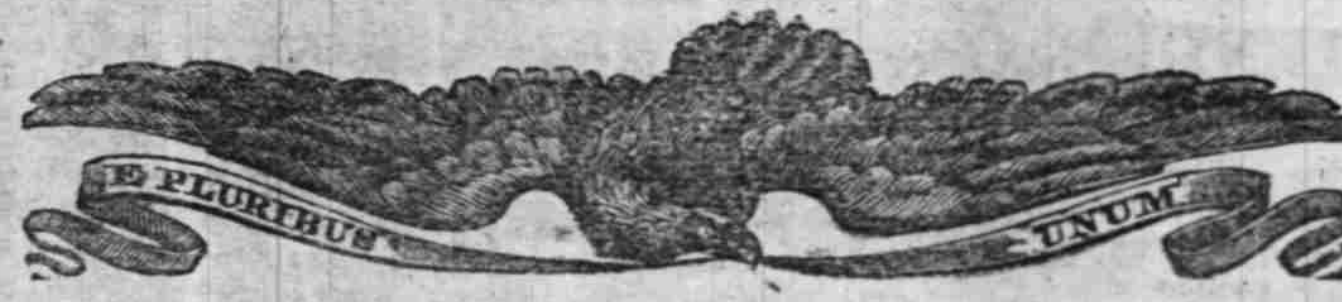


HENDERSON PIONEER.



"NO NORTH, NO SOUTH, NO EAST, NO WEST---OUR WHOLE COUNTRY."

VOL. 1.

HENDERSONVILLE, N. C., SEPTEMBER 12, 1866.

NO. 18.

THE HENDERSON PIONEER.

By A. H. Jones.

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Washington, D. C., Aug. 8th, 1866.

To the Editor of the Sentinel:

GENTLEMEN—My attention has been called to the leading article in your journal of the 11th ultimo, in which you criticise my conduct very freely and indulge in remarks well calculated, if not intended, to render my position in the State a citizen, and a public officer, uncomfortable, if not untenable. I am unwilling to believe you mean to menace me with the popular indignation, or vengeance, and yet what else I infer from the following sentences, I say, "If Mr. Goodloe contemplates resigning his former residence in this State, he should secure himself, in his self-assumed capacity another representative man, of a high and distinguished consideration at the hands of our people."—Whatever your purpose may have been, I cannot but feel that your language, proceeding

as those opinions were not spontaneous in my own mind, they were imbibed from reading the debate which took place in the Virginia Legislature in 1832, upon the question of abolishing slavery. It was characterized by great eloquence and power, and made an impression upon my youthful mind which time has not effaced. I embraced the generous idea of emancipation, with my whole heart, as it was expounded by McDowell, Faulkner, Thos. J. Randolph, Bellinger, Chandler, Moore of Rockbridge, Marshall, Broadnax, and others. Subsequently, I read the writings of Mr. [Name], which are instinct with the spirit of liberty; so that, before I was of age, and before I had heard that there was a Northern abolitionist in existence, my mind was thoroughly imbued with the sentiment. I may remark, also, that I heard no one at that day attempt to defend the abstract idea of slavery. It was the boast of the emancipation orators in Virginia, that no man had risen in the Legislature to defend the slavery. There were elaborate apologies and excuses, but no attempt at justification. I have compiled this entire debate, and I hope one day to see it published. It will do more honor to Virginia than anything in her annals, since the revolutionary period.

I have always protested against and opposed the extension of slavery; and as a journalist have often had occasion to examine and criticise the arguments of its friends, intended to show that the institution is compatible with equity and Christianity, but I have never set myself up as a censor of individuals, nor have I maintained that all who held slaves were as unjust as I conceive the system to be. I have followed the examples of Washington, Jefferson, Madison and a host of other noble Virginians, with Hugh Williamson, James Iredell and William Gaston of North Carolina, in declaring my opinion that slavery was the greatest moral and political evil that afflicted our country. Like them, too, I have always addressed myself to the white people, and never by written or spoken word have I encouraged the negroes to revolt, or to disobedience. Since slavery was abolished, I be-

lieve that the admission of the rebels has been made through the New York Times and the National Republican of this city, while a similar intimation has appeared recently in the *Intelligencer*. But this test-oath is not the only unpalatable food which the new friends of the President will have to swallow. We are assured by the *National Republican* that the President is still the friend of negro suffrage, as he was when he sent the telegram to Governor Sharkley, and when he put his name to the reported convention with Maj. Stearns of Boston. The *Republican* of the 21st ultimo, arraigned Congress before the country failing to grant negro suffrage in the District of Columbia to all who can read and write, to all who own property, and to all who have borne arms in the service of the United States against the rebellion. It charged that it was the object of Congress by this course, to place the President in a false position before the colored race, which is a naughty Congress would not permit. I leave you and your readers to say whether the delegates to the August Convention will acquiesce in this policy of the President as cordially as I do.

