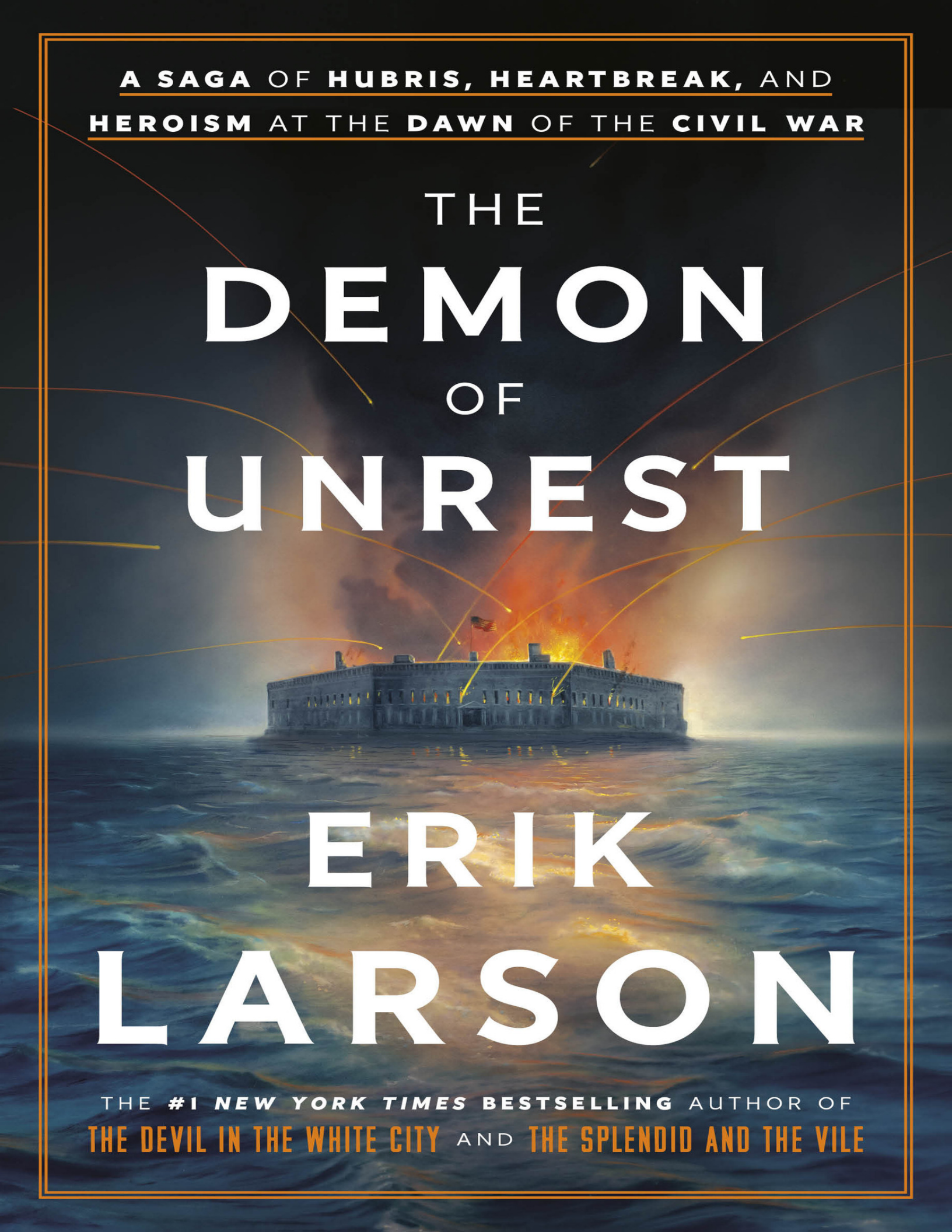
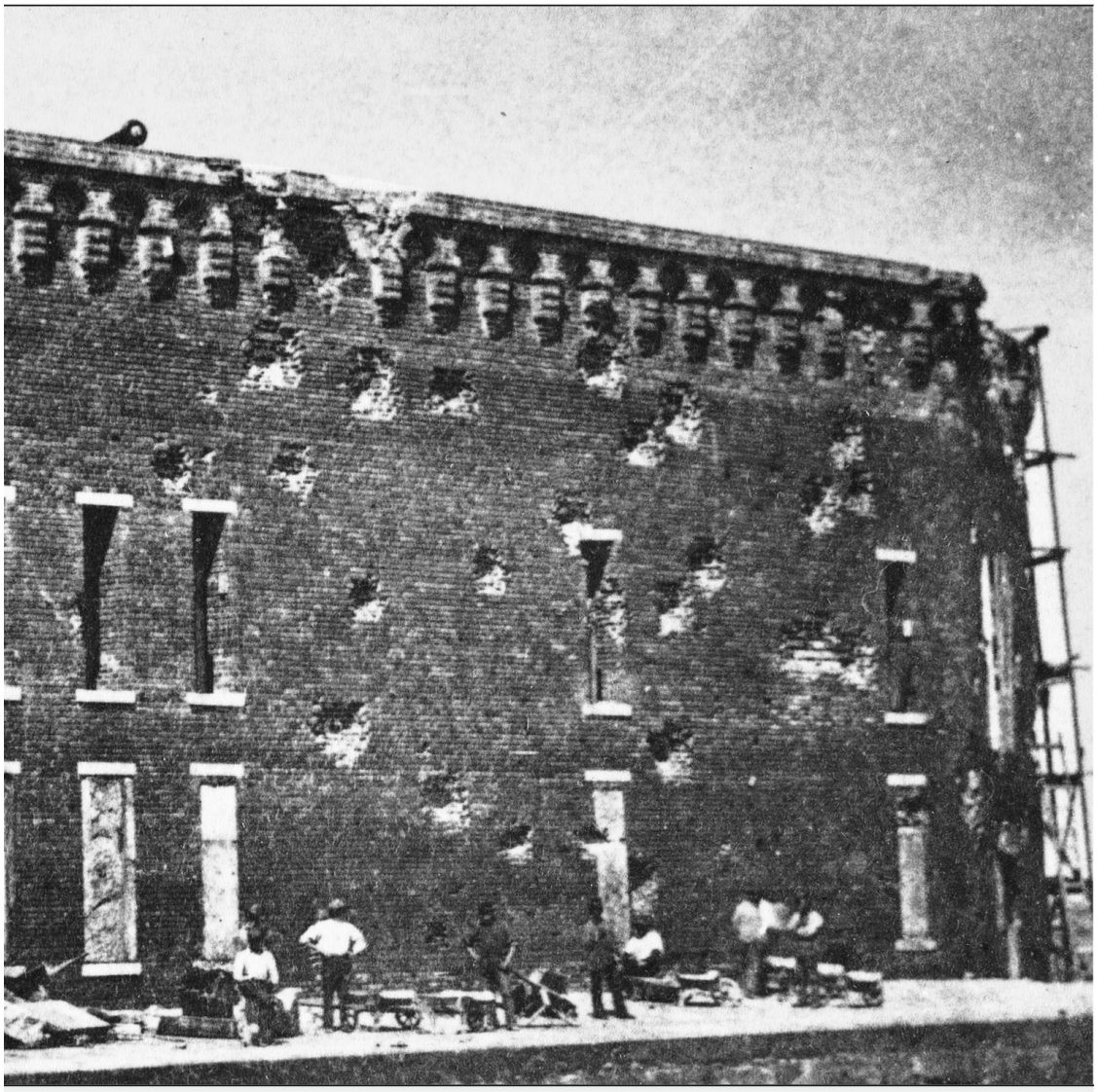
A SAGA OF HUBRIS, HEARTBREAK, AND HEROISM AT THE DAWN OF THE CIVIL WAR

THE DEMON OF UNREST



ERIK LARSON

THE #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY AND THE SPLENDID AND THE VILE



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Contents

DARK MAGIC

MAP

A BOAT IN THE DARK

PART ONE

THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

PART TWO

TREACHERY IN THE WIND

PART THREE

PRECIPICE

PART FOUR

JOURNEY

PART FIVE

COERCION

PART SIX

COLLISION

PART SEVEN

FIRE!

EPILOGUE: A TOAST

CODA: BLOOD AMONG THE TULIP TREES

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

NOTES

INDEX

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For C.A.G.

Slavery with us is no abstraction—but a *great* and *vital fact*. Without it our every comfort would be taken from us. Our wives, our children, made unhappy—education, the light of knowledge—all *all* lost and *our people ruined for ever*. *Nothing short of separation from the Union can save us*.

—ARTHUR PERONNEAU HAYNE TO PRESIDENT JAMES BUCHANAN, DECEMBER 22, 1860

We must settle this question now, whether in a free government the minority have the right to break up the government whenever they choose. If we fail it will go far to prove the incapability of the people to govern themselves.

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN, REMARK TO PRIVATE SECRETARY JOHN HAY, MAY 1861

Is any thing worth it? This fearful sacrifice—this awful penalty we pay for war?

—MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT, JOURNAL, JULY 26, 1864

Dark Magic

(A NOTE TO READERS)

I WAS WELL INTO MY RESEARCH on the saga of Fort Sumter and the advent of the American Civil War when the events of January 6, 2021, took place. As I watched the Capitol assault unfold on camera, I had the eerie feeling that present and past had merged. It is unsettling that in 1861 two of the greatest moments of national dread centered on the certification of the Electoral College vote and the presidential inauguration.

I was appalled by the attack, but also riveted. I realized that the anxiety, anger, and astonishment that I felt would certainly have been experienced in 1860–1861 by vast numbers of Americans. With this in mind, I set out to try to capture the real suspense of those long-ago months when the country lurched toward catastrophe, propelled by hubris, duplicity, false honor, and an unsatisfiable craving on the part of certain key actors for personal attention and affirmation. Many voices at the time of Sumter warned of civil war, but few had an inkling of what that might truly mean, and certainly none would have believed that any such war could take the lives of 750,000 Americans.

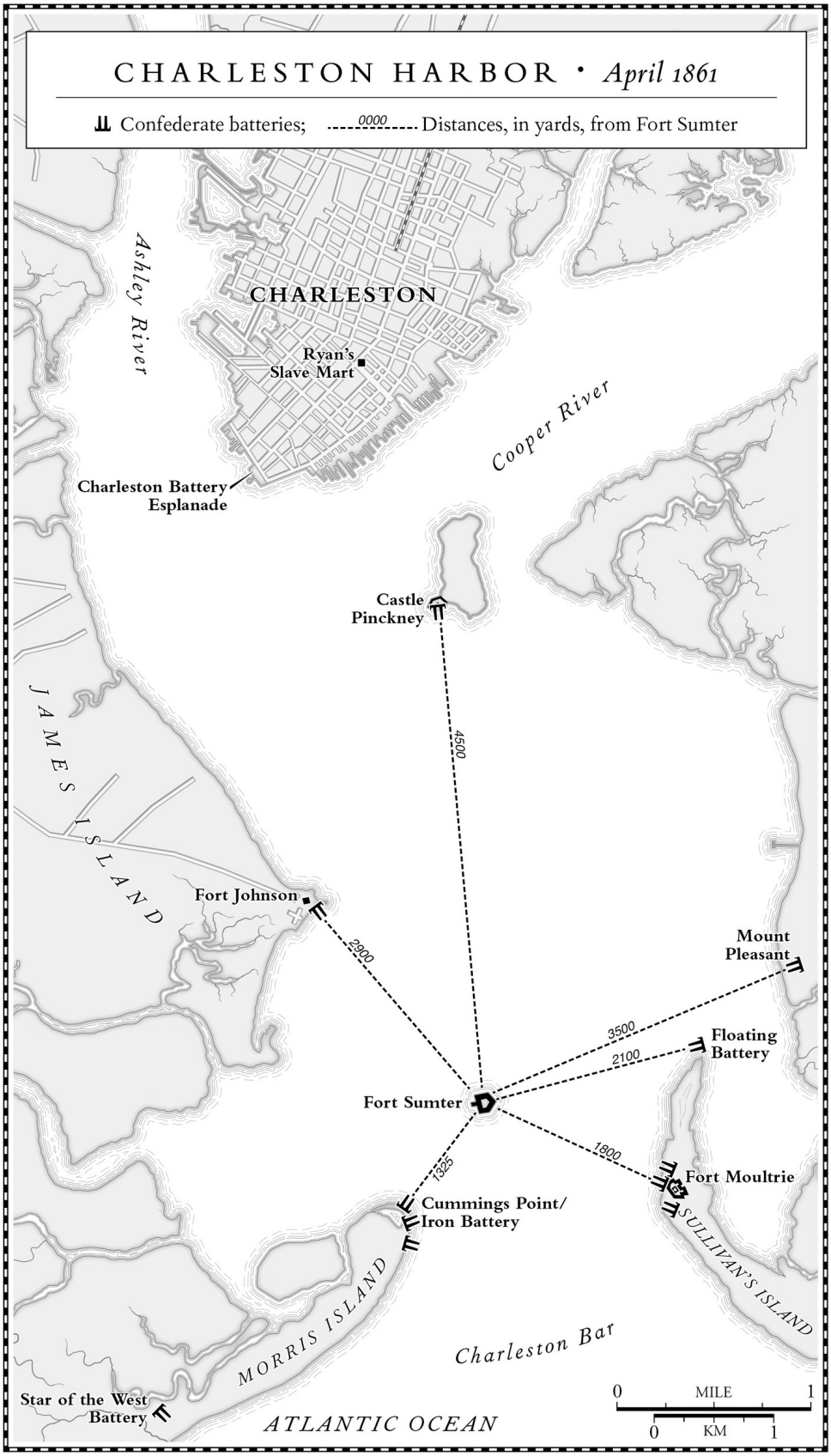
At the heart of the story is a mystery that still confounds: How on earth did South Carolina, a primitive, scantily populated state in economic decline, become the fulcrum for America's greatest tragedy? And even more bewildering, what malignant magic brought Americans on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line to the point where they could actually imagine the wholesale killing of one another?

