Newspapers.com by Ancestry

Paxton Daily Record (Paxton, Illinois) · 25 Apr 1900, Wed · Page 3

Downloaded on Mar 15, 2021

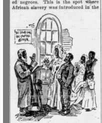
NEGROES AS VOTERS.

As a Race They Are Indifferent to Governmental Affairs.

Some Reasons Why the Mixed Population of Porto Rico and the Philippines Should Not Be Granted Citizenship.

[Special New Orleans Letter.]

TRAVELERS in the southern states, especially along the gulf coast, are impressed with the indifference of the great mass of the negroes in governmental affairs. This may serve as an illustration for the mixed populations in the West Indian islands and the Philippines. In our new possession of Porto Rico, which some of our people wish to erect into a territory, negroes predominate, and there is also a large population of mixed blood. These are as incapable of self-government as are the full-blooded negroes. This is the spot where African slavery was introduced in the



SOUTHERN NEGRO WEDDING.

new world by the Spaniards, and from this island and Cuba it spread to the gulf states. The negroes brought from the African coast, from whence they were kidnaped, their barbarisms and superstitions and their incapacity for self-government. There they lived in tribes, warred upon each other, and the more powerful sold their neighbors into bondage. For centuries the experiment of self-government was tried in Africa, and that country has steadily deteriorated in population, morals and in tribal governments.

The experiment of self-government, or rather negro government, was tried in the late rebellious states of the south after the conclusion of the civil war. True, they had corrupt white men for leaders, and every state was plundered. But the negroes were in the majority, and the white "carpet-baggers" would have been powerless had the negroes not been easy to corrupt. Will it not be the same in Porto Rico and in the Philippines?

While the negroes of the south had been born and reared in slavery they knew what freedom was by comparing their burdensome lives to those of their masters who lived in ease upon their labor. Yet, when the opportunity came, the negro did not appreciate it, and went in for plunder. After 35 years of freedom he is scarcely more qualified for self-government than when liberated at the close of the war. By nature he is indifferent to government, and cares not who governs, so long as he is undisturbed in his "happy-go-lucky" manner of living. While the slave generation was not expected to make much progress in education, or in ideas of self-government, much was expected of the newer generation, especially by the "theorists" who believed that the negro was capable of self-government. Though the negroes have had the advantage of public schools for more than a third of a century, the advance of the generation born in the south since the war has been very slow. There are a few exceptional cases where a negro has risen above the average mass of his people, but in most of these cases the white blood predominated, and to this fact his rise is mainly attributable. It is the same in Porto Rico, in Cuba and the Philippines. The south may be taken as an illustration of the incapability of these islands for self-government. The negroes of the south have not demonstrated their fitness for self-government. They are little better educated than were their slave parents. The children of this second generation show the same indifference to educa-

TWO YOUNG CIGARETTE FIENDS.

tion, and so may other generations, perhaps. It is thus demonstrated that the intellect of the plantation negro is not capable of being enlightened to the intellectual standpoint of average citizenship, or that he is interested in the science of government. My observations, recently, in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee and Virginia failed to denote any material progress of the darky from his former condition. This applies to the former slave and "the new nigger," as the later generation is styled. He still grovels in the superstitions of his remote ancestors and firmly believes in witches and witchcraft.

The schools and churches, with which they are well supplied, have not removed these delusions from his cloud brain, imported from Africa and the West Indies. The "intelligent" voter and citizen, who determines the rights of others and construes the law to his own dark way of thinking, still believes that the placing of a frog under the doorstep of an enemy will cause the death of that person when he has crossed the threshold. He goes to the polls to exercise his rights in our scheme of government, carrying in his pocket the left hind foot of a rabbit killed in a graveyard at midnight at full moon. This not only brings to him good luck generally, but protects him from personal danger. As an evidence of their little faith in themselves they prefer, as a rule, to be tried by white juries. Their superstitions are so numerous that the white people give very little attention to them, and on the more important cases the negro is generally "excused" from jury service. There are not many people in this age of learning who would feel safe in being tried by a "jury of peers" composed of negroes who believe in the rabbit-foot and frog theories, and who frequently hold close communion with "ghosts."

