

An Act to prevent disabled and superannuated Slaves being set Free, or the Manumission of Slaves by any last Will or Testament.

WHEREAS sundry Persons of this Province have set disabled and superannuated Slaves free, who have either perished through Want, or otherwise become a Burthen to others: And inasmuch as giving Freedom to Slaves, by any last Will and Testament, may be attended with many Evils; it is therefore humbly prayed that it may be Enacted;

Preamble.

And be it Enacted by the Right Honourable the Lord Proprietary, by and with the Advice and Consent of his Lordship's President, and the Upper and Lower Houses of Assembly, and the Authority of the same, That it shall not be lawful for any Person or Persons within this Province, to give or grant Freedom to any Slave or Slaves disabled to work, or gain a sufficient Livelihood and Maintainance; but that in all such Cases, any Master, Mistress, or Owner of such Slave or Slaves, at the proper Cost and Charge of such Master, Mistress, or other Person owning such Slave or Slaves, shall support and maintain such Slave or Slaves, during the natural Life or Lives of such Slave or Slaves, in Food and Cloathing fitting and needful for such Slave or Slaves; whereby he, she, or they may not become a Burthen to others, or perish through Want, to the great Scandal of Christian Society.

Slaves who are old, and incapable of working, not to be set at Liberty; but to be provided for by the Owner.

And be it further Enacted, That it shall not be lawful for any Person or Persons within this Province, by any verbal Order, or by his, her, or their last Will and Testament, or by any other Instrument of Writing, in his, her, or their last Sickness, whereof he, she, or they shall die, to give or grant Freedom to any Slave or Slaves: And if any Person or Persons, after the Time aforesaid, shall, by any verbal Order, or by his, her, or their last Will and Testament, or by any other Writing or Instrument, in his, her, or their last Sickness whereof he, she, or they shall die, give Freedom to any Slave or Slaves, such Order, Will, or other Writing shall be void and of no Effect, so far as relates to such Freedom or Manumission only.

No Slaves to be set free by any last Will and Testament.

And be it likewise Enacted, That if any Master, Mistress, Owner, or Owners of any Slave or Slaves, grown old and incapable of Labour, or otherwise disabled by Sickness or Accident, shall neglect to provide for such old or disabled Slave necessary Food and Cloathing, or shall suffer any Slave or Slaves whatsoever to depart from his, her, or their respective Habitation or Quarter, or to wander about begging, whereby such Slave or Slaves may become burthensome to the Neighbourhood wherein they have resided, or others, it shall and may be lawful for the County Court where such Master, Mistress, Owner or Owners of such Slave or Slaves shall reside, upon Presentment of the Grand Jury, to issue their Warrant against such Master, Mistress, Owner or Owners of such Slave or Slaves, and to cause such Master, Mistress, Owner or Owners of such Slave or Slaves to appear before them; and if, upon Examination in a summary Way, it shall appear to such Court that such Master, Mistress, Owner or Owners of such Slave or Slaves did not provide necessary Food and Cloathing, or did suffer such Slave or Slaves to depart and wander, contrary to the Intent and Meaning of this Act, such Court is hereby directed and impowered to cause such Master, Mistress, Owner or Owners of such Slave or Slaves, to enter into Recognizance, in the

Superannuated Slaves not to be suffered to wander abroad, or beg.