
William Bladen Publisher and his Printer Thomas Reading

nally that a comparison of the typographical features of this volume with those of certain other known issues of the Annapolis press brings out an identity in the type faces and a similarity in style, chiefly in faults of press-work and imposition, which indicate with some degree of certainty that the same printer, working with the same poor press and appurtenances was responsible for all of them.¹

So skittish a jade is Fame that this important collection of Maryland laws, having served its three or four years of usefulness, passed into such a degree of oblivion that in Bacon's day, sixty odd years after its publication, the very memory of it had been lost. In the enumeration of collections of Maryland laws which occurs in the Preface to Bacon's *Laws of Maryland*, this edition of the year 1700 is not mentioned, and a later collection of 1707 is referred to by the learned compiler as the first printed edition of the laws of the Province.² For once, however, Bacon is found nodding at his task; the edition of 1700, as will now be shown, was well known in the earlier decades of the century.³

In the year 1704 there was published in London *An Abridgement of the Laws in Force and Use in Her Majesty's Plantations*,⁴ a work which has for us in this connection a definite bibliographical interest, for in its section devoted to Maryland the abridgements of the various laws of that province are accompanied by references to an unnamed collection of Maryland laws whereof the page numbers are identical with those of the Library of Congress volume which has been described.

The work was known and used also by Nicholas Trott in the compilation of his "Laws of the Plantations," London 1721,⁵ for in calling attention to the connection here noticed between the "Abridgement" of 1704 and

¹ A description of the Library of Congress volume is given in the bibliographical appendix attached to this narrative, under the year 1700. It should be said that in affirming a positive result to a typographical comparison of this volume with other issues of Reading's press, the author is giving his own opinion only. He has not been able to bring the various examples of this press together for the examination of an expert. It is to be hoped that the Library of Congress authorities will some day replace the preservative paper with which the leaves of the volume are covered by the material now used in that institution for preservative purposes. A more satisfactory examination will then be possible.

² *Laws of Maryland at Large*, by Thomas Bacon. Annapolis, 1765.

³ A single reference has been found in the Assembly journal which seems to point to the use by the House and other departments of the government of this edition of compiled laws of 1700. At the session of September 18, 1704, "Mr. John Taylor orderd to goe up to some of the offices for a printed body of laws. He returns and says that there is none perfect but what belongs to the County Court office and that Mr. Bordley the Clk refused to send it." (Whereupon Mr. Bordley was brought to the bar of the House and promptly adjudged guilty of contempt. He made his submission and it was) "Ordered he bring downe the body of law belonging to the County. Which he did and delivered it to Mr. Speaker and upon his Submission he was discharged." (*Archives of Maryland*, 26: 156).

⁴ Title and description given in bibliographical appendix under year 1704.

⁵ Title and description given in bibliographical appendix under year 1721.