

# BOON'S LICK TIMES.

"ERROR CEASES TO BE DANGEROUS, WHEN REASON IS LEFT FREE TO COMBAT IT."—JEFFERSON.

BY CYRIL C. CADY.

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## POLITICAL OPINIONS OF MARTIN VAN BUREN IN REGARD TO THE RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE, &c.

From the Report of the proceedings and debates of the Convention of 1821, assembled for the purpose of amending the Constitution of the State of New York.

No. 1.—Martin Van Buren in favor of placing Free Negroes on an equality with White Men in regard to the right of suffrage.

At the opening of the Convention, Friday, August 31st, 1821.

Mr. King, from the committee appointed to consider and report in what manner it would be expedient to take up the business of the Convention, presented a series of resolutions the 6th of which was as follows:—

Resolved, That so much of the Constitution as relates to the rights and qualifications of persons to be elected, be referred to a committee to take into consideration the expediency of making any, and if any, what alterations or amendments, therein, and to report such amendments as they may deem expedient.

Journal of the Convention, page 35.

Under the above resolutions, Messrs. N. Sanford, S. Vanrensselear, P. R. Livingston, Fairfield, Young, Cramer and Ross.

Jour. Con. page 38.

Wednesday, Sept. 12th, 1821.

Mr. Sanford, from the committee appointed, reported that the committee having considered the subjects referred to them, recommended the following amendments to the constitution.

1st. Every white male citizen of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have resided in the State, six months, next preceding any election, and shall within one year preceding the election have paid any tax assessed upon him, or shall, within one year preceding any election have been assessed to work on a public road and shall have performed the work assessed upon him, or shall have paid an equivalent in money, therefor, according to law, or shall within one year preceding the election have been enrolled in the Militia in this State, and shall have served there, according to law, shall be entitled to vote at such election in the town or ward in which he shall reside, for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Senators, Members of Assembly, and all other officers who are or may be elective by the people.

Jour. Con. page 134.

September 19th, 1821.

On motion of Mr. Sanford, the report of the committee relative to the right of suffrage, was taken up for consideration, and was discussed.

Jour. Con. 173, &c., &c.

The question being on the first section as originally reported by the committee.

Mr. Jay, moved that the word White be stricken out.

See Jour. Con. page 190.

The object of this amendment was to place the Negroes on an equality with the Whites in regard to voting.

Col. Young earnestly opposed the amendment.

"We ought," he said, "to make a constitution adapted to our habits, manners, and state of society. Metaphysical refinements and abstract speculations are of little use in framing a Constitution.

"No White men will stand shoulder to shoulder with a negro in the train band of jury room. He will not invite him to a seat at his table, nor in his pew at church. And yet he must be placed on a footing of equality in the right of voting, and on no other occasion whatever, either civil or social!"

"The minds of the blacks are not competent to vote," continued Col. Young, "they are too much degraded to estimate the value of exercising with fidelity and discretion, that important right. It would be unsafe in their hands!" &c. &c.

—See Jour. Con. page 191.

The question on striking out the word white, was then taken by ayes and noes, and decided in the affirmative, ayes 63, noes 50. MARTIN VAN BUREN voting in the affirmative to strike out the word white, and thus place the NEGRO ON AN EQUALITY WITH THE WHITE MEN IN VOTING AT ELECTIONS.—See Jour. Con. page 202.

After the above vote was taken, Gen. Root immediately arose and observed, that "There was danger of extending the right of suffrage too far. It was now extended to NEGROES, and in the polite language of the day, to COLORED PEOPLE. It was, in his opinion, inexpedient to admit strolling voters." With a view to prevent this, he offered a further amendment relative to residence, paying of tax, doing military duty, &c. &c. See Jour. of Con., page 202.

This is the same Martin Van Buren who is now exhibited to the world as a "northern man with southern principles." Is it not the principles of the south, that a negro has as much right to vote at elections as a white man? We pause for a reply.

No. 2.—Martin Van Buren in favor of a freehold qualification for State Senators.

September 22d, 1821.

