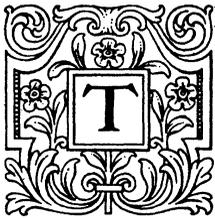


## CHAPTER EIGHT

*The Reverend Thomas Bacon and his Edition of the  
“Laws of Maryland at Large,”  
Annapolis, 1765*



THE work which generations of Marylanders have known familiarly as “Bacon’s Laws” has a particular interest in a narrative wherein the history of Maryland printing has been studied largely through the medium of the legislative publications of the Maryland press. *The Laws of Maryland at Large*, compiled by the Rev. Thomas Bacon and printed in Annapolis by Jonas Green in 1765, was not only the most important of the legal publications of the Province of Maryland, but it happens also to have been a specimen of typography which was not exceeded in dignity and beauty by any production of an American colonial press. By a peculiar good fortune its compiler and its printer were persons in themselves interesting, and the introduction into the Assembly of proposals for the publication of the work provided the occasion for several sharp battles in that long-continued warfare between the Proprietary and his people which had caused Maryland, during a period of great importance, to become almost an impotent factor in colonial affairs.

### A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE COMPILER OF “BACON’S LAWS”

The Rev. Thomas Bacon is said to have been born in the Isle of Man about the year 1700.<sup>1</sup> The story of his youth is a blank page, not even is his parentage known to us. The first definite fact which can be learned in regard to him was his publication in 1737, in Dublin, of a work entitled “A Compleat System of the Revenue of Ireland,”<sup>2</sup> a book which is elsewhere de-

<sup>1</sup> The author has been informed in an indirect way that Bacon was born in County Cumberland, England, the son of a master mariner of that place, but he has not been able to verify this assertion.

<sup>2</sup> British Museum Catalogue gives the title of this work as below, where it is reproduced in full for the reason that no two American writers in referring to it agree as to bibliographical description and title. The British Museum cataloguers were unaware that this Thomas Bacon and the compiler of the *Laws of Maryland* were the same person.

Bacon, Thomas—A Compleat System of the Revenue of Ireland, in its Branches of Import, Export, and Inland Duties, Containing I. An Abridgement of English and Irish Statutes Relating to the Revenue of Ireland. II. The Former and Additional Book of Rates Inwards and Outwards, etc. III. A View of the Duties which Com-