

CHARLESTON UNDER ARMS

Originally published in *The Atlantic monthly*, April 1861

ON Saturday morning, January 19, 1861, the steamer *Columbia*, from New York, lay off the harbor of Charleston in full sight of Fort Sumter. It is a circumstance which perhaps would never have reached the knowledge of the magazine-reading world, nor have been of any importance to it, but for the attendant fact that I, the writer of this article, was on board the steamer. It takes two events to make a consequence, as well as two parties to make a bargain.

The sea was smooth; the air was warmish and slightly misty; the low coast showed bare sand and forests of pines. The dangerous bar of the port, now partially deprived of its buoys, and with its main channel rendered perilous by the hulks of sunken schooners, revealed itself plainly, half a mile ahead of us, in a great crescent of yellow water, plainly distinguishable from the steel-gray of the outer ocean. Two or three square-rigged vessels were anchored to the southward of us, waiting for the tide or the tugs, while four or five pilot-boats tacked up and down in the lazy breeze, watching for the cotton-freighters which ought at this season to crowd the palmetto wharves.

"I wish we could get the duties on those ships to pay some of our military bills," said a genteel, clean-spoken Charlestonian, to a long, green, kindly-faced youth, from I know not what Southern military academy.

We had arrived off the harbor about midnight, but had not entered, for lack of a beacon whereby to shape our course. Now we must wait until noon for the tide, standing off and on the while merely to keep up our fires. A pilot came under our quarter in his little schooner, and told us that the steamer *Nashville* had got out the day before with only a hard bumping. No other news had he; Fort Sumter had not been taken, nor assaulted; the independence of South Carolina had not been recognized; various desirable events had not happened. In short, the political world had remained during our voyage in that chaotic *status quo* so loved by President Buchanan. At twelve we stood for the bar, sounding our way with extreme caution. Without accident we passed over the treacherous bottom, although in places it could not have been more than eighteen inches below our keel. The shores closed in on both sides as we passed onward. To the south was the long, low, gray Morris Island, with its extinguished lighthouse, its tuft or two of pines, its few dwellings, and its invisible batteries. To the north was the long, low, gray Sullivan's Island, a repetition of the other, with the distinctions of higher sand-rolls, a village, a regular fort, and palmettos. We passed the huge brown Moultrie House, in summer a gay resort, at present a barrack; passed the hundred scattered cottages of the island, mostly untenanted now, and looking among the sand-drifts as if they had been washed ashore at random; passed the low walls of Fort Moultrie, once visibly yellow, but now almost hidden by the new *glacis*, and surmounted by piles of barrels and bags of sand, with here and there palmetto stockades as a casing for the improvised embrasures; passed its black guns, its solidly built, but rusty barracks, and its weather-worn palmetto flag waving from a temporary flag-staff. On the opposite side of the harbor was Fort Johnstone, a low point, exhibiting a barrack, a few houses, and a sand redoubt, with three forty-two pounders. And here, in the midst of all things, apparent master of all things, at the entrance of the harbor proper, and nearly equidistant from either shore, though nearest the southern, frowned Fort Sumter, a huge and lofty and solid mass of brickwork with stone embrasures, all rising from a foundation of ragged granite boulders washed by the tides. The port-holes were closed; a dozen or so of monstrous cannon peeped from the summit; two or three sentinels paced slowly along the parapet; the stars and stripes blew out from the lofty flag-staff. The plan of Fort Sumter may be briefly described as five-sided, with each angle just so much truncated as to give room for one embrasure in every story. Its whole air is massive, commanding, and formidable.

Eighty or a hundred citizens, volunteers, cadets from the military academy, policemen, and negroes, greeted the arrival of the *Columbia* at her wharf. It was a larger crowd than usual, partly because a report had circulated that we should be forced to bring to off Fort Sumter and give an account of ourselves, and partly because many persons in Charleston have lately been perplexed with an abundant leisure. As I drove to my hotel, I noticed that the streets showed less movement of business and population than when I knew them four years ago. The place seemed dirtier, too, worse paved, shabbier as to its brick-work and stucco, and worse painted,—but whether through real deterioration, or by comparison with the neatly finished city which I had lately left, I cannot decide. There was surely not a third of the usual shipping, nor a quarter of the accustomed cotton. Here and there were wharves perfectly bare, not only of masting and of freight, but even of dust, as if they had not been used for days, or possibly for weeks.

My old hotel was as well kept, and its table as plentiful and excellent as ever. I believe we are all aware by this time that Charleston has not suffered from hunger; that beef has not sold at thirty-five cents a pound, but rather at ten or fifteen; that its Minute Men have not been accustomed to come down upon its citizens for forced dinners and dollars; that the State loan was taken willingly by the banks, instead of unwillingly by private persons; that the rich, so far from being obliged to give a great deal for the cause of Secession, have generally given very little; that the streets are well-policed, untrodden by mobs, and as orderly as those of most cities; that, in short, the revolution so far has been political, and not social. At the same time exports and imports have nearly ceased; business, even in the retail form, is stagnant; the banks have suspended; debts are not paid.

After dinner I walked up to the Citadel square and saw a drill of the Home Guard. About thirty troopers, all elderly men, and several with white hair and whiskers, uniformed in long overcoats of homespun gray, went through some of the simpler cavalry evolutions in spite of their horses' teeth. The Home Guard is a volunteer police force, raised because of the absence of so many of the young men of the city at the islands, and because of the supposed necessity of keeping a strong hand over the negroes. A malicious citizen assured me that it was in training to take Fort Sumter by charging upon it at low water. On the opposite side of the square from where I stood rose the Citadel, or military academy, a long and lofty reddish-yellow building, stuccoed and castellated, which, by the way, I have seen represented in one of our illustrated papers as the United States Arsenal. Under its walls were half a dozen iron cannon which I judged at that distance to be twenty-four pounders. A few negroes, certainly the most



The Citadel seen across Marion Square (Library of Congress)

leisurely part of the population at this period, and still fewer white people, leaned over the shabby fence and stared listlessly at the horsemen, with the air of people whom habit had made indifferent to such spectacles. Near me three men of the middle class of Charleston talked of those two eternal subjects, Secession and Fort Sumter. One of them, a rosy-faced, kindly-eyed, sincere, seedy, puffy gentleman of fifty, congratulated the others and thanked God because of the present high moral stand of South Carolina, so much loftier than if she had seized the key to her main harbor, when she had the opportunity. Her honor was now unspotted; her good faith and her love of the right were visible to the whole world; while the position of the Federal Government was disgraced and sapped by falsity. Better Sumter treacherously in the hands of the United States than in the hands of

South Carolina; better suffer for a time under physical difficulties than forever under moral dishonor.

Simple-hearted man, a fair type of his fellow-citizens, he saw but his own side of the question, and might fairly claim in this matter to be justified by his faith. His bald crown, sandy side-locks, reddish whiskers, sanguineous cheeks, and blue eyes were all luminous with confidence in the integrity of his State, and with scorn for the meanness and wickedness of her enemies. No doubt had he that the fort ought to be surrendered to South Carolina; no suspicion that the Government could show a reason for holding it, aside from low self-interest and malice. He was the honest mouth-piece of a most peculiar people, local in its opinions and sentiments beyond anything known at the North, even in self-poised Boston. Changing his subject, he spoke with hostile, yet chivalrous, respect of the pluck of the Black Republicans in Congress. They had never faltered; they had vouchsafed no hint of concession; while, on the other hand, Southerners had shamed him by their craven spirit. It grieved, it mortified him, to see such a man as Crittenden on his knees to the North, begging, actually with tears, for what he ought to demand as a right, with head erect and hands clenched. He departed with a mysterious allusion to some secret of his for taking Fort Sumter, — some disagreeably odorous chemical preparation, I guessed, by the scientific terms in which he beclouded himself, — something which he expected would soon be called for by the Governor. May he never smell anything worse, even in the other world, than his own compounds! Unionist, and perhaps Consolidationist, as I am, I could not look upon his honest, persuaded face, and judge him a traitor, at least not to any sentiment of right that was in his own soul.

