

CHAPTER VI.

EFFECT OF ANDERSON'S MOVEMENT.

President Buchanan Aroused.—Excitement in Charleston.—The Situation at the Beginning of 1861.—Governor Pickens's War Measures.—“My heart was never in this War.”

Anderson's movement and the sudden uprising of the North put an end to the mission of the South Carolina commissioners. Governor Pickens seized Castle Pinckney and Fort Moultrie on the 27th, and the custom-house and other United States property on the 28th. Before leaving, the commissioners made a formal call upon the President. The latter expected some apology or explanation in relation to the high-handed outrages which had been perpetrated. Had they temporized, or even used conciliatory language on this occasion, it is possible the South might still have preserved the ascendancy it had always held in the councils of the President. Fortunately, they assumed an air of injured innocence, and required Mr. Buchanan to humble himself before them for the past, and give guarantees for the future by immediately ordering Fort Sumter to be vacated ; that is, by surrendering to the State all public property in Charleston harbor which had not been already stolen. For once, the President, whose personal integrity was called in question, was thoroughly roused, and made the only answer which suited the circumstances. He ordered a man-of-war to proceed to Charleston immediately, drive the State garrisons out of the forts, and take possession of the city. He might, indeed, have arrested the commissioners for high treason; but his Unionism was of a very mild type, and far from being aggressive.

One of the commissioners, Mr. Adams, hastened to telegraph to the authorities of Charleston, on the 28th, to prepare for war immediately, as there were no longer any hopes of a peaceful settlement.

This dispatch caused a great uproar and excitement in Charleston. The banks at once suspended specie payments. All was terror and confusion, for it was expected that a fleet would bombard the city and land troops, and there were no adequate means of opposing its entrance. Castle Pinckney, indeed, might offer some resistance, but as it had been a dependency of Fort Sumter, and unoccupied, little, if any, ammunition was kept there. The governor rushed frantically down to Fort Moultrie to hasten the preparations

for defense. Non-combatants were urged to leave Moultrieville at once. The laborers formerly employed by Captain Foster were again hired by the State engineers, and were kept at work thereafter, night and day, in piling up sandbags to shield the troops from the fire of Fort Sumter. The batteries at the northeastern extremity of Sullivan's Island, which were made up of a few old field-pieces brought from the Citadel Academy in the city, were hastily put in order to protect the entrance by that channel. As for Fort Moultrie, before we left we had rendered its armament useless. At this time the guns were still spiked, and the workshops in the city were going night and day to replace the gun-carriages that had been burned. In place of these, some of the guns and carriages were sent over from Castle Pinckney.

No attempt had been made to fortify the Morris Island channel, and vessels could enter there without the slightest difficulty. It took several days to transfer the guns and make the preparations I have mentioned. It follows, therefore, that if the Administration had acted promptly, Charleston could have been taken at once, and full reparation exacted for all the wrongs perpetrated against the United States. Why this was not done will be explained hereafter.

Foster had not been able to settle with all his workmen, and the rebels frequently sent them over under a flag of truce to demand their back pay and act as spies. I was enabled through this channel to keep up a correspondence with my wife, who was still in Moultrieville. I learned all that was going on there, and took occasion to inform her that we had no means of lighting up our quarters—a serious inconvenience in those long winter nights. She purchased a gross of matches and a box of candles, and had them put on board one of the boats referred to, in full view of a rebel sentinel, who was supervising the embarkation. She then requested one of the crew, an old soldier named M'Narhamy, who formerly belonged to my company, to deliver them to me, which he agreed to do. The sentinel stared, but the self-possessed manner in which she acted made him think it must be all right, and he did not interfere. The box arrived safely, and added very much to our comfort and convenience.

When the governor found that the spell of Southern supremacy was broken, and that there was no probability that we would be ordered back to Fort Moultrie, he was in a very angry mood. He stopped our mail for a time, and cut off all communication with us. We were, of course, prevented from purchasing fresh provisions, and reduced to pork, beans, and hard-tack. Anderson was quite indignant at this proceeding, and again talked of shutting up the port by putting out the lights in the light-houses.

While the leader, in the city complained bitterly to the public of Anderson for his perfidy in occupying Fort Sumter, they did not hesitate, among themselves, to express their admiration for his acuteness in evading the dangers and difficulties which surrounded him, and for the skillful manner in which he had accomplished it.

