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THE MAN WHO BEAT HALE.

Thompson H. Murch, Greenbacker---The Story of His Campaign.

What Sort of a Person He Is, and What Ideas He Holds.

Rockland (Me.) Correspondence of New York Sun.

The granite eagle that is perched over the main entrance of the New York Post office was cut from the rock by a stonecutter, who will be sworn in as the successor of Eugene Hale in the next Congress. His name is Thompson H. Murch. It is the work of an experienced workman to cut an eagle from the granite that abounds in the Maine islands; but to Mr. Murch, as he admits, it would have seemed easier a year ago for a green hand to take up the hammer and steel and fashion that bird than for any one of those stone cutters to defeat Eugene Hale. Yet Mr. Murch did defeat him by a plurality of 1,042—he received the official figures last night. Two years ago Mr. Hale's majority was more than 3,000.

HOW MURCH MADE HIS CANVASS.

Last fall Mr. Murch began quietly a thorough canvass of the district. His position as editor of the *Stonecutters' Journal* gave him an opportunity to watch the local newspapers, and he took every opportunity of learning just what the feelings of the people in the district were. The volume of discontent developed surprised him. Republicans were chafing under the imperious rule of Hale and Blaine, although they did not dare say so openly, and were disgusted with the policy of the administration. But they regarded the Democratic party as fully as bad, and there seemed no way in which a protest would avail. But just here comes the "true inwardness" of the greenback movement, not only in Hale's district but throughout the State; and the manner in which Mr. Murch utilized it is briefly told.

Seeing that there was great dissatisfaction, and that the people were ready for anything that promised relief and the rout of the Blaine-Hale ring, Mr. Murch determined to put out a feeler early last February. He arranged for a greenback meeting in Rockland, and paid Solon Chase's expenses and the hall and printing bills from his own pocket. Mr. Chase had a great audience. The people did not have very definite notions about this greenback question, but they were ready for anything that promised a change. Mr. Murch saw this disposition, and began an organization. The work was done in his office, in the village stores, on the street corners, and wherever opportunity offered. The organization spread like wildfire. The hundreds of voters who described all this to the writer say that at first they had no clear notions upon the financial question, but went into the movement because of its promise of becoming formidable enough to upset both the old parties.

In the spring Mr. Murch determined to test the strength of the movement, and men came boldly out of both parties with him and ran a greenback ticket for the local election. They polled 130 votes in that little town after only two months' organization; but they were enough to defeat the election of the Republican candidate for mayor. Encouraged by this, a club-room was hired, and the work of organization went on. Then it was decided by the new party men, both in Rockland and in other places in the district to organize for the Congressional contest, although they had no hope of present success. They were looking forward to 1880. Mr. Murch, as he frankly admits he thought he would be, was put forward by the new party men in his district as a candidate for the nomination for Congress. So enthusiastic were his friends that they chartered a little boat, using all the money they could spare, and started, many of them without their breakfasts, for Belfast, where the convention was to be held. A kettle of clam-chowder made in the boat was their only food; but they were too enthusiastic to feel hungry then.

Mr. Murch was nominated, and he made the first speech of his life in accepting. In that speech he told the convention that he knew that much money had been spent in that district for Congressional elections. He did not intend to follow that example, for he had no money to spend for such purposes. This expression was distorted by a local journal into the remark, which went throughout the country, that he didn't own a cent's worth of property, and was glad of it. At that time neither he nor his friends had any hope of his election. All that they expected to do was to make a formidable organization and a winning one for the next Presidential election.

