

# SIR WALTER RALEIGH

(1552–1618)

ANOTHER famous Englishman who lived in the days of Queen Elizabeth was Sir Walter Raleigh. He was a soldier and statesman, a poet and historian—but the most interesting fact about him is that he was the first Englishman to attempt to plant colonies in the region now known as the United States.

Raleigh was born in Devonshire, England, in 1552. At about the time that he was growing up, great sympathy was felt in England for the Huguenots, as the French protestants were called, and Raleigh enlisted as a volunteer in the Huguenot army. He was in France at the time of the massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572, but we do not know how long he remained there.

In 1580 he went to Ireland as captain of a company of a hundred men to aid in putting down a rebellion there.

Returning to England at the age of thirty, he became one of Queen Elizabeth's courtiers. He constantly sought to please her. A story is told that one day when Elizabeth was out walking at Greenwich, she came to a muddy place. Raleigh was in attendance upon her and quickly took off his costly coat and spread it over the mud so that it formed a carpet for the queen to walk on. This gallant act is said to have gained him high favor with Elizabeth.

Whether the story is true or not, it is certain that for some years Raleigh was the greatest favorite at the court.



Sir Walter Raleigh

During Queen Elizabeth's reign, the English began to take great interest in the new country of North America. Raleigh and his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, obtained permission from Queen Elizabeth to colonize any land in North America which was not already claimed by a Christian nation.



Raleigh's gallant act

Five ships were fitted out and sailed from England in 1583, under the command of Gilbert. Raleigh was unable to go, but he bore a large part of the expense of the expedition.

The voyage had hardly begun when one of the ships, owing to sickness among the crew, was obliged to return to England. Gilbert, with the other ships, kept on his course across the Atlantic and at last reached Newfoundland, where he went on shore and took possession of the island in the name of Queen Elizabeth.

Gilbert now sailed onward with the fleet.

Near Cape Breton Island the largest vessel stuck in the mud and was broken to pieces by the force of the waves; all but fourteen, out of nearly one hundred men on board, lost their lives. Gilbert thought that now it would be impossible to carry

out the colonization plan, so, with his three remaining ships he started back to England.

A terrible storm came on, but the vessels kept together for a time. When last seen, Gilbert was sitting in the stern of his ship, reading a book. He shouted to those on board the other ships, "We are as near to heaven by sea as by land!" During the night his ship disappeared, and not one on board was saved, but the other vessels succeeded in reaching England.

Raleigh was not discouraged by this failure. In the following year, he sent another expedition to America.

In due time, his vessels reached the coast of what is now known as North Carolina. Everybody was charmed with the beauty of the country. But after exploring the coast for some distance and taking possession of the region in the name of Elizabeth, the



Raleigh captures the governor of Trinidad

expedition, for some reason, returned to England without making a settlement.

The description the explorers gave of the country which they had visited interested Queen Elizabeth. As she was called the 'Virgin Queen,' Raleigh suggested that she should give the name 'Virginia' to the newly discovered territory. She did this, and the state of Virginia, which formed part of the territory thus discovered, obtained its name in that way.

Raleigh soon organized a third expedition, which sailed in 1585 with about a hundred colonists. Seven vessels carried them. The fleet was commanded by Sir Richard Grenville, while the colonists

were in the charge of a noted soldier named Ralph Lane.

After a long voyage they reached Roanoke Island, on the coast of North Carolina. Grenville returned to England with the fleet, while Lane was left on Roanoke Island to establish a settlement.

The colonists, whose provisions had failed, probably quarreled with the Native Americans, from whom they could get none. No ship from England came with supplies, and the colonists were thoroughly discouraged.

The next year a fleet under the command of Sir Francis Drake called there by chance, and all the colonists returned home.

One of them, named Thomas Hariot, in an account of the colony, spoke of a herb 'called by the natives yppomoc,' and told how it was smoked by them in pipes. This herb was tobacco. Hariot and his companions had learned to like it, and they carried quantity home with them.

This was the first Virginia tobacco imported into England. Some of it was given to Raleigh, who smoked it in silver pipes. Queen Elizabeth also learned the art, and she made smoking fashionable among people of high rank in England.

In 1587 Raleigh sent out a fourth expedition to Virginia. It consisted of three ships carrying one hundred fifty colonists under Captain White.

