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Ten American Girls From History

Kate Dickinson Sweetser

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TO
EDITH BOLLING WILSON

"THE FIRST LADY OF THE LAND"

A DESCENDANT OF POCAHONTAS, THE INDIAN
GIRL OF THE VIRGINIA FOREST WHO LINKS
THE FLOWER OF EARLY AMERICA WITH
THE "NEW FREEDOM" OF TODAY, THIS
BOOK IS CORDIALLY DEDICATED.

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FOREWORD

The loyalty of Pocahontas, the patriotism of Molly Pitcher and Dorothy Quincy, the devoted service of Clara Barton, the heroism of Ida Lewis, the enthusiasm of Anna Dickinson, the fine work of Louisa Alcott—all challenge the emulation of American girls of to-day. Citizen-soldiers on a field of service as wide as the world, young America has at this hour of national crisis its chance to win recognition for fidelity, for bravery, and for loyal service, with victory for American ideals as its golden reward, in a world "made safe for democracy."

My first aim in bringing the lives of these ten American girls from history to the attention of the girls of to-day has been to inspire them to like deeds of patriotism and courage. Second only to that purpose is a desire to make young Americans realize as they read these true stories of achievement along such widely varying lines of work, that history is more thrilling than fiction, and that if they will turn from these short sketches to the longer biographies from which the facts of these stories have been taken, they will find interesting and absorbing reading.

May the book accomplish its twofold object, and so justify its publication at this time of the testing of all true Americans.

Kate Dickinson Sweetser.

August 1, 1917.

TEN AMERICAN GIRLS FROM HISTORY

POCAHONTAS: THE INDIAN GIRL OF THE VIRGINIA FOREST

Sunlight glinting between huge forest trees, and blue skies overarching the Indian village of Werewocomoco on the York River in Virginia, where Powhatan, the mighty "Werowance," or ruler over thirty tribes, was living.

Through Orapakes and Pamunkey and other forest settlements a long line of fierce warriors were marching Indian file, on their way to Werewocomoco, leading a captive white man to Powhatan for inspection and for sentence. As the warriors passed into the Indian village, they encountered crowds of dusky braves and tattooed squaws hurrying along the wood trails, and when they halted at the central clearing of the village, the crowd closed in around them to get a better view of the captive. At the same time there rose a wild clamor from the rear of the throng as a merry group of shrieking, shouting girls and boys darted forward, jostling their way through the crowd.

Their leader was a slender, straight young girl with laughing eyes such as are seldom seen among Indians, and hair as black as a crow's wing blown about her cheeks in wild disorder, while her manner was that of a happy hearty [Pg 2] forest maiden. This was Matoaka, daughter of the Werowance Powhatan, and although he had many subjects as well as twenty sons and eleven daughters, not one was ruled so despotically as was he himself, by this slender girl with laughing eyes, for whom his pet name was Pocahontas, or in free translation, "little romp."

Having established themselves in the front row of the crowd the girls and boys stood eagerly staring at the prisoner, for many of them had never seen a white man before, and as Pocahontas watched, she looked like a forest flower in her robe of soft deer-skin, with beaded moccasins on her shapely feet, coral bracelets and anklets vying with the color in her dark cheeks, while a white plume drooping over her disordered hair proclaimed her to be the daughter of a great chief. In her health and happiness she radiated a

charm which made her easily the ruling spirit among her mates, and compelled the gaze of the captive, whose eyes, looking about for some friendly face among the savage throng, fastened on the eager little maiden with a feeling of relief, for her bright glance showed such interest in the prisoner and such sympathy with him as was to endear her to his race in later years.

The long line of braves with their heads and shoulders gaily painted had wound their slow way through forest, field, and meadow to bring into the presence of the great "Werowance" a no less important captive than Captain John Smith, leader in the English Colony at Jamestown by reason of his quick wit and stout heart. The settlers having been threatened with a famine, the brave Captain had volunteered to go on an expedition among neighboring Indian villages in search of a supply of corn. The trip had been full of thrilling adventures for him, and had ended disastrously in his being taken prisoner by Opechancanough, the brother of Powhatan. The news of Smith's [Pg 3] capture having been carried to the great Werowance, he commanded that the pale-faced *Caucarouse*, or Captain, be brought to him for sentence. And that was why the warriors marched into Werewocomoco, Opechancanough in the center, with the firearms taken from Captain Smith and his companions carried before him as trophies. The prisoner followed, gripped by three stalwart Indians, while six others acted as flank guards to prevent his escape, and as they passed into Werewocomoco they were greeted by yelling savages brandishing weapons and surging forward to get a better glimpse of the white captive. The procession halted for a few minutes at the village clearing, then moved slowly on to Powhatan's "Chief Place of Council," a long arbor-like structure where the great Werowance was waiting to receive Captain Smith.

The crowd of boys and girls followed in the wake of the warriors until the Council Hall was reached, when they all dropped back except their leader. Pushing her hair from her low brow, that she might see more clearly, and walking with the erectness of a Werowance's daughter, Pocahontas entered the hall and stood near her father where she could not only watch the white captive, who appealed strongly to her fancy, but could also note Powhatan's expression as he passed judgment on the prisoner.

