

sea-swallowing whirlpool—we were most miraculously delivered. For this fog being converted into so monstrous a shower of rain that it should seem the very windows of heaven were set open that it might with the more speed work our deliverance, fell with such vehemence that it not only allayed the raging of the fearful seas grown and swollen up into an incredible bigness, but broke the heart of that most bitter storm. Thus, while we were all so mated and amazed that, neither hearing what the master said for the whistling and buzzing of the winds, not knowing for fear what to amend, we were most miraculously by the mighty hand of God, past man's capacity and altogether unlooked for of ourselves, delivered.

And before it pleased God to inflict upon us this punishment, he foretold us by his warning messenger, a most rare accident, which the mariners called Santelmo or Corposantie,² which appear before any tempestuous weather as a sign of a most dangerous storm. And although the opinions of all writers are variable concerning its true essence, I am persuaded there can be no certain truth delivered about it. The Greeks call it Poliduces, the Latins Castor and Pollux; Pliny writes that it is as much seen on land among a great army of men as at sea among mariners; Virgil seems to confirm this in the second book of the Aeneid, saying that it appeared at the head of Julius Aescanius; and Titus Livius affirms that such a thing appeared on the head of Servius Tullius, the sixth King of the Romans. But however it is variably censured in sundry writers, this is certainly agreed upon: that it foretells some great thing to come, and if it appears in two lights, the goodness comes, and if but one, then some eminent danger is at hand to ensue; for, if just one fire is seen, it presages a most cruel, dangerous, and tempestuous storm, hazing both ship, goods, and lives of all those who happen to be in it. This is not only confirmed by all sorts of nations which are navigators, like the Spaniards, French, Portuguese, Turks, Moors, indeed all kinds of sea-faring men, but we, to our great peril, were made eyewitnesses, which in my opinion was and is more authentic for us than if we received the reports of thousands of others. It is a fearful tale to tell, and a discourse dreadful to the hearer to have delivered as a truth, that in the night a substance of fire resembling the shape of a fiery dragon should fall into our sails and there remain some quarter of an hour, afterwards falling onto the deck and passing from place to place, ready to set everything on fire, since fire most commonly converts all things into the same substance as itself, which is fire, being the true confirmation of that axiom of Aristotle that *omne tale efficit maius tale*.³ This, I say, might seem

2. Corpo Santo and St. Elmo's Fire are names given to the balls of electric light seen on the masts and yardsarms of a ship in stormy weather.

3. Properly *Quod efficit tale, illud est magistale* (What makes another such is more such itself).

dreadful to the hearer, but it was much more dreadful for us, who beheld it with our eyes. This was strange, but the event much more strange, for this fiery dragon, having continued halfway over to the astonishment of us all, vanished without any harm done either to our shipping or to any of our company, except the most strange sequel, as you have already heard in the description of this last storm, and yet not so strange as true.

* * *

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

[The Cannibals of Brazil] †

I find (as far as I have been informed) there is nothing in that nation that is either barbarous or savage, unless men call that barbarism which is not common to them. As indeed, we have no other aim of truth and reason than the example and idea of the opinions and customs of the country we live in. There is ever perfect religion, perfect policy, perfect and complete use of all things. They are even savage, as we call those fruits wild which nature of herself and of her ordinary progress has produced, whereas indeed they are those which ourselves have altered by our artificial devices and diverted from their common order we should rather term savage. In those are the true and most profitable virtues, and natural properties most lively and vigorous, which in these we have bastardised, applying them to the pleasure of our corrupted taste. And if, notwithstanding, in divers fruits of those countries that were never tilled, we shall find that in respect of ours they are most excellent, and as delicate unto our taste, there is no reason art should gain the point of honour over our great and puissant mother Nature. We have so much by our inventions surcharged the beauties and riches of her works that we have altogether overchoked her; yet wherever her purity shines, she makes our vain and frivolous enterprises wonderfully ashamed.

*Et veniunt hederæ sponte sua melius,
Surgit et in solis formosior arbutus antris,
Et volucres nulla dulctius arte canunt.*

Ivies spring better of their own accord,
Unhaunted plots much fairer trees afford.
Birds by no art much sweeter notes record.¹

† From "Of the cannibals" [1580], in *The Essays*, trans. John Florio (London: V. Sims for E. Blount, 1603), pp. 101-2, 104, 106-7.

