

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CLUB MOVEMENT AMONG COLORED WOMEN OF AMERICA.

Afro-American women of the United States have never had the benefit of a discriminating judgment concerning their worth as women made up of the good and bad of human nature. What they have been made to be and not what they are, seldom enters into the best or worst opinion concerning them.

In studying the status of Afro-American women as revealed in their club organizations, it ought to be borne in mind that such social differentiations as "women's interests, children's interests, and men's interests" that are so finely worked out in the social development of the more favored races are but recent recognitions in the progressive life of the negro race. Such specializing had no economic value in slavery days, and the degrading habit of regarding the negro race as an unclassified people has not yet wholly faded into a memory.

The negro as an "alien" race, as a "problem," as an "industrial factor," as "ex-slaves," as "ignorant" etc., are well known and instantly recognized; but colored women as mothers, as home-makers, as the center and source of the social life of the race have received little or no attention. These women have been left to grope their way unassisted toward a realization of those domestic virtues, moral impulses and standards of family and social



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life that are the badges of race respectability. They have had no special teachers to instruct them. No conventions of distinguished women of the more favored race have met to consider their peculiar needs. There has been no fixed public opinion to which they could appeal; no protection against the libelous attacks upon their characters, and no chivalry generous enough to guarantee their safety against man's inhumanity to woman. Certain it is that colored women have been the least known, and the most ill-favored class of women in this country.

Thirty-five years ago they were unsocialized, unclassed and unrecognized as either maids or matrons. They were simply women whose character and personality excited no interest. If within thirty-five years they have become sufficiently important to be studied apart from the general race problem and have come to be recognized as an integral part of the general womanhood of American civilization, that fact is a gratifying evidence of real progress.

In considering the social advancement of these women, it is important to keep in mind the point from which progress began, and the fact that they have been mainly self-taught in all those precious things that make for social order, purity and character. They have gradually become conscious of the fact that progress includes a great deal more than what is generally meant by the terms culture, education and contact.

The club movement among colored women reaches into the sub-social condition of the entire race. Among white women clubs mean the for-

ward movement of the best women in the interest of the best womanhood. Among colored women the club is the effort of the few competent in behalf of the many incompetent; that is to say that the club is only one of many means for the social uplift of a race. Among white women the club is the onward movement of the already uplifted.

The consciousness of being fully free has not yet come to the great masses of the colored women in this country. The emancipation of the mind and spirit of the race could not be accomplished by legislation. More time, more patience, more suffering and more charity are still needed to complete the work of emancipation.

The training which first enabled colored women to organize and successfully carry on club work was originally obtained in church work. These churches have been and still are the great preparatory schools in which the primary lessons of social order, mutual trustfulness and united effort have been taught. The churches have been sustained, enlarged and beautified principally through the organized efforts of their women members. The meaning of unity of effort for the common good, the development of social sympathies grew into woman's consciousness through the privileges of church work.

Still another school of preparation for colored women has been their secret societies. "The ritual of these secret societies is not without a certain social value." They demand a higher order of intelligence than is required for church membership. Care for the sick, provisions for the decent burial of the indigent dead, the care for orphans and the

enlarging sense of sisterhood all contributed to the development of the very conditions of heart that qualify women for the more inclusive work of those social reforms that are the aim of women's clubs. The churches and secret societies have helped to make colored women acquainted with the general social condition of the race and the possibilities of social improvement.

With this training the more intelligent women of the race could not fail to follow the example and be inspired by the larger club movement of the white women. The need of social reconstruction became more and more apparent as they studied the results of women's organizations. Better homes, better schools, better protection for girls of scant home training, better sanitary conditions, better opportunities for competent young women to gain employment, and the need of being better known to the American people appealed to the conscience of progressive colored women from many communities.

The clubs and leagues organized among colored women have all been more or less in direct response to these appeals. Seriousness of purpose has thus been the main characteristic of all these organizations. While the National Federation of Woman's Clubs has served as a guide and inspiration to colored women, the club movement among them is something deeper than a mere imitation of white women. It is nothing less than the organized anxiety of women who have become intelligent enough to recognize their own low social condition and strong enough to initiate the forces of reform.



MRS. ANNA J. COOPER,
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thor of the "Voice From the South."

The club movement as a race influence among the colored women of the country may be fittingly said to date from July, 1895, when the first national conference of colored women was held in Boston, Mass. Prior to this time there were a number of strong clubs in some of the larger cities of the country, but they were not affiliated and the larger idea of effecting the social regeneration of the race was scarcely conceived of.

Among the earlier clubs the Woman's League of Washington, D. C., organized in 1892, and the Woman's Era Club of Boston, organized in January, 1893, were and are still the most thorough and influential organizations of the kind in the country.

The kind of work carried on by the Washington League since its organization is best indicated by its standing committees, as follows:

- Committee on Education.
- Committee on Industries.
- Committee on Mending and Sewing.
- Committee on Free Class Instruction.
- Committee on Day Nursery.
- Committee on Building Fund.

These various activities include sewing schools, kindergartens, well-conducted night schools, and mother's meetings, all of which have been developed and made a prominent part of the educational and social forces of the colored people of the capital. The league has made itself the recognized champion of every cause in which colored women

and children have any special interests in the District of Columbia.

The league is also especially strong in the personnel of its membership, being made up largely of teachers; many of whom are recognized as among the most cultured and influential women of the negro race in this country.

Mrs. Helen Cook, of Washington, was the first president elected by the league, and still holds that position. Mrs. Cook belongs to one of the oldest and best-established colored families in the country. She has had all the advantages of culture, contact, and experience to make her an ideal leader of the leading woman's organization of the colored race.

