What Happened Till the First Supply

John Smith

*\*Hover over blue text for popup notes*

*\*Consider the significance of the highlighted passages*

Being thus left to our [fortunes](#fortunes" \o "things that happen or are to happen to a person - FATE), it [fortuned](#fortuned" \o "came by chance) 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](#pilfer" \o "to steal) 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](#canonized) for saints. But our [President](#pres" \o "leader of the colonists (assigned by the charter company)) would never have been admitted, for engrossing to his private [use] oatmeal, [sack](#sack" \o "cheap wine), oil, [aquavitae](#aquavitae" \o "hard liquor/whiskey), 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](#lodgings" \o "they had no lodgings - just the dream/want of lodgings). With this lodging and diet, our extreme toil in bearing and planting [Pallisadoes](#pallisadoes" \o "poles or stakes planted in ground to make defensive fencing) 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](#pinnace" \o "small boat left for their use) by flight (who all this time had neither felt want nor sickness) so moved our dead spirits that we [deposed](#deposed" \o "removed from office/position of authority) 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](#provision" \o "food/supplies) spent, the sturgeon gone, all helps abandoned. Each hour expecting the fury of the [savages](#savages" \o "reference to the native americans), when God, the [patron](#patron" \o "person regarded as the special guardian of something (in this case all good endeavors)) 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](#affirmed" \o "confirm) it was [ill done](#illdone" \o "not smart) of the [Council](#council" \o "The Virginia Company - joint English company whose purpose was to establish colonies on the eastern shore of North America) to send forth [men so badly provided](#provided" \o "Not only did the 100 or so original colonists not have enough food and supplies, they also did not have the knowledge and skills to survive on their own; the company largely sent business people and aristocrats), 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](#victual" \o "food) 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](#suffer" \o "in this context, suffer means to tolerate or accept) others. But to proceed.

The new President and Martin, being little beloved, of weak judgment in dangers and less [industry](#industry" \o "work/labor) in peace, committed the managing of all things abroad to [Captain Smith](#captainsmith" \o "Smith refers to himself in the third person - he does not use \"I\" to refer to himself); [who by his own example, good words, and fair promises](#arrogant" \o "Critics often believe Smith embellished in his writing; Smith is often viewed as an arrogant braggart) 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](#superfluity" \o "excessiveness/unnecessary luxuries; the food given by the first group of savages was beginning to disappear) begin to decrease (with some of the workmen) shipped himself in the [shallop](#shallop" \o "flat bottomed boat for navigating in shallow waters) to search the country for trade. The want of the language, knowledge to manage his boat without sails, the want of [a sufficient power](#power" \o "some kind of organized army) (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](#they" \o "the \"savages\" at this location - different from the group that gave them the earlier provisions) scorned him, as a famished man, and would in [derision](#derision" \o "ridicule or mockery) 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](#targets" \o "a small, usually weak, shield), bows and arrows, they charged the English, that [so kindly received them](#sarcasm" \o "Smith uses sarcasm here) with their muskets loaden with pistol shot, that down fell their [god](#god" \o "leader) and [divers](#divers" \o "\"diverse\" - numerous) lay on the ground. The rest fled again to the woods and [ere](#ere" \o "before) long sent one of the [Quiyoughkasoucks](#quiy" \o "religious leader) 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.