

Ms. Chas. F. King
Presented to F. B. May 20 1841

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MINUTES

OF THE

STATE CONVENTION

OF

COLORED CITIZENS,

HELD AT ALBANY,

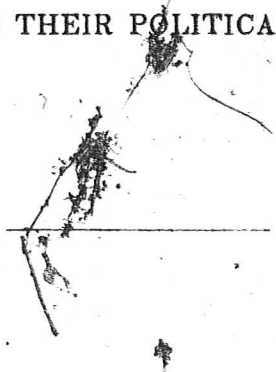
ON THE 18th, 19th, AND 20th OF AUGUST, 1840,

FOR THE PURPOSE OF

CONSIDERING THEIR POLITICAL CONDITION.

NEW-YORK:
PIERCY & REED, PRINTERS,
No. 9 Spruce street.
1840.

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THE MEETING.

At a meeting of Colored Citizens, favorable to a call for a State Convention, held in the city of New-York, May 29th, 1840, C. B. Ray in the chair, and C. L. Reason, Secretary, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted :

Resolved, That a Convention of the colored people of the State of New York be invited to assemble at Albany on the third Tuesday in August, to consider their political condition, and to adopt such measures as will be calculated to remove their disabilities, and that a call be issued to that effect.

Resolved, That Charles B. Ray, John J. Zuille, Theo. S. Wright, Charles L. Reason, and Timothy Seaman, be a committee to prepare a call in the spirit of the above resolution, and also to correspond with gentlemen in other places throughout the State, to interest them in the object of the Convention.

A CALL

FOR A CONVENTION OF THE COLORED INHABITANTS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.

Fellow citizens,—We issue this call, to invite you to attend a State Convention, to be held in the city of Albany on Tuesday, the 18th day of August next.

The primary object we have, in inviting you to assemble, is, to take into consideration the political condition of our people in this State, and to adopt such measures as can be simultaneously carried out by our brethren in every section of the State, to obtain a relief from those political disabilities under which we labor.

The principal legal disability which affects us, is, our deprivation of the free exercise, in common with other men, of the elective franchise. A free suffrage is the basis of a free government, the safeguard of a free people, the strength of the strong, the defence of the weak, a powerful auxiliary to respectability, wealth, and usefulness ; and just in proportion as men are deprived of this, they are shorn of their strength, and are subject to poverty, disgrace, and abuse.

We are convinced, fellow citizens, that not only our political, but our depressed condition in all other respects in the State, owes itself, not in the least sense, to the fact that we are politically weak, not possessing the unrestricted use of the elective franchise. The body politic see in us, therefore, no favors to court, and nothing to fear. It is to them a matter of no concern, what may be the abuses we suffer, or how unhappy our condition.

You are aware, that while other citizens have a free and unrestricted use of the elective franchise, a property qualification is required on our part, in order for us to exercise this right so important to a free people, and without which, a man cannot be considered, in a democratic sense, a freeman. This invidious requisition to the exercise of a birth-right privilege, weakens our standing as citizens of the State, and subjects us to all the consequent inconveniences. It also degrades our population, because it virtually lowers us in the scale of humanity, and reflects disparagingly upon our character. To seek a removal of this radical evil, is the object of calling you together in convention.

There has been no time so favorable for us to meet for the above object, as the present season. There is evidently a redeeming spirit abroad in our State—an increasing disposition to stand by, and defend the weak against the strong, as the noble acts of the Legislature regarding our protection as citizens, clearly indicate. Ought we not, then, to avail ourselves of this favorable indication, and come together to take some decisive measures to lay before the next Legislature our grievances, with a view to produce further action on their part, for our political disenfranchisement?

To facilitate the business of the Convention, it will be necessary that statements setting forth the legal and other disabilities of our people in different parts of the State, be presented at the Convention. To further this object, we invite all who expect to be present, to collect such statements, and also statistical accounts of the property, real and personal, public buildings, with their value, &c., owned by our people, and the condition of the people in morals, as compared with former times.

We therefore urge upon colored men in all sections of the State—men in all circumstances—if you possess self-respect, if you love liberty, if you appreciate your own rights, if you wish for political and moral elevation, if you have any interest in the prosperity of our people, if you have any regard for the welfare of your children, for the welfare of the State and of the nation, to assemble at Albany on the 18th of August next.

We call upon the farmer to leave for a while his harvesting, and repair to the assemblage of his brethren. Let the mechanic leave his workshop, to share the toils of a general council. Let the laborer and the working man be seen crowding the avenues that lead to the place of assemblage. Let every portion of our great and growing State, where lives a single object of oppression, be represented. We call upon the people in every city, town, and village to represent themselves in that Convention. Let the aged and the youth—all—all—be found at the above place, on that day. Come up, fellow citizens, from Suffolk to Erie, from Clinton to Steuben, and let us engage together in a common interest.

The above call was signed by upwards of one hundred persons, from different parts of the State.

PROCEEDINGS.

Pursuant to the preceding call, issued to the Colored Citizens of this State, through the "Colored American," urging them to assemble at Albany in convention on the 18th of August, to consider their political condition, and to adopt measures for their enfranchisement, the Hamilton street Baptist Church was thrown open at an early hour on Tuesday morning of the above date, and soon became the scene of the most spirited and soul-stirring meetings that have ever enlisted the feelings or engaged the energies of our people in this or any other State.

At ten o'clock, about 40 delegates were assembled.

The Convention was called to order by the Rev. Theodore S. Wright, of New York, who moved the appointment of Mr. Charles B. Ray, N. Y., as Chairman pro tem.

On motion of Alexander Crummell, N. Y., Messrs. Charles S. Morton, of Albany, and Frederick Olney, of New York, were appointed Secretaries.

Mr. Ray, in taking the chair, remarked

"In taking the chair, gentlemen, to organize the Convention, I congratulate you, in forming, this morning, the first assemblage of our people of this State, (and perhaps of any other) in the capacity of a STATE CONVENTION, to take into consideration the political disabilities under which our people of this Commonwealth are laboring.

"Our assembling together this morning, gentlemen, for the object before us, is practical evidence of the march of mind and improvement among us, and the deep and increasing interest felt in our political, moral, and social elevation.

"We assemble together, gentlemen, for purposes the most noble and becoming. The objects before us lay at the foundation of our rights as men, and of our usefulness as citizens of the State in which we live, and they can but be concurred in and approved of, by men of honest and virtuous principles, of all classes and parties. We are here this morning, under great obligation. Great responsibilities rest upon us. We represent the people generally with whom we are identified, and are the delegated body of fifty thousand of our

brethren, scattered throughout this great and growing State. The business we are about to enter upon, regards their interest equally as our own.

"The business we shall transact in this Convention, and the spirit in which we shall transact that business, will have an important bearing upon our people generally, and will tell, for good or for evil, upon them. For the doings of the Convention, when completed, will be published, and sent broad cast over the land, to come in contact with every class of mind—with men in high life and men in low life, and in every condition in life, to be criticised and scrutinized, and seen and read of all men. All eyes are upon us, to scan our doings.

"The proceedings will, then, in their tendencies and bearing upon our people, either elevate them in the view of the public, or lower them in their estimation. They will either give them a character, or become a disgrace to us, as the character of our business may be. Let us remember, that we are not affecting ourselves alone, but directly the fifty thousand whose delegates we are, and indirectly, the three millions scattered throughout our whole country.

"We repeat it, gentlemen, that the business we shall here transact, and the spirit in which we shall transact that business, will tell, for weal or for woe, upon our people. Let us, then, in entering upon the duties before us, in view of the great responsibility we assume, as the representatives of a maligned people, and in view of the tendencies and bearings of our doings upon them, enter upon these duties in the spirit of Him with whom we have to do, and without whom we can do nothing; and continue in all our deliberations to cultivate that spirit; and that we may be aided from above, and guided with wisdom from on high, through the sessions of our meeting, I call upon the Rev. Bro. Raymond to address the throne of grace."

On motion of Rev. Theodore S. Wright,

Resolved, That a Committee of three, consisting of James W. Duffin, of Geneva, Henry R. Crummell, and Michael Dougee of Albany, be appointed by the chair, as a Standing Committee, to make out the roll of this Convention. Adopted.

On motion of Charles L. Reason, of New York,

Resolved, That a Committee of four be appointed, to select candidates for the regular officers of this Convention, the said Committee to report forthwith. Adopted.

The following members were appointed by the chair: Alexander Crummell, Theodore S. Wright, of N. Y., James W. Duffin, Geneva, and Samuel Streeter, of Albany.

The Committee, after retiring, reported the following gentlemen, who were severally unanimously elected, and took their seats as officers of the Convention.