The Woman's League claims to have originated the idea of a national organization of colored women's clubs. In its annual report for 1895 there occurs the following language:

"The idea of national organization has been embodied in the Woman's League of Washington from its formation. It existed fully developed in the minds of the original members even before they united themselves into an association which has national union for its central thought, its inspiring motive, its avowed purpose—its very reason for being."

Having assumed a national character by gaining the affiliations of such clubs as the Kansas City League, the Denver League, and associations in Virginia, South Carolina and Pennsylvania, the Washington League was admitted into the membership of the National Council of Women of the United States.



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Teacher in Kansas City High School; is an Alumnus of the
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and a Most Successful Teacher.



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The league is very tenacious of its name and claim as the originator of the idea of nationalizing the colored women's clubs of America, but its claim has always been challenged with more or less spirit by some of the clubs composing the National Association.

The New Era Club of Boston was organized in the month of February, 1893. The desire of the cultured and public-spirited colored women of that city to do something in the way of promoting a more favorable public opinion in behalf of the negro race was the immediate incentive to this organization. The club began its work of agitation by collecting data and issuing leaflets and tracts containing well-edited matter in reference to Afro-American progress. Its most conspicuous work has been the publication of the *Woman's Era*, the first newspaper ever published by colored women in this country. This paper gained a wide circulation and did more than any other single agency to nationalize the club idea among the colored women of the country. The New Era Club has sustained its reputation as the most representative organization of colored people in New England. It has taken the initiative in many reforms and helpful movements that have had a wide influence on race development. This club has been especially useful and influential in all local affairs that in any way effect the colored people. Deserving young men and women struggling to obtain an education, and defenseless young women in distress have always been able to find substantial assistance in the New Era Club.

This Boston organization embraces a member-



MRS. JOSEPHINE ST. PIERRE RUFFIN,
Prominent Woman of Boston, Leader of the Club Move-
ment Among Colored Women.

ship of about one hundred women, many of whom are prominent in the ranks of New England's strongest women.

Mrs. Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin has been the president of the Era Club all the time since its organization. She is an active member in many of the influential women's organizations in Massachusetts. She is a woman of rare force of character, mental alertness and of generous impulses. She has played a leading part in every movement that has tended to the emancipation of colored women from the thralldom of past conditions. Her husband, the late Judge Ruffin, held the first position of a judicial character ever held by a colored man in New England.

These two clubs, located respectively in Washington and Boston, were worthy beginnings of the many local efforts that were destined to grow and spread until there should be such a thing in the United States as a national uprising of the colored women of the country pledged to the serious work of a social reconstruction of the negro race.

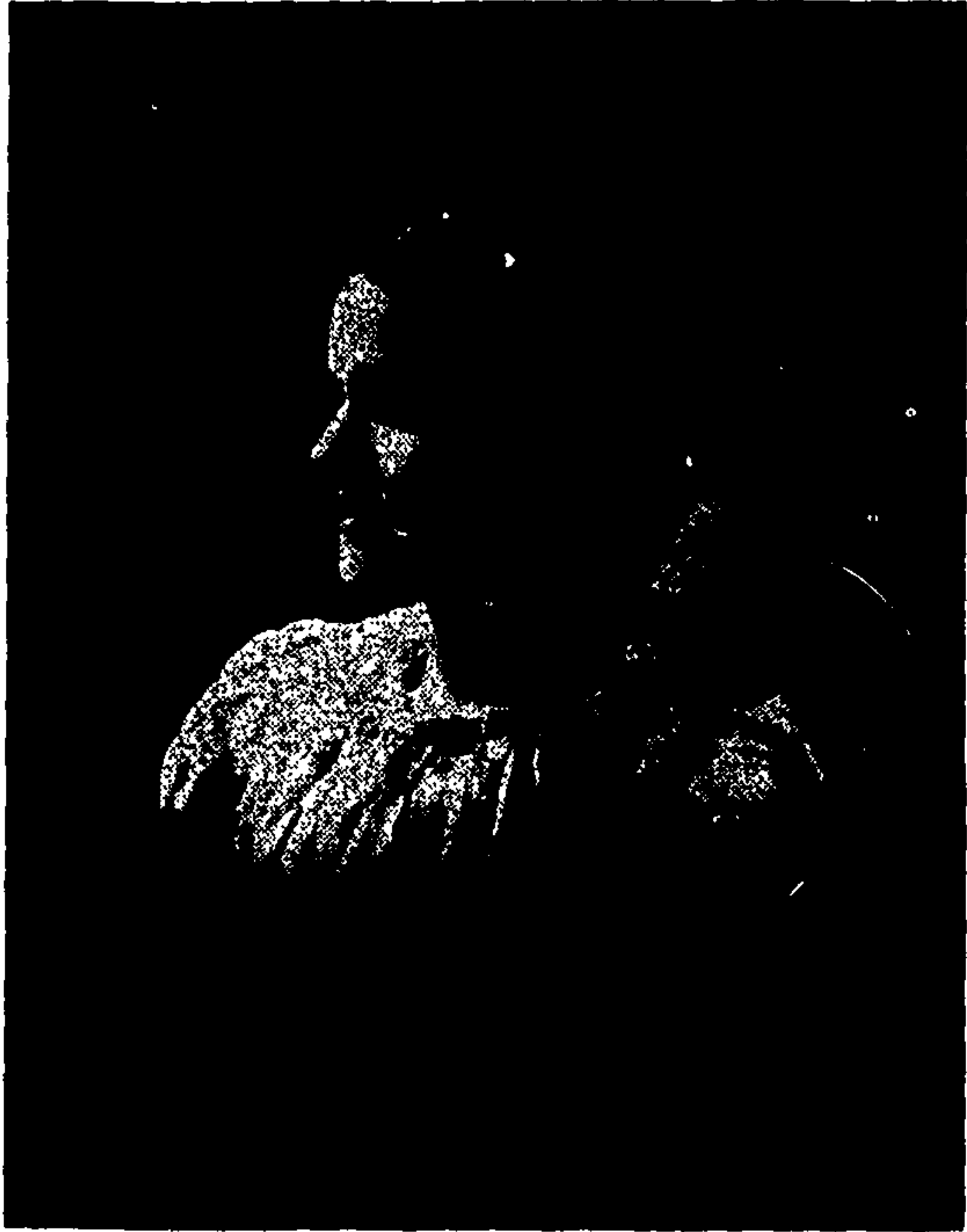
But these two clubs were not the only examples of the colored woman's capacity for organization. The following clubs were thoroughly organized and actively engaged in the work of reform contemporaneously with the clubs of Boston and Washington:

