

There had been in the Province, almost from the beginning, a discontented faction, led by a few demagogues, who were ever ready to stir up sedition, and play on the ignorance, credulity, and bigotry of the people. A leader in all work of this kind was the ex-governor, Josias Fendall, who having been, with perhaps more humanity than wisdom, pardoned for an act of flagrant treason, and suffered to remain in the Province, bore ever afterward a rancorous hatred to the Proprietary and the government, and his home in Calvert county was a hatching-place for plots and mutinies. With him we soon find associated that unclean bird, John Coode.

The uneasiness about the Indians was skilfully taken advantage of by these plotters, who spread everywhere the rumor that the Proprietary and the Catholics (about one-twelfth of the whole population) were conspiring with the Indians to massacre the Protestants. Absurd as such a charge was, it found ready credence among the agitated and credulous people, to whom it seemed an easy explanation of all these disquieting phenomena. Indeed so well did it serve its purpose, that it was used with great effect by Coode and his followers in the rebellion of 1689, and openly put forward in their Declaration.

To a certain extent, therefore, these volumes explain what has always been a mystery, the sudden and almost unresisted success of that most causeless of rebellions. It was not that the people really felt any oppression, endured any wrong, or bore any burdens but such as are incident to all governments by law. But for years they had had their fears, their credulity, and their bigotry wrought upon by tales of Popish plots and conspiracies with the Indians, and the assurances that (whether they felt it or not) they were groaning under insupportable tyranny, until mere iteration had compelled belief.