

## CHAPTER II.

## ENGLISH COLONIAL HISTORY.

SUCCESSFUL ADMINISTRATION OF COL. NICOLS—RECAPTURE OF MANHATTAN BY THE DUTCH—THE CAREER AND TRAGIC END OF LEISLER, THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE—CAPTAIN KIDD, THE NEW YORK PIRATE—RIP VAN DAM—THE TRIAL AND TRIUMPH OF LIBERTY—THE NEGRO PLOT OF 1741—TRIUMPH OF THE ANGLO-SAXON—TROUBLOUS TIMES APPROACHING.



MUCH dissatisfaction was very reasonably expected with this sudden change of authority, though it proved, upon the whole, quite satisfactory to the Dutch colony. The inhabitants were confirmed in their right of property and their custom of inheritance; they were allowed to continue their commerce with the Holland merchants, liberty of conscience in matters of religion was not abridged, and they were promised exemption from impressment in war service against any nation whatsoever. They were allowed to elect inferior officers and magistrates, and any who were dissatisfied were permitted to leave the country. The first English Governor, Col. Richard Nicols, established the system of trial by jury, a hitherto unknown procedure in America. The Dutch Government at that period was reputed the most liberal government in Europe; but, unfortunately, the Government had never had control of the colony, that having been committed to the mercenary management of a private mercantile corporation. Every precaution to strengthen the hold of the new government on the inhabitants was taken. All grants of

land previously made were renewed or confirmed, and all individual interests were carefully guarded. All property belonging to the West India Company was confiscated and sold at auction to the inhabitants. This linked the new administration to their titles, and made it essential to the possession of their property. It was not until July 12, 1665, that the Governor felt safe in attempting any decided change in the government. On that day he issued his proclamation revoking the old system of burgomasters and schepens, introducing in their place a Mayor, a Board of Aldermen, and a Sheriff, all of whom were to be appointed by the Governor. The name of the city was also changed to New York, in honor of the Duke. Colonel Nicols, after a successful administration of four years, was at his own request relieved from duty, and was succeeded in office by Colonel Francis Lovelace, an officer of the English army.

## RECAPTURE OF MANHATTAN BY THE DUTCH.



IN 1672 war again broke out between England and Holland. The sturdy Dutch having waited anxiously for an opportunity to recover their lost possessions in America, fitted out a squadron of five ships to cruise on the American coast, with instructions to inflict as much injury as possible upon the English colony and commerce. Though the authorities at New York were apprised of this fact, little preparation for defence was undertaken. Governor Lovelace appears to have been a moderate, good-natured genius, vastly more interested in trips of pleasure than the affairs of government; hence, he scrupled not to leave for distant parts of the country, though the city was liable to be surprised at any hour with the approach of a hostile fleet. In his absence the fort was



left under command of Captain John Manning, a white-feathered hero, full of pomp and bluster, every way capable of eating a rich dinner and of adjusting a pair of shoulder-straps, though quite incapable of conducting any ordinary correspondence or of resisting an attack.

In February, 1673, a rumor reached the city that the enemy's fleet had been discovered off the coast of Virginia. The Governor was luxuriating among his rich friends in Westchester. A hasty summons from Captain Manning brought him to the city, where several hundred troops were mustered, but as no enemy appeared they were soon dispersed. In July he planned a trip to Connecticut. (A New York summer vacation.) A few days after his departure, two Dutch men-of-war appeared off Sandy Hook. The affrighted Manning again sent a dispatch to the Governor, and caused the drum to be beaten through the streets for recruits. The only noticeable response was from the Dutch malcontents, who, overjoyed at the sight of the flag of the "fadderlandt," on pretence of doing service, entered the fort and spiked many of the cannon, after which they departed, leaving the chicken-hearted captain to fight his battle on his own line and in his own way. Meanwhile the enemies' ships advanced in front of the fort, and after some interchange of communications, in which Manning exhibited the greatest imbecility, the city with its fortifications was surrendered without firing a gun in its defence. The pusillanimous conduct of Manning, in surrendering the city without the slightest resistance, was a matter of great mortification to the English people, who then, as now, prided themselves on their military prestige. After the English authority was again established on the island, Manning was arraigned and tried by court-martial for cowardice and treachery, and was convicted. His sword was broken over his head in front of the City Hall, and he was incapacitated from holding any station of trust or authority under His Majesty's government ever afterward.