This is a work of nonfiction. As always, anything between quotation marks comes from some form of historical document; likewise, any reference to a gesture, smile, or other physical action comes from an account by one who made it or witnessed it. In places I have corrected anachronistic spelling, capitalization, and punctuation to conform with modern usage. For example, I turned “&” into “and,” but only where that meaning was obvious. Lincoln’s charming misspellings remain unaltered.

I invite you now to step into the past, to that time of fear and dissension, and experience the passion, heroism, and heartbreak—even humor—as if you were living in that day and did not know how the story would end. I suspect your sense of dread will be all the more pronounced in light of today’s political discord, which, incredibly, has led some benighted Americans to whisper once again of secession and civil war.

—*Erik Larson*

NEW YORK, 2023


CHARLESTON HARBOR • April 1861
Confederate batteries; 0000 Distances, in yards, from Fort Sumter
Ashley River
CHARLESTON
Ryan's Slave Mart
Cooper River
Charleston Battery Esplanade
Castle Pinckney
4500
JAMES ISLAND
Fort Johnson
2900
Mount Pleasant
3500
Floating Battery
2100
Fort Sumter
1800
Fort Moultrie
1325
Cummings Point/ Iron Battery
SULLIVAN'S ISLAND
MORRIS ISLAND
Charleston Bar
Star of the West Battery
ATLANTIC OCEAN
0 MILE 1
0 KM 1

A Boat in the Dark

THE OARS WERE AUDIBLE BEFORE the boat came into view, this despite a noisy wind that coarsened the waters of the bay. It was very late on a black night. The rain, according to one account, "fell in torrents, and the wind howled weird-like and drearily." In recent weeks the weather had been erratic: seductively vernal one day, bone-wrackingly cold the next. One morning there was snow. For a week a strong gale had scoured the coast. The four enslaved men rowing the boat made steady progress despite the wind and chop, and hauled their cargo—three white Confederate officers—with seeming ease. They covered the distance from Charleston to the fortress in about forty-five minutes. Until recently, a big lantern incorporating the latest in Fresnel lenses had capped the fort's lighthouse, but in preparing for war, Army engineers had moved it. Now the lantern stood elevated on trestles at the center of the enclosed grounds, the "parade," where it lit the interior faces of the surrounding fifty-foot walls and the rumps of giant cannon facing out through ground-level casemates. From afar, at night, in the mist, the light transformed the fortress into an immense cauldron steaming with pale smoke. The boat reached its wharf at twelve forty-five A.M., Friday, April 12, 1861, destined to be the single-most consequential day in American history.

Over the last 113 days, the fort's commander, Maj. Robert Anderson, and his garrison of U.S. Army regulars, along with a cadre of men under Capt. John G. Foster of the Army Corps of Engineers, had transformed it from a cluttered relic into an edifice of death and destruction. It was still drastically undermanned. Designed to be staffed by 650 soldiers, it now had

only seventy-five, including officers, enlisted men, engineers, and members of the regimental band. But its guns were ready, nested within and atop its walls. Also, five large cannon had been mounted on makeshift platforms in the parade and pointed skyward to serve as mortars, these capable of throwing explosive shells into Charleston itself.

In those 113 days, this fortress, named for Thomas Sumter, a Revolutionary War hero, had become a profoundly dangerous place to invade and could have resisted attack quite possibly forever, but for one fatal flaw: It was staffed by men, and men had to eat. The food supply, cut off by Confederate authorities, had dwindled to nearly nothing.

—

ANDERSON WAS FIFTY-FIVE YEARS old, with a wife, Eliza (known universally as Eba), three daughters, and a one-year-old son, also named Robert. Anderson was clean-shaven, rare for the time, and this helped impart to his face a pleasant openness very unlike the hollow, axe-handle aspect of his Confederate opponent across the bay, his friend and former pupil Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard, who had taken command of all South Carolina military activities. Their relationship was courteous and cordial, almost warm, despite Beauregard's obvious willingness to kill Anderson and all his men if it meant furthering the cause of Southern independence.

Anderson adored his family and mourned the separation from them that was so often required by the Army. Thanks to income from Eba's family, they lived a life they could not have afforded on his salary alone. They owned a house on West Ninth Street in New York, but with Anderson's rising notoriety, Eba and the children moved into the nearby Brevoort House hotel, a luxurious five-story structure on Fifth Avenue. Their daughters went to boarding school in New Jersey, a measure meant, apparently, to ease the burden of child-rearing for Eba, who suffered from an indeterminate chronic illness, which Anderson in one letter described as her "long continued indisposition."

Eba's condition made Anderson all the more attentive to her. "What would I not give to *know* that you passed a comfortable night, and that you feel much better this morning," he wrote on one occasion. He was prone to loving endearments. "I do not know what I should do without you, my precious pet," or simply "my precious," or "my own dear little wife." To save her the physical strain of writing letters, he proposed a pact: He would continue to write to her every day in multipage, diary-like accounts, but she would be obligated to write to him only once a week.

Anderson was a deeply religious man. To Eba: "I pray that Our Heavenly Father may, ere long, rejoice my old heart by restoring you to health, such that we may be together as long as we live." He summoned the beneficence of God even in formal reports to the War Department. One of his officers wrote, "I never met a man who trusts more quietly and at the same time more contentedly upon the efficacy of prayer." Lately a consistent element of his prayers was a plea that war would not come.

On the stillest nights, at nine o'clock, Major Anderson could hear the great bells in the distant witch-cap spire of St. Michael's Church, bastion of Charleston society where planters displayed rank by purchasing pews. It stood adjacent to Ryan's Slave Mart, and each night rang the "negro curfew" to alert the city's enslaved and free Blacks that they had thirty minutes to return to their quarters, lest the nightly "slave patrol" find them and lock them in the guard house until morning.

Charleston was a central hub in the domestic slave trade, which in the wake of a fifty-year-old federal ban on international trading now thrived and accounted for much of the city's wealth. The "Slave Schedule" of the 1860 U.S. Census listed 440 South Carolina planters who each held one hundred or more enslaved Blacks within a single district, this when the average number owned per slaveholding household nationwide was 10.2. In 1860, the South as a whole had 3.95 million slaves. One South Carolina family, the descendants of Nathaniel Heyward, owned over three thousand, of whom 2,590 resided within the state.

Together these planters constituted a kind of aristocracy and saw themselves as such. They called themselves "the chivalry." As the

prominent South Carolina planter James Henry Hammond put it, they were "the nearest to noblemen of any possible in America." This idea was affirmed on a daily basis by the fact of their possession of, and dominion over, a subservient population of enslaved Blacks. But with this also came a deep fear that this population over which they exercised such stern rule might one day rise in rebellion. The 1860 census found that the state had 111,000 more enslaved people than it did whites; it was, moreover, one of only two states where this kind of imbalance existed, the other being Mississippi. Free and enslaved Blacks together accounted for over 40 percent of the population of South Carolina's chief city, Charleston, and this caused uneasiness among its white citizens. Planters built what were in effect backyard plantations with two or more out-structures housing kitchens, stables, and slave quarters and surrounded by high walls to limit the dangers of insurrection and midnight murder. Any enslaved person who worked outside these walls had to wear a special badge, a metal medallion—square, round, octagonal—stamped "Charleston," with the year, type of job, and an identification number pinned to clothing or hung around the neck. The effect of this overwhelming slave presence was immediately evident to travelers from the North. "How strange the aspect of this city!" one such visitor observed. "Every street corner, and door-sill filled with blacks; blacks driving the drays & carriages, blacks carrying burdens, blacks tending children & vending articles on the sidewalks; blacks doing all."

Not only did the state's planters call themselves "the chivalry"; they devoured chivalric novels, like Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. They held jousting competitions, called "heads and rings," where a rider bearing the name of one of Scott's or Tennyson's knights, wearing knightly garb and holding a long lance, would ride at full gallop and attempt to spear a series of dangling metal rings as small as half an inch in diameter, then draw his saber to take an exuberant swipe at the head of an inanimate figure at the end of the course. The chivalry gave themselves military titles and favored elaborate uniforms. Their South Carolina standard-bearer, novelist William Gilmore Simms, wrote eighty-

two novels in which chivalry and honor were central themes. Chivalry, to him, meant “gallantry, stimulated by courage, warmed by enthusiasm, and refined by courtesy.” The chivalry valued honor above all human traits and would happily kill to sustain it, but only in accord with the rules set out in the *Code Duello*, which specified exactly how a man suffering an abrasion of honor could challenge and, if he wished, murder another.

The chivalry, male and female, dressed in the highest fashion and rode magnificent horses over clean, well-tended streets, and promenaded nightly, starting at four o’clock, along the city’s Battery—“their Hyde Park, their Prater, and their Champs Elysées,” as one visitor put it. But time and steam had begun to upset this world. To outsiders, South Carolina seemed to have fallen out of step with the nation’s great march into what many called the Railroad Age. One marker: The Census Bureau’s tally of occupations counted 364 “railroad men” in the state as of 1860; in New York, by contrast, there were 6,272. In 1800, Charleston was the fifth-largest city in the United States; by 1860, the twenty-second. In the last decade the city had actually lost 6 percent of its population, mainly due to a decline in the number of enslaved inhabitants as planters sought better land elsewhere—in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi.

There was a growing fear that maybe South Carolina’s best days were behind her. Planters had once constituted the richest class in America, wrote Dennis Hart Mahan, a New York–born, Virginia-raised professor at West Point in a November 1860 letter to a friend. “But when commerce, manufacturers, the mechanic arts disturbed this condition of things, and amassed wealth that could pretend to more lavish luxury than planting, then came in, I fear, this demon of unrest which has been the utmost sole disturber of the land for years past.” Mahan, whose son Alfred would grow up to become a prominent naval historian, argued that rather than join the rush to modernity, South Carolina—“this arrogant little state”—had grown ever more insular. “That fine old, careless hospitality, the necessary accompaniment of a sparse and wealthy population, and all its concomitants of high courtesy and geniality, is no longer in keeping with this railroad age,” he wrote. “Men have no longer time to waste in mere talk and

dawdling through the livelong day, and even into the small hours of the morning."

If anyone cared to look, there was an analogy to be found in a new novel by Charles Dickens, called *Great Expectations*, just then being published in installments in an English literary weekly. The first installment appeared in December 1860. One of the book's key characters, Miss Havisham, seemed the perfect embodiment of South Carolina. Having been stood up at the altar, she retired from the world, stopped her clocks, wore her wedding dress forever, and even left her nuptial feast in place, rotting on the table. Jilted at the altar of the Railroad Age, South Carolina had retreated into its own world of indolence and myth.

