

CALL FOR A MADISON COUNTY MASS MEETING,

TO

OPPOSE THE RATIFICATION OF THE SO-CALLED CONSTITUTION OF ALABAMA.

THE Citizens of Madison county, who are opposed to the Convention, lately in session at Montgomery, are requested to meet at the Court House in Huntsville, on Monday, the 6th day of January, 1868.

The late Convention assembled in opposition to the wishes of the great mass of the citizens of the State, a very large portion of whom were denied the privilege of voting, and controlled by unprincipled and unscrupulous adventurers, whose very names are strange in the ears of our people, has proposed a Constitution, the establishment of which as the permanent organic law of the State, it is our solemn duty to resist by all lawful and peaceable means in our power. The plan of government, which this Convention has framed, by destroying the harmony of the white and black races in our midst, will injure the interests of both, and continually disturb the peace of society, by securing to ignorance and corruption the control of our State administration and of most of our county and municipal organizations, will inflict upon us the evils of misgovernment to an extent of which the American people have hitherto had no experience; and by destroying the sense of security for the rights most highly prized by men, will prevent the settlement among us of industrious and enterprising strangers, induce the removal of our best and most substantial citizens, and put an end to all rational hope of the material progress and prosperity of the State. We should be singularly negligent of our rights, and criminally careless of our interests if we failed to

exert our utmost energies to defeat this scheme of oppression and folly.

The people of this county do not need to be convinced that this plan for the ruin of our State, ought to be defeated. They do, however, need to be assured that they have it in their power to contribute materially to that result. Firmly persuaded, that by united and vigorous action on their part, the Conservative people of the State can prevent the ratification of this so-called Constitution in the manner prescribed by the act of Congress, we earnestly appeal to the citizens of Madison county to meet at the time and place above named, for the purpose of effecting an organization and of securing united action of all who are opposed to that Constitution. We beg our fellow-citizens to lay aside, for one day at least, the cares of personal business, and to unite with us in an earnest and manly endeavor to save our State and people from the ruin which threatens them.

The importance of immediate and energetic action among our people is so great, the results of inaction and indifference may be so disastrous, that we feel emboldened to extend our appeal to the neighboring counties, and to urge our fellow-citizens, throughout North Alabama, to take immediate steps in their several counties, to secure thorough organization and united action of all who desire to defeat the project of inflicting on the State the Constitution framed by the late Convention at Montgomery. [The above call was signed by several hundred citizens.]

CONSERVATIVE MASS MEETING AT HUNTSVILLE, ALA., JAN. 6, 1868.

Pursuant to the above call published in the Democrat and the Independent, a large number of the citizens of Madison county assembled at the Court House in Huntsville, on the 6th day of January, 1868.

Maj. James J. Donegan called the meeting to order and said:

Gentlemen, you will please come to order for the purpose of organization. The first business will be to select a presiding officer. I have in my mind's eye—a gentleman, I have long known, I knew him before the war—through its duration and

since its termination. He has uniformly been a Union man, not in a partisan sense, but a Constitutional Union man, with the olive branch in one hand and the Constitution in the other. I present him as an exemplification of our feelings, and to show to our persecutors the true passport to our allegiance, fidelity and affections. That gentleman is Peter M. Dox, Esq. All those who are in favor of his nomination will signify it by saying Aye—those opposed to it, No. Judge Dox being unanimously elected, on taking the Chair, said:

JUDGE DOX'S SPEECH.