The razor is the darky's favorite weapon—it is a greater talisman than the rabbit's foot, and more effective. All carry razors, both men and women, and to all places—the polls, the jury box, the dance and the church. Three-fourths of the crimes committed in any southern community, on an average, are due to negroes, while they contribute little or nothing towards the expenses of local government. Their natural ignorance is the principal cause of so many "misunderstandings." Another is the frequent use of very bad whisky.

The Saturday night dance is a fruitful source of disturbances. On these nights "razors are in the air," but the festivities are not marred by the carving of a few, unless it is to the death, when the "function" suddenly comes to a period. They do not obey the usual injunction: "Lebe yer razzer at de do'," regarding it as a mere form. Neither is it etiquette to search one for weapons—that would bring on an engagement. The same habit prevails at weddings. It is not always that disturbances occur, but when they do the "razzer" cuts an important figure. The courts seem to be powerless to stop the practice of carrying such weapons. From the fact that all negroes carry them, there are few informers among them. Those who do, however, give such information become subjects for carving by the aggrieved ones, and the rabbit's foot is of no protection.

The marriage and divorce system, or rather the lack of the latter, is a strange custom in negro life. They imitate white people in their marriages, even as to style, but their "divorce" system is an improvement upon the Oklahoma quick and easy style. While they are willing to pay two dollars for a license, they rarely sue for divorce. Not that they care so much for the publicity as the expense. They just quit—and that ends it. In a very short time both find other affinities. Prosecution seldom follows these informal divorces and

A GAME OF DRAW POKER.

"common law" marriages. They are so numerous that the people do not care to burden the local governments with the expense. The minister's fee is usually one dollar, seldom more, notwithstanding his placarded hint: "De Lawd Lubs de Cheerful Giber." Strictly construed, it means that the minister wants a raise from the usual fee.

While the negro has made little or no progress in education and in governmental affairs, he is "getting along" in other directions. He is mastering the mysteries of that great and popular game "poker." Some of them are adepts in the art of "holding out" big cards and "good hands." The methods adopted by the darky adept are primitive, but perhaps as effective as holding cards up the sleeve, or secreting them in the "patent vest" device used by white gamblers. In a "gemmen's game," it is in bad form for a darky to remove his shoes from his feet. This is considered as prima facie evidence of an intent to "skin" his friend.

The darky also keeps pace with his white brother in the cigarette habit, and he begins about as early as the other youth, but it is not believed that he lives as long under it.

The negro "progresses" in our voices, but does not seem capable of advancing intellectually. Before he can do so, his superstitions must be removed. How long this will require may be estimated from his slow progress during the past 35 years. The same reasoning may apply to our Porto Rican neighbors, who are asking for self-government.

J. M. SCANLAND.

BRIDE IN NEW ROLE.

Acts as Director at Her Own Wedding —Omits the Regulation Wedding Gown and Attendants.

Standing in the brick Presbyterian church at New York the other afternoon, just prior to the ceremony which made her the bride of Dr. Charles Thorndyke Parker, Miss Susan De Forest Day gave order after order concerning the arrangements as if she were upon the deck of her yacht, the Scythian. Miss Day's freedom from conventionality was marked by the omission of the regulation wedding gown and any attendants. James P. Parker, of Boston, was the bridegroom's best man.

The Cause of His Anxiety.

"Spender seems worried. I suppose he owes a good deal of money."

"Yes; but he isn't worrying about the money he owes; it's about the money he can't borrow."—Puck.

Knows Part of the Process.

"Did you ever visit a maple-sugar camp?"

"No; but I once worked in a grocery and helped put in the sand."—Chicago Record.

Clipped By:

mhpatterson
Mon, Mar 15, 2021

Copyright © 2021 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

Powered by Newspapers.com