—

THE THREE CAROLINA OFFICERS stepped onto Sumter's wharf, and did so gingerly, as their boat rocked below them. This was their second visit to the fort in twenty-four hours. On the first, they learned from Major Anderson that he and his men would soon run out of food and be starved into capitulation; the officers passed this on to the Confederacy's new secretary of war, Leroy Pope Walker, in Montgomery, Alabama, provisional capital of the Confederate States of America. Anderson's statement suggested a new path that might allow the state to gain control of the fort without violence. Walker authorized the officers to pursue it, and so, on this second visit, they told Anderson that if he would declare a date and time when he planned to evacuate the fort, the Confederate batteries arrayed around Charleston Harbor would stay silent and allow him and his men to leave safely. Over the prior three months, Confederate forces had installed new batteries of heavy artillery on opposing shores capable of firing on Fort Sumter from all directions.

While the emissaries waited, Anderson gathered his officers together and polled them as to how long they thought they could maintain possession of the fort without new supplies. Five days, they agreed, with

almost no rations on the last three. All of Anderson's officers voted to stay put and not surrender the fort before then.

Anderson wrote out his reply. He gave it to the Carolina officers at three-fifteen A.M., assuring them that he would indeed evacuate the fort but, rather than subject his men to needless suffering, would do so in three days, at precisely twelve noon on April 15. He added an important caveat: His pledge would hold provided that in the interim he did not receive "controlling instructions from my Government or additional supplies." Though vastly outnumbered and outgunned, Anderson pluckily added, "I will not in the meantime open my fires [*sic*] upon your forces unless compelled to do so by some hostile act against this fort or the flag of my Government."

This did not please the emissaries. They knew that a Union naval expedition had been dispatched to Charleston. They knew it because Lincoln had told them. On April 6, a courier had set out from Washington for Charleston to deliver to the state's governor, Francis W. Pickens, a succinct message: An expedition was on its way to supply the fort with provisions only and would make no attempt to transfer arms, ammunition, or troops unless the fort or the ships were attacked.

It was, on Lincoln's part, a clever gambit: He was sending food to starving men. Who could object? If the ships were allowed to deliver it unimpeded, peace would reign and Anderson and his men would have all the supplies they needed to continue holding the fort. If Confederate forces fired on the ships, however, they would in the world's eyes be the offenders, engaging in an act of dishonor, the very thing the chivalry were schooled from childhood to avoid. The Northern fleet was prepared: It carried two hundred soldiers, guns, and ammunition and included several of the U.S. Navy's most powerful warships.

To the Carolina officers, Anderson seemed to be stalling; they feared that the fleet might actually be an expedition of war and that Anderson knew it. As General Beauregard noted later in a formal report, it was "an imperative necessity to reduce the fort as speedily as possible, and not to wait until the ships and the fort should unite in a combined attack upon us."

“Reduce” was a polite military way of saying “destroy.”

The weather contributed to the Carolinians’ fears. The rain and deep darkness and the noise of wind and surf made ideal conditions for a covert passage through the harbor.

The officers read Anderson’s response on the spot. Yes, he had given what they’d asked for, a precise evacuation date, but his qualification rendered it moot. One officer, Col. James Chesnut, Jr., among the chivalry’s most-favored sons, resplendent now in a brilliant red sash and sword, wrote out a reply.

“Sir,” it read, “By authority of Brigadier-General Beauregard, commanding the provisional forces of the Confederate States, we have the honor to notify you that he will open the fire of his batteries on Fort Sumter in one hour from this time.” It was three-twenty A.M.

Anderson accepted this without comment. There was no anger, just civility and courtesy. This was, after all, an affair of honor, and there was no more important thing to Anderson and to the Confederate officers than honor. Anderson walked them to the dock and shook hands with each. “If we never meet in this world again,” he told them, “God grant that we may in the next.”

The officers departed. Their boat moved out over the black waters, the enslaved oarsmen again hard at work, but they did not steer toward Charleston. Instead, they rowed due west, toward James Island, twenty-three hundred yards away, where a battery of heavy mortars had been established in a colonial-era redoubt named Fort Johnson, once abandoned but now again ready for battle. The landscape around it lay newly barbed with cannon, mortars, and bombproof shelters, these installed by hundreds of captive workers whose labor was donated by their Charleston owners.

The officers made their way to a mortar battery and ordered its commander to prepare to fire one round at precisely four-twenty A.M., this to signal that the bombardment of Sumter was to begin. In the liturgy of honor, such precision was important: A gentleman was punctual.

—

AT SUMTER, ANDERSON ORDERED the garrison's distinctive American flag raised over the fort, its thirty-three stars arrayed in a loose diamond pattern in the blue field at its top-left corner. The flag was immense: twenty feet high by thirty-six long. He dispatched his own officers to awaken their men and give them the news. Just the day before he had directed them all to move their bedding into the protective shelter of the casemates, the virtually bombproof first level of the fort.

—

IN CHARLESTON THAT THURSDAY there was a wild dinner party, "the merriest, maddest dinner we have had yet," wrote Mary Boykin Chesnut, wife of the colonel then delivering the Confederate ultimatum. Dinner was an afternoon meal, generally around two or three o'clock; supper was in the evening.

Mary described the party in a red leather-bound book laced with gold leaf and defended with a brass lock that housed her daily journal. She kept it very private now and locked the book nightly, but in time it would become one of the most famous diaries of American history. In its pages she called her husband "JC" or "Mr. C."

"Men were more audaciously wise and witty," she wrote. "We had an unspoken foreboding it was to be our last pleasant evening."

The city had a festive yet anxious air. For Mary there had been teas and dinners all week. She dined with two former governors, a former U.S. senator (who flamboyantly quoted Sir Walter Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*), a former U.S. assistant secretary of state, a former judge, and myriad other scions of the best families at the pinnacle of society, including even a Pinckney—Harriott Pinckney, holder of 343 enslaved Blacks and "one of the last of the 18th century Pinckneys," Mary wrote. At one supper the fare was "pâté de foie gras, salad, biscuit glacé, and champagne frappé."

The usual society quadrille of house visits and return visits, with calling cards passed inward by Black house servants in white gloves, took on a relentless Rome-afire intensity. Carriages moved from house to house

driven by enslaved men in scarlet livery, with enslaved boys on the fenders to open gates. Planters who had been wearing ordinary clothing one day turned up the next in elaborate uniforms, red sashes glaring—their "soldier's toggery," as Mary put it. With so much tension in the city, she wrote, the atmosphere was "phosphorescent." The streets were full of soldiers in uniform marching and singing; at night she heard the heavy rumble of ammunition wagons moving over cobbled streets—no one could sleep. "The plot thickens," she wrote, using a phrase then in common usage but first deployed in a play two centuries earlier. "The air is red-hot with rumors," she wrote. "The mystery is to find out where these utterly groundless tales originate."

After one especially buoyant dinner where talk centered on the latest report that half a dozen U.S. Navy warships had massed in the Atlantic outside the harbor, Mary retreated to her room. "In any stir or confusion, my heart is apt to beat so painfully," she wrote in her diary. "Now the agony was so stifling—I could hardly see or hear. The men went off almost immediately. And I crept silently to my room, where I sat down to a good cry."

On that Thursday, April 11, while Mr. C and his two fellow officers shuttled to and from Sumter with their ultimatums, as rain fell, windows rattled, and men clattered about with their swords and red sashes, and ammunition wagons trundled toward the wharf and nightriders hunted stray Blacks, the fever of anxiety and war lust grew unbearable.

"Patience oh my soul—" Mary wrote, "if Anderson will not surrender, tonight the bombardment begins.

"Have mercy upon us, Oh Lord!"

Later: "I do not pretend to go to sleep. How can I? If Anderson does not accept terms—at four—the orders are—he shall be fired upon."

She lay awake. A church bell boomed four times. Silence followed. "I begin to hope," Mary wrote. At four-twenty, the actual time designated for the first shot, there was again only quiet.

—

AT SUMTER, CLOCKS TICKED, chronometer hands whirled, as one slow minute passed, then another.

PART ONE

THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

(1807–1860)

USE YOUR UTMOST EFFORTS TO allay all excitement which your principal may labor under; search diligently into the origin of the misunderstanding; for gentlemen seldom insult each other, unless they labor under some misapprehension or mistake; and when you have discovered the original ground or error, follow each movement to the time of sending the note, and harmony will be restored.

—JOHN LYDE WILSON, *The Code of Honor or Rules for the Government of Principals and Seconds in Duelling, 1858,* ALSO KNOWN AS *The Code Duello*

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

Cataclysm

NOVEMBER 6, 1860

A CANNON FIRED. SUNRISE. A FLARE of orange and a cumulus of smoke. Then another. Glass shook. Geese took flight. No threat here—it was Election Day, November 6, 1860, six months earlier. The cannon discharge was for the town to wake up and vote. This being Springfield, Illinois, in the heart of farm country in that climactic autumn, nearly everyone was already up, and nearly everyone would vote. It was a four-way race, the outcome uncertain but with Lincoln generally believed to be the frontrunner. If none of the candidates acquired a clear majority of votes, the election would be decided in the House of Representatives.

With the sound of the morning cannon there arose what one reporter called an "out-door tumult" as people began surging toward the city's only polling place, on the second floor of the Sangamon County Court House at Sixth and Washington. The owner of a nearby ice cream parlor opened his shop to a group of Republican women who laid out a feast of coffee, sandwiches, oysters, and cake.

Springfield was Lincoln's hometown. He walked the five blocks from his house to his campaign office, which, thanks to a courtesy by the governor, was located in the Illinois state capitol in a suite ordinarily occupied by the governor himself. At one point during the day Lincoln said

that elections in America were like “ ‘big boils’—they caused a great deal of pain before they came to a head, but after the trouble was over the body was in better health than before.” In Quincy, Massachusetts, Rep. Charles Francis Adams, an abolitionist ally of Lincoln’s and prolific diarist, marveled at how peacefully the day was progressing despite the passions roiling the country. “It is a remarkable idea,” he wrote, “to reflect that all over this broad land at this moment the process of changing the rulers is peacefully going on, and what a change in all probability.”

A cataclysmic change: If Lincoln won and the Republican Party took control in Washington, it would sweep out the administration of James Buchanan and the proslavery Democratic Party, which had filled most federal posts with men sympathetic to the South and its “peculiar institution.” The Democrats had held almost unshakeable control of both houses of Congress since 1833, at times with stunning majorities. In the latest complete session, which ended in 1859, Democrats held forty-two more House seats than Republicans; in the Senate they had a two-to-one majority. But suddenly Lincoln seemed to have a chance. Conflict within the Democratic Party had caused a rift that led Northern and Southern factions to propose presidential candidates of their own. In addition, a new Constitutional Union Party claiming to seek North-South rapprochement nominated a third candidate. And the Republican Party, fast gaining strength, nominated Lincoln. With four candidates dividing the field, Lincoln’s backers saw a clear path to the White House. The prospect of party change was by itself daunting for the slaveholding South, but the ascent of Lincoln made it terrifying. Many Southerners, egged on by activists known as “fire-eaters,” reviled Lincoln as a fanatical abolitionist whom they imagined to be hell-bent on making Blacks and whites equal in all things—an intolerable prospect, despite Lincoln’s repeated vow not to interfere with slavery in states where it already existed. So hated was he that ten Deep South states did not even include him on the ballot. The South’s most radical newspaper, the *Charleston Mercury,* urged that if Lincoln won, every slaveholding state should secede immediately.

At about three-thirty P.M. Lincoln strolled across the square to cast his own vote as adoring locals called out his various nicknames:

> OLD ABE,
> UNCLE ABE,
> HONEST ABE,
> GIANT KILLER.

This last was an allusion to one of his opponents in the race, Stephen Douglas, a man of diminutive stature but high intellect known to the public and the press as “The Little Giant.”

A crowd followed. Lincoln made it easy. His praying-mantis frame measured six-four without shoes or hat, yet he wore a black silk stovepipe all the same, and this increased his visible height to about seven feet. He climbed the stairs in a few long strides and approached a window designated for Republican voters. The crowd behind him swelled.

