

HORRIBLE FEDERAL OUTRAGE

October 18, 1862, in Palmyra, Missouri, ten prisoners were shot in retaliation for the presumed murder of a local Union man. General John McNeil became known as the "Butcher of Palmyra" and was denounced in newspapers both in the Union states and in other countries. Confederate enlistments, and reenlistments, increased after the massacre.

The following account is from the local Palmyra, Missouri Courier. . .

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HORRIBLE FEDERAL OUTRAGE--TEN CONFEDERATES MURDERED--THE FULL PARTICULARS OF THE SCENE.

Saturday last, the 18th instant, witnessed the performance of a tragedy in this once quiet and beautiful city of Palmyra, which, in ordinary and peaceful times, would have created a profound sensation throughout the entire country, but which now scarcely produces a distinct ripple upon the surface of our turbulent social tide.

It will be remembered by our readers that on the occasion of Porter's descent upon Palmyra, he captured, among other persons, an old and highly respected resident of this city, by name Andrew Allsman. This person formerly belonged to the Third Missouri Cavalry, though too old to endure all the hardships of very active duty. He was, therefore, detailed as a kind of special or extra provost-marshal's guard or cicerone, making himself generally useful in a variety of ways to the military of the place. Being an old resident, and widely acquainted with the people of the place and vicinity, he was frequently called upon for information touching the loyalty of men, which he always gave to the extent of his ability, though acting, we believe, in all such cases with great candor, and actuated solely by a conscientious desire to discharge his whole duty to his Government. His knowledge of the surrounding country was the reason of his being frequently called upon to act as a guide to scouting parties sent out to arrest disloyal persons. So efficiently and successfully did he act in these various capacities, that he won the bitter hatred of all the rebels in this city and vicinity, and they only waited the coming of a favorable opportunity to gratify their desire for revenge. The opportunity came at last, when Porter took Palmyra. That the villains, with Porter's assent, satiated their thirst for his blood by the deliberate and predetermined murder of their helpless victim no truly loyal man doubts. When they killed him, or how, or where,

are items of the act not yet revealed to the public. Whether he was stabbed at midnight by the dagger of the assassin, or shot at midday by the rifle of the guerrilla; whether he was hung and his body hidden beneath the scanty soil of some oaken thicket, or left as food for hogs to fatten upon, or whether, like the ill-fated Wheat, his throat was severed from ear to ear, and his body sunk beneath the wave, we know not. But that he was foully, causelessly murdered it is useless to attempt to deny.

When General McNeil returned to Palmyra, after that event, and ascertained the circumstances under which Allsman had been abducted, he caused to be issued, after due deliberation, the following notice:

"PALMYRA, MO., October 8, 1862.

"JOSEPH C. PORTER:

"SIR: Andrew Allsman, an aged citizen of Palmyra, and a non-combatant, having been carried from his home by a band of persons unlawfully arrayed against the peace and good order of the State of Missouri, and which band was under your control, this is to notify you that unless said Andrew Allsman is returned, unharmed, to his family within ten days from date, ten men, who have belonged to your band, and unlawfully sworn by you to carry arms against the Government of the United States, and who are now in custody, will be shot as a meet reward for their crimes, among which is the illegal restraining of said Allsman of his liberty, and, if not returned, presumptively aiding in his murder.

"Your prompt attention to this will save much suffering.

"Yours, &c.,

"W. R. STRACHAN,

"Provost-Marshal-General, District of Northeastern Missouri.

"Per order of brigadier-general commanding McNeil's column."

A written duplicate of this notice he caused to be placed in the hands of the wife of Joseph C. Porter, at her residence in Lewis County, who it was well known was in frequent communication with her husband. The notice was published widely, and as Porter was in Northern Missouri during the whole of the ten days subsequent to the date of this notice, it is impossible that, with all his varied

channels of information, he remained unapprised of General McNeil's determination in the premises.

Many rebels believed the whole thing was simply intended as a scare, declaring that McNeil did not dare [?] to carry out the threat.

