

Lynching.

HOW TO SECURE ITS ABOLITION.

ARTICLE PARTICULARLY GOOD AND HELPFUL.

Never may be the remedy for outbreaks, lynch law as epidemic will never be suppressed by ignoring the conditions which keep the atmosphere infected with the germs of the lynching.

Briefly stated these conditions are 1 the prevalence of crime among the blacks and 2 the prevalence of race prejudice among the whites.

A serious difficulty which confronted the student of the problem from the beginning is the disposition to ignore either one or the other of these conditions. For a long while the friends of the Negro at the north saw no account for the infected atmosphere but race prejudice, while the average south-lander would see nothing but Negro crime.

In answer to the charge of race prejudice the southerner points to the statistics, which show that nearly one-fifth of the victims of lynch law were whites.

Off-Repeated Statement.

In answer to the oft-repeated statement that lynch law was induced by Negro crime of a peculiarly revolting character, the friends of the Negro pointed with confidence to the same statistics, which showed that for a considerable period hardly one-fifth of the victims of the mob were charged with the crime against female virtue, while not a white man was lynched for comparative trivial offenses.

Lately, however, there has been a marked improvement in the spirit of both sides to the controversy, and there is among the more intelligent a growing disposition to face conditions as they actually exist. It is not an uncommon thing to meet a southerner who fully realizes how small a matter in the life of the masses is the life of a colored man, and only those who are interested in making the Negro a man in making apologies will deny that a colored skin acts as a red flag to the fury of the mob. Nor is it uncommon to meet northern visitors in the South who have awakened to the fact that the crime against female virtue has a prominence in a lynching epidemic that it does not have in the published statistics.

Both Sides of the Line.

In his recent manifestation of a position on both sides of the line to face the problem in the only serious way offers, it would seem a favorable opportunity to inquire what can be done to eradicate or diminish the lynching evil. That the problem is an exceedingly serious one is apparent when it is remembered that within the past ten years nearly 2,500 persons have been lynched in the United States, and that during this period there has been little practical change in the general situation. There has been improvement in only three states—notably in Michigan—and there are indications that in several other states the sentiment has begun to ally against the evil; but changes have not yet materially affected the grand total in the annual statistics of lynching.

Two years ago the South Carolina legislature enacted a law making the county in which a lynching is committed liable in exemplary damages of not less than \$2,000, to be paid by the legal representative of the person lynched, and authorizing the county against which a judgment has been obtained for damages in any case of lynching to recover the amount of judgment from the parties engaged in the lynching. About the same time Governor O'Ferrall, in a message to the Virginia legislature, recommended that the county in which a lynching occurs should be required to pay into the state treasury a sum not exceeding \$100 for the benefit of the public school fund. Recommendations of similar character were subsequently made by the governors of Maryland and Georgia.

It was believed by the more enthusiastic advocates of these measures that a pecuniary penalty placed upon an entire county would result in eventually bringing the most unenlightened community to its senses; but as mob leaders are not ordinarily tax-payers, and as they are not apt to be influenced by exhortations to righteousness from tax-paying neighbors who cannot be moved to exhort except by threats aimed at their pockets, it is not likely that any great good would come out of it. The practical value of the South Carolina law has not yet been established.

* * The indifferent attitude of white people toward the young Negro is another serious hindrance to his moral progress.

Southerners are not indifferent to the "old-time darky"—a type now nearly extinct—but they feel no interest in the new Negro. They pay their taxes to send him to school, but they pay them for conscience' sake and not with any lively interest in his future. The fact is, the majority of them believe that there is no future in him. This is a more serious matter than one who is unfamiliar with the Negro character would imagine.

The New Negro.

It is often said that the new Negroes are not drawn to the white people as their fathers were; but while they stand aloof there is nothing which an inspiring youth of the better type desires so much as the good opinion of white people. It is nothing to him to be honored by his own race if the superior race refuses to see any difference between him and the low mass from which he has risen. That is all he is complaining of—that we insist on counting him in the unclean mass. We do not encourage him to lead a virtuous life. He no longer asks for social equality—he no longer wants it; but what he does want and what he has the right to ask is a recognition of the lines which his own strivings and the strivings of others of his sort are making in the race. He wants to be distinguished from those who do not strive. To adopt his own phrase, he wants to be distinguished from a "nigger." It is time for the people of the South (and the people of the north, for that matter, to accord to him this right. It is time we were putting a premium upon virtue for the young Negro, employing virtuous Negroes preferably to others, and in every way possible showing the new generation that the colored youth who strives to rise is held in honor by the white race.

Special Legislation Needed.

To sum up: Not to mention the special legislation that may be needed in some of the states to secure a better enforcement of the laws in existence, these six things ought to be done for the prevention of lynch-law epidemics: 1 Executive officials should be chosen with regard for their personal courage. It is not enough to know how the candidate stands on the law: the question is whether he can be depended upon to stand by the law. 2 The intelligent citizens of the South should individually undertake to awaken in their neighbors a higher regard for law. 3 The papers of the two sections should exchange texts, and the northern press should preach against lawlessness and race prejudice. The good that has already been accomplished by the few papers that have made this exchange ought to encourage the rest to follow their example. 4 Southern newspapers should omit from their news columns the suggestive details of lynchings as well as the inflammatory details of assaults. 5 The higher education of Negroes should be pushed with a view to supplying the demand for capable teachers of righteousness for the race. 6 The south should take the worthy Negro by the hand as earnestly as the mob has taken the unworthy Negro by the neck, and encourage him in all high endeavor that the race may not be without salt to save it.—Edward L. Pell, in the *March American Monthly Review of Reviews*, New York.