AUSTIN STEWART, of Rochester, President.

RICHARD P. G. WRIGHT, of Schenectady,

JOHN T. RAYMOND, of Albany,

WM. P. JOHNSON, of New York,

} Vice Presidents.

CHARLES L. REASON, of N. Y.,

HENRY H. GARNET, of Troy,

WM. H. TOPP, of Albany,

} Secretaries.

Mr. Austin Stewart, in assuming his station as President of the Convention, made the following brief, but appropriate remarks :

"I could have hoped, gentlemen, that some other person had been called to act as President of this Convention ; but inasmuch as it has pleased you to choose me to preside over your deliberation, and as I believe it to be the duty of every man to do whatever he can to benefit his people and to serve his country, with deference I yield to your request, and thank you for the honor you have conferred upon me.

"The object of this Convention is of course well known to all ; for it was fully set forth in the call which invited us together. Our political rights have been wrested from us without any just cause. No one can say that we ever conspired to injure a single interest of our country while we enjoyed the elective franchise ; no one can say that we ever cast a single vote to the detriment of the commonwealth. There is nothing improper, nothing unjust, in the steps which we are about to take. It is to be hoped that we have come fully determined to adopt some measures by which we shall obtain the privileges of citizens of the State of New York.

"It is necessary, gentlemen, that I should beg your assistance, in order that a brotherly spirit may be cherished in all things that may be done. Let us aim to destroy every root of bitterness that may attempt to spring up among us. Let us come forward with warm hearts, and a firm and steady determination to act like men, for the benefit of our people. If we but put our trust in God, we shall be able, through His assistance, to accomplish all things. Our State and our country must be shown the shame and disgrace that now rest upon them.

"Our people compose an important portion of the citizens of this State, and of the United States. They have mingled with the whole population that have rolled from the sea coast to the Rocky Mountains. And although we have been abused and hated—notwithstanding wave after wave of the foulest injustice has passed over us—still we love our country, and shall cease to love it only when the last ray of hope shall sink in darkness. But may God grant that such a day may be far distant. Let us hope that the laws and customs we so severely feel and so deeply deplore, will soon be done away. Let us, gentlemen, but do our duty, and my word for it, opposition will soon die, and be buried and forgotten.

"Then, brethren, come up to the work of duty, fearing nothing and anticipating much ; for God, who leads the armies of the skies, is our leader."

After the President had taken his seat, and declared the Convention open for regular business, it was, on motion of Charles B. Ray,

Resolved, That all persons favorable to the call for this Convention, and who have come under that call to deliberate in the doings of these meetings, be requested to hand in their names to the Standing Committee, as delegates to this Convention. Adopted.

Resolved, That a Committee of two, consisting of Charles L. Reason, of New York, and Rev. Eli N. Hall, of Albany, be appointed to draft rules for the government of this Convention.

Resolved, That a Committee of ten be appointed, to suggest, in a becoming form, business for this Convention. Adopted.

The following gentlemen were appointed as the Business Committee :

CHARLES B. RAY, of New York, Chairman.

JAMES W. DUFFIN, Geneva.

CHARLES S. MORTON, Albany.

ELIMUS S. RODGERS, Whitesboro.

JOHN WENDELL, Schenectady.

ARMSTRONG ARCHER, Williamsburgh.

THEODORE S. WRIGHT, New York.

PATRICK H. REASON, "

FREDERICK OLNEY, "

GEORGE BALTIMORE, Troy.

*ABNER H. FRANCIS, Buffalo.

After adopting these preliminary arrangements, at 12 o'clock the Convention adjourned, to meet at 2 o'clock P. M.

Tuesday Afternoon. The Convention assembled as per adjournment, and was opened with prayer by the Rev. Eli N. Hall, Albany.

The Committee on Rules submitted the following report, which, on motion, was as a whole adopted.

RULES.

1. Upon the appearance of a quorum, the President shall take the chair, and the Convention be called to order.

2. The Minutes of the preceding session shall be read at the commencement of each meeting ; at which time, mistakes, if any, shall be corrected.

3. The President shall decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal to the Convention.

4. All motions and addresses shall be made to the President, the member rising from his seat.

5. All motions (except those of reference,) shall be submitted in writing.

*Mr. Francis, of Buffalo, not being present when the appointments were made, was subsequently placed on the Committee.

6. All committces shall be nominated by the President, unless otherwise ordered by the Convention.

7. The previous question shall be always in order, and, until decided, shall preclude all amendment and debate of the main question, and shall be put in this form, "Shall the main question be now put?"

8. No member shall be interrupted while speaking, except when out of order—when he shall be called to order by or through the President.

9. A motion to adjourn shall be always in order, and shall be decided without debate.

10. No member shall speak more than twice on the same question without leave, or over fifteen minutes at each time.

11. No motion shall be reconsidered during the same session at which it is passed.

12. No resolution (except of reference) shall be offered to the Convention, except it come through the Business Committee.

13. The sessions of the Convention shall commence at 9 o'clock in the morning, and 2 in the afternoon.

CHARLES L. REASON, } Committee.
ELI N. HALL, }

The Committee on the Roll reported the following list, as the names of those who came to participate in the doings of the Convention.

The roll here given, stands as the one subsequently completed and used by the Convention.

ROLL.

NEW YORK.

Rev. Theo. S. Wright,
Charles B. Ray,
Charles L. Reason,
Alexander Crummell,
Frederick Olney,
Henry Williams,
Patrick H. Reason,
Wm. R. Thompson,
Jeffrey Van Clief,
J. H. Bishop,
John M. Dolan,
Wm. P. Johnson,
Thomas Jefferson.

POUGHKEEPSIE.

Rev. John N. Mars,
Uriah Boston.

HUDSON.

Tunis Blake,
James Parkman,
Lloyd Tillman,
J. Stay,
William Van Alstyne,
C. Osterhout,
Wm. H. Parker,
Solomon Groomer,
P. Green.

ALBANY..

Rev. John T. Raymond,
Eli N. Hall,
Charles S. Morton,
William H. Topp,
David Thomas,
Michael Dougee,

James F. Murray,
 Jacob Waldron,
 Primus Robinson,
 F. Van Vranken,
 A. Johnson,
 Henry R. Crummell,
 John Springsteal,
 Stephen Myers,
 Richard Thompson,
 M. Thompson,
 William Johnson,
 Henry Jackson,
 William Queen,
 Henry Johnson,
 Samuel Streeter,
 James Baltimore,
 Nicholas Bogart,
 Oliver King,
 R. Springsteal,
 Benjamin Cutler,
 Hiram Dalton,
 John Tate,
 Adam Blake,
 Eli Johnson,
 H. Emery,
 J. Lain.

TROY.

Alexander Theily,
 William Rich,
 J. A. Hubbard,
 Francis Baker,
 Jacob Brown,
 Francis L. Allen,
 Ezekiel George,
 H. Highland Garnet,
 Samuel Jefferson,
 Lewis Jones,
 George B. Moulton,
 George H. Baltimore,
 Prince Vameller,
 Rev. Robert Butler,
 William Garison,
 F. Thompson,
 Anthony Schuyler,
 Clarence P. Seldon,
 Rev. George Garnet,

Abram Jackson,
 James Gardner,
 Moses F. Van Leer,
 Daniel Jones,
 J. Woods,
 Jesse Prince.

SCHENECTADY.

R. P. G. Wright,
 Francis Simson,
 F. Jackson,
 John Wandell,
 Richard Sampson,
 Francis Dana,
 T. Harris,
 Moses Willcox,
 S. Barnes,
 G. Murray,
 M. Miner,
 Francis Thompson,
 J. Thompson,
 Francis La Tour,
 R. Murray.

LANSINGBURGH.

Andrew Grant,
 Frisby Way,
 John Jamieson,
 George Baker,
 Charles Sherman,
 Charles Shim,
 Augustus Gifford,
 Thomas Van Brankes,
 George Lansen,
 John Johnson,
 Daniel Oliver.

UTICA.

Benjamin Anderson,
 George C. Brown,
 Jermanus Loguen,
 Joseph C. Pankes.

WHITESBOROUGH.

Elimus P. Rogers,
 John M. Brickens.

WATERVLIET.

M. La Tour Lapanier,
J. Adams.

SYRACUSE.

John Chester,
Ambrose Dunbar.

GENEVA.

James W. Duffin.

ITHICA.

Henry Jackson.

WHITEHALL.

John Watson.

ROCHESTER.

Rev. Thomas James,
Austin Stewart,
F. Payne,
Rev. James Sharp.

BROOKLYN.

Augustus Washington.

JAMAICA, L. I.

