

Maryland's Good Name In Balance

—AN EDITORIAL—

ALL AROUND the nation to-day there is a new view of Maryland. We had been called "the Free State." We had been regarded as a particularly enlightened state; as an exceptionally orderly, well-governed state. But now any mention of Maryland can bring the immediate reaction—"Yes; that's where a man was lynched."

We had been up with the leaders in public estimation. Now we are on a par with Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia.

What is to be done about it?

Only one thing: The nation must be shown that Friday's disgrace was not representative of the state; that it was the work of a bestial, ghoulish, unlawful group and that the forces of law and order are still supreme here. And the way to do that is to punish, quickly and vigorously, those who were responsible for the lynching.

Governor Ritchie has said he intends to do that. He has ordered Attorney General Lane to take whatever steps are necessary. In doing this he recognized that it would not do to leave the matter to the officials of Salisbury and Wicomico County. That was a wise decision.

These officials have issued statements deploring the lynching and promising action against the lynchers. As a matter of fact, however, any progress which Attorney General Lane makes will have to be made with little hope of real co-operation from local officials.

The logical official to investigate and prosecute the lynchers is the county State's Attorney. But this official—Levin C. Bailey—has already shown his attitude toward the matter. He was in a nearby village transacting personal business when the lynching occurred. When notified by phone, he did not hurry back. He stayed until his personal business was concluded.

He returned to Salisbury after all the excitement was over—and he went home and to sleep. He would not have done this if he had really been eager to punish the lynchers. He would immediately have sought to find out who led the mob. It would have been a simple thing to do, in view of the fact that at least 500 persons in the small town had the information. A more conscientious state's attorney would have had the names and demanded indictments the very next day, thereby saving the face of Maryland justice.

But, far from demanding indictments the day after the lynching, Mr. Bailey merely issued high-sounding generalities to the effect that he was going to investigate, at the same time explaining to reporters that it was impossible to get information, because the people would not talk.

Obviously, no help is to be expected from such an official. It will be up to Attorney General Lane, single handed, to find out who were the culprits. But even should he succeed, the difficulties are not ended.

He must get indictments from the grand jury; he must get convictions from the petit jury. This may be difficult. Many of the people of Salisbury do not realize that a shameful, reprehensible deed has been done. Their sympathies are with the lynchers. They regret only that the town is getting unfavorable publicity.

Just how the Attorney General will overcome this attitude sufficiently to get vigorous action from the juries is a problem. But it is a problem which the Attorney General must solve. The re-