

THE Anglo-African Magazine.

VOL. I.

OCTOBER, 1859.

NO. 10.

The First Colored Convention.

On the fifteenth day of September, 1830, there was held at Bethel Church, in the city of Philadelphia, the first Convention of the colored people of these United States. It was an event of historical importance; and, whether we regard the times or the men of whom this assemblage was composed, we find matter for interesting and profitable consideration.

Emancipation had just taken place in New York, and had just been arrested in Virginia by the Nat Turner rebellion and Walker's pamphlet. Secret sessions of the legislatures of the several Southern States had been held to deliberate upon the production of a colored man who had coolly recommended to his fellow blacks the only solution to the slave question, which, after twenty-five years of arduous labor of the most hopeful and noble-hearted of the abolitionists,* seems the forlorn hope of freedom to-day—insurrection and bloodshed. Great Britain was in the midst of that bloodless revolution which, two years afterwards, culminated in the passage of the Reform Bill, and thus prepared the joyous and generous state of the British

heart which dictated the West India Emancipation Act. France was rejoicing in the not bloodless *trois jours de Juillet*. Indeed, the whole world seemed stirred up with a universal excitement, which, when contrasted with the universal panics of 1837 and 1857, leads one to regard as more than a philosophical speculation the doctrine of those who hold the life of mankind from the creation as but one life, beating with one heart, animated with one soul, tending to one destiny, although made up of millions upon millions of molecular lives, gifted with their infinite variety of attractions and repulsions, which regulate, or crystallize them into evanescent substructures or organizations, which we call nationalities and empires and peoples and tribes, whose minute actions and reactions on each other are the histories which absorb our attention, whilst the grand universal life moves on beyond our ken, or only guessed at, as the astronomers shadow out movements of our solar system around or towards some distant unknown centre of attraction.

If the times of 1830 were eventful, there were among our people, as well as among other peoples, men equal to the occasion. We had giants in those days! There were Bishop Allen, the founder of the great

* See letter of Hon. Gerrit Smith to Convention of Jerry Rescuers, dated Sept. 3, 1859.

The Self-Redeeming Power of the Colored Races of the World.

BY J. W. C. PENNINGTON.

This question has often been discussed in one form and another; and yet it remains one of deep interest, to the church and to the state.

Human progress, next to human redemption, must, indeed, enter into the economy of every enlightened state and Christian church. In the economy of God's moral government, no provision is made for waste human materials; and it is not easy to see how the state or church can afford to waste those precious materials which God has committed to their care.

It has always appeared to me, that taking for granted that certain portions of the human family are incapable of, or not worth the effort of attempting to civilize, is a dangerous state or church policy. Take any section of the human family, in any condition, however low they may be in the mass; every per cent. of civilized element that can be brought up by the effort of the philanthropist, will be rewarded by the accession of so many new agencies to their number, which, in their turn, will act as assistants in the common work.

The civilization of the colored race is a subject which just now commends itself more strongly than ever to the attention of the thinking and enlightened observer; and indeed it cannot be otherwise. A race so numerous in almost every populous part of the globe—a race so ancient, so well connected, and so intimately associated with all the leading events in universal history, cannot fail to elicit the attention of those unselfish minds of the various en-

lightened nations who are engaged in the great work of universal civilization. It is a cheering indication, that the cause of the colored race is continually conquering friends. For this happy result many thanks are due to the faithfulness and consistency of our early friends; and also, in no small degree, to the endurance of the colored people themselves.

The race has been preserved mainly by the desperate hope for a better time coming. Their night has been long, and their darkness dense. But their day has been slowly dawning, till, even now, while we speak, the sunbeams appear. Upon this matter it may be remarked, there is a deep conviction resting upon the minds of enlightened colored men throughout the world, that the time has fully come for us to develop our attributes of manhood equally with the other races in the common work of *Christian civilization*.

For many years, here and there, individual minds have been struggling up from among the masses and have slowly progressed against great odds: while some have been dragged down, others have weathered the storm of adversity, and now, like veterans, gaze, with warm gratitude to God, upon the scenes of their old battleground, and think of the victories won, and the battles contested. But now, of this much we may speak certain, the minds of the colored people of the world are coming earnestly to a thinking point. Adversity, to the race, has been a training school. And not only has the race come to exer-

cise a higher range of thought and a deeper reflection in regard to its own relative position, among other races of the world; but a more extended view is taken of all the localities of the race. The free colored men of the North look further than the South. Central America, Brazil, the West Indies, Canada, Africa and her adjacencies, are now looked at with manly frankness by our most earnest workers in the great field of civilization, while, in their turn, colored men of other localities in the world are exchanging views with us. This fact is to be hailed as one of great moment in this connection.

