

**WHY THE NEGRO WAS
ENFRANCHISED. NEGRO
SUFFRAGE JUSTIFIED**

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Why the negro was enfranchised. Negro suffrage justified by Richard P. Hallowell

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RICHARD P. HALLOWELL

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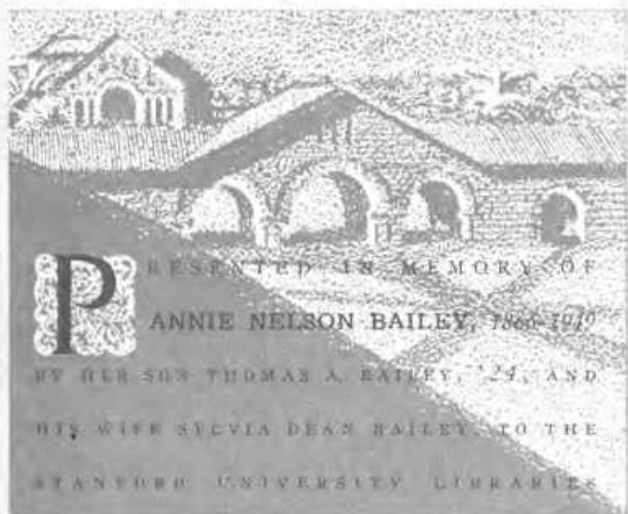
NEGRO SUFFRAGE JUSTIFIED.

BY
RICHARD P. HALLOWELL.

Published at the Request of Colored Citizens of Boston

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INTRODUCTION.

The two following letters were published originally in the *Boston Herald*, March 11 and March 26, 1903, respectively, under the titles "Negro Suffrage Defended" and "For Negro Suffrage." After revision, I republish them in the present form for greater ease of distribution and at the request of a number of leading colored citizens of Boston.

I am especially indebted to Mr. Butler R. Wilson, a prominent colored member of the Suffolk Bar of this State, for his examination of Southern legislation with reference to the negro and for other valuable assistance.

RICHARD P. HALLOWELL.

BOSTON, MASS., May 1, 1903.

WHY THE NEGRO WAS ENFRANCHISED.

To the Editor of the Herald :—

The *Herald* of March 4 says editorially: "It is now, we think, generally recognized that a mistake was made at the close of our civil war in according suffrage generally to the emancipated negro"; and on March 6 you say that the federal government could have and should have limited the right to vote "to those who possessed sufficient education to read and write," and that "a slight property qualification . . . without the least discrimination as to color" should have been required.

Apparently, you assume that by your scheme a number of negroes sufficient to have political influence would have been enfranchised, and would have participated in the reorganization of the rebel states. To satisfy you that such an assumption is unwarranted, it should be only necessary to remind you that, up to the close of the civil war, the negroes did not own even the rags that covered them, and had been kept in ignorance through laws that made it a crime to teach them to read and write. Evidently, your plan

would have limited the suffrage, at least through the period of reconstruction and for many years to follow, to white men, and would have left the question of reorganization to be settled exclusively by white men, of whom a vast majority were not only unalterably opposed to the enfranchisement of the negro, regardless of his character or attainments, but who were avowedly determined to hold him in servile subjugation. Whether or no my characterization of the attitude of the confederates toward the negro is justified, you will judge when you have considered the evidence I shall offer.

As a matter of fact, at the close of the civil war, the suffrage was not, as is often assumed, accorded "generally to the emancipated negroes." That was the last, not the first act, in the history of reconstruction. The first act consisted in the establishment of provisional legislatures elected by and composed of white men only. This experiment failed. As soon as the legislatures were convened they enacted atrocious laws applicable especially to the colored race. These laws regulated the relations between master and servant. The Legislature of Alabama was bold enough to use the term "former owner," when providing for a cruel apprenticeship of minors. In the same state "stubborn and refractory servants" were declared to be "vagrants," to be taken before a jus-

tice of the peace, who could fine them \$50; and, in default of payment, they were to be hired out, on three days' public notice, for six months. Laws were ingeniously framed to deprive the colored man of the right to contract for his own labor or to receive the benefits of his daily toil.

The South Carolina Legislature compelled colored men wishing to be mechanics to pay \$10 for a license, while for the privilege of being a shop-keeper an annual payment of \$100 was demanded. For an extended report of and comment upon this iniquitous legislation, let me refer you to Blaine's "Twenty Years of Congress."* That it fairly represented white public sentiment and that it was intended to accomplish the revival of slavery, so far as it could be revived, there is no room for doubt.

In order to learn existing conditions, in the summer of 1865 President Johnson sent the Hon. Carl Schurz into the southern states on an observation and investigation tour. Mr. Schurz then stood high in the councils of the nation, and his report was accepted as an intelligent and impartial statement. He said, in part, that in his judgment it would "hardly be possible to secure the freedman against oppressive legislation and private persecution, unless he be en-

* For the full text of these laws see McPherson's *History of the Reconstruction*, pp. 29-44.