

FEWER LYNCHINGS.

Actually and Relatively to Population, Mr. Hoffman Says.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

Recent lynchings in the South have once more attracted public attention to a most deplorable phase of Southern life. There is probably no Southern problem more generally misunderstood in the North and more unduly exaggerated than the occasional outbreaks of mob violence, chiefly against suspected or confessed criminals of the lowest possible type. No defense can be made of lynchings in a civilized community, nor can this wrongful procedure be explained on rational grounds. It is, therefore, of considerable importance that the facts of lynchings should not be misunderstood, if but in simple justice to the overwhelming majority of Southern people who neither encourage nor condone mob violence in any form. Unfortunately, there are no Federal judicial statistics upon which a thoroughly trustworthy conclusion could be based, but the statistics of lynchings annually collected by The Chicago Tribune are generally accepted as approximately correct, and, since they are compiled by a Northern newspaper, they probably err rather on the side of an overstatement of the facts than to the contrary. Mere numbers are, however, of relatively small significance, considering the large negro population, which, approximately, amounts to about ten millions. The most important fact is not so much the actual number of lynchings as the relative *tendency* of lynchings to increase or decrease, in proportion to population.

LYNCHING STATISTICS OF THE UNITED STATES. 1885-1912.

| Year. | Number of Lynchings. | Rate per 1,000,000 Population. |
|-----------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1885 | 184 | 3.25 |
| 1886 | 138 | 2.39 |
| 1887 | 122 | 2.06 |
| 1888 | 142 | 2.35 |
| 1889 | 176 | 2.85 |
| 1890 | 127 | 2.02 |
| 1891 | 192 | 2.99 |
| 1892 | 235 | 3.58 |
| 1893 | 200 | 2.99 |
| 1894 | 190 | 2.79 |
| 1895 | 171 | 2.46 |
| 1896 | 131 | 1.85 |
| 1897 | 166 | 2.30 |
| 1898 | 127 | 1.73 |
| 1899 | 107 | 1.43 |
| 1900 | 115 | 1.51 |
| 1901 | 125 | 1.74 |
| 1902 | 96 | 1.21 |
| 1903 | 104 | 1.29 |
| 1904 | 87 | 1.06 |
| 1905 | 66 | 0.79 |
| 1906 | 69 | 0.81 |
| 1907 | 63 | 0.72 |
| 1908 | 100 | 1.13 |
| 1909 | 87 | 0.96 |
| 1910 | 74 | 0.80 |
| 1911 | 71 | 0.76 |
| 1912 | 64 | 0.67 |
| 1885-1889 | 762 | 2.58 |
| 1890-1894 | 944 | 2.88 |
| 1895-1899 | 702 | 1.95 |
| 1900-1904 | 587 | 1.36 |
| 1905-1909 | 385 | 0.88 |
| 1910 | 74 | 0.80 |
| 1911 | 71 | 0.76 |
| 1912 | 64 | 0.67 |
| 1885-1912 | 3,539 | 1.69 |

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The first table presented herewith gives the actual number of lynchings in the United States for each year, as returned by The Chicago Tribune, for the period 1885-1912, together with the rate of lynching per million of population, carefully estimated for intercensal years. According to this table, the largest actual number of lynchings occurred in 1892, when 235 were reported, which, on the basis of population, would be equivalent to a rate of 3.6 per million. The lowest actual number of lynchings was reported for 1907, and the equivalent rate was 0.7 per million. But in 1912 the actual number of lynchings was only 64, and, since the population was much larger, the relative rate was only 0.67 per million, or the lowest rate on record since 1885. There can be no more conclusive evidence that lynchings, however regrettable, as spasmodic outbreaks of mob violence, are diminishing in actual numbers, as well as relatively to population.

This most unfortunate aspect of American life is precisely shown in the diagram, which exhibits the rate by quinquennial periods from 1885 to 1900, and by single years thereafter. The diagram is self-explanatory and requires no further discussion.

The reports of lynchings by States are not available in full detail for a long period of years, but the information has been compiled with reasonable accuracy for the period 1908-1912. For the purpose of emphasizing precisely the local intensity of lynchings, the following table has been prepared, to show the rate of lynchings per million of population for the States in which lynchings have occurred during the five years ended with 1912. According to the table, the largest actual number of lynchings occurred in Georgia, or 74, with an equivalent rate of lynching of 5.7 per million of population. But the highest rate of lynching occurred in Florida, or 10.6 per million. That outbreaks of mob violence of this kind have not been limited entirely to the South is made evident by the fact that lynchings occurred in California, Idaho, Illinois, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Wyoming.

LYNCHINGS BY STATES. 1908-12.

| States. | Number of Lynchings. | Rate per 1,000,000 Population. |
|----------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Florida | 40 | 10.63 |
| Georgia | 74 | 5.67 |
| Mississippi | 46 | 5.12 |
| Louisiana | 33 | 3.98 |
| Alabama | 30 | 2.81 |
| Arkansas | 22 | 2.81 |
| Texas | 45 | 2.31 |
| Tennessee | 23 | 2.11 |
| South Carolina | 15 | 1.98 |
| Kentucky | 22 | 1.92 |
| Oklahoma | 14 | 1.69 |
| Wyoming | 1 | 1.37 |
| Idaho | 1 | 0.61 |
| New Mexico | 1 | 0.61 |
| Montana | 1 | 0.53 |
| West Virginia | 3 | 0.49 |
| Virginia | 4 | 0.39 |
| Missouri | 6 | 0.36 |
| North Dakota | 1 | 0.35 |
| Oregon | 1 | 0.30 |
| North Carolina | 3 | 0.27 |
| Nebraska | 1 | 0.17 |
| Maryland | 1 | 0.15 |
| Illinois | 4 | 0.14 |
| California | 1 | 0.08 |
| Ohio | 2 | 0.08 |
| Pennsylvania | 1 | 0.03 |

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As said at the outset, lynching admits of no defense and hardly of a rational explanation, but as said in *The Atlanta Constitution* many years ago, "We advise our Northern contemporaries to deal as gently as they can with the manifestations of human nature which take place in the South and are duplicated at the North when the opportunity offers. That they are deplorable is not to be denied."

It is no cause of satisfaction that there should have been sixty-four lynchings during 1912 in the United States, chiefly in the South; but the country may well be satisfied with the fact that, with a single exception, this was actually the lowest number of lynchings during the last twenty-eight years, and, without exception, in proportion to population, the lowest rate of lynching during the period for which the historical record has been preserved. Since in all matters of social progress the tendency is of most importance, it may safely be assumed that since the rate has steadily gone down the time is not far distant when lynchings North or South will be practically a thing of the past.

FREDERICK L. HOFFMAN.

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