Chief Justice Spencer moved to amend Mr. Root's amendment, by requiring an interest in law or equity, in lands, tenements, or hereditaments of the value of \$250, as a qualification of voters for State Senators.—Jour. of Con., page 215.

Mr. Van Buren opposed this amendment.—He contended that the land interest "was sufficiently guarded by the constitution as it now stands." It now provides that the Senators shall be freeholders, and that part of the constitution was not proposed to alter. There was no objection to fixing the amount of the freehold required in the elected, and to place it on a respectable, but not extravagant footing.—See Jour. of Con. page 255, &c.

After a long debate, the question on the amendment of Chief Justice Spencer, was taken by

ayes and noes, and decided in the negative, ayes 19, noes 100, Mr. Van Buren voting in the negative.—Jour. of Con. page 270.

Under the old constitution, which in this respect, according to Mr. Van Buren, "it was not proposed to alter," no man could be elected Senator, unless "he possessed a freehold of the value of one hundred pounds over and above all debts charged thereon." Con. of New York, 1777, sec. 10.

No. 3.—Martin Van Buren opposed to universal suffrage.—Jour. of Con. page 273.

Mr. Jay, for the sake of relieving the embarrassments of the committee, moved to strike out from Gen. Root's amendments the words, "or being armed and equipped according to law, shall have performed within the year military duty in the militia of this State."

Jour. of Con. page 274.—The question was taken and decided in the negative, ayes, 26, noes 92. Mr. Van Buren voting in the negative.

Gen. Tallmadge then moved to strike out "or on the highways," he was for confining the qualifications of voters, to such as do military duty and pay taxes.

Col. Young replied, and was opposed to striking out. Mr. Van Buren supported the motion for striking out. The people (he said) were not prepared for universal suffrage.

Gen. Root replied, that if the clause were stricken out it would disfranchise a numerous class of persons who ought to vote.

Mr. Russell was against striking out. "It would disfranchise many who ought to vote. He recollected a Revolutionary soldier in his town, who was at the siege at Quebec, and another who was at the storming of Stony Point, and neither would have a vote if this motion prevailed."

September 27th, 1821.

An amendment of Gen. Tallmadge was under consideration. See page 276.

Jour. of Con. page 277. Gen. Root said the amendment provided for the disfranchisement of a numerous class of citizens. He enlarged upon the remarks of the gentleman from Niagara, Mr. Russell, who mentioned two instances in his town, where two Revolutionary patriots and soldiers, one of whom fought with Montgomery under the walls of Quebec, and the other, under Wayne at Stony Point, would be disfranchised if this provision were stricken out. &c.

Mr. Van Buren said, he felt himself called on to make a few remarks in reply to the gentleman from Delaware. (Gen. Root.) He observed that it was evident, and indeed some gentlemen did not seem disposed to disguise it, that the amendment proposed by the Hon. gentleman from Delaware (Gen. Root) contemplated nothing short of universal suffrage. Mr. Van Buren did not believe that there were twenty members of that committee who, were the bare naked question of universal suffrage put to them, would vote in its favor. Mr. Van Buren then replied to a statement made yesterday by his honorable and venerable friend from Erie. (Mr. Russell) in relation to the exclusion of soldiers, who had fought at Quebec and Stony Point, under the banner of Montgomery and Wayne. And he felt the necessity of doing this because such cases urged by such gentlemen as his honorable friend, were calculated to make a deep and lasting impression.

"—Few of those patriots were now living, and, of that few, the number was yearly diminishing. In fifteen years the grave will have covered all those who now survive. Was it not, then, unwise to hazard a wholesome restrictive provision, lest in its operation it might affect those few individuals for a short time? He would add no more; his duty would not permit him to say less.

One word (continued Mr. Van Buren) on the MAIN QUESTION before the committee. We had already reached the verge of universal suffrage. There was but one step beyond. And are gentlemen prepared to take that step? We were championing this invaluable right. He was disposed to go as far as any man in the extension of rational liberty; but he could not consent to undervalue this precious privilege, so far as to confer it with an indiscriminating hand upon every one, black and white, who would be kind enough to accept it."

See Jour. of Con. page 277.