Our hotel was full of legislators and volunteer officers, mostly planters or sons of planters, and almost without exception men of standing and property. South Carolina is an oligarchy in spirit, and allows no plebeians in high places. Two centuries of plenteous feeding and favorable climate showed their natural results in the *physique* of these people. I do not think that I exaggerate, when I say that they averaged six feet or nearly in height, and one hundred and seventy pounds or thereabouts in weight. One or two would have brought in money, if enterprisingly heralded as Swiss or Belgian giants. The general physiognomy was good, mostly high-featured, often commanding, sometimes remarkable for massive beauty of the Jovian type, and almost invariably distinguished by a fearless, open-eyed frankness, in some instances running into arrogance and pugnacity. I remember one or two elderly men, in particular, whose faces would help an artist to idealize a Lacedæmonian general, or a baron of the Middle Ages. In dress somewhat careless, and wearing usually the last fashion but one, they struck me as less tidy than the same class when I saw it four years ago; and I made a similar remark concerning the citizens of Charleston,—not only men, but women,—from whom dandified suits and superb silks seem to have departed during the present martial time. Indeed, I heard that economy was the order of the day; that the fashionables of Charleston bought nothing new, partly because of the money pressure, and partly because the guns of Major Anderson might any day send the whole city into mourning; that patrician families had discharged their foreign cooks and put their daughters into the kitchen; that there were no concerts, no balls, and no marriages. Even the volunteers exhibited little of the pomp and vanity of war. The small French military cap was often the only sign of their present profession. The uniform, when it appeared, was frequently a coarse homespun gray, charily trimmed with red worsted, and stained with the rains and earth of the islands. One young dragoon in this sober dress walked into our hotel, trailing the clinking steel scabbard of his sabre across the marble floor of the vestibule with a war-like rattle which reminded me of the Austrian officers whom I used to see, yes, and hear, stalking about the *cafés* of Florence. Half a dozen surrounded him to look at and talk about the weapon. A portly, middle-aged legislator must draw it and cut and thrust, with a smile of boyish satisfaction between his grizzled whiskers, bringing the point so near my nose, in his careless eagerness, that I had to fall back upon a stronger, that is, a more distant position. Then half a dozen others must do likewise, their eyes sparkling like those of children examining a new toy.

"It 's not very sharp," said one, running his thumb carefully along the edge of the narrow and rather light blade.

"Sharp enough to cut a man's head open," averred the dragoon.

"Well, it 's a dam' shame that sixty-five men tharr in Sumter should make such an expense to the State," declared a stout, blonde young rifleman, speaking with a burr which proclaimed him from the up-country. "We haven't even troyed to get 'em out. We ought at least to make a troyal."

All strangers at Charleston walk to the Battery. It is the extreme point of the city peninsula, its right facing on the Ashley, its left on the Cooper, and its outlook commanding the entire harbor, with Fort Sumter, Fort Pinckney, Fort Moultrie, and Fort Johnstone in the distance. Plots of thin clover, a perfect wonder in this grassless land; promenades, neatly fenced, and covered with broken shells instead of gravel; a handsome bronze lantern-stand, twenty-five feet high, meant for a beacon; a long and solid stone quay, the finest sea-walk in the United States; a background of the best houses in Charleston, three-storied and faced with verandas: such are the features of the Battery. Lately four large iron guns, mounted like field-pieces, form an additional attraction to boys and soldierly-minded men. Nobody knew their calibre; the policemen who watched them could not say; the idlers who gathered about them disputed upon it: they were eighteen pounders; they were twenty-fours; they were thirty-sixes. Nobody could tell what they were there for. They were aimed at Fort Sumter, but would not carry half way to it. They could hit Fort Pinckney, but that was not desirable. The policeman could not explain; neither could the idlers; neither can I. At last it got reported about the city that they were to sink any boats which might come down the



East Battery, Charleston, South Carolina (Library of Congress)

river to reinforce Anderson; though how the boats were to get into the river, whether by railroad from Washington, or by balloon from the Free States, nobody even pretended to guess. Standing on this side of the Ashley, and looking across it, you naturally see the other side. The long line of nearly dead level, with its stretches of thin pine-forest and its occasional glares of open sand, gives you an idea of nearly the whole country about Charleston, except that in general you ought to add to the picture a number of noble evergreen oaks bearded with pendent, weird Spanish moss, and occasional green spikes of the tropical-looking Spanish bayonet. Of palmettos there are none that I know of in this immediate region, save the hundred or more on Sullivan's Island and the one or two exotics in the streets of Charleston. In the middle of the Ashley, which is here more than a quarter of a mile wide, lies anchored a topsail schooner, the nursery of the South Carolina navy. I never saw it sail anywhere; but then my opportunities of observation were limited. Quite a number of boys are on board of it, studying maritime matters; and I can bear witness that they are sufficiently advanced to row themselves ashore. Possibly they are moored thus far up the stream to guard them from sea-sickness, which might be discouraging to young sailors. However, I ought not to talk on this subject, for I am the merest civilian and landlubber.

My first conversation in Charleston on Secession was with an estimable friend, Northern-born, but drawing breath of Southern air ever since he attained the age of manhood. After the first salutation, he sat down, his hands on his knees, gazing on the floor, and shaking his head soberly, if not sadly.

"You have found us in a pretty fix,—in a pretty fix!"

"But what are you going to do? Are you really going out? *You* are not a politician, and will tell me the honest facts."

"Yes, we are going out,—there is no doubt of it. I have not been a seceder, — I have even been called one of the disaffected; but I am obliged to admit that secession is the will of the community. Perhaps you at the North don't believe that we are honest in our professions and actions. We are so. The Carolinians really mean to go out of the Union, and don't mean to come back. They say that they *are* out, and they believe it., And now, what are you going to do with us? What is the feeling at the North?"

"The Union must and shall be preserved, at all hazards. That famous declaration expresses the present Northern popular sentiment. When I left, people were growing martial; they were joining military companies; they wanted to fight; they were angry."

"So I supposed. That agrees with what I hear by letter. Well, I am very sorry for it. Our people here will not retreat; they will accept a war, first. If you preserve the Union, it must be by conquest. I suppose you can do it, if you try hard enough. The North is a great deal stronger than the South; it can desolate it, — crush it. But I hope it won't be done. I wish you would speak a good word for us, when you go back. You can destroy us, I suppose. But don't you think it would be inhuman? Don't you think it would be impolitic? Do you think it would result in sufficient good to counterbalance the evident and certain evil?"

"Why, people reason in this way. They say, that, even if we allow the final independence of the seceding States, we must make it clear that there is no such thing as the right of secession, but only that of revolution or rebellion. We must fix a price for going out of the Union, which shall be so high that henceforward no State will ever be willing to pay it. We must kill, once for all, the doctrine of peaceable secession, which is nothing else than national disintegration and ruin. Lieutenant-Governor Morton of Indiana declares in substance that England never spent blood and money to wiser purpose than when she laid down fifty thousand lives and one hundred millions of pounds to prevent her thirteen disaffected colonies from having their own way. No English colony since has been willing to face the tremendous issue thus offered it. Just so it is the interest, it is the sole safety of the Federal Government, to try to hold in the Cotton States by force, and, if they go out, to oblige them to pay an enormous price for the privilege. Revolution is a troublesome luxury, and ought to be made expensive. That is the way people talk at the North and at Washington. They reason thus, you see, because they believe that this is not a league, but a nation."

