

ARKANSAS

Thousands of men, women and children lined the roads. They searched every crack and crevice; they beat the woods high and low, and they found him crouched in the top-most limb of a tall tree. He was a driven, hunted animal at bay. With shouts of glee and horrible gurgles of satisfaction in anticipation of a savage orgy, these white citizens of Arkansas dragged their prey to the ground. They had suddenly become a pack of starved, snarling wolves in sight of fresh food. They were wildest of wild beasts, clamoring for the chance to taste human flesh.

The man was beaten, stepped upon, trampled in the dirt. He was ordered to confess to the commission of a brutal crime. Laughter of children almost drowned his pleas for a real trial. He was cursed and spat upon. His face was mutilated almost beyond recognition before some kindly intentioned citizen of Arkansas sent a bullet into his heart. As he writhed in agony on the ground, his life fast ebbing from his wrecked body, a rope was placed about his neck and willing hands dragged him to the tree in which he had hidden. He was yanked high into the air where he could be seen by the smallest child in the crowd.

Other bullets were sent into his body—but he was dead long before this. "Lets burn him," a woman was heard to cry. It was a fine suggestion and one quickly to be acted upon. The gruesome remains of a man were lowered from the tree and tied securely to the rear axle of one of the cars. The procession started for Little Rock. On and on through miles of country road, through the heart of the city, through flooded areas and through dry, the party traveled, honking horns and cheering. The mutilated body of a lynched man dangled at the end of a rope tied to the leader's car. Finally a suitable section was reached, gasoline was procured from one of the cars, and the torch lighted.

Men, women and children, all white, shouted joyfully as the hungry flames raced up the human form from his toes to his head. Soon there was nothing left of the man but a pile of ashes and a few whitened bones. These were taken and distributed as souvenirs. The crowd, tired from its exertions; hungry, but happy, dispersed. Some went back to their businesses, some returned to their pulpits, some to finish their housework, and the children to their classrooms. It was a perfectly gorgeous affair, and everyone was happy.

That is a picture of Arkansas. All the above happened last week, Thursday, to be exact. John Carter, the victim, had been accused of attacking a woman with a club. He was said to be insane. Police, warned of the temper of the mob, made no effort to prevent the debauchery. Many state and government officials are said to have participated. No effort was made to give the man a trial; even the woman said to have been attacked was not there to identify Carter. He may have been guilty, or he may have been innocent—that was of no consequence to the white citizens of Arkansas—all they wanted was to see human blood—hear human cries for mercy—smell human flesh as it burned itself out. They wanted their children to grow up with the memory of a human being hanging from a tree, his head almost shot away, blood streaming from a hundred holes in his body! They wanted their children to see savagery at its worst—they wanted to show them how easily humanity can return to barbarism.

Even the flood could not dampen the ardor of the mob. That the Mississippi was rising, that thousands were homeless and that money was being raised throughout the country to help those distressed by turbulent waters had no effect upon the tenor of those white men and women who went thirsting for human blood. That there is a constituted authority to get redress for any injuries to society meant nothing to the mob. That Carter, or some other black man, would have received the law's limit based upon the unsupported word of the woman also meant nothing to those champions of white superiority and Nordic supremacy.

Waters everywhere, men and women homeless, strife, pestilence, famine, hunger and disease—and a man burning at the stake while thousands look on in joyful silence. That is Arkansas—that is the South—that is America. The white man is the salt of the earth. He builded the world and all that is thereon. He founded civilization and brought order out of chaos. He conquered the sea, and mastered the air. He tamed the beasts and harnessed the elements to serve his needs. He drove savage Indians farther and farther back inland from their native heaths, and he taught them the ways of the white man. He measured the distance to the sun and told us its diameter. He does all these—and he burns a human being at the stake. He does it and is proud of himself. God help a nation that boasts men like these! God help Arkansas!