The question on striking out "or on the highways," was then taken by ayes and noes—and decided in the affirmative, ayes 68, noes 48, MARTIN VAN BUREN voting in the affirmative, and thus voting to exclude from the right of suffrage a large class of citizens, and also soldiers of the Revolution. See Jour. of Con., page 283.

The effect of this striking out the words "or on the highways," was to exclude from voting all those words and been left in the Constitution, might have voted, by working on the highways, to the amount of SIXTY-TWO AND A HALF CENTS.

Martin Van Buren, by this vote, says No—your poor laborers, who do not pay taxes, &c., stand aside, you shall NOT VOTE. The effect of his vote to strike out white, as before shown, was to admit negroes to vote on the same footing with white men!"

This is the Martin Van Buren who is called by the office-holders the friend of the POOR MAN!"

September 28th, 1821.

Jour. of Con., page 284. Judge Van Ness moved for a reconsideration of the vote of yesterday, for striking out the words "or on the highways."

After a long discussion, the question of reconsideration was taken and decided in the affirmative.

Col. Young then called for the consideration of Mr. Wheeler's amendment. See Jour. of Con., page 276.

Mr. Wheeler spoke at length in its favor. He was in favor of universal suffrage, with such exceptions and limitations as might be conducive to the public welfare. See Jour. of Con., page 284.

Judge Platt opposed the amendment on the ground that it went in favor of universal suffrage.

Mr. Van Buren "occupied the floor for some time in expressing his sentiments decidedly against the amendment and against universal suffrage. We need (he said) regarding every thing, by going to such lengths in the amendments, &c." Page 284.

Mr. Tompkins supported the amendment and thought too much alarm had been created by the bug-bear, universal suffrage. Taxation as applied to representation, meant liability to taxation. How was it when no taxes were imposed in this State? Were there no representatives? &c. page 284.

Jour. of Convention, page 287. The question on Mr. Wheeler's amendment was taken by ayes and noes, and decided in the affirmative, ayes 113, noes 55.—Martin Van Buren voting in the negative and against universal suffrage.

No. 4.—Martin Van Buren against universal suffrage, and in favor of a household qualification for voters.

September 29th, 1821.

On motion of Mr. Edwards, the whole subject was again referred to a select committee of thirteen to consider and report upon it.

Jour. of Con., page 288.

October 4, 1821.

Col. Young, from the committee of thirteen, to whom was referred the resolution relative to the right of suffrage, made a report. See Jour. of Con., page 339.

The subject came up for discussion, page 360.

Martin Van Buren said, "that as the vote he should now give on what was called the highway qualification, would be different from what it had been on a former occasion, he would give a brief explanation. The qualifications reported by the first committee were of three kinds, viz.—The payment of a money tax—the performance of military duty—and working on the highways. The two former had met his decided approbation. To the latter he wished to add the additional qualification, that the elector should, if he paid no tax, performed no military duty, but offered his vote on the sole ground that he had labored on the highway, also be a householder."

Mr. Van Buren then proceeded to give a history of the progress of the voting on the subject, and stated as a reason, why he should not now again attempt to add the qualification of householder, to the highway qualification, that if he did, it would be running the hazard of the reintroduction of the proposition of the gentleman from Washington, abandoning all qualifications, and throwing open the ballot boxes to every body.

Mr. Van Buren then sought to point out the many evils that would flow from a wholly unrestricted right of suffrage.

"First," he said, "it would give to the city of New York, about 25,000 votes, whilst, under the liberal extension of the right or the choice of delegates, to this convention, she had but about thirteen or fourteen thousand; that the character of the increased number of votes would be such as would render their elections rather a curse than a blessing."

"Secondly," it would not only be injurious to them, but to the northern and western part of the State, &c., the additional representation which next year was to be distributed among the counties, would, instead of going principally to the west, be surrendered to the worst population of the old counties and cities."

"Thirdly, the door would be entirely closed against reform, whatever might be our after conviction, founded on experience, as to the evil tendency of this extended suffrage."

