

the session laws and the Votes and Proceedings of the Lower House, specified respectively as three months and four months. By a supplementary act passed on November 26, 1763, which applied, however, only to this session, these periods were extended to four months and five months respectively (pp. 396, 278, 518-519). The Lower House at the 1763 session also directed Green to print in the *Maryland Gazette* the act to recover small debts out of court before one justice, and also certain sections of the Tobacco Inspection act relating to tobacco warehouses (p. 389). The attempt of the Lower House to have printed the bill rejected by the Upper House to establish a College at Annapolis was frustrated by the refusal of the latter chamber to return to it the original bill (pp. lvii-lviii, 389). The Journal of the Lower House also discloses that in addition to doing the public printing Green sold record books to the House, for the purchase of which an ordinance was passed (pp. 387, 388).

## LANGUISHING PRISONERS FOR DEBT

It had long been customary, at more or less frequent but irregular intervals, for the Assembly to pass acts for the relief of sundry prisoners confined for debt in county jails, who were always described as "languishing prisoners". No act for this purpose had been passed since the May, 1757, session, the last attempt, which has been made at the November-December, 1757, session, having failed because the Lower House would not agree to amendments added in the upper chamber by which debtors to the Lord Proprietary were not to have the benefit of the law, and by which sureties for debtors to the Loan Office were not also relieved of their obligations. In a preceding volume of the *Archives* (LVI; lxxiv, 62, 509-514) there were printed in full in the Appendix the petitions of six prisoners for debt, dated 1759-1760, some of whom had already been in prison as long as four years, praying the enactment of legislation for their relief.

In the Appendix of this volume will be found the petitions, dated 1761-1762, of six other unfortunate prisoners. These petitions are printed in full because of the sidelights they throw upon the horrors of the system of imprisonment for debt. One of these prisoners had been in jail seven, and another five, years. The debtors, who were often men with families, declared that they were willing and anxious to make over everything they possessed to their creditors, and after release would do all they could to pay their debts. In each case the petition for relief was endorsed by the justices of the courts of the county where the petitioner was confined. The impasse between these two houses extended over the period 1758-1765, and it was not until the latter year that a debtors' act was passed (Hanson's *Laws of Maryland made since MDCCLXIII*; Acts of 1765, Chapter XI). By this act Nathaniel Wickham, one of these petitioners (p. 586) and John Turnbull (*Arch. Md.* LVI, 511-512), were released. It was not until 1766 that an act was passed (Hanson's *Laws*; Acts of 1766, Chapter III) under which George Baker (pp. 583-584) was released. The fate of the other unfortunates has not been learned. None of these petitions were presented to the Assembly.