

THE inserting the Titles of all the Acts, &c. which passed in the several Sessions of Assembly held in this Province from its first Settlement; the References to the Books wherein they are respectively Recorded; and the numerous Notes on such as have Relation to the legal Constitution or Properties of the Inhabitants, may claim a favourable Acceptance, as the same may conduce to throw a stronger Light on several Points which have occasionally been controverted among us; some of which have received a final Determination before the King in Council, tho' not so generally known, and those, which as yet remain subject to Doubt or Debate, may perhaps from hence be more clearly understood; and such Gentlemen as desire a more accurate View of the several Steps and Gradations by which our Laws have been conducted to their present State, with the several Alterations, Defalcations or Additions, which have been thought expedient and suitable to the different Circumstances of the Colony, from its first Plantation, thro' its various Stages and Exigencies, may, from the Titles here inserted, know where to meet with Materials to satisfy so entertaining and useful an Enquiry.

THE Difficulties which occurred in executing this Part of the Work, with any tolerable Degree of Exactness, were great and discouraging, and in some Cases almost unfurmountable; occasioned by the Defects of the Public Records, which are partly owing to the several Turns and Revolutions in Government, partly to Accident, and partly to Neglect.

In February 1644, a Rebellion broke out, at the Head of which appeared Capt. Richard Ingle, who not only forced the Hon^{ble} Leonard Calvert, Esq; Brother to the Lord Cæcilius, and then his Lieutenant General here, to fly for Protection and Aid into Virginia, but also seized the Records, together with the Great Seal; nor was the Government compleatly re-established till the latter End of the Year 1646, or Beginning of 1647. The Great Seal was never found, so that it was necessary to establish a new One (the same which is in Use at present) which was accordingly sent in, under his Lordship's Commission for that Purpose, dated from Bath the 12th of August 1648. And most of the Records were then lost or embezzled, which occasions many Chasms in the Public Proceedings of the Province down to the Year 1647, and necessarily involves the Accounts of those Infant Years of the Colony in great Obscurity. ^a

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^c This Capt. Ingle had before been charged with High Treason against his Majesty in this Province, as appears by a Proclamation in the Council Book, dated the 20th July 1643, for apprehending him and seizing his Ship; but, as it seems, then made his Escape. He associated with Capt. William Cleyborne, who laid Claim to the Island of Kent, and some Lands about the Mouth of the River Susquehanna, under Colour of a Licence from his Majesty under the Scotch Signet, to trade with the Indians in America, in such Places where the sole Trade had not been formerly granted by his Majesty to any other. Which Claim being, upon Mr. Cleyborne's Petition referred by his Majesty to the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Keeper, Lord Privy Seal, and any other the Commissioners for Plantations who should be near at Hand, &c. was by them heard and rejected at Whitehall, the 4th of April 1638, their Lordships "Resolving and Declaring, That the Right and Title to the Isle of Kent, and other Places in Question, to be absolutely belonging to the Lord Baltimore; and that no Plantation or Trade with the Indians ought to be within the Precincts of Lord Baltimore's Patent without his Licence, &c." 'Tis certain Mr. Cleyborne could not have pitched upon a better Time than the present for reviving his Disappointed Claim, when Disputes ran so high between the King and Parliament, wherein the latter, whose Party he adhered to, had greatly the Superiority.

^d In the Book of Council Proceedings, is the following Entry relative hereto, viz.
 "Memorandum, That I Thomas Hatton, by Virtue of my Commission from the R^t Hon^{ble} the Lord Baltimore, of being his Lordship's Secretary of this Province; did, upon the 2^d Day of this present Month, being the first Day of the Assembly, receive into my Custody, this Book of Entries, before the Governor and Council then met together; this being the 9th Day of April, Anno Domini 1649.
 "Mr. William Bretton, with his own Hands, in the House of Assembly, delivered to me this Book, and another lesser Book with a Parchment Cover, divers of the Leaves thereof being cut or torn out, and many of them being lost, and much worn out and defaced, together with divers other Papers and Writings, bound together in a Bundle: And then, upon the Delivery of them, made Oath, That these were all the Books of Record, Papers, Draughts, Precedents or other Writings that he had, could come by, or know of within this Province, which belonged to the Secretary or Register of this Province, their Office or
 "Offices;