PELTS and PALISADES

THE STORY OF FUR
AND THE
RIVALRY FOR PELTS IN EARLY AMERICA

By NATHANIEL C. HALE

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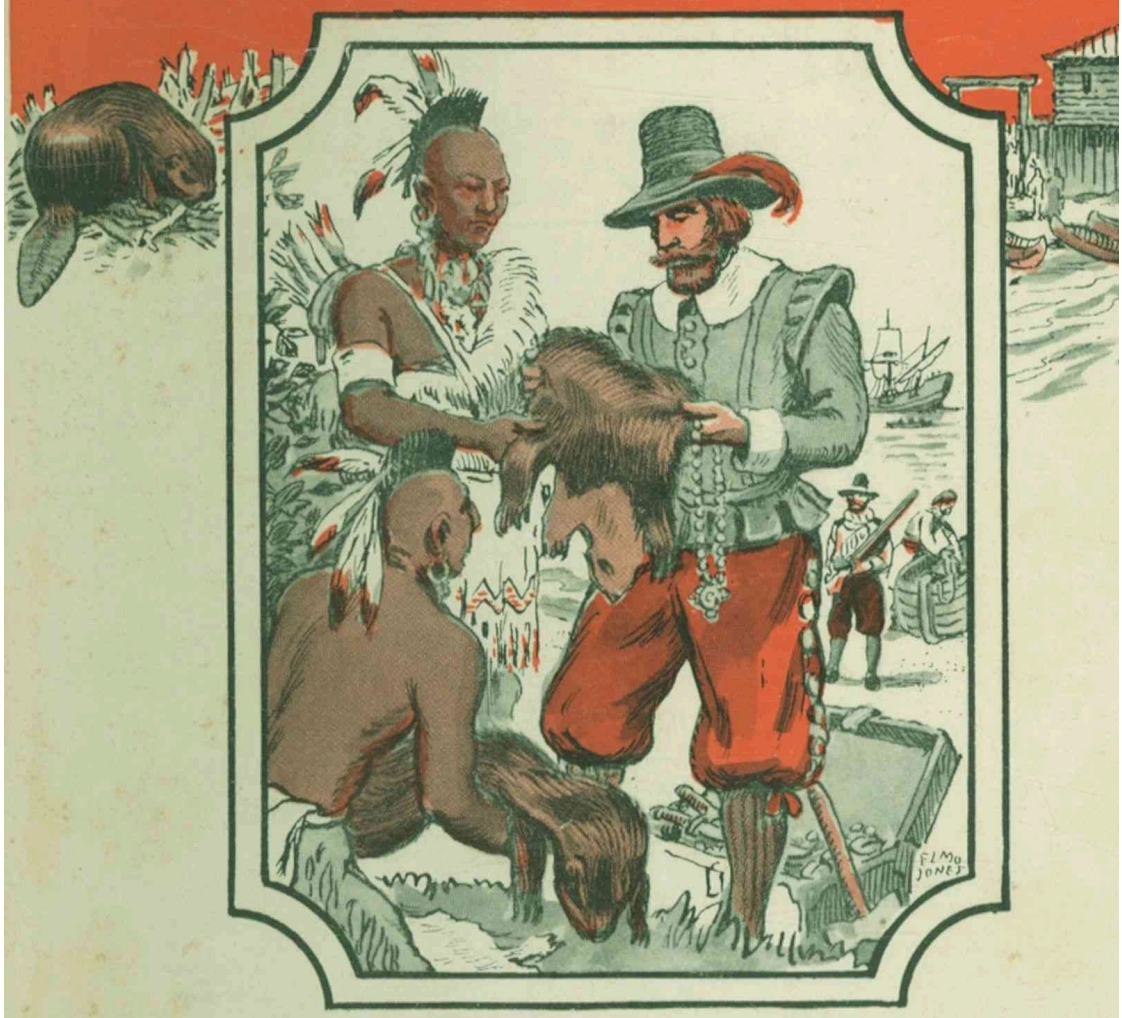

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The Author

Nathaniel C. Hale graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1925. After serving in the Army, he resigned his commission to enter business, but joined the Army again on the outbreak of World War II. He was Commandant of an Officers Training School prior to overseas duty with the Signal Corps. Since the war, Colonel Hale has become well known as an author and historian. In 1952 he received the annual award of the Society of Colonial Wars in New York for his book, VIRGINIA VENTURER, which was cited as the outstanding contribution of the year in the field of American colonial history. Colonel Hale and his wife, both of Southern birth, make their home in the Rittenhouse Square section of Philadelphia and spend part of their summers at their cottage in Cape May, New Jersey.

PELTS and PALISADES

By the Same Author

VIRGINIA VENTURER

A Biography of William Claiborne
1600-1677

THE FUR TRADE FURNISHED THE MEANS OF CONTACT BETWEEN WIDELY DIVERGENT CULTURES.

PELTS and PALISADES

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Rivalry for Pelts in Early America

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To My Grandchildren

Preface

THE story of fur is as old as the story of man. Some brief account of ancient man's quest for fur is included in the beginning of this book. However, the main narrative is concerned with the rivalry for pelts in early America.

The discoverers of our country came here looking for gold. They found it in fur. After that the fur trade formed the pattern of exploration, trade and settlement. It sustained the colonies along the Atlantic seaboard until they could be rooted in agriculture and it was a controlling factor in the westward movement of our population.

In the seventeenth century there was a seemingly insatiable demand in Europe for beaver pelts, inflated in no small degree by early laws prohibiting the use of cheaper furs in hat making. Since there was an apparently inexhaustible supply of these pelts in America, the fur trade quickly became the economic lifeblood of the colonies. On it was laid the cornerstone of American commerce.

On it, too, was laid the cornerstone of European imperialism on this continent, the prosecution of which was largely motivated by the energies of the mercantile classes of the nations involved. The merchants, their factors, and the fur traders, shaped colonial policies. The statesmen only signed the implementing documents.

It was the trader in quest of beaver who first met and conducted diplomatic relations with the Indians and who first challenged the claims of competing nations. Indeed, it was this fur trader in the wilderness, making allies and building palisaded trading posts, or forts, who determined colonial borders and who largely influenced the outcome of the imperialistic struggle for the continent.

That struggle culminated in the French and Indian War and that is the event which ends the story in this book. *Pelts and Palisades* does not pretend to be a comprehensive study of the

early American fur trade. Its only intent is to illustrate in narrative form the significant effect of that trade on the genesis of America and the westward movement of its people.

Included in the narrative are frank accounts of merchants and traders among our founding fathers who built their fortunes or their reputations on fur. As all the men who were prominent in this activity could not be named, only meaningful case histories that point up the pattern of the early fur trade have been cited. Fortunately, there are local histories, county and state, that do name most of these truly pioneer Americans and credit them with their individual accomplishments.

The era of the early fur trade, typified by the white trader and the Indian hunter, began drawing to a close after the French and Indian War. The white trader then became the trapper and a whole new conception of the fur trade in America developed as the frontier rolled across the plains and on to the Rocky Mountains. Today we may be on the threshold of still another era, that of the fur farmer.

In any case the fur industry continues to be big business in this country, total activity at all levels—raw furs, dressing and dyeing, and retail sales—being estimated at about one billion dollars. After exporting some twenty million dollars worth of domestic pelts, the United States annually consumes around two hundred million dollars worth of raw furs altogether—this, according to a recent bulletin of the Department of Commerce. About fifty percent of this consumption is imported.

Our imports are chiefly Persian lamb and caracul, mink, rabbit and squirrel. While the fur farms of this country produce great quantities of mink, fox, chinchilla and nutria, our principal domestic production of wild furs consists of muskrat, opossum, raccoon and mink. All other wild furs including "King Beaver" of colonial times run far behind this field.

Curiously enough, the lowly, unwanted muskrat of the seventeenth century is now the "King" of the wild furs. Its main domicile is the State of Louisiana. Because of the muskrat's residence there Louisiana produces many more pelts, all fur-bearing animals included, than any other state in the union. Southern Louisiana is in fact one of the most

important fur producing areas on our continent. In that section alone there are approximately twenty thousand local trappers of muskrat, mink, otter and raccoon.

Altogether there are two million full or part-time trappers in the United States, bringing in about twenty million pelts a year. There are also some twenty thousand or more fur farms contributing several million pelts annually, although fur farming had its inception in this country not much more than thirty-five years ago. Additionally, there are the raw fur imports. To transform all these pelts into dressed and dyed furs and retail them to milady calls for the services of thousands of additional people at manufacturing, jobbing and dealer levels.

Even as in ancient times such a great outpouring of commercial energy and money for fur is mainly decreed by fashion. The arbiters of fashion are fickle of course, but at a recent showing of designer collections for women in New York it was said that fur and fur trimmings were everywhere, with mink currently in most popular favor. As one newspaper correspondent reported, hats were made of fur or trimmed with it; coats were collared, cuffed, bordered or lined with it; suits wore wide fur collars and revers; and evening gowns had deep hemline borders of fur. And not so long ago in the *New York Times* appeared a full page advertisement for a chair upholstered in fur, “the world’s most sumptuous hostess chair ... lavished with the enchanting elegance of genuine mink!”

The author wishes to acknowledge the many kindnesses of those who have been helpful to him. He is much indebted to the staffs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. He is also indebted to members of the General Society of Colonial Wars, the Netherlands Society, the Colonial Society of Pennsylvania and the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia who have assisted him in many ways. From papers he has delivered before these groups has come much of the material used in this book. The author is also very grateful to Professor Arthur Adams of Boston, Massachusetts for his criticism and advice.

A bibliography of the works consulted in the preparation of the manuscript is appended, special acknowledgement being

due to Doctor Amandus Johnson of Philadelphia for his published documentations of the Swedish fur trade in the Delaware valley.

And, to his wife, Eliska, the writer of this book is very thankful for her patient understanding during the many week ends that he spent on the manuscript.

NATHANIEL C. HALE

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1959.

CONTENTS

PELTS and PALISADES

Friend, once 'twas Fame that led thee forth
To brave the Tropic Heat, the Frozen North;
Late it was Gold, then Beauty was the Spur;
But now our gallants venture but for Fur.

John Dryden, 1672.

I
Royal Robes and Beaver Hats

IT might be said that man's first true possession was the fur skin of an animal.

Prehistoric mankind prowled the earth seeking food, shelter and mates—only those needs intended by nature to preserve him and to perpetuate his species. He had no accumulated wealth. Even his first crude weapons, rocks and sticks, were expendable. He had nothing material to treasure until he began to acquire coverings for his body.

Body coverings must have become useful to primitive man in the last glacial period, during the very evolution of human society. His earliest needs were doubtless served by the pelts of such cold-climate animals as the reindeer and the bear. Once *Homo sapiens*, stretched out on the floor of a chilly cave, experienced the warmth of fur skins accumulated from these animals that he had eaten, it could have been but a short step to using pelts as clothing. All the world was not cold however.

In the middle latitudes early man knew little of thickly furred animals, and had less need for warm garments. He used foliage, grasses and eventually goat and sheep skins as skirts to hide his uncleanness. It was probably no more than modesty, a primal sense of shame, that first prompted him to cover himself. Later, as he learned to shape and weave and to appreciate his art, he fashioned his clothing for adornment.

Then it was that pelts stripped from bowed chiefs of the colder countries came to be prized as rarities of beauty and usefulness, as kingly trophies. Conquerors adopted them as ornaments and symbols of victory and power. Fur became prime loot. For many generations of man, while contacts between peoples remained essentially war-like, prize pelts from the farthest corners of the known world were brought home by warriors as evidence of their prowess and as tribute to their rulers.

Some rulers among the rising civilizations of the ancient world made extravagant use of fur skins, especially the brightly hued pelts of the big cats.

Tradition has it that the voluptuous Assyrian queen, Semiramis, acquired eight thousand tiger skins during a plundering campaign in India. Presumably, much of this loot was used to decorate the palace and hanging gardens of sinful Babylon which this storied enchantress is supposed to have founded.

Pharaohs and high priests of ancient Egypt used quantities of lion, leopard and panther skins as ornamental and ceremonial pieces. Men of high position draped these colorful pelts over their shoulders, tying the paws in the back with ribbons. The tail of the lion was appended animal-fashion by pharaohs to impart the beast's qualities to the wearer, and warriors stretched their frame-wood shields with leopard skins. Extant today is a wall painting on a tomb of the eighteenth dynasty which shows tax-paying Ethiopians bearing their tribute of pelts to an Egyptian king.

And, when barter finally joined hands with a war as a better means of contact between peoples, it was fur that helped bring it about. Evidence of such military commerce emerges from the mists of Greek antiquity. The legend of Jason and his quest for the Golden Fleece is in all likelihood the fanciful story of a fur trading expedition in the thirteenth or fourteenth century B.C.

Some students of Greek mythology interpret the Golden Fleece as symbolism of one kind or another. However, it is specifically identified in the legend as the pelt of a golden ram and ornamental pelts are shown in archaic bas-reliefs to have been an integral part of Greek culture.

The perils encountered by Jason and his adventurers, as first related by them, were probably intended to point up the difficulties of their achievement and to help guard the secrets of their trade-route discoveries. No doubt Greek hero worship contributed to the subsequent embellishment of the legend. But, if like most other folk tradition this epic of the Argonauts had its origin in some simple fact now obscured by the telling,

that fact must lie in the Golden Fleece itself. Certainly, without its existence in some form, as the object of the voyage, there would be no motivation—no story.

But of course there is a story, and a good one, even after eliminating the delightful folk-tale embroidery.

For recognition of his right to the throne Prince Jason of Greece bargained with his crafty uncle, King Pelias, to go on a dangerous voyage to the Euxine Sea in search of the Golden Fleece. Jason planned well. All the gods and great heroes of Greece came to his assistance. With Juno's help a ship called the *Argo* was built for the expedition. According to the legend it was capable of holding over fifty men, but the building of a ship to accommodate half that number would have been a gigantic accomplishment for those days. After manning the *Argo* with heroes selected for their particular talents in sailing, fighting and overcoming special dangers of the voyage, Jason set out on his quest.

The Argonauts were involved in many perilous adventures after they left Greece. Nevertheless, they negotiated the treacherous straits at the entrance to the Euxine Sea and followed its shore until at great length they came to the country of Colchis. There they bargained and fought against tremendous odds for the Golden Fleece, much the same as fur trading adventurers who crossed another unknown sea to a New World some three thousand years or more later.

But, when Jason returned with the treasure and placed it at the feet of Pelias, the king became very wrathful. It seems the fleece was no longer golden.

This is entirely believable, whether it was lambskin or something else. Assuredly, prime lambskin, even a mutated sort, could have had no more lustre than royal baum marten, ermine, sealskin or other fine pelts available to Jason in the region he had visited.

In any event Pelias thought he had a good excuse not to keep his end of the bargain with Jason, a common enough denouement in itself, one that has been acted out untold times in both history and fiction.

That is the plot of the legend, as related only to the probable fact of the fleece's existence. How the fleece came into being, that is, how the golden ram descended from the heavens first into Greece and then betook himself to the far off country of Colchis to be slaughtered for his radiant coat, all would seem to lie in the realm of pure myth. So would many other imaginative passages of the legend as recited variously by bards who have embroidered on the tale. And, of course, the episodic adventures of the Argonauts have little or no bearing on the plot.

The story in its origin does appear to have been simply that of a Greek expedition bent on military commerce in the Black Sea, the first organized fur trading voyage in recorded history.

From the ancient Greeks, too, comes the English word which describes the fur skin of an animal. Pelt, a contraction of peltry from the old Anglo-French *pelterie*, is derived from the Greek *pelta*. A *pelta* was a half shield made of the skin of an animal. It was carried by the warriors of Greece and later by the Romans. A foot soldier armed with a *pelta* and a short spear or javelin was called a *peltast*. Hence also the verb pelt, used to indicate repeated blows by striking or hurling missiles, as against a *pelta*.

Although the Greeks had competition on occasion from the Persians and others, they drove a great trade in the Black Sea for over a thousand years. At the Bosphorus they founded Byzantium, one of the world's best known emporiums. Great quantities of fur trimmings for the tall bonnets and robes of the Mesopotamians were traded there. The felting used so extensively by the Scythians, as well as the valuable pelts which the Israelites used as temple decorations and as offerings to the deity, all passed through this famous fur market. And of course from Byzantium came the pelts which the Greeks themselves used so extravagantly as house decorations and body raiment, especially battle dress.

After the Romans took over Greece's trade, they in turn carried on a brisk commerce in pelts through Byzantium where lambskin, marten, sable and ermine were exacted in vast quantities as tribute.

The market for pelts expanded tremendously under Rome's driving demand for luxuries. From the Slavic steppes and forests and from the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas came all manner of pelts. Furs of the finest quality—pure white ermine, black fox and silvery sable—along with silks and gems, came by trade caravan from Mongolia and Cathay, across the Asian wastes. Down the Nile from deep in Africa travelled Ethiopians bearing their lion and leopard skins. Arabian traders, having learned the law of the monsoon winds, crossed the Indian Ocean to bring prime pelts as well as spices and other riches from Hindustan and the Malay Archipelago to the Mediterranean.

Italy was the main center of the world's commerce in pelts, with the Romans reaching out not only for the far eastern trade in precious fur such as sable and ermine but into northern Europe, to Flanders and even into Scandinavia for beaver, otter and bear—and for more ermine. For ermine was becoming the garment of state wherever royalty held court, pure white ermine being held in highest esteem. Demand for this regal fur far exceeded the means of supply. Not until the Germanic hordes cycloned down from the north did the impetus of this Italian trade in fine pelts abate.

Then all trade, culture, and even most western knowledge of the world, shrank almost into oblivion. The Dark Ages settled down upon civilized Europe.

It took the impact of Mohammed's vicious attack on Christendom and Islam's subsequent conquests in the Mediterranean to stir the western world from its lethargy. The resulting Holy Crusades awakened curiosity about Moslem luxuries and better ways of living. Western trade was restimulated; merchants again began bidding up fine furs.

There was a new, stepped-up demand for ermine pelts by dignitaries of the Church and other nobility. Fashion came to require quantities of mantles and robes of the royal white, as whole systems of protocol on the use of ermine were

established. To indicate rank on state occasions the lustrous white robes of the nobility were often decorated with the ermine's black tail tips or the paws of the black lamb. Decrees were issued permitting peers to wear trimmings of the white fur on their scarlet gowns. And, king and judge having originated as one, it was but natural that the judiciary came to be permitted the use of white ermine as the badge of high legal dignity, of purity.

The ermine, a slim little animal of the weasel family which produces a semi-durable pelt of soft, glossy fur, is thought to have gotten its name from Armenia, a fur center in ancient times. Medieval writers often referred to the ermine as the Armenian rat. However it was the breed inhabiting the northern latitudes of Asia that was most sought after because of its snow-white fur.

In winter the live ermine's coat ranges from creamy white in northern Europe to pure white in parts of Siberia; the tip of its tail is always black. During the summer the white fur usually darkens in varying degrees to a yellowish brown except for the underparts of the animal's body. Medieval nobility's choicest ermine pelts were those which were all pure white, except of course for the black tail tips. Because these came from Siberia they could be obtained only through eastern trade channels.

To make terminal contacts with these eastern channels eager Italian merchants risked their fortunes and their very lives. Eventually, like most frontier traders, they won through by individual enterprise. Commerce with the Moslems was a hazardous business however, even after two rising emporiums of Italy, Genoa and Venice, built armed navies to support it. But bartering and warring, sometimes between themselves, the Genoese and the Venetians extended their trade and their navies gained complete control of the Mediterranean, to make it once more the main western highway of Eurasian commerce.

These encounters, with the Arabs and the ancient cultures they had preserved, eventually reawakened a long dead interest in the far east too. In the thirteenth century the Venetian traveler, Marco Polo, penetrated beyond the Moslem barrier to

the East, visited the Great Kublai Khan in Cathay and returned to write a wondrous tale about what he had seen in the Orient.

There was gold plate, and there were sapphires, rubies, emeralds and pearls to be had in the far eastern countries, just as the ancients had said. For proof, road-weary Marco Polo brought home with him samples of these jewels sewed in the linings of his tattered clothing. Also, in plenteous variety in the East he had found spices for seasoning and deodorizing, commodities for which all Europe yearned desperately during the middle ages.

And, Polo reported glowingly, there were silks, and priceless furs!

The clothes of the wealthy Tartars in the far east were for the most part of gold and silk stuffs, lined with costly furs, such as sable and ermine and black fox, in the richest manner. Robes of vair were much to be seen also. These consisted of hundreds of tiny Siberian squirrel pelts, the grey backs and white bellies of which were joined together checker fashion. In winter the Tartars wore two gowns of pelts, one with the soft, comforting fur inward next to their skin, and the other with the fur outward to defend them against wind and snow.

Sable was esteemed the queen of furs in Mongolia. The dark, silver-tipped fur of the Siberian sable was thick and silky, the leather thin. According to Polo prime sable pelts, scarcely sufficient to line a mantle, were often worth two thousand besants of gold.

However, ermine appears to have been preferred in India where Ibn-Batootah, a famous Moorish traveller of the fourteenth century, reported an ermine pelisse was worth a thousand dinars, or rupees, whereas a pelisse of sable was worth only four hundred at the time.

In any case these two aristocrats of the weasel family, sable and ermine, depending on the quality of their pelts, vied for favor among the lords of the east, as did to some extent the rare black fox of the icy regions in the far north.

Polo said that when the Grand Khan of the Tartar Empire quit his palace for the chase he took ten thousand retainers

with him, including his sons, the nobles of his court, his ladies, falconers and life guards. For this entourage great tents were provided, appointed luxuriously and stretched with silken ropes. The Khan's sleeping tents and audience pavilions were covered on the outside with the skins of lions, streaked white, black and red, and so well joined together that no wind or rain could penetrate. On the inside they were lined with the costly pelts of ermines and sables. The Venetian marvelled at the skill and taste with which the inlaying of the pelts was accomplished.

When this intrepid adventurer travelled into northern Mongolia he found the country alive with traders and merchants. "The Merchants to buy their Furres, for fourteene dayes journey thorow the Desart, have set up for each day a house of Wood, where they abide and barter; and in Winter they use Sleds without wheeles, and plaine in the bottome, rising with a semi-circle at the top or end, drawne easily on the Ice by beasts like great Dogs six yoked by couples, the Sledman only with his Merchant and Furres sitting therein."

These fur traders showed the Venetian huge pelts, "twentie palms long," taken from the white bear in the far north. That was the Region of Darkness, so-called because for "the most part of the Winter moneths the Sun appeares not, and the Ayre is thick and darkish." There, Polo was told, the natives were pale, had no prince and lived like beasts. But in the polar summer when there was continuous daylight they caught multitudes of large black foxes, ermines, martens and sables.

Ibn-Batootah, who later travelled this country, told how the traders bartered with the mysterious inhabitants of the far north.

After encamping near the borders of the Region of Darkness the traders would deposit their bartering goods in a likely spot and return to their quarters. The next day on returning to the same place they might find beside their goods the skins of sable, ermine and other valuable furs. If a trader was satisfied with what he found, he took it; if not, he left it there. In the latter case the inhabitants of the Region of Darkness might then on another visit increase the amount of their deposit, or as

often happened, they might pick up their furs and leave the goods of the foreign merchant untouched.

So far as the traders were concerned these people of the far north with whom they bartered might as well have been ghosts. The traders never saw them.

The pelts of all the polar animals were lusher and finer and consequently much more valuable than those found in the districts inhabited by the Tartars. Because of this the Tartars were often induced to undertake plundering expeditions in the Region of Darkness for furs, as well as for domesticated animals kept by the natives there. Invariably, it appears, the inhabitants simply sought safety in flight from the raiders, putting up no fight and never showing themselves.

Marco Polo said that lest the Tartar raiders lose their way during the long winter night, “they ride on Mares which have Colts sucking which they leave with a Guard at the entrance of that Countrey, where the Light beginneth to faile, and when they have taken their prey give reynes to the Mares, which hasten to their Colts.” Continuing, he said that from this northern region came “many of the finest Furres of which I have heard some are brought into Russia.”

About the mysteries of Russia, Polo learned little. But he was certain that it was of vast extent, bordering in the north on the Region of Darkness and reaching to the “Ocean Sea.” Although there were many fine and valuable furs there, such as sable, it was not a land of trade he reported.

How wrong he was about that!

German merchants were long since firmly established with fur factories in Russia, and Norse sea-rovers had first tapped the trade of that land hundreds of years earlier.

During the dark centuries when western Europe was sinking in despair fierce Vikings in their horned helmets were traversing the Slavic lands, plundering as they went and dropping Arabian, Byzantine and Anglo-Saxon coins which

later marked their routes. By way of the Volga and the Dvina the Norsemen brought back far-eastern spices and pearls obtained on the shores of the Caspian Sea in exchange for amber and tin. But chiefly they transported skins. They bartered Baltic furs for lustrous Oriental pelts and frequently used both slaves and coinage as media of exchange. By way of the Dneiper and other rivers they even traded on the Black Sea, and at Byzantium, portaging their dragon boats from stream to stream with marvelous facility.

In the ninth century the Norsemen established a truly great trading city of their own at Novgorod. It was located on a table-land where four main waterways of Russia converged to form trade routes to the Caspian, Black and Baltic Seas. Here the Vikings, inter-marrying with the natives, settled down and prospered in the riches of their commerce with the farthest corners of the world. Furs and other oriental luxuries, cloths, honey, spices, metals, and the wax consumed in such quantities by the Christians, all passed through their hands.

Rurik, the Norse leader of these Russified Scandinavians, or Varangians, built a castle and a fort at Novgorod in 862 to protect the independence of the surrounding province, and thus was laid the foundation of Russia.

An ancient chronicler tells also of the wicked, fabulous trading city of Julin at the mouth of the Oder River on the Baltic Sea. The Saxons called it Winetha (Venice). It was inhabited mainly by pagan Slavs. But there were Norsemen there too, and in fact anyone could live and trade in this emporium of the north so long as he didn’t declare himself a Christian. Julin disappeared at an unknown date beneath the water due to the encroachments of the sea. Trusting in the wealth of its trade and despising God, it went the way of Sodom and Gomorrha according to Christian bards.

In the eleventh century whatever did remain of Julin belonged to the Christian Germans. German merchants, crossing the Elbe from the west, colonized the Oder valley and other Slavic lands on the shores of the Baltic. At Thorn in Poland they exchanged cloth and other goods for ermine, sable, fox and calabar (grey squirrel). They even penetrated

Russia deeply for trade. At Novgorod they had a fur trading settlement active enough to prompt expressive protestations from the pious Canon Adam of Bremen.

"Pelts are plentiful as dung" in Russia, he wrote, but they are "for our damnation, as I believe, for *per fas et nefas* we strive as hard to come into the possession of a marten skin as if it were everlasting salvation." According to him it was from this evil source in Russia "that the deadly sin of luxurious pride" had overspread the west.

Indeed, by comparison with the self-mortifying Christian standards of the time, luxury in dress was very pronounced among the rising German merchants and their wives. It was even more so among the men than among the women. The most conservative patricians and councillors wore cloth hoods ostentatiously trimmed with beaver and other fine fur, and long fur cloaks of exquisite quality. So proud were they of their finery that the Councillors of Bremen once forged a document pretending to prove that Godfrey of Bouillon during the First Crusade had vested them with the right to wear fur and gold chains.

The Church frowned upon the use of fur by the laity or any except the highest ecclesiastics. In fact, since early in medieval times the wearing of fur by the common man had been regulated by severe laws. But even among the Christians a man's wealth and standing permitted its use in some degree. As always in the past, fur was a symbol of power and prestige. And, these German merchants were becoming a real power as they gained a monopoly of the Baltic trade.

They formed a strong federation of the towns they had founded at the river mouths along the south shore of their sea. Their luggers plied the North Sea and the Thames in Britain. At Wisby on the important Isle of Gothland they early established an emporium. From the first Christian centuries barbarian Gothland had been the most active center of Baltic trade. Now it was under the control of this Hanseatic League of German cities which dominated the Baltic Sea and was soon permitting no carrying bottoms there other than its own.

In the thirteenth century the enterprising Hansa towns had monopolistic trade factories established not only in England and Scandinavia, and at Novgorod in Russia, but at Pleskow and perhaps even at Moscow. Their fur traders penetrated to the White Sea. Within another century they had extended their operations beyond the Urals into Siberia as far as Tobolsk and the River Taz. By then their bold assurance had gained them factories or the protection of trade-guild concessions in Flanders, France and Portugal. They were granted concessions even in Venice, their great Italian rival, whose own trading galleys were in turn annually invading England and Flanders.

But cruelty and haughtiness were born of the Hansa's strength and pride, and lasting enmities resulted.

German arrogance met its first tests at Novgorod. There the Hansa traders incurred the everlasting resentment of the Russians, who in an effort to cope with mounting indignities resorted to cheating the Germans at every opportunity. Buying furs was risky business except in well-lighted places where it was easy to test quality. Resentments often flared into conflict, and the factory in Novgorod became a kind of hostile encampment.

In spite of reduced returns, however, the Hansa merchants clung tenaciously to their trading privileges in Russia for some time. Not until Ivan the Terrible crushed the independent provinces and consolidated the Russian Empire were the Germans finally driven out—in the sixteenth century.

Then the Scandinavian powers revolted against the Hansa monopolies and the cruelties of the Germans within their borders. During the wars that followed the power of the Hanseatic League declined rapidly. With feudalism breaking up on the continent in western Europe, men had been freed for competitive commerce. It was the time of the Renaissance and trading impulses were quickening everywhere. New maritime states, sensing opportunity, had already risen to challenge the monopoly in the Baltic. Danes, Dutch and even the commercially-retarded English had been competing for the prize.

In England as early as 1404 a group of merchant adventurers organized a company to carry trade to Baltic cities. But as it turned out the agricultural English were not ready, for, although their sailors and traders fought savagely during piratical encounters in the Baltic, at home they were still hindered by their feudal system, a system against which the Germans had early rebelled as being incompatible with commercial enterprise. The absence of a large middle class, of sufficient urban community life in England, forestalled any real commerce.

The backward Englishmen didn't have anything but lead, tin and cheap skins to export, and they had to buy back some of that, reworked, at a premium. On the continent at the time there was a saying: "We buy fox skins from the English for a groat, and re-sell them the foxes' tails for a guilder."

The Danes, situated strategically to cut the Baltic trade lane, fared much better than the English. But in the end it was the Dutch who succeeded the Hansa in carrying trade. The main lane of traffic from Bruges in Flanders, over the North Sea, around the Danish peninsular, and through the Baltic to Russia belonged eventually to Holland. So did the remnants of the Hansa's former fur trade at Novgorod.

Dutch requirements for skins mounted rapidly with the coming of the Renaissance. Even a brisk market for worn, discarded and inferior pelts was maintained in Holland. The pinch for pelts came about as a result of a tremendously stepped-up demand for fur in manufacture—in the felting of hats!

In Holland, as in other countries crawling out of the Dark Ages, beaver skin had been permitted as headgear to almost all who could afford it. Beginning with the time that the wearing of hats became fashionable in Europe this costly fur was used extensively for that purpose by people of means. It would appear, in fact, that in England from the time of Chaucer the word *beaver* was practically synonymous with *hat*.

Now, felt hats, which had brims and other advantages over those fashioned from pelts, were being pressed out in quantity by the trade-conscious Dutch for world commerce. Dutch beavers, they were called, and they came in a variety of shapes and quality.

Due to the peculiar matting quality of fur filaments, felting had been a profitable manufacturing art for centuries. The Greeks had practiced it. The Mongolians of Kublai Khan's time used felt matting for tents; rich Tartars sometimes furred their robes with pelluce or silk shag. The Normans who wore felted articles of dress brought the art to England.

Fur is made up of short, barbed hairs that are downy and inclined to curl. Matting or felting, which would expose a live animal to cold and storm, is prevented in most animal coats by relatively stiffer guard hairs lying alongside the fur filaments and keeping them separated. But, the ancients had learned that by first plucking the coarser guard hairs from a pelt, the downy fur that remained could easily be removed from the hide, processed, pressed into felt mats and blocked into any shape.

Although many other furs were used in the manufacture of hats, the best felts were of beaver. For one thing they were practically indestructible. Discarded beaver hats could be worked over and made like new. Then, a new method of combing out the fur filaments of the beaver pelt was developed, to better utilize the skins. This left the pelts with the guard hairs to be worked into stoles for clerics and officials, and the combed-out fur fibers of course for the manufacture of hats.

Dutch beavers for both men and women found their way to England, to Baltic countries, to France, Portugal and into the Mediterranean. These, as well as other products of the north, were eagerly sought in trade-hungry Venice, until recently the mistress of a thriving Mediterranean carrying trade.

Venice had reached this position of trade eminence in the Mediterranean after a bitter, hundred years' war to eliminate Genoa as her rival. The most savage of the battles between the fine navies of these two medieval states had been fought over the Black Sea fur trade. But then the Turks, taking

Constantinople in 1453, erected a toll-gate at this ancient Eurasian cross-roads, and the bite they took as middlemen all but stagnated world trade through the Mediterranean.

To make matters worse, the Portuguese, who had been exploring the south Atlantic, rounded the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa in 1488. An alternative route to India and Malaya had been discovered!

But, although Italy's hold on the fur trade and other oriental traffic was broken, her own need for fine pelts and luxuries had not diminished. Italian coffers were overflowing with the riches of past commercial glory, while a golden age of elegance was blossoming in Europe for those who could afford it.

One of the keynotes of the Renaissance, as illustrated in the art and literature of the time, was an increasing appreciation of beautiful furs. Throughout the western world wealthy women took to adorning themselves with expensive pelts. If, as was said at the time, the ermined luxury of a Queen of France was cast into the shade by the furred splendor of a matron of Bruges, much more could have been claimed for the oft-wed daughter of Pope Alexander in Italy.

When this young lady, Lucretia Borgia, was married to her fourth husband, Alfonso de Ferrara, furs competed with jewels in dazzling array. Although the marriage was celebrated by proxy, the twenty-two-year-old bride wore a diadem of diamonds, thirty strings of splendid pearls, a gown of ruby velvet edged with sable, and a cloth-of-gold train lined with ermine. According to Sanuto, the Venetian diarist, it took ten mules to carry the boxes containing the furs of her trousseau, there being no less than forty-five robes trimmed and lined with sable, ermine, rabbit, wolf and marten.

IN EUROPE THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS DEMAND FOR BEAVER FUR IN THE MANUFACTURE OF FELT HATS.

With the need for such elegance, it is small wonder that the cooped-up western world, alive and vigorous by then, hailed the Portuguese discovery of a new spice route to the East Indies and began casting about in every direction for passages to the even greater riches of Cathay.

II
Vikings and Skraelings in Vinland

BY the closing years of the fifteenth century, not only were the mercantile classes of western Europe thoroughly awake to the possibilities of world trade, but a good number of other people were beginning to think for themselves about the world around them.

If one could cross by land to China, which itself faced on the sea, there must be ways to reach that fabulous country by skirting the land masses of the world. In that manner the Portuguese had discovered an all-water route to India and Malaya. Or, was there the possibility of an even more direct passage to both China and the Indies by sailing straight west across the ocean?

The ancients had said the world was a globe. Hundreds of years before Christ, Greek philosophers were sure the world was round. One of them, Eratosthenes, calculated the earth's circumference to be 40,000 kilometers (amazingly enough today, within 9 kilometers of the meridional figure!) And Strabo, a geographer who lived in the first century, recorded that if it were not for lack of sailing equipment to negotiate the immensity of the Atlantic Ocean one could travel from Spain to India by keeping to the same parallel.

Of course this did not agree with the teachings of the scriptures which spoke of the "four corners of the earth." All during the dark ages ignorant clerics of the Church preferred to think of the world as a flat platter and pretended to forbid a contrary conception because it did not conform with the Bible. The low level of western culture had blindly accepted the thesis that the inner edges of this platter-like world were inhabited by monstrous creatures, and beyond the edges—a bottomless gulf!

On such grounds most people of the western world still resisted any notion that the world was round. But there was a

question in the minds of many.

The Phoenicians, the Greeks and the Arabs had navigated the waters of the Atlantic—so had the Irish and the Vikings who long since discovered and colonized "islands" across the western sea—all without falling off the edges of the world. The Arabs, even now, were making the globes they had made for centuries for their sailors and traders. Many learned men in the west, geographers and scientists, were confident that the world was round; only recently at scholarly Nuremberg a fine globe had been completed showing Asia right across from Spain.

If there were "islands" they could be skirted, large though some of them might be according to the legends and the sagas of ancient mariners. Christopher Columbus, the Genoese sailor, must have heard about these western islands at Iceland when he visited that old Irish-Norse settlement in 1477. Certainly he must have heard much about Greenland.

Greenland, a continent-like island in the west, had been colonized by several thousand Norsemen in the tenth century under the leadership of a red-headed, murderous Icelander named Eric Thorvaldson. From there two of his sons, Leif and Thorvald, an illegitimate daughter named Freydis, and a former daughter-in-law, Gudrid, with her new husband Thorfinn Karlsefni, set out on even more daring trading and colonizing expeditions to other great islands—"the western lands of the world."

First, Leif, whose conversion to Christianity against his pagan father's will may have had something to do with his wish to get away, made landings in America in 1003. To Leif it was "White Man's Land" or "Great Ireland," for he knew that Christian Irish had preceded him there. There is in fact some evidence today that Celtic missionaries in staunch, hide-covered coracles, and others too, had been crossing the sea and making settlements in America for five hundred years before Leif Ericson sailed west from Greenland. But Leif's visit is recorded with much more credibleness.

In the tradition of his Viking ancestors Leif and his crew of thirty-five men visited Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, and

appear to have made their camp for the winter on Cape Cod where they built a good house. There they leisurely cut timber and gathered vines for cargo back to treeless Greenland. Some of the crew shaped a new mast from a tall tree for their dragon ship. Others collected peltries. All marvelled at the mildness of the new country's climate.

Leif called the land surrounding his camp site "Vinland," probably because of the abundance of the greenbrier vines which grew there. These made strong, flexible rope material when stripped of their thorns and stranded together. On the other hand the name "Vinland" may have been derived from the grape-vines and wineberries discovered there by Leif's family retainer, a "southerner" called Tyrker. If this slave came originally from the Mediterranean area as his name might indicate he may well have been the first to recognize grapes and demonstrate their usefulness.

One thing is certain however; the addition of wine to Leif's already valuable cargo, when he embarked for Greenland the following year, made his expedition most exciting—one to be emulated!

Ambitious Thorvald Ericson, for one, did not feel that the western lands had been sufficiently explored by his brother. He set out in 1004 and spent two years in Vinland investigating the coasts and rivers. In his Viking ship, the same one that Leif had used, the sagas seem to say that he ranged north of Cape Cod along the Maine coast and south through Long Island Sound.

The natives Thorvald met on his voyage were surprised whenever possible and liquidated without quarter. Skraelings, he called them, meaning shriekers or war-whoopers. No doubt the rough treatment afforded the wild Skraelings was an approved medieval means of taking possession of their fur skins with the least bother. In any case it ended in Thorvald's own death. One day hundreds of Skraelings in their canoes suddenly attacked the Viking ship. Although the Norsemen drove them off with much slaughter Thorvald was mortally wounded in his armpit by an arrow. He was buried ashore that

same day. His men returned to Greenland the following year, in 1007.

It has been claimed that the encounter in which Thorvald was slain took place at Mount Desert Island on the Maine coast. Somes Sound does seem to fit the site of the battle as related in the saga. Certainly, great numbers of natives could have been in the habit of congregating there with their canoes during fur trapping season, for Mount Desert Island was a favorite haunt of beavers and other fur bearers in past centuries.

In 1010 wealthy Thorfinn Karlsefni and his wife Gudrid, who had urged the project upon him, took something over 160 colonists from Greenland to establish a permanent Norse trading settlement in the western land. They went in dragon ships and round-bottomed cargo vessels loaded with "all kinds of livestock," including a bull. The men had headgear adorned with horns, antlers or ravens' wings. They wore short breeches and were clad with leather armor. Pelts were wrapped about their legs. The women wore girdled tunics. Heavy fur coats and lambskin hoods lined with cat fur protected the voyagers, men and women alike, when the seas were icy and the winds biting. Most of them survived to reach Vinland, where Gudrid bore her husband a son, Snorri, the first autumn they spent at Leif's old house.

Snorri, who was to become the ancestor of a number of distinguished men including three Icelandic bishops, appears to have been the first European of record born in America.

At Vinland the Skraelings came with "packs wherein were grey furs, sables, and all kind of peltries." The bull having greatly frightened them, it was some time before they loosened their bundles and offered their pelts in trade. They wanted to exchange them for Norse weapons. Karlsefni rejected this proposition. But the saga relates that he gave them some milk, whereupon the red men wanted nothing else and barter forthwith got under way.

In such manner was the first fur trade of record joined in America, although one cannot resist wondering if the milk was spirituous. Experienced Thorfinn Karlsefni, who had gained

his fortune in other parts of the world as a seafaring trader, may well have been the first white man to practice this ancient trick of the trade on the naïve native Americans.

Very soon after this first successful barter the aborigines came back in much greater number than before with bundles of pelts and stood outside the palisades which the Norsemen had been foresighted enough to erect around their house in the meantime. Karlsefni, sensing the making of another good bargain, instructed the women to offer more milk. The Skraelings took it thirstily, pitching their bundles of furs over the palisades. But then one of them tried to steal a Norse weapon and a battle ensued during which many of the Skraelings were slain.

Evidently Karlsefni thought it was too dangerous at Vinland. It would appear that he moved his colony the second year to a site probably on the Hudson River. In the meantime according to some students he had explored the country from its northernmost parts, where he mentioned seeing "many artic foxes," to the Chesapeake Bay, no doubt entering many rivers, the St. Lawrence, the Hudson, the Delaware, possibly the James, and identifying correctly the extent of the Appalachian mountain range. There is reason to believe that he built shelters and maintained a separate camp somewhere in the Chesapeake tidewater.

It may have been there, as the Norsemen told it, that swarthy, ill-looking men with broad cheeks and ugly hair on their heads, came in canoes and stared at them in amazement. Later, these same men came back with "fur-skins and all-grey skins" wanting swords and spears in trade. Evidently there was no milk in this camp, wherever it was, but fortunately the natives finally agreed to take red cloth in exchange for their pelts.

"In return for unblemished skins, the savages would accept a span length of red cloth and bind it around their heads. Thus the trading continued. When Karlsefni's people began to run short of cloth, they ripped it into pieces so narrow that none was broader than a finger, but the savages even then gave as much for it as before, or more."

And, so the trading continued, according to a version of the saga in *Hauk's Book*, until it ended in a battle as usual. Once more many of the natives were killed. So were two of the Norsemen.

After three years Karlsefni abandoned the idea of a permanent settlement. The Skraelings were too hostile. The Norse, with their superior boats and shields, could cope with them on water. But on land the red men were too numerous and had the advantage of surprise. They couldn't be held at bay—the Norsemen didn't have the terrifying firearms available to later colonists coming to America.

