

PREFACE.

The present volume continues the Council Proceedings from Aug. 10, 1753, to Mar. 20, 1761.

On Aug. 10 Horatio Sharpe assumed the governorship, which office had been administered by President Tasker since the death of Gov. Ogle in 1752. No better man than Sharpe could have been selected for the position. He was just, able, energetic, and conscientious, and he had had military training and experience; qualifications which were soon to be much in demand.

His first worries were over the disputed or unsettled boundaries. The vast territory which William Penn had seized, added to that which had been given him by a man who did not own it, all which were tenaciously held by his heirs, seemed by this time to be irrecoverably lost, partly through the inertness and too easy belief of former Proprietaries, and partly through the neglect of Gov. Ogle to secure the necessary evidence. The temporary lines were very imperfectly determined, whence arose disputes, brawls, and even bloodshed. The Virginia boundary also was still in question. The charter of Maryland called for a meridian line from the first, or farthest, fountain of the Potomac. Lord Fairfax, whose grant was limited by the Maryland boundary, had, in 1746, planted the "Fairfax stone" at the head of the north branch as marking the beginning of his line. Better knowledge of the topography showed that the head of the south branch was really the first fountain. This delimitation Fairfax was very willing to accept, believing that removing his starting-point to the west would add considerably to his territory (p. 20); and probably the matter would then have been settled, but for the outbreak of the French and Indian war.

The anxiety which had been felt since the disclosure of the French plan of a cordon of forts extending south and west from Canada, was brought to a climax by the erection of a fort on the Ohio within the province of Pennsylvania. Active measures of resistance were taken by the British and Provincial governments, and Sharpe was commissioned commander-in-chief pending the arrival of Gen. Braddock with a body of regular troops.