

THE SALISBURY LYNCHING

The lynching at Salisbury Friday night of last week when the negro slayer of a white man was hanged and burned by a crowd of infuriated residents of the community, undoubtedly was influenced by delays in bringing to trial two other Eastern Shore negroes who had committed heinous crimes. The community was first stirred several weeks ago when a family of four was murdered near Berlin. The slayer was soon caught and confessed. A speedy trial was warranted and expected. Technicalities in the law were resorted to, and the trial has not yet started.

Our courts, we are afraid, are becoming too slow to act in crimes where murder is involved. Too many technicalities and loopholes are found in the law, it appears, to bring the guilty parties to the bar of justice. Had Jones, the negro who confessed to murdering the entire family of four at Berlin, been tried within a few days after he had been arrested, this blot on the fair name of Maryland would have never occurred. It will not do to postpone or appeal these serious crimes. The public, enraged to high pitch, demand that the guilty party should have a fair trial, but the trial should not be delayed by technicalities in the law.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when Matthew Williams, a Salisbury negro, shot down in cold blood, Daniel J. Elliott, a business man of that place, and who had been Williams' employer for ten years, there should come a determination for speedy retribution and a quick decision to mete out punishment even though it meant murder on the part of what had heretofore been law abiding citizens.

The lynching is regretted exceedingly. Perhaps most of the participants share this view. Yet they doubtless felt that the time had come when the lawless element should be given a stern lesson.

Lynching is never justified. Furthermore, it is the duty of all good citizens to uphold the law. If laws are defective or weak they can, and ought to be, corrected. Public sentiment and legislatures can bring this about. Ours is a nation of laws and we must respect them if we want to avoid chaos.