He said the highway tax was within the control of the legislature, and might hereafter be confined to property. For one hundred years at least this would afford protection against the evils apprehended. He would, therefore, notwithstanding that his desire to have the qualification of householder, added to the electors of the third description remained unchanged, accept the report of the committee as it was, with the addition of military qualification, which he thought ought to be adopted for the sake of principle, if for no other reason.

The question was taken—affirmative 80, negative 14. See Jour. of Con. 365.

No. 5.—Martin Van Buren in favor of a freehold qualification for negroes, in exercising the right of suffrage.

The next subject in order was the compromise reported by the committee of thirteen, allowing a negro to vote, provided he had three years' residence in the State one year in the county, and was seized 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.

Gen. Root moved that the committee rise and report. "He hoped they would not (it being 3 o'clock) take up the negroes on an empty stomach."

The motion to rise and report was lost.

Jour. Con. page 360.

Mr. Van Buren said he had voted against a total and unqualified exclusion (of the negroes) for he would not draw a revenue from them, and yet deny to them the right of suffrage,—but this proviso met his approbation, they were exempted from taxation until they had qualified themselves to vote. The right was not denied, to exclude any portion of the community who will not exercise the right of suffrage in its purity. This held out inducements to industry, and will receive his support.

Jour. of Con. page 376.

The question was taken on allowing negroes to vote, as above stated, and decided in the affirmative, ayes 74, noes 31, Mr. Van Buren voting in the affirmative.—Jour. of Con. 378.

The subject was reported to the Convention, and the question was taken on the whole section, including provisos, &c. and decided in the affirmative, ayes 72, noes 32, Mr. Van Buren voting in the affirmative.—Jour. of Con. page 557.

The section thus adopted and made part of the Constitution of the State of New York, is as follows:—

ARTICLE SECOND.

Sec. 1. Every male citizen, of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been an inhabitant of this State one year preceding any election, and for the last six months a resident of the town or county where he may offer his vote; and shall have within the year next preceding the election, paid a tax to the State or county, assessed upon his real or personal property; or shall be exempted from taxation; or being armed or equipped according to law, shall have performed within that year, military duty in the militia of this State; or who shall be exempted from performing military duty in consequence of being a freeman in any city, town, or village in this State; and also, every male citizen of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been, for three years next preceding such election, an inhabitant of this State; and for the last year a resident in the town or county, where he may offer his vote; and shall have been within the last year, assessed to labor upon the highways, and shall have performed the labor, or paid an equivalent therefor, according to law; shall be entitled to vote in the town or ward where he actually resides, and not elsewhere, for all officers that now are, or hereafter may be, elective by the people. But 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 such election. And no person of color shall be subject to direct taxation, unless he shall be seized and possessed of such real estate as aforesaid.

The above is a faithful and candid abstract of the votes and speeches of Martin Van Buren in the New York Convention of 1821, as reported. We have the volume of proceedings published in Albany, in the same year, in our possession, and any person who feels disposed his full liberty of access for the purpose of comparing the above with the original.

We invite all who doubt it. Friends of universal suffrage what think you of the man that uttered the language contained in the above speeches and gave the votes above specified, in restriction of that sacred right? Will any man longer doubt whether Martin Van Buren is against universal suffrage? Will the most rapid partisan longer deny that Martin Van Buren advocated and voted, for the right of the Negro to vote at elections?

The evidence is plain, palpable and clear as the light of day—read, reflect. It is plain English. No man should have a vote, in the opinion of Martin Van Buren unless he paid taxes—did military duty, or worked on the highway, and was a householder. The idea of universal suffrage was to him monstrous. Mark this journeyman mechanic attend to this, poor, but honest freeman of the land! Hearken to it ye agal-

nant of the revolution—remember it all of you. No. 6. Van Buren opposed to giving the election of Sheriff's to the people.

Gen. Root moved an amendment to a section on the appointing power that Sheriffs shall be chosen by the people of the several counties, &c. See Jour. of Con. page 381.

A division having been called for on the amendment of Gen. Root, relating to sheriffs, the same was decided in the affirmative, ayes 71, noes 36.—Martin Van Buren voting in the negative, and against giving the election of sheriffs to the people. The amendment was nevertheless carried, and is now a part of the Constitution of New York.

