

## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

*April 15, 1937.*

*To the Maryland Historical Society,*

GENTLEMEN:

This volume, LIV, of the *Archives of Maryland*, containing the proceedings of the county courts of Kent, Talbot, and Somerset, is to be regarded as the continuation of Volume LIII of the *Archives*, containing the proceedings of the Charles County Court and of the manorial court of St. Clement's Manor, St. Mary's County. Although bearing the publication date of 1936, the distribution of the latter volume has been held back so that both these volumes of county court records may reach the reader at the same time. This is advisable because the introductory notes by the editor on "Early Maryland County Courts", prefacing Volume LIII, trace not only the general development of the county court in Maryland down to the end of the third quarter of the seventeenth century, but include also a general survey or analysis of many matters, judicial and civil, which came before the commissioners or justices of the four county courts of Charles, Kent, Talbot, and Somerset, which are recorded in both volumes. The reader of this volume, LIV, should therefore consult not only its index for direct references to its contents, but should also refer to the index of the preceding volume, LIII, for comments in the introductory notes to court entries contained in Volume LIV.

With the publication of these two volumes of county court proceedings, the student of Maryland colonial law now has available in printed form a complete cross-section of the judicial system of Maryland in the seventeenth century from the highest to the lowest courts of the Province, and the student of social customs a record of very great interest. There are now in print and available for study the proceedings of the five Maryland courts of this century, viz.: (1) the Appellate Court of the Governor and Council sitting until 1694 as the Upper House of the Assembly, and after this date under the name of the Court of Appeals, (2) the Provincial Court, or general law court of the Province, (3) the Court of Chancery, (4) the county courts of Charles, Kent, Talbot, and Somerset, (5) the manorial court of St. Clement's Manor.

For a better understanding of the local backgrounds upon which the records of these four county courts are respectively projected and of the men who directed their activities, there will be found in the introductory sections of both volumes short historical summaries dealing with the origin and develop-