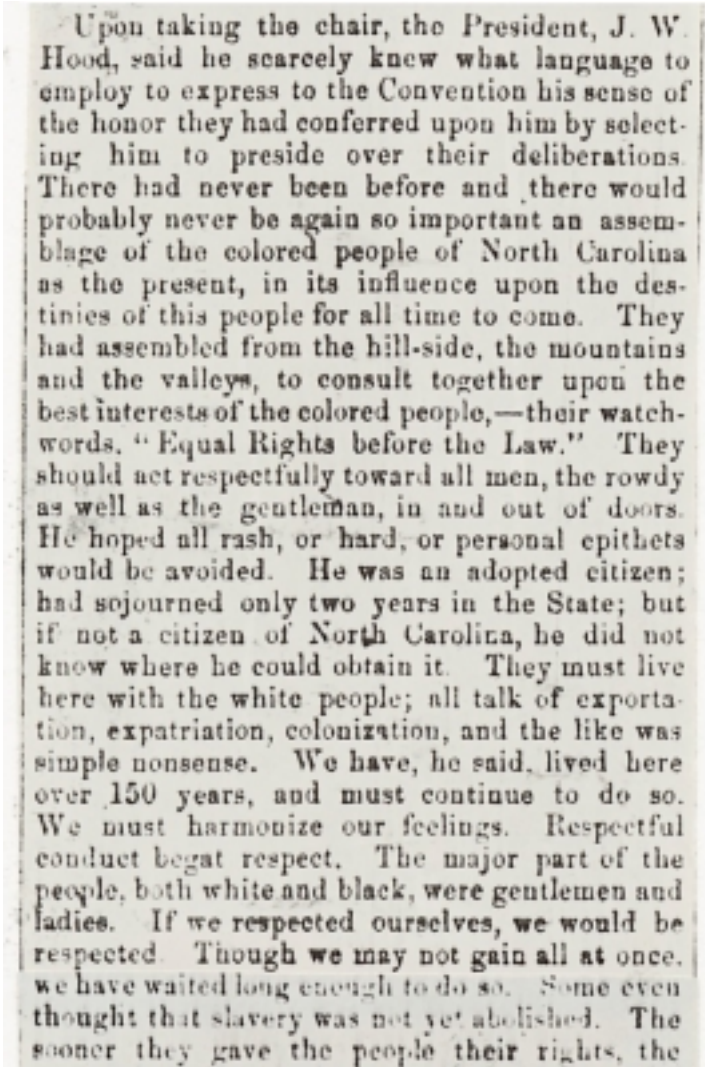


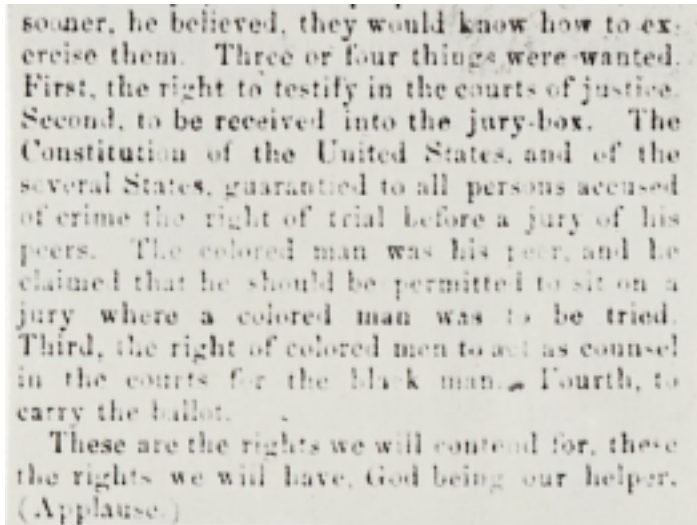
Upon taking the chair, the President, J.W. Hood, said he scarcely knew what language to employ to express to the Convention his sense of the honor they had conferred upon him by selecting him to preside over their deliberations. There had never been before and there would probably never be again so important an assemblage of the colored people of North Carolina as the present, in its influence upon the destinies of this people for all time to come. They had assembled from the hill-side, the mountains and the valleys, to consult together upon the best interests of the colored people, their watch-words, "Equal Rights before the Law." They should act respectfully toward all men, the rowdy as well as the gentleman, in and out of doors. He hoped all rash, or hard, or personal epithets would be avoided. He was an adopted citizen; had sojourned only two years in the State; but if not a citizen of North Carolina, he did not know where he could obtain it. They must live here with the white people; all talk of exportation, expatriation, colonization, and the like was simple nonsense. We have, he said, lived here over 150 years, and must continue to do so. We must harmonize our feelings. Respectful conduct begat respect. The major part of the people, both white and black, were gentlemen and ladies. If we respected ourselves, we would be respected. Though we may not gain all at once, we have waited long enough to do so. Some even thought that slavery was not yet abolished. The sooner they gave the people their rights, the



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sooner, he believed, they would know how to exercise them. Three or four things were wanted. First, the right to testify in the courts of justice. Second, to be received into the jury-box. The Constitution of the United States, and of the several States, guaranteed to all persons accused of crime the right of trial before a jury of his peers. The colored man was his peer, and he claimed that he should be permitted to sit on a jury where a colored man was to be tried. Third, the right of colored men to act as counsel in the courts for the black man. Fourth, to carry the ballot.

These are the rights as we contend for, these the rights we will have, God being our helper. (Applause.)



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