The ten days elapsed, and no tidings came of the murdered Allsman. It is not our intention to dwell at length upon the details of this transaction. The tenth day expired with last Friday. On that day ten rebel prisoners, already in custody, were selected to pay with their lives the penalty demanded. The names of the men so selected were as follows: Willis Baker, Lewis County; Thomas Humston, Lewis County; Morgan Bixler, Lewis County; Herbert Hudson, Rails County; John M. Wade, Rails County; Marion Lair, Rails County; Capt. Thomas A. Sidner, Monroe County; Eleazer Lake, Scotland County, and Hiram Smith, Knox County. These parties were informed on Friday evening that unless Mr. Allsman was returned to his family by 1 o'clock on the following day, they would all be shot at that hour. Most of them received the announcement with composure or indifference. The Rev. James S. Green, of this city, remained with them during that night, as their spiritual adviser, endeavoring to prepare them for their sudden entrance into the presence of their Maker. A little after 11 a.m. the next day, three Government wagons drove to the jail; one contained four and each of the others three rough board coffins. The condemned men were conducted from the prison and seated in the wagons, one upon each coffin. A sufficient guard of soldiers accompanied them, and the cavalcade started for the fatal grounds. Proceeding east to Main street, the cortege turned and moved slowly southward as far as Malone's livery stable; thence turning east, it entered the Hannibal road, pursuing it nearly to the residence of Col. James Culbertson; there, throwing down the fences, they turned northward, entering the fair grounds (half a mile east of the town), on the west side, and, driving within the circular amphitheatrical ring, paused for the final consummation of the scene.

The ten coffins were removed from the wagons and placed in a row 6 or 8 feet apart, forming a line north and south, about 15 paces east of the central pagoda or music stand, in the center of the ring. Each coffin was placed upon the ground, with its foot west and head east. Thirty soldiers of the Second Missouri State Militia were drawn up in a single line, extending north and south, facing the row of coffins. This line of executioners ran immediately at the east base of the pagoda, leaving a space between them and the coffins of 12 or 13 paces. Reserves were drawn up in line upon either bank [flank] of these executioners.

The arrangements completed, the doomed men knelt upon the grass between their coffins and the soldiers, while the Rev. R. M. Rhodes offered up a prayer. At the conclusion of this, each prisoner took his seat upon the foot of his coffin, facing the muskets which in a few moments were to launch them into eternity. They were nearly all firm and undaunted, two or three only showing signs of trepidation.

The most noted of the ten was Capt. Thomas A. Sidner, of Monroe County, whose capture at Shelbyville, in the disguise of a woman, we related several weeks since. He was now elegantly attired in a suit of black broadcloth, with a white vest. A luxurious growth of beautiful hair rolled down upon his shoulders, which, with his fine personal appearance, could not but bring to mind the handsome but vicious Absalom. There was nothing especially worthy of note in the appearance of the others. One of them, Willis Baker, of Lewis County, was proven to be the man who last year shot and killed Mr. Ezekiel Pratt, his Union neighbor, near Williamstown, in that county. All the others were rebels of lesser note, the particulars of whose crimes we are not familiar with.

A few minutes after 1 o'clock, Colonel Strachan, provost-marshal-general, and Reverend Rhodes shook hands with the prisoners, two of them accepting bandages for their eyes. All the rest refused. A hundred spectators had gathered around the amphitheater to witness the impressive scene. The stillness of death pervaded the place. The officer in command now stepped forward, and gave the word of command, "Ready, aim, fire." The discharges, however, were not made simultaneously, probably through want of a perfect previous understanding of the orders and of the time at which to fire. Two of the rebels fell backward upon their coffins and died instantly. Captain Sidner sprang forward and fell with his head toward the soldiers, his face upward, his hands clasped upon his breast and the left leg drawn half way up. He did not move again, but died immediately. He had requested the soldiers to aim at his heart, and they obeyed but too implicitly. The other seven were not killed outright, so the reserves were called in, who dispatched them with their revolvers.

It seems hard that ten men should die for one. Under ordinary circumstances it would hardly be justified; but severe diseases demand severe remedies. The safety of the people is the supreme law. It overrides all other considerations. The madness of rebellion has become so deep seated that ordinary methods of cure are inadequate. To take life for life would be little intimidation to men seeking the

heart's blood of an obnoxious enemy. They could well afford to make even exchanges under many circumstances. It is only by striking the deepest terror in them, causing them to thoroughly respect the lives of loyal men, that they can be taught to observe the obligation of humanity and of law.