

CHAPTER CMLXXIII.

AN ACT TO REDRESS CERTAIN GRIEVANCES, WITHIN THE COUNTIES
OF WESTMORELAND AND WASHINGTON.

(Section I, P. L.) Whereas, a number of the inhabitants of Westmoreland and Washington counties have represented to the general assembly that they labor under many inconveniences by reason that before the boundary was agreed to between the states of Virginia and Pennsylvania many of the inhabitants aforesaid, conceiving themselves under the jurisdiction of Virginia, which exercised judicial authority over them, had taken and subscribed the oath of allegiance and fidelity as prescribed by the laws and usages of the said state, are considered in many respects as not entitled to all the rights of free citizens of this state, and that for the reasons above mentioned, they have had no opportunity of entering or registering their slaves agreeable to the act of assembly of this state for the gradual abolition of slavery, and that a number of the records and papers containing the proceedings of the late counties of Youghiogheny, Monongahela and Ohio are now in the hands of the late clerks, who are not authorized to give exemplified copies thereof:

[Section I.] (Section II, P. L.) Be it therefore enacted by the Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met, and by the authority of the same, That all and every person or persons, inhabitants of the said counties of Westmoreland and Washington, whose names shall not be found in the records hereinafter mentioned, and who shall be possessed of certified copies of their having taken the oath of allegiance and fidelity as aforesaid, shall, within six months after the publication of this act, produce to the clerks of the general quarter sessions of the said counties respectively, the said certified copies or certificates of their having taken the oath of allegiance and fidelity to the state of Virginia before the said boundary was agreed to, shall

be and they are hereby declared to be, to all intents and purposes, free citizens of this state.

[Section II.] (Section III, P. L.) And be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, That it shall and may be lawful for all such inhabitants of the said counties who were, on the twenty-third of September, one thousand seven hundred and eighty, possessed of negro or mulatto slaves or servants until the age of thirty-one years, to register such slaves or servants, agreeable to the directions of the act aforesaid, for the gradual abolition of slavery, on or before the first day of January next; and the said master or masters, owner or owners of such slaves or servants shall be entitled to his, her or their service as by the said act is directed, and the said slaves and servants shall be entitled to all the benefits and immunities in the said act contained and expressed.

[Section III.] (Section IV, P. L.) And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That the clerks of the orphan courts, the registers for the probates of wills and granting letters of administration and the recorders of deeds for the respective counties of Westmoreland and Washington aforesaid, shall be authorized and empowered to call on the late clerks of the said counties of Youghioghenny, Monongahela and Ohio for all such papers and records in their custody or possession, which relate to or affect the taking of the oath or affirmation of allegiance, the probates of wills, granting letters of administration, and the recording of deeds or other indentures, bargain and sale of any of the inhabitants of the said counties of Westmoreland and Washington, and when they shall have received all or any part of the [said] papers and records as aforesaid, they shall be lodged within their respective offices, and become part of the records of the said counties and the said late clerks are hereby required and enjoined, on demand made as aforesaid, to deliver up entire and undefaced all such papers and records as aforesaid, and in case they, or either of them, shall refuse or neglect to deliver up the papers and records in manner and form aforesaid, they, or either of them, so neglecting or refusing shall forfeit and pay the sum

of five hundred pounds, to be recovered by action of debt, in any court of common pleas within this commonwealth for the use of the same.

Passed April 13, 1782. Recorded L. B. No. 1, p. 516, etc.

CHAPTER CMLXXIV.

AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE THE APPREHENDING PRISONERS OF WAR, WHO HAVE OR HEREAFTER MAY ESCAPE FROM THE PLACE OF THEIR CONFINEMENT, AND TO DISCOURAGE HARBORING THEM IN THIS STATE.

(Section I, P. L.) Whereas, it has been found by experience that the lenity and indulgence extended to the British prisoners of war, confined in sundry places within the United States, have been abused by them to base and perfidious purposes, and [that] many of them, assuming the habit and profession of laborers, have effected their escape and joined our enemies within the British lines at New York:

For remedy whereof:

[Section I.] Be it enacted and it is hereby enacted by the Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met, and by the authority of the same, That it shall and may be lawful for any of the inhabitants of this state, as well as to the different officers, whether civil or military, in the same, and they are hereby strictly enjoined and required to make diligent inquiry after and take up all such prisoners of war as they may have reason to believe are either secreted or concealed under any habit or pretence whatsoever, and them forthwith to bring before the next justice of the peace for examination. And if, upon such examination, it shall appear that said person so brought is a prisoner of war, he shall be committed to the gaol of the county and notice immediately transmitted to the war office of the name and place of confinement of such offender, that proper measures may be taken to return him to the place of his con-