

mitted letters and a memorial relative thereto that he received some time ago from England (p. 384). The house appointed a committee headed by Thomas Johnson, with William Murdock, Matthew Tilghman, and Thomas Ringgold as associates, to prepare an address to the Governor in reply (p. 389). In this address, which the house approved, it was said that "we are not surprised at the grievous complaints of contractors for the transportation of felons against the quarantine law, at their denial of notorious facts, or suppression of a considerable circumstance, the profitable price at which they generally sell the convicts, nor that they should, when actuated solely by sordid views, esteem the health of the inhabitants light in the scale, against a grain of their profit: But we are surprised at imaginary importance of these people, as well as at the ingratitude of their attempt to interest the government at home, against a country, from which they have extracted so much wealth, and at the expense of so many lives." The house felt that the law needed amendments, a strengthening not a softening, declaring that they were "apprehensive that the security of oaths, alone, is not sufficient—that cruelty, so long, and so fatally exercised, of distributing with impunity, the jail-fever and other infectious disorders. In compassion also to the infected, a place for their reception is desirable", the cost of which should be met by a contribution from the contractors from the profits of their trade (p. 411). The reference to the insufficiency of "the security of oaths" was a reference to the law which allowed the passengers to land when the shipmaster made oath that there was no sickness aboard. It will also be seen that Thomas Ringgold, a member of the committee that drew up the address, was one of the Maryland agents of the contractors and a rabid opponent of the law. That he voted for its adoption seems most unlikely. The law continued in effect until several years after the Revolution.

THE POOR, VAGRANTS, ALMSHOUSES, AND WORKHOUSES

The care of the dependent poor and infirm in Maryland prior to the passage of the 1768 law was by placement in private homes. In 1765, a proposal was made to the Assembly by residents of Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Worcester, and Prince George's counties, seconded by the Upper House, that hospitals, workhouses, and houses of correction be erected in each county for the care of the poor and for the commitment of such offenders as vagrants, beggars and vagabonds. This has been discussed in a previous volume of the *Archives* (LIX, xxx-xxxI, 181). The reasons asserted in favor of this proposal were that the costs to the counties for the care of the poor, then very large, would be lessened and that minor offenders would be kept under control. Nothing about the matter, however, was done at the 1765 session. At the November-December, 1766, Assembly, on the petition of Samuel Chase, the Lower House, on January 21st, appointed a committee of fourteen headed by Daniel Wolstenholme to bring in a bill for "the better support of the poor and for erecting workhouses in the several counties in the Province" (p. 181). The large expense to a county for providing care for the indigent in private homes is revealed by the Worcester County tax levy for 1766, which is printed in the Appendix (pp. 505-513). This shows that about forty percent of that county's expenditures went for this purpose.