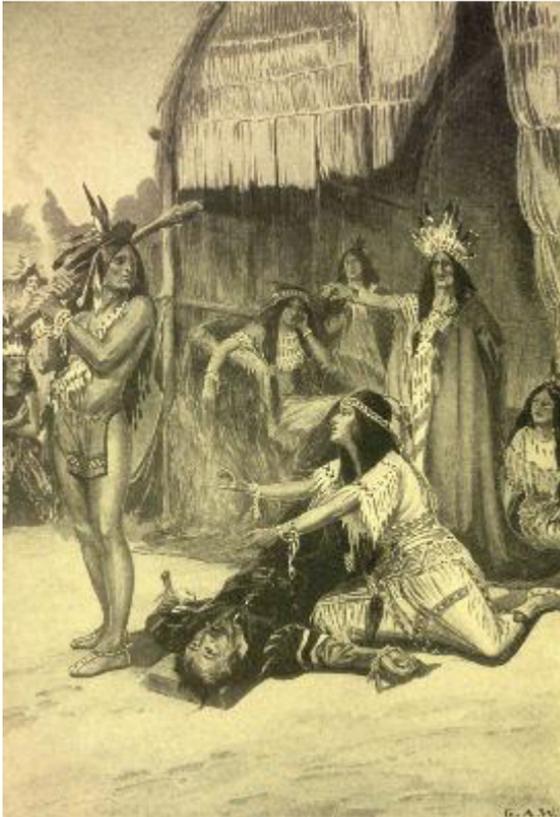
With inscrutable reserve and majestic dignity the great ruler bowed as the captive was led before his rustic throne, where he reclined in a gorgeous robe of raccoon-skins. On either side of the Council Hall sat rows of dusky men and women, with their heads and shoulders painted red, some of the women wearing garments trimmed with the white down from birds' breasts, while others wore long chains of white beads about their necks.

It was a picturesque sight for English eyes, and fearful though he was of foul play, the Captain could not but [Pg 4] appreciate the brilliant mingling of gay colors and dark faces. As he stood before the Chief, there was a clapping of hands to call an Indian woman, the Queen of the Appamattock, who brought water to wash the captive's hands, while another brought a bunch of feathers to dry them on. "What next?" Captain Smith wondered as he watched further preparations being made, evidently for a feast, of which he was soon asked to partake.

Under the circumstances his appetite was not keen, but he felt obliged to pretend to a relish that he did not feel, and while he was eating his eyes lighted up with pleasure as he saw by her father's side—though he did not know then of the relationship—the little Indian girl whose interest in him had been so apparent when he saw her in the village. He dared not smile in response to her vivid glance, but his gaze lingered long on the vision of youth and loveliness, and he turned back to his meal with a better appetite.

The feast at an end, Powhatan called his councilors to his side, and while they were in earnest debate Captain Smith knew only too well that his fate was hanging in the balance. At last a stalwart brave arose and spoke to the assemblage. The captive, so he said, was known to be the leading spirit among the white settlers whose colony was too near the Indians' homes to please them, also in his expedition in search of corn he had killed four Indian warriors with "mysterious weapons which spoke with the voice of thunder and breathed the lightning," and he had been spying on their land, trying to find some secret means by which to betray them. With him out of the way their country would be freed from a dangerous menace, therefore he was condemned to death.

Doomed to die! Although he did not understand their words, there was no misunderstanding their intention. Immediately two great stones were rolled into the hall, to [Pg 5] the feet of Powhatan, and the Captain was seized roughly, dragged forward and forced to lie down in such a position that his head lay across the stones. Life looked sweet to him as he reviewed it in a moment of quick survey while waiting for the warriors' clubs to dash out his brains. He closed his eyes. Powhatan gave the fatal signal—the clubs quivered in the hands of the executioners. A piercing shriek rang out, as Pocahontas darted from her father's side, sprang between the uplifted clubs of the savages and the prostrate Captain, twining her arms around his neck and laying her own bright head in such a position that to kill the captive would be to kill the Werowance's dearest daughter.



POCAHONTAS

SAVES CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH

With horror at this staying of his royal purpose, and at the sight of his child with her arms around the white man's neck, Powhatan stared as if at a hideous vision, and closed his ears to the sound of her voice as her defiant Indian words rang out:

"No! He shall not die!"

The savages stood with upraised weapons; Powhatan sat rigid in the intensity of his emotion. Watching him closely for some sign of

relenting, Pocahontas, without moving from her position, began to plead with the stern old Chief,—begged, entreated, prayed—until she had her desire.

"Let the prisoner go free!"

