
INTRODUCTION

to the bibliography of Maryland laws and to the legislation underlying their publication, it must be remembered that it was the printing of laws and the public business generally which brought printers to the early American cities. In the seventeenth century, in such capitals as Annapolis and Williamsburg, the private patronage of the press would not have provided a living for the least ambitious of its votaries. Public printing was the living of the printer in colonial Maryland until after the middle of the eighteenth century; the publication of the laws was his reason for being in the Province. The eye of authority looked with uneasiness on such issues of his press as did not initiate in a government office, and its hand was continually raised in the gesture of plucking away the license by favor of which he gained his bread. The literary activity of the Province came late into being, and the religious life was of a sort that rarely sought expression in print. In these pages a few sermons will be taken account of, and a political document or two will be noticed, but it is pre-eminently the printing of the Maryland laws that forms the framework for the early part of the narrative which here ensues.

It is obvious that to have carried through a work of this character without assistance from many persons would have been a supremely tedious task, but fortunately the author has not been compelled to encounter his difficulties alone. In the course of his adventure he has found a helping hand reached out to him in whatever direction he has turned, and for the assistance which has been freely given by everyone to whom he has applied, he here acknowledges himself most grateful. As usual in such cases, however, there are certain individuals whose aid has been of such a character as to give him an especial pleasure in its acknowledgment. Foremost among these must be mentioned Mr. Wilberforce Eames of the New York Public Library, that kindly book-lover and scholar who by making himself the servant of all American bibliographers has become their master. It is with an added sense of obligation, too, that the author recalls the interest displayed in the work at every step in its progress by his chief in the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Dr. Bernard C. Steiner, whose knowledge of even this bypath of colonial history has proved to be an unfailing source which could be drawn upon without restraint, as its richness was yielded always with-