

## EIGHT HANGING BODIES.

### THE CORONER'S INQUEST ON THE SOUTH CAROLINA LYNCHING.

COLUMBIA, S. C., Dec. 29.—The Coroner's inquest into the death of the eight negroes who were lynched at Barnwell yesterday morning was held last night at the scene of the tragedy. It was a terrible sight which the jurymen looked upon. On the left side of the road were the bodies of Ripley Johnson and Mitchell Adams, charged with the murder of Hefernan. On the opposite side were the six bodies of the negroes charged with implication in the murder of young Robert Martin. They were tied to young oak trees on the road side, all except Mitchell Adams, who was tied to the post which marked the corporation limits of Barnwell. Johnson was tied to a little tree close by Adams. The others across the road were tied two to the same tree, with their backs to the saplings, the rope passed around the tree and around the body of the men, in some instances nearly all the way from head to foot.

When shot, however, the weight of their bodies had swung down on the ropes and now they occupied all sorts of grotesque and revolting positions. One had swung forward over the ropes which encircled the waist, the head hanging down, and the tongue protruding. Another had dropped straight down, the legs bending under the weight. In one or two instances bullets had entered the head and blood disfigured the distorted features. In all sorts of positions they hung, a horrible sight not soon to be forgotten by those who looked on it.

The frightful character of the wounds is shown by the testimony of the physicians who examined each body. In brief, it is as follows: Henry Furse, ten balls in his body, age about twenty-four years; Peter Bell, one ball in back of neck at base of skull, age about sixty years; Harrison Johnson, four balls in his body, age about thirty-five years; Rafe Morrall, six balls in head and body, either of which would have been fatal, age about sixty years; Judge Jones, eight balls, one in his brain, about twenty-eight years old; Robert Phoenix, four balls in body, about twenty-two years old; Ripley Johnson, eight balls in body, one in the face, about thirty years old; Mitchell Adams, five balls, one through brain, about thirty-five years old.

On this testimony the jury returned a verdict that the eight men came to their death from gunshot wounds inflicted by some party or parties unknown. In order to allow the doctor to make the examination and probe the wounds the bodies were cut down from the trees and laid on the ground. The clothes were cut from the bodies to enable him to get to the wounds, and the sight was not improved by their changed position. The men lay around in whatever position the surgeon had left them—on side, back, or face, as the case might be. Three lay on the roadside, the others here and there among the little oaks on the side of the road, large parts of their bodies exposed and their cut and torn clothing hanging about them in a grotesque way.

After the Coroner's inquest the negroes were notified that they might remove the bodies if they desired. The families of Ripley Johnson and Mitchell Adams removed their bodies to their homes, but the other six remained up to midnight. Treated as murderers and outcasts there were none to mourn them, to cross their hands, or close their eyes. Neither the whites nor the negroes wanted to remove the bodies. A prominent negro of the town said:

"We never put them there. Let those remove them who are responsible for their being there."

Said the Mayor of Barnwell: "The bodies are outside the limits of the town, and they were prisoners of the county. We don't care to place ourselves in the light of assuming responsibility in the matter. The town of Barnwell has had nothing to do with the affair. We have, however, notified the negroes that they could go ahead and bury the bodies and we would pay the expense. Acting with the Sheriff we have employed a man to make the coffins for them, and it will be done as soon as possible."

A leading colored citizen was asked what his people thought of the lynching. "We think it is a great outrage," said he.

"What course do you all propose to take in the matter? Is it true that there is any idea of violence or vengeance entertained among you?"

"Not the slightest," said he. "It would do no good, and nobody is thinking of it. But we have decided to call a meeting of all the colored people in Barnwell County."

"What for?"

"To move away from here. We want every one of us to get out of the county, and leave it forever. We would be willing to go even to a worse place, if that were possible, rather than stay here. No, Sir. We contemplate no violence or revenge, but we mean to leave Barnwell County."

This was assented to by all those present. The white people of Barnwell, generally, deplore the affair, but admit that the men who have thus taken the law in their own hands did not act without great provocation. The town was patrolled all last night by a large posse of armed citizens, but everything passed off quietly. Adj. Gen. Bonham arrived this morning, and after viewing the situation decided that the presence of troops was not necessary. Tomorrow Gov. Richardson will issue a proclamation denouncing the outrage and offering a reward for the apprehension of the lynchers, not one of whom has yet been identified.