The Harper Woman's Club of Jefferson City, Mo., was formed in 1890 and had established a training school for instruction in sewing; a temperance department and mothers' meetings were also carried on. The Loyal Union of Brooklyn and New York was organized in December, 1892. It

had a membership of seventy-five women and was engaged largely in agitating for better schools and better opportunities for young women seeking honorable employment; the I. B. W. Club of Chicago, Ill., organized in 1893; the Woman's Club of Omaha, Neb., organized February, 1895; the Belle Phoebe League of Pittsburg, Pa., organized November, 1894; the Woman's League of Denver; the Phyllis Wheatley Club of New Orleans; the Sojourner Club of Providence, R. I., and the Woman's Mutual Improvement Club of Knoxville, Tenn., organized in 1894.

It will thus be seen that from 1890 to 1895 the character of Afro-American womanhood began to assert itself in definite purposes and efforts in club work. Many of these clubs came into being all unconscious of the influences of the larger club movement among white women. The incentive in most cases was quite simple and direct. How to help and protect some defenseless and tempted young woman; how to aid some poor boy to complete a much-coveted education; how to lengthen the short school term in some impoverished school district; how to instruct and interest deficient mothers in the difficulties of child training are some of the motives that led to the formation of the great majority of these clubs. These were the first out-reachings of sympathy and fellowship felt by women whose lives had been narrowed by the petty concerns of the struggle for existence and removed by human cruelty from all the harmonies of freedom, love and aspirations.

Many of these organizations so humble in their beginnings and meager in membership clearly



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needed behind them the force and favor of some larger sanction to save them from timidity and pettiness of effort. Many of them clearly needed the inspirations, the wider vision and supporting strength that come from a national unity. The club in Mississippi could have a better understanding of its own possibilities by feeling the kinship of the club in New England or Chicago, and the womanhood sympathy of these northern clubs must remain narrow and inefficient if isolated in interest from the self-emancipating struggles of southern clubs.

As already noted some of the more progressive clubs had already conceived the idea of a National organization. The *Woman's Era* journal of Boston began to agitate the matter in the summer of 1894, and requested the clubs to express themselves through its columns on the question of holding a National convention. Colored women everywhere were quick to see the possible benefits to be derived from a National conference of representative women. It was everywhere believed that such a convention, conducted with decorum, and along the lines of serious purpose might help in a decided manner to change public opinion concerning the character and worth of colored women. This agitation had the effect of committing most of the clubs to the proposal for a call in the summer of 1895. While public-spirited Afro-American women everywhere were thus aroused to this larger vision in plans for race amelioration, there occurred an incident of aggravation that swept away all timidity and doubt as to the necessity of a National conference. Some obscure editor in a Missouri

town sought to gain notoriety by publishing a libelous article in which the colored women of the country were described as having no sense of virtue and altogether without character. The article in question was in the form of an open letter addressed to Miss Florence Belgarnie of England, who had manifested a kindly interest in behalf of the American negro as a result of Miss Ida B. Wells' agitation. This letter is too foul for reprint, but the effect of its publication stirred the intelligent colored women of America as nothing else had ever done. The letter, in spite of its wanton meanness, was not without some value in showing to what extent the sensitiveness of colored women had grown. Twenty years prior to this time a similar publication would scarcely have been noticed, beyond the small circles of the few who could read, and were public-spirited. In 1895 this open and vulgar attack on the character of a whole race of women was instantly and vehemently resented, in every possible way, by a whole race of women conscious of being slandered. Mass meetings were held in every part of the country to denounce the editor and refute the charges.

The calling of a National convention of colored women was hastened by this coarse assault upon their character. The Woman's Era Club of Boston took the initiative in concentrating the widespread anxiety to do something large and effective, by calling a National conference of representative colored women. The conference was appointed to meet in Berkeley Hall, Boston, for a three days' session, July 29, 30 and 31, 1895.

In pursuance to this call the 29th day of July,



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1895, witnessed in Berkeley Hall the first National convention of colored women ever held in America. About one hundred delegates were present from ten States and representatives of about twenty-five different clubs.

The convention afforded a fine exhibition of capable women. There was nothing amateurish, uncertain or timid in the proceedings. Every subject of peculiar interest to colored women was discussed and acted upon as if by women disciplined in thinking out large and serious problems. The following named women were elected as officers of the conference:

Mrs. Josephine St. P. Ruffin, president; vice-presidents, Mrs. Helen Cook, of Washington, and Mrs. Booker T. Washington; secretary, Miss Eliza Carter.

