John Hammond, "Leah and Rachel"

Once the colonies of Virginia and Maryland were well established, John Hammond, a resident of Virginia, wrote this tract as a promotional tool to encourage more colonists to come from England. He discusses what life will be like first for indentured servants and next for families.

Those servants that will be industrious may in their time of service gain a competent estate before their Freedomes, which is usually done by many, and they gaine esteeme and assistance that appear so industrious: There is no Master almost but will allow his Servant a parcell of clear ground to plant some Tobacco in for himself, which he may husband at those many idle times he hath allowed him and not prejudice, but rejoice his Master to see it, which in time of Shipping he may lay out for commodities, and in Summer sell them again with advantage, and get a Sow-Pig, or two, which anybody almost will give him, and his Master suffer him to keep them with his own, which will be no charge to his Master, and with one years increase of them may purchase a Cow Calf or two, and by that time he is for himself; he may have Cattle, Hogs, and Tobacoo of his own, and come to live gallantly; but this must be gained (as I said) by industry and affability, not by sloth nor churlish behaviour.

And whereas it is rumoured that Servants have no lodging other then on boards, or by the Fire side, it is contrary to reason to believe it: First, as we are Christians; next as people living under a law, which compels as well the Master as the Servant to perform his duty; nor can true labour be either expected or exacted without sufficient cloathing, diet, and lodging; all which both their Indentures (which must inviolably be observed) and the Justice of the Country requires.

But if any go thither, not in a condition of a Servant, but pay his or her passage, which is some six pounds: Let them not doubt but it is money well layd out (yet however let them not fail) although they carry little else to take a Bed along with them, and then few Houses but will give them entertainment, either out of curtesie, or on reasonable tearms; and I think it better for any that goes over free, and but in a mean condition, to hire himself for reasonable wages of Tobacco and Provision, the first year, provided he happen in an honest house, and where the Mistresse is noted for a good Housewife, of which there are very many (notwithstanding the cry to the contrary) for by that means he will live free of disbursement, have something to help him the next year, and be carefully looked to in his sicknesse (if he chance to fall sick) and let him so covenant that exceptions may be made, that he work not much in the hot weather, a course we alwayes take with our new hands (as they call them) the first year they come in.

If they are women that go after this manner, that is paying their own passages; I advise them to sojourn in a house of honest repute, for by their good carriage, they may advance themselves in marriage, by their ill, overthrow their fortunes; and although loose persons seldom live long unmarried if free; yet they match with as desolute as themselves, and never live handsomly or are ever respected.

For any that come over free, and are minded to dyet and quarter in another mans house, it
matters not whether they know on what term or conditions they are there; for by an
excellent Decrease, made by Sir William Berkly, when Governour; (as indeed he was the
Author of many good Laws) It was ordered, that if any inhabitant received any stranger
Merchant, or border into their houses, and did not condition in Writing with him or them
so entertained on what terms he received them, it should be supposed an invitation, an
no satisfaction should be allowed or recovered in any Court of Justice; thereby giving
notice that no stranger coming into the Country should be drilled in, or made a purchase
of under colour of friendship; but that the Inhabitants at first coming shall let them know
how they mean to deal with them, that if they like not the terms they may remove
themselves at pleasure; a Law so good and commendable, that it is never like to be
revoked or altered.

Now for those that carry over Families and estates with a determination to inhabit, my
advice is that they neither sojourn for that will be chargeable; nor on the sudden purchase,
for that may prove unfortunate; but that they for the first year hire a house (for seats are
always to be hired) and by that means, they will not onely finde content and live at a
cheap rate, but be acquainted in the Country and learn the worth and goodnesse of the
Plantation they mean to purchase; and so not rashly intangle themselves in al ill bargain,
or finde where a convenient parcell of Land is for their turns to be taken up.

Yet are the Inhabitants generally affable, courteous and very assistant to strangers (for
what but plenty makes hospitality and good neighbourhhood) and no sooner are they
settled, but they will be visiting, presenting and advising the stranger how to improve
what they have, how to better their way of livelihood.

Justice is there duly and daily administred; hardly can any travaile two miles together, but
they will finde a Justice, which hath power of himself to hear and determine mean
differences, to secure and bind over notorious offenders, of which very few are in the
Country.

In every County are Courts kept, every two moneths, and oftener if occasion require, in
which Courts all things are determined without exceptions; and if any dislike the
proceedings of those Courts, they have liberty to appeal to the Quarter Court, which is
four times a year; and from thence to the Assembly, which is once or oftner every year:
So that I am confident, more speedy Justice and with smaller charge is not in any place to
be found.