Samuel V. Berry.

FLUSHING, L. I.

Edward M. Africanus.

ORANGE.

John Van Huesen.

GREENBUSH.

John Brown.

BUFFALO.

Abner H. Francis.

WEST TROY.

York La Tour.

WILLIAMSBURGH.

Rev. Armstrong Archer.
Willis Hodges.

The Business Committee reported by their chairman the following preamble and resolutions.

Whereas, we have assembled together here in convention, to devise means, and deliberately to act, and to call upon all who are willing, to assist us in acting, that we may remove that proscriptive clause in our State Constitution, contained in these words: "No man of color, unless he shall have been for three years a citizen of this State, and for one year next preceding any election, shall be seized and possessed of a freehold estate of the value of two hundred and fifty dollars, over and above all debts and incumbrances charged thereon, and shall have been actually rated and paid a tax thereon, shall be entitled to vote at any such election"—we think it our place here to declare, that we hold all distinctions between native-born citizens growing out of complexion, as unjust—not because it restricts us socially with respect to the rest of the community, but because it unwarrantably withholds rights inherent to us as men, and farther guaranteed by the noble charter of our country's liberty; it therefore becomes us, as the objects of this proscription, directly to state the ground of our grievances, to protest against the unrighteous discrimination, and to appeal to the reason, and nobler sentiments of the power-holding majority, for its peaceable but thorough overthrow:—therefore be it

Resolved, That all laws established for human government, and all systems of whatever kind, founded in the spirit of complexional

cast, are in violation of the fundamental principles of divine law, evil in their tendencies, and should therefore be effectually destroyed.

Resolved, That the toleration of complexional difference in the State of New York, is a stain upon its Constitution, and attaches it to the great system of oppression in the land, so vital to our national character—since it is upheld not only in direct opposition to the common rights of humanity, but also runs counter to those very political principles asserted by the framers of our republican government.

Resolved, That the Act of the Convention of 1821, which amended the State Constitution so as to extend the right of suffrage to one portion of the citizens of the State, unrestricted, and demand for its exercise a property-qualification of another portion, was a violation of every principle of justice, anti-republican, and repugnant to the assertion of man's equality, upon which our government is founded.

Resolved, That the discrimination introduced by the adoption of the above-mentioned article, was a violation of justice, because it deprived us of those rights which should have been enjoyed in common by all native-born citizens; because it guaranteed to foreigners naturalized, advantages over denizens of the soil; because it oppressed those who fought and bled for their country's freedom, and thereby were entitled to the unrestricted enjoyment of its political institutions.

Resolved, That we look upon it as anti-republican, and repugnant to the assertion of man's equality, upon which our government is founded; first, because 45,000 of the inhabitants of this State are excluded from the basis of representation; and secondly, because the proscription merely on account of color denies the declaration that "all men are created free and equal," results in the limitation of our liberties, and consequently in the curtailment of our means of "pursuing happiness."

Resolved, That the exclusion of colored men from a free exercise of the elective franchise, gave a falsity to the high ground which the State had taken on the subject of slavery, tore down the principles of its own profession, and was an evidence to slaveholders of their triumph, degrading to a State calling itself free, and holding liberal principles.

Resolved, That we hold the elective franchise as a mighty lever for elevating in the scale of society any people, and feel sensible that without it, we are but nominally free, the vital means of our improvement being paralyzed; we do therefore believe it obligatory upon us, and do hereby pledge ourselves to each other, to use all just means in our power, by devoting a portion of our time, talent, and substance, to agitate this question, until we obtain a restoration of this inestimable boon.

Resolved, That a Committee of three be appointed to draw up an address to our people, setting forth our duties in relation to the fore-

going resolution, and to the cause of human rights in general.

Resolved, That the Committee consist of Henry H. Garnet, C. B. Ray, and Theodore S. Wright.

Resolved, That the government of our country having made provision for those aggrieved, to petition for a redress of grievances; and we, the people of color in this State, being sorely aggrieved by that clause of the Constitution, heretofore cited, which deprives us of the right of suffrage upon a property qualification; we do therefore call upon our people throughout the State, extensively to petition the Legislature on this subject.

Resolved, That a Committee of three be appointed to report on the above resolution.

Alexander Crummell, J. W. Duffin, and Rev. J. N. Marrs, were the committee.

On motion, Resolved, That a Committee of three be appointed to collect from the delegates statistics of our people.

Resolved, That Abner H. Francis, Michael Dougee, and Uriah Boston, be said Committee.

Resolved, That a Committee of three be appointed on incidental expenditures.—Rev. Thomas James, Rev. John Chester, and Henry R. Crummell, were appointed.

Resolved, That a Committee of three be appointed on Printing.—It was made up of P. H. Reason, C. B. Ray, and A. Crummell.

Resolved, That H. H. Garnett, E. P. Rodgers, and Rev. Eli N. Hall, be a Committee to draft resolutions and appoint public speakers for a meeting this evening. Adjourned.

Wednesday Morning, Aug. 19. The Convention met at the appointed hour, and was opened with prayer by the Rev. James Sharp, of Rochester. The minutes of the preceding meeting were read and approved.

On motion, Resolved, That the Convention go into a committee of the whole, this afternoon, immediately upon organizing, to hear statistical statements from the delegates.

Resolved, That a committee of six be appointed to draw up an address to the people of the State of New York, upon the political condition of our people. Adopted.—A. Crummell, Rev. J. Sharp, T. S. Wright, P. H. Reason, C. B. Ray, and C. L. Reason were appointed that committee.

On motion, Resolved, That a committee of two be appointed to draft a form of petition, praying to the next Legislature for the right

of suffrage; the said petition to be signed by the President, Vice Presidents, and Secretaries, as well as the entire delegation assembled here in behalf of the colored people in this State.

Resolved, That P. H. Reason and A. Crummell be the committee.

The following resolution was then submitted:

Resolved, That inasmuch as the possession of a freehold estate to the amount of \$250, secures to us the elective franchise, we do therefore strongly recommend to our people throughout the State to become possessors of the soil, inasmuch as *that* not only elevates them to the rights of freemen, but increases the political power in the State in favor of our political and social elevation.

A very spirited debate arose on this resolution, owing to the exception taken to that part of it which asserted that the obtainment of a certain amount of property "*elevates us to the rights of freemen.*" The resolution was supported in the affirmative by C. B. Ray, T. S. Wright, E. P. Rodgers, chiefly, and opposed by H. H. Garnet, U. Boston, A. Crummell, and others. The discussion on the resolution continued till near the close of the session, when Mr. Ray introduced an amendment, which was as strongly opposed, owing to its containing, as was contended, the same objectionable feature as the original resolution. While yet the question was pending, the Convention adjourned at half-past 12 o'clock.

Wednesday Afternoon. The Convention opened at 2 o'clock with prayer by the Rev. J. N. Mars, of Poughkeepsie.

The Minutes were read and approved.

The Convention went into a committee of the whole, to receive statistical statements; Austin Stewart in the chair. A number of very important facts respecting the real and personal estate owned in the represented places and their vicinities—the state of schools, churches, &c. were made known—statistics of many places removed from the seats of representation, were communicated by delegates who had made it their duty to procure such general information. The Committee sat in very pleasant meeting for one hour and forty-five minutes, when it rose and resumed progress, the facts obtained being handed over to the Committee on Statistics, to be kept by them for the further use of the Committee on the Address.

Mr. Ray's amendment, which was under consideration at the close of the morning session, was called up, and after some further discussion, was laid indefinitely upon the table.

On motion, Resolved, That a committee of eight, one from each senatorial district, be appointed by the house, to form plans and suggestions, by which we can effectually and harmoniously proceed in our future efforts to obtain the right of suffrage.

Resolved, That P. H. Reason, U. Boston, Wm. H. Topp, E. P. Rogers, A. H. Francis, A. Dunbar, J. Sharp, and James W. Duffin, be that committee.

The Committee appointed on Wednesday morning to report a form of petition for the special signatures of the Convention, reported through P. H. Reason, chairman, the following, which was adopted.

FORM OF PETITION.

The State Convention of colored citizens, assembled at Albany, August 18th, 19th, and 20th, to consider their political condition, in behalf of their brethren throughout the State, would respectfully represent:

That, although by the nature of the government we are taught that an equality, not of property or favor, but of rights, is the firmest foundation of liberty, and that on which democracy is founded—yet, by Art. II. Sec. 1, Revised State Constitution, a distinction is made with regard to them of the most grievous nature—which, while it acknowledges them as citizens, denies them the rights which all others possess, as attached to that honorable appellation.