The sanity of these colored women in their first National association was shown in the fact that but little time was spent in complaints and fault-finding about conditions that were inevitable. Almost for the first time in the history of negro gatherings, this Boston conference frankly studied the status of their own race and pointed out their own shortcomings. They set for themselves large and serious tasks in suggestions of plans and work to redeem the unredeemed among them. The convention did credit to itself by sending far and wide a warning note that the race must begin to help itself to live better, strive for a higher standard of social purity, to exercise a more helpful sympathy with the many of the race who are without guides and enlightenment in the ways of social righteousness.

Of course the Missouri editor was roundly scored in resolutions that lacked nothing of the elements of resentment, but the slanderous article against colored women that was the immediate incentive to the calling of the conference, became of the least importance when the women came together and realized the responsibility of larger considerations. They very soon felt that a National convention of responsible women would be a misplacement of moral force, if it merely exhausted itself in replying to a slanderous publication. The convention, therefore, easily shaped itself toward the consideration of themes and policies more in keeping with its responsibilities to the thousands of women and interests represented.

The chief work of the convention was the formation of National organization. The name adopted was "The National Association of Colored Women." The first officers of the National association were as follows:

The importance of this Boston conference to the club movement among colored women can scarcely be overestimated. The bracing effect of its vigorous proceedings and stirring addresses to the public gave a certain inspiration to the women throughout the whole country. The clubs that already existed became stronger and more positive and aggressive in their helpful work.

The National association has steadily grown in power and influence as an organized body, composed of the best moral and social forces of the negro race. It has held three National conventions since its organization, in 1895: At Washington, D. C., in 1896; Nashville, Tenn., in 1897; and

Chicago, in 1899. At the Chicago convention one hundred and fifty delegates were present, representing clubs from thirty States of the Union. The growing importance of the National organization was evidenced by the generous notices and editorial comments in the press of the country. Fraternal greetings were extended to the Chicago convention from many of the prominent white clubs of the city. It is not too much to say that no National convention of colored people held in the country ever made such a deep impression upon the public and told a more thrilling story of the social progress of the race than the Chicago convention. The interest awakened in colored women, and their peculiar interests, was evidenced in many ways. The National association has made it possible for many bright colored women to enjoy the fellowship and helpfulness of many of the best organizations of American women. It has certainly helped to emancipate the white women from the fear and uncertainty of contact or association with women of the darker race. In other words the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs is helping to give respect and character to a race of women who had no place in the classification of progressive womanhood in America. The terms good and bad, bright, and dull, plain and beautiful are now as applicable to colored women as to women of other races. There has been created such a thing as public faith in the sustained virtue and social standards of the women who have spoken and acted so well in these representative organizations. The National body has also been felt in giving a new importance and a larger relationship



MRS. JOHN R. FRANCIS,
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ington, D. C.

to the purposes and activities of local clubs throughout the country. Colored women everywhere in this club work began to feel themselves included in a wider and better world than their immediate neighborhood. Women who have always lived and breathed the air of ample freedom and whose range of vision has been world-wide, will scarcely know what it means for women whose lives have been confined and dependent to feel the first consciousness of a relationship to the great social forces that include whole nationalities in the sweep of their influences. To feel that you are something better than a slave, or a descendant of an ex-slave, to feel that you are a unit in the womanhood of a great nation and a great civilization, is the beginning of self-respect and the respect of your race. The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs has certainly meant all this and much more to the women of the ransomed race in the United States.

The National association has also been useful to an important extent in creating what may be called a race public opinion. When the local clubs of the many States became nationalized, it became possible to reach the whole people with questions and interests that concerned the whole race. For example, when the National association interested itself in studying such problems as the Convict Lease System of the Southern States, or the necessity of kindergartens, or the evils of the one-room cabin, it was possible to unite and interest the intelligent forces of the entire race. On these and other questions it has become possible to get the co-operation of the colored people in Mississippi and

Minnesota and of New York and Florida. Such co-operation is new and belongs to the new order of things brought about by nationalized efforts.

Through the united voice of the representative colored women of the country the interests of the race are heard by the American women with more effect than they were in other days. There is certainly more power to demand respect and righteous treatment since it has become possible to organize the best forces of all the race for such demands.

The influence of the National association has been especially felt in the rapid increase of women's clubs throughout the country, and especially in the South. There are now about three hundred of such clubs in the United States. There is an average membership of about sixty women to each club. Some have an enrollment of over two hundred women and there are but few with less than twenty-five. Wherever there is a nucleus of intelligent colored women there will be found a woman's club. The following is only a partial list of the clubs composing the National association.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLUB LIST.

NAMES OF THE CLUBS OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COLORED WOMEN.

ALABAMA.

Eufaula Woman's Club.
Greensboro Woman's Mutual Benefit Club.
Montgomery Sojourner Truth Club.
Mt. Meigs Woman's Club.
Selma Woman's Club.
Tuskegee Woman's Club.
Tuskegee-Notasulga Woman's Club.
Birmingham Sojourner Truth Club.
Ladies' Auxiliary, Montgomery.
Ten Times One, Montgomery.

ARKANSAS.

Little Rock Branch of National Association.
Woman's Club, Little Rock.

CALIFORNIA.

Los Angeles Woman's Club.

NORTH CAROLINA.

Biddle University Club.

SOUTH CAROLINA.

Charleston Woman's League.
Charleston W. C. T. U.



MRS. MARY CHURCH TERRELL,
President of the National Association of Colored Women.

COLORADO.

Denver, The Woman's League.

CONNECTICUT.

Norwich, Rose of New England League.

FLORIDA.

Jacksonville Woman's Christian Industrial and Protective Union.

