

ing the rioters to justice. The State wants to know the cause of the excitement. "The mob," it says, "has not overstepped boundaries fixed by the mob! And the people of Louisiana have viewed the mob's performances heretofore with a good deal of complacency. The offense of the mob in this instance is no whit greater or more reprehensible than in any former case. It is, in fact, but going its logical way. If the mob can execute for one offense, then the mob can execute for any offense the mob may see fit. When the mob becomes the 'higher law,' as fools call it, then it supersedes all law." Then follows this truly remarkable statement: "The crime of hanging a man for stealing a cow or a chicken or for opening his eyes or shutting his mouth is no greater than the crime of lynching a man for murder or rape. The offense of the mob is not against its victim; it is against the State." That is strict logic and good law, no doubt, but—but—well, human nature counts for something, and even in the inexcusable there are degrees. To ignore them in this way seems to us unwise, and we are not open to suspicion of condoning lynching either.

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A Reform, Not Revolution.

Prof. BRANDER MATTHEWS, writing in Harper's Weekly, very lucidly explains the purposes and plans of the Simplified Spelling Board, of which he is Chairman, and incidentally he shows that he was rather seriously misunderstood by those who recently quoted him as saying that what the would-be reformers of our orthography wanted was first to create such a wild confusion of spelling that people would be glad to accept the system which the board was going to devise. We are glad to learn that neither it nor he has any such intention. What they would do is to remove the existing impression that there is any absolutely authoritative or sacred spelling for any word, and to encourage people with an inclination toward economy and common sense to drop from their writing such letters as seem to them too absurdly superfluous to be longer endured. Says Prof. MATTHEWS: "To hasten along the improvement of English orthography by urging the omission of useless letters—this is the practical task which has been undertaken by the Simplified Spelling Board. Simplification by omission—this is its platform; this is its motto. It is not an innovation; it is not a new principle; it is a principle which has been at work for centuries; it is a principle the application of which will arouse the least possible resistance and produce the most immediate results. To call attention to this principle will be the first duty of the Simplified Spelling Board, and to urge every user of the language to apply the principle for himself at his own convenience and to whatsoever extent he himself may see fit. To this simplification by omission and to a host of words simplified in accordance with this principle the Simplified Spelling Board proposes to lend the weight of its authority—of the authority of its several members." People of timid mind may well content themselves for the present with using the simpler of the two forms which the dictionaries already authorize for a large number of words. This alone would bring about a considerable reform without inflicting a too grievous shock upon anybody. No attempt is to be made to create a perfect alphabet, nor will a sudden change of the whole written language be advocated. What the board wants is only a moderate hastening of that natural process of eliminating unsounded letters that has been going steadily on ever since English and letters came together. This ought to please the "historical record" folk, for, with the reform thus effected, they can still have all their so-called history, but it will be in libraries and not a heavy burden at the end of every pen.

A Southern View of Lynching.

Rarely, indeed, has Northern condemnation of Southern lynchings gone as far as does that of The Columbia (S. C.) State in its comments on the recent hanging by a Louisiana mob of a negro who had stolen and killed a cow. This affair, The State has heard, caused great indignation in the district where it occurred, and there is loud talk of bring-