"And our people believe that the States are independent and have a right to recede from the Confederation without asking its leave. With few exceptions, all agree on that; it is honest, common public opinion. The South Carolinians sincerely think that they are exercising a right, and you may depend that they will not be reasoned nor frightened out of it; and if the North tries coercion, there will be war. I don't say this defiantly, but sadly, and merely because I want you to know the truth. War is abhorrent to my feelings,—especially a war with our own brethren; and then we are so poorly prepared for it!"

Such was the substance of several conversations. The reader may rely, I think, on the justness of my friend's opinions, founded as they are on his honesty of intellect, his moderation, and his opportunities for studying his fel-

low-citizens. All told me the same story, but generally with more passion, sometimes with defiance; defiance toward the Government, I mean, and not toward me personally; for the better classes of Charleston are eminently courteous. South Carolina had seceded forever, defying all the hazards; she would accept nothing but independence or destruction; she did not desire any supposable compromise; she had altogether done with the Union. Yet her desire was not for war; it was simply and solely for escape. She would forget all her wrongs and insults, she would seek no revenge for the injurious past, provided she were allowed to depart without a conflict. Nearly every man with whom I talked began the conversation by asking if the North meant coercion, and closed it by deprecating hostilities and affirming the universal wish for *peaceable* secession. In case of compulsion, however, the State would accept the gage of battle; her sister communities of the South would side with her, the moment they saw her blood flow; Northern commerce would be devoured by privateers of all nations under the Southern flag; Northern manufactures would perish for lack of Southern raw material and Southern consumers; Northern banks would suspend, and Northern finances go into universal insolvency; the Southern ports would be opened forcibly by England and France, who must have cotton; the South would flourish in the struggle, and the North decay.

"But why do you venture on this doubtful future?" I asked of one gentleman. "What is South Carolina's grievance? The Personal-Liberty Bills?"

"Yes,—they constitute a grievance. And yet not much of one. Some of us even — the men of the 'Mercury' school, I mean— do not complain of the Union because of those bills. They say that it is the Fugitive-Slave Law itself which is unconstitutional; that the rendition of runaways is a State affair, in which the Federal Government has no concern; that Massachusetts, and other States, were quite right in nullifying an illegal and aggressive statute. Besides, South Carolina has lost very few slaves."

"Is it the Territorial Question which forces you to quit us?"

"Not in its practical issues. The South needs no more territory; has not negroes to colonize it. The doctrine of 'No more Slave States' is an insult to us, but hardly an injury. The flow of population has settled that matter. You have won all the Territories, not even excepting New Mexico, where slavery exists nominally, but is sure to die out under the hostile influences of unpropitious soil and climate. The Territorial Question has become a mere abstraction. We no longer talk of it."

"Then your great grievance is the election of Lincoln?"

"Yes."

"And the grievance is all the greater because he was elected according to all the forms of law?"

"Yes."

"If he had been got into the Presidency by trickery, by manifest cheating, your grievance would have been less complete?"

"Yes."

"Is Lincoln considered here to be a bad or dangerous man?"

"Not personally. I understand that he is a man of excellent private character, and I have nothing to say against him as a ruler, inasmuch as he has never been tried. Mr. Lincoln is simply a sign to us that we are in danger, and must provide for our own safety."

"You secede, then, solely because you think his election proves that the mass of the Northern people is adverse to you and your interests?"

"Yes."

"So Mr. Wigfall of Texas hit the nail on the head, when he said substantially that the South cannot be at peace with the North until the latter concedes that slavery is right?"

"Well, — I admit it; that is precisely it."

I desire the reader to note the loyal frankness, the unshrinking honesty of these avowals, so characteristic of the South Carolina morale. Whenever the native of that State does an act or holds an opinion, it is his nature to confess it and avow the motives thereof, without quibbling or hesitation. It is a persuaded, self-poised community, strikingly like its negative pole on the Slavery Question, Massachusetts. All those Charlestonians whom I talked with I found open-hearted in their secession, and patient of my openheartedness as an advocate of the Union, although often astonished, I suspect, that any creature capable of drawing a conclusion from two premises should think so differently from themselves.

"But have you looked at the platform of the Republicans?" I proceeded. "It is not adverse to slavery in the States; it only objects to its entrance into the Territories; it is not an Abolition platform."

"We don't trust in the platform; we believe that it is an incomplete expression of the party creed,—that it suppresses more than it utters. The spirit which keeps the Republicans together is enmity to slavery, and that spirit will never be satisfied until the system is extinct."

"Finally, —yes; gradually and quietly and safely,—that is possible. I suppose that the secret and generally unconscious *animus* of the party is one which will abolitionize it after a long while."

"When will it begin to act in an abolition sense, do you think?"

"I can't say: perhaps a hundred years from now; perhaps two hundred."

There was a general laugh from the half-dozen persons who formed the group.

"What time do *you* fix?" I inquired.

"Two years. But for this secession of ours, there would have been bills before Congress within two years, looking to the abolition of slavery in the navy-yards, the District of Columbia, etc. That would be only the point of the wedge, which would soon assume the dimensions of an attack on slavery in the States. Look how aggressive the party has been in the question of the Territories."

"The questions are different. When Congress makes local laws for Utah, it does not follow that it will do likewise for South Carolina. You might as well infer, that, because a vessel sails from Liverpool to New York in ten days, therefore it will sail overland to St. Louis in five more."

Incredulous laughter answered me again. The South has labored under two delusions: first, that the Republicans are Abolitionists; second, that the North can be frightened. Back of these, rendering them fatally effective, lies that other delusion, the imagined right of peaceable secession, founded on a belief in the full and unresigned sovereignty of the States. Let me tell a story illustrative of the depth to which this belief has penetrated. Years ago, a friend of mine, talking to a Charleston boy about patriotism, asked him, "What is the name of your country?" "South Carolina!" responded the eight-year-old, promptly and proudly. What Northern boy, what Massachusetts boy even, would not have replied, "The United States of America"?

South Carolina, I am inclined to think, has long been a disunionist community, or nearly so, deceived by the idea that the Confederation is a bar rather than a help to her prosperity, and waiting only for a good chance to quit it. Up to the election of Lincoln all timid souls were against secession; now they are for it, because they think it less dangerous than submission. For instance, when I asked one gentleman what the South expected to gain by going out, he replied, "First, safety. Our slaves have heard of Lincoln,—that he is a black man, or black Republican, or black something,—that he is to become ruler of this country on the fourth of March,— that he is a friend of theirs, and will free them. We must establish our independence in order to make them believe that they are beyond his help. We have had to hang some of them in Alabama,—and we expect to be obliged to hang others, perhaps many."

This was not the only statement of the sort which I heard in Charleston. Other persons assured me of the perfect fidelity of the negroes, and declared that they would even fight against Northern invaders, if needful. Skepticism in regard to this last comfortable belief is, however, not wanting.

"If it comes to a war, you have one great advantage over us," said to me a military gentleman, lately in the service of the United States. "Your working-class is a fighting class, and will constitute the rank and file of your armies. Our working-class is not a fighting-class. Indeed, there is some reason to fear, that, if it take up arms at all, it will be on the wrong side."