See Jour. of Con. page 389.

GEN. JACKSON AGAINST GEN. HARRISON, AND AGAINST GEN. WASHINGTON.

General Jackson may be excused, in his old days, for doing an act which, in the vigor of his years and of his mind, he would have scorned. Degraded, indeed, must that party be to slander the fame of Gen. Harrison by operating upon the declining years and mind of a cavalrous man, to make him the accuser of his rival in military glory, and of an old fellow-officer! The spectacle cannot be other than painful to every American bosom. What friend of our country's honor but must feel mortified at the following extract from a late publication by Gen. Jackson.

"To the Editor of the Nashville Edition:—

"Sir: Having never admired Gen. Harrison as a military man, or considered him possessing the qualities which constitute the commander of an army, I have looked at his political relations alone, in the opinions I have formed and expressed respecting his pretensions to the Presidency, and the consequences which would result to the country should the suffrages of the People place him in that office."

"I am, &c. ANDREW JACKSON."

The history of the country shows that General Jackson, was, and is, the personal enemy of General Harrison, and that he always regarded him as his rival in military fame. Can the opinions of General Jackson, under these feelings and circumstances, make any impression upon the People of the country other than such as are unfavorable to himself? Why are the military services of the gallant Harrison assailed at this time? Why have not the opinions of distinguished impartial men, who had served with Harrison, and who had an opportunity to judge of him "as a military man," been given, instead of the prejudiced opinion of a rival and an enemy? Was it because none such could be obtained, or is it that the task would better suit the man who had refused to acknowledge that the father of his country, the immortal WASHINGTON, was "a military man," and for his services in the field and in the cabinet deserved the grateful thanks of Congress? Let the People of the country read the following extract from the journals of Congress, and then say if it be any discredit to General Harrison not to be "admirer as a military man" by General Jackson, who did not consider even Washington as entitled to the thanks of his country. Upon the 15th of December, 1796, the House of Representatives of the United States had under consideration "an address" to General Washington, when the following proceeding took place:

A motion was made and seconded to strike out of said address the following words, to wit:

"For our country's sake, for the sake of republican liberty, it is our earnest wish that your example may be the guide to our successors, and thus, after being the ornament and safeguard of the present age, become the patrimony of our descendants."

And on the question being taken, it passed in the negative.

Andrew Jackson and 23 others voting in the affirmative.

James Madison and 53 others voting in the negative.

And then the main question being taken, that the House do agree to the said address, from which the following extracts are taken, to wit:

"The gratitude and admiration of your countrymen are still drawn to the recollection of those independent virtues and labors which were so eminently instrumental to the achievement of the Revolution, and of which that glorious event will ever be the memorial." "May you long enjoy that liberty which is so dear to you, and to which your name will ever be so dear. May your own virtues and a nation's prayers obtain the happiest sunshine for the decline of your days and the choicest of future blessings."

It was resolved in the affirmative.

James Madison and 63 others voting for the address.

Andrew Jackson and 11 others voting against it.

(See vol. 2 House Journal of 1796, pages 617, 619—in this effort.)

After this exposition, can General Harrison's military glory be tainted by him who "admires" no one, as a military man, but himself, and who would not accord to the illustrious Washington an address approving of his military services as instrumental to the achievement of the Revolution? If General Jackson does not "admire General Harrison as a military man," what do the distinguished officers who fought by his side and witnessed his "qualities as a commander of an army" say? They are disinterested witnesses, and speak from no prejudices and enmities. What did one of the present leaders of the Van Buren party say, before he was identified with Mr. Van Buren's fate, and before he had so far lost his chivalry of character as to *listen*, as he now does, to the abuse of his old friend, fellow-soldier, and General? We allude to Colonel Richard M. Johnson. They differ in opinions with General Jackson, and they "admire Harrison as a military man." Col. Richard M. Johnson said in a speech in Congress:

"For forty years he [Harrison] has been identified with us [the West] interests, his perils, and his hopes. Universally beloved in the walks of peace, and distinguished by his abilities in the councils of the country, he has been yet more illustriously distinguished in the field. He was longer in actual service than any other general officer; he was perhaps often in action than any one of them, and NEVER SUSTAINED A DEFEAT."

