

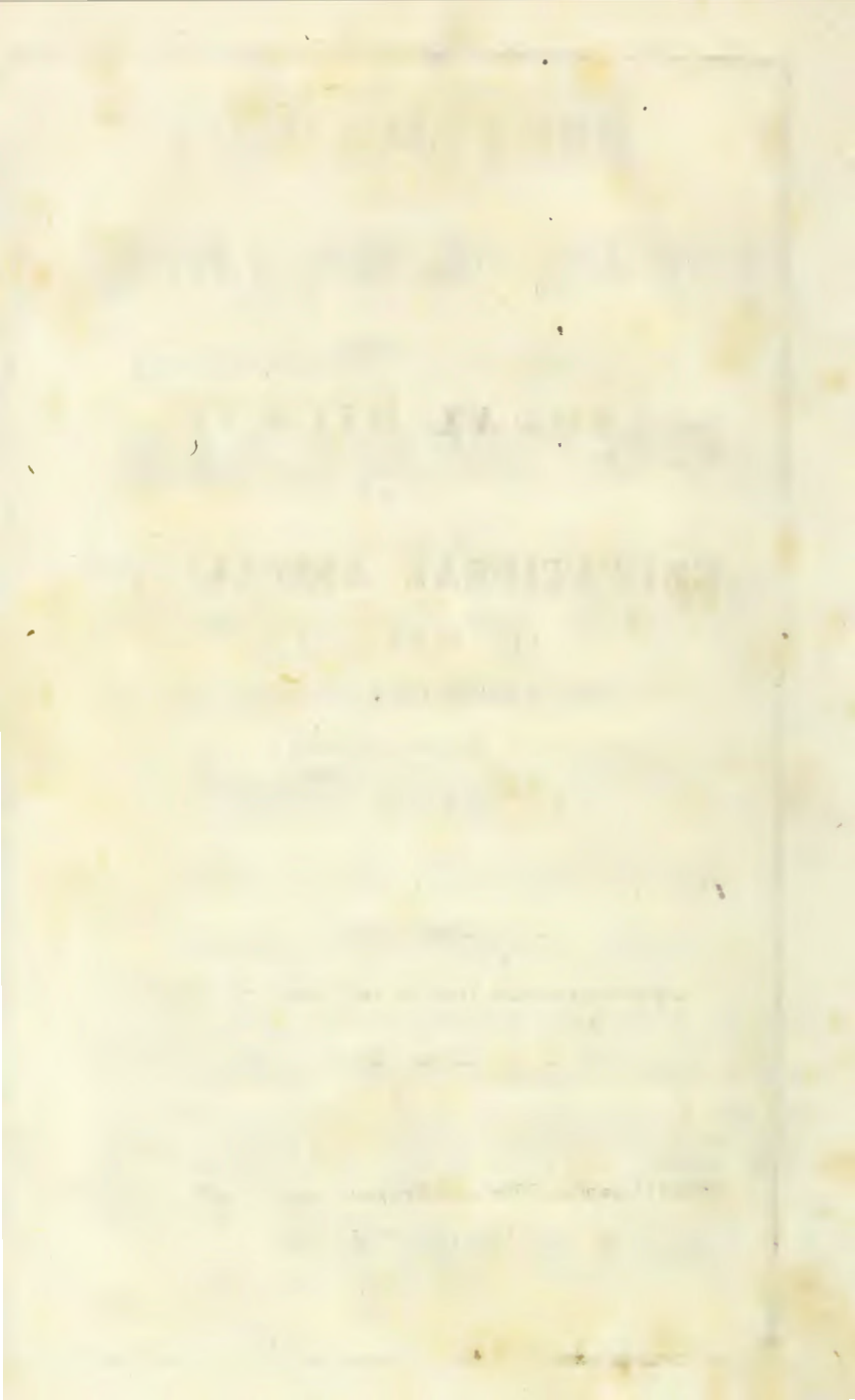
PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CONVENTION
OF THE
EQUAL RIGHTS
AND
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF GEORGIA,
ASSEMBLED AT MACON, OCTOBER 29th, 1866;
Containing the Annual Address of the President,
CAPTAIN J. E. BRYANT.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE CONVENTION.

Printed at the office of The Loyal Georgian, corner of Jackson and Ellis Sts.,

AUGUSTA, GA.

1866.



CONVENTION OF GEORGIA EQUAL RIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

MACON, GA., October 30th, 1866.

The Georgia Equal Rights Association met in Convention at the African Methodist Episcopal church. The Convention was called to order by the President, Captain J. E. Bryant, at ten o'clock A. M. The proceedings were opened with a very impressive prayer by Rev. Wilkes Flagg, of Baldwin county. The President, after giving a brief history of the Association, appointed the following gentlemen a Committee on Credentials: Rev. Wm. J. White of Richmond, Lawrence Gardiner of Hancock, Wm. H. Harris of Warren, S. McAlister of Morgan, and Lewis Smith of Bibb. The committee reported the following delegates duly elected to this Convention:

Bibb county. Rev Milton Tillinghast, Rev Lewis Smith, A G Gaston, W D Sneed.

Baldwin county. Rev Wilkes Flagg, Berry Hall.

Burke county. Rev Edward Crumby, Peter Drayton, John P Nelson.

Butts county. Anderson Freeman, G Wise.

Calhoun county. Henry Thompson, C Thomas.

Clarke county. James Bacon.

Clayton county. Sam'l Chubbs.

Cobb county. W Cokine.

Coweta county. Samuel Smith, Benj Dent.

Dougherty county. Benj Sykes, S Sherman.

Fulton county. Rev A Jackson, Wm R Mann.

Green county. Wesley Mapp, Chas Martin.

Glascock county. Singleton Davis, John Ruff.

Hancock county. L F Gardner, L H Holsey, A Yancy.

Houston county. Isaac Harrall, A Rolly, S A Cobb.

Henry county. H Griffin, H Humphrey.

Jasper county. Rev T M Allen, J Cargill.

Jefferson county. Rev R Smith, A Spann, G W Stone.

Johnson county. Rev S Harris, W Outley.

company, and that each member of the Association use his best efforts to sell stock sufficient to put the paper upon a firm basis; laboring for it as they have never labored before.

The Committee on Conference made report, which was adopted, recommending that all delegates from counties in which there were no Equal Rights Associations, be admitted to the Convention.

Adjourned to nine o'clock to-morrow morning.

SECOND DAY.

President called Convention to order at nine o'clock. Prayer by Mr. Gardner of Hancock. Minutes read and approved. Chairman of Committee on Conference reported that the committee were unable to agree with the Union League upon a plan to unite with this Convention. On motion, the report was received and adopted.