My impression is, that a prevalent, though not a universal fear, existed lest the negroes should rise in partial insurrections on or about the fourth of March. A Northern man, who had lived for several years in the back-country of South Carolina, had married there, and had lately travelled through a considerable portion of the South, informed me that many of the villages were lately forming Home Guards, as a measure of defence against the slave population. The Home Guard is frequently a cavalry corps, and is always composed of men who have passed the usual term of military service; for it is deemed necessary to reserve the youth of the country to meet the "Northern masses," the "Federal mercenaries," on the field of possible battle. By letters from Montgomery, Alabama, I learn that unusual precautions have been common during the last winter, many persons locking up their negroes over night in the quarters, and most sleeping with arms at hand, ready for nocturnal conflict. Whoever considers the necessarily horrible nature of a servile insurrection will find in it some palliation for Southern violence toward suspected incendiaries and Southern precipitation in matters of secession, however strongly he may still maintain that lynch-law should not usurp the place of justice, nor revolution the place of regular government. If you live in a powder-magazine, you positively must feel inhospitably inclined towards a man who presents himself with a cigar in

his mouth. Even if he shows you that it is but a fireless stump, it still makes you uneasy. And if you catch sight of a multitude of smokers, distant as yet, but apparently intent on approaching, you will be very apt to rush toward them, deprecate their advance, forbid it, or possibly threaten armed resistance, even at the risk of being considered aggressive.

Are all the South Carolinians disunionists? It seemed so when I was there in January, 1861, and yet it did not seem so when I was there in 1855 and '56. At that time you could find men in Charleston who held that the right of secession was but the right of revolution, of rebellion,—well enough, if successful, but inductive to hanging, if unfortunate. Now those same men nearly all argue for the right of peaceable secession, declaring that the State has a right to go out at will, and that the Federal Government has no right to coerce or punish it. These turncoats are the sympathetic, who are carried away by a rush of popular enthusiasm, and the fearful or peaceable, who dread or dislike violence. Let us see how a timid Unionist can be converted into an advocate of the right of secession. Let us suppose a boat with three men on board, which is hailed by a revenue-cutter, with a threat of firing, if she does not come to. Two of these men believe that the revenue-officer is performing a legal duty, and desire to obey him; but the third, a reckless, domineering fellow, seizes the helm, lets the sail fill, and attempts to run by, mean-time declaring at the top of his voice that the cutter has no business to stop his progress. The others dare not resist him and cannot persuade him. Now, then, what position will they take as to the right of the revenue-officer to fire? Ten to one they will join their comrade whom they lately opposed; they will cry out, that the pursuer was wrong in ordering them to stop, and ought not to punish them for disobedience; in short, they will be converted by the instinct of self-preservation into advocates of the right of peaceable secession. I understand, indeed I know, that there are a few opponents of disunion remaining in South Carolina; but, although they are wealthy people and of good position, it is pretty certain that they have not an atom of political influence.

Secession peaceable! It is what is most particularly desired at Charleston, and, I believe, throughout the Cotton States. Certainly, when I was there, the war-party, the party of the "Mercury," was not in the ascendant, unless in the sense of having been "hoist with its own petard" when it cried out for immediate hostilities. Not only Governor Pickens and his Council, but nearly all the influential citizens, were opposed to bloodshed. They demanded independence and Fort Sumter, but desired and hoped to get both by argument. They believed, or tried to believe, that at last the Administration would hearken to reason and grant to South Carolina what it seemed to them could not be denied her with justice. The battle-cry of the "Mercury," urging precipitation even at the expense of defeat, for the sake of uniting the South, was listened to without enthusiasm, except by the young and thoughtless.

"We shall never attack Fort Sumter," said one gentleman. "Don't you see why? I have a son in the trenches, my next neighbor has one, everybody in the city has one. Well, we shan't let our boys fight; we can't bear to lose them. We don't want to risk our handsome, genteel, educated young fellows against a gang of Irishmen, Germans, British deserters, and New York roughs, not worth killing, and yet instructed to kill to the best advantage. We can't endure it, and we shan't do it."

This repugnance to stake the lives of South Carolina patricians against the lives of low-born mercenaries was a feeling that I frequently heard expressed. It was betting guineas against pennies, and on a limited stock of guineas.

Other men, anti-secessionists even, assured me that war was inevitable, that Fort Sumter would be attacked, that the volunteers were panting for the strife, that Governor Pickens was excessively unpopular because of his peaceful inclinations, and that he would soon be forced to give the signal for battle. Once or twice I was seriously invited to stay a few days longer, in order to witness the struggle and victory of South Carolina. However, it was clear that the enthusiasm and confidence of the people were no longer what they had been. Several dull and costly weeks had passed since the passage of the secession ordinance. Stump-speeches, torchlight-processions, fireworks, and other jublations, were among bygone things. The flags were falling to pieces, and the palmettos withering, unnoticed except by strangers. Men had begun to realize that a hurrah is not sufficient to carry out a great revolution successfully; that the work which they had undertaken was weightier, and the reward of it more distant, if not more doubtful, than they had supposed. The political prophets had been forced, like the Millerites, to ask an extension for their predictions. The anticipated fleet of cotton-freighters had not arrived from Europe, and the expected twelve millions of foreign gold had not refilled the collapsed banks. The daily expenses were estimated at twenty thousand dollars; the treasury was in rapid progress of depletion; and as yet no results. It is not wonderful, that, under these circumstances, the most enthusiastic secessionists were not gay, and that the general physiognomy of the city was sober, not to say troubled. It must not be understood, however, that there was any visible discontent or even discouragement. "We are suffering in our affairs," said a business-man to me; "but you will hear no grum-

bling." "We expect to be poor, very poor, for two or three years," observed a lady; "but we are willing to bear it, for the sake of the noble and prosperous end." "Our people do not want concessions, and will never be tempted back into the Union," was the voice of every private person, as well as of the Legislature. "I hope the Republicans will offer no compromise," remarked one excellent person who has not favored the revolution. "They would be sure to see it rejected: that would humiliate them and anger them; then there would be more danger of war."

Hatred of Buchanan, mingled with contempt for him, I found almost universal. If any Northerner should ever get into trouble in South Carolina because of his supposed abolition tendencies, I advise him to bestow a liberal cursing on our Old Public Functionary, assuring him that he will thereby not only escape tar and feathers, but acquire popularity. The Carolinians called the then President double-faced and treacherous, hardly allowing him the poor credit of being a well-intentioned imbecile. Why should they not consider him false? Up to the garrisoning of Fort Sumter he favored the project of secession full as decidedly as he afterwards crossed it. Did he think that he was laying a train to blow the Republicans off their platform, and leave off his labor in a fright, when he found that the powder-bags to be exploded had been placed under the foundations of the Union? The man who could explain Mr. Buchanan would have a better title than Daniel Webster to be called The Great Expounder.

During the ten days of my sojourn, Charleston was full of surprising reports and painful expectations. If a door slammed, we stopped talking, and looked at each other; and if the sound was repeated, we went to the window and listened for Fort Sumter. Every strange noise was metamorphosed by the watchful ear into the roar of cannon or the rush of soldiery. Women trembled at the salutes which were fired in honor of the secession of other States, fearing lest the struggle had commenced and the dearly-loved son or brother in volunteer uniform was already under the storm of the columbiads. One day, a reinforcement was coming to Anderson, and the troops must attack him before it arrived; the next day, Florida had assaulted Fort Pickens, and South Carolina was bound to dash her bare bosom against Fort Sumter. The batteries were strong enough to make a breach; and then again, the best authorities had declared them not strong enough. A columbiad throwing a ball of one hundred and twenty pounds, sufficient to crack the strongest embrasures, was on its way from some unknown region. An Armstrong gun capable of carrying ten miles had arrived or was about to arrive. No one inquired whether Governor Pickens had suspended the law of gravitation in South Carolina, in view of the fact that ordinarily an Armstrong gun will not carry five miles,—nor whether, in such case, the guns of Fort Sumter might not also be expected to double their range. Major Anderson was a Southerner, who would surrender rather than shed the blood of fellow-Southerners. Major Anderson was an army-officer, incapable by his professional education of comprehending State rights, angry because he had been charged with cowardice in withdrawing from Fort Moultrie, and resolved to defend himself to the death.

