

Re-Capturing of the Bahamas Islands (1783)

"Re-Capture of The Bahamas"

The Political Magazine July 1783, pp. 11-13

An express arrived at the Post Office with the mail brought by the D. of Cumberland, packet Capt. Dashwood from New York. Captain Dashwood left New York the 20th of June; the chief news is, the retaking of the Bahamas and the violent publications of the late rebels against the admission of the loyalists.

East-Florida Gazette.

RECAPTURE OF THE BAHAMAS.

St. Augustine, May 3.

On Wednesday last arrived off our Bay, the privateer brig Whitby Warrior, with accounts of the success of the expedition which was lately fitted out at this place, against the island of New Providence. The gallantry and good conduct of the persons connected with it, particularly of Major Deveaux, who from his situation of commanding on shore, had the most frequent opportunities of distinguishing himself, will best appear from the following extracts of various letters received here.

Extracts of a letter dated New Providence,
April 15, to a mercantile House in this place.

GENTLEMEN, "I have taken the earliest opportunity to let you know of my proceedings, since my departure from St. Augustine. I sailed in company with the Perseverance private ship of war, together with Colonel Deveaux, whose fleet we had taken under our protection. On the passage we parted with the convoy in a gale of wind, but fortunately fell in with them again, the island of Abaces then in sight: we anchored there, and detached the smaller vessels to the other adjacent islands in order to recruit and know the strength of the enemy. The success of Colonel Deveaux was extraordinary in his recruiting department; a number of the inhabitants joining him, formed a body of infantry stronger than the former force, consisting then of but 50men, but at his return amounting to 300 with 35 large boats. On the 9th inst., at night, we got under way from Egg Island and at three in the morning landed Mr. Deveaux with his men, on the east end of Providence, who immediately made an attack on Fort Montague, and effected their intention; at the same time the Warrior's boats attacked three gallies and took them without loss. At eight in the morning of the 10th he summoned the Governor to surrender the garrison, who sent him word that peace had been proclaimed in the Cape, and that he expected official instructions from the Havannah to deliver up these islands to his Majesty, but that hostilities did not cease in these latitudes till the 20th instant. Colonel Deveaux considering the time was short, sent a second summons, and positively demanded an immediate surrender; a third being sent, the Governor surrendered a strong battery, and about 500men, on the 18th in the afternoon, to a few undisciplined men. Too much cannot be said in favour of Colonel Deveaux, whose intrepidity and good conduct during the whole time, would do honour to a veteran commander.

The acquisition is not inconsiderable; four square-rigged, and two sloop gallies, seventy pieces of cannon, an extraordinary quantity of ammunition, stores, and provisions, with an amazing quantity of very fine cotton, have fallen into our hands. ["]

DANIEL WHEELER.

Extract of another letter from New Providence.

"On Monday the 30th of March, we sailed from St. Augustine Bar, with between forty and fifty men, for New Providence, under convoy of the privateers, Perseverance and Whitby Warrior. On the Monday following we made Harbour Island, and landed on Tuesday; we were received with the

greatest demonstrations of joy, by all the inhabitants who very willingly joined us on the expedition. Major Deveaux had guards immediately placed on every settlement on the islands, to prevent intelligence of our arrival being carried to the Spaniards. Captain M'Kenzie was sent to Eleuthera, to collect the inhabitants on that island on Wednesday, and on the Saturday following returned with about fifty men, and joined the fleet off Egg Island. We were employed all that day in arming our new-raised corps, and forming them into companies. In the evening we set sail, and the day following (Sunday the 13th) we arrived at the Salt Key; we lay there till the evening, lest we should be discovered by the enemy. We disembarked our men from the shipping on board of the boats, and at about midnight proceeded for the place of landing, at the East end of New Providence, which we effected about sun rise, on Monday the 14th. Our number altogether did not exceed two hundred, out of which about fifty were armed with pikes, not having muskets sufficient for them. We took upwards of fifty pieces of cannon, with a great quantity of ammunition, and seven very fine galleys. The Spanish garrison, at the time of our landing, consisting of between 500 and 600 men: under the command of Don Antonio Claraco Sauz."

Extracts of a letter dated New Providence,
April 25, to a Gentleman of this place.

Government Hill. April 25th, 1783

Dear Sir,

"I have the honour to inform you, that / on the night of the 16th inst. we arrived at the Salt Key with our fleet, four miles distance from the Eastern Fort, which consisted of thirteen pieces of cannon. I landed about a mile from it a little after daylight with my formidable body of about one hundred and sixty men, and proceeded against it with all expedition, determined to storm immediately: but there being a plain for some distance round their fortifications gave the enemy an opportunity of discovering us, when they in great confusion abandoned the fort, and drew up in a field near a wood. As soon as I came up with them they fired upon us. My young troop charged them, made two prisoners, and drew their main body in great irregularity into town. We sustained no loss on our side. Captains Wheeler and Dow detached about seventy men in boats to board [sic] three formidable galleys, that lay abreast of the Eastern Fort, which was effected about the time of my skirmish with the enemy. On my going to take possession of the fort; I smelt a match on fire, which circumstance, together with their abandoning their works so readily, gave me reason to suspect their intentions. I immediately had the two prisoners confined in the fort, and halted my troops at some distance from it; but self preservation being so natural a reflection, they soon discovered the match that was on fire, which in half an hour would have been communicated to the magazine and two mines that were left for that purpose.

