

AN
ACCOUNT

Of the Late Dreadful

Earth-Quake

In the ISLAND of

MEVIS, *St.* CHRISTOPHERS, &c.

Which happen'd in the Beginning of *April*, of this present Year 1690.

In a LETTER to a Friend in *London*

24 *June* 1690

SIR,

The Intereft which you have in the Trade of this Ifland, obliges me to give you fome Account of the Earth-Quake that happened in this Place. It was very aftonifhing and terrible while it lafted; but as for what Mifchief it has done, we cannot for the present give a juft Account of it, and therefore muft leave it imperfect till the next. However, you may be fure it was very great, by the wafful Deftruction of Buildings, which it has made: And it was one of our chiefeft Happineffes that the Fort and Magazine efcap'd.

It began upon the fixth of *April*, about five of the Clock in the Afternoon. At what time we heard a rumbling Noife, like that of diftant Thunder, which feem'd to come from the Bowels of the great Mountain, feated in the very Navil of the Ifland. We heard it for a fhort while with great Amazement; for it lafted not long before we felt the dire Effects of the thofe violent Vapors frugling and contending in the Womb of the Earth for paffage forth. So ftrong was the Motion, that within fome few Moments after the Noife began, enfu'd a moft amazing Earth-Quake, which fhook the whole Ifland to that degree, that all the Houfes in *Charles* Town that were built of Brick or Stone, dropt of a fudden down from the Top to the Bottom in perfect Ruines. Thofe that were built of Wood were no lefs violently fhaken, but flood however; which fhew'd that the Rivetings of wodden Structures are far ftronger, and not fo eafily disjointed as the Co-agmentations of Cement and Mortar. Neverthelefs, it was a dreadful thing to fee Men, Women and Children flying up and down from Place to Place in Fear and Confternation, yet not knowing where to fly for Safety, while the Surface of the tottering Earth hardly give them Liberty, no lefs in an Agony than the Earth it felf, to fet their Feet upon the Ground: which in many places alfo open'd, and from the yawning Clefs, vomited up a fort of hot bituminous Water, whole Tuns full at a time, no lefs offenfive to the Smell, than dreadful

to the Sight: and such was the Force which thrust up that heavy Element, as to mount it a great height in the Air. The Sea it self for a time forsook the Shoar for about three quarters of a Mile together, and left a great Number of Fifth of a large Size to the gaping upon the Sand, till it return'd again: which violent Motion of the Water happen'd divert times, though not with the same Rapidness and Fury, nor at so great a Distance as at first.

Another thing was observable, that whereas it is an usual thing in this Island, for every house to have a large Cistern, nine or ten foot deep, and fifteen or twenty Foot in Diameter, for the Conveniency of receiving the Rain-water, the Violence of the Earth-quake all over the Island was such, that those Cisterns threw up the Water eight or ten foot high in the Air, as if it had been spouted out of so many monstrous Springs. The Earth also in many places was thrown up in a vast Heaps; and great Numbers of large Trees were torn up by the Roots, and buried in the Rents and Gaps of the Island, and never expected to be seen more. I wish we may have a true Sense of this terrible Judgment of God upon us.

Nor has this Island only felt the severe Strokes of Celestial Indignation. For as we are told of several Persons, since come from thence to this Island, St. *Christophers* has had a large Share of the same Calamity; where a late Earth-quake, no less dreadful, has made the same Ravages, by throwing down and burying whole Houses in the wide Fissures of the gaping Mold, overturning their Sugar-Mills, and demolishing the *Jesuites* Colledge, together with several other Piles of Brick and Stone, to the great Amazement of all that beheld it, and no less Damage of them that suffer'd. We are also inform'd that *Antego* and *Monferrat* have likewise been very greatly shaken, though not in so severe a manner; and that the *Barbadoes* also has had some trembling Fits, but not so considerable. As for our parts we are not quite rid of all our Fears, for this Island has had several short Agonies since, that have not long endur'd, which is all we have to make us hope that the Fury of the Cause is over, and the Effects will consequently cease.

After we had somewhat recover'd ourselves, I began to consider what might be the Cause of this dreadful Accident: and by my little Reading, I find the great Philosophers cannot agree concerning the true Cause of Earth-quakes. For some will have Wind, some Water to be the Cause of them, when put up within the Bowels of the Earth, like strong Liquor fermenting in a Bottle, and not able to get forth, otherwise, than breaking the Flasks. For my Part, I believe both Wind and Water concur'd in this which we have suffer'd. But I shall not trouble you with my Philosophy, you being in a Place where you may have recourse to the more Learned, for better Satisfaction than I can pretend to give you. This is certain, we have severely felt the fatal Consequences of these Contentions within the Bowels of the Earth; and this being over, I hope I shall have no more occasion to trouble you with these sad Relations.