In the meantime, the city papers were strangely deficient in local news concerning the revolution,—possibly from a fear of giving valuable military information to the enemy at Washington. Uselessly did I study them for particulars concerning the condition of the batteries, and the number of guns and troops,—finding little in them but mention of parades, soldierly festivities, offers of service by enthusiastic citizen's, and other like small business. I thought of visiting the islands, but heard that strangers were closely watched there, and that a permit from authority to enter the forts was difficult to obtain. Fortune, or rather, misfortune, favored me in this matter.

After passing six days in Charleston, hearing much that was extraordinary, but seeing little, I left in the steamer *Columbia* for New York. The main opening to the harbor, or Ship Channel, as it is called, being choked with sunken vessels, and the Middle Channel little known, our only resource for exit was Maffitt's Channel, a narrow strip of deep water closely skirting Sullivan's Island. It was half-past six in the morning, slightly misty and very quiet. Passing Fort Sumter, then Fort Moultrie, we rounded a low break-water, and attempted to take the channel. I have heard a half-dozen reasons why we struck; but all I venture to affirm is that we did strike. There was a bump; we hoped it was the last : — there was another; we hoped again:—there was a third; we stopped. The wheels rolled and surged, bringing the fine sand from the bottom and changing the green waters to yellow; but the *Columbia* remained inert under the gray morning sky, close alongside of the brown, damp beach of Sullivan's Island. There was only a faint breeze, and a mere ripple of a sea; but even those slight forces swung our stern far enough toward the land to complete our helplessness. We lay broadside to the shore, in the centre of a small crescent or cove, and, consequently, unable to use our engines without forcing either bow or stern higher up on the sloping bottom. The *Columbia* tried to advance, tried to back water, and then gave up the contest, standing upright on her flat flooring with no motion beyond an occasional faint bumping. The tug-boat *Aid*, half a mile ahead of us, cast off from the vessel which it was taking out, and came to our assistance. Apparently it had been engaged during the night in watching

the harbor; for on deck stood a score of volunteers in gray overcoats, while the naval-looking personage with grizzled whiskers who seemed to command was the same Lieutenant Coate who transferred the revenue-cutter *Aiken* from the service of the United States to that of South Carolina. The *Aid* took hold of us, broke a large new hawser after a brief struggle, and then went up to the city to report our condition.

The morning was lowery, with driving showers running through it from time to time, and an atmosphere penetratingly damp and cheerless. On the beach two companies of volunteers were drilling in the rain, no doubt getting an appetite for breakfast. Without uniforms, their trousers tucked into their boots, and here and there a white blanket fastened shawl-like over the shoulders, they looked, as one of our passengers observed, like a party of returned Californians. Their line was uneven, their wheeling excessively loose, their evolutions of the simplest and yet awkwardly executed. Evidently they were newly embodied, and from the country; for the Charleston companies are spruce in appearance and well drilled. Half a dozen of them, who had been on sentinel duty during the night, discharged their guns in the air,—a daily process, rendered necessary by the moist atmosphere of the harbor at this season; and then, the exercise being over, there was a general scamper for the shelter of a neighboring cottage, low-roofed and surrounded by a veranda after the fashion of Sullivan's Island. Within half an hour they reappeared in idle squads, and proceeded to kill the heavy time by staring at us as we stared at them. One individual, learned in sea-phrases, insulted our misfortune by bawling, "Ship ahoy!" A fellow in a red shirt, who looked more like a Bowery *bhoy* than like a Carolinian, hailed the captain to know if he might come aboard; whereupon he was surrounded by twenty others, who appeared to question him and confound him until he thought it best to disappear unostentatiously. I conjectured that he was a hero of Northern birth, who had concluded to run away, if he could do it safely.

When we tired of the volunteers, we looked at the harbor and its inanimate surroundings. A ship from Liverpool, a small steamer from Savannah, and a schooner or two of the coasting class passed by us toward the city during the day, showing to what small proportions the commerce of Charleston had suddenly shrunk. On shore there seemed to be no population aside from the volunteers. Sullivan's Island is a summer resort, much favored by Charlestonians in the hot season, because of its coolness and healthfulness, but apparently almost uninhabited in winter, notwithstanding that it boasts a village called Moultrieville. Its hundred cottages are mostly of one model, square, low-roofed, a single story in height, and surrounded by a veranda, a portion of which is in some instances in-closed by blinds so as to add to the amount of shelter. Paint has been sparingly used, when applied at all, and is seldom renewed, when weather-stained. The favorite colors, at least those which most strike the eye at a distance, are green and yellow. The yards are apt to be full of sand-drifts, which are much prized by the possessors, with whom it is an object to be secured from high tides and other more permanent aggressions of the ocean. The whole island is but a verdureless sand-drift, of which the outlines are constantly changing under the influence of winds and waters. Fort Moultrie, once close to the shore, as I am told, is now a hundred yards from it; while, half a mile off, the sea flows over the site of a row of cottages not long since washed away. Behind Fort Moultrie, where the land rises to its highest, appears a continuous foliage of the famous palmettos, a low palm, strange to the Northern eye, but not beautiful, unless to those who love it for its associations. Compared with its brothers of the East, it is short, contracted in outline, and deficient in waving grace.

The chill mist and drizzling



Columbia ashore Sullivan's Island, by Alfred R. Waud
(Library of Congress Civil War Drawing Collection)
Fort Sumter in background

rain frequently drove us under cover. While enjoying my cigar in the little smoking-room on the promenade-deck, I listened to the talk of four players of euchre, two of them Georgians, one a Carolinian, and one a pro-slavery New-Yorker.

"I wish the Capin would invite old Greeley on board his boat in New York," said the Gothamite, "and then run him off to Charleston. I 'd give ten thousand dollars towards paying expenses; that is, if they could do what they was a mind to with him."

"I reckon a little more 'n ten thousand dollars 'd do it," grinned Georgian First.

"They 'd cut him up into little bits," pursued the New Yorker.

"They 'd worry him first like a cat does a mouse," added the Carolinian.

"I'd rather serve Beecher or — what 's his name? — Cheever, that trick," observed Georgian Second. "It's the cussed parsons that 's done all the mischief. Who played that bower? Yours, eh? My deal."

"I want to smash up some of these dam' Black Republicans," resumed the New-Yorker. "I want to see the North suffer some. I don't care, if New York catches it. I own about forty thousand dollars' worth of property in — Street, and I want to see the grass growing all round it. Blasted, if I can get a hand any way!"

"I say, we should be in a tight place, if the forts went to firing now," suggested the Carolinian. "Major Anderson would have a fair chance at us, if he wanted to do us any harm."

"Damn Major Anderson!" answered the New Yorker. "I 'd shoot him myself, if I had a chance. I've heard about Bob Anderson till I 'm sick of it."

Of this fashion of conversation you may hear any desired amount at the South, by going among the right sort of people. Let us take it for granted, without making impertinent inquiry, that nothing of the kind is ever uttered in any other country, whether in pothouse or parlor. I suppose that such remarks seem very horrid to ladies and other gentle-minded folk, who perhaps never heard the like in their lives, and imagine, when they see the stuff on paper, that it is spoken with scowling brows, through set teeth, and out of a heart of red-hot passion. The truth is, that these ferocious phrases are generally drawled forth in an *ex-officio* tone, as if the speaker were rather tired of that sort of thing, meant nothing very particular by it, and talked thus only as a matter of fashion. It will be observed that the most violent of these politicians was a New Yorker. I am inclined to pronounce, also, that the two Georgians were by birth New Englanders. The Carolinian was the most moderate of the company, giving his attention chiefly to the game. and throwing out his one re-mark concerning the worrying of Greeley with an air of simply civil assent to the general meaning of the conversation, as an exchange of anti-abolition sentiments. "If you will play that card," he seemed to say, "I follow suit as a mere matter of course."