About two hours after I had possession of the fort, his Excellency Governor Claraco sent out a flag, giving some trifling information of a peace. I supposed his information entirely for the purpose of putting off time and amusing me; I therefore, shortly after the return of his flag, demanded a surrender of the garrison at discretion, in fifteen minutes. In answer to which his Excellency waved the surrender, and requested a conference with me personally, when he made offers which I thought prudent to accept, and to establish a truce between us for some days: but fortunately his Excellency was discovered to be carrying on his works, and not adhering so strictly to the terms of the truce as he ought; this gave me an opportunity of commencing hostilities at once with him. I immediately landed eight pieces of heavy cannon from the captured vessels, viz. one brig and two sloops, with twenty 4. and 12.pounders, with which I stole a march in the night of the 17th instant, and sunk my cannon on the solid rock on Society Hill, which is about four hundred yards from their grand fortress, consisting of twenty-one pieces of cannon, and two small flanking batteries of three guns each. On an adjacent hill I erected a work with one 12. and four 4. pounders, which was not 300 yards distance

from them, commanded by Capt. M'Kenzie; a third work of two nine pounders was not compleat. The enemy kept up a heavy fire, and throwing off shells during the night, which had no bad effect. On the morning of the 18th, having two batteries ready to open on them, and a third which though not compleat, could have annoyed them greatly, besides two galleys with twenty 4 pounders, I gave his Excellency once more an opportunity of saving the lives of his men from the horrid consequences attending a work being carried by storm, upon which his Excellency surrendered the garrison.
Yours &c.,

A. DEVEAUX

Articles entered upon between DON ANTONIO CLARACO SAUZ, Governor of the Bahama Islands, &c. &c. and his Honour ANDREW DEVEAUX, Colonel, and Commander in Chief of the expedition.

Article 1st. The Governor's house and public stores to be delivered up to his Britannic Majesty.

Art. 2^d The governor and garrison under his command to march to the Eastern Fort, with all honours of war, remaining with two cannon and two shots per day, with permission to hoist his Catholick Majesty's flag. Provisions for the troops, sailors, and sick in the hospital, are to be furnished at his Britannick Majesty's expence, as also vessels prepared to carry them to the Havannah, and a vessel to carry the governor to Europe.

Art. 3^d.

All the officers and troops of the garrison, belonging to his Catholick Majesty, are to remain in possession of their baggage and other effects.

Art. 4th

All the vessels in the harbour belonging to his Catholick Majesty are to be given up, with every thing onboard the said vessels, to his Britannick Majesty.

Art. 5th.

All effects appertaining to Spaniards, to remain their property, and the Spanish merchants to have two months to settle their accounts,

Art. 6th .

His Excellency, with the troops under his command, to pack their arms precisely at four o'clock, between the fort the pickets, after which his Excellency will march out 300 paces without the pickets, and halt the troops, until the British troops take possession of the garrison, after which, an officer will be sent to conduct them to the Eastern Fort, where the officers and troops will observe the conditions specified in the 2^d article.

(signed)

ANTONIO CLARICO AY SAUZ

A. DEVEAUX.

New Providence, April 18, 1783.

May 10. Yesterday arrived off our Bar a vessel under a flag of truce from Havana. Accounts had been received there of the taking of New Providence by a force consisting of 500 regular troops, 1100 loyalists and 400 Indians, escorted by two of his Majesty's ships of war, with a number of galleys and other vessels. / That part of the above report which relates to the Indians, probably took its rise from the following anecdote: Major Deveaux took with him from this place, two Indians, whom he introduced to the first conference with the enemy, as two chiefs, each having under his command a body of two hundred of his countrymen, whom, however, he had not permitted to land, as he could not be answerable for their conduct, but whom he threatened to let loose in case of resistance.

Indian Opinion of the Peace

A letter from Augustine, dated June 1, says that the southern Indians, on hearing that peace was made with America, and Florida given up to the Spanish, had sent deputies to Governor Tonyn, who had held several meetings with them. They heard the account confirmed with noble indignation; they repeated the talks they had received from their late father and protector, Col. Stuart, he told them, they said, that he spoke the word of the Great King, and they considered that word as sacred as the word of God; but they found it came not from the heart; that their father and themselves were deceived; and that the faith of the great nation was but an empty sound. —We know not, said they, the cause of your quarrel; but we left our women and children, and lifted up the hatchet in your support, because we believe you told us truth; —you engaged us with fair promises to take part in your dispute, and you now desert us in our misfortunes —you turn your backs like sheep upon the enemy, and advise us to sue for peace, from the men you have taught us to despise—this, they said they would not stoop to, nor would they hold out their hands to Spaniards, who had been the murderers of their forefathers; but that, if the Great King would send ships for them also, they would go away in search of new habitations; or if he would supply them with ammunition, they would go back and protect their old ones!

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