On motion of Bacon, of Clarke, ordered that the resolution relating to the transfer of the Loyal Georgian to a joint-stock company, be published in the Loyal Georgian separately.

Rev W Flagg presented twelve dollars—amount of collection at public meeting for the Loyal Georgian.

The President then delivered the following annual address which was listened to with the most profound interest, and a resolution unanimously adopted requesting him to furnish a copy for publication in the Loyal Georgian.

ADDRESS OF CAPTAIN J. E. BRYANT.

My Friends, and Members of the Georgia Equal Rights Association.

You have met for the second time to consider the condition of the colored citizens of Georgia. On the 10th day of January last, the friends of equal rights met for the first time in the history of this State to consult together, and adopt a policy, by which they would be governed, in laboring to advance the cause so dear to their hearts. They organized an Association which was very properly called the Georgia Equal Rights Association, made arrangements for publishing a newspaper, passed resolutions and adjourned.

A difference of opinion arose in regard to the policy which should be pursued towards the white friends, who might wish to assist in the efforts, made to secure for the colored race those rights to which every citizen in this free Government is entitled. Some, desirous of securing the practical assistance of white friends, advocated the election of a white man for President; others, in consideration of the fact that all the delegates to the convention were colored men, were of the opinion that it would be better to elect a colored man to that position. The discussion, which was throughout conducted in the best spirit, was ended by a decision, nearly unanimous, in favor of electing a white man President. The election was unanimous.

I regarded it a great honor to myself that I was, under these circumstances, the unanimous choice of the convention. Men who but a few months before were slaves, having to use a phrase of politicians, 'no rights which white men were bound to respect,' had assembled to discuss and make known the condition of their people, and organize to labor, unitedly and successfully, to improve their condition, and secure for them those rights which the Declaration of Independence declares to be unalienable. To choose myself from the race of their oppressors, being almost a stranger, was, under the circumstances, proof of the strongest kind that I had the entire confidence of the delegates. I prized this more than I can express to you, and felt that I could not refuse to accept a position which would offer, so many opportunities of doing good, when I was assured that a downtrodden people, struggling to gain rights which had always been denied them, placed such generous confidence in me; and, in accepting the position, I said: 'after listening to the remarks of the President of your convention, who, in words that touched my heart as it has seldom been touched, assured me that in choosing one from the race of your oppressors to act as President of an Association, organized to secure for your race equal rights, you manifested the confidence and esteem, entertained for me by yourselves, and those whom you represent; I can not decline to accept the position, and I promise that with the help of Him who rules all nations, and as, by an almost miraculous display of power, given you freedom, I will not disappoint you.' Standing before you to-day, and calling God for my witness, I say to you, that, from that time to this, I have labored early and late, as I have never before labored, to fulfill that pledge. I have walked in the light as God gave me to see the light, regardless of all consequences and all dangers. I have done what I thought was right leaving the result with God.

Although I willingly accepted the honor conferred upon me, nevertheless I was fully aware of the unpleasant position, in which I placed myself by accepting it. I was fully aware that, as an officer of the Government, I had made myself obnoxious to a large class of citizens, because I recognized the late slaves as citizens, and protected them as such. I know that I should, in my new position, render myself still more obnoxious, but I had, during my residence in the State, attempted to do right, and I proposed to continue to do so, and, believing that,

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again—
The eternal years of God are hers;"

determined to continue to do right, leaving the result with God; believing that, if I lived, good men would at length acknowledge the purity of my motives, whatever they might think of the policy pursued. I was fully aware of the fact that, but a few months before, my white man, who attempted to do what I proposed to do, would

have been severely punished in accordance with the laws of the State, and, if he had been killed, the verdict of the entire community would have been, 'served him right.' I knew that laws and customs as old as these, which the people were *forced* to give up against their will, must leave a prejudice, bitter and hard to overcome; I knew that, if I accepted this position, I should be ostracized for years from the society of most white citizens of this State, and I knew that I risked even life itself, nevertheless I did not, for a moment, hesitate.

What is life! We have but a few years to live, and he who does most good, accomplishes most. It is pleasant to enjoy the advantages of good society; it is pleasant to die a natural death, for die we all must, but that man is a coward who fails to do good, because there are dangers in the way; he is unfit to live, if he will fail to do good, because, perchance, he may be deprived of some of the pleasures of society.

SUBORDINATE ASSOCIATIONS.

The great work, in my judgment, which first presented itself to me, was to organize Subordinate Associations throughout the State as rapidly as possible, and establish, upon a permanent basis, the organ of your Association, the *Loyal Georgian*. Indeed, that has been the great work of the past year.

I have found much difficulty in establishing Subordinate Associations in the different counties. When you were slaves, you had no leaders, no smart men, or, more properly, your smart men were not permitted to become your leaders. The laws prevented you from securing an education. You could not become acquainted with each other through the public press, or by letter, as free persons can, and as you now may. Indeed, I found that, outside of the cities and large towns, the colored people knew nothing of each other, except in the neighborhood in which they lived. It was necessary that I should find out who could read and write, and also who were most respected among you. For the reasons given, it has been a difficult task; nevertheless I have succeeded in *discovering* some of these men in fifty counties, and Associations have been organized in those counties. The Constitution provides that each member shall pay an initiation fee of one dollar, which is to be sent by each Subordinate Association to the President of the State Association. Very few Subordinate Associations have done this. I have been informed that in some counties the money has been raised and given to the Vice President of the county, who has failed to forward it, and that, in other counties, the Vice President has failed to forward *all* that has been entrusted to his care. I desire that, if you are prepared to prove such charges, you will not fail to report them at this time, for I desire to appoint a committee to investigate all charges of this kind. If any officer of this Association has been dishonest, he should be expelled from office and denounced. We have undertaken a great work, and one

of vast importance to the colored race, as well as to the State. We must raise money to enable us to prosecute our work; we must trust men, and, if they betray the confidence which we place in them, it is our duty to expose them and denounce them. This will be a warning to others, who, being trusted, may not be tempted to act dishonestly.

These Subordinate Associations are exerting a powerful influence already. They are schools where colored citizens learn their rights. At the meetings of many Associations the *Loyal Georgian* is read by some member, and thus, in every county in the State, they may gain information which is of vital importance at this time. These Associations may be, indeed they should be schools where every member can, at least, learn to read and write.

THE LOYAL GEORGIAN.

