

Written for this Paper.

### OUR COLORED CONGRESSMAN.

WASHINGTON, D. C., 1893.—The only colored man in Congress comes from South Carolina. His name is George Washington Murray and he represents 216,000 people. His district is the famous black district, which was represented by Gen. Robt. Smalls, and it is the biggest negro district of the Union. It is two hundred miles long, and it winds in and out like a snake, scalloping the Atlantic coast and cutting the state of South Carolina like a saw. It is the district set aside by the whites of that state for colored representation. It contains few towns and only one-fifth of its population is white.

There is no question about Geo. W. Murray's ancestry. Every feature of his cannon ball head is modeled on African lines. His complexion is that of the ace of spades and his features are of the pronounced negro type. He is by no means a bad looking colored man. He stands about five feet eight inches in his stockings and is broad shouldered and strong limbed. He has shown himself to be a man of nerve and a politician of shrewdness. He talks well, but butchers the king's English in many of his sentences. He has had to fight for all that he has and his education has been acquired in almost as remarkable a way as was that of Fred Douglass. I had a talk with him last night about himself and questions relating to his race.

#### HOW ONE COLORED MAN WAS EDUCATED.

I first asked him as to his history. He replied: "I was born in the district in which I live, just about forty years ago. My parents were slaves, and when Abraham Lincoln freed the negroes I was just eleven years old. I had no money and no one to take care of me, but I decided at that time that I would have an education and went at it. I learned my A, B, C's by asking other children, who went to school, what the letters were, and by practicing on every person whom I met I finally learned to read and write. I studied as best I could until I became able to read the newspapers and I know that I could stumble my way through a congressional speech when I was fifteen. It was about this time that Geo. S. Boutwell, a Congressman from Maine or Massachusetts, made a speech, which I read. It made a great impression upon me and I can quote one sentence from it now. It was on the southern question and I think it read as follows: 'I know that there is pro-slavery desire and always has been and always will be until we, the republican party, grind it into powder, trample it under foot, and freedom blows the dust out with the healing of her wings.' This sentence made an impression on me and I probably read it to some of our people, as the colored boys who could read always read the papers to the others. Well, in this way I learned to read and write. Arithmetic always came easy to me and I could figure out sums in my head long before I knew how to make the figures. When I was eighteen years old I had so far progressed that I began to teach school, and the first school I ever entered was as a teacher and not as a scholar. After teaching several years I went to the University of South Carolina and remained there at school until the government of the state prohibited the co-education of the races and forced me out.

I then went back to teach in the public schools and was engaged in teaching and farming until I was elected to Congress."

#### FARMING AMONG THE NEGROES.

"How about farming among the negroes, Mr. Murray," I asked, "are they gradually acquiring property?"

"They are, indeed," emphatically replied the colored Congressman. "The negro naturally wants a farm of his own, and my people are buying lands on long time and are improving them. Some of them owns farms of from one to two thousand acres, and there is a colored man in Washington to day who farms seven thousand acres of land in Georgia. He owns more than this, but he has this amount under cultivation. I own a little farm of my own, and there are thousands of colored men in the south who own land. We are advancing right along in the accumulation of property, and the time will come when our people will be a commercial and business factor in the United States. I believe that our success depends upon our education and enrichment, and I look for the time when the negro will stand even with the white man as a property owner."

"How about property rights in the south? Are those of the colored people respected?"

"Yes, I think so," was the reply. "The southerners are anxious that the negroes should own property, and they encourage them to save and invest their money. They treat them fairly so far as any of these things are concerned, but they do not give them a fair show in any political way. There is fraud in every election in the south, and there has not been a fair election in South Carolina for years. The whites control the ballot boxes, and they count the ballots to suit themselves. The governor appoints the officers of election, and there are all sorts of tricks to prevent the negro from having a fair vote. One way is in the size and shape of the ballots. The ballot must be so many inches long and so many inches wide. If the paper varies one-sixteenth of an inch the ballot may be thrown out. The ballots are put into boxes labeled with the names of the officers to be voted for. If a ballot is dropped into the wrong box it does not count. Many of our people cannot read, and by changing the boxes about they make it so that the ballots go into the wrong box and are thus worthless. We have also laws for registration which make it practically impossible for a fair election."

#### THE KU KLUX IN THE SOUTH.

"How about the ku klux?"

"There are no ku klux in the south, and there is very little terror arising at the polls. The whites are able to accomplish their ends without the use of a shot gun. They don't need them."

"How about the feeling between the negroes and the whites; will there ever be a war between the two races?"

"I think not. The negroes appreciate the fact that such a war would result in their destruction, and the fight that they intend to make is along business and educational lines. We propose to educate ourselves and to save our money, and when we become the equals of the whites in property and in business you will see that we have better recognition."

"Do you think that the negro is the equal of the white in natural ability?"

"I do," replied the African Congressman. "History has shown that the sons

of Ham are as strong as the sons of Shem and Japhet in every way. It was once thought that the negro could not advance in learning beyond a certain point, but the colleges know that the negro is the equal of the white, and, in many cases, superior. I think that we will gradually equal and eventually distance the whites. The reason for this is that we have got to start from the bottom. We have nothing, and we must fight for every inch. We are very ambitious, and we will not stop until we get to the top."

#### A MIXED RACE.

"What will be the future of the two races? Will the negro ever unite with the whites?"

"I believe," said Mr. Murray, "that there will eventually be a mixed race in this country, made up of negro and white blood. When the negro becomes rich and educated the objection to him will wear away and there will be inter-marriages between the two races. At present the negroes have no objections to such marriages. They think that the only ground of marriage should be that of love. The objection comes from the whites and this will disappear as the negro equals them in property and other things."

"Do not a large number of your people object to colored men marrying white women? You remember the howl of indignation that went up from the colored people of this country when Fred Douglass married a white woman."

"Yes," replied Mr. Murray, "I do, and the indignation against Douglass was so strong because he, to a large extent, represented the colored people of the United States, and the fact that he married a woman of white blood was considered by our people a slap at the women of his own race. They thought it meant that he could not find a colored woman good enough for him and hence had to take a white one."

#### THE COLONIZATION OF THE NEGRO.

"How about negro colonization, Mr. Murray? Will such schemes ever succeed?"

"No," was the reply. "The negroes have never been in favor of such colonization, nor have such schemes ever been engineered by people who have not wanted to make money out of it. There was a movement about fifteen years ago to take the colored people to Kansas, and there have been propositions to send them to Brazil and other places. The negroes are in the United States to stay, and if they could have free transportation to Liberia or to Africa they would not take it. I do not think the people of the south want to get rid of the negro, and I think if we are let alone that we will work out our destiny to the satisfaction of every one."

#### LYNCHING IN THE SOUTH.

"How about the numerous cases of lynching that have recently taken place in the south?"

"The action of the whites in this regard," said Mr. Murray, "is an outrage upon civilization. Hundreds of the men who are murdered in this way are innocent, and the lynching is brought about to keep the races apart. Trumped-up charges are made against the colored man. Irresponsible white women are induced to accuse obnoxious colored men of crimes against them. The colored man is arrested, put in jail. A