

**Captain John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England & the Summer Isles* (1624)**

**Chapter II**

**What Happened Till the First Supply**

Being thus left to our fortunes, it fortuned that within ten days 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, furs, or love. But when they departed, there remained neither tavern, beer house, nor place of relief but the common kettle. Had we been as free from all sins as 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, aquavita, beef, eggs, or what not, but the [common] kettle. 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 26 weeks in the ship's hold contained as many worms as grains, so that we might truly call it rather so much bran than corn. Our drink was water, our lodgings castles in the air. With this lodging and diet, our extreme toil in bearing and planting Pallisadoes 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 those that escaped lived upon sturgeon and sea crabs. Fifty in this time we buried. The rest seeing the President's 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 that we deposed him and established Ratcliffe in his place (Gosnold being dead), Kendall deposed. Smith newly recovered [from illness], Martin and Ratcliffe was by his care preserved and relieved, and the most of the soldiers recovered with the skillful diligence of Master Thomas Wotton, our surgeon general. 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 provisions that no man wanted.

And now, where some, affirmed it was ill done of the Council to send forth men so badly provided, this incontradictable 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 unskillful 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 untoward 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 abroad 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 (with some of the workmen) shipped himself in the shallop to search the country for trade. The want of 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 necessaries, were infinite impediments, yet no discouragement. Being but six or seven in company, he went down the river to Kecoughtan, 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 fly 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 red, some white, some parti-colored came in a square order, 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 arrows, they charged the English, that so kindly received them with their muskets loaden with pistol shot, that down fell their god and divers lay on the ground. The rest fled again to the woods and ere long sent one of the Quiyoughkasoucks 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 contents 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. . . .

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 mouth (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 Chickahamania. Yet what he carefully provided the rest carelessly spent. Wingfield and Kendall living in disgrace, seeing all things at random in the absence of Smith, the company's dislike of their President's weakness, and their small love to Martin's never mending sickness, 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 saker and musket shot he forced them to stay or sink in the river; which action cost the life of Captain Kendall. These brawls are so disgustful, 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 share of their excused disorders.

The President and Captain Archer not long after intended also to have abandoned the country, which project also was curbed and suppressed by Smith. The Spaniard never more greedily desired gold than he

[Smith] victual; 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 diverse places stood with baskets expecting his coming. And now the winter approaching, the river became so covered with swans, geese, ducks, and cranes that we daily feasted with good bread, Virginia peas, pumpkins, and putchamins [persimmons], fish, fowl, and diverse sorts of wild beasts as fat as we could eat them, so that none of our tuftaffaty [silly] humorists desired to go for England.

But our comedies never endured long without a tragedy. Some idle exceptions being muttered against Captain Smith for not discovering the head of Chickahominy River and [being] taxed by the Council to be too slow in so worthy an attempt, the next voyage [in December] he proceeded so far that with much labor by cutting trees in sunder 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.

[Among the colonists on the next ship arriving included the following tradesmen.]

Daniel Stallings, Jeweller.  
Richard Belfield, a Goldsmith.  
William Dawson, a refiner.  
Abram Ransack, a refiner.  
Post Ginnat, a Surgeon  
William Johnson, a Goldsmith.  
John Lewes, a Cooper.  
Peter Keffer, a gunsmith.  
Robert Cotton, a tobacco pipe-maker.  
Rob: Alberton, a perfumer.  
Richard Dole, a Blacksmith.

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