

In July, 1694, Nicholson arrived in the Province. In September he summoned an Assembly to meet at St. Maries, and at once began to impress upon the members the importance of public education. He desired the doors of knowledge to be thrown open to the poor: the rich could open them for themselves; and what he wanted was a free school in every county. Our ancestors—with all respect to their memory—were a rather close-fisted generation, and this was a proposition to take their breath away. Ten counties—ten schoolhouses to be built—ten schoolmasters to be paid!

But Nicholson was not the man to be turned from his purpose. He argued and pleaded with the Councillors and Burgesses. They would begin with one school at Severn. He would himself give more than anybody. He would pay £50 sterling out of his own pocket at once, and £25 yearly as long as he held office. He would give his one-third of all vessels forfeited for violation of the navigation acts [see p. 181]. In fine, he pushed and dragged and shamed them into liberality; and the Council and Burgesses at last loosened their purse-strings and contributed 45,000 pounds of tobacco toward building a schoolhouse and engaging a master. Indeed they thought they saw their way clear to two free schools, one at Severn for the Western, and one at Oxford for the Eastern Shore.

Nicholson also turned his attention toward the insufficient provision for the clergy, whose condition in Maryland was, for the most part, deplorable, and urged the erection of a decent parsonage house with suitable glebe, in every parish; and with his usual liberality offered £5 sterling out of his own pocket toward building each house, and to take on himself the expense of surveying the glebes. His zeal and generosity so impressed the Lower House, that they passed an address of thanks to him, which may be read in the Assembly proceedings.

Another important act of his, in 1694, was to remove the seat of government from St. Maries to the new town on the Severn, called Anne Arundel, and afterwards Annapolis. It was a wise and indeed a necessary change. The centre of population had moved northward, and St. Maries was at the extreme southern boundary, besides being unhealthy.

In 1696 the desire of Nicholson's heart was fulfilled. An Act was passed providing for a free school at Annapolis to be called King William's School. The administration was to be vested in a Board of Trustees, with Nicholson at their head, incorporated as the Rectors,