All of which may reasonably account for the dearth of Viking artifacts on the eastern seaboard of America. The Norsemen kept close to the shore-line, whether on the seacoast or on a tidewater river, building their huts near the safety of their shielded dragon ships. Today, the sites of those early camps may well be under water as the level of the sea has risen at least five or six feet in the intervening time due to glacial meltings.

A translation of the *Flatey Book* saga relates that when Karlsefni's people returned to Greenland they "carried away with them much booty in vines and grapes and peltries," and that after this "there was much new talk in Greenland about voyaging to Vinland, for this enterprise was now considered both profitable and honorable."

Not to be outdone in the matter of profit Freydis, the illegitimate daughter of Eric the Red and with a heart as murderous as that of her father, led an expedition to Vinland a few years later. Honor appears to have had no part in her plans.

Freydis had a husband, but she made the plans. Before leaving Greenland, she arranged with Leif for the loan of his house in Vinland and induced two unsuspecting brothers of another family who had a particularly fine ship to become her partners in the venture. These two men were pledged to take only thirty warriors and their women. Freydis had agreed to take a like number, but somehow she contrived to conceal five extra men in her smaller ship.

After they arrived in Vinland, Freydis managed to keep the two groups apart by fomenting antagonism. The brothers were forced to build a separate house for their men and women. This house, together with too much wine and heavy sleep, proved to be the means of their undoing—all according to the Viking lady's plan it appears. And what a red-handed proceeding it was!

Freydis, with her husband's grudging cooperation, succeeded in murdering the two brothers in their house one night after shackling their company. She had all of their men put to death and personally wielded the axe that killed their five women when no one else would do it. Then, taking her deceased partners' fine trading ship, she returned to Greenland with a rich cargo of furs, wine and lumber.

One shudders to think how she went about extracting the furs from the Skraelings!

For two or three hundred years the Greenland republic maintained an active trade between America and Norway, and with other countries, in walrus hides, seal and fur skins, dried fish and whale fat. Norwegian port records, as well as the sagas, testify to trade with "Markland," the name which had been given to Nova Scotia by Leif Ericson. There are old church records which show that quantities of the pelts of animals not indigenous to Greenland were exported from that country to Norway, pelts that could have come only from the mainland of America. The bills of lading listing church taxes which had been collected *in natura* include elk, black bear, beaver, otter, ermine, sable, lynx, glutton and wolf.

But, in 1261, the Greenland parliament renounced its independence and swore allegiance to Norway. Independent traffic with other countries was promptly curtailed. Subsequently the dominance of the Hanseatic League through its monopolistic factory at Bergen, which took no interest in Greenland, brought about a withering of all commerce between Greenland and the continent.

Deterioration of the Greenlanders themselves came about through malnutrition and intermarriage with the Eskimos who descended on their settlements. Some who voyaged to America

probably remained there and were eventually absorbed by the natives. There is evidence that as late as 1362 an expedition of Swedes and Norwegians, exploring westward in the Hudson Bay, left their ship at the mouth of the Nelson River and in their afterboats penetrated through Lake Winnipeg up the Red River into Minnesota. An inscription on a rhune-stone, ostensibly left by them as a marker, says they were being cut off by the savages at the time. But, whether authentic or not, the storied voyage appears to be of little commercial significance; the era of Viking trade in America was ended.

Among most scholars during the dark ages little notice had been taken of the Norse discoveries, if indeed very much was known about them. True, the chronicler Adam of Bremen had recorded the discovery of a large island in the western sea, called “Vinland,” but then everyone knew there were “islands” in the sea. Knowledge of any far-western lands, even of Greenland itself, faded with the withering of trade.

Then Christopher Columbus, sailing for Spain, plowed the ocean straight west in 1492 and returned to assert that as he had predicted the east coast of Asia was six thousand miles nearer to Europe than most of the world’s best geographers had estimated it to be.

A new, short route west to Asia! The news was electrifying to a now thoroughly trade-conscious world. Spain, England, Portugal, France—all took to the western sea.

III
Codfish Land Spawns a Fur Frontier

CHRISTOPHER Columbus probably thought that "the western lands of the world" explored by the Norsemen were island-like masses, similar to Greenland, off the northern coast of Asia. From what he was able to learn, especially on his visit to Iceland, he no doubt concluded that these lands stretched far away to the southeast. He had a mariner's instinct for such things. Certainly he calculated his landfall in 1492 with amazing accuracy.

Columbus came among islands that he confidently took to be the Moluccas off Asia. The continent lay just beyond.

But it was the wrong continent!

Although Christopher Columbus made four voyages, reaching the mainland of South America in 1498, he never knew that he hadn't really come upon Asia—that the natives he encountered were not wild, borderland East Indians.

In the meantime, a Genoese-born Venetian navigator sailing for an English king landed on the North American coast in 1497 and claimed the country for England. John Cabot was his English name. Cabot made the North Atlantic crossing in a small bark called the *Matthew* with eighteen men, following the route of the Vikings, and landed first somewhere near Cape Breton. After sailing northern coasts for a week he decided the country was Siberia. Like Christopher Columbus, he returned quickly to report that he had discovered a route to Asia.

Like Columbus too, John Cabot was given a fleet of trading ships and was sent back the next year by an excited monarch and hopeful Bristol merchants to collect the spoils of his discovery. His ships were "fraught with sleight and grosse merchandizes, as course cloth, Caps, laces, points, and other trifles."

This time Cabot cruised the coast south, possibly as far as Cape Fear, for signs of Cathay or India before he returned to England. He carried back a few mangy furs taken in trade with the Indians—for the surprised Indians could think of nothing much to give the white god other than the clothes off their backs—but no gold, pearls, silks or spices.

It was hard to believe that this was the Asia about which Marco Polo had written.

It took another decade for Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine astronomer who had gone along on several Spanish and Portuguese voyages to the western lands, to declare that they were in reality a new world. A German savant named Waldseemuller who greatly admired Vespucci revised the map of the earth. He drew in a new continental land mass between Europe and Asia, and he honored Vespucci by calling it Amerigo's Land—in Latin, Terra America.

Meanwhile, Spain's only world rival had not been neglecting the west. Portuguese caravels reached Brazil as early as 1500 and explorers from Portugal visited Labrador and Newfoundland in 1501. Within a few years after John Cabot's crewmen first told Bristol fishermen that the waters off Newfoundland boiled with codfish, Portuguese fishing boats led the way to those American waters.

Armed and battling, rival fishing fleets of the other European countries followed them across the North Atlantic. Soon, almost a hundred sail yearly were frequenting the fabulous Newfoundland banks where fish could literally be hauled in by basket.

These fishermen, Normans, Bretons, Basques, Bristolmen, fell to bartering with the natives when they went ashore to dry their catches. In sailorly tradition they no doubt had a handy reserve of appealing gew-gaws for any chance meetings with the opposite sex. One thing leading to another, it was not long before looking-glasses, beads, tin bells and other trinkets were being exchanged for the fur skins that the natives wore. And the aborigines in turn were then lured into trapping and curing prime skins for this trade.

So, along with their nets, the fishermen from Europe brought over more substantial trade goods, such as knives, axes, fishhooks, combs and colored cloth. Codfish Land, as they called it, began yielding up tidy extra profits from a trade in sealskins, red and blue fox, otter, beaver and marten. The bulk was small on the return trip; the merchants at home paid well.

The first pelts of the American pine marten taken by the sailors caused much excitement. They were mistaken for sable. At the time Siberian sable was the most expensive of all furs traded in the great international fur center at Leipzig. In Russia it was reserved for the use of royalty only; in England noble women eagerly sought the precious pelts as neckpieces. A sack, as the Russian traders called a robe of Siberian sable, was worth more thousands of rubles than most western royalty could afford.

But, although the pine marten did eventually become known as American sable, the pelt of this little animal was never so precious as that of his glistening, thick-coated Siberian cousin. For one thing the guard hairs of his fur did not have the beautiful silver tips.

However, there was another marten, otter-like in its aquatic habits, that turned out to have a much finer coat than its European and Asian cousins. This one the fishermen learned to call mink. It was the name already given in Finland to this scrappy little member of the weasel family, for whose fur there was a premium market in western European countries. The American wild mink with its thicker, silkier under fur and its glossier guard hair was definitely more desirable, bringing a better price.

Although Portuguese sailors had led the way to Codfish Land, Portugal followed up her early advantages in America only half-heartedly. She agreed to a Papal-sponsored division of the earth that left the new world pretty much to Spain. The Portuguese suspected there was no short route west to Asia. Anyway, they were doing very well in their own sphere with their route to the east around Africa.

In the end the Pope's line of demarcation was all right with the Spaniards, too. By the time they were sure there was no centrally located strait through America, they had turned up enough gold, silver and other rich loot to keep them well occupied.

With medieval single-mindedness they were plundering, enslaving and killing. It was the only way the criminal conquistadors knew to reward themselves. Because the natives were accounted to be bloodthirsty cannibals their enslavement or liquidation was looked upon with favor by Spanish authorities. It also greatly simplified the acquisition of aboriginal treasures and mines. Cruelties, so artfully practiced at home, became sheer brutality when transferred to a frontier where the number of victims seemed inexhaustible. Roasting alive, tearing by hounds, dismembering, were all part of the customary Spanish pattern at the time; it was just that these atrocities were committed with higher frequency in America. Wholesale annihilation was the order of the day.

Spain was not so absorbed however that she did not make threatening gestures against those who would intrude on her new possessions. England, following up Cabot's discoveries, made a prideful attempt to launch a colonizing venture. But it died in birth. The Spaniards warned against any encroachments in their American sphere and the English admiralty was in no position to contest the point.

Not so, the French!

Loot from the Aztec Empire proved too tempting to French captains of swift, handy ships which had been commissioned as privateers. Armed with official "letters of mark" to challenge Spanish depredations on the high seas they found clever ways to exceed their authority when they overhauled cumbersome, treasure-laden galleons from America.

It wasn't too long before it was difficult to distinguish between a French privateer and a plain pirate. And Francis I, winking broadly, said he knew of no clause in Father Adam's

will which left all the new world and its riches to his cousin Charles of Spain. Whereupon the French monarch went further. He sent out a capable Florentine pilot, Giovanni da Verrazano, to discover and claim lands in America, and if possible to locate a passage to the Indian Ocean.

Verrazano, with a crew of fifty Normans in *La Dauphine*, made his landfall in 1524 just above Spanish Florida. He coasted northward past the entrance to Chesapeake Bay. It appears that he glimpsed the bay and identified it as the great ocean of the East reaching to China; then he sailed on to the Hudson River.

The natives encountered by the Frenchmen along the way were gentle and playful. It was spring and Verrazano's mariners succumbed to the beauty of the Indian women who braided their hair and modestly covered their loins with soft furs. Otherwise they were quite naked. The sailors gave the aborigines toy bells, bits of paper and colored beads, and found them in turn "very liberal, for they give away what they have."

La Dauphine left the Hudson River and continued on north, beyond Cape Cod, to lands where the natives were found to wear Arctic bear and seal skins. They were rude and truculent too, possibly as a result of having encountered white men before. These wild men exchanged their furs warily. They wanted only fishhooks, metal cutting tools and other valuable trade goods.

When Verrazano returned home all he could show, of any tangible value, were the furs he had taken in trade along the coast of America. But no one in France was more than passingly interested in pelts; there was the more immediate prospect of finding gold or reaching China.

While the French were preparing to follow up Verrazano's coastal discoveries with an inland venture the Spaniards looked on with a jealous eye. They themselves explored northward in Verrazano's track to make sure there was no gold or a northwest passage to Cathay there. They took furs and Indian slaves from the St. Lawrence Gulf. And they actually tried a gigantic colonizing venture in the Chesapeake Bay area.

There was the chance that another Aztec Empire lay deep in the interior of those parts!

This country to the north of Tierra Florida, the Spaniards called Tierra D'Ayllon. For it was Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon, a justice of Santo Domingo, who had reconnoitered it and traded there for bison hides, beaver, otter and muskrat.

In 1526 Ayllon made a settlement of several hundred men, women and children at San Miquel, possibly on the James River, in the Bay of Santa Maria as the Spaniards called the Chesapeake. He brought priests, armored soldiers, black slaves and the usual instruments of torture to the Chesapeake. But probably he didn't erect protecting palisades about his town. San Miquel was abandoned after the first winter, its captain having perished. The benighted natives had not taken well to killings. These were of a prouder race than the West Indian savages, and those colonists who did not die at their hands or from disease were happy to get back to sunny Santo Domingo.

There seemed to be no hope of finding gold or silver in Tierra D'Ayllon anyway. From this time all the closely guarded, secret maps of the Spaniards said so. Except for some further trade in the Potomac for bison hides and pelts, and a fatal missionary effort on the peninsula between the James and York Rivers by a band of brave Jesuit priests, the Spaniards ceased active interest in the Chesapeake area for many years. They were being kept much too busy in Florida and South America. Newly discovered mines, interlopers in the Caribbean, and especially French corsairs lying in wait along their rich trade routes—all demanded attention.

The Frenchmen, however annoying their "privateers" were to the Spaniards, were really only biding their time.

Francis I, as always, had a great many problems. But the most pressing one was his need for gold—much more than his privateers and pirates could safely plunder from Spanish galleons. He had his mind on America itself as a solution.

Jacques Cartier, a stout Breton mariner of St. Malo who knew the fishermen's route to Codfish Land, was sent out by the French king in 1534, and again in 1535, to explore inland

in America. He was to find gold, or the elusive passage to the treasures of Cathay at least. Maybe in the northwest, beyond Spanish claims, the new-found land was joined to Tartary as some of the geographers said. By striking inland Cartier might reach it.

On his first voyage of discovery Cartier explored the Gulf of St. Lawrence and claimed the country, calling it New France. He found the first Indians he met anxious to trade. They followed the French ships, in their birch-bark canoes and along the shores, dancing and singing to prove their friendliness, and holding up pelts on sticks. But the pelts turned out to be "such skinnes as they cloth themselves withall, which are of small value," Cartier remarked.

However, he gave the aborigines ironware and other things, while they danced about him, rubbed his chest and arms, and cast sea water over their heads in ceremonies of joy. "They gave us whatsoever they had, not keeping anything, so that they were constrained to go backe againe naked, and made us signes that the next day they would come againe, and bring more skinnes with them."

Along the shores of the gulf wherever he went Cartier made friends with the natives, giving to the women and children, little tin bells and beads—to the men: hatchets, knives, frying pans. But he found no gold; he located no passage to Cathay. When he embarked for his return to France he took two wild men of "Canada" with him, inveigling them into making the voyage by clothing them in shirts, colored coats and red caps, and putting a copper chain about each of their necks.

These two, in France, assured the French king that far up the deep river of Canada (the St. Lawrence) and beyond, there were walled cities where people lived in houses—Hochelaga, and even more distant Saguenay. Frontier towns of Tartary! They could be. When Captain Cartier left with three ships in 1535 on his second voyage of discovery he was instructed to "go west as far as possible."

With the two Indians as guides, Cartier's ships anchored finally in the quiet waters below present-day Quebec. Close by was the village of Donnacona, Indian "Lord of Canada," who

welcomed the white men even more than the safe return of his two subjects. He wanted to trade. But the French captain wasn't much interested in Donnacona's personal wardrobe or any other pelts.

He made only a brief note of the great store of fur-bearing animals in Canada—the martens, foxes, otters, beavers, weasels and badgers. Then he pushed on. His was a more glittering objective. Up the swift, narrowing river he toiled with a small party, part way in a little pinnace and then in two long boats, until at length he reached Hochelaga.

The walled city turned out to be a well-palisaded Indian village, near the present site of Montreal, where some of the highly organized Iroquois lived in their traditional long houses. That was all—except that the Indians, noting the silver chain of Cartier's whistle and a French dagger handle of yellowish copper gilt, said that such metals came from Saguenay. It was much farther inland, several moons travel.

But there were difficult rapids and the French captain couldn't make it. He was already a thousand miles inland. Winter was coming on. In the end he returned downstream to the safety of his ships and the fort his men had built on the river in Canada.

Plagued by scurvy and freezing with cold that winter, Jacques Cartier had another failure on his hands. It was going to be difficult to explain things at home. He treated with Donnacona for food and medicine, for furs with which to protect his men from the cold, and for information about the country to the west. The "Lord of Canada" was anxious to please the white men, that is, in return for their skillets and axes and their bright colored clothes. He provided the things they wanted—and he talked too much.

Donnacona boasted that he had been to Saguenay. Truly, he swore, he had seen there many of the things the Frenchmen valued so much—red rubies, gold, silver—and the people were white men who went about clothed in woolen cloths. Cartier brightened in the face of his troubles. Here, he perceived, was eye-witness testimony on a royal level to the existence of Saguenay and its treasures. When spring came he captured

Donnacona by a stratagem and "persuaded" the Indian king to go with him to France for a visit.

Whether or not Donnacona really believed his own story about Saguenay, he played the game effectively all the way for Jacques Cartier when he was presented to the French monarch. No doubt he wanted to make sure that he created the means of getting back to his native land. In any event, he had been canny enough to bring along with him several bundles of his best trade goods, consisting mostly of "Beavers, and Sea Woolves skinnes." Maybe, among other things, he had French squaws in mind for his holiday abroad, as one old scribbler has suggested.

It was some time before King Francis was able to get around to doing much about the Indian king's stories. In the meantime Donnacona died. But Francis wanted to make the imagined treasures secure for the French. The only way to do that was to colonize and fortify the approaches through New France, to take possession of the land by occupying it.

Realistic French merchants, like Jean Ango, were more interested in the furs that had been finding their way back across the sea. However colonization was an end they sought, too, if it provided a base for their traders. It was a long way, across a dangerous ocean, to New France.

With the support of both the king and the merchants, therefore, Jacques Cartier went back to New France in 1541. The Sieur de Roberval followed him in 1542. In their well-supplied fleets they transported several hundred colonists, including many farmers, also soldiers, miners and traders. Roberval's expedition included some women. They planted near Quebec, building forts there; both tried desperately to reach mythical Saguenay. Each remained through only one Canadian winter among the now hostile Indians.

Both leaders were more interested in finding quick treasure than in any such prosaic business as fur trading. Cartier took back fool's gold and false diamonds found on the river's bank near the forts. Rescue ships had to be sent over from France with enough supplies to evacuate the scurvy-ridden remnant of Roberval's contingent.

It would be another sixty years before a permanent colony was planted in these parts. But New France was held, nevertheless, for France. And, curiously enough, by the very fur trade that had been so much ignored.

The fishing barques from St. Malo, from Dieppe, Rouen, La Rochelle and Havre, kept coming to America's northern coasts every summer, hundreds of them. They fished for cod on the banks, hunted walrus in the great gulf, and caught whales in the lower parts of the St. Lawrence River. Always, wherever they were, the mariners drove an ever increasing trade with the Indians for valuable pelts. Over the sides of their ships and on shore they bartered for marten, otter, fox and beaver.

Commerce flourished to such an extent through this individual enterprise that ships' captains frequently found it profitable to turn all hands to bartering for pelts. It was a French vessel in 1569 at Cape Breton whose master drove a "trade with the people of divers sortes of fine furs" that picked up the Englishmen, David Ingram and his two companions, Richard Browne and Richard Twide. Along with a large number of others these three had been abandoned ashore following the defeat of their famous leader, John Hawkins, the slaver, in a piratical engagement in the Caribbean with the Spaniards. Ingram and his two friends, however, struck out into the Florida wilderness, "crossed the River May," and for twelve months beat their hazardous way northward through lands never before trod by white men, until they reached Cape Breton. They reported seeing "plentie of fine furres" along the way.

Gradually the traffic in furs moved inland via the St. Lawrence as occasional traders, adopting the native mode of travel by canoe, braved the wilderness for choicer pelts. There being no soldiers or forts to fall back on, these traders, born of the fishing fleets, found it expedient to treat the Indians well. The Montagnais and the Algonkins, who had been hostile since Cartier's last visit, reciprocated in kind. So did the

Hurons, eventually. They were all hopeful of allies with fire guns to help them against their powerful enemies, the recently formed league of the Five Nations of the Iroquois, who inhabited parts of the St. Lawrence valley in the west and the country to the south.

In 1581 a French bark, sent out exclusively for fur by the merchants of St. Malo, pushed into the upper St. Lawrence. The profits of this venture were so spectacular that organized bulk traffic got under way immediately between France and the St. Lawrence valley.

Within three years Richard Hakluyt, the English geographer, was writing, "And nowe our neighboures, the men of St. Maloe in Brytaine, in the begynnyinge of Auguste laste paste, of this yere 1584 are come home with five shippes from Canada and the contries upp the Bay of St. Lawrence, and have broughte twoo of the people of the contrie home, and have founde suche swete in the newe trade that they are preparinge tenne shippes to returne thither in January nexte...."

Almost overnight New France became noted for its valuable export of pelts, especially beaver. Hakluyt, writing from Paris about this time, said that in one man's house he had seen Canadian otter and beaver to the value of five thousand crowns.

The French merchants mostly kept to the St. Lawrence valley, for Canada and the valley region in the hinterland teemed with fur-bearing animals. Furthermore, communication with the natives in the valley was relatively easy because of their earlier contact with Frenchmen.

Of course dialects differed, but limited palaver in a language similar to that of the Algonkin tribe was possible with all the Indians in these parts except the Iroquois. Theirs was a different tongue. The Algonkin tribe of Canada, however, was part of a great linguistic family which came to be known as Algonquin and which stretched irregularly over most of the northern woodland and as far south as Cape Hatteras on the Atlantic seaboard.

Intrepid French traders often spent the winter in the wilderness with the different tribes, to learn about their habits and dialects. If they were to know what was really in the minds of the unpredictable savages with whom they dealt, it was best to know as much as possible about them and especially the exact meaning of their words. A good knowledge of the dialect of a particular tribe might mean an advantage over a competitor, a better profit, or even the difference between life and death.

The lonely fur trader in his canoe with his Indian guides soon symbolized the occupation of New France. The deeper he penetrated into the country the farther the fame of his conquest spread abroad. New France was more than a claim; without colonization it was becoming a recognized French possession. Geographers so indicated it on their maps.

The front line of this French conquest was to become known as the beaver frontier. The coast of the fishermen had been the first fur trading frontier, but when that trade began moving rapidly inland and *castor canadensis* took over the chief victim's role in the drama of destruction, it became the beaver frontier. For *castor canadensis* is not a highly reproductive animal and he is not a migrant. He is also hindered from flight in the face of danger by the large capital investment he has made in his home.

The beaver is an amphibious rodent whose natural environment is a pond or a sluggish stream. An industrious home body, operating on a self-imposed economy, he hews trees and builds protecting dams and apartment houses in which he cohabits with other beavers, all under a system of government much like man's.

Physically, the beaver is distinguished by his thick coat of soft fur, his hard, incisor-like teeth with which he can cut through the stoutest oak, his palmated hind feet and his horizontally-flattened, scaly tail.

He depends very much on that tail, which probably was a model for Indian canoe paddles. It serves him as a rudder when he swims and as a balance for his awkwardly-proportioned body when he runs. As the foreman of a

community construction project he uses his tail with telling effect to lash laggards in the matter of pushing logs about or sealing crevices in structures with good, hard clay. Frequently it comes in handy to smack the surface of the water as a warning that an enemy approaches as well as a protest to the unwelcome intruder. No sound impresses itself more sharply on the woodsman than the crash of an angry beaver's tail on the quiet waters of his home preserve.

The fur of this busy little animal was much in demand in the old world. Not only was it preferred as a coating because of its beauty, warmth and durability, but the hat industry then centering about La Rochelle was requisitioning it in increasing quantities. With European reserves being depleted, the lovely blue-brown, blanket-like pelt of the larger Canadian animal found eager bidders in the French market at twenty or more livres a pound, the average beaver pelt weighing one and a half to two pounds.

Castoreum, an important by-product of the beaver trade at the time, was much in demand too. Obtained in the spring from the perineal glands of both male and female animals, it was used extensively by perfumers as a base for the flower scents. It was also often used to catch the beaver himself. During mating season both sexes of the beaver deposited the pungent, sticky, yellow substance on spots regularly visited by other beaver and added mud and dead leaves to form scent mounds. These served the natives to locate runways; also to bait the intricate snares they set in lieu of spearing, before the white man provided them with metal traps.

The Indians of French Canada fell in readily with the white man's breathless pursuit of the beaver. They, themselves, had long since learned the warmth and durability of his pelt. They used his sharp teeth to point their cutting and scraping tools. They ate his flesh, the tail of the beaver being considered a special delicacy. Now they could trade his pelt and his castors for many wonderful things they thought they needed—ironware, clothing, guns and brandy. It was not difficult to persuade them to step up their war on the challenging little animal that acted like a man.

This soon changed the Indian's mode of life, making him more and more dependent on the white man's wares. Eventually it brought about the red man's destruction.

As old cultural habits began falling away and as hardware which the Indian couldn't make took the place of bone, wood and stone, he became the prey of every evil white man who stood to gain from him. Always deep in the Indian's breast lay the revenge motive; always liquor stirred his most primal instincts. The displacement of bows and arrows by guns made it possible for him to kill off his aboriginal enemies much faster. But he was dependent on the European's continued help even in that. Only the European could supply repair parts for the muskets and furnish the required ammunition. It was a case of the red man destroying himself with the white man's culture.

The brass kettle had as much to do with it as guns or brandy —and the process was not restricted to New France. The pattern was to be repeated on every other American frontier, by the English, the Dutch and the Swedes. The fur trade furnished the means of contact between the two widely divergent cultures of white European and red American. Profits were tremendous—on both sides, considering relative values. But the trade led to the Indian's self-destruction.

It also led to bitter rivalries among the white men.

IV
Samuel de Champlain Lights a Blaze of Red Terror

IT was the first spectacular profits of the fur trade toward the close of the sixteenth century that brought about a fresh and urgent need for the colonization of New France.

The French government saw danger from jealous foreigners, Englishmen in particular. Already the English had attempted settlements to the south at a place called Roanoke. Greatly emboldened on the sea these days they were admitting Spanish claims no more northerly than 34° and French claims no more southerly than 45°. The land in between, from Cape Fear to the Bay of Fundy, was claimed as English. All because John Cabot had sailed that coast more than a century earlier!

Now English boats, too many of them, were poking about Newfoundland, where England laid claim to certain discoveries, and even in the Gulf of St. Lawrence itself. London merchants like Charles Leigh, ostensibly on trading voyages in the great gulf, were boldly practicing piracy against French as well as Spanish vessels. And Hakluyt, the English geographer, was exhorting his countrymen to even greater competition. “While the French, Bretons, Basques and Biscayans do yearly return from these parts a manifold gain, we the English have merely stood still and been idle lookers on,” he wrote provocatively.

French merchants, however, were not showing much inclination to colonize the country; they saw no profit in underwriting such risky ventures when things were going so well. It cost money to plant colonies. Unencumbered competitive traders would probably profit as much as those who did the planting.

The king saw it differently however. Unless something was done to colonize the valley of the St. Lawrence, to fortify it,

the great trade of the French and the hoped-for route to Cathay stood to be seized by foreigners. He resorted to offering monopolies.

Companies were given total rights to the fur trade in return for promising to settle specified numbers of colonists a year. But no volunteers as colonists appeared. When a company was given the fur monopoly it had to take worthless tramps or convicts furnished by the government and, as the merchants weren't particularly interested in colonization anyway, they didn't bother much about these derelicts and criminals once they had transported them to some desolate post in the wilderness. Furthermore, independent traders, as well as the fishermen who went ashore to barter, persisted in violating the monopolies. No one was happy. So vociferous were the conflicting protests that the king was forced to cancel the patents he granted one after another.

He didn't begin to get the results he desired in New France until the advent of Samuel de Champlain.

Champlain, born at Brouage on the Bay of Biscay in 1567, was the son of a French naval captain and the nephew of a Spanish pilot major. He served with French troops as a quartermaster before the Peace of Vervins and later captained a Spanish transport conveying troops to the West Indies. He was there for two years. Having an observant eye he carefully sketched and mapped everything he saw in the Caribbean, the account of his adventures even containing a suggestion of a Panama Canal whereby "the voyage to the South Sea would be shortened by more than 1500 leagues."

When he first came to the St. Lawrence valley in 1603 as an advance agent of a company with a fur trade monopoly, Samuel de Champlain held the title of Geographer Royal, a brevet nobility. It had been conferred upon him by Henry IV in recognition of his demonstrated ability to get at the facts in America. Now a captain in the French navy he came with instructions from the French monarch to bring back a true report on the St. Lawrence valley. While others in the expedition spent their time bartering with the aborigines, Champlain and Francois Grave, Sieur duPont, a principal

merchant of the company, set out to explore the great waterway to the west and to get all the intelligence they could about it.

Actually, they penetrated no farther west than Cartier had done, and not so far as other traders in recent years, but Champlain judiciously recorded what he learned from the Indians and made impressive recommendations. Before returning to France he made a similar survey of the regions about Gaspe and the Acadian Peninsula where there were thought to be rich mines. His report, while recognizing the advantages of establishing a trading post on the St. Lawrence at Three Rivers as Dupont-Grave recommended, pointed out that the powerful league of Iroquois nations barred the way to any farther penetration westward. Too, the feasibility of a possible passage by this route to China was complicated by rapids and ice.

It might be better to try for a more southerly passage, one that would flank the war-like Iroquois, Champlain suggested. There were rivers on the coast south of the St. Lawrence that might lead directly to the lakes in the west—possibly to the western sea.

The new Huguenot head of the company, Pierre de Guast, Sieur de Monts, favored this plan. He'd like to find a new entry into New France, one free of the bitter cold of Canada, and one free of the jealousies of the merchants who had pioneered in the St. Lawrence. The king fully approved. The prospects of finding minerals in the more southerly parts intrigued him. To make sure the company had sufficient ground in which to operate he gave de Monts a patent extending from Cape Breton south to present-day Philadelphia, from 46° north latitude to 40°.

The next few years were spent in making settlements in the Bay of Fundy, at St. Croix and at Port Royal.

Scurvy and cold plagued the colonists even more than Basque pirates, Hollanders and other poaching foreigners annoyed the company's traders. Trade was brisk nevertheless, with the furriers and hatters of Rouen and Paris bidding up all the pelts that could be shipped to France. In fact, prices rose so

high that the Hatters Corporation of Paris complained to the ministry.

Meanwhile, Champlain explored to the south of the French settlements as far as Cape Cod for better sites. He found that Englishmen had been investigating that coast, but he didn't discover a river that led inland to the lake country, skirting the terrible Iroquois. He didn't look south far enough. If he had found the Connecticut or the Hudson, New England might today be populated by Frenchmen. And New Yorkers probably wouldn't have their Dutch ancestors.

In the end Champlain advised the king and the merchants that the company should return to the St. Lawrence valley. Trading posts should be established there, he said. With the help of native enemies of the Iroquois he believed he could defeat the Five Nations—force them to trade—force a way through to Tartary or the western sea.

This is what the company now proceeded to do. An expedition was sent to the St. Lawrence in 1608. Dupont-Grave traded at Tadoussac with one ship while Champlain in another set out to erect a factory at Quebec. There, at the foot of the cliff where the river was narrow, he built a trading post fort consisting of a two-story wooden building surrounded by a large moat. Cannon which would carry across the river were placed on mounds at the corners, and the surrounding land was cleared of timber and brush against attack.

The going was rough, for *le capitaine* tolerated no shirking of toil. Some of his men conspired to murder him by poison, and, should that fail, by "a traine of gunpowder." This plot, he discovered in the nick of time. One of the mutineers was hanged; the others were shipped back to France, condemned to the galleys.

When the trading ships with their cargoes of beaver and "blacke Foxes, which seeme to exceede Sables" returned to France in the fall, Champlain remained behind at Quebec with twenty-eight men. But scurvy and dysentery took its usual toll. Only eight remained by spring. Nevertheless the French captain proceeded with his plan to invade the country of the

Iroquois. He made overtures to their ancient enemies, the Montagnais and the Algonkin Indians.

"Notwithstanding, being a man, who is astonished with nothing, and of a gentle conversation, knowing wisely how to acquaint, and accommodate himselfe with those people, after having promised them, that when the land of the Iroquois, and other Countries should be discovered, the great French Sagamos (meaning our King) would give them great rewards: he invited them to goe to warre against the said Iroquois, promising (for himselfe) that he would take part with them. They (in whom the desire of revenge dieth not, and who delight in nothing more then in warre) passe their word unto him, and arme themselves about one hundred men, for that effect, with whom the said Champlain, ventures himselfe, accompanied with one man, and one of Monsieur deMonts his footemen."

This alliance of 1609 was to have far reaching effects on the future colonial history of America. It sparked a blaze of red terror along the borders between Dutch and French, and between French and English, wherever the competition for the fur trade was joined, that was not to be extinguished for a hundred and fifty years.

News has a way of travelling fast in the wilderness, especially news of a war alliance. The Hurons in the west were Iroquoian, but were bitter enemies of the Five Nations. They wanted to be members of such a promising war party, one with white men carrying the astonishing "fireguns" that the nations of the enemy league had never before seen or heard.

Down the Ottawa and the St. Lawrence the Hurons came to Quebec, with furs to barter but with their tomahawks well sharpened. Champlain and his savage allies gave them a resounding welcome. The French captain traded with them and made a war pact. Then they all set off up the St. Lawrence for the mouth of the Richelieu River, beyond which lay the territory of the Five Nations. There, turning south in a flanking movement, they ascended the Richelieu to reach the "Lake of the Iroquois," later to be called Lake Champlain.

The invaders proceeded with extreme caution after reaching the lake, travelling only at night. However, the French captain had an opportunity to observe something of the advanced state of civilization of the Iroquois before the alarm was given. Their farms, sown with corn and beans, were models of orderliness. Their palisaded forts, he noted, contained buildings of three to four stories, similar to those he had previously observed among the highly organized natives of Mexico.

Champlain must have had some premonition then that these intelligent but bloodthirsty savages would prove far more troublesome than any other natives the French had encountered in America.

When the battle was joined, the invading savages cunningly kept the three Frenchmen hidden behind ranks until, by the sudden appearance of white men with death-dealing thunder, the greatest consternation might be created among the Iroquois. The effect upon the Iroquois was even more dramatic than was anticipated. “On a sodaine, all was in disorder, astonished at such a noise, and death so unexpected. Upon this feare, the men of Kebec loosing no occasion, followed earnestly their enemies, and killed about fiftie of them, whose heads they brought backe, to make therewith merry feasts, and dances, at their returne, according to their custome.” They also took back ten or twelve live prisoners reserved for torture.

The Iroquois, when they recovered sufficiently from their shock to learn more about white men and guns, became the irreconcilable haters of the French. The flame blazed. And it would be fed even more by the Frenchmen—by surprise arquebus massacres and the savagery of the white men’s Algonkin and Huron allies.

Champlain went back to France that fall. Once more the monopoly had been cancelled; the company had lost its exclusive patent. The government was permitting free trade to all Frenchmen in the St. Lawrence valley. However, the company decided to stick it out in the face of this competition. Champlain became affianced, under a marriage contract, to a

girl of twelve who was to join him later as his wife, and then he returned to Canada.

The French captain now carried the war to the Iroquois nations again, successfully urging his Indian allies to help him push farther west. All his battles with the Five Nations were not victories, for the Iroquois were fiercely stubborn foes. However Champlain forced his way to Lake Ontario and Niagara. He ascended the Ottawa and visited Lakes Nipissing and Huron, blazing a trail west for the beaver traders to follow. Because of his tireless efforts in the western wilderness the economy of the new country rested solidly on the fur trade for many years, and the beaver rightfully came to occupy a prominent place in the Canadian coat of arms.

Samuel de Champlain became the first Governor of French Canada, the ruler of all New France. But he didn’t find the western sea, or a passage to China.

He did force the Five Nations of the Iroquois into alliances with the enemies of the French, the incoming Dutch fur traders who furnished the savages with guns, and then with the English. The story of the brutal border wars that resulted is in large measure the story of the colonial struggle for most of the American continent.

V
England Moves to Extend Her Realm

ENGLAND came of age in the sixteenth century. Labor troubles helped to bring this about.

When the tenants on demesne land asserted their right to sell their labor to the best advantage, the lords in turn claimed their right to use their lands to the best advantage. Since profitable sheep farming required fewer laborers than ploughing and reaping, less and less acres were kept in cultivation by the lords. Frustrated and starving, the tenants were forced to abandon their homes and seek precarious employment in the towns and cities.

But feudalism retreated before this shift to community life and a nation of five million restless people emerged from its former agricultural isolation. Although the sheep farmers and wool merchants improved their capital fortunes at the expense of the poor laborers, they had notwithstanding built up a great national industry. England at last had something to sell!

In 1553 an expedition carrying woolens for trade with the Tartars attempted unsuccessfully to reach Cathay by a northeast polar passage. Defeated by ice and death, a surviving remnant did nevertheless manage to reach the White Sea and to journey south into Russia to Moscow. There they made a trade agreement of sorts with Ivan IV, called “the Terrible.”

The merchant adventurers of England promptly set up the Muscovy Company to handle what looked like a promising commerce with Russia and through that country with the caravans of Persia. But the English never found the Russians rewarding as either customers or middlemen. While their czar was willing to sell furs, felts and naval stores, or wax and honey, he wasn’t particularly interested in buying coarse woolens. His subjects wore fur.

The subjects of the czar did indeed indulge themselves in both the beauty and warmth of fur.

Except for the summer months Russians of quality went about in all manner of furred luxury. From bearskin, lynx, squirrel, beaver, fox and marten were fashioned their capes and bonnets, as well as their fine tailored coats sporting decorative braid loops and toggles. Women wore handsomely brocaded velvet coats lined and trimmed with expensive fur. Nowhere in the western world did royalty make such extravagant use of precious pelts. The nobility of Russia affected enveloping gowns and pelisses of sable, ermine and vair. Esteemed above all other pelts for certain wear was black fox. Nobles used this rare fur to make up their distinctive wide caps enclosing tall felted bonnets in the fashion of Babylonian hats.

Millions of lesser folk in Russia, wearing caps and buskins, and shedding cloth tunics for long waistcoats of fur in the winter, consumed vast quantities of muskrat, wolf, lamb skin and reindeer hide.

Still, there were plenty of pelts for export. They were in fact the country's chief commodity. Caravans from Siberia brought their cargoes of fine pelts to the great market towns of Novgorod and Moscow. Ivan the Terrible personally enforced a tribute of thousands of sables each year from the western Tartars across the Urals. The value of Russia's fur exports to Turkey, Persia and the countries of Christendom reached into millions of rubles yearly.

Trade with the Russians, however, was very unsatisfactory to the English. For one thing Dutch competition bid up the prices of Russian fur. Some pelts "cost more there with you than we can sell them for here" the London merchants wrote ruefully to their factors in Russia. Then there was the fickleness and downright trickiness of the Russians who being "very mistrustful ... doe not alwaies speake the trueth, and think other men to bee like them." To these woes were added the enormous difficulties of the icy northern route. They were almost insuperable; yet the taxes imposed on cargoes through

the Baltic by the King of Denmark were unbearably high. It was all very frustrating.

In the end proclamations were published in England against the use of foreign furs—and these laws were not entirely sumptuary.

True, the Renaissance had brought fashion consciousness to the middle class Englishman to such an extent that it was often difficult to distinguish between a noble and a well-furred commoner. There was urgent need for proclamations to stop that. Often in the past such proclamations had been necessary when the craze for furs mounted inordinately. “Sabyls be for great estates” had been one historic royal edict. Henry VIII, who decked himself lavishly with furs plundered from the monasteries and indulged in cozily “furred nightgowns” for his evening escapades, issued many a decree limiting the use of precious pelts to the chosen few. Other monarchs had done the same thing.

Over and above this need for class distinction however, it irked the relatively poor English royalty to be gouged in the market place for one of its regal necessities.

From earliest Norman times imported furs had been used in England to designate royal rank. Even before that, in the ninth and tenth centuries, nobility and ranking clergy trimmed their garments with beaver and fox. In the fourteenth century Edward III issued a decree specifying ermine, symmetrically spotted with astrakan or other bits of black, to be a royal fur. A whole set of heraldic tinctures was based on fur. Ermine was represented by white flecked with black, variant patterns and colors being termed ermines, erminois, pean and so forth. Vair was shown as blue and white alternating in the manner of small skins sewn together, some of its variants being counter-vair, potent and counter-potent. Feudal lords of England had been inclined to treat their equipage of furs as heirlooms, handing them down from generation to generation.

The use of fur was so firmly embedded in English tradition that it was not in the nature of things that the new restrictive laws now promulgated would be accepted without protest. One English merchant put it tellingly when describing presents of

fur that had previously been brought to Queen Elizabeth by a Russian ambassador.

"The Presents sent unto her Majesty were Sables, both in paires for tippets, and two timbars, to wit, two times fortie, with Luzerns and other rich furres. For at that time that princely ancient ornament of furres was yet in use. And great pitie but that it might be renewed especiall in Court, and among Magistrates, not only for the restoring of an olde worshipful Art and Companie, but also because they be for our Climate wholesome, delicate, grave and comely; expressing dignitie, comforting age, and of longer continuance, and better with small cost to be preserved, then these new silks, shagges and ragges, wherein a great part of the wealth of the land is hastily consumed."

Whether or not the merchant's protest was heeded, it was in fact prophetic in its suggestiveness.

The recent proclamations had decreed "that no furres shall be worn here, but such as the like is growing here within this our Realme." Well, the "Realme" was about to be vastly extended.

Now that England was no longer in a state of complete commercial dependence upon the continent, ingenuity at home and pluckiness abroad were rising to meet the challenge. Participation in world affairs was eagerly sought. While adventurers of purse formed companies to trade overseas, venturers of person took a sudden interest in such things as ship design and ordnance. With an eye on plunder as well as legitimate commerce shipwrights were trained to turn out swift and manageable craft of small burden, well gunned for oceanic warfare and easy to maintain.

Of course Mary Tudor, the Catholic Queen of England who succeeded her father Henry VIII, had prohibited her countrymen from sailing west to America. It wouldn't have pleased Philip II of Spain. He married her to extend his empire, not to share it.

But Englishmen had tasted salt water and they liked it. They liked it even more after seeing the American silver, fifty thousand pounds of it, that Philip sent to London as a wedding present. When Mary died in 1558 after a short but bloody reign and her Protestant sister, Elizabeth, ascended the throne, there was no holding those who wanted to sail west.

Elizabeth, herself, applied no restraints. Like the French king, Francis I, she winked broadly enough when her own newly toughened mariners pirated Spain's shipping and disputed that country's ascendancy even on the Spanish main. The destiny of empire was beckoning the English. John Hawkins, the slaver, and Francis Drake, the privateer, were only the forerunners of captains of their stripe who were to make their country the mistress of the seas.