There was a second attempt to haul us off at sunset, and a third in the morning, both unsuccessful. Each tide, though stormless, carried the *Columbia* a little higher up the beach; and the tugs, trying singly to move her, only broke their hawsers and wasted precious time. Fortunately, the sea continued smooth; so that the ship escaped a pounding. On Saturday, at eleven, twenty-eight hours after we struck, all hope of getting off without discharging cargo having been abandoned, we passengers were landed on Sullivan's Island, to make our way back to Charleston. Our baggage was forwarded to the ferry in carts, and we followed at leisure on foot. In company with Georgian First and a gentleman from Brooklyn, I strolled over the sand-rolls, damp and hard now with a week's rain, passed one or two of the tenantless summer-houses, and halted beside the *glacis* of Fort Moultrie. I do not wonder that Major Anderson did not consider his small force safe within this fortification. It is overlooked by neighboring sand-hills and by the houses of Moultrieville, which closely surround it on the land side, while its ditch is so narrow and its rampart so low that a ladder of twenty-five feet in length would reach from the outside of the former to the summit of the latter. A fire of sharp-shooters from the commanding points, and two columns of attack, would have crushed the feeble garrison. No military movement could be more natural than the retreat to Fort Sumter. What puzzles one, especially on the spot, and what nobody in Charleston could explain to me, is the fact that this manœuvre could be executed unobserved by the people of Moultrieville, few as they are, and by the guard-boats which patrolled the harbor.

On the eastern side of the fort two or three dozen negroes were engaged in filling canvas bags with sand, to be used in forming temporary embrasures. One lad of eighteen, a dark mulatto, presented the very remarkable peculiarity of chest-nut hair, only slightly curling. The others were nearly all of the true field-hand type, aboriginal black, with dull faces, short and thick forms, and an air of animal contentment or at least indifference. They talked little, but giggled a great deal, snatching the canvas bags from each other, and otherwise showing their disbelief in the doctrine of all work and no play. When the barrows were sufficiently filled to suit their weak ideal of a load, a pro-

cession of them set off along a plank cause-way leading into the fort, observing a droll semblance of military precision and pomp, and forcing a passage through lounging unmilitary buckras with an air of, "Out of de way, Ole Dan Tacker!" We glanced at the yet unfinished ditch, half full of water, and walked on to the gateway. A grinning, skipping negro drummer was showing a new pair of shoes to the tobacco-chewing, jovial youth who stood, or rather sat, sentinel.

"How 'd you get hold of *them*?" asked the latter, surveying the articles admiringly.

"Got a special order from the Cap 'm fur 'um. That ee way to do it. Won't wet through, no matter how it rain. He, he ! I 'm all right now."

Here he showed ivory to his ears, cut a caper, and danced into the fort.

"D-a-m' nig-ger!" grinned the sentinel, approvingly, looking at us to see if we also enjoyed the incident. Thus introduced to the temporary guardian of the fort, we told him that we were from the *Columbia*,—which he was glad to hear of; wanting to know if she was damaged, how she went ashore, whether she could get off, etc., etc. He was a fair specimen of the average country Southerner, lounging, open to address, and fond of talk.

"I've no authority to let' you in," he said, when we asked that favor; "but I'll call the corporal of the guard."

"If you please."

"Corporal of the guard!"

Appeared the corporal, who civilly heard us, and went for the lieutenant of the guard. Presently a blonde young officer, with a pleasant face, somewhat Irish in character, came out to us, raising his forefinger in military salute.

"We should like to go into the fort, if it is proper," I said. "We ask hospitality the more boldly, because we are ship-wrecked people."

"It is against the regulations. However, I venture to take the responsibility," was the obliging answer.

We passed in, and wandered unwatched for half an hour about the irregular, many-angled fortress. One-third of the interior is occupied by two brick barracks, covered with rusty stucco, and by other brick buildings, as yet incomplete, which I took to be of the nature of magazines. On the walls, gaping landward as well as seaward, are thirty or thirty-five iron cannon, all *en barbette*, but protected toward the harbor by heavy piles of sand-bags, fenced up either with barrels of sand or palmetto-logs driven firmly into the rampart. Four eight-inch columbiads, carrying sixty-four pound balls, pointed at Fort Sumter. Six other heavy pieces, Paixhans, I believe, faced the neck of the harbor. The remaining armament is of lighter calibre, running, I should judge, from forty-twos down to eighteens. Only one gun lay on the ground destitute of a carriage. The place will stand a great deal of battering; for the walls are nearly hidden by the sand-covered *glacis*, which would catch and smother four point-blank shots out of five, if discharged from a distance. Against shells, however, it has no resource; and one mortar would make it a most unwholesome residence.

"What 's this?" asked a volunteer, in homespun gray uniform, who, like ourselves, had come in by courtesy.

"That's the butt of the old flag staff," answered a comrade. "Cap'n Foster cut it down before he left the fort, damn him! It was a dam' sneaking trick. I've a great mind to shave off a sliver and send it to Lincoln."

The idea of getting a bit of the famous staff as a memento struck me, and I attempted to put it in practice; but the exceedingly tough pitch-pine defied my slender pocket-knife.

"Jim, cut the gentleman a piece," said one of the volunteers. Jim drew a toothpick a foot long and did me the favor, for which I here repeat my thanks to him.



Fort Moultrie, Charleston Harbor, by A. Vizitelly, 1861

(Library of Congress Civil War Drawings)

Fort Sumter in Background

They were good-looking, healthy fellows, these two, like most of their comrades, with a certain air of frank gentility and self-respect about them, being probably the sons of well-to-do planters. It would be a great mistake to suppose that the volunteers are drawn, to any extent whatever, from the "poor white trash." The secession movement, like all the political action of the State at all times, is independent of the crackers, asks no aid nor advice of them, and, in short, ignores them utterly.

"I was here when the *Star of the West* was fired on," the Lieutenant told us. "We only had powder for two hours. Anderson could have put us out in a short time, if he had chosen."

"How rapidly can these heavy guns be fired?"

"About ten times an hour."

"Do you think the defences will protect the garrison against a bombardment?" "I think the palmetto stockades will answer. I don't know about that enormous pile of barrels, however. If a shot hits the mass on the top, I am afraid it will come down, bags and barrels together, bury the gun and perhaps the gunners."

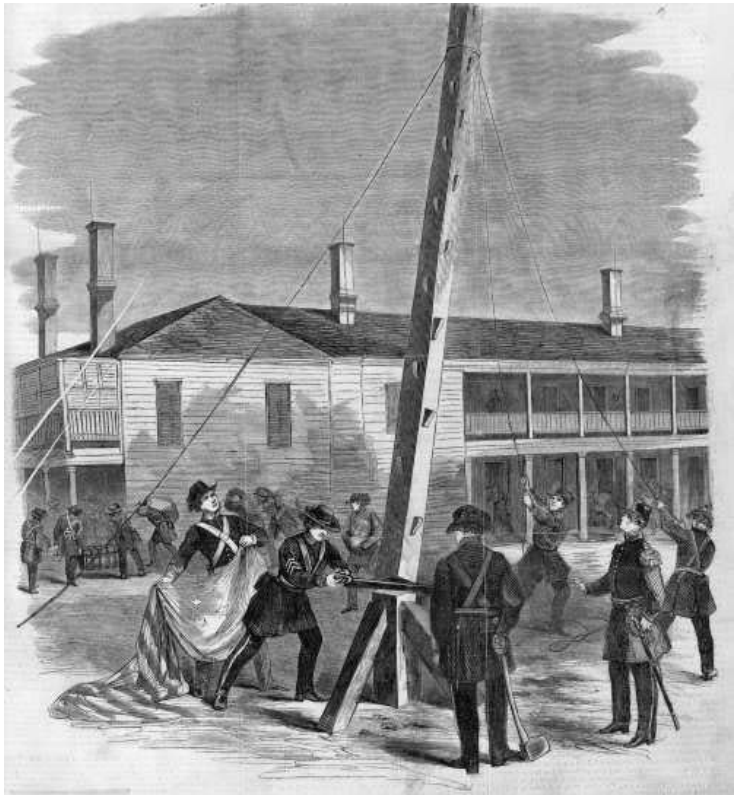
"What if Sumter should open now?" I suggested.

