be put to one death or other, for all their feasting. But almighty God (by His divine providence) had mollified the hearts of those stern barbarians with compassion. The next morning betimes they came to the fort, where Smith having used the savages with what kindness he could, he showed Rawhunt, Powhatan's trusty servant, two demiculverins¹ and a millstone to carry [to] Powhatan; they found them somewhat too heavy, but when they did see him discharge them, being loaded with stones, among the boughs of a great tree loaded with icicles, the ice and branches came so tumbling down that the poor savages ran away half dead with fear. But at last we regained some conference with them and gave them such toys and sent to Powhatan, his women, and children such presents as gave them in general full content.

Now in Jamestown they were all in combustion, the strongest preparing once more to run away with the pinnace; which with the hazard of his life, with saker falcon² and musket shot, Smith forced now the third time to stay or sink.

Some no better than they should be, had plotted with the President the next day to have put him to death by the Levitical³ law, for the lives of Robinson and Emry; pretending the fault was his that had led them to their ends: but he quickly took such order with such lawyers that he laid them by the heels till he sent some of them prisoners for England.

Now ever once in four or five days, Pocahontas with her attendants brought him so much provision that saved many of their lives, that else for all this had starved with hunger.

Thus from numb death our good God sent relief,
The sweet assuager of all other grief.⁴

8. Derived from a translation of the ancient Greek playwright Euripides by Fotherby.

9. I.e., Powhatan would esteem him as highly as his own son Nantaquoud. Capahowasic was along the York River, near where Smith was held prisoner.

1. Large cannons.

2. Small artillery piece.

3. "And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 24.17).

4. The first line appears to be Smith's, inspired by Fotherby. The second comes from Fotherby's translation of a quotation from Euripides in a text by the ancient Greek writer Plutarch.

His relation of the plenty he had seen, especially at Werowocomoco, and of the state and bounty of Powhatan (which till that time was unknown), so revived their dead spirits (especially the love of Pocahontas)⁵ as all men's fear was abandoned.

Thus you may see what difficulties still crossed any good endeavor; and the good success of the business being thus oft brought to the very period of destruction; yet you see by what strange means God hath still delivered it.

* * *

From *The Fourth Book*

[SMITH'S FAREWELL TO VIRGINIA]

Thus far I have traveled in this Wilderness of Virginia, not being ignorant for all my pains this discourse will be wrested, tossed and turned as many ways as there is leaves;⁶ that I have written too much of some, too little of others, and many such like objections. To such I must answer, in the Company's name I was requested to do it,⁷ if any have concealed their approved experiences from my knowledge, they must excuse me: as for every fatherless or stolen relation,⁸ or whole volumes of sophisticated rehearsals, I leave them to the charge of them that desire them. I thank God I never undertook anything yet [for which] any could tax me of carelessness or dishonesty, and what is he to whom I am indebted or troublesome?⁹ Ah! were these my accusers but to change cases and places with me [for] but two years, or till they had done but so much as I, it may be they would judge more charitably of my imperfections. But here I must leave all to the trial of time, both myself, Virginia's preparations, proceedings and good events, praying to that great God the protector of all goodness to send them as good success as the goodness of the action¹ and country deserveth, and my heart desireth.

1624

From *A Description of New England*

Who can desire more content, that hath small means; or but only his merit to advance his fortune, than to tread, and plant that ground he hath purchased by the hazard of his life? If he have but the taste of virtue and magnanimity, what to such a mind can be more pleasant, than planting and building a foundation for his posterity, got from the rude earth, by God's blessing and his own industry, without prejudice¹ to any? If he have any grain of faith or zeal in religion, what can he do less hurtful to any; or more agreeable to God,

5. I.e., the evident affection of Pocahontas for Smith and the English was instrumental in reviving the colonists' spirits.

6. Pages.

7. Smith was not requested to write the whole *General History* by the Virginia Company, so it is not clear what he means here. Possibly the discourse to which he refers is the brief summary of recommendations for the "reformation" of

Virginia that ends the Fourth Book and that he drew up at the request of the royal commissioners charged with effecting that reformation.

