

ANDREW JOHNSON

. . . OF humble birth, a tailor by trade, nature gave him a strong intellect, and he had learned to read after his marriage. He had acquired much knowledge of the principles of government and made himself a fluent speaker, but could not rise above the level of the class in which he was born and to which he always appealed. He well understood the few subjects laboriously studied, and affected to despise other knowledge, while suspicious that those possessing such would take advantage of him. Self-educated men, as they are called, deprived of the side light thrown on a particular subject by instruction in cognate matters, are narrow and dogmatic, and, with an uneasy consciousness of ignorance, soothe their own vanity by underrating the studies of others. To the vanity of this class he added that of the demagogue (I use the term in its better sense) and called the wise policy left him by his predecessor, "my policy." Compelled to fight his way up from obscurity, he had contracted a dislike of those more favored of fortune, whom he was in the habit of calling the "slave aristocracy," and became incapable of giving his confidence to any one, even to those on whose assistance he relied in a contest, just now beginning, with Congress.

President Johnson never made a dollar by public office, abstained from quartering a horde of connections on the Treasury, refused to uphold rogues in high places, and had too just a conception of the dignity of a chief magistrate to accept presents. It may be said that these are humble qualities for a citizen to boast the possession of by a President of the United States. As well claim respect for a woman of one's family on the ground that she has preserved her virtue. Yet all whose eyes were not blinded by partisanship, whose manhood was not emasculated by servility, would in these last years have welcomed the least of them as manna in the desert.