To what do the signs of the times point now? Glorb.

They point to General Harrison's election as true as the needle to the pole, or a leg treasurer's nose to Texas.—Prentice.

The Baltimore Republican of the 18th ult. contains "A short biography of a Democrat: Martin Van Buren." Query—Did he not mean epitaph? We propose to insert the article from the Republican, with some emendations, as follows:

An Epitaph on Martin Van Buren: who is No Democrat.

Born Dec. 5th, 1782, at Kinderhook, New York. Admitted to the Bar, Nov. 1803.

Elected Senator of the State in 1812.

Opposed the war and Madison, who was the advocate of the war.

In February, 1815, offered resolutions expressive of the sense of the New York Legislature of the victory at New Orleans,

by that brave old soldier.

GENERAL ANDREW JACKSON. To whose influence, and not his own merit, he was entirely indebted for all the honors he lately received.

He was elected to the U. S. Senate in 1821; in which year he voted in the New York Convention to prevent poor old

REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIERS from exercising the elective franchise.

But in the same Convention, voted to allow negroes to vote.

He was engaged in dancing a minuet at Albany, at the very time when

GENERAL HARRISON, ankle-deep in blood, was fighting the enemies of his country.

Appointed Secretary of State of the U. S. in 1829, when he gave instructions to our Minister at the Court of St. James, derogatory to the honor of his country.

Minister to England in 1831, where he acquired great fondness for the moblity, and became, more aristocratic reality,

AN ARISTOCRAT.

Which tastes he eminently and gorgeously displayed in the palace, with his English coach and servants—his sumptuous furniture, "chambrettes, roses, crimson taffeta, gilt lamps, Gold Knives and Forks," &c. &c.

which were purchased with the PEOPLE'S CASH.

Thus making the Van Buren police equal to those of St. James, the Tuilleries, Fontainebleau, Neuilly, and St. Cloud.

Vice President in 1832; and by the personal popularity and influence of Gen. Jackson, without any merits of his own.

President of the United States in 1836.

In 1839—being "a Northern man with Southern principles"—he allowed negroes to testify, in FLORIDA,

against an officer of the U. S. Navy. In 1840, after having obtained possession of the purse of the

NATION,

He endeavored to enlist a STANDING ARMY, consisting of TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND MEN.

The combined operation of these two measures would have enabled him to destroy the liberties of his COUNTRY.

His only claim to immortality consists in never having had his name connected with any great measure for the good of his country, although he was in public life for thirty years.

In every station, and under all circumstances, he manifested supreme regard for HIMSELF.

He had the rare happiness to attain his highest wishes: having deemed it "Glorious enough to serve under such a chief."

His political demise took place on the 3d of March, 1841, at midnight.

HIS REMAINS repose at Kinderhook; if not "The world forgetting," certainly

"BY THE WORLD FORGOT."

A VETERAN'S TESTIMONY.

What school boy but recollects the reply of the gallant Miller at the battle of Bridgewater! A destructive fire had been moving down rank after rank of the American line, when General Ripley, hastening to the regiment commanded by the brave Miller, exclaimed—"Colonel, can you silence that battery?"—"I'll try sir," was the quick reply; and that "try" will ever occupy a proud niche in the temple of American valor.

He craved the rebuttal at the point of the bayonet, braving the hottest fire of the enemy.

This letter of Gen. Miller, who served under Gen. Harrison at Tippecanoe, and knew him well, will offset a thousand such as the one lately emanated from the Hermitage. "If I ever had any military skill," says the Colonel, "I am more indebted to Gen. Harrison than any other man."—"What friend of the veteran Harrison, who has heard of General James Miller, but feels the force of the compliment herein unintentionally conveyed by the military pupil, to his old preceptor? Let those consider, too, who attempt to depreciate the military character of Gen. Harrison that in so doing, they are reflecting upon the reputation of very many of the most promising younger officers of the last war.

What adds to the force of