His private secretary, John Nicolay, recorded the scene in a memorandum that day. The courthouse steps, Nicolay wrote, “were thronged with People, who welcomed him with immense cheering, and followed him in dense numbers along the hall and up stairs into the Court room, which was also crowded. Here the applause became absolutely deafening, and from the time he entered the room and until he cast his vote and again left it, there was wild huzzaing, waving of hats, and all sorts of demonstrations of applause,—rendering all other noises insignificant and futile.”

At the window, the candidate announced his name, “Abraham Lincoln,” as if the clerk and everyone else in town did not already know him. He dropped his ballot in an adjacent glass bowl. In a demonstration of humility, he first snipped his own name from the paper ballot, so as not to appear to be voting for himself; he otherwise voted a straight Republican ticket. It took him an hour to make his way back downstairs and through the crowd to his office.

Soon news of the early returns began to arrive by telegraph. This chattering skein of wires—fifty thousand miles of it—had transformed communication. While not quite instantaneous, given the many points where messages had to be transcribed and relayed, it nonetheless passed for miraculous. Messengers brought the latest returns to the campaign office. The mood was subdued. “Lincoln never poured out his soul to any mortal creature at any time,” wrote William H. Herndon, his law partner. “He was the most secretive—reticent—shut-mouthed man that ever existed.” Those who knew him could tell, however, that the suspense was eroding his reserve. “Mr. Lincoln was calm and collected as ever in his life,” a friend and political advisor, Thurlow Weed, said, “but there was a nervous twitch on his countenance when the messenger from the telegraph office entered, that indicated an anxiety within that no coolness from without could repress.”

By nine P.M. the tension became too great even for the hard-to-ruffle Lincoln. It was full-on dark by then, the streets ill lit and soft from rain. Accompanied by secretary Nicolay and two friends, Lincoln walked over to the telegraph office and by invitation of the operators sat on a sofa near the receivers. Lincoln on a sofa was like a ship’s mast on a barstool, poised in an uneasy equilibrium between relaxation and structural collapse.

The messages arrived in code, as was the practice of the day. The operator transcribed them onto small pieces of paper the color of mustard. These were immediately snatched from his hands by others now crowding the room and passed along until eventually they reached Lincoln. The news was good and kept getting better. He took Chicago by twenty-five hundred votes; Connecticut by ten thousand; Pittsburgh by *at least* ten thousand. But the big question was New York.

First came a cryptic message from the chair of New York’s Republican Party: “The city of New York will more than meet your expectations.”

Lincoln left the telegraph office but then came back.

At last the crucial telegram from New York arrived: “We tender you our congratulations upon this magnificent victory.”

New York City had gone for Lincoln with enough of a majority to win the entire state, a big prize that would garner thirty-five electoral votes. Late in the evening Lincoln learned that he also won Springfield, where all four candidates were popular. He'd won it by twenty-two votes. At which point, as one observer noted, Lincoln at last allowed himself an expression of joy, "a sudden exuberant utterance—neither a cheer nor a crow, but something partaking of the nature of each."

And he laughed out loud.

The laughter did not last long. Nicolay watched him as the enormity of the moment sank in. He had all but won. "It seemed as if he suddenly bore the whole world upon his shoulders, and could not shake it off."

Elsewhere wild rumors circulated: Riots had broken out in New York City; Stephen Douglas was taken hostage by secessionists in Alabama; Washington was on fire. Across the South the most petrifying genre of rumors took root—those indicating that a widespread slave insurrection, the thing Southerners most feared, had begun. Word spread in Texas that abolitionists and enslaved Blacks were plotting the slaughter of white women while their husbands were out voting. For many in the South the election was the crucible event. A Lincoln victory, wrote fire-eater Edmund Ruffin in his diary, "will serve to show whether these Southern States are to remain free, or to be politically enslaved—whether the institution of negro slavery on which the social and political existence of the South rests, is to be secured by our resistance, or to be abolished in a short time." Ruffin dearly hoped—"most earnestly and anxiously desired"—that Lincoln would win, "because I have hope that at least one state S.C. will secede, and that others will follow." If the South did not resist, he wrote, "there never will be future maintenance of our rights—and the end of negro slavery may be considered as settled. I can think of little else than this momentous crisis of our institutions and our fate."

In Springfield there was revelry. Lights blazed in the Hall of Representatives in the state capitol building, Nicolay reported to his fiancée, Therena Bates, "and it was filled nearly all night by a crowd

shouting, yelling, singing, dancing, and indulging in all sorts of demonstrations of happiness as the news came in.”

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TELEGRAM AFTER TELEGRAM ARRIVED. By midnight the outcome became certain. It was a strange victory: Lincoln won more of the popular vote than any candidate, more in fact than any president had ever won—nearly 1,866,000 votes—but this was only 40 percent of the national total. With the race split four ways, however, it was more than enough. He took the Electoral College by a wide margin. Even so, the returns offered little hope for bridging the nation’s division. In those few Southern states where he was included on the ballot, he received few votes. In Virginia he won just over 1 percent; in Kentucky, the state of his birth, *less* than 1 percent.

At around two in the morning, Lincoln headed home. He found his wife, Mary, asleep. He touched her shoulder. No response. “I spoke again, a little louder,” he recalled later. “ ‘Mary, Mary! *We are elected!*’ ”

Shortly before this, however, as he was walking home, a friend heard him say, “God help me, God help me.”

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ALTHOUGH HE HAD CLEARLY won the election, Lincoln, ever the stickler for legal detail, could not quite settle into his victory. The final certification of Electoral College votes would not take place for another three months, on February 13, and given the rising unrest in the country, there was considerable uncertainty as to whether this would come off without strife. For one thing, in accord with the Constitution, the incumbent vice president, John C. Breckinridge, would conduct the count and certify the votes. Not only was Breckinridge a Southerner and slave owner, he had also been Lincoln’s closest competitor in the presidential race.

And the South did not like the outcome. For one thing, Lincoln’s election and the apprehension leading up to it inflicted a direct cost on the financial well-being of the South’s leading citizens, its planters. Cotton

prices fell, as did the market value of slaves, and this in turn limited the planters' ability to use them as security for mortgages and other investments. An "Extra No. 1" male who sold for $1,625 in Richmond over the preceding summer now sold for only $1,000, or 38.5 percent less. South Carolina reacted with particular fury. The day after the election, the state's most senior federal officials resigned their posts, among them federal judge Andrew Gordon Magrath. "In the political history of the United States, an event has happened of ominous import to fifteen slaveholding States," Magrath said upon resigning; he vowed that henceforth he would obey only the wishes of his own state. "So far as I am concerned," he said, "the Temple of Justice, raised under the Constitution of the United States, is now closed." Better that, he declared, than to have it "desecrated with sacrifices to tyranny." Magrath's act electrified the South.

To Lincoln all this rancor was a mystery. He could not fathom South Carolina's reaction. An election had taken place; he had won; America's greatest democratic tradition had been upheld. At no time had he threatened to abolish slavery or emancipate the millions of enslaved men and women who populated the plantations of the South. But fire-eaters and secessionist editors had portrayed him as seeking exactly that.

"What is it I could say which would quiet the alarm?" he wrote to a friend shortly before the election. "Is it that no interference by the government, with slaves or slavery within the states, is intended? I have said this so often already, that a repetition of it is but mockery, bearing an appearance of weakness, and cowardice, which perhaps should be avoided. Why do not uneasy men *read* what I have already said?"

But here Lincoln revealed his own myopia. What would soon become apparent was how little he understood the South, in particular the existential fear that its planter aristocracy harbored about his becoming president. This was especially the case in South Carolina, a state made desperate by an accumulation of forces both within and beyond its control.

CHARLESTON HARBOR

A Proper Commander

NOVEMBER 1860

COL. JOHN L. GARDNER, SIXTY-SEVEN years old, was growing increasingly worried. As commander of U.S. Army forces in Charleston, South Carolina, he was in charge of several forts and a federal arsenal, the most important of which, at the moment, was Fort Moultrie, a squat fortress on Sullivan's Island roughly four miles east of Charleston proper. It was here that an eighteen-year-old soldier named Edgar Allan Poe was stationed from November 1827 to December 1828, and where he later set his 1843 story "The Gold-Bug," about a man's hunt for the buried treasure of Captain Kidd. The other properties in Gardner's charge included Castle Pinckney, a small fort just off the city's waterfront, and Fort Johnson, an abandoned relic of the Revolutionary War. The biggest of them all was Fort Sumter, a "sea fortress" situated in the middle of Charleston's ship channel, currently manned only by laborers working on the seemingly endless task of finishing its construction, which had been underway for thirty years.

The presidential election had markedly intensified the secessionist mood of Charleston, causing Gardner to become concerned that Fort Moultrie could be seized even by a mob of armed citizens. The fort in its current state was uniquely vulnerable. It was designed from the start to defend against the ships of hostile foreign nations, with little attention paid to the

potential for an attack from behind by fellow Americans; as a consequence its rear flank faced open land that could be readily traversed by ladder-bearing ground troops arriving from the north and east—although in the fort's current condition the ladders would hardly be necessary. The sand hills behind it had risen to the point where enemy sharpshooters occupying their weedy summits could hold full sway over the fort's interior. Wind-driven sand routinely piled up so high against the fort's rear wall that cows from the surrounding neighborhood now and then wandered in over the ramparts.

Gardner had few soldiers, and these soldiers had few small arms. In a letter to the U.S. Army Ordnance Department in Washington on November 5, 1860, the day before Lincoln's election, he had recommended that his garrison at Sumter be issued muskets from the city's federal arsenal. But Gardner of late also began to worry about a threat closer at hand, this from the civilian workers at the forts, all free men, many of them immigrants from Europe, "of whom," Gardner wrote, "it is prudent to be somewhat suspicious." A total of 260 men worked on the forts, with 125 assigned to Sumter, far outnumbering the garrison's seventy-five officers and privates. Upon being questioned about their attitudes toward secession, Gardner wrote, the laborers had replied "to the effect that they were indifferent, and intimated that the largest bribe would determine their action, and they can, you know, discharge themselves of their public obligations at any moment, and thus be free to choose sides."

Gardner feared that the workers, if armed, might "unrestrainedly deliver up the post and its contents on a bribe or demand." Instead of guns, he urged, send troops: two companies, to occupy both Sumter and Castle Pinckney.

Gardner's superiors, meanwhile, were growing concerned about *him*, that he might not be the man for such a volatile situation. What was obvious, or should have been, to any observer was that sending troops to occupy Sumter in the current climate would be viewed by the Carolinians as tantamount to declaring war. Moreover, an inspection of Gardner's fiefdom conducted by a visiting Army official had revealed lapses in

management. The hospital and storage buildings at Fort Moultrie were aging wood-framed structures situated outside the fort walls “and not secured by the presence or watchful eye of a sentinel from the acts of evil-disposed persons. An incendiary could in a few minutes destroy all the supplies and workshops of the command.”

The fort’s obvious vulnerability invited attack, but now, thanks to Gardner’s lax management, even the act of shoring up its defenses risked inflaming the populace. A “proper commander” would have done it already, the inspector wrote; now the situation had grown precarious. “All could have been easily arranged several weeks since, when the danger was foreseen by the present commander,” the inspector wrote. He further reported that Colonel Gardner’s cadre of noncommissioned officers and privates, while evidently intelligent and obedient, “do not move with an alacrity and spirit indicating the existence of a strict discipline.”

In Washington, senior Army officials recognized that the colonel had to be removed and proposed to replace him with Major Anderson. A Kentuckian by birth and a former owner of enslaved laborers, Anderson was sympathetic to the South but staunchly loyal to the U.S. Army. He had taught artillery tactics at West Point and proven himself in battle in the Black Hawk and Seminole Wars of the 1830s, and in the Mexican-American War of 1846–1848, in which he was severely wounded. He was given light duty afterward, first with a garrison in Maine, then as governor of the Army’s Western Military Asylum at Harrodsburg, Kentucky, a job he loved, mainly for its proximity to family. An obscure Army rule forced him from the post. Before taking command in Charleston, Anderson had been promoted and assigned to help establish an “Artillery School of Practice” at Fort Monroe in Norfolk, Virginia, another important federal fortress, which guarded the U.S. Navy’s Gosport Shipyard. On May 4, 1860, he wrote to his wife proudly and with a tincture of irony that he had just received his epaulettes and his sash. “I am now ready for all duties,” he told her. He was apparently already well known to the public at large, for in October 1860 he received an invitation to a ball at New York’s Academy of Music to honor

the Prince of Wales, Queen Victoria's son, then in the midst of a tour of North America.

