

THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT.

The new article of the Constitution of the United States passed by Congress in 1869 has now become a part of that document by the action of the necessary States. Thirty of these have ratified, while six have rejected it, including New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and California. It is claimed by the Democrats that the ratification by New York and Indiana is invalid, and that these States should go upon the record for rejection. However this may be, the Fifteenth Amendment is now the law of the land, there being the assent of only twenty-seven States needed to incorporate it as part of the Constitution. The article reads as follows: "Art. XV. Sec. 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, or by any State, on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Sec. 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation." This, it will be seen, sweeps away all disabling State enactments, based on color, or race, such as the property qualification in New York and Rhode Island. The Negro, alike with the Chinaman, is a voter throughout all the States and Territories of the Union, even in those six, or eight, States, where the majority of the people would deny both, if they could, that privilege.

As to the practical results of the adoption of this Amendment, we do not expect them to be very startling. The negro race is a decaying one, and its ultimate extinction is looked upon by many political economists as an event of the not distant future. In this State some eight or nine thousand additional voters will have the right to indicate their preferences at the polls at the March elections. Ten years ago such an enactment would have produced a revolution at the South, but it now assumes rather the character of an abstract principle than of an element for good or evil in the political life of the country. Practically, the negro has ceased to be a power in the land, and the mission of the white race towards him will hereafter be personal rather than general or political. His destiny is not in the hands of man, and in his decadence he may well be allowed the untrammelled exercise of those inalienable "rights"—"life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The negro has, however, been productive of misfortune to this country in the past, and we fear he will be socially a source of evil in the future. The work of those who clamored most loudly for his admission to a political equality with the white man has been accomplished, and what more can they ask for him than this Fifteenth Amendment confers? Let us hope that we shall hear less of him now that he can go to the polls and record his vote like other citizens, and now, too, that there is a negro in the Senate at Washington, and if the ratification only has this effect it will not be without its uses, for if there is one subject more than another that we have heard too much of during the last quarter of a century, it is that of the negro.