

Civilization of the Whipping Post: Delaware's Imperishable Infamy (February 10, 1912)

The state of Delaware, one of the first in the union to be settled by civilized people, is still in a state of bloody savagery. Cannibals would shrink from entering there after reading Delaware's twentieth century New Year's greeting to Christendom.

Dragging Quakers through the streets at the tail end of carts and hanging witches were acts of mercy compared to the barbarous atrocities committed in this year of 1912 by the Christian authorities of the state which Ingersoll declared was so small and shriveled that when the tide was in, only one township was out of water, and which was better adapted to clam culture than the raising of human beings.

"Tied to a Cross; Lashed in Public" is the heading of a press dispatch dated Wilmington, Delaware, January 13, 1912, the opening paragraph of which reads as follows:

With hands tied to the extended arms of a cross and with backs bared to the zero gale two men were mercilessly lashed in the courtyard of the county workhouse here today, part payment of the toll the state exacts for their crime. John Brewington received forty lashes with a cat o' nine tails¹ in addition to which he will serve two years in state' prison for highway robbery. Arthur Johnson received twenty lashes and will serve one year for larceny.

When one reads the account of the atrocious torture of human beings by the "Christian" authorities of a "civilized" state in a "free" republic, it is scarcely possible to realize that this is the twentieth century and that we are no longer living in the dark and horrid middle ages.

Millions of dollars are collected by the churches annually for sending missionaries abroad to Christianize and civilize the heathens of other lands, while the state of Delaware, one of the original thirteen colonies of which the union was formed, and after 400 years of Christian civilization, practices cruelties upon her children in the name of the "law" and with the blessing of the pulpit, which would make a cannibal, tribesman, or headhunter of darkest Africa or the South Sea islands blush with shame and tremble with terror.

Let me proceed with the reading of this New Year's greeting which the savage state of Delaware, through the hardened beasts that administer the "law" which would be a disgrace to devils and for which they would be lashed out of hell, has issued to the civilized world:

The men suffered frightfully from the cold and from the blood-letting lashes and staggered, semi-conscious, back to their cells. The whippings, as are all Delaware whippings, were public and a morbid crowd stood against the prison walls and saw the heavy leather strap with its nine thongs cut deep into the quivering flesh of the wretches.

The human being who can read this shocking account without growing sick at heart and revolting against it with all the white-hot indignation of an outraged soul is still in the hyena state of his development.

The furrows "cut deep into the quivering flesh" are for life. The hideous scars remain forever. The victim carries through life the marks of degenerate Delaware's twentieth century civilization.

Branding a wretch with a hot iron until he writhes in the convulsions of agony is less cruel than Delaware's satanic infliction. The ingenious Christian officials who rule there chortle with glee as they witness the excruciating torment and feast their eyes upon the livid and distorted features of these images of God, whose transgression is mercifully treated with the refinement of torture instead of burning them alive at the stake.

A decent dragon would fly in horror from such a sickening scene.

Now steel yourself for this:

The men were have to been lashed early today, but the two degrees above zero weather chilled Warden Crawford² (too bad that the delicate sensibilities of this official monster should have been "chilled" by the zero gale — nothing else could have penetrated his alligator hide — EVD) to such an extent that he postponed the whippings until the day warmed.

In the afternoon when a four degree rise in temperature was noted Crawford bundled himself in a fur-lined overcoat, put on heavy gloves, and ordered the men brought out. Each wore a heavy blanket wrapped around his neck but his back was nude. The prisoners' hands were encased in gloves as their extended arms were lashed to the cross bars.

The officiating hyena, it will be observed, took the utmost precaution to protect his own precious hide from the biting blasts. If there was one spare of the divinity that raises man above the brute before he began to

cut the flesh from the backs of these wretches into red ribbons frozen to his lash, it was extinguished before he completed his bloody function, and God and the angels must have wept above the heart-rending scene.

Oh, what a burning shame, what a revolting atrocity, what a foul and damning blot upon the state of Delaware!

Once in his life when all his wrath was aroused by the cruelties of slavery Ingersoll exclaimed: "I wish there were words that coil and hiss and were fanged like snakes so that I could express my horror of chattel slavery."³ And so I feel when I attempt to express my horror and detestation of the revolting barbarities practiced in the shadow of her courts of justice and temples of worship by the Christian commonwealth of Delaware.

Every one of the *official torturers*, from the beast who wielded the bloody lash to the heartless legislator who enacted the law, the sodden judge who pronounced the sentence, and the pious savage who followed with his benediction, every one of them is a professed Christian.

It is in this way that they forgive the erring, love mercy, and follow in the footsteps of the sad and suffering Christ.

If the Christian priesthood and ministry of Delaware, and beyond the boundaries of Delaware over all the states of the union, do not lift their voices in a cry of protest against mutilating and disfiguring the children of God in the name of Christian civilization, then it is because the currents of pity have frozen in their veins and their souls have been deadened in the service of mammon, and in vain will they plead that they are followers of the Christ who pitied the unfortunate, forgave the erring, loved the poor and friendless, and "had not where to lay his head."⁴

Now comes the tragic climax:

Brewington was whipped first. His back, blue from cold, shivered and shook as the first blow of the strap fell, cutting nine bloody welts straight across. Ten times the scourge fell, straight down, and ninety livid welts showed on his quivering back. Then by moving his position, Warden Crawford made the strap strike at an angle. The blows thus completed, the angle was changed, until when the forty cruel blows had landed, a perfect grill of embossed flesh torn and bruised showed across the wretch's back.

Brewington uttered not a sound though his lips were bleeding from the bites he gave as the scourge whistled through the air and he stiffened for the coming pain. His arms were freed and he staggered back from the cross. Guards seized him, without washing away the blood, and rushed him half frozen back to the cell.

Johnson, nude to the waist, stood by all the while, shivering with cold and fright. Involuntarily he braced himself as each blow landed on Brewington's shoulders as if he could feel the pain himself. Then when Brewington's torture was ended Johnson was led to the cross, pilloried, and lashed.

All words are futile and all language fails here. We are simply speechless with amazement and dumb with shame and horror.

Let those who charge socialists with being beasts for seeking to humanize society and put an end to "lawful" practices which would sicken a savage, take to themselves all the credit they are entitled for these unspeakable crimes.

If these two mutilated human beings, scarred with Delaware's bloody lash and bearing the marks of shame to their graves, have not been changed into fiends, murderers, and assassins and do not turn upon the brutes that outraged their manhood, it will be because they have infinitely more of the Christ spirit in their lacerated bodies than have the monsters that whipped them into insensibility.

Instead of Delaware sending missionaries abroad to civilize the heathens, some of the tribesmen and cannibals of these lands should go into Delaware to uncivilize the man-whipping gorillas of that state.

It remains only to be said that the capitalist system is at high tide and that socialism is at a low ebb in Delaware. *The circulation of the Appeal to Reason is smaller in Delaware than in any other state of the union*, and that is one of the reasons why the Civilization of the Whipping Post flourishes there.

Capital punishment and every other crime perpetrated by the state upon its unfortunate children for whom the state itself is responsible — for maintaining the society which produces them — is disappearing before the march of socialism as the mist disappears before the sunrise. The whipping outrages of Delaware will be wiped out with the capitalist system which they typify when *the rising sun of socialism lights the world*.

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¹ A short multi-thonged rope flail, historically used for punitive flogging of sailors, soldiers, and penal convicts in the British empire.

² Leonard E. Crawford (1867-1926), a former industrial school instructor, was warden of the New Castle County workhouse from 1908 until his resignation due to ill health in December 1915.

³ The source of this quotation has not been located.

⁴ From Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58.