FELLOW-CITIZENS:—It would be a distinction to any man, at any time, to be designated the presiding officer of a meeting of the citizens of Madison county, Alabama. It is now nearly half a century since, here in the county of Madison, at Huntsville—perhaps near the very place where we have met,—assembled the Convention of distinguished men who framed for Alabama its first organic law, whose provisions, since modified by the State Convention of 1865, in such a way as to secure the future freedom of all men, constitute all that is most valuable in our present free Constitution. From the citizens of this county have, also, been selected those who, in other days, have illustrated the qualities which signify *pre-eminence* in the Legislative Halls of the State and Nation, at the Bar, and in the Judiciary. And it may, with truth, be said of the people of Madison county, that, during their entire history, no demand has been made upon them for a display of the qualities of courage, of intelligence, and of an earnest, unflinching assertion of principle, which did not receive a full and unhesitating response. You may judge, therefore, fellow-citizens, how highly I appreciate the honor of being selected as the presiding officer of this assembly of free and intelligent citizens; and I make this acknowledgment the more emphatically, because it cannot be doubted, that, in selecting as its presiding officer, a well-known Union man, who, before the late war, and during and since the war, has maintained unflinchingly his devotion to the *Union under the Constitution* it was intended by this meeting, (whatever share any of its members may have had in late events,) to proclaim its purpose to adhere to that Union, whose *image and expression* can be found only in that Constitution, by a respect for whose limitations and well defined powers alone, the Union of the States can have either a legitimate recognition or an assured continuance. I salute you, therefore, fellow-citizens, as Constitutional Union men; and thus I salute you, with the more confidence that the greeting will be recognized, because I believe, as I have faith in the inviolability of truth, that the earnestness of purpose evinced in the late struggle, which, by its persistence, attested the sincerity of the participants, also affords the strongest guarantee that the voluntarily assumed pledges, since given, to the maintenance of the Union, will be inviolably maintained. With this declaration of our relations, and of our common purpose towards the Government transmitted to us, and in the form transmitted by the Fathers of the Republic, I shall, for a few moments, ask your consideration to the more especial objects of our meeting. We are assembled in response to a call numerously signed by citizens residing in every part of the county—by citizens, indeed, who have united

therein without regard to past political distinctions—which lucidly expresses and clearly defines the subjects which will properly engage our attention. And it is in no spirit of dictation, nor in any sense from a desire to control your proceedings, that I suggest that whatever shall be done by us, whether by resolutions or in an address, and whatever line of remark may be indulged by any of us, as individuals, that moderation in tone, often the best assurance of earnestness of purpose, may be a distinguishing feature of our deliberations. This is no ordinary political gathering in which a scramble for petty office, or offices of any kind, is to be made. It is an assembly of free citizens against whose liberties, and dearest social, and most cherished political rights has been aimed a deadly blow, which it is our duty, if possible, to avert. The proposed Constitution, which a Convention lately assembled at Montgomery, has sent out to be ratified or rejected by the votes of the entire adult male negro population, and of a circumscribed number of the white electors of the State, contains much that is admittedly excellent, but, like a setting of precious stones, encircling as a central figure, a venomous serpent's tooth, it also presents that against which the intelligence and the common conscience of all enlightened men must revolt. Those provisions of the proposed Constitution, to which no serious objection can or will be made, are to be found in the present Constitution of this State, and in the Constitutions of most of the other States of the Union. In addition, however, to those provisions whose acceptability has been attested by the statesmanship of the country, and whose value as a shield to the liberties and rights of the citizens, experience has confirmed, is another provision which cannot be found in any free Constitution; whose adoption would render the word "citizen of Alabama" a by-word and a mockery, and by giving to ignorance and vice the prerogatives which virtue and intelligence alone can justly or safely exercise, will, it is apprehended, finally, but certainly, obliterate the boundaries between civilization and barbarism, and consummate the common ruin of all classes and conditions of our people. As such of you who have read the proposed Constitution, have no doubt anticipated, I refer to that part of it designated as Art. VII, under the title "Elections," and particularly to the oath therein prescribed, by which, to entitle one to registration, or to vote, he must swear among other things, "that he accepts," (which signifies that he receives with a consenting mind, or with approbation and favor) "the civil and political equality of all men and will not attempt to deprive any person or persons, on account of race, or color, or previous condition, of any civil or political right. And, furthermore, that he will not injure any person or persons on

account of present or past support of the Government of the United States, or of the political and civil equality of all men, or for affiliation with any political party."

