

from *A Discovery of the Bermudas* (1610) by Sylvester Jourdain

[*Providence*]

...All our men, being utterly spent, tired, and disabled for longer labor, were even resolved, without any hope of their lives, to shut up the hatches, and to have committed themselves to the mercy of the sea, (which is said to be merciless) or rather to the mercy of their mighty God and redeemer.... So that some of them, having some good and comfortable waters in the ship, fetched them and drunk the one to the other, taking their last leave one of the other, until their more joyful and happy meeting in a more blessed world; when it pleased God out of his most gracious and merciful providence, so to direct and guide our ship, (being left to the mercy of the sea) for her most advantage; that Sir George Sommers...most wishedly and happily descried land; whereupon he most comfortably encouraged the company to follow their pumping, and by no means cease bailing out of the water.... Through which weak means, it pleased God to work so strongly as the water was stayed for that little time, (which, as we all much feared, was the last period of our breathing) and the ship kept from present sinking, when it pleased God to send her within half an English mile of that land that Sir George Somers had not long before descried—which were the islands of the Bermudas. And there neither did our ship sink, but more fortunately in so great a misfortune fell in between two rocks, where she was fast lodged and locked for further budging.

[*An island paradise*]

But our delivery was not more strange in falling so opportunely and happily upon the land, as our feeding and preservation was beyond our hopes and all men's expectations most admirable. For the islands of the Bermudas, as every man knoweth that hath

heard or read of them, were never inhabited by any Christian or heathen people, but ever esteemed, and reputed, a most prodigious and enchanted place affording nothing but gusts, storms, and foul weather; which made every navigator and mariner to avoid them, as Scylla and Charybdis; or as they would shun the Devil himself; and no man was ever heard to make for the place, but as against their will, they have by storms and dangerousness of the rocks, lying seven leagues into the sea, suffered shipwreck. Yet did we find there the air so temperate and the country so abundantly fruitful of all fit necessaries for the sustentation and preservation of man's life, that most in a manner of all our provisions of bread, beer, and victual, being quite spoiled, in lying long drowned in salt water, notwithstanding we were there for the space of nine months (few days over or under) not only well refreshed, comforted, and with good satiety contented but, out of the abundance thereof, provided some reasonable quantity and proportion of provision to carry us for Virginia and to maintain ourselves, and that company we found there, to the great relief of them, as it fell out in their so great extremities...until it pleased God...that their store was better supplied. And greater and better provision we might have had, if we had had better means for the storing and transportation thereof. Wherefore my opinion sincerely of this island is, that whereas it hath been and is still accounted the most dangerous, unfortunate, and most forlorn place of the world, it is in truth the richest, healthfulest, and pleasing land, (the quantity and bigness thereof considered) and merely natural, as ever man set foot upon.