

The Liberator.

AMERICAN FREEDMEN'S AID COMMISSION.

The American Academy of Music, Philadelphia, on Thursday evening, 5th inst., was completely filled with an intelligent and respectable audience, for the purpose of inaugurating an organization on the basis and plan of the Sanitary and Christian Commissions, which should have for its object the care and supervision of the educational and moral needs of the freedmen of the South.

Bishop McIlvaine, of Ohio, was called to the chair, and the meeting was then opened with prayer by the Rev. Mr. Yarnall.

REMARKS OF BISHOP MCILVAINE.

Bishop McIlvaine made the opening address, welcoming the audience, and referring to the interesting cause which had brought them together. God had wonderfully blest our land; his judgment and mercy have descended upon us. In the midst of the Red Sea of suffering and blood from which we have escaped, and the re-establishment of the Union and the authority of the Government over all the States, has been shown his providence. But more than all, that he has broken the bonds from the slave.

There was no way to have thrown off the curse of slavery, unless by the method that was followed. The war that was intended to fasten the chains of the slave forever broke his fetters, and made him eternally a freeman. For so great a mercy, brought by such wonderful ways, we must render services to God by going among these liberated men, and raise them up to be worthy servants of God and good citizens of the Republic. That would be the most appropriate thanksgiving. They have been made free, and it is our task to bring them up from their intellectual infancy; to educate them, provide for them, protect them, and render them fit to enjoy what God has intended for them. As God visited us for tolerating this evil by the terrible war of the last four years, so will He abundantly bless the land if we now take care of these freedmen.

REMARKS OF BISHOP SIMPSON.

Bishop Simpson, of the M. E. Church, next addressed the meeting:—It was proper when a new society is brought before the public, to define its objects. The present meeting was called to institute an organized plan of relief for the American freedmen. Philadelphia has done nobly before, and so she will do again. There were many societies engaged in sending relief to the freedmen, but as they did not work together, they were not always certain that a proper and equitable distribution of relief was made. To meet this objection, and to render the aid of these societies as efficient as possible, it was thought that it was best that a general society, embracing all these others, should be organized, and the present, which it was proposed to organize this evening, was the result.

All the aid that can be given will be needed. The crops in the South will be short, and the colored people in many cases will suffer. The white people, too, may suffer, and efforts will be made in their behalf. It is probable, too, that the colored population which rose against the masters to help us break the power of the rebellion, will be ill-treated and persecuted by the people of the South. The prevention of this was to be embraced within the scope of the society. Already, where the United States forces had been removed, there had been outbreaks, and in some cases even the teachers had been mobbed, and ordered to leave the localities where they were teaching. But it might come to pass, as the war broke the shackles of the slave it was intended to rivet, so this persecution will bring about its own redemption in the proper time. The society was not an organization in opposition to the South, but to assist them. Even of the people of the South he would say, with the Scriptures, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." Thus might the people of the South be brought to a proper understanding and true interpretation of the subject.

Regarding the scope of the present work, Bishop Simpson said that six hundred and fifty teachers were working in different parts of the South, not only teaching them to read and write, but to learn the practical arts of life. The expense of each teacher is five hundred dollars a year, but to do the work truly and properly there should be at least two thousand teachers, and for these we must raise funds.

The Secretary then read letters from Major General O. O. Howard, of the Freedmen's Bureau at Washington, and George H. Stuart, Esq., President of the Christian Commission, of Philadelphia, highly approving of the objects of the association.

REMARKS OF REV. DR. BELLOWES.

Dr. Bellows, formerly President of the Sanitary Commission, was the next speaker. He said that he merely desired to be considered as an outsider, a looker on in Vienna, yet deeply interested in the great work of ameliorating the condition of the freedmen. The greatest thing in the American Freedmen's Association was the heroism of the work they had undertaken. It is not only for the education of the freedmen, but it has to accomplish a much more difficult work at home, the education of the Northern people to a due appreciation of their duties to the negro and the freedmen. If that were accomplished, their work would be one of ease and joy. Had we waited for the consent, the approbation and the support of the American people, acting under their instincts and interests, the slave would be to-day a slave, doubly locked in his chains.

Now that we have freed him, through Providence, we should be prepared to educate him, and secure to him the immunities and rights that belong to his position. The labors of the association will not prove easy. The great difficulty is to send agents and agitators into every town and county throughout the North to stir up the people, and make them sensible of and alive to the vital importance of the work, to plead the cause of the freedmen, to take their offerings, and to swell them into one great river of support. They will then find a wide-spread and general sympathy with the task they have undertaken.

The universal and unjust prejudice against the freedmen must also be removed, and this association will have to take that matter in hand. There are not only four millions of slaves to educate, but twenty millions of white men; you cannot do your work for the black man without working for the white man also.

