

James Augustus Black

(1793 - 3 Apr 1848)

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989

A Representative from South Carolina; born on his father's plantation in the 96th District, near Abbeville, S.C., in 1793; attended the common schools on his father's plantation; during the War of 1812 was appointed a second lieutenant in the Eighth Infantry, March 12, 1812; promoted to first lieutenant, December 2, 1813 and was honorably discharged, June 15, 1815; engaged in the mining of iron ore on what is now the present site of Cherokee Falls, S.C.; moved to Georgia and settled in Savannah; engaged in cotton dealing; served as tax collector of Chatham County, Ga.; returned to South Carolina and settled in Columbia; cashier in the State (branch) Bank; elected as a Calhoun Democrat to the 28th through 30th Congresses and served from March 4, 1843 until his death in Washington, D.C. on April 3, 1848; interment in the graveyard of the First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, S.C.

Interred in the Public Vault at Congressional Cemetery, April 5, 1848. Removed to South Carolina, December 14, 1848.

The National Intelligencer, Tuesday, April 4, 1848

The Journal having been read--

Mr. Sims rose and said: Mr. Speaker, it is with no ordinary emotions that I now rise to announce to the House that Death, whose presence has so oft and so recently called us to mourn during the progress of this session of Congress, has again demanded a victim of our number. James Augustus Black, a Representative from the State of South Carolina, is no more. He expired in this city on yesterday night, at twenty-five minutes after eleven o'clock, amidst the delegation of his State, with his family around him without a murmur, and without a groan.

In a most extraordinary degree, through a protracted illness of seventeen days, he preserved his composure of mind, his consciousness, and constancy of purpose. At no moment did he complain. Though conscious, day by day and hour by hour, that death pursued him, and, at the final struggle, that dissolution was inevitable, he quelled not and murmured not; and at the hour that I have indicated he breathed out his soul as composedly as the infant sinks into the softest slumber. Such were the last scenes in the life of my friend and colleague.

Mr. Speaker: Under any circumstances death is a solemn occurrence; but there are concomitants that render its approach less afflictive, because more expected and appropriate than in other circumstances. When the soldier dies on the battle-field he falls beneath the law of the occasion and propriety. When old age sinks to rest human destiny has been appropriately fulfilled, and man finds his end at the proper period. It is natural and appropriate, and fills us with a pleasing melancholy rather than with poignant grief, because, like the falling of the autumnal leaf, the creature perishes beneath the decree of his Creator in the proper season. But when, in the midst of life unexpectedly, in the midst of years and acts of usefulness, one is cut down; when there is no premonitory event or circumstances to announce the destroyer's approach; when he comes upon us thus unexpectedly, the visitation is always felt with more peculiar force and regret.

Such was the fall of my friend. But a few days ago he was among us, in life and health, in the constant and assiduous performance of his duties here as a Representative. One day, thus engaged with

his accustomed usefulness and ability; the next, his friends find him stricken down by the violence of disease, which, from the first, announced with a certainty which all the untiring efforts of his skillful professional attendants could not avert, that the victim was marked, and that not a ray of hope could cheer a friend or inquirer who sought to know the progress and ultimate result of his disease. His friends, his immediate family at a distance, though stricken down so unexpectedly, there were two circumstances of benevolence in the providence of God; the one, to which I have already referred, of preserving his intellect unclouded to the last, and the other of protracting his sweet resignation and patience, and his existence, until, from the distant South, his wife and child and affectionate brother were enabled to minister the last consolations of affection and tenderness around his dying bed.

There are many incidents in the life of my friend that at the proper time it would be pleasant and proper to dwell upon. I come not now to gather from the acts of usefulness with which his life, from earliest manhood, to its close, was filled, to bind up flowers with which to deck his grave. Now is not the time to adorn his open grave, waiting for the reception of his lifeless form, and naught but the tears of affection and the weeping regrets of friends are the becoming garniture of its desolation.

