

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

LET US BEGIN by asking two pertinent questions: What were offices of profit? And why should we examine those in Maryland?

The term itself, once commonly used, meant any office which, for what it paid, was worth a gentleman's acceptance. Such a place might, and probably would, confer influence and position; but if these were its chief attractions, it was not a place of profit but merely one of honor.

To those interested in all the colonies this treatise may be of value in so far as, *mutatis mutandis*, what happened in one would happen in the others. However, in Maryland there were odd complications, because the province was proprietary for a while, then royal, and then again proprietary.

Anyone interested in this particular colony must indeed know something of these offices else he can have no real acquaintance with the time and place. For we may turn to almost any aspect of her early history and encounter problems arising from the patronage. More of this in a moment.

Meanwhile let us note that, distinct from the places of profit, there were, in Maryland as elsewhere, many posts supported merely by a *per diem* allowance for time in public service. These were the military offices and a number of civil places: seats in the Lower House of Assembly, on the Council of State, and in the county and provincial courts.<sup>1</sup> Military rank was prized for the dashing titles it conferred, but the civil offices were little sought and were at times actually difficult to fill.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Governor Sharpe found that candidates for the Lower House were too often "the lowest Persons at least men of small

<sup>1</sup> On the history and character of these offices see N. D. Mereness, *Maryland as a Proprietary Province* (New York, 1901), 194-338.

<sup>2</sup> In May, 1715, the Upper House proposed to include in a militia act a clause fining anyone who should refuse a military commission. The delegates, however, thought this unnecessary, "few persons being to be found or instanced that refused the same at any Times heretofore. . . ." (*Archives of Maryland* [Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1883- ], hereafter cited as *Archives*, XXX, 176, 179).