As I understand this oath, it will certainly effect, and was undoubtedly intended to effect, the disfranchisement of nine-tenths of the intelligent white electors of the State. It will certainly disfranchise me for I could not take it without being guilty of conscious perjury. And I feel certain that the interpretation I have given, is the proper and legal one. In this opinion, I am sustained by the President of said Convention and a possible Chief Justice of the State, thus giving us, on this clause of the proposed Constitution, the benefit of contemporaneous exposition and of judicial interpretation from the same learned and *discriminating* expounder. Judge Peck, the President and the possible Chief Justice referred to, in his farewell address to the late Convention, said,—I quote his words, congratulating particularly the colored members of that body—"all who shall hereafter exercise this great privilege, the right to vote, will have first to swear he will *never* attempt to deprive you (the colored men) of these your chartered rights, nor will he encourage any one else in so doing." To propose such a Constitution as is here offered for the acceptance of any enlightened and hitherto free people, (for "acceptance" in this connection, as I have just said, means, and can only mean, a receiving with satisfaction or "approbation") containing, though that Constitution does, much that is excellent, but in such monstrous association, is very like what would be the presentation of the sermon delivered on Mount Olivet "by Him who spake as never, man spake," and ask its acceptance by the humble believer in the Saviour of men, after interpolating it with an oath of fidelity to the false prophet of the Mussulman. To say nothing of the numbers which the provision would add to the enlightened citizens already proscribed by acts of Congress, it need only be contemplated in its full scope and meaning, to awaken in any reflecting mind visions of future probable realities from which the soul recoils with inexpressible horror.

Another provision of this so-called Constitution should secure its rejection by the vote and by the united efforts of every intelligent citizen of Alabama. I refer to Art. XI, title Education, by which provision, if adopted, will be created a second legislative body, with all the powers of enacting laws, imposing taxes, and of appropriating unlimited sums of money and other property, and of doing many other extraordinary things, without, so far as I can discover, responsibility of any kind. I do not refer to the *practical* working of this provision, which will show it to be, and it should be so entitled, a scheme to educate the colored children of the State, to the exclusion of the

white children, but at the expense of white people—when I express the opinion that the people of no State North, would accept a Constitution containing a provision of this kind,—a provision admirably calculated, in addition to its other recommendations, to tempt its administrators to undertake large schemes for public plunder. Indeed, I do not hesitate to say that this provision of the proposed constitution, of itself, would secure its rejection by the unanimous vote of the intelligent and honest electors of every Northern State.

I am free to say, therefore, fellow citizens, in regard to this proposed Constitution, that every consideration which we may give the subject, and any possible view which we can take of it, must determine us to refuse its ratification. It should be rejected for its incongruities,—for its anti-republican features—for its wide, and wicked, and relentless proscription, and because, should it be adopted, by our consent, or through our supineness, while exposing us to the *pity*, if not to the scorn of men, it will necessarily subject us to that greatest of humiliations the loss of our own self-respect. For my own part, however it may be, with others, so serious are my objections to this instrument, that, did I believe it could be permanently fastened upon Alabama as its supreme law, I should be impelled to fly from the State with feelings and from motives kindred to those which it may be presumed hastened the departure of righteous Lot in his flight from ancient Sodom. But no such Constitution can have endurance: its monstrous birth, the vindictive spirit which conceived it, the want of character in those who ministered to its advent, and its features of unrelieved deformity,—all indicate that, like other monsters, it *must* be of ephemeral life and incapable of reproduction. If its adoption in this State shall be effected by chicanery or compelled by force (which need not be, if its opponents be but true to themselves and earnestly work for its defeat) the great Northern blasts of popular indignation—of whose power we have already had a foretaste—will ere another annual revolution shall be accomplished, tear it in shreds, and scatter it and its authors, and its early and latter sponsors, as the dead leaves of the forest are driven by the wind in the tempestuous seasons of the year.—Then will be afforded—though not unhappily for us—another illustration of the truth that, though the lightning be terrible, and the earthquake be terrible, the judgment of mankind, when expressed in indignant tones is even more terrible than the most striking displays of merely physical convulsion.