It helped, too, that Anderson knew Fort Moultrie well: Early in his career, in 1845–46, he had been stationed at the fort before moving on to a post in Florida. And the fact was, Anderson was ready for a change. His posting at the Fort Monroe Artillery School had proven unsatisfactory. He felt his talents were going unrecognized and his living quarters were not suitable to his rank. In October he asked to be relieved. A month later, on November 12, the Army's adjutant general ordered Anderson to report to Secretary of War John B. Floyd in Washington "without unnecessary delay." For the time being Anderson was living at his wife's Brevoort House apartment in New York, assigned to finish a handbook he was writing on best artillery practices.

Three days later, the Army issued Special Order No. 137: "Major Robert Anderson, First Artillery, will forthwith proceed to Fort Moultrie, and immediately relieve Bvt. [Brevet] Col. John L. Gardner, lieutenant colonel of First Artillery, in command thereof."

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CHARLESTON OCCUPIED THE END of a peninsula at the convergence of two rivers, the Ashley and the Cooper, which in turn fed a broad bay that stretched to the Atlantic. Most visitors arrived by train or by one of the many passenger steamships that plied the eastern seaboard. Anyone approaching by these steamers first had to cross the notorious Charleston Bar, a submerged triangular mass of shifting sand that the largest ships could only traverse at high tide, and even then only with the help of an experienced harbor pilot. The bar's southernmost portion, a persistent threat to shipping, had long been known as "the Coffin Land." Another hazard, to the north, was Drunken Dick Shoal, where at low tide great Atlantic breakers would lather the horizon. A number of channels crossed the bar, the deepest and best of which was the aptly named Ship Channel. Any captain whose vessel made it this far would find himself in a broad swath of

water between two barrier islands, Sullivan's Island (with Fort Moultrie) on the right, Morris Island on the left. Dead ahead lay Fort Sumter, a threatening presence despite the fact that its guns had yet to be mounted and its interior structures were far from complete.

At night, from the parapets at Moultrie, sentries could see the lights of Charleston's southernmost wards. These were the comeliest streets in the city, lined with two- and three-story homes embedded in rich, fragrant gardens. Many were encircled by airy verandas, which Charlestonians called piazzas. A few taller structures towered above these, including the city's two most luxurious hotels—Mills House and the Charleston—and the tall steeples of its most prominent churches, St. Philip's and St. Michael's. Wharves filled its eastern waterfront, where scores of masts and the tall smokestacks of steamships jutted into the sky, and where the grim slave ships of the now banned African trade once unloaded hundreds of men, women, and children at a time. Swamps and mechanical industries occupied the city's west front. The Battery and its beloved esplanade formed the city's southernmost end and was fronted by the mansions of the chivalry, filled with fine art and troves of silver and crystal, which, by local custom, the owners displayed with untempered ostentation.

But the streets were unpaved, and on hot, dry days breezes raised clouds of dust. An unexpectedly primordial source aided in the city's sanitation, as observed by one British visitor, John Benwell, author in 1857 of *An Englishman's Travels in America.* "As you walk the streets of Charleston, rows of greedy vultures, with sapient look, sit on the parapets of the houses, watching for offal," he wrote. The birds were protected; anyone caught killing one was subject to a ten-dollar fine. "They appeared to be quite conscious of their privileges, and sailed down from the house-tops into the streets, where they stalked about, hardly caring to move out of the way of the horses and carriages passing."

While Benwell seemed unlikely to choose Charleston as a place to live, one of his countrymen, author Charles Rosenberg, decided that he himself "should very decidedly relish settling" there, but with a caveat as to timing. The city had an heirloom quality; it seemed somnolent, "very staid and

remarkably slow," he wrote, as if it had fallen into the "Lethe," the mythical Greek river of forgetfulness or oblivion. That might be just the thing for an older man, he imagined, one who "had passed that fatal half-century which leaves man dragging on his path towards the tomb."

For many visitors, however, there was also an undercurrent of brutality they found hard to abide. Enslaved Blacks transported from the upper South in the extremely lucrative domestic trade arrived by ship and train, but also on foot in "coffles," groups of captive men, women, and children often tethered together with chains and iron collars. The city had thirty-two slave brokerages, which held frequent auctions. One traveler who out of curiosity paused to witness an auction found himself deeply repulsed. "The scene was most painful, humiliating, and degrading," he wrote. "I became quite affected myself, and was obliged to hurry away, for fear of showing what I felt." Out of concern for alienating visitors, the city had banned outdoor sales between 1839 and 1849, but then, in accord with the rise of the so-called proslavery movement, reinstated them. After all, if slavery was good, why be ashamed? But Charleston banned them again in 1856 because of increasingly vicious coverage in northern newspapers and abolitionist journals. On the day the ban took effect, an enterprising trader, Thomas Ryan, sensing opportunity, opened his Ryan & Sons Mart on Chalmers Street a few blocks from the waterfront, complete with a four-story "barracoon," a prison for holding captive Blacks until the day of sale. Locals called it "Ryan's n—r jail." It had a kitchen and, ominously, a morgue. In the big indoor showroom that fronted Chalmers, the enslaved climbed onto a platform three feet off the ground and about ten feet long to foster easier examination by buyers.

Ryan's Mart became the center of slave trading in Charleston and was used routinely by traders to sell enslaved Blacks of all ages, as on January 9, 1860, when the Mart hosted the sale of a "Prime Gang of 235 Negroes" from the estate of a once influential planter, Gen. James Gadsden. Buyers had to put down cash for one-half of the purchase price but could pay the rest through a twelve-month bond, effectively a mortgage secured by the value of the slaves themselves. A flyer for the sale identified them by name,

age, and whether they were attached to a family. Here were Chloe, eight months old, from a family of three, and Aesop, five months, from a family of seven. His parents, Caroline and Witty, and siblings Charlotte, fifteen; Cupid, eleven; Robert, six; and Peter, three; were also up for sale. The young ones were appreciating assets: As they grew up, their value would increase unless yellow fever or malaria—"autumnal fever"—killed them first. The list included an infant, unnamed, newly born to a family of five. The flyer also identified any skill or disorder deemed worth noting. A thirty-three-year-old male named Monday was identified as "dropsical"; a six-year-old boy, George, was "idiotic"; seventy-year-old Jara was blind; but Tom was a cooper, Henry a wheelwright, and Bess a cook.

None of this troubled Anderson, or his wife, for that matter. She, too, was born in the South—in her case the Deep South. Her father was Gen. Duncan Lamont Clinch, a Georgia planter, revered as a veteran of the War of 1812. On General Clinch's death, his lands went to his sons in accord with Southern law and custom, but he made sure to leave his daughter a robust income and some twenty-nine enslaved Blacks, who remained in Georgia. The Andersons appear to have sold these in 1860, reportedly for $1,300, or an average of forty-five dollars each, a steep discount considering that by then the price in Georgia for a *single* "prime" field hand ran as high as $1,800. A Charleston steamboat was named for Eba's father: the *General Clinch*.

Anderson felt no enmity for the South, per se, though he had little patience for the antics of South Carolina. In a letter from Fort Sumter to an old friend in Washington he wrote, "Like yourself my sympathies are in the matter of the sectional controversy all with the South, but I must confess that I have lost all sympathy with the people who govern this state. They are resolved to cement their secession with blood."

Having grown up in Kentucky, Anderson understood the South and its passions and resentments in a way that the new president, Abraham Lincoln, appeared not to. Slavery was central to that life. Anderson, who was still given to describing enslaved Blacks as "darkies," embraced the proslavery ethos that slavery was in fact a positive good, both for the slaves

and for society as a whole. He accepted without challenge the often espoused argument that the Bible expressly permitted slavery.

"Unfortunately, he desired not only to save the Union, but to save slavery with it," wrote one of Anderson's senior officers, Capt. Abner Doubleday, an ardent abolitionist from New York. Doubleday believed that in supporting slavery, Anderson—like many in the South—had fallen out of step with the great global shift that had driven the North and the advanced societies of Europe to reclassify it as a wholly repulsive moral wrong. "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," Doubleday wrote. Anderson saw himself "more like an arbiter between two contending nations than a simple soldier engaged in carrying out the instructions of his superiors."

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UNTIL THE RECENT UNREST, the Moultrie garrison had maintained a comfortable relationship with the citizens of Charleston. On summer nights the garrison's band would play as civilians from surrounding homes and from Moultrie House, a summer hotel up the beach, strolled along the fort's parapet for their nightly promenade. The day Anderson arrived at Moultrie, November 21, he sought to establish as nonthreatening a tone as possible. After meeting with his predecessor, Colonel Gardner, at his home, Anderson emerged to find a crowd of locals apparently hoping for a look at the new commander. Anderson walked to the fort's entry gate and received the sentry's salute but did not immediately enter; he called for the officer in charge of the fort's protective guard and ordered him henceforth to leave the gates open. Anderson then "turned to the crowd," as one sergeant recalled, "and with a courteous gesture, said: 'Walk in, gentlemen, if you wish to. We have no secrets here.' "

Two days later Anderson filed his first report from Charleston conveying the results of his own inspection of the forts now under his command. After reviewing their obvious weaknesses, he echoed his

predecessor's recommendation that Fort Sumter, across the channel, be reinforced with troops, including half a dozen ordnance men experienced in preparing ammunition. The power of Sumter, once completed, was self-evident, but Anderson also argued that it was important to strengthen Castle Pinckney, the smallest of the forts, because it was the closest to Charleston and might discourage unruly citizens from attempting to seize Sumter and Moultrie. Guns installed there could easily reach all the city's neighborhoods and the Battery promenade. "The Charlestonians would not venture to attack this place"—meaning Moultrie—"when they knew that their city was at the mercy of the commander of Castle Pinckney," Anderson wrote. Throughout his report he emphasized that strength was the best deterrent. "I need not say how anxious I am—indeed, determined, so far as honor will permit—to avoid collision with the citizens of South Carolina," he wrote. "Nothing, however, will be better calculated to prevent bloodshed than our being found in such an attitude that it would be madness and folly to attack us."

The work of reinforcing the forts would have to proceed quickly, he knew; agitation for secession was intensifying, and Carolina authorities had made no secret of their desire to seize control of all federal property in the harbor.

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THAT SAME NIGHT IN CHARLESTON, scores of young men styling themselves as the Young Men's Secession Association, or YMSA, marched through the heart of the city following a chaotic zigzagging path from the Citadel, the state's premier military academy, down through the chivalric wards and back up again, bearing torches and firing off rockets and Roman candles. "Here lies the Union," one banner proclaimed: "Born 4th July 1776. Died 7th Nov. 1860."

"The clouds are threatening," Anderson wrote in his report to Washington, "and the storm may break upon us at any moment."

In fact, the clouds had been gathering for decades.

HAMMOND

The Awakening

1807–1842

JAMES HENRY HAMMOND WAS HARDLY a typical planter, but then no planter was typical. Some were descendants of eighteenth-century colonial slaveholders; others were new arrivals who married into the oldest planting families. At least ten of the largest slaveholders came from Europe, mainly England, Ireland, and France; many were Northerners by birth, including a particularly ruthless slaveholder who came from Portland, Maine. At least twenty-eight planters went to Harvard for some level of education, another eighteen to Princeton. Fifteen of the largest slaveholders were women who had inherited land and slaves from dead husbands. One planter was a Choctaw chief named Greenwood LeFlore.

As of Election Day 1860, Hammond was master of Redcliffe Plantation in Beech Island, South Carolina, and three other plantations, where he owned over three hundred enslaved Blacks and fourteen thousand acres of land, equivalent to nearly twenty-two square miles. For much of the century he had been a leading advocate of secession, but his greatest influence stemmed from his role as one of the foremost architects of a profound shift in how the South thought about slavery and therefore how it thought about itself. That he would achieve such stature in a culture governed by rules and customs designed to ensure that the old families, the chivalry, held full

control over everything was remarkable in that Hammond began life as that most abject of creatures, an outsider of low birth: a yeoman.

