

## Flag Salute

(Note: In these days when armies are marching and there is much talk of loyalty and democracy on all fronts in America, it is being said that the strongest defense of democracy lies in the unity of all groups in the nation and a conviction that each has a stake in a democratic government. When it was announced in Washington on October 9, almost simultaneously, that the federal anti-lynching bill had been killed in the Senate and that Negro Americans would be segregated and discriminated against in the U. S. armed forces, THE CRISIS received several requests to reprint this poem. It was written after a lynching which occurred in Princess Anne, Maryland, October 18, 1933.)

*"I pledge allegiance to the flag"—*

They dragged him naked  
Through the muddy streets,  
A feeble-minded black boy!  
And the charge? Supposed assault  
Upon an aged woman!

*"Of the United States of America"—*

One mile they dragged him  
Like a sack of meal,  
A rope around his neck,  
A bloody ear  
Left dangling by the patriotic hand  
Of Nordic youth! (A boy of seventeen!)

*"And to the Republic for which it stands"—*

And then they hanged his body to a tree,  
Below the window of the county judge  
Whose pleadings for that battered human flesh  
Were stifled by the brutish, raucous howls  
Of men, and boys, and women with their babes,  
Brought out to see the bloody spectacle  
Of murder in the style of '33!  
(Three thousand strong, they were!)

*"One Nation, Indivisible"—*

To make the tale complete  
They built a fire—  
What matters that the stuff they burned  
Was flesh—and bone—and hair—  
And reeking gasoline!

*"With Liberty—and Justice"—*

They cut the rope in bits  
And passed them out,  
For souvenirs, among the men and boys!  
The teeth no doubt, on golden chains  
Will hang  
About the favored necks of sweethearts, wives,  
And daughters, mothers, sisters, babies, too!

*"For ALL!"*

—ESTHER POPEL