

THE LAW TOO SLOW

Annapolis and Anne Arundel county was given a black eye last night by the lynching of the negro Davis or Chambers, as he was sometimes called. The press of the country, especially the New England part of it, will now fire hot shot at us down here in Maryland for being 'a lawless community.'

Are we lawless? Let's see. When the law has an opportunity to do squarely and deal justly, and will not make use of that opportunity, who is to blame? Is not the law to blame? We do not wish it understood that we favor or uphold lynching. We do not. We abhor and deplore it. But this lynching last night need not have taken place, had the law done its duty, and we as a community need not have had a black stain to wipe out had the law in all its mightiness acted quickly and not deliberated with no necessity for deliberation.

The negro's assault on Mrs. Reid occurred a week ago today. It is said to have been more heinous and more villainous than ever made public. The day after the assault the scoundrel walked these streets with his hands in his pockets, coolly strolling along and whistling regardless of the home into which he had wrought such a havoc. He was captured on Sunday, two days after the assault. He confessed on Tuesday, and was identified by his victim. Was there any doubt then as to the man's guilt? Two days elapse and still nothing is done. The husband and family of the outraged victim clamor for justice. The law hesitates. There is a mere quibble, the victim is too ill to testify, and nothing is done. The grand jury that always stands in readiness to be called by the Court, could have been summoned three days ago, the negro could have been indicted and removed to Baltimore for protection, and this lynching could have been avoided. All this could have been done, but was not. Somebody bungled, now who is to blame? It is not for us to say. It is for those on whose shoulders rest the lynching of this negro who was entitled to the benefit the law is supposed to give, to be their own accusers. They, and not the mob who lynched him are the direct cause of the lynching, whoever they be.

Again, let every one whose eye falls on this article put himself in the place of the victim of this dastardly assault and of her family. Would they want their mother, wife or sister, or most remote female relative or friend dragged into Court to testify in such a case? The friends of this woman gave the law a chance to punish the criminal. No action was taken, and realizing what was before them they took the law in their own hands, that same law refusing to act itself. We may be called a slow town. There is reason for it now, and ever after. We were too slow in attempting to save ourselves from the stain of lynching.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that the people who engaged in this lynching believed themselves justified in doing what they thought was right. The negro had committed a similar crime before. He was a beastial villain of the deepest dye. In all probability the full penalty of the law would or could have been carried out as the victim, Mrs. Reid's condition is such it would probably have cost her life to have come into Court to testify. These and other extenuating circumstances connected with the lynching last night must be considered when the affair is weighed in the balance and we are condemned as a lawless community. Sometimes the end justifies the means and in this instance, as deplorable as it is the provocation was great and the feeling intense.