

## CHAPTER VI

### ALL SORTS OF CLERKS

THE DEVELOPMENT of a corps of clerks to serve this central governing body resembled the evolution of that body as a whole. Thus the clerical establishment began very modestly and then expanded as the need for clerks and registers increased. Moreover, it expanded by the same processes. Just as many offices were separated from the secretariat, and a few wholly new ones were established, so some clerkships were separated from the office of the Secretary's clerk, and other new ones were inaugurated.

Originally all writing business was done by William Bretton of St. Mary's City who bore three titles as Clerk of the Secretary's Office and of the Provincial Court, Clerk of the Council, and Clerk of Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

In or shortly before September, 1647, Bretton lost to Robert Clarke the clerkship of the Council. In April, 1650, on division of the Assembly into two houses, his clerkship of that body was similarly divided between a Clerk of the Upper and a Clerk of the Lower House. Bretton himself remained Clerk of the Lower House through March, 1650/1. The Secretary acted as Clerk of the Upper House until April, 1661, when John Gittings was appointed. However, from October, 1678, until the organization of state government a century later the Clerk of the Council was always Clerk of the Upper House too.

The duties of the Clerk of the Secretary's Office were curtailed on appointment, soon after April, 1673, of a separate Clerk of the Prerogative Office (under the Commissary General) and in May, 1695, of a separate Register in Chancery.<sup>2</sup> A clerkship of the High Court of Appeals was separated from that of the Council in July, 1707. New offices grafted onto the system provided a Register of the Admiralty Court, July, 1694, and two Clerks of

<sup>1</sup> *Archives*, IV, 309 *et passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Testamentary Proceedings, liber 6, folio 261 (Md. Hall of Records); Chancery Record, liber 2, folio 295 (Md. Land Office); *Archives*, XX, 233. The appointees were Michael Rockford and John Freeman respectively.