

AFRO-AMERICAN LEAGUE.

A THREE-CORNERED MOVEMENT TO ORGANIZE THE COLORED PEOPLE.

One Convention Has Been Held and Two More Are in Prospect—Thomas T. Fortune of New York City Arranging for One Here Wednesday—John G. Jones, Who Will Hold Another in June, Does Not Approve.

If no lack of leaders is a good sign the crusade about to be begun within the ranks of the colored people of the United States for the advancement of the race promises well.

Ferry H. Carson, the widely known hotel-keeper of Washington, D. C., has held his convention. Thomas T. Fortune, the still more widely known editor of New York City, will hold his convention in Chicago next Wednesday. And John G. Jones, the less widely known lawyer of this city, will hold his convention here next June.

The object of the three conventions is apparently the same.

"We must form a national organization to secure our rights," said Mr. Carson.

"We are going to form the Afro-American League for the betterment of our condition," says Mr. Fortune.

"We will organize for protection," Mr. Jones will say.

That Mr. Carson, a member of the National Republican Committee from the District of Columbia, switched off into politics is lamented by Mr. Fortune and Mr. Jones, and forms their reason for calling fresh conventions. And because there is thought to be danger that Mr. Jones may be the only delegate to his convention Mr. Fortune thinks it wise to try his own hand at one. Mr. Jones, of course, has his views about Mr. Fortune.

For the moment anyhow Mr. Fortune stands in the focus of the eyes of his race. His convention is at hand. If it develops the strength its leader expects it will give birth to the pioneer permanent colored organization of the country, as the Washington convention adjourned without effecting its primary purpose.

Mr. Fortune reached Chicago Friday and began preparations for the meeting Wednesday. He has secured the Madison Street Theater and predicts an attendance of 300 delegates, representing every State in the Union. A committee of 100 citizens has been formed to give the expected visitors a reception and banquet, has engaged the First Regiment Armory for Wednesday evening, and has asked the Mayor to deliver an address of welcome. It looks as if Mr. Fortune were an organizer.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"Two years ago, when editor of the *Freeman*," said Mr. Fortune yesterday, "I began agitating the formation of the Afro-American League. A preliminary organization has now been secured in every State. Each delegate to the approaching convention will come as the representative of at least twenty-five leading colored men in his community. We have a good working basis, therefore, to start on.

"The object of the convention is to consolidate these State leagues into a National organization, which can then take up the work of forming further State leagues and enlarging those already formed. A constitution embodying the principles of the organization will be formulated.

"I have some pet ideas myself as to what the constitution should be and shall present them to the delegates. In the first place I want the name of the preliminary organization, the Afro-American League, retained by the permanent body. I regard this matter of name as highly important. At present our race in this country hasn't a name descriptive of it which commands a capital letter in the newspapers. We are referred to as the negro race, colored people, 'niggers,' 'darkies,' and 'coons.' The effect on the thought of the country of these uncapitalized and slighting terms is immensely to our disadvantage. It goes far towards preventing our rising into the equal respect accorded white Americans, German-Americans, Irish-Americans, Scandinavian-Americans, and the other classes of our population dignified by a large initial letter. Even the Indians, though a mere handful in comparison with our numbers and much less deserving of commendation in point of progress, are given a prestige in name not given us. The effect on our own people of belittling terms in the mouths of others is also bad; it humiliates us, crushes rising spirits, and lacerates us with cruel distinctions. I want the term Afro-American to become currently descriptive of our race and descriptive even of individual members of the race. By adopting the term ourselves, first as the name of a great national organization, next as the name of the entire race, and then in particular instances, we can bring this about.

"The organization must be strictly non-political. Its aims will be the correction not merely of the political but as well of the civil, social, and material disabilities under which we suffer, especially in the South, but also in the North. To accomplish these aims we must seek the cooperation of all parties, all sects, and all classes.

FIVE DEPARTMENTS.

"I am in favor of the league's undertaking practical work in five departments. They are:

"First—An Afro-American bank, with a head office in one of the centers of commerce, and branches throughout the country.

"Second—An Afro-American emigration bureau, to scatter the race through the different States as equably as possible, constantly compiling information as to the best places in this country, and even abroad, for the habitation of our people.

"Third—An Afro American Committee on Legislature, composed of lawyers, to induce legislation favorable to us and resist that which is unfavorable.

"Fourth—An Afro-American Bureau of Technical Education, to promote the establishment of trade schools among us.

"Fifth—An Afro-American Board of Co-operative Industry, to organize co-operative stores and manufactures in communities thickly enough peopled by our race to sustain such undertakings."

