

KINGSTON AND THE LOYALISTS OF THE "SPRING FLEET" OF 1783.

INTRODUCTORY.

Year by year the task of collecting reliable information regarding the early history of this province becomes increasingly difficult.

Already through indifference and neglect much valuable information has been irreparably lost. It, therefore, becomes a matter of some importance to preserve in a more permanent form such trustworthy records as are yet in existence.

It is by no means improbable that much material of real value to the future historian lies hidden from the light of day in many an old dwelling in this province. Old family documents and letters—faded and musty—consigned in numerous instances to the attic or the lumber-room, are capable of supplying here and there a missing link, or throwing light on some obscure point in our provincial history.

The publication of the following extremely interesting narrative of the late Walter Bates, Esq., of Kingston, will be especially valuable if it should prove the means of arousing a spirit of inquiry and investigation amongst the possessors of old papers and documents.

In the notes which I have appended to the narrative, occasional reference will be made to the *History of New York during the Revolutionary War*, by Thomas Jones, justice of the supreme court of that province.

The work is a remarkable one. It is ably edited by Edward Floyd de Lancey, a personal friend of Dr. C. W. Weldon, M. P., of this city, to whose kindness I am indebted for its perusal.

The position taken by the Loyalists at the time of the American revolution has been largely misunderstood, and, as a con-

sequence, greatly misrepresented. Their true position is admirably stated in the preface to the work just mentioned, and the following quotation is particularly valuable, as coming from a citizen of the United States:

"It is a common belief," says Mr. de Lancey, "that the loyal inhabitants of America—the truly loyal, those who acted from principle, were the unhesitating supporters of the British government in its unjustifiable and tyrannic invasions of the rights and liberties of its American people.

"United States writers have naturally, perhaps, so described them, while the few English historians who have treated American History, have either taken a similar view, or have ignored them altogether.

"The history of the course of the Loyalists at the American Revolutionary epoch, and of their plans for relief from the British tyranny which then oppressed America, has never been written. There can be no greater error than to suppose that the Loyalists as a whole were willing to submit quietly to the exactions of the Mother Country, and her invasion of their rights and liberties as British subjects. As Americans they felt those grievances, and were as indignant at the treatment they were subjected to as those of their countrymen who took up arms. But they wished to fight the battle for those rights and liberties and the redress of those grievances, with the powerful weapons which the constitution of England gave to them as to other Englishmen—weapons which had proved successful before as they have proved successful since in similar emergencies—freedom of speech, freedom of the pen, freedom of the press.