The Phyllis Wheatley Chautauqua Circle, Jacksonville.

The Afro-American Woman's Club, Jacksonville.

GEORGIA.

Atlanta Woman's Club.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, Macon.

Columbus, Douglass Reading Circle.

Augusta, Woman's Protective Club.

Woman's Club of Athens.

INDIANA.

The Booker T. Washington Club, Logansport.

ILLINOIS.

Chicago, Ida B. Wells Club.

Chicago, Phyllis Wheatley Club.

Chicago, Woman's Civic League.

Chicago, Women's Conference.

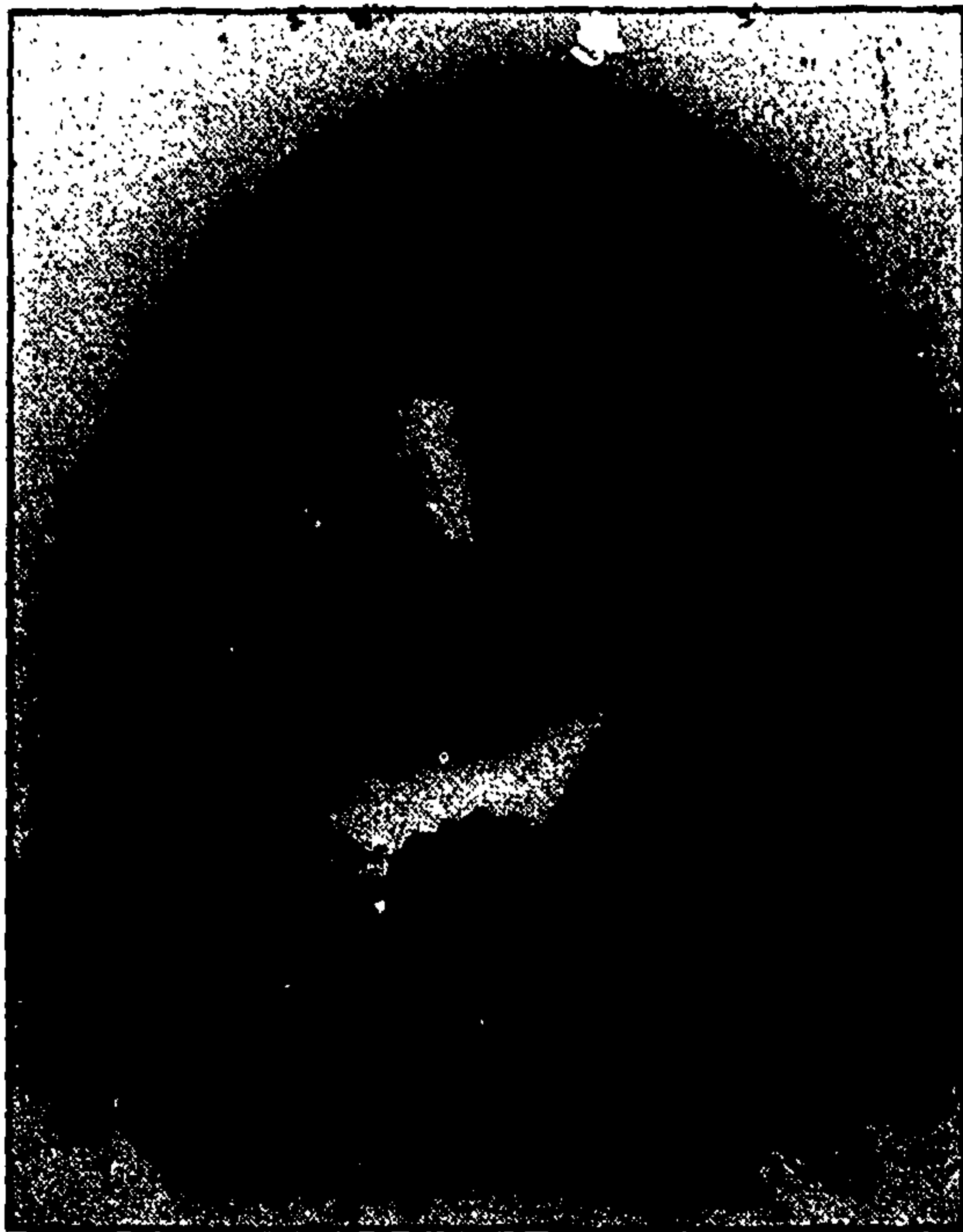
Chicago, Women's Circle.

Chicago, Progressive Circle of King's Daughters.

KANSAS.

Sierra Leone Club.

Woman's Club, Paola.



**MRS. HART,
Jacksonville, Fla., Promoter of a Monument to Commemo-
rate the Valor of Black Soldiers in the
Spanish-American War.**

KENTUCKY.

Louisville, Woman's Improvement Club.
Echstein Daisy Club, Cane Springs.

LOUISIANA.

New Orleans, Phyllis Wheatley Club.

MASSACHUSETTS.

Boston, Woman's Era Club.
Boston, Lend-a-Hand Club.
Boston Female Benevolent Firm.
Boston, E. M. Thomas League.
Boston Calvary Circle.
New Bedford Woman's Loyal Union.
Salem, Woman's Protective Club.
Cambridge Golden Rule Club.
Chelsea, B. T. Tanner Club.
New Bedford, St. Pierre Ruffin Club.

MINNESOTA.

Minneapolis, Ada Sweet Pioneer Club.
Minneapolis and St. Paul, Twin City Woman's Era Club.
St. Paul, Woman's Loyal Union and John Brown Industrial Club.

MISSOURI.

