



ELIZABETH LICHTENSTEIN JOHNSTON
in early life

Recollections

OF A

Georgia Loyalist

BY
ELIZABETH LICHTENSTEIN JOHNSTON

Written in 1836

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Preface

Charles Inglis, of New York, who in 1787 became the first Colonial Bishop of the British Empire.

Among the many hundreds of names in Sabine's "Loyalists," the catalogue of which carries one completely through the alphabet, are to be found the names of Lewis and Andrew Johnston. Of Lewis Johnston, "residence unknown," it is said that he was banished and attainted, and his estate confiscated, and that in 1794 he represented to the British Government, by his attorney, John Irvine, that at the time of his banishment several large debts were due him in America, which he had not been able to recover. Of Andrew Johnston, captain in the Florida Rangers, it is merely said that he was killed in the attack on Augusta, Ga., in 1780. In the names of these men, who were father and son, there is nothing to suggest unusual interest, nor does Sabine apparently know more about them than he has here told, but we venture to believe that the following pages of reminiscence by a member of the distinguished Georgia family to which they belonged, will not by any means be found wanting, at least in variety of incident and in

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strong human feeling. The "Recollections" were written in 1836, by Mrs. William Martin Johnston, then aged seventy-two, a woman of strong character, clear intellect, and deep religious feeling, and with a life behind her unusually full of vicissitude and change. As the reminiscences show, she was born and married in Georgia, at the time of the war was obliged to flee to Florida, thence went to Scotland, next settled in the West Indies, and at last, by a singular fate, became, as she remained till her death, a resident of Nova Scotia. In that Province and in other parts of Canada her descendants have held, and still hold, positions of the highest social and political importance. That these "Recollections" are of very wide historical or even biographical interest, no one could possibly claim; but the writer, who belonged to an important colonial family, lived through an exciting period of American history, bore her share in the heavy personal misfortunes of the political party to which she and her family belonged, spent her subsequent life in two separate British colonies, took many long voyages in uncomfortable sailing vessels on stormy seas, and left descendants who have

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care to cherish it by every means in your power; this you are bound to do from a proper sense of gratitude, and from regard for your own interest. He certainly can and will be of much service to you in the prosecution of your studies if you are not much wanting in your own endeavor to profit by the opportunities you now enjoy."

To this advice I may add that which he gave his son on the threatened outbreak of the rebellion, which was then looming in the near future :

"SAVANNAH, GA., *Aug.* 20, 1774.

"DEAR BILLY :

". . . There is one thing which I think it my duty to caution you against, that is, the taking any part in the unhappy political disputes which I doubt not run very high in Philadelphia; these are matters you have no business with, and of which you cannot be supposed to be a competent judge. This consideration alone should induce you to be silent on the subject, but there is a prudential one which ought to have the greatest weight with you in your present situation, which is that at a time when men's passions and prejudices are so much inflamed, you cannot declare your sentiments even in the most modest terms without giving offence to one side or the

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other, which you ought carefully to avoid, as it should be your study to gain the good-will and friendship of every person your present situation connects you with; this only requires your keeping your thoughts on these subjects to yourself. There is another thing of the greatest consequence, which is, to guard against receiving prejudices which may operate so strongly as to affect your whole future conduct and put it out of your power to judge impartially upon the merits of these disputes. In time it may perhaps become your duty not to remain a silent spectator while matters of such consequence are agitating. To answer these valuable purposes, keep your thoughts or doubts, whatever they may be, to yourself, and your mind so free and disengaged from prejudice that when you are better able to judge and it may be proper for you to take a part, you may then be able, without bias, to follow the dictates of reason, truth, and duty—that God may direct you to honorable pursuits is the prayer of
Your affectionate father,

“LEWIS JOHNSTON.”

Mr. Johnston's studies in Philadelphia were put a stop to by the breaking out of the Revolution, and he joined his father in Savannah, from whence they were forced to retire by the rebels having taken possession of the

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had a book under my work to look into as opportunity offered. The good old lady not being able to make me perfect in sewing, declared at last that I should never be anything but a botcher at it, yet I did not think I really deserved the charge.

In 1774 the Revolutionary War commenced at Boston and began to spread to the southward. In '76 the people in Georgia were inflamed against the Government of Great Britain, and were raising a ragged corps of all sorts. Some had guns with firelocks and some without, and all, gentle and simple, were made to declare whether they were on the side of the King or for the people whom we Loyalists, then termed Tories, called rebels. If a Tory refused to join the people, he was imprisoned, and tarred and feathered. This was a terrible indignity, the poor creature being stripped naked, tarred all over, and then rolled in feathers. I might once, if I would have gone to the window, have seen a poor man carried all over the town with the mob around him, in such a plight, but the idea was too dreadful. He was an inoffensive man, a British pilot.

Our teachers became officers in the rebel

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army, and everywhere the scum rose to the top. All the public officers under Government remained loyal and quit the country, their estates being confiscated and afterward sold. My father, at the barking of a dog while he was shaving and preparing to dress that he might escape in his boat, looked up and saw an armed party near the house. He had just time to go through a door that opened into the garden, leap the fence, and lay himself down at a little distance in some tall grass which concealed him. He could hear the soldiers talking loudly to his servants and saying that he could not be far off, for his clothes and watch were in the room. If he was above ground, they said, they would surely have him. My father had a sensible, plausible black man, who had been brought up as a pet in my grandfather's house, and who was greatly attached to the family. He contrived to amuse the soldiers in different ways, while he got down his sails and oars to take them to a back landing-place, where the boat lay. The leader of the party was a fine young man, a Mr. John Milledge, whom my father had known from his infancy, and who some years afterward was at Augusta with

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the rank of colonel. He was an amiable man, and his turning against my father served to show the spirit of the times and the violence with which civil wars are entered upon.

After their unsuccessful pursuit, the party returned, and my father got to his boat without delay and arrived at Tybee, where the British man-of-war, the *Scarborough*, lay. Then he embarked, as did my future husband, who had also been fortunate enough to effect his escape to Tybee, and they sailed for Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1776. At that time I was twelve years of age, and being with my aunt on the mainland, at her plantation, did not take leave of my father or know what was going on at Skidaway until some time after I heard he was gone. Commissioners were appointed to confiscate the Loyalists' property and dispose of it as being forfeited because of their not joining the rebels, and my grandfather had a petition drawn up which he made me take, accompanied by a lady (sorely against my will, for I felt so indignant at their treatment of my father), to the Board of Commissioners, which set forth the orphan condition I was left in, and petitioned that my