Hale's district is a large one. It has miles of seacoast, and in the interior few railroads. There are no large cities it, and few large towns. Mr. Murch determined to visit every town in this district, provide speakers, and send to every voter documents. The new party was poor, and contributions were very small. Mr. Murch had $1,000, and he determined to spend it all if necessary. He paid the expenses of speakers, of hall hire, and now and then of a band. He bought campaign literature, and he spoke day and night. After a meeting he often harnessed his horse and drove twenty or thirty miles on those wild Maine roads in the darkness to the nearest town. He was nominated in June; by the latter part of July he began to see that the new movement was spreading so rapidly that there might be a chance, after all, of his election, and he redoubled his efforts. The charges that had been made against him as a communist he met on the platform and in private. He went into Hale's home town of Ellsworth and had a packed hall to hear him. His speakers were everywhere. Many of them were young mechanics, who asked only that their expenses might be paid. Reports came that whole towns, especially in Waldo county, were going over to the new party. Then snags were struck. It was learned that the stone-cutters were given to understand that they were expected to vote for Hale, and Hale's Democratic friends had nominated a candidate for Congress with the expressed view of drawing from the new party enough votes to make Hale safe. When it was seen that this plan would fail, there was a movement to withdraw this Democrat candidate, and to put Hale's name quietly on the State ticket. Murch heard of it. He had learned that several influential Democrats and Republicans were with him, although secretly, and he never betrayed their confidence. Through their influence he managed to have the Democrat candidate kept in the field, and when this was finally accomplished, the Thursday before the election, Mr. Murch was satisfied that he had Hale beaten. But he knew that they would stop at no trick to overcome him, and it was necessary to circumvent some of their schemes by secret ones of his own. For instance, to protect the stone-cutters, he caused tickets to be printed as nearly like Republican ballots in shape and size as possible. These he gave his fellow-mechanics, and told them that the watchers at the polls would not mistrust that they were voting anything but the Republican ticket. Election-day came. Mr. Murch spent the morning distributing tickets. At noon, feeling exhausted, he went to a neighboring hotel for a short nap, and fell into a sound sleep, from which he did not awake until the polls closed. He lost his own vote thereby.

The people in the fifth district could hardly believe that Hale's power was gone, and after they saw it, the man who broke the Blaine-Hale ring became a hero. Shrewd politicians in other parts of the State admit that the canvass of the new party was handled with marvelous skill, for there were some distrusting elements within to be managed, as well as the enemy without to be fought. To organize, control and lead to victory within six months such a movement required a skill that Blaine only was supposed to possess. But one reason is given for the success of the movement, aside from what is admitted as its skillful handling, and that is the prevailing desire for the utter overthrow of Blaine and Hale. Could Blaine hear the opinions that Republicans now freely express about him, he would realize that his sway is over, while of Hale expressions of contempt are used.

HOW THE NEW CONGRESSMAN LOOKS AND TALKS.

The newly-elected Congressman is of medium size, with a supple frame. He must have been agile when younger. He was neatly dressed in black, and over the polished linen the black ends of a necktie fell negligently. A slender chain of gold runs from his vest button-hole to the watch pocket, neat and not ostentatious. His feet and hands are small, but his hands are calloused by years of manual labor. A pair of large, light blue and singularly expressive eyes fix the stranger's attention instantly. There are little wrinkles running from the corners of the lids that give him the appearance of being constantly amused, and these wrinkles do often contract with a genuine smile. A broad, high forehead, with the perceptive faculties especially conspicuous, is fringed with light brown hair that is rapidly silvering, and the locks that are brushed back over the ears are almost snow white. A nose as straight as a Grecian model's, with finely-cut nostrils, partially hidden by a silky brown moustache, and a thin-lipped, strong-willed mouth, give plenty of character to the face. Mr. Murch would pass far more readily for a professional man than for a stone-cutter, especially when a view is obtained of his clear-cut profile. Exposure and labor have browned a complexion that must once have been rosy, and there are more wrinkles than a man of 40 would have after a life of ease. He speaks quickly and determinedly, and his emotions play all over his face when he is at all stirred.

"Do you know," he said, "that the Sun expressed my idea precisely when it urged that the electoral commission was unconstitutional? Ah, that whole business was damnable," he continued, and he meant what he said. "That villainous Louisiana business and the whole scheme of stealing the Presidency—we never shall get over it. I have an idea that future patriots will try to skip that part of our history."

"Then you are not a believer in Hayes's right to the Presidency?"

