

Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618)

On 20th March 1616, Sir Walter Raleigh was set free. He had been in the Tower of London for thirteen years. The king said he would set him free but only if he did something. What was it? He must go in a ship to South America to find *El Dorado*. What was *El Dorado*? It was the Land of Gold! What a wicked king! Sir Walter Raleigh was a good man. He did not deserve to be in prison. The king was greedy. How rich he would be if Sir Walter found *El Dorado*! Sir Walter was a brilliant sea captain. He was an explorer. But no one knew if *El Dorado* even existed.

The voyage was a failure. There was no *El Dorado* to be found. The king had told Sir Walter not to attack any Spanish towns or ships. The king wanted to be friends with the Spanish. Most English people did not want to be friends with the Spanish. In those days the Spanish were cruel. They put Christians to death.

The Spanish had a town in South America. While Sir Walter was there some of his men attacked this town. Sir Walter did not know what they were doing. His own son was part of the attack. He was killed in the fighting.

Raleigh had to go home. He had no gold. He had lost his son. How angry the Spanish were. Their town had been attacked! "Sir Walter must die," the king was told.

Did the king save Sir Walter? No. He had him put to death.

Is this a sad story? Perhaps it is. But Sir Walter was brave. He never lost heart. English people followed his good example. They did not find *El Dorado*. They found something better. They found whole new lands to live in instead. That was better than *El Dorado*!