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May 22 19 The Horror at Waco

It is with gloomy forebodings that we await the stinging lash of criticism and reproach—criticism thrice hard to bear because it is merited; reproach thrice difficult to endure because it is justified.

Not a word of defense is there to offer; not an extenuating circumstance to plead. The constituted authority of the state had not been called upon in vain. No crime had gone unpunished, no court had been remiss in its duty, no criminal was about to escape. There was not the slightest excuse for mob violence on the threadbare plea that justice was about to be outraged.

In this particular instance, at least, the judicial system had dealt out justice so swift and so severe as to satisfy the most exacting. The culprit had been heard and condemned to die. What more can the law give by way of retribution? What is there left by way of punishment? What could this mob hope to do that the state had not already done, except to satiate that blood lust and morbid antipathy which have no place in civilized communities?

Bestial cruelty, though seemingly sanctioned by righteous indignation, never did, and never will, strengthen those customs, institutions and standards which make society respectable and the individual's life safe.

Gradually, but invariably, the world has been compelled to abandon its stern and barbarous methods of punishment. The human mind will not and can not associate torture and brutality with civilized ideals.

This Waco mob has done more than wreak a terrible vengeance on a pitifully weak and helpless individual whom the courts had already doomed. It has indulged in an orgy of passion, the brutalizing influence of which can not be measured in time or numbers. No man, woman or child who saw that exhibition of ungovernable temper will ever forget it. No man, woman or child who witnessed it, finding himself or herself in a position where violence can be employed, but will think of it as an excuse.

"They did such a thing in the cultured, reputable City of Waco," men will say. "Why should not we do likewise?"

Precedent is a powerful factor in life; powerful for evil as well as for good.

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Georgia, that we scolded so excitedly because of the Frank affair, what will Georgia have to say?

New York, that we ridiculed because of the Thaw case, what will New York have to say?

What will they all have to say, East, West, North and South; and no matter what they say, how shall we answer except to bow our heads in shame?

We have denounced the Germans for certain alleged atrocities in Belgium; we have called upon the world to ostracize Turkey for her treatment of the Armenians; we have worked ourselves into horrified repugnance at the French revolution for more than a century; we have pretended to be humane, Christian and tolerant and have called upon others to emulate us. We have grown hysterical over prison reform, have bewailed the "bat," have asked for the "honor system" even for

pending sentence in order to give the condemned every benefit of human compassion.

Now we stand before the world, confessedly involved in one of the most revolting tragedies of modern times; a tragedy which for sheer barbarism has seldom been paralleled in American history.

To burn a human being; it is a horrible thing. It never has been done and it never will be done except to detract from those that do the burning.

The Chronicle does not seek to palliate the offense of the abnormal black who perpetrated that most abhorrent of crimes. The Chronicle leaves him entirely out of consideration. It is not him, nor his race, that has been affected; it is the hundreds of whites who participated, the thousands who looked on, the millions who will read.

The sovereignty of the great State of Texas, the constituted authority of the United States, have been defied and outraged in order that an angry mob might make the last few moments of a negro, already condemned to death, more horrible than the law decrees; so horrible indeed that no respectable citizen of this state would lower himself to declare them justified by any conceivable act.

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There isn't a man who participated in the burning of that negro who dares to confess it before Governor James E. Ferguson.

There isn't a man that participated in it who dares tell Woodrow Wilson that he did.

There isn't a man that participated in it who dares get upon a public platform in any of the ten largest cities of this state and say so.

That is how bad it is.

It is so bad that thousands must lie.

It is so bad that silence must be maintained even though that silence amount to perjury.

And what will it do to offset this secret creeping evil?

What will it accomplish that a legal execution wouldn't have accomplished?

What has brutal punishment ever accomplished?

The report of this occurrence will go round the world. It is too unusual, too much out of the ordinary, too unbelievable, to be suppressed.

It can hardly be duplicated in any civilized nation during the past fifty years.

When has England had a burning even in the most barbarous of her colonial possessions?

When has France, when has Germany, when has Russia, when has Japan?

Go to the records, you who think this is a commonplace event; you who can not understand why people are horrified. Go to the records and see how many similar events have occurred in modern times.

Go to the records and see how many instances you can find where a human being, white, black, yellow, red or any other color, has been burned in the public square of a city of 40,000 people, while a vast concourse of men, women and children looked on and where there was no power, no sentiment, capable of making an effective protest.

Remember, this was not in the dead of night; not a secretly planned affair; not an assault on an unprepared jail. It was in the daytime, in the court house, in open and deliberate defiance of law and order.

Let us not become worried over the delinquencies of others so long as such things can be