They would submit it to your honorable body, whether it can be for the benefit of the community, that a part should be depressed and degraded; whether humanity and policy do not alike suggest the propriety of elevating the character of the humblest members of the State, by not debarring them from the most efficient instrument of their elevation simply on account of complexional difference.

In view, therefore, of the injustice and levelling policy of this act, they would respectfully ask, that by an amendment, the enjoyment of equal political rights and privileges may be extended to all the citizens of the State. They would ask, as natives, that the same political privileges may be extended to them as to foreigners. In fine, they would respectfully pray for the abolition of that part of the State Constitution which imposes upon them unequally a property-qualification for the use of the franchise.
Signed, &c.

The Committee appointed on Wednesday morning to draw up certain instructions or recommendations to the people on petitioning, in behalf of the Convention, submitted through the chairman, Alexander Crummell, the following:

The committee on the resolution which has reference to petitioning, would beg leave most respectfully to

REPORT.

Prayer is one of the earliest and most spontaneous of all human exercises. Man is a creature of wants, which are ever presented in continuous succession. From his imperfect and dependent nature, petitionary addresses are ever attendant upon him, from the dawn of existence to the last slow lingering descent and appearance of life.

In this feature of human character, man meets with sympathy and instruction in entire universal being. In proportion to the extent of want, and the intenseness of desire, so is the depth and fervor of the petition, the earnestness of its tone, and the frequency of its presentation.

The colored people of this State, are, from the non-possession of the right of suffrage, the proscribed class. This proscription is the fountain Marah, from whence proceed those bitter waters that run through all the various ramifications of society, connecting themselves with all our relations, tainting and embittering the fresh streams of existence in their pure and healthy flow. The consciousness of want in this matter, is deep, strong, and universal—and so should the expression of it be.

The mode of giving an adequate and natural development of the sense of wrong and want, is for the aggrieved class in a community, where rights have been wrested from them, to appeal to the better principles, the fundamental sentiments of our common humanity, and make a continual and earnest entreaty for their restoration.

In making such appeals and entreaties, we have much to expect. Oppression, prejudice, and injustice, although they have made sad and dire work with man's better nature; although they have withered many of the best affections and noble sentiments of the human heart, and impaired much of the clearness of man's mental vision and the moral beauty of his spiritual nature; yet Reason is not wholly destroyed; the image of God is not yet entirely effaced from the nature of man. There are yet remaining to him, high sentiments, and gentle sympathies, and deep-laid principles, which create a fellow feeling between man and man—which constitute a bond connecting and binding together the heart of universal humanity. The principle of rectitude is as universal among men as the light of the sun. Conscience, well described as

"God's most intimate presence in the soul,
And his most perfect image in the world,"

still remains exerting her power over the thoughts, and words, and actions of men.

To these sentiments we can yet appeal. From our own human consciousness can we make our most earnest and effectual entreaties to our fellow men in power. Such an appeal cannot but be heard. It will receive deference from its very nature. It will bring forth sympathy, by reason of the source from whence it proceeds. It will meet with favor, from being in accordance with the spirit of the age. It will command respect, from its consonance with universal justice. It will secure its success and triumph, from the light of reason, the principles of Christianity, and the dictates of living and eternal right. The Committee would therefore recommend the following resolutions:

Resolved, That it is a solemn duty of the free colored people, in city, town, village, and hamlet, continually and earnestly to re-

TITION the Legislature for an equal and impartial exercise of the elective franchise, until they effect a consummation of their desires.

Resolved, That the petition which has been used in various places in the State, and copies of which we have at hand, be recommended to our people for the purpose of petitioning.

Respectfully submitted, ALEX. CRUMMELL, Ch'n.

JAMES W. DUFFIN, }
REV. J. N. MARS, } Committee.

The Business Committee reported the following resolution :

On motion, Resolved, That the report of the Committee be accepted and adopted.

On motion, Resolved, That we recommend to our people to become possessors of the soil within the limits of this State, if possible; as a means to their becoming more permanent residents, happier in their circumstances, and elevated in their condition.

Resolved, That in recommending our people to possess themselves of the soil, we no less protest against that clause in the Constitution of the State, which requires a property-qualification of us, in order to exercise the elective franchise—considering it wrong in principle, sapping the foundation of self-government, and contrary to all notions of natural justice.

Resolved, That each delegate be assessed in the sum of 25 cents, to defray in part the expense of publishing the proceedings of this Convention, and that a committee of three be appointed to attend to this business forthwith.

Henry R. Crummell, U. Boston, and J. W. Loguen, were appointed the Committee, who occupied the rest of the session in performing the duty assigned, bringing in a report before adjournment, of \$27 47 cts. collected.

The Convention adjourned at a quarter past 5 o'clock.

Thursday Morning, Aug. 20. The Convention opened at 9 o'clock, with prayer by the Rev. Thomas James, of Rochester. The Minutes of the preceding meeting were read and approved.

The Business Committee reported the following resolutions :

Resolved, That the idea contained in the Declaration of Independence, that men should inherit rights aside from accidental circumstances or factitious arrangements, is a sentiment set forth not merely in that document, but one that is also consonant universally with reason and revelation.

Resolved, That the framers of the State Constitution, in practically embodying the principles contained in the above resolution, formed the government of the State fundamentally republican.

Resolved, That one of the distinctive and peculiar features of republicanism, is, that rights are to be guaranteed and extended, without arbitrary or unnatural distinctions.

Resolved, That whenever in the administration of such a government, a portion of its citizens are deprived (from any such invidious causes) of an equal participation of the privileges and prerogatives of citizenship, the principles of republicanism are manifestly violated.

Resolved, That to the non-possession of the elective franchise may be traced most of the degradation to which we, as a people, have been for years subjected, and is the fruitful source of unnumbered and unmitigated civil, literary, and religious wrongs.

Resolved, That in proportion as we are treated with disrespect, contumely, and neglect, in our political, literary, and ecclesiastical relations, from the want of the elective franchise—so would we command respect and influence in these different relations, by the possession of it.

Resolved, That there is great hope for the politically oppressed in their own exertions, relying upon the favor of heaven, and appealing to the just sentiments of those in political power.

Resolved, That the way to obtain rights that have been wrested from a depressed people, is, by the continual presentation of the first principles of political freedom, truth, and justice, accompanied by corresponding efforts on the part of the proscribed.

The following report was handed in by Patrick H. Reason, chairman of the committee :

REPORT.

The committee of eight, one from each senatorial district, appointed to suggest a plan by which we can effectually and harmoniously proceed in our future efforts for the right of suffrage, respectfully report the following resolutions :—

1. Resolved, That a central committee of seven be appointed, consisting of four members from Albany and three from Troy, whose duty it shall be to procure signatures to petitions, and to correspond with other committees throughout the State, appointed for the same purpose.

2. Resolved, That a committee of five from each County in the State, except New York, where there shall be a committee of ten, be appointed in accordance with the last clause of the above resolution—said committees to be termed "County committees."

3. Resolved, That it shall be the duty of the County committees to forward their petitions, when prepared, to the Central Committee, postage paid, and at as early a date as possible; and the Chairman of the Central Committee to present the same in person to some member or committee of the Legislature.

The Committee would recommend that the house go immediately into a committee of the whole, to appoint the several County committees.

Respectfully submitted,

PATRICK H. REASON,	}	Committee.
URIAH BOSTON,		
WILLIAM H. TOPP,		
ELIMUS P. ROGERS,		
ABNER H. FRANCIS,		
AMBROSE DUNBAR,		
JAMES SHARP,		
JAMES W. DUFFIN.		

On motion, Resolved, That the report of the Committee be accepted.

Resolved, That the first resolution of the committee be adopted.

Resolved, That the Central Committee of seven consist of the following members: H. H. Garnet, Troy, chairman; C. S. Morton, M. Dougee, John P. Anthony, S. Myers, Albany; G. H. Baltimore, and Daniel Jones, of Troy.

Resolved, That we go immediately into a committee of the whole, to appoint County committees.

The Convention went into a committee of the whole; R. P. G. Wright in the chair.