It was considered absolutely necessary, by the founders of this Association, that an organ should be published to advocate the policy, which was regarded as of vital importance to the interests and welfare of the colored citizens of the State.

A newspaper—the Colored American—had been established by an enterprising colored man in the city of Augusta, but he did not meet with that encouragement which he expected, and was about to relinquish the undertaking, when an Association in that city, known as the Union League, relieved him of the responsibility, assumed the debts and continued the publication of the paper until this Association was organized, when it transferred the property to this Association, upon condition that it should pay the debts. It was thought best to change the name, and, by unanimous consent, the paper was called the *Loyal Georgian*. Thus was established a paper, which, although small in size, has wielded a powerful influence in behalf of the colored people of this State. As President of the Association, it becomes my duty to superintend the publication of this paper. Although we have used every exertion to pay the expenses and decrease the debt, we have been unable to do so. I have, with great difficulty, continued its publication, and must say to you frankly that, unless some changes are made immediately, we must suspend its publication altogether. This would be a disaster to the cause of equal rights in Georgia greatly to be deplored, and I fear that it would take months, perhaps years, to repair the injury, caused by a failure on the part of the friends of justice to sustain one small paper in the State. I know there are obstacles to overcome that would appal cowards; but we are engaged in a warfare against wrong, injustice, prejudice, ignorance, wickedness and villainy, and cowards have no business to enter into such a contest. If we are not cowards, we should shrink from no honorable and wise effort that promises to bring success; and we should be appaled at no opposition, for we know that God assists those who labor to do good, and, trusting

in Him, we should never cease our efforts, as long as any plan presents itself that is considered feasible.

When this Association was organized, I thought that it could and would easily support the paper. I knew that the object, and the only object in view, was to improve the condition of the colored citizens, and thus advance the interests of the State and Nation. I therefore felt that every colored man in Georgia would, as soon as he learned our object, assist us. I have been disappointed. Before our Association was organized, there were societies in several cities in the State known as Union Leagues. Delegates were present, I believe, from all of these Leagues except the Savannah League. Unfortunately that society was not represented, and, for reasons which it is unnecessary to mention, its members have been unwilling to unite with us. For this reason, mainly, we have received but little assistance from Savannah. There are in this State about five hundred thousand colored persons, and at least 100,000 men who are old enough to join the Association. As the initiation fee is one dollar, if one in ten should join and pay the initiation fee, \$10,000 would be raised. Thus the paper could be easily supported, even if nothing was received from subscriptions to it, or from advertisements. But for the reasons given above, and because most of the Vice Presidents have failed to send money from those counties where Associations have been organized, the State Association has been unable to render the paper much assistance.

I have received from Associations \$625,72, and from this sum have paid T. P. Beard, Agent and Treasurer for the paper \$523,97. I suppose that another reason has prevented the friends from sending money. The Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for Georgia, General Tillson, has accused your President of dishonesty, and, although the charges made by him have been investigated and proved to be false, nevertheless bad men continue to repeat these charges. I believe that your paper has received more injury from the reports, circulated by General Tillson, than from all other causes. The colored people have been taught to look to the Freedmen's Bureau for protection. It was established to protect them, and they naturally supposed that officers, appointed by the Government, are their friends. When, therefore, the chief officer of the Bureau, for the State, asserted positively that the money, which was given by the freed people for the Association, was stolen by the President, we can not wonder that they hesitated about sending it; and, when you remember that an agent of the Bureau has been appointed for each county, all of whom are subject to the command of the Assistant Commissioner, and are, of course, expected to believe the statements made by him, and, when all of these men were informed of the statements made by General Tillson, and instructed to prevent the freedmen, so far as possible, from sending money to the officers of the State Association, you can not be surprised that we received but little assistance from them. A few counties have continued to labor

with zeal. Richmond, Jefferson, and Greene counties have given us the most assistance. Too much praise can not be given to the colored people of Augusta. Through evil report and good report they have never faltered, never failed us. They have given \$384,50 and have loaned \$1028,80. The money loaned should have been paid before, but as I have said above, it has been impossible to do so. The creditors have held a meeting, and have chosen a committee to consult with this Association, and, if possible, make a settlement. If it had not been for the assistance which we have received from Augusta, we must have suspended the publication of the paper several months since. The friends in Augusta feel that they can give and loan no more at present.

I informed the council at its meeting in July that, in my judgment, we must receive assistance from our friends at the North, or we could not succeed in our undertaking; and I was requested to visit the North and represent to our friends there the importance of the work we had undertaken, and appeal to them for assistance. I did as requested. I found that the Northern people take a deep interest in every undertaking that has for its object the improvement of the freed people of the South, and are willing to give liberally to sustain them; but there are so many calls for money that we can not expect very much assistance from there. I must therefore say to you that, in my opinion, your paper can not be longer published by the Association. But I am of opinion that it may still be published as the organ of the Association. I was authorized by the council to hire money if necessary to continue the publication of the paper. I have given notes that remain unpaid to the amount of \$1028,80. These notes are signed by myself as President of the Association, and by the Secretary of the Council, Robert T. Kent. I assured the persons to whom these notes were given that they should be paid; indeed the money was loaned, because I gave that assurance. Therefore, when I came to the conclusion that the Association would be unable to continue the publication of the *Loyal Georgian*, or to pay these notes, I requested the parties who had loaned the money to meet me, and I frankly stated to them our condition. They chose a committee to represent them at this convention, and voted that they would, if the Association approved of the plan, form a stock company, pay all the debts of the paper, and continue its publication.

I advise you by all means to accept this proposition. As I have before said, I am fully convinced that the Association cannot continue the publication of the paper. We owe none but colored men and their friends, therefore it will be just as well for the cause of equal rights to have it published by them as by the Association.

But, if the Association could continue the publication of the paper, I should think it better to make the change proposed, for the following reasons: As I have said, the Union League of Savannah has not thought best to unite with us, and I fear that they will do so. I am informed that other Leagues have been formed in different parts of the State, and that they have a State organization. They have

no organ, but will, I think, unite in supporting the Loyal Georgian, if it is published by a stock company. The white Union men of the South, who met in convention at Philadelphia in September, took strong grounds in favor of justice and equal rights for all. Indeed they advocated the same principles that you advocate. They were in favor of giving to colored citizens the same rights that white citizens enjoy. There are, then, in Georgia, three parties who think alike, the Republican party, the Equal Rights Association, and the Union League. The Loyal Georgian is the only paper in the State that advocates the policy of these parties, and I have reason to believe that the white Union men of the State will assist the paper, if it is published by a stock company, but, for reasons which I will not explain, they will not now assist us very much. I feel certain that, if the paper is published by a stock company, it will receive the assistance of this Association, the Union League, and Republican party. We can not only continue the publication of the paper, if we receive the support of these parties, but we can also enlarge it and make it truly a power in the State. I say, therefore, that it is impossible, in my opinion, for the Association to continue the publication of the paper, even in its present size, but it can be published by a stock company, composed of friends to the cause we advocate, and, by so doing, bring to its support all classes of citizens who are friendly to the cause of equal rights.

