

A MEMORIAL:

Or, a Short
ACCOUNT
OF THE

BAHAMAS-ISLANDS;

Of their Situation, Product, Conveniency of Trading with the *Spaniards*: The Benefit that ariseth by the great Quantities of Salt that is made by the Sun; and the Safety all Ships that are in Distress near those Parts do find, by having so good a Harbour as *Providence* to bear away to for Succour.

Deliver'd to the

Lords, Proprietors of the said Islands,

AND THE

Honourable Commissioners of Her Majesty's Customs.

BY

JOHN GRAVES,

Collector of Her Majesty's Customs in those Islands.

[London;] And now Humbly Presented to both [1708]

Houses of PARLIAMENT

Cherry Lane
 In Locke Court
 Going into Lincoln
 for our son's shipping

A Short
A C C O U N T
 O F T H E
B A H A M A - I S L A N D S,
 Humbly Presented to both
Houses of Parliament.

Imprimis, **T**H O S E Islands are Situated from 22 to 27 Degrees North Latitude ; they are the best Situated for Trade, and particularly with the *Spaniards*, of any Colony in *America* ; they lying all along the North side of the great Island of *Cuba*, not above Fourteen or Sixteen Leagues over the Channel. *New Providence* is within Three Days sail of the *Havana*, the best Haven the *Spaniards* have in the whole *Indies*, and they are in the very Center between *Carolina* and *Jamaica*.

Secondly, If the *Spaniards* take Possession, which I heard them say they would, all the Trade from *North America* to *Jamaica* will be very Hazardous ; and from *Carolina* to *Jamaica*, will inevitably, be Obstructed, they being forc'd to go between several of those Islands to *Jamaica*. Then what will they do for a Supply of Salt to save their Provisions they vend in the *West-Indies* ? Which is

the most Beneficious to *Carolina* and other Parts of *North-America*, of any Trade they have. Without these Islands be Protected, that Trade is lost.

Thirdly, whatever Ships come through the Gulph of *Florida* from *Jamaica*, must expect to fall into the Hands of the Enemy, they being forc'd to sail so nigh those Islands that they cannot escape being Descry'd.

Fourthly, There is another Trade which is a precious Jewel in the Queen's Crown, as any Trade our Nation has, by reason it carrieth nothing from us in Bullion or Cash, only what is taken out of the Sea (that is, the Fishing-Trade of *Newfound-Land* and *New-England*) who are Supply'd with great Quantities of Salt from the *Bahama*-Islands, especially in Time of War. As for the Returns that are sent to *England* from *Italy*, *Spain*, *Portugal*, &c. for the said Fish, all Trading-Men are sensible of, and know the vast Sums of Mony that are Pay'd into Her Majesty's Custom-House, besides Bullion and Coin'd Mony brought Home.

Fifthly, These Islands, especially *New Providence*, by reason of a very Commodious Harbour, are the greatest Succour for all distress'd Ships that come through the Gulph of *Florida*, and all others that are beaten off the Coast of *New-York*, *New-England*, and all the Northern Shoar of *America*: I have known upward of Fourteen Sail in a Year come into *Providence* Harbour for Shelter.

Sixthly, To the Shame of our Nation may it be spoken, our Neighbours, the *Hollanders*, having small footing in the *West-Indies*, and I am sure all Ingenious Men that know the *West-India*-Trade, will allow and agree, That they vend far greater Quantities of *European*-Goods both Woollen and others at *Curazo*, which is a very small Place, and of little value but for a good Harbour; and particularly by their vast Trade with the *Spaniards*, their Sale of Goods far exceeds the great Island of *Jamaica*; and for their Returns Home in Bullion and *Spanish* Coin, it cannot be contradicted, but must be allow'd by all impartial Men, to be very considerably

siderably more than Ours. And were the *Bahama*-Islands, particularly that Island of *New-Providence*, to be dispos'd of, no Money would keep it out of their Hands: Then they would soon make it the Mart of the *Indies*, and in Time of War there could scarce a Ship or Vessel move through the Gulph of *Florida*, but must fall into their Hands. Then what will become of our *Jamaica*-Trade? *Tangier* and *Dunkirk* were valu'd little; but since they have been in our Neighbour's Hands, and we at War with them, What would our Nation give to be possess'd of them as they formerly were? My Lords, Your *Bahama*-Islands in Process of Time, may prove of the same Effect for the *West-India*-Trade.

