THE ALABAMA ELECTION.

Studies from the Polls—The Freedman as a Voter—The Issues and the Results.

[Correspondence of the Cincinnati Commercial.]

MONTGOMERY, Ala., February 3, 1868.—For four days now I have been a looker-on for first days now I have been a looker-on for first days now I have been a looker-on for the election held to determine the fate of the new Constitution of Alabama. The spectacle is a curious one, affording, as it does, many studies from the most remarkable page in the history of the ballot-box in this Republic. The white citizens of this State, with very few exceptions, have been struggling to keep the negroes from the polls, and the black voters away from the polls, and the black citizens have shown a contented eagerness to exercise their right of suffrage fully, thoughtfully, comprehendingly that the continued cruelty, comprehendingly that the continued injustice of that right is at stake. In definition of fatigue, hardship, hunger, the degrees of employers, the arguments of brighter intellects than their own, the sacrifice of valuable friendships and of pleasant situations, the majority of the black men of Alabama have recorded their votes in favor of the new Constitution.

The influences brought to bear to induce them to compromise with the enemy have been ingenious and manifold. If goodbye humorously reasoned with, they would only lend in reply. Appeals to old ties their impassive heads as uselessly as a spittoon. Expostulation was of no avail. Threats of proscription have been less fruitless, but many thousands disregarded every menace save the one that spurred them to vote for the political elevation of their race. It is universally asserted by the Conservatives that the poor negroes are the dupes of designing white "carpet baggers" who desire to be elected into office and emolument. That such designing persons exist is not to be doubted, but the black man, at this election, is trying to pull out of the fire the largest and most succulent chestnuts for himself and his own people. Read the proposed Constitution, and judge for yourself if he is snapping for more shadow than substance. Though often credulous, and by nature always confiding, he has a just apprehension of the stake he has put upon the issue of this election.

For four days the election has been quietly proceeding, with the polls open from 8 to 6 o'clock. If ratification fail it will not be because time enough was not given to muster all who desired to vote. Originally but two days were named, then four. The voting commenced in a rear ward, and it was feared that many negroes would be kept at home by the wretched weather and roads. The weather day was added by General Meade, making five in all. The first two days were exceedingly chilly, wet and gloomy. The second two were mild and sunny. To-day promises to be a lovely one. But, rain or shine, the streets of Montgomery have been thronged with negroes. The curbstone restaurants (ranging in size from a hand-basket to a rickety table) have continued operations on a scale adapted to the crisis. Pedestrians collide on back streets have been pegging away, day and night, at the shocking bad fare of the tempting venders distant plantations. Wooden awnings have sheltered a nightly bivouac. Every hospitable hut has lodged enough darkies to give it a double claim to be called a black hole. The warm sides of the stables have had their ebony procession lengthened and widened to the election standard, and philanthropic auctioneers have shivered out their stock of goods and stock of conscience, at a fearful sacrifice, of course.

If the new suffrage is to be written with me and watch for awhile how the voting proceeds, I promise him a novel experience. We will not take the first day of the voting, for then it was painful to see the crowd of ragged colored men hurrying to their homes in the pitiless storm, waiting to slip in their tickets, and so fearful of losing their turns that one who had been detained by his work found no avenue of egress save that paved with the heads of those behind. Let us choose the third day, when the air is bland and the sky cloudless. There stand the black pilgrims, you see, ranged four deep and twice—that humility's played out," says one of the challengers with a laugh. But the voter has his own views as to the bat. Perhaps he stands uncovered to the ballot and not to one man. His ticket down the box, and he stumps off, irradiated. The third! "Another George Washington," Another vote, too, and another chuckle. The fourth! The name of this one cannot be found. "Go to headquarters of registration," says the judge; "If your name is there they will give you a certificate enabling you to vote." "I've been that," sorrowfully rejoins the applicant. "Taint that," "Sorry," says the judge; "I can't help you." "Sorry! Now I ask you to watch this poor fellow. He comes out looking sick at heart. A friendly mulatto takes him aside, and inquires into his case. It is hopeless—name not registered at all. The disappointed darkey wanders around for ten minutes, then he quietly falls again into the rear of the line, to be repulsed again and again when he reaches the window. Hope that his name may have been overlooked dies out at last, and not without the sharpest pang his simple but emotional nature can feel.

Enter the fifth. "My name is Henry Clay." "All right, Henry, you can vote; you're registered." "But, Henry, where were you born?" "In Kentucky, Sir; Henry Clay of Ashland was my father." And the tall, black, some mulatto lows and makes his bow and goes out. The sixth! This is another of the persevering kind. Begins his name. "He ob" says the Judge. "You have been here already half a dozen times. You say you are not registered." "Well, Sir," says the sorrowful negro, "I've been kyah evah since Tuesday trying to vote an obeyah ob de law, and I hasn't had a bite to eat, and I can't vote, and I've got to walk twelve miles to get home." The red-nosed Conservative judge takes a biscuit from his pocket and hands it to the negro, with "Here, make room." One of the challengers says: "Boys, the Conservatives have the name of being generous. Let's give this hungry nigger a dinner." The speaker draws his pocket-book and transfers some currency to the object of his kindly impulse, who takes it with a "cakee," but a vacant look. It is a vote he wants, not a meal.

So the strange procession moves slowly on. If you wish to determine how much the negro's heart is in the election, watch his face as he comes away from the ballot-box. His vote once in, every feature lights with joy; but his vote rejected, sorrow and dismay are expressed even in the faces of those who anxious but unpalate sooty faces in those waiting their turns. Is all this emotion due to the duplicity of Yankee adventurers? Can the "carpet-bagger" thus sway the very soul of the black man to reach his ballot? Can he for a possible week and 40 acres of land that the negro is thus profoundly stirred; that he braves hunger, the ill will of his employers, and, may be, starvation itself? No, friend Conservative. The slave you once owned, ignorant as he is still, and lowly in social rank, feels, as he casts that ballot, the freedom he inherited, and which, unchecked by reasonably good, will give his manhood a rapid and generous growth. Let the Conservatives cast here in this ballot, and no longer cheat the poor bondsman out of the rights of citizenship. And of the polls, and proffered me his vote, asking: "Are you de boss?" The question in this case lack of such technical knowledge until him for useful and honest citizenship. Let