

FROM

OF PLYMOUTH PLANTATION



WILLIAM BRADFORD

THEIR SAFE ARRIVAL AT CAPE COD

But to omit other things (that I may be brief) after long beating at sea they¹ fell with that land which is called Cape Cod; the which being made and certainly known to be it, they were not a little joyful. . . .

Being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of Heaven who had brought them over the

vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element. . . .

But here I cannot but stay and make a pause, and stand half amazed at this

1. they: Bradford refers to the Pilgrims in the third person even though he is one of them.

poor people's present condition; and so I think will the reader, too, when he well considers the same. Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation (as may be remembered by that which went before), they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor.² It is recorded in Scripture as a mercy to the Apostle and his shipwrecked company, that the barbarians showed them no small kindness in refreshing them, but these savage barbarians, when they met with them (as after will appear) were readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise.³ And for the season it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast. Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men—and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. Neither could they, as it were, go up to the top of Pisgah⁴ to view from this wilderness a more goodly country to feed their hopes; for which way soever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward objects. For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a weatherbeaten face, and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue. If they looked behind them, there was the mighty ocean which they had passed and was now as a main bar and gulf to separate them from all the civil parts of the world. . . .

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

Being thus arrived at Cape Cod the 11th of November, and necessity calling them to look out a place for habitation (as well as the master's

and mariners' importunity); they having brought a large shallop⁵ with them out of England, stowed in quarters in the ship, they now got her out and set their carpenters to work to trim her up; but being much bruised and shattered in the ship with foul weather, they saw she would be long in mending. Whereupon a few of them tendered themselves to go by land and discover those nearest places, whilst the shallop was in mending; . . .

After this, the shallop being got ready, they set out again for the better discovery of this place, and the master of the ship desired to go himself. So there went some thirty men but found it to be no harbor for ships but only for boats. There was also found two of their [the Indians'] houses covered with mats, and sundry of their implements in them, but the people were run away and could not be seen. Also there was found more of their corn and of their beans of various colors; the corn and beans they [the English] brought away, purposing to give them [the Indians] full satisfaction when they should meet with any of them as, about some six months afterward they did, to their good content.⁶

And here is to be noted a special providence of God, and a great mercy to this poor people, that here they got seed to plant them corn the next year, or else they might have starved, for they had none nor any likelihood to get any till

2. **succor** (sŭk'ər): help; relief.