1. Propertius.

All our endeavour or wit cannot so much as reach to represent the nest of the least birdlet, its contexture, beauty, profit and use, no, nor the web of a silly spider. "All things," says Plato, "are produced either by nature, by fortune, or by art. The greatest and fairest by one or other of the first two, the least and imperfect by the last." Those nations seem therefore so barbarous to me because they have received very little fashion from human wit, and are yet near their original naturalness. The laws of nature do yet command them, which are but little bastardised by ours. And that with such purity as I am sometimes grieved the knowledge of it came no sooner to light at what time there were men who better than we could have judged of it. I am sorry Lycurgus and Plato had it not, for it seems to me that what in those nations we see by experience does not only exceed all the pictures with which licentious Poetry has proudly embellished the golden age and all her quaint inventions to feign a happy condition of man, but also the conception and desire of philosophy. They could not imagine a genuity² so pure and simple as we see it by experience, nor ever believe our society might be maintained with so little art and human combination. It is a nation, I would answer Plato, that has no kind of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of political superiority, no use of service, of riches or of poverty, no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation but idle, no respect of kindred, but common, no apparel but natural, no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corn, or metal. The very words that import lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulations, covetousness, envy, detraction, and pardon were never heard of amongst them. How dissonant would he find his imaginary commonwealth from this perfection!

Hos natura modos primum dedit.

Nature at first uprise

These manners did devise.³

Furthermore they live in a country of so exceeding pleasant and temperate situation that as my testimonies have told me, it is very rare to see a sick body amongst them, and they have further assured me they never saw any man there either shaking with the palsy, toothless, with eyes dropping, or crooked and stooping through age.

[Discusses their cannibalism]

I am not sorry we note the barbarous horror of such an action, but grieved that prying so narrowly into their faults we are so

2. Simplicity.

3. Virgil, *Georgics*.

blinded in ours. I think there is more barbarism in eating men alive than to feed upon them being dead, to mangle by tortures and tortments a body full of lively sense, to roast him in pieces, to make dogs and swine gnaw and tear him in maimocks⁴ (as we have not only read, but seen very lately, yes and in our own memory, not amongst ancient enemies, but our neighbours and fellow-citizens; and what is worse, under pretence of piety and religion) than to roast and eat him after he is dead.

[Remembers speaking to three cannibals who had been brought to Rouen]

Afterward some demanded their advice and would needs know what things of note and admirable they had observed amongst us. They answered three things, the last of which I have forgotten, and am very sorry for it, the other two I still remember. They said first they found it strange that so many tall men with long beards, strong and well-armed, as were about the King's person (it is likely they meant the Switzers of his guard) would submit themselves to obey a beardless child, and that we did not rather choose one amongst them to command the rest. Secondly (they have a manner of phrase whereby they call men but a moiety of men from others),⁵ they had perceived there were men amongst us full-gorged with all sorts of commodities, and others who, hunger-starved and bare with need and poverty, begged at their gates; and found it strange these moiety so needy could endure such an injustice and that they took not the others by the throat, or set fire to their houses. I talked a good while with one of them, but I had so bad an interpreter, and who did so ill apprehend my meaning, and who through his foolishness was so troubled to conceive my imaginations, that I could draw no great matter from him. Touching that point, wherein I demanded of him what good he received by the superiority he had amongst his countrymen (for he was a captain and our mariners called him king), he told me it was to march foremost in any charge of war. Further I asked him how many men did follow him, he showed me a distance of place, to signify they were as many as might be contained in so much ground, which I guessed to be about 4 or 5,000 men. Moreover, I demanded if, when the wars were ended, all his authority expired; he answered that he had only this left him, which was that when he went on progress and visited the villages depending of him, the inhabitants prepared paths and highways athwart the hedges of their woods for him to pass through at ease. All that is not very ill, but what of that? They wear no kind of breeches or hose.

