

A BRUTAL NEGRO LYNCHED

TAKEN FROM A MARYLAND JAIL AND HANGED.

THE TERRIBLE CRIME FOR WHICH JOHN DIGGS WAS HANGED—THE OFFICERS OF THE LAW OVERPOWERED—PRAYING FOR THE DOOMED MAN—THE SCENE AT THE GALLOWS-TREE.

WASHINGTON, July 27.—The region around this city, the capital of the Nation, has become notorious for the punishment of colored criminals by Lynch law, and for a public sentiment which supports those who in this way administer what they believe justice demands. Not long ago public meetings were held in this city for the avowed purpose of agreeing upon plans for the lynching of a colored man who had been arrested for assault upon a woman. But the law was allowed to take its course, and the criminal was sent to prison for 30 years. Swift punishment overtook this morning a colored man named John Diggs, in Rockville, Md. Diggs had been employed on the farm of James Tschiffely, near Darnestown, in Montgomery County, Md. On Sunday last, Mr. Tschiffely left home to be gone over night. The family had confidence in Diggs, and Mrs. Tschiffely felt safe so long as he remained in the house. Late in the evening Diggs assaulted his employer's wife, dragged her up stairs by the hair, and compelled her to remain with him until morning, beating and otherwise abusing her in a horrible manner. In the morning he left her alone, and the poor woman made an effort to escape, but he had not gone away from the house, and she was intercepted and beaten until she lost consciousness. Diggs then ran away, and when Mrs. Tschiffely regained her senses she crawled out of the house, and painfully made her way to the house of a neighbor, where she was cared for.

The inhabitants of that part of Maryland at once began a search for Diggs, and the most intense excitement prevailed. The place where the crime was committed is only a few miles from this city, and it was supposed that Diggs had come in this direction. Residents of this city joined in the search, and an innocent negro, who resembled Diggs, narrowly escaped hanging. It was well understood that Diggs's capture would be immediately followed by his death. The criminal was caught late last night near Mechanicsville, and taken to the jail in Rockville. A crowd gathered for the purpose of lynching him, but was restrained by a message from Mr. Tschiffely, who requested delay until he could reach the place. The Sheriff found it impossible to gather a posse large enough to assist him. Reporters from Washington and for papers of other cities passed the night near the jail, awaiting the tragedy which would surely be enacted.

At 3 o'clock this morning Tschiffely arrived, and at once a company of 40 men was formed. Some wore masks, but others, including the Captain, did not wear such disguise. They demanded admission to the jail, and when the Sheriff and jailer opposed them these officers were overpowered and removed. The doors were opened and Diggs was taken out, by daylight, and carried toward Darnestown. On the way the lynchers stopped, formed in a circle, and took an oath never to reveal the names of the members of the party. It was then proposed that Diggs should be tied to the legs of a kicking horse which one of the men rode and be kicked to death. "No," said the Captain, "we are carrying out the law." The party continued its march until a cherry tree was reached, nearly a mile from the jail. Diggs was urged to confess after the rope had been placed around his neck. "All you can do is to hang me," he replied; "what's the use of saying anything? You will hang me anyhow." "Free your conscience," said the Captain. "I didn't do it," said Diggs, "and you will all suffer for this." The Captain then remarked that, although he was not a clergyman, he would pray for Diggs. The lynchers stood in a circle around the improvised gallows, with hats in their hands, while the Captain invoked pardon for Diggs, such as had been granted to the thief on the cross, saying that the grace of God was boundless, and would suffice even for such a fiend. Diggs was then held by four men while the noose was adjusted, and in a few minutes there was nothing there to tell the story except a dead body hanging to a tree.

This morning an inquest was held and a verdict rendered of death caused by persons unknown. Within a short time there have been six lynchings for such assaults within a few miles of this city. In one case, in Prince George County, the guilty man was discovered just in time to save the life of another who would have been swinging from a tree in a few minutes. In commenting upon this hanging, which was attended by reporters, the *Star* of this city says: "It would seem that there should be no excuse for the exercise of this illegal form of punishment in an old and civilized community, but the fact must be admitted that the quips and quirks of the law afford so many obstacles to the speedy trial or the adequate punishment of criminals of this class that public sentiment quite generally indorses this resort to border law. In the opinion of some, too, the execution of such brutes with these marks of ignominy and public detestation should serve to make their horrible crime more odious than the court processes by which the criminal is made rather a hero during his trial, and if convicted and executed has a glorified send-off into eternity as one who is stepping straight from the gallows into Paradise."