THE POLICY TO BE PURSUED FOR THE YEAR TO COME.

The founders of this Association believed in the truths set forth in the Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." To labor to secure these rights, this Association was organized. Then, the country had just passed through a long and bloody war; a war inaugurated to establish a government, whose corner-stone was to be slavery. The North and the South had contended for the mastery; the South fighting for slavery—the North, to prevent the destruction of the Government. It is true that the slaves were emancipated by the North; but this was done—not because it was right; not because slavery was wrong; not because the Government had protected the worst system of tyranny that ever disgraced the world; and, seeing the wickedness of the institution, (an institution repugnant to the theory upon which the Government was founded) had determined to be true, at length, to the teachings of the fathers—but because it was necessary to save the Government. I have long believed that, but for the over-ruling providence of God, your people would now be held in slavery, and thus held, until the people of this country had been educated to understand the enormity of the

crime of holding human beings in slavery. Then, no doubt, a war would have been inaugurated to make this government, in fact, as well as name a free Government, and, at the end of such a war, if the friends of freedom were victorious, it would be unnecessary to agitate the question of justice and equal rights, for citizens who were guilty of no crime; the people who fought for justice would be just when victory crowned their efforts. But, as I have said, the victors in the late war fought to save the Union, and, to do this, they found it necessary to emancipate the slaves. When peace was established, very many of the war party, perhaps a majority, certainly a large minority, were not in favor of giving full justice to the emancipated slaves, now citizens; and the Democratic, or peace party, were the enemies of justice and equal rights.

But the war party felt that they were in honor bound to protect the freedmen in their civil rights, and very many, perhaps a majority, were in favor of giving them full justice, and political rights. It was foreseen by the founders of this Association that these questions would be discussed for several months, perhaps years; and that the interests of the colored people demanded that they should take a part in the discussion. Therefore, I have for the past year advised the friends in every part of the State to discuss political questions, and particularly to bring before the people the importance of securing impartial suffrage, before the present Governments of the non-reconstructed States were recognized by Congress. Reconstruction is the great question that has agitated for several months past, and now agitates the public mind. At first, the Republican members of Congress, supported by the Republican party, claimed that, as the governments of the States that rebelled had been overthrown, new governments could not be legally established, except by the authority of Congress. The President, supported by the Democratic party, claimed that the States had no authority to break their relations with the general government, or secede; therefore, that they had not destroyed their former relations with the Government, and that he had the authority to recognize new governments that were established by those States. An issue having been thus joined, an appeal was made to the people, who are the jury to decide. The elections, that have been held, show that the people will sustain Congress, and the decision of Congress must therefore be final. While the Republican members of Congress were, at first, nearly unanimous in claiming that Congress alone had the authority to reconstruct the rebel States, they were not, by any means, united upon a policy of reconstruction; and so long as they did not agree, it was right, yes, it was of great importance that the colored citizens of this and other Southern States should, themselves, in every honorable and peaceable way, bring the attention of Congress to their true condition, and, if possible, convince them that no plan of reconstruction was just or safe which ignored the right of colored Union men to take a part in the new governments, but allowed disloyal men to do so; thus placing Union men, both white and colored, at the mercy of rebels,

who had for four years, plotted the destruction of the National Government. But the Republican members of Congress did, after months of discussion, agree upon a plan of reconstruction; and, as they have the controlling power in Congress, their policy became the Congressional policy. An amendment to the Constitution of the United States was submitted to the States for their consideration, with the understanding that the non-reconstructed States, which adopt this amendment, will be recognized by Congress. This plan of reconstruction does not satisfy many, perhaps a majority of the Republican party, nevertheless it is the policy of the party, and those Southern States which adopt the amendment, will, without doubt, be recognized by Congress, although every colored man in America protested. But, if these States do not adopt the amendment before the Fortieth Congress assembles, I have reason to believe that their present governments will be "wiped out," and new ones established, enfranchising all loyal men, white and colored, and disfranchising a certain specified class of men who have been disloyal, although no colored man should request it. I therefore conclude that political discussion on the part of colored citizens can do no good at this time. Whether it has or has not done good in the past, it matters not. They have done their duty to themselves and their race by entering upon this discussion.

I have received information from nearly every part of the State that white men prevent if possible, the organization of Subordinate Associations. Several influential colored men have been driven from their homes, because they assisted in the organization of these Associations, and the lives of others have been threatened. I am convinced that the opposition would not be as great if political question were not discussed at the meetings of the Associations. If political discussions can do no good and may do harm, they had better be postponed for the present.

The strongest argument, and I might almost say the only argument, that your enemies adduce in favor of withholding from you the right of suffrage, is the ignorance of your people. It would be folly to deny that most of the colored people in the Southern States are ignorant. Indeed they have been systematically kept in ignorance. It was no fault of theirs that they were not educated. They were prevented by cruel laws from learning to read even. True, some few were able to steal a little knowledge, but these usually lived in the cities or large towns.

You were kept in ignorance that you might the more easily be kept in slavery, and, if you ever expect to secure justice and equal rights, your people must be educated. I would therefore advise that our Association, for the coming year, labor to arouse the colored people to the importance of gaining an education, and that we establish as many schools in the State as possible.

I am informed that the Northern Associations that have sent teachers South to instruct your children, will be able to establish but

few schools in the State, except in the cities and large towns. For the present, we cannot, I fear, expect that schools will be established for you by the State, although I would suggest that you send an address to the Legislature upon the subject, and bring to their attention the importance, justice and wisdom of providing schools for your children, the same as for white children. It can do no harm and may do good.

The freed people will therefore be obliged to establish and support schools for their children themselves, or have none. I suggest, therefore, that it shall be the work of our Association, for the coming year, to establish schools in every county in the State. Let the Vice Presidents be instructed to establish schools in their counties for children, and let the Subordinate Associations be night schools, if possible, where men and women may, at least, learn to read and write. Subordinate Association No. 2, of Augusta, has already established a night school, and the other Subordinate Associations of that city will soon do the same. The members who attend the school pay one dollar per month into the treasury, and appoint a committee of three to employ the superintendent of the school. If you shall, during the year, establish schools in every county in the State, it will be regarded by your friends, everywhere, as one of the most remarkable undertakings ever accomplished by a people just emancipated from slavery.