4. Shreds.

5. They speak of men as halves of each other, that is, in two groups.

WILLIAM STRACHEY

[Storms and Strife in Bermuda]†

We were within seven or eight days at the most by Capt. Newport's reckoning of making Cape Henry upon the coast of Virginia, when on St James's day, July 24, being Monday (preparing for no less all the black night before), the clouds gathering thick upon us, and the winds singing and whistling most unusually, which made us cast off our pinnace, towed till then astern, a dreadful storm and hideous began to blow from out of the north-east, which swelling and roaring as it were by fits, some hours with more violence than others, at length it did beat all light from heaven, which, like a hell of darkness turned black upon us, so much the fuller of horror, as in such cases horror and fear are used to overrun the troubled and overmastered senses of us all. Our eyes lay so sensible to the terrible cries and murmurs of the winds, and to the distraction of our company since even the most armed and best prepared among us was not a little shaken. * * *

For four and twenty hours the storm in a restless tumult had blown so exceedingly that we could not apprehend in our imaginations any possibility of greater violence, yet we did still find it, not only more terrible but more constant, fury added to fury, and one storm urging a second more outrageous than the former, whether it so wrought upon our fears, or indeed met with new forces. Sometimes strikes in our ship amongst women and passengers, not used to such hurly and discomforts, made us look upon each other with troubled hearts and panting bosoms; our clamours drowned in the winds, and the winds in thunder. Prayers might well be in the heart and lips, but drowned in the outcries of the officers: nothing was heard that could give comfort, nothing seen, that might encourage hope. It is impossible for me, had I the voice of Stentor,¹ and the expression of as many tongues as his throat of voices, to express the outcries and miseries, not languishing, but wasting his spirits, and art constant to his principles but not prevailing. Our sails lay wound up without use and if at any time we bore but a hollocks, or half forecourse, to guide her before the sea, six and sometimes eight men were not enough to hold the whipstaff in the steerage and the tiller below in the gunners' room, by which may be imagined the strength of the storm. The sea swelled above the clouds

† From *A True Repertory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight, upon and from the Islands of the Bermudas*, in Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625) (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1906), xix: 5-72.

1. A Greek herald of loud voice, as described by Homer in *The Iliad*.

and gave battle unto heaven. It could not be said to rain, the waters like whole rivers did flood the air. And this I still did observe, that whereas upon the Land, when a storm has poured itself forth once in drifts of rain, the wind has thereby been beaten down and vanquished, and has not lasted long after, here the glut of water (as if it were meanwhile throttling the wind) was no sooner a little emptied and qualified, than instantly the winds (as having now gotten their mouths free and at liberty) spoke louder and grew more tumultuous and malignant. What shall I say? Winds and seas were as mad as fury and rage could make them. For my own part, I had been in some storms before, on the coast of Barbary and Algiers as well as in the Levant, and one even worse in the Adriatic gulf, in a bottom off Candy, so I may well say: *Ego quid sit ater Adriæ novus, & quid albus Peccet Iapex?* Yet all that I had ever suffered gathered together might not hold comparison with this. There was not a moment in which the sudden splitting or instant overturning of the ship was not expected.

* * *

During all this time, the heavens look'd so black upon us that it was not possible to observe the elevation of the pole: not a star by night nor a sunbeam by day was to be seen. Only upon the Thursday night Sir George Sommers, being upon the watch, had an apparition of a little round light, like a faint star, trembling and streaming along with a sparkling blaze, half the height of the main mast, and shooting sometimes from shroud to shroud, tempting to settle as it were upon any of the four shrouds. And for three or four hours together, or rather more, half the night it kept with us, running sometimes along the mainyard to the very end, and then returning. At which, Sir George Sommers called several people about him and showed it them: they observed it with much wonder and carefulness, but all of a sudden, towards the morning watch, they lost sight of it, and knew not which way it went. The superstitious seamen make many constructions of this sea-fire, which nevertheless is usual in storms; the same (it may be) which the Greeks were wont in the Mediterranean to call Castor and Pollux, of which, if one only appeared without the other, they took it for an evil sign of great tempest. The Italians and such, who lie open to the Adriatic and Tyrene Sea, call it *Corpo Santo* (a sacred body); the Spaniards call it *Saint Elmo* and have an authentic and miraculous legend for it. Be it what it will, we laid other foundations of safety or ruin than in the rising or falling of it, could it have served us now miraculously to have taken our height by it, it might have stricken amazement and a reverence in our devotions, according to the due of a miracle.