The following are the county committees, as appointed:

Albany Co., C. S. Morton, H. R. Crummell, F. G. Murray; *Washington Co.*, J. Harris, Whitehall; *Otsego Co.*, H. Granger, Coopers Town; *Oneida Co.*, W. D. Anderson, Utica; *Madison Co.*, S. R. Ward, Peterboro; *Onondaga Co.*, A. Dunbar, Syracuse; J. Chester, do.; *Schenectady Co.*, R. P. G. Wright, Schenectady; *Tioga Co.* L. Johnson, Owego; *Tompkins Co.*, H. Jackson, Ithica; *Herkimer Co.*, W. Johnson, Little Falls; *Livingston Co.*, J. Crawford, Geneseo, C. McGayner; *Seneca Co.*, T. James, Seneca Falls; *Jefferson Co.*, J. Terrill, Sacketts Harbor; *Ontario Co.*, J. W. Duffin, Geneva, D. H. Ray; *Monroe Co.*, A. Stewart, Rochester; *Erie Co.*, A. H. Francis, Buffalo, George Ware; *Schenen Co.*, S. Watkins, Bath, L. Platt; *Allegany Co.*, J. Peterson, Scio, I. Hough, Friendship; *Wayne Co.*, P. B. Lee, Palmyra, Wm. Bristol; *Orleans Co.*, R. Gardner, Medina; *Niagara Co.*, J. Morgan, Lockport, N. Blount, do.; *Oswego Co.*, J. E. Grant, Oswego; *Cortland Co.*, Wm. Simmons, Village; *Broome Co.*, C. Spruce, Binghamton; *Kings Co.*, B. Croger, Brooklyn, A. Washington, do.; *Queens Co.*, S. V. Berry, Jamaica, E. M. Africanus, Flushing; *New York Co.*, J. J. Zuille, G. Lawrence, sen., F. Olney, C. L. Reason, C. B. Ray, P. H. Reason, A. Elston, J. Fields, T. Seaman, W. P. Johnson, New York; *Westchester Co.*, J. Dungee, Sing Sing; *Orange Co.*, J. Van Huesen, S. Hunter; *Dutchess Co.*, U. Boston, Poughkeepsie, N. H. Simmons, do., J. N. Mars, do.; *Ulster Co.*, T. Harl y, Kingston; *Greene Co.*, M. Cross, Catskill; *Wm. Rennselaer Co.*, Wm. Rich, Troy, J. A. Furbord, do.

On motion, Resolved, That the third resolution of the Committee be adopted.

Resolved, That the Committee be discharged, with thanks.

Mr. Henry H. Garnet, as chairman of the Committee on the Address to the Colored People, submitted the following

REPORT.

"Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not,
Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow!"

BRETHREN,—The Convention has been held. The sentiments and determination of our people are before the public. We have taken our position. You are now called upon for exertions of such strength and peculiarity of character as never before distinguished the colored people of this State—exertions in behalf of one of the most cherished and precious rights of freemen.

The mind of our people is fixed and determined; and the course of events and the arrangements of His providence, make manifest the will of God, that here on this continent we are to remain, citizens of this republic, inhabitants of the soil, till the latest periods of time. How—in what condition shall we and our posterity live here? We are not satisfied with our present condition in the State. If we look into the past, we behold nothing inviting there. We see nothing but "chains and slavery." Our lot, for the two last centuries, has been oppression, of a severe and unmitigated character. From this state, we have been but a few years relieved. During this time, we have been working our way up, with steady perseverance, to respectability and intelligence. Improvement and elevation, then, for the future, is the universal sentiment among us. The man who is willing that we should remain in the sad and unfortunate circumstances in which we now are, is unworthy the exalted privileges of a freeman.

It is the nature of man, and his destiny, to be ever progressive. In this feature of character, we sympathise with the rest of our fellow-creatures. We cannot escape from it. Society is all alive about us. It is pressing onward toward higher excellence, laying new plans for increased social happiness, carrying out divers modes for a purer and more elevated, and more general enjoyment of civil and political rights and prerogatives. The deep foundations of political injustice are now being broken up. Political disfranchisement is becoming more and more odious. Mankind, in the mass, are putting forth just and reasonable exertions for rights—are intent upon escaping from the slough of political wrong, injustice, and oppression, in which they have been kept from a free and healthy exercise of their best powers. And shall we remain inactive?—we, who have and are now suffering so much from political wrong, from legal proscription!

Colored men of New York! Are you willing that your people should longer constitute the proscribed class? Are you willing ever to be deprived of one of the dearest rights of freemen? Are you wil-

ling to remain quietly and inactively, political slaves? Are you willing to leave to your children no better public inheritance than to be among the disfranchised—the politically oppressed? O no! And let the mechanic at his toil, answer No! and those who ply the broad rivers and noble lakes, answer No! and the farmer, amid the rich fields and abundant harvests of the West, let him answer No! and those who live in the inland towns, on the rivers, our farming brethren of Long Island, and the thousands who throng the crowded city; from all these, let the universal, unanimous reply come, No! Let the opinion of the people, of all ages, in all circumstances, in all relations, be fixed upon this matter. Aye, and when the pure incense of prayer goes up, let it bear the gentle burden—No!

My brethren, the possession of the franchise right is the life-blood of political existence. It runs through all the convolutions of our civil state. It connects itself with our literary immunities, enters into our ecclesiastical associations, and blends with our social and domestic relations. If it have a pure, uninterrupted, and general exercise, it is found instinct with life and vitality. It is strengthening in its effects, and revivifying in its influences. To be deprived of it, is like extracting the living principle from the blood of the system. Is it any wonder, then, that our energies have been relapsed, that our powers have been crippled, our souls languid, our purposes nerveless, our determinations dead and lifeless? Is it any wonder that we have been the poor and persecuted ones, outraged and degraded, unable to obtain commiseration from the church, or even humanity from the world?

Brethren, from this has proceeded our degradation. This has been the source of our suffering and oppression. And in all this, is there not enough to rouse the soul, and awaken the latent energies of every man of us? But a redeeming spirit is abroad, and new purposes have been decided upon among ourselves.

Brethren, by united, vigorous, and judicious and manly effort, we can redeem ourselves. But we must put forth our own exertions. We must exert our own powers. Our political enfranchisement cometh *not* from afar.

The history of the world is replete with instruction upon this point. Where rights have been wrested from a people, the restoration of them by those in power, as a matter of favor, can never be expected. They are not to be bought nor cajoled. They are to be obtained only by the continual presentation of the great truths pertaining to their specific wrongs, accompanied by corresponding energy and activity on the part of the aggrieved.

We call upon you, then, for effort; nor for effort alone. We call upon you for *sacrifice*. Examine the annals of the human race, look over the face of the universe, and you will find, that whenever any thing of great worth was to be achieved for man, men have been needed, and men have been willing to sacrifice their every thing—

their all—yea, to give up life, for the good of their oppressed people. How full of such glorious reminiscences is the history of our own country! But we—we are not called upon to make sacrifices of such character. But, we ask, if in all ages of the world, men, in view of the prostrate condition of their compatriots, and the inevitable heritage of posterity, have been willing to sacrifice every thing of dear and sacred nature for the good of man; is there not enough of public spirit, of patriotic feeling, among us, peeled, stricken, and smitten, fleeced and flayed, as we have been, as we now are, to induce, *impel* us to some small sacrifice of time, and money, and labor in our own behalf? We hope, we trust we do not say too much for the character of Colored Americans, New Yorkers, when we confidently say, "There is!"

Let every man in the State arouse himself. Let every city, and town, and village, bestir itself to action. Let associations be immediately formed; and where the families are few, let there be an organization in every hamlet. Let the chief objects of these associations be, to obtain the name of every man to a petition, to be presented by the State Central Committee to the Legislature, until all traces of proscription are stricken from the statute-book. Let petitions be scattered in every quarter. Let every man send in his remonstrance.

Brethren, we call upon you to make this great effort. We call for the exertion of the entire people. We call upon age, with its wisdom and sage experience; upon youth, with its freshness, and zeal, and eloquence. We call upon that portion of the people whose influence is tender, gentle, and benign—we call upon the women. We invoke the entire people, in their strength and manliness, to put forth intelligent and well-directed effort in this matter.

We respectfully solicit the efforts and influence of the clergy. This is a rational struggle; in which it becomes them to participate, inasmuch as our ecclesiastical disabilities originate in political degradation, and because the clergy of the power-holding body are generally against us. Let the prayer of the fervid saint go up for the people. We need that influence that can nerve the arm—that can move the universe.

That we shall eventually triumph, is sure and certain. Whether the day of success shall be near or remote, depends measurably upon whether we put forth efforts characterised for their strength and straight-forwardness. Ours is the cause of truth. For its success we have the pledge of God himself. And truth is full of His mightiness. We have no fear for truth and principle in any circumstances, among wicked men or malignant fiends. It matters not how hard the times, how evil the day—onward she goes, conquering and to, conquest—

"The eternal years of God are hers."

Through all the vicissitudes of time, amid all the revolutions of earth, hers is a triumphant, a heavenly career.

Let these convictions seize upon and color the minutest portions of our souls. Let them give shape and form to our thoughts and actions. Let them be characteristic of our efforts in this matter.

