

Blankety, Blank, Blank!

Some time ago, Matthew Williams a negro, was lynched in the court house square at Salisbury, Wicomico county, and a storm of indignation swept the entire State, with the exception of the locality in which the outrage occurred and most of the sympathetic Eastern Shore. Considerable heat was generated on both sides of the Bay—Western Maryland condemning the Eastern Shore and the Eastern Shore representing the attitude with all the vehemence of badly wounded pride. It was an ill gust of wind on the Presidential nomination kite which Governor Ritchie was flying in the political sky, and His Excellency with a flourish, immediately ordered his Attorney-General to make a complete investigation and bring the matter to the attention of the grand jury.

On the surface, and to the uninitiated, it looked as though something was really going to be done about the necktie party. Governor Ritchie and Attorney-General Lane certainly did their parts. The investigation was made, and the case was duly presented to the Wicomico county grand jury, and what did that august body do? Well, what is in the middle of a doughnut?

According to the finding of the grand jury nobody was present at the lynching; so, as it is absolutely necessary for someone to be present at an affair of that kind or the ceremonies cannot take place, the lynching never happened, at all. Why, as some wag has pointed out, the grand jury didn't even find that Williams was there. No sir, there wasn't anybody there; despite the fact that Williams' body was found there later, dangling from a tree. If we are to take the finding of the grand jury as a frame for a picture of Salisbury's court house square on that alleged mobby night, when the unfortunate Williams was swung from here to hereafter, it was deserted. There was no mob there; there was no lynching, and all our indignation and storming and het-upness was based on a piece of fiction, a false alarm.

As for the lifeless form of the negro suspended from a tree; the poor soul, finding the town empty of the human element that night, probably got so lonesome he left his cell in the county jail, borrowed a rope somewhere, wandered up to the court house square, strung himself up and went over the River Jordan where he felt he could find a crowd.

A Baltimore Countian, who happened to be in Salisbury on that uneventful night—uneventful ac-

ording to the grand jury report—says he plainly heard the mob in the court house yard, while sitting in his room at the local hotel and saw a policeman directing traffic at one of the corners of the square while the lawn fete was in progress. But no, says the grand jury, nobody was in the court house square that night, which eliminates the traffic cop on the corner too, and suggests that the visiting Baltimore Countian was seeing and hearing things only through his imagination.

If it would serve any purpose or gain any advantage, the grand jury might be recalled to find that Salisbury itself was not there that night; that it effaced itself from the map of the Eastern Shore and left nothing but a big vacant lot for the nocturnal interval in question. To complete the picture of utter blank, the grand jury might go farther and find that the night itself failed to register and that only nothingness, in both time and space, appeared in its place on the calendar.

Well, anyway, Salisbury and Wicomico county have been washed white as snow again. But nobody expected anything else. If one indictment had been found it would have registered a shock that would have wrecked every seismograph in the western hemisphere.