2. Ah! well I know / How Hadria glooms, how falsely clear / The west-winds blow. (Horace, *Odes*).

But it did not light us any whit the more to our known way, as we now ran (as do hoodwinked men) at all adventures, sometimes north and north-east, then north and by west, and in an instant again varying two or three points, and sometimes half the compass. East and by south we steered away as much as we could to bear upright, which was no small carefulness nor pain to do, although we much unrigged our ship, threw overboard much luggage, many a trunk and chest (in which I suffered no mean loss) and stave many a butt of beer, hogsheds of oil, cider, wine, and vinegar, and heaved away all our ordinance on the starboard side, and had now purposed to have cut down the main mast, the more to lighten her, for we were much spent, and our men so weary that their strength altogether failed them, with their hearts, having travailed now from Tuesday till Friday morning, day and night, without either sleep or food, for the leakage taking up all the hold, we could neither come by beer nor fresh water, fire we could keep none in the cook-room to dress any meat, and carefulness, grief, and our turn at the pump or bucket were sufficient to hold sleep from our eyes.

* * *

We found it to be the dangerous and dreaded island, or rather islands, of the Bermuda; whereof let me give your Ladyship a brief description before I proceed to my narration. And that the rather, because they be so terrible to all that ever touched on them, and such tempests, thunders, and other fearful objects are seen and heard about them, that they be called commonly, The Devil's Islands, and are feared and avoyded of all sea travellers alive, above any other place in the world. Yet it pleased our merciful God to make even this hideous and hated place, both the place of our safetie, and meanes of our deliverance.

And hereby also, I hope to deliver the world from a foul and general error: it being counted of most, that they can be no habitation for men, but rather given over to devils and wicked spirits; whereas indeed we find them now by experience to be as habitable and commodious as most countries of the same climate and situation; in so much as if the entrance into them were as easy as the place itself is contenting, it had long before this been inhabited, as well as other islands. Thus shall we make it appear that truth is the daughter of time, and that men ought not to deny everything which is not subject to their own sense.

* * *
[There are mutinies and rebellions among the company]

In these dangers and devilish disquiets (whilst the almighty God wrought for us, and sent us miraculously delivered from the calamities of the sea, all blessings upon the shore, to content and bind us

to gratefulness) thus enraged amongst ourselves, to the destruction each of the others, into what a mischief and misery had we been given up, had we not had a Governor with his authority to have suppressed the same? Yet was there a worse practice, faction, and conjuration afoot, deadly and bloody, in which the life of our Governor, with many others were threatened, and could not but miscarry in his fall. But such is ever the will of God (who, in the execution of his judgments, breaks the firebrands upon the head of him who first kindled them) that there were those who conceived that our Governor indeed neither dared, nor had authority to put into execution, or pass the act of justice upon any one, however treacherous or impious. Their own opinions deceived them so much about the unlawfulness of any act which they would execute, as they dared to justify among themselves that if they should be apprehended before the performance, they should happily suffer as martyrs. They therefore persevered not only to draw in as many associates as they could persuade to the abandoning of our governor and the inhabiting of this island. They had now proposed to have made a surprise of the store-house, and to have forced from thence what was therein either of meal, cloth, cables, arms, sails, oars or what else it pleased God that we had recovered from the wreck, and was to serve our general necessity and needs, either for the relief of us while we stayed here, or for the carrying of us from this place again, when our pinnace should have been furnished.

