

By a closer examination of said statement, this gain becomes apparent by a comparison with the same statement for the fiscal year of 1897. The amount received from collectors of State taxes during the present fiscal year, aggregates \$1,092,899.85, the largest in the history of the State, as against \$1,019,631.76 for the year previous, or a gain of \$73,268.09; and that, too, notwithstanding the very large increase in the gain of the preceding year of \$175,011.41, while the gain from Tax on Incorporated Institutions and Tax on Baltimore City Stock, is \$10,753.49 and \$1,915.23 respectively; hence the total gain during the year from direct taxes aggregates \$85,936.81, an augmentation specifically dedicated to and used by the Sinking Funds, Free Books and the Public Schools of the State. This increase was made possible by the prompt collection of the State's revenues above referred to, as is very thoroughly demonstrated by the balances due by collectors, aggregating \$582,118.52, as against \$685,551.06 for 1897, or \$103,432.54 less than at the same period last year, while the balances due by Incorporated Institutions show also a decrease amounting to \$2,349.52.

Another gratifying exhibit is also shown in the increase of \$18,344.02 in Excess of Fees of Office, and of \$20,498.93 from Tax on Gross Receipts of Corporations; the total receipts from the latter amounting to \$191,638.98. Even this large amount is not what it should and would be, if it were not for special exemptions granted by the Legislature in the years past to sundry corporations. It cannot be denied that real estate bears the burden of taxation, which many holders thereof have indeed found onerous, and were it not for such exemptions, and all corporations were compelled to pay their fair and just share of the burdens of taxation, our tax rate could soon be materially reduced.

During the year the several Registers of Wills paid into the State Treasury the sum of \$184,155.44, or a gain of \$83,404.06 over the year previous. Prior to the year 1892 all Clerks of Courts and Registers of Wills were allowed a commission of 5 per cent. upon all State moneys collected by them, save and except the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas, whose commission was and still remains 1 per cent—a very fair and reasonable compensation to all for the labor and responsibility of handling the State's money. By reference to Chapter 564 of the Act of 1892, you will find these rates of commission changed, in so far only as they relate to Registers of Wills. By that statute they are allowed a commission of 25 per cent. upon such collections, one-fourth of entire amount—a most exorbitant rate, in my opinion—and this tax can only be paid to the Registers; must be paid within a specified time, and if not paid