8. I.e., anonymous or "fugitive" narratives. "Approved": proven.

9. I.e., and who is it that I have been a burden to?

1. Venture. "Events": results.

1. Harm. "Magnanimity": greatness of spirit.

than to seek to convert those poor savages to know Christ, and humanity, whose labors with discretion will triple requite thy charge and pains? What so truly suits with honor and honesty, as the discovering things unknown? erecting towns, peopling countries, informing the ignorant, reforming things unjust, teaching virtue; and gaining to our native mother country a kingdom to attend her, finding employment for those that are idle, because they know not what to do: so far from wronging any, as to cause posterity to remember thee; and remembering thee, ever honor that remembrance with praise?

* * *

Then, who would live at home idly (or think in himself any worth to live) only to eat, drink, and sleep, and so die? Or by consuming that carelessly, [which] his friends got worthily? Or by using that miserably, that maintained virtue honestly? Or for being descended nobly, pine with the vain vaunt of great kindred, in penury?² Or (to maintain a silly show of bravery) toil out thy heart, soul, and time, basely, by shifts,³ tricks, cards, and dice? Or by relating news of others' actions, shark⁴ here or there for a dinner, or supper; deceive thy friends, by fair promises, and dissimulation, in borrowing where thou never intendest to pay; offend the laws, surfeit with excess, burden thy country, abuse thyself, despair in want, and then cozen⁵ thy kindred, yea even thine own brother, and wish thy parents' death (I will not say damnation) to have their estates? though thou seest what honors, and rewards, the world yet hath for them will seek them and worthily deserve them.

* * *

Let this move you to embrace employment, for those whose educations, spirits, and judgments want but your purses; not only to prevent such accustomed dangers, but also to gain more thereby than you have. And you fathers that are either so foolishly fond, or so miserably covetous, or so wilfully ignorant, or so negligently careless, as that you will rather maintain your children in idle wantonness, till they grow your masters; or become so basely unkind, as they wish nothing but your deaths; so that both sorts grow dissolute: and although you would wish them anywhere to escape the gallows, and ease your cares; though they spend you here one, two, or three hundred pound a year; you would grudge to give half so much in adventure with them, to obtain an estate, which in a small time but with a little assistance of your providence,⁶ might be better than your own. But if an angel should tell you, that any place yet unknown can afford such fortunes; you would not believe him, no more than Columbus was believed there was any such land as is now the well-known abounding America; much less such large regions as are yet unknown, as well in America, as in Africa, and Asia, and Terra Incognita; where were courses for gentlemen (and them that would be so reputed) more suiting their qualities, than begging from their Prince's generous disposition, the labors of his subjects, and the very marrow of his maintenance.

I have not been so ill bred, but I have tasted of plenty and pleasure, as well as want and misery: nor doth necessity yet, or occasion of discontent, force

2. I.e., live in poverty while claiming great ancestors.

3. Expedients. "Bravery": fine appearances.

4. Sponge.

5. Deceive. "Excess": overindulgence.

6. Provision.

me to these endeavors: nor am I ignorant what small thank I shall have for my pains; or that many would have the World imagine them to be of great judgment, that can but blemish these my designs, by their witty objections and detractions: yet (I hope) my reasons with my deeds, will so prevail with some, that I shall not want⁷ employment in these affairs, to make the most blind see his own senselessness, and incredulity; hoping that gain will make them affect that, which religion, charity, and the common good cannot. It were but a poor device in me, to deceive myself; much more the king, state, my friends and country, with these inducements: which, seeing his Majesty hath given permission, I wish all sorts of worthy, honest, industrious spirits, would understand: and if they desire any further satisfaction, I will do my best to give it: Not to persuade them to go only;⁸ but go with them: Not leave them there; but live with them there.

