PREFACE.

On the death of Governor Copley in 1693, Sir Edmond Andros, then Governor of Virginia, at once seized the government of Maryland, by virtue, as he declared, of a royal commission empowering him so to do in the event of Copley's death, and the absence of Francis Nicholson, the Lieut.-Governor, who was in England. The commission, however, on being examined was found to read otherwise, making the appointment contingent on the death of Nicholson and the absence of Copley. A question as to its validity under the circumstances was raised in the Assembly, but no opposition was made to the assumption of Andros, who soon returned to Virginia, leaving Nicholas Greenberry, President of the Council, as acting Governor.

Sir Thomas Lawrence, their Majesties' Secretary for Maryland, had been impeached by Copley's administration, deprived of his offices and imprisoned, against which actions he had appealed to the Board of Trade. An order from that body was now received, declaring these proceedings illegal, and reinstating him in his offices. In May, 1694, Sir Thomas was appointed by Andros President of the Council and acting Governor.

In the summer, Nicholson came into the Province, produced his commission and assumed the government.

It is to be regretted that no biography of Nicholson has been written, and still more to be regretted that a considerable part of the slight information we have, comes from certainly hostile, and probably unscrupulous sources. The recorded facts of his life, in brief, are these :

Francis Nicholson was born, it is said, in 1660, but the place of his birth is not mentioned. In the earliest notice of him, we find him a commissioned officer in the British navy, first as ensign, and then as lieutenant. His connection with America began in 1686, when he was sent out as Lieutenant-Governor of the northern colonies, which had been consolidated under the rule of the violent and arbitrary Sir Edmond Andros, whose destiny seems to have been to carry a storm-centre with him wherever he went.