Jefferson City Woman's Club.
St. Louis, F. E. W. Harper League.
St. Joseph, F. E. W. H. League.
St. Louis Suffrage Club.
St. Louis, Phyllis Wheatley Club.
St. Louis Woman's Club.
St. Louis Married Ladies' Thimble Club.

Kansas City Club.

Self-Improvement Club, St. Louis.

MICHIGAN.

The Detroit Willing Workers.

Detroit, Phyllis Wheatley Club.

Lima, The Booker T. Washington Club.

Grand Rapids, Married Ladies' 19th Century Club.

Battle Creek, The Sojourner Truth Improvement.

Ann Arbor, The Woman's Federation Club.

NEW YORK.

New York and Brooklyn, Woman's Loyal Union.

Buffalo Woman's Club.

Harlem Woman's Sympathetic Union.

Rochester Woman's Club.

New York and Brooklyn, W. A. A. U.

NEBRASKA.

Omaha Woman's Club.

Woman's Improvement Club.

PENNSYLVANIA.

Pittsburg and Alleghany F. E. W. H. League.

Woman's Loyal Union, Pittsburg.

Washington Young Woman's Twentieth Century Club.

OHIO.

Toledo Woman's Club. A. M. E., Columbus.

RHODE ISLAND.

Newport Woman's League.

Providence Working Woman's League.

Lucy Thurman W. C. T. U., St. Paul.

The Dunbar Reading Circle, Cleveland.



IDA GRAY NELSON, D. D. S.,
The Only Colored Lady Dentist in the Country. Graduate of
Ann Arbor, Michigan; is very popular and has a large
and lucrative practice in the City of Chicago.



BELLE GARNET,
Graduate Nurse of Provident Hospital and Training School,
Chicago, now Pursuing a Course of Medicine
in the Chicago Medical College.

TENNESSEE.

Knoxville, Woman's Mutual Improvement Club.
 Memphis, Coterie Migratory Assembly.
 Memphis, Hook's School Association.
 Phyllis Wheatley, Nashville.
 Jackson, Woman's Club.
 Jackson, W. C. T. U.

TEXAS.

Fort Worth Phyllis Wheatley Club.

VIRGINIA.

Woman's League of Roanoke.
 Richmond Woman's League.
 Cappahoosic Gloucester A. and I. School.
 Urbanna Club.
 Lynchburg Woman's League.
 Lexington Woman's Club.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

Washington, D. C., Ladies' Auxiliary Committee.
 Washington League.
 Washington, Lucy Thurman W. C. T. U.
 Woman's Protective Union, Washington, D. C.

WEST VIRGINIA.

Wheeling, Woman's Fortnightly Club.

There are of course hundreds of clubs that are not yet members of the National association, but these outside clubs have all been brought into being by the influence of the National body, and have received their inspiration and direction from the same source.

A study of the plans and purposes of these clubs reveals an interesting similarity. They show that



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Chief Stenographer in One of the Largest Mercantile Houses
in Chicago.

the wants, needs, limitations and aspirations of the Afro-American are about the same everywhere—North, South, East and West.

If the question be asked: "What do these clubs do; what do they stand for in their respective communities, and what have they actually accomplished?" satisfactory answer will be found by studying them a little at short range.

The first thing to be noted is that these club women are students of their own social condition, and the clubs themselves are schools in which are taught and learned, more or less thoroughly, the near lessons of life and living. All these clubs have a program for study. In some of the more ambitious clubs literature, music and art are studied more or less seriously, but in all of them race problems and sociological questions directly related to the condition of the negro race in America are the principal subjects for study and discussion.

Many of the clubs, in their programs for study, plan to invite from time to time prominent men and women to address them on questions of vital interest. In this way club members not only become wide awake and interested in questions of importance to themselves and their community, but men and women who help to make and shape public opinion have an opportunity to see and know the better side of the colored race.

Race prejudice yields more readily to this interchange of service and helpfulness than to any other force in the relationship of races.

The lessons learned in these women's organizations of the country all have a direct bearing on

the social conditions of the negro race. They are such lessons that are not taught in the schools or preached from the pulpits. Home-making has been new business to the great majority of the women whom the women's clubs aim to reach and influence. For this reason the principal object of club studies is to teach that homes are something better and dearer than rooms, furniture, comforts and food. How to make the homes of the race the shrines of all the domestic virtues rather than a mere shelter, is the important thing that colored women are trying to learn and teach through their club organizations.

Take for example one club in Chicago, known as the "Colored Woman's Conference," and it will be found that its aims and efforts are typical of the best purposes of club life among colored women. The special activities and aims of this particular club are the establishment of kindergartens, mothers' meetings, sewing schools for girls, day nurseries, employment bureau; promoting the cause of education by establishing a direct line of interest between the teacher and the home life of every child; friendly visiting and protection to friendless and homeless girls; and a penny savings bank as a practical lesson in frugality and economy. The special thing to be noted in this program is that colored women are not afraid to set for themselves hard and serious tasks and to make whatever sacrifices necessary to realize their high purposes.

A lack of kindergarten teachers more than a lack of money has retarded the work of establishing kindergartens, especially in the South, where they are specially needed. The progressive woman feels

that an increased number of kindergartens would have a determining influence in shaping and moulding the character of thousands of colored children whose home lives are scant and meager.

The success of the kindergarten work in St. Louis, Mo., under the direction of Mrs. Haydee Campbell and her able assistant, Miss Helene Abbott, is a happy justification of the wisdom and anxiety of the colored club woman to extend these schools wherever it is possible to do so.