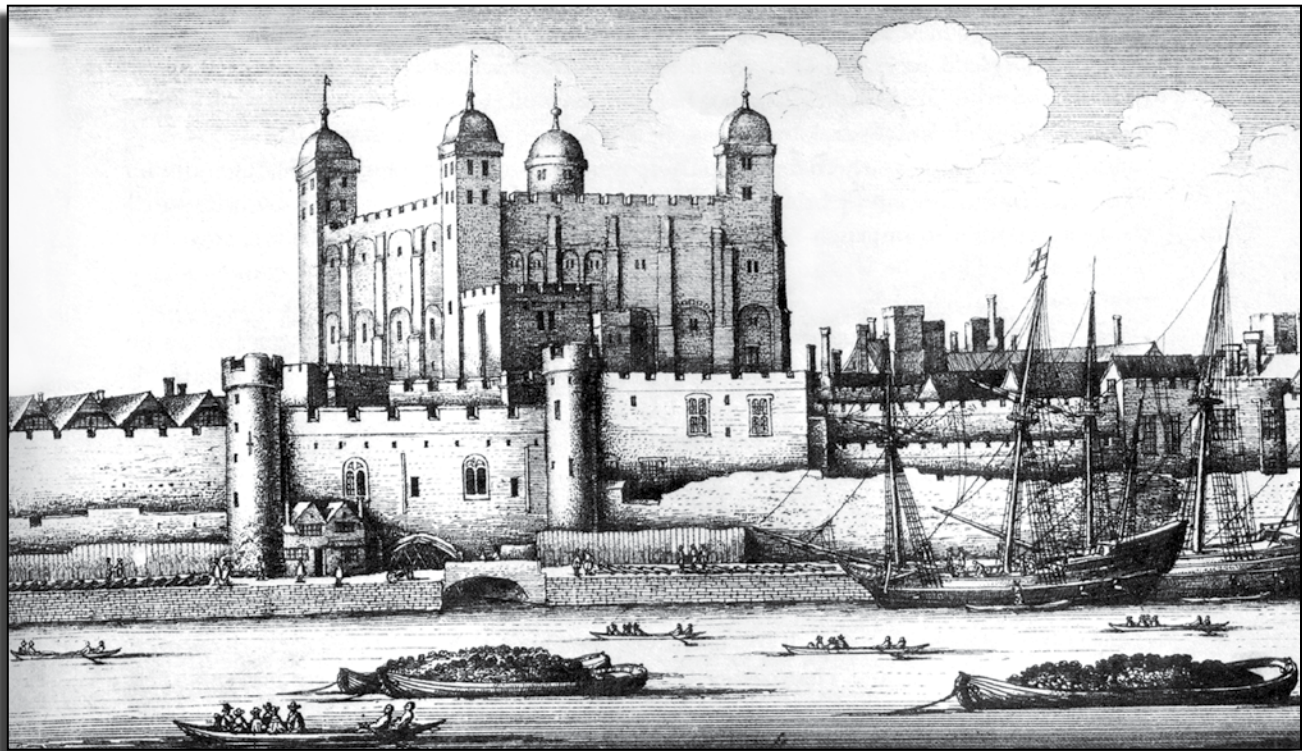
After landing his passengers, White returned to England for supplies. When he got back to America, three years later, he found that the colonists had disappeared, and it was never learned what became of them. Thus failed Raleigh's last attempt to colonize Virginia.

So confident was he that the new world would be colonized, he wrote of Virginia, "I shall yet live to see it an English nation." And this he did, for he lived until 1618, and Jamestown had then been founded ten years.

In return for his services in quelling the Irish rebellion, the queen gave Raleigh a large grant of land in Ireland. The most interesting fact about this Irish property is that there Raleigh raised the first potatoes grown in Europe.

You have read how Philip II of Spain attempted, in 1588, to invade England with his famous Armada and how that great fleet was destroyed. In England there was a great hatred of the Spaniards and a great desire to injure them.

At that time Spain claimed most of the new world, so far as it had been explored, and her ships were all the time coming home laden with the products of her possessions and particularly with silver from her mines.



The Tower of London

Raleigh fitted out privateers to capture such vessels, and a large Spanish ship was taken. She was the most valuable prize which, up to that time, had ever been brought into an English port. The queen herself had an interest in the expedition and was greatly pleased with her share of the plunder.

Raleigh still had a great desire to plant colonies, and he now turned his attention to South America. He placed a vessel under the command of a certain Captain Whiddon and sent him, in 1594, to explore the region now known as Guiana.

Fabulous stories had been told of the amount of gold in this province. It was said that the king, when he was going to make an offering to his gods, covered his body all over with gold dust, and from this the Spaniards called him 'El Dorado,' that is, 'the gilded man.'

In 1595 Raleigh himself set sail with five ships for the land of 'the Gilded King.' He entered the mouth of the Orinoco and sailed up the great river for a distance of about four hundred miles. But the river rose so high that navigation was imperilled; Raleigh therefore returned to the coast and soon afterward sailed back to England.

War with Spain still continued; in 1597 an English expedition under Howard and Essex was fitted out to attack Cadiz, a seaport on the Spanish coast. Raleigh was in one of the ships and rendered important service. The English destroyed or captured the ships of a large Spanish fleet in the harbor, and the city itself was surrendered.

This exploit was one of the most brilliant ever achieved by the English navy. After it, the Spaniards never regained their power upon the sea.

All through the reign of Elizabeth, Raleigh was highly esteemed by the queen

and by the people. Up to the date of her death, he was a member of Parliament. But in 1603 James I succeeded Elizabeth. He disliked Raleigh and therefore stripped him of all his offices and accused him of entering into a plot against the king.

Raleigh was arrested and brought to trial. One who was present wrote that when the trial began, he would have gone a hundred miles to see Raleigh hanged, but that before it closed, he would have gone two hundred to save his life.

Although nothing was proved against him, Raleigh was condemned to death. Only when he stood on the scaffold was his sentence changed to imprisonment for life.

For thirteen years Raleigh was confined in the Tower of London; and there he wrote his great work, "The History of the World." It is reported that the Prince of Wales often visited him in the Tower and said, "No man but my father would keep such a bird in such a cage."

In 1616 Raleigh was released so that he might go on another expedition to the golden land of Guiana and capture Spanish merchant vessels.

But disease broke out among his crews, and Raleigh himself was stricken down with fever before they reached the Orinoco. His son was killed in a fight with the Spaniards, and in 1618 the poor father returned to England broken-hearted.

Shortly after his arrival, Raleigh was arrested and condemned to die the very next morning under the sentence of death which had been passed upon him fifteen years before.

Even then his courage did not leave him. On the scaffold he asked to see the axe. "This gives me no fear," he said. "It is a sharp medicine to cure me of all diseases." To someone who told him to lay his head

toward the north, he replied, "What matter how the head lies, so the heart be right."

Raleigh's attempts at colonization were the beginnings of the great movement

which led to the establishment of the Thirteen Colonies; and those colonies formed the basis for the United States of America.



Elizabeth I