

Va.  
Good Content  
Dear Sir

Washington city Decr 26<sup>th</sup> 1829

Having closed the festivities of Christmas, and tired with trudging along the streets of this metropolis on business through an incessant rain I have retired to devote an hour to the call of friendship.

It was my intention, at a leisure moment in this District, to reply at large to the contents of your last favor received before I left home, and to attempt to refute, to the best of my capacity, what I deem its antirepublican doctrines. But the frightful attitude in which the convention has since placed itself by its votes and the undisguised expression of the intentions of the East on the "all-absorbing" subject of the basis of representation merges minor considerations in its vast abyss and throws the mind upon the appalling contemplation of the dire result which may be produced by a pertinacious refusal to redress to any salutary extent, those grievances in the existing system of government, a deep sense of which forced the state into convention. The torpor into which a long continued privation of political rights sinks a nation is not easily disturbed. For, all experience proves that people are more prone to bear with evils while they are sufferable than to make any great exertion to remedy them. But when a feeling and a galling conviction of oppression rouses a majority of the community, to a determined resistance, its voice, like that of the royal beast of the forest, makes everything quake around. Hope is patient, but despair unmanageable. Can it then be wise or prudent or politic in the minority unjustly possessed of the power of the state, to hazard the rueful consequences of driving the majority of the people to despair of attaining their just and equal rights by an appeal to reason & justice; or at least a prospect of arriving one day at a consummation so devoutly to be wished for? (turn to 3<sup>d</sup> page)

Long have the citizens of Virginia waited for a peaceable reform of their constitution. They had contemplated the call of a convention as the harbinger of the restoration of their equal and unalienable rights. The assembling of that body was looked to with deep interest. The excitement produced by its proceedings is great. A crisis seems to have arrived. It is a moment of awful suspense and penetrating solicitude. The public feeling is intense. Should the convention on which the expectation of relief rested, dissolve in smoke; or still worse, by a deliberate act, determine to perpetuate the galling yoke of political slavery on the necks of the majority, can they flatter themselves that it will be patiently worn, or quietly even as in times past? Is it reasonable or probable that men knowing themselves possessed of the physical power to right themselves <sup>having once been roused to an effort</sup> conscious that every principle of human and justice concedes what they demand, will long yield a tame submission to the will or dictation of the few? Such a supposition would be at war with every manly feeling of the heart.

I cannot accord with those members who declare that whatever be the result of your present deliberations (perhaps more properly agitations) they will exert themselves to allay the popular ferment to tranquilize the public excitement and reconcile the people to a disastrous state of things thus inevitably forced upon them. I cannot consent to my peace, peace! when there is no peace. I wish never to see the people of Virginia settle down in quiet again under the frightful oligarchy of the day - and more especially after the developement in the convention of the aristocratic and iniquitous principles on which it is avowedly to be sustained.

I regret that my friend Cooke, with whose manly assertion and luminous exposition of genuine republican doctrines I was charmed, should so far lower his lofty feelings as to agree to accept under the name of a compromise a scheme, which while it professes an amelioration

grants no present, nor indeed prospective relief. And should such a plan be presented to the people and accepted by them its inevitable effect would be to fix in long immaturity any radical reform. I would feel myself a traitor to those principles for which our forefathers fought and bled were I to advise the adoption of a constitution with such delusive features.

From the temper manifested by the east, and the confident tone which they have assumed since the late acquisition to their number, I think any attempt to procure a provision in the constitution (should one be agreed on) which for its future amendment which would promise an equitable revision at some future period, would be altogether fruitless. Without such a provision, or such alterations as would render it in some degree acceptable to the majority of the freemen, I care not how bad it shall be. The more hateful its complexion the better would I be pleased. Because I would then hope that its deformity would diminish a portion of its present favor and cause an indignant people to rise in the majesty of their strength for its demotion.

I see no likelihood of any benefit to arise from your continuance & you will adjourn ere long. Beware of compromises which shall delude the people by specious appearances where no operative principle is secured or practical good obtained.

It is probable I shall leave this district before new year if I obtain the deed executed which I enclosed to you the other day.

I have visited the president and find him a plain, unostentatious republican in manners & quite accessible. But I could not receive the impression that he is a great man.

Your friend  
Arch W. Cleaveland

Jackson.

FREE  
Archd McLean R.M.  
at Archville now at  
Washington

FREE

Charles S. Morgan Esqr  
of the Convention  
Richmond  
Virginia

now  
would

Archd. McLean  
Dec. 26, 1829.  
Jan. 4, 1830.

WASHINGTON  
DEC  
28