

THREATENED CRISIS.

How a Negro Justice Nearly Brought on International Trouble.

During the reign of the carpetbaggers in Georgia a very black but brainy old negro named Tunis G. Campbell came down from the north and became one of the leaders of his race.

In the course of time Campbell was made a justice of the peace at the port of Darien. Then the trouble began in earnest.

Justice Campbell had no use for the whites because he knew that they cordially hated him.

But he did not confine his animosity to Georgians or to Democrats. He employed a number of negro constables, authorized them to carry weapons, and in a short time made his court a terror to the community.

So much by way of introduction. One summer a British sailing vessel came to Darien and took on a cargo of naval stores. Before getting ready to sail the captain settled everything due from him and his crew—that is, everything in the way of a just account. He secured his papers, when several negro traders of the lowest class unexpectedly put in claims for goods that had never been purchased.

These cormorants alleged that the captain and his sailors were indebted to them for meals, merchandise, lodging and other things.

It was evident that these claims were fraudulent, and the captain continued his preparations for his departure.

The afternoon he was to weigh anchor Justice Campbell held a consultation with a shyster lawyer.

"I want to hold that —— foreigner here," said Campbell, "until he settles these bills!"

"In England," replied the lawyer, "when you want to prevent people from leaving the country, you issue a writ of ne exeat regnum."

Justice Campbell came near falling to the floor.

"Just say that again," he said excitedly.

"A writ of ne exeat regnum."

"I see—I see," said Campbell. "Well, I want you to draw up one and keep that fellow here."

The shyster's resources were limited, and he explained to his friend that regnum meant kingdom, and as this country was a republic there would have to be a change in the verbiage.

"Change it," commanded the black justice.

The lawyer then admitted that he knew very little Latin, and for that reason was somewhat embarrassed.

"This is a republic," he said.

"All right," was the prompt reply of Campbell. "Draw up a writ of ne exeat republicum."

"I am afraid it is bad Latin," objected the lawyer.

"I'll make it stick," answered the justice. "I'll sign the paper and swear in six special constables to enforce it."

This was enough, and the lawyer proceeded to draw up the most remarkable document ever seen in America.

The writ covered 20 pages of foolscap and ordered the Englishman, under the severest pains and penalties, to remain with his ship at Darien until he settled all claims.

It was a sultry August afternoon, and the vessel was about ready to depart, when it was boarded by Justice Campbell and six negro constables armed with guns.

The justice read the writ to the captain, and after informing him that the constables would remain until the matter was adjusted the judicial tyrant went ashore again.

The captain retired to the cabin with the mate and talked it over.

Finally a plan of action was agreed upon, and when the ship's officers reappeared they were apparently in a good humor. They told the constables that they were welcome as the representatives of the law and requested them to enjoy the freedom of the vessel.

The constables were overwhelmed with tobacco and cigars and an occasional dram until their suspicions vanished.

Then the captain and his crew displayed still more hospitality, and the bottle was freely passed around.

At midnight six negro constables were in a drunken slumber, the effect of their drugged liquor, and the captain and his men were wide awake and perfectly sober.

The blacks were carefully deposited in a boat and set adrift in the harbor, and then the British sloop quietly weighed anchor and left the port at an hour when Justice Campbell was dreaming of his new and wonderful writ of ne exeat republicum.

The constables were picked up next day and sent to jail for neglect of duty, but the vessel was then beyond reach.

The British captain went straight to Savannah, where he laid his case before his consul and demanded an apology and an indemnity from the United States government.

The consul found it difficult to keep his face straight when he heard the story.

"It is an outrage," he said to the captain, "but it is a peculiar one and of a ludicrous nature. If I were you, I would not hold a friendly government responsible for the conduct of a few ignorant persons, who have not been free long enough to know their own rights and respect the rights of others.

It required a good deal of talk to appease the Englishman, but after he had been wined and dined by the merchants and had told his story a score of times, amid roars of laughter, he began to regard the affair as a good joke and agreed to let it drop.

And thus ended what threatened to be a serious international complication.

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