

Indeed, although distributed as a political plum, the shrievalty was a difficult place and required, together with financial resources, both ability and experience. Governor Sharpe could write in 1768 that, "As to the Sheriffs Offices . . . though some of them if the Sheriff is very active and diligent punctual & well acquainted with the People of his County & their Circumstances may be worth £ 300 [sterling] a year yet the Instances of Peoples injuring their Fortune by undertaking these Offices have been very common owing to their not being in a sufficient degree possess't of the above mentioned Qualifications. . . ." ³⁹ In the same tenor is a letter of 1756 from Attorney General Stephen Bordley, a man of wide connections among the official class, to a newly appointed sheriff in Kent County: ⁴⁰

The Sheriffs office is a place either of Considerable gain or as Considerable loss; & the difference turns upon the proportion of Care, Exactness & diligence in the Execution of it; I would therefore recommend that you be very careful and Exact in your Accounts, to which end you must keep your Books yourself; and must oblige your Deputies on a certain day in Every fortnight at least, to come to your house, & settle their particular Accounts with you, that you may know how Tobaccos etc. in their respective hands lye, & consequently how your affairs in General with Regard to the office are. . . .

Do not from a spirit of frugality, pinch yourself in the number of your Deputies; but Employ enough to do the business well & with ease; nothing will be lost by this method; for besides the Savings in having your business well done, the more you employ the less will their ridings be, & the less these are, the less may be their respective salaries.

Do not Credit the People over the year where it can possibly be avoided; for besides the Invidious Suspicion that this is done for the sake of charging them Interest, when they find the load of the 2d year added to the first, they Sensibly feele the Burthen, and as they will chose to blame anyone rather than themselves, the Sheriff has the whole of it, & tho it be ever so unjustly, it will nevertheless affect his Character and raise a Clamour against him. . . . But if you should at any time Advance for a man who *cannot pay this year*, I think you may in such case fairly charge interest: Be punctual therefore & Strict in making them pay their Annual dues, that you may be punctual yourself; And if this be done without moroseness, and with good nature, the people will be so far from Censuring you at the Expiration of your time that, when you go

³⁹to Edward Lloyd, March 9, 1756, and Horatio Sharpe to Lord Baltimore, Aug. 15, 1765 (Calvert Paper No. 1181, Md. Historical Society; *Archives*, XIV, 214).

³⁹Horatio Sharpe to Hugh Hamersley, July 25, 1768 (*Ibid.*, XIV, 517-18).

⁴⁰Stephen Bordley to Hercules Coutts, Dec. 11, 1756 (Bordley Papers, Letter Book of Stephen Bordley, 1756-59, 22-24, Md. Historical Society).