

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

Baltimore, December 20, 1940.

To the Maryland Historical Society

GENTLEMEN :

This volume, the *Proceedings of the Provincial Court of Maryland 1666-1670*, forms Volume LVII of the *Archives of Maryland*, and the eighth volume of the sub-series dealing with the seventeenth century Maryland courts. It is in direct continuation with Volume XLIX which carried down the proceedings of this court to the beginning of the year 1666, and is the fifth volume of Provincial Court proceedings so far published. Of the Court sub-series there have also appeared one volume of proceedings of the Court of Chancery (Volume LI), and two volumes of the proceedings of the county courts of Kent, Charles, Talbot and Somerset (Volumes LIII and LIV). In the introduction to certain volumes of the *Archives* will be found traced the history of the development during the seventeenth century of the Provincial, Chancery, county, and manorial courts of Maryland (XLIX, LI, LIII, LIV).

In the five-year period which this volume covers there was a marked change in legal procedure in the Provincial Court and in the Chancery Court; and beginning with the June, 1666, session, we find the establishment of a professional bar. Prior to this litigants had been represented by any planter or official who might present himself in court on a client's behalf as his attorney, but practice in the provincial courts at St. Mary's was, beginning with this session, limited to those formally admitted by the court as sworn attorneys, and thereafter practice became concentrated in the hands of a limited number of men. It was also at this time that legal procedure in the provincial courts began to become more formalized, technical, and rigid. For this, one man, John Morecroft, a well-trained professional lawyer, who had recently come into the Province from Virginia and at once become the leader of the Maryland bar, seems to have been in great part responsible, as there were no changes in the personnel of the court itself which can explain it.

The scope of the jurisdiction of the court and the changes in the character of its legal procedure, as well as the civil and administrative duties of the court are discussed in the introduction, where there will also be found mention of the justices themselves, and of the officers of the court—the attorneys-