I stop not, therefore, to announce that in early manhood, at the age of eighteen, impelled by that patriotism which animated him to the last, he stepped forward in 1812 to join the army of his country. He entered the service as a lieutenant, and at the close of the war, resigning the commission of captain, which at that time he held, he retired to private life. After that, he was constantly engaged in useful employment's until, some few years since, he was called from the sphere of usefulness in other walks of life to take a seat upon this floor as a Representative from the Pinckney district in South Carolina. How he performed his duties here; how he has illustrated in the most eminent manner the true character of a representative; how he has shown respect to the opinions of his constituents, and discharged his duty by keeping them constantly informed by communications of the progress and state of public business here; how he has ever responded to the impulses of patriotism, which had grown into fixed principles of action in him, throughout his whole public career here, all who now hear me will hear cheerful testimony. He loved the people; not with a demagogue's love, but with a soul-stirring, divine impulse, springing from that fundamental maxim of his creed, that all men are brothers, and all men are equal, and that the people are capable of self-government. These were the fixed principles of his life; and his whole public career was but a practical embodiment and illustration of these principles.

My friend was not regularly educated; but with a strong natural intellect, with a power of reflection and observation seldom equaled, passing a busy and eventful life he had supplied, in all the essential elements, the want of education in the amount of information that he had amassed, and those treasures from personal observation that he had collected.

One or two more remarks and I have done. There are those who believe that the success of a public man in popular elections is no evidence either of virtue in the constituent, or of influence or aptitude for the appointment in the representative. 'This is a great mistake. One who, without other circumstances than mere merit, can fasten and retain the public confidence, has a charm of excellence about him, an undefinable fascination of character and qualifications, which, although acquaintances, individually may not discover it, yet constitutes a kind of divine and political electricity which, without explanation, works its mighty power in this universe of election and popular right, and under the appointment of God, and by the common sense of the people, carried system of the Government. My friend possessed this power. No man living ever had more of ... one saw why. Other men were superior to him in attainments, superior to him in accomplishments, superior to him in wealth, seemingly superior to him in every advantage that would have a tendency to bind man to man, and bestow political or social influence; yet not a man breathed in this Congress, or elsewhere within the whole circle of his acquaintances, who had the power in a greater degree than the deceased to bind as with hooks of steel to him, but all who knew him or called him friend. Among his immediate constituency his position was

peculiar and ... The great Senator of New York, without wealth, of position, to bind him to his people; nothing but his principle of devotion to truth and to popular right that attached them to him.

In all his life he did his duty well; and in his death there is nothing, now that event is past, to regret. He was

The National Intelligencer, April 5, 1848

Order of Procession

For the Funeral of the Hon. James A. Black

A Representative in the Congress of the United States from the State of South Carolina

The Committee of Arrangements, pall-bearers, and mourners, will attend at the Committee-room of the Post Office and Post Roads, in the Capitol, at 11-1/2 o'clock a.m., on Wednesday, the 5th instant, (today) at which time the corpse will be removed, in charge of the Committee of Arrangements, attended by the Sergeant-at-arms of the House of Representatives, to the hall of the House.

At 12-1/2 o'clock p.m. funeral service will be performed in the hall of the House of Representatives, and immediately thereafter the procession will move to the Congressional burial ground in the following order:

1. The Chaplains of both Houses of Congress
2. Physicians who attended the deceased
3. Committee of Arrangements
 - Mr. Sims of South Carolina
 - Mr. Boyd, of Ky. Mr. Marsh, of Vt.
 - Mr. Atkinson, of Va. Mr. Hampton, of N.J.
 - Mr. Thompson, of Pa. Mr. Hubbard, of Conn.
4. Pall-Bearers
 - Mr. Lumpkin, of Ga. C Mr. Cranston of R.I.
 - Mr. McClernand, of Ill. O Mr. Cocke, of Tenn.
 - Mr. Ligon, of Md. R Mr. Rockwell, of Mass.
 - Mr. Hunt, of N.Y. P Mr. Harmanson, of La.
 - S
 - E
5. The family and friends of the deceased
6. The Senators and Representatives from the State of South Carolina as mourners
7. The Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives
8. The House of Representatives of the United States, preceded by their Speaker and Clerk
9. The other officers of the House of Representatives
10. The Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate
11. The Senate, preceded by their President and Secretary
12. The other officers of the Senate
13. The President of the United States (Taylor)
14. The Heads of Departments
15. The Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States
16. The Diplomatic Corps
17. The Comptrollers, Auditors, and other Heads of Bureaus of the several Departments of the Government, with their officers
18. Officers of the Army and Navy at the seat of Government
19. The Mayor of Washington

20. Citizens and Strangers.