The mothers' meetings established in connection with almost every club have probably had a more direct and beneficial influence on the everyday problems of motherhood and home-making than any other activity. Meetings of this sort have been the chief feature of the women's clubs organized by the Tuskegee teachers among the women of the hard plantation life, within reach of the Tuskegee Institute. Thousands of these women in the rural life of the South continue to live under the shadow of bondage conditions. There has come to them scarcely a ray of light as to a better way of how to live for themselves and their offspring.

It is to the credit of the high usefulness of the colored club woman that she has taken the initiative in doing something to reach and help a class of women who have lived isolated from all the regenerating and uplifting influences of freedom and education. It is the first touch of sympathy that has connected the progressive colored woman with her neglected and unprogressive sister.

In this connection especial word ought to be said in behalf of these clubs as agencies of rescue



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of Colored Women.

and protection to the many unprotected and defenseless colored girls to be found in every large city. No race of young women in this country have so little done for them as the young colored woman. She is unknown, she is not believed in, and in respect to favors that direct and uplift, she is an alien, and unheeded. They have been literally shut out from the love, favor and protection that chivalry and a common pride have built up around the personality and character of the young women of almost every other race. The colored women's clubs have had heart enough and intelligence enough to recognize their opportunity and duty toward their own young women, and in numerous instances have been the very salvation of unfortunate colored girls.

An interesting example of the usefulness of these clubs in this rescue work was recently shown by the success of the Colored Woman's Conference, above mentioned, in saving a girl, friendless, and a victim of unfortunate circumstances, from the stain of the penitentiary by pledging to take her in charge and to save her to herself and society by placing her under good and redeeming influences.

These women's clubs have never failed to champion the cause of every worthy applicant for advice and assistance. They have made the cause of the neglected young colored woman one of commanding interest, and are interesting in her behalf every possible means of education, and are endeavoring to create for her a kindlier feeling and a better degree of respect, and to improve her standing among young women generally. The clubs have entered upon this department of their work

with great heartiness and have enlisted in behalf of young women new influences of helpfulness and encouragement. Colored girls with poor homes and no homes are many. Thousands of them are the poor, weak and misguided daughters of ill-starred mothers. To reach out for and save them from a bitter fate; to lift them into a higher sphere of hopefulness and opportunity is a task altogether worthy of the best efforts of club women.

What has been said of the earnestness and practical aim of colored women's clubs in behalf of kindergartens for the children and salvation for the girls may also be said of the practical way in which they have established and sustained sewing schools, mending schools and friendly visitations in behalf of neighborhood respectability and decency, and of their various committees that visit reformatory institutions and jails in search of opportunities to be useful. Numerous and interesting instances might be given to show to what extent these women are realizing their desire to be useful in the social regeneration of their race.

This chapter on the club movement among colored women would be incomplete without some notice of the leaders of the movement. Nothing that these club women have done or aimed to do is more interesting than themselves. What a variety of accomplishments, talents, successes and ambitions have been brought into view and notice by these hitherto obscure women of a ransomed race! Educated? Yes, besides the thousands educated in the common schools, hundreds of them have been trained in the best colleges and universities



MISS MATTIE B. DAVIS,
President The Woman's Club, Athens, Ga.



MRS. MARY L. DAVENPORT,
President of the Chicago Woman's Conference.

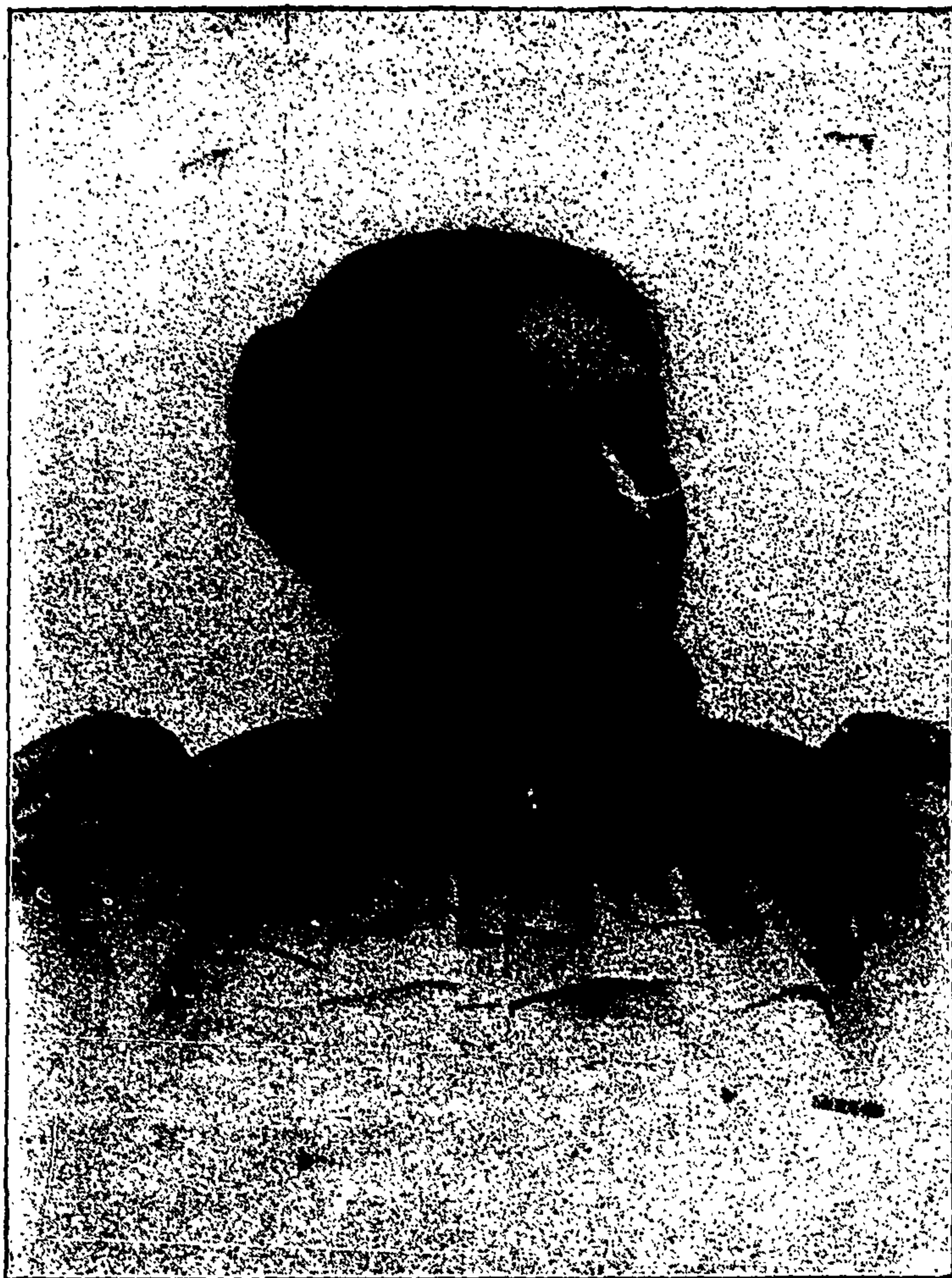
in the country, and some of them have spent several years in the noted schools of Europe.

