

GEO. R. MCGILL, Appellant, vs. THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, Appellee.

LRSC 4; 1 LLR 169

[January Term, A. D. 1883.]

Appeal from the Court of Quarter Sessions and Common Pleas, Grand Bassa County.

Libel of information in personam.

1. A post-master is a revenue officer and is liable to prosecution in a Court of Admiralty for breach of official duty.
2. A letter posted for a foreign country and unlawfully taken out of the post-office, is a contravention of the revenue laws, and is cognizable in admiralty.

This case is an appeal from the Court of Quarter Sessions, Grand Bassa County, in the exercise of admiralty jurisdiction.

This case is no doubt one of great importance to the appellant and appellee. This court has carefully and impartially considered the same, and is of the opinion that the object of the Legislature in making the law establishing the post-office and a branch custom-house in the lower ward of the city of Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, was to increase the revenue and afford accommodation to the people. Therefore the court says appellant was acting in the capacity of a revenue officer under the said law, during his incumbency as Post-Master and Deputy Collector of Customs, and as such the Court of Admiralty had jurisdiction over his case.

A letter posted to be sent to a foreign country is presumed, in the idea of the law, to be in the course of its destiny, and therefore any person who unlawfully takes it out of the post-office thereby contravenes the revenue law.

The Court of Admiralty may exercise jurisdiction over any wrong done in violation of the law providing for the safe conveyance of letters and money across the sea. A letter posted to be conveyed to a foreign land relates to the sea, and has protection under those principles of the maritime law, because of the contract made for its conveyance.

We are of opinion that the several grounds upon which appellant's appeal was taken were not material in a case tried in accordance with the principles of natural justice. The court has considered the justice of the whole case, and adjudges that substantial justice has been done in the premises and that the judgment of the court below is affirmed; the appellant is ruled to pay all costs incurred in this action.

Key Description: Admiralty (Jurisdiction, In general; jurisdiction of prosecution for theft from post office)