

COMMISSIONER TO REVISE THE LAWS RELATING TO SLAVERY.

The system of negro Slavery having been abolished throughout the country, it becomes a duty that the status of the freedmen in Maryland should now be distinctly and clearly defined under our laws. From the origin of our State government, Slavery has been more or less interwoven with our whole domestic economy. The result has been, that our statute books are burthened with laws—some long since obsolete, but unrepealed—and mostly all calculated to confuse and lead to embarrassment, in the action of our courts. The relations existing in the past between master and slave, being dissolved, the entire system of laws relating to the colored population should be carefully revised by some competent authority, and such changes and modifications recommended as may lead to the adoption of a defined and uniform system for their protection and guidance in the future. In proclaiming freedom to the colored race, the State of Maryland designed to confer upon the negro something more than a mere nominal benefit: she intended freedom in all that relates to person and property. This would not be accomplished, if, after being made free by the provisions of your organic law, the freedmen are left without proper direction under a system of just and equitable laws, or denied the fullest protection in their new relation. There should be entire conformity between these laws, and the principles recognized and proclaimed in your free Constitution. In connection with this recommendation, I should hope that steps may be taken, at an early day, to confer upon the freedman the privilege of testifying in our Courts—a right which has already been conceded in some of our sister States of the South, and which is urged by the strongest considerations of justice and fair dealing.

I would recommend that authority be given to appoint a Commissioner, whose duty it shall be to revise all laws relating to the former status of the negro, and report at the regular session of your Honorable Body in January next, such modifications or additions in the present Code, as may be suggested by the provisions of the New Constitution abolishing Slavery, and the changed relation in which we stand towards the colored race.

REGISTRATION OF VOTERS.

The Act passed for the registration of voters, in furtherance of the requirements of the Constitution, has been threatened, I regret to say, with resistance, in some parts of the State, chiefly among those, who, in the face of the decision of our highest judicial tribunal, persist in denying its constitutionality, and object to the oath of allegiance which it imposes.