

5. Edward Waterhouse's Report on the Events of 1622

By 1622, thanks to tobacco and a peace that had been made with the Indians, the English colony at Jamestown was flourishing. This was, however, bad news for the local indigenous people, who were rapidly losing all the arable land near the rivers to the well-armed colonists. In March of 1622, the Powhatans orchestrated a major attack, striking without warning at many sites up and down the James River. About a quarter of the colony's population was killed in one day. It is unclear whether the Powhatans hoped the surviving colonists would leave forever or simply be content to stay in Jamestown and operate a trading post, leaving the Indians with their lands. Most likely, the indigenous were divided among themselves as to their ultimate agenda. In any case, the settlers regrouped and sent out attack parties to wreak vengeance. Almost immediately, Edward Waterhouse sent back to London "A Declaration of the State of the Colony and Affaires in Virginia, with a Relation of the Barbarous massacre in the time of peace and League, treacherously executed by the Native Infidels upon the English."

These small and scattered Companies [of Indians] had warning given from one another in all their habitations to meete at the day and houre appointed for our destruction, at all our severall Townes and places seated upon the River; some were directed to goe to one place, some to another, all to be done at the same day and time, which they did accordingly: some entering their Houses under colour of trucking [trading], and so taking advantage, others drawing our men abroad upon faire pretences, and the rest suddenly falling upon those that were at their labours.

... Thus have you seen the particulars of this massacre, out of Letters from thence written, wherein treachery and cruelty have done their worst to us, or rather to themselves; for whose understanding is so shallow, as not to perceive that this must needs bee for the good of the Plantation after, and the losse of this blood to make the body more healthfull, as by these reasons may be manifest.

First, Because betraying of innocency never rests unpunished: And therefore *Agesilaus*,² when his enemies (upon whose oath of being faithfull hee rested) had deceived him, he sent them thanks, for that by their perjury, they had made God his friend, and their enemy.

Secondly, Because our hands which before were tied with gentlesse and faire usage, are now set at liberty by the treacherous violence of the Savages, not untying the Knot, but cutting it: So that we, who hitherto have had possession of no more ground then their waste, and our purchase at a valuable consideration to their owne contentment, gained; may now by right of Warre, and law of Nations, invade the Country and destroy them who sought to destroy us: whereby wee shall enjoy their cultivated places, turning the laborious Mattocke into the Victorious Sword (wherein there is more both ease, benefit, and glory) and possessing the fruits of others labours. Now their cleared grounds in all their villages (which are situate in the fruitfulest places of the land) shall be inhabited by us, whereas heretofore the grubbing [clearing] of woods was the greatest labour.

Thirdly, Because those commodities which the Indians enjoyed as much or rather more than we, shall now also be entirely possessed by us. The Deere and other beasts will be in safety, and finitely increase, which heretofore not onely in the generall huntings of the King (whereat foure or five hundred Deere were usually slaine) but by each particular Indian were destroyed at all times of the yeare, without any difference of Male, Damme, or Young . . .

Fourthly, Because the way of conquering them is much more easie then of civilizing them by faire meanes, for they are a rude, barbarous, and naked people, scattered in small companies, which are helps to Victories, but hinderances to Civilitie: Besides that, a conquest may be of many, and at once, but civility is in particular, and slow, the effect of long time, and great industry. Moreover, victorie of them may bee gained many waies; by force, by surprise, by famine in burning their Corne, by destroying and burning their Boats, Canoes and Houses, by breaking their fishing Weares, by assailing them in their huntings, whereby they get the greatest part of

² Agesilaus was a king of Sparta who lived from 444 BC to 360 BC. In making reference to him, Waterhouse is showing off his classical education, and thus proving his credentials as a "gentleman" to anyone who might read his work.

their sustenance in Winter, by pursuing and chasing them with our horses, and blood-Hounds to draw after them, and Mastives to teare them, which take this naked, tanned, deformed Savages, for no other then wilde beasts, and are so fierce and fell upon them, that they feare them worse then their old Devill which they worship, supposing them to be a new and worse kind of Devils then their owne. By these and sundry other wayes, as by driving them (when they flye) upon their enemies, who are round about them, and by animating and abetting their enemies against them, may their ruine or subjection be soone effected . . .

Fiftly [*sic*], Because the Indians, who before were used as friends, may now most justly be compelled to servitude and drudgery, and supply the roome of men that labour, whereby even the meanest [poorest] of the Plantation may imploy themselves more entirely in their Arts and Occupations, which are more generous, whilst Savages performe their inferiour workes of digging in mynes, and the like, of whom also some may be sent for the service of the Sommer Ilands [in the Caribbean].

Sixtly, This will for ever hereafter make us more cautelous [cautious] and circumspect, as never to bee deceived more by any other treacheries, but will serve for a great instruction to all posterities there, to teach them that *Trust is the mother of Deceipt*, and to learne them that of the Italian, *Chi no fida, non s'ingamuu*, Hee that trusts not is not deceived; and make them know that kindnesses are misspent upon rude natures, so long as they continue rude; as also, that Savages and Pagans are above all other for matter of Justice ever to be suspected. Thus upon this Anvile shall wee now beate out to our selves an armour of prooffe, which shall for ever after defend us from barbarous Incursions, and from greater dangers that otherwise might happen. And so we may truly say according to the French Proverb, *Aquelq chose Malheur est bon*, Ill lucke is good for something.

Source: Edward Waterhouse, "A Declaration of the State of the Colony and Affaires in Virginia, with a Relation of the Barbarous massacre in the time of peace and League, treacherously executed by the Native Infidels upon the English" (imprinted at London for Robert Mylbourne, 1622), in Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed., *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, vol. 3 (United States Government Printing Office, 1933), pp. 541-64.

Study: Frederic Gleach, *Powhatan's World and Colonial Virginia: A Conflict of Cultures* (University of Nebraska Press, 1997); Helen Rountree, *Pocahontas's People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia through Four Centuries* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1990).