GENERAL TILLSON.

I accepted the position of President of this Association the more willingly, because my relations with General Tillson—the Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for this State—were of a very friendly nature, and I felt that I might, by bringing to his attention the true condition of the colored people, assist them more than any other person, who would consent to accept the position. I am pleased to say that, for many weeks my anticipations were realized: but I was pained to discover that, in my opinion, the General was less and less willing to protect the freedmen, as I thought he might; by degrees, our relations became less and less satisfactory to myself.

In the latter part of May, an attempt was made, by the teachers of the colored schools of Augusta, to enter the city cemetery with their scholars, for the purpose of strewing flowers over the graves of Union soldiers, who lie buried in that cemetery. They were met at the entrance by the Mayor and a large force of armed policemen, and admission denied to colored children, unless they entered as the servants, or slaves, of the white persons present, to carry flowers for them. The teachers and their white friends refused to enter upon such conditions, and returned to a church near by. It was there decided to send a committee to General Tillson, and request that he would protect the colored children in their effort to do honor to the memory of the Union dead. He not only very unexpectedly

refused to do so, but he declared that he was opposed to the whole affair. I gave an account of the difficulty in the Loyal Georgian, and, for doing so, he commenced a system of persecution, unrelenting, unmerciful and unscrupulous. I was charged with robbing colored men of money which they contributed for the paper, and, in fact, with almost every crime known to men. I denied the charges, and requested that a committee might be appointed, before which I would appear and meet every charge that might be made. He refused to do this, but continued to repeat the charges. When the Council met in July last, I informed the members that charges had been made against me by General Tillson, and requested that they might be investigated by a committee. A committee was appointed, and, after two days careful investigation, they made a report fully exonerating me; nevertheless, the General came before the Council, and in a most violent and ungentlemanly, I might almost say disgraceful and reckless manner, repeated the charges which had been already proved to be false; calling me a liar, a scoundrel, a thief and a beggar. He also made a speech which contained much valuable information. A resolution was passed, thanking him for the speech. I am aware that it was the intention of the Council to thank him for the information which the speech contained, upon subjects that had no relation to myself, and that nearly every member of the Council disapproved of that part of the speech which related to myself, but a different impression has been made upon the public mind, to a certain extent. I therefore ask that, in justice to myself, the resolution of thanks be expunged from the records of the Council.

Many persons have thought that I have had a personal quarrel with Gen. Tillson, and that I have used the Loyal Georgian as a medium through which I could gratify feelings of hatred against that officer. Such persons entirely misunderstand the difficulty. My relations with the General were of a very friendly nature, previous to the attempt to do honor to the memory of the Union dead who lie buried in the cemetery at Augusta, and up to the very day, when an account of that affair appeared in the columns of the Loyal Georgian. I published that account, not because I had feelings of hatred to gratify, for I had no such feelings towards General Tillson; on the contrary, as I have said, my relations with that officer, and with his family, were of a very friendly nature; but I published the account, because I felt that the memory of the brave Union soldiers who had died in defence of their country had been insulted. I felt that a General of the United States Army had disgraced himself to please men who had fought to destroy the country, and had killed the very men whose graves we desired to decorate with flowers. And because I published this account, I have been assailed by rebels and dough-face officers who are a thousand times meaner and more contemptible than rebels, for many of the former are honest, while the latter are ready to crawl in the dirt to gain a little popularity.

The Augusta cemetery is under the control of the city authori-

ties. They have no more authority to prevent colored citizens from entering it, than they have to deny that right to white citizens. The Civil Rights Bill declares, 'that all persons, born in the United States, and not subject to any foreign power, excluding Indians not taxed,' are citizens of the United States. Colored men being citizens, it follows of course that they are entitled to all and the same civil rights to which white citizens are entitled, and that they can not legally be denied them, any law, statute, ordinance, regulation or custom to the contrary notwithstanding. Colored citizens in Augusta were denied the privilege of entering the cemetery by the Mayor, but he would allow white citizens to enter. General Tillson was appealed to, to protect the colored citizens, and, as an officer of the Freedmen's Bureau, it was his duty. A few weeks later, the city authorities of Savannah forbid the colored citizens from entering the city park, and General Tillson interfered in their favor. If he could interfere in one case, he could in the other. Colored citizens wished to enter a city cemetery to decorate, with flowers, the graves of men who had fought to make them free, and, being prevented, General Tillson *refused* to interfere in their behalf. Colored citizens wished to enter a city park for pleasure, and, being prevented, General Tillson *did* interfere in their behalf.

I have demanded, and I shall continue to demand that colored citizens shall be protected in the full and free enjoyment of all the rights to which they are entitled. This I shall do, although Gen. Tillson and all the rebels and dough-face Generals from the Potomac to the Gulf denounce me. But I do not wish that my friends shall misunderstand my motives.

CONCLUSION.

My friends, you have much to encourage you. One year ago, but few white Union men in the South were willing to give you equal political rights; now they *demand* these rights for you: one year ago, there was no party at the South that advocated your cause; now the Republican party is organized, or is being organized in every Southern State. This is the party of freedom and progress, 'tis the party that conducted the war, that saved the country and made you free. Thanking God for what he has already done for you, take courage, and enter upon the work that now presents itself with fresh zeal. Labor to educate your people, and, while your white friends are laboring to secure for you these rights to which you are entitled, show by your own industry, economy and good behavior, that you will make good use of political rights, when they are granted to you.

On motion of Rev H M Turner, of Bibb, the rules of the last Convention were adopted to govern this Convention. Rev Lewis Smith, of Bibb, was appointed Marshall of the Convention; Mr

Wiley McClenon and Mr Wm Clarke, Assistant Marshalls: Rev Robert Anderson was chosen Chaplain of the Convention.

On motion of H M Turner, of Bibb, voted that a Committee *On Address and the Condition of the Colored People in the State* be appointed. The following gentlemen were appointed: Rev H M Turner of Bibb, Sherman of Dougherty, McAlister of Morgau, Brooks of Newton, Jas Benifield of Monroe.

The President appointed the following additional Committees:

On Resolutions: Andrew Jackson of Fulton, Gardiner of Hancock, Harris of Warren, and Bacon of Clarke.

On Constitution and Policy of the Association: Heath of Warren, Mann of Fulton, Cokine of Cobb, and Travis of Monroe.

