

The Birmingham papers gave columns of reports of our meetings, and splendid editorials.

The Birmingham Daily Gazette May 18th says editorially:

THE lesson of toleration for native races is always a difficult one for people who have reached an advanced stage of civilisation, and it seems to be especially repugnant to the citizens of the United States. Miss IDA B. WELLS had a good deal to say on this subject to a sympathetic Birmingham audience yesterday, the subject in question being the emancipated negroes; but there is another native race whom the American people appear to dislike even more than "niggers," and that is the heathen Chinese. There are no domestic laws against the yellow-skinned, almond-eyed emigrants from the Celestial Kingdom of the extreme severity of those which formerly disgraced the American Statute Book in its treatment of the negro race. It is still, it seems, a crime in the Southern States for black and white to intermarry, or even for men of different colours to ride in the same carriage, and public opinion and usage in those States prohibits coloured men from attending the same church services as the whites. There is also a double school system for whites and negroes, and the administration of the law being in the hands of the former, we are not surprised to learn that there is considerable difference in the measurement of justice held out to the two classes of offenders. The Chinese, doubtless, are subject to many disqualifications also, and when Judge Lynch is on the road they have not much more mercy to look for than their black brethren; but on the whole they seem to have suffered less and experienced a larger measure of toleration than the negroes until the recent enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Law, prohibiting immigration from China, and requiring the deportation of all unregistered Chinese found on United States territory. ~~Just twelve months ago this Act~~

It is by no means certain that Miss IDA WELLS will succeed in convincing every white man that the negroes in America are being inhumanly treated, because there is, unfortunately, a class of people which imagine that no treatment can be too vile for anyone whose lot it is to be born black. This class we believe is gradually dying out in all countries but America, where it appears to be increasing. From time to time we have learnt from the harrowing reports of atrocity and revenge how fierce the race prejudice is. To say that the negroes in America are treated like beasts is to do their persecutors too much justice. Though very little mercy is shown to cattle in many parts of the country, the horse, the mule, the ass, and the dog have a very happy life compared with the poor blacks, the descendants of slaves. America was the last civilised country to permit a black man liberty, and even then one-half the country decimated the other half in order to obtain the concession. The hostility to the negroes has never died out in the South. On every possible occasion the wretched coloured man is reminded that although his chains have been struck off he has neither the rights nor privileges of the superior white citizens. He does not enjoy the same treatment, he is tried by different laws, he is denied all recognition as a man. What wonder that the negro, a low type originally, finds it impossible to improve under these oppressive and discouraging conditions? What wonder that he is goaded into madness, that he nurses feelings of resentment, that he often tries to defeat the plans and spoil the purposes of the men who never show him a kindness, but who tyrannise over him ~~make his existence a burden?~~

The American citizen in the South is at heart more a barbarian than the negro whom he regards as a savage. Miss WELLS gave some terrible instances yesterday of wholesale massacres, awful cruelties, persistent persecution, and judicial murders, in which the blacks were the victims. Lynch law is fiendishly resorted to as a sort of sport on every possible opportunity, and the negroes are butchered to make a Yankee holiday. At one time hanging and shooting were the favourite methods of depriving negro offenders (real or supposed) of their lives, but the Americans have grown weary of this ~~business~~ ~~and are now showing a preference for~~ refined and long-continued torture such as maiming and roasting. Miss WELLS says that the negroes cannot look for justice. As in the days of the Italian doges, to be suspected is tantamount to being adjudged guilty, and the innocent are hanged, shot, and burnt without a trial, if appearances are ever so little against them. Miss WELLS said that, as the administration of the law was entirely in the hands of the white people, there was really no fear of a negro guilty of a crime being able to escape the penalty. Prison statistics showed that for offences trivial and common enough in all communities sentences of from five to 10 and even 20 years were inflicted upon negro offenders. "Why, then," she asked, "was it necessary that a mob of white citizens, with all the machinery of 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, she added, considered it had done its duty until every man had lodged a bullet in the body. Then she gave a shocking example of the cold and calculating brutality which exists, and with which every ~~man~~ ~~is~~ ~~familiarised~~. In one instance ~~the~~ ~~men~~ ~~used~~ ~~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. That the men who deal in lynch law are proud of their exploits cannot be questioned. It is quite usual for the whole of the lynching party to delay operations while they picturesquely pose themselves around the intended victim in order to have their photographs taken. Since 1882 over a thousand negroes, men, women, and children, have been lynched by the citizens of the country which claims to be the most advanced, most elevated, and most progressive and enlightened in the world. Either they mistrust their legal institutions or they murder in wantonness and for mere lust of blood. Miss WELLS declared that one man in Tennessee was hanged for being "sandy" to white people while he was drunk. The meaning of all this is plain enough. Slavery is abolished in America—the vaunted land of the free—but in reality it exists to-day in the South as much as it did when the planters bought and sold human flesh for their own purposes. The negroes are made to feel that they are slaves. They are deprived of citizen rights, they are neither defended nor tried by the law, they are outcasts and pariahs liable to be murdered in cold blood any day and knowing that their deaths will be unavenged. Lynching has not been declared illegal, and no lynchings have yet been convicted. Their plans are prepared in public, their portraits taken, their names printed in the papers, and yet the invariable verdict of the jury is that the lynchings are "persons unknown." We trust that Miss IDA WELLS will obtain warm sympathy for an oppressed race as she reveals their wrongs to Englishmen. Open slavery was sternly denounced in this country years ago; ought not the covert tyranny now prevailing equally to be censured?

Don't forget to write to the papers. I am seeing to it that we make a good job of it. I will be glad to see you on the 10th.

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