

BRUTALITY AND BARBARISM!



THE SKINNING OF DEAD CONVICTS IN THE OHIO PENITENTIARY. WHAT THE DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION DID FOR THE DEAD!

The Skinning of Dead Convicts.

The foul conspiracy inaugurated at the Ohio Penitentiary a little over two years ago, is being condemned by that wholesome public opinion which, in this enlightened age, will not suffer the barbarities of brutally depraved beings to be carried on by public officers. It was a conspiracy which was characterized by unparalleled corruption in the management of the business of the State, and brutality to convicts both before and after death.

The most horrible and revolting chapter in the history of Ohio, was contributed by the Democratic officers at the Penitentiary, at Columbus, under the administration of Governor Hoadly, the last Democratic administration which this State wants. Governor Foraker, as the Chief Executive Officer of the State, who has supervision over the

penal and benevolent institutions, when he found these outrages were perpetrated gave to the tax payers an account of the manner in which their affairs had been managed as it was his duty to do. In these pages are given the affidavits and statements of some of the men who had personal knowledge of these foul iniquities. That the skinning of the bodies of dead convicts, and the manufacture of the human hide thus obtained into canes, was carried on in a State institution, almost passes belief, but the proof is clear and overwhelming, and there is no doubt that these horrible practices were carried on in that institution under the last Democratic administration. Some of the proofs follow. The first affidavit made public on the subject is given first, and it is followed by overwhelming evidence of the fact that these inhuman practices were carried on under the Democratic administration.

Affidavit of F. W. Nye.

State of Ohio, Franklin County, ss.

Personally appeared before me F. W. Nye, who being duly sworn, deposes and says that: On July 5, 1884, I was committed to the hospital of the Ohio Penitentiary, in which place I have remained ever since. About November of 1884, having partially recovered from a complication of troubles under the direction of Dr. C. R. Montgomery, the physician in charge of the hospital, I began to work at my trade, which is that of a cabinet-maker, from time to time as my health would permit, working in a small and private side room in which is placed the clothing of the prisoners who are confined in the hospital, working under the direction of the hospital officials and upon pieces of cabinet work principally for *their individual use*. During this time I was frequently directed by Doctor Montgomery and Assistant Doctor W. W. Homes, to aid in removing the remains of the deceased prisoners to what is known as the morgue or dead-house, and in the case of many of these prisoners whose remains it was known would not be called for, I was directed by these officials to skin the body and the sides and back for use in making canes or walking-sticks. I took skin from not less than seven or eight different bodies of deceased prisoners under the immediate direction and instructions of Drs. C. R. Montgomery and W. W. Homes.

After so taking the skins I would bring them in a basket to my private work-room (known as "the shed"), where I would cut the skins into strips in order that they might become seasoned quicker than if I left them in the entire piece. I would then put these strips of skin into a basket that I would hang high up on the inside of a narrow, open window in the shed in order that the air circulating through would quickly season and fit them for use in the manufacture of canes. When the skins became seasoned in a degree to allow of their being worked up, I would cut them into small, square pieces and perforate each piece in the center for a steel rod to pass through, after which, by planing and paring, neat walking sticks would be produced, averaging in size from $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch at the bottom to $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch at the top.

In making the canes I would first put five or six pieces of leather on the bottom of the steel rod, next the ferrule, and then add about six pieces of the human skin, alternating about every sixth piece of human skin with one layer of calf skin. In some of the sticks there was more of the calf skin. After fitting about four inches of the skin and leather on the steel rod I would hammer and compress it as much as possible, and so on until the rod was filled. I was at times assisted in this work by other prisoners. In compressing and tightening the skins I would hammer them with a brass block weighing about two pounds that fit over the rod, and in doing this the fat or oily substance would spurt and ooze out, greasing the floor and so sickening me that I was often compelled to quit work; and by the advice and instructions of the said Montgomery and Homes, I would take strong drinks of whisky, which were furnished by them in six-ounce phials, as a remedy for such sickness. At other times I was compelled to go to bed for days at a time, on account of the offensive character of this work.

