

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

I ought not, perhaps, to say so; but I think that I deserve some credit for the conception, if not the execution, of this book. Although the British Statutes in force here form so large and interesting a part of our law, and although we are instructed by the highest authority, that it is "ever good to rely upon the book at large," it may safely be said, that few have ever sought any of those Statutes in their originals. Any such search involved a double and, as it appears, a difficult reference; first, to Kilty's Report of the Statutes which extended to the Province, and then to the Acts themselves scattered through numerous and expensive volumes; but, judging from my experience and the large number of copies remaining unsold in the State Library, Kilty's book is almost as rarely to be found on the shelf as the Statutes at Large. The acquaintance, then, of Maryland lawyers with the Statutes contained in this volume must, generally, have been derived from text-books or the different abridgements, in which those Acts have been cited or their contents collected, and, if I may say so without offence, may be compared to the acquaintance of two individuals through the description of a common friend; such, though in some favored instances it may become absolute familiarity, and in others may exercise itself in mutual offices, in the great majority of cases but begets an expectation of intimacy in the future — an expectation often interrupted by distance and difficulty, often disappointed by accident, often postponed from indifference, and oftener yet, when a meeting takes place, dissipated by utter uncongeniality. I will not pursue the figure. But, that it is the bounden duty of every Maryland lawyer to make himself familiar with these Statutes, I suppose no one will deny; that some gratitude is due to any one, who collects them in an accessible and convenient form for the use of his brethren, I am persuaded that all will admit; and that so