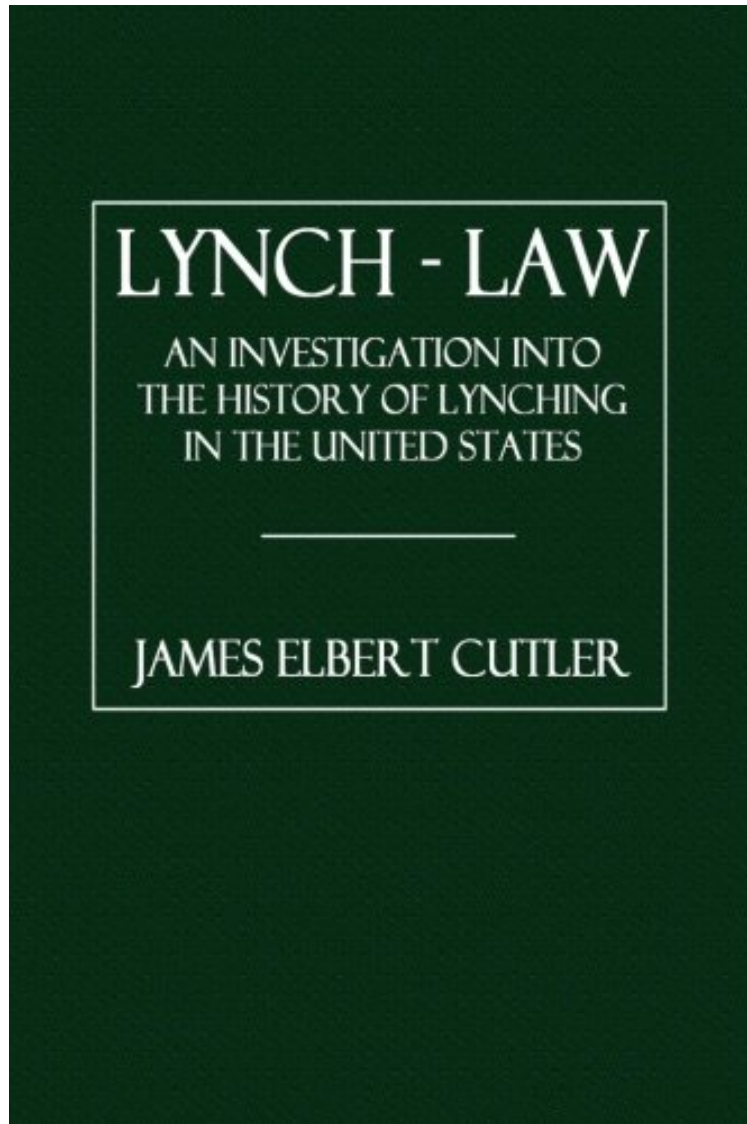


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Lynch - Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United States

James Elbert Cutler

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From the Foreword: Few people are able to read about lynch-executions, with atrocious forms of torture and cruel death, such as have occurred from time to time within ten years in this country, without a feeling of national shame. It is necessary that facts should be known and that public opinion should be corrected as to the ethics of that mode of dealing with crime. Lynch-law is a very different thing where laws and civil institutions are in full force and activity from what it is where they are wanting. It is not admissible that a self-governing democracy should plead the remissness of its own selected agents as an excuse for mob-violence. It is a disgrace to our civilization that men can be put to death by painful methods, which our laws have discarded as never suitable, and without the proofs of guilt which our laws call for in any case whatsoever. It would be a disgrace to us if amongst us men should burn a rattlesnake or a mad dog. The badness of the victim is not an element in the case at all. Torture and burning are forbidden, not because the victim is not bad enough, but because we are too good. It is on account of what we owe to ourselves that these methods are shameful to us, if we descend to them. It is evident, however, that public opinion is not educated up to this level. The reader of the present book will learn very interesting facts about the causes alleged for lynching, and about the public view of that crime. Many current errors will be corrected, and many notions which are irrelevant, although they are popularly believed to be germane and important, will be set aside.