

AUGUST · 1877

To the Editor of the Charleston *West Virginia Journal*

[Malden, W.Va., August 1877]

Editors Journal: This question has presented itself to me, "can we not improve?" I mean the colored people, for I am a colored man myself, or rather a boy. When I look over the record of the colored people for the last ten years, I see many things for which they ought to be praised, but again when I look on the other side I see many things that we might improve ourselves in faster than we have done. First, let us take up the matter of education. Does each parent do all in his power to give his child an education? Does each parent consider the importance of educating his child? The time has come when we are expected to play our part in this republic as American citizens. Let every parent then see that his child is led to perform his duty as an American citizen. The time is fast coming when bondage can no longer be a plea for our ignorance. Our many friends who have stood by us in the past, and who are still willing to befriend us, want to see us accomplish something ourselves.

I know that there are many who will plead poverty as a reason for not educating themselves and their children, but let such look at Vice-president Henry Wilson,¹ who amid poverty and discouragements, rose from the shoemaker's bench to one of the Nation's highest officers. Let such, also, look at Abraham Lincoln who rose from the humble log cabin to the Presidency of the greatest republic on earth. Let them remember the old maxim, "where there is a will there is a way," and take courage and resolve never to give up in despair of getting an education till they have exhausted all the means in their power. I am afraid that there are too many of our people who do not improve the privileges they have within their reach. I am afraid that there are too many who spend too great a portion of their time in street walking or in vain or vile talk. I think there are many who, if they would count up the time spent by them in vain and idle street talk, would find it to amount to hours and days enough in which they might have obtained for themselves a valuable and respectable education. If we expect to make an intelligent nation we have no time to spend in idleness. It behooves us to properly employ every minute of our time. If the colored man will only improve his opportunities and persevere, I believe the time is not far distant when a great portion of them will be equal