In the beginning it was envy of Spain, a thirst for silver and gold, and the quest for a trade passage to Cathay that drove the English westward, just as it had the French before them. Colonization, except as an eventual means to an end, had no part in the French scheme—nor in the English. The primary objects other than the harassment of Spain were the discovery of mines and a northwest passage.

Colonization was visualized, when at all, only as occupation —to hold the route to the mines or to Cathay against the possibility of foreign claims.

Not until an English venturer in America by the name of John Smith challenged the wasteful search for gold and demanded the development of the country's more obvious resources did it begin to dawn on the merchant adventurers of England that colonization might be a commercially desirable end in itself.

And it was this same John Smith who demonstrated how trade with the natives could be employed to get the country planted with Englishmen. Along with the usual trade for pelts he bartered successfully for Indian corn and other food stuffs. This kept the colonists alive until they were "seasoned" to the new land; then came the profits from organized fur trading to maintain them until agricultural settlement could be effected with some degree of economic success.

Prior to the coming of John Smith the English ventures in America had been one costly failure after another.

Among the earliest of these were the expeditions led by that enigmatic Yorkshireman, Martin Frobisher. Reputedly a successful privateer, it was also said that he knew how to hold his tongue. Maybe what he did tell gained in importance thereby. It might account for the otherwise unaccountable backing he obtained for three successive voyages to America. Many thousands of pounds sterling were wasted on these ventures by a usually hard-headed merchant named Michael Lok. A large part of the expenditure was underwritten by the queen, herself, and Elizabeth was not normally one to squander her silver.

Frobisher went out first in 1576 in search of a northwest passage. He succeeded only in discovering the bay, or "strait" as he called it, that bears his name before coming on "gold ore" in the form of bright, black rocks. Since the samples must have proved worthless on his return to England, his promise of a strait to Cathay was probably very impressive. Certainly the fur-clad Eskimo he brought back from the north side of the "strait" was accepted as an Asiatic. In any event, back he went to America the next year with three ships and the financial blessings of Lok's newly formed Company of Cathay.

Martin Frobisher did some further exploring on this voyage, but not enough it appears to learn that his strait was only a bay. It is all very strange. An abundance of spiders in the region was taken as convincing evidence that gold-bearing ore was close at hand. In the end Frobisher loaded his ships with worthless black earth and returned to England. What he said, or didn't say, must have been doubly impressive this time for the merchants evidently were not one whit discouraged. They backed him with a fine fleet, fifteen ships, for a third voyage in 1578.

A large band of miners was sent along this time by the company, and two hundred twenty men were provided for the purpose of planting a settlement on the "strait" that would protect both the mines and the route to Cathay. But, so anxious was everyone to dig for gold, the necessary buildings never did

get erected. Again it is not clear what happened, but apparently all thought of settlement was abandoned.

Before the ice began to close in, Martin Frobisher set sail for home with all his company and another three hundred tons of fool's gold, bankrupting the Company of Cathay.

Next there was Sir Humphrey Gilbert. He and his half-brother, Sir Walter Raleigh, were the queen's two favorite gallants among her soldiers of fortune. Both were brave men and both were intensely nationalistic. Sir Humphrey said that a man is "not worthy to live at all, that for feare, or danger of death, shunneth his country service, and his owne honour."

Like other gentlemen marauders of England at the time Gilbert and Raleigh practiced piracy abroad because it was considered both patriotic and sportingly profitable to do so. They were particularly jealous of Spain's sea commerce and lent support to raids on that country's shipping with lucrative results. But when they personally led forays against the silver fleet they were none too successful. Humiliatingly enough, they were beaten off with severe losses.

Sir Humphrey, however, was good at drawing maps. Using a globe he showed the queen how interminably long were the southern routes to the Indian Ocean as compared with a great circle route to the northwest. This was true enough in theory—only there was land and ice to block the northern way. But Humphrey Gilbert didn't let that bother him. He drew in a convenient strait, and once a thing is drawn in detail on a map it has a way of looking real, even to the artist who conceived it.

So the queen gave Gilbert a patent to "discover and inhabit" all the land in the west not occupied by another Christian prince. In the language of the time this meant to explore and occupy such land. And as an incentive the patentee was given absolute title to all the country he occupied, except of course for precious metals. One-fifth of that went to the crown.

Sir Humphrey planned to occupy Newfoundland as a starter. It was conveniently situated off the entrance to his strait—the Gulf of St. Lawrence!

Newfoundland had natural advantages for colonization. Englishmen were in fact already living there at some seasons —fishermen comfortably occupying their well-lardered huts alongside their drying frames. Domination of the fishing banks would surely prove profitable, Gilbert thought. Naval stores were plenteous too, according to all reports.

And everyone knew that Newfoundland was as rich in furs as Muscovy. Only a year or so earlier an English sea-captain, Richard Whitbourne, bound for the Gulf of St. Lawrence to kill whales, had put in at Trinity Harbor in Newfoundland. There he took so great a store of bears, beaver, otter and seal that after killing a few fish he returned forthwith to Southampton to sell his more profitable cargo. There were few of the difficulties in taking these furs that impeded trade with Russia.

However, when Gilbert took possession of Newfoundland at St. John's in 1583, he showed small interest in fish, naval stores or furs.

Certainly, he was not much concerned with the potentials of the fur trade. That there were "foxes, which to the Northward a little further are black, whose furre is esteemed in some Countries of Europe very rich: Otters, bevers and marternes," he seems to have acknowledged. And an American pine marten appears to have arrested his attention at least fleetingly. "The Generall had brought unto him a Sable alive, which he sent unto his brother Sir John Gilbert, knight of Devonshire." But that was all.

From the first hour of his arrival at Newfoundland, Humphrey Gilbert showed deep interest only in metals. He commanded his miners to be diligent, and they obediently discovered what he took to be copper and silver. Excitedly loading one of his ships with a treasure trove of this ore, Sir Humphrey postponed the planting of Newfoundland. He sailed to discover other mines to the south under his patent.

But, unfortunately, he met with bad weather and his supply ship foundered. Even after changing his course for England, storms plagued his fleet. The "treasure" was lost, and Gilbert himself went down in the sea after having gallantly refused to

abandon the men aboard his own leaking craft when he might have transferred to a safer consort ship. “We are as near to heaven by sea as by land!” he cried out above the tempest at the last.

Sir Walter Raleigh took over his half-brother’s patent. Since there was no limit placed on the land to be explored and occupied, except that it should not be already occupied by another Christian prince, Raleigh had wide latitude in choosing a theatre for his operations. Newfoundland didn’t appeal to him. It wasn’t the most favorable site for what he had in mind.

The survivors of Sir Humphrey’s ill-fated expedition had been thoroughly interrogated; obviously it wasn’t silver that had been mined in Newfoundland. After all, precious metals didn’t come from the bleak coasts of the north, but from the warmer regions of the south where the Spaniards had discovered them. And that suited Raleigh’s purpose, as much as the rising hope that a passage to the Indian Ocean might also lie in those parts where Verrazano once claimed to have actually sighted the other sea. Those southern coasts were near New Spain!

For, what Raleigh really had in mind was a site close to the route of the Spanish treasure galleons. He wanted an English outpost, a garrisoned base, within easy striking distance of the silver fleets. That was the quickest way to riches and the surest means of destroying the power of Spain. The Caribbean was the Spaniard’s Achilles’ heel.

The first step in the achievement of this purpose was to be the planting of a colony.

A reconnaissance expedition, sent out by the southern route in 1584, chose the vicinity of Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds near Hatteras for the settlement. Curiously, however, this party failed to recognize the poor harbor and stormy hazards of the location. Possibly it was just the first agreeable site they came upon as they coasted north from the borders of Spanish-held Florida. If they had gone on just a little farther they would have found Chesapeake Bay, a likely spot indeed.

In that case Virginia, as Raleigh called the new country in honor of his "virgin" queen, might have been successfully planted in the sixteenth rather than the seventeenth century.

However the reconnaissance expedition suggested Roanoke Island, near Cape Hatteras, bringing back glowing reports of the country, a few dark pearls and a good quantity of soft furs. "Chamoys, Buffe, and Deere skinnes" had been taken in trade with the friendly natives. A single bright tin dish given in barter had gained twenty skins, each worth all of a crown, and a copper kettle had gained as many as fifty. The voyagers also brought back two of the native inhabitants who were as anxious to please the white men with tales that found favor as was Chief Donnacona of Canada when he was taken to France, and probably for the same reasons.

Sir Walter Raleigh tried hard during the next three years to plant a colony at Hatteras, sending out one expedition after another. Everything failed. Storms contributed to the disasters as much as bad leadership and worsening relations with the Indians. But, mainly, the objectives were wrong.

It was the search for precious metals, the quest for a trade passage through to the Indian Ocean, the harrying of Spain, all coupled with a complete neglect of the country's more obvious resources, that brought defeat. No one thought of growing food or trading with the Indians. The "colonists" were mostly fortune hunters, ex-soldiers and adventurers, bent on finding El Dorado in one form or another.

All except one—he was Thomas Hariot, a precise man and an observant one. Raleigh sent him out as geographer to the second expedition. Noting the resources of the country, he listed among other things wine, "medicinal" tobacco and furs as saleable exports. He made special mention of the fur trade potential.

"All along the Sea coast," Hariot wrote, "there are great store of Otters, which being taken by weares and other engines made for the purpose, wil yeeld good profit. We hope also of Marterne furres, and make no doubt by the relation of the people, that in some places of the countrey there are store, although there were but two skinnes that came to our hands.

Luzernes also we have understanding of, although for the time we saw none."

But even Hariot, along with Ralph Lane, the governor of the colony at the time, listened gullibly to the tales of Indians who wanted to gain favor. While Sir Richard Grenville, the admiral of the Virginia fleet, raided the Spaniards in the West Indies, Lane and his men spent months of fruitless search in the interior for white pearls or mines, and followed many a river whose source might prove to be "near unto a sea."

They explored north as far as the Chesapeake, entering the capes and looking for a channel that might be the passage, while one of their party, John White, made sketches of the region. The south side of the bay thus became well known in England about 1590 when White's work was included in the first engraved map of Virginia published by Theodore de Bry. What the Englishmen failed to understand at the time, because they were more concerned with gold mines and channel passages, was that the Chesapeake tidewater represented a storehouse of valuable fur—muskrat, beaver, mink and otter—all in vast reserve.

Lane, however, was convinced that only "the discovery of a good mine by the goodness of God, or a passage to the South Sea, or some way to it, and nothing else, can bring this country in request to be inhabited by our nation." If only he had realized that within easy reach there was far more quick gold in fur than the English would ever take out of America in ore!

A last contingent of Raleigh's colonists, which included some women and children, provided one of history's most mystifying episodes when the entire colony simply vanished from Roanoke Island. Among them was the first Christian child born in English Virginia, little Virginia Dare, granddaughter of the colony's new governor, John White, the artist. The word "Croatan," carved in "faire Romane letters" on a post of the abandoned stockade, was the only clue to the lost colony ever found by those who came later to search for it. A tribe of Indians by that name lived on a near-by island. Even this proved futile however, and the mystery has only darkened with the passing of the centuries.

Other English ventures in America also ended in failure. Beginning in 1585 Captain John Davis, an expert navigator, went out three times in quest of a northwest passage to Cathay. He penetrated farther north than anyone before him to discover the straits that bear his name, never fully realizing that beyond lay only pack ice. Captain George Weymouth followed Davis' track in 1593, meeting eventual defeat.

Weymouth tried again for a northern passage in 1602; so did Captain John Knight in 1606 while exploring for gold and silver mines. Ice and mutiny stopped Weymouth. Knight simply disappeared ashore one day.

Not long after the turn of the century Captain Charles Leigh led a daring expedition to South America in an attempt to establish a base of operations in what is now French Guiana. Only a remnant survived a massacre by the natives in 1605 to straggle back to England.

The coast of North America from Spanish Florida to Nova Scotia also came in for more investigation at this time. Bartholomew Gilbert, son of Sir Humphrey, was sent out by James I in 1603. He visited the Chesapeake Bay area, possibly hoping to find survivors of the Roanoke colony, only to be killed himself by Indians when he landed with a shore party.

Others explored in the vicinity of Cape Cod and northward, Bartholomew Gosnold, going out to that coast in 1602, and Martin Pring in 1603. They found no mines, but they took back to England quantities of cedar, sassafras and furs. Gosnold's cargo of pelts obtained from the Buzzard's Bay area included beaver, marten, otter, "Wild-cat skinnes very large and deepe furre," seal, deer, black fox, rabbit and "other beasts skinnes to us unknowen."

Pring was more interested in sassafras trees, but he later wrote that the furs of certain wild beasts in those parts "being hereafter purchased by exchange may yield no smal gaine to us. Since as we are certainly informed, the Frenchmen brought from Canada the value of thirtie thousand Crownes in the yeare 1604. Almost in Bevers and Otters skinnes only."

A great deal of sassafras was cut and stowed aboard their ships by these two captains. Sassafras brought fancy prices at the time as a cure for the French pox as well as a specific for certain other diseases. But such windfall importations glutted the London and Bristol markets, seriously depressing the price.

Both Gosnold and Pring brought back the usual tales about a passage to the South Sea and the fertility of the land. So Captain George Weymouth went over in 1605, visiting the Maine coast where he explored for colonization sites. He also drove a good though hazardous trade for pelts. In one instance, "for knives, glasses, combes and other trifles to the valew of foure or five shillings, we had 40 good Beavers skins, Otters skins, Sables, and other small skins which we knewe not how to call."

These were the interlopers who had alarmed the French traders then settled in the Bay of Fundy. Before Weymouth left Maine, Champlain was making his own exploration southward along the coast as far as Cape Cod. He learned enough to decide that all the English ventures had been failures. They had discovered no mines, no passage, and, although they had made a temporary camp or two, no colony was yet planted. Obviously, the Frenchman surmised, the English had found nothing of great value to the south or they would be trying to occupy that coast. Champlain turned back, convinced that the best prospects lay in the valley of the St. Lawrence.

But then, late in 1606, three small ships put down the Thames, bound for America. Aboard, in addition to the crews, were a hundred or more men committed to colonizing an English plantation in the vicinity of Chesapeake Bay. One of these was Captain John Smith, soldier and adventurer extraordinary—and, fortunately, a forthright man who spoke his mind.

VI
Captain John Smith Takes to Trade

WHEN Captain John Smith arrived in America early in 1607 he was but freshly turned twenty-seven years of age. And he was in serious trouble—a prospect for the gibbet, in fact, because of alleged treason. On the voyage over he had plotted to supplant those in charge, or so it was charged by his enemies in the expedition.

But, when the sealed instructions from the London Company were opened that spring in Virginia, it was learned that John Smith himself was to be a member of the council in the government of the colony. In the end he had to be given his rightful position of authority at Jamestown where the colony was planted.

It had always been thus with young Smith. By just such amazing experiences he had succeeded in raising himself from the status of a poor tenant farmer's son in Lincolnshire to that of soldier and "gentleman."

Unfortunately, however, at this period in England's history such social climbing, though countenanced and legitimate enough, had not quite come to be "accepted." It provided fertile ground for the cultivation of jealous enemies.

Still, John Smith had probably packed more thrilling experiences and hairbreadth escapes into his life than anyone else in the realm. He had warred in far-off countries, engaged in sea fights and been forced to ship with Barbary pirates. An award of a coat of arms and the princely sum of fifteen hundred gold ducats had come to him from Transylvania where, like a knight of old, he cut off three Turks' heads in single combat. He had escaped death from wounds on a middle-eastern battlefield, only to be enslaved by the Turks. This hard fate was mitigated somewhat by the favors of a high-born Turkish lady who acquired him as a slave. But then her brother mercilessly shackled him off to the land of the Tartars.

From there, however, Smith succeeded in making a miraculous escape after killing his cruel master.

The fiction-like pattern was to be repeated over and over again in the new world. Captured by the Indians of Virginia, Smith saved himself from a tortured death by an ingenious oration and his flare for the dramatic. Later, in the nick of time, he won the love of the young Indian "princess," Pocahontas, who rescued him from having his brains beaten out by her father, Powhatan. He escaped from this predicament only to find the living remnant of his distressed comrades in the fort at Jamestown again ready to hang him, this time for allegedly having gone over to the enemy. And so they would have done, if it had not been for the timely arrival of the admiral of the Virginia fleet, Captain Christopher Newport, returning from England with more colonists and stopgap supplies.

Delivered from the gallows once more, Captain Smith was subsequently to be asked to assume the highest office in the colony, that of president, because he was the only man with ingenuity enough to keep his comrades alive while enforcing discipline.

It was a poorly chosen group of colonists—these original Jamestown venturers. Fully half of them were gentlemen of sorts bent only on a quest for riches. A handful of craftsmen, a few boys and a brawling lot of seaport loafers and ex-soldiers who were indisposed to agriculture or any peaceful pursuits completed the ill-balanced company. They came to find gold and they expected to relieve the natives of it quickly, if not to scoop it up by the handful along the banks of Virginia's rivers. Instead, they met with hostile Indians, killing diseases and famine.

Not more than one out of four who pioneered the settlement at Jamestown survived the first few months in America.

The joint-stock company that sent them out, backed by the patronage of King James I and headed by one of the greatest of England's merchant adventurers, Sir Thomas Smith, only had the usual primary objectives in view—the discovery of mines and a northwest passage to Cathay. The instructions of the

London Company, in fact, dwelt on these things, while saddling the colony with a communalistic form of government that encouraged idleness, bred suspicion and brought about deadly factional disputes. Malarial fevers, dysentery and typhoid laid many of the venturers low. Famine and attacks by the natives completed a grim toll of death.

While others remained behind the palisades of the fort, bemoaning their fate and dying helplessly to prove it, Captain Smith was on the rivers and in the forests laying the foundations of successful trade with the Indians and sizing up the country's resources. Resolutely, he foraged among the natives for needed corn and other food. With a few men in a barge he explored and mapped the entire Chesapeake Bay and tidewater region, realistically recording Virginia's natural resources with a view toward making the plantation self-supporting.

And when he assumed the stewardship of the colony in the fall of 1608, following two presidents who had failed miserably, John Smith, the soldier of fortune, truly became John Smith, the colonizer. To do this, under communalism, he had to become a virtual dictator. But his rule was as honest and as ingenious as it was arbitrary. These qualities of leadership coupled with his understanding of the true nature of Virginia's resources and of the need for a firm foundation of trade relations with the natives saved the plantation from extinction. The colony on the James River became the first permanent English settlement in America.

For that matter, it was the British Empire's first permanent colonial settlement anywhere in the world.

The tidewater Indians with whom Smith had to deal mostly belonged to a group of Algonquian tribes known as the Powhatan Confederacy. Ruling this confederacy was a tyrannous old chief, himself called Powhatan, who was held in considerable awe by his subjects. From each of the tribes under his domination Powhatan demanded an annual tribute consisting mainly of beads and skins and bits of the decorative copper that was so scarce in his kingdom.

Beads were used by the Indians not only for adornment but as a form of currency. As Captain Smith observed, they were the cause of "as much dissention among the Salvages as gold and silver amongst the Christians." Their manufacture by the natives did indeed call for a high degree of skill, each bead being cut individually from shell, then polished and drilled with crude stone tools. When strung together in belts or arm's length ropes they were known universally among the Algonquin nations of the eastern seaboard as wampum.

In Virginia wampum strings of white beads made from cockle shell were called roanoke, whereas strings of beads cut from conch shell, dark purple in color, were called peake. Generally speaking the latter were worth ten times as much as the former. The natives used their wampum, or shell money, in barter among themselves to such an extent that the white men found it very convenient as a means of promoting their own fur trade. Often they would trade their wares with a rich tribe for wampum, and then exchange this shell money with a less prosperous tribe for furs.

The collecting of skins for taxes, or tribute, was of course a device older than history. The Romans employed it to collect taxes from barbarian subjects; so did the pharaohs of prehistoric Egypt in gathering tribute from the upper Nile valley. Powhatan could demand pelts in some variety. A contemporary chronicler among the first settlers at Jamestown noted that within the great chief's kingdom the forests and streams abounded with bears, foxes, otters, beavers, muskrats and "Deere both Red and Fallow."

The skins of these animals were the tidewater Indians' most necessary and useful commodity next to food. Mainly they were necessary as clothing in winter, but they were also used as adornment by chiefs and priests, and for many ceremonial purposes. They were utilized, too, as closures and decorations for the Indians' long-houses. And soft hide leather, such as buckskin, came in for a variety of aboriginal hunting and household requirements, as well as for garments and footwear.

Actually Powhatan's common subjects often went quite naked, except for skins worn much like aprons. However,

when it was cold, they wore *matchcores*—an Indian word for garments of fur which was later turned into "match-coats" by the English.

At his first meeting with Powhatan, Smith found the old savage blanketed with a *matchcore* of raccoon skins. One of the priests was "disguised with a great Skinne, his head hung round with little Skinnes of Weasels and other vermine." Many of the better sort of savages, such as werowances and chief men, affected mantles of carefully dressed deerskin, some painted and embossed with white beads or bits of copper. Others who were opulent had *matchcores* made from squirrel, beaver, muskrat and otter, the last being held in highest esteem.

Women wore fur blankets of beaver and otter, or tastefully fringed and embroidered skin skirts, appropriate to the season. Children usually went naked, although marriageable maidens, twelve to fifteen, modestly covered their loins at least. Pocahontas herself is referred to on one occasion as being girdled with soft otter skins.

About most of the great Bay of the Chesapeake, on his expeditions, Captain Smith found "Wilde Cats ... Martins, Powlecats, weessels and Minkes." When he explored the Eastern Shore he discovered it to be thickly inhabited by "Otters, Beavers, Martins, Luswarts and sables." Truly, the tidewater literally swarmed with fur bearers.

In the northernmost reaches of the bay Smith managed to trade with the giant Susquehannocks. "Their attire," he recorded, "is the skinnes of beares and Woolves, some have Cassacks made of Beares heades and skinnes that a man's necke goes through the skinnes neck, and the eares of the beare fastened to his shoulders behind, the nose and teeth hanging downe his breast, and at the end of the nose hung a Beares Pawe: the halfe sleeves comming to the elbowes were the neckes of Beares and the armes through the mouth, with pawes hanging at their noses. One had the head of a Woolfe hanging in a chaine for a Jewell."

These majestic savages came from the banks of the Susquehanna River, the headwaters of which reached to the

territory of the Five Nations in the lake country of French Canada. As castoff relatives of the Iroquois, the Susquehannocks lived in palisaded forts along the river where they were subjected to constant raiding by their bloodthirsty kinsmen. Hoping to make allies of men with fire guns, they presented Captain Smith with many fine gifts in trade, including bearskins and robes of various furs sewn together. Most significantly, however, they had with them French hatchets, knives and pieces of iron and brass which they said they had acquired in trade from tribes who bartered directly with white men on the River of Canada.

This news, gained by Smith in 1608, about the encroachments of French trade on the "back-side of Virginia" probably did more than anything else to awaken Englishmen to their own fur trading possibilities in America. Everyone knew that the French were driving a highly profitable trade with the savages up the valley of the St. Lawrence. What hadn't been known was how deep they had penetrated into the new continent, or the direction taken.

In English minds Virginia stretched northward by land or sea to the 45th parallel at least, even though French charters presumed to encompass territory as far south as 40°. In less than five years English guns would rout French Jesuits and traders attempting a settlement at Mount Desert Island on the coast of Maine, and an expedition from Jamestown would destroy the older plantations of the French fur merchants at St. Croix and Port Royal in the Bay of Fundy itself. Within that length of time the Virginians would be well rooted and competitive as a result of their own good trade in furs, a trade that would expand rapidly in the Chesapeake tidewater.

But for the time being, in view of their critical problems of existence, there was little they could do about either the fur trade or the Frenchmen, except to nurse their jealousy. It was natural enough that they were envious of French successes, especially as the hoped-for mines in Virginia seemed to be retreating farther and farther into the hinterland and the prospects of finding a passage to the other sea in the Chesapeake area were diminishing daily. However, staying alive was their immediate problem.

Already Captain Smith had spoken out strongly against the fruitless search for gold—"guilded dirt," he called it contemptuously. As president he would not permit the supply ships to be cargoed with more of the worthless yellow soil or mica-tinctured dirt that they had been ferrying back to England. And, although he still thought there was the probability of a passage farther north or possibly a short overland route between rivers to the other salt sea, he frankly admitted that his own exploration had been entirely unrewarding in this respect.

No English explorer before John Smith had dared to be so honest. And Smith went even farther.

Now he had courageously despatched a very blunt note to his employers, the merchant adventurers of the company in London, telling them the truth about their El Dorado. It was a note that must have startled those comfortable gentlemen right out of their starched ruffs. Certainly it was disillusioning to gold-hungry investors already so heavily committed. But by its very forthrightness it was also soberingly effective, for the merchants promptly took John Smith's advice, even though they didn't thank him for his seeming impertinence.

There might be iron in Virginia, Smith had written in effect, but there was no gold, and neither was there any immediate prospect of the discovery there of a short route to Cathay and India. However, a profitable plantation could be cultivated by earnest husbandry and the realistic development of the country's natural resources for trade. Agricultural products, furs, timber, naval stores, iron and possibly other products of local industries could eventually be shipped home in exchange for English woolens and coarse cloths.

In the meantime of course the president had his hands full just foraging for food enough to keep his charges alive. While people were dying of famine, company profits of any kind had to wait—even those to be gained from organized fur trading for which there was considerable pressure from the natives. The red men were always much more interested in trading their furs than their food. They never raised more of the latter than was needed for their own minimum requirements. Smith

had to resort to stratagem and even to a kind of military commerce on more than one occasion to separate them from their corn.

So the Indians, with their pelts to barter, turned to the sailors who manned the transport ships, and the mariners readily accommodated them. These hands knew how to turn a quick profit in the golden fleece. They learned first, when the fishing fleets began crossing the oceans, to Newfoundland and elsewhere—and later, when English ships took to the seas to trade with other nations. As far back as 1560 merchants in England were complaining to their factors in Russia about the sailors' aptitude for smuggling furs.

"Foxe skins, white, blacke, and russet will be vendible here," they wrote. "The last yere you sent none; but there were mariners that bought many. If any mariners doe buy any trifling furres or other commodities, we will they shall be registered in our pursers bookes, to the intent we may know what they be."

In Virginia the mariners not only entered into direct negotiations with the natives, by swapping goods over the side of a ship with savages in canoes or by stealing ashore for a dangerous rendezvous, but they carried on barter through colonists who secretly assumed the roles of factors in return for favors from the home-bound mariners. One mariner, according to Captain Smith, confessed to having obtained enough pelts in this manner on one voyage to net him thirty pounds sterling at home. That was a tidy sum for an ordinary sailor to acquire in those days, legitimately or otherwise.

It was bad enough that the colonists abetted the sailors' enterprise. Inflation invariably resulted when the settlers traded individually with the natives. But worst of all, in most cases the supplies being bartered had been pilfered by the sailors from company stores aboard ship.

Smith railed against this "damnable and private trade," when the colony was in such desperate need for food, and even for the very articles sold to the Indians. He recognized the profits to be made from the fur trade, as he well proved both in

Virginia and later in New England. In this particular instance it was just that corn came first.

John Smith's tenure in Virginia ended in the fall of 1609 when he was seriously wounded by an accidental gunpowder explosion. He was invalided home to England. But not before his enemies had taken advantage of his agonized prostration to plot his murder. This treachery was thwarted by Smith's usual fortune in such crises, the plot being discovered and exposed in the nick of time to save his life.

In the meantime, however, the thoroughly aroused merchants in London had reorganized the company, taking a more realistic approach to the problems of colonization as John Smith suggested, and had appointed an influential governor with fuller authority to rule their plantation. The new governor's advance representatives had already been dispatched to depose the outspoken young president who was so critical of the company's policies.

But Captain Smith's task in Virginia was completed. Through his efforts, almost singlehanded, the English at last had a beachhead on the American continent.

Settlers came now in great numbers—traders, merchants and farmers. The communalistic plan under which the colony had been governed by the company was abandoned, and a venturer to Virginia was given an opportunity to share in the profits of his labor. He could acquire land of his own, through bondage if necessary, something he had little chance of ever doing in England. And he could establish a family; many women now immigrated to reinforce further the first two brave females who arrived in 1608.

Meanwhile, as John Smith's historic beachhead was expanded, the fur trade continued to set the usual pattern of exploration, trade and settlement.

Mariners with an experienced eye for marketable pelts came to Virginia in increasing numbers—hardy, courageous men who were prepared to take incredible risks in the pursuit of beaver, otter, bear and the big Virginia muskrat. By 1620 there were nearly one hundred fur traders operating in and about the

Chesapeake Bay, according to an official of the colony. They plied their shallops and pinnaces up unexplored tidewater streams and rivers to find the villages of the unpredictable savages, hazarding their very lives to learn the ways and language of the aborigines, and to trade with them. They established wilderness trading posts, building palisaded forts which later came to be occupied by merchants and farmers and became permanent settlements.

These fur traders found the profits attractive enough to offset the dangers—not only those posed by their early contacts with the red men but those threatened by rival Englishmen during much of the seventeenth century.

At times rival traders proved much more dangerous than the aborigines. The Englishmen were to fight among themselves, often with piratical and bloody fury, over the fur trade of the Chesapeake tidewater and for possession of the Susquehanna and Potomac River routes to the lush lake country of the north where the Frenchmen bartered for pelts.

But while the Englishmen were thus engaged among themselves on the backside of Virginia some foreign traders moved in as their neighbors on the coast, first on the Hudson and then on the Connecticut and Delaware Rivers. These were the Dutchmen, who forthwith enjoyed a most profitable commerce in pelts with the natives and began settling themselves in complete possession of all those parts of "Virginia."

VII
The Dutch Profit by a Mutiny

IN the late summer of 1609 a Dutch ship, the *Half Moon*, was cruising the coasts of America. It had an English master. The merchants of the Dutch East India Company had engaged the Englishman, Captain Henry Hudson, to search for a northeastern passage to China over the frozen top of the world. Instead, he sailed their ship west.

A mutiny compelled him to change his course, or so he later claimed. It seems that his twenty-man crew, mostly Dutch, had been accustomed to warmer seas. They refused to brave the northern cold.

Henry Hudson himself probably had come to recognize the impracticability of the Arctic route. No longer did he hold to the notion that because the sun shone continuously at the north pole for five months of the year temperate waters for navigation would be found there, that is, once the first belt of Arctic cold was pierced. Twice before, for English merchants of the Muscovy Company, he had tried for that northern route only to be frustrated by ice-choked seas—and mutinous crews.

The mutinies went unpunished it appears. Certainly, this was a most unusual outcome for the times. Such uncommon laxity on the part of an English ship's master, together with Hudson's similar behavior on subsequent occasions, could lead to the conclusion that he was too weak a disciplinarian ever to have been trusted with command.

Or, maybe this famous explorer was both dissembling and highhanded enough to manage always to have his way, even if it was necessary to employ such devious means as fomenting rebellions to his authority to achieve his secret purposes.

The latter is a tempting surmise. But if it is correct, Hudson may have tried it once too often.

On a later expedition to America as master of an English ship he perished at the hands of his crew. He and his young son along with a few loyal sailors were set adrift in a shallop in the great bay that bears his name, never to be heard of again.

Be all of this as it may, by fortunate circumstance or by premeditation Hudson had with him on his memorable voyage in 1609 a map that had been sent to him from Virginia by Captain John Smith. And there was a letter that had come with the map from his adventurous friend suggesting that a passage to China might be found in the west above 40° where Smith himself had "left off." Everything pointed to a big sea on the backside of Virginia. Many of the Indians Captain Smith met on his explorations had confirmed its existence (their version no doubt of the Great Lakes). And there was much evidence of navigable rivers paralleling the Susquehanna above 40°. They probably led toward this sea!

So Henry Hudson, contriving to cooperate with the mutineers aboard his ship and in flagrant disobedience to the specific instructions of his Dutch employers, sailed west instead of northeast.

After surviving a storm that tore away her foremast the *Half Moon* made a landfall in America off Newfoundland where she came among a fleet of French fishing boats taking cod on the banks. Captain Hudson salted a few fish for his own stores, and then put down the coast of Nova Scotia to Maine. There, at Penobscot Bay, he had a new pine mast cut and proceeded to relieve some French-speaking Indians of their stock-in-trade without benefit of barter.

"We espied two French shallops full of the Countrey people come into the Harbour," his clerk wrote, "but they offered us no wrong, seeing we stood upon our guard. They brought many Beaver skinnes, and other fine Furres, which they would have changed for redde Gownes. For the French trade with them for red Cassockes, Knives, Hatchets, Copper, Kettles, Trevits, Beades and other trifles.... We kept good watch for feare of being betrayed by the people, and perceived where they layd their shallops.... In the morning we manned our Scute with foure Muskets, and sixe men and tooke one of their

Shallops and brought it aboard. Then we manned our Boat and Scute with twelve men and Muskets, and two stone Pieces or Murderers, and drove the Salvages from their Houses, and tooke the spoyle of them, as they would have done of us. Then we set sail....”

If the Dutchmen left hurriedly it was probably in fear of revenge. Maybe the Indians showed signs of retaliating. After all, the natives of this coast must have been getting annoyed by the ways of white men, considering that this sort of thing had been going on, sporadically, since the first Norsemen invaded their land some six hundred years earlier.

The *Half Moon* sailed on south to Cape Cod, which the crew noted had been “discovered by Captain Bartholomew Gosnold in 1602.” Here, the sailors made sport of an Indian they brought aboard, getting the savage so drunk that “he leapt and danced.” After that Captain Hudson put out to sea once more, to arrive off the Capes of Virginia about the middle of August.

He nosed into the Chesapeake, possibly with the intention of visiting his friend Smith, but caution seems to have won out over the risk of exposing his Dutch-owned vessel to agents of the rival London Company. Being an Englishman himself, Henry Hudson knew only too well that the merchants of his native country made little distinction between a foreign competitor and a foreign enemy, especially when they had guns like those at Jamestown. He might risk disobeying his Dutch employers but not losing their ship—not before he’d made his grand discovery of a passage to the Orient. Perhaps, too, he turned a little sensitive about sailing under a Dutch flag with information furnished by a fellow Englishman.

So, a convenient “storm” blew the *Half Moon* back out to sea, and Hudson made his way northward, first to penetrate the Delaware River to shoal water, and then on to explore the river that now bears his name.

Numerous Europeans had visited this great river before him. The Norsemen under the leadership of Thorfinn Karselfni in 1011 may have been the first. Certainly in 1524 the Frenchman, Verrazano, and his amorous crew stopped off there to mingle with the friendly natives. Not many months

afterward a Portuguese captain, Estevan Gomez, sailing for Spain, probably put into the river's mouth. In fact, Spanish archives are said to indicate that during the sixteenth century many Spanish ships used the harbor for watering and refitting on their fishing and fur trading trips between Newfoundland and New Spain.

But Henry Hudson ascended the river as far as it was navigable and recorded what he observed and what he did. He it was who took back to Europe the first news of the vast store of fur skins to be had there. And that is what opened the valley of the Hudson to trade and settlement.

His memorable exploration of the river got off however to an inauspicious start in the Lower Bay. Here, it was recorded, "the people of the Countrey came aboord of us, seeming very glad of our comming, and brought greene Tobacco, and gave us of it for Knives and Beeds. They goe in Deere skins loose, well dressed. They have yellow copper. They desire Cloathes, and are very civill." Yet, Hudson did not trust them, and mutual suspicion quickly clouded the atmosphere. There was fighting and a sailor was killed. Later, some Indians who came aboard were kidnapped. They were plied with liquor and dressed in red coats while the sailors made crude sport of them. Two were kept prisoners.

But then, after passing the Narrows and entering the river, the *Half Moon* stopped off at Manhattan to find the natives there most hospitable in spite of any news they may have had about the fights in the Lower Bay. With their women and children they swarmed about the little Dutch yacht in a bid for friendship and trade. Captain Hudson, however, now believing that he had at long last entered on the strait that led to "Zipangu where the palace roof was covered with gold," did not tarry long to barter for pelts.

Certainly, he didn't let the escape of the two captive Indians delay the passage of the *Half Moon* upstream, even though these savages swimming ashore made provocative signs of derision and scorn toward the white men.

It wasn't until it became disappointingly obvious that he had reached the head of ship navigation that Hudson took time for

barter. This was in the vicinity of present-day Albany. Here he again found the natives both hospitable and anxious to trade. In one instance, when he went ashore to eat fat dog meat with a chief of the country, the Indians broke their arrows and cast them into the fire to prove their friendship. Later they came flocking aboard, bringing beaver and otter skins which they exchanged for glass beads, knives and hatchets.

Still, the Englishman and his Dutch mate decided to test some of the chief men of the country for possible treachery by getting them intoxicated in the privacy of the *Half Moon's* cabin. One of them got so drunk that he finally dropped to the floor unconscious. The subsequent raising of this savage from the "dead" created such an impression on his fellows that they brought tobacco, venison and shell money to the white captain in gratitude. They also wanted to get drunk again.

Indeed, after Captain Hudson had reluctantly turned his ship's prow downstream in disappointment over not finding the long sought passage to the South Sea, he was besieged by chief men of the country who wanted more *aqua vitae*. They brought women aboard who "behaved very modestly," and they made it clear to the captain that whatever he wanted in their land was his.

So Hudson now concentrated on acquiring the only thing of value he recognized—pelts. As the *Half Moon* proceeded leisurely down the river he traded in earnest with the "loveing countrey people," encouraging any who had furs to offer in exchange for knives and beads to come aboard. The story is vividly logged.

On reaching the Highlands the "people of the Mountaynes came aboord us, wondring at our ship and weapons. We bought some small skinnes of them for Trifles." But here real trouble started when an Indian in a canoe "got up by our Rudder to the Cabin window," and stole a couple of shirts.

"Our Masters Mate shot at him, and strooke him on the breast, and killed him. Whereupon all the rest fled away, some in the Canoes, and so lept out of them into the water. We manned our Boat, and got our things againe. Then one of them that swamme got hold of our Boat, thinking to overthrow it.

But our Cooke tooke a Sword, and cut off one of his hands, and he was drowned."

The next day as the *Half Moon* approached Manhattan the savages attacked in force. From their canoes and from the shore they launched showers of arrows. Foremost among them was one of the two natives who had been misused and held captive on the trip up the river until the escape. He led repeated assaults on the yacht. But the red men's fury was feeble in its effect. The white men easily drove them off with musket and falcon shot, killing ten or more of them, and proceeded on their way.

Putting the river behind him Captain Hudson sailed for Europe, but not without much debate on the high seas about the *Half Moon's* destination port. The crew once more threatened him brutally according to Hudson's reports.

Here again "mutiny" served to resolve an awkward situation. The captain needed a safe haven while explanations were worked out, as much so as his recalcitrant crew. Disobedience when crowned with success is usually forgiven, but added to Henry Hudson's disobedience was failure. No passage to China had been found.

After having agreed to winter in Ireland, Hudson managed to put into Dartmouth in England. From there he wrote a report of his voyage for the Directors of the East India Company at Amsterdam. And then, opportunely, his countrymen stepped in to rescue him. They "detained" him in England as one who had information of value to his own country, while the *Half Moon* was returned to its owners in Holland.

The Dutch East India Company, preoccupied with its profitable spice trade and its search for a shorter route to the East, promptly wrote off the cost of the voyage and closed the account. It was said at the time that all Hudson did in the west was to find a river and exchange his merchandise for some furs. But it was precisely those furs and the report of the harbor and river, all unexploited by any Europeans, that brought independent Dutch fur traders to the Valley of the Hudson the very next year.

Amsterdam merchants who bartered European and Eastern goods in Muscovy for furs had quickly taken note of the new possibilities in the west. There were no duties to pay the savages in America, such as those imposed on trade by the Czar. And a shipload of pelts could be had on Hudson's River for an insignificant outlay of beads and trifles—as the French were doing on their great river in Canada. No time was lost in organizing a trial adventure.

In a ship loaded with "a cargo of goods suitable for traffic with the Indians," and manned by some of Hudson's own crew of the previous year, traders from Holland arrived at Manhattan in 1610. They found the savages there no less capricious than before, just as dangerously unpredictable, but obviously anxious to barter their pelts for the white men's goods. After driving a profitable trade, it is said, the Dutchmen promised that "they would visit them the next year again, when they would bring them more presents, and stay with them awhile," adding however that "as they could not live without eating, they should then want a little land of them, to sow seeds, in order to raise herbs to put in their broth."

And so they did, coming each year, quite likely building a palisaded truck house and huts on Manhattan Island as early as 1613 to serve as a depot. Trading posts were established farther up the river and light-drafted shallops invaded the creeks and bays of the interior. Beavers were butchered wholesale by natives eager for hatchets, baubles and liquor. Within a few years furs were being collected in such quantity during the winter months that early spring ships from Holland could count on being cargoed along Hudson's River with as many as seven thousand pelts.

To further this profitable trade and to encourage discovery in "New Netherland" the States General at The Hague granted a temporary charter of special privileges to merchants of Amsterdam and Hoorn who had formed a western trading association known as the United New Netherland Company.

By 1614 Hendrick Christiansen, a fur factor in the employ of Amsterdam merchants, had established a permanent trading post on Hudson's River near the present site of Albany. Fort Nassau, as it was called, was well palisaded and moated, equipped with two large guns and eleven swivels, and garrisoned by a dozen armed traders. All were necessary precautions. The trading post was located on the border of the fiercest of all Indian tribes, the dreaded Mohawks of the Iroquois Confederacy.

Relatively peaceful tribes, Algonquian Mohegans and others, occupied most of the Hudson Valley east of the river and south of Fort Nassau along both banks. But the interior to the north and west was the home of the Five Nations, the terrible Iroquois: Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca. From palisaded forts deep in this hinterland their bloodthirsty young warriors sallied forth regularly to terrorize their neighbors.

Humbling every foe they met into complete submission the Iroquois enforced tribute and left a trail of carnage wherever they paddled their war canoes. They carried their conquests to the sea in the east, scourging the valleys of the Hudson and the Connecticut. Their chilling war cries sounded over the Great Lakes among the Eries, in the lower valley of the Delaware where lived the gentle Lenni Lenape, and down the length of the Susquehanna to the waters of Chesapeake Bay. War parties from their ancient forts forayed far to the south in the Valley of Virginia and crossed the Blue Ridge to follow the Piedmont plateau even into Carolina to take Catawba scalps and women.

For many generations the supremacy of the Iroquois had been acknowledged wherever their warriors went in search of victories and their national pride had grown with every conquest.

But now their own country was being invaded, from the north, from New France, by Huron and Algonquin enemies with the help of Champlain's arquebusiers. And the Five Nations had sworn by the blood of the bear their undying enmity to these Frenchmen who first surprised them at Lake Champlain with their death-dealing firesticks.

