

The Part He Took in Running Out the Planter.

A correspondent of the New York Sun in the annexed communication sets history to right in regard to the part taken by Robert Smalls, at present a colored Congressman from South Carolina, in running the steamer Planter past Fort Sumter in 1862:

"The arrest of Congressman Robert Smalls, of Beaufort, S. C., last week, on the charge of selling his vote for \$5,000 to aid in the election of Senator John J. Patterson, of that State, will probably bring out the facts of an historical event that did more in the matter of public opinion to elevate the dusky member of Congress than anything else. The district that Smalls represents is largely made up of his own race, and Beaufort county, where he has resided, has ten black people at least to one white. Since reconstruction Smalls has been a ruling spirit there. It has been proverbial with those inside the ring that every time he voted something went to his bank account. But to the historical fact. It will be remembered what a furore followed the announcement in 1862 that Robert Smalls, then a pilot, had run out in the night, past Fort Sumter, the steamer Planter with a lot of ordnance stores and delivered her over to a United States gunboat lying in the offing. So far as the steamer being run out is concerned the story is true. So far as Congressman Robert Smalls being the pilot who performed that perilous feat is concerned, it is an error that has been allowed to stand without being corrected. It is the very rope on which Smalls has swung himself aloft, and for a time at least enjoyed a reputation commended all over the country.

"During one of the inspection tours among the various military posts made by the writer in the years 1866, 1867, 1868 and 1869 he met a pilot on a Hilton Head steamer by the name of Jenkins. He was a model black man. From him it was ascertained, and subsequently verified by proof, that Jenkins run out the Planter. Smalls, who was on board, took refuge in the boiler-room. When all danger was passed he appeared in the pilot house, and being Jenkins' superior, turned the Planter over to the officer of the gunboat. The Government, in consideration of this brave feat, gave Smalls the use of the Planter for a year after the war, having first put the steamer in a tip-top condition and repair for him. Smalls was also given the contract to furnish water to the fleet. It was said the gift of the Government netted him \$30,000. Poor Jenkins, the last time I saw him, was a pilot on one of the river steamers running to Savannah."