The Dutch commanders appointed Captain Anthony Colve

Governor, who changed the name of the city to New Orange, and proceeded to reorganize the municipal institutions, conforming them again to those of the fatherland. Expecting an attack from the English to recover their lost territory, Governor Colve with commendable dispatch repaired the palisades, improved the fortifications, and placed the city in a good state of defence. But the Dutch were not long allowed to enjoy the fruit of this toil. The treaty of peace signed February 9, 1674, between England and Holland, restored Manhattan to the English crown, and on the 10th of November, 1674, the Dutch Government departed from American soil for the last time.

THE CAREER AND TRAGIC END OF LEISLER, THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE.



AS soon as the final cession of Manhattan to the English dominion had been secured by the peace treaty with the Holland Government, the Duke of York applied for and received from his brother Charles II. the confirmation of his former title to the country, and immediately appointed Sir Edmond Andros Governor of the province. Andros, though a man of ability, was the unscrupulous tool of his master, the Duke of York, and his arbitrary tyranny over the people soon rendered his government immensely unpopular. During his administration seven public wells were dug, a new dock was constructed, new streets were laid out, and the "bolting act" passed. This latter granted the inhabitants of Manhattan the exclusive monopoly of bolting flour, a business which, twenty years later, furnished employment and subsistence to nearly two-



thirds of the population. Andros was recalled in 1683, and Colonel Thomas Dongan appointed in his stead. The death of Charles II., in 1685, brought the Duke of York to the English throne under the title of James II. The great political battles between Catholicism and Protestantism in Europe were now fiercely renewed, James seeking with every appliance the restoration of the Roman Catholic religion in England, as it had existed at the beginning of the reign of Henry VIII. The American colonies were largely peopled with Protestant refugees, who had fled the tyranny of the Old World, and who could but take a lively interest in the pending struggle. It was known that Governor Dongan, though a man of moderation and caution, was a zealous Catholic, who had received instructions from his master to favor the introduction of the Roman Catholic religion into the province. As the contest proceeded in England, the tides of public feeling ran high in this country. The climax was reached on the reception of the news of the landing and proclamation of the Prince of Orange, and the abdication and flight of the former king. The revolution in England immediately extended to this country. The Bostonians rose to arms, deposed the English officers, sent them back to the mother country, and established a popular government. New York was more conservative. Governor Dongan, too tolerant in his policy to please the king, had been superseded a short time previously by Francis Nicholson, another Catholic, who, on the reception of the news, betook himself on board a vessel lying in the harbor, and sailed for England, leaving the colony without a ruler. Two political parties quickly came to the surface, each of which avowed its loyalty to the reign of William and Mary. One consisted of the members of the late Council, supported by a few wealthy citizens, and claimed that the colonial government was not subverted by the revolution in England, or by the flight of the Governor; that the second in authority with the Council inherited the power to administer the government, until matters should be definitely settled by the

crowd. The other party, which embodied the masses of the people, maintained that by the overthrow of the late king, and the abandonment of the country by the Governor, the previous system of government was totally overthrown, and that the people were empowered to appoint a provisional government of their own. But in times of general and intense excitement there is little chance for discussion; prejudice and inclination are immensely more potent than logic. The public money of the city, amounting to £773 12s., had been deposited for safe keeping in the fort, which was garrisoned with a few troops. A crowd of citizens took possession of the fortification without resistance, after which Jacob Leisler, senior captain of the trainbands, was unanimously appointed to take command of the same, with power to preserve the peace, and suppress rebellion until instructions were received from England. The gentleman thus elevated to be the principal hero, and bear in the end the sad penalty of this exciting epoch, was one of the oldest and wealthiest of the Dutch burghers. He had entered Manhattan as a soldier in the service of the West India Company in 1660, and soon after married the widow of Cornelius Vanderveer, and thus became uncle of Stephanus Van Cortlandt and Nicholas Bayard, who were afterwards the principal instigators in his execution. He had already held a commission in the colony, and fully demonstrated his capacity and loyalty. No sooner had he taken possession of the fort, however, than active measures were undertaken by the opposite party to subvert his administration. Nicholas Bayard became the principal opponent of the Leislerian Government. Bayard was the cousin of Mrs. Peter Stuyvesant, of genuine Holland origin, had by mercantile pursuits amassed a large fortune, and had long been an active politician. He had served as Mayor, and was at this time colonel of the trainbands, of which Leisler was senior captain. His party having failed to get possession of the fort or custom-house, he next tried, but in vain, to disaffect the militia. Finding his influence gone, and alarmed for his personal safety, he, with Colonel



Peter Schuyler, took refuge at Albany, where they labored industriously to excite hostility to Leisler and his party. Leisler was supported by Massachusetts, and the General Court of Connecticut, by the citizens of other provinces; but the authorities at Albany, probably through the influence of Bayard, refused for a period to recognize him. His administration appears to have been just, and considering the times, moderate. The first Mayor elected by the people was under his administration.