It was the Mohawks, the proudest and bravest of the Iroquois and now the near neighbors of the Dutch, who had taken the brunt of that first Iroquois disgrace in 1609. Their portage path coming from the west terminated near Fort Nassau, and the Dutch traders didn't find it difficult to cultivate them. Rankling with hatred against the French, the Mohawks were in a mood to be friendly with any gun-carrying white men who might become their allies.

Revenge of course is a powerful motive in the savage breast. On the other hand so is self-preservation. The risk of having enemies with the astonishing fireguns on both their flanks no doubt also entered into the Mohawks' calculations.

In any case it wasn't long before Dutch traders were fearlessly visiting villages deep in the country of the dreaded Five Nations, peacefully driving a great trade in furs while the savages learned to drink their fire-water and became better acquainted with the awesome weapons they carried.

In the meantime, late in 1615, the Iroquois did gain some satisfaction when Champlain and his Indian allies, after driving deep into their territory by way of Lake Ontario, were forced to withdraw in temporary defeat. A galleried and thickly palisaded fort at Lake Onondaga withstood the arquebuses, even though a movable tower was built by the attackers so that the Frenchmen might shoot down into the fort. Attempts by the Canadian force to fire the stockade proved unsuccessful too, due to contrary winds. And Champlain himself was so badly wounded during the battle that he had to be carried from the field on a litter of wickered branches.

After Fort Nassau was destroyed by a freshet of ice and water in 1617, a new trading post was established by the Dutch in the same vicinity but in a more secure position. This was on a commanding rise overlooking the Hudson at the mouth of the Tawasentha, later known as Norman's Kill. It was here, as tradition has it, that the tacit agreement of friendship and trade between the Dutch and the Iroquois was actually formalized as a treaty of alliance and peace.

The Mohawks were the prime movers of the pact, sending invitations to a grand council of the sachems of the Five

Nations as well as their subjugated neighbors in the east and south. With the smoking of the calumet a binding covenant was made between the factors of the Holland merchants and all the Indian tribes represented at the council. The supremacy of the Five Nations over their aboriginal neighbors was confirmed, and the Dutch promised "firegun" reprisals against any who broke the peace on the frontiers of New Netherland.

And there was peace of a sort—while the merchants in Holland filled their coffers and the Indians acquired guns. Only occasionally did armed fur factors find it necessary to enforce the pact and then often to their sorrow. Once, for instance, when a detail from the fort took the part of some offended Mohegans, the Mohawks retaliated fiercely. They managed to kill the Dutch commander and three of his men. Capturing the remainder of the party, they cooked and ate one of them and burned the others.

But in the main there was the kind of armed peace that permitted the fur traders to extend the frontiers of New Netherland and by their discoveries gain additional trading privileges under their charter. This they had to do if they were to beat the French and the English to the vast untapped fur stores of the interior.

Early in the history of Fort Nassau, a party of three adventurous traders, led by one "Kleynties," penetrated deep into the hinterland. Travelling west up the Mohawk Valley, they appear to have stumbled upon the headwaters of the Susquehanna River and eventually to have reached Carantouan, a palisaded town of the Susquehannock Indians.

Carantouan, now known as Spanish Hill, was just south of the present-day border between New York and Pennsylvania. It was built about the terraced slopes of a gigantic mound. The platter-like top of this mound with its man-made entrenchments was said by the Indians to have been occupied once by awesome spirits who spoke with thunder and killed men by making holes through their bodies. The spirits could have been sixteenth century Spanish explorers from Chesapeake Bay taking refuge there while searching for gold.

Only a short time before the advent of the three Dutchmen in this vicinity Carantouan had been visited by a Frenchman, Etienne Brule. With a delegation of Hurons he safely traversed the country of the Five Nations to reach this stronghold of the Susquehannocks in 1615. He wanted them as allies for Champlain's pending attack on Fort Onondaga. Like the Hurons, the Susquehannocks were kinsmen but bitter enemies of the Five Nations, and they agreed readily enough to help in the attack. However their war dances took too long and they arrived too late—after Champlain's defeat.

Etienne Brule returned to Carantouan with his savage friends to do a bit of bartering and to examine into the possibilities of extending the fur trade of Canada to the Susquehanna. In fact he descended the length of that river into the upper waters of Chesapeake Bay. But because of the temperate climate there he took it to be the coast of Spanish Florida and discreetly turned back.

THE MERCHANTS FILLED THEIR COFFERS, WHILE THE INDIANS ACQUIRED GUNS.

After his return up the river to Carantouan, Brule set out for home. This time he was captured in the country of the Five Nations. When those savages discovered he was a Frenchman, they plucked his beard hair by hair, tore his nails loose with their teeth, and staked him out for fire-brand torture. But then, just before it was too late, Brule mysteriously won their favor, was roundly feted, and in the end was permitted to escape back to Huron lands. In 1618 he made his way to Three Rivers in Canada, where Champlain at the time was driving a trade for beaver pelts with the Indians, and there he reported his discoveries.

However, getting through the Iroquois country to Carantouan—and getting back to Canada—had been a dangerous exploit, one that not many French traders would desire to emulate, not unless Champlain first brought the Five Nations to complete submission by force of arms. That, of course, the great French captain was never able to do; if he had, probably the French would have overrun the valleys of the Susquehanna, the Delaware and the Hudson.

In the meantime, if the three lost Hollanders from Fort Nassau did wander into the Susquehannock stronghold, they managed to get out of it with their whole skins. Maybe, having missed Brule, they posed as friendly Frenchmen, or even as Englishmen with whom the Susquehannocks had previously enjoyed such satisfactory dealings through Captain John Smith. Eventually, however, they were taken by other Susquehannock Indians, or “Minquas,” and ended up on the lower reaches of the Delaware River as captives held for ransom.

From there, it appears, word of their predicament reached Manhattan and Fort Nassau.

At the time, the spring of 1616, the Dutch factors on Hudson’s River were anxious to explore this other great river to the south that Captain Hudson had also discovered. Already investigated were the rivers to the east and north. Captain Cornelis Jacobsen May, a trader in the employ of Hoorn

merchants, had sailed east along the coast as far as Martha's Vineyard. Another trader out of Amsterdam, Captain Adrien Block, went even farther in a small 16-ton yacht called the *Onrust* which he had built in New Netherland following the loss of his employers' ship by fire. The little *Onrust* sailed through Long Island Sound, ascended the Connecticut, explored other streams and the bays along the coasts, and rounded Cape Cod northward to latitudes above present-day Boston.

It was claimed that Captain May had also sailed far enough south to touch at the cape that now bears his name. However, there appears to have been a little hesitancy about making any further discoveries in that direction that might be interpreted as encroaching on the English settlements in Virginia. Maybe the Dutch traders were especially cautious about disturbing the Virginians. It had been in the late fall of 1613 that the fiery tempered Englishman, Captain Samuel Argall, in a 16-gun frigate stopped off at Manhattan supposedly and forced token acknowledgement of the supremacy of the Virginia government. The Hollanders' trade in Hudson's River had been going very well; there had been no need to beg trouble abroad.

Now, however, the Dutch felt that their claims were better established by actual occupation on the northern river and no English were yet known to occupy or even trade upon the southern river that Hudson had discovered. Why not explore it with a view toward making further discoveries which under the Hollanders' charter would give them additional trading privileges? And should they find their lost traders, would not those three have made enough discoveries in the hinterland to provide material for new claims—yes, even a new map of New Netherland?

So, Cornelis Hendricksen who now had the *Onrust* in his charge went out in that little yacht to investigate the prospects on the "South" River and to see if he might find and ransom the three traders held captive there.

Hendricksen's voyage was entirely successful. After charting the west shores of Delaware Bay, he entered the river

and ascended it possibly as high as present-day Philadelphia. The river's banks abounded with game, the country was pleasant, and the climate which was "the same as that of Holland" delighted the crew of the *Onrust*. Above all, there were ample prospects of a great traffic in pelts. On the banks of the Christina where Wilmington now stands and at other places along the shores of the Delaware River, Hendricksen drove a most profitable trade with friendly Indians for "sable," mink, otter and beaver.

And, meager though his report is in the matter of details, somewhere along the river he was successful in ransoming his three captive countrymen from the Minquas for "kettles, beads, and other merchandize."

Hendricksen returned quickly to Manhattan and sailed for Holland. There, he laid before his employers a report of his discoveries "between the thirty-eighth and fortieth degrees of latitude," together with a map of New Netherland embracing the lower reaches of the Delaware River as well as the hinterland discoveries of the three traders he had ransomed. Excitedly, the merchants went before the States General of the United Netherlands and prayed not only for an extension of their special charter which was soon to expire but for an extension of the geographical limits of New Netherland.

In the original charter, New Netherland had been described as "situated in America, between New France and Virginia, the seacoasts of which lie between the 40th and 45th degrees of latitude." The Dutch claim was thus neatly set down as the exact territory of the overlapping claims of France and England on the Elizabethan theory that it was the possession of neither of those countries as it was not occupied by either of them.

Now the merchants wanted the limits extended by two degrees in the south—to include the Delaware valley. Their arguments were impressive. The Delaware had not been occupied by the English, or even explored by them. What if Captain Samuel Argall had looked in on the bay and named it for his English governor of Virginia? That was a year after Henry Hudson had discovered it for the Dutch.

The States General demurred however, postponing any decision. There were problems at home and abroad that took precedence, and within the framework of a grand solution of those problems was a plan to create a great western trading company similar to the Dutch East India Company.

Ever since the defeat of the Armada there had been those in the United Netherlands who had urged striking at Spain's sources of revenue in the East and West Indies as the surest way to hasten that nation's decline. The Dutch East India Company, a military trading organization, had been chartered with this in mind. That was before Spain virtually acknowledged the independence of the Dutch Netherlands in 1609 by agreeing to a truce. After that, however, the Peace Party in the Dutch Netherlands had been strong enough to resist demands that a similar company be organized to exploit America and harass the Spanish there. It was considered dangerous to Holland's newly gained peace and independence to goad the Spaniards in that quarter—or to offend the English, or the French either for that matter.

But the War Party led by Prince Maurice of Orange and the Calvinist clergy, and backed by such important Flemish emigres as Amsterdam's great merchant, William Usselinx, wanted to resume the war with Spain in order to gain complete independence for all the Netherlands. Usselinx particularly urged the necessity of challenging Spanish hegemony in America. He wanted a government-sponsored Dutch West India Company to prosecute the pursuit of gold and silver, the conduct of the fur trade with the Indians and the destruction of the Spanish commercial monopoly in the New World.

It was the probability of being forced into forming this company, a company which would incidentally assume control over New Netherland, that kept the States General from renewing the New Netherland Company's charter. Certainly, concern over possible friction with the English or the French prevented any territorial broadening of the charter or of the individual trading licenses which were issued after the charter's expiration.

By the New Netherland Company's charter the States General had in effect defined and acknowledged the borders of New France in the north and Virginia in the south. They recognized that it would be bad enough in the interior when the French realized that New Netherland traders were aligning themselves with the Iroquois enemies of New France. But it would be much worse to tangle with the English on the coasts —the Virginians in the south, and now those other Englishmen preparing to stake out "New England" in the north.

The Peace Party in the Netherlands didn't want any trouble and they wished the Orangers who had gone out to America would stay in the valley of Hudson's River, where no Englishmen had ever attempted to trade for furs. However, that was not to be. The fur traders would push on; the War Party would have its way.

VIII
Conception of New England

THE Englishmen living already in America, in southern Virginia, were more concerned about the Catholic Spaniards to the south of them than about a few Dutch traders on an unknown river to the north. Jamestown had been planted by the London Company with very much the same objects that Raleigh had in mind when he planted Roanoke—a threat to New Spain among other things. While the colony was young and relatively weak, therefore, the Virginians lived in constant dread of themselves being surprised and destroyed by the Spaniards.

Their neighbors in the south had a reputation for making short shrift of heretics or any foreign colonies that might endanger Florida or Spanish silver fleets. Some years earlier several hundred Huguenots from France who planted a colony on the southern coast had been butchered to the last man in a surprise attack.

Indeed, the Virginians' fears were well founded. The Spanish admiralty more than once nursed just such an action against the "English pirates' nest" on the James River. That they didn't attack was probably due to their own increasing vulnerability, for the Spanish star had been in decline since the destruction of the Armada.

To the north, the Virginians had mainly been concerned about the French. The northern boundary of English "Virginia," the 45th parallel, cut through the Bay of Fundy, but the Frenchmen failed to observe this delineation of the border. Whereas Dutch interlopers might be passed off as no more than individual traders who could be ousted at will, the government-backed traders of New France, firmly entrenched as they were in the far north, needed special watching.

There was no English colony in those parts to forestall serious French encroachment. The Plymouth Company had

failed in its mission to settle a plantation in northern Virginia.

It had been with the hope of finding gold or a trade route to the Indian sea, or in lieu of that at least an outlet for English woolens, that King James granted charters in 1606 to the London Company and the Plymouth Company. The merchants of these two joint-stock trading companies were to settle southern and northern Virginia respectively, thus driving an English wedge of actual occupation between the vast territorial claims of New Spain and New France. Under the direction of Sir Thomas Smith of the London Company the southern colony, Jamestown, was successfully planted. But in the north, on the border of French Canada, the colonists sent over by the Plymouth Company failed. They were too much in love with "El Dorado."

There had been an unusually good prospect of trade in furs to tide over the Plymouth Company's plantation until it could become permanently rooted by agriculture. Gosnold, Pring, Weymouth—all had predicted the success of such a venture. But colonization failed. There was no John Smith at Sagadahoc.

The settlement at the mouth of the Kennebec in Maine was made in 1607, only a few months after the colonists of the London Company planted themselves at Jamestown. The Sagadahoc venturers came in two ships, mainly supplied by Sir Ferdinando Gorges of the Plymouth Company and backed by the special patronage of another great merchant adventurer, Chief Justice Sir John Popham. They built a palisaded fort which they called Saint George, a storehouse and a church, and fifteen dwellings. And their carpenters under the supervision of a shipwright named Digby constructed a thirty-ton pinnace, the *Virginia*, which crossed the ocean to England and came back later to Jamestown in the service of the Virginia Company.

Except for these few noteworthy accomplishments, however, everything went wrong at Sagadahoc. Fire destroyed most of the buildings and few survived the bitter cold of the first winter. George Popham, the president of the colony and a nephew of the chief patron, died. Trouble with French traders

on the coast operating out of the Bay of Fundy was a source of much uneasiness, especially after a prominent French captain wintering at St. Croix was waylaid by the Englishmen and released only on his promise never again to trade for pelts in those parts. The weakened defenders of Fort St. George lived in fear of a surprise French attack—of bloody retaliation.

To cap the Englishmen's difficulties they were unsuccessful in driving a trade of their own with the Indians. For one thing, their disgraceful personal conduct turned the savages against them. A licentious lot of brawlers to begin with, the Sagadahoc venturers went native without restraint, and the Indians who were certainly never prudish about lending their women recoiled in contempt. For another thing, the Frenchmen offered more for pelts, so the natives hid their furs from the Englishmen.

When spring came the Sagadahoc settlement was abandoned and the survivors returned to England with nothing to show for their efforts. It was all so discouraging that no money could be raised among the merchant adventurers of the Plymouth Company for further attempts at colonization, although each year thereafter Gorges sent trading vessels to the vicinity for pelts. To compete with the French these vessels had to be plentifully supplied with a variety of goods, trinkets, hatchets, colored cloths, and eventually even with guns and powder to exchange for furs.

Several years after Sagadahoc was evacuated the Vice-Admiral of Acadia, Saint Just, came down the coast and set up the arms of France on the most conspicuous height he could find near the Englishmen's abandoned fort. Having thus officially proclaimed his jurisdiction over Maine, he returned to his headquarters at Port Royal in the Bay of Fundy, where it was his practice to exact a one-fifth share of all the furs collected.

Saint Just's father, Sieur de Poutrincourt, had been granted the country originally by de Monts, and now held it under an independent patent from the king. Although, all in all, Poutrincourt and his son made a pretty profit from their patent, they met with difficulty in getting their full share of the furs

being collected. Taxes of course are always unpopular, especially among frontiersmen. The traders across the bay at St. Croix were recalcitrant, and there were even more serious dissensions at Port Royal itself on this score.

Among the inhabitants of Port Royal were two lately-arrived Jesuit priests who had purchased part ownership in a trading vessel and were stirring up no end of trouble for Saint Just. One of these fathers, Pierre Biard, was particularly obstreperous, objecting to the vice-admiral's profits, giving unwanted advice on trading, and even trying to take over control of the colony according to his enemies. He was accused of pitting Catholics against Huguenots, and he did actually bring about the excommunication of Saint Just. Some said he partook too freely of the bottle.

In any event, Father Biard accompanied Saint Just on his voyage along the southern coast and liked the lay of the country. He thought it offered special opportunities for a profitable trade in furs, and he felt that if he could but have a colony of his own there he would use the profits of trade with the savages for the maintenance of the Jesuits rather than let it be "lost in the hands of the merchants."

Upon his return to Port Royal, Biard and his brother priest proceeded to do something about it. Writing to their patron at the French court, Madame deGuercheville, the Jesuits told her of their troubles and their aspirations. Whereupon that well-connected lady acquired a patent to the southern coast, granted the fathers their wish for a colony of their own and sent over a ship to settle them there at her expense. In the spring of 1613 the Jesuit colony was planted—Saint Sauveur it was called—on Mt. Desert Island in Maine.

But no sooner were the Frenchmen seated than they were murderously surprised by the English.

Captain Samuel Argall out of Jamestown in his heavily armed ship, the *Treasurer*, happened to be trading and fishing in the vicinity. Learning from the Indians of the presence of the French vessel at Mount Desert and the colony being planted there, he attacked so suddenly that he met with practically no resistance. Two Frenchmen were killed. Father

Biard and fourteen others were taken to Jamestown as prisoners and the remainder were ordered by Argall to find their way home as best they could in any fishing or trading vessels they might happen upon along the coast.

There was great excitement at Jamestown when Captain Argall arrived there with his prisoners and the news about the French infringement on "English territory." There was even more excitement when Father Biard proffered the information that Saint Just, after capturing an English ship, was fortifying Port Royal with thirty cannon. A "pirates' nest," Biard called it in his anger at Saint Just. Certainly it was a menace to the English the Virginia Council concluded.

So Argall was dispatched north again, this time to rout the French from the Bay of Fundy. On the way, he destroyed all vestiges of French occupation at Mt. Desert Island and at St. Croix; then he surprised Port Royal with the help of Father Biard who appears to have acted as his guide ashore. Coming upon the fort-like settlement at a time when most of the inhabitants were busy in the fields, Argall burned their houses and plundered their stores, leaving the Frenchmen almost destitute on the eve of winter.

The destruction was so complete that Sieur de Poutrincourt, who arrived from France in the spring, decided to collect what furs he could and transport his people back to France.

Madame deGuercheville gave up too. She attempted no new colony, contenting herself with protestations to the English king. But James let it be known that the Virginia Company was well within its rights, and there the matter ended.

Although Saint Just did return to Port Royal later to act as factor for some independent La Rochelle fur merchants and although young Dupont-Grave wintered at St. Croix on occasion to maintain desultory barter with the savages there, the French fur trade was now restricted in the main to the St. Lawrence Valley and the hinterland. Argall had effectually checked the advance south on the coast into the territory claimed by the English—for the time being.

Traffic on the "Northern Virginia" coast, below the Bay of Fundy, now fell almost exclusively into the hands of the English—except, of course, for that which the Dutchmen were pursuing in the vicinity of the Hudson River.

There is the relation in an uncorroborated promotional tract of the time that Captain Argall, in the late fall of 1613 on his return from Port Royal, stopped off at Manhattan where he is said to have caused the few Dutch traders he found there to submit to the English king and the government at Jamestown. If so, he no doubt took whatever furs they had as tribute and probably made other arrangements calculated to benefit his private purse. Samuel Argall, later knighted, was to become notorious for such devices.

But if the Dutch traders, reflectively smoking their pipes, acceded to his demands while the guns of the *Treasurer* pointed at their huts, they lost little time in expanding their beaver trade along the eastern and northern coasts once the hot-headed Englishman left. The very next spring they began the prosecution of a highly profitable business in and about Long Island Sound, up the valley of the Connecticut, and in the Narragansett country. The Indians as far east as Buzzard's Bay acquired special longings for Dutch sugar, liquor, ornaments, cloth and firearms, and the Hollanders were able to maintain a virtual monopoly on this trade for some years.

Captain John Smith didn't see anything of these Dutch competitors when he visited northern Virginia in 1614. But then he traded along the coasts no farther south than Cape Cod. The only foreigners he encountered were a couple of poaching French ships bartering with the Indians for pelts some forty leagues below the mouth of the Kennebec River.

Being recovered from his wound and being much interested in planting an English colony in the north, Captain Smith had helped promote enough capital to supply two ships for this voyage. Of course the venture's immediate object was not colonization. No money could have been raised for that. Rather it was to "Take whales and make tryalls of a Myne of Gold and Copper," Smith said. "If those failed, Fish and Furres was then our refuge."

The venturers discovered no mines. And, although there were plenty of whales in sight, they weren't able to catch any. The English hadn't yet learned to whale. So, while the sailors turned to fishing, John Smith set out with eight or nine men in a shallop to investigate the country, to map the bays and rivers, and to trade with the natives—in preparation for the colonization he secretly planned.

He ranged the coast from Penobscot Bay to Cape Cod, and "got for trifles neer 1100 Bever skinnes, 100 martins and neer as many Otters." Most of these were acquired within a distance of twenty leagues, he said, for "Eastwards our commodities were not esteemed, they were so neare the French who affords them better." At Sagadahoc, at the mouth of the Kennebec, there was competition from an English vessel belonging to Sir Francis Popham, son of the chief justice. This fur-trading ship "had there such an acquaintance, having many yeares used only that porte, that the most parte there was had by him." And of course to the southwest were the two French trading vessels.

The country, Smith later reported, was populated by "Moos, a beast bigger than a Stagge; Deere, red and Fallow; Bevers, Wolves, Foxes, both blacke and other; Aroughconds (raccoons), Wild-cats, Beares, Otters, Martins, Fitches, musquassus (muskrats) and diverse sorts of vermine, whose names I know not."

"Of the Musk Rat," he predicted, "May bee well raised of their goodnesse. Of Bevers, Otters, Martins, Blacke Foxes, and Furres of price, may yearely be had 6 or 7000: and if the trade of the French were prevented, many more."

With the title of Admiral of this "New England," of which he had drawn an exceptionally detailed and accurate map, Captain Smith was sent out the next year by Sir Ferdinando Gorges and others of the Plymouth Company. This time he never reached his objective, being captured by pirates and once more experiencing perils enough for many another adventurer's lifetime. With his usual luck and ingenuity however he managed to escape, and returned to England to write about his ventures.

Unable to get any further backing for his colonization schemes John Smith never returned to America. Thus it never came about that he encountered the Dutch interlopers for whose original presence in "Virginia" he had been responsible through his friendship with Henry Hudson. However, one of Smith's companions on his last voyage, Thomas Dermer, was sent out again by Gorges in 1619. And Dermer paid a visit to the Dutch at Manhattan.

After arriving in America and sending a cargo of furs and fish from Sagadahoc back to England, Dermer set out in a small open pinnace of five tons burden to follow the coast south to the Chesapeake. The account of his voyage is almost as interesting as one of Captain John Smith's epics.

Among other adventures on his way down the coast, Dermer "redeemed" two Frenchmen from the Indians. These men, after having been shipwrecked off Cape Cod and captured with others by the Indians, had survived three years of being "sent from one sachem to another to make sport with." Dermer himself was taken during a fight with the savages but successfully contrived an escape with the aid of some hatchets which his compatriots used as ransom bait.

Following a winter at the plantations on the James River, Dermer then returned to New England via Manhattan where he stopped off, probably upon the urging of Jamestown officials, to see what the Dutch traders were about. There he discovered a "multitude" of factors busy with furs, and he found plenty to indicate that the Hollanders were permanently settling themselves in the land.

The English fur trader pointed out to them that they were on English soil, but the Dutchmen replied that "they understood no such thing, nor found any other nation there; so that they hoped they had not offended." Since he was in no position to challenge them further Dermer contented himself by warning them not to continue their occupation as his own countrymen would soon take possession of what they, the Dutch squatters, were calling "New Netherland."

Whereupon Thomas Dermer withdrew, eventually to have his story laid before the English merchants at home, while the

Hollanders promptly went about widening the coastal head of the wedge they had driven between southern Virginia and northern Virginia, the country now called New England by the Englishmen.

Cornelis Jacobsen May explored south again that very summer. He even entered the James River. Then he revisited the cape he had first sighted a few years earlier and which now bears his name. Entering Delaware Bay this time however, he charted its shores, and following in Hendricksen's path he ascended the river to trade and more thoroughly investigate it also.

By the following year, 1621, the English ambassador at The Hague was before the States General calling attention to the trespassers on "English" territory in America. But his protests received scant hearing. The lowlanders' grand design for the west was now in process of completion—the West India Company had been chartered—and a government for New Netherland was being organized. Already an official seal for the new province in America had been engraved, the figure of a beaver, fittingly enough, its central theme.

In the meantime however part of the Dutch claim had been occupied by some refugee Englishmen who were determined to stay in America. The Pilgrims had planted the first permanent settlement on the coast of New England.

IX
The Pilgrims Rely on God and Beaver

THE first permanent settlement made by the English on the northern coasts of America owed its success to traffic in pelts.

Almost from the very beginning in the winter of 1620-21 the Plymouth plantation was a fur-trading post, depending on beaver and otter skins for the maintenance of its inhabitants. And, as Edward Channing has put it, "In the end what saved the Plymouth colony from extinction and gave the settlers a chance to repay the London merchants for their advances was a well managed fur trade."

Governor William Bradford himself recognized that the fur trade was vital to the survival of his people in New England, saying "there was no other means to procure them food which they so much wanted and clothes also."

This was only too true. Not only did a vicious system of communalistic enterprise retard the production of food at Plymouth but the merchant adventurers in England who backed the plantation insisted that time-consuming agricultural activities be curtailed to a minimum, promising to send over the needed food. In return for financing the venture they wanted quick returns that could be gotten only from fish and fur. Since the Plymouth colonists were never too successful at fishing, in fact ill equipped for that pursuit, they had to depend on the export of pelts to keep the merchants happy and to wangle supplies and trucking goods enough to keep themselves alive.

Even with the help of the fur trade, however, this brave little band of Brownist Separatists probably would not have survived the rigors of the climate and the harsh New England coast except for the impelling religious motive that brought them to America in the first place.

Persecuted for their beliefs and exiled from their homeland, they had been maintained through many trials by a driving determination to find sanctuary for themselves and their posterity—a place where they could live and worship in the way they believed was most fitting in the eyes of God. First, they fled to Holland, where at Leyden they enjoyed immunity from interference by the authorities but too much intimacy with their neighbors. In this their leaders saw a new danger. The Dutch, they felt, were entirely too neglectful of God's ordinances, and the exiles became exceedingly fearful that "their posteritie would be in danger to degenerate and be corrupted."

Only in the New World where they would have no near neighbors did there seem to be a solution to the problem. They thought of going out to Guiana, and the Dutch even offered to underwrite their passage to New Netherland to plant a colony there under the auspices of the States General. But then some of their leaders learned that through the Virginia Company a patent could be obtained for a private plantation in America where they could live as Englishmen, yet "as a distincte body by themselves." Assured that they might have their own governor, ordinances and mode of worship, subject only to the general government of Virginia, they entered into conclusive negotiations with English merchants to finance the venture.

One Thomas Weston was the leading backer of the proposed plantation, obtaining the patent through the Virginia Company and promoting the adventurers' share of the joint-stock through a company of merchants which he represented. Although the king balked at giving the exiles liberty of conscience under his protection he did indicate that he would not molest them. And of course the Virginia Company, the leaders of which were mostly Puritan-tinged Genevans at heart, encouraged the venture from the start, albeit with discretion.

So the business agreements were drawn up and signed and transportation arranged. This included a stopover in England where the exiles were joined by a major complement of indentured servants and other "strangers" hired by Weston. The emigrants were to sail in two ships from Southampton, but

after a false start they settled on the *Mayflower* and this little ship put out alone across the sea late in 1620.

The *Mayflower's* destination was charted as the general vicinity of Hudson's River where a beginning was to be made on selecting a suitable site for the new English plantation in Virginia. However, a landfall was made at Cape Cod and, although a course was then actually set for the mouth of the Hudson, the ship was brought about after navigation difficulties and hints of mutiny and a decision was made to plant in New England instead.

This was territory well known at the time of sailing as coming under the jurisdiction of the proposed Council for New England which was about to be created as successor to Sir Ferdinando Gorges' old Plymouth Company.

Quite likely, William Bradford and other leaders of the expedition had come to have their doubts about settling in the vicinity of the Hudson River, a territory in dispute between England and Holland. But in addition it would appear that before the sailing they had received secret assurance that Gorges and the reorganized New England company would welcome a colony planted within their jurisdiction, and that a proper patent would be no more than a legal formality once the Council for New England was commissioned. Certainly the chief investor in the enterprise, Thomas Weston, favored New England. In the final days of preparation he had expressed a strong preference for New England rather than Virginia, due he said to the established fisheries and fur trade, as well as other commercial prospects there.

In any event, when word reached England that the Pilgrims had settled themselves at Plymouth in New England, no one seems to have expressed the slightest surprise. Nor is there any record of an explanation coming from Plymouth—just as if none was thought to be necessary.

All of which would make it appear likely that the planting at Plymouth was no accident, but premeditated to some extent by merchants of the New England company in connivance with leading partners in the adventure. Possibly there was more than a hope that some calculated incident would bring it about.

If so, the navigation difficulties and threats of mutiny provided incident enough—or excuse enough to satisfy those not in on the plan!

The savages in and about Plymouth Harbor, so named by Captain John Smith some six years earlier, did not exactly welcome the *Mayflower's* passengers. Their experience with white men had been none too rewarding over the years and these new arrivals were proving no exception. From their hiding places the natives watched the very first exploring parties that came ashore from the ship steal caches of Indian corn and rifle the graves of the dead.

Small wonder it is, therefore, that almost before the Pilgrims laid eyes on a savage they were treated to thievery in kind and the weird shrieks, or war whoops, with which these same "Skraelings" had challenged the invading Vikings centuries earlier. But when the attacks came they were easily repulsed by English firearms.

In the meantime, after the landing at Plymouth in that winter of 1620-21, some of the natives were enticed out of hiding by offers of bright baubles and other gifts. On one occasion "a pot of strong water" was employed. Then, with thunder-making cannon mounted ashore to awe their wild hosts, the Pilgrims were finally able to enter into negotiations for beaver skins and food supplies under a kind of armed truce.

But the Indians of this section were very poor and very few. A pestilence originally spread among them by Frenchmen had all but wiped them out in fact. It was necessary for the Pilgrims to look abroad for the pelts which they had quickly realized would be their chief means of support if they were to survive in this strange land.

Beaver skins would pay their debts, buy for them in England the additional supplies they needed, even serve as a medium of exchange in obtaining corn and beans from the savages themselves. In the guise of exploration, therefore, military

commerce was commenced as soon as possible with neighboring tribes along the coast.

In this the diminutive military commander at Plymouth, Captain Miles Standish, had an invaluable aide—an Indian named Squanto who had come to the fort and offered his services as ally and interpreter.

Squanto spoke English almost as fluently as the white men. Twice he had been to England, once having dwelt for some time with a London merchant. He was first taken there by Captain George Weymouth in 1605. Returned to his native land nine years later by Captain John Smith, Squanto had been no more than set free when he was kidnapped along with some other natives by an English captain named Hunt and sold in the Spanish slave market at Malaga. However, through the intercession of local friars, he managed to get to London again. Captain Thomas Dermer then returned him once more to Cape Cod, not many months before the Pilgrims arrived.

Finding his own people wiped out by the pestilence, Squanto sought refuge with a neighboring tribe. But when he learned of the presence of the Englishmen at Plymouth he went to them, to be gratefully acknowledged as "a speciall instrumente sent of God for their good beyond their expectation."

Guided by this Indian the Pilgrim traders went farther and farther afield. In September ten armed men sailed up to Boston Harbor in a shallop and obtained a quantity of beaver from the Massachusetts Indians. So successful was the barter that the women of the tribe impulsively removed their beaver coats to exchange them for the bright baubles of the white men. Giggling maidens, bedecked only with strings of beads we are told, were left behind by the "sober-faced" Pilgrims when they sailed away.

By November, when the first "supply" ship, the *Fortune*, arrived from England, the colony at Plymouth had acquired enough beaver and otter skins to pack two great hogsheads worth 300 pounds sterling for export. These pelts represented over sixty per cent of the total value of the vessel's return cargo, the remainder consisting of clapboard. By this one

shipment the Pilgrim Fathers estimated they were paying off almost half of their debt to Weston and his partners and insuring the prompt return of the additional supplies they so much needed by then.

But unfortunately, as they later learned, the *Fortune* was intercepted by a French privateer before she reached England and all her cargo confiscated!

Long before this first supply ship came to Plymouth the Pilgrims had been in want of food. Their meal was gone, and other rations were rapidly dwindling under their communalistic system. But when the ship arrived it brought only letters of gratuitous counsel from their merchant backers in England and more "hungrie bellies" to be fed. There was practically nothing aboard in the way of food and clothing or truck for barter with the savages.

Already half-starved, the colonists were in really dire straits as winter approached. Many of them sickened and death stalked the huts and cottages at Plymouth. With Indian alarms and unaccountable fires creating a general state of anxiety, fear and suspicion lay heavy on those who lived. Probably the only thing that prevented a complete collapse was the diversion brought about by enforced labor on strengthening the fortifications of the plantation.

Before the first snow, the Narragansett tribe which had not suffered from the plague boldly sent in a bundle of arrows wrapped in a snakeskin. It was an open challenge to war. The Pilgrims were plucky enough to replace the arrows with bullets and send the snakeskin back to the Narragansett, but they were nevertheless thoroughly frightened and hastened to palisade their fort and buildings with a strong wall of high pales.

Relations with the natives was under constant strain. Most of the early commerce with them for pelts and food was a bloody business. But, as explosive and unprincipled as was the red-headed little military captain, Miles Standish, it was Squanto who caused much of the trouble.

It seems that the Indian interpreter was overly ambitious to become a great sachem and seized on any opportunity to

eliminate a red rival to his pretensions by provoking hostilities. Captain Standish never did like Squanto, and Bradford himself later stated that the interpreter "sought his own ends and played his own game, by putting the Indians in fear and drawing gifts from them to enrich himself, making them believe he could stir up war against whom he would, and make peace with whom he would."

Although some temporary relief in the matter of food could be obtained from trading and fishing boats off the Maine coast and by other local expedients, it was plain for all to see that the economy, indeed the very existence of Plymouth, depended on fur. Fishing had failed completely as a source of income. Only as a fur-trading post could the plantation be maintained, for only by the export of pelts could sufficient supplies and trading goods be obtained and the debt to the merchant adventurers paid off. So, in the spring of 1622, an expedition went out once more to the Massachusetts and commerce of a sort was resumed—along with hostilities. Some few pelts were thus obtained by the Pilgrims in spite of their almost total lack of trading goods.

But then came a "providence of God." A trading ship, coasting the shores from Virginia to New England, came into the harbor with a large store of English beads and knives aboard.

The captain, however, drove a hard bargain with the desperate colonists. Shrewdly sensing the situation, he hiked the prices of his trading goods; in fact, he "would sell none but at dear rates and also a good quantity together." The Pilgrims were forced to buy, paying away their store of coat-beaver at three shillings per pound which, as it happened, "in a few years after yielded twenty shillings." Still, by this means, they were fitted again to barter for beans and corn—and more beaver.

For the next three or four years the Plymouth plantation was engaged in hand-to-mouth expedients to squeeze enough

revenue from the fur trade to meet the demands of its economy.

All of this was made the more trying because of the evils of the communalistic system under which the colony was operated. A first step toward the private ownership of land was taken in 1623, when each man was permitted to set a little corn "for his owne perticuler," but it was some years before this reform was fully realized. However, of more concern to the Pilgrims was the increasing pressure from a variety of English competitors for the fur trade along the coast.

Always a bit disturbing had been the freebooting interlopers who operated along the coasts, particularly in Maine. These Englishmen, bartering generously with trinkets, colored cloth and ironware, were also not averse to trading guns and powder with the Indians, a practice frowned upon by the king.

Partly because of the trade in firearms, but mainly because the freebooters were cutting into the monopoly of the august Council for New England, that body obtained a royal proclamation forbidding trade in furs and fish without a license. As it turned out however the merchants were unsuccessful in enforcing the edict. Captain Francis West, the Admiral of New England, who was sent out to stop the trespassing returned only to report that he found the traders to be "stuborne fellows."

In the meantime a number of patents and licenses were being granted through the Council for New England along the northern coast.

Ferdinando Gorges and Captain John Mason, as adventurers, were granted the "Province of Maine," all the land lying between the Merrimac and the Kennebec Rivers. As early as 1623 David Thompson, "a Scottish gentleman," went out with a few servants and established a fur-trading post at the mouth of the Piscataqua, near the present site of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Said to have been accompanied by his wife and children, he "built a Strong and Large House, enclosed it with a large and high Palizado and mounted Gunns, and being stored extraordinarily with shot and Ammunition was a Terror to the Indians...." Thompson nevertheless carried on a

flourishing business with the natives for otter and beaver, as did Christopher Levett who built a fort-like emporium for the same kind of military commerce in Casco Bay the following year.

More obvious competitors to the Pilgrims had been getting footholds in the country of the Massachusetts Indians. Samuel Maverick had a palisaded trading post on Noddle's Island (East Boston) wherein he mounted "four murtherers to protect him from the Indians." Under the muzzles of these wicked little cannon he drove a most profitable private trade. And David Thompson himself moved to Boston Bay in 1626, building a truck house on the island which ever since has been known by his name.

Although these more or less distant and individual competitors cut into the Plymouth Colony's business to some degree, they were not exactly strangling the economy and they were not neighbors in the bothersome sense. However, the Pilgrims viewed with real alarm all attempts of English traders to establish themselves in the near-by lower end of Boston Bay. That, they judged, belonged to them and was necessary to their survival as well as their cherished privacy.

Their one-time friend, Thomas Weston, had been the first to try to plant a trading post there, at Wessagusset, in 1622. Weston, who had sold out his interest in the Plymouth Plantation, first sent over some men to trade for his "perticuler," that is, not for the plantation's account. Shortly afterward he obtained a patent to plant a colony of his own at the lower end of Boston Bay.

The colony his men established at Wessagusset, now Weymouth, was entirely too close to the Pilgrims for their comfort, not only because it forthwith severed a major artery of their fur trade but because it put the pinch on Plymouth for food. Weston's "rude fellers" were more interested in consorting with Indian squaws, according to the Pilgrims, than in grubbing for their own food. Also, disturbingly enough in itself, these newcomers setting themselves down as near neighbors were Anglicans.

According to the record the Pilgrims discovered a conspiracy among the savages to massacre the Englishmen at Wessagusset. Possibly, as some say, they simply invented the plot. Be that as it may, they rushed to the assistance of their unsuspecting white neighbors. Then, under the pretense of joining with the Massachusetts in feasting and trading, they conducted a surprise massacre of their own among the natives. During this murderous affair Captain Standish cut off the head of one Massachusetts brave of some renown for his previous insults to the Pilgrims and took it back to Plymouth where he stuck it on a pole for all to see. After that it was much too dangerous for Weston's traders to remain at Wessagusset.

The following year Sir Ferdinando Gorges' son, Captain Robert Gorges, with a commission from the Council of New England as general governor of the country brought over some people and occupied Wessagusset as a fur-trading post. But things did not go well for him either. Gorges soon abandoned the place and his people scattered, some going to Virginia. A few, however, remained in the vicinity and set up a trading post at Nantasket (Hull) which was made permanent by the frequent addition of discontents from Plymouth.

Still later, in 1625, a shipload of colonists, composed mostly of indentured servants under the command of a Captain Wollaston, came to Boston Bay. The captain set up a trading post close by Wessagusset at Quincy. By 1627 he too had given up. The difficulties, whether of the Pilgrims' secret connivance or not, were too great. He gathered up most of the servants and sailed for Virginia where he sold their indentures at a very good profit.

Wollaston would have taken all the servants and sold their time if it had not been for one Thomas Morton. An educated man, a lawyer of sorts with a bent for both pleasure and profit, Morton saw an opportunity for greater gains in the fur trade than anyone had yet garnered. His plan was to sell guns and liquor to the Indians in exchange for skins and to let the devil take the hindmost.

Appealing to some of the worst rogues among Wollaston's servants on the promise that they would prosper Morton

conducted a successful mutiny. After all, who wanted to be sold into slavery in Virginia? Soon thereafter, with his disreputable associates, Morton set up his own trading post, calling it "Merrymount," and commenced his illegal barter with the Indians to the great consternation of the Pilgrims.

Beaver, otter and valuable deer skins found their way in great quantities to the new truck house, while Merrymount became "a sort of a drunkard's resort and gambling hall" and worse. The jolly host of Merrymount, revelling in "riotous prodigality," had a great Maypole erected for the entertainment of visiting factors who wanted to dance and frisk with pleasurable Indian maids. Fishing and trading vessels along the coast much preferred to do business with the open-handed Morton rather than the close-fisted Pilgrims. Therefore, trading goods were as easily come by at Merrymount as were beaver skins. Everyone was quite happy about the situation except the fathers at Plymouth.

Morton had even discovered their profitable new trading grounds in Maine. The first year the Pilgrims extended their fur trading operations to Maine, in 1625, they gathered in 700 pounds of beaver besides some other furs on the Kennebec, mostly in exchange for the corn they had by then learned to grow at Plymouth. But now Morton was outbidding them with his more attractive trading goods and getting nearly everything of value in that vicinity too. The very existence of the Plymouth Colony seemed to be at stake.

Complaints, cajolings and threats were of no avail. Morton, the lawyer, was too clever. Something had to be done and force was the final resort. Captain Standish was sent with some soldiers to arrest the obnoxious neighbor on the charge that he was violating the royal proclamation prohibiting trade in guns and powder.

"Captain Shrimp," as Morton contemptuously called Standish, succeeded in his mission only after a fight. He captured Morton and took him to Plymouth. There he tried his best to have the erstwhile "host of Merrymount" hanged. But in the end Morton's only punishment was to be shipped back to England.

As it came about, the Wessagusset area was no sooner eliminated as a competitor for the beaver trade than the Pilgrims were faced with new and much more formidable rivals in the same neighborhood. These were the Puritans, the advance guard of whom arrived at Salem under Captain John Endicott in 1628. As recruits of the great Massachusetts Bay Company they were soon coming by the thousands. Under the leadership of Governor John Winthrop they overran the Boston Bay region. And there wasn't much the fathers at Plymouth could do about these new neighbors except to offer religious advice on the relative merits of Brownism and Separation.