The speaker was frequently interrupted by the plaudits of the audience.

The speaker then alluded to the importance of a complete organization of the Aid Societies throughout the country, that each might know of one place where it might send its contributions, and also be aware that all the others were giving of their substance. Each would thus be a help to the other, and all would do better.

The work, even now, is going on well. Nearly fifty thousand children, between four and sixteen years of age, are at present receiving instruction in the schools. But this is only one-twentieth part. If we can educate one half of these, it is enough for the present, for the rest will learn from these. The five million dollars necessary for this ought to be but as a drop in the bucket for the American people. Organize—organize—organize; and henceforth, under the leadership of men like those who were connected with the Sanitary and Christian Commissions, the work will go bravely on, and before six months the treasury will be full and overflowing. Do the work thoroughly for the next three years, and then the Society may shut up shop; there will be no more need for its work, for then the freedmen will be able to think and act for themselves.

The next speaker was the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, who advanced to the front of the stage, amid a perfect storm of applause. He said:

REMARKS OF REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER.

It used to be asked us, not many years ago, by sundry gentlemen who said that we were disturbing the public peace, "What do you preach abolition here

for, where there are no slaves? why do you not go where it exists?" There were cogent reasons why we did not go South at that time; but we are now going. (Laughter and applause.) There are six hundred and fifty of us already there, and that is but the shadow, the faint perception of what is to come. We still mean to satisfy these querulous questioners on the subject of our sincerity. It was said that the agitators and radicals of the North profess to be very fond of the black man. It was said, "What are you doing for him but to make his chains heavier and his bondage darker? Show your love for him, and we will believe in your pretensions." We are now attempting to show that we were true, and that if there is one thing susceptible of demonstration, it is that the moral sense of the North was at first indirectly and finally the direct cause of emancipation. It was the growing temper of Christian feeling in the North that provoked rebellion; and it was the same moral toughness in the North—a consciousness that had a cutting edge to it, an edge that would not break or turn—that carried the nation through the struggle, to emancipation and victory. (Applause.) I hold we are indebted, under God, for the condition into which we have been brought, to the educated moral feeling of the North. At that time men did not know what they were learning. The men who at that time frustrated your Abolition lecturers and were apostles of the mob, are now found sitting at the feet of their masters, the most rabid apostles of liberty. We have any number of Pauls among us. (Laughter.) Now we do not wish to take advantage of old services and sayings, but to say that the hand of God has led us in a better way than we thought. The most sanguine or sagacious never expected to see things as they are to-day. But now, when we say to the people of the United States that we propose to take the four millions of late slaves, just introduced into liberty, to educate them, and fit them for good Christians and citizens, men are a little startled. They say it is impossible; you can never do this; the difficulties are greater than you can imagine. But the more we look at a difficulty, the greater it becomes, and so we should shut our eyes to the difficulty, and, as it were, jump over the whole of them. There never was a fight between right and wrong in which it could not be figured out that the chances were as ten to one against the victory on the moral side. Worldly chances are always so. To be certain of victory, we must ignore the existence of difficulties. It is indomitable faith that gives victory where calculation would give defeat. It was never believed that the miserable fishermen of Galilee would become the legislators of the world, the inspirers of a new literature, the leaders of a new religion, when all the power and glory, both of wealth and the civil power, all that was at the command of the adversary of Christ, were against them. It was never thought that these humble instruments would so revolutionize the globe that to-day the once despised things are the highest, and the things that were formerly the highest are now the most despised; but so it has come to pass.

When the work is to undertake to raise up four millions of degraded creatures just out of their bondage, and make them good citizens, men say you cannot do it. No, not if everybody felt as such men, we could not do it, nor if they stop to look the difficulties in the face. You say that the freedmen are a stupid race. I suppose they are the only race that is stupid. (Laughter.) You will say that they are full of evil habits which will require generations to eradicate. I am sorry that there are so many bad habits among the slaves, when we are so perfect. (Laughter.) But then their masters are rabid, and raging like lions robbed of their prey. I suppose they are, and of both whelps and prey, in some instances. (Much laughter.) Without a doubt there is difficulty here; you may say it is an unpopular theme in politics. But it is not impossible to do anything. There is no task that we cannot perform, as the advances we have made in the last twenty years conclusively show. I have seen the time when a man would have whirled away like a fire-ball, who would have dared to hint that it was possible for a black man to be superior to a white man. But the logic of events and the providence of God have brought about this change, so that we are all of us changed. How blind are men who predict the bounds in which God Almighty will make his paths!

But, although the work before us is great, it is not greater than our strength. Although it is difficult, it is not more difficult than other things that we have had before us. I believe it is according to the genius of Christianity and the nature of our institutions, and according to our social tendencies, and the coordinate and cooperative influences that are organized into society as well as in our Christian churches.

