

# THE LITERARY DIGEST

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## VIRGINIA AND NEGRO SUFFRAGE.

**T**HE decision made by the voters of Virginia, by a majority of about 18,000, to call a convention to revise the state constitution is attracting wide interest, especially in view of the fact that one purpose of the revision is to be the addition of an educational and property qualification to the ballot laws, such as is now in force in South Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and the additional provision, also in force in the three other States mentioned, that lineal descendants of men who voted before the Civil War shall not be barred from voting by lack of education or property. The effect of these constitutional provisions, in the States where they are being tried, is to keep nearly all the negroes from the polls, without disfranchising any white men. South Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisiana, which have adopted this plan, are the only States in the Union which have a larger proportion of negroes than of white inhabitants. Three other States—Virginia, North Carolina, and Alabama—have more than half a million colored inhabitants each, and will vote on constitutional amendments this year or next. North Carolina will vote on the amendment in August. Virginia will vote as soon as the legislature and constitutional convention can frame the amendment, and Alabama will vote on the question this summer.

The *Cleveland Leader* (Rep.) asks if it is not rather inconsistent that the Democrats of the South, who "profess to have great solicitude for the welfare of the people of the Philippine Islands," and "are clamoring for the granting of political freedom and national independence to the dark-skinned followers of Aguinaldo, and have wept barrels of crocodile tears because of their apprehension that these people may be oppressed in some way," should be the very ones who "have done their utmost during the past thirty-five years to oppress and disfranchise the millions of black men in the South who were freed from Democratic slavery by the Republican Party." The *Boston Journal* (Rep.) declares that "Virginia has no excuse of any apprehensions of negro domination for her course," as the white voters outnumber the negro voters two to one. "If Virginia white men are made of such stuff," it remarks, "that two of them, on the average, can be 'dominated' by one negro, a frightful degeneracy has taken place in the old State."

A Virginia view of the matter may be seen in the following comment from the *Richmond Times* (Ind. Dem.):

"Under the constitution, which is to be framed, large numbers of negroes will be deprived of their votes, but they will not suffer by reason of it. The black man's vote has done him far more harm than good, and the great majority of black men in this State would be better off without the right of suffrage than with it. The whites are determined that the negro party in this State shall not rule, and so measures have long been in force to nullify the black man's vote. His vote under the present system is not effective and never will be effective, and so the black man might as well not have the right to vote.

"So much for the masses. As for that class of intelligent, law-abiding, property-owning colored men, and it is a considerable class in Virginia and growing, we are heartily in favor of extending the suffrage to them. We believe that all such will be given the right to vote, and that the inducement will be held out to other colored men to qualify."