

# SIR WALTER RALEIGH

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Although England had not a fighting navy, English seamen were alert to capture Spanish vessels and rob them of their gold and silver. To seize these prizes, such bold sea captains as Drake and Hawkins roamed the sea, burning and plundering Spanish fleets and Spanish settlements along the coast of Mexico and South America.



Conspicuous among these daring sea rovers and explorers was Sir Walter Raleigh, one of the most distinguished Englishmen of his time. He was born in a town near the sea-coast in Devonshire, England, in 1552, his father and mother both of high social rank.

In this town lived many old sailors who could tell the wide-awake boy stirring tales of seafaring life and of bloody fights with Spaniards. Walter was a patriotic boy, and therefore soon learned to hate Spain because of her insolence toward the English people.

As he became older and learned more of the power of Spain, especially that which came through possessions in the New World, he was envious for his country's sake and wished her to become Spain's rival in wealth.

When Walter was old enough, he was sent to Oxford University where he became an earnest student. But at seventeen he put aside his studies and went to France to join the

Huguenot army. After remaining there for about six years, he returned to England and served for a short time in the English army, fighting against Spain and Austria in the Netherlands. Later he went as captain of a hundred men to Ireland, and there proved himself a brave soldier.

Returning again to England, by a simple act of courtesy he won the admiration of the powerful queen Elizabeth. It happened in this way. On one occasion, she was about to cross a muddy road with her attendants as Raleigh stood looking on. Noticing that the queen hesitated for an instant, he took from his shoulder his beautiful velvet cloak and gallantly spread it in her pathway. The queen, greatly pleased with this delicate attention, took Raleigh into her Court and in time bestowed upon him much honor. She not only made him a knight, but also presented him with costly gifts and estates, and showered upon him offices of rank and dignity. The brave knight, Sir Walter Raleigh, became a man of great wealth and influence.

As a courtier his dress was rich and dazzling. He wore a hat with a pearl band and a black-jeweled feather. His shoes, which were tied with white ribbons, were studded with gems worth six thousand six hundred gold pieces. He had

also a suit of silver armor that glittered with diamonds and other precious stones.

This splendor did not seem so much out of place in those days as it would now, for much display and ceremony were customary in court life. Queen Elizabeth, with her ten hundred and seventy-five dresses and mantles, ornamented with lace, embroidery, and jewels, and with her eighty wigs of various colors, set a gorgeous example, which her courtiers were delighted to follow.

But Raleigh was not satisfied with the glamour of court life. He was eager to achieve glory for England and if possible to elevate her upon the ruins of her enemy, Spain.

It was his desire to build up a new England for the glory of the old, and to that end he secured from Queen Elizabeth a charter for planting a colony in America. He therefore fitted out two vessels, which were to sail to the land north of Florida, then occupied by Spain, and bring back reports of the country. The captains of these vessels arrived in Pamlico Sound, and landed on an island, which they found rich in grapes and woods and abounding in deer and other game. The explorers received kind treatment from the Indians, two of who accompanied the voyagers to England on their return. Queen Elizabeth was so pleased with the good reports from the new country that she called it Virginia in honor of herself—the Virgin Queen. The next year, 1585, Raleigh sent out to Virginia seven vessels and one hundred colonists, under his cousin, Sir Richard Grenville, and Ralph Lane. They landed on Roanoke Island, and made a settlement

there, but the colony was not prosperous. At the outset, by unwise and cruel treatment they made enemies of the natives. It is related that, an Indian having stolen a silver cup from one of the colonists, the Englishmen burned an entire village and ruined the corn belonging to its people. Such punishment was out of all proportion to the petty offence. It is not surprising, therefore, that from that time the settlers found the Indians unfriendly.

Very soon Grenville sailed back to England, leaving the colony in charge of Ralph Lane. The colonists instead of building houses and tilling the soil to supply food, were bent upon finding gold. Hence they listened with eager interest to a story that the Indians told of the Roanoke River. According to this story, the river flowed out of a fountain in a rock so near the ocean that in time of storm the waves dashed over into the fountain. The river, the Indians said, flowed near rich mines of gold and silver, in a country where there was a town with walls made of pearls. Lane and his followers foolishly started up the river in a vain search for this wonderful land. They encountered many difficulties, including hostile attacks by Indians, and suffered so much from lack of food that they had to eat the flesh of their own dogs.

The discovery of the tobacco plant introduced into England the custom of smoking, and a curious story is told of it in connection with Sir Walter Raleigh, who soon learned to smoke. One day his servant, who knew nothing of the new custom, came into his master's

room and found him smoking from a silver pipe. Believing Raleigh was on fire, the faithful servant hastily dashed a mug of ale at him to quench the flames and rescue him from death.

The wealth that lay hidden in the soil was yet unknown, and no one felt any enthusiasm over the new colony of Virginia. Most men would by this time have lost hope. But Raleigh was not daunted. Two years later he made a second attempt to plant a colony in the New World, this time sending over three ships, with a hundred and fifty settlers, including seventeen women. John White was appointed governor of the colony. These settlers had the forethought to carry with them farming implements to use in tilling the soil. When they landed on Roanoke Island they found no trace of the fifteen men left there two years before by Sir Richard Grenville. The new settlers had not been on the island long before they were in need of help from England, and begged Governor White to return home for provisions and more settlers. White at first refused to leave them, but finally consented. A warm interest in the feeble settlement and love for his little granddaughter, born soon after the settlers arrived, persuaded him to yield. This little girl, the first white girl born in America, was named after the new country, Virginia, her full name being Virginia Dare.

When Governor White left the settlement he expected to return immediately, but upon reaching England he found his countrymen greatly excited over the coming invasion of the much-dreaded "Spanish Armada." Everybody

was astir, and Raleigh was aroused to his fullest energy in preparation to meet the hated foe.

But, notwithstanding this, he found time to fit out two small vessels for Governor White. Although they sailed, trouble with the Spaniards compelled their return to England, and not until two years later, when the Spanish Armada had been defeated, did Governor White sail again for Virginia, this time as a passenger in a West Indianan. He landed on Roanoke Island as before, but there remained of the settlement only some chests of books, some maps, and some firearms, all of which had been ruined by the Indians.

Upon bidding Governor White farewell, the colonists had agreed to carve on a tree the name of the place to which they would go if they should decide to leave Roanoke Island. They were also to carve above the name a cross if they were in serious trouble. Governor White found the word CROATOAN cut in capital letters on a large tree, but he found no cross. Before White could sail to Croatian, which was an island not far away, he had to return to England because the captain of the vessel, having encountered stormy weather, refused to sail further. What became of the lost colonists is still a mystery. It is possible, that the Indians either killed them or captured and enslaved them.

Raleigh sent out other expeditions in search of the lost colony, but without success. He had already spent a sum equal to more than a million dollars in trying to plant this colony, and now felt that he must give up all hope of accomplishing his purpose.