

MISS IDA B. WELLS

"The College of Life or Practical Self-Education. A Manual of Self-Improvement of the Colored Race. by Henry Davenport Northrop, D. D. Hon. Joseph R. Gay, and Prof. I. Garland Penn. Chicago Publication and Lithograph Co. Chicago, Illinois 1895.

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Perhaps no woman of our race is more widely known or more influential than Miss Wells. Her connection with "The Society for the Recognition of the Brotherhood of Man", the large share she had in founding this organization, and her very successful efforts in awakening an anti-lynching public sentiment both in this country and in England, have made her name famous on both sides of the Atlantic.

The following sketch is taken from "The Afro-American Press", and furnishes some interesting facts connected with her remarkable career:

That "perseverance overcomes all obstacles," is fully verified in the life and character of Miss I. B. Wells, who was born at Holly Springs, Ark, [Miss.] and reared and educated there. Her parents died while she was attending Rust University, which compelled her to leave school in order that she might support her five brothers and sisters.

She taught her first school at the age of fourteen, and with this work and journalism she has been an incessant laborer. She has taught in the schools of Arkansas and Tennessee, and has at various times been offered like positions elsewhere; but preferring to teach her people in the South, she has continued to labor there. For six years she followed her vocation as teacher in the City of Memphis.

During this time she began to write for the press. Her first article was a "write-up", at the request of the editor, of a suit for damages, in which she was the complainant. This paper was "The Living Way, which she contributed to for the space of two years. This engagement introduced her to the newspaper fraternity as a writer of superb ability and therefore demands for her services began to come in.

Carries a Pointed Pen

T. Thomas Fortune, after meeting her wrote as follows: "She has become famous as one of the few of our women who handles a goose-quill, with diamond point, as easily as any man in the newspaper work. If 'Iola' were a man, she would be a humming independent in politics. She has plenty of nerve and is as sharp as a steel trap."

She has been the regular correspondent of "The Detroit Plaindealer," "Christian Index" and "The People's Choice." She is also part owner and editor of "The Memphis Free Speech and Head Light", and editress of the "Home" department of "Our Women and Children, of which Dr. William J. Simmons was publisher. Decidedly, "Iola" is a great success in journalism, and we can but feel proud of a woman whose ability and energy serves to make her so.

She is popular with all the journalists of Afro-American connection, as will be seen by her election as assistant secretary of the National Afro-American Press Convention, at Louisville, and her unanimous election as secretary of the Press Convention, which met at Washington, D. C., March 4, 1889.

Miss Lucy W. Smith says of her: Miss Ida B. Wells, "Iola", has been called the "Princess of the Press"; and she has well earned the title. No writer, the male fraternity not excepted, has been more extensively quoted; none struck harder blows at the wrongs and weaknesses of the race.

A Most Successful Journalist,

Miss Wells readers are equally divided between the sexes. She reaches the men by dealing with the political aspect of the race question, and the women she meets around the fireside. She is an inspiration to the young writers, and her success has lent impetus to their ambition. When the National Press Convention, of which she was assistant secretary, met in Louisville, she read a splendidly written paper on "Women in Journalism; or How I Would Edit."

By the way, it is her ambition to edit a paper. She believes there is no agency so potent as the press, in reaching and elevating a people. Her contributions are distributed among the leading race journals. She made her debut with "The Living Way" (Memphis, Tenn), and has since written for "The New York Age", "Detroit Plaindealer", Indianapolis World", "Gate City Press," (Mo.), "Little Rock Sun", "American Baptist," (Ky.), "Memphis Watchman," "Chattanooga Justice," "Christian Index," "Fisk University Herald,"(Tenn.),"Our Women and Children Magazine," (Ky.), and the Memphis papers, weeklies and dailies. Miss Wells has attained much success as a teacher in the public schools of the last named place.

When Miss Wells owned an interest in "The Memphis Free Speech" an article appeared in May, 1892, that gave offense to a prejudiced public. By a mob the newspaper plant was destroyed and the two male editors were forced to flee for their lives. She was warned at Philadelphia not to return, as her life would be in danger.

She began lecturing on the wrongs inflicted upon her race and, as already stated, in this country and Great Britain she plead the cause of her people with marked ability and success. The most influential people in many of our cities and throughout England and Scotland gave her their support, anti-lynching organizations were formed, and valiant efforts have been put forth to secure justice for the black man.