

H. N. Allen Diary, December 5, 1884, H. N. Allen Papers. New York Public Library, New York.

December 5, Friday.

Last night was a most eventful one to foreigners in Seoul. I was out to see a foreign patient in the evening and came home about 9 P. M. It was bright, moonlight, and the deserted streets were so quiet and picturesque that I planned with Fannie that we should go out for a walk through the lovely city some evening before the moon ceased shining. We retired about 10:30 but had barely gotten ... in bed when a great shout of many men was heard. Our gate here was violently rung and a foreigner kept calling for me.

I went into the sitting room and found Mr. Scudder, Secretary to the U. S. Legation, with a note for me from Mr. Paul G. von Möllendorf urging me to come to his place at once as he had a dying man on his hands. Mr. Scudder then explained that that evening the foreign officials were all in attendance upon a dinner party at the foreign office (Möllendorf) and that an alarm of fire was heard and Min Yong Ik, one of the most prominent Korean noblemen, cousin to the Queen, ran out to see where the fire was and was cut down with a sword by an unknown person. This Min Yong Ik was the Ambassador to the U. S., a progressive man and one in favor of foreign relations. His father was killed in 1881 in the house now occupied by Möllendorf.

At the time of the massacre of the foreign sympathizers, of course I hastened to the spot. I found a guard of fifty soldiers, all armed, waiting in our compound to escort me through the streets and I marched at double quick in their midst. I found the patient in a horrible condition all blood and gore and attended by fourteen Korean doctors who made great objections to my heroic measures. I found a cut extending from the external Canthus of the right eye across the temple severing a branch of the temporal artery splitting the right ear, lengthwise down the side of the neck laying bare the curoted artery and jugular vein but not cutting either them or the breathing organs. It extended backwards and inwards between the spine and internal border of the scapula to about the infangle of the same and cutting through the superior layer of muscles. The point was curved where the sharp instrument left the flesh. I tied the bleeding temporal artery, put a silk suture in the divided temple, two in the cartilage of the ear four in the neck and two deep silver ones in the back.

Owing to his exhausted condition, I was compelled to stop with that and putting in four silk sutures in a long cut which extended from the right elbow about eight inches down the back of the fore arm and laying bare the external cerudyle of the humerus. His left arm was cut in two places, one cut just over the carpal bones with and another about over the juncture of the lower with the middle third of the fore arm and both in the posterior surface. The one over the carpal bones laid bare and severed the tendon, extensor minimus digite. I could only sponge out these wounds which were both of a curved shape and about two inches in length, after cleansing them and assuring myself of the absence of hemorrhage. I simply bandaged them and waited for the more complete dressing in the morning by daylight when the patient's condition should be improved. A small cut behind the right ear of about an inch and a half and only skin deep.

I left together with a long cut about six inches in length just above the right knee in the external aspect of the thigh and not more than an eight of an inch in depth. Owing to the darkness confusion and his matted head dress. I missed a cut on the top of his head a little to the right of the median line. It was the size of an egg (chicken's egg) and oval in shape. The whole piece was cut off and only hanging by the hair which was coiled in the top knot. It extended to the bone in the center and must have been dealt by a swinging motion with a heavy sharp instrument which would have cut off his head had he not dodged.

I stayed with him all night excepting one hour from 2 to 3 A. M., when I came home to attend my family. I had an escort of soldiers again and was unmolested. I found Mr. Bernadou of the U. S. Navy keeping guard in our house. A messenger from the Palace arrived at the same time I did with a message from the King to General Foote asking him to come with all the foreigners at his place and stop in the Palace till the excitement was over, for a general uprising and massacre was expected as in 1881. We had a consultation and wisely decided to remain at home. Asking however for a guard of Japanese soldiers which was promptly granted. I however did not know of the final decision before leaving for the foreign office again.

So I had Fannie and the Amah and baby dress and pack a valise with clothing for a few days and go to the U. S. Legation expecting to go to the Palace with the Footes if they should go. Mr. and Mrs. Aston of the English Consulate General came also to the Footes and I went back to my man. I kept him warm with bottles of hot water, gave him ice water to drink in doses of two table spoons full every ten or fifteen minutes with ten drops of Tilipii and the same of brandy every half hour. By 5 A. M. he was improved in condition though his pulse at the wrist could not be felt and his temperature had risen from 97° at 4 A. M. to 98° at 5 A. M. I then sent a note to the physician to the Japanese Legation and invited him to help me dress the wounds at 7 A. M.

He came and we decided his condition would admit of the dressing. So we removed some of the sutures carefully washed out the wound with a 1-40 solution of carbolic acid dusted in Iodoform freely and put back the sutures with additional ones where necessary. Altogether there were seven different wounds five of which must have been made by different blows either from the same or different instruments. We put in altogether one ligature, twenty-seven sutures and put on eight strips of rubber plaster. All distributed as follows. Fourteen sutures and one ligature in the long gash from the temple to the infangle of the scapula four in the gash on the right fore arm. Two each in the cuts in the left fore arm and five in the gash on the right thigh. The scalp wound I cleansed, shaved off the surrounding hair dusted in Iodoform and put on a pad of lint held in place by a strip of rubber bandage. The Japanese Dr. consented to have the patient moved to his own home, but I did not. However on seeing the friends making all preparation to move him. I cleaned up my instruments and left the patient in as good condition as possible.