

better their condition. That would relieve the pressure of black population in the cotton South, and the negroes who should remain there would get better pay and more decent treatment when their labor could be had only on such terms.

Considering that the negroes were slaves less than a generation ago a great advance has been made. No race ever before started from the low point of illiterate chattel slavery and made better progress in less than a generation. Moral, educational, and civilizing forces have helped them more than statutes. The weakest point with the negroes is their fondness for liquor and disposition to ally themselves with the "wets" in the South. If their preachers could check the tendency toward intemperance it would be to their advantage in every way. If tippling could be stopped the blacks would have more money for educational purposes and to buy homes, and if the white "drys" could command the votes of the blacks in fighting the "wets" they would be apt to care for their allies and have their political rights better respected.

#### NATIONAL CONVENTION OF COLORED MEN.

A convention of colored men, with delegates from all the States and Territories, has been called to meet in Washington the first Monday in February next. The purposes of the convention are thus stated in the call:

First, to organize a National Association of Colored American Citizens by which a united and continuous effort shall be made to relieve them from the personal outrages inflicted upon them in the Southern States and to obtain all the rights of American citizens now denied them in parts of this country; second, to ascertain the opposing influences that retard the growth of their educational, moral, and material interests; third, to invoke Congress to pass such legislation as will enable the colored Americans to exercise the right of franchise in the Southern States without fear or molestation, to pass the Blair Educational bill, and also pass a bill to pay the depositors of the Freedmen's Bank in full of their deposits.

It is not easy to see why this convention should concern itself with such irrelevant matters as the payment of interest on deposits in the Freedmen's Bank. That is a matter which can be settled on its merits without the intervention of a body representing the colored race, particularly as the claims in question have nearly all been sold to speculators and few negro depositors now have any interest in them. As for the "Blair Educational bill," it would merely give the Southern whites an opportunity to reduce their school taxes just in proportion as funds were supplied by the North, and it would encourage wasteful and careless expenditures. If the North should provide money to support Southern schools for ten years it would certainly be called on at the end of that time to renew the experiment and to perpetuate it, and in the meantime motives of pride, independence, and self-help would give way to chronic mendacity. Education in the South will not be promoted by having that section hold out the hat to the North for the support of its public schools.

The convention of colored men should waste no time on irrelevant matters like the Freedmen's Bank claims or Blair's ill-devised plan for pauper relief in support for Southern schools. The convention should address itself to the vital points of the race problem in the South. It is not necessary to say that the ablest men among the whites have studied this question exhaustively without being able to devise, as yet, any effective, practical, and prompt method of establishing the political and civil rights of the cotton States negroes by the coercive force of Federal law. The country will listen with interest to any feasible propositions that a convention of representative colored men may make. The ablest colored men in the country should be sent to this convention. Its sessions will attract general attention and due weight will be given its recommendations.

The colored men, while demanding relief from the shameful outrages and wrongs to which their race is still subjected in the cotton States, must not forget the difficulties which surround the matter and the constitutional and legal limitations which hedge in the power of Congress. To secure absolutely to the negroes "the right of franchise in the Southern States without fear or molestation" is beyond the power of the Federal Government. It cannot interfere with State elections. Some think it doubtful whether the Constitution would permit Congress to exercise authority over the choice of Presidential Electors. The most that it can probably do would be to take charge of the election of members of Congress, and even that would be of rather doubtful expediency. While the Federal Government cannot constitutionally intervene to protect the right of suffrage and secure a fair and free ballot at local State elections in the South it is equally powerless to punish assassins and ruffians whose crimes are in violation of State law and within the sole jurisdiction of the State courts and authorities. Under the war amendments to the Constitution, as interpreted by the Federal Supreme Court, Congress cannot interfere to protect the civil and political rights of the negroes so long as they are assailed only by individuals and not by the States.

While the coercive power of Federal law cannot be used to solve the race question in the South, it is fortunate that moral, humanizing, and civilizing forces are making progress in that direction, though very slowly in some parts of it. The area of election fraud, violence, terrorism, and barbarism in the South is being steadily lessened. In fully one-half the Southern States the civil and political rights of the negroes are now fairly well respected. The blacks receive tolerably decent treatment in Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, East and West Virginia, North Carolina, and in the greater parts of Tennessee and Arkansas. At the recent hotly-contested election in Virginia the blacks voted without fear of violence and as a rule their votes were fairly counted. The same can be said of Maryland. The border States which are subject to Northern influences and those immediately adjoining them on the south show the effect of moral influences in bringing about voluntary obedience to law and respect for manhood suffrage and the civil rights of the colored men. Violence and systematized election frauds have been pushed back into the cotton States, where the barbarous spirit of slavery still survives. With a surplus negro population in that section and the dominant class inheriting the fierce race prejudice passed down through two centuries of slavery progress in the cotton South is comparatively slow. Perhaps a good plan for that section would be the acquisition of Hayti by the United States and its use as an outlet for the oppressed and dissatisfied blacks of the cotton South. With Hayti under American protection the negroes could find there excellent opportunities to