France having espoused the cause of the exiled king, war broke out on the frontier between the French of Canada and their Indian allies, and the English colonies. The thriving settlement at Schenectady was burned, and nearly all the inhabitants massacred in one night. These depredations led to a general movement on the part of the authorities at Albany, New York, and New England, and two expeditions were fitted out, one against Montreal, and the other against Quebec. Neither of these accomplished their mission, and Leisler's administration can hardly be regarded a success though his motives were certainly only those of a genuine patriot.

In December, 1689, a messenger from the English Government arrived at Boston with a communication addressed "To Francis Nicholson, or, in his absence, to such as for the time being takes care for preserving the peace and administering the laws in his Majesty's province of New York." Anxious to obtain possession of the letter and what authority it might confer, Bayard and one or two of his adherents secretly entered New York, and on the arrival of the messenger asserted their pretensions and demanded the missive. After some deliberation, however, the messenger delivered the package to those actually in power. The document authorized the person in power to take the chief command as Lieutenant-Governor, and to appoint a council to assist him in conducting the government. Leisler carried out these instructions. A riot ensued, in which an attempt was made to seize Leis-

ler, after which he issued a warrant for the arrest of Bayard and others, on the charge of high misdemeanor against his Majesty's authority. Bayard was arrested and thrown into prison, and on the following day a court was called to try him for treason. Finding his affairs suddenly brought to extremities, Bayard confessed his faults, and supplicated for mercy, which was granted, though he was retained a prisoner for fourteen months. Early in his administration, Leisler had sent a report of his doings to the English throne. It was, however, written in broken English, a language he had never mastered; and as every disappointed English Governor stood ready to malign his motives and decry his usurpations, a violent prejudice was probably excited against him. Late in the year 1690, the Prince of Orange appointed Henry Sloughter Governor of New York, and Major Richard Ingoldsby Lieutenant-Governor, who set sail for America with several ships and a small body of troops. A storm separated the vessels at sea, and Ingoldsby landed two months previous to the arrival of his superior. On landing, Ingoldsby announced the appointment of Sloughter, and demanded the fort for the accommodation of his troops. Leisler expressed his willingness to surrender the fort and his entire authority, but very properly demanded that previous to it the new-comer should produce his royal commission. The papers were, however, in the possession of Sloughter, and no sort of credentials could be produced. Leisler then offered the City Hall for the accommodation of the English troops, declining to surrender the fort until an officer duly commissioned arrived. Ingoldsby, with a haughty dignity, such as no wise officer sensible of the proper forms of authority would exhibit, issued a proclamation calling on the people to assist him in overcoming all opposition to his Majesty's command. This was bravely replied to by Leisler on the following day, charging whatever of bloodshed should ensue to his opponent, and forbidding him to commit any hostile acts against the city, fort, or province, at his utmost peril. A cloud of



wild agitation and uncertainty hung over the city for seven long weeks, until on the 19th of March the missing vessel, with the storm-tossed Governor, entered the harbor. Slough-ter immediately landed, selected his council from among the enemies of Leisler, and proceeded to the City Hall, where he published his commission. Having sworn in the members of his council, he directed Ingoldsby to demand possession of the fort, though it was now eleven o'clock at night. Leis-ler, to avoid any deception, dispatched Ensign Stoll, who had seen Slough-ter in England, with a message to the Governor, charging him to eye him closely. A second demand was made for the fort, and Leisler dispatched the Mayor and another prominent officer to make to the Governor all neces-sary explanations, and to transfer the fort. On entering his presence they were, however, handed over instantly to the guards, without being allowed to speak. Another ineffectual demand for the fort was made, after which the matter was allowed to rest until the next day.

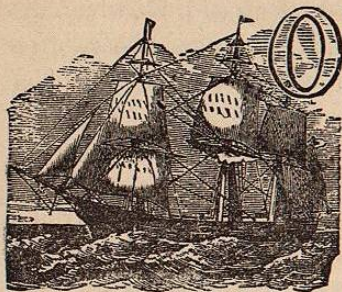
On the following morning, Leisler addressed a polite and congratulatory letter to the Governor, asking to be released from duty, and offering the fort with all its arms and stores, expressing also his willingness to give an exact account of all his doings. An officer dispatched to receive the fort was ordered to release Bayard and Nichols, who were still in con-finement, and to arrest Leisler and his principal adherents. Bayard and Nichols were at once admitted and sworn into the council, and Leisler and eleven of his friends arrested. Two weeks later they were arraigned for trial. Leisler set up no defence, alleging that the court had no authority in the case — that the king of England only could decide whether he had acted without his authority or not. Leisler and his son-in-law, Milborne, who had acted as Secretary, were pro-nounced usurpers and traitors, and condemned to death. On the 16th of May, 1691, amid a storm of rain, while the dissi-pated Governor and his satellites were revelling at a drunken feast, they were brought out for execution. The scaffold

was erected on the ground now covered by the New York post office, and in full view of Leisler's fine residence. Mil-borne offered a prayer for the king, queen, and the officers of the province. Leisler delivered a long address, which dis-played the workings of a fine mind, and a good heart, after which he died without a murmur, amid the tears and lamen-tations of the populace.

