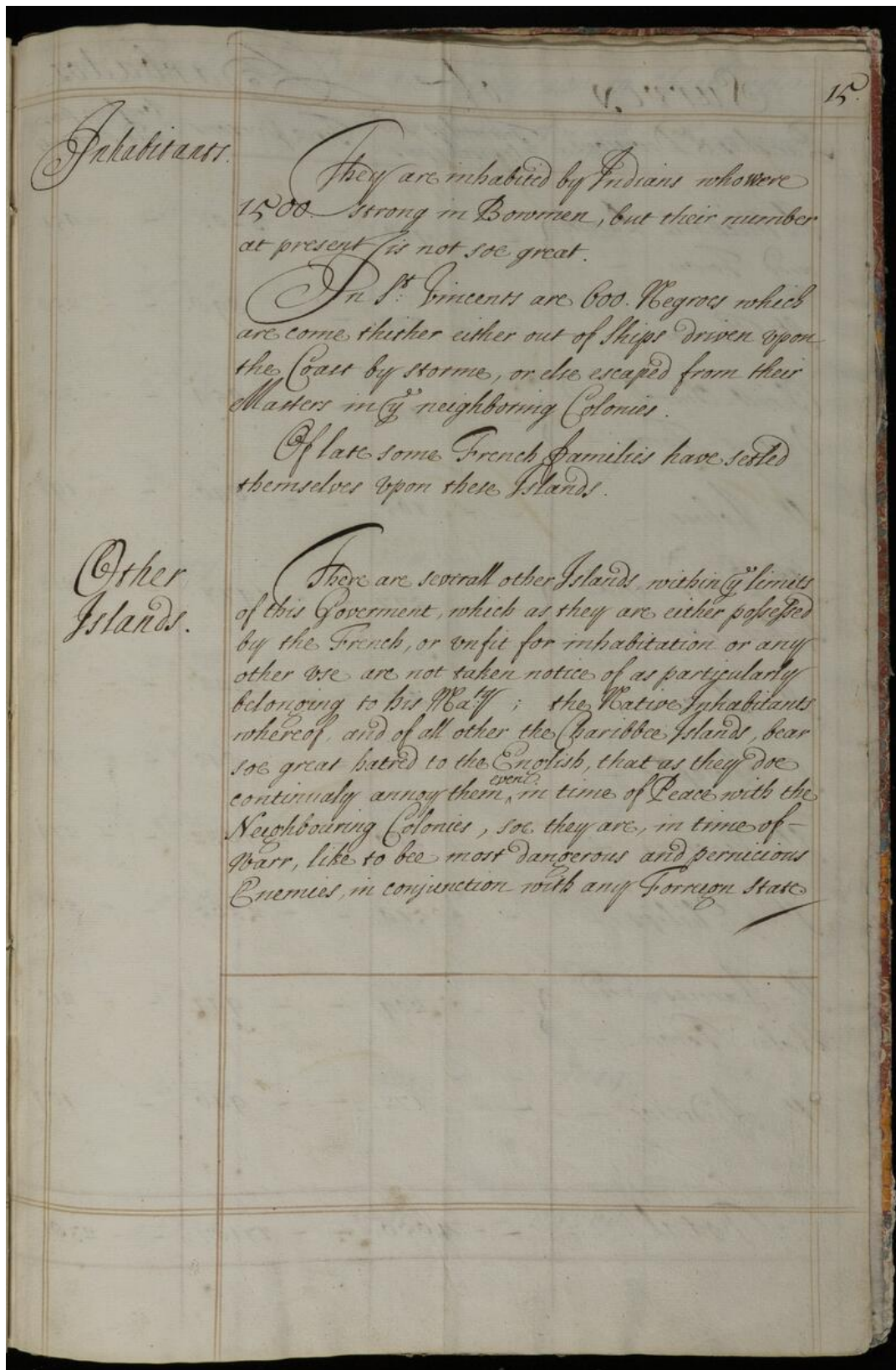
