

acting under orders from the Lord Proprietary. Many of these acts were not new laws but were continuances of old laws about to expire, or acts supplementary to existing laws. Some nine bills which passed the Lower House were rejected in the upper chamber. Bills thus rejected will usually be found to have more significance, politically, economically, and socially, as regards future trends, than those which are readily agreed upon by a body such as the Lower House and the Upper House representing the vested interests of the Lord Proprietary.

We owe to no less a personage than Thomas Jefferson the only contemporary description, and that an amusing one, which has come down to us, of a meeting of a pre-Revolutionary Maryland General Assembly. This was written by Jefferson, when in May, 1766, as a young man of twenty-three, he for the first time left the bounds of Virginia, and visited Annapolis, Philadelphia, and New York. That he held no mean opinion of the House of Burgesses of his beloved Virginia is shown by what he characteristically said of it when first elected a burgess some three years later. It was, he declared, "the most distinguished body of men ever assembled to legislate". It would indeed have been impossible for another Colonial legislative assembly to measure up to such a standard, and certainly in his opinion, as will be seen, Maryland fell far short of it. Jefferson wrote from Annapolis, on May 25, 1766, just two days before the May session of this year came to an end, his impression of the spectacle he had just witnessed. The letter from which this description of the meeting of the Maryland House was taken was addressed by Jefferson to a cousin, John Page of Virginia. It will be found reprinted in full in the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (Vol. II, 1898, page 176-177).

"I will now give you some account of what I have seen in this metropolis. The assembly happens to be sitting at this time. Their upper and lower house, as they call them, sit in different houses. I went into the lower, sitting in an old courthouse, which, judging from it's form and appearance, was built in the year one. I was surprised on approaching it to hear as great a noise and hubbub as you will usually observe at a publick meeting of the planters in Virginia. The first object which struck me after my entrance was the figure of a little old man dressed but indifferently, with a yellow queüe wig on, and mounted in the judge's chair. This the gentleman who walked with me informed me was the speaker, a man of a very fair character, but who by the bye has very little the air of a speaker. At one of the justices' bench stood a man whom in another place I should from his dress and phis have taken for Goodall the lawyer in Williamsburgh, reading a bill then before the house with a schoolboy tone and an abrupt pause at every half dozen words. This I found to be the clerk of the assembly. The mob (for such was their appearance) sat covered on the justices' and lawyers' benches, and were divided into little clubs amusing themselves in the common chit chat way. I was surprised to see them address the