"Indeed, I am not, and I don't think there is a man in the country who, if he told the truth, would say he was either."

"Did that feeling have any influence in your Maine whirlwind?"

"Unquestionably," replied Mr. Murch, and then added, musingly, "I know that the disgust that the whole business produced had a great influence in getting our people into that frame of mind which led irresistibly to seek a change."

"In both parties?"

"Yes, I should say so. Republicans feel the disgrace as much as the Democrats do the injustice."

"You have had a remarkable canvass in this district?"

"Yes, and one that is entirely misunderstood outside."

"In what respect?"

"Well, as to the reason that made victory possible, and as to the nature of our financial views."

"You were nominated and elected as a mechanic, were you not?"

"I am one, and have always been since I left the sea. But I always preferred the name national industrial party to the greenback party for the new movement. However, the name doesn't amount to very much now. We all believe in the same ideas."

"And what are those ideas?"

"Well, first of all, we wish labor to have a fair chance all over the country. In addition to that, we wish the political slavery in this district to be done away with. We wish such protection from imposition as legislation can give us, and we desire some arrangement by which disagreement between labor and capital can be adjusted. I am myself strongly in favor of a board of arbitrators, to be appointed by the State, to whom matters of dispute shall be referred. That would do away with strikes, which I believe to be of great disadvantage, although now, at times, absolutely necessary for protection."

"But it is said that you are a communist."

"That is the meanest slander that was made against me. On the contrary, I believe that the ambition to accumulate property is the very strongest incentive for getting the best and most labor out of men. It is that they may have a fair chance for such accumulation proportionately with capital that I have gone into this political battle. I tell you," continued Mr. Murch, rising and rapidly walking the floor, "that the most earnest opponents of the socialist idea are the men who labor with the view of accumulating. How such a slander could have arisen I don't know. It is made out of whole cloth. I don't know but I would rather suffer some of the present evils than to have the communist idea prevail."

"What first set you in the direction of political life?"

"The intolerable abuses which the workmen employed by government contractors in our harbor suffered. They are mere slaves. I expect that some of them will be discharged for voting for me. I saw that there was absolutely no hope except through a ballot-box revolution. If it had not been that, it must have been something worse."

"Did you expect to accomplish it so soon?"

"No, indeed. But when I saw what intense dissatisfaction there was in this district among the masses with Republican rule—a dissatisfaction that had been subdued because it had no way to express itself until the new party gave it the chance—I felt encouraged."

"The cause of that dissatisfaction was what?"

"Well, to tell the truth, people had got tired of hearing that they were mere servants of Blaine and Hale. For Hale there was, especially since his visit to Louisiana in the interest of fraud, almost contempt. People began to feel that they were not represented, but misrepresented. Many here think Hale took the money to Louisiana which manipulated things. I have no hesitation in saying that I believe Hale's connection with the theft of the Presidency hastened and intensified the opposition to him in this district. This led many to welcome any chance that might lead to his overthrow. Then Blaine has lost his prestige. People are asking how it happens that he went to Congress poor, and now pays the heaviest tax in Augusta. They had sickened of his condescending, patronizing way about election time, and there are thousands who are boiling mad at his insinuation that he carried Maine in his vest pocket. The shilly-shally course of the present Republican Administration had a tremendous influence in both parties. Republicans were disgusted. Democrats who are not tails to the Republican kite saw there was no hope, here in Maine anyway, in voting the Democratic ticket. The hard times had an influence, but the people remembered that Hale and Blaine had come down here at every election for the last five years and told them, 'Oh, you have passed the worst. Times are going to get better.' But times got worse, and people were ready for any change. Now, I found all these elements at work in the district. I knew that on some points of the financial question we could agree; at least it would make a rope long enough for us all to take hold of. The trouble has been that we have had nothing to cling to heretofore. The result you know."

"Is the overthrow a lasting one?"

