

AMERICAN FREEDMEN'S AID COMMISSION

Hitherto, the efforts made for the education of the Freedmen of the South having been of an isolated character, though zealously prosecuted and with encouraging success, it has been deemed not only expedient but important, by the principal Freedmen's Associations, East and West, that there should be greater concentration of action among them, as well as unity of spirit and purpose: consequently, on the 19th of Sept. 1865, by their authorized representatives met in the city of New York, they proceeded to organize an AMERICAN FREEDMEN'S AID COMMISSION, making themselves auxiliary thereto—its object, as defined in the second article of its Constitution, being "to promote the education and elevation of the Freedmen, and to cooperate to this end with the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands"—and comprising an Eastern and a Western Department, "each to be independent of the other so far as the collection of money and goods, and the selection, supervision and payment of Teachers and Agents may be concerned." This great beneficent movement, therefore, has now a recognized responsible head, such as its magnitude demands, and such as it is believed will add dignity and efficiency to the task of giving light to the blind, and lifting up from the dust a race so long "peeled, meted out, and trodden under foot."

On Wednesday, October 11th, the Commission held its first regular meeting at the Freedmen's Rooms, 424 Wall street, Philadelphia, at which were present members from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, &c. Bishop Simpson, of the M. E. Church, President of the Commission, was in the chair. The proceedings were of an interesting character; the resolutions adopted such as the state of the country demands; and the views expressed by those present as to the course to be pursued for the furtherance of the Freedmen's cause at the South entirely harmonious. The immediate formation of State Societies, both North and South, auxiliary to the Commission, was recommended as of urgent importance, and a plan adopted to carry the recommendation into effect.

In the evening, a splendid assembly of four thousand persons (admitted by ticket) filled the Academy of Music,—many persons being unable to obtain entrance who strongly desired to do so,—for the purpose of inaugurating the movement on the basis and plan of the Sanitary and Christian Commissions. The scene was in the highest degree inspiring,—the leading influences of Church and State being represented on the occasion.

The venerable Bishop McIlvaine, of Ohio, (of the Protestant Episcopal Church,) presided, and made the opening address—rejoicing that the bonds of the slave had been broken, even if through a Red Sea of suffering and blood. As God had visited us for tolerating the slave system, by the terrible war of the last four years, so will He abundantly bless the land if we now take care of the freedmen, and raise them up to be good citizens of the republic.

He was followed by Bishop Simpson, in a short but effective speech. Regarding the scope of the present work, he 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.

Addresses were also made by Rev. Dr. Bellows, Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, and William Lloyd Garrison—all being warmly applauded. A fuller report will be given in our next number.