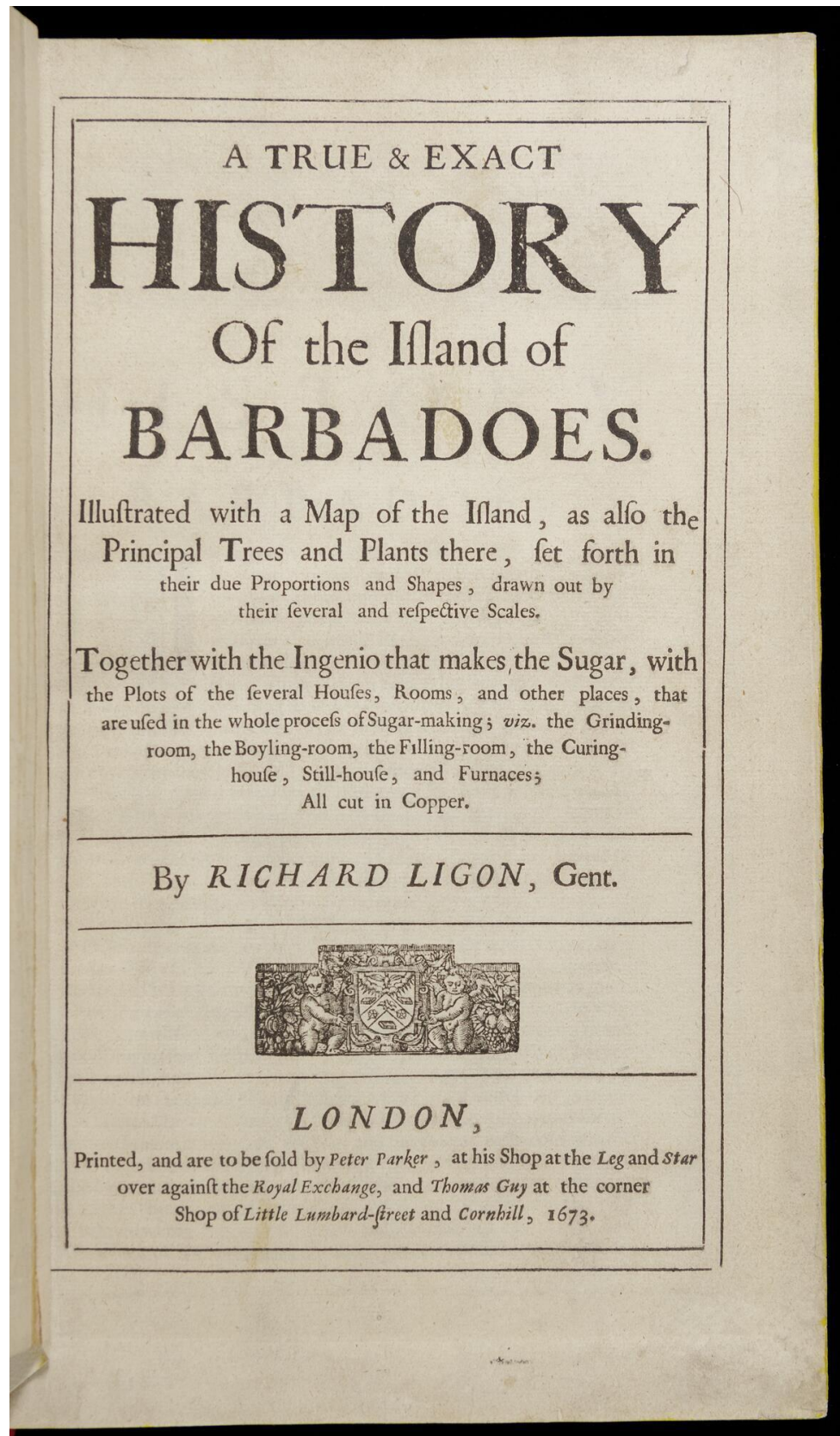