The local competition for beaver now being almost overwhelming, the Pilgrims found it necessary to go more and more afield to meet their required quota of pelts. Excursions north to the Kennebec in Maine were the most fruitful, not only because there was much fine fur to be had from the natives there but because trading goods on occasion could be obtained from fishing and trading ships off that coast. Once, too, in exchange for corn the Pilgrims picked up four hundred pounds worth of trucking stuff from some Englishmen who were abandoning their plantation on Monhegan Island. And they acquired an additional stock of truck from a French ship which had been wrecked at Sagadahoc.

To the south along the coast they never met with much success. When they had first gone out to Narragansett Bay on a trading voyage in 1623, for instance, the Indians there disdained their meagre offerings. The Narragansett were much too happy with the goods being furnished by the Dutch traders from Manhattan. Both the Narragansett and their neighbors, the Pequot, held on to their furs for the Hollanders, and they were powerful enough to get away with it. They had Dutch guns and powder, as well as the Hollanders themselves if need be, to back them up. In fact, by 1625 the Dutch had a fortified trading post on an island in Narragansett Bay and two similar forts near-by on the mainland.

Governor Bradford, in exasperation, gave out a warning that all the region along the coast to the southeast of Plymouth was English territory. He as much as demanded that the New Netherlanders stop trading there. But it was useless. The Dutchmen simply ignored the warnings. However they did offer to enter into direct trading relations themselves with Plymouth and sent a mission there in 1627, with sugar, linen and other goods, to talk it over.

This mission was headed up by Isaack de Rasieres, the chief trader as well as the Secretary of New Netherland. Rasieres appears to have had an ulterior motive in making the visit. He brought along a stock of wampum, the strings of highly polished shell-beads that the Dutchmen had been accustomed to getting from the Narragansett and the Pequot. With wampum, Rasieres pointed out to the Pilgrims, he had been doing a great business among Indians who didn't have the means of manufacturing it, especially along the Hudson River where Henry Hudson himself had first discovered strings of shell-beads circulating as a kind of money.

The Hollander cannily suggested that wampum might be used to just as great advantage on the Kennebec by the Pilgrims. No doubt, by this means, he hoped to direct their attention more to Maine and away from the Dutch trading preserves in Long Island Sound and the Narragansett country. Offering to sell wampum to the Englishmen at a fair price, probably he hoped also to keep them from dealing direct for it with the Narragansett and the Pequot.

Although the Pilgrim fathers were a bit suspicious of Rasieres' motives, nevertheless they did find the shell-money to be most "vendable" on the Kennebec. So much so, in fact, that in a very short time with the aid of this medium of exchange they were enabled to cut off the fur trade of that region from the fishermen and other independent traders who had been accustomed to barter there. In the meantime they also developed their own sources of wampum among some of the Massachusetts coastal tribes who, as it turned out, also possessed the means of manufacturing it.

The Pilgrims secured their rights up the Kennebec River by obtaining a patent to a strip of land fifteen miles wide on both sides of that river. They built a trucking house at Cushenoc (Augusta) which they kept stocked with coats, shirts, rugs, blankets, corn, biscuit, peas, prunes, and other supplies. With the help of wampum for exchange they drove a brisk trade among the Abnaki Indians in those parts. In 1630 they extended their operations even farther north, setting up a trading post on the Penobscot River at Pentagoet, now Castine, Maine.

The Penobscot trading post originated as a private venture for which the Pilgrim, Isaac Allerton, along with some partners in England promoted a patent. Allerton, once a London tailor, had risen in prominence at Plymouth in New England to stand second only to the governor. It would appear that he and his overseas partners shared the rights to trade in the territory north of the Kennebec with other leading Pilgrims in return for the loan of wampum, shallops, supplies and servants.

But the partnership accounts became jumbled, because of Allerton's financial deceits according to the Pilgrims. And Edward Ashley, the "profane young man" sent out from England as factor, didn't help things by his personal conduct.

Actually, young Ashley did well enough in the bartering department, acquiring over a thousand pounds of beaver and otter the first season. However he seems to have gone native in the most offensive sense to the Pilgrim fathers, living "naked" among the savages and committing "uncleannes with Indean women." Also, it was discovered, he was trading shot and powder with the savages and not even accounting for the profits from this unholy trade.

Such behavior, of course, could not be countenanced. Ashley was arrested and shipped back to England by the Plymouth partners, while they themselves took over complete operating control of the enterprise.

All of which was not to Isaac Allerton's liking. Deserting the partnership, he retaliated by setting himself up as a competitor in Maine. In 1633 he settled some "base fellows" in a new trading post at the mouth of the Machias River, close by

the present Canadian border. There he did his best to cut off Plymouth's commerce with the more northerly tribes who were then taking their furs to the Penobscot and Kennebec trucking houses.

The Pilgrims had other competitors in Maine also. In 1630 a trading post was established at Pemaquid Point under a patent obtained by two English merchants for twelve thousand acres between the Damariscotta and Muscongus Rivers. About the same time John Oldham and Richard Vines obtained a grant at the mouth of the Saco River, which remained a most profitable fur trading center for some years.

Then there was the Laconia Company, organized by Sir Ferdinando Gorges and Captain John Mason to put new life in their Piscataqua colony. Laconia, described as a vast hinterland area of rivers and lakes, was an extension of their original patent to the "Province of Maine." Gorges and Mason now planned to send cargoes of Indian trucking goods up the Piscataqua River into Laconia, to Lake Champlain, to be bartered for peltries. Thus they hoped to compete with the Dutch and the French for the hinterland trade.

Captain Walter Neale, as governor of the Laconia Company, and Ambrose Gibbons, as factor, did very well from 1630 to 1633, establishing several trading posts on the Piscataqua River. But they never reached Lake Champlain. Maybe they had it confused with Lake Winnepesaukee. In any case, as they discovered, the rivers of Maine flowed from the north, not from the west, and they couldn't penetrate deep enough into the interior to tap the hinterland trade of the Dutch and the French.

Probably the most dangerous of the Pilgrims' rivals in Maine about this time was the trading post on Richmond's Island off Cape Elizabeth. Thomas Morton, the jolly host of Merrymount, had traded here as early as 1627. After his banishment from America one of his most roguish associates, Walter Bagnall, took over the island and is said to have gained 1,000 pounds sterling from his trade in a period of three years. Then this "wicked fellow" was murdered by the natives.

Bagnall's successor, John Winter, also did a flourishing business on Richmond's Island as factor for some English merchants, employing some sixty men at one time in both fishing and fur trading activities. The records indicate that he was about as unscrupulous in his dealings as was his predecessor, cheating and otherwise mistreating the Indians at every turn. He charged them at the rate of thirty-three pounds for a hogshead of brandy which cost him seven. For powder which cost him twenty pence per pound he raised the rate to three shillings in trade. But the natives preferred his goods.

In spite of such competition, however, Maine became the Pilgrims' chief source of furs. In one period of two years the trading post at Cushenoc alone is known to have gathered in more than 7,000 pounds of beaver. The route of the beaver-laden shallops from the Maine coast was indeed Plymouth's life-line. Wampum played no small role in the success of this extended operation which was so vital to the colony's existence, although the tight control exercised over the fur trade by the Pilgrim fathers was the main factor.

Always the peltry traffic had been invested in certain leaders at Plymouth who managed the whole trade in the interests of the communalty in order that the Pilgrims' debt to the merchants in England might be paid. In 1627 William Bradford, Isaac Allerton, Edward Winslow, Miles Standish and a few others in partnership undertook to assume this entire indebtedness. In return, these "undertakers" were to enjoy any and all profits from the traffic in peltries for six years. They were empowered to do what they pleased with all furs and trucking goods in the common store, and they alone were to use the colony's trading posts, truck houses and shallops.

From that time forward the Plymouth Plantation enjoyed real economic success. In 1628 furs to the value of 659 English pounds were exported in one cargo. Although no total figures are available for 1628 to 1630, a very large amount of peltry went to England according to Governor Bradford. From 1631 to 1636 over 12,000 pounds of beaver and 1,000 pounds of otter were shipped, most of which brought 20 shillings a pound and none less than 14 shillings. Bradford said that the beaver alone during these years brought 10,000 pounds

sterling and that the otter was more than sufficient to pay all costs of transport and auction. Considering the size of the plantation this was indeed big business.

In spite of the financial bungling of the partnership's agents in England, and even outright irregularities there, the debt was paid off. Additional profits from the sale of beaver skins bought many other things the Pilgrims needed, and in the end it was the earnings from the fur trade that provided the foundation for Plymouth's next economic development, cattle farming.

In the meantime the Pilgrims' profitable trade in furs on the Maine coast and on rivers leading to the interior was jealously regarded by the French who, after all, considered that territory within their own limits. And neighboring French traders were doing something about it.

X
A Border Fixed on the Coast of Maine

THE planting of trading posts farther and farther up the coast of Maine by the New Englanders did not go unchallenged by the French. Although in English eyes it had been well established ever since Captain Argall's raids in the Bay of Fundy that English claims to the coast now extended well above the 45th parallel, even to the St. Lawrence valley, no such admission had ever been made by the French. There were always French traders in Acadia (Nova Scotia) who envisaged their preserves as extending well down the coast of Maine and who intended to resist further encroachments in those parts.

In fact, as it came about, these fur traders protected and maintained the French claim to much of this coastal region during an incident of the Thirty Years' War which put most of New France under the English flag for three years, from 1629 to 1632.

Prior to this episode the affairs of New France had reached a turning point. In 1627 Samuel de Champlain's difficulties became acute. That year the Iroquois, his irreconcilable enemies, renewed their bloody savagery in the interior, while along the coast the English were closing off the very entrance to the valley of the St. Lawrence with their plantations and trading posts and their increased shipping.

Although Champlain's company had a good season in furs, collecting 22,000 that summer which could be sold in France at ten francs each, the expense of operation had made the outlook none too bright relatively for the shareholders who expected huge returns. Besides the salaries of the Viceroy in France and of Champlain as his lieutenant governing the colony, interpreters now cost as much as a thousand francs a season and sailors six hundred, while factors and other

servants came correspondingly high. And there were other increased expenses that bid fair to cut deep into profits.

As a result the directors of the company made things difficult for their governor on the St. Lawrence. They particularly balked at his urgent request for extra funds to strengthen the fortifications of Quebec, even though only a wooden palisade and a few small cannon protected the French trading post.

Champlain, with characteristic fortitude, made the best of his difficulties. But he was most uneasy about the English at his doorway. And well he might be!

As early as 1620 Sir George Calvert, English Baron of Baltimore, had adventured a plantation in Newfoundland. Three years later King James granted him quasi-regal proprietorship of the southeastern peninsula of that island between Trinity and Placentia Bays. In 1627 he came out with his family, built a fine house at Ferryland, and showed every intention of establishing a great fur trading and fishing colony in the form of a British dominion at this strategic gateway to New France.

Still more alarming were the activities of a Scotsman, Sir William Alexander, who had been stirred by accounts of the founding of New Spain, New France, New Netherland and New England to attempt the founding of a New Scotland. In 1621, with complete disregard for French claims, the English king had granted to him all the vast peninsula between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of St. Lawrence! Today that would be Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and part of Quebec Province. This princely domain was to be divided into feudal-type Scotch baronies complete with a hierarchy of hereditary titles.

Alexander's attempts to establish permanent trading posts in New Scotland, or Nova Scotia, were failures until 1628. That year seventy-two of his colonists managed to set up for business at Poutrincourt's old quarters at Port Royal in the Bay of Fundy. There they found themselves to be the near neighbors of a young French fur trader at Cape Sable named

Charles de la Tour who was under the impression that the country belonged to him.

Monsieur La Tour had inherited his rights from Saint Just after that pioneer finally returned to France in 1623. Since then he had been living the independent life of a wilderness lord with French retainers and aboriginal subjects, and he had no intention of yielding his estate or fur-trading privileges to anyone, much less foreigners.

La Tour did not immediately attempt to oust Alexander's Scots from Port Royal as he was on much the weaker side at the time, but he did stand firm and unsubmissive at Cape Sable and he resisted all efforts of the English to bring him over to their side. This was not easy, for nearly all of New France was soon in the hands of the enemy.

In 1628 a French colonizing fleet sent out by the Company of New France under the aegis of Cardinal de Richelieu was captured by privateers boldly operating in the Gulf of St. Lawrence with English letters of marque. In another year Champlain's worst fears were realized when this same fleet of privateers, under the leadership of the Kirke brothers, appeared before Quebec in force enough to insure its capitulation.

Champlain himself was taken prisoner at Quebec. But under the terms of the surrender he marched out of the fort with his arms and all of his own furs, as did other head men. The factors, servants and workmen were allowed to take but one beaver skin each before the English took over the factory. Then, after running up the English flag, the Kirkes were said to have driven an immediate trade with Indians and others remaining about the fort for some 2,000 skins in addition to those they found in the storehouse. They even ended up with the pelts they had allowed the starving garrison under the terms of surrender, taking them in trade for food.

Sir William Alexander, uniting his interests with the Kirkes to form the Scottish and English Company for the peltry trade of New France, sent out a second fleet to Port Royal in 1629 under the command of his son. When the fleet arrived nearly half the people who had been left at Port Royal the year before were found to have died from one cause or another. But young

Alexander relieved the survivors, strengthened the fort, and put new life into the colony. His vessels managed to acquire a satisfactory number of pelts in the Bay of Fundy during that summer. He also captured a French ship. And as further proof of the substance of New Scotland he took back on his return voyage an Indian chief of the region who wanted to conclude an alliance with the English king.

In the meantime it developed that shortly before Champlain's capitulation a treaty of peace had been signed between England and France. But, although King Charles agreed very soon to restore Quebec to the French under the terms of the treaty, the negotiations dragged on for three years. During that time the Scottish Company continued to drive a great trade for pelts on the St. Lawrence and elsewhere, while the French pressed not only their claims to furs appropriated from stores at Quebec after the actual signing of the peace treaty but insisted also upon the return of all of New France. That included Acadia of course and the evacuation of the fort at Port Royal.

At first, Charles was not disposed to disturb Alexander in his occupation of "Nova Scotia." In fact he encouraged the Scot to further efforts in that direction. However, he needed gold at the time much more than he needed another Scotland, so he was not reluctant to do a little bargaining. When his wife's brother, the French king, agreed to pay a long overdue and substantial dowry, Charles agreed to return Port Royal to the French. Sir William's dream was thereupon finished. The Scots demolished their fort, and young Alexander surrendered Port Royal to the Chevalier Isaac de Razilly who had been sent out by the Company of New France as governor of all Acadia.

This was a tremendous victory for Charles de la Tour and his French fur traders, who had not only stubbornly maintained themselves during the incident of the Scottish occupation of Acadia, but had managed harassments intended to hinder further encroachments up the coast of Maine by the Englishmen in those more southerly parts.

In 1631 the Frenchmen had paid a visit to the Pilgrims' most northerly outpost at Pentagoet on the Penobscot. Taking

advantage of the absence of the factor and most of his company, they were able to surprise a few "simple" servants by a ruse. First, pretending they had "newly come from the sea" and that their vessel was in need of repairs, a "false Scot" among them fell to admiring the Englishmen's muskets. Then, talking the servants into letting them examine the guns, they gained possession of the Englishmen's weapons and promptly made away with some four or five hundred pounds worth of Pilgrim goods, including three hundredweight of beaver.

In time, however, after the ousting of the Scots from the Bay of Fundy, the Frenchmen were able to do more than simply harass the Englishmen on the coast of Maine. The truck house at Machias in Maine, built by Isaac Allerton in 1633, was even more of a challenge than the Penobscot post had been. Allerton had no sooner settled his traders there than "La Tour, governor of the French in those parts, making claim to the place, came to displant them, and finding resistance, killed two of the men and carried away the other three and the goods."

Allerton himself later went to Port Royal to protest. But he was told by La Tour that "he had authority from the king of France, who challenged all from Cape Sable to Cape Cod, wishing them to take notice and to certify the rest of the English, that, if they traded to the east of Pemaquid, he would make prize of them." When Allerton asked to see Monsieur La Tour's commission the Frenchman replied that "his sword was commission sufficient, where he had strength to overcome; where that wanted, he would show his commission."

And the French made good on their challenge, for in 1635 Monsieur Charles d'Aunay, one of Governor Razilly's lieutenants, came in a man-of-war to the Pilgrims' trading post on the Penobscot. By a show of this force he took possession of the trucking house in the name of the King of France. Making an inventory of the goods he found there at prices he set himself, d'Aunay "made no payment for them, but told them in convenient time he would do it if they came for it. For the house and fortification etc. he would not allow nor account anything, saying that they which build on another man's ground do forfeit the same." Then he put the English traders in a shallop and sent them back to Plymouth.

The Pilgrim fathers were enough upset about the loss of their goods and trading post to do something violent about it. With the approval of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but without much in the way of material assistance from their Puritan brethren, they hired “a fair ship of above 300 tun well fitted with ordnance” to retake Pentagoet. This ship was under the command of a Captain Girling. If the captain was successful he was to have 700 pounds of beaver; if not, nothing. Along with him went Captain Miles Standish and twenty Plymouth men in their own bark to resettle their trading post after Girling had driven out the French.

It would appear, however, that the French must have had notice of the impending attack. So firmly were they entrenched behind earthworks that Captain Girling’s gunfire could not dislodge them and all the big ship’s powder was exhausted without effect. No landing was attempted. Standish, frustrated, returned to Plymouth in his bark, and Captain Girling went his own way.

The French now remained in permanent possession of what was soon known as the “Mission of Pentagoet.” And so the line was finally drawn as a practical matter between the English and the French on the Maine coast, although England continued to maintain officially that it was more northerly, at the 45th parallel.

Mutual distrust, born of the religious differences between English Puritan and French Catholic, often erupted in charges and counter-charges that sometimes threatened security on either side of the line. In fact, fear of possible French aggression was in part responsible for the eventual formation of the New England Confederation in 1643. On the other side of the picture however, there was much guarded trade between Frenchman and Englishman as it suited their pocketbooks. As a matter of fact the Puritans actually traded with the French conquerors of Pentagoet shortly after d’Aunay captured the Pilgrim trading post.

But, even so, this coastal border created by the rival fur traders of these two nations was maintained with only minor

variations for years, even after competition for the beaver trade was no longer the reason for its existence.

Acadian fur traders and the rivers of Maine and Massachusetts that ran in the wrong direction had effectively contained the English on the northern coasts. The St. Lawrence River route to the interior, to the great lake country that teemed with fur-bearers, remained safe to the French traders, who resumed their profitable westward penetration of the hinterland.

It remained to be seen, however, if the French could prevent the Dutch of New Netherland and the English of Virginia from draining off this hinterland trade. The Connecticut, Hudson, Delaware, and Susquehanna Rivers all ran in the right direction to tap it.

XI
The Bay of Virginia

WHEN Sir George Calvert, Baron of Baltimore, founded his province of "Avalon" in Newfoundland he was partly motivated by religious urgings. Being a Catholic convert he earnestly wanted to provide a haven in the new world for the persecuted Catholics of England. But this court favorite, who as the son of a humble Yorkshire farmer had figuratively pulled himself up by his own bootstraps to ennoblement, was also a profit-minded promoter. He expected a rich return on his newly gained proprietorship.

However, after investing many thousands of pounds at Ferryland, Lord Baltimore had little to show in the way of profits. The future, too, looked as bleak as the cold Newfoundland winters, as barren as the sterile soil. True, there were fish to be had for the taking—weather permitting. But the trade in pelts was only fair, for the more profitable fur frontier had long since passed into the interior of Canada. And agricultural pursuits, the traditional support of English feudal manors, were almost impossible due to the inclemencies of the climate.

The Lord Proprietor of Avalon was soon looking southward, his eyes resting appraisingly on Virginia. There, the warmer weather and richer soil seemed to offer more appropriate conditions for the kind of province he had in mind. There, in the lush tidewater of the Chesapeake Bay country, he could hope for a better trade in pelts too.

As for possible profits from Newfoundland cod, he would gladly consign them to those hearty fishermen who by nature were better able to cope with the rigors of the northern climate!

So it came about that in 1629 his lordship wrote to King Charles asking that a precinct of land in Virginia be granted to him with the same quasi-regal privileges he enjoyed under his

Newfoundland patent. Then, without waiting for a reply, he embarked for Jamestown where he let it be known that he was looking for a new plantation site, and forthwith began cruising about Chesapeake Bay with the air of a man who was confident that the king would approve his plans.

This was anything but politic. No Virginians, Anglican or Puritan, wanted a Catholic in their midst. They didn't want one even as a neighbor in their great bay, and especially such an influential convert as Baltimore. Who knew what Romish plot he might be promoting?

But even more alarming was the threat that this ambitious baron posed to their fur trade in the Chesapeake.

The tidewater had come to represent a treasure house of pelts to the merchants and factors on the James River, at Jamestown and at Kecoughtan, and to scores of traders plying their shallops and pinnaces in the bay. On the York, the Rappahannock and the Potomac Rivers these traders regularly visited the villages of the Indians, their shallops returning to the James River plantations laden with skins. And across the bay on the Eastern Shore there was still another lively fur trading center at Accomac where beaver and muskrat abounded in the near-by streams and marshes.

The most profitable branch of this trade was that in the Potomac River, where the Spaniards of the sixteenth century had been the first of record to barter with the natives for pelts and hides. Captain Samuel Argall, who succeeded Captain John Smith in 1609 as the colony's main support for trade with the Indians, made several early visits to the villages of the Patowomecks there. For hatchets and hoes, no doubt, he took good quantities of beaver, otter, raccoon and deer skins as well as the corn that was so badly needed at Jamestown. In 1612 he really whetted the Patowomecks' appetite for English goods when he produced a copper kettle for their chief. Many English traders, with and without permits, followed Captain Argall into the Potomac River, but especially members of the

Virginia Council who more or less controlled the Chesapeake trade as a perquisite of office.

The Eastern Shore was opened up for trade in 1619 by Ensign Thomas Savage who was one of the earliest professional factors in the Chesapeake tidewater. He had spent several years as a youthful hostage with Chief Wahunsonacock of the Powhatan Confederacy after having been left with this old Powhatan in 1608 by Captain Christopher Newport. During that time young Savage became a favorite of the natives and learned much about the dialects and customs of the tribes in the tidewater country. Later, when his services as an interpreter came to be in demand by Virginia officials, he was commissioned an "Aunchient," or ensign, on the staff of the Master of Ordnance at Jamestown. It was in this capacity on expeditions of discovery in the Potomac and Patuxent Rivers and on the Eastern Shore that he began bartering on his own account.

Like Captain John Smith before him, Ensign Savage learned of the great trade in furs being had by the Frenchmen on the "backside of Virginia." In 1621 his account of their deeper penetration of the hinterland reached the Virginia Company Council in London. At the same time the company received reports of Dutch traders operating along the Virginia coasts. A detailed account of this competition was rendered by Thomas Dermer, the New England fur trader, who in addition to having paid the visit to Jamestown went into the Delaware and Hudson Rivers. He reported that in both those rivers he had "found divers ships of Amsterdam and Horne who yearly had there a great and rich trade in Furrs."

The Dutch encroachments prompted a special letter, too, from the governor and his council at Jamestown. They urged the company to undertake "so certaine and gainefull" voyages for pelts as might be made "to their infinite gaine" in the Delaware and Hudson, both of which they pointed out were "within our lymits." The Dutch interlopers on the coasts were almost as challenging to the Virginians, now that they themselves were well rooted, as was the possibility of French competition creeping down the rivers that flowed into Chesapeake Bay from the northern hinterland.

Almost—but not quite as challenging. For one thing, the settlers on the James at this time had neither the ships to trade coastwise nor the trade goods necessary to compete with the Dutch. More importantly, however, right at their back door was the vast tidewater of the bay and, beyond that, great stretches of lake country in the north, all fertile with fur bearers to be had for the taking—provided they got there before the French. This could be accomplished with home-made shallops and less fancy trade goods than were needed to compete with the Dutch.

So it came about that the Virginians left any exploitation of the Delaware and Hudson Rivers to the merchants in England and, individually with their more limited resources, extended their own trading operations in their "Bay of Virginia."

Scores of immigrants participated in this tidewater fur trade, including a great many who had the advantage of a knowledge of the Algonquin tongue because of having cohabited with the savages. Some of the latter were no more than villainous runaways, cautiously returning from sanctuary with the natives to share the profits of the boom in pelts. Others, such as Robert Poole and Henry Spelman, had been left with the Indians as hostages when they were youths, very much in the same manner as Thomas Savage. Like him, they too had learned the dialects and habits of various tribes, acted as spies for the English colonists and then, later, were useful as interpreters.

Robert Poole traded professionally for the joint-stock, making voyages in the company's pinnace and rendering his accountings to the colony's treasurer at Jamestown. But he and Thomas Savage also obtained commissions through members of the council and, renting shallops from more prosperous colonists for voyages to the villages of the Indians, did very well for themselves in this way. Probably neither of them traded for pelts as extensively however as did Henry Spelman who eventually managed to get financial backing in England and ships of his own.

Young Spelman was the incorrigible scion of a distinguished English family. According to his own testimony he had been sent out to Virginia in 1609 at fourteen years of age because of

“beinge in displeasure of my fryndes and desirous to see other countries.” Captain John Smith left him with Powhatan’s people, no doubt as the best way to get rid of him. Henry Spelman was not as popular with the natives as Thomas Savage, except perhaps with the Indian maidens. In fact he appears to have escaped with his life only because of the intervention of Pocahontas who, continuing her interest in white men after the affair with Captain John Smith, succeeded eventually to marrying an Englishman named John Rolfe.

Spelman’s entire career in the colony was one of manifold and dangerous deceit. As a youth living with the Indians, he was accused of treacherously laying a death trap for some of his fellow Englishmen at Jamestown. Later, when he was employed as an official interpreter for the colony, his tenure in office was cut short after he was tried by the House of Burgesses and degraded from his rank for inciting Opechancanough, the new Powhatan, against the English governor.

In 1622, when Opechancanough finally loosed his stored-up hatred against the English, killing some three hundred fifty men, women and children along the James River in a surprise massacre, Henry Spelman and a trading partner, Captain Raleigh Croshaw, were bartering in the Potomac. Opechancanough conspired with Chief Japazaws of the Patowomecks to have the traders murdered. But the Patowomeck king double-crossed the Powhatan. Instead of killing the Englishmen, he entered into an alliance with them, permitting them to build a fortified trading post on his lands.

All the evidence would indicate that Japazaws was a very wily politician. He liked English kettles and knives as much as some of his red neighbors disliked him, and he never did get around to knuckling under to Opechancanough. No doubt the fort was a smart move on his part. In any event, because of Japazaws’ need for white friends with guns Captains Spelman and Croshaw escaped death.

Henry Spelman was not so fortunate the following year however. On a trading voyage farther up the Potomac River, at the later site of Washington, D. C., he was killed by the

Anacostan Indians after being captured in an ambush along with Henry Fleet and some other traders and servants. Just a few days before his death Spelman had betrayed a warrior who hazarded warning him of his own intended murder. It appears he even witnessed the agony of the red man's tortured execution. Then, by some sort of final justice, he died at the hands of the same savages to whom he had given over the kindly warrior.

Aqua vitae may have had something to do with this murderous episode, for, like the French and the Dutch before them and like the English who were to follow in New England, some traders in Virginia taught the savages to drink strong waters as a means of extracting a richer profit during barter. And what a frightful chance they took!

Emotionally volatile and capricious by nature, the red man was even more unpredictable of course when he was under the influence of liquor. He might lose his trading sense to the advantage of the white men who purposely plied him with *aqua vitae* during the feasting that always preceded barter, but when he realized he had been cheated he was apt to reach for another jug and his tomahawk at the same time. No doubt many a trader suffered a slow and bestial death while looking into the bloodshot eyes of savages galled by stomach fires that he himself had kindled.

Henry Fleet, who had been captured with Spelman, managed the predicament in which he found himself with more skill than his friend, indeed with some foresight. While no one in the colony heard from him in over four years, and all thought he was dead, Fleet not only contrived to escape execution by the savages, but spent his captivity to real advantage. By the time he was finally released he had learned enough about the Algonquin language and had become sufficiently fraternal with his captors to engage in a profitable trade in skins with them. Then, returning to London, where he had excellent family connections, he acquired financial backing from William Cloberry and other well-known merchants there. Afterward, as Captain Henry Fleet, he traded in the Chesapeake for some years in his own ships and later

played a significant role in the genesis of the war between the Virginians and Lord Baltimore over the fur trade.

The central figure in that struggle was to be William Claiborne, an ambitious and fiery young man who had been sent out to Virginia by the company in 1621 as the colony's surveyor. He served against the Indians and rose rapidly to become a member of the governor's council. In 1626, after the English king took over the management of the colony from the company, Captain Claiborne at twenty-five years of age became Secretary of Virginia, the first to hold that office by royal appointment.

This flattering preferment happened during the midst of the young councillor's activities to launch himself in the fur trade as a means of supplementing his income. For a base of operations in the tidewater he had just acquired a strategically located plantation at the mouth of the James River. This was at Kecoughtan in Elizabeth City—now Hampton, Virginia, the oldest continuous English habitation on the American continent—a prime seventeenth century warehousing site.

In the favored position of a member of the council Claiborne was joining such enterprising venturers as Raleigh Croshaw, Abraham Peirsey, John Chew and Samuel Mathews in profiting from the Chesapeake fur trade. These merchants furnished guides, interpreters, maps, supplies and trucking stuff not only to seasoned traders already on the bay but to those naively adventurous souls who came out from England with their warrants to barter with the savages. It was a lucrative business, particularly for one who also had influence to peddle in the matter of commissions, licenses and taxes.

However, Captain Claiborne's ambitions soared much higher with his appointment as Secretary of His Majesty's Colony of Virginia. In this capacity he was second only to the governor in the colony's hierarchy of prestige and power, and he was in a position to dispense direct patronage. His trade horizon broadened measurably.

With the acquisition of additional lands on the Eastern Shore, a perquisite of the Secretary's office, he began doing business on that side of the bay with promising traders like Daniel Cugley and Charles Harmar, as well as with Thomas Savage, who then lived on land given him there by his genial friend, Debedeavon, the Laughing King of the Accomacs. And these rugged frontiersmen together with their friends supported the ambitious young secretary in plans he broached to set up a great new plantation somewhere in the northernmost reaches of the bay, a Virginia Hundred which would serve as a base for far-flung trading operations on the backside of Virginia—to challenge both the Dutch and the French in the hinterland.

Beginning in 1627 Claiborne made several exploratory expeditions in the Chesapeake preparatory to implementing these plans. Since the governor and his council had authority to grant commissions for discovery and trade with the Indians between the 34th and 41st parallels, it was no trick at all for Mr. Secretary to arrange to go whither he pleased in the pursuit of his objective. Also, it would appear, he had less trouble than most in dealing with the savages. He seemed to have a way with them.

On his voyages into the Potomac and other near-by rivers of the tidewater, where the natives were already accustomed to bartering with the Virginians, Indian dugouts filled with braves would escort Claiborne's boat to a village site or runners would appear along the banks to show the way. There would be drummings, smoke signals and whooping. When the village was reached the entire population might be in evidence, standing about in groups exhibiting their brown beaver, otter, marten, or deerskins by holding up the pelts on poles and otherwise making friendly gestures.

Usually the savages were almost naked. During the hot spring months of the trading season few of them wore much more than little aprons, with possibly feathers or some English ornaments tied on their heads. On sunny days their bodies glistened with grease and oil; often they were streaked with the red and orange dye of pocones root in honor of the distinguished white visitors with the intriguing trade goods.

Sometimes, to prove their friendship, the warriors of a tribe would come dancing to the beat of their drums and singing their peace song all the way down to the water's edge. A priest might be among them, cavorting about with clattering deer hooves tied around his ankles and rattling dried gourds filled with pebbles and shells. Or even some squaws might join in the greetings with loops of bells, thimbles or pieces of brass which they shook in cadence with the drums.

Always, however, the Virginians had to be watchful for ambuscades, no matter how friendly things appeared. Only if women and children were much in evidence was it considered reasonably safe to beach a boat and proceed with the preliminaries of barter.

Exasperating in their tediousness, these preliminaries had to be accepted with casualness, else the barter might be off. A great trader like Captain Claiborne must first engage in seemingly endless pantomime and orations. After that he had to offer through his interpreter gifts of axes, knives or hatchets for the chief of the tribe and his head men, and this must be followed by a distribution of blue beads, bells and other trinkets among the chief's wives. But it was the feasting that took up most of the time. In fact, when a really good catch of beaver was on hand trading seldom commenced until the second day.

Then, when the goods were finally unloaded, the natives would insist on viewing it at leisure, tumbling and tossing it over and over again and stealing whatever they could. If objections were raised, however, no barter might be joined. Or worse, the savages might "fall out" with the Englishmen, and killings would result. Therefore, the members of the bartering detail had to be constantly on the alert to prevent as much stealing as possible, while their companions stood guard by the boat with arms in readiness to provide cover for a quick retreat in case of necessity. After the bartering actually got under way, every cunning device and ruse was employed on each side to outwit the other. Suspicion was mutual, and well it might be, for the natives were quick to learn "English tricks."

Claiborne was especially successful in the northern reaches of the bay where contacts were made with fierce hunting tribes from the hinterland. They brought out decorative panther skins, bundles of tough bison hides which would serve as leather, and huge bearskins for use as robes, blankets and floor coverings. Occasionally for mere trifles they offered sparkling stones and rare gems that would eventually bring fancy prices from the London jewelers who set them in gentlemen's rings.

There were even black beaver and sable skins available in the northernmost bay villages. Sables (American pine marten) brought up to twenty shillings a pair. One full grown black beaver was worth as much, whereas a brown beaver pelt weighing two pounds never brought more than fourteen shillings in the Virginia market at the time. There were stacks of the cheaper pelts to be had in the northern villages too—wild-cat, red fox and the little musquash (muskrat). The time would come in America when the lowly muskrat would be the backbone of the fur industry, but the smaller varieties in the seventeenth century sometimes brought only two shillings a dozen—with cods. The cods of muskrat served for good perfume in England. In Virginia they only added to the stench of Indian stews!

Wherever the English traders went in the Chesapeake there was no escaping the hospitality of the feast. And much Indian food was anything but palatable. Stinking jerked venison swarming with maggots had to be eaten if offered, however. Gobbets of greasy meat with the suspiciously foul odors of a communal stew pot must be swallowed. An Indian could understand why a white trader might decline the offer of a squaw as a bed fellow for the night but never the refusal of food at a feast.

Captain Claiborne's crowning business achievement at this time was the establishment of trading relations with the giant Susquehannocks who had previously bartered their fine pelts with Captain John Smith. These proud and intelligent savages, Iroquois by blood, inhabited the valley of the Susquehanna River through which the Englishmen hoped to gain access to the northern lake regions. Claiborne made trading pacts with their great chief in 1629, the meetings taking place at the

mouth of the river on the mountainous little island which today serves as a bridge anchor for fast trains and automobiles speeding over the Susquehanna River between Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Indeed, the Secretary of Virginia was well on his way to consummating his grand plan for a Virginia Hundred in the upper Chesapeake as the hub of a great fur-trading empire, when Lord Baltimore appeared on the scene.

Now, obviously, the English baron had much the same idea as the Virginians, except in one important respect. He didn't plan to come under Virginia's jurisdiction. He intended to have a province of his own—and that a slice of Virginia territory—over which he would rule independently and for which he would be answerable to no one except the king.

It was an impossible situation for the Virginians. But not for George Calvert. The First Baron of Baltimore felt that he knew well enough how to get things done at the English court, and he didn't intend to let any muddy colonials stand in his way!

XII
Kent Island and the Backside of Virginia

AT the time of Lord Baltimore's arrival the Virginians were already suffering from mass hypertension induced by fear. Early in the summer of 1629 there had been another massacre along the James River, and no sooner had this Indian uprising been quelled than rumors were rife that the Spaniards were about to attack.

Captain Claiborne led the colonial forces against the offending Pamunkeys of the Powhatan Confederacy in an effort to "utterly exterpate" them, that being the settled policy of the colony. No thought had been given to any further trade with these neighboring savages since the first bloody massacre they committed in 1622. The Pamunkeys were fair game and in 1629 the English soldiers "obtained more spoil and revenge than they had done since the great massacre."

But even more pressing than the Indian war that year was the feverish urgency about rebuilding and fortifying the fort at Point Comfort to protect the plantations against a surprise attack from Florida. Nervously on the alert for Spanish spies and treachery, the protestant Virginians not only didn't trust the intentions of their Catholic neighbors to the south, they didn't trust their own king. After all, they no doubt reasoned, Charles did have a Catholic wife! And didn't he have as his new advisor, William Laud, the Bishop of London, who everyone knew was trying to reconcile the English Church to Rome?

The bigotries of the seventeenth century were indeed unreasoning. But they were very real to the Virginians in their lonesome outpost of civilization. To them Spaniard and Catholic were one.

Now into their midst came Lord Baltimore! Had he not once connived with Gondomar, the hated Spanish ambassador, to bring about the marriage of the baby Prince Charles to the

Infanta Maria of Spain? Maybe he was in league now with Spain under some subtle arrangement made by King Charles himself. Anything was possible to the fear-ridden colonists on the James.

To dispose of this unwelcome intruder, without the risk of too greatly offending the king, they had to have something fool-proof on which to hang their collective hats. In the end, they offered Baltimore the prescribed oath of allegiance and supremacy, making it mandatory for him to subscribe to the supreme authority of the English sovereign in all matters ecclesiastical and spiritual. He refused to take the oath and so was ordered to leave the colony.

Always in the front rank of the opposition to Lord Baltimore of course had been the merchants who foresaw the loss of their tidewater trade, but even more especially William Claiborne and his followers with their own grand plan for colonization and trade on the backside of Virginia. Working for them in addition to fear and prejudice during this clash of rival plans was the rising sense of political independence in the colony, an increasing determination to fight for the sovereignty of possessed land and for “democrattical rights.”

The Virginians did actually have something of a legal brake that they could apply on royal or noble license. They had their House of Burgesses, which had been sitting since 1619 as the first popular legislative assembly in America. Even after the king took over the colony from the company the colonists had been successful in retaining their little parliament. Somehow, with this bulwark of democracy, it was easier to face up to the crown or to court favorites like Lord Baltimore when impossible demands were in the making. And that is exactly what happened, for the House of Burgesses backed the merchants in every move they made to thwart the great lord’s plans, both in Virginia and in England after he returned there.

Meanwhile, Captain Claiborne himself went to London where he obtained additional backing for his project through

the merchant adventurer, William Cloberry. This wealthy man, together with Maurice Thompson and other merchants, subscribed for the major share of the joint-stock in the trading adventure. All agreed enthusiastically that through Claiborne's plantation it would be possible to drain off much of the fur trade of the French in Canada. Cloberry well knew the potentialities of the "backside of Virginia," as he had formerly adventured with the Kirkes in Canada.

Just to make sure that if Lord Baltimore later obtained his grant he did not molest Claiborne, the partners in the trading adventure obtained a commission under His Majesty's signet of Scotland authorizing trade in all territory "neere or about these partes of America for which there is not allready a patent granted to others for the sole trade." It was drawn up by Sir William Alexander, the Secretary for Scotland, who was entertained by Cloberry with bait in the form of a proposition for interchange of trade between Virginia and Nova Scotia. Sir William, making desperate efforts at the time to extract a profit from his grant in America, saw in the Claiborne venture a source of corn for his plantation at Port Royal.

In any event, the commission was confirmed by the King himself at Greenwich, and when the Secretary of Virginia sailed back across the ocean in May of 1631 to establish his plantation and launch his trading adventure he went with the royal blessing.

In his ship, the *Africa*, cargoed with colonists and supplies, Claiborne touched first at Kecoughtan and Accomac to attract additional volunteers, and then late in August he planted his colony on Kent Island, some hundred and twenty-five miles up the bay. Kent Island, which lies against the Eastern Shore opposite present-day Annapolis, was ideally situated for his purposes. He built a palisaded fort and stocked his plantation with cattle, swine and poultry. With the arrival of more farmers and traders from the lower settlements it was not long before the colony had a church, a windmill, warehouses, and a shipyard busily constructing shallops, wherries and pinnaces for the Indian trade.

Despite a devastating fire that once destroyed all the buildings, death from marauding savages, and sickness, as well as many other hardships, the plantation flourished. In the spring its fields were green with tobacco and corn, and its wharves were busy with trading boats and bundles of furs. During the summer the season's pelts were stretched and leathered on rows of wooden hide racks inside the palisades before being packed in great hogsheads for shipment to England. Then in the autumn, after the harvesting, the sweet scent of tobacco wafted into the fort from the drying sheds where the leaves hung curing on poles.

In the spring of 1632 Captain Nicholas Martiau, an ancestor of George Washington, represented Kent Hundred in the House of Burgesses at Jamestown, and the first English settlement within the present bounds of the State of Maryland was recognized as a political unit of Virginia, established within the assigned territorial limits of that royal colony.

In the meantime, on the other side of the ocean, George Calvert died before ever getting a charter to establish a palatinate of his own in the Chesapeake. However, his efforts finally bore fruit. On June 30, 1632, two months after his death, a grant passed through the seals. "Maryland" was to be a slice of Virginia extending from the Potomac River northward to the 40th parallel which crosses the Delaware at present-day Philadelphia. It was a feudal seigniory to be passed on to the baron's heirs, just as he had planned, and already it had made its first descent, to his oldest son, Cecilius Calvert, second Lord Baltimore.

Although Kent Island was obviously within the limits of the grant to Baltimore, neither William Claiborne nor the Council at Jamestown doubted the legality of Virginia's claim upon the island. The Maryland charter expressly limited Baltimore's rights to land "hactenus inculta," that is, hitherto uncultivated. Kent of course was cultivated and had been for some time.

Two years later, however, when Cecilius' younger brother, the twenty-eight-year-old Leonard, brought the first colonists over to plant on the Potomac River he promptly let it be known that Captain Claiborne must submit to his government.

Kent Hundred, he said, came under the jurisdiction of the Lord Proprietor of Maryland. Furthermore, licenses from Lord Baltimore were to be required of anyone trading within the precincts of Maryland. Not only was Kent Island to be delivered up to his government at St. Mary's on the Potomac, but the trading post in the Susquehanna River on mountainous little Palmer's Island, which Claiborne had planted in 1633, was to be given over. The Marylanders, it appeared, planned to build their own ships for the Indian fur trade and to set up magazines in their colony that they might "make thereby a very great gayne."

Cecil, Lord Baltimore, in fact laid much stress on the fur trade in his instructions to Leonard, consigning to his brother for his own account in trade with the natives a quantity of trucking stuff consisting of "coarse freeze, small groce glass beads, box, Ivorye, and horne Combes, brass kettles, axes, hoes, hawkes bells, and sheffeeld knives." Before the palisaded fort at St. Mary's was completed, the Maryland pinnace, *Dove*, was sent out to follow the "trade of beaver through all parts of the precincts of this province."