Thus, brethren, we shall achieve the great object upon which we are intent. Thus shall we further the cause of man. Thus shall we secure to ourselves great and important benefits, and send down to all posterity the innumerable privileges of civil and religious liberty.

Signed, &c.

On motion, Resolved, That the report of the Committee on the Address be adopted.

Mr. Alexander Crummell, from the Committee on the General Address, reported an Address, which will be found on page 26.

On motion of Charles L. Reason, Resolved, That the report of the Committee on the Address to the People of the State, be accepted and adopted; the Committee continued, and empowered to embody facts and statistics, as furnished by the appropriate committee; and that it be published with the signatures of the President and Secretaries, after having received the careful revision and sanction of this same committee in New York.

Adjourned at half-past twelve o'clock.

Thursday Afternoon. The Convention was called to order at half-past one o'clock, being opened with prayer by Rev. D. Scott, Pa. The Committee on Expenditures reported as follows, and were discharged.

REPORT.

The Committee on Expenditures beg leave to submit the following report:

For lights for public meetings,	\$1 50
Sexton's services, 3 days at \$1,	3 00
Quills and paper,	00 37½

Total,	\$4 87½
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Moved, That William H. Topp pay the above bills.

The Business Committee reported the following resolutions:

On-motion, Resolved, That while we deem it our imperious duty to co-operate with our friends in all lawful measures for the promotion of every great work, and especially for the cause of human rights, we maintain it to be important, also, in view of our peculiar circumstances, and of the importance to our cause of embodying the unbiassed sentiments of our people, that we assemble together, as occasion may require, in public conventions.

On motion, Resolved, That a National Convention of our people is a movement of great magnitude, inasmuch as it imports to embody the representatives of 500,000 of the people scattered throughout our extended country; a movement, therefore, to be entered upon not

hastily, but only after mature, extensive, and harmonious deliberation by the whole people ; therefore we disapprove of the National Moral Reform Convention, to be held by call in New Haven, on the 10th of September, because entered upon too hastily—too limited and indefinite in its objects—and located by no means to accommodate the majority of our spreading people.

On motion, Resolved, That this Convention exceedingly deprecate any system of general emigration offered to our people, as calculated to throw us into a state of restlessness, to break up all those settled habits which would otherwise attach us to the soil, and to furnish our enemies with arguments to urge our removal from the land of our birth.

The above resolution gave rise to somewhat of a debate, owing to the opposition of Messrs. Charles L. Reason and Alexander Crummell, who contended that it was introduced in opposition to the object of the convention, as set forth in its call. They were overruled, however, and the resolution adopted.

On motion, Resolved, That the signal success which has attended the noble cause of human rights in Europe, and in our own country, is encouraging to our hearts, and is cause of devout gratitude to the God of the oppressed.

This resolution also met with opposition by the same gentlemen, for a like reason, but was finally adopted.

On motion, Resolved, That this country is our country ; its liberties and privileges were purchased by the exertions and blood of our fathers, as much as by the exertions and blood of other men ; the language of the people is our language ; their education, our education ; the free institutions they love, we love ; the soil to which they are wedded, we are wedded ; their hopes are our hopes ; their God is our God ; we were born among them ; our lot is to live among them, and be of them ; where they die, we will die ; and where they are buried, there will we be buried also.

On motion, Resolved, That a publishing committee of four, of the city of New York, be appointed to publish the proceedings of this convention in the most convenient manner, and at the earliest possible day.

Mr. Wm. H. Topp, from the committee on expenditures, reported a balance of \$27 00, expenses deducted, now in his hands, which was, by motion, placed in the hands of Mr. Charles B. Ray, as chairman of the publishing committee.

Mr. Alexander Crummell having made some becoming remarks on the unanimity of feeling that had pervaded the meetings, which he in a great measure attributed to the calm judgment and dignity of the presiding officer—Moved, that the thanks of the convention be presented to our worthy President, Mr. Austin Stewart, for the patient and dignified manner in which he has presided over the deliberations of this convention, and that the members rise as they respond to the motion.

The motion was affirmed unanimously, the whole house standing.

The President made a reply, the members again rising, in which he said that he was really thankful that it was his happiness to take part in the doings of a body which had assembled for so great an object ; he was pleased to see the earnest and willing spirit that had brought each individual brother here, kept up in so friendly a manner ; he reciprocated the patient manner in which they had yielded to his frequent opposing decisions, and hoped and trusted that the work which they had accomplished, would tell for much good on our whole people.

On motion of Uriah Boston, it was Resolved, That the thanks of the convention be tendered to the Secretaries, for the willing manner in which they have performed their duties.

The Vice President, Rev. John T. Raymond, here presented to the President, and through him to the delegates generally, sentiments expressive of the cordial feeling of the people of Albany toward them, in whose behalf he spoke, and expressed their entire approval of the measures and spirit adopted by the convention, and their thanks in anticipation of the probable good influence that would follow from the views that from day to day had been thrown out in the meetings.

A short reply was again made by the President.

A hymn was sung, and the closing prayer made by the Rev. Theodore S. Wright. Adjourned.

ADDRESS.

FELLOW-CITIZENS:

The State Convention of Colored Citizens assembled in Albany, August 18th, 19th, and 20th, to consider their political condition, in behalf of their people in this state, would respectfully address you on a subject to them of the most vital import. They would call your earnest and unprejudiced attention to the unjust and withering policy that in 1821 led to the endorsing of an anti-republican enactment, (Art. II. Sec. 1, State Constitution,) by which a portion of the citizens of this State were restricted in the exercise of a natural right, and refused an equal participation in its political arrangements. And they would also solemnly desire you to look around, and witness the multiplied evils that have for years weighed, and do now weigh heavily upon them, from not being allowed to use, on liberal and worthy terms, the all-important privilege of the elective franchise.

The patriotic framers of our State Constitution, in view of the then recent unwarrantableness of British jurisdiction, and pondering on the self-evident truths that had been made the solemn charter of their country's liberties, did, in 1777, (by suffrage and free choice appointed,) assemble in deliberative convention, and adopt such "acts and declarations as were calculated most efficiently to secure the rights and liberties of the good people of this State—most conducive to the happiness and safety of their constituents in particular, and of America in general."

Basing themselves upon the avowed principle of the Democratic Colonies, that taxation and representation should go together, and that governments receive their just power from the consent of the governed—they established in the Constitution, as a foundation guard to the plainest rights of the people, such provisions as were best designed to keep inviolate their undeniable prerogative to select their rulers—this being the first article of belief in their republican faith.

In so doing, they did not think it consistent with the principles they professed, to divide freemen; those who had shared with them the dangers of war; who had ever been willing to aid them in achieving their independence; we say, they did not divide these,

their fellow-citizens, into castes, and in the face of justice, confer privileges on one class that were refused to another. Every free-man, according to Art. VII. of this firstly-adopted instrument, who paid taxes, and hired a tenement worth forty shillings a year, was entitled to exercise the common right of voting.

In 1821, in opposition to the intellect, the philanthropy, and consistent republicanism of many noble men, who dignifiedly stood up and contended against the unprovoked intolerance that urged forward the measure, an act was passed, which, while it protected liberally others in the exercise of the franchise, made it incumbent upon every colored citizen to possess \$250 freehold estate, in order to use the before common privilege. This requirement, as we have before declared, resulted most disadvantageously to us.

We now find ourselves existing in the chief division of the government, with no marks of criminality attached to our names, as a class; no spots of immorality staining our characters; no charges of disloyalty dishonoring our birthright; yet prevented (by an invidious complexional proscription) from being participants in those free-born rights and sympathies that are bountifully guaranteed not only to common humanity of this State, but also to foreigners, of whatever clime or language. We find ourselves the **SUBJECTS**, and not the objects of legislation, because we are prevented from giving an assenting or opposing voice in the periodic appointments of those who rule us, and are made passive instruments of all laws, just or unjust, that may be enacted, to which we are bound to subscribe, even while we have no instrumentality either in their formation or adoption.

We find ourselves crippled and crushed in soul and ability, because with all the longing that our spirits may possess to drink deeply of those purer waters that mentally and morally refresh and invigorate, we are thrust from the fountain with the cold treatment of aliens, having even that self-protecting instrument taken from us, which is the primary assurance and safeguard of citizenship.

We find ourselves shut out by the secondary influence of a monied restriction, from a right which is the basis of a people's liberties and prosperity; and by the withering influence of this, we are virtually and manifestly shut out from the obtainment of those resources of pecuniary and possessional emolument, which an unshackled citizenship does always ensure, and which **VERY RESOURCES** are held up before us as requirements for the use of a privilege, that, in accordance with the spirit of the government, should be the freest and most sacred.