The State of Barbados, 15 (1684)



Richard Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, title page (1657)



Richard Ligon, *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, 53 (1657)

of the Island of Barbadoes.

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but that play being forbidden, the duck would make them good sport, for they are stronger Ducks, and better Divers by far than ours: and in this chase, there was much of pleasure, to see the various swim-mings of the *Negroes*; some the ordinary wayes, upon their bellies, some on their backs, some by striking out their right leg and left arm, and then turning on the other side, and changing both their leg and arm, which is a stronger and swifter way of swimming, than any of the others: and while we were seeing this sport, and observing the diversities, of their swim-mings, a *Negro* maid, vvho vvvas not there at the beginning of the sport, and therefore heard nothing of the forbidding them to dive, put off her peticoat behind a bush, that was at one end of the Pond, and closely sunk down into the water, and at one diving got to the Duck, pull'd her under water, and went back again the same way she came to the bush, all at one dive. We all thought the Duck had div'd: and expected her appearance above water, but nothing could be seen, till the subtilty was discovered, by a Christian that saw her go in, and so the duck was taken from her. But the trick being so finely and so closely done, I beg'd that the Duck might be given her again, which was granted, and the young girl much pleased.

Though there be a mark set upon these people, which will hardly ever be vvip'd off, as of their cruelties vvhen they have advantages, and of their fearfulness and falseness; yet no rule so general but hath his acception: for I believe, and I have strong motives to cause me to be of that persuasion, that there are as honest, faithful, and conscionable people amongst them, as amongst those of *Europe*, or any other part of the vvorld.

A hint of this, I vvill give you in a lively example; and it vvvas in a time vvhen Victuals vvvere scarce, and Plantins vvvere not then so frequently planted, as to afford them enough. So that some of the high spirited and turbulent amongst them, began to mutiny, and had a plot, secretly to be reveng'd on their Master; and one or two of these were Firemen that made the fires in the furnaces, who were never without store of dry wood by them. These villains, were resolved to make fire to such part of the boyling-house, as they were sure would fire the rest, and so burn all, and yet seem ignorant of the fact, as a thing done by accident. But this plot was discovered, by some of the others who hated mischief, as much as they lov'd it; and so traduc'd them to their Master, and brought in so many witnesses against them, as they were forc'd to confess, what they meant should have been put in act the next night: so giving them condign punishment, the Master gave order to the overseer that the rest should have a dayes liberty to themselves and their wives, to do what they would; and withall to allow them a double proportion of victual for three dayes, both which they refus'd: which we all wonder'd at, knowing well how much they lov'd their liberties, and their meat, having been lately pinch'd of the one, and not having overmuch of the other; and therefore being doubtful what their meaning was in this, suspecting some discontent amongst them, sent for three or four of the best of them, and desir'd to know why they refus'd this favour that was offer'd them, but

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receiv'd such an answer : as we little expected ; for they told us, it was not fullness, or slighting the gratuity their Master bestow'd on them, but they would not accept any thing as a recompence for doing that which became them in their duties to do, nor would they have him think, it was hope of reward, that made them to accuse their fellow servants, but an act of Justice, which they thought themselves bound in duty to do, and they thought themselves sufficiently rewarded in the Act. The substance of this, in such language as they had, they delivered, and poor *sambo* was the Orator, by whose example the others were led both in the discovery of the Plot, and refusal of the gratuity : And withall they said, that if it pleas'd their Master, at any time, to bestow a voluntary boon upon them, be it never so slight, they would willingly and thankfully accept it : and this act might have bescem'd the best Christians, though some of them were denyed Christianity, when they earnestly fought it. Let others have what opinion they please, yet I am of this belief; that there are to be found amongst them, some who are as morally honest, as Conscionable, as humble, as loving to their friends, and as loyal to their Masters, as any that live under the Sun; and one reason they have to be so, is, they set no great value upon their lives : And this is all I can remember concerning the *Negroes*, except of their games, which I could never learn, because they wanted language to teach me.

As for the *Indians*, we have but few, and those fetcht from other Countries; some from the neighbouring Islands, some from the Main, which we make slaves : the women who are better vers'd in ordering the Cassave and making bread, then the *Negroes*, we employ for that purpose, as also for making Mobbie : the men we use for footmen, and killing of fish, vvhich they are good at; vvhith their ovvn bovves and arrowvs they vwill go out; and in a dayes time, kill as much fish, as vwill serve a family of a dozen persons, tvvo or three dayes, if you can keep the fish so long. They are very active men, and apt to learn any thing, sooner than the *Negroes*; and as different from them in shape, almost as in colour; the men very broad shoulder'd, deep breasted, with large heads, and their faces almost three square; broad about the eyes and temples, and sharp at the chin, their skins some of them brown, some a bright Bay, they are much craftier, and subtler then the *Negroes*; and in their nature falser; but in their bodies more active : their women have very small breasts, and have more of the shape of the *Europeans* than the *Negroes*, their hair black and long, a great part whereof hangs down upon their backs, as low as their nanches, with a large lock hanging over either breast, which seldom or never curls : cloaths they scorn to wear, especially if they be well shap'd; a girdle they use of tape, covered with little smooth shels of fishes, white, and from their flank of one side, to their flank on the other side, a fringe of blew *Bugle*; which hangs so low as to cover their privities. We had an *Indian* woman, a slave in the house, who was of excellent shape and colour, for it was a pure bright bay; small breasts, with the nipples of a porphyrie colour, this woman would not be woo'd by any means to wear Cloaths. She chanc'd to be with Child, by a Christian servant, and lodging in the *Indian* house, amongst other women,