Under Cyprian Thorowgood, Lord Baltimore's traders paid a visit to the Virginians' trading post on Palmer's Island, which was manned by an interpreter named John Fullwood and a negro slave. However, the men from St. Mary's "had a little falling out with the Indians" who never did take well to them. When Thorowgood threatened a small Kent Island shallop he found trading there, the Indians showed signs of siding with the Virginians and in the end the shallop was permitted to depart with its load of skins.

Although the Kent Islanders had taken in 3,000 skins during the first part of the 1634 season, the Marylanders, due to the lateness of their arrival that spring, took altogether "only 298, weighing 451 pounds, together with 53 muskrat and 17 other skins."

Even so, Leonard Calvert was much encouraged, and he sent out shallops for more skins late in May. He also wrote home that he was certain that he could obtain a large part of the trade of the "Massawomecks" (Iroquois) who, he said,

dwelt ten days journey to the north and had formerly traded with the Kirkes in Canada. He urged however that much more trucking stuff be sent over as “there is nothing does more endanger the loss of commerce with the Indians than want of truck to barter with them.”

The site of Calvert’s capital near the mouth of the Potomac River was an old trading ground of Virginia traders, including Claiborne, Fleet and Harmar. Once, Harmar had outwitted Fleet there to the tune of three hundredweight of beaver, when he persuaded the Yowaccomoco Indians to let him have the skins they were holding for his rival by telling them that Fleet was dead. The trick worked so well in fact that Harmar then went up the river spreading the report that Captain Fleet was dead, with the result that he made “an unexpected trade for the time, at a small charge, having gotten fifteen hundredweight of beaver, and cleared fourteen towns.”

Up the Potomac were the important towns of the Piscattaways. Beyond them lived the Anacostans who once held Henry Fleet captive and with whom he later traded. The Anacostans, like the Susquehannocks, were blood relatives of the Iroquois. But they too were now castoff and acted as buffers between the war-like Five Nations and the Algonquin tribes to the south. Through the Anacostans, Fleet hoped to make contacts with the Iroquois, tap the Canada trade, and drain it down the backside of Virginia through the Potomac River. He had run into trouble, however, due to the jealousies of the Piscattaways and others in the lower valley who didn’t want to be bypassed. They had no objection to acting as middlemen, but they objected to the white men taking their truck up the valley and dealing directly with their enemies.

Fleet’s problems were further complicated by the arrival of the Marylanders. It would appear that as a means of protecting his trade interests in the Potomac valley, he associated himself with them in the fur trade, agreeing to pay the ten percent tax demanded by the proprietary on all skins acquired from the Indians.

This, of course, William Claiborne and other Virginians would not agree to do.

When Captain Claiborne refused to submit to Lord Baltimore or to pay the tax on skins, he found himself accused of having incited the Indians against the Maryland settlement on the Potomac. Henry Fleet, it turned out, was the instrument of this accusation. Possibly he was hoping in this way to hasten the elimination of his major competitor for the backside trade.

However, the accusation against Claiborne was later proved false on the testimony of the Indian chiefs themselves. They said that it was actually Captain Fleet who had talked against the Marylanders—all of which might indicate that some original scheme concocted by Fleet to hang on to his Potomac trade had backfired. Father Andrew White, a restless Jesuit priest who was much involved in the fur trade with the natives as a means of supporting the Jesuits' mission in Maryland, always insisted that Captain Fleet "had been a firebrand to inflame the Indians against us."

The new Governor of Virginia, Sir John Harvey, also co-operated with the Marylanders. For reasons of his own he gave them cattle and supplies and assisted them against Claiborne whom he had relieved of his office as secretary. All of which was very much to the disgust of the Virginians who eventually "thrust" the governor out of office for treason to their interests and sent him packing back to England.

It was charged that Harvey had even encouraged Calvert's men to fire on Kent Island shallops and confiscate their furs. In any case, this the Marylanders did almost from the time of their arrival in 1634, and during all the remainder of that year piracy and lawlessness ruled the Chesapeake.

Armed pinnaces out of St. Mary's commandeered Claiborne's smaller shallops and took his furs. His men were evicted from their traditional trading grounds with gun and sword. But the fort on Kent Island was not attacked, and the Virginians had time not only to make it more secure but to erect a second fort on another part of the island to prevent surprise. They also began building larger boats, including a

pinnace called the *Long Tayle*, that could carry more fighting men and heavier weapons in addition to a cargo of pelts.

The *Long Tayle* was the first real ship built within the present boundaries of Maryland. She had a crew of twenty men. Her guns were chambers and falconets for ball shot, and murderers—the little cannon into the muzzles of which could be jammed scraps of iron, rocks, or almost anything lethal that might be handy for standing off boarding parties.

The Kent Islanders launched the hostilities in the spring of 1635 when John Butler, Claiborne's brother-in-law, captured a Maryland boat loaded with pelts taken from Palmer's Island. Soon after, Captain Thomas Smith went out in the *Long Tayle* to trade for beaver with an Indian village on the south side of the Patuxent River. Since this village was not more than half a dozen miles overland from the Maryland capital, it is not strange that Calvert learned of the *Long Tayle's* presence. He promptly sent a sufficient force of soldiers to surprise the Kent Islanders and take them and their pinnace.

Captain Claiborne retaliated just as promptly. He dispatched Lieutenant Radcliffe Warren down the bay in a fast wherry, called the *Cockatrice*, with a vengeful crew of thirteen men. They tried to recapture the *Long Tayle*. However they couldn't get at her under the guns of Calvert's fort at St. Mary's where she lay protected. But then, Warren heard that a Maryland pinnace, the *St. Helen*, was trading alone in the Pocomoke River on the Eastern Shore. So he set out after her.

Entering the Pocomoke, he sighted the Maryland pinnace and splashed a ball from his falconet beside her. She hove to quietly. He was closing in to board when, suddenly from a nearby cove, another pinnace bore down on him. Her decks were razed and her crew were presenting arms. It was the *St. Margaret*, Calvert's largest boat, commanded by his chief trader and councillor, Captain Thomas Cornwallis.

Lieutenant Warren had little time to consider the probability that he was the victim of a well-laid trap. Falconets cracked out their sharp reports. Chambers barked. The surrounding marshes of the Pocomoke reverberated with the din of oaths, shots and belching murderers as the three boats became

environed with fire and smoke. Warren himself was killed. Three others died in the fight, and many were wounded on both sides. Only the greater maneuverability and speed of the badly battered *Cockatrice* accounted for its escape back to Kent Island.

Claiborne and his men were bitter about the unexpected outcome of Warren's expedition. They soon had an opportunity for revenge however. Just a few weeks later they learned that Cornwallis was again bartering in the Pocomoke, together with his aide, Cuthbert Fenwick, and some other well known Maryland traders. Two boats were sent this time to trap the Marylanders. Captain Thomas Smith, recently escaped from St. Mary's and now master of the *Cockatrice*, went in escort with a newly enlisted Virginia pinnace under the command of Philip Taylor. They succeeded in capturing the big Maryland boat and its crew in a naval action that was later described as "felonie and piracie" by Lord Baltimore's government.

The next day Taylor was in the Potomac River for a try at recapturing the *Long Tayle*. He carried what might be described as a letter of marque and reprisal given him by William Claiborne. The Marylanders, however, turned the tables on him. They captured Taylor along with his pinnace.

But in the meantime Governor Harvey had been placed under arrest by the Virginia Council and put on a ship for England. When Claiborne arrived from Kent Island late in May of 1635 with news of the bloody encounters on the bay, the acting governor, John West, at once sent a mission to St. Mary's to apprize Calvert of Harvey's arrest and to demand that the Marylanders "desist their violent proceedings."

Leonard Calvert took pause at this unexpected development. His younger brother, George, as well as his councillor, Jerome Hawley, had been contending all along that Claiborne had some right on his side. Violence was certainly not accomplishing anything. Maybe, Calvert may have conjectured, his brother in England could do better through the courts.

So it came about that the mission was successful in imposing a truce on Maryland that lasted for two years.

Prisoners and confiscated boats were exchanged. Claiborne, now married and settled with his family, was left unmolested in the possession of his island home and undisturbed in his trading activities. Another windmill was built, and another church, better to serve the two growing communities on Kent Island. Besides an enormous number of pelts traded locally for private accounts and for the maintenance of the plantation, furs to the value of 4,000 pounds sterling were shipped to England for the company partners there.

But then, Captain Claiborne found it necessary to go to England, for Lord Baltimore had powerful friends. It looked as if he might get a legal decision against the Virginians through the Lords Commissioners of Plantations. Claiborne turned over all his operations to a partner who had recently arrived from England representing the joint-stock company, and went to London to fight for his rights. No sooner had he left however than this partner, one George Evelin, managed to betray Kent Island into the hands of his enemies.

Although the main fort was traitorously delivered up, the island was not yielded quietly or easily. Repeated military expeditions to subdue the inhabitants were made by Leonard Calvert before Captain Thomas Smith and others were finally captured in 1638 and hanged as pirates and rebels. Claiborne himself, *in absentia*, was attainted by the Maryland Assembly of the "grievous crimes of pyracie and murther," and "all his lands and tenements, goods and chattels" were forfeited to the Lord Proprietary. Evelin took his share of the loot, even digging up some of Claiborne's fruit trees and transplanting them to the manor that Lord Baltimore granted him near St. Mary's in payment for his services.

In another few years, due to continued disturbances, Kent Island was to be laid waste without hope of recovery, the mill and the forts destroyed, its former population scattered abroad.

Soldiers armed with ordnance taken from Kent were also sent in 1638 to Palmer's Island in the Susquehanna River where they "utterly ruined" the plantation and reduced the palisaded fort which had been built there the previous year. They seized all of Claiborne's goods and chattels. Leonard

Calvert himself, following the expedition, triumphantly supervised the conversion of this trade outpost to "Fort Conquest" of Maryland. The spoils were divided. Claiborne's bonded servants, cattle and other goods at Palmer's Island went to John Lewger, Secretary of Maryland. His books were sequestered by a petty officer, as was a wooden chest belonging to the unfortunate Captain Tom Smith.

Gone was the "Plantation in the Sasquesahonoughs Country" at the mouth of the river, for which Captain Claiborne had been willing to pay the king a rental of fifty pounds sterling a year including rights "to the head of the said River, and to the Grand Lake of Canada to be held in fee from the Crown of England." In fact, forever gone was the "greate trade of beaver and other furrs which Claiborne might have had with the mountayn Indians which live upon the lakes of the river of Canada."

The Marylanders carried on a profitable local fur trade, in spite of Indian disturbances, for some years. But they were no threat to the French or the Dutch as they were never successful in tapping the northern lake-country trade on the backside of Virginia through either the valley of the Susquehanna or the Potomac. Their relations with the Indians were not up to it, and they were more inclined to agricultural pursuits anyway.

The French were therefore able to continue their penetration of America without the interference they might have had from the Virginians who settled Kent and Palmer's Islands. In fact, they were now almost unmolested in an encirclement of the English colonies that would not stop until they reached the mouth of the Mississippi River. And the Dutch were undisturbed by the Marylanders even in the neighboring valley of the Delaware, where they were now settling and trading in pelts under the very noses of Lord Baltimore's people who claimed jurisdiction over some of those parts.

By the end of the century the fur frontier in Maryland had almost disappeared and the trade was no longer important in the economic life of the colony. The average value of skins exported per year didn't exceed 650 pounds sterling. By then the Governor of Maryland was declaring that "this Countrey is

an open Country and deales generally in Tobacco and not in furrs.”

XIII
New Netherland's South River

THE charter of the great Dutch West India Company gave it a monopoly over trade in Africa and America, empowered it to plant colonies and appoint governors of those colonies, make treaties with the aborigines, build forts, and wage war. The company was to maintain its own fleet of twenty warships; but, if it became embroiled in more trouble than this fleet could handle expeditiously, the States General of the Netherlands bound itself to furnish twenty additional armed vessels.

Although the company was chartered in 1621, it did not commence operations until 1623. But then, during the next six or seven years, its success was phenomenal in the matter of profits—from waging war against Spain. So much so, that by 1629 its directors in Amsterdam were prone to speak slightingly of New Netherland, their trading colony in North America. "The trade carried on there in peltries is right advantageous but, one year with another, we can at most bring home fifty thousand guilders," they complained.

For a plantation which at the time numbered no more than 300 inhabitants this would seem to be most productive, especially when compared to what the English had done in either Virginia or in New England. It was paltry enough, however, when compared with the loot of Spanish colonial strongholds that fell to the conquering Dutch merchants, or when weighed against the spoils of Spain's silver fleet that Admiral Peter Heyn had captured in the name of the West India Company. In one fell swoop he took seventeen galleons laden with bullion and merchandise to the value of fourteen millions of guilders! From that operation alone the investors received a dividend amounting to well over half of the company's paid-up capital.

Experienced Captain Cornelis Jacobsen May, who had been appointed the first managing director of the West India Company's colony in America, acted primarily as a chief fur factor for the company. During 1624, the first and only year of his governorship, he sent home pelts which brought 27,000 guilders. The next year his successor did even better. In 1626, the year that Peter Minuit received the formal title of Director General of New Netherland and purchased Manhattan from the Indians, one ship for Amsterdam was cargoed with "7246 beaver skins, 178½ otter skins, 675 otter skins, 48 minck skins, 36 wild cat skins, 33 mincks, 34 rat skins." It also carried some oak and hickory to timber-hungry Holland.

This, incidentally, is the earliest known true manifest of a ship clearing from the present port of New York. In terms of today's money the skins brought well over one hundred thousand American dollars. A right advantageous trade indeed!

In the spring of 1624 some thirty families, mostly French-speaking Walloons from the lower provinces fleeing persecution by Spanish inquisitors, had come over with Captain May in the *New Netherland*. They came as the plantation's first real colonists, to raise livestock, to put their spades into the earth. May, as well as his successor, was charged with "spreading out" and more formally occupying New Netherland. It would prevent any further trouble with England about the possession of that country, it was hoped, since the English themselves had expounded the doctrine that "occupancy confers a good title by the laws of nations and nature." In the case of their North American colony the Hollanders could afford a point of agreement on such a doctrine.

A part of this 1624 expedition is said to have been landed on Manhattan Island. Although the evidence has been attacked, it is not at all unlikely that May did promptly put some of the *New Netherland's* passengers ashore at Manhattan to begin the replacement of any temporary works there. There must have been a truck house or two, huts and possibly even palisades in need of rehabilitation for permanent, year-round occupancy. The immediate occupation of such a strategic location at the mouth of the river could hardly have been neglected anyway,

especially as it was necessary at the time to escort from the harbor a poaching French ship whose captain seemed bent on going ashore to set up the arms of his king and take possession of the country.

In any case, some eighteen families were conveyed up the Hudson to a previously selected site a few miles above the redoubt at Norman's Kill. In this more convenient location a new fort was built, while the Walloons settled around it. Fort Orange, as they called this plantation, was within the limits of present-day Albany, New York. Here the Mohegans, as well as the Iroquois, came immediately with presents of beaver and other peltry to confirm their alliance with the Dutch, and the old trade continued to flourish under the new management of the West India Company.

It would appear that about this time a group of May's people also went up the Connecticut River to establish a trading post near the present site of Hartford and to begin the construction of Fort Good Hope there. But the building of this outpost lagged. It was some years before the fort was completed and manned. When that came about, in 1633, Fort Good Hope had become a focal point of rivalry between the Dutch and the New Englanders for the beaver meadows of the Connecticut valley and a question mark in the matter of resolving jurisdiction over the country.

At the time of the planting of Fort Orange another part of May's expedition, including some of the Walloon families, was dispatched to the Delaware, or South River, as the Hollanders now called it to distinguish it from the Hudson, their great North River.

Up the South River, on its east bank, at a strategic trading site also previously selected by Captain May, a new Fort Nassau was built. It was opposite the confluence of the Schuylkill River and the Delaware, the tongue of land on which Philadelphia was later founded by William Penn but which at the time of the Dutch arrival was the seat of probably

the largest Lenni Lenape community in the valley. There, at Passyunk, lived the great chief of all the lower river Indians. Fort Nassau, the new Dutch trading post across the Delaware River, stood at the mouth of Timber Creek within the present limits of Gloucester, New Jersey.

Some soldiers and traders, together with a few of the Walloon farmers and their families who were originally to have settled a farming plantation on the lower west side of Delaware Bay, were eventually installed at Fort Nassau. There, they established trade relations with the natives. Others, it is said, with the addition of new recruits from Holland the following spring, were sent still higher up the river to build a house and operate a trading station on Verhulsten Island, near the present site of Trenton. This island, at the head of navigation just below the falls, was named for Captain May's successor in 1625, William Verhulst, who made his headquarters on the South River. The site of the falls was an important Indian crossing from the valley of the Hudson, where the Lenni Lenape traditionally traded with other tribes.

The Lenni Lenape Indians, later called the Delaware by the English, were an Algonquin nation that inhabited all the immense valley of the Delaware. Tribal relatives occupied important villages even in the lower valley of the Hudson River. Relatively peaceful, the Lenni Lenape made their homes beside placid streams, in grass-matted huts thatched with the bark of cedar, the men fishing and hunting while their women tilled gardens of corn, beans, tobacco and squash. The men hunted fur-bearing animals whose pelts would be useful for winter body coverings. The women scraped the pelts with stone tools and dried them on wooden stretching racks, rubbing the animals' brains and livers into the skins to help in the suppling process.

All was not quiet and peace for the Lenape however. They were subject to terrifying raids by the Susquehannocks (Minquas, the Dutch called them) as well as by the Iroquoian relatives of the Susquehannocks who lived farther up the valley of the Susquehanna River. These fearsome marauders stole their women, burnt their houses and devastated their gardens. Trapping beaver and muskrat for blankets or hunting

the raccoon too far away from native grounds was a precarious venture for Lenape braves. In fact, some tribes had fled their more isolated villages for the safety of Passyunk on the Schuylkill before the white men came. Others, on the west bank of the lower river, had crossed over the Delaware to settle on the safer east bank.

So it was that at the coming of the Dutch these river Indians welcomed the Europeans' guns. And the deliberative Hollanders bought land and made trade treaties with them while, at the same time, probing for avenues of trade with the Lenapes' enemies, too. Although there were muskrat, mink, ordinary otter and some brown beaver on the South River, the Dutch well knew from previous dealings with the Iroquois that there were vast stores of the finer black pelts, both beaver and otter, and valuable "lion skins" cached in the "forts" of the Susquehannocks and their northern relatives. However, on the lower Delaware, it was principally muskrat that the Lenape had to offer, the market value of which was but a fraction of other pelts.

The muskrat, a bushy-furred member of the rodent family, resembles nothing so much as a big wharf rat. This was something with which the seagoing Dutchmen were only too familiar. As a matter of practice they referred to the kindred fur bearers in America simply as "rats." Like the Englishmen they also marketed both the pelts and the musky cods, the fluids of which were useful for perfumes and as demothing agents.

Muskrats frequent tidewater marshlands and swamps. Their hind feet are oar-like, being slightly webbed and set obliquely to the legs, permitting a swivel action that propels them through the water. They steer themselves with their tails which are flattened sidewise. The Indians hunted and trapped these animals along their waterside runs very much as they did the beaver. And they often dumped the skinned carcasses of the "rats" into the communal stew pot, much to the disgust of the traders who had to partake of the feast which always preceded barter.

In the early days of the Dutch occupation on the South River, as it turned out, the Hollanders were not too successful

in opening up trade with the Susquehannocks and their Iroquois relatives of the hinterland. The Susquehannocks were too busy subjugating the Lenni Lenape. By the time things settled down, after most of the lower river Indians had taken flight or been made tributary, the Susquehannocks were bartering in a more convenient market. They were selling pelts at the mouth of their own river among the English in the Chesapeake Bay.

On the other hand, the furs of the lower Delaware River Indians were not hard to come by, even when they were good. Brown beaver by the bundle, when the Lenape had it, might be taken for a white clay pipe worth a mere pittance. To an Indian who had not yet learned the true value of such a tobacco pipe, with its smoothly beautiful bowl and straight stem, it was a treasure to accompany him to his grave. And, as for the Dutchman's iron and his colored cloth, his liquor, his firearms, and especially the clothes he wore, these all represented unbelievable wealth to the savage. Quick to learn that he could acquire such amazing riches for a few animal skins, he would risk traffic with his aboriginal enemies if necessary to get the kinds of pelts the white men wanted.

But it was entirely different when it came to the food for which the Dutch in their early occupation of the Delaware valley had to depend on their native neighbors. Although the Lenape were perfectly willing to part with their own furs, and sometimes took extraordinary risks to get more of them, it was another matter when it came to corn and beans. With the Minquas constantly raiding, no treasure could tempt a Lenape chief to give up what little corn he might have to keep his people from starving.

It was this difficulty, coupled with the squeeze put on New Netherland by greedy directors of the West India Company, that soon brought about the recall of the South River settlers to Manhattan. One small yacht, the directors contended, would adequately take care of the South River trade at much less cost than maintaining garrisons there under the conditions with which they had to contend.

Anyway, it was asserted, the need for formal occupation of this distant outpost was less necessary now that England had joined the Netherlands in the war against Spain. All ports of each country were open to merchantmen and warships of the other, and both were committed to maintain fleets that were finally to rid the world of Spanish might. Under the circumstances the English would hardly risk offending their ally by disturbing any part of the Netherlands' province in America.

So, after the government of New Netherland was formally taken over in 1626 by Peter Minuit, who forthwith installed a "Battery" on the southern tip of Manhattan Island for protection against the Spaniards and named the place "Fort Amsterdam," the South River was all but abandoned as a plantation. Now and then Dutch factors put ashore at Fort Nassau to occupy it temporarily as a trading post, but by 1628 all the Walloon farmers had returned to the North River.

There, at Fort Amsterdam, the company now concentrated its own colonists and centralized the control of its fur trade, while promoting another scheme for the permanent planting of the outlying districts with farmers at no expense to itself.

The no-expense colonizing scheme was not a new one among the colonial powers of Europe, except for its dressing.

Members of the West India Company who at their own expense planted the unoccupied provinces of New Netherland were to become "patroons," that is, proprietors of little colonial principalities with feudalistic "privileges and exemptions." By transporting and settling a specified number of colonists, black slaves qualifying as such, a rich if otherwise undistinguished merchant of Amsterdam could elevate himself to the worshipful status of a feudal lord. Of course he had first to purchase his land from the Indians in conformance with Dutch policy. A little *aqua vitae* and a few jackets sufficed usually to keep that a relatively minor expense however.

There was only one hitch. A patroon could not engage in the fur trade. He had freedom of trade in any merchandise "except beavers, otters, minks, and all sorts of peltry." The commerce in pelts was to remain the company's monopoly.

Because of this restriction the early patroonships were destined to failure. Trade in furs was needed to help root a new plantation in the soil, as had already been proved so often on the wild American coasts. Only one of the early patroonships survived, Kiliaen van Rensselaer's colony in the Albany area. And it was the illegal pursuit of private fur trade that suckled Rensselaerwyck through its infancy.

The earliest patroonship for which land was chosen in New Netherland was patented on the "South River" in 1630. Samuel Godyn and Samuel Blommaert, leading members of the company, were original partners in this venture which later included Captain David Pieters de Vries among others. Their original manor tract, called Swanendael, lay west of Cape Henlopen in Delaware Bay, but the proprietorship was later extended to the opposite shore including Cape May. The bay, reportedly, was a favorite haunt of whales, many having been sighted there in the past. It was decided that whaling would be a profitable enterprise in lieu of fur trading to support the plantation in its infancy.

The first colonizing expedition to Swanendael arrived in the spring of 1631 and planted at Whorekill, on present-day Lewes Creek, just above Cape Henlopen. Although the whaling proved a failure that year, the ship that brought over the colonists returning to Amsterdam with no more than a sample of oil taken from a dead whale found on the beach, it was said that the settlers did seed their land and had a fine crop by July. But then, as the story goes, a piece of tin was the instrument of their undoing.

They had emblazoned a small sheet of this metal with the arms of Holland and attached it to a pillar which was erected to proclaim their possession of the land. An Indian chief, happening along, appropriated the tin, probably with the idea of converting it into a shiny tobacco pipe. That savage whim, it was claimed, set off a chain of misunderstanding that ended in

his own death and the massacre of the Dutch. Only one of the thirty-three settlers survived the carnage.

The Hollanders had built a brick house which should have served them well as a fort. They were also supposed to have surrounded the house with palisades, a requirement of the time, and to have had an Indian-fighting mastiff handy for just such an emergency. However, according to those who later argued with the company over responsibility for the failure of the Swanendael patroonship, the settlers at Whorekill were caught and butchered individually one day while laboring in the fields, unable to reach the safety of the palisades reportedly erected—while their fierce dog was unfortunately chained at the house.

If Whorekill, which may be translated as Harlots' Creek, acquired its name as indicated, one cannot resist wondering whether playful Indian squaws, too much *aqua vitae* and vengeful braves might have had something to do with the demise of the Dutchmen. Certain it is that these first Europeans "left other reminders of their brief sojourn on the bay besides their skeletons," for later Dutchmen who visited in this vicinity "with their goods where they traded with the Indians ... got the country dutyes, otherwise called the Pox."

When Captain David de Vries came over as patroon in the winter of 1632-33 he built a lodging hut ashore, constructed "sloops" for whaling and set up a kettle for rendering oil. But although his harpooners killed a few whales, they were small and almost worthless for oil. The whale fishery was an economic failure.

Meanwhile, for some reason, Captain De Vries made peace with the savages who had slaughtered the original settlers on the Whorekill. There was no retaliation, surprisingly enough, for whatever happened on the creek the previous year. De Vries explained that the natives promised to provide him with food. But apparently they didn't do so.

The Dutch patroon ascended the South River to barter for corn and beans. Twice during the winter he visited abandoned Fort Nassau where many Indians congregated on the news that he was in the river. However there was the usual difficulty

about food. The Lenape were anxious to trade skins for his merchandise, even pausing in flight from the terrible Minqua to do so, but few of them were willing to part with corn.

De Vries did buy some of their pelts, though without much enthusiasm. Under an ambiguous agreement the company had recently made with the patroons, they were permitted to barter for pelts where no company factories were maintained. However, all skins taken under this arrangement had to be delivered at Fort Amsterdam for processing and shipment by the company to Holland. Such transactions were therefore not too satisfactory from an overall profit standpoint.

With the coming of spring, the Patroon of Swanendael went down the coast to call on the neighboring English at Jamestown for enough supplies to evacuate his people. The small profit on the pelts he had taken represented the only gain from the patroonship. It wasn't too long afterward that the continuing wrangle over fur trading privileges, and other contentions, ended in the proprietors of Swanendael selling out their interests to the company, without having made any further attempt at colonization.

At the time of De Vries' visit to the old Dutch works at Fort Nassau, he learned much to his surprise that an English shallop with seven or eight traders from Virginia had preceded him there. All the Virginians had been killed by the Lenape. Some of the chief men among the savages were jauntily wearing their victims' jackets when they came to call on the Dutch patroon aboard his yacht that winter.

On the subsequent visit to Jamestown, which may have been prompted as much by curiosity concerning this invasion of the South River as by the need of supplies, Captain De Vries was told by Governor Harvey that these Virginians had indeed gone on an exploring voyage in those parts. And, although Harvey said there was no reason for Virginia traders to disturb the Hollanders, he nevertheless maintained the English claim to the Delaware valley and intimated that other countrymen of his would be going there too.

Shortly after this, when De Vries stopped off at Fort Amsterdam with his furs and the alarming news about the

English, the Dutch provincial council dispatched an expedition once more to occupy Fort Nassau. A new house was built there and other improvements were made during the summer. Arendt Corssen, who went along at this time as the company's commissioner in charge, also purchased from the Lenape a tract of land across the Delaware from Fort Nassau. There, probably on the west bank of the Schuylkill River and within the limits of present-day Philadelphia, he built a house and established a trading post.

This post of course promoted a more convenient trade with the western Minquas. It was also designed, no doubt, to serve as added evidence of the company's maintenance of factories in the South River valley.

However, no English having appeared on the river during the summer and the Swanendael patroonship being inactive, these lonely outposts of the company were again deserted during the winter of 1633-34. A fur trader's life in the winter wilderness, cooped up in a house surrounded by snow and unpredictable savages, must have been anything but enviable. The Hollanders on the South River could hardly be blamed for preferring their warmer and gayer quarters on Manhattan.

But then, in the summer of 1634 when no Dutch were about, an Englishman named Thomas Young sailed up the Delaware and planted the arms of his king ashore. He had come directly from England to trade in "Virginia," under a license from the king, with special designs on the valley of the Delaware. Governor Harvey of Virginia lent all possible assistance to him when he stopped off in the Chesapeake to build trading shallops and gather information for his venture.

Captain Young traded extensively for beaver, otter and lesser furs, and he was much impressed by the abundance of elk and deer skins available in the Delaware valley. However, his ambition was to discover a northwest passage to the South Sea and he had secret instructions authorizing him to explore the Delaware, challenge any Dutch encroachment there, and plant forts to occupy the land if he wished to do so. He was stopped of course by the falls. Although he established an English post at Eriwoneck, where his lieutenant recorded that

“we sate down,” the adventure was given over after a year or two.

Young himself was later captured by the French of Canada when, in his continuing quest for the elusive passage to the Orient, he ascended the Kennebec River, portaged to headwaters of streams that took him to the St. Lawrence and found himself unexpectedly before Quebec!

The English post that Captain Young established on the Delaware at Eriwoneck was opposite present-day Philadelphia. It is frequently mentioned as having been on Pennsauken Creek. However, since the Eriwoneck tribe appears to have been living close by if not at the site of Fort Nassau, it is more likely that the English captain simply “sate down” in the deserted Dutch fort. In view of his mission any other course would appear to have been inexpedient.

Captain Young discreetly makes no mention of Dutch works on the river, probably to avoid any perplexity over the Elizabethan theory about occupation proving right of possession. But his report admits of two contacts with Dutch traders. First he ran into a trading vessel from Manhattan which he accosted and chased from the river. Then a fresh expedition from Fort Amsterdam, which he reported had been sent to “plant and trade heere” by the Hollanders, was similarly forced to retire by the English captain.

Although the Dutch traders didn’t put up any fight in the face of Thomas Young’s well-gunned ship that summer, it was a different matter the next year when an English deserter brought word overland to Fort Amsterdam that a party of Virginia traders was occupying Fort Nassau.

An armed bark was immediately dispatched to the South River. It recaptured the fort and made prisoners of the Englishmen, about fifteen altogether including their leader, George Holmes. These captives, after being transported first to Fort Amsterdam where no one could decide what to do with them, were finally returned to Kecoughtan in Virginia. The New Netherlanders then installed and maintained a permanent garrison of traders at Fort Nassau under the management of Jan Jansen with Peter May as his assistant. All of which so

discouraged other Virginians, who at the time were planning to follow in Holmes' track, that they abandoned the project.

However, across the ocean, venturers of still another nationality were preparing to invade New Netherland's South River. The Swedish people, aroused to territorial expansion by their late King Gustavus Adolphus, wanted a bridgehead in America. Profit-minded merchants, with the fur trade uppermost in their minds, were moving eagerly to accommodate them.

XIV
Swedish Interlude On the Delaware

PETER Minuit, erstwhile governor and chief fur trader of New Netherland, was a man of energy and special talent for colonial administration. Although he had been discharged from his post in Dutch America after a disagreement with his employers, the directors of the West India Company, his administration there had been virile and efficient. It was therefore quite natural that he should be a bit vindictive toward the people who had treated him so unfairly. And, because of his driving energy, it would have been quite as unnatural for him to remain idle for long.

So it was that he sought out Samuel Blommaert who, embittered by the failure of his Swanendael patroonship, also felt he had reason for complaint against his former associates in the West India Company. According to Blommaert, it was their parsimonious policies on such matters as the fur trade and military protection for new plantations that had caused the fiasco at Whorekill. Anxious now to show up the stupidity of their management, he was attempting to form a Dutch-Swedish opposition company under Swedish protection for operations in the "West Indies."

When Minuit came on the scene, with his firsthand knowledge of New Netherland, things began to happen fast. Blommaert's project quickly crystallized into a fur trading company with the specific intent of colonizing the valley of the South River where the patroon himself had formerly adventured. It remained only for Minuit to offer his expert services as leader of such an expedition to the Swedish crown, and royal sanction and assistance were forthcoming for the venture.

"Pierre" Minuit, for that is what the Hollanders often called him when he was their governor in New Netherland, had been born a French Huguenot in the German city of Wessel. It is not

strange that his nationalism was therefore elastic enough to meet almost any demands of his ambition and ability. About the only point at which Minuit might have hesitated in those bigoted times would have been an association with Catholics. Certainly, to serve under the banner of Sweden, a protestant nation allied in the crusade against Spain, required a minimum degree of adaptability, especially as Sweden's official excuse for a colony in America was that it would provide a base for attacking the common enemy at his weakest spot.

Half the subscriptions for the venture in "New Sweden" were raised in Sweden and half in Holland, with Samuel Blommaert the largest single subscriber. Although the Swedish government furnished two well-armed ships, *Kalmar Nyckel* and *Gripen*, as well as all other weapons and ammunition, the cost of the expedition to the company ran to 33,000 florins by the time it sailed from Gothenburg in the closing days of 1637.

If Minuit was lucky however, a single Spanish prize would be enough to cancel out this unexpectedly high debt. Otherwise the New Sweden Company looked to the Indian fur trade to pay it off in a season or two.

Almost half of the invested capital was for cargo that consisted mainly of the merchandise needed for the Indian trade. Axes, hatchets, adzes, knives, tobacco pipes, looking-glasses, cheap trinkets, duffels and other cloth weaved in Holland were purchased by Blommaert and shipped to Sweden where they were loaded aboard the two ships. So were a few tools for farming, as well as some spirituous liquors and wines to be traded either in Virginia or the West Indies for tobacco. The tobacco was to be brought into Sweden where people had lately developed a taste for it. But the furs would be sold in Holland, a better market for foreign skins.

No act of fate guided Peter Minuit to the site he chose for the Swedish beachhead in America. It was on Minquas Kill, a little stream from the west emptying into the estuary of the Delaware River. The Indians from whom the stream acquired its name had often used its course in their raids against the Lenape. Minuit doubtless knew all about Minquas Kill from reports he had received from Dutch traders when he was

Governor of New Netherland. He knew it was navigable by small boats almost to the borders of the Minqua country, where a trade might be joined for the rich pelts then finding their way to the English on Chesapeake Bay. Also, he well knew that the site he selected on this stream was a protected though strategic one from which, once fortified and garrisoned properly, further encroachment on the Dutch West India Company's South River preserves might be safely launched.

For a kettle and other trifles Minuit bought enough land from a local sachem to erect a couple of houses, emplace some cannon and palisade "Fort Christina"—which was named in honor of the Queen of Sweden and which was the beginning of Wilmington, Delaware. Then, he managed to attract a few other Lenape chieftains from up and down the Delaware who were perfectly willing to cede all the land that he wanted for New Sweden in return for the colorful merchandise he offered.

There was some argument later about these "deeds," that is, after they were "lost." Not only was their geographical extent challenged, which the Swedes claimed to be the west side of the Delaware from Duck Creek up to the Schuylkill; but other purchasers, in particular the Dutch to whom the Lenape were equally accommodating, laid claim to identical grants from the Indians. The English did too, in at least one case.

Of course the Hollanders came down the river from Fort Nassau, shortly after the Swedes arrived, to find out what was going on. But Minuit, experienced in handling them, gave it out that he was only stopping in Minquas Kill for wood and water on his way to the West Indies. In this he was telling the truth, strictly speaking, for he and both of his ships were moving on to that part of the new world to exchange their liquor for tobacco and to try for Spanish prizes before returning to Europe. What he neglected to say was that he was building a fort to be left garrisoned with 24 men, collecting return cargoes of furs and leaving a sloop on the river to collect more.

Peter May, at the time in charge of Fort Nassau during Jan Jansen's absence at Fort Amsterdam, learned the truth when Minuit's little trading boat tried to slip past the Dutch outpost

to barter for pelts. May wouldn't let the sloop ascend the river, and he sped Indian runners overland to Manhattan with news of the Swedish invasion. Whereupon newly-arrived Governor Kieft dispatched Commissary Jansen back to his South River headquarters with many loud protests and threats against the Swedes, but not much in the way of force to back up his fulminations.

The New Netherland governor even issued a menacing proclamation. In view of the close political and economic ties between Sweden and his country, he couldn't believe that the Swedish queen had authorized Minuit to build forts "or to trade in peltries on the South River," but in any event, he proclaimed, the Dutch West India Company would defend its rights by bloodshed if the Swedes did not withdraw.

Peter Minuit was undeterred by all of this however. He went about finishing his fort and collecting his peltries, and there wasn't really anything the Dutch could do about it. They claimed that he "drew all the skins to him by his liberal gifts," and that as a result of his "underselling" their losses ran to 30,000 guilders.

While Minuit was still on the Delaware that spring of 1638 he sent the *Grip* down to Jamestown to try to barter liquor for tobacco. However the Governor of Virginia, Sir Francis Wyatt, who probably looked askance at the usurpation of English claims on the Delaware, diplomatically found excuses for not trading with the Swedes. He said he would refer the matter to his king, and that ended it. The *Grip* returned to Minquas Kill, transferred the liquor to the *Kalmar Nyckel* and set out in search of a fat Spanish galleon.

Soon thereafter, the *Kalmar Nyckel* also took aboard 710 beaver, otter and bear pelts, which had been collected from the Indians, and laid a course for the West Indies to trade the liquor for tobacco. Peter Minuit sailed in this ship. He left Mans Kling in command of Fort Christina, with Hendrick Huygen as commissary in charge of the provisions, merchandise and Indian trade. Huygen maintained excellent relations with the Indians and would appear to have opened up trade with the Minquas. He bartered for food as well as furs,

and the first permanent white settlement in the present State of Delaware was able to sustain itself for two years before any further relief came from Sweden.

In the meantime, New Sweden's founder had lost his life in the West Indies. While the *Kalmar Nyckel* was in harbor at St. Christopher's Island, Minuit went aboard a ship out of Rotterdam as the guest of its skipper. A hurricane came up suddenly and drove this ship out to sea. It was never heard of again.

Peter Minuit's untimely death was an irreparable loss to the Swedes. He would have made a capable governor for their colony in America, which might have turned out quite differently had he remained in charge.

After a fruitless year on the track of the silver fleet the *Grip* returned to New Sweden in the spring of 1639, took on a miscellaneous lot of over 1,500 fur skins and sailed for Sweden. All the skins were reshipped to Holland for merchandising, where the *Kalmar Nyckel* had already unloaded its cargo of pelts. Altogether, these first furs from New Sweden brought 15,426:13:8 florins into the coffers of the company according to Dr. Amandus Johnson, the American-Swedish historian.

The Dutch West India Company, at last awakening to the perils facing New Netherland from foreign encroachment, now took more positive steps to encourage immigration. The directors promised land and free trade in the colony to private persons and made their promise firm by an official proclamation. It was announced that anyone could henceforth trade in pelts, as well as other merchandise, upon payment of fifteen per cent tax and freight charges on all exports.

This lure to promote individual enterprise under the flag of Holland quickly brought Dutchmen from the Netherlands as well as "strangers" from Virginia and New England into the colony. After being on the verge of economic collapse because of the company's mismanagement, New Netherland began to prosper again, especially those parts about the North River. The newly liberalized policy was too late, however, to have

any effect in offsetting the invasion of the South River under the Swedish flag.

Swedish reinforcements, men and women, began arriving in 1640. Even some Hollanders came over and took up land near Fort Christina, their leader being paid a salary by the Swedish government as the commandant of his people. Among contingents of new settlers from Sweden itself were some who came unwillingly. Such were the Finns, those hearty, pioneering outlaws who had been roving Sweden, poaching game and destroying forests, and rudely mocking all efforts to curb their depredations. Many of them were rounded up and "persuaded" to emigrate, along with some native "criminals" whose most serious offenses appear to have been unpaid debts, adultery, and draft-dodging.

But these unwilling emigrants quickly adapted themselves after they arrived in the new country. They rendered good service clearing the land, hewing trees and building houses. Back of Fort Christina typical Scandinavian houses went up, the first "log cabins" ever seen in America, with the timbers notched so that the carefully tailored logs lay flat and close at the joints. These primitive but highly efficient cabins soon became the symbol of the American pioneer—the fur trader as well as the farmer.

The trading limits of New Sweden were extended to the Falls of the Delaware on the north and to Cape Henlopen on the south by new purchases from the Indians. Traffic in pelts, always the chief business of the colony, was prosecuted with real vigor. With the arrival in 1643 of a vigorous new governor, Johan Printz, the Swedes began establishing trading posts and forts up and down the river in their expanded territory. And there just weren't enough Hollanders under the flag of the Dutch West India Company at Fort Nassau to stop them, no more in fact than twenty at any time.

The Swedes went out even to the Minqua country in the valley of the Susquehanna, competing with the Dutch for the luxuriant pelts from the northern lake country. Traders with Hendrick Huygen penetrated the northwestern hinterland over 200 miles. Most often however the Minquas, or

Susquehannocks, who no longer went to the Marylanders in Chesapeake Bay, came with great bundles of their fine pelts to trade at Fort Christina, for they found that the Swedes were more liberal than either the Dutch or the English, not only with trade goods but with sewan, or wampum.

Always the Swedes gave the Minquas generous measures of shell strings in exchange for beaver. Whether it was common white roanoke made from the cockle shells found in quantity along some local beaches, valuable peake strung with purple conch shell, or a variety of the even more highly prized Long Island wampum, measurements were uniformly generous. And since fathoms, ells and yards were roughly estimated by using the length of one's arm, the giant Susquehannocks did very well for themselves.

Resourceful as usual, the Dutch began manufacturing false wampum to meet the competition. But the savages were quick to detect the counterfeit and wouldn't accept it.

Meanwhile, some English traders from the New Haven Colony, which was being hemmed in and cut off from the Indian trade of New England, had come down to test out the prospects on the Delaware River and were very much impressed. George Lamberton, Nathaniel Turner and others decided to form a company to purchase land about the Schuylkill River as well as the unoccupied country stretching northward from Cape May. As usual the natives obliged them, regardless of prior deeds, and the New Englanders soon had a colony at Varkens Kill, now Salem Creek in New Jersey.

Everything might have been all right if the Englishmen had remained on the land they bought on the east side of the river. But this was not destined to be. Although there were some twenty families who cleared land and planted crops in 1641 at Varkens Kill, these people were primarily fur traders. They discovered that the east side of the river was too far from the trading grounds of the Indians. The next year they established

a fort, building dwellings and a truck house, on the west side of the river at the mouth of the Schuylkill.