A man who cannot at the glance of thought traverse the map of the world, is mentally incapable of appreciating civilization in its extended sense. And he whose *heart* is too small or too selfish to love the world as God loves it, cannot, in any sense, be a civilizer. We come to think deeper, as we take in the range of our thoughts the world. We are more purely patriotic as we embrace in our affections the interests of our colored race.

Nor is this all. The efforts now being made to bring out our quota of civilizing agencies and means for the common work never were more marked and vigorous. Among us, as among white men, there are differences in reference to matters upon which men may agree to differ. It is said that the history of a people does not repeat itself. This is true in a measure. But it does not contradict the fact, that it often recalls its people from seeming oblivion.

The past history of the descendants of Africa is now appealing to her sons and daughters in the four quarters of the globe, to be up and doing for God, for Christ, for the race, for pure religion, for humanity, for civilization, and for righteousness and truth. The response is certainly very creditable to the hoping and hopeful man: for such is the colored man the world over;

for if there is a human being on the face of the earth who can hope alone, and even hope against hope, it is the colored man. And this is the secret of his amazing powers of endurance.

In answer to the voice of our history calling upon us to reproduce the works of our past, it will be seen that our own literature, and productions of science and art, attest that our's are a recovering people, and that there is a very general impression now prevailing upon the minds of the people, that we are to act, in the providence of God, a conspicuous part in the great struggle of the latter day of the world's history. There are two important facts now noticeable:

1. That, notwithstanding so much wickedness has been perpetrated upon the colored people, under the garb of religion, yet the masses have never repudiated evangelical religion, and for the reason that they have common sense enough to know that it is not the possession of true religion by their oppressors that makes them such; but the want of it.

To avoid being invidious, I shall not mention nations by name; but I might adduce such now in existence, and among us, who, on account of oppressions endured at the hands of tyrants in the old world, have renounced even the form of evangelical Christianity, and have gone into rank infidelity.

2. Another fact now obvious is, that such youth of both sex as are under regular training, acquit themselves handsomely when brought fairly in contact with the whites; and looking forward to make their own marks when the time shall come to play their part in public. Over thirty years' experience as a guardian and an educationist enables me to speak with confidence upon this subject. We have a few choice young minds now in course of training, who are destined to be an ornament to the race. Oberlin, Central College, Yale,

Xenia, and other such like institutions of learning are training youth for us.

In New England generally, the high-schools are now open to colored youth of both sex, where they enter and stand well.

To any one who looks at the course of events in the history of the colored people in this country for the last twenty or thirty years, it will be obvious that every attempt of our oppressors to swallow us up, has ended in their defeat. Whether we look at court-decisions or malicious legislations, or the preaching of false theology, all have ended in their confusion.

The latest and the most brilliant victory gained has been by the free colored people of the State of Maryland, over what was called the Slaveholders' Convention, which lately met at the city of Baltimore in that State. The call for, and the assembling of that body naturally excited much attention, both in and out of the State. The idea of a slaveholders' convention at once indicated its object to follow up what they undertook years ago, namely, to adopt ways and means to procure the ejection of all the free people of color from the State. When we take into account the geographical position of Maryland, the wealth and character of her slaveholders, the number of her free people of color, both compared with the slaves and their owners, and the fact the slaveholders have been for years preparing for this action on the one hand, and the free people of color preparing on the other hand to meet it, the result may be taken as the most important of any action ever had in that State touching the subject of slavery and the progress of the colored race. I look upon it as virtually a *declaration in favor of free negro labor.*

Let it now and ever be remembered, that the free colored people have, in a fair face to face contest, carried on for years without foreign aid, gained this victory over a convention of slaveholders assembled in their midst, with the avowed object of

dislodging them from the soil.

I feel proud of the free colored people of the State in which I was born a slave, and from which I had to exile myself to be free. Maryland numbered with the Middle States and joining the Keystone State, is herself, as it were, the key stone, &c.

