

CHAP. 66.

CHAP. LXVI.

Passed Jan 25 1806

*An Act, entitled, An additional supplement to an act, (a) entitled, An act relating to Negroes, and to repeal the Acts of Assembly therein mentioned. Lib. TH. No. 1, fol. 87.*

(a) 1796, ch. 67. See 1804, ch. 90, and the acts there referred to.

Preamble.

WHEREAS great mischiefs have arisen from slaves coming into possession of the certificates of free negroes, by running away and passing as free, under the faith of such certificates: And whereas it has been found from experience, that the manner of granting certificates of freedom is not sufficient to prevent the evils felt by slaves coming into possession of such certificates; for remedy whereof,

Certificates of freedom to be granted only by the clerks of the county courts and registers of wills—The manner of granting them, and a registry thereof.

2. BE IT ENACTED, by the General Assembly of Maryland, That from and after the first day of June next, it shall not be lawful for any person or persons, except the clerks of the county courts in the several counties in this state, or register of wills, where any negro or negroes have been freed by last will and testament, to grant certificates of freedom to any free negro or negroes (b), and the said clerks and registers are hereby enjoined, when called upon by any negro entitled to freedom, residing in, or belonging to, their respective counties, for a certificate thereof, to grant the same under the seal of their respective offices, and to set forth therein the height, age, complexion, the time when such negro became free, the place where he or she, as the case may be, was raised, and such mark or marks as may appear to such clerk or register to be notable in such negro, so applying for his or her certificate of freedom as aforesaid; and the said clerk or register shall keep a registry of each and every certificate granted by them, or either of them, to any negro or negroes to whom such certificate have been granted.

(b) See 1807, ch. 164, which directs that no negro shall receive a certificate of freedom except from the clerk or register of wills of the county where the deed of manumission or will is recorded.

Penalty on persons other than clerks, &c. for granting certificates of freedom, and on clerks, &c. for granting them improperly.

3. AND BE IT ENACTED, That if any person or persons, other than the clerks or registers as aforesaid of the several counties in this state, shall give or grant any certificate of freedom to any negro or negroes, he, she or they, shall, upon an indictment, and being found guilty thereof, either by confession or verdict of a jury, forfeit and pay not exceeding five hundred dollars for each and every offence, to be applied to the use of the county where such person shall reside; and if any clerk or register in any county in this state shall grant a certificate of freedom to any negro or negroes not entitled to freedom, knowing such negro or negroes not to be entitled to freedom, or to any free negro or free negroes, except such as belong to, or were manumitted or freed according to the laws of this state, in his or their respective counties, shall, upon an indictment and conviction thereof, forfeit and pay not exceeding five hundred dollars for each and every offence, to be applied as aforesaid.

A second certificate not to be granted except on oath that the first is lost.

4. AND BE IT ENACTED, That it shall not be lawful for any clerk or register of any county in this state to grant a certificate of freedom to any negro manumitted or freed as aforesaid who has once obtained a certificate of his or her freedom of such clerk or register, unless such negro applying for the same shall make oath, or prove by some credible and disinterested witness, that he or she, as the case may be, has lost the former certificate of his or her freedom, granted as aforesaid; and it shall be the duty of the said