

HARD TIMES REPORTED AT JAMESTOWN

Christopher Newport has just returned from his first voyage to re-supply the colony at Jamestown with provisions and new settlers. The news he brought back with him was not good—only 38 of the 104 men and boys that he left at Jamestown last June were still alive. The deaths occurred during the summer when the settlers were weakened from lack of food and the extreme heat. The survivors complained that it was stifling and that the air was damp and heavy, making it difficult to breathe. The only drink they had was the water from the river, which at high tide was salty and at low tide full of filth and slime. It was the undoing of many of the men.

The poor conditions in the fort caused dissension among the members of the Council of Government and they could not agree on what course of action to follow. Many in the fort blamed the president, Wingfield, for the troubles they were having. Finally he was deposed and John Ratcliffe chosen to replace him. Wingfield has returned to England with Newport.

As if that were not bad enough, the Paspaheghs, in whose territory the fort is located, attacked the settlers during the summer killing several of the men. At one point, the survivors said, they were so weak they feared they would not be able to defend the fort if the Indians attacked. Then, at the end of the summer, when all seemed lost, the Paspaheghs came to the fort with much needed food, the weather cooled and migratory birds appeared in great numbers providing a welcome change to their diet. The spirits of all the men revived. Let us hope the future for the men in Virginia will be better.

Newport reports that contact has been made with the great Chief Powhatan, ruler of all the natives in this area. Captain John Smith has met with him and the chief has promised to assist the settlers in any way he can. Indeed, before Newport left for England delegations from Chief Powhatan came to the fort with gifts of corn, beans, squash and wild game. Among the group of Indians was a young girl named Pocahontas, one of the daughters of the great chief—a charming child—according to Newport.

Newport is scheduled to return to Virginia as soon as possible with more supplies and more settlers. Perhaps on his next return, he will bring good tidings of the colony at Jamestown.