Through the long Council-room echoed Powhatan's order, and a perfunctory shout rose from the savage throng, who were always quick to echo their Chief's commands. Captain Smith, bewildered by the sudden turn of affairs, was helped to rise, led to the beaming girl, and told that the condition of his release from death was that he might "make hatchets and trinkets" for Pocahontas, the Werowance's dearest daughter. So his deliverer was the daughter of the great Chief! With the courtly manner which he [Pg 6] had brought from his life in other lands he bent over the warm little hand of the Indian maiden with such sincere appreciation of her brave deed that she flushed with happiness, and she ran away with her playmates, singing as merrily as a forest bird, leaving the pale-faced *Caucarouse* with her royal father, that they might become better acquainted. Although she ran off so gaily with her comrades after having rescued Captain Smith, yet she was far from heedless of his presence in the village, and soon deserted her young friends to steal shyly back to the side of the wonderful white man whose life had been saved that he might serve her.

During the first days of his captivity—for it was that—the Captain and Powhatan became very friendly, and had many long talks by the camp-fire, by means of a sign language and such words of the Algonquin dialect as Captain Smith had learned since coming to Virginia. And often Pocahontas squatted by her father's side, her eager eyes intent on the Captain's face as he matched the old ruler's marvelous tales of hoarded gold possessed by tribes living to the west of Werewocomoco, with stories of the cities of Europe he had visited, and the strange peoples he had met in his wanderings. Sometimes as he told his thrilling tales he would hear the little Indian maid catch her breath from interest in his narrative, and he would smile responsively into her upturned face, feeling a real affection for the young girl who had saved his life.

From his talks with Powhatan the Englishman found out that the great desire of the savage ruler was to own some of the cannon and

grindstones used by the colonists, and with quick diplomacy he promised to satisfy this wish if Powhatan would but let him go back to Jamestown and send with him warriors to carry the coveted articles. This the wily Indian ruler promised to do, and in return offered him [Pg 7] a tract of land which he did not own, and from which he intended to push the settlers if they should take possession of it. And Captain Smith had no intention of giving either cannon or grindstones to Powhatan, so the shrewd old savage and the quick-witted Captain were well matched in diplomacy.

Meanwhile, Powhatan's interest in his white captive became so great that he gave him the freedom he would have accorded one of his own subjects, even allowing Pocahontas to hunt with him, and when evening came she would sit by the great fire and listen to her Captain's stories of his life told with many a graphic gesture which made them clear to her even though most of his words were unintelligible.

Then came a day when the captive was led to a cabin in the heart of the forest and seated on a mat before a smoldering fire to await he knew not what. Suddenly Powhatan appeared before him, fantastically dressed, followed by two hundred warriors as weirdly decorated as he was. Rushing in, they surrounded the frightened Captain, but quickly dispelled his fears by telling him that they were all his friends and this was only a ceremony to celebrate his speedy return to Jamestown, for the purpose of sending back cannon and grindstones to their Chief.

This was good news. The Captain showed hearty appreciation of the favor, and at once said his farewells. Powhatan, the inscrutable, who bade him a dignified good-by, repeated his promise to give him the country of the Capahowsick, which he did not own, and said he should forever honor him as his own son. Then, with an escort of twelve Indians, Captain Smith set out for Jamestown, and beside him trudged Pocahontas, looking as resolute as if she were in truth a forest Princess escorting her chosen cavalier through the wilderness.

As they picked their way along the rough trail, the [Pg 8] Captain told her such tales of the settlement as he could make clear to her and repeated some simple English words he had been trying to

teach her. As he talked and as she said over and over the words she had learned, Pocahontas gripped his arm with rapt interest and longed to follow where he led. But night was coming on, it was unwise for her to go beyond the last fork of the trail, and so, reluctantly, she parted from her new and wonderful friend. But before she left him she darted to the side of a trusty warrior and gave a passionate command, then started swiftly back on the long wood path leading to Werewocomoco. The next night no one could make her laugh or join in the dances around the big fire, nor did she show any likeness to the light-hearted, romping, singing little tomboy, ringleader among her playmates. Pocahontas had lost a comrade, and her childish heart was sore at the loss. But when the warriors returned from Jamestown she became merry and happy again, for had the *Caucarouse* not sent her back strings of beads more beautiful than any she had ever seen before, such as proved surely that he had not forgotten her?

The truth of the matter was, that on reaching the colony, Captain Smith showed the Indians a grindstone and told them to carry it back to Powhatan, but when they tried to lift it and found its great weight they were utterly disconcerted. Then the wily Captain showed them a cannon purposely loaded with stones, and had it discharged among the icicle-laden trees, which so terrified the savages that they ran away and refused to take another look at it. Then Captain Smith cleverly suggested that they carry back trinkets in place of the articles which were so heavy, and the Indians went happily away without the promised gifts, but bearing many smaller things, some of which the Captain was thoughtful enough to suggest be given to [Pg 9] Pocahontas as a slight token of his appreciation of her great service to him.

Little he dreamed, man of the world though he was, that the small courtesy would mean as much to the Indian maiden as it did, nor could he know that from that hour the dreams of Pocahontas were all to be built around the daily life of the pale-faced men in the Jamestown settlement. Even when she joined her playmates in her favorite games of Gus-ga-e-sa-ta (deer buttons), or Gus-ka-eh (peach-pit), or even,—tomboy that she was,—when she turned somersaults with her favorite brother Nantaquaus and his comrades, she was so far from being her usual lively self that the boys