

In 1718, there appeared in Philadelphia, a compilation of Maryland Laws: "Printed by Andrew Bradford and are to be sold by Evan Jones at the City of Annapolis in Maryland." The Preface to the "Laws of the Province of Maryland Collected into one Volume, by order of the Governor and Assembly of the said Province, at a General Assembly begun at St. Mary's the 10th Day of May 1692 and continued by several Assemblies to the year 1718" is as follows:

[This introduction is reprinted from the Library of Congress copy]

"The Publisher to the Reader.

"As this Volumn only contains the Publick Acts of Assembly of the Province of Maryland, now in Force, (which are not expected to speak, but where the General Statutes of England are silent) 'tis presumed the Inhabitants of that Province, for whose Use they were at first made, and are now Published, will be principally concerned in the Perusal of them; nothing of Curiosity to an indifferent Reader being to be Expected in a Collection of this Nature.

"To these Inhabitants, therefore, I Recommend this Work, by which they may be acquainted with the particular Laws of their Country, with much more Facility, than when the only Recourse they could have was to a few Ill-Written Manuscripts, Lodged in the Hands of particular Officers, and not more than Twelve or Fourteen of them in the whole Province.

"It was then Difficult to come at the Body of those Laws, and when the Body was come at, it was no less Difficult (for want of an Index and Marginal Notes) to find the particular Law or Paragraph required; So that without any Reflection, it may be justly Remark'd, The Laws of the Province lay so obscure, that they were scarcely known to those that were Immediately concerned in the Judging of or Pleading by them. And as to the Common People, who were to direct their Actions by those Laws, they might almost be said To Labour under an Involuntary Ignorance of them; and yet that Ignorance could not excuse their Punishment for an Offence against the Law they knew not. A Case, indeed, that wanted Remedy.

"The Necessity therefore and Usefulness of the Work can do no less then justify the Encouragers of it, as I hope it will Encourage the Undertaker.

"The Laws themselves are such as have been either carefully Revised, during the Administration of his Excellency John Hart, Esq; present Governour, whilst he acted by an immediate Commission from the Crown, or Enacted in that Time, or since, during the said Governour's Administration by Commission from the Right Honourable, the Lord Proprietor, From whence, 'tis hoped, they are so well adapted to the present Circumstance of the Country and the British Constitution, that this Volumn may be of Use and Continue Valuable for many Years, without any Considerable Alterations.