

When the news of the Revolution of 1688 had reached America, Andros, who was supposed to be a partisan of James, and whose ideas of popular freedom and the sanctity of charters were James's own, was deposed by a popular uprising and thrown into prison in Boston. Nicholson, who represented him in New York, also fell under suspicion. Though he was well known to be a Protestant, his commission from a Catholic monarch was little less than the mark of the beast; and a rumor arising that he was plotting to surrender the province to the French, a revolt broke out, headed by a German named Jacob Leisler, who seized the fort and usurped the government. Nicholson, finding himself powerless to resist, sailed for England.

In 1690 he was sent out to Virginia as Lieut.-Governor—that is, really as Governor, as Lord Howard of Effingham, fortunately for the province, determined to reside for the future in England, and limit his activities to drawing his salary. Nicholson showed himself to be a governor of a different kind from his narrow-minded and rapacious chief. He had paid much attention to colonial affairs, and sent important information and valuable advice to the Privy Council. His residence in New York had opened his eyes to the far-reaching designs of the French, and the perils threatening British rule in America, and he strongly urged a union of all the colonies on the mainland in defence against Canada.

Nor was he concerned with foreign policy alone. He saw in Virginia the great need of popular education. There were practically no schools in the Province, and while wealthy planters could import private tutors for their sons, and then send them to England or the continent to finish their education, the less prosperous had to see their children grow up in ignorance. Nicholson set zealously to work to improve this state of things, both by exhortation and example. For one thing, he gave his houses and lots in Yorktown for the establishment of a free school.

More important was his coöperation with the excellent Dr. James Blair in founding William and Mary College, which was chartered in 1693, with Blair as the President, and Nicholson as the head of the Board of Trustees. Its objects were three-fold: to provide a seminary of ministers of the Gospel, to educate youth in good letters and manners, and to propagate Christianity among the Indians. Nicholson lent this noble foundation his heartiest support until his recall to England and subsequent assignment to another field of duty in Maryland.