

1778; but the act authorizing them to appoint their clerk did not pass until the 5th of May, 1780. Hence it was not until after that period, that the judicial department could be said to be completely, and in all its branches, prepared and ready for the administration of justice.(m)

But, this government was framed during the heat of a most distressing and perilous war; when the movements of the best established political institutions might have been interrupted by the rude collisions of the times. It could not, therefore, be supposed, that every principle of the newly written constitution was, at once, fully to operate; and, that all its provisions were to be, from the very outset, exactly observed. Maryland, never having been the immediate seat of war, during our revolutionary conflict, had not felt any of those dreadful calamities, that are always exhibited on such a theatre. But, the people were exposed to frequent predatory incursions; and, in other respects, had their full share of burthens and sufferings.

After the disastrous battle of Camden, when the enemy, flushed with victory, began his march towards this State, all its energies were aroused, and all its resources called forth to meet and repel the approaching danger. The government was put into a condition to disperse, to fly, and to reassemble in a place of safety. The payment of all drafts upon the treasury was prohibited, that the public finances might be husbanded for the occasion. It was resolved, that a request be sent to the general court to adjourn; the expected interruptions of the usual and periodical movements of judicial proceedings were provided against; and the executive was armed, for the season, with a vigour far beyond the temperate restrictions of the newly adopted constitution. But, fortunately, this awfully threatening cloud broke before it reached us; and we suffered nothing from the bursting of that storm, the terrifying advances of which, had stimulated every nerve in the State. The capture of the British army at Yorktown relieved our apprehensions, without, however, allowing any immediate relaxation of our efforts. Better times were approaching, but their tardy development was accompanied with such alternations of hope, doubt, and fear, as to forbid those retrenchments, which would certainly have

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(m) For what is stated in this paragraph, see the Votes and Proceedings of the two Houses of the General Assembly; and the acts of February 1777, ch. 8 & 15; October 1777, ch. 19, and March 1780, ch. 23.