A resolution was unanimously passed inviting the members of the Union League to seats on the floor of the Convention. Revs Flagg, Turner, and Purdy were appointed a committee to inform the members of the Union League of the action of the Association. Mr Jno A Rockwell, Superintendent of Free Schools at Macon, under the American Missionary Association, was introduced to the Convention by the President.

The remainder of the day was spent in hearing the reports of the delegates from the different counties giving an account of the condition of the colored people in the counties which they represented.

EVENING SESSION.

The Convention was called to order at 7 o'clock by the President.

Rev Andrew Jackson, of Fulton, from the Committee on Resolutions, reported the following, which, after debate, were adopted:

Resolved, That 'we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.'

Resolved, That in regard to the franchise, we will never cease to protest against all partial legislation, based on color or race, or other adventitious distinctions.

Resolved, That while we protest against all partial legislation, and while we demand equal rights for all citizens, we recommend that for the coming year the members of our Association refrain from public political discussion in the meetings of the Association, and exert their entire influence to establish schools and educate the people.

Resolved, That we advise our friends to hold educational conventions in each of the Congressional Districts of the State during the coming year.

Resolved, That we cordially approve of the noble course pursued by the Loyal Georgian, and the able and fearless manner in which it

has advocated our cause, and exposed all men who have sought to deprive us of our rights.

Resolved, That we request our friends to do all in their power to sustain the Loyal Georgian.

Resolved, That whereas General Davis Tillson came into a meeting of the Council of this Association, and denounced our President—Captain J. E. Bryant—as a liar, a scoundrel, a beggar, and a villain, and whereas a vote of thanks was passed by the Council for his speech, not intending thereby to thank him for denouncing our President, but for the valuable information which the speech contained, concerning matters which were of interest to our people, and did not relate to Captain Bryant, and whereas the intention of the members of the Council in passing the resolution has been misunderstood, we direct the Secretary of the Council to expunge the resolution from the records of the Council.

Resolved, That whereas we have received no protection from the civil authorities, we call upon the good citizens of the State to come to our relief, and help us to secure justice for our people.

Resolved, That we request the Loyal Georgian, the New York Tribune, and all other papers friendly to our cause to publish these resolutions.

THIRD DAY.

President called Convention to order at 9 o'clock, A. M. Prayer by Rev Wm H Harris, of Warren. Minutes read and approved. The following resolution was offered by Mr Mann, of Fulton, and unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That we request Rev H M Turner to act as a delegate to represent the colored people of Georgia, at Washington City.

The appointment was accepted by Mr Turner in a few eloquent and appropriate remarks.

On motion of Rev W J White, of Richmond,

Resolved, That we tender to the trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and to the friends of Macon, our warmest thanks for their kindness in placing this church at our disposal, and for their hospitality during the session of our convention.

The Committee on Amendments reported recommending certain amendments, which, after a lengthy debate, were adopted.

(The Constitution as amended is published herewith.)

On motion of Rev Mr Turner, of Bibb,

Resolved, That the President and Secretary prepare, and have the minutes of this Convention published in pamphlet form and distributed to the different counties.

On motion of William J White, of Richmond county,

Resolved, That our delegate to Washington be instructed to present a copy of the proceedings of this Convention to the President of the United States and the Governor of Georgia; to the President

of the United States Senate, and of the Senate of Georgia; to the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States, and of the State of Georgia.

On motion of Holsey, of Hancock county,

Resolved, That the thanks of the Convention be hereby tendered to the President of this Association for the impartial and faithful performance of his duties.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Convention be tendered to Rev Wm J White, the Secretary, Robt Johnson, Second Assistant Secretary, for the faithful performance of their duties.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Convention be tendered to Lewis Smith, of Macon, Marshal of the Convention, and to his Assistants, for the polite and gentlemanly manner in which they have performed their duties.

Major G L Eberhart, Superintendent of Schools under the Freedmen's Bureau was elected Superintendent of Schools under this Association.

After prayer by Rev Wm J White, the convention adjourned *sine die*.

—o—

The following are the resolutions adopted by the Convention:

Resolved, That 'we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life liberty and pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.'

Resolved, That in regard to the franchise, we will never cease to protest against all partial legislation, based on color or race, or other adventitious distinctions.

Resolved, That while we protest against all partial legislation, and while we demand Equal Rights for all citizens, we recommend that for the coming year the members of our Association refrain from public political discussion in the meetings of the Association, and exert their entire influence to establish schools and educate the people.

Resolved, That we advise our friends to hold educational conventions in each of the Congressional Districts of the State during the coming year.

Resolved, That we cordially approve of the noble course pursued by the Loyal Georgian, and the able and fearless manner in which it has advocated our cause, and exposed all men who have sought to deprive us of our rights.

Resolved, That we request our friends to do all in their power to sustain the Loyal Georgian.

Resolved, That whereas General Davis Tillson came into a meeting of the council of this Association, and denounced our President—Capt J E Bryant—as a liar, a scoundrel a beggar and a villain, and whereas a vote of thanks was passed by the council for his

speech, not intending thereby to thank him for denouncing our President, but for the valuable information which the speech contained, concerning matters which were of interest to our people, and did not relate to Captain Bryant, and whereas the intention of the members of the council in passing the resolution has been misunderstood, we direct the Secretary of the council to expunge the resolution from the records of the council.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Convention be hereby tendered to the President of this Association for the impartial and faithful performance of his duties.

Resolved, That whereas we have received no protection from the civil authorities we call upon the good citizens of the State to come to our relief, and help us to secure justice for our people.

Resolved, That whereas the colored people of this State are daily receiving the most unjust treatment on the cars, having to pay as much as white passengers while they are consigned to the most filthy cars, often cursed and driven about; their wives and daughters insulted, blackguarded and smoked to sickness; therefore we bitterly protest against such conduct, it being outrageous and inhuman and we declare that we will not much longer submit to it.

Resolved, That whereas a large majority of the Bureau Agents are Southern men who will not take notice of outrages perpetrated upon our people, we most respectfully request the United States Government to give us Northern Agents or allow colored men to hold these offices.

Resolved, That we bitterly protest against the colored people of Georgia, being levied upon for poll tax until they are given the right to vote, but they are willing to pay all other taxes when no more is exacted than is required of white men.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Convention be tendered to Rev Wm J White, the Secretary, Robt Johnson, Second Assistant Secretary, and to the Marshal, Lewis Smith, and his Assistants.

Resolved, That we request the Loyal Georgian, the New York Tribune, and all other papers friendly to our cause to publish these resolutions.