Under the direct instructions of the said Montgomery and Homes I made five canes as above described, two of which I delivered to the said Montgomery and two to the said Homes, one remaining in my possession, and which is hereby surrendered for the Governor, for whom this statement is voluntarily made. The cane surrendered with this statement is composed of skins taken from the body of an Irish prisoner named Joseph McCoy, who was serving a term of imprisonment under sentence from the Stark county Common Pleas court, and who died in October, 1885, and the body of a colored man named John W. Slater, who was serving a term of imprisonment under sentence from the Scioto county Common Pleas court, and who died in November, 1885. As a further evidence of the brutal and inhuman conduct of the said Montgomery, who was the chief prison physician, I desire to say he would frequently remark to me while standing at the bedside of dying prisoners, "I guess he would make a good stick," meaning that the dying prisoner's skin would make a good cane.

FREDERICK W. NYE.

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence by the said Frederick W. Nye, this 20th day of September, 1886.

GEORGE A. BEATON.

Notary Public, Franklin County, O.

"But Nye is a convict," some one says, "and shouldn't be believed." Of course he is a convict, he couldn't have known anything about what Dr. Montgomery instructed a convict to do if he had not been the convict instructed. "He is a bad man." Of course he is. He would not have skinned human bodies and made canes of the skin in the manner he describes if he had not been a bad man, even under Dr. Montgomery's direction. But his evidence to this form of human devilment is only a small part of the mass of such evidence which has accumulated.

Dr. Kinsman's Statement.

But to follow this disgusting care, which he gave to Governor Foraker, a mere inspection of which with the naked eye would confirm Nye's statement. The Governor delivered this cane to Dr. D. N. Kinsman, of Columbus, a leading physician, and one of the finest microscopists in the country. After examining it with a microscope, cutting pieces of it in course of the examination, Dr. Kinsman made the following statement:

COLUMBUS, O., September 28, 1886.

To Whom It May Concern:

I have received for examination certain disks removed from a cane manufactured at the Ohio Penitentiary.

I find among them three different kinds.

1. White disks, which are made from the skin of a white person.
2. Dark disks, which are evidently made from the skin of a colored person.
3. Black disks, made from the tanned skin of some animal.

D. N. KINSMAN, M. D.

No one has ever questioned Dr. Kinsman's veracity. No one dare question it.

Edward Savanac's Affidavit.

On the same day that Nye made his affidavit, Edward Savanac, night nurse and cook at the penitentiary hospital, made the following affidavit:

State of Ohio, Franklin County, ss.

Personally appeared before me Edward Savanac, who, being duly sworn, deposes and says: F. W. Nye went to the dead-house on the nights that Slater and McCoy died, returning with a part of the skin from each of the deceased prisoners' bodies, for I saw him bring the skins into and through the hospital to the "shed" or private room in which Mr. Nye has worked during the time I have served here as nurse. The skins were carried in a basket, and I afterward saw them cut into strips in order that they would dry or season quicker than if left in entire pieces, and the strips were then placed in the basket, which was hung high up in the window, where the air circulating through might dry them. Afterward I saw Nye working the skins into canes, and the sight was a most revolting one, because of the fact that the skins were yet green, and when they were hammered over the steel on which the small pieces of skin, with occasional pieces of leather, were strung, the fat substance would spurt out over the floor and other things about it, producing a great stench, that would often compel the said Nye to quit his work, sometimes for days at a time. I have seen Mr. Nye making a number of canes composed of human skin and leather, and I personally know that the one he to-day surrenders with the sworn statement that he makes for the Governor is largely composed of the skin from the dead bodies of Joseph McCoy and John W. Slater.

EDWARD SAVANAC.

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence by the said Edward Savanac, this 20th day of September, 1886.

GEORGE A. BEATON,

Notary Public, Franklin County, O.

Joel F. Skillen's Affidavit.