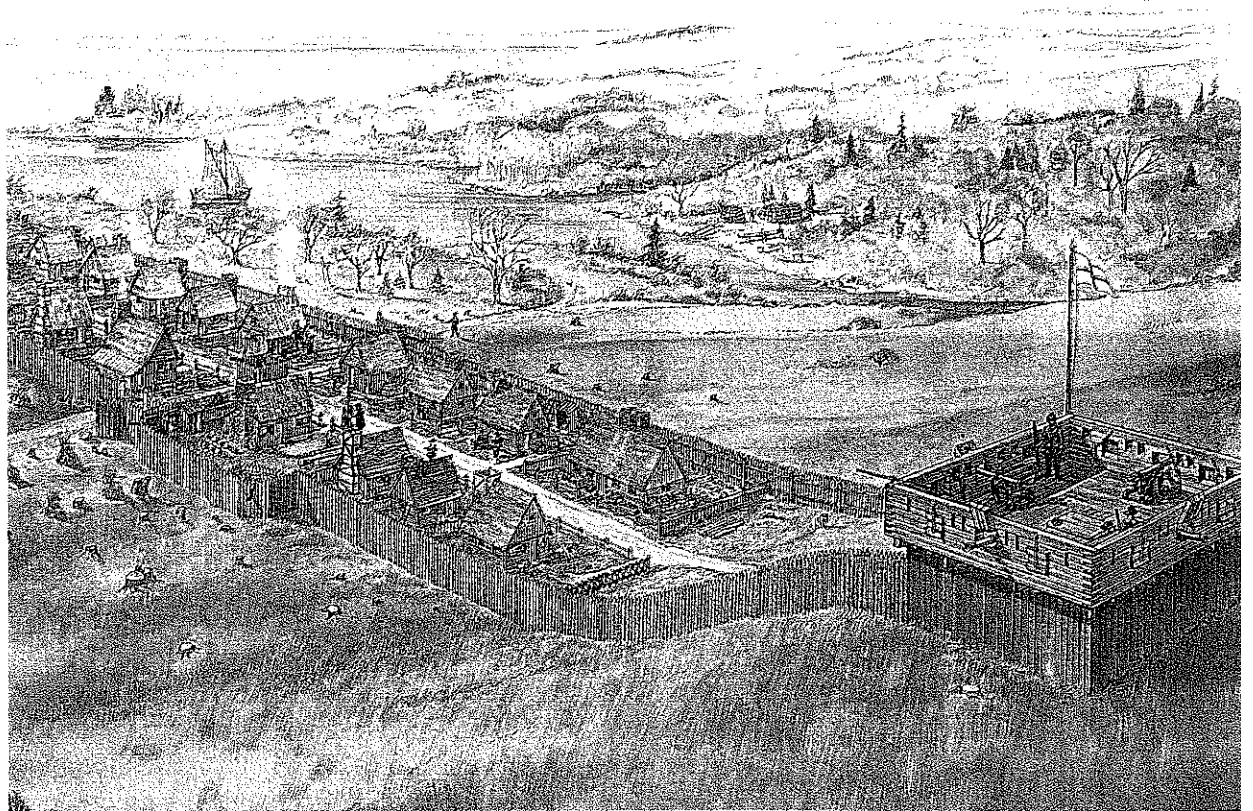
3. It is . . . otherwise: Bradford contrasts the Pilgrims' reception with the courteous reception of the apostle Paul by the inhabitants of Malta. Bradford describes Native Americans using the inaccurate and extremely offensive phrase "savage barbarians."

4. **Pisgah** (pĭz'gə): the mountain from whose peak Moses saw the Promised Land.

5. **shallop** (shäl'əp): an open boat used in shallow waters.

6. **purposing . . . content**: intending to repay the Nauset Indians whose corn and beans they took, as they in fact did, to the Indians' satisfaction, six months later.

WORDS TO KNOW
desolate (dēs'ə-līt) *adj.* without inhabitants; barren
solace (səl'īs) *n.* comfort in sorrow or distress
hue (hyū) *n.* appearance; color
providence (prŏv'ĭ-dens) *n.* an instance of divine care or guidance



View of Plymouth (1627), Cal Sachs. American Heritage Picture Collection, New York.

the season had been past, as the sequel did manifest. Neither is it likely they had had this, if the first voyage had not been made, for the ground was now all covered with snow and hard frozen; but the Lord is never wanting unto His in their greatest needs; let His holy name have all the praise.

The month of November being spent in these affairs, and much foul weather falling in, the 6th of December they sent out their shallop again with ten of their principal men and some seamen, upon further discovery, intending to circulate that deep bay of Cape Cod. The weather was very cold and it froze so hard as the spray of the sea lighting on their coats, they were as if they had been glazed. . . . [The next night

they landed and] made them a barricado⁷ as usually they did every night, with logs, stakes, and thick pine boughs, the height of a man, leaving it open to leeward,⁸ partly to shelter them from the cold and wind (making their fire in the middle and lying round about it) and partly to defend them from any sudden assault of the savages, if they should surround them; s being very weary, they betook them to rest. Bu about midnight they heard a hideous and great cry, and their sentinel called "Arm! arm!" So they bestirred them and stood to their arms an

7. **barricado** (bă'r-ĭ-kă'dō): a barrier for defense.

8. **to leeward** (lē'wərd): on the side sheltered from the wi

WORDS
TO **sentinel** (sĕn'tə-nəl) *n.* a guard
KNOW