Born in 1807, Hammond was raised by a father who was a failure in all that he did. Resentful of his lot, the elder Hammond, named Elisha, sought to instill in his son a thirst for greatness, to the point of whipping him when he failed to excel at his schoolwork. Elisha may have failed at all else, but he did succeed in instilling in the boy an overwhelming ambition, manifested in an unslakable need for recognition and distinction. “No passion rules the soul with half the force Ambition does,” Hammond wrote later in his diary.

Hammond attended what he and his father both recognized to be a second-rate rural preparatory school called Poplar Spring, but Elisha assured his son that great things lay ahead. “When President of the U.S., you will tell many anecdotes about the Poplar Spring,” his father told him. At the time, Elisha was employed as a steward at South Carolina College, the school of the planting aristocracy situated in Columbia, the state capital. Though the job was not particularly lofty—Elisha provided food for the students—it did give his son an edge over other low-born applicants and helped him win admission. Attendance was almost a prerequisite for success in the state, especially if one sought to go into politics.

Rewards and punishments at the college were administered in accord with “the principles of honor and shame” that governed the behavior of gentlemen, according to the school’s “By-Laws,” a fifty-page handbook of rules that each boy was required to sign. It included a host of prohibitions, among them bans against playing cards or dice, setting off explosives, blowing trumpets, “lounging under the trees” on Sundays, and sitting “in an indecorous position” on any day. The bylaws included a final species-conflating admonition: “The striking of servants and cruelty to animals is expressly forbidden.”

The students developed a hair-trigger sensitivity to abrasions of honor, and with it a corollary penchant, and reputation, for violence. This became acutely evident on February 18, 1856, with the “Guard House Riot,” when, according to one account, “more than one hundred enraged young men,

with rifles in their hands”—all enrolled in the college—confronted the city’s militia, this after one student struck the city’s chief of police and the chief struck back with his club. The confrontation was calmed by the intercession of a well-liked former college president. A separate event had a less salubrious outcome. In the dining hall two students reached for a plate of fish at the same time, causing the slower of the two to feel affronted. He issued a challenge. The ensuing duel killed both.

It was at South Carolina College that Hammond may have engaged in sexual explorations involving men, or at least one man. Hammond was eighteen at the time; the other, Thomas Jefferson Withers, was twenty-two, a law student destined to become a prominent jurist in the state (and to make regular cranky appearances in the diary of his niece, Mary Boykin Chesnut). Two letters survive that have led to endless speculation, both written in 1826 after the two men had graduated. One Hammond expert, Carol Bleser, took a boys-will-be-boys view, arguing that in this time students often shared beds and that, since Hammond was sixteen upon entering college, eighteen upon exit, he fell into that always problematic cohort, the teenaged boy, known to be “frequently tumescent without any specific sexual stimulation.”

Whatever the interpretation, the letters do suggest some ribald moments among the magnolias. In one, dated May 15, Withers, calling himself “the old Stud, Jeff,” wrote, “I feel some inclination to learn whether you yet sleep in your Shirt-tail, and whether you yet have the extravagant delight of poking and punching a writhing Bedfellow with your long fleshen pole—the exquisite touches of which I have often had the honor of feeling?”

Fleshen poles aside, the college inculcated in its privileged and pampered students a reverence for all things Southern and for their own exalted stature as gentlemen, a point the bylaws made explicit, stating that the ultimate goal of the college “is to train a body of gentlemen in knowledge, virtue and religion and refinement.” More importantly, it gave them the connections to help them on their way toward success in the two realms that mattered most to the white aristocracy—politics and planting, with achievement in the latter counted in the number of enslaved people

you owned and the array of fine possessions displayed in your home. If a student had any qualms about slavery, he found them eased at every turn, particularly in his senior year, when graduating students attended lectures in "moral philosophy" that taught them "to delight in the possession and exercise of power," affirmed the rightness of the existing social hierarchy, and reinforced that it was "absolutely necessary to keep the blacks in the present condition."

Not surprisingly, the school's budget for 1845 included nine hundred dollars for the "Purchase of Jack, (a slave)."

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UPON GRADUATION HAMMOND WAS disappointed to find that despite being fourth in his class, the best he could do in terms of employment was to take a job as a teacher at a provincial school, unhappily following in the footsteps of his father. Unlike the rest of his classmates, he did not graduate into the full embrace of the planter aristocracy with the prospect of receiving a large share of family land and, with it, instant admission into the upper reaches of society. For a landless soul like him, his father had counseled, there was one sure path, and that was marriage.

He was a good-looking man, tall, with black hair, obsidian eyes—a "beautiful face," as one friend put it—and he was clearly smart and on the rise. He gave up teaching to study law and eventually built a successful practice. He allied himself with a new legion of political radicals devoted to asserting the state's right to nullify federal laws that it determined to be unconstitutional. His advocacy of nullification, or what its proponents liked to call "states' rights," drew him into the orbit of South Carolina's most powerful politician, John C. Calhoun, then vice president of the United States. The movement's leaders established a newspaper, the *Southern Times*, and made Hammond its editor. His looks and improving prospects made him an appealing commodity among marriage-ready women. It was a matter of some surprise, therefore, when he set his sights on a fifteen-year-old heiress named Catherine Fitzsimons renowned for two things: her

stature as a member of one of South Carolina's richest families, and her plain appearance. As one descendant cruelly put it, "Young wags in Charleston used to say they wouldn't marry her if every pimple on her face was worth a million dollars."

Though he met significant opposition from her family, who suspected Hammond's true motive, he prevailed. The wedding took place on June 23, 1831. Catherine by then was seventeen; Hammond, twenty-three. Thus, through an act of strategic matrimony, Hammond in a relative instant became one of the wealthiest men in South Carolina. He quit his editorship at the *Southern Times,* closed his law office, and settled into his new life as a gentleman planter, which he deemed the only "honorable" occupation. "The planters here are essentially what the nobility are in other countries," he wrote. "They stand at the head of society and politics."

Hammond's newly acquired empire included 10,800 acres of land, most of it undeveloped, centered initially on a plantation called Silver Bluff that was said to be named for the gleam emitted when the sun struck deposits of mica in the underlying terrain. His dominion also included one hundred and thirty hogs, ninety-five cattle, twenty-five mules, and twenty sheep, with all but the mules roaming free on the land. The plantation had a sawmill, gristmill, and cotton gin, and a small village of structures that housed the plantation's greatest asset: its enslaved laborers. In all he now owned one hundred forty-seven, of whom seventy-three were men, seventy-four women. Sixty-four were between the ages of fifteen and forty-five, considered the ideal range. On paper, at least, the age and sex composition promised both a productive workforce and one capable of achieving that desideratum of planters, "natural increase," meaning a population likely to bear children. Enslaved Blacks were capital, and a slave family that regularly bore children—a biological compounding of interest—was about as robust an asset as one could dream of. A single "No. 1" man or "Fancy Girl," as the most-coveted Blacks were often labeled when put up for sale, could have a value in twenty-first-century dollars of nearly fifty-three thousand dollars.

Sixty-four of Hammond's enslaved workers fell into these categories; if they achieved top prices in the marketplace, their value alone could have reached over three million in today's dollars.

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HAMMOND WORKED HIS SLAVES HARD. Partly because of that, but also for less clear reasons, they had a penchant for dying. Each death inflicted a financial cost in terms of lost labor and diminished capital. In one diary entry, he bemoaned the death of a three-year-old, not out of any sense of emotional loss, but because this was the seventy-eighth death in just under ten years. During the same period, he wrote, the plantation experienced only seventy-two births among its enslaved population, leaving a deficit of six. "One would think from this statement that I was a monster of inhumanity," he wrote. "Yet this one subject has caused me more anxiety and suffering than any other of my life." Hammond conflated human lives with other plantation assets. "Every thing dies," he wrote, "not only people, but mules, horses, cattle, hogs—life seems here to be the mere sport of some capricious destiny. Whether it is a judgement on me or on the place I know not."

Hammond pursued a strategy of absolute dominance. He allowed his enslaved Blacks to visit town only twice a year; he determined who would be allowed to marry, who to divorce. He selected the names of babies, changing them at will, sometimes assigning a name to honor a guest in his house. When Josiah Nott, a racist physician and influential proslavery writer, came for a visit, Hammond named a newly arrived Black infant "Nott." To encourage marriage and the births that he hoped would follow, he offered a five-dollar bonus to newlyweds. For second marriages, apparently less valuable, he paid only three dollars and fifty cents. Divorce earned one hundred lashes.

To Hammond, as to other planters, whipping was an important element of control to remind the enslaved of their place in the plantation hierarchy. Planters preferred the more genteel term, "correcting." So routine was this

on Hammond's Silver Bluff plantation that he included precise instructions in a manual he wrote for his overseers, the men who directed his enslaved workers on a daily basis. "The highest punishment," he wrote, "must not exceed 100 lashes in one day and to that extent only in extreme cases." The lash itself was to be one inch wide. "In general 15 to 20 lashes will be a sufficient flogging: The hands in every case must be secured by a cord. Punishment must always be given calmly and deliberately and never when angry or excited."

If one of Hammond's Blacks escaped, he or she got ten lashes for each day absent from the plantation. If the fugitive returned voluntarily, this was reduced to three for each day. Escapes occurred so often throughout the South that means arose to help prevent them. At night slave patrols with unrestricted access to plantations roved the countryside and were required to visit each plantation once a month. Planters seeking to retrieve escapees often hired trackers with bloodhounds, a method of proven efficacy. The dogs, known in the trade as "n—r dogs," were often transported by train along with their handlers. "Some fellows take just as much delight in it as in runnin' a fox," an Alabama tradesman told Frederick Law Olmsted, then a thirty-two-year-old journalist exploring the South. "Always seemed to me a kind o' barbarous sport." The man paused. "It's necessary, though."

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BOOSTED BY HIS SUDDEN wealth and growing political notoriety, Hammond was selected by the state legislature to be a candidate for the House of Representatives in the 1834 U.S. congressional election. The public did the ultimate electing, but given the mechanics of Carolina politics, being thus anointed pretty much assured that Hammond would become his district's next congressman. So ritualized was this process that candidates were counseled to avoid campaigning altogether. The chivalry did *not* go door to door begging for votes. As expected, Hammond won.

Although the official start of his term was March 4, 1835, he and his fellow representatives did not physically convene until December 7, nine

months later. In the interim, Hammond, at age twenty-seven, moved his family to Washington. They found a rough-hewn place but one that must have felt familiar. The slave trade thrived there and would continue to do so openly until 1851, when a federal law took effect that made it illegal to transport enslaved Blacks into the city “for the purpose of being sold.” Coffles of slaves routinely moved over city streets to and from Washington’s many slave-auction houses and the pens, or barracoons, where they were held between auctions or before transporting them to buyers and markets in the Deep South. One especially dreary pen was situated at Third Street (not yet designated as Third Street “SW”) and Pennsylvania Avenue a couple of blocks from the Capitol.

The Capitol building had not yet been expanded and still had its original wooden dome, a modest affair shaped roughly like a pith helmet, which would be replaced about thirty years later with a far taller dome fashioned from nine million pounds of cast iron. The building’s architect, William Thornton, said of his own creation that it resembled a “large sugar dish between two tea canisters.” Shortly before the Hammonds’ arrival the building’s East Portico had been the scene of an assassination attempt against President Andrew Jackson. The assailant was named Richard Lawrence, who believed himself to be England’s long-dead King Richard III and claimed that Jackson had interfered with the delivery of payments long owed to him by the colonies. The would-be assassin had two guns, both of which misfired—a good thing because Jackson already had one bullet in his body from an 1806 duel in Tennessee in which he killed his challenger and was himself shot in the chest. After the assassin’s second gun misfired, two men charged to the rescue, one a congressman named Davy Crockett. At the ensuing trial the prosecutor was Francis Scott Key. The assassin was deemed not guilty by reason of insanity.