The late Convention at the city of Baltimore represented *sixteen thousand* slaveholders, that being a fraction below the round number of slaveholders in the State. If we omit South Carolina, and, perhaps, Virginia, the slaveholders of Maryland are the most marked characters in the Union. Generally well educated and generous, but proud, honorable but tyrannical, extravagant but not, generally, spendthrifts, fond of pleasure, but not libertines, with great pride of character and position. A true Marylander is always a man of marked features of character. Maryland has a sentiment peculiarly her own; and whatever may be said of the master in this respect may be said of his slave; what may be said of the employer of the free man of color may be said of him.

Seventy years ago, the free colored population of Maryland amounted to about *eight thousand*. By the census of 1850, it was shown to be 74,723. The Convention estimate it at *eighty thousand*.

Within the periods above named the slaves have been decreasing, so that in reality this conflict between free and slave labor in Maryland has been going on for seventy years or more. It must also be borne in mind that Maryland, more than any other State, has been drained by the exit of fugitive slaves.

While these self-emancipated fugitives have been doing battle for the cause of freedom and civilization in the States of their adoption their emancipated brethren at home have been doing even better; so much so that it makes one almost wish he had remained on the battle-ground.

THE GREAT MARYLAND SCHEME FOR THE EXTINCTION OF THE FREE BLACKS AND FOR CHECKING EMANCIPATION IN 1831.

A brief view of this gigantic plan of oppression will show what our brethren of Maryland have conquered in their conflict with the slave power of their State. In the month of March of the above year, Mr. Brawner submitted a string of resolutions to the Legislature of Maryland, the first of which is in these words:

"Resolved, That the increased proportion of the free people of color in this State, to the white population; the evils growing out of their connection and unrestrained association with the slaves, their habits and manner of obtaining a subsistence, and their withdrawing a LARGE PORTION of employment from the laboring class of the white population, are subjects of momentous and grave consideration to the good people of this State."

At the end of these resolves was an order for a committee of five to bring in a bill. The chairman appointed said committee, and by parliamentary usage placed the mover at the head of the same. That committee reported a bill which, in due course of legislature, became a law of the State. The Ninth Section is as follows:

"Sec. 9. And be it enacted, That it shall not be lawful for any person to purchase of any free negro or mulatto, or from any slave or slaves, any bacon, pork, beef, mutton, corn, wheat, tobacco, rye, or oats, unless such free negro or mulatto shall at the time of such sale, produce a certificate from a justice of the peace, or three respectable persons residing in the neighborhood of said negro, of the county in which such negro resides, that he or they have reason to believe and do believe, that such free negro or mulatto came honestly and bona-fide into possession of any such articles so offered for sale, or unless such slave shall produce a written authority from his or her owner, employer or overseer, to sell any such article; and any person thus offending against the provisions of this act shall be subject to a penalty of five dollars for every such offence, or a penalty equal

in amount to the value of the article purchased, should the value thereof exceed the sum of five dollars."

Thus, by this Act, it became the presumption of law, that the free colored people of the State were, as a body, dishonest.

Following this legislation we have another specimen:

"A bill, entitled, An Act relating to the Manumission of Slaves in Maryland."

Sec. 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland, that from and after the passage of this act, it shall not be lawful for any person owning or holding any slave or slaves in this State to liberate, manumit, or set free such slave or slaves by deed of manumission, will, or otherwise, unless such slave or slaves be sent by the owner or holder of his or her representative, beyond the limits of this State."

Such was the case of the free people of color of Maryland in 1831, and surely nothing could be more gloomy, so far as these documents depict it.

But, in reality, here began the struggle in earnest for political, civil, and religious existence. The timid and fearful gave way and sunk, or departed from the State; but the most stood like men of nerve, with hope and public faith in great principles.

To show how successfully the free colored people of Maryland have maintained the struggle, I have only now to present to my readers the report adopted by the late Slaveholders' Convention at Baltimore. Senator Pearce, chairman of the committee on resolutions, to whom I applied for the copy, says, in his note dated at Chestertown, July 8th, 1859, says *"The papers of the North which misrepresented me would have done more full justice, if they had published the report which was accepted by the convention," &c."*

As one of the representatives of the Northern press, I am sure the "Anglo African Magazine" will hasten to do justice to the learned Senator, reserving such

further remarks as the magnitude of the subject matter of it may suggest.

THE ACCEPTED REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS.

