

Ode to the Virginian Voyage

Michael Drayton

You brave heroic minds,
Worthy your country's name,
That honor still pursue,
Go and subdue!
Whilst loit'ring hinds 5
Lurk here at home with shame.

Britons, you stay too long;
Quickly aboard bestow you,
And with a merry gale 10
Swell your stretch'd sail,
With vows as strong
As the winds that blow you!

Your course securely steer,
West and by south forth keep;
Rocks, lee-shores, nor shoals, 15
When Æolus¹ scowls,
You need not fear,
So absolute the deep.

And cheerfully at sea
Success you still entice 20
To get the pearl and gold,
And ours to hold
Virginia,
Earth's only paradise!

Where nature hath in store 25
Fowl, venison, and fish,
And the fruitful'st soil,
Without your toil,
Three harvests more,
All greater than your wish. 30

¹ Aeolus in Greek mythology is the ruler of the winds.

And the ambitious vine
Crowns with his purple mass,
The cedar reaching high
To kiss the sky,
The cypress, pine, 35
And useful sassafras;²

To whose the golden age
Still nature's laws doth give;
No other cares that tend
But them to defend 40
From winter's age,
That long there doth not live.

When as the luscious smell
Of that delicious land,
Above the seas that flows, 45
The clear wind throws,
Your hearts to swell
Approaching the dear strand.

In kenning³ of the shore,
Thanks to God first given, 50
O you, the happiest men,
Be frolic then!
Let cannons roar
Frighting the wide heaven.

And in regions far 55
Such heroes bring ye forth,
As those from whom we came;
And plant our name
Under that star
Not known unto our north. 60

And, as there plenty grows
Of laurel everywhere,
Apollo's sacred tree,
You may it see
A poet's brows 65
To crown, that may sing there.

² A plant which is native to the eastern North America and is used for food, medicine, and its aromatic properties. The wood of sassafras can also be used to build furniture.

³ *kenning*: viewing

Thy voyages attend,
Industrious Hakluyt,⁴
Whose reading shall enflame
Men to seek fame,
And much commend
To after-times thy wit.

70

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⁴ Richard Hakluyt was known for advertising and promoting the colonization of North America through his written texts.