Murder Of A Murderer

Again the blot of lynching defiles Florida's record. A "group of men" at Marianna, took a negro prisoner out of the county jail and literally beat him to death. Four of the lynchers, masked with paper sacks over their heads, entered the jail at midnight by subterfuge, held up the jailer with a gun, took the prisoner from his cell. The victim's body was found at daylight in a roadside ditch by state patrolmen.

The negro, Colles Harrison, had been convicted of killing a white filling station operator by beating him on the head with a hammer. The conviction was reversed by the Supreme Court, which threw out a confession made by the accused, on the ground that it was obtained improperly. Harrison was to go on trial Monday. Obviously the lynchers were actuated by resentment at the action of the Supreme Court in granting the new trial, although, it would appear, with that trial only a few days distant, they could have waited for its result before taking the law into their own hands. If their grievance is the new trial, their murderous inclinations should have been directed at the Supreme Court, not the defendant.

State highway patrolmen are cooperating with local officers, ostensibly to apprehend the lynchers, but it is safe to predict that nothing will be done about it.

Complaints of the law's delays, of setting aside verdicts and sentences of criminals on technicalities, often are warranted, but manifesting such criticism by mob law can't be justified.

It is customary for the press to urge in these cases that the authorities exert every effort to catch and punish the perpetrators—but that's wasted ink and paper, because it's never done.