I will not say, but by ill providing and undue managing, such courses may be taken, [that] may make us miserable enough.⁹ But if I may have the execution of what I have projected; if they want to eat, let them eat or never digest me.¹ If I perform what I say, I desire but that reward out of the gains [which] may suit my pains, quality, and condition. And if I abuse you with my tongue, take my head for satisfaction. If any dislike at the year's end, defraying their charge,² by my consent they should freely return. I fear not want of company sufficient, were it but known what I know of those countries; and by the proof of that wealth I hope yearly to return; if God please to bless me from such accidents, as are beyond my power in reason to prevent: For, I am not so simple to think, that ever any other motive than wealth, will ever erect there a commonwealth; or draw company from their ease and humors at home, to stay in New England to effect my purposes.

And lest any should think the toil might be insupportable, though these things may be had by labor, and diligence: I assure myself there are who delight extremely in vain pleasure, that take much more pains in England, to enjoy it, than I should do here to gain wealth sufficient: and yet I think they should not have half such sweet content: for, our pleasure here is still gains; in England charges and loss. Here nature and liberty affords us that freely, which in England we want, or it costeth us dearly. What pleasure can be more, than (being tired with any occasion³ a-shore, in planting vines, fruits, or herbs, in contriving their own grounds, to the pleasure of their own minds, their fields, gardens, orchards, buildings, ships, and other works, &c.) to recreate themselves before their own doors, in their own boats upon the sea; where man, woman and child, with a small hook and line, by angling, may take diverse sorts of excellent fish, at their pleasures? And is it not pretty sport, to pull up two pence, six pence, and twelve pence, as fast as you can haul and veer a line?⁴ He is a very bad fisher [that] cannot kill in one day with his hook and line, one, two, or three hundred cods: which dressed and dried, if they be sold there for ten shillings the hundred (though in England they will give more than twenty) may not both the servant, the master, and merchant, be well content with this gain? If a man work but

three days in seven, he may get more than he can spend, unless he will be excessive. Now that carpenter, mason, gardener, tailor, smith, sailor, forgers,⁵ or what other, may they not make this a pretty recreation though they fish but an hour in a day, to take more than they eat in a week? or if they will not eat it, because there is so much better choice; yet sell it, or change it, with the fishermen, or merchants, for anything they want. And what sport doth yield a more pleasing content, and less hurt or charge than angling with a hook; and crossing the sweet air from isle to isle, over the silent streams of a calm sea? Wherein the most curious may find pleasure, profit, and content.

Thus, though all men be not fishers: yet all men, whatsoever, may in other matters do as well. For necessity doth in these cases so rule a commonwealth, and each in their several functions, as their labors in their qualities may be as profitable, because there is a necessary mutual use of all.

For Gentlemen, what exercise should more delight them, than ranging daily those unknown parts, using fowling and fishing, for hunting and hawking? and yet you shall see the wild hawks give you some pleasure, in seeing them stoop (six or seven after one another) an hour or two together, at the schools of fish in the fair harbors, as those ashore at a fowl; and never trouble nor torment yourselves, with watching, mewing,⁶ feeding, and attending them: nor kill horse and man with running and crying. See you not a hawk?⁷ For hunting also: the woods, lakes, and rivers afford not only chase sufficient, for any that delights in that kind of toil, or pleasure; but such beasts to hunt, that besides the delicacy of their bodies for food, their skins are so rich, as may well recompence thy daily labor, with a captains pay.

For laborers, if those that sow hemp, rape,⁸ turnips, parsnips, carrots, cabbage, and such like; give twenty, thirty, forty, fifty shillings yearly for an acre of ground, and meat, drink, and wages to use it, and yet grow rich; when better, or at least as good ground, may be had, and cost nothing but labor; it seems strange to me, any such should there grow poor.

My purpose is not to persuade children [to go] from their parents; men from their wives; nor servants from their masters: only, such as with free consent may be spared: But that each parish, or village, in city, or country, that will but apparell their fatherless children, of thirteen or fourteen years of age, or young married people, that have small wealth to live on; here by their labor may live exceedingly well: provided always that first there be a sufficient power to command them, houses to receive them, means to defend them, and meet provisions for them; for, any place may be overlain:⁹ and it is most necessary to have a fortress (ere this grow to practice) and sufficient masters (as, carpenters, masons, fishers, fowlers, gardeners, husbandman, sawyers, smiths, spinsters, tailors, weavers, and such like) to take ten, twelve, or twenty, or as there is occasion, for apprentices. The masters by this may quickly grow rich; these may learn their trades themselves, to do the like; to a general and an incredible benefit, for king, and country, master, and servant.

