

Captain John Smith

From A Description of New England

Who can desire more content, that hath small means; or but only his merit to advance his fortune, than to tread, and plant that ground he hath purchased by the hazard of his life? If he have but the taste of virtue, and magnanimity, what to such a mind can be more pleasant, than planting and building a foundation for his posterity, got from the rude earth, by God's blessing and his own industry, without prejudice to any? If he have any grain of faith or zeal in Religion, what can he do less hurtful to any; or more agreeable to God, than to seek to convert those poor savages to know Christ, and humanity, whose labors with discretion will triple requite thy charge and pains? What so truly suits with honor and honesty, as the discovering things unknown, erecting towns, peopling countries, informing the ignorant, reforming things unjust, teaching virtue; and gain to our native mother-country a kingdom to attend her; find employment for those that are idle, because they know not what to do: so far from wronging any, as to cause posterity to remember thee; and remembering thee, ever honor that remembrance with praise?

Here nature and liberty affords us that freely, which in England we want, or it costeth us dearly. What pleasure can be more, than (being tired with any occasion a-shore in planting vines, fruits, or herbs, in contriving their own grounds, to the pleasure of their own minds, their fields, gardens, orchards, buildings, ships, and other works, &c.) to recreate themselves before their own doors, in their own boats upon the sea, where man, woman and child, with a small hook and line, by angling, may take diverse sorts of excellent fish, at their pleasures? And is it not pretty sport, to pull up two pence, six pence, and twelve pence, as fast as you can hale and wear a line? He is a very bad fisher, cannot kill in one day with his hook and line, one, two, or three hundred cods: which dressed and dried, if they be sold there for ten shillings the hundred, though in England they will give more than twenty; may not both the servant, the master, and merchant, be well content with this gain? If a man work but three days in seven, he may get more then he can spend, unless he be excessive. Now that carpenter, mason, gardiner, tailor, smith, sailer, forgers, or what other, may they not make this a pretty recreation though they fish but an hour in a day, to take more than they eat in a week: or? if they will not eat it, because there is so much better choice; yet sell it, or change it, with the fishermen, or merchants, for anything they want. And what sport doth yield a more pleasing content, and less hurt or charge than angling with a hook, and crossing the sweet air from isle to isle, over the silent streams of a calm sea? Wherein the most curious may find pleasure, profit, and content...

...For gentlemen, what exercise should more delight them, than ranging daily those unknown parts, using fowling and fishing, for hunting and hawking? ...For hunting also: the woods, lakes, and rivers afford not only chase sufficient, for any that delights in that kind of toil, or pleasure: but such beasts to hunt, that besides the delicacy of their bodies for food, their skins are so rich, as may well recompense thy daily labor, with a captain's pay.

For laborers, if those that sow hemp, rape, turnips, parsnips, carrots, cabbage, and such like: give 20, 30, 40, 50, shillings yearly for an acre of ground, and meat, drink, and wages to use it, and yet grow rich: when better or at least as good ground, may be had, and cost nothing but labor: it seems strange to me, any such should there grow poor.

My purpose is not to persuade children from their parents: men from their wives: nor servants from their masters: only, such as with free consent may be spared: but that each parish, or village, in city or country, that will but apparel their fatherless children of thirteen or fourteen years of age, or young married people, that have small wealth to live on: here by their labor may live exceeding well: provided always that first there be a sufficient power to command them, houses to receive them, means to defend them, and meet provisions for them: for any place may be overlain: and it is most necessary to have a fortress (ere this grow to practice) and sufficient masters (as, carpenters,

masons, fishers, fowlers, gardeners, husbandmen, sawers, smiths, spinsters, tailors, weavers, and such like) to take ten, twelve, or twenty, or as there is occasion, for apprentice. The masters by this may quickly grow rich: these may learn their trades themselves, to do the like: to a general and an incredible benefit for king, and country, masters, and servant.