The land around the Capitol was in a primitive state. Cows milled about on what would become the National Mall. As depicted in a detailed 1839 rendering, anyone approaching the building from the West Front, which faced the Mall, would enter the grounds through a gate in a tall wrought iron fence and then traverse a dense forest before reaching the base of the

building's stairway. Charles Dickens visited the city in 1842 and climbed to the balcony of a "very pleasant and commodious library in the Capitol"—the Library of Congress, overlooking the Mall—in order to better gauge the city's progress in realizing the grand design proposed in 1790 by Pierre L'Enfant. "It is sometimes called the City of Magnificent Distances," Dickens wrote in his *American Notes*, "but it might with greater propriety be termed the City of Magnificent Intentions." L'Enfant had envisioned grand boulevards radiating from the Capitol, linking distant quarters of the city. To Dickens on the balcony, it became very clear that full execution of L'Enfant's plan would take some time. "Spacious avenues that begin in nothing, and lead nowhere; streets, mile long, that only want houses, roads, and inhabitants; public buildings that need but a public to be complete."

Hammond moved his family into a boarding house on the city's Capitol Hill, where they lodged with John C. Calhoun, former vice president and now U.S. senator, and various South Carolina congressmen and their families. They shared meals and late-night conversation and shunned participation in the broader life of Washington. They brought with them their own homegrown proclivity toward clubbiness and the hauteur instilled in them by their lives back home as masters of their personal slave empires. Even the White House, the hub of Washington social life, was beneath them, occupied as it was by Jackson, the benighted Democrat who forcefully crushed Carolina's nullification movement. They made a point of declining invitations to the elaborate parties Jackson threw on Christmas Eve and New Year's Day.

This unwillingness to engage with colleagues from other states—and their own state's reputation as a petulant, possibly treasonous force in national politics—gave them an insularity that reinforced the men's view of themselves as a special presence, a lofty cadre of chivalric gentlemen motivated by honor and higher purpose. Hammond's wife, Catherine, found it oppressive. "We Carolinians are in such bad odor here," she wrote in a letter to one of Hammond's brothers. Shy, reserved, and only twenty years old, she was reluctant to engage in the kinds of social calls made so commonly by society women back home. Hammond in his diary called her

“a passive nobody.” She also had four children to supervise, all under four years of age, the youngest a two-month-old infant. Hammond acknowledged that his children were a difficult and ill-behaved brood, as he confessed in a letter expressing his surprise “that children would be such a nuisance.” He could rule an empire of slaves but not a canton of toddlers.

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FROM THE START OF his congressional tenure, Hammond proved himself to be an effective partisan in the proslavery movement. To help defend the institution against potential threats, he opposed all growth in federal power and presence, even “internal improvements” like railroads and canals, no matter how beneficial they might be. He and fellow activists went so far as to oppose funds bequeathed to America by an English philanthropist named Joseph Smithson, whose will directed that the money be used “to found in Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men.”

What most troubled Hammond and his fellow Southerners was the rapid intensification of antislavery sentiment in the North, epitomized in 1831 by William Lloyd Garrison’s founding in Boston of his abolitionist newspaper the *Liberator.* Antislavery societies soon proliferated and began bombarding the South with pamphlets and broadsides that depicted slavery as an unalloyed evil. Many Virginians blamed Garrison’s rhetoric for igniting the Nat Turner Rebellion of August 21–22, 1831, in which Turner and coconspirators killed fifty-five whites. In the days after Virginia’s suppression of the revolt, three dozen Blacks were murdered on mere suspicion that they had taken part; another nineteen were executed after standing trial.

In July 1835 Charleston reacted with outrage as news spread that the city’s postmaster had discovered a large shipment of abolitionist tracts published by Garrison’s American Anti-Slavery Society, mailed from New York and addressed to leading local citizens. The news so incensed the city that several hundred Charlestonians marched to the post office, confiscated

the pamphlets, and set them on fire. The arrival of the tracts in Charleston, the heart of the South, abetted by that most prosaic of federal institutions, the U.S. Post Office, seemed to be evidence of a broader threat and raised anew the miasmic fear that white Southerners had always felt about the dangers of slave insurrections and the horrors of emancipation. Vigilantes set out to identify anyone harboring abolitionist sentiment, while a special committee began examining all incoming mail for signs of further postal incursions. Free Blacks especially came under suspicion, with the memory of a barely averted slave insurrection in 1822, planned by a free Black Charlestonian, Denmark Vesey, still fresh in the community psyche.

In the midst of the controversy over abolitionist mail, Hammond, on February 1, 1836, delivered the first unabashedly proslavery speech Congress had ever heard. Newly turned twenty-eight, he stood in jarring contrast to the veteran legislators doddering about the floor. Slavery, he assured his audience, was anything but evil. “On the contrary, I believe it to be the greatest of all the great blessings which a kind Providence has bestowed upon our favored region.” Only the abolitionists with their “mad and fatal schemes” demanded emancipation, he argued. “As a class, I say it boldly, there is not a happier, more contented race upon the face of the earth than our slaves.”

He explained why the antislavery petitions that filled Southern post offices so inflamed him and his constituents. “Sir,” he said, “I do firmly believe that domestic slavery regulated as ours is produces the highest toned, the purest, best organization of society that has ever existed on the face of the earth.” If slavery was good, so too were the slaveholders: To attack slavery as an evil was to soil the honor of the owners themselves, the chivalry. If this abolitionist assault on Southern honor did not subside, he warned, the consequences would be grave. “We may have to adopt an entire non-intercourse with the free States, and finally, Sir, we may have to dissolve this Union.”

The speech won him high praise from the Southern press and states’ rights advocates, some of whom saw him as the next Calhoun, but now stress seemed to overwhelm him. Since the age of seventeen he had

suffered from what he called dyspepsia, a blanket description typically applied to chronic digestive unrest. What Hammond endured, however, was something far worse than mere indigestion. His intestinal tract was a river of pain and gastric flamboyance marked by constipation, diarrhea, hemorrhoids, and hemorrhaging. Whether the cause was dyspepsia or something else, several weeks after his speech, while walking near the Capitol with a fellow congressman, he collapsed, overcome by what he called a "rush of blood to the head." His companion guided him to the second floor of the building and summoned a doctor, who gave him a cup of brandy and subjected him to a round of bloodletting in the still-prevalent belief that doing so eliminated the malignant humors that caused illness. Hammond retreated to his boarding house. Anxious that he might once again collapse, he remained sequestered until the spring.

When he emerged, his malaise once again engulfed him to the point where he could not even enter the House chamber without feeling faint. Just on the cusp of success, his psyche and body had failed him. "Broken down at Twenty-Eight," he wrote; he had "one foot in the grave—Dying of decay in the very blossom."

He resigned and on the advice of a physician fled to Europe, which, second only to bloodletting, was considered a cure for most ills. But the journey had another benefit. The "Grand Tour" was a symbol of social status and prestige, and Hammond understood this as well as anyone. He bought sculptures and paintings by the trunkload and commissioned a bust of himself. The sculptor knew his mark: He told Hammond his bust looked uncannily like that of Caesar Augustus.

On his return to South Carolina, he decided to run for governor, a position with little actual power but high visibility. The state legislature appointed the governor. Thus, to become governor also meant that one had the faith and confidence of the state's leading politicians, a crucial thing given that they were the men who also would choose the state's two U.S. senators—a seat in the Senate being what Hammond wanted most. By the same token, to lose the gubernatorial election would signal to all that he

lacked status among the chivalry, which for Hammond would mean crippling humiliation. The risk, however, seemed worth it.

He understood that if he was to become governor, he could not remain isolated at Silver Bluff among a populace he denigrated as “low-bred country folk” and resolved to build a presence in the state capital, Columbia. He began construction of a grand house that would draw attention to him and testify to his standing as a member of the state’s planter aristocracy. This was not particularly difficult in Columbia. Though it was the state’s second-largest city, it was hardly a bustling metropolis. According to the 1850 U.S. Census it had a total population of 6,060, of whom 3,184 were white and 2,680 enslaved Blacks; another 196 were free Blacks, leaving the city almost equally divided between races. To address this discomfiting ratio, the city established various mechanisms for racial control. One civic official was an overseer of carts, streets, and “negroes,” all of whom, whether enslaved or not, had a nighttime curfew just like their peers in Charleston, signaled by a bell that in winter sounded at nine P.M., in summer, nine forty-five. No more than five Blacks were permitted to assemble at a time unless a white person was present to supervise them. The city’s white population was a willing audience for a series of lectures given in 1850 by Louis Agassiz, a Harvard zoologist who claimed that scientific observation proved that Blacks were inferior to whites and thus merited enslavement.

Hammond built his house on a two-acre lot at the center of town and based its design on a building he had admired in Rome. The resulting structure, finished in June 1841, had thirty-six exterior columns and was surrounded by a raised and covered piazza. Each of its interior rooms had thirteen-foot ceilings and occupied about five hundred square feet. Hammond was unabashed about his motives in building so fine a house: to best the homes of the great planting dynasties and further distance himself from his lowly past. “I beat them in *their own line*,” he crowed, “—furniture, balls and dinner parties.”

In the months before the December 1840 gubernatorial election, Hammond moved into his new but still incomplete home and began filling

it with his European treasures. Catherine stayed behind in Silver Bluff, having delivered yet another baby, this one a girl. To help decorate his home Hammond enlisted the aid of two nieces, Harriet and Catty Hampton, daughters of Catherine's sister Ann, whose husband, Wade Hampton II, owned eighteen thousand acres of land and five hundred enslaved Blacks and wielded immense political power. The girls—along with two of their sisters—were soon to occupy a good deal of Hammond's imagination, with disastrous consequences.

WASHINGTON

The Vile Wretch in Petticoats

1851

In Washington, South Carolina's representatives in Congress had something new to rage about that was far more insidious than abolitionist petitions.

On June 5, 1851, the *National Era*, an antislavery newspaper based in Washington, published the opening chapter of a serialized novel, the first of forty-one weekly installments. It began innocuously enough. "Late in the afternoon of a chilly day in February, two gentlemen were sitting alone over their wine, in a well-furnished dining parlor, in the town of P—, in Kentucky." The author quickly qualified her use of the plural "gentlemen," stating that one of the men, "when critically examined, did not seem strictly speaking, to come under the species." She identified him only as Haley but in short order revealed him to be a slave trader in the midst of haggling over the purchase of a slave named Tom.

By the time the last installment appeared, on April 1, 1852, the serialized chapters alone had drawn some fifty thousand readers, many of whom had come to eagerly look forward to Fridays, when each new edition of the *National Era* would arrive. The complete novel, titled *Uncle Tom's Cabin; Or, Life Among the Lowly* (in promoting the serial, the newspaper used the subtitle "The Man That Was a Thing"), was published March 20,

1852, and made its forty-year-old author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, a literary sensation adored in the North, reviled in the South. Its central character was noble God-fearing Tom, acquired by a cruel planter named Simon Legree, who beat his enslaved laborers, took female slaves as lovers, and ultimately ordered his overseers to whip Tom to death. The book also depicted the separation of enslaved families and the tragic consequences, as when one Black woman, Cassy, told Tom how, having previously been separated from a son and daughter, she killed her new baby rather than face another separation. At the time of publication the book's portrayal of the sheer brutality of slavery proved revelatory to many readers and added fuel to the already surging antislavery movement.

Reaction in the South was harsh and immediate. Louisa McCord, an essayist herself and wife of a planter, dismissed it angrily as "one mass of fanatical bitterness and foul misrepresentation wrapped in the garb of Christian Charity." Suddenly, owning the book or being seen reading or carrying it became a dangerous pursuit for Southerners and visiting Northerners alike. Stowe had delivered perhaps the ultimate insult to the South's honor, attacking an institution that decades of proslavery writing by James Hammond, the fire-eater Edmund Ruffin, and others had positioned as a thing of beauty and beneficence. That Stowe was a woman made the sting all the more pronounced, drawing forth a barely disguised misogyny. Some of the book's most persistent and aggressive detractors were Hammond's closest friends, including novelist Simms and George Frederick Holmes, a former president of the University of Mississippi. In an invitation to Holmes to write a review, one Southern editor specified, "I would have the review as hot as hell fire, blasting and searing the reputation of the vile wretch in petticoats who could write such a volume."