In conclusion, I remark again, that we may well realize that it is a serious work which we have to do. This is not the time, nor this the occasion, for mere speech-making. By the simple record of this day's action, and of the formal deliberations of this meeting must we be judged. What

we have to do is to organize for efficient, energetic action; and, in addressing ourselves to that which is our chief duty, may we take care that while making earnest, and as I trust, effectual arrangements for the defence of our own rights, we also give assurance, by the *manner* of our proceedings, and by our formal declarations, that what we seek to secure are the freedom and the just rights of all men, black as well as white, and the elevation of all, but always and only in connection with the assured recognition, never to be disregarded, of the supremacy of virtue and intelligence over ignorance and its long train of concomitant evils. Entering upon our deliberations in this spirit, and with this purpose, we may invoke the co-operation of all honest men—because, with God's blessing upon what shall be here done, every honest man—no matter what his race, or color, or previous condition, will see that it is in no hostile spirit to any class, but to conserve the good of all, that we have met together.

Trusting, then, fellow-citizens, that our deliberations may have all the sanction which motives of patriotism, of integrity, and of the purest philanthropy can bestow, I thank you for your patience while hearing the few remarks I have thought proper to make, and now invite your attention more directly to the consideration of the purposes which suggested the call which has brought us together.

On motion of S. D. Cabaniss, the following persons were elected Vice Presidents and Secretaries of the meeting—viz :

Vice Presidents—Col. James J. Donegan, Gen'l. W. T. H. Brooks, Dr. Fleming Jordan, Z. P. Davis, Esq., Hon. W. D. Humphrey, George W. Neal, John N. Drake, G. B. Strother, James H. Pride, Gustavus L. Mastin, Jonathan W. Hartsell, Thomas H. Owen and W. M. Roper.

Secretaries—Dr. A. R. Erskine, William Weeden and A. F. Murray.

On motion of Hon. R. W. Walker, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the President of this meeting appoint a committee composed of fifteen persons to report for the consideration of this meeting suitable resolutions, and an address to the people of Alabama, setting forth the objects for which this meeting was called, and asking their entire co-operation in our efforts to defeat the Constitution submitted by the Convention at Montgomery.

Under the foregoing resolution, the President appointed the following Committee:

R. W. Walker, Joseph R. Morris, David Shelby, S. D. Cabaniss, F. E. H. Steger, W. M. Lowe, Geo. A. Gordon, Saml. W. For-dyce, R. W. Coltart, William H. Powers, Saml. Matthews, James L. Watkins, Wm. R. Whitman, James H. Bibb, and E. C. Spragins.

During the absence of the Committee on

Address and Resolutions, the President of the meeting read a letter from the Hon. Geo. S. Houston, regretting his inability to attend the meeting, and sympathizing in the object for which it was called.

The Committee then reported through their Chairman, the Hon. R. W. Walker, the following Address and Resolutions:

Address to the People of Alabama.

The Convention lately in session in Montgomery has proposed a Constitution for the State of Alabama, and an election, to determine whether it shall be ratified or rejected, has been ordered to be held on the 4th and 5th days of February next.

The Convention was elected under circumstances, and composed in the main of individuals not calculated to inspire public confidence in the result of its labors. But while the people of Alabama did not look for a wise and just Constitution at the hands of that body, they did not anticipate that it would attempt to fasten upon the State a plan of government so entirely indefensible, so abhorrent to justice and reason, as that which is now submitted to the registered voters of the State for their acceptance or rejection.

The Act of Congress under which the Convention was assembled, and from which it derived whatever authority it had, did not, when properly construed, require the Constitution to disfranchise any part of the white population of the State, but, on the contrary, prohibited the disfranchisement of any of the male citizens of the State twenty-one years old and upward, except such as by that act were disqualified from voting for delegates to the Convention.

The proscription permitted, though not directed by the Act of Congress, was not sweeping enough to satisfy those who managed to obtain the control and shape the action of the Convention. The Constitution proposed, not only denies the right of suffrage to all who were disqualified by the Act of Congress from voting for delegates to the Convention, but, in addition, excludes from the privilege of voting "all who during the late rebellion in any way violated the rules of civilized warfare,"—terms of convenient generality which, construed by corrupt men, may be made to have a very wide operation—and furthermore requires, that every citizen, as a condition precedent to the exercise of the right to vote, shall take an oath whereby he accepts the civil and political equality of all men, and agrees not to attempt to deprive any person or persons, on account of race, color or previous condition of any political or civil right, privilege or immunity enjoyed by any other class of men."

