

Under the following heading was this column report of the Birmingham meetings:

LYNCH LAW IN THE UNITED STATES.

PROTEST BY BIRMINGHAM AUDIENCES.

Two meetings were held in Birmingham yesterday at which addresses were delivered by Miss Ida B. Wells (an American negro lady) and Miss C. Impey (of Street, Somerset) in explanation of the Lynch Law in the United States of America. In the afternoon there was a fair attendance at the Assembly Room of the Young Men's Christian Association. Councillor S. LLOYD presided (in the absence of the Rev. F. S. Webster through his indisposition). The rev. gentleman, however, wrote: "I have read with deep sorrow of the flagrant injustice shown to the blacks in the Southern States, and trust that public Christian sentiment will be sufficiently aroused to protest effectually against the inhuman practices which prevail."—Alfred White also wrote sympathising with the objects of the meeting.—Miss IDA B. WELLS was introduced by Mr. C. L. Impey. She said that many of those in this country who had interested themselves in the anti-slavery agitation seemed to think that the freeing of the slaves gave to the negroes in America all the liberties which others enjoyed to make men and women of themselves, but unfortunately that was not true. The resentment of the Southern white people about the taking away from them of their slaves had never ceased to show itself against the negro at any and every opportunity. For the first 10 years after the war it was the crime of using the ballot that formed the immediate reason for murdering the negroes. Those massacres would leave upon the Southern States of the Union a stain that could never be wiped away. The general tendency of the legislation of the States in regard to the negro was directly retrogressive instead of progressive, and while as a servant the negro was welcomed in all parts of America, and a negro woman carrying a white child would be received in a railway car with the same recognition as a white woman, an educated, self-respecting woman with negro blood in her veins would be dragged out with ignominy. It was the same in the hotels and the churches. A Christian minister would not even administer the Sacrament to a negro side by side with a white communicant—"Shame". But for a few institutions supported by Northern philanthropists there would be no provision whatever in the Southern States for the higher education of the race, and this provision was woefully insufficient. The administration of the law was entirely in the hands of the white people, and there was consequently no fear of a negro guilty of a crime being able to escape the penalty. This was illustrated by prison statistics, which showed that for offences ranging from mere fighting to ordinary assaults sentences of from five to 10 and even to 20 years were inflicted upon negro offenders. Why, then, she asked, was it necessary that the machinery of the law and government in their hands, should take a black man out of gaol and hang him to the nearest lamp or bridge in the town, or the nearest tree in the country—and not satisfied with that amuse themselves by shooting bullets into the body? No self-respecting mob in the Southern States considered that it had done its duty until every man had lodged a bullet in the body. In one instance the mob ranged themselves under the body and were photographed, and a copy of the picture was sent to a prominent advocate of the negro's cause. Boys of four years old were among those that were photographed. The *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, however, was the only paper throughout the length and breadth of the United States that had the courage to publish articles in denunciation of the crimes. Since 1882 over a thousand black men and women and children had been lynched—"Shame," and cries of "Abominable". Some of the charges made against the victims were of the vilest description, and often without any ground whatever. They were made with the object of shutting off the sympathy of the world, and as the papers and the telegraph were in the hand of the whites it was impossible to contradict these statements. One-third of the victims had been charged with assaults on white women, and the remainder with all sorts of crimes, ranging from murder to that on which a man was hung in Tennessee—namely, that he was "drunk and 'sassy' to white people"—("Shame"). Miss Wells proceeded to allude to the flimsy evidence upon which people, who had afterwards been proved to be innocent, were lynched, and said it was clear that it was not a detestation of the crime that actuated the mob, but the class of the person accused. The action of the mob occurred in the thriving cities of the South, in New Orleans, in Nashville, Tennessee, in Memphis, and other populous centres. In Memphis, the city in which she edited her paper, *The Free Speech*, a place of 75,000 inhabitants, the first case of lynching was that of

three men who had simply defended themselves against an attack on their prosperous business. They were the president, the manager, and the clerk of a grocery store, and there was every reason to believe that the authorities had acted in collusion with their business rivals. At midnight what appeared to be an attack upon the store was made, and the negroes in question fired upon men who turned out afterwards to be Deputy-Sheriffs, and whose excuse was that they were searching for a man who might have been a 'rested at any time during the day, and who was not known to be a desperate character. As soon as the negroes knew the facts of the case they gave up their firearms and disclaimed any intention of resisting the officers of the law. They were put in prison, and on the day after the announcement appeared that the wounded officers would recover they were dragged out of prison by the mob and hung. The thing had been arranged at a meeting reported in the papers as consisting of 'solid business men,' and though the lynching took place at two o'clock in the morning it was reported with names and the fullest details in the paper that went to press at three, showing that everything had been most carefully planned. And yet the verdict at the inquest was that the deceased met with their death at the hands of persons unknown to the jury. Articles on lynching appeared in the *Free Speech*, with the result that after an announcement in the leading paper of Memphis her office was wrecked, her manager was driven out of the town, and with herself (she being in New York at the time, forbidden to return on pain of being shot. Miss Wells cited several instances of lynching, and in conclusion read a resolution passed on Sunday night by a large body of Christian worshippers assembled in the Coventry Road Congregational Church, Birmingham, condemning the practice of lynching as tending to lower the high and deserved esteem in which the United States is held among civilised nations.—A resolution in similar terms was proposed by Mr. F. IMPEY, seconded by Miss IMPEY, and unanimously carried.

In the evening a meeting was held in the Central Hall, Corporation Street.—The Rev. J. C. STREET presided, and said that he did not wonder at the objection to form new organisations, for already they had too many. But when was there an occasion when the public of Birmingham were irresponsible to a cry for mercy and an appeal for justice? These cries were not nailed down by locality or by race, and Birmingham people had hitherto been responsive to a worthy call—(hear, hear). Although Englishmen could not alter the laws of the States, they could at least bring the moral sentiment of this country to bear upon the moral sentiment of the United States, and probably they would find in the future, as in the past, that moral force was more powerful than swords and cannons, and that kind feeling expressed here would have the best influence upon the race on the other side—(applause). Miss WELLS then addressed the meeting. She spoke of the treatment of negro prisoners, who were so beaten that before they could put on their shirts they were coloured crimson with blood. Men and women were chained together and herded in the stockades like cattle. It was almost impossible to understand how such a state of things could be allowed to exist. The cruelty was hidden from the world, but it existed, and existed mostly because the poor black men, who were the sufferers, had no one to voice their sufferings. All this went on under the name of law, and besides all this cruelty there was lynch law. A white man who thought he had a grievance against a black citizen had only to say so to half-a-dozen of his white friends, and it was a very easy matter to get a number of them to capture him, beat him, hang him on the nearest tree, and riddle his body with bullets. This had become a favourite pastime in the South. She again emphasised the fact that in such cases verdicts were returned when the inquests were held that the man was killed by persons unknown. The negro had waited, prayed, and fought for the time when he would enjoy the rights of citizenship, but the time seemed farther off than ever when they were being burnt and shot. She instanced a case where one man, after being loosed from the stake, was caught hold of by the body of the mob, and after he had been burnt by the body they threw him into the fire. The people looked on and cheered.—"What she had heard of and where the Christian sentiment hear). The inhabitants of the ask for sympathy for criminal which they were murdered there. The crimes being proved

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