Mr. Fortune's ideas are large. But they will be discussed Wednesday by some of the large men of his race. Among the delegates he expects to aid him in forming the league's constitution are: Prof. J. C. Price, President of Livingston College, North Carolina; John C. Dancy, North Carolina, who seconded Blaine's nomination in the last Republican National Convention; Dr. William D. Crum, South Carolina; W. A. Pledger, editor of the *Atlanta News*; Van N. Williams, Post-Office Examiner at Birmingham; the Rev. W. H. Heard, Presiding Elder of the Lancaster District, Pennsylvania; John Durham of the editorial staff of the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*; J. Gordon Street, a reporter on the *Boston Herald*; the Rev. Alex. Walters, New York; Col. Robert Harlan and D. A. Rudd, Cincinnati; H. C. Smith, editor of the *Cleveland Gazette*; the Hon. Jerry Brown, an ex-member of the Ohio Legislature from Cleveland; Prof. B. K. Sampson, Memphis, Tenn.; the Hon. H. C. C. Astwood, ex-United States Consul to San Domingo, Louisiana; two delegates from the Dover Republican Club of Peoria; F. L. Barnett, the Chicago lawyer; and other well-known Illinois and Chicago colored men.

Mr. Fortune exhibits letters approving the idea of the convention from such colored celebrities as John R. Lynch, Fourth Auditor of the United States Treasury; James M. Townsend, Recorder of the Land Office; ex-Gov. P. B. S. Pinchback, New Orleans; J. H. Lewis, the big merchant tailor of Boston; and Bishop B. T. Tanner, Pennsylvania.

MR. JONES IS SKEPTICAL.

Despite all this, however, Mr. Jones, the June conventionist, says that Mr. Fortune's convention will prove a dead failure. He further says Mr. Fortune is stealing an idea original with Mr. Jones in getting up a convention at all. At the same time he absolves Mr. Carson from this charge on the ground of still greater priority. Moreover he has circulated the following notice:

TO THE COLORED PEOPLE OF THE U. S.:
I, the undersigned committee has been instructed by several State leagues and a number of prominent and leading colored men from every State and Territory in the Union to inform the press and the public that not the slightest attention has been or will be given to the convention that has been called by T. Thomas Fortune that has been advertised to meet in this city Jan. 15, and all delegates and others are requested to attend the National Convention that has been called to meet in Chicago June 21, 1890, for the purpose of forming a National League to better the condition of their race. THE REV. G. C. BORTH, JOHN L. WALLACE, Kansas; ALEXANDER G. ALKES, Iowa; DANIEL LUCAS, Missouri; JOHN G. JONES, Chicago, Ill.

"I do not care to discuss Mr. Jones," said Mr. Fortune. "But I have reasons for doubting that Mr. Jones was ever authorized to use the signatures appended to his circular. Men whose names he has appended to other circulars will be present as delegates to the convention Wednesday. I should like Mr. Jones to be present also."

But Mr. Jones is not so suave as Mr. Fortune.

"I do not want to discuss Mr. Fortune," he said. "I am opposed to his having any-

thing to do with a convention of colored people because he started out in life as a Republican, became a Prohibitionist, stumped New York for Grover Cleveland, and has now shifted back to Republicanism."

Mr. Fortune is able to defend himself.

"I started out in life as a printer," he said, "have worked my way to the editorship and proprietorship of a newspaper, and have never sought an office. I am a Republican, but also a free-trader. I voted for Cleveland because he made free trade the single issue of his campaign and had shown he was not unfriendly to our race. Under any other circumstances I am a Republican, but never a politician."

Thus lies the field. Mr. Carson has not altogether retired, and Mr. Jones and Mr. Fortune have yet to decide the supremacy.

In the meantime, however, the following prominent colored citizens of Chicago have come to Mr. Fortune's assistance:

J. W. E. Thomas, ex-member of the Legislature; Henry J. Mitchell, clerk in the County Clerk's office; George D. Ecton, ex-member of the Legislature; John H. Howard, Post-Office janitor; William Baker, J. H. Porter, E. H. Morris, L. G. Wheeler, Dr. D. H. Williams, R. S. Bryan, C. F. Bentley, the dentist, W. H. Curd, J. Q. Grant, J. E. Jones, A. E. Knight, the Rev. J. W. Moore, S. Williams, and about eighty others.

Whatever the outcome of the three-cornered division the cause of the Afro-American race can hardly suffer. It may be much advanced.