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 affonifhing and terrible while it lafted; but as for what Mischief it has done, we cannot for the prefent 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 waftful Destruction 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 thoé 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. Thoé that were built of Wood were no lefs violently flaken, 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 Clefts, 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 fuch was the Force which thruft up that heavy Element, as to mount it a
great height in the Air. The Sea it felf for a time forfook the Shoar for about three
quarters of a Mile together, and left a great Number of Fifh 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 fame Rapidnefs and Fury, nor at fo great a Diftance as at firft.

Another thing was obfervable, that whereas it is an ufual thing in this Ifland, for
every houfe to have a large Ciftern, 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 Ifland was fuch, that thofe Cifterns threw up the Water eight or ten foot
high in the Air, as if it had been fpouted out of fo many monftrous Springs. The Earth
also in many places was thrown up in a vaft Heaps; and great Numbers of large Trees
were torn up by the Roots, and buried in the Rents and Gapings of the Ifland, and never
expected to be feen more. I wifh we may have a true Sence of this terrible Judgment of
God upon us.

Nor has this Ifland only felt the fevere Strokes of Celeftial Indignation. For as we
are told of feveral Perfons, fince come from thence to this Ifland, St. Chriftophers has had
a large Share of the fame Calamity; where a late Earth-quake, no lefs dreadful, has made
the fame Ravages, by throwing down and burying whole Houfes in the wide Fiffures of
the gaping Mold, overturning their Sugar-Mills, and demolifhing the Jefuites Colledge,
together with feveral other Piles of Brick and Stone, to the great Amazement of all that
beheld it, and no lefs Damage of them that fuffer’d. We are alfo inform’d that Antego
and Monferrat have likewife been very greatly fhaken, though not in fo fevere a manner;
and that the Barbadoes alfo has had fome trembling Fits, but not fo confiderable. As for
our parts we are not quite rid of all our Fears, for this Ifland has had feveral fhort Agonies
fince, that have not long endur’d, which is all we have to make us hope that the Fury of
the Caufe is over, and the Effects will confequently ceafe.

After we had somewhat recover’d ourfelves, I began to confider what might be
the Caufe of this dreadful Accident: and by my little Reading, I find the great
Philofophers cannot agree concerning the true Caufe fo Earth-qua kes. For fome will
have Wind, fome Water to be the Caufe of them, when put up within the Bowels of the
Earth, like ftrong Liquor fermenting in a Bottle , and not able to get forth, otherwise, than
breaking the Flafs. For my Part, I believe both Wind and Water concur’d in this which
we have fuffer’d. But I fhall not trouble you with my Philofophy, you being in a Place
where you may have recourfe to the more Learned, for better Satisfaction than I can
pretend to give you. This is certain, we have feverely felt the fatal Confequences of these
Contentions within the Bowels of the Earth; and this being over, I hope I fhall have no
more occafion to trouble you with these fad Relations.

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