

The Daily Astorian

VOL. XXIV, NO. 58.

ASTORIA, OREGON, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1885.

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HOW THEY DO IN VIRGINIA.

The Southern Idea of the Negro Voter.

EASTERN VIRGINIA, Aug. 10.—The way things are conducted down here would seem to a New Yorker rather likely to retard than to advance events. The boats and trains leave when they get ready and stop when they get tired. It was not very long ago that a night train, run on a Virginia schedule, was bumping along leisurely at a ten-mile-an-hour gait, when it came to an open switch. The switchman was comfortably asleep in his little shanty, and the brakeman had to get out and wake him up. The people in the sleeper were roused by the following colloquy in the dead of the night:
The brakeman—"Jake! Jake! get up and set the switch. The train can't get just if you don't set the switch."
The switchman—"Oh-ah-um-um."
The switchman began to snore.
The brakeman (earnestly)—"Do, for the Lord's sake, get up, Jake, and set the switch. I tell you, there's a lot of them durned industrious Yankees on the train, and the conductor says they're growin' about every little thing."
The switchman—"Yes-ah-um-um." (Turns over and continues to snore.)
The brakeman (very anxious by this time, as windows on the train are going up and a few mild expletives are wafted out on the night air)—"Jake, get up and set the switch. I'd set the durned thing myself if I only knew how."
A voice—"You infernal lazy rascal, if you don't get up and set that switch before I can get my trousers on I'll come out there and blow your blasted brains out." (The click of a pistol is heard.)
The switchman (lazily creeping out of the door)—"Stranger, I don't believe a word o' that. You're a New Yorker. I knowed it by your twang, and you ain't a shootin' feller. You're handier with your tongue than your weepin', I reckon."
The switch being by this time in process of arrangement everybody subsides. The brakeman heaves a sigh of relief, the switchman manages at last to get the switch set, the train rolls through and the New Yorker retires full of strange oaths, like the gentleman in Shakespeare. On the river steamboats people walk quietly on board without any formality of a ticket. After awhile a darkey comes along ringing a big bell and bawling: "Gentlemen! please step up to the captain's office and pay." There is no coercion about it. A tolerably astute and plausible fellow could travel forever in Virginia without paying anything. Occasionally a discussion arises as to whether a man had paid his fare or not, but the passenger's word is invariably taken. The Virginians have a sublime confidence in human nature. The cabin maid goes after the ladies and collects the fare from them.

THE NEGRO VOTERS.

The talk about the negro voters being kept away from the polls by force is all hosh—and would never be advanced by any press or people understanding southern affairs. The southerner is a natural-born politician, trained to it for long generations. The south always had an enormous and disproportionate influence in national politics. It was surpassed by New England in wealth and population almost before this century was begun, and when the giant west came to the front it would seem that it was completely overshadowed. But by straining every nerve toward politics, by putting its best men into public life, by pressing into the service of politics every young man of promise, by making able political managers of its women and almost its children, the south continued to maintain its supremacy until the war. It is not likely that such a people could not outwit the lately enfranchised, newly-fledged negroes. It was infinitely easier to outwit them than to shoot them, as a part of the Republican press believes—or pretends to believe. Just observe how easy it was, aided as it came to be by the shortsightedness of the white Republican leaders who came from the north to direct matters they knew nothing about. The white men would devise an elaborate and complicated method of voting. Dealing themselves with the intelligent and practised voters, willing to give their time freely to drilling them, they could easily get every Democratic voter in the precinct out, fully acquainted with what was required of him, and with a contingent of the best men among the Democrats at the polls early and late to see that every vote was properly cast and recorded. The negroes, confused, unable to get information as to how their votes were to be cast, with half a dozen designing white men, each intriguing against the other for the negro vote, might, indeed, come to the polls, but with their leaders fighting each other, and each one with his own personal irons in the fire, they could make but little impression on the solid phalanx of Democratic votes. Half the negro votes could be legally thrown out, and surely, supposing the southern men to be bloodthirsty as their enemies represent them—which is a vile slander—that was easier than shooting and intimidating. Then the Democrats always managed to have a capitation tax which they cheerfully paid. The white Republicans, with shortsighted selfishness, monopolized the offices. The negroes were left entirely out. They were practically ineligible to offices requiring bond and security, nor could they fill those requiring education and business qualifications, so it will be seen that there were but few for them, and these few were divided up among the white spoilsmen. To the negro, therefore, this proposition was presented—no was to pay a dollar for the privilege of voting for a man whom he neither knew nor cared anything about, and who was perfectly sure never to do anything for the negro. Therefore, the negro stayed at home, and it cost the Republicans more trouble to get him to the polls than it did the Democrats to keep him away.

Politics are ugly everywhere. It sounds ugly in a free country to say it is right that a certain part of any community should be disfranchised, but the assertion is freely made that to any one who knows anything about the south it would be the most frightful calamity that could be imagined to have it controlled by the concrete ignorance of the negro of the negro vote, and the southern people are justified in keeping it at bay. Let it be distinctly understood that at the south the negro, in his person and his property, is as safe as the white man. But his social and political rights are under the heel of the wealth and the intelligence of the country, and who, knowing anything, understanding anything, of the two races, dare say it is not best?

What can't be cured must be endured, is a saying fit only for Mahomedans, who believe in fate. No matter how bad a cough may be, it need not be endured now that Red Star Cough Cure has been discovered.

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