

THE CRISFIELD LYNCHING.

There are abundant reasons why the people of Crisfield should deplore the lynching of James Reed, a negro murderer. In the first place, the murderer would have been hanged by due process of law if the courts had been left to deal with him. Maryland justice lacks, in such cases, neither swiftness nor sureness. Reed's crime naturally aroused the indignation of the people of Crisfield. It was cold-blooded and atrocious. His punishment would have been speedy and condign. His life was forfeited to the law, and the extreme penalty would have been imposed in an orderly way in the regular course of the law. There was, therefore, no reason why a mob should have anticipated the action of the courts. If they resorted to lawlessness on the principle of a "life for a life," their violence was altogether unnecessary. The crime for which they lynched Reed is usually punished by the extreme penalty in Maryland.

It is always best to leave to the courts the punishment of criminals. When men take the law into their own hands—especially when the machinery of justice is adequate for the protection of society from criminals—they establish a precedent which may prove dangerous. No mob is capable of administering the law in a way that will strengthen our civilization or add to the security of society. Lawlessness begets contempt of the law and of orderly procedure. The lyncher of today may be the victim of mob law tomorrow. The safety of every community rests upon the prompt and rigid enforcement of the law in courts of justice. To encourage Judge Lynch is to place a premium upon acts of violence and to expose every citizen to the vengeance of a mob incapable of acting with calm and discriminating justice. Let the courts of Maryland punish lawbreakers in Maryland.