One of the best known and most reputable citizens of Columbus is Mr. Joel F. Skillen, a gentleman of character and standing. Dr. Montgomery, physician at the Penitentiary, rented his uptown office of Mr. Skillen, who makes the following affidavit:

State of Ohio, Franklin county, ss.:

Personally appeared before me Joel F. Skillen, who, being first duly sworn, says he resides at No. 84 East Town street, Columbus, O.; that he will be 70 years of age on September 30, 1886; that he well knows Dr. C. R. Montgomery, the late physician of the Ohio Penitentiary; that during the time the doctor was physician at the Penitentiary he had an office in affiant's premises, at 84 East Town street; that some time during the fall of the year 1885—affiant can not now more definitely fix the time, as he did not make any memorandum of it, he went with Dr. Montgomery to the morgue, or dead-house, at the Penitentiary, where he was told by the doctor before going that he (Dr. Montgomery) was to make a post-mortem examination upon a convict who had just died. Affiant says that when he and Dr. Montgomery arrived at the morgue they found a dead colored man lying on the bench; that the doctor, in affiant's presence and in the presence of three or four others, first split the skin of the body of said colored man from his neck down over his chest and abdomen,

then he cut the skin crosswise at the lower part of the abdomen and then stripped it up on either side of the body, throwing it over each shoulder; then stripped the skin down from each hip. He then proceeded to make his examination of the intestines of the man. After he had concluded the examination of the intestines he then cut the skin which had been stripped and laid over the shoulders down the back, and entirely removed the same from the right side of the prisoner's body and put the same in a basket, which was present there. Affiant says that at this point he became sickened with the sight he had witnessed and immediately left the Penitentiary, leaving Dr. Montgomery still at the morgue.

Affiant says he does not know what was done with the skin from this deceased convict after it was put in the basket, but he did see it with his own eyes removed from the prisoner's body and placed in the basket in the way he has described.

Affiant says the other persons present, as above stated, also witnessed just what he has described, that he never knew until to-day any of the others who were present, but he to-day identified F. W. Nye as one of the men who was there present.

And further deponent saith not.

JOEL F. SKILLEN,
No. 84 East Town street.

Sworn to before me and subscribed in my presence by said Joel F. Skillen, this 28th day of September, A. D. 1886.

KARL A. FLICKINGER,
Notary Public in and for Franklin county, O.

On the day he made this affidavit Mr. Skillen was allowed to go through the Penitentiary, and recognized Nye from about 50 other prisoners who were present at the time with him, as the man who was present at the skinning on the occasion he describes in his affidavit.

Remember that Mr. Skillen is a wholly disinterested witness. His affidavit alone would be sufficient to prove that Dr. Montgomery was guilty of skinning the bodies of dead convicts. But there is more.

Alexander Gonder's Statement.

Mr. D. A. Austin, a gentleman of integrity and high standing, residing at Dresden, Ohio, on September 28, 1886, wrote the following statement to Governor Foraker:

"Alexander Gonder, residing here, and ex-guard at the prison, on duty in the hospital at the time of the commission of the terrible outrage you speak of, was night guard in the hospital, and tells me he remembers well the odors of Nye's cane factory, and of having Nye open the window to get rid of the horrible stench, though at the time he did not understand the origin of it. Gonder knew Nye, Hunt and Ballard well in the hospital, and says that Hunt, who is out on parole, can tell all about the business of the 'shed.' •Hunt, being a finisher and painter, assisted in the making of canes and furniture for the officers. Nye and Hunt both told Gonder that a very fine secretary he saw there was for Dr. Homes, and that he got his knowledge of the horse deal with Deputy Warden Marriott from Ballard himself. Gonder told me of the deal during the campaign last fall. Gonder served during the Allen and Bishop administrations, and a short time of Foster's and Hoadly's.

Charles Jackson's Statement.

I, Charles Jackson, of Colorado City, Texas, make the following statement voluntarily: I was confined in the State Penitentiary of Ohio, at Columbus, from February 2, 1884, to October 13, 1886. I was sent up from Circleville, Pickaway County, O., on the charge of forgery. During my confinement in the penitentiary I was working on Patton's contract.