J. E. BRYANT, President.

WM. J. WHITE, Secretary.

CONSTITUTION OF THE GEORGIA EQUAL RIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

PREAMBLE.

We, the friends of impartial justice in Georgia, in Convention assembled, feeling that the time has come when we should unite to advance the cause we advocate, do form ourselves into an Association, for the purpose, among other things, of assisting the destitute and improving those who need our assistance. Our motto shall be,

'Peace and Good Will to All Men.' The object of the Association shall be to establish schools and labor to secure for every citizen, without regard to race, descent or color, equal political rights. To secure this object we will labor peaceably, but earnestly.

ART. I—NAME—This Association shall be known as The Georgia Equal Rights and Educational Association.

ART. II—OFFICERS—The officers of this Association shall be a President, one Vice President from each county, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Chaplain, Treasurer, Superintendent of Schools, and such committees as the Association shall elect.

ART. III—ELECTION OF OFFICE—The officers chosen by this Association shall be elected by ballot at the regular meeting in October, and remain in office three years, providing, however, that the first election shall take place in January 1866, and the second in October 1868. All officers are to continue in office until their places are filled. Vacancies may be filled at any of the regular meetings.

Each county shall elect the Vice President to which it is entitled. It shall be the duty of the President, or of a Deputy President, to superintend the election in each county.

The President shall commission the Vice Presidents who have been duly elected.

ART. IV—DUTIES OF OFFICERS—Sec. 1. It shall be the duty of the President to preside at all meetings of the Association and Council.

He shall appoint all committees who are not elected by the Association or Council.

He shall appoint as many Deputy Presidents as he may deem necessary who shall perform such duties, not in conflict with the provisions of this Constitution, as the President may direct.

He shall have power to appoint officers to fill all vacancies that may arise and appoint Vice Presidents in counties where none have been elected until an election shall be held.

He shall establish an office and give his personal attention to all matters, that may advance the interest of the Association or the cause which it advocates.

He shall nominate to the Council such officers as they are authorized to elect, and if a person nominated shall be rejected by the Council, it shall be his duty to nominate another person, and continue to nominate until a choice is made.

It shall be his duty to see that all officers of this Association faithfully perform the duties assigned them, and, for bad conduct, he may suspend an officer, providing two-thirds of the Council concur therein.

Whenever he shall think proper to suspend an officer he shall immediately order the officer to deliver to him all books, papers or other property, belonging to the Association, and shall, as soon as practicable, call a meeting of the Council, and if two-thirds of the

Council approve of the action of the President, the officer shall be suspended until the next meeting of the Association.

He shall fill the vacancy until the Council have decided the matter.

He shall sign orders for the Treasurer to pay money, voted by the Council or the State Association and none others, unless specially authorized to do so by the Council or State Association.

He shall call a meeting of the Council, whenever, in his opinion, the good of the cause demands, and shall transact any business, not in conflict with the constitution, which he shall be instructed by the State Association or the council to transact, or that he may consider necessary for the good of the cause.

2. It shall be the duty of one of the Vice Presidents, designated by the Council, when the State Association is not in session, to perform the duties of the President, when, for any cause, he is unable to perform them. And if a vacancy arises when the Council is not in session, the President may designate one of the Vice Presidents to perform his duties.

Each Vice President shall be President of the County Association if there be one in the county in which he lives, during the time he remains Vice President, and shall labor to promote the interests of the Association in his county.

3. It shall be the duty of the Recording Secretary to keep a correct and impartial record of all the proceedings of the Association, and, to attend to any business that the Association may direct.

4. The Corresponding Secretary shall conduct the correspondence of the Association and Council, under the direction of the President.

5. The Chaplain shall open all the meetings of the Association with prayer.

6. The Treasurer shall be elected by the Council, and may be removed by the same, upon the recommendation of the President, whenever, in his opinion, the Treasurer shall not faithfully perform his duties.

He shall have charge of all money or other property, belonging to the Association, and shall give to the President a bond in such sum as the Council may require for the faithful discharge of his duties.

He shall pay out no money except upon order, approved by the President and signed by the Secretary of the Council.

He shall invest the money in his hands in such a manner as the Council may direct.

ART. V—MEMBERS—The members of this Association shall be elected annually by the Subordinate Associations.

Each Subordinate Association shall be entitled to one representative, and one for each three hundred members or for a fraction over half that number.

The members of the Convention which form this Constitution and the officers elect of the Association shall be honorary members

of the same and shall remain permanent members and be entitled to all the rights and privileges of other members.

The members shall be elected at the first regular meeting in September. In case of a vacancy, a representative shall be elected as soon as practicable to fill the unexpired term of such member.

No person shall be a member of this Association under the age of twenty-one years.

ART. VI—COUNCIL—Sec. 1. The President and Vice President shall constitute a council to attend to such business as is delegated to them by this Constitution or which the State Association may instruct them to perform.

They shall elect annually a delegate to congress, (until the right of suffrage shall be given to all men without regard to race or color), who shall be nominated by the President.

If they shall not elect the person nominated by the President, they shall continue to ballot for a person nominated by him, until a choice is made.

The delegate to Congress will be elected in October. In case of a vacancy, a delegate shall be elected as soon as practicable, to fill the same.

The Council shall be called together by the President whenever, in his opinion, this is necessary, and shall be empowered to transact any business not in conflict with the Constitution.

They shall decide what compensation each officer shall receive.

When an officer has been suspended by the Council, they shall fill the vacancy until the State Association shall take action in regard to it.

They shall elect a Secretary who shall act as private Secretary to the President, and perform such duties as the Council or President may direct.

The Secretary of the Council shall remain in office one year, and shall be elected annually in October.

The Council may, by a two-thirds vote, suspend the President whenever he shall violate this Constitution, in which case, they shall immediately call a meeting of the State Association, and, if two thirds of the Association approved of the action of the Council, the President shall be expelled from office, and they shall also suspend any other officer for a violation of the Constitution, neglect of duty or gross immorality.

A majority of the Council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

ART. VII—Sec. 1. The State Association shall meet annually, in the month of October.

The time and place for holding the session shall be fixed by the President unless the Association or Council shall attend to that duty.

The President or Council may call an extra meeting of the Association when they consider it necessary.

ART. VIII—BY-LAWS—This Association may make any By-Laws not inconsistent with the Constitution.

ART. IX—COUNTY AND SUBORDINATE ASSOCIATIONS—This Association may organize County and Subordinate Associations, at such places and under such regulations as it may deem proper.

