**Fountain Peyton**

*A Glance at the Life of Ira Aldridge*

Washington, [D.C.]: R.L. Pendleton 1917

$600

First edition. Small octavo. 24pp. Stapled beige printed wraps. Frontispiece portrait of Aldridge in the role of Othello. A few short chips at the edges of the slightly oversize wrappers, else very good or better. A very scarce early work on Ira Aldridge, a pre-eminent African-American Shakespearean actor, who was honored with a memorial plaque at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon, and who gained international recognition on the London and European stages.
Although Aldridge made his debut in New York City in the role of Rolla in “Pizarro,” he found opportunities for a black actor very limited in the United States. In 1824, he emigrated to England, and attended the University of Glasgow for a time. He returned to London in 1825 and made his debut as Othello at the Royal Theatre in 1826. According to this sketch: “The better critics agree that Mr. Aldridge was one of the greatest Othellos. Edmund Kean (the renowned English actor) supported a like opinion by choosing him as Othello to his Iago at Belfast, Ireland.” Aldridge continued to work in England, Ireland, and on the continent for the next four decades until his death in Poland in 1827. This brief sketch of his career by Peyton highlights Aldridge’s African background (disputed by later biographers), the prejudices he faced, and the many roles he portrayed. Fountain Peyton was a graduate of Howard Law School class of 1890 and was involved in the Board of Education in Washington, DC for a number of years. Additionally, R.L. Pendleton is listed as an African-American printer in period directories. Exceptionally uncommon combination: a biography of a black actor by a black author, and published by a black printer. OCLC lists four copies (Emory, Northwestern, University of Illinois, and the Library of Congress). [BTC#408199]
A GLANCE AT THE LIFE
OF
IRA FREDERICK ALDRIDGE
BY
FOUNTAIN PEYTON, ESQ.

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