

against him for damages, to learn at the trial that the blind man was not responsible for the letter, which was apparently the work of some practical joker (pp. 147-148). In another case John Wickes of Talbot was sued for singing a ribald song which he had had written for him by a certain Thomas Horrocks detrimental to the good name of Mrs. John Wedge, who was the central figure in the poetic effusion. Wickes was fined and obliged to apologize "on bended knees" to the lady (*Arch. Md. liv*, 558). A rather remarkable case is one in which a man sued a woman for defamation because she had spread the false rumor that he was having improper relations with her. He asked damages on the grounds that he was a single man, and that such rumors made it difficult for him to secure a suitable wife. The court was sympathetic and ordered fifteen lashes for the defamer (*Arch. Md. liv*, 576). Occasionally, when suits were not actually entered, complaints were made to the courts of persons who had used abusive language or opprobrious epithets about members of the bench. Thus in 1659 at the May 12 session of the Charles County Court complaint was made by Capt. John Jenkins, one of the justices, that he had been called "Capt. Grindingstone", doubtless a reference to an element of hardness in his make-up. But the court seems to have taken no action in the matter (pp. 49, 51). The term, "spindel shanke Doge", applied to no less a personage than Justice Job Chandler of the Charles County Court, gave rise to a suit for defamation, August 19, 1658, against Thomas Baker. The court bound Baker over for his good behavior (p. 13). Later Baker appears as the justice who was driven off the bench as a hog-stealer.

Damages were asked for all sorts of offences, such as killing livestock and poultry, false arrest or imprisonment, and illegal execution upon goods. A suit for damages for a dog bite was thrown out because it was shown that the plaintiff had "trod upon the bitch" (p. 337-338). In a case before the Kent County Court, tried in January 1660/1, damages to the extent of 400 pounds of tobacco were awarded for injuries received in a fight (*Arch. Md. liv*, 195). On the records appear several suits requiring defendants to fulfill contracts, such as the completion of the building of a house, suits for breach of the terms of a partnership or a labor agreement, for unjust detention of property, and for unlawful molestation. Many suits entered, especially those for debt and defamation, never came up for trial, and were dropped or settled out of court. In several instances suits which came before the court for hearing were referred by the consent of both parties to arbitration. In one instance the court directed two of its members to examine a complicated account and report at the next session.

In the county courts procedure in criminal actions down to the year 1666 was usually begun by "information", or by presentment of the accused before the court by one of the justices, the constable, the sheriff, or occasionally by the Attorney-General of the Province. In the case of Lucy Stratton, the mother of an illegitimate child, suspected of purposely drying up her milk to starve her baby, the governor issued a special warrant for her appearance before the Charles County Court (p. 28). In at least two instances the Attorney-General, William Calvert, who was in the Charles County Court as attorney in a civil suit when a hog-stealing case came up before the court, acted as a public prose-