But as all giddy and lawless attempts have always something of imperfection, and that as well by the property of the action, which holds disobedience and rebellion (both full of fear), as through the ignorance of the devisers themselves; so in this (besides those defects) there were some of the association who, not strongly enough fortified in their own conceits, broke from the plot itself, and before the time was ripe for its execution) discovered the whole order and every agent and actor of it, who nevertheless were not suddenly apprehended, because the confederates were divided and separated in place, some with us, and the chief with Sir George Summers on his island (and indeed all his company). But good watch was placed upon them, every man from then on was commanded to wear his weapon, without which previously we had freely walked from quarter to quarter and conversed among ourselves, and every man was advised to stand upon his guard, his own life not being in safety, whilst his next neighbour was not to be trusted. The sentinels and nightwatchmen doubled, the passages of both the quarters were carefully observed, by which means nothing was further attempted; until a gentleman among them, one Henry Paine, on the thirteenth of March, full of mischief and every hour preparing something or other, stealing swords, adises, axes, hatchets, saws, augers, planes,

mallets, etc to make good his own bad end, his watch night coming about, and being called by the captain of the same to be upon the guard, did not only give his said commander evil language, but struck at him, doubled his blows, and when he was not allowed to close with him, went off the guard, scoffing at the double diligence and attendance of the watch, appointed by the governor for much purpose, as he said: upon which, the watch telling him, if the governor should hear of his insolence, it might turn him to much blame and happily be as much as his life was worth. The said Paine replied with a settled and bitter violence, and in such irreverent terms as I should offend the modest ear too much if I expressed it in his own phrase; but the contents were, how the governor had no authority of that quality to justify upon anyone (however mean in the colony) an action of that nature, and therefore let the governor (said he) kiss etc. Which words, being with the omitted additions brought the next day into every common and public discourse, at length they were delivered over to the governor, who, examining well the fact. (the transgression so much the more exemplary and odious, as being in a dangerous time, in a confederate, and the success of the same wishly³ listened after, with a doubtful conceit, what might be the issue of so notorious a boldness and impudence) calling the said Paine before him, and the whole company, where (being soon convinced both by the witness of the commander and many who were on the watch with him), our governor, who had now the eyes of the whole colony fixed upon him, condemned him to be instantly hanged; and the ladder being ready, after he had made many confessions, he earnestly desired, being a gentleman, that he might be shot to death, and towards the evening he had his desire, the sun and his life setting together.

* * *

Likewise we buried five of our company, Jeffrey Briars, Richard Lewis, William Hitchman, and my god-daughter Bermuda Rolfe, and one untimely Edward Samuell, a sailor, being villainously killed by the foresaid Robert Waters (also a sailor) with a shovel, who struck him therewith under the ear, for which he was apprehended and appointed to be hanged the next day (the fact being done in the twilight), but being bound fast to a tree all night, with many ropes and a guard of five or six to attend him, his fellow sailors (watching the advantage of the sentinels sleeping), in despite and disdain that justice should be showed on a sailor, and that one of their crew should be an example to others, not taking into consideration the unmanliness of the murder, nor the horror of the sin, they cut his

bands and conveyed him into the woods, where they fed him nightly, and closely. Afterwards, by the mediation of Sir George Summers, upon many conditions, he had his trial respited by our governor.

* * *

SIR HENRY MAINWARING

The Seaman's Dictionary†

Blow. Every one knows when the wind blows, but there are some speeches used at sea, which are not generally understood, as the wind *blows home*, or *blows through*; that is, when the wind doth not cease, or grow less till it come past that place: also *blow through* is sometimes used, when they think the wind will be so great that it will blow asunder the sails.

A Butt. By this word taken indefinitely is meant a vessel or cask, as a butt of wine, etc., but in sea language, thus: a *butt* is properly the end of a plank joining to another, on the outward side of the ship under water.

Course is taken for that point of the compass which the ship is to sail upon. . . . *Alter the course*, that is, sail upon another point of the compass; *mistake the course*, that is, not to know how the land lies or which way to go. Also *main course* and *fore course*, *mizzen course* are the sails without the bonnets. Not all ships of great burden have *double courses* to hold more wind and give the ship more way in a fresh gale, but in an easy gale they hinder, as do all things that are weighty overhead.

Fathom. A fathom is six foot; which, though every one know, I set down to give notice that we measure the length of all our ropes by fathoms, and not by any other measure, as we do the compass of the ropes by inches, for we say a cable or hawser of so many fathom long or so many inches about; also we reckon in sounding by fathoms.

Split. When the wind hath blown a sail to pieces, we say the sail is split.

† From *The Seaman's Dictionary* (c. 1623), edited by G. E. Manwaring and W. G. Perrin for The Navy Records Society, 1922.