The following are copies of the Report and Resolutions reported by Mr. Senator Pearce and adopted by the Convention:

The Committee on Resolutions beg leave to submit to the Convention the following report:

A number of resolutions were submitted to them by members of the Convention, all of which they read, considered, and discussed, as carefully as the time allowed to them permitted. This, however, was too short for the committee to entertain fully the consideration of several papers proposing details of legislation upon minor points, which were thought by those that suggested them, and by others, to be of consequence. Two subjects of primary importance occupied most of the committee's time. These were the proposed expulsion from Maryland of the free negroes now residing in the State, and the policy adopted by the Legislature in 1831 of restraints upon manumission, and the necessity of procuring additional legislation to give vitality and vigor to the law of that year, which probably, from the imperfection of its details, has fallen into desuetude.

In regard to the first of these questions, the committee came to the conclusion that it was highly inexpedient to undertake any measure for the general removal of our free black population from the State, and that the best interests of the State, and of that class of people, too, required only due enforcement of the statutes on this subject already existing, and of such additional laws as seem to be necessary to carry out the purposes of former Legislatures, to make these people orderly, industrious and productive. By the last census this class of our population numbered about 74,000. Within the last nine years they are estimated, by natural causes and manumissions, to have reached over 80,000.

The existence of so large a number of free blacks in the midst of a slaveholding State, is believed to be, of itself, an evil, and this evil is readily perceived to be greater when it is considered that a portion of them are idle, vicious and unproductive. This, however, is not the case with a ma-

jority of them, and their removal would, as the committee believe, be far greater than all the evils the people of Maryland ever suffered from them. In the city of Baltimore it is estimated that there are more than twenty-five thousand of them, employed chiefly as domestic servants or as laborers in various departments of industry. In many of the rural districts of the State, where labor is by no means abundant, they furnish a large supply of agricultural labor, and it is unquestionable that quite a large portion of our soil could not be tilled without their aid. In some districts they supply almost all the labor demanded by the farmers.

Their removal from the State would deduct nearly fifty per cent. from the household and agricultural labor furnished by people of this color, and indispensable to the people of the State; would produce great discomfort and inconvenience to the great body of households; would break up the business and destroy the property of large numbers of land-owners and land-renters—a class whose interests are entitled to as much consideration as those of any other portion of our citizens; would be harsh and oppressive to those people themselves; would violate public sentiment, which is generally not only just, but kindly, and would probably lead to other evils which the committee forbear to mention.

We are satisfied that such a measure could not receive the legislative sanction, and would not be tolerated by the great body of the people of Maryland, even with that sanction. The committee, therefore, cannot recommend their expulsion from the State. Still more unwilling should they be to favor any measure which looked to their being deprived of the right to freedom which they have acquired by the indulgence of our laws and the tenderness of their masters, whether wise or unwise, or which they have inherited as a birthright.

On the other proposition—the restraints upon manumission—the committee think that the policy in this regard, adopted by the act of 1831, chapter 281, was wise and proper. That act provided for the compulsory removal of all blacks manumitted after the passage of the law. Its provisions were numerous and cumbersome. It provided for the appointment of a board of three managers, who should be members of the Colonization Society, whose duty it should

be to remove such people of color as should become free in this State thereafter; required clerks of courts and registers of wills to inform this board of managers of every manumission by deed or will, within five days after the recording of the one or the probate of the other; required the board of managers to notify the Colonization Society and arrange with them the removal of each manumitted slave to Liberia. If the Society declined to do so, the board was to remove them to some other place without the State with their consent, and if they refused to leave the State, then the sheriff of the county was to be notified by the board, and thereupon it was the duty of the sheriff to arrest and remove them beyond the State. It directed the sheriffs of the several counties to make an enumeration and list of the names of all the free blacks in the respective counties, but it expressly recognized the right of all free blacks then in the State to remain therein if they so pleased.

Thus it is evident that the policy of the State in 1831 was the compulsory removal from the State of slaves manumitted after the date of the act, with a view to prevent the too great and rapid increase of this part of our population. The committee see no reason for discarding this policy now, but believe that the same reasons which influenced the Legislature of 1831 exist in greater force. The act of that Legislature failed to prove operative. Few or none were willing to go to Liberia, or to any other place out of the State. No compensation to the sheriffs for their compulsory removal was provided, or to the clerks and registers for the performance of the duties enjoined upon them, and the law soon fell into neglect and was almost forgotten, except by the gentlemen of the bar; and yet the evils attending the increase of this population, neither citizens nor slaves, have been generally felt and almost universally admitted. No one doubts that it is through their agency in the main that the slaves are induced to run away; that the example which many of them set of thriftless laziness, sustained only by dishonest practices, is corrupting to the slaves and to many of their own class: that they encourage slaves to insubordination. The avoidance of the moderate labor required of them, to habits of theft and to dissatisfaction with their condition—all this, which was apparent in

1831, is only more palpable now.