The women thus trained and educated are busily pursuing every kind of avocation not prohibited by American prejudices. As educators, fully twenty thousand of them are at work in the schools, colleges and universities of the country, and some of them teach everything required to be taught from the kindergarten to the university. Among these educators and leaders of Afro-American womanhood are to be found linguists, mathematicians, musicians, artists, authors, newspaper writers, lecturers and reform agitators, with varying degrees of excellence and success. There are women in the professions of law, medicine, dentistry, preaching, trained nursing, managers of successful business enterprises, and women of small independent fortunes made and saved within the past twenty-five years.

There are women plain, beautiful, charming, bright conversationalists, fluent, resourceful in ideas, forceful in execution, and women of all sorts of temperament and idiosyncracies and force and delicacy of character.

All this of course is simply amazing to people trained in the habit of rating colored women too low and knowing only the menial type. To such people she is a revelation.

The woman thus portrayed is the real new woman in American life. This woman, as if by magic, has succeeded in lifting herself as completely from the stain and meanness of slavery as if a century had elapsed since the day of emancipation. This new woman, with the club behind her and the



MRS. BOOKER T. WASHINGTON.

club service in her heart and mind, has come to the front in an opportune time. She is needed to change the old idea of things implanted in the minds of the white race and there sustained and hardened into a national habit by the debasing influence of slavery estimates. This woman is needed as an educator of public opinion. She is a happy refutation of the idle insinuations and common skepticism as to the womanly worth and promise of the whole race of women. She has come to enrich American life with finer sympathies, and to enlarge the boundary of fraternity and the democracy of love among American women. She has come to join her talents, her virtues, her intelligence, her sacrifices and her love in the work of redeeming the unredeemed from stagnation, from cheapness and from narrowness.

Quite as important as all this she has come to bring new hope and fresh assurances to the hapless young women of her own race. Life is not a failure. All avenues are not closed. Womanly worth of whatever race or complexion is appreciated. Love, sympathy, opportunity and helpfulness are within the reach of those who can deserve them. The world is still yearning for pure hearts, willing hands, and bright minds. This and much more is the message brought by this new woman to the hearts of thousands discouraged and hopeless young colored women.

It is a real message of courage, a real inspiration that has touched more sides of the Afro-American race than any other message or thing since the dawn of freedom.

This is not exaggeration or fancy. Demonstra-

tion of it can be seen, heard and felt in the widespread renewal of hope and effort among the present generation of young Afro-American women.

These young women, thus aroused to courage, to hope and self-assertion toward better things, can find inspiring examples of success and achievements in the women of their own race. They have begun to feel something of the exaltation of race pride and race ideals. They have been brought face to face with standards of living that are high and ennobling, and have been made conscious of the severe penalties of social misdoings.

Around them has been created a sentiment of care, pride, protection and chivalry that is every day deepening and widening the distinctions between right and wrong in woman's relationship to man, child and society.

The glow of optimism has coursed so easily through this chapter concerning the work done and attempted by colored women that the importance of it all may seem somewhat exaggerated.

It, perhaps, should be confessed that in spite of the actual good already realized, the club movement is more of a prophecy than a thing accomplished. Colored women organized have succeeded in touching the heart of the race, and for the first time the thrill of unity has been felt. They have set in motion moral forces that are beginning to socialize interests that have been kept apart by ignorance and the spirit of dependence.

They have begun to make the virtues as well as the wants of the colored women known to the American people. They are striving to put a new social value on themselves. Yet their work has

just begun. It takes more than five or ten years to effect the social uplift of a whole race of people.

The club movement is well purposed. There is in it a strong faith, an enthusiasm born of love and sympathy, and an ever-increasing intelligence in the ways and means of affecting noble results. It is not a fad. It is not an imitation. It is not a passing sentiment. It is not an expedient, or an experiment. It is rather the force of a new intelligence against the old ignorance. The struggle of an enlightened conscience against the whole brood of social miseries born out of the stress and pain of a hated past.

FANNIE BARRIER WILLIAMS.

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