The means are not at hand to ascertain the number of white citizens of Alabama, who by the action of Boards of Registration were held to be disqualified from voting for delegates to the Convention, but it is believ-

ed to have been not less than twenty-five or thirty thousand. The number of white voters registered by the Boards was 72,748; while, according to the State Census of 1866, the white males, over twenty years of age, number 110,512.

The Convention, by requiring all voters to take the oath above mentioned, not only transcended the requirements of the Reconstruction Act, but clearly disobeyed its mandate; and by excluding from the ballot-box all who are unwilling to swear that they are in favor of immediate and universal negro suffrage, and that, no matter how disastrous may be the results of this hitherto untried experiment, they will never seek to change the basis of suffrage in this particular, in fact, disfranchises a large majority of the white population of the State. For it is useless to disguise the fact that the white men of Alabama, who can, with a clear conscience take the oath prescribed by this Constitution, constitute a small minority of our white citizens.

If the people of the Northern States decline to confer the right of suffrage upon a comparatively insignificant number of colored men, most of whom were born free and have had the benefit of some education, the people of the Southern States may well be excused, if they hesitate to consent to the immediate enfranchisement of the colored population of those States, formidable in number as that population is, and consisting almost entirely of freshly emancipated slaves, destitute of education and unprepared by any training or experience for the discreet exercise of the political privileges of citizenship—more especially will their unwillingness to assent to the hazardous project of immediate and universal negro suffrage stand justified by the requirement, that they shall bind themselves, by solemn oath, never to retrace their steps, no matter what calamities may result from the experiment. A just and generous spirit must revolt at the idea of "forcing the South to accept in a huge mass that which the North rejects in minute quantities,"—and it is a cruel aggravation of the wrong to compel us to give the suffrage, with one hand, to ignorance, depravity and inexperience, and, with the other, to wrest it from intelligence, virtue and refinement. Thoughtful men will admit that most of the evils of our political system are the result of ignorance in our electoral bodies, and the attempt to cure those evils by the addition of more ignorance is an odd and perilous application of the doubtful maxim that the hair of the dog is good for his bite. The Southern people should be borne with, if they cannot unlearn, in a day, the lesson so earnestly taught by the fathers of the Republic that popular intelligence and virtue are essential to the success of free institutions.

The requirement of such an oath as that prescribed by the proposed Constitution as a qualification for the elective franchise is,

indeed, a novelty in American politics, and is at war with principles which have always been deemed fundamental in our system of government. To require a citizen, as a condition of his exercising the right to vote, to swear to his belief in the political capacity of others, is a flimsily disguised attempt to proscribe a man for his opinions; and to bind voters, by an oath, never to change a particular feature of the fundamental law, no matter how great a public evil it may prove to be, is a palpable violation of the cardinal doctrine of Republics that the people have, at all times, an inalienable and indefeasible right to alter or amend their form of government as they may deem expedient.

The monstrous folly of this provision is made yet more striking when we remember that it is not designed to have a merely temporary operation, but to occupy the whole wide field of the future—that not the present generation only, but citizens yet unborn, and their successors through all coming time, are alike embraced within the scope of this absurd requirement.

The proposed Constitution does not simply secure to the colored population the right to participate equally with the whites in the control of the government, but, in fact, establishes the supremacy of the black over the white race. For while all male negroes over twenty-one are made qualified voters, the large majority of white citizens over twenty-one, are, as already stated, excluded, either by virtue of belonging to the class of persons expressly disfranchised, or on account of their inability to take the extraordinary oath required of every voter. It is plain, therefore, that in its practical working this Constitution will secure to the negro population the political power of the State—a result so equally abhorrent to justice and to common sense that it is difficult to decide whether the contrivance of the scheme is due more to wickedness or to folly. Among all the fantastic absurdities which the crazy zealots and unprincipled demagogues of the day have advanced, none is at once so silly and so mischievous as the proposition to declare in the fundamental law of a free State that ignorance is entitled to more political power than knowledge. Stated broadly, the theory of this Constitution is that the power of making the laws shall be confided to those who have the least to be protected by laws, and that the right to levy the taxes shall be bestowed on those who have no taxes to pay.

