

Letters from a Pilgrim Child

for Your Classroom



Harvest 1621

Dearest Aunt Constance,

Pray forgive me for being so long between letters. After the great sickness it seemed that there was little good to write about. By the time spring arrived, nearly half of our number had died. Twas truly a mournful time. Since then we have continued to build houses and have planted our gardens and many acres of our English corns. In time, I think we may come to prosper here. We have even begun to grow a curious corn that we call Indian corn or turkey wheat.



How we learned to grow this Indian corn was most unexpected. Last spring a tall Indian walked into our town, causing great alarm. To our great astonishment, he spoke in our tongue, saying "Welcome Englishmen." He told us that his name was Samoset and that he had learned English from fishermen to the north of here.

Samoset returned the next day with Tisquantum, whose English was as fine as yours and mine. Tisquantum told us how his people used to live where we now live, but that a few years before we arrived a plague had come and wiped out the town. He has been a great blessing to us, showing us how to grow Indian corn in mounds. He even told us to put herring in the ground to make the corn grow better. It works as well as using manure and our harvest was quite fine. Tisquantum also showed us how to fish and the best places to hunt. I fear that we would not have survived here were it not for the help of Tisquantum and others.

To celebrate our first harvest our Governor, Master Bradford, called for a celebration. Four men went hunting wild fowl and brought back enough geese, ducks and other birds to last nearly a week! We ate, played at games, and the men practiced shooting their muskets. The Indians came amongst us as well, among them their greatest King Massasoit and more than 90 men! I was most frightened at first, but they stayed for three days and we entertained and feasted them. And they went out and brought us five deer. While they were here I even saw some of their children! One boy, father says he thinks that his name is Po-met-a-comet, threw a ball to me. Of course he could not speak English and I could not speak the Indian tongue.



And now we have a new ship in the harbor! It is wonderful that we have new folk to settle here, but I fear that our harvest, which seemed plentiful enough, will not be enough for all of us and the newcomers. Father says that we will fill this ship full of timber and furs to send back to England. Perhaps on the next ship they will send over some cows!

Dearest Aunt Constance, I truly hope that you will come to join us in New Plimoth. I pray that soon we will be a thriving town.

*Your loving niece,
Lizzy*