

The act of May, 1766, as finally passed, granted relief to 32 debtors, of whom two were women (pp. 68-73). The bill for relief was prepared in the Lower House and promptly passed, but when it reached the Upper House nine additional names were added. Four of these were stricken out by the Lower House after the bill was returned to it. The grounds for striking out these names were as follows: Henry Heinzman had declined to accept the offer of his principal creditor to release him from jail if he would give him his bond; John Davis, another prisoner "hath been guilty of a Riot in the gaol"; George Beall not only "is Strongly Suspected of acting fraudulently towards his Creditors", but has not been recommended by the magistrate of his county, nor have his creditors been notified; John Berry has already been released (pp. 8, 52). The Upper House then accepted the bill as revised in the Lower House, and it was duly passed (p. 10, 53, 54, 68-73).

The relief act passed at the November-December, 1766, Assembly was for the benefit of 59 prisoners, two of whom were women (pp. 247-252). Again a difference arose about some of the debtors whose names had been included in the Lower House bill, resulting in the exchange of sharp messages between the two houses. The Upper House struck out the names of Mayberry Helms, Jr., of Baltimore County, and of John Duncastle of Charles County. Relief for Helms had been opposed in a petition filed by John Slye and Daniel Barnett, on the ground that he had sought to defraud his creditors by placing his property in trust with his father, Maybury Helms, Sr., but after a hearing at the bar of the Lower House, it was found "to the universal satisfaction of this House" that no fraud had been committed or intended; nor had any reasons been shown for refusing relief to John Duncastle (pp. 193, 201). The Upper House replied that its opposition for relief to Helms was not based on the Slye and Barnett representations, but on the belief that he had defrauded no less a person than Nicholas Maccubbin; and that in the case of Duncastle, the objector was Mr. David Ross, to whom Duncastle had been very unfair (p. 126). The Upper House seems to have had its way, for the bill was passed without the reinstatement the names of Helms and Duncastle (p. 247). Nor are their names to be found in the 1768 relief act. They may have made some settlement with their creditors and were released.

At the 1768 session the relieving act released 108 debtors, of whom two were women. Petitions for relief had numbered 119. The bill in this instance had easy sailing, no changes being made in the original draft in either house, nor did any messages pass between the two houses on the subject (pp. 296, 468-473). At this same session the Reverend John Macpherson, rector of William and Mary Parish, St. Mary's County, who, for some time had been a languishing prisoner for debt in the county jail, had the honor of having a special act for relief passed for his benefit. This gave him the privilege of retaining his library, clothes, and a part of the salary he received as rector (p. 465). Macpherson's case is discussed more fully in the section on clergymen (pp. lxxix-lxxxvi).

It may be recalled that at the November-December, 1765, session, Parker Selby, a delegate from Worcester County, had introduced a bill in the Lower