"Yes, sir. Blaine and Hale are politically dead in this State. They never can get back to power after their present terms expire, and from the correspondence I receive I believe the movement here will run through the country to a greater or less extent, and for the same reasons. It is the stepping-stone to a great change—one that will wind up Tom Scott and Jay Gould's power with legislation; one that will restrict government legislation within constitutional limits, one that will make it impossible for men to go to Congress poor and come out in a few years millionaires. Of course I don't mean to say that there will be no corruption. But the tendency will be the other way. When the new party gets old and corrupt it must give way to another."

MURCH'S IDEA ABOUT FINANCE.

"Now as to the financial views of the Maine Greenback party."

"We have been widely misrepresented. We have been called inflationists. I deny that emphatically. I am not, anyway. We are called repudiators. That I deny. We are said to be in favor of irredeemable paper money. That is false. My views can be given in a few words, and I think they are the same as of a vast majority of those who voted for me. Of course, there are some details of the financial question upon which my mind is not fully made up. My idea is that the Government should be the sole issuing source of money. Let banks do business if anybody wants to do business with them, but they must not issue currency. Now there should be a fixed limit for such Government issue at so much per capita of the population. I cannot now say just what. Some authorities go as low as $25, and some as high as $60 per capita. I believe that this limit settles the matter of inflation, and I would be ready to insert a limiting clause in the constitution. Of course, at each census, as the per capita increased, the currency would increase; but the proportion would remain the same. Now, I believe that the Government ought to honor its own money, and take it for all debts, taxes and custom dues. I have no objection to coin and paper issues, although I cannot see the necessity of coining bullion, except for certain purposes. The full legal tender value of the greenback will keep the currency at par with gold. But it is a fact that when specie payments are nominally in force, coin isn't used excepting for subsidiary currency. Now this greenback currency ought to be redeemable, whether the redeemability should be confined to one metal is a question. I rather think so. I believe our bonds ought to be paid in accordance with the original contract. If that specified coin, then coin; if so-called greenbacks, then by this money. Now I see that complications must arise; there are differences of opinion about many details. Cooper's idea of the government loaning out the greenbacks I am hardly prepared to approve. As to the issuing of this money by the government, I think the matter ought not to be decided without careful study and deliberation, but I am inclined to think that, if any interest is to be paid by any one, the government ought to receive it, instead of paying it. But, of all things, I am firmly convinced that measures should be taken to stop usury and anything but a low rate of interest. These high rates have sapped the life from labor. They are the necessary concomitants of the credit system, and I believe that the true greenback theory is one that will make the credit system unnecessary. That is the root of all our evil. That is what makes labor uneasy and what burdens it. On the cash basis our labor can compete with foreign manufactures, and we should need no protective tariff. On the credit system, which is a fellow of the present financial system, I think a high protective tariff a necessity. I am inclined to follow Thurman's financial views, and I believe that is what greenbackism means in Maine. As I said, however, there are many details that are not fully clear to my mind. Therefore, upon these I don't care to express an opinion."

WHAT HE THINKS ABOUT HIS FUTURE.

"Do you think you can compass all these things when in Congress?"

"Why," said Mr. Murch, laughing, "I am only one man, and a new one. I don't expect to make a great revolution nor to take my place in Congress as a brilliant leader. But I shall use all my efforts modestly, but firmly, I trust, to bring about such reforms as I think needful, and to that end I shall co-operate with all others similarly disposed. One united effort ought to do something. "By the way," he continued, "did you ever hear such an absurd charge as that one about my inability to read or write? It was absurd, because if those who made it had stopped to think they would have remembered that I would have been ineligible for election, because I could not have been made a citizen."

"You met with much abuse in the canvass?"

"Oh, yes. Of course I did not like it; but, at the same time, I knew it would react in my favor afterward. One thing is certain—no charge was ever made against my moral character."

"Now, Mr. Murch, what do you regard as the greatest feature of your election?"

"The proof it gives of the soundness of the American principle of government. It shows that the people are capable of self-government, not because I was elected, but because any one was elected in opposition to the ring rule that has cursed Maine so long. The people are apt to be long-suffering, but when they do rise they rise with tremendous power."