While in the hospital I was lying in the second bed from the room named by Nye in his confession, in which he prepared the skins and made the canes. The stench from this room was so great that on several occasions I asked the doctors to remove me from that bed to one in the east wing of the ward. They refused to do it and said it was healthy—nothing that would injure me. I had seen Nye come out of the room in which he worked so overcome with the stench that he had to lie down on his bed. My bed was only about fifteen feet from his bed. On one occasion he came out and said to me, "I tell you what it is, Jackson, I'd rather be hung than working in there with that dirty, black skin, making canes." I asked what kind of black skin it was, where it was from. He said, "Why, don't you know? It was from that nigger that died about ten days ago." Every convict that knew any canes were made in that room knew that the skins of a white man and a black man were used, brought in from the dead-house.

* * * * *

CHARLES JACKSON.

John Faulhaber's Affidavit.

But it seems the manufacture of canes was not the sole use to which the skins of dead convicts were put. They were also used for other purposes. Read the following affidavit:

State of Ohio, Franklin County, ss.:

Personally appeared before me John Faulhaber, who being duly sworn deposes and says as follows:

I am foreman of the tannery of Schauweker Bros.' Oak Leather Company, on West Main street, Columbus, Ohio. Some time during the month of June, 1885, a gentleman who introduced himself to me as Dr. Montgomery, physician at the Ohio Penitentiary, came to the tannery. This gentleman was of medium weight, with a sandy mustache. He met me at the head of the stairs on the second floor. He inquired for the foreman and I told him I was the man. He then introduced himself as stated above. He said that there was a convict who was to be hung at the Penitentiary in a short time, and that he would like to get his hide tanned. He said that he was going to skin him, and that he was going to *save every particle* of the skin, and wanted a good job of tanning done, as he wanted to mount the skin. I told him that we could not do that kind of work. He then urged me to take this job and do the work, as he was very anxious to have it done, and was willing to pay liberally for it. As it was about a month or so before the first date fixed for the execution of Greiner, I asked him if it was to be his skin. He replied that it was not; that it was a man who was to be hung at the Penitentiary. He then left without saying anything more. I do not know where he went from our tannery.

Sworn to before me, and subscribed in my presence, by the said John Faulhaber, this second day of October, 1886.

JOHN FAULHABER.

GEORGE A. BEATON,

Notary Public in and for Franklin Co., O.

This affidavit was made in the presence of Messrs. G. A. Godfrey and William Schauweker, Mr. Beaton, and two newspaper representatives. The statement was made on the second floor of the Columbus Tannery. Mr. Faulhaber in making this statement, enlarged upon it somewhat afterwards. He said Dr. Montgomery had told him he was going to have a perfect skin, that is one from the head to the foot of a man, and that he was particularly desirous of having it done. Mr. Faulhaber said he had told him they had no place to do such work, and would not do it anyway. This was the only reply he would make to the persistence of the man. He did not know Dr. Montgomery personally before, but this person had told him that that was his name. When asked to describe his visitor, Mr. Faulhaber gave a much more perfect description than even that in the affidavit. Dr. Montgomery did not have the skin with him, and when he left he did not notice which way he went. Mr. Faulhaber, while he was not anxious to make the affidavit, said he could tell the truth, and would, as can be seen by the above.

This call of Dr. Montgomery's occurred as near as he could remember, some time in June, and when he had been told that it was a convict's skin, he naturally thought of Frederick Greiner, who was at that time in jail awaiting execution. When told that it was not Greiner, he questioned no further.

Other Testimony.

Mr. L. L. Lang, the Democratic clerk at the Penitentiary under Governor Hoadly's administration, states that it was a matter of common report about the prison at that time that the skinning of convicts was going on, but he knew nothing definite about it. Mr. Andrew Redman, who is now serving on the jury in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, has a piece of human skin from a convict which was given him by an ex-guard at the prison.

A barber in one of the large shops on High street has a strap which he has been using for the past two months, and he states that it was given him by Edward Elderkin, a barber in another shop, who said it was given him by a young physician from the Penitentiary. There are some men who would be peculiar enough to not like to be shaved by a razor strapped on material of this character.

A gentleman from Loudonville writes as follows, under date of September 29:

"Since you are engaged in investigating the new industry of tanning human hides, please have Gustave Schweenker tell the investigating committee what kind of leather he exhibited to his friends in Loudonville. He said it was the skin of a nigger."

