

EXPOSITION
OF THE
"KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN CIRCLE."

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ORDER—SOUTHERN RIGHTS' CLUBS—THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE AND THE ACQUISITION OF NEW SLAVE TERRITORY—THE FIRST ORGANIZATION IN 1834, AND ITS SUCCESS—THE MEXICAN WAR, AND THE SOUTH'S INTEREST IN IT—PROGRESS OF THE SLAVE TRADE UP TO 1852—ACQUISITION OF CUBA, REPEAL OF THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE, NICARAGUA EXPEDITIONS, ETC., USED TO INCREASE MEMBERSHIP.

THE Order of which I propose writing an exposition was, for many years, like the earth in its primordial condition, "without form, and void." It did not receive its present name until about the year 1855. The principles upon which it is based, however, and the actuating motives which pervade its membership, have existed nearly thirty years. About the close of the year 1834, there were to be found, in Charleston, New Orleans, and some other Southern cities, a few politicians who earnestly desired the re-establishment of the African slave-trade and the acquisition of new slave territory. They believed that the Constitution of the United States was a tyrannical document, since it prohibited the slave-trade, and regarded it as a system of piracy. The American Union, therefore, had its enemies almost from its very childhood. These men formed themselves into secret juntas, which, without any particular form or ritual, were called S. R. C.'s, (Southern Rights Clubs.) They had certain signs of recognition, by which they made themselves known to each other, and met weekly, semi-weekly, or otherwise, as the cause which they labored to promote seemed to demand. They might have had, at this early day, some sort of constitution and rules of regulation, but of these little is now known.