PREAMBLE AND REGULATIONS

OF THE

SAVANNAH RIVER ANTI-SLAVE TRAFFICK

ASSOCIATION.

ADOPTED NOVEMBER, 21st, 1846.

PREAMBLE.

Whereas a visible change having taken place in the last few years in the conduct of our Slaves, which occasioned great annoyance to the owners, much difficulty in managing them, and very considerable losses, all of which evils were latterly increasing with a rapidity that became seriously alarming—a portion of the citizens of Sonth Carolina, residing on Savannah River, in Edgefield and Barnwell Districts, below the Sand-Bar Ferry, met at the Union Church last Spring. to devise measures for arresting them: And whereas upon consultation it was agreed that these evils resulted from two causes, viz. the too great negligence of slave owners in maintaining wholesome discipline, and the extensive and growing traffick unlawfully carried on with slaves by white persons and chiefly by Retailers of Spirituous Liquors—to remove which causes as far as practicable certain regulations were then adopted.—And whereas, although great benefits have been derived from the measures taken, the success has nevertheless been partial, and the necessity is now perceived for the formation of a regular and permanent association for the purpose of preserving proper subordination among our slaves, and putting down unlawful traffick with them,—this meeting of citizens residing as aforesaid, have thought proper to adopt and make public the following statement of their views, and the regulations deemed requisite to carry them out.

Formerly Slaves were essentially members of the family to which they belonged, and a reciprocal interest and attachment existing between them, their relations were simple, agreeable, easily maintained, and mutually beneficial: But now Masters and Slaves are beginning to look upon each other as natural enemies, and the result is mutual distrust, harsh yet inefficient discipline on the one hand, and sullenness, discontent, and growing depravity upon the other. Formerly it was

not necessary, and was not customary to put locks on dwelling houses, barns, stables, smoke houses, &c. as perfect security both for persons and property was felt throughout the country. Now locks are universally required, and yet afford scarcely any protection. They are entered by false keys which abound among our negroes, are picked with instruments at which they have become very skilful, and finally they are boldly broken open. It is no longer possible when a crop is housed to depend on any estimate that may be made of the amount of it. Often when a Farmer has expected to sell largely, he finds himself compelled to use the most stringent economy to make his provisions meet his own wants, and sometimes has actually to buy. Not content with plundering from Barns, our standing crops are beginning to suffer depredation, and if the progress of corruption is not arrested, the time is near at hand when crops of all kinds must be regularly guarded in the fields as soon as they approach maturity, and until finally consumed or sold. Such a state of things must speedily put an end to agriculture or to negro slavery.

