



Peter Stuyvesant discussing the terms of surrender to the English with his council.

Chapter 2

The English rule of New York, which was to continue uninterrupted for more than a century, was inaugurated by Governor Edmund Andros, but neither he nor his immediate successors did anything to disturb the pastoral calm of the city's nearest neighbor. In 1686, Governor Jacob Leisler decided to attempt to fortify both New York and Nutten Island. He actually got as far as installing a battery of guns on the New York shore immediately opposite Nutten Island at the spot still called "The Battery." Before he could complement them with a similar installation across the channel, he was caught in traitorous actions against his king and hanged in his own garden. His administration cannot be said to have had much inspirational effect.

Within the next year the conflicting elements in New York's rapidly expanding social structure forced upon the city the dubious distinction of acquiring a whipping-post, a cage, a pillory, and a ducking block. But these evidences of an awaken-

ing municipal consciousness were lost upon Nutten Island. Its only population was still highly rural, furnished by the governors' sheep, cattle, and coach horses, and in the spring an occasional truant lad and his lass from New York enjoyed an amorous dalliance common to the vernal season. It was not until September of 1691 that any lasting public attention was focused on Nutten Island, when the Provincial Assembly decreed that the island and the two other so called "Oyster Islands" in New York Bay — Bedloe and Ellis — should be removed from their status as independent royal grants and ceded to the County of New York. One Colonel Cortlandt and a Chidley Brooks, Esquire, brought the bill back to a surprised Assembly, requesting that Nutten Island be exempted from the legislation since it belonged to "His Majesty's Fort and Garrison."

Although this sudden militaristic aspect of the island must have been news to the assemblymen, they good-naturedly agreed, as did the governor. After the king gave his approval, the matter rested until six years later when Benjamin Fletcher,