"Do you regard the office of Congressman as an influential one?"

"It ought to be. I have no sympathy with this habit of making sport of our legislative bodies. If they become objects of ridicule what will become of us? You may bring individual members of the body to task, but always honor the body. The office is an honorable one, and it is an honorable ambition for any one to desire it."

"It is said, Mr. Murch, that you boasted that you did not own an inch of soil?"

"The charge is untrue in both respects, for I never said so, and do own an acre of land that I have been trying to induce a winter's supply of potatoes to grow upon. I wish I had more property. I think it the duty of every man to try to accumulate all that he can, and that is the reason why I want a fair chance given to labor. Many of those charges against me arose from an intentional misreporting of my speech in accepting the nomination."

"You must already realize that the fact that you defeated Hale, coupled with these reports regarding your views, has given you a sudden notoriety."

"Oh, yes," replied Mr. Murch, somewhat nervously, "I realize that now, and it is a great embarrassment. I go to Congress a new man, and I know that under the circumstances I shall be narrowly watched and every effort made to lead me to commit errors. At the same time, so long as my purposes are right, and I conscientiously try to do my duty, I don't think I can slip up. I propose to live simply and quietly, and I would much prefer to lose a little of the notoriety before I take my seat."

Just here two athletic young fellows came into the room and desired to speak to Mr. Murch. He took them aside, but soon returned. His face was clouded and his eyes snapped passionately.

"Here is an example of political proscription," Mr. Murch said, pointing to the men. "These men tell me that they have been discharged from the government works. No reason was given, but they are first-class workmen and have been employed for five years there; new men have been put in their places. They were known to be friends of mine and to have voted for me. There can be no other reason for the discharge." The men said that they had been warned before election not to vote for Mr. Murch, but had done so. There were eleven others who were known to have voted for him. These have all been discharged, and probably every stone-cutter who was known to have voted against Hale will soon be dropped from the rolls. Mr. Murch was very indignant, and he asked the writer whether it was not time that there was a change in the district where such things were tolerated. He also at once made arrangements for procuring the men new places in the Cape Ann works.

Mr. Murch is given an excellent reputation by the people of Rockland. They say he is a quiet, unostentatious man, domestic in his tastes, and every one speaks of his practice of not running into debt. His family, consisting of a wife and two sons, one 17 and one 15, live in a plain, two-and-a-half story double house, that is built on a point of land that projects into the bay of Rockland. The lawn is neatly trimmed, and flowers grow in profusion all about. A number of pretty and remarkably little Sebright fowls were wandering about the yard, and they seemed perfectly tame. Mr. Murch's house is neatly furnished. Books lie around on his parlor table, most of them of a serious or political character. They seemed to be constantly in use. The sea rolls up nearly to his door-yard, and in a northeast gale the wind must blow piteously around the windows. There is, however, every evidence of taste and refinement in the cleanly internal decorations of the house. These are not costly, but they are pleasing, none the less. Mrs. Murch rejoices in her husband's success, for she remembers how he was discharged years ago for voting a Democratic ticket. She had encouraged her husband in every way during the canvass, but never believed it possible for him to overcome Hale's majority.

"How much did your election cost you, Mr. Murch," the writer asked, "if you have no objections to saying?"

"None at all. The money was honestly spent. My total expenses were a trifle over $700, and I paid by far the largest part of the expenses of the canvass."

"Hale must have spent many thousands:"

"Yes, I have no doubt he did. Some one told me that his father-in-law, Zack Chandler, who was here until a day or two before election, told Hannibal Hamlin that he wished the little fellow would move into a less expensive district."

"And with $700 you overcame a majority of 3,000, and defeated 'Blaine's little bub?'"

"Yes; and, by the way, that expression told against Hale here. People did not want to be represented any longer by a man who was a tail to Blaine's kite. My money was expended for speakers, their expenses, halls, music and printing. Expenditure wasn't very necessary with the people feeling as they did. When our people get awakened, it doesn't take much money for election purposes; neither can their will be circumvented by a liberal expenditure of cash."

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