Seventhly, And as these Islands are so well Situated for Trade, we cannot but allow, if *New-Providence* were Strengthen'd with a small Garrison, and but one sixth Rate Frigate, it would be under the Circumstances of Protecting Merchant's Estates, and Annoying our Enemies proportionably.

Eighthly, Our Dying-Woods and what Cotten, &c. is produc'd, are Dayly carry'd to the *Dutch* at *Curazo*, and to the *Dane* at *St. Thomas's*; so that in a short time we must be beholding to our Neighbours for the Growth of our own Colony, the Sale of our Woollen Manufactories lessen'd, and Her Majesty's Customs, Abroad and at Home, lost.

Ninthly, This Article cannot be deny'd by all Men that sail that way, for many Foreigners and some of our own Nation, have found it by woful Experience, That these Islands ever were, and ever will be a Shelter for Pyrats, if left without good Government and some Strength; which Practice all Civil Nations in the World abhor.

Tenthly, They are the most healthful Islands of all our Settlements; and tho' the Ground be very Rocky, it will produce whatever is put into it, the best of Cotten in all the *Indies*, Dying-Woods, Sugar Canes, Indico, and great Quantities of Salt made by the Sun out of the Sea, Tortoise-Shell, Oyl of Whale, Seal

and Nurse, &c. *Spermaceti*-Whale sometimes, Amber-Greece often wash'd up on the Bays.

My LORDS,

I have no sinister Ends in laying this before Your Lordships; it is the Zeal I have for my own Nation, Your Lordships Interest, and the Desire I have to see *Providence* Reviv'd: All may be done with very little Difficulty, if Your Lordships please to take it into Consideration and give a speedy Dispatch. This that I humbly Offer to Your Lordships, is not by Hear-say, or by any Thing I gather from other Men, but by Twenty Years Experience, living the major part of the Time in *New-Providence*.

My Lords, I have laid before Your Lordships, some time since, the Necessity there is for *Providence* to be Settled with speed; it being so much for the Nation's Advantage, particularly for Trade, which is the only Thing that Enriches a Nation, and Impleys the Poor; so that their Cryes come not to the Ears of the Rich, for Bread for their Families.

In pursuance to carry on which I have solicited some Merchants, and find some willing to Adventure to settle a Factory to carry on the *Spanish* Trade, which is the most profitable Trade in the known World, but they raise this Objection, and Query how their Effects shall be secur'd. I dare not cry up the Strength nor good Conduct of your Militia, nor say much of the Fort, tho' it is really a very good one, and might easily be Repair'd; I should but have caus'd Laughter, all Persons knowing how often it has been Destroy'd and Sack'd by a handful of Men.

My Lords, The chief Thing wanting to make a Settlement in earnest, is Strength, a small Man of War and a Garrison, as should be thought fit, with Provisions and Warlike stores; without which it will be impossible to secure Men's Estates: And who will be guilty of so much Folly, to build or lay out any Money in a Place so often insulted over by their near Neighbours, who can come at any Time in Twenty Four Hours?

I presume to inform Your Lordships, that the Colony is under very ill Circumstances in Time of Peace, for the War is no sooner ended, but the *West-Indies* always swarm with Pyrats; and one

large Ship, or two small ones, shall come and Plunder the Inhabitants when they please : I further assert, that one small Pyrat with Fifty Men that are acquainted with the Inhabitants (which too many of them are) shall and will Ruin that Place, and be assisted by the loose Inhabitants ; who hitherto have never been Prosecuted to effect, for Aiding, Abetting, and Assisting the said Villains with Provision, &c. nor is it in any Man's Power now to do it, without being furnish'd with Strength sufficient to put the Laws in Execution : And I must say, that your Governors hitherto have wink'd much at such ill Practices for filthy Lucre.