Nor is our opposition to the proposed system diminished, but rather strengthened, by the fact that its chief authors and advocates are a set of political adventurers, mostly strangers in our State, having no interest in common with our people, at once corrupt and incompetent, who have concocted this plan of placing the white under the dominion of the black race, not from

any special regard for the rights of the latter, but for the selfish purpose of promoting their own schemes of personal aggrandizement, and who have already shown that they expect and intend to appropriate to themselves the chief offices and honors of the State, and to propitiate the favor and secure the support of the black race by exciting their prejudices against, and stimulating their hatred of, the native white population of the State.

The proposed Constitution establishes a Board of Education, whose members are to be elected by popular vote, who are invested with "full legislative powers in reference to the public educational institutions of the State," and who are required to establish in each township "one or more schools at which all the children of the State between the ages of five and twenty-one years may attend free of charge." They are, also, constituted Regents of the State University, and have power to appoint its President and Faculty. One-fifth of the aggregate annual revenue of the State, all poll-taxes, the proceeds of all the public lands, and specific annual taxes which the Legislature is required to levy upon railroad, insurance, and other corporations, constitute the educational fund, the whole of which is placed under the control and direction of the Board of Education. By this Constitution the Board has no right to establish separate schools for white and colored children, but is, in effect, prohibited from doing so. The attempt to establish and keep up a system of public schools in which white and black children must sit side by side, cannot fail to be a source of perpetual discontent and strife, and we enter our solemn protest against it, as a measure which will be productive of no good to either race, but which is fraught with incalculable evil to both, and sure to retard, rather than advance, the cause of education in the State. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that this feature of the Constitution was framed, not with the expectation of promoting the intellectual advancement of either race, but with a deliberate intention to humiliate, abase and degrade the white population of the State.

It is hoped and believed that there is no inconsiderable number of colored men in the State, who have intelligence enough to see that such a system of government as that proposed by this Constitution, cannot, in the nature of things, be permanent, and that its temporary enforcement will inevitably tend to excite in the white population a feeling of hostility to their race which does not now exist, and which will be likely to affect their enduring welfare much more injuriously than the defeat of this unwise attempt to subject the white men of the State to the control of the blacks. It is a fact well worthy to be considered by the colored people, that nothing could contribute more to the establishment of perma-

nently friendly relations between the two races, than the refusal of the colored men to aid in the establishment of a Constitution which deprives so large a portion of the white citizens of Alabama of the rights to which they have always been accustomed. Such an exhibition of good judgment, friendly feeling, and sense of justice on the part of the colored people, would constitute a stronger guaranty for the preservation of their rights, and a better protection against future wrongs, than can possibly be given by a Constitution which is infallibly destined to but a brief duration.

No man of ordinary intelligence can believe that the permanent supremacy of the negro population of this State over white men of the Anglo-American stock, considerably their superiors in number*, immeasurably their superiors in energy, wealth and intelligence, can be reckoned among the possibilities of the future. Such a monstrous inversion of natural order can only be considered as a spasmodic convulsion in the body politic, which, like similar affections in the natural body, must soon pass away. If the colored men of the State comprehend their true interests and wish to secure justice and generosity from the white population, they will decline this invitation of false friends to secure themselves a control, which must be transient, over a race which they know to be their superiors in education, numbers and wealth. It is cruel to provoke the enmity of a stronger against a weaker race, by encouraging the latter to assert a right to control and govern the former—and it is not by way of menace, but of sincere friendly admonition, that we say that the future dangers of the colored population will bear an exact proportion to the extent of authority over the whites which mischievous advisers may now prevail upon them to assume.

We, therefore, declare it as our deliberate conviction—

That the proposed Constitution will be productive of inextinguishable hatred and ill-blood between the two races in our midst, thereby injuring the interests of both, and continually disturbing the peace of society—

That it cannot in the nature of things be permanent, thereby lacking that element of stability which is indispensable in any arrangement which can be considered or ought to be accepted as a settlement of existing difficulties, and without which any plan of reorganization will be delusive and mischievous, intensifying, rather than allaying, the agitation and disquiet which have already affected so injuriously the public welfare—

That it will secure to ignorance and corruption the control of our State administration, and of many of our county and muni-

* By the State census of 1856, the total white population was 532,800—colored, 420,579.

cial organizations, thereby inflicting upon us the evils of misgovernment to an extent of which the American people have hitherto had no experience, subjecting the good people of this State to a long train of vindictive and oppressive laws, converting the administration of justice into a solemn farce, destroying the sense of security for the rights most highly prized by men, impairing still further the already reduced value of property, preventing the settlement among us of industrious and enterprising strangers, inducing the removal of many of our best and most substantial citizens, and putting an end, during the period of its existence, to all rational hope of the material prosperity or moral progress of the State.