I feel that God has at last called to his people. The poor creature that had been robbed lay by the roadside; priest and Levite passed on, but the Samaritan at last relieved him. We have had ministers and churches that passed by the poor and despised, some on one plea and some on another; but now the good Samaritan, which I hold to be the great mass of the common people, is going where the sufferer is, to extend to him a helping hand—to rescue him from darkness, and take him to the school-house and the church. I hold that no minister is of the church of God who does not take part in it. I deride the idea of a true religion that has no humanity in it. I despise the profession of the Christian ministry that has no disposition to suffer for the sake of the poor and the unpopular.

The great work we are called to do at this time is to educate the colored people. It has been justly said, they are our best helpers. They are thirsting for knowledge. By education, I mean the teaching of the entire man; the *claircissement* of the understanding; the bringing out of the industrial powers and capacities. The way to protect him from being oppressed is to inspire him with growth, to make him intelligent, moral, pure and industrious. I do not doubt that he will have to go through a period of suffering; but where is the man who does not? We will give him all his rights, because we believe that his education will involve the necessity of it. While we are doing this, it seems to me we must do as we do with children; we must have a system for him; but that will necessitate his having some civil privileges. In the first place, he was a slave; he is now emancipated. What is he? Can you tell me? Is he a citizen? You know he is not. He is not a slave. He is a freedman, as though there were a middle term which designated a difference between something and nothing; an anomalous condition that cannot long exist without great mischief. We have no place on this nation for any such condition as that. There is no class in the category for a man that is not a citizen and not a slave. When he was a slave, he was nothing; he was not counted as a man; the law did not regard him as a man, scarcely the Gospel. He has been received into something. It will be difficult to tell what it is. I here demand for the slave that, ceasing to be a slave, his manhood be substantially recognized. I demand that he become a citizen on this ground. (Loud applause.) We cannot have men with us who are not substantially citizens. The first thing for the slave is, that he have the right to liberty and property, and that he shall not depend on the good nature of his neighbors, but on his own address; that the authority of the Union that gave him his liberty shall give him the right to labor and the remuneration of labor. I demand that he be treated in law and in the courts as the equal of any other citizen. (Applause.) There must not be one court for white men and another court for black men. If you are to classify, it cannot stop here. Now it is color, but by and-by there will be a classification on account of condition, and there will be laws for the rich man and laws for the poor man. I appeal to every man if he can dodge this principle, or get rid of it.

I hold that the freedmen of the South ought to have full possession of their natural rights; and if there is a right that any man should have, it is that his life, liberty and property shall be in no manner controlled

unless he has a voice in it himself. (Applause.) I do not undertake to say that it should be suffrage; but you have no right to meddle with a man's person, his labor, his family, life or property, without his having something to do with the making of the laws. I claim for the freedman his natural rights. *He ought to vote.* (Enthusiastic applause.) You will say he does not know how. How will he learn, unless you let him? You say he will vote wrong. That is to say, a man must not fire a rifle until he can hit the mark! They will not vote much worse than many Democrats do in the North. (Laughter.) But they say that in some districts their votes will outnumber the white population, and this would be ruinous. Will a people which remained firm to the Constitution and the Union when their masters were crazy with fanaticism and rebellion, vote against the country? Rather let the white men be kept from the polls. (Applause.) After calling the slave from the plantation to assist in bearing up the banner which was well-nigh trailing in the dust of defeat—after having taken his blood to cement the loosening stones of the edifice of liberty, will you turn him off without a privilege? Do this, and not only will the scorn of man fall upon you, but the vengeance of Almighty God himself.

If this is too much, then let it be that only those shall vote who can read and write, but let this extend to black and white alike: or let those who have borne arms for the preservation of the Union vote. Who denies that, will be mean enough to deny anything. Even if but ten colored men in a parish vote, ten men who have borne arms, it will be such a wedge that it will soon make an entrance for others. Their votes will be sought as eagerly as Northern men here seek the votes of Irishmen. But it is the imperative duty of the country to see to it that the arm and hand that bore a weapon in defence of the country, whatever its color may be, should have the right to bear the ballot to the ballot-box.

I do not undertake to dictate what you shall put into their platform, but party, precedent, and society must know that they must do the whole thing or nothing. Make him a man, a neighbor, a Christian—raise him up into manhood; and there will be a more sublime awakening than when God spoke, and the earth rose into existence.

William Lloyd Garrison was then introduced, and in a few words signified his hearty approval of the objects of the Association. He took occasion to deny the truth of the story now going the rounds of the newspapers, that he had written a letter to Gov. Andrew in reference to the Mississippi Constitution. He referred to the changes in public sentiment during the past fifteen years, and urged that the Society should go forward with the work it proposed to undertake.