I know not what policy may be laid down by the Philadelphia September Convention. I signed the call for it from a conviction that the loyal men of the South are entitled to be heard, and that they cannot be heard in the August Convention, if the representatives of the lately rebellious population are to be admitted. This is an undecided question. The authorities differ. The Republican adherents of the President's policy, as I have stated, say the "Confederates" shall not be admitted. But this class of Republicans is small and feeble in number and influence in the Northern States; while the great "Copperhead" party insists that the Southern representatives shall be admitted, without regard to tests of loyalty. I have made up my mind that a political association with Northern "Copperheads" and Southern "Confederates" will not be congenial to my taste; I should be a fish out of water, and I, therefore, choose to be represented in the August Convention, by those who never

will pass away, when their groundlessness is shown in the light of reason and experience. No intelligent man—at least no lawyer now thinks of disputing the propriety of allowing negro testimony. The principle is almost universally admitted to be just; and while it is felt to be an essential protection to the negro against oppression, it is at the same time found to be in no wise detrimental to white men. On the contrary it is another security thrown around their rights. Communities need to be Argus-eyed. They should see all around them, that there may be no hiding place for crime. What, then, must be thought of the wisdom of States which blindfold half their population to the misdoings of the other half?

I know nothing in all history comparable with the suddenness of this collapse of time-honored prejudice. The people of the South should learn from it to distrust the grounds of that twin relic of slavery, their aversion to negro suffrage. I confess I would be glad to see one candid, dispassionate argument designed to show the evils that must attend the extension of the franchise to that class. It cannot be that they are illiterate, because the same argument is good against at least twenty thousand white voters in the State; and if ignorance is considered an insuperable objection, it is not applicable to all negroes; and is less applicable to some of that class than to many whites. But the very ignorance and inferiority of the negroes furnish a reason, why we should not be afraid of their influence. The white people have the education, the high spirit and habit of command, and at the same time constitute a majority of two-thirds of the population. Yet they are afraid to trust the negro with the right of suffrage, lest he should supplant them!

If it is asked, why give the negro suffrage? I reply by asking, why give it to white men? Is not the ballot box the bulwark of liberty? Is there liberty any where on earth where the elective franchise is withheld from the people? The right to vote commands respect, and secures countenance and friends, the world over, while the absence of the franchise is everywhere accompanied with the neglect and contempt of the rich and powerful. The man who is armed with the ballot is not to be despised. He is not only respected and protected by the numerous class of aspirants for office, but by all who feel an interest in the success of parties. The poor handful of free negroes in North Carolina were respected and courted by politicians, so long as they enjoyed the elective franchise. But when in a moment of passion, the Convention of 1835, in its haste to adopt the protest of Mr. Gaston, un-

derstanding that the negroes would be excluded from the right of suffrage, then they are not to be reckoned as part of the population in apportioning representation. I give the substance and effect of the section, rather than its words. This basis, certainly fair as it regards the white people, however short of fairness it may be to the negroes.—I have never yet seen a Southern man who could deny its fairness. South Carolina, for instance, with but 281,000 white inhabitants, can have no just claims to a representation based on more than 700,000. To maintain the contrary is to claim for each of her citizens as much political influence as is exercised by two and a half Northern citizens. You may imagine that the Northern people are not just now in the mood to make this concession in favor of South Carolina. I have no desire to see Southern representation reduced. On the contrary I wish it to be legitimately increased, by the full and fair representation of all classes, and to bring about this result, I would strip the white people of the undeserved privilege of representing four millions of non-voters, until the latter are enfranchised. I would place this incentive to a liberal policy before the people. I may remark here that the amendment excludes the black population from the basis of representation, when the males of twenty-one years and upwards are excluded from the polls; so that the clause in the State Constitution which defines the qualifications of State officers would not be affected by the adoption of the amendment.

The disabilities imposed by the third section upon all who before the war took an oath to support the Constitution, and subsequently participated in the rebellion, may be removed by a two-thirds vote of both Houses of Congress; and the ratification of the amendment would of itself, in my opinion, secure that result immediately for the majority of the class affected, and eventually for all law-abiding citizens. I know it is ungracious to ask men to vote away privileges to which they have been accustomed all their lives; but the deprivation already exists as it regards National Government its

This question of suffrage, however, can be postponed until after the ratification of the amendment. It will not affect the question of representation until the apportionment of 1872 is made, and in the mean time the negroes will have made considerable progress in education and independence of character, so that thousands of them will be qualified to exercise the elective franchise intelligently before they become invested with it. If an educational test is thought proper, it will of course be equally proper for the white people; for ignorance in one class must be as incompatible with the intelligent exercise of the franchise, as in the other. Uniformity is all that the Constitutional amendment calls for. I apprehend that an educational test need take from no man, who has heretofore been a voter in the State, the right to vote; and that it will be sufficient to provide, that on and after a certain date no new electors shall be admitted to the polls unless they can read and write. A law to this effect would be a great incentive to improvement in both white and blacks.—Our politicians, instead of patronizing the dram shops, in the prosecution of their electioneering enterprises, would become school-masters and patrons of learning, in order to qualify their friends as voters.

One great objection to the admission of negroes to the enjoyment of equal laws is the popular habit of confounding political with social equality. The two things are essentially different, and political equality are essential to man, to secure him in the enjoyment of equal rights with others. They must be secured to him by the fundamental Constitutional laws of a State, and must be enforced, by the magistrate. Social equality independent of legislative enactment, could not be guaranteed by them, and not to be so guaranteed if the thing possible. There could be no more revolutionary than to compel people of incompatible characters, tastes, and habits, to associate together in the same Government.