This trading post, located on Province Island in present Philadelphia, was on land claimed by both the Swedes and the Dutch. Actually it must have incorporated whatever was left of the abandoned Dutch installation built there originally by Arendt Corssen in 1633. In any case the men from New Haven, after starting a lively Indian trade, made it clear that they would countenance no competition within their newly acquired precincts.

The Swedes and the Dutch, who had been operating under a kind of armed truce in this area, united promptly in the face of this threat to their common interest. Two armed sloops were sent out by the Council of New Netherland, and Jan Jansen with the cooperation of the Swedes attacked and burned out the interlopers. George Lamberton managed to escape in his pinnace with a few of his people. But most of the New Englanders were captured and shipped off to Manhattan as prisoners.

Lamberton, however, like most English traders, was a man of tenacity and courage. Certainly he was persistent when he thought he saw a good thing. The very next year he was back in the river again. This time, unfortunately for him, the atmosphere was even more hostile. That hot-tempered, national-minded Governor of New Sweden, Johan Printz, had arrived in the meantime—all four hundred imperious pounds of him!

“Big Belly” Printz, as the Indians called him, came with the fire of patriotism in his eye. He was not one to stand for any nonsense from foreigners. As a good diplomat he maintained a neighborly friendship with the Dutch, as he had been instructed to do, that is, so long as they were no military threat to New Sweden and so long as they could be outwitted in the Indian trade. But the English—those aggressive and stubbornly nationalistic colonizers—were another matter.

So, in 1643, when George Lamberton once more sailed up the Delaware in his pinnace, he was to find himself in real trouble.

Intercepting some Minquas en route to Fort Christina with their furs, Lamberton induced them to trade with him. Whereupon the Swedish governor invited him to dinner in order to arrest him, the charge being that of having bribed the Minquas with cloth and wampum to massacre the Swedes and Dutch. For a while it looked as if the Englishman might have a short life.

But, although "Big Belly" set himself up as inquisitor, prosecutor and judge, he couldn't make his accusation stick before a mixed court of English, Dutch and Swedish commissioners in the face of 400 beaver skins Lamberton produced as evidence of his peaceful barter. In the end Printz could only fine the New Englander double duty on the beaver skins he had taken in trade and let him go. As a parting threat however, he told Lamberton that his pinnace would be confiscated if ever he traded again in New Sweden without authorization.

Then the corpulent but vigorous governor turned his full attention to tightening Swedish control of the river, with a view toward gaining a monopoly of the fur trade for his company.

On the east side of the Delaware, where he pretended to the same land claimed by the New Englanders, he constructed a stronghold which he named Fort Elfsborg. It was an imposing earthwork, emplaced with 8 twelve-pound guns and a mortar. Located on waterside just below Varkens Kill and garrisoned by thirteen men, Fort Elfsborg not only asserted Printz's authority over a sickly remnant of the New Haven Englishmen still there, but gave him military control of the river. Even Dutch vessels on their way up to Fort Nassau were compelled to lower their flags before the guns of the Swedish fort, their skippers no doubt muttering curses against "Big Belly" who now "held the river locked for himself."

On the west side of the river the governor strengthened Fort Christina, the fur emporium of New Sweden where the general storehouses were maintained. He moved his own headquarters however to a much grander manor setting farther upstream at Tinicum Island.

There, on this water-bound river bank, over which sleek airliners now wing low, in and out of close by Philadelphia Airport, he built a riverside fort of hemlock logs "laid one upon another" and a princely "hall" for himself. Fort New Gothenborg, he named this new capital, which was little more than half a dozen miles from Dutch Fort Nassau across the river. To Fort New Gothenborg the Swedish governor hoped to attract most of the Indian traffic that he now shared grudgingly with the New Netherland traders.

For a while the strategy proved highly successful, especially after Printz established a trading post on the near-by Schuylkill to control that important artery of traffic from the hinterland. There, on Province Island, from which the English had so recently been ousted, he built a blockhouse of his own and mounted "stone cannon" on it. These were the vicious little "murderers" of the time, whose broad iron mouths could be jammed with stones or anything else lethal that might be handy to spray attackers at close range. Other buildings too were later erected at Province Island, but in the spring of 1644 the blockhouse served for stores, and also as quarters for Lieutenant Mans Kling and the traders stationed there.

The Dutch traders under Jan Jansen at Fort Nassau, frustrated by lack of numbers as well as by restraining orders from Fort Amsterdam, now could only stand by watching and biting their nails, while taking whatever crumbs of the Indian trade their Swedish neighbors deigned to share with them.

This same year of 1644 some merchants of Boston, with the backing of Winthrop and the Court of Massachusetts, formed a company to discover the great Lake of the Iroquois by ascending the Delaware River. Some dozen years earlier, Captain Walter Neale of the Laconia Company had failed in his efforts to reach the lake via the rivers of Maine. At least the Delaware ran in the right direction, toward that "inexhaustible" supply of beaver, something it was now conceded no Maine or Massachusetts rivers did.

A well-equipped pinnace was actually sent out to the Delaware. However, just what happened on the river is vague. Certainly neither the Swedes nor the Dutch wanted English

traders on their “backside.” A few tentative shots were fired, but apparently some wisely dispensed liquor accomplished more than force. In any event the New Englanders were “entertained,” one way or another, first at Fort Elfsborg by the Swedes and then at Fort Nassau by the Dutch, and in the end they were persuaded to turn back. They returned to Boston in their pinnace, at great loss to the chagrined investors in the enterprise.

Under Johan Printz’s able direction Swedish trade flourished throughout the Delaware valley. Fine cargoes of beaver and other pelts were shipped across the sea. Some went to Sweden, but the market was never good there for foreign pelts and most were auctioned in Holland. Great quantities, however, were sold locally in America for needed supplies. And, we are told, “otter coats” and “elkskin trousers” were common articles of dress among the Swedes themselves.

Like the Pilgrims, the Swedes could not have maintained themselves but for the beaver trade. Their attempts to cultivate tobacco were unsuccessful. Neither did they grow sufficient food for themselves. And little enough help came from home. For nearly six years after the winter of 1647-48 there was no relief ship nor even any official word from Sweden to its earnest governor in America. A relief expedition sent out in 1649 was wrecked en route in the Spanish West Indies, its people tortured and enslaved. Printz had to depend on his Dutch and English neighbors for supplies. And there was only one thing of value to give them in exchange for this subsistence—beaver.

The problem of the Swedes was to monopolize the Indian beaver trade while depending upon competitors not only for subsistence supplies but for the very trucking merchandise required for the Indian trade. Dutch traders, as well as English, were therefore welcome on the Delaware so long as the Swedes could act as middlemen between them and the natives who had the beaver pelts.

English traders of this type were particularly active in New Sweden—Virginians and New Englanders, and some roving independents like Isaac Allerton, the former Pilgrim father who made so much trouble for his associates at Plymouth. Allerton, as a matter of fact, made his headquarters at this time with the Dutch at Fort Amsterdam.

John Wilcox and William Cox were among other colonial merchants who purveyed fowling pieces, sailcloth, duffels, cheese and brandy to the Swedes in exchange for beaver skins. They also provided Printz with trucking goods, such as knives, kettles, axes, hoes, cloth, red coral and sewan, or wampum. Among many such entries in the company books, reported by Dr. Amandus Johnson, is one for 220 yards of sewan purchased from an Englishman for 140 beaver skins valued at 800 florins.

William Whiting, a Hartford merchant, collected 1,069½ pounds of beaver worth 4,277 florins from the Swedes on one trading expedition to the Delaware in 1644. Captain Turner and Allerton, who made frequent trips there, purveyed cloth, barley seed and other grain, millstones, beer, leather and wampum for the Indian trade, all in exchange for the Swedes' beaver. Several trading boats were also sold to the Swedes, a small one being exchanged for 98 skins, and larger barks bringing five to ten times as many.

Printz frequently sent his own people with beaver to New Amsterdam, and even to New England, to buy trade goods, livestock, rye, corn, lime, and other supplies. His chief commissary, Hendrick Huygen, usually headed up the expeditions to Manhattan. At the Dutch capital the going rate for corn, which was not always to be obtained direct from the Indians, was one beaver pelt for three bushels. Evidently the Swedes found this exchange less onerous than toiling with the plow.

On one trip to the Dutch capital Huygen bought seven oxen for 124 beaver skins valued at 868 florins, a cow for 22 skins worth 154 florins, and 75 bushels of rye for 32 skins valued at seven florins each. It cost him only ten skins to get this livestock to New Sweden, five being paid out to two

Hollanders who led some of the oxen cross-country, and five to the Governor of New Netherland whose sloop delivered the remainder on the Delaware. On another trip, in addition to oxen, Huygen bought a horse for thirty skins. He even settled for his expenses at New Amsterdam with beaver, paying out nine skins for board and five for lodgings to the inn-keeper on one occasion, while having the storm-torn sails of his boat repaired for another six skins.

The Swedes never did root their colony in agriculture. For one thing, it was just too easy to rest the entire economy on the beaver trade, and somehow the habit persisted even after the fur frontier had passed into the hinterland. A visiting Indian convert from New France once accused them of being more concerned with fur trading than with converting his red kinsmen to Christianity. The charge was true enough. It might have been leveled in fact at almost any colonials of the time. But probably it wasn't even of passing interest to the beaver-hungry Swedes.

A lesser reason for the agricultural failure was that there never seemed to be enough Swedes to man farms. The total population of the colony—soldiers, traders, farmers, servants, women, and children—amounted to no more than two hundred fifty at any time during Governor Printz's tenure. And losses by death were not offset by reinforcements from home. In the spring of 1648 a census of all male inhabitants of age counted up to only seventy-nine. These seventy-nine were not all Swedes by a large number.

When Peter Stuyvesant arrived in America as governor of the Dutch, the inherent numerical weakness of the Swedes was at once apparent to him, for he was an experienced soldier. He also knew that because of changing conditions abroad there was less reason for being so friendly and neighborly. With the war against the Catholics drawing to a close, the alliance was breaking up, and Holland was no longer favoring Swedish shipping. The two countries were becoming bitter competitors.

The new Dutch governor had a personality that was every bit as colorful as that of his soldier counterpart in New Sweden. Having lost a leg in action, and being of an arrogant

and tyrannical nature, Stuyvesant stamped about affectedly on a silver-banded pegleg, swishing a rattan cane to emphasize his commands. But he was also as zealously nationalistic and as company-minded in the administration of his colonial post as was Johan Printz.

It was predestined that hot-tempered "Big Belly" and autocratic "Peg-Leg" would clash. They did—almost immediately.

Printz, it appears, replaced his blockhouse on Province Island with a much stronger installation, Fort Korsholm, armed with cannon and manned with a garrison of soldiers. Andries Hudde, who had succeeded Jan Jansen as Dutch commissary on the South River, reported to Stuyvesant that he was now absolutely cut off from the Schuylkill and that the Swedes were "hindering" all other Dutch trade with the Indians in the river valley.

Furthermore, Hudde said, the Swedes had spoiled the trade anyway, for the Indians now insisted on two fathoms of white sewan and one fathom of purple sewan for a beaver. And, since a fathom was commonly estimated as the span of a man's outstretched arms, the natives were sending "the largest and tallest among them to trade with us." This made the barter "rather too much against" him, the Dutch commissary complained, as every fathom amounted "to three ells!"

Stuyvesant, to Hudde's surprise, instructed him to take the initiative against the Swedes, telling him it was now well known that the Swedes could expect no succor from home, and that he should go into the Schuylkill and erect a stronghold there for his own traders.

Backed by this authority the South River commissary, who was of an aggressive nature anyway, went into the Schuylkill with enthusiasm. In May of 1648 he began building a log house surrounded by palisades at Passyunk, on the lands purchased by Corssen in 1633. He called it Fort Beversrede (Beaver Road Fort). Located within the limits of present-day Philadelphia, on the east bank of the Schuylkill, Fort Beversrede not only challenged the Swedish monopoly of the

Schuylkill trade but it restrained some of Printz's people who were now probing east and north of that stream.

Governor Printz reacted violently as might have been expected. He sent out several chastising expeditions of armed men who tore down palisades, destroyed surrounding forests and burned houses being built about the new Dutch trading post. But there doesn't appear to have been too much blood shed, and the whole affair ended up amusingly enough when the Swedes constructed a blockhouse of their own on the riverside within a dozen feet of the gates to the Dutch fort. Evidently the six nervous Hollanders who manned Fort Beversrede looked the other way during this operation. In any case, after the Swedish blockhouse went up, thirty-five feet in length, the Hollanders in their fort didn't have "the sight of the water on the kill" that they were supposed to dominate.

It is easy to imagine that this was almost too much for Stuyvesant. However, he was cautioned by his employers in Holland to arm himself with some patience before using force against the Swedes. But then, becoming increasingly irritated by further trespasses, the governor determined to send both ships and troops to the South River as a convincing show of strength. In 1651 he dispatched eleven ships with arms and supplies around the coast, while he marched overland with 120 soldiers to Fort Nassau where the fleet met him.

There ensued much on-the-spot argument among the Dutch, the Swedes, and the Indians, about their overlapping land titles. But it all ended up with the Dutch becoming the masters of the South River, their troops being much the most persuasive consideration in the case.

Stuyvesant sailed down the river to a likely site on the west bank just below Fort Christina, landed two hundred men and erected a commanding fortification which he named Fort Casimir. Located on a peninsula, near present New Castle, Fort Casimir was 210 feet long and was mounted with twelve guns, some of which came from Fort Nassau, now dismantled. Two warships were also stationed in the river and several English trading-boats were taken as prizes since England and Holland

were at war. All traders on the South River were now compelled to pay duty to New Netherland.

Printz's situation deteriorated rapidly as Dutch trading factors overran New Sweden, monopolizing the beaver commerce. With pitifully few remaining subjects, desertions having cut the total population to less than a hundred souls, the governor had to leave Forts Elfsborg and Korsholm unmanned and rotting. Now that he was without trade goods even the Indians turned against him, boldly committing depredations within the limits of the colony.

The people, growing mutinous, openly accused "Big Belly" of avarice and brutality. They claimed that by their enforced labor he had filled his storehouses at Tinicum Island with skins for his personal profit. But he tore up a petition of their grievances and had their leader convicted of treason. Then he heatedly dared the others to complain again.

As to the charge of brutality, things were probably no worse nor any better than the time a party of Indians was hired in New Sweden to track down some settlers who deserted. These luckless subjects, who had first tried unsuccessfully to desert to the Dutch, fled toward the English settlements on the Chesapeake. The savages did their job well—and efficiently—bringing back only the heads of those who resisted capture.

The Swedish governor could only protest the Dutch usurpation of his life-giving trade in the face of the military odds against him and his own internal problems. His government was left intact however, and he bided the time that reinforcements would arrive. But none came, nor even any word. In the end he asked to be relieved. When there was no reply to his request Johan Printz, at last disillusioned and completely frustrated, finally took it on his own authority in 1653 to relinquish his post and sail for home.

Once, some years earlier when Printz was a young officer in the Army of Sweden, he had been dismissed from the service for surrendering his post without authority. When he left America under similar conditions, it is said that he took the precaution of getting a letter of recommendation from Peter

Stuyvesant to the Dutch West India Company, just as insurance.

The year after Printz sailed away reinforcements did at long last arrive in New Sweden, and with them came a new and impetuous governor named Johan Rising. Finding Fort Casimir in the embarrassing position of being without gunpowder and greatly underestimating the general situation of the Dutch in New Netherland, Rising made the mistake of reducing the fort to Swedish rule and pledging the loyalty of some of the Dutchmen there.

Infuriated, the Directors of the Dutch West India Company sent a fleet of ships and two hundred veteran soldiers across the sea to their governor at New Amsterdam. They ordered him to gather all possible additional forces before the Swedes could be reinforced and "exert every nerve to avenge that injury, not only by restoring affairs to their former situation, but by driving the Swedes from every side of the river." Stuyvesant responded with alacrity. In September of 1655 he was under sail for the South River with a fleet of seven armed ships, land artillery for besieging batteries, and several hundred soldiers.

Captain Sven Skute who was the commandant at Fort Casimir, now called Fort Trinity by the Swedes, had greatly strengthened the fortifications there in anticipation of the attack. Shot and powder were stored in good supply, as were all other necessities for defense. Skute had written orders from the Council at Fort Christina not to let the enemy pass.

But, when the Dutch flotilla sailed up the river and anchored above the fort, Sven Skute didn't fire a shot. Stuyvesant was permitted to mount his batteries ashore without interference. After the Swedish stronghold had been completely surrounded and cut off, Skute sent out word that his men were going to defend the position. Governor Stuyvesant replied that if a single Hollander became a casualty there would be no quarter for any Swede in the fort. Whereupon Captain Skute capitulated under terms that permitted him to walk out with his "personal property." His men had mutinied, it appears.

Leaving Captain Dirck Smith in command of the fort, now renamed Fort Amstel, the Dutch moved on to the Christina. There Stuyvesant repeated his maneuver, investing the fort and the entire Swedish settlement. While he and Rising parleyed, Dutch soldiers pillaged the countryside as far north as Tinicum Island, where Johan Printz's ambitious daughter, married to a pliable husband, now held forth at Printz Hall in the style of her father. The Hollanders killed livestock, plundered houses and left the women "stripped naked" in their beds, or so it was said.

Governor Rising's situation was hopeless. He had only a small supply of ammunition, most of it having been sent to Fort Trinity. He was faced not only with the Dutch guns pointing at his fort but with increasing desertions to the enemy. Stuyvesant was demanding complete evacuation of the position or the oath of loyalty to Holland from all Swedish subjects.

In the end the Swedish governor could only agree to surrender, with transportation guaranteed for those who did not wish to remain as Dutch subjects. The governor himself did not fare too badly. It appears that his private property, like that of Captain Skute, was respected under the terms of the capitulation and that it was promised he would be landed in "England or France."

New Sweden was no more. No longer did the Dutch at New Amsterdam have to worry about Swedish competition on their South River, much less the envelopment of Fort Orange in the north by Swedish penetration of the hinterland.

What the Dutch had to worry about now, other than the Indians in the vicinity of Manhattan who were getting a bit out of hand, were Englishmen—especially the New England traders pressing them in the north. And that was becoming quite a worry!

XV
New Netherland Threatened Without and Within

NOWHERE in America was there a better situation for a great fur emporium than Manhattan Island. There, converging into a protected harbor which was easily accessible to seagoing ships, were arteries of fur traffic that tapped both hinterland and coastal trade. Indeed, the beaver trade that originated at Manhattan in the round-bellied Dutch ships of the seventeenth century was the genesis of a commerce that was to make New York the greatest seaport in the world.

But, although the Hollanders at New Amsterdam had this material advantage and were exploiting it with all their energy, their occupation of New Netherland was insecure to say the least. In English eyes they were squatters on English territory, and the English had the physical means to do something about it whenever they wished.

Logically, of course, the Englishmen had a very poor case. In the light of their own Elizabethan theory that occupation of a territory was necessary to back up any claim of possession, the Dutch title to New Netherland was certainly valid. The Hollanders had searched out and settled the country. The Englishmen had not bothered to do either. Yet, stubbornly, they had never once conceded Dutch sovereignty.

Naturally, they had to come up with a new interpretation of Elizabeth's historic pronouncement. It took the following line of reasoning. James I had long since defined Virginia as extending from the 34th to the 45th parallel, and, in fact, had granted it by charter to two great joint-stock companies of London and Plymouth before Captain Hudson ever went out to America for the Dutch. Such an act of sovereignty could be considered equivalent to taking possession of that territory! Therefore the Dutch were intruders!!

And, a quarter of a century after this “act of sovereignty,” parts of Dutch New Netherland—Connecticut, Long Island and the west bank of the Delaware River—were being reconveyed by the original English patentees or the king himself, all without benefit of having yet been settled by Englishmen.

That no official action was taken to eject the Hollanders can be attributed to the alliances of the Thirty Years’ War. However, the time was not too far away when England and Holland, relieved of their compacts, were to become deadly rivals. Already, in fact, patriotic Englishmen smarted with the knowledge that a foreign country which had to import its timber for shipbuilding, and one which had so recently been helped to independence by them, was growing rich on a carrying trade that should be in British bottoms. The ultimate conquest of New Netherland was a foregone conclusion as far as they were concerned.

Meanwhile, pressure on New Netherland from individual traders with the backing of London and New England merchants prepared the way for the anticipated military action.

The pressure on New Netherland began in 1633 when a trading vessel from England invaded the Hollanders’ North River for furs. Her name was the *William*. She was the first English ship ever to ascend the Hudson. At the time, the annual returns there were estimated at 16,000 beaverskins, and no one was better qualified to appreciate this rich business than the factor in charge of the *William*; for, he was none other than a former Dutch commissary on the Hudson, Jacob Eelkens, who himself had driven a great trade with the Indians at Fort Orange. In 1623 however, after incurring the displeasure of the West India Company, he had been summarily discharged. Now he was in the employ of English merchants, William Cloberry and Company of London, and he was of a mind to square accounts.

Defying both Governor Wouter van Twiller and the threatening guns on Manhattan, Eelkens proclaimed haughtily that the Hudson River belonged to England and then proceeded upstream. Van Twiller didn't fire on him. In fact, the irresolute Dutch governor broached a cask of wine while he deliberated on the situation. Not until he had been roundly twitted for timidity by his drinking companions did he acquire enough spirit to dispatch three ships with some soldiers after the renegade Hollander. By the time this force caught up with Eelkens, he was anchored near Fort Orange, where he had established a well-stocked trucking station ashore and was enjoying a lucrative trade for beaver with the natives, all at the expense of the frustrated Dutch commissary there.

Van Twiller's soldiers, upon their arrival, arrested the turncoat interloper, and the *William* was convoyed back down the river to Manhattan where all the pelts aboard were confiscated. Then Eelkens, protesting loudly, was escorted with his empty ship out of the Narrows, never again to bother his countrymen on the Hudson.

But this same year, 1633, there was pressure of a more serious nature on the Dutch. It came overland, and it was not to be repulsed so easily.

The fur traders of New England hankered for the beaver that abounded in the valley of the Connecticut River where the Hollanders were taking annually some 10,000 skins. Of course Dutch Captain Adrien Block had discovered and explored the Connecticut, or "Fresh Water" as he called it, in 1614. And since fur traders from New Amsterdam bartered traditionally on the river, even establishing a temporary trading post and laying out the foundations of Fort Good Hope near the site of present-day Hartford in 1623, there was not much question in their minds about the jurisdiction of New Netherland. Admittedly, however, they had made no permanent settlements.

Neither had the English who now coveted the valley's beaver meadows. However, they had lately done some exploring and liked what they found. Edward Winslow of New Plymouth went up the river in 1632 and was so impressed that

he selected a site for a house. And John Winthrop of the Bay Colony let it out that because his colony extended "to the south sea on the west parte," the Connecticut River, or the greater part of it anyway, belonged to Massachusetts under its charter.

So the Hollanders at New Amsterdam, a bit alarmed, bestirred themselves to complete the fort which had been commenced by them some ten years earlier. After buying "most of the lands on both sides" of the Connecticut River from the Indians, they built a strong house of yellow bricks at their old trading post and set up two cannon there to secure the river above them.

But, even while their commissary, Jacob van Curler, was building this fort in 1633, it was being enveloped by the New Englanders. Fur traders from Massachusetts Bay fought their way straight west through the wilderness that summer to reach the upper Connecticut valley north of Fort Good Hope. In the fall a party of Pilgrims from New Plymouth sailed up the river from the south for the same purpose.

It was John Oldham, an adventurous trader of ten years experience in New England, who pioneered the way for the English. With three companions he blazed what was to become known as the "Old Connecticut Path" from Watertown in Massachusetts to the Connecticut River. On his return he made an enthusiastic report on the valley and its beaver meadows, while delegations of Mohegans from the Connecticut valley offered alliances and otherwise made things most attractive to prospective settlers. They wanted the men of Massachusetts, or any other white men with guns, to settle among them. It was the only way they knew to even scores with their recent conquerors, the Pequots.

There were 4,000 Englishmen clustered about Massachusetts Bay at the time and quite a few were of a mind to get away. Puritanical intolerance, given free rein in this new American colony, was making too much of a strait jacket out of life for many of them. Connecticut sounded almost too good to be true. Some of the bold ones began making plans to migrate to the bounteous valley the following year.

In the meantime Winslow's people at New Plymouth moved more quickly. With them fresh beaver territory was always a pressing necessity. Their very survival as a colony depended on their fur exports. They also sensed profit in taking sides with the Mohegans. Whereas the Massachusetts men cautiously avoided any complicating alliances with the Connecticut valley Indians, the Pilgrims in their desperate anxiety for pelts were quite willing, as usual, to involve themselves in inter-tribal disputes. In this case it led to most unhappy results for the traders, the farmers, and their families. Some have claimed that it was the genesis of the fierce war between the Pequots and the white men that exploded a few years later.

In any event, by early September of 1633 Captain William Holmes of New Plymouth, carrying a prefabricated house frame in "a great new bark," was on his way up the Connecticut River. Undaunted by the Dutch fort and the Hollanders, who "threatened [him] hard, yet ... shot not," Captain Holmes sailed past Fort Good Hope and erected his house above it at Windsor. There his people established a trading post that prospered at once on upriver furs at the expense of the Dutch traders below them. Strongly palisading this post, Holmes and his company then stood firm against a force of seventy Hollanders who were sent from New Amsterdam to eject them.

The Pilgrim coup was short-lived however. Competition from Boston had even more to do with this than Indian troubles, for in another three years a wholesale exodus from Massachusetts to the Connecticut was under way, over 800 people already having moved west to the fruitful valley. In the forefront of this migration were the fur traders, but farmers followed them to found Wethersfield and other towns. Invading Windsor, they swallowed up the small band of their Pilgrim brethren there.

The Puritans completely surrounded the isolated Dutch trading post at Hartford. But, although the New Englanders on the Connecticut at this time outnumbered the population of all New Netherland, they made no attempt to oust the garrison of Hollanders in their midst. Some twenty men, sent out by the

younger Winthrop from Boston, did however take possession of the Dutch claims about the mouth of the Connecticut. There they tore down the arms of the States General which had been affixed to a tree and contemptuously engraved “a ridiculous face in their place.” When a Dutch sloop came from New Amsterdam to dislodge them, it was compelled to withdraw in the face of two cannon threateningly mounted ashore. The Boston men then went about constructing fortifications and buildings which they called Fort Saybrook.

After that the English had control of the river and, as they thought, easy access also to the beaver trade “of that so pleasant and commodious country of Erocoise before us.”

One Puritan merchant, William Pynchon, who was to found a great fortune in the Indian trade, now spearheaded the economic attack on New Netherland’s northern flank. Because of his relentless search for fur he did more than any other man to defeat the Dutch traders and to expand the frontiers of Massachusetts.

William Pynchon was one of the original company of twenty-seven grantees of Massachusetts. For their concession these adventurers were committed to pay the crown one-fifth of all the gold and silver ore found within the limits of the grant. Pynchon, however, wasn’t interested in ore. He was of a more practical bent of mind. He traded with the Indians near Boston from the start, supplying them with guns and ammunition in exchange for their beaver.

Although this trade in guns was carried on with the court’s approval, Pynchon was severely criticized for doing it, fined in fact. Annoyed about this, dissatisfied anyway with the dwindling fur trade about the bay, and not being particularly in sympathy with the rigid Calvinism of the church he had helped to found there, Pynchon’s eyes turned westward.

This keen-minded, resolute man was probably one of John Oldham’s financial backers when that extraordinary adventurer pioneered the Connecticut Path. Pynchon himself made a trip up the Connecticut River by shallop in 1635 and chose a location for a trading post near the Indian village of Agawam. Somewhat above the other river towns which were being laid

out, this strategic site was relied upon to intercept most of the Indian trade from the north and west.

Early in 1636 Pynchon with his son-in-law, Henry Smith, led a group of traders overland to Agawam. They shipped their goods by water. For 18 fathoms of wampum, and 18 each of coats, hatchets, hoes and knives, with "two extra coats thrown in for good measure," land was purchased from the Indians, and a trading settlement was established. It wasn't too long before every one was calling this trading post Springfield, in honor of its founder's home town in England.

In the resolutions which were framed for the government of Springfield a provision was shrewdly included to limit the population. This was intended to prevent an influx of farmers who would spoil the fur trade. Actually, the founder brought out only twelve families. As a result of his plan the main business of Springfield for many years was the beaver trade.

There was a provision in the resolutions, too, for obtaining a minister, Pynchon himself acting in this capacity until the Reverend George Moxon was finally installed. It is recorded of this good parson that when he did arrive he preached a sermon that lasted for twenty-eight days. It is also a matter of record that an early purchase for the church was an hourglass. But whether its purpose was to impose a time limit or to insure good measure is not stated.

Travelling extensively by canoe and on horseback, William Pynchon bartered with many tribes for beaver, otter, marten, mink, muskrat, raccoon, lynx, and fox. And, tactfully using Algonquin tribes as middlemen, it wasn't too long before he tapped the Iroquois trade. By 1640 he had established one of his agents, Thomas Cooper, at Woronoco, later the site of Westfield, "where the Indians brought not only their own furs, but also furs which they obtained from the Mohawks." When this happened, the Dutch no longer had a monopoly of the furs of the Iroquois.

Of course Pynchon's tremendous gains meant some real losses to the new towns below Springfield, which in 1639 had created a government of their own when they drew up the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut. In an effort to checkmate

Pynchon, and bring the trade of the valley to Hartford instead, Connecticut now granted to Governor Edward Hopkins and William Whiting “liberty of free trade at Woronoco and at any place thereabouts ... all others to be restrained for the terme of seven years....” But Massachusetts came to Pynchon’s rescue, resisted the Connecticut grab, and eventually established through the Commissioners of the United Colonies that Woronoco was within its bounds.

Later, the Connecticut people tried another tack. They declared an impost on all pelts and other goods that Pynchon shipped down the river, a tax that could have ruined him. However, they voted to remove this excise when the Massachusetts authorities, in retaliation, levied a large duty on Connecticut goods coming into Boston harbor. And William Pynchon went on to expand the fur frontier of Massachusetts to the north and the west, and through his beaver trade to become one of the richest men in New England.

Meanwhile, the Puritan migration was taking other avenues of expansion in the direction of New Netherland, along the shores of Long Island Sound. These routes, too, followed the paths of fur traders who as usual broke through the wilderness to make pacts with the natives or to fuse the wars that cleared the way for settlement.

The Narragansett country and Long Island Sound were of course traditional Dutch trading preserves. But as early as 1632, New Plymouth established a truckhouse at Sowamset, now Barrington, Rhode Island, and in the following year daring John Oldham, filled with “vast conceits of extraordinary gaine,” was driving a trade on his own account much farther to the west in Long Island Sound. Oldham did business with both the Pequots and the Narragansetts, the latter taking so kindly to him and his trucking goods that they offered him free land for the establishment of a permanent trading post among them.

Three years later however, on a trading voyage in the Sound, Oldham was murdered at Block Island by Indians under Pequot control. His boat was plundered and two English boys with him at the time were carried off into captivity. This episode fused the Pequot War, the chief results of which was a bloody purge by the New Englanders that cleared the shores of the Sound for settlement.

The campaign commenced against the Pequots in 1637 quickly became a hundredfold more terrible than the murderous episode the white men set out originally to avenge. Under the leadership of Captain John Endicott of Massachusetts, a devastating blow was first delivered at Block Island. A hundred men went there with him in three ships. They burned the native wigwams, spoiled the corn, and slew all the Indians they could catch. Then they repaired to the mainland, where they invaded the heart of the Pequot country and repeated their brutal chastisement of the red men.

This grim Puritan punishment came close to uniting all the Indians in those parts against the English. Only the diplomacy of Roger Williams, who traded for furs with the Narragansetts while preaching the gospel, prevented the great Narragansett tribe from joining the Pequots in the fierce revenge they now took against any isolated Englishmen they could find. Meanwhile the Pequots scourged the countryside—until, by a final campaign, the New Englanders set out to remove this powerful tribe from the face of the earth!

An army composed mostly of mercenary savages was assembled by the Englishmen for this gory task. It originated with a party of ninety white men from the Connecticut River towns under the command of John Mason. Together with an equal number of Mohegans, they went down to Fort Saybrook to meet Captain John Underhill who had been sent from Massachusetts with twenty soldiers. This nucleous force then proceeded to the Bay of the Narragansetts where it was joined by some 500 of those savages, all bent on scalps and loot. From the bay the army marched overland to the Mystic River to attack one of the chief Pequot towns, occupied at the time by some six or seven hundred men, women and children.

The English and their Indian allies took the inhabitants of the town by surprise. They put the torch to the wigwams before the sleeping natives could offer any resistance. All who were not burned to death were slaughtered as they tried to escape—all except seven who managed to escape and seven others who were taken captive. It was a terrible affair—for the Pequots. Only two Englishmen died in the encounter.

Another main body of the Pequots was routed soon afterward. But that did not end the bloody harassment. A month later, a large force from Massachusetts under Captain Stoughton, together with Captain Mason's Connecticut men, surrounded all that remained of the once powerful tribe. This occurred in a swamp at Fairfield where the remnant of the tribe had taken refuge. The warriors put up a brave fight, but the odds were too great against them. Those few who escaped this final butchery were divided among the Mohegans and the Narragansetts, never more to be called Pequots.

The shores of the Sound west of Fort Saybrook were open now to settlers. A wave of migration from Boston resulted in the founding of New Haven, Stratford, Norwalk, Stamford, and other towns. The New Haven people, forming their own government, even spread across the Sound to Long Island which, of course, had long been occupied only by the Hollanders, whose traders exploited the natives there for the wampum so essential in the beaver trade.

To halt this encroachment on the very nerve center of their trading territory, the Dutch hurriedly purchased from the Indians all the country that remained open between Manhattan and the oncoming English, acquiring legal title to additional lands on Long Island as far west as Oyster Bay as well as to all that triangle of territory between the Hudson and the Sound south of Norwalk. The latter comprised much of present Westchester County. However the English encroachment along the north shore of the Sound, as a practical matter, was halted no farther east than Greenwich.

Only in the Narragansett country, after 1640, did the Dutch hang on to any substantial beaver trade east of Greenwich. Rhode Island, by then well populated with Englishmen, tried

to keep them out. However, the Dutch simply supplied the Indians there more generously with rum and guns—in return for beaver. So did some interloping but enterprising Frenchmen. And so did some of the New Englanders themselves, for that matter. Nowhere was the competition for beaver more keen or more dangerous than in Rhode Island.

English laws at the time sincerely prohibited the sale of liquor or firearms to the savages. But such laws were difficult to enforce on a wild frontier where uncontrolled profits could be scooped up so easily. Roger Williams was later to write that he had "refused the gain of thousands by such a murderous trade." Some of his neighbors in the wilderness and even some of his own trading associates had no such scruples however.

Richard Smith who became wealthy on the Indian trade was a man of this stripe. He and Roger Williams, along with John Wilcox, "a sturring, driving, somewhat unscrupulous fellow," began trading in the Narragansett country as early as 1637. Each of them built trucking houses on the much-traveled Pequot and Narragansett Trail at the site of present-day Wickford. As trading practices sharpened over the years, neither Smith nor Wilcox hesitated to meet the increasing demands of the natives for liquor and powder. Williams was revolted. In 1651, when he was about to go to England, he sold his house and trading interests to Smith for 50 pounds sterling. That left Smith without any competition for this lucrative fur trade, as he had bought out Wilcox some years earlier.

Men like Smith and Wilcox furnished tinder for many flaming atrocities in Rhode Island. But their murderous trade was "the most profitable employment in these parts of America ... by which many persons of mean degree advanced to considerable estates." Rhode Island was truly one of the most fertile of all beaver grounds—while it lasted. That was until 1660. By then the beaver was all but exhausted, while, with the help of the white man's goods, the Indian trapper was well on the way to destroying himself too.

It had been the same of course on every fur frontier in America. In Rhode Island the fateful process of the aborigine's extinction was just exaggerated in dreadful degree. As native

drinking increased, atrocities mounted and bloody retaliation followed. Yet, in spite of this terrible situation, the English themselves came to recognize wine and spirits as the chief staple of the Indian trade, while futilely putting new laws on their books intended to limit the natives' consumption!

For their part the Hollanders never had any compunction about distributing hot waters or firearms among the savage neighbors of the New Englanders, who after all seemed bent on taking over all of New Netherland. Protected by ships, of which the Rhode Islanders had none, the Hollanders drove a continuing trade at their long-established posts in Narragansett Bay, especially at Dutchmen's Island which they had fortified. As late as 1647 the natives were transporting their pelts in canoes to Dutchmen's Island, where it was said they could lay in a supply of strong waters sufficient to keep an Indian village in an uproar for a week and acquire all the guns and powder they wanted. And the Dutch continued to trade in the bay for some years after that, until the beaver of Rhode Island was almost exhausted.

In fact at no time, until 1650, did the New Netherlanders give up any part of their claims south of Cape Cod, even though they hadn't been able to stem the overland flood of English traders and settlers. In 1647 they did seize an Amsterdam ship, trading at New Haven without a license from the Dutch West India Company, and brought her into New Amsterdam where she was confiscated in spite of excited protests from New Haven. On land, however, they were overwhelmingly outnumbered. Furthermore, troubles at home, especially with the savages, kept them close to the valley of the Hudson after 1640.

Curiously enough, the New Netherlanders' troubles at home beginning in 1640 sprang largely from their sale of firearms to the distant Iroquois.

These lake country Indians, with practically inexhaustible supplies of the finest beaver, thought nothing of offering as

many as twenty heavy skins in exchange for a musket. The great profit in this traffic had proved irresistible to the Dutchmen. So the authorities at Manhattan often winked at the illegal purveyance of arms and powder by their traders to such faraway savages. If their consciences bothered them at all, they were comforted by the knowledge that their Iroquois allies maintained a bulwark against competitive traders from French Canada, as well as against the enveloping English.

At the same time however, prompted strictly by self-preservation, the New Netherlanders clamped down hard on any "bosch-lopers" who sold arms among their Algonquin neighbors. This was good policy for the Hollanders of course, but it left the river tribes at the complete mercy of their ancient and terrible Iroquois enemies, especially the Mohawks, who descended upon them periodically to collect taxes.

Added to this touchy situation was the asininity of a reckless Dutch governor, one William Kieft, who himself attempted to collect taxes from these same river Indians for the support of his fortifications on Manhattan. When he adopted wholesale butchery and the surprise tactics of the Iroquois to enforce his demands for tribute, things became explosive. The Dutch found themselves waging a sanguinary five-year war against local tribes who in turn managed to terrorize Manhattan and the surrounding plantations.

This war, though sporadic and spotty, was fought with a thirst for blood on both sides. Massacres and other atrocities were committed by reds and whites alike, as the Indian league against the Hollanders spread up the Hudson above the Highlands. In 1643 a shallop coming down from Fort Orange with four hundred beaver skins taken in trade with the Mohawks was plundered, to signal a general massacre that resulted in the virtual evacuation of all the outlying plantations in the lower valley as surviving colonists fled to Fort Amsterdam.

It took a final annihilating blow, no less terrible than the recent English offensive against the Pequots, to end the war. And it was Captain John Underhill who delivered it with the same dreadful efficiency he had demonstrated during the

Pequot campaign. Underhill, now a Boston "heretic" living under the jurisdiction of the West India Company, led 150 Dutch soldiers into the mountainous region north of Stamford where the remnant of the Indian league against the New Netherlanders had a strongly palisaded town. When it was all over 700 Indian corpses darkened the snow. The Dutch lost 15 men.

Only Kiliaen van Rensselaer's patroonship far up the Hudson was spared the tomahawk during these Indian troubles. There, where the shrewd Amsterdam jeweler had purchased lands about Fort Orange embracing most of two present-day New York counties, the neighboring Mohawk allies of the Dutch provided complete protection from Algonquin depredations. While all was pandemonium on the lower river, both agriculture and trade flourished at Rensselaerwyck.

Nowhere in New Netherland, in fact, was there a livelier trade in pelts then or at any other time than at Van Rensselaer's manor. And nowhere was this trade more unlicensed. In 1644 it was estimated that between three and four thousand furs had been carried off the manor illegally during a twelve month period. That is, illegally carried off in the eyes of the patroon, although he himself was shipping out pelts illegally as far as the authorities at Manhattan were concerned.

Van Rensselaer, however, recognized no jurisdiction from that quarter. He asserted that he held his patroonship directly from the States General and that he would buy and ship furs as he pleased without regard to any laws or taxes proclaimed by the West India Company's representatives at New Amsterdam. And so he did.

He even built a fort of his own on a Hudson River island where he emphasized the independence of his feudal domain by enforcing the medieval principle of "staple right." Every passing vessel, except those of the Dutch West India Company, must pay duty or deposit its cargo of pelts ashore where the patroon might buy these "staples" on his own terms. The skippers must strike their colors too, in homage to the lord of Rensselaerwyck.

Van Rensselaer also made it clear that company as well as private fur traders were to keep off his property. This caused much bitterness. Fort Orange, about which the patroon had established his domain, was the official post of the Dutch West India Company, the emporium where their traders traditionally bartered for beaver with the Iroquois. After Rensselaerwyck was established Fort Orange continued to be the commercial center of this profitable trade, so much so that the flourishing little trading village which sprang up there under the very cannon of the fort, and which was to grow into the strategically important city of Albany, was originally christened Beverwyck. Kiliaen van Rensselaer of course had no jurisdiction over Fort Orange, the company's private precinct, but he considered Beverwyck within his domain. The resulting rivalry between his traders and the company's representatives, with guns for the savages as bait for beaver, was anything but neighborly.

The company's management at Manhattan only quickened the tension when on occasion the authorities there confiscated firearms en route to the patroon of Rensselaerwyck. In one case, in 1644, a ship out of Holland for Rensselaerwyck was discovered to be carrying 4,000 pounds of powder and 700 guns intended for the Indian trade, and these munitions were seized with considerable show of propriety. But what then happened to them is not stated, although one well-informed old chronicler suggests that they got along probably in due course to the Iroquois as usual in return for their precious beaver. In any event, the confiscation represented only one slight interruption in the continuous flow of these murderous trade goods to the lake-country Indians.

The feud between the company and the patroonship on the upper Hudson really settled down to cases in 1648 after Kiliaen van Rensselaer died and his young son's contumacious new commissary, Brandt van Slechtenhorst, took over the management of Rensselaerwyck. For, in the meantime, that little snappish captain, Peter Stuyvesant, had arrived in New Netherland as the West India Company's Director General.

Stuyvesant was by way of being a reformer, so long as the reforms were in the company's trade interests. One of his first

acts to attract more settlers was to permit the popular election of “Nine Men” who, when called upon, were to assist the governor and the council in matters concerning the general welfare. But when the “Nine Men” proposed to serve the general welfare without being called upon by the governor, Peter Stuyvesant proceeded to knock them down. And when the right of appeal to the home government was suggested, the governor stamped about arrogantly on his pegleg and dared anyone to try it. He said he would make the appealer “a foot shorter, pack the pieces off to Holland, and let him appeal in that way!”