The committee forbear to speculate upon all the consequences which may hereafter flow from the increase among the people of Maryland of a free black population, an inferior race, whose proper condition, when mixed with the superior white race, few will deny to be that of servitude, or at least of well-regulated subordination.

The committee, without hesitation, recommend that the Legislature be invoked to pass such laws as may be necessary to give efficiency to the policy of 1831, and to enforce the prompt removal from the State of all persons manumitted hereafter. A majority of the committee would prefer, however, the passage of a law prohibiting all emancipation whatever in future.

It has been suggested also that the State should revert to its former policy in regard to manumission by last will, and entirely prohibit all such, unless when the will shall have been made by the testator so long previous to his death as to afford a probability that the manumission was the deliberate act of a person whose faculties were unimpaired by disease, and not overcome by the near approach of death. It has also been suggested that prospective manumission should be entirely prohibited; that in future the acquisition of real estate by free negroes should be prohibited, and that no free negro residing in Maryland, who goes out of the State, should be allowed to return to it.

In regard to those negroes who have been manumitted since 1831, it would seem to be contrary to the policy of that act that they should acquire real estate, since the enjoyment of it is incompatible with the policy which forbids such a person remaining in the State in a condition of freedom. Such was the opinion of Chas. Johnson, expressed in the first volume of his reports, page 357; but it is supposed that the possession of real estate by these people is not only inconsistent with the policy which looks to their removal from the State, but is also productive of evil in other respects. It not unfrequently happens that these people obtain small parcels of land, where they form a close settlement, cultivating much less than is necessary to yield them a support, and laboring very little for such persons as would be glad to hire them on liberal terms. The conclu-

sion is that they eke out their support by unlawful means, and that evil would be prevented by depriving them of the power to hold real estate.

On the subject of free negroes going out of the State and returning to it, the Legislature has heretofore acted by the general laws of 1831, which, however, allows an absence of thirty days by other general acts and by the special local law applicable to the three counties of Cecil, Kent, and Queen Ann's. The first is believed to be inoperative and wholly inefficient; the latter is stringent and has recently been enforced. The committee have not time to digest thoroughly these and other subjects brought to their notice; but they think that the attention of the Legislature may well be invited to them, and such legislation in regard to them be asked for as upon careful consideration the wisdom of the General Assembly may think will enhance the public interests.

The laws in relation to our colored population are scattered through many volumes, running through a hundred and fifty years. It has been proposed to ask the Legislature to re-enact them in one body. The object is a good one, and is likely to be accomplished without further legislative action. The codifiers now preparing their work have already completed a chapter which groups all these statutes. Should that work be accepted by the Legislature all that is necessary will have been done.

The committee do not think it advisable to prepare at this time detailed bills or propositions to be submitted to the Legislature. The most that can be done, they think, is, to indicate the subjects on which legislation is desired, and the general pur-

pose of such legislation; to appoint a committee to present the views of the Convention to the Legislature and to assist in preparing such bills as may be necessary, leaving, however, to the wisdom and discretion of the Legislature to determine the measure and mode of relief on the various subjects to which the action of this Convention has referred. They recommend to the Convention the adoption of the following resolutions:

Resolved, That this Convention consider any measure for a general removal of the free blacks from the State of Maryland as impolitic, inexpedient, and uncalled-for by any public exigency which could justify it.

Resolved, That the free negro population should be well and thoroughly controlled by efficient laws, to the end that it may be orderly, industrious and productive.

Resolved, That, for the purpose of diminishing as far as possible the evils which proceed from an excessive increase of the free negro class, the policy of this State declared in 1831 should be re-affirmed, and such amendments be made to the act of that year as will give to it active force and certain operation, and as will either prohibit emancipation altogether or compel a prompt removal from the State of those emancipated; and that the Legislature should be asked to review and amend the laws relating to free negroes and to emancipation, so as to remedy all the defects of a system which time and experience have disclosed.

Resolved, That a committee of — be appointed to submit the views of this Convention and to ask appropriate legislation by the General Assembly.