But it is not crops alone that suffer; cattle and hogs can scarcely be raised. Few negroes can now be trusted out of sight with corn and salt for them, while they are nightly and even daily slaughtered both in pastures and the range. Our poultry yards are continually swept out, and poultry can in fact scarcely be purchased any where except from the retail shops around which they swarm at all times, and from which they are sent by waggon loads to the market towns. Hundreds of negroes it may be said without exaggeration are every night, and at all hours of the night, prowling about the country picking up every article of any value that is exposed; clothes hung out in our yards, household and farming implements, every thing that can be sold becomes their prey. And on some plantations they even sell a large portion of their weekly allowance. These things are done by negroes remaining at home in apparent subordination, while they are also perpetrated to a much greater extent, together with other more serious crimes by desperate gangs of runaways, who are becoming more numerous, more reckless and are almost entirely secure from apprehension in our swamps.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the slave holder is often injudicious, and more frequently culpably negligent in the management of his slaves, there can be no doubt that their increasing, and apparently insatiable appetite for plunder arises almost entirely from the vastly increased facilities of disposing of it afforded by retailing shop-keepers and other white persons. Nor are the actual losses incurred by the farmer by any means the greatest evils occasioned by this abominable traffick. The negroes themselves are seriously impaired in physical qualities, and their minds are fatally corrupted. Their nightly expeditions are followed by days of languor, and often by disease and death. In the hands of those who profit by it they are trained and stimulated to every species of theft. By constant practice they become as expert at it as the juggler in the performance of his tricks. No care or foresight can always anticipate—most frequently no art can detect them: while they are daily widening the scope of their villainy, and becoming more hardened in it. Supplied liberally with spirits in return for what they carry to the dram shops, instructed that they have the right to steal the fruits of their own labours, and indirectly, not unfrequently directly taught to regard their owners, and especially their overseers, as unjust and unfeeling oppressors, the negro ceases to be a moral being, holding a position in the frame-work of society, and becomes a serpent gnawing at its vitals or a demon ready with knife and torch to demolish its foundations. Thus slavery becomes indeed a curse: one equally fatal to the master and the slave. And if these evils and dangers cannot be remedied, the sooner the whole system is eradicated the better for all concerned. The Abolitionists have long declared that they are the inevitable consequences of our slave Institutions. We have answered their arguments, retorted their charges, defied their threats, and laughed at their predictions: But the negro trafficker, more potent than the abolitionist, bids fair to demonstrate what he has only asserted, and to practically bring about what he has only prophesied. The negro trafficer plants himself down among us, in the midst of our defences; he plies in secret his fatal arts, he seizes piratically, upon the products of our labour, reducing us to a worse condition than that of mere overseers

of our own property, the toil, the risk, the expenditure and the anxiety ours, the profits mainly his. He thus depreciates to almost nothing the value of the slave, while he seduces his affections from his master, renders him unable to endure and insubordinate to discipline, prepares his mind for insurrection, burning and murder, and both insures a speedy decay, and stimulates to a violent dissolution of our domestic institutions. The abolitionist declaims, the negro-trafficker acts. The one though an open and insolent, is a distant and comparatively harmless enemy; the other is the disguised fiend, who unless expelled from among us will surely and rapidly accomplish our ruin.

To effect this expulsion and to remedy some of the principal defects in our own management of our slaves are the only and exclusive purposes of our association, and we propose to use no other means than to place restrictions on ourselves and firmly enforce the laws under which we live. And we thus distinctly and publicly announce our views, our purposes and means, because they have been greatly misrepresented and misunderstood.

It has been said that ours was a combination to oppress the poor, and this ridiculous falsehood has been industriously circulated by those who are directly and indirectly interested, as unfortunately for the country so many, are in upholding this infamous traffick with slaves. The charge is a calumny upon the Poor. It amounts to asserting that the poor of this community derive their support from trading with its slaves, for if they do not, how can they be oppressed by measures exclusively directed to the suppression of that trade? It becomes the honest poor man to repel this slander by denouncing those who give it circulation, and who rob poverty of its good name, to sustain themselves in robbing others of their property. For ourselves most of us are far from being wealthy, and in uniting to put down a base, dangerous and unlawful traffic, our object is not to oppress any man or class of men, but to preserve the just rights and lawful interests of all. In fact the poorest man in this community though he possess no slave, if he is honest and relies for his support on honest industry, is as much interested as the largest slave holder in the purposes of this association. Peace, good

order and security in keeping and enjoying the fruits of his toil are as indispensable to him as to any. The rich can only lose a portion of their surplus, but the greater part of what the poor man has is at the mercy of the artful villains whom the negro-traffickers are training to plunder all alike; while amid the wreck of property and scenes of violence which must follow the subversion of our slave system, he stands the most defenceless, and must be among the earliest victims.

Our association is reproached with aiming to put down the dram shops within its limits. This is indeed one of our objects, We avow it. We regard it as indispensable to the suppression of negro-traffick. It is believed that no dram shop can in the present day prosper and prove profitable in this section, if in any part of the country, without carrying on unlawful traffick with slaves, and that so long as they exist this traffick will continue, while the evil of it is more than doubled where the negro is furnished with spirits in return for plunder. It is not the purpose of this association to contend against the general evils resulting from dram shops and dram drinking. We aim solely to suppress unlawful negro trading, and whatever advantages may be thought to accrue elsewhere from retailing spirits, or however harmless it may be in other countries, we fully believe that in a slave state it is wholly incompatible with the best and most vital interests of the community.