1616

7. Lack.

8. Alone.

9. I.e., he won't promise that even with bad management they'll succeed.

2. I.e., once they have paid the cost of their support for the year.

3. Task.

4. I.e., fish.

5. I.e., ironworkers.

6. Keeping in a cage. "Stoop": swoop down.

7. Smith contrasts the delight of watching wild hawks hunt their prey in America with the tediousness that keepers of trained hawks in

England must give their birds—as when such birds fly away and must be hunted for all over the countryside.

8. The rape plant.

9. Overcome.

From New England's Trials¹

Here I must entreat a little your favors to digress. They² did not kill the English because they were Christians, but for their weapons and commodities, that were rare novelties; but now they fear we may beat them out of their dens, which lions and tigers would not admit³ but by force. But must this be an argument for an Englishman,⁴ or discourage any either in Virginia or New England? No: for I have tried them both.

For Virginia, I kept that country with thirty-eight, and had not⁵ to eat but what we had from the savages. When I had ten men able to go abroad, our commonwealth was very strong: with such a number I ranged that unknown country fourteen weeks; I had but eighteen to subdue them all, with which great army I stayed six weeks before their greatest king's habitations, till they had gathered together all the power they could; and yet the Dutchmen sent at a needless excessive charge did help Powhatan how to betray me.⁶

* * *

For wronging a soldier but the value of a penny, I have caused Powhatan [to] send his own men to Jamestown to receive their punishment at my discretion. It is true in our greatest extremity they shot me, slew three of my men, and by the folly of them that fled took me prisoner: yet God made Pocahontas the king's daughter the means to deliver me: and thereby taught me to know their treacheries to preserve the rest.

It was also my chance in single combat to take the king of Paspahugh⁷ prisoner: and by keeping him, [I] forced his subjects to work in chains till I made all the country pay contribution; having little else whereon to live.

Twice in this time I was their president, and none can say in all that time I had a man slain: but for keeping them in that fear I was much blamed both there and here: yet I left five hundred behind me that, through their confidence, in six months came most to confusion, as you may read at large in the description of Virginia.⁸

1. Tests or experiments, not sufferings.

2. The Powhatans. Smith is here speaking of the massacre of three hundred forty-seven settlers in Jamestown, Virginia—one-quarter of that colony's English population—in March 1622. News of the massacre reached New England in May of that year. In mustering support for settlement in New England, he obviously had to take into account the dampening effect of events in Virginia.

3. Allow.

4. I.e., such events are not strong enough to dissuade an Englishman.

5. Nothing. "With thirty-eight": i.e., he protected or secured Virginia by means of a very modest force.

6. Several "Dutch" (probably German) skilled workers had been shipped to Virginia in 1608. Sent to build a house for Powhatan, they hinted to him that they would take his side against

the English and soon were plotting against Smith and the colony. Arrested by the English and brought back to Jamestown for execution, they were saved when a new ship arrived from England, bringing fresh supplies and important new instructions for President Smith and Virginia's governing council.

7. The Algonquian name for the region around Jamestown. Smith took its werowance, or chief, Woinchopunck, prisoner in 1609, an episode shown in an engraving in the *General History* (p. 120; see the lower left panel).

8. I.e., Smith's first book, which contains a section so titled. "President": Smith was president of the Virginia council for only a single term; he probably means "twice during the time I was their president (these things happened)," although the passage may have been garbled. "Confidence": i.e., overconfidence.

