

at divine service difficult, and because some of the parishes were so small that they did not supply a decent support for a minister. The act also provided that an assessment of 30,000 pounds of tobacco be made to build a new and larger Wye Chapel in St. Paul's Parish, and another of 80,000 pounds of tobacco for rebuilding St. Paul's Parish Church (pp. 213, 314-319).

A petition from the inhabitants of the southern quarter of St. Paul's Parish lying in Queen Anne's and Talbot counties was presented in the Upper House on December 2 and referred to the Lower House for action, where it died (pp. 71, 195). The nature of the petition is not disclosed.

LANGUISHING PRISONERS FOR DEBT

Owing to disputes between the two houses no act for the relief of "languishing prisoners" confined in county jails for debt had been passed since the session of May 1757, a period of over eight years. The financial depression, from which Maryland and the other colonies were then suffering, had greatly increased insolvency, and it was declared by Councillor Benedict Calvert that the jails were filled to overflowing with debtors, and that along the roads there was a steady stream of those seeking to escape their creditors. The principal difference between the two houses which had prevented the enactment of relief legislation was because the Lower House had refused to yield to the insistence of the upper chamber, that debtors to the Lord Proprietary and the sureties of debtors owing money to the Loan Office should not under the act be relieved of their liability. The Lower House on the other hand felt that these two classes should not be treated more harshly than other debtors. From a reading of the bill as it was finally passed at the 1765 session the Upper House seems to have given up its previous insistence to discriminate against these two classes of debtors. The differences between the two houses at the 1765 session seems to have been limited to other points. Unquestionably many unfortunate debtors had, during the eight year interval since the last act was passed, either died in prison, or had been voluntarily released by their creditors, or had acquiesced in being sold into servitude for the payment of their debts. Of the thirty-six prisoners for debt of both sexes named in this act, it is learned, from two petitions to the Assembly that have by chance been preserved, that at least these two debtors, Nathaniel Wickham and John Turnbull of Frederick County, had already been in prison for more than five years (*Arch. Md.* LVIII; 580; LVI; 511-512).

The bill for the relief of prisoners for debt was passed by the Lower House on November 9, 1765, and sent to the Upper House (pp. 140, 141, 143, 149). It was returned five days later by the upper chamber with a message saying that if the Lower House would also include in the bill the names of other deserving debtors whose petitions had been received since the bill was framed, and if certain amendments were adopted, it would pass the bill (pp. 48-49, 154-156). While agreeing to the incorporation of additional names, and the amendment that the sheriff be a preferred creditor in the matter of imprisonment charges, to some of the other amendments the Lower House refused to agree. It objected to requiring that debtors without dependent families, or