In this brief statement details have been omitted. For the truth of what has been said each individual is referred to his own experience and information. Deeply impressed by it ourselves, and fully convinced of the absolute necessity of uniting in the adoption and stringent execution of efficient measures for reforming the slaves in our region, and for the entire suppression of unlawful traffic with them:

We the subscribers do hereby agree to form an association to be called "The Savannah River Anti-Slave-Traffick Association," the object of which shall be to put down unlawful tradig with slaves within the following limits, viz. from the Sand-Bar Ferry, to the mouth of Steel Creek, within the distance of ten miles from the River on the Carolina side, and along its banks on the Georgia side, and for that purpose do pledge ourselves to conform to the following regulations.

Regulation 1st. We will, as we consider it a sacred duty to do, furnish our slaves with an adequate supply of food and clothing, treat them with humanity, afford them all reasonable comforts, exact of them reasonable labour, and maintain among them just and proper discipline.

Regulation 2d. We will not hire our negroes their time and will enforce the law against all those who do.

Regulation 3d. We will not permit our negroes to raise hogs or cattle for their own use or for sale.

Regulation 4th. We will have the gathering of our negroes crops carefully attended to and will purchase them ourselves, or give lawful tickets allowing the sale of them. They shall be sold at one time or at most in two lots and in no case shall they be sold to a retailer of spirits.

Regulation 5th. We will not permit negro meetings for any purpose to be held on our premises that shall continue later than ordinary bed time, and will not permit our negroes to go abroad to any night meetings, to continue longer than until 9 o'clock.

Regulation 6th. When we send a negro to town with produce in a cart or wagon we will give him a ticket stating what articles he carries, and if informed that he carries any others will use the necessary means to prevent its being done again.

Regulation 7th. We will do every thing in our power, so far as we can without resorting to illegal measures to prevent, detect, and bring to punishment all unlawful trafficking with slaves.

Regulation 8th. We will not purchase any articles whatever from any retailer of spirits within the limits of this association or from any person whom we suspect of trading with slaves.

Regulation 9th. The officers of this Association shall be, a President, Vice President, and Secretary who shall also be Treasurer. They shall be appointed annually.

Regulation 10th. The Association shall meet at the Union Church semi-annually on the second Saturdays in April and November. But an Executive Committee to be composed of the President, Vice President, Secretary, and nine others appointed annually by the President, shall during the recess transact all necessary business and call an extra meeting of the

Association at whatever time and place they may deem proper.

Regulation 11*th*. This Association hereby agrees to defray the necessary expenses of all persons who may institute and carry on prosecutions for unlawful trading with slaves or for retailing without a licence within its limits; and it shall be the duty of the Executive Committee to take care that all persons committing these offences shall be prosecuted.

Regulation 12*th*. At the time of subscribing our names to these regulations we will each of us furnish the Secretary with a statement of the number of negroes we own or have in our employment within the limits of this Association, and do hereby bind ourselves to pay whatever sums of money may be assessed on them by the Executive Committee for the purpose of defraying the expenses incurred in carrying out the objects of this Association. And the said Committee shall from time to time equally assess and collect said money provided that the assessment shall in no one year exceed 55 cents per negro.—And the said Committee shall also report at each semi-annual meeting of the Association the amount they have collected and how it has been expended.

Regulation 13*th*. Any person signing these regulations and conforming to them shall be considered a member of this Association. And a majority of those present shall at all times control its proceedings and may alter or repeal any of these Regulations.

WM. BUSH President.

J. C. BROOKS Secretary.

Laws of South Carolina referring to the purposes of the Association.