Schweenker was a Democratic guard under the late administration. They seem to have had a special spite against the negro. It was a revival of the sentiments which prevailed toward the colored man before the war. At that time they tanned their hides in a little different manner.

The Columbus correspondence of the Commercial-Gazette says:

"It is reported on what seems to be good authority that a bartender in a High street saloon has a piece of the skin of Pat Hartnett, the Cincinnati murderer, who was hanged at the penitentiary some months ago. It will be remembered that at the execution the rope was too long, and it nearly jerked the victim's head from the body. Concerning the story of the skin being in the hands of a bartender, a reputable young man says he has seen it frequently; that the bartender has been in the habit of frightening timid persons by getting them to examine it and then telling them what it was. There is another report that a barber on North High street has a razor-strap made from the skin of a horse-thief who died at the penitentiary. This strap is said to be in daily use, patrons of the place little dreaming that the keen edge on the razor which glides over their faces is made by coming in contact with the skin of a human being. The names have been given of quite a number of persons who are said to be in possession of pieces of leather made from the skins of dead convicts. From all accounts the penitentiary tannery must have done a flourishing business when it was in full blast and doing its best."

The Columbus Dispatch (Ind.), said that a Dayton Democrat had some of the canes made from human hide in his possession. It also said "the skinning of dead convicts is proven."

The Sidney Journal says:

"Within the town of Sidney is a piece of human hide skinned from a convict during Hoadly's administration, tanned during the same administration by a Sidney man, or where he works, and sent home by him, where it now is, and can be produced and names given. It is no secret, and has been seen by many. The testimony in this case is no convict testimony, but from as reputable a man as we have. Scoffs, jeers, sneers, ridicule, denial, and the hue and cry about convict testimony given for the purpose of getting an easier task or release from confinement, will not apply to this case, nor to that of Joel Skillen, formerly of Sidney, and others equally reputable. No wonder the revelations have created a sensation, and that the Democratic party is quaking like an aspen, and faces in high positions, politically and socially, are pale with fright and consternation."

They Convict Themselves.

And what of the denials of the Democratic officials? Who has denied? Dr. Montgomery telegraphed from St. Louis that "Nye was a liar and the bodies referred to by him were buried in the Penitentiary grounds." Dr. Homes made affidavit that the same bodies "were delivered to Columbus medical colleges for the use of the demonstrators of anatomy and their students." Thus the two ex-physicians at the Penitentiary contradicted each other at first. By this time they can perhaps harmonize their statements so that they will not conflict. Dr. Obetz, a friend of these two physicians, who was connected with Starling Medical College, made affidavit that the body of Slater was received at the Starling Medical College with the skin intact nearly a year before the making of Dr. Obetz's affidavit. Dr. Obetz was the demonstrator of anatomy at this medical college, and is a Democratic politician on intimate terms with Dr. Montgomery. The claim was set up by Dr. Montgomery and his intimates that Dr. Josiah Medberry, demonstrator of anatomy at Columbus Medical College, would swear that McCoy's body was received at Columbus Medical College without the skin being mutilated. So Dr. Josiah Medberry was interviewed and his attention called to the fact that F. W. Nye had made affidavit that the bodies of Joseph McCoy and J. W. Slater were skinned and that Dr. Obetz had sworn that Slater's body was received at Starling College without a particle of skin removed, and that it had

been stated that he (Medberry) would testify in like manner as to McCoy's body being received at Columbus Medical College. After reading the affidavits and certificates, Dr. Medberry said:

"I don't know anything about the condition of McCoy's body. We get the bodies, put them in the vat at the college, and don't know one body from another so far as any individuality is concerned. We have a man go to the prison with the certificate, demanding the body under section 3763 (R. S.), to get the subjects, deliver them at the college and inject them.

"Have you no recollection of Joseph McCoy's body?"

"None whatever. I don't remember the names of stiffs. One is the same as another to us, except as to the different causes of death."

"Would you have remembered the name had you known it?"

"Not in an ordinary subject. No anatomist would remember one stiff from another unless there was something very special in the history of the subject or nature of the disease."

