

REPORT.

The undersigned, a minority of the committee on Registration, to which was referred sundry memorials asking the removal of the constitutional disabilities in relation to the elective franchise beg leave to dissent from the position assumed by the majority, and to urge upon the House the necessity of taking such action as will speedily remove the disqualifications under which a large majority of our people are laboring. The disqualifying provisions of our constitution, if imposed upon the people as punishments, would even under the decision of our Court of Appeals, be clearly illegal and void. Believing, as we do, that the deprivation of the right of suffrage is the severest punishment that can be inflicted upon the citizens, and that the visiting of such a penalty for acts done, which were not criminal at the time the offences were committed, is contrary to the spirit of free institutions, and repugnant to the Bill of Rights of Maryland, and the constitution of the United States; therefore in our opinion, those provisions in order to have the least shadow of validity, must be regarded as *preventive* in their operation and not *punitive* in their character. These odious disabilities were imposed in the midst of a sanguinary strife, when passion had usurped the dominion of reason; when the barriers of the Constitution were overleaped under the plea of preserving the Government; but now all danger has passed; the Southern people have expressed an almost unanimous desire to return to their allegiance; many of their chosen leaders