"We should be here to help," answered the Georgian.

"We should be here to run away," amended my comrade from Brooklyn. "Well, I suppose we should be of mighty little use, and might as well clear out," was the sober second-thought of the Georgian.

Having satisfied our curiosity, we thanked the Lieutenant and left Fort Moultrie. The story of our visit to it excited much surprise, when we recounted it in the city. Members of the Legislature and other men high in influence had desired the privilege, but had not applied for it, expecting a repulse.

A walk down a winding street, bordered by scattered cottages, inclosed by brown board-fences or railings, and tracked by a horse-railroad built for the Moultrie House, led us to the ferry-wharf, where we found our baggage piled together, and our fellow-passengers wandering about in a state of bored expectation. Sullivan's Island in winter is a good spot for an economical man, inasmuch as it presents no visible opportunities of spending money. There were houses of refreshment, as we could see by their signs; but if they did business, it was with closed doors and barred shutters. After we had paid a newsboy five cents for the "Mercury," and five more for the "Courier," we were at the end of our possibilities in the way of extravagance. At half-past one arrived the ferry-boat with a few passengers, mostly volunteers, and a deck-load of military stores, among which I noticed Boston biscuit and several dozen new knapsacks. Then, from the other side, came the "dam' nigger," that is to say, the drummer of the new shoes, beating his sheepskin at the head of about fifty men of the Washington Artillery, who were on their way back to town from Fort Moultrie. They were fine-looking young fellows, mostly above the middle size of Northerners, with spirited and often aristocratic faces, but somewhat more devil-may-care in expression than we are accustomed to see in New England. They poured down the gangway, trailed arms, ascended the promenade-deck, ordered arms, grounded arms, and broke line. The drill struck rue as middling, which may be owing to the fact that the company has lately increased to about two hundred members, thus diluting the old organization with a large number of new recruits. Military service at the South is a patrician exercise, much favored by men of "good family," more especially at this time, when it signifies real danger and glory.



Cutting down the U.S. flagstaff, under the direction of Major Anderson, at Fort Moultrie, Charleston Harbor, S.C., on Christmas night, 1860 from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, Jan. 19, 1861 (Library of Congress)

Our rajpoots having entered the boat, we of lower caste were permitted to follow. At two o'clock we were steaming over the yellow waters of the harbor. The volunteers, like everybody else in Charleston, discussed Secession and Fort Sumter, considering the former as an accomplished fact, and the latter as a fact of the kind called stubborn. They talked uniform, too, and equipments, and marksmanship, and drinks, and cigars, and other military matters. Now and then an awkwardly folded blanket was taken from the shoulders which it disgraced, refolded, packed carefully in its covering of India-rubber, and strapped once more in its place, two or three generally assisting in the operation. Presently a firing at marks from the upper deck commenced. The favorite target was a conical floating buoy, showing red on the sunlit surface of the harbor, some four hundred yards away. With a crack and a hoarse whiz the minié-balls flew towards it, splashing up the water where they first struck and then taking two or three tremendous skips before they sank. A militiaman from New York city, who was one of my fellow-passengers, told me that he "never saw such good shooting." It seemed to me that every sixth ball either hit the buoy full, or

touched water but a few yards this side of it, while not more than one in a dozen went wild.

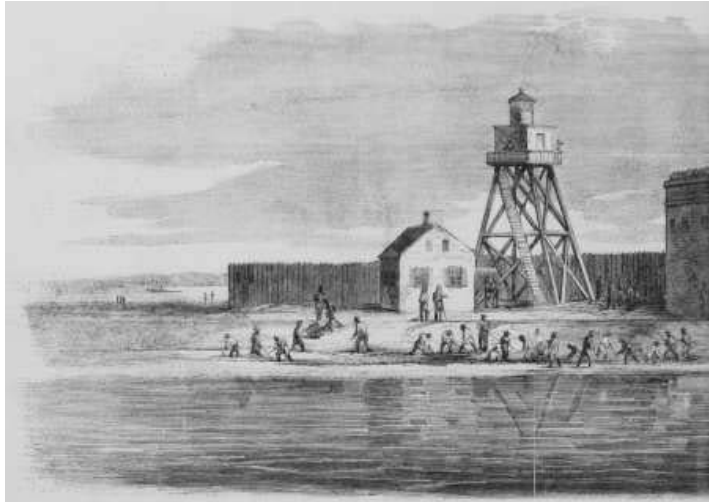
"It is good for a thousand yards," said a volunteer, slapping his bright, new piece, proudly.

A favorite subject of argument appeared to be whether Fort Sumter ought to be attacked immediately or not. A lieutenant standing near me talked long and earnestly regarding this matter with a civilian friend, breaking out at last in a loud tone, —

"Why, good Heaven, Jim! do you want that place to go peaceably into the hands of Lincoln?"

"No, Fred, I do not. But I tell you, Fred, when that fort is attacked, it will be the bloodiest day,— the bloodiest day! — the bloodiest — !!"

And here, unable to express himself in words, Jim flung his arms wildly about, ground his tobacco with



excitement, spit on all sides, and walked away, shaking his head, I thought, in real grief of spirit.

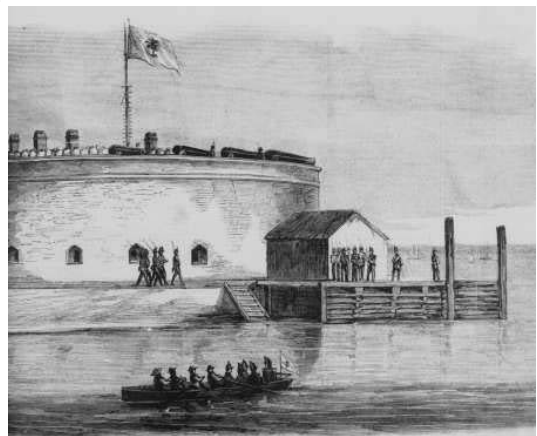
We passed close to Fort Pinckney, our volunteers exchanging hurrahs with the garrison. It is a round, two-storied, yellow little fortification, standing at one end of a green marsh known as Shute's Folly Island. What it was put there for no one knows: it is too close to the city to protect it; too much out of the harbor to command that. Perhaps it might keep reinforcements for Anderson from coming down the Ashley, just as the guns on the Battery were supposed to be intended to deter them from descending the Cooper.

On the wharf of the ferry three drunken volunteers, the first that I had seen in that condition, brushed against me. The nearest one, a handsome young fellow of six feet two, half turned to stare back at me with a—

"How are ye, Cap'm? Gaw damn ye! Haw, haw, awl!"— and reeled onward, brimful of spirituous good-nature.

Four days more had I in Charleston, waiting from tide to tide for a chance to sail to New York, and listening from hour to hour for the guns of Fort Sumter. Sunday was a day of excitement, a report spreading that the Floridians had attacked Fort Pickens, and the Charlestonians feeling consequently bound in honor to fight their own dragon. Groups of earnest men talked all day and late into the evening under the portico and in the basement-rooms of the hotel, besides gathering at the corners and strolling about the Battery. "We must act" "We cannot delay." "We ought not to submit." Such were the phrases that fell upon the ear oftenest and loudest.