Theft is seldome punished (as being seldome or never committed; for as the Proverb is,
where there are no receivers, there are no thieves; and although Doores are nightly left
open (especially in the Summer time) Hedges hanging full of Cloathes; Plate frequently
used amongst all comers and goers (and there is good store of Plate in many houses) yet I
never heard of any losse ever received either in Plate, Linnen, or any thing else out of
their Houses all the time I inhabited there.

Indeed I have known some suffer for stealing of Hogs, (but not since they have been
plentifull) and whereas Hogstealing was once punished with death, it is now made penal,
and restitution given very amply to the owner thereof.
Cases of Murther are punished as in England, and Juries allowed, as well in Criminal causes, as in all other differences between party and party, if they desire it.

Servants complaints are freely harkened to, and (if not causlesly made) there Masters are compelled either speedily to amend, or they are removed upon second complaint to another service; and often times not onely set free, (if the abuse merit it) but ordered to give reparation and damage to their servant.

The Country is very full of sober, modest persons, both men and women, and many that truly fear God and follow that perfect rule of our blessed Saviour, to do as they would be done by; and of such a happy inclination is the Country, that many who in England have been lewd and idle, there in emulation or imitation (for example moves more then precept) of the industry of those they finde there, not onely grow ashamed of their former courses, but abhor to hear of them, and in small time wipe off those stains they have formerly been taintted with; yet I cannot but confess, there are people wicked enough (as what Country is free) for we know some natures will never be reformed, but these must follow the Fryers rule, Si non caste, tamen cante; for if any be known, either to prophone the Lords day or his Name, be found drunk, commit whoredome, scandalize or disturb his neighbour, or give offence to the world by living suspiciously in any bad courses; there are for each of these, severe and wholsome laws and remedies made, provided and duly put in execution: I can confidently affirm, that since my being in England, which is not yet four moneths, I have been an eye and ear witnesse of more deceits and villanies (and such as modesty forbids me to utter) then I either ever saw or heard mention made of in Virginia, in my one and twenty years aboad in those parts.

And therefore those that shall blemish Virginia any more, do but like the Dog bark against the Moon, untill they be blind and wary; and Virginia is now in that secure growing condition, that like the Moon so barked at, she will passe on her course, maugre all detractors, and a few years will bring it to that glorious happinesse, that many of her calumniators, will intercede to procure admittance thither, when it will be hard to be attained to; for in smal time, little land will be to be taken up; and after a while none at all; and as the Mulberry Trees grows up, which are by every one planted, Tobacco will be laid by, and we shall wholly fall to making of Silk (a Sample of 400l. hath already been sent for England, and approved of) which will require little labour; and therefore shall have little use of Servants; besides, Children increase and thrive so well there, that they themselves will sufficiently supply the defect of Servants: And in small time become a Nation of themselves sufficient to people the Country: And this good policy is there used; As the Children there born grow to maturity, and capable (as they are generally very capable and apt) they are still preferred and put into authority, and carry themselves therein civilly and discreetly; and few there are but are able to give some Portions with their daughters, more or lesse, according to their abilities; so that many comming out of England have raised themselves good fortunes there meerly by matching with Maidens born in the Country.

And therefore I cannot but admire, and indeed much pitty the dull stupidity of people necessitated in England, who rather then they remove themselves, live here a base, slavish, penurious life; as if there were a necessity to live and to live so choosing rather
then they will forsake England to stuff New-Gate, Bridewell, and other Jayles with their carkessies, nay cleave to tyburne if selfe; and so bring confusion to their souls horror and infamine to their kindred or posteritie, others itch out their wearisom lives in reliance of other mens charities, an uncertaine and unmanly expectation; some more abhorring such courses betake themselfe to almost perpetuall and restlesse toyle and druggeries out of which (whilst their strength lasteth) they (observing hard diets, earlie and late houres) make hard shift to subsist from hand to mouth, untill age or sичnesse takes them off from labour and directs them the way to beggerie, and such indeed are to be pitted, relieved and provided for.

I have seriously considered when I have (passing the streets) heard the several Cryes, and noting the commodities, and the worth of them they have carried and cryed up and down; how possibly a livelihood could be exacted out of them, as to cry Matches, Smal-coal, Blacking, Pen and Ink, Thred-laces, and a hundred more such kinde of trifling merchandizes; then looking on the nastinesse of their linnen habits and bodies: I conclude if gain sufficient could be raised out of them for subsistance; yet their manner of living was degenerate and base; and their condition to be far below the meanest servant in Virginia.

The other day, I saw a man heavily loaden with a burden of Faggots on his back, crying, Dry Faggots, Dry Faggots; he travailed much ground, bawled frequently, and sweat with his burthen; but I saw none buy any, neer three houres I followed him, in which time he rested, I entered into discourse with him, offered him drink, which he thankfully accepted of (as desirous to learn the mistery of his trade) I enquired what he got by each burden when sold? He answered me three pence: I further asked him what he usually got a day? He replyed, some dayes nothing some dayes six pence; some time more, but seldome; me thought it was a pittifull life, and I admired how he could live on it; And yet it were dangerous to advise these wretches to better their conditions by travail, for fear of the cry of, a spirit, a spirit.