My Lords, I desire your Consideration how your Governors can Subsist on the one seventh Part of Your Lordships Tenth, which sometimes does not come to Thirty Pounds *per Annum*. Your own Accounts can inform you to a Farthing, what your Governor's just Income is from Your Lordships : He and his Family must have Subsistence ; and to live like a Governor, I will aver, he cannot under Four or Five Hundred Pounds *per Annum*, all Provisions being as follows, *viz.* Mutton, Veal, Pork salt and fresh, at Nine-pence *per* Pound ; Beef from Nine-pence to Six-pence ; Butter Eighteen-pence ; Milk Six-pence *per* Quart ; Eggs Three-half-pence a-piece ; all other Provisions proportionable, Fish only excepted.

May it please Your Lordships, I hold my self oblig'd, as having been many Years a Tenant to Your Lordships, and Twenty Years a Dweller in *Providence*, to inform Your Lordships, that by the granting such Islands, and other Privileges from the Tenants in general, to particular Persons, is, and will be to the utter destroying the Colony. *Anne-Island*, call'd *Hog-Island*, to *Nicholas Trott* for Fifty Pounds ; for which Island *Sir William Phipps*, deceas'd, offer'd One Thousand Pounds for to be lay'd out to Fortify *Providence*, if they would grant him a Patent for the said Island ; but it was all along design'd for a Common for the Town, and Enacted and Confirm'd by several Assemblies so to be ; and Your Lordships never signify'd your Dissent from it as I know of.

Now lately, an Island call'd *Exuma*, which has the great Salt-pond on it, to one *Mr. Henry Palmer*, who was set at work by the said *Trott* to purchase it for their joint Interest.

Your *Brazalet* Wood to the said *Palmer*.

Your Whale-fishing to another.

Fishing on Racks to another.

All which is contrary to your first Condescensions with all the People that came to Set down and Inhabit, as your Instructions for this Eighteen Years, to my certain Knowledge, will make appear ; and ever since the first Settlement were the same, as I have been inform'd by the old Inhabitants : Which said Instructions to your Governors and Council, is, That all your Tenants were to have, and ever had the foregoing Privileges entirely to themselves for their Encouragement, paying Your Lordships the One Tenth Part, which they were always ready and willing to do ; so that it is my Opinion, That it is not in Your Lordship's Power to grant those Privileges to any Stranger, nor, indeed, to any particular Tenant, so as to have Power to alter the first Agreement. Your Lordships Hardships to your poor Tenants went farther than all this, for you dispos'd of all your Timber to the said *Palmer*, so that no one could Cut down a Tree in any Island to build a House, or any Vessel for Sea, without agreeing with the said *Palmer* ; which, before this last Three Years, every Inhabitant had Privilege to cut what Timber they pleas'd to Build or Work up, asking Leave ; and in all the Governments under the Crown it is the same. Which has been a great Discouragement and Hindrance to the well Peopling your Colony.

With Submission to your Lordships, we have now been near Twenty Years in War, and to my Knowledge, Your Lordships, tho' often Solicited and Requested, never did send us the least Assistance either in Arms, Ammunition, or any Warlike Stores : So I must say, your poor Tenants having been so Dishearten'd, and then Harra's'd by ill Governors you have sent, may be imputed to be the main Reason that Place has so often suffer'd by the common Enemy ; and now lately, three times Plunder'd and lay'd in Ashes.

Graves, John, et al. A memorial, or, A short account of the Bahama-Islands : of their situation, product, conveniency of trading with the Spaniards the benefit that ariseth by the great quantities of salt that is made by the sun and the safety all ships that are in distress near those ports do find, by having so good a harbour as Providence to bear away to for succour. [s.n.], [1708]. Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CY0110409330/SABN?u=usaskmain&sid=bookmark-SABN&xid=90488a95&pg=1. Accessed 8 Jan. 2022.