The Ohio State Journal says of this:

"The interview with Dr. Medberry leaves Dr. Obetz in a peculiar light. Dr. Obetz made affidavit that Slater's body was received at Starling Medical College without a particle of skin removed. Dr. Medberry says no anatomist remembers one stiff from another unless it is a remarkable one, noted from the prominence of the person or the nature of the disease, and in the case of convicts, one dying from consumption and the other from hemorrhoids, no such distinguishing features exist. When it comes to remembering stiffs by name under these circumstances, when they are obtained by the dozen during a college term, it is getting things down finer than the nomenclature of bones, muscles and veins. The stiffs are brought by students or hired men to the college, put in the vat and injected, and there is no more attention to names than to those of cows after their slaughter. Dr. Medberry's statement of the McCoy case shows the indefinite nature of names in connection with the cases referred to."

But it will be noticed that none of these gentlemen deny that the bodies of *some convicts* were skinned. They are careful to confine themselves to the bodies of Slater and McCoy but fail even to show alibis for these. Suppose they did—it was just as bad to skin other bodies.

The only other denials made are by men directly implicated who would naturally be supposed to have reached a depth of depravity where they would not tell the truth, or by those who know nothing about the subject but are called on to state their ignorance of what was done at the penitentiary, on the principle that the burglar, whom ten men had seen entering a dwelling in the night time, followed when he called twenty men who had not seen him enter, to rebut the testimony of those who had seen him.

In Conclusion.

Dozens more of similar statements and affidavits might be given, were not those here presented sufficient to establish the fact that the dead convicts were skinned. Moreover, the cane handed to Governor Foraker, which is now in possession of Superintendent Harris, of the State House, speaks for itself. It is a physical fact which nobody can contradict. It matters not whose bodies were skinned; the grave feature of the matter is that dead convicts were skinned, and their skins made into canes in some cases and in others tanned.

Men of Ohio, let not the barbarian, cannibalistic horde again gain entrance to our State institutions as trusted officers. Democrats, join with Republicans in rebuking the baser clique which has gained ascendancy in your party, and teach them that Ohio will not again be disgraced.

Under Governor Foraker's administration there is no scandalous conduct; convicts who die a natural death or pay the extreme penalty of the law are no longer skinned; canes made of tanned human hide are no longer a State industry; the institution has once more been put upon a paying basis—during the months of June, July and August it turned in \$5,472.40 to the State Treasury. Under Hoadly but 210 men at the most worked under the piece-price plan; to-day, under that modified reform system, there are five hundred men working, and the forgery of election returns is no longer done at the Ohio Penitentiary.

And yet, less than one year after completing the infamous record outlined, the same old crowd have the unparalleled impudence to ask the people of Ohio to again put them in power. The people of Ohio will do no such thing.

THE DEMOCRATIC CANE.

BY PROF. JOHN H. SARCHET.

Air—Golden Slippers.

The Democratic party is a party of reform,

They would "Turn all the rascals out!"

'Twas shouted thro' the land by Mossbacks and Kids,

But the time hasn't come for the rout.

There was "Too much money in the vaults," said they,

And they wanted a general divide;

They counted in Hoadly, got the penitentiary,

And they set up skinning hide.

CHORUS.

When a black man dies, skin him, skin him;

When a white man dies, skin him all the same.

When an Irishman dies, skin him, skin him;

Then you have the material for a Democratic cane.

When the boys got in their appetite was strong;

They'd been starving for a long, long while;

And began to feel around just to see what was loose

In good, Democratic style.

They furnished their homes, replenished their store,

With articles to gratify pride—

Only fixtures remained inside the big iron door,

And the factory for tanning hide.

CHORUS.

The Democratic party was always foul—

Doesn't cultivate the sense of smell;

They can skin black and white, and foreigners, too,

And the treasury as well.

In the city of Columbus, when the votes were counted out,

And the Democratic tickets were short,

They skinned the honest voters, raised a 2 to a 5,

Through the pen—their natural resort.

CHORUS.

A cane is a very indispensable thing

To a man in declining years;

It helps to brace up his stooping form,

Passing through the vale of tears.

When a party is on its last, last legs,

And of it very little remains,

As a last resort it is not very strange

That they want their little Democratic canes.

CHORUS.

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