

LEADERS OF THE COLORED RACE

— IN —

ALABAMA

Edited by
J. H. MOORMAN
and
E. L. BARRETT

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O. O. SARVER

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FOREWORD

The publishers being Southern men and having spent much time in travel and observation, have always been greatly interested in the progress being made by the Colored People of the Southland, and particularly of Alabama.

The progress along religious, educational and business lines during the past ten or fifteen years is almost incredible; and when one looks about for the cause and source of this remarkable advancement, he at once recognizes that credit is due to those courageous spirits who have spent, and are spending their lives, for the uplift of their race.

It is to those apostles of righteousness, those exponents of the fine arts, and to those champions of a high standard of business ethics that this book is dedicated; also in the hope that many others, especially the young may receive an inspiration and be constrained to emulate the lives of those who have labored so unselfishly before them.

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REV. J. S. PRENTICE
Aldrich, Ala.

Montevallo has furnished to the Colored Race one of the oldest representative men in both the industrial and religious world in that section of the South, in Rev. J. S. Prentice, one who has devoted more than two score of years to guiding humanity along the path of righteousness; one who as a business man has made a success and as a minister, has served every Baptist Church of his home county during a period of 41 years. The educational world also knows him, since he is an advocate of higher education whenever possible, even though it is necessary to sacrifice personally in order to obtain it, as many have done and are doing today. It is this spirit that is bringing the Colored Race to the high intellectual standing that is being recorded today.

When it is known that Rev. Prentice was born in Montevallo in 1857, it will also be seen that in point of years as well as service, he is among the oldest. His aspirations were in advance of his finance and it was necessary that he labor for years, but to get higher, he worked and saved—and succeeded. He was a student at the local grammar schools and having to depend upon his own effort, succeeded in engaging in the coal business. While successful at this, making friends and building up a creditable business, he felt the urge to go forth and preach the word of God. Although in business, his mind was not changed and he took advantage of every opportunity to preach, even though in business, until 1908.

Deciding that one could not successfully serve two masters, God and mammon, this man who had given what time he could to pastoring, devoted his entire time to ministering to the spiritual needs of his race. He felt that this was a greater and nobler work; one that would enhance the prospects of the future for his fellowman, and he continued. His earnestness, manner of presenting biblical facts,

impressing his hearers with the importance of giving heed, enabled him to derive great pleasure and no small measure of success from his work. His devotion to church and welfare of all attracted attention and his first record of continuous service proved his efficiency and stability. This was for a period of 28 years at the New Hope Baptist Church, Randolph, Alabama. Regularly, earnestly, impressively and honestly, this man prevailed upon his people, and with success. His long reign made him a most important part of the community. He was relied upon, believed in, sought for the various minor services of the average minister. He never failed. Was always on duty or ready for it. From one church to another he would be found, his record showing that he officiated at every Baptist Church in his county, Shelby, during his preaching life of 41 years as stated.

He is a staunch believer in enlightenment by way of school as well as church and as proof, he has practiced as well as preached, since he has nine living children to each of whom he has bequeathed that important heritage—an excellent education. Not only this, but Rev. Prentice has been successful in other ways, although he changed from industrial business to pulpit. He is the owner of his own home and has been since he was 18 years old and has made it a duty to present to each of his children a home when they decided to make their mark in this world. Aside from this he is the owner of considerable property in Montevallo where he is held in the highest esteem by a large circle of friends of both races. He is decidedly familiar with county and district affairs, being one of the oldest Moderators in his section. He has held the position of Moderator in Bibb County for a quarter of a century and continues, giving every degree of satisfaction. His extended knowledge of the affairs of the various localities renders him one of the most valuable men obtainable for this work and while he has virtually reached the three score and ten years, he continues to be actively engaged in his various tasks. His interest in church affairs is a pleasure to him. He is one of the members of the Board of Trustees, always prepared and ready to take an active part in anything pertaining to the interest of his church and its progress; and one instance reciting the esteem in which he is held is a written communication to the officers of the Star of Bethlehem Baptist Church of Wilsonville, Alabama, signed by a large number of the residents, congratulating them upon their good fortune in having one so endeared and qualified; one who has spent most of his life in behalf of his community, setting an example most worthy and whose duties towards the higher principles and general uplifting have never ceased. The letter is of highest commendation and approbation of his noble work and congratulating the congregation upon their good fortune in so long being able to enjoy the fruits of the work of a man, a good citizen, neighbor, minister and devoted servant of God.