ART. X—CONSTITUTION—This Constitution may be altered or amended at any regular meeting of this Association by a two-thirds vote providing that notice shall be given in writing, by the member submitting an amendment, at least 24 hours before action shall be taken.

CONSTITUTION OF COUNTY EQUAL RIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

PREAMBLE.

We the friends of impartial justice, believing that in union there is strength, do organize ourselves into an Association to secure for all: 1st, equal political rights; 2d, assistance for the destitute; and 3d, the education and elevation of the people.

ART. I—THE NAME—The name of this Association shall be the County Equal Rights and Educational Association.

ART. II—OFFICERS—The officers of the Association shall be a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Chaplain, an Examining Committee of Five, and a Financial Committee of Six.

ART. III—The President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Chaplain shall be elected by ballot annually, at the first meeting in January. All the committees shall be appointed by the President on the night of his election, or as soon after as may be practicable. All officers are to continue until their places are filled. Vacancies may be filled at any of the regular meetings.

ART. IV—DUTIES OF OFFICERS—Sec. 1. It shall be the duty of the President to preside at all meetings; to call an extra meeting whenever he may deem it advisable, or upon the request of five members, to initiate new members, and to perform all duties that may devolve upon him by the Constitution and By-Laws

2. It shall be the duty of the Vice President, in the absence of the President to perform his duties.

3. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to keep a true and impartial record of the doings of the Association, and in the absence of the President and Vice President to call extra meetings of the Association by the request of five members, and attend to such other duties as the Association may direct.

4. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to take charge of and safely keep all monies and other property entrusted to him by the Association, and pay out the same only upon a requisition drawn according to a vote of the Association, and signed by the President and Secretary. He shall report once a quarter, and as much oftener as the society may direct. He shall give the President a bond in such sum as the Association may require for the faithful performance of his duties.

5. The Chaplain shall open all the meetings with prayer.

6. The Executive Committee shall faithfully attend to all duties imposed on them from time to time making a report when called upon.

7. It shall be the duty of the Examining Committee carefully to examine all propositions for membership to the Association and when received by a constitutional vote, to examine the candidate before initiated, and report to the President upon the same.

8. It shall be the duty of the Financial Committee to make all necessary arrangements for furnishing the Association with needed funds, and to perform such other duties as the society may require of them.

ART. V.—MEMBERS—Sec. 1. All persons who are members of the State Association from this county shall be members of the County Association, having all the privileges of other members except the privilege to vote.

4. The President and Vice President of each Subordinate Association in this county, and Representatives constitutionally elected from the same shall be members of the County Association.

ART. VI.—If there is but one Association in a county it shall have the powers, and perform the duties conferred upon the County and Subordinate Associations.

ART. VII.—BY LAWS—This Association is authorized to make any By Laws not in conflict with the State Association.

ART. VIII.—The meetings of this Association may be public or private.

ART. IX.—The members of one County Association shall have the privilege of attending meetings of all County Associations.

CONSTITUTION OF SUBORDINATE EQUAL RIGHTS AND EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

PREAMBLE.

We, the friends of impartial justice, believing that in union there is strength, do organize ourselves into an Association to secure for all: 1st, equal political rights; 2d, assistance for the destitute; and 3d, the education and elevation of the people.

ART. I.—THE NAME—The name of this Association shall be the Equal Rights and Educational Association of County, No.

ART. II.—OFFICERS—The officers of the Association shall be a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Chaplain, an Examining Committee of three, an Executive Committee of five, and a Financial Committee of six.

ART. III.—The President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Chaplain shall be elected by ballot annually, at the first meeting in January. All the committees shall be filled by the President on the night of his election, or so soon after as may be practicable. All officers are to continue until their places are filled. Vacancies may be filled at any of the regular meetings.

ART. IV—DUTIES OF OFFICERS—Sec 1. It shall be the duty of the President to preside at all meetings; to call an extra meeting whenever he may deem it advisable, or upon the request of five members, to initiate new members, and to perform all duties that may devolve upon him by the Constitution and By-Laws.

2. It shall be the duty of the Vice President, in the absence of the President, to perform his duties.

3. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to keep a true and impartial record of the doings of the Association, and in the absence of the President and Vice President to call extra meetings of the Association by the request of five members, and attend to such other duties as the Association may direct.

4. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to take charge of, and safely keep, all monies and other property intrusted to him by the Association, and pay out the same only upon a requisition drawn according to the vote of the Association and signed by the President and Secretary. He shall report once a quarter, and as much oftener as the society may direct. He shall give to the President a bond in such sum as the Association may require for the faithful performance of his duties.

5. The Chaplain shall open all the meetings with prayer.

6. The Executive Committee shall faithfully attend to all duties imposed on them from time to time, making a report when called upon.

7. It shall be the duty of the Examining Committee carefully to examine all propositions for membership to the Association, and when received by a Constitutional vote to examine candidates before initiated, and report to the President upon the same.

8. It shall be the duty of the Financial Committee to make all necessary arrangements for furnishing the Association with needed funds, and shall perform such other duties as the society may require of them.

* **ART. V—MEMBERSHIP—**Sec. 1st. All persons who desire to become members of this Association shall first be proposed by a member in writing, stating name, age, business and residence.

2. The proposition shall be handed to the Examining Committee, who shall report upon the same as soon as practicable, either approving or disapproving.

3. After the committee have reported, a ballot shall be taken and if a majority vote in favor of the candidate he shall be declared elected,

4. After the candidate has been elected he shall be initiated as soon as practicable.

5. The candidates presenting themselves, the following questions shall be proposed to them by the Examining Committee: Will you do all in your power to alleviate the wants of the destitute, to assist in educating the people, to secure to all persons equal political rights, and defend and protect the Constitution and laws of the United States?

6. If the candidate shall answer each of the above questions in the

affirmative, he shall be conducted into the room of the Association by the chairman of the Examining Committee, and be introduced to the President; after which, the candidates shall sign the Constitution and pay a fee of twenty-five cents, and be declared members of the Association.

ART. VI.—REPRESENTATIVES—When two or more Subordinate Associations shall have been organized in any county, they shall elect one representative for every twenty-five members, who, together with the President and Vice President, shall form a County Association.

ART. VII.—This Association is authorized to make any By-Laws not in conflict with the State or County Associations.

ART. VIII.—The meetings of this Association may be public or private.

ART. IX.—The members of one Subordinate Association shall have the privilege of attending the meetings of all Subordinate Associations.

ART. X.—The Treasurer of this Association shall pay into the Treasury of the State Association, twenty-five cents for each of its members and take a receipt for the same signed by the President of the State Association, and Secretary of the Council.

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