

posed and levies ordered by the county courts. With few exceptions commercial transactions in the colony were conducted in terms of tobacco values. The many imported items of personalty listed in accounts appearing in the records here reproduced are almost always valued in pounds of tobacco and, with rare exceptions, damages awarded in civil actions are in terms of the same commodity. Although the market value of tobacco fluctuated somewhat, it had a fixed legal value which in the period 1696-99 was one penny per pound. Thus it is possible from the many accounts appearing in the court records to determine the price in sterling of almost any commodity sold in Maryland from pins to coffins.

The great bulk of the tobacco raised was of course exported to England. In the years 1697-99 the estimated number of ships trading in the province annually ranged from 90 to 115; most were from England. In the years of royal government in Maryland (1692-1715) the average annual export amounted to about 25,000 hogsheads or 10,000,000 pounds.²³ This was ordinarily sold in one of two ways. If financially able, the planter could ship the product at his own risk to a commission merchant in England with authority to sell it on the open market, to pay the cost of freight, duties and insurance, to deduct his own commission and to credit the balance, if any, to the account of the planter. The second, and probably more common method, at least for the outport vessels, was for the planter to sell the crop as it stood packed in the plantation either to ships' captains or to factors representing English merchants in the province. They in turn would dispose of it on the English market, drawing whatever profit they could from the difference between the market price and the original sum paid to the planter, plus costs of shipping, insurance and duties. Under either method of disposition the profit of the planter was not large and was always uncertain.²⁴

Most of this business was conducted by English merchants and, of this group, those from London were the most prominent. These men performed a dual function. They bought up the tobacco crop either as it stood in warehouses in the province or after it had been shipped to England and they sold to the planters a wide variety of manufactured goods. Very little cash was exchanged directly for tobacco. Planters ordinarily held open accounts with their merchant representatives and these were credited with the value of the tobacco sold or consigned to them and debited with the value of the manufactured goods bought from them. Since this was a one-crop economy, unassisted by any extensive manufacturing in the colony, the tendency was for the debits to outweigh the credits. Planters, once in debt to their merchant representatives, were not in a position to market their crop elsewhere and hence tended to become bound to a single merchant house. And as imports from England increased in quantity and value, this thralldom became all the more firmly fixed. Most of the items appearing in the accounts contained in the records here printed are necessities. Whatever might be said of the refined and expensive tastes of Maryland planters in the eighteenth century, the average Maryland planter at this date was not running into debt because of extravagant tastes.

Maryland had little traffic with other English colonies. Some beef, pork, pipe staves, timber, corn, wheat flour and tobacco was shipped to Barbados; some corn and wheat flour to New England. From New England came rum, sugar, molasses, fish and wooden-ware; from the Azores, some wines. The colony's only domestic manufactures were coarse stockings and clothing for servants and slaves made from native wool, some tanned leather and some shoes. Some flour was imported

23. Wyckoff, *op. cit. supra*, 273; Morriss, *op. cit. supra*, 35.

24. *Id.* 37-38.