

THE COMPILED LAWS OF 1727

In spite of the lack of harmony between the Houses in regard to his work, Parks went quietly forward with the execution of the tasks allotted to him by their resolutions. The laws of the March Assembly of 1725/26 made their appearance in course,¹ and on their last page was an advertisement in which was announced as forthcoming from Parks's press an edition of the whole Body of Laws from the beginning of the Province down to the year 1726, of which the price to subscribers was to be twenty shillings a copy. The edition of the collected laws which he proceeded to publish, probably in the autumn of 1727, was that which was known in Bacon's day as the "old Body of Laws," and which until the appearance of Bacon's great work in 1765, remained as the most ambitious production of the Maryland press.² In comparing it with his own larger and more scholarly edition of the laws, Bacon was not especially complimentary to the earlier collection. "The Superiority of the present Edition," he wrote in his Preface,

"will best appear from a Comparison of it with the last mentioned; which, tho' Published (as set forth in the Title Page) by Authority, is in Fact very imperfect, and replete with Errors: The Printer having used no other Copy of the Laws, made before the Year 1719, than that of Bradford's Edition, which was published without any Authority; and consequently hath adopted, as may appear in several Instances, the Blunders of that Edition: Which, together with its own Mistakes, make up a considerable Number."

It may have been that the considerable number of mistakes which he found in "the old Body of Laws" taught Bacon the desirability of making transcripts for his collection from the original acts, so that through the blunders of Parks and Evan Jones he attained a height of editorial grace not reached, or even striven for perhaps, by his predecessors.

THE BEGINNINGS OF A LITERARY TRADITION IN MARYLAND

William Parks became almost immediately an important member of the provincial society. To give opportunity for discussion of public affairs, to attempt to form public opinion, are not functions belonging only to the modern newspaper and publishing house. In the *Maryland Gazette*, which he began in 1727, Parks plunged to the heart of the economic problems facing the Province, and among the early issues of his press was a pamphlet in which the absorbing question of American politics, the question of the

¹ Copy of this edition of the session laws in the Maryland Diocesan Library, Baltimore, is the only one known.

² In his *Maryland Gazette* for December, 17, 1728, Parks advertises that he has left a few copies of the Body of Laws at the regular price of a pistole each. He vents his vexation against those pluralists in office who have hurt his sales of the book by selling their own duplicates. In the course of the notice, he says that the work was advertised for publication more than a year ago, which means that it had been published probably in the autumn of 1727.