Thus closed the career of the first New York Governor elected by the people. Leisler does not appear to have been unduly ambitious for political honors. He was a patriotic, honest, high-minded Dutchman; wholly destitute of the arts and intrigues of the modern politician. Chosen by his coun-trymen, like Washington at a later period, he devoted him-self with all his energies for the advancement of the common weal, and died a martyr to the cause he served. Possessed of great influence, he incited no insurrection to prevent his execution; and wasted none of his vast estate in purchasing a pardon. He did not cringe and beg for life as his enemies had meanly done; but asserting his sincerity, like an honest, brave man he expired, trusting in God, and praying for his enemies. His execution, ordered over the signature of a drunken Governor, was the first ripe fruit of that spirit of English usurpation which culminated at length in the numerous gory fields of the American Revolution. Four years after his death, his worthy son, after a series of well-timed efforts, secured from the English Parliament the triumphant reversal of the attainder, and the complete exoneration of his father from the charge of usurpation.



## CAPTAIN KIDD, THE NEW YORK PIRATE.



ONE melancholy event in human history too frequently gives place to another still more appalling. The frontier war begun during the administration of Leisler, continued its ravages for a number of years after his death. Governor Fletcher wisely formed an alliance with the Iroquois Indians, who proved a valuable defence against these hostile inroads. It was clearly the design of the French Government to harass and cripple the frontier settlements, until such times as it could overwhelm the cities, and so wipe out the English authority from the country. During these perilous years, great losses and calamities were inflicted on the colonies, and the people sighed for security and rest. But another evil, equally disastrous to the development of the city, had long preyed upon its commerce. The slave trade had been considered legitimate since the founding of the colony, and the Dutch have the unenviable honor of introducing this iniquitous system. During the continuance of the Dutch dynasty, however, this trade appears to have been carried on by transient Dutch traders, who obtained the blacks from the African kings, on the coasts of Guinea, and to have formed no part of the regular business of the shipping merchants of Manhattan. This continued policy of legalized theft and brutality necessarily corrupted the men of the sea, and fitted them for any undertaking of treachery and daring. It is difficult inculcating theft and honesty in the same lesson. During the continuance of the war between France and England, many privateers had also been fitted out from England and New York, to prey upon the French merchantmen, which greatly encouraged the licentious tendencies of the sailors. It is

said that many of these, failing to seize the legitimate objects of their pursuit, to prevent failure to the expedition, fell upon friendly vessels, which they plundered and sunk, returning in triumph with their booty. So difficult is it for adventurous men, long trained in these schools of vice, and feasted with ill-gotten gain, to return to the walks of common industry, that at the close of the war the seas literally swarmed with armed pirates. Many merchants suspended business in consequence of these incessant perils; and it is even hinted that not a few of them, as well as higher functionaries, including Governor Fletcher himself, became abettors and partners in these piratical enterprises. The American seas, with a thinly populated coast of two thousand miles, indented with numerous harbors, rivers, and inroads, and with a poorly organized government, furnished perhaps the safest retreat for these wandering corsairs. Their merchandise was largely disposed of through the Spanish merchants, who had been so deeply demoralized by their Central American plunders that they cared little whence they received their goods, provided they yielded a satisfactory profit. It is probable that New York merchants, also, were not guiltless. Before the conclusion of the war, these depredations became so alarming that many New York merchants besought the English ministry to institute measures to suppress piracy. Governor Fletcher, who had been accused on every side of complicity with these malefactors, was removed, and Lord Bellamont appointed in his stead, with instruction to extirpate piracy from the American seas. As every English vessel was at that time engaged in the war with France, Bellamont formed a stock-company, in which the King, Chancellor Somers, the Earl of Romney, the Duke of Shrewsbury, the Earl of Oxford, Bellamont, and Robert Livingston, became shareholders. A written agreement was made, consisting of several articles, which recited, in substance, that Bellamont should furnish £5,000, this sum being four-fifths of the outlay in the undertaking, and that the remaining fifth should be