The rule of a Military Commander, with all its known evils and possible contingencies, has less of terror for the people of Alabama than the misrule of a Government founded upon such a Constitution. Subjection to an inferior race is a more colossal calamity than a provisional dictatorship, of which, when the fires of passion kindled by the late strife die out and reason re-ascends the steps of her throne, we are sure to be relieved. Our Military Commanders are of our own race. They have education and experience. They may be, and, as we know, sometimes are, just and humane men. To some extent they are responsible to, and controllable by, their Constitutional Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States, and in all their action they are under the restraining eye, and amenable to the public opinion, of the civilized world.

In our present unhappy condition, next to our own prudence and discretion, Time, the great pacificator, is our best friend, and sooner or later will remedy the evils from which we are now suffering. What is needed to the restoration of genuine peace and national prosperity, is not a mere formal, fictitious reconstruction, but a cordial reconciliation of the lately contending sections. This, Time will surely bring. As the fury and heat of the war recede in the distance, the vindictive passions it excited will be displaced by the sentiments of justice and humanity, and these, reinforced as they must be by an enlightened regard for their own welfare, will secure, at the hands of the Northern people, the reversal of the oppressive legislation of which we are now the victims.

It is not credible that the Northern people can fail to see that the suspension of the Constitution in the South will be found incompatible with its maintenance in the North—or that they will continue to ignore the fact that freedom there cannot long co-exist with absolutism here. Recent events justify the opinion that, though the so-called Reconstruction Acts may be the ultimate decree of the present Congress, they do not embody the settled feeling, or express the deliberate will, of the Northern

people. Let us then patiently bide our time, and endure with constancy and fortitude the ills of our present situation, trusting that neither the feelings nor the interests of the Northern people will permit their long continuance, and that, at no very distant period, the people of the South, now the subjects of military rule, may again become the free citizens of equal States in a restored Union.

In conclusion, we earnestly urge our fellow-citizens throughout the State, opposed to the adoption of this Constitution, forgetting all former political divisions or other differences, to organize at once, and to leave untried no legitimate effort to prevent its ratification.

RESOLUTIONS.

Resolved, 1. That in the name and on behalf of the people of Madison county, we solemnly protest against the action of the so-called Convention lately in session at the Capitol of Alabama—a Convention packed against the wishes of the great mass of the people of the State, by means of their exclusion from the ballot-box—and we do hereby declare that we will forever hold the work of framing a Constitution by such authority, with the intent to be forced by military power on the free people of this State, as a crime against our people, and subversive of the fundamental principles of free government—and in the name of justice and of the Constitution of our common country, so openly violated by these proceedings, we do hereby appeal to the patriotic people of the North to arrest this attempt to oppose and degrade us.

2. That in the judgment of this assembly, the Constitution proposed by said Convention has been deliberately framed by designing adventurers, so as to place the political power of the State in the hands of the negro population, with the view, not of securing the rights or advancing the welfare of the black race, but of furthering their own schemes of selfish aggrandizement, and of appropriating to themselves the offices and honors of the State—that no dangers threaten our people comparable to those certain evils which will be entailed on us by such a Constitution; among which evils we reckon, as by no means the least, the sure destruction of harmony and friendly feelings between the white and black races in our midst, and, consequent thereon, irreparable injury to the interests of both—and that we feel bound by every consideration of self-respect, of interest, and of duty to our country, to prevent, by all lawful and peaceable means in our power, the establishment of that Constitution as the organic law of Alabama.

3. That, confiding in the patriotism and good judgment of the State Executive Committee, of which Gen. James H. Clanton is Chairman, we deem it good policy to conform to such programme of action, with

the view of preventing the ratification of the proposed Constitution, as that Committee shall recommend to the people of the State.

