

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN VIRGINIA?

It has been many months since we have had any official word from the London Company on the state of the Jamestown Colony. Rumor has it that the officials of the company are censoring all news from the Virginia settlement even the letters written by settlers to relatives and friends back in England. However, mariners returning from supply voyages to Virginia bring news of extreme hardships and great discontent among the colonists.

The *London Gazette* has recently been given a letter written by one of the settlers to a relative in London that confirms both the hardships and the discontent. This letter was given to one of the mariners on board a supply ship returning to England without the knowledge of colonial officials. The names of the writer and the recipient are concealed for their protection.

“You asked in your last letter how I was faring in this new land. Life here is not at all what I expected. I am constantly hungry and the heat this summer is so great that I am often lightheaded and dizzy. But I must work regardless or I will not get my meager food allowance and I will be weaker still.

Food allowance—‘tis but eight ounces of oatmeal and half a pint of peas per person per day. It is often rotten, moldy and full of maggots. One man was driven by hunger to steal some two or three pints of oatmeal. He had a bodkin thrust through his tongue. They tied him to a tree with chains and left him there till he starved to death. Men who desert the colony to live with the Indians are tracked down and returned to the fort where they are executed in the most cruel way imaginable.

The laws are very strict. Would you believe that we are not allowed to criticize the London Company, the colonial authorities here in Virginia or the council in England? A baker who puts less flour in his bread than usual can be charged with cheating his customers and can have his ears cut off. Workers sent out to weed and hoe in the gardens can be sentenced to death if caught taking a vegetable or even picking a flower from the garden. We are not a happy lot.”