

Lynchings and International Peace

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IN view of the controversy with Russia on account of her wrongful treatment of certain classes of American citizens, and in view, further, of the discussion of the subject of international peace, I think it advisable to call the attention of the country to the number of lynchings, mainly of American Negroes, that have taken place in the United States during twelve months. My own belief is that, in the degree that we create a public sentiment that will result in the decrease in the number of lynchings, or, better still, that will blot them out entirely, in the same degree will we have influence in bringing about peace among the nations of the world. I believe that we must have inter-racial peace and good will as the foundation of international peace and good will.

During these twelve months 71 lynchings have taken place in this country. While this is a shockingly large number, it is a decrease when compared with some other years. Out of the 71, fifty-nine were colored, twelve (including one Mexican) white. In 1901 there were 135 cases of lynching; in 1892 there were 255 cases of lynching.

During the past year lynchings have occurred in eighteen States, as follows: Alabama, 2; Arkansas, 4; Florida, 7; Georgia, 21; Kentucky, 8; Louisiana, 4; Missouri, 2; Mississippi, 5; Oklahoma, 6; Tennessee, 2; Texas, 3; West Virginia, 1; Ohio, 1;

Pennsylvania, 1; Idaho, 1; South Carolina, 1; Maryland, 1.

It is instructive to summarize the causes alleged for these seventy-one lynchings: In fifteen cases, rape or attempted rape, or mere accusation of the crime, was the charge; in one, resistance to officers of the law; in twenty-four, murder or attempt to murder; in one, threats to kill; in one, "abusive language;" in one, "acting suspiciously around the house;" in one, "no special offense charged -said to have been in the depot with several other Negroes;" in two, insulting women; in four cases of white men my lists do not specify the cause; in one, robbery; in one, "murderous assault;" in one, "robbery and killing officers;" in one case (a Mexican boy), stabbing a man who had cursed him; in one, "using insulting language in addressing a lady over the telephone;" in one, "entered a cherry orchard and quarreled with the owner;" in one, wife-beating.

There are lessons to be learned from this record of the year's lynchings. In the first place, it is clear that an evil once begun spreads and increases. The habit of lynching was begun in this country largely as a punishment for rape. It will be noticed, however, that out of seventy-one lynchings only fifteen, or twenty-one per cent, were for rape or attempted rape. Secondly, an examination of the individual cases of colored people charged with crimes that resulted in lynching shows that not a single individual lynched could be classed as an educated person. Again, so far as one can discover, not a single one of these persons was the owner of property or a taxpayer. Then again, in considering lynchings, it is to be borne in mind that, since the individuals have not had a trial, it is known that many innocent persons are lynched.

What can be done to prevent these numerous lynchings? In this regard there is one matter that is worthy of attention. It will be noted that during these twelve months there have been only two lynchings in Alabama. Soon after Governor Emmet O'Neal, the present Governor, took office, a year ago, there was a lynching in Bullock County, Alabama. At once Governor O'Neal took measures to have the sheriff impeached and removed from office. Since that action there

has not been a lynching in Alabama. In my opinion, it seems to be clearly proved that wherever there is the right public sentiment in the State, among judges and other State officials, and wherever the daily press is out-spokenly against lynchings, in that State few lynchings are likely to occur.