4. That we recommend the immediate organization of Clubs in this County for the purpose of securing the united and energetic action of all who are opposed to the proposed Constitution.

5. That the President of this meeting shall appoint a committee of five persons as a Central Executive Committee for the County of Madison—that said committee be directed to take steps for the immediate organization in the City of Huntsville of a Central Club for the County of Madison, and to adopt such other measures as they may deem best calculated to secure the united action of all the opponents of the proposed Constitution, and to promote the objects of the organization.

6. [Appoints precinct committees to organize Clubs.]

7. That we earnestly urge and entreat all citizens of the State, opposed to the proposed Constitution, who are qualified to register under the Reconstruction Acts of Congress, but who have not heretofore registered, to do so, and we also urge all such citizens, who have been improperly excluded from registration, to renew their applications, and if rejected to report the fact to the proper authorities.

7. That we recommend to the people throughout the State, to take all proper legal steps to secure a fair election on the 4th and 5th of February, and to prevent false counts or fraudulent returns of the votes cast, of the manner in which the registration has been heretofore conducted and made in this State, and if, upon such investigation, it shall appear that such registration has been partially and fraudulently made, that such action be taken as will repair the wrong—that we make these requests in no factious spirit, but only in the interest of justice and right, and from a well-founded conviction that, by the former action of the Boards of Registration, large numbers of the citizens of Alabama, legally qualified to register under the reconstruction acts, were denied the right to do so—in support of which statement, attention is called to the fact, that, while, by the State census of 1866, there were in the State 110,312 white males over 20 years of age, the registered white voters only number 72,748 from which it is apparent that there cannot be less than 33,000 white men over 21 not registered; whereas this assembly confidently declares that upon any just or sensible construction of the Acts of Congress, not one of that number were disqualified from registration.

9. That the President of this meeting, together with Gen. W. T. H. Brooks and Maj. James J. Donegan, are hereby appointed a committee to communicate to Major General Meade the requests contained in the foregoing resolution, and to

fortify the same by such statements and suggestions as they may deem right and proper in the premises; and it is the earnest wish of this meeting that the said committee shall, in the discharge of the duty imposed on them, wait in person on Gen. Meade.

10. That the President of this meeting appoint five delegates to represent us at the Conference of the opponents of the proposed Constitution, to be held in Montgomery on the 14th inst.

11. That we disclaim all hostility to the colored population of the State, and we declare that the white people of Alabama sincerely desire their advancement in intelligence, and the enduring welfare and prosperity of their race—that we have no purpose, in this defensive movement, to deprive the negro population of their freedom, or of a single right that legitimately results to them from the late war, or to deny to them any privilege that will conduce to their happiness and security—that we are struggling, not to destroy the rights of the black, but to secure those of the white man, and to promote the real welfare of both races; and that there can be no peace in society, or stability in government, or happiness in either race, so long as the effort is kept up to subordinate the civil and political rights and interests of the white to those of the colored population.

On motion of J. W. Clay, Esq., the Address and Resolutions, as reported by the Committee, were unanimously adopted.

On motion of Gen. J. P. Drake, it was resolved that ten thousand copies of the Address and Resolutions be printed in pamphlet form for distribution throughout the State, that a suitable number be sent North, and, also, that they be published in the city papers, which was unanimously adopted.

The President then appointed the following gentlemen as the "Central Committee" under the fifth Resolution:

W. M. Lowe, Chairman, R. W. Coltart, J. W. Young, Wm. F. Mastin and Charles A. Donegan.

Under the tenth resolution the President appointed the following Committee:

Hon. R. W. Walker, Gen. W. H. T. Brooks, R. C. Brickell, Esq., Fred. Tate, Esq., and Col. W. M. Lowe, to attend the Conference of the opponents of the proposed Constitution to be held at Montgomery on the 14th inst.

On motion of R. W. Coltart, the Central Committee were charged with the superintendence of the printing and distribution of the Addresses and Resolutions, and to solicit contributions for the expenses thereof.

On motion the meeting adjourned.

PETER M. DOX, President.

A. R. ERSKINE.)
WM. WESDEN.) Secretaries.
A. F. MURRAY.)