

## TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

### A Lynching Far to the North.

Southerners, so often lectured for the frequency with which they lynch negroes instead of trusting their own courts to be justly stern in the punishment of proven crime, will be sure to call the attention of their critics to what happened in Duluth this week when the indignation of the citizens there was turned to rage by the commission of the offense that does the same thing in the South.

In that very Northern city matters took the familiar course, but there were certain variations which may or may not have been due to the moderating effects on temper of a high latitude. For one thing, the mob, in its attack on the jail, seemingly was not armed with deadly weapons. At any rate, it did not use any of them, but overcame the resistance of the jailers and the police with sticks and stones and streams of water from a hose. And, after the cells had been broken open and the prisoners seized, there was at least the semblance of judicial proceedings. It was evidently a brief trial that the six accused men received, but there must have been the taking of some sort of evidence, for three of the negroes were spared and only three taken out into the street and hanged.

For a mob that showed a surprising regard for the forms of law, for as an almost invariable rule in lynching accusation is treated as proof of guilt and for the presentation of a defense no opportunity is given.

In Duluth, as so often in the South, the resistance to the mob offered by the local authorities must have been half-hearted, or worse, otherwise it would not have been so ineffectual, and the storming of the jail would have been accompanied with fatalities among its assailants.

### They Lacked Even a Poor Excuse.

No valid or even colorable claim in behalf of Duluth can be based on the fact that three of the six negroes were spared by the executors of "wild justice." In that city and State there can be no pretense that the white population is under any general menace from a black majority. Anything like a real racial conflict there is unimaginable, and for the infliction of summary vengeance on negro criminals there is not the excuse which has something of plausibility in some parts of the South—the excuse that thus only can punishment have the deterrent effect on which the safety of the whites and their women depends.

That excuse is a poor one anywhere, but in the North it is so poor that probably nobody would venture to offer it as mitigating the guilt of resort to lynch law.

Of course, the lynching of negroes in Duluth is far from being the first that has occurred in the North. Human nature is much the same in both sections of the country, and in both there is appreciation of the fact that mob violence is never justifiable and is always disgraceful to those who participate in it and to those who permit it. Probably one difference does exist—a difference in the likelihood that the lynchiers will be punished. Even that is a dubious likelihood, and certainly nothing like all of the 3,000 inhabitants of Duluth who took some part in this lynching will pay any penalty for what they did, though they are all as guilty, morally, as those who pulled the avenging ropes.