Our life now proved to be one of great hardship. Captain Seymour and myself were the only officers for duty as officers of the day, Lieutenant Davis and Lieutenant Hall serving under us as officers of the guard. The situation required constant vigilance. Lieutenant Talbot, being a great sufferer from lung-disease, was unable to do this kind of duty. We were, therefore, very busy during the day superintending measures for defense, and were obliged to be on the alert, and wide awake every other night, so that we were completely exhausted in a short time. Assistant-surgeon Crawford, having no sick in hospital, generously offered to do duty as officer of the day, and his offer was gladly accepted. The two young engineer officers, Snyder and Meade, were also willing to serve as

line officers; but Captain Foster thought it was contrary to precedent, and they were not detailed.

As the Engineer department is regarded in this country as the highest branch of the military service, and as its officers are really very able men, I can not conceive what induced them to build Fort Sumter without any flanking defenses whatever, and without fireproof quarters for the officers. The first defect I endeavored to remedy by projecting iron-plated, bullet-proof galleries over the angles of the parapet. I left small trapdoors in the bottom of these, for the purpose of throwing down shells on the heads of any party below attempting to force an entrance through the embrasures. The other defect—the presence of so much combustible matter in the quarters—it was impossible to remedy, and it ultimately cost the loss of the fort. The excuse that it never could have been anticipated that the fort would be attacked from the land side is hardly a valid one, for a foreign fleet might possibly have effected a landing on Morris Island ; or they might have set fire to the quarters from the decks of the vessels by means of incendiary shells.

As may well be supposed, there was a great deal of excitement in New York in relation to us; and, in view of the small number of men available for service in the regular army, three of the principal citizens, James A. Hamilton, Moses H. Grinnell, and I. E. Williams, offered, at their own expense, about the last of December, to send us four hundred picked artillerists from the citizen soldiery of the city; but General Scott refused to entertain the proposition.

On the 1st of January, 1861, we took an account of our resources, and found we had but one month's supply of fuel for cooking purposes, but few candles, and no soap. There was, however, a small lighthouse inside the fort, and we found a little oil stored there.

It seemed to me that the time had now come when forbearance ceased to be a virtue. Even our opponents were willing to acknowledge that we represented a legitimate government, and that both duty and propriety called upon us to resist the numerous war measures which the governor of South Carolina had inaugurated. He had taken forcible possession of two United States forts, of the money in the customhouse, of the customhouse itself, and of other national property in Charleston. He had closed the harbor, by destroying the costly prismatic lenses in the lighthouses, and by withdrawing the warning lightship from Rattlesnake Shoal. He had cut off all communication between us and the city, and had seized the United States mails. His steamboats, laden with war material to be used in erecting batteries against us, were allowed to pass and repass Fort Sumter, not only without opposition, but without even a protest. Worse than all, he had commenced imprisoning the crews of merchant vessels for contumacy in refusing to acknowledge his authority as the head of an independent nation. In vain did these vessels reverse their flags in a mute appeal to us to use our guns in their defense. Anderson would do nothing not even send a communication to the governor on the subject, although the latter, without authority from the State Legislature, was thus wielding all the powers of a military dictator. The enemy were greatly emboldened at our weakness or timidity, and with good reason, for they saw us stand by with folded arms, and allow steamboat loads of ammunition and war material to pass us, on their way to Morris Island, to be used in the erection and arming of batteries to prevent any United States vessels from coming to our assistance.

Major Anderson was neither timid nor irresolute, and he was fully aware of his duties and responsibilities. Unfortunately, he desired not only to save the Union, but to save slavery with it. Without this, he considered the contest as hopeless. In this spirit he sub-

mitted to every thing, and delayed all action in the expectation that Congress would make some new and more binding compromise which would restore peace to the country. He could not read the signs of the times, and see that the conscience of the nation and the progress of civilization had already doomed slavery to destruction. If he had taken this view of the situation, he would have made more strenuous efforts to hold on to the harbor of Charleston, and the one hundred and twenty millions of dollars, more or less, spent to regain it might still have formed part of the national treasury.

The applause which, both in the North and South, greeted his masterly movement of the 13th of December, made him feel more like an arbiter between two contending nations than a simple soldier engaged in carrying out the instructions of his superiors. To show the spirit in which he acted, it is only necessary to quote from his letter to Governor Pickens while the rebellion was still pending. He wrote: "My dear Governor, my heart was never in this war." This sentiment was repeated by him in letters to other parties, and, strange to say, was actually sent in the form of an official communication to the adjutant-general of the army.

The difficulties he experienced in his unavailing attempts to defer hostilities seriously impaired his health and spirits, and ultimately brought on the disease which kept him almost entirely out of service during the remainder of the war, and in all probability hastened his death.

However much I differed from him in regard to his proslavery sentiments, I take pleasure in stating that, aside from his political career, the graces of his private life were such as to win the esteem and regard of all who knew him.