The Country is not only plentifull but pleasant and profitable, pleasant in regard of the brightnesse of the weather, the many delightfull rivers, on which the inhabitants are settled (every man almost living in sight of a lovely river) the abundance of game, the extraordinary good neighbour-hood and loving conversation they have one with the other.

Pleasant in their building, which although for most part they are but one story besides the loft, and built of wood, yet contrived so delightfull, that your ordinary houses in England are not so handsome, for usually the rooms are large, daubed and whitelimed, glazed and flowered and if not glazed windows, shutters which are made very pritty and convenient.

Pleasant in observing their stocks and flockes of Cattle, Hoggs, and Poultry, grazing, whisking and skipping in their sights, pleasant in having all things of their own, growing or breeding without drawing the peny to send for this and that, without which, in England they cannot be supplyed.

The manner of living and trading there is thus, each man almost lives a free-holder, nothing but the value of 12.d. a year to be paid as rent, for every 50. Acres of land;
firing cost nothing every man plants his own corne and neede take no care for bread; if any thing be bought, it is for comodity, exchanged presently, or for a day, payment is usuall made but once a year, and for that Bill taken (for accounts are not pleadable.)

In summer when fresh meat will not keep (seeing every man kils of his own, and quantities are inconvenient, they lend from one to another, such portions of flesh as they can spare, which is repaid again when the borrowers kils his.

If any fall sick, and cannot compasse to follow his crope which if not followed, will soon be lost, the adjoyning neighbour, will either voluntarily or upon a request joyn together, and work in it by spels, untill the honour recovers, and that gratis, so that no man by sickness loose any part of his years worke.

Let any travell, it is without charge, and at every house is entertainment as in a hostery, and with it hearty welcome are stranger entertained.

In a word, *Virginia* wants not good victual, wants not good dispositions, and as God hath freely bestowed it; they as freely impart with it, yet are there aswel bad natures as good.

The profit of the country is either by their labour, their stockes, or their trades.

By their labours is produced corne and Tobacco, and all other growing provisions, and this Tobacco however now low rated, yet a good maintenance may be had out of it, (for they have nothing of necessity but cloathing to purchase) or can this mean price of Tobacco long hold, for these reasons, First that in England it is prohibited, next that they ha ve attained of late those sorts equal with the best Spanish, Thirdly that the sicknesse in Holland is decreasing, which hath been a great obstruction to the sail of Tobacco.

And lastly, that as the mulberry tree grows up, tobacco will be neglected and silke, flax, two staple commodities generally fallen upon.

Of the increase of cattle and hoggs, much advantage is made, by selling biefe, porke, and bacon, and butter &c. either to shipping, or to send to the Barbadoes, and other Islands, and he is a very poor man that hath not sometimes provision to put off.

By trading with Indians for Skine, Beaver, Furres and other commodities oftentimes good profits are raised; The Indians are in absolute subjection to the English, so that they both pay tribute to them and receive all their several king from them, and as one dies they repaire to the English for a successor, so that none neede doubt it a place of securitie.

Several ways of advancement there are and imployments both for the learned and laborer, recreation for the gentry, traffique fo the adventurer, congregations for the ministrie (and oh that God would stir, up the heart of more to go over, such as would teach good doctrine, and not paddle in faction, or state matters; they could not want maintenance, they would find an assisting, and imbracing, a conforming people.)

It is knowne (such preferment hath this Country rewarded the industrious with) that some from being wool-hoppers and of as mean and meaner imployment in England have there
grown great merchants, and attained to the most eminet advancements the Country afforded. If men cannot gaine (by diligence) states in those parts.) I speake not only mine owne opinion; but divers others, and something by experience) it will hardly be done (unlesse by meere lucke as gamsters thrive, and other accidentals in any other part whatsoever.

Now having briefly set down the present state of Virginia not in fiction, but in realitie, I wish the juditious reader to consider what dislike can be had of the Country, or upon what grounds it is so infamously injured, I only therein covet to stop those blackmouthed babblers, that not only have and do abuse so noble a plantation, but abuse Gods great blessing in adding to England so flourishing a branch, in perswading many souls, rather to follow desparate and miserable courses in England, then to ingage in so honourable an undertaking as to travile and inhabite there; but to those I shall (if admonition will not worke on their recreant spirits) only say. Let him that is filthie be filthie still.

Document Analysis

Would Hammond’s descriptions of Virginia and Maryland have convinced you to make the voyage from England? Why or why not?
How does Hammond describe the differences in living conditions and lifestyle based on whether one came to the colonies as an indentured servant or as a member of a family?