When I went first to these desperate designs; it cost me many a forgotten pound to hire men to go; and procrastination caused more [to] run away than went. But after the ice was broken, came many brave voluntaries: notwithstanding since I came from thence, the honorable company have been humble suitors to his Majesty to get vagabonds and condemned man to go thither; nay so much scorned was the name of Virginia, some did choose to be hanged ere they would go thither, and were: yet for all the worst of spite, detraction, and discouragement, and this lamentable massacre, there is more honest men now suitors to go, then ever hath been constrained knaves; and it is not unknown to most men of understanding, how happy many of those calumniators do think themselves, that they might be admitted, and yet pay for their passage to go now to Virginia: and had I but means to transport as many as would go, I might have choice of 10,000 that would gladly be in any of those new places, which were so basely condemned by ungrateful base minds.

To range this country of New England in like manner I had but eight, as is said, and amongst their brute conditions I met many of their silly encounters, and without any hurt, God be thanked; when your West country men⁹ were many of them wounded and much tormented with the savages that assaulted their ship, as they did say themselves, in the first year I was there, 1614; and though Master Hunt, then master with me, did most basely in stealing some savages from that coast to sell, when he was directed to have gone for Spain.¹ * * * I speak not this out of vainglory, as it may be some gleaners,² or some [that] was never there may censure me: but to let all men be assured by those examples, what those savages are, that thus strangely do murder and betray our countrymen. But to the purpose.

What is already writ of the healthfulness of the air, the richness of the soil, the goodness of the woods, the abundance of fruits, fish, and fowl in their season, they still affirm that have been there now near two years, and at one draught they have taken 1000 basses, and in one night twelve hogsheds³ of herring. They are building a strong fort, they hope shortly to finish, in the interim they are well provided: their number is about a hundred persons, all in health, and well near sixty acres of ground well planted with corn, besides their gardens well replenished with useful fruits; and if their adventurers would but furnish them with necessities for fishing, their wants would quickly be supplied.⁴

To supply them this sixteenth of October is going the *Paragon* with sixty-seven persons, and all this is done by private men's purses. And to conclude in their own words, should they write of all plenties they have found, they think they should not be believed.

* * *

9. I.e., men from Southwest England. "Brute": tough.

1. Smith here refers to the tough going among earlier English voyagers to New England, especially Sir Ferdinando Gorges (1568–1647), a backer of Smith, and Thomas Hunt, who had been with Smith on the latter's 1614 voyage to the region. Hunt had stirred up much trouble with the local American Indians by kidnapping

more than twenty of them, including the Native American Tisquantum (called Squanto by the Pilgrims) to sell into slavery in Spain.

2. Those who pick through events in search of bits of scandal.

3. Large casks. "Draught": haul of the fish net.

4. Here Smith speaks of the Plymouth settlers. "Adventurers": the investors who backed the Pilgrim venture.

Thus you may see plainly the yearly success from New England (by Virginia)⁵ which has been so costly to this kingdom and so dear to me, which either to see perish or but bleed, pardon me though it passionate⁶ me beyond the bounds of modesty, to have been sufficiently able to foresee it, and had neither power nor means how to prevent it. By that acquaintance I have with them, I may call them my children; for they have been my wife, my hawks, my hounds, my cards, my dice, and in total my best content, as indifferent to my heart as my left hand to my right;⁷ and notwithstanding all those miracles of disasters [that] have crossed both them and me, yet were there not one Englishman remaining (as God be thanked there is some thousands) I would yet begin again with as small means as I did at the first. Not for that I have any secret encouragement from any I protest, more than lamentable experiences: for all their discoveries I can yet hear of, are but pigs of my own sow;⁸ nor more strange to me than to hear one tell me he hath gone from Billingsgate and discovered Greenwich, Gravesend, Tilbury, Queenborough, Leigh, and Margate;⁹ which to those [who] did never hear of them, though they dwell in England, might be made seem some rare secrets and great countries unknown: except the relations of Master Dirmer.¹

* * *

What here I have writ by relation, if it be not right, I humbly entreat your pardons; but I have not spared any diligence to learn the truth of them that have been actors or sharers in those voyages: in some particulars they might deceive me, but in the substances they could not, for few could tell me anything, except where they fished. But seeing all those [that] have lived there, do confirm more than I have written, I doubt not but all those testimonies with these new-begun examples of plantation, will move both city and country freely to adventure with me and my partners more than promises, seeing I have from his Majesty letters patent,² such honest, free, and large conditions assured me from his commissioners, as I hope will satisfy any honest understanding.

