NEGROES IN LITERATURE.

Within the last two years Daniel Murray of the Congressional library has been endeavoring to secure a complete list of pamphlets and books by negro authors. This work has been carried on with great thoroughness under the direction of Herbert Putnam, librarian of Congress. The effort thus made has revealed so much of excellence that has been written and forgotten that a complete bibliography is being prepared for the Paris exposition as a part of the American exhibit.

In Mr. Murray's preliminary list of books and pamphlets by negro authors there are 1,100 titles and about 1,200 writers. These beginnings have been found mostly in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Baltimore and Washington. The pamphlet literature is particularly interesting, as showing to what extent colored men became thinkers and scholars in days when it was a crime to teach negroes to read and write. These people without a country and without favor not only became educated, but what they wrote contributed greatly to the political, religious and social questions of the day. Many of these earlier writers were educated in the West Indies. Much of their writing exhibited excellence of the highest order.

The chief characteristic of nearly all of this early writing by negro authors was seriousness. There was but little fiction, poetry or humor. How to destroy slavery and bring freedom and equality to the enslaved was the burden of most of the first negro authors. With the conquest of slavery negro authors lost their most inspiring theme. Since that time a very few men and women have gained name and fame as contributors to American literature.

George W. Williams' "History of the American Negro," in two large volumes, is an interesting and valuable compilation. Bishop Payne's "History of the A. M. E. Church." Anna J. Cooper's essays, "A Voice from the South," Frederick Douglass' wonderful autobiography; the more recent publications by Booker T. Washington, Professor Du Bois and the lives of Phillips and Sumner, by Archibald Grimke, and the literary productions of Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles Chestnut are representative of the best things contributed to American literature by negro authors. These later books are what might be called the first productions of the negro in freedom. It is the first literary utterance of the negro who has been to school. It is also prophetic of what may be expected. It is a promise that authorship of a most interesting and valuable kind will develop in the course of the progressive life of the race.—Chicago Times-Herald.
New Haven Evening Post
NEW HAVEN, CONN.
AUG. 12, 1894
No. 2.

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