As I lounged, after tea, in the vestibule of the reading-room, an eccentric citizen of Arkansas varied the entertainment. A short, thin man, of the cracker type, swarthy, long-bearded, and untidy,



Castle Pinkney, from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, Jan. 26, 1861 (Library of Congress)

he was dressed in well-worn civilian costume, with the exception of an old blue coat showing dim remnants of military garniture. Reeling up to a gentleman who sat near me, he glared stupidly at him from beneath a broad-brimmed hat, demanding a seat mutely, but with such eloquence of oscillation that no words were necessary. The respectable person thus addressed, not anxious to receive the stranger into his lap, rose and walked away, with that air of not having seen anything so common to disconcerted people who wish to conceal their disturbance. Into the vacant place dropped the stranger, stretching out his feet, throwing his head back against the wall, and half closing his eyes with the drunkard's own leer of self-sufficiency. During a few moments of agonizing suspense the world waited. Then from those whiskey-scorched and tobacco-stained lips came a long, shrill "Yee-p!"

It was his exordium; it demanded the attention of the company; and though he had it not, he continued:

"I 'm an Arkansas man, *I am*. I 'm a big su-gar planter, *I am*. All right! Go a'ead! I own fifty niggers, *I do*. Yee-p!"

He lifted both feet and slammed them on the floor energetically, pausing for a reply. He had addressed all men; no one responded, and he went on : —

"I'm for straightout, immedit ssession, *I am*. I go for 'staining coursh of Sou' Car'lina, *I do*. I 'm ready to fight for Sou' Car'lina. I'm a Na-po-le-on Bonaparte. All right! Go a'ead! Yee-p! Fellahs don't know me here. I 'm an Arkansas man, *I am*. Sou' Car'lina won't kill an Arkansas man. I'm an immedit ssessionist. Hurrah for Sou' Car'lina! All right! Yee-p I"

There was a lingering, caressing accent on his "*I am*," which told how dear to him was his individuality, drunk or sober. He looked at no one; his hat was drawn over his eyes; his hands were deep in his pockets; his feet did all needful gesturing. I stepped in front of him to get a fuller view of his face, and the action aroused his attention. He surveyed my gray Inverness wrapper and gave me a chuckling nod of approbation.

"How are ye, Bub ? I like that blanket, *I do*."

In spite of this noble stranger's good-will and prowess, we still found Fort Sumter a knotty question. In a country which for eighty years has not seen a shot fired in earnest, it is not wonderful that a good deal of ignorance should exist concerning military matters, and that second-class plans should be hatched for taking a first-class fortification. While I was in Charleston, the most popular proposition was to bombard continuously for two whole days and nights, thereby demoralizing the garrison by depriving it of sleep and causing it to surrender at the first attempt to escalate. Another plan, not in general favor, was to smoke Anderson out by means of a raft covered with burning mixtures of a chemical and bad-smelling nature. Still another, with perhaps yet fewer adherents, was to advance on all sides in such a vast number of rowboats that the fort could not sink them all, whereupon the survivors should land on the wharf and proceed to take such further measures as might be deemed expedient. The volunteers from the country always arrived full of faith and defiance. "We want to get a squint at that Fort Sumter," they would say to their city friends. "We are going to take it. If we don't plant the palmetto on it, it 's because there 's no such tree as the palmetto."

Down the harbor they would go in the ferry-boats to Morris or Sullivan's Island. The spy-glass would be brought out, and one after another would peer through it at the object of their enmity. Some could not sight it at all, confounded the instrument, and fell back on their natural vision. Others, more lucky, or better versed in telescopic observations, got a view of the fortress, and perhaps burst out swearing at the evident massiveness of the walls and the size of the columbiads.

"Good Lord, what a gun!" exclaimed one man. "D' ye see that gun ? What an almighty thing ! I'll be ———, if I ever put my head in front of it!"

The difficulties of assault were admitted to be very great, considering the bad footing, the height of the ramparts, and the abundant store of muskets and grenades in the garrison. As to breaches, nobody seemed to know whether they could be made or not. The besieging batteries were neither heavy nor near, nor could they be advanced as is usual in regular sieges, nor had they any advan-



Fort Sumter
Published by Currier & Ives
(Library of Congress)

tage over the defence except in the number of gunners, while in regard to position and calibre they were inferior. To knock down a wall nearly forty feet high and fourteen feet thick at a distance of more than half a mile seemed a tough undertaking, even when unresisted. It was discovered also that the side of the fortification towards Fort Johnstone, its only weak point, had been strengthened so as to make it bomb-proof by means of interior masonry constructed from the stones of the landing-place. Then nobody wanted to knock Fort Sumter down, inasmuch as that involved either the labor of building it up again, or the necessity of going without it as a harbor-defence. Finally, suppose it should be attacked and not taken? Really, we unlearned people in the art of war were vastly puzzled as we thought this whole matter over, and we sometimes doubted whether our superiors were not almost equally bothered with ourselves.

This fighting was a sober, sad subject; and yet at times it took a turn toward the ludicrous. A gentleman told me that he was present when the steamer *Marion* was seized with the intention of using her in pursuing the *Star of the West*. A vehement dispute arose as to the fitness of the vessel for military service.

"Fill her with men, and put two or three eighteen-pounders in her," said the advocates of the measure.

"Where will you put your eighteen-pounders?" demanded the opposition. "On the promenade-deck, to be sure." "Yes, and the moment you fire one, you'll see it go through the bottom of the ship, and then you'll have to go after it." During the two days previous to my second and successful attempt to quit Charleston, the city was in full expectation that the fort would shortly be attacked. News had arrived that Federal troops were on their way with reinforcements. An armed steamer had been seen off the harbor, both by night and day, making signals to Anderson. The Governor went down to Sullivan's Island to inspect the troops and Fort Moultrie. The volunteers, aided by negroes and even negro women, worked all night on the batteries. Notwithstanding we were close upon race-week, when the city is usually crowded, the streets had a deserted air, and nearly every acquaintance I met told me he had been down to the islands to see the preparations. Yet the whole excitement, like others which had preceded, ended even short of smoke. News came that reinforcements had not been sent to Anderson; and the destruction of that most inconvenient person was once more postponed. People fell back on the old hope that the Government would be brought to listen to reason,—that it would give up to South Carolina what it could not keep from her with justice, — that it would grant, in short, the incontrovertible right of peaceable secession. For, in the midst of all these labors and terrors, this expense and annoyance, no one talked of returning into the Union, and all agreed in deprecating compromise.

Once more, this time in the *James Adger*, I set sail from Charleston. The boat lost one tide, and consequently one day, because at the last moment the captain found himself obliged to take out a South Carolina clearance. As I passed down the harbor, I counted fourteen square-rigged vessels at the wharves, and one lying at anchor, while three others had just passed the bar, outward-bound, and two were approaching from the open sea. Deterred from the Ship Channel by the sunken schooners, and from Maffitt's Channel by the fate of the *Columbia*, we tried the Middle Channel, and glided over the bar without accident.

"Sailing to Charleston is very much like going foreign," I said to a middle-aged sea-captain whom we numbered among our passengers. "What with heaving the lead, and doing without beacons, and lying off the coast o' nights, it makes one think of trading to new countries."

I had, it seems, unintentionally pulled the string which jerked him. Springing up, he paced about excitedly for a few moments, and then broke out with his story.

"Yes, —I know it,—I know as much about it as anybody, I reckon. I lay off there nine days in a nor'easter and lost my anchors; and here I am going on to New York to buy some more; and all for those cursed Black Republicans!"

In South Carolina they see but one side of the shield, — which is quite different, as we know, from the custom of the rest of mankind.