1622

5. I.e., by Virginia's example; Plymouth had barely been settled, but the longer experience of the English in Virginia (with all its faults) could be used to suggest the probable course of events in New England.

6. Excite; imbue with passion.

7. I.e., as equally dear to me as one hand or the other.

8. The offspring of Smith's deeds; i.e., the accomplishments of others would not have been possible had he not gone before.

9. Well-known places in England.

1. Smith means that once he led the way into

America, the English who followed him accomplished nothing truly bold. The exception was Captain Thomas Dermer (d. 1621), who had accompanied Smith to New England in 1614, had spent two years in Newfoundland (1616–18), and had returned to New England in 1619, in the process acquiring more knowledge about the region than Smith. (For more on Dermer, see references in Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, on p. 151 ff.)

2. I.e., official documents sealed with the king's signet.

WILLIAM BRADFORD

1590–1657

William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* offered the first sustained treatment of New England's early history, and it helped shape enduring cultural narratives about the small settlement that a group of religious dissenters known as the Pilgrims established on the Massachusetts coast in 1620. Written between roughly 1630 and 1650, *Of Plymouth Plantation* casts a backward look on the Plymouth colony's early history and seeks meaning in its major episodes. As he composed his retrospective account, Bradford revised more immediate, journalistic-style narratives such as *Mourt's Relation* (1622), which Bradford coauthored with Edward Winslow, another Plymouth leader. (See the excerpt in the "First Encounters" cluster, earlier in this volume.) He also incorporated and reworked his own notes. In the resulting narrative, Bradford portrays the uncertain and ambiguous emergence of providential meaning.

Bradford's life, with its many losses and dislocations as well as its strong if sometimes muted sense of purpose, provides a model of the Plymouth community. He was born in Yorkshire, in the northeast of England, a region still retaining marks of Viking invasions from centuries past. Bradford's father died when he was an infant, and he was passed among relatives and taught the arts of farming. His life changed at age twelve or thirteen, when he heard the sermons of Richard Clyfton. Clyfton was the Nonconformist minister of a small community in Scrooby, Nottinghamshire, a neighboring parish. Despite opposition from his uncles and grandparents, in 1606 Bradford left home and joined the community.

The members of the Scrooby church were known as "Separatists" because they were not sympathetic to the idea of a national Church, such as the one that King Henry VIII established in England after he broke with the pope. Separating from the Church of England was, however, by English law an act of treason, and many believers paid a high price for their dreams of purity. Other Puritan critics of the established Church, such as the non-Separating Congregationalists who eventually settled Boston, struck a middle path, retaining ties to the Church of England even as they developed a different organizational structure. Despite these differences, the churches at both Plymouth and the neighboring Massachusetts Bay Colony embraced John Calvin's Congregationalist model. Calvin (1509–1564), a French theologian, called upon Protestant reformers to set up "particular," independent churches, each founded on a formal covenant that would be sworn to by its members. In Congregational churches, God offered himself as a contractual partner to each believer in a contract freely initiated but perpetually binding. The model was twofold: the Old Testament covenant that God made with Adam and renewed through Jesus Christ, as well as the tight-knit communities of the early Christian churches.

Wishing to pursue their beliefs about church government more freely, the Scrooby community took up residence in the Netherlands, in Leiden (or Leyden), where Bradford joined them in 1609. But they suffered from continued government harassment, and with the Netherlands on the brink of war with Catholic Spain, the community took counsel from Captain John Smith and petitioned the English government for a grant of land in North America. In mid-September 1620, a portion of the congregation and a group of entrepreneurs sailed from Plymouth, England, for America. The rest of the congregation was expected to follow at some future time. The voyage on the *Mayflower* went relatively smoothly, though one person died, and there was