By act of 1740 slaves are prohibited from owning "any boat, perriauger or canoe," and from "raising or breeding any horses, mares, neat cattle, sheep or hogs, for their own peculiar use, benefit or profit." And any person is authorized to seize and take away from slaves such articles and animals and deliver them to the nearest Magistrate, who shall cause the same to be sold at public outcry, and dispose of the proceeds of the sale, one half to the person informing and the other half to the State Treasury.—*Statutes at Large* 7 *vol.* 40, 916 p.

By act of 1817 all persons are prohibited, under the penalty of forfeiting "a sum not exceeding $1000 and imprisonment not exceeding 12 months *nor less than one month*," from buying from or selling to a slave any article whatever, unless the slave shall have a permit from under the hand of his owner or such other person as may have the care and management of such slave. And where any person shall trade with a slave, "*he shall retain in his possession the permit which the slave has produced, and whenever any person shall be charged with having trafficked with a slave contrary to law, it shall be the duty of such person to produce the permit and to prove its authenticity.*"—*Ibid* 7 *vol.* 454 *p.*

By act of 1834 *Shop-keepers* and *Traders* are forbidden under the above penalty from purchasing from slaves directly or *indirectly* COTTON, RICE, INDIAN CORN OR WHEAT, *with or without a permit.* And if any such person shall *receive* any of these articles from a slave, he shall be presumed to have purchased them and must furnish proof that he has not. And in all cases of buying and selling any of these articles, the act of the clerk or *agent* of the Shop-keeper or Trader shall be considered as the act of the Shop-keeper or Trader himself unless, he proves that it was not authorized by him.—*Ibid* 6 *vol.* 516 *p.*

By an act of the same year it is declared that upon the trial of any person having the use of a house of any kind for trading, if charged with unlawful buying from a slave, it shall be sufficient evidence for his conviction, to prove that the slave entered the said house with the articles charged in the indictment and left it without them; and if charged with unlawful selling, it shall be sufficient to prove that the slave entered the said house without such articles and left it with them.—*Ibid* 7 *vol.* 469 *p.*

By act of 1822 owners are prohibited from hiring their time to *male* slaves under penalty of forfeiting the slave so hiring his time—one half of the monies arising from the sale of him to go to the informer.—*Ibid* 7 *vol.* 462 *p.*

By act of 1836 it is declared that if any person shall give a ticket or written permit to any slave, the property or being

under charge of another, without the consent of the owner or person having charge of him, authorizing such slave either to be absent or to trade, such person on being indicted and convicted shall be imprisoned not exceeding 12 months and fined not excerding $1000, the whole amount of the fine to go to the informer.—*Ibid* 6 *vol.* 552 p.

By act of 1801 all persons are prohibited from retailing spirituous liquors or keeping tavern without licence under a penalty of $100. By the same act it is required of every person obtaining licence to keep tavern to give a bond to "keep clean and wholesome meat and drink and lodging for travellers and the usual provender for horses," and "that licenced retailers who do not keep taverns and *entertainment for travellers*, shall not retail less than *one quart* of spirituous liquors.—*Ibid* 5 *vol.* 400 *p.*

By act of 1834 persons applying for a licence to retail or keep tavern are required to make the following oath before a magistrate, "I, A. B. do swear that I will not directly or *indirectly* during the period for which I may receive a licence to retail spirituous liquors, sell, *give*, exchange, barter or in any otherwise deliver any spirituous liquors to any slave or slaves contrary to the true intent and meaning of the laws for the preventing the selling, giving, or delivering spirituous liquors to slaves, so help me God."—*Ibid* 7 *vol.* 469 *p.*

By act of 1839 (*p* 14) it is declared that "Recognizances entered into before a Magistrate shall be according to the following scale: If the offence charged be punishable with fine and imprisonment or either, the recognizance of the accused shall not be for less than two hundred dollars; and if the fine be specified or limited by statute *it shall not be for less than the greatest extent of such fine.*"