

MEN OF MARK:

Eminent, Progressive and Rising.

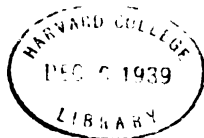
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WITH AN INTRODUCTORY SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR BY REV. HENRY M.
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CXLI.

HON. HIRAM R. REVELS, D. D.

First Negro United States Senator—President of Alcorn University, Rodney, Mississippi—Secretary of State—Preacher of the A. M. E. Church—Retired Farmer.

HONORABLE HIRAM R. REVELS, United States Senator from Mississippi, was born in Fayetteville, Cumberland county, North Carolina, September 1, 1822. Desiring to obtain an education, which was denied in his native state to those of African descent, he removed to Indiana and spent some time at the Quaker Seminary, in Union county, after which he went to Dark county, Ohio. He graduated at Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois. After his graduation he entered the ministry as a preacher of the gospel in the M. E. church. He was now twenty-five years of age, and was called to take charge of a church in Indiana. After spending some years there, he went to Missouri, Maryland, Kentucky and Kansas, in the cause of the A. M. E. church. He was in Maryland in 1861 at the breaking out of the civil war, and did much in forming in that State the first colored regiment. In 1863 and 1864 he taught school in St. Louis, Missouri, and then went to Vicksburg, where he assisted the provost marshal in man-

aging the affairs of the Freedmen. He followed the army to Jackson, organizing churches, lecturing and trying to organize schools. His health failing him, he went north again until the close of the war. Returning he located in Natchez, where he preached to a large congregation regularly. He was also appointed by General Ames, then military governor, to the position of alderman, and in 1869 was elected to the State Senate of Mississippi. In January 1870, he was the first colored man sent to the United States Senate. Dr. Revels was selected to fill the place of Jefferson Davis, which selection took the country by surprise, and as the time drew near for the Negro to take his seat, the interest became intense. The Nation stood with its mouth wide open, and the world stood still in silent amazement at this new phase of American life. The bottom rail is on top; the newly emancipated unfranchised citizen enters upon the dignified position of United States Senator, to mingle his voice with the lawmakers and to cast his vote in behalf of God and his country. He served in Congress from February 25, 1870, to March 3, 1871. Says Wells Brown, in the *Rising Sun* :

Salisbury had done his best to turn backward the wheels of progress; Davis fought in vain, declaring he would "resist at every step" this unconstitutional measure, giving illustrations, dissertations, execrations, and recommendations of and for the "Negro" and his Republican friends; Stockton, in the interest of law and precedent, begged that the subject should go to the judiciary committee, but the party of freedom moved on in solid phalanx of unanimity to the historic results. Mr. Sumner, who had not taken part in the debate, raised his voice with impressiveness and power, comprehending the whole question in a short speech, just before the vote.

After his senatorial term had closed, he was called to the exalted position of president of Alcorn University, Rodney, Mississippi, at a salary of two thousand five hundred dollars per annum. Governor Powers appointed him secretary of the State, which position he held for several months only. Rev. H. R. Revels makes his home near the city of Natchez, Mississippi, where he leads the quiet life of a farmer, having served his God and his country to the best of his ability. As the first Negro Senator he stands the solitary figure in history that marks the ascent of the race; and it seemed one of the revenges of history, too, for the black man sat in the seat of Jefferson Davis the president of the Southern Confederacy. The Negro was no longer chattels, beast of burden, but a Senator mingling with the exalted in exalted stations and attracting the attention of the world. The irrepressible Negro is hard to "keep in his place." He succeeds persistently in getting some white man's place, or his own held wrongfully so long by another.