This unequal participation in the privileges of the State, we consider invidious and proscriptive. It proceeds from no principles of justice; it is not predicable either from the position or character of the people upon whom it so unequally operates. The causes which were supposed to justify its enactment, or warrant its continuance, have either no existence, or are equally applicable to a large body of the respectable voters of the State.

What are we, as a people, in the State? What is our condition? What is the character we have?—what the reputation we sustain? We are native-born citizens of the State—immediate descendants of men, held, not long since, as slaves: From this state we were *translated* into the partial enjoyment and limited possession of freedom. Cut off from the sympathies of our fellow citizens, almost abject in poverty, allowed in many places but a scanty and inadequate participation in the privileges of education, and deprived almost entirely of the elective franchise, we have nevertheless, by the practical operation of common sense, by habits of industry, and the cultivation of the religious sentiments, been enabled to elevate ourselves above abasement, and possess ourselves of many of the advantages of RELIGION, INTELLIGENCE, and PROPERTY.

We present the curious and acknowledged creditable spectacle of a people, bending under the weight of proscription, who yet will not suffer by a comparison with their more privileged fellow citizens of the same rank, in either religion, virtue, or industry.

Although from the arbitrary distinctions that prevail throughout the community, we have been debarred entirely from collegiate education; although, to a considerable extent, we have been excluded from the advantages of the Common School System; yet we have been enabled, not only to sustain them among ourselves, but likewise in many instances, select schools of our own. A spirit of intelligence pervades our entire people. Keeping pace with the progressive spirit of the age, and the continual intellectual progress of the nation, there are but few families in which books are not a common and necessary commodity.

In all parts of the State, from Montauk to Buffalo, literary and debating societies and clubs exist among our people, in city, town, and village. In some instances, these societies are adorned and made more useful by libraries and reading rooms. Our schools and associations are continually sending forth a host of youth, with strong determination and purpose, of subserving the best and highest interests of their proscribed race. And not an inconsiderable number of the rising hope of our people, have sought, in some of the higher institutions of learning, either in this or a foreign land, the privileges of a classical education.

We have scattered, as bright spots all along the State, a number of young men, aspirants for the ministry, preparing for academical instruction; or entering, once in a while, the medical profession; with cultivated minds and hearts devoted to the interests of man, and the great purposes of Truth. The causes that have thrown a damp upon our literary ardor, have operated disadvantageously in our ecclesiastical relations. The prejudice against us in the community, has been more potent than the dictates of Christian equality. Not only are we debarred from the rightful exercise of ecclesiastical privileges, but we also meet with hindrances and indignities in the sim-

plest forms of religious communion. We have often been driven from a quiet and peaceable enjoyment of those rights with which the death of a common Saviour invested us, in common with the rest of our fellow creatures of the human family.

Of necessity, then, have we been often forced to form religious societies of our own. Throughout the State, we have upwards of forty independent religious congregations, of the Presbyterian, Episcopal Methodist, and Baptist denomination; each with a temple erected to the worship of the Almighty; most with settled pastors under a regular yearly stipend; in connection with which there are about 6000 communicants, who, with the respective congregations in attendance with them, average in the aggregate not less than 15,000 of our people who stately are under the influence of religion, in connection with our own churches, besides those in attendance elsewhere.

The amount of energy and intellect brought out by these various projects, may be justly regarded as bespeaking much for the virtue and character of a disfranchised and oppressed people. Aside from this, a large body of our people are in partial communion with the various Christian communities through the State. From these sources, streams of religious influence and blessings are in continual flow, refreshing and invigorating our entire body.

An undue and disproportionate development of powers, produces unnatural effects. A continual enlargement of certain capacities, to the entire neglect of others of equal, or it may be, of more importance, produces deformity. In order to develope symmetry of either form or character, a full, general, healthy, and vigorous exercise of *all* the powers, is absolutely necessary. In bringing forth the character of a people, this is clear and manifest. The history of the serfs, under the feudal system, the character of the same class in Russia, and the prominent traits of the disfranchised class in all communities at the present day, and especially the condition of enslaved men throughout the universe, give strong verity to the sentiment herein expressed. Human nature is complex in its formation. In proportion as the various powers of man are harmoniously educed, so is the nobleness and vastness of its capacity manifested. Free scope, and ample verge given for the exercise of the physical and mental powers, to the detriment of the moral, an hideousness of character is evinced. And so if the moral alone is cultivated, to the neglect of the mental and physical; the character is not symmetrical.

In a community, man sustains various relations, and possesses powers adapted to them—which, if not permitted a natural and legitimate exercise, are turned upon himself and follows with augmented and fearful capacity for evil, from the fact of having been diverted from a natural channel. It is thus with the possession or non-possession of the franchise in any state of society. Man is a creature of law—his nature adapted to government and its various functions. He sympa-

thizes with its modes, and forms, and operations; and this, from the fact that there is not a single shade of revolution in the political aspect of a country, but it is felt to the extreme limits of the body politic; operating upon the individual being of all its subjects.

The deprivation of our people of the elective franchise, and a participation in the various rounds of public duty, shows the evil here spoken of. The powers that should have been thus employed, have not lain dormant. A trait which we possess in common with our common humanity, has been manifested in us. Powers will have exercise, either healthy or unhealthy. The impartial and proscriptive, non-suffrage act, has been to us hurtful in the extreme. The powers that should naturally have been thus exercised, were wrested from their legitimate employment. It has been the source of evil; unmitigated, unalleviated; without even an approach to an adequate benefit. It is true, we might become possessed of the immunities of citizens and voters, by the property qualification. But this spur, this incitement, as it is regarded by some, lost all its zest, in the bitter reflection, in the searing conviction, that we were made aliens and strangers in the country of our birth; a disfranchised class in the very land where lie the bones of our fathers—the land whose liberties they helped achieve by patriotic service, and whose soil is enriched by their purest and noblest blood!

But this is not all. When we were deprived of the elective franchise, the blow was given which severed that hold, by which respect, deference, and consideration is obtained, by the poorest and humblest citizen. Our fellow citizens saw they had nothing to expect from us. We became a proscribed, depressed class. We felt every where we went, in all our relations, that we had been made separate from the rest of our fellow citizens.

The pure and refreshing waters of literary excellence, were not allowed to flow by us, to quench the burning thirst of an eager and longing people. In the various religious bodies, they have not found their purity of Christian feeling powerful and universal enough to treat man, aside from arbitrary distinctions, "without respect of persons." In short, the means and facilities—the ways and avenues to wealth and influence, were shut against us.

We ask, what might be expected of any people in such circumstances? What might be anticipated as legitimate results from such a condition?

Under like disabilities, we perceive the sufferings of the Irish in Ireland, the degradation of the Greek, the besotted stupidity of the lower castes in India, and the abasement and continual decrease of the aborigines of our own country. So in this State; under like sufferings, under like injustice, the greater amount of crime and sufferings among our people, has proceeded from a non-participation in the prerogatives of citizenship. Notwithstanding all these difficulties and depressions, calculated as they are, to sicken the heart, to

a great extent, and make the soul give up, we have nevertheless been enabled to live above them.

We have been deprived of the elective franchise during the last twenty years. In a free country, this is ever a stimulant to enterprise, a means of influence, and a source of respect. The possession of it sends life, vigor, and energy through the entire heart of a people. The want of it in a community, is the cause of carelessness, intellectual inertness, and indolence. Springing above all these depressing circumstances, and exerting ourselves with unwonted alacrity, by native industry, by the accumulation of property, we have helped contribute, to a considerable extent, not only to the means of the State, but likewise to its character and respectability.

We claim, that there is no consideration whatever in existence, on account of which, the odious proscription of which we complain, should be continued. The want of intelligence, our misfortune, and the *crime* of others, which was once urged against us, does not now exist. Again : *we are the descendants of some of the earliest settlers of the State.* We can trace our ancestry back to those who first pierced the almost impenetrable forests that then lifted their high and stately heads in silent grandeur to the skies. When the vast and trackless wilderness, that had alone answered to the fierce roar of the roaming beast, or the whoop of the wild native, spread itself before the earlier settlers, our fathers were among those, who, with sinewy frame and muscular arm, went forth to humble that wilderness in its native pride. Since that time, our fathers, and we ourselves, have lent our best strength in cultivating the soil, in developing its vast resources, and contributing to its wealth and importance. Those who are the least acquainted with the history of the State, cannot but grant, that in this respect we have contributed more than our proportionate part.

