

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Annapolis, December 19th, 1857.

*To His Excellency,
Governor Ligon.*

SIR:—I feel it a duty incumbent upon me to invite your early attention to the continued lamentable condition of our general militia system; in addition to the apt reflections bestowed thereupon, as shown so lucidly and forcibly in your Excellency's last Annual Message to the Legislature, and according to my judgment, to recommend that if a judicious mode of preparing—disciplining our militia—something fundamental and abiding worthy of a name, cannot be substituted in place of our inefficient military code; to use your influence to have all our militia laws expunged from the statute book; except those referable to our meritorious uniformed volunteer corps; these acts to be thoroughly amended, so as to harmonize with that freedom of choice, which alone ushers into being such laudable organizations—insure more spirit in, and durability to their ranks, and thereby place our State in a position where she ought to be during profound peace.

It is a fact not to be denied, that ever since the original law of 1793, with many others, for the better regulation of our militia—all of them based upon supposed suitable principles, which, after so long a trial, have not, with the great bulk of our able bodied yeomanry, produced the slightest beneficial result. Nay, have been a total failure, and obviously so, because not adapted to the nature of the case which, if kept in force for five hundred years, will yield nothing better.

With so much sad experience of the utter inutility of past legislation upon this highly important subject—involving present and prospective interest of such magnitude to Maryland; a longer continuance of such laws, or to pass others of a like character, would, in my opinion, be the height of folly.

For a peace establishment, our numerous laws are not calculated to meet the wants of our State, much less conform to the habits and peaceful disposition of our population, and beyond doubt have effected nothing with enrolled district militia, but a system of officers. I say a system of officers, with no intention of underating or reflecting upon them, no, indeed. On the contrary, be our code of laws what it may, commissioned officers cannot be dispensed with; but amidst our high sounding statutes, imposing almost numberless impracticable restrictions, penalties and fines, upon officers and men, for non-performance of duty, have always been, and now are, more disregarded, than at any former period of our history, rendering said laws a dead letter upon the record.