Brutally dictatorial though he may have been, the new governor was earnest nevertheless in all things, reforms included. He took very effective steps, for instance, to check the smuggling of beaver into New England where it could be traded tax-free for European goods. And, while setting up tighter export controls, he also increased the tax on furs. Furthermore, he not only forbade the sale of liquor to the natives but he tried his best to enforce the contraband on firearms for use as trade goods.

Naturally, such policies were obnoxious at Rensselaerwyck, where gun-running was popular and company taxes were not. There too the commissary, Brandt van Slechtenhorst, headstrong in pretensions to complete independence of the company, was itching to prove his insubordination.

So, when Stuyvesant, with his penchant for issuing autocratic proclamations, decreed a certain fast day not to van Slechtenhorst’s liking, the Commissary of Rensselaerwyck pounced upon it, rejecting it as an invasion of “the right and authority of the Lord Patroon.” When the governor went up the river to challenge his adversary he was met with open defiance.

It was Stuyvesant’s edict then that “no new ordinances affecting trade or commerce within the colony were to be made, unless with the assent of the provincial authorities.” Also, with regard to the company’s jealously guarded “precincts” about Fort Orange, no more buildings were to be erected at Beverwyck within range of the guns of the

fortifications. Such encroachments on the company's precincts rendered the fort insecure, the governor claimed. And further, he ordered, the wooden palisades of the fort were to be replaced with a stone wall, the stone to be quarried on an adjoining tract of land.

Van Slechtenhorst's reply to all this was that he would build wherever he pleased because all the land around belonged to the patroon. He noted sarcastically that the patroon's own trading house had once stood on the very border of the fort's moat. No sooner had Stuyvesant departed than the wilful commissary went right ahead erecting houses, "even within pistol shot" of the palisades. Furthermore, he forbade the quarrying of stone for new walls to replace the palisades.

The feud, continuing unabated, was eventually referred to Holland where the States General sustained the Governor of New Netherland on every point. Although by this action the aspirations of the patroonship for independence were dashed beyond hope, van Slechtenhorst resisted stubbornly until 1652, when he was arrested and transported down to Manhattan. In the end also, the village of Beverwyck was officially declared free, to become a part of the "precincts" of Fort Orange.

Meanwhile, for Governor Stuyvesant, there was the more vital problem of the New Englanders who were hungrily gnawing away at Dutch fur trading territory.

XVI
The English Close Their Coastal Ranks

ALL during the trouble he was having with the patroon on the upper Hudson, Peter Stuyvesant was conducting a diplomatic holding action against the mounting pressure on his New England front. This was no easy task in the face of the darkening international situation abroad. After Charles I of England was beheaded in 1649, Cromwell's jealousy of Dutch commerce had become threateningly obvious. War between the two nations was imminent. And Stuyvesant well knew that the "United Colonies of New England," even without Cromwell's soldiers, could overrun New Netherland with ease if they took concerted action. That possibility had been implicit in the founding purpose of their alliance in 1643.

It was a fact that defense against the Indians had motivated the New Englanders not much more than the animosity they nurtured against their Dutch neighbors, an animosity born of rivalry for the fur trade. After the alliance, English fur factors became even more aggressive. The men of New Haven, who were especially bitter about being cut off from the Indian trade, boldly encroached on Dutch preserves when they ascended the Housatonic valley and set up a trucking station on the Naugatuck River within sixty miles of Fort Orange. And traders from the upper Connecticut valley probed deeply into traditional Dutch territory in their efforts to tap the beaver stores of the Iroquois.

But, in the years immediately following the formation of the league, there was not enough unanimity of purpose among the New Englanders to attack the foreigners who were standing in the way of their expanding beaver traffic. For one thing, at that time, the dominant member of the confederation was not too directly affected by Dutch resistance. Massachusetts' main inland fur traffic from Boston did not approach Dutch territory, and her chief fur merchant, Simon Willard of Concord, who spearheaded this traffic up the Merrimac River had yet to

reach even Lake Winnepesaukee, itself far separated from New Netherland frontiers by natural boundaries.

Of course all New Englanders protested about the "murderous" Dutch trade in arms for beaver. William Pynchon protested even about the Hollanders supplying the distant Iroquois with firearms. But since all the colonies of the confederation were guilty in some degree of this practice, it is questionable whether the complaints sprang as much from moral considerations as they did from vexation over the diversion of beaver pelts to the more freehanded Hollanders.

In any case, while the New Englanders protested so virtuously about the Dutch trade in firearms, they complained strenuously also about Stuyvesant's new excises on furs, and they took the occasion to pass laws excluding the Hollanders from any trade with Indians under their jurisdiction. Their jurisdiction, it seemed, now comprehended everything along the coast east of Greenwich and unlimited claims to the interior. This brought about a diplomatic showdown.

Governor Stuyvesant, in high bluff, journeyed to Hartford in 1650 for a meeting with the Commissioners of the United Colonies. He offered a valiant front, opening the negotiations with a letter of considerations signed at Hartford but dated "in New Netherland." When the New England commissioners took exception, Stuyvesant explained that, as the substance of the letter was agreed upon in Council at Manhattan, it was so dated. However, if the commissioners would cease speaking of Hartford "in New England," he would not date his letters "in New Netherland."

This was not to be his only retreat. His territorial claims east along the coast retreated from Cape Cod to Greenwich in the face of accomplished fact. And he could only agree to a stabilization of the border between New England and New Netherland at about where it had been fixed already by English traders. Roughly, this was a line running northerly from the vicinity of Greenwich that was at no point to come within ten miles of Hudson's River. The only Dutch reservation east of that line was the Fort Good Hope trading post.

It was all very humiliating. However it appeared to have the redeeming feature of halting by treaty any further encroachment on the heart of the Dutch trading preserves. The all-important Iroquois trade was saved.

But only for the time being, as it turned out. Significantly enough, although the treaty signed at Hartford was eventually ratified by the States General in Holland, the English government never did get around to doing so. It wasn't necessary. England planned to take all of New Netherland, in due time.

Meanwhile, the pressure on New Netherland was renewed, while the treaty itself was violated, even repudiated, by the New Englanders.

To begin with, Cromwell's Navigation Act was passed in 1651. It decreed that goods imported into England must come in English ships or ships belonging to the country in which the goods were produced. Since this was specifically directed against the Dutch carrying trade, it soon plunged England and Holland into a naval war, from which England may be said to have emerged the victor even though she was soundly thrashed at sea. But, although the British fleet had to take refuge in the Thames while an exulting Dutch admiral sailed up and down the Channel with a broom tied to the masthead of his flagship, the Navigation Act was maintained in force.

While all this was going on overseas, New Haven and Connecticut clamored for the conquest of their "noxious" Dutch neighbors. So alarmed was Peter Stuyvesant in 1653 that he made last-ditch preparations for the coming English onslaught. It was at this time that the famous wall of palisades was built along the line of what is still called "Wall" Street. This pale was intended to hinder any possible land envelopment of New Amsterdam by the English. But once again Massachusetts held back. She prevented outright war in America by refusing to join in a military offensive against New Netherland.

The boundaries set up by the Treaty of Hartford were violated however. By 1655 the English had pushed across the

line at Greenwich, well into present-day Westchester County. By 1659 Massachusetts itself was ready to repudiate the treaty.

In that year, it appears, the Hollanders made the mistake of objecting too vigorously to being divested of the bulk of their beaver trade by Boston merchants. The Bay Colony, claiming unlimited western boundaries, had granted a tract in the Hudson valley to merchants interested in establishing a fur trading post close by Fort Orange itself. Then, as if this was not offensive enough to the New Netherlanders, the Boston men boldly requested free use of the Hudson River waterway to reach their new property. The overland route was too difficult, they explained.

When Peter Stuyvesant angrily refused this request the Boston traders persisted, bringing their case before the Commissioners of the United Colonies. Whereupon those gentlemen announced airily that "The agreement at Hartford that the English should not come within ten miles of Hudson's River, doth not prejudice the rights of the Massachusetts in the upland country, nor give any rights to the Dutch there!" Only the excitement generated by the Restoration in England quelled the ensuing controversy long enough to forestall a local conflict.

This same year, only four years after the Dutch conquest of New Sweden, English pressure commenced from the south. There, Governor Fendall of Lord Baltimore's Maryland colony was invading the Delaware valley with men and ultimatums. He demanded that "the pretended Governor of a people seated in Delaware Bay, within his Lordship's Province ... depart forth!" Otherwise, he declaimed, that part of his lordship's province "would be reduced to its due obedience under him."

Stuyvesant, of course, refuted the Maryland claim. He pointed out that Lord Baltimore's patent gave him rights only to lands hitherto uncultivated by Christians. But the English pressure in that quarter, once commenced, was maintained with the same stubborn persistence as that on the New England front. The British were closing their ranks on the eastern seaboard of America. The squeeze was on New Netherland.

The Dutch governor fought desperately for the life of his colony. He had been plagued with Indian uprisings in the valley of the Hudson, pirates in Long Island Sound and English plotters in New Amsterdam itself. Now the very life's breath of his colony was being squeezed out, for, in addition to the loss of Indian trade to the trespassing Englishmen, Peter Stuyvesant also had to contend with the stifling effects of the new British Navigation Acts. These laws had not been relaxed in any degree since Cromwell's death. On the contrary, they had been tightened upon the restoration of the crown.

But, since the Navigation Acts were almost as obnoxious to the English colonies as they were to the Dutch, ways were found in America to circumvent them. Intercolonial trade practices developed that soon baffled the monopoly-minded merchants of London and Bristol. Stuyvesant discovered, for instance, that he could exchange negroes and "other merchandise" for Virginia tobacco, and then reship the English product via New Amsterdam. Thus, goods intended for British bottoms were being carried by the Dutch to foreign markets, in spite of the English navigation laws.

Under these circumstances, from the British viewpoint, there was only one thing left to do. Whatever remained of Dutch authority and jurisdiction in America would have to be stamped out by military force. To accomplish this the English had only to take the Hudson River. It was not only the main highway to the fur stores of the Iroquois, it was the key to military control of the continent. And it could be seized at small cost, the Council of Foreign Plantations suggested.

Whereupon James, Duke of York, persuaded his brother, Charles II, to grant him title to various lands in America including all the territory between the Delaware and Connecticut Rivers, and to finance an expedition against New Amsterdam. The English did not bother even to declare war, since, as the king curiously put it, New Amsterdam "did belong to England before, but the Dutch drove our people out of it." A conglomeration of assumptions hardly warranted by any facts!

Someone has written that the conquest of New Netherland by the force sent out by the Duke of York was “a mere bit of bellicose etiquette.” Others have been more direct, calling it “bold robbery.” In any case, when Colonel Richard Nicolls arrived off Fort Amsterdam in the late summer of 1664, with four frigates and five times the fire power of Stuyvesant’s guns, New Amsterdam became New York without a shot being fired. So did Fort Orange up the river. It only remained then for Sir Robert Carr to descend upon the Delaware settlements to force the allegiance of all those seated there, and New Netherland ceased to exist.

The English had closed ranks on the coasts of America. British colonies now stretched out in line, unbroken by foreigners, from Spanish Florida to French Canada—one united front—for trade, for war.

British demands at Fort Amsterdam having proved to be moderate, the Dutch remained as good subjects, thus establishing the early cosmopolitan character of Manhattan. Many of the burghers had openly sided with the English anyway during the surrender negotiations, apparently with the happy prospect of ridding themselves of their waspish little governor. Stuyvesant himself, retiring to private life, developed a warm friendship with his English successor, Governor Nicolls, each apparently holding the other in high esteem.

And, in the official seal of New York, full recognition was given to the little furred animal that had so properly occupied a prominent place in the seal of the Dutch colony. *Castor canadensis* appeared twice, in fact, within the shield of the British seal. Even after the American Revolution, after the eagle had supplanted the crown in the seal of New York, these two beavers remained there as a permanent reminder of the important role of fur in the genesis of our greatest port.

XVII
Westward the Fur Frontier of America

WITH the elimination of New Netherland in 1664 the main obstacle to British colonial policy had been removed. Laws providing for a more closely knit relationship between the colonies and the mother country, such as the Navigation Acts, could be enforced. Soldiers now backed up the merchants. Indeed, from this time the expansion of England's imperial trade system in America would proceed at the point of a gun.

That it would expand however, and solidly, was because the English had what it took in addition to guns. They possessed all those stubborn qualities required of true empire builders, of colonizers. The farmers who pressed hard behind the fur traders were land-hungry, persistent and numerous. They kept the beaver traders, and the soldiers, on the move.

Although the English flag waved over America in 1664 from Spanish Florida to French Canada, it was planted only along the coast. The farthest inland post was Fort Albany on the Hudson, formerly Dutch Fort Orange. Beyond that, however, lay the boundless hinterland, a seemingly inexhaustible fur frontier to be rolled westward toward the South Sea, toward China!

Of course there was the matter of protecting the English flanks against the Spaniards and the French. On the left flank, in the south, this had been accomplished by the Carolina Patent which extended England's claim in those parts far below Cape Fear to 31°, and later even farther, although Spain did manage to keep the border north of its stronghold at St. Augustine. On the right flank the French coastal boundary had been neatly settled, or so the British colonials thought, when the northernmost limit of the widely scattered lands granted to the Duke of York was placed at the St. Croix River, roughly 45°, which had been England's traditional claim there.

THE TRADERS KEPT PUSHING THEIR BIRCH-BARK CANOES DEEPER INTO THE WILDERNESS.

Then, too, there was the matter of the French traders already in the northwestern hinterland. But, since England had inherited the Dutch trade with the Iroquois, those fierce savages were counted upon to act as buffer allies in the interior, to keep the French trade routes north of the lake country.

It was quite a surprise therefore to the British colonials when their penetration of the interior had hardly begun before Frenchmen were harassing their right flank. Their coastal border on the St. Croix River was forced back once more below the Penobscot, while in the interior the Mohawk valley itself was raided by French troops trying to wrest more southerly routes from the Iroquois.

And this was only the beginning of a bloody rivalry between the English and the French for fur and dominion in America, a

rivalry that would keep the evershifting borders aflame for almost a hundred years—to culminate finally in the decisive French and Indian War of the eighteenth century.

The Frenchmen of the seventeenth century who followed the paths blazed by Samuel de Champlain had extended those paths farther and farther into the hinterland. Fur traders, explorers, soldiers, and Catholic priests who not infrequently bent to the paddles for discovery entirely on their own, all took part in this invasion of America.

Of course the Frenchmen who came to America were not colonizers, not true empire builders. There were few farmers among them. In the main they were adventurers. But they had grand plans, and they knew how to strike bargains and make treaties with the natives. So, although their lines of communication were much too thinly held, they kept pushing their birch-bark canoes deeper into the wilderness for trade and dominion.

In 1634, one of Champlain's interpreters, Jean Nicollet, voyaged across the waters of Lake Michigan to establish trade with the natives in the Wisconsin region. He had supposed they would be an Oriental people, and his appearance at Green Bay in a damask gown richly embroidered in the Chinese manner impressed the Dacotahs no less than the thunder and lightning of his pistol. Believing him to be a white god, the savages were humbly acquiescent to Nicollet's demand for skins, and he took full profit from the situation.

In another twenty-five years two intrepid fur-traders, Pierre Exprit Radisson and his sister's husband Medard Chouart, Sieur des Grosseilliers, had looked upon the waters of the upper Mississippi River. Trading and hunting with the Sioux, they explored much of the vast country between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. On this same expedition, it would appear, while his partner was ill in winter camp, Radisson investigated the region about Lake Superior and learned of Cree trade routes from that lake to the Great Bay of

the North (Hudson's Bay). In the end, after many blood-curdling adventures, he and his brother-in-law returned home to Three Rivers on the St. Lawrence with a fortune in beaver skins.

They were soon off again, however, on another extended trading expedition, this time to build a palisaded fort among savage tribes living north of Lake Superior and eventually to cross the wilderness to Hudson's Bay. Radisson's account of the perils encountered on this venture puts one in mind of Jason's quest for the golden fleece—and the tale's denouement is no less reminiscent of that ancient Greek legend. In any case, the brothers-in-law took along a particularly fine supply of merchandise on this expedition into what is now northwestern Ontario—knives, hatchets and swords, ivory combs and tin looking-glasses, awls, and needles—all those things designed to send the red men in breathless pursuit of beaver. And, when they returned home, they had the greatest single cargo of pelts ever before seen in America. Their convoy included a great fleet of fur-laden canoes, requiring hundreds of Indians to paddle them.

Such a kingly treasure was too much for the grasping French governor at Quebec to resist. What he couldn't take away from Radisson and Des Grosseilliers in taxes he took away in fines. This, he informed them, was because they had gone on their journey without his personal permission. The share left for the two traders, who had taken the risks, opened the country and brought back the beaver, hardly compensated them for their labor. They quit Canada in disgust to cast their lot with the English, the important consequence of which was the birth of the great Hudson's Bay Company.

Radisson and his brother-in-law first spent some time trying to interest merchants in Nova Scotia, then under British control, in establishing a fur trading post on Hudson's Bay. An expedition did set out in an English ship but the captain turned back on encountering ice floes, due to the lateness of the season. Then the Frenchmen went to Boston, where they gained considerable interest in their project but not enough capital to launch it. Finally, in England, they obtained

sufficient backing from Prince Rupert, cousin of King Charles II, to finance such a costly adventure.

In 1668 a trading post was established "at the bottom of Hudson's Bay," in the southernmost part of James Bay, and the first cargo of furs to arrive in England was magnificent enough to insure a royal charter. The king granted domain over all the vast area drained by waters flowing into Hudson's Bay to Prince Rupert and seventeen associates, incorporating them in 1670 as the "Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading in Hudson's Bay." These merchant adventurers became virtual rulers over "Rupert's Land," approximately 1,400,000 square miles of territory, and so their successors of the Hudson's Bay Company were to be for over 200 years.

After the English became entrenched on Hudson's Bay, furs were diverted to them that otherwise would have been collected by the French. In time French traders became aggravated enough to make repeated attacks on the rival posts. Attempts to dislodge the English from the bay proved futile however. Although the "Honorable Company," as the Hudson's Bay Company was to become known, moved ponderously at times due to its conservative absentee directorship in England, it managed to endure and to expand at the expense of the French. In fact, it was destined to become the world's largest fur trading organization. It would shift the course of trade to London, to make it the center of the western world's fur market.

Meanwhile, the adventurous French were spurred on by the discovery of the upper Mississippi. Radisson called the Mississippi, in conjunction with the Missouri, the Forked River "because it has two branches, the one towards the west, the other towards the south, which we believe runs toward Mexico." Jesuit priests, probing the hinterland, wrote that the savages assured them the Mississippi was "so noble a river that, at more than three hundred leagues' distance from its mouth, it is larger than the one flowing before Quebec; for they declare it is more than a league wide.... Some warriors of this country, who tell us that they have made their way thither, declare that they saw there men resembling the French, who

were splitting trees with long knives, and that some of them had houses on the water—for they thus expressed themselves in speaking of sawed boards and Ships"—and Spaniards!

Already, young Louis XIV had considered occupying the mouths of continental rivers emptying into the Gulf of Mexico to threaten the Spanish possessions there. If Radisson's Forked River was really one of these waterways, the strategic value of such a move would be immensely enhanced. It would provide a backside approach from New France, an interior line of communications safe from Spanish attack. It was an intriguing prospect, to say the least.

Then, in 1673, a fur trader and mine prospector named Louis Joliet together with a Jesuit priest, Father Jacques Marquette, descended the Mississippi far enough to learn that it assuredly did flow into the Gulf of Mexico. Whereupon the French not only tasted the stimulating prospect of threatening Spanish possessions there, they excitedly envisioned an inland empire of trading citadels stretching from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, through the Great Lakes and the Mississippi Valley, to the Gulf of Mexico. The continent would be theirs, with great ports of entry at the distantly separated mouths of the St. Lawrence and Mississippi Rivers. The English colonies would be completely encircled—to be pinned down on the coast, or eliminated!

Chief among those who developed this grand commercial strategy for dominion over the heart of America was Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, who as Commandant of Fort Frontenac at the western outlet of Lake Ontario had built up a thriving trade with the northwestern savages. Much to the annoyance of the Iroquois he furnished these Algonquin tribes with guns, powder and lead, as well as less deadly goods, in return for their furs. La Salle's profits from this commerce were huge. But he was an eager young man. The prospect of an enormous trade for buffalo hides, deerskins, beaver, bear, otter and raccoon in the Mississippi valley beckoned him to conquest. In 1678, on his promise to King Louis that he would Christianize the natives, establish a line of forts from the lakes to the mouth of the Mississippi and open a direct route to France through the Gulf of Mexico, he was granted a

monopolistic trade patent to all the lands drained by the mighty river.

It was to be four years however before La Salle reached the mouth of the Mississippi, even on an initial exploratory expedition, for he was to make one false start after another.

If the Iroquois had been unhappy before, they were more so when La Salle, entering into his new domain, palisaded a trading post called Fort Crevecouer—the present site of Peoria, Illinois. They almost annihilated the Illinois with whom the Frenchmen were trading there, this being one of the tribes over which the Five Nations maintained their tyrannous lordship. Henri de Tonti, La Salle's lieutenant in command of the fort at the time these human tigers descended on their vassals, was given the choice of being burned along with some Illinois captives or departing forthwith. He chose to depart. Curiously enough, however, not without a superb stock of furs for his inconvenience, all provided for him with typical savage capriciousness.

There were other opponents with whom La Salle had to contend during this period of trial. Jesuit priests, who drove a profitable trade for beaver among the savages while saving souls, objected not only to the monopoly granted La Salle but to the Franciscan priests who accompanied him and who competed in both commercial and spiritual fields. And there were still others who made mischief. *Coureurs des bois*, those renegade Frenchmen trading in the wilderness without license and illegally selling their furs to the English at Albany, were not averse to conspiring against the new monopoly that threatened their independence. There were hundreds of these savage-like white men, some originally of the French petty nobility, living among the Indians. Many of them had squaw wives, no consciences and little compunction about stirring up a war against their own countrymen if it fattened their pocketbooks.

In the end, however, La Salle established trading relations with the western tribes and organized them as allies. To keep the Iroquois off his back he furnished his red friends with more guns and taught them how to palisade their villages against the

attacks of their fierce overlords. This done, in 1682 he was able to launch the fleet of canoes that carried a motley company of some fifty white men and Indians, including squaws and papooses, to the desolate delta country at the mouth of the Mississippi River. There, he erected a cross, sang the *Te Deum* and gave the name of "Louisiana" to the vast domain he now claimed in the name of France. Then he re-embarked with his company for the Illinois country.

It was a tortuous voyage back up the river. La Salle sickened and nearly died. Recovering at last, he went on to France where he organized and embarked on the expedition that was to end his short but historic career.

After setting out for the Gulf of Mexico with a well-equipped fleet of ships and a full complement of traders and their families, La Salle was first attacked by the Spaniards; then he failed to locate the mouth of the Mississippi. In final desperation he built a palisaded fort hundreds of miles west of his goal on what is now called Matagorda Bay. In that strange country the young French leader was killed by discontents among his own men following an argument over the apportionment of some buffalo meat.

But La Salle's grand scheme did not die with him. While the Spaniards, who carried on a flourishing business in hides in New Mexico, were not long in searching out all that remained of the French colony and taking over the neighboring country called "Texas," they didn't occupy the strategic region about the mouth of the Mississippi River. By 1699 Pierre le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville, a Canadian, had planted a colony on Biloxi Bay in what is now Mississippi, and in another three years a strongly palisaded fort was built close by at Mobile, to become the capital of Louisiana.

French trading citadels soon dotted the Mississippi valley—New Orleans in the delta, Forts Rosalie, Chartres and St. Antoine to comprehend the length of the great river itself, Fort d'Huiller on the Minnesota, Pimitoui on the Illinois, and Fort Orleans on the Missouri. Half-breed camps, conglomerate communities sprang up—Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Natchez, Natchitoches, and others. The natives, and even the outlawed

coureurs des bois, found ready, local markets for their peltries in exchange for trade goods and supplies. And, while deep-laden canoes and company boats plied the alluvial waters of the Mississippi River to and from its mouth, ships from France set a course direct to the Gulf of Mexico—to the new French fur emporium in America.

In the meantime, the main path of the fur traders, the line of communication between Canada and Louisiana, was shortened by a far-sighted Gascon merchant named Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac. When he palisaded his trading citadel at Detroit in 1699, on the strait connecting Lake Erie and Lake Huron, he brought about such a concentration of Indian commerce and military power in those parts that within a few years portages between streams feeding western Lake Erie and the Ohio River could be effected with relative safety from Iroquois attack. And, when French fur traders began dipping their paddles in the Ohio River, thousands of square miles of territory were added to France's mid-continent conquest.

Not only had the French completely encircled the English colonies strung out along the Atlantic seaboard, they had now begun to spread their occupation eastward toward the Appalachian Mountains, behind which they hoped to contain the English permanently.

Meanwhile, trail-blazing traders from Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania and New York had come upon the Appalachians and were searching out that mountainous barrier to further westward expansion.

Sir William Berkeley, Governor of Virginia, had an especial interest in the mountains and the country beyond. As agent in America for the Hudson's Bay Company he hoped to help break the French monopoly on the hinterland trade by exploiting the western territory from Virginia. As early as 1669 he sent out John Lederer, a German, who ranged the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge, north and south, for many miles. Even before that, Abraham Wood and other traders with

commissions from the governor had bartered far to the southwest among the headwaters of Carolina coastal rivers.

They transported their wares on pack horses, 150 to 200 pounds on each animal, making twenty miles or more a day on their journeys when forage was plentiful. With guns, powder and shot as prime trade goods they visited tribes who had previously bartered with the Spaniards of Florida. They took hatchets, kettles, iron tools, colorful blankets and a variety of trinkets to villages never before visited by white men. On these occasions the appearance of that strange animal, the horse, strung with tinkling bells and packing unbelievable wealth on his back, created more awe among the savages than the bearded white man himself.

In 1671 the Virginians crossed the southerly ridges into the New River valley, and in another two years young Gabriel Arthur opened commerce with the Cherokees in the terminal hills of the Appalachians. He and his partner, James Needham, had some extraordinary experiences. Needham, a much older man of some experience in the Indian trade, was murdered by the savages on this venture. Arthur himself escaped burning only through the intervention of a Cherokee chief who, during the midst of the torture, adopted him into the tribe.

The Cherokee chief dressed and armed Arthur as a brave and sent him out with raiding war parties. In the first such instance, the Virginian seems to have joined willingly enough in a murderous surprise attack on a Spanish mission settlement in West Florida. In another, he helped slaughter some sleeping native villagers one night in the vicinity of Port Royal, South Carolina, on the promise of the Cherokees that no Englishmen in those parts would be harmed during the raid. Arthur later said he could tell that one English family was celebrating Christmas when his war party crept by their hut.

In still another instance, Arthur went all the way to the banks of the Ohio with his Cherokee chief to attack a Shawnee village. There he was badly wounded and captured, but released with some reverence when he scrubbed himself and exhibited his white skin to the amazed savages. After making his way back to the country of his Cherokee friends, the young

Virginian finally returned to his own kind on the James River, richly laden with furs and trade treaties.

Henry Woodward, Carolina's resourceful pioneer, found evidence of the Virginians' trade on the backside of Lord Ashley's proprietary in 1674. Woodward, who saved the fledgling colony at Charles Towne from bankruptcy by developing a trade in pelts and skins with the hinterland savages, visited the palisaded village of the Westoes that year. There, high up the Savannah River, he found the natives already "well provided with arms, ammunition, tradeing cloath & other trade from ye northward for which at set times of ye year they truck drest deare skins furrs & young Indian slaves."

Governor Berkeley's traders were indeed carrying on a highly profitable commerce. So much so, that in the interests of those profits, it was claimed, the governor permitted favored hinterland tribes to pillage Virginia tobacco planters with impunity. In any case Berkeley, who operated gainfully in his capacity as a British fur factor, did not respond with enough enthusiasm to the planters' demands for protection, and a civil war resulted in 1676 that set back the colony's economy by years. The rebellion was led by a fiery, twenty-nine-year-old patriot named Nathaniel Bacon. Before he died suddenly of a camp malady, Bacon chased the governor across the Chesapeake Bay to the Eastern Shore and burned Jamestown, the capital of Virginia, to the ground. With Bacon's death the revolt collapsed and twenty-three prominent insurgent leaders were hanged by the governor in an orgy of personal revenge.

But, if Governor Berkeley had won the war over the fur trade, it was a merchant at the Falls of the James River who prospered most. There, at his store, William Byrd maintained a fine stock of calico, red coats, beads, knives, guns and Barbadian brandy for the pack-traders who sought out beaver pelts among remote Indian villages in the interior. So successful was Byrd that by the early 1680's he dominated the hinterland trading paths of Virginia and Carolina. From this commerce he created the fortune that bought enough slaves and tobacco lands to promote his family to a position among the wealthiest in the colony, while the great hogsheads of pelts that he shipped yearly down the James River to England

contributed in no small way to the support of Britain's growing empire.

Henry Woodward and his Carolinians driving straight west avoided the trading paths of the Virginians, as well as the Appalachian Mountains, to invade the preserves of Spanish Florida. This took them to the headwaters of rivers emptying into the Gulf of Mexico, to the villages of the Creeks, where the Spaniards had previously monopolized the trade in deerskins and Indian slaves. The Carolinians diverted much of this profitable commerce to newly located Charleston. Thousands upon thousands of deerskins were shipped yearly to England, to be manufactured into a variety of articles. Hundreds of Indian slaves were supplied to New England and Virginia, and to Barbados where the rate of mortality on the hot sugar plantations insured a steady demand.

Spanish resistance in the south, the extinction of deer and the elimination of whole tribes of Indians who succumbed to slavery, kept the Charleston traders pushing ever toward the unknown west, across the headwaters of the Chattahoochee and the Alabama and into the valley of the Tennessee River. Before the turn of the century they had reached the lands of the Chickasaw Indians bordering on the Mississippi River, where their bright trade goods soon brought in all the available deer in those parts. There, they were busily helping the Chickasaws make war on their neighbors, the Choctaws, to procure slaves in lieu of the skins, when the French arrived.

French forts and a French alliance with the Choctaws halted this English advance into the lower valley of the Mississippi. Even so, the Carolina traders had pushed the English frontier farther west, by hundreds of miles, than any other colonials would do during the next half century.

North of Virginia in the latter part of the seventeenth century the two major areas of the fur trade among the English colonies were New England and New York.

The New England trade, exhausting itself, was on the decline. It had been blocked from expansion by national and political barriers in the west and by the hostility of the French in the north. Raids and counter raids, with the Indians used as

allies on both sides, kept the borders between the French and the New Englanders alive with savage horrors. And, because of the prolonged hostilities in Europe these conditions would continue into the next century, until 1763, long after competition for pelts was no longer a controlling motive in that area.

The main fur trade of the colonies in the north after the fall of New Netherland was New York's hinterland traffic, that which had been inherited from the Dutch. All wilderness paths led to Albany, even those made by the *coureurs des bois* and their copper-hued families packing their illegal furs to the Hudson when they could not do business with their own countrymen at Montreal. In 1679, it was said, there were over 500 of these French renegades living among the Indians. And to Albany, of course, came not only the beaver of the Five Nations but the peltries of vassal tribes deep in the hinterland for whom the Iroquois acted as middlemen.

The Five Nations were jealous enough of their trade and sovereignty to visit swift vengeance on any vassals who tried to deal direct with the white men, as happened to the Illinois in 1680 when those distant natives sold their pelts to La Salle. For the same reason they also tried to keep white pack traders from pushing farther into the west, where they might exchange their wares direct with the less sophisticated natives. It was a losing battle however.

By the turn of the century, traders from New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia were working the Appalachian passes for beaver and otter. In another twenty years many were squeezing through the more northerly gaps into the valley of the Ohio River. By then, the pressure of immigrant families upon the land east of the mountains had commenced in earnest. Palatine farmers were flowing up the valley of the Mohawk in great numbers, and land-hungry Ulster Scots were scrambling through the Susquehanna valley and southward up the Shenandoah.

The fur trader as usual had searched out the country. Then, while he was still exploiting it for his own purposes, he had to make way for the farmer. The two could never blend, not after the frontier began to roll westward. Farmers spoiled the trade. The pioneer traders could only move on to more fertile trading grounds, to open new territory which itself would later be taken up by farmers.

Of course, Indian titles had to be extinguished before settlers could legally move into the lands opened up by the fur traders. Some tribes were a bit troublesome about this detail. The Delaware kicked up an especially bloody fuss on the Pennsylvania frontier. They had more than a suspicion that they had been swindled by the "Walking Purchase."

When William Penn, the founding proprietor of the Quaker colony, bought land from the Delaware tribe, the extent of the purchase was limited to the distance a man could go in 1½ days. But, when the time came in 1737 for Penn's son to measure this off, he did not have it walked off as the Indians had presumed it would be done. To cover the distance, the Quaker employed trained white athletes, runners! It was even suspected that the white runners may have used horses concealed along the route, that is, after they were out of sight of the Indians who panted along behind them full of Penn's rum, according to some accounts.

Things settled down rather quickly however when James Logan, that astute Pennsylvanian who guided the Indian policy of the colony, treated generously with the Iroquois to keep the Delaware in line. The Delaware, in fear of their fierce overlords in the north, vacated most of their lands east of the mountains and joined the equally unhappy Shawnee in the upper Ohio valley. There they listened malevolently to French traders and soldiers who promised a red-handed revenge.

So successful was the Indian policy in general, however, that on the outbreak of King George's War in 1744 between England and France, the Iroquois were cajoled into granting the English practically all the Ohio valley and sealing the bargain with an alliance to help protect the property against the French who were already there. In fact, commissioners from

Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, meeting with an Iroquois delegation around the council fire at Lancaster, obtained "a Deed recognizing the King's right to all the Lands that are, or shall be, by his Majesty's appointment, in the Colony of Virginia."

As far as the Virginians were concerned those lands by ancient charter stretched all the way to the South Sea, wherever that was, although they were willing to settle for the Ohio valley for the time being. Nor did the Quaker colony seriously dispute Virginia's claim at the time, even though nearly all of the fur traders beyond the mountains, who were now aggressively competing with the French, were Pennsylvanians.

Chief among these was George Croghan. He had not arrived in Pennsylvania from Dublin until 1741, but he was established in trade on the Ohio River well before King George's War. By 1746 he had a number of storehouses on Lake Erie itself. From the bustling base of his operations in the 1740's near Harris Ferry (Harrisburg) on the Susquehanna, and later from Aughwick farther west, he and his various partners directed effective attacks on French trade in the Ohio valley.

Together with his brother-in-law William Trent, and Andrew Montour, Barney Curran and John Fraser, Croghan controlled fort-like storehouses about the forks of the Ohio, up the Allegheny and the Youghiogheny, on the south shore of Lake Erie, at the forks of the Muskingum, and even on the Scioto and Miami Rivers. From these trading posts, all of which developed into rude settlements of sorts, the Pennsylvanians distributed rum, gunpowder, lead and flints, as well as calicoes, ribbons, colored stockings, kettles, axes, bells, whistles and looking-glasses. In return, they collected a fine variety of pelts and skins—beaver, raccoon, otter, muskrat, mink, fisher, fox, deer, elk, and bear.

Croghan's pack traders, at times possibly numbering twenty-five men and driving a hundred or more mules altogether, followed the Ohio down to the falls and worked the streams that fed it. They were trading and fighting in what is now West Virginia and eastern Kentucky almost a quarter of a

century before Daniel Boone. They bartered under the very guns of French forts, engaging in bloody skirmishes with the French and Indians and on occasion being taken as captives to Montreal and even to France.

Croghan had his English competitors too. There were, for instance, the five Lowrey brothers, as aggressive and as rugged a lot of rivals as might have been found on any fur frontier. But all the Pennsylvanians were as one in their persistent encroachment on the French. Backed by factors in Philadelphia and Lancaster, including Shippen and Lawrence and the firm of Levy, Franks and Simon, both of which specialized in the Indian trade and in turn received credit from wealthy merchants of London and Bristol, these intrepid frontiersmen stubbornly picked away at the French trade.

In one respect the Englishmen were fortunate. During King George's War the French had trouble getting sufficient trade goods, and many Indians with whom they had been trading became contemptuous of them. It is said that, on one occasion, when a Frenchman only offered a single charge of powder for a beaver skin, the Indian with whom he was bartering "took up his Hatchet, and knock'd him on the head, and killed him upon the Spot." Croghan and his Pennsylvanians took full advantage of the temporary French embarrassment, building up their annual business in pelts to a value of some 40,000 pounds sterling.

It was the prospect of a share in this lucrative trade that motivated some wealthy Virginians, among them Thomas Lee and the Washingtons, who conceived the Ohio Company after the Treaty of Lancaster. While acting as a vehicle to establish England's claim west of the mountains, the company as it was finally organized promised future dividends from land development in those parts. But there was the immediate prospect of rich gains from the fur trade, and little time was lost in lining up experienced Indian traders for the project.

Thomas Cresap, a clever Yorkshireman, who operated a trading post in the mountains near the junction of the North and South Branches of the Potomac River, became an organizing member of the Ohio Company. So lavishly

hospitable was Cresap to the Indians and others with whom he did business that he was known to them as "Big Spoon," but to his Pennsylvania trading competitors he was an undercutting Marylander not above committing murder for a beaver skin. Certain it is that he had once been carted off in irons, after some "rascality" on the Maryland-Pennsylvania border, to spend a year in prison at Philadelphia.

In any case the aristocratic tidewater Virginians counted "Colonel Cressup" a key member of their Ohio Company. The Marylander's trading paths already led to the Youghiogheny, the Monongahela, and the Ohio. So, the fort-like establishment he maintained on Virginia's northwestern frontier served as a convenient base from which the company commenced its well-financed operations in the Ohio valley.

Employed by the company were some former associates of George Croghan. Among them were Andrew Montour, a colorful half-breed of *coureur des bois* stock, and Croghan's brother-in-law William Trent. With the aid of experienced men like these, Thomas Cresap was soon proving his worth to his tidewater partners and to the British Empire.

The threat was too obvious to be ignored by the French. They laid plans to push the English back over the mountains. Already, a French army detachment, using a traders' portage between the eastern end of Lake Erie and Lake Chautauqua, had gone down to the Ohio via the Allegheny River, planting lead plates along both streams as a warning to trespassers. Already, French-led and French-inspired Indian raids had taken the lives of English traders, as well as those of their native hosts. In one case a prominent Indian chief allied with the English had been boiled and eaten by some Ottawas led by a French half-breed, all without discouraging the Englishmen it seemed. Now, in 1753, a French army of 1,000 men headed down the Allegheny from Canada, to begin building a line of forts along the line of the previously planted lead plates.

Forts were built first at present-day Erie on the lake and at the head of French Creek to secure a portage. Then, John Frazer's trading post at Venango on the Allegheny was taken

and converted to a fortification. There the French troops, bogged down with sickness, dug in for the winter.

That is where Major George Washington found them when he carried a note from the Governor of Virginia to their commanding officer suggesting that they all retire promptly to Canada. This, the Frenchmen said, they had no intention of doing. In the spring they would push on, down the Allegheny, to the strategic Forks of the Ohio.

Even as the French army was building canoes that winter for its advance on the Ohio, Thomas Cresap and William Trent were supervising the construction of an English fort at the forks of the river. They now represented the Governor of Virginia and the King of England, as well as the Ohio Company, all of whom were one and the same as far as the Ohio valley was concerned. In fact Trent, the fur trader in the employ of the Ohio Company, had been commissioned a captain by Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia to command the new fort and oppose the French.

But when spring and the French came to the Forks of the Ohio, Captain Trent was absent. He said he was looking for recruits; some suspected he was ferrying his beaver to a safer spot. The ensign in command yielded the English fort in the face of overwhelming odds, and the French built an impressive citadel in its place, which they named Fort DuQuesne to honor the Canadian governor of that name.

Washington, now Colonel Washington, who was advancing from Virginia with his militia to Trent's support, was much too late. He was forced to content himself with palisading a defensive position along the road at Great Meadows. There at Fort Necessity, as he called it, he warded off as best he could the large number of French troops who came out to engage him.

That summer of 1754 Washington surrendered. When he led his militiamen back over the Alleghenies, the Frenchmen had succeeded in their purpose. The English were out of the Ohio valley.

However, the American phase of the Seven Years' War had commenced—two years before it was officially declared in Europe. The critical contest known on this continent as the French and Indian War was under way, and the very next year General Edward Braddock arrived with his British regulars to direct the campaign.

The strategic plan decided upon encompassed a four-fold attack upon the French at DuQuesne, Crown Point, Niagara, and in Nova Scotia. General Braddock himself assumed the DuQuesne assignment, the most important immediate objective. But he failed on this mission, his abortive attempt to reach the Forks of the Ohio ending in the disastrous rout of his troops and his own death.

It was not until 1758 that General John Forbes forced the evacuation of the fort at the Forks of the Ohio. The French then abandoned the entire valley. Fort DuQuesne became Fort Pitt and the English were in control of the Ohio River.

The war was savagely fought out on all fronts in America. Other French citadels fell—Louisburg, Frontenac, Niagara, Ticonderoga, and Crown Point. Eventually, Quebec and Montreal, those ancient fortresses on the St. Lawrence River, capitulated to the British. Then, in 1763, by the Treaty of Paris, France ceded Canada and all her territory east of the Mississippi River to Great Britain, except for one small plot encompassing New Orleans. Spain likewise ceded Florida.

The English flanks no longer needed protection. The way west was open and the frontier was boundless!

Settlers spilled through the gaps of the Appalachians, into Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois. And the fur traders, making way for them as they pressed upon their trading grounds, pushed on, ever westward, across the plains after the turn of the century to the Rocky Mountains and the coastal rivers of the Pacific.

But the era of the early fur trader, typified by the white trader and the Indian hunter, had come to an end. As the frontier began rolling across the great plains of America, the white man became trapper as well as trader. When he took over the function of the Indian, who had formerly caught the

beaver, a whole new conception of the fur trade in America was born. A new era commenced—that of the fur trapper.

The fur trader of early America had played out his historically important role.

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Transcriber's Notes

A few minor errors in punctuation and spacing were corrected.

Page 10: "wore cloth hoods ostenstatiously" changed to "wore cloth hoods ostentatiously"

Page 27: "Wholesale annihiliation" changed to "Wholesale annihilation"

Page 28: "instuments of torture" changed to "instruments of torture"

Page 34: "great linquistic family" changed to "great linguistic family"

Page 68: "parallelling the Susquehanna" changed to "paralleling the Susquehanna"

Page 123: "the offer a squaw" changed to "the offer of a squaw"

Page 176: "sanquinary five-year war" changed to "sanguinary five-year war"

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PELTS AND PALISADES: THE STORY OF FUR AND THE RIVALRY FOR PELTS IN EARLY AMERICA ***

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