In times when patient toil and hardy industry were demanded, it will thus be seen, we have ever been present and active. Not only so. *In times of peril has our aid been called for, and our services as promptly given.* When the country, its interests, its best and most cherished rights and institutions, have been assailed, not unavailingly have we been looked to. When the shrill trumpet-call of Freedom was heard amid the mountains and the rocks, and along the rivers of the North, and a reverberating reply was heard from the broad fields and pine forests of the South ; when the whole country, aroused by the injustice of British policy, arose as one man, for the maintenance of natural and unprescriptable rights ; the dark-browed man stood side by side with his fairer fellow citizen, with firm determination and indomitable spirit. During that memorable conflict, in severe and trying service, did they contend for those principles of liberty set forth in the Declaration of Independence, which are not of partial or local applicability, but which pertain alike to every being possessed of those high and exalted endowments that distinguish humanity.

Their blood is mingled with the soil of every battle field, made glorious by revolutionary reminiscence; and their bones have enriched the most productive lands of the country. In the late war of 1812, our people were again called upon to defend their country. The splendid naval achievements on Lakes Erie and Champlain, were owing mostly to the skill and prowess of colored men. The fame of Perry was gained at the expense of the mangled bodies and bleeding veins of our disfranchised people. Not inconsiderably is it owing to them, that Americans of the present day can recur with pleasurable emotions, and pride of country, to the battle fields of Plattsburgh and Sacketts Harbor.

We are Americans. We were born in no foreign clime. Here, where we behold the noble rivers, and the rich fields, and the healthful skies, that may be called American; here, amid the institutions that now surround us, we first beheld the light of the impartial sun. We have not been brought up under the influence of other strange, aristocratic, and uncongenial political relations. In this respect, we profess to be American and republican. With the nature, features, and operations of our government, we have been familiarized from youth; and its democratic character is accordant with the flow of our feelings, and the current of our thoughts.

We have thus laid before you, fellow citizens, some considerations why we should never have been deprived of an equal suffrage, and why a just and impartial guarantee of this right, should soon be made.

But bating all these, we lay our claim on still higher ground. We do regard the right of our birthdom, our service in behalf of the country, contributing to its importance, and developing its resources, as favorable considerations—considerations adapted to banish all thought of proscription and injustice, from the power-holding body of the country, and to lead them to a hearty and practical acknowledgment of the claims and rights of a disfranchised people.

Yet for these alone, we do not ask for the extension of the elective franchise. We would not, we do not, predicate any right to it from any such a basis. We would not fall into the error of basing rights upon grounds so untenable. We object to others placing our rights upon complexion. We ourselves would not lay our claims to consideration on this or any similar ground.

We can find no system of moral or political ethics in which rights are based upon the conformation of the body, or the color of the skin. We can find no nation that has the temerity to insult the common sense of mankind, by promulgating such a sentiment as part of its creed. However individuals or nations may act, however they may assail the rights of man, or wrest from him his liberties, they all equally and alike *profess* regard for natural rights, the protection and security of which they claim as the object of the formation of their respective systems.

Rights have an existence, aside from conventional arrangements or unnatural partialities. They are of higher origin and of purer birth. They are inferrable from the settled and primary sentiments of man's nature. The high dignities and exalted tendencies of our common humanity, are the original grounds from which they may be deduced. Wherever a being may be found endowed with the light of Reason, and in the exercise of its various exalted attributes, that being is possessed of certain peculiar rights, on the ground of his nature.

We base our claim upon the possession of those common and yet exalted faculties of manhood. **WE ARE MEN.** 1. Those sympathies which find their natural channel, and legitimate and healthy exercise in civil and political relations, have the same being and nature in us that they have in the rest of the human family. 2. Those yearnings and longings for the exercise of political prerogatives, that are the product of the adaptedness of man's social nature to political arrangements, strive with irrepressible potency within us, from the fact of our disfranchised condition, a prevalent and unreasonable state of caste, and the operation of laws and statutes not proceeding from, yet operating upon us. 3. Those indignities and wrongs which naturally become the portion of a disfranchised class, and gather accumulated potency from an increase and intenseness of proscription, naturally and legitimately revert to us. From possessing like sympathies for civil and political operations with others, and like susceptibilities for evil, when nature is hindered in any of its legitimate exercises—on the ground of our *common humanity*, do we claim equal and entire rights with the rest of our fellow citizens. All that we say here, meets with full sympathy from all connected with the history of the country, the nature of its institutions, the spirit of its Constitution, and the designs and purposes of its great originators.

We have no reason to think that the framers of the Declaration of Independence, in setting forth the doctrines it contains, regarded them as mere dogmas or idle theories. We believe they put full faith in them, as actual truths, and living verities. This they evinced, by pledging to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors. This they manifested, by an unswerving opposition to injustice and oppression.

It was in accordance with the views of that great charter of American freedom, that they framed the constitution of the country. Setting aside the stale primogenital fallacies of the blood-dyed political institutions of the old world; repudiating the unnatural assumptions of the feudal system, and exploding the aged and destructive sophism of natural inequalities in the family of man, they clung with undying tenacity to the connecting chain that runs through the whole mighty mass of humanity, recognised the common sympathies and wants of the race, and framed a political edifice of such a nature and character as was congenial with the natural and indestructible principles of

man, and as was adapted to secure to all under its broad *Ægis*, the purest liberty God ever conferred upon him.

That Declaration, and that Constitution, we think, may be considered as more fully developing the primary ideas of American republicanism, than any other documents. In these, individuals are regarded distinctly and respectively—each and every one as men, fully capacitated by the Creator, for government and progressive advancement—which capacities, in a natural exercise, are not to be interfered with by government.

Republicanism, in these two documents, has an eye to individual freedom, without lets or hindrances. In her operations, she is impartial. She regards man—all men; and is indifferent to all arbitrary and conventional considerations. This we deem to be the character of the Declaration of Independence—and this, likewise, the character of the Constitution, after which it was modelled. Republicanism was to be the distinguishing feature in its operations.

The Constitution of our own State, as it sprung from the clear head and pure heart of that incomparable patriot, JOHN JAY, in its preamble and several sections, was, in spirit, concordant with it. By this we mean, that although the qualifications for voting, in general, were higher than those prevailing at the present, yet the ground of the suffrage enactment was not based upon national peculiarities, or complexional distinctions. It said that *any* man possessed of such and such qualifications, should be a political denizen of the State.

As the State advanced in age, intelligence, and population, augmented in wealth, and extended in resources, the call went forth for the extension of the franchise right. In accordance with the will of the people, thus expressed, a convention was held in the city of Albany in 1821-2.

We beg that it may be remembered, that the convention was called for the purpose of *extending* the suffrage right. We would also call your attention to the fact, that the votes by which many of the delegates were elected to that convention, were cast by colored voters. And more especially would we remind you, that during the proceedings of that convention, in its reports, addresses, &c., a peculiar deference is ever paid to the republican features of our common country, and its democratic tendencies. Yet in that convention, that portion of the citizens of the State whom we here represent, were shut out from an equal and common participation in the prerogatives of citizenship, in the operations of both State and National Governments, and thus placed under the operation of laws and statutes without our agency, and to which we are subjected without acquiescence. We, the Colored Citizens of the State, in Convention assembled, representing 50,000 of the population, do ask your earnest attention, your deep reflection, your unbiased and conscientious judgment in this matter. We ask you, as a matter in which you are deeply concerned, to come forward and restore the fountains of political justice

in this State to their pristine purity. We ask you to secure to us our political rights. We call upon you to return to the pure faith of your republican fathers. We lift up our voices for the restored spirit of the first days of the republic—for the great principles that then maintained, and that regard for man which revered the characteristic features of his nature, as of more honor and worth than the form and color of the body in which they dwell.

For no vested rights, for no peculiar privileges, for no extraordinary prerogatives, do we ask. We merely put forth our appeal for a republican birthright. We wish to be something more than political serfs and slaves. We fully believe in the fundamental doctrines set forth in the Declaration of Independence. We acquiesce in the sentiment that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." And we say it is injustice of the most aggravated character, either to deprive us of a just and legitimate participation in the rights of the State, or to make us bear the burdens, and submit to its enactments, when all its arrangements, plans, and purposes, are framed and put into operation utterly regardless of us, in their incipient state, than if we were nonentities; but which, in their practical operation, act upon us with destructive tendency, eat away our soul, and destroy our life. We ask for a living manifestation of belief in the above doctrine: we know already too much of its dead letter.

Fellow citizens! the Colored Citizens of this State, through us, their representatives, respectfully and earnestly ask at your hands, the speedy adoption of such plans, and the formation of such measures, as may soon lead to the erasure of the odious proscriptive act of which we complain—we secured an equal suffrage, and the State freed from a stain upon its character.