Immediately after the book version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* emerged, Simms and others responded with a barrage of proslavery, anti-abolitionist novels, well over a dozen, that took the themes of Stowe's story, notably the separation of enslaved families, and contorted them in ways that verged on the comical. One author, Charles Jacobs Peterson, paradoxically a Philadelphia-bred writer and editor, in that same year published *The Cabin*

and the Parlor, which laid the blame for separation at the feet of financiers in New York, specifically a firm named “Mssrs. Skin and Flint” whose predatory behavior forced a planter to sell his slaves. Another novel, with the cudgel-like title *Uncle Robin, in his Cabin in Virginia, and Tom Without One in Boston*, blamed slave separations on Northern abolitionists who cajoled slaves into escaping their plantations, thereby leaving them vulnerable to capture and resale by unscrupulous slave traders. The traders were Yankees. Another book, *Aunt Phillis’s Cabin*, carved an especially contorted path, likewise blaming abolitionists for causing slaves to flee, but with the twist that once the fugitives were captured and returned to their plantations, their presence proved so disruptive that the loyal stay-behinds forced their masters to sell them in order to restore harmony.

These did little to blunt the effect of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In book form, it sold three hundred thousand copies in just the first three months after its publication. In the North, it confirmed readers’ worst imaginings about the true nature of slavery; in the South, it was spurned as yet another Northern failure to understand how slavery benefited the enslaved themselves by providing for all their needs, every day and every night, all year long, regardless of the nation’s overall economic condition.

What the North truly failed to grasp, however, was the degree to which the proslavery writers like James Hammond had succeeded in persuading themselves and their peers that slavery had indeed produced this best of all societies, and that anyone who condemned the institution of slavery slandered the South and the chivalry in particular. Southern society had worked out a mechanism for dealing with such offenses between individuals, the *Code Duello*. But no such mechanism existed to address the hurt and shame inflicted on the South as a whole by Harriet Beecher Stowe and her abolitionist allies.

It was here that resentment dwelled. Not yet hatred—at least not the pure intractable hatred that allowed men to imagine armies marching across the landscape.

But close.

HAMMOND

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Scandal

1857–1858

AT A TIME OF POLITICAL flux, with calls for secession mounting and heated rhetoric on all sides, James Hammond suddenly found himself being put forward to fill a seat in the U.S. Senate left vacant by the death in May 1857 of its previous occupant. Short of the presidency it was the post he deemed most worthy in American politics.

Up until now, however, his electoral record had been mixed. In December 1840 he had lost his bid for governor in humiliating fashion, winning just forty-seven votes to the victor's 104. He tried again in 1842 and this time won, but by only seven votes, a dishearteningly narrow margin. The Senate seemed beyond his reach.

In fact, winning the seat would be nothing less than a political miracle, given that few men pursued such high political office bearing deeper moral stains than Hammond.

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IT HAD ALL STARTED, apparently, in 1841 with Hammond's move to Columbia and the construction of his house. His nieces, the youngest thirteen years old, had reason to come to the house on a regular basis because Hammond's wife, their aunt Catherine, served as their surrogate mother, stepping into

the role after their own mother had died some years earlier. They adored their handsome uncle. Whether the thing was triggered when the girls came over to help him decorate the new house or had some other proximate cause is not at all clear. Hammond, however, soon found himself engaged in sexual dalliance with all four girls.

He confessed it later in his diary. “Here were four lovely creatures, from the tender but precious girl of 13 to the mature but fresh and blooming woman nearly 19 (in 1840–41), each contending for my love, claiming the greater share of it as due to her superior devotion to me, all of them rushing on every occasion into my arms and covering me with kisses, lolling on my lap, pressing their bodies almost into mine, wreathing their limbs with mine, encountering warmly every portion of my frame, and permitting my hands to stray unchecked over every part of them and to rest without the slightest shrinking from it, in the most secret and sacred regions, and all this for a period of more than two years continuously.”

Hammond complained that instead of condemnation, he deserved praise. “Is it in flesh and blood to withstand this?” he wrote in his diary. “Is there a man, with manhood in him and a heart susceptible of any emotions of tenderness, who could tear himself from such a cluster of lovely, loving, such amorous and devoted beings? Nay are there many who would have the self-control to stop where I did? Am I not after all entitled to some, the smallest portion of, credit for not going further?” He should be honored for his restraint, he wrote, and likened himself to “a creature of chivalric romance.”

The relationship lasted from 1841 to 1843, during which, he wrote, “I gave way to the most wanton indulgences. It would be improper to state in detail what these indulgences were. It will be sufficient to say that they extended to every thing short of direct sexual intercourse, that for two years they were carried on not with one, but indiscriminately with all of them, that they were perfectly habitual and renewed every time or very nearly every time we met at my house in Columbia, which was never less than once a week while I was there, and most usually much oftener.” The nieces never balked at his “amorous advances,” he claimed, but rather “again and

again made the advances themselves, so much so as often to excite my astonishment and to fill my mind with the most extraordinary suspicions as to their past experience."

All this came to an end on April 13, 1843, when the second-eldest niece, also named Catherine and now eighteen years old, "took offense at a familiarity from me, which under the circumstances and considering all that had passed between us, excited my surprise."

This had the effect of awakening him from whatever reverie had allowed him to continue a five-way affair for two years: "At this first check," he wrote, "I saw clearly and at once the full extent of my past indiscretions." He apologized and believed his apology had been accepted. He resolved to stop the affair immediately, and from that moment forward, he wrote, "there was no more wanton toying between us." The girls continued to come to the house, however, including for a ball that Hammond and his wife had thrown to honor the wedding of the girls' brother, Christopher.

Hammond assumed, with great relief, that the matter had ended without damaging relations between his family and the Hamptons, and left town for the summer "full of self-congratulation that such was the case."

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HE RETURNED TO COLUMBIA in the fall to begin his final year as governor, and there, on November 1, 1843, he received a letter from Wade Hampton, the girls' father, severing ties between the families. This shocked Hammond. He had presumed Hampton would have wanted the whole affair kept quiet to protect their honor. In his reply, apparently hoping that by coming clean he might salve Hampton's anger, Hammond confessed to a liaison not just with niece Catherine but with the other three as well, and acknowledged that these relationships "had been long continued."

Hammond felt that in fact it was he who had been wronged, and that if the truth of the whole multiyear affair were ever revealed, he would be exonerated. But that could not happen, he wrote in his diary, and as a result,

“the loose manners and ardent temperaments of these lovely and luscious creatures would never be known.” They had come to him, he claimed; he had never engaged in seduction or coercion. To understand that final incident in April, he wrote, one had to know all that had gone before; otherwise it might appear to be “a deliberate attempt to perpetrate a base crime. Yet I declare that on that night I felt no more animal excitement than I do at this moment. And worn down as I was with fatigue and full, the very moment, of anxious cares, I was almost literally incapable of sexual connection.”

Wade Hampton did not see it that way. Hammond learned through a family messenger that “atonement and oblivion were impossible.” Relations between the families were irrevocably broken. Within the planting elite, rumor alone was enough to ruin Hammond’s social and political life. Few outside Hampton’s immediate circle knew actual details of what had occurred. Even Catherine Hammond knew nothing of the affair, as became apparent when the couple hosted a ball toward the end of 1843. “My wife, ignorant of every thing, sent invitations to the whole set,” he wrote. He did nothing to stop her. “To have objected to it would have rendered a disclosure necessary.” She was perplexed at why so few people came. “To her I pretended ignorance of all causes of difficulty,” Hammond wrote, “and made light of their not coming to see us.”

Hammond feared that Wade Hampton might challenge him to a duel or simply assassinate him. He bought a pair of “small pocket pistols,” and while doing so learned that just the day before, two of Hampton’s brothers-in-law also had bought guns. But Hampton did not issue a challenge.

Hammond would have preferred a duel to what followed. “I would jump at an opportunity to settle and bury all, by fighting one or even more duels,” he wrote in his diary. But Hampton had something else in mind, a more prolonged torment of a kind he surely knew would be uniquely hurtful to Hammond, who bled ambition from every pore.

What Wade Hampton planned was Hammond’s social and political death.

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AT FIRST IT WAS a campaign of whispers, which in that tight-knit arena of the planting aristocracy proved brutally effective. Though still in the midst of his two-year term as governor, Hammond felt the chill of social opprobrium. Rumors of an indiscretion, if not the details themselves, traveled quickly. “They have gone all over the State and are generally believed,” Hammond complained in his diary. “The effect is crushing to me.” He chafed at being unable to defend himself. “I often feel like coming out with the *whole truth* and fighting my way through,” he wrote, “but the idea of the injury I would do to those I hold dearest on earth is shocking to me, and, after all, my triumph would not be complete. Calumny can never be killed.”

Hammond resolved that his only course of action was to remain silent. “My policy then was concealment,” he wrote. “Profound and utter secrecy.”

He dreaded returning to Columbia to preside over the opening of the legislative session of 1844, the last of his term as governor. “The crisis of my fate personally and politically has arrived,” he wrote. “I leave here alone for Columbia in two days, to meet it. Whatever it may be. My path is dark, and I see no gleam of light before me.”

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THE LAY PUBLIC WAS not yet aware of Hammond’s relationship with his nieces. His antagonist, Wade Hampton, had counted on rumor alone to destroy Hammond but failed to reckon with Hammond’s unquenchable ambition. From the press and the public at large, Hammond received plaudits for his performance as governor and exhortations to run for the U.S. Senate. Hammond’s confidence grew. He cast himself as the torchbearer for slavery, in part because this of all things seemed to draw him acclaim.

In 1845 he began writing what would become two long “letters”—essays really—in defense of slavery, addressed to Thomas Clarkson of

England, “the Patriarch of Abolition,” as Hammond called him. Clarkson, then eighty-four, had led the campaign that resulted in Britain, in 1807, ending its involvement in the international slave trade, and triggered what by mid-century had become a worldwide drive toward abolition. Hammond’s “Letters” were published by the Columbia *South-Carolinian* “and have produced quite a sensation,” Hammond noted in his diary. “I have received many extravagant compliments.”

By 1846 Hammond was widely considered a contender for the Senate. To stop him, Wade Hampton took the scandal public; he circulated to state legislators a document full of details. In Carolina’s honor-bound culture this was a risky thing to do. Hampton himself came in for significant criticism for airing so private a matter in the legislature and thereby publicly tarnishing the reputations of his own daughters, but he succeeded in hobbling Hammond’s candidacy. Hammond lost by a vote of 97 to 46.

“My career as a public man is over, I am crushed,” Hammond wrote on December 21, 1850, after the final results were recorded; “—*annihilated forever*. God’s will be done.”

To Hammond, this was more than simply a political loss. It was the state’s verdict on him personally, as a man. He was furious; he felt unjustly wronged. Others in high office had done far worse than he without harm to their careers. The state had turned “prude,” he railed in his diary. “She surrenders herself to be ruled by gossip and gossipers and discards her best servant, because he does not pass immaculate through the hands of the Tea Table Goddesses. Where was a Statesman ever put down before for his amours and conjugal infidelity?”

But now, still smarting from his Senate loss and buffeted by winds of social and political odium—a time when another man might have strived to avoid even the slightest appearance of new impropriety—Hammond revealed another sexual escapade, but of a different sort, one that also arose from his striving for domination of all around him.

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THERE WERE TWO ENSLAVED women in which Hammond took a particular interest. In January 1839 Hammond purchased an eighteen-year-old named Sally Johnson and her one-year-old daughter, Louisa, for nine hundred dollars with the idea that Sally would serve as one of his “house slaves.” These positions were typically assigned to Blacks who for one reason or another were deemed attractive: good looks, good teeth, good diction, or light skin. In Charleston’s thirty-two slave brokerages, Sally would likely have been graded a “Fancy Girl.” While many such women were, like Sally, selected for duties in the “big house,” others were hired out for purposes of prostitution, with their owners pocketing the income. Hammond likely acquired Sally because of her overall appearance, for he promptly made her his mistress. In this case there was no question of his sexual interest: He slept with her repeatedly. Their relationship lasted years, and when Sally’s daughter turned twelve in 1850, Hammond made her his mistress as well.

Hammond did not address any of this in his diary but eventually disclosed it in a letter to his son Harry in which he revealed that in his will he bequeathed both Sally and Louisa to him, “and all the children of both.” The letter alludes to children sired by both him and Harry and cautioned Harry never to sell Louisa or her offspring. “Do not let Louisa or any of my children or possible children be slaves of Strangers. Slavery *in the family* will be their happiest earthly condition.”

He somehow kept his relationship with the two a secret from his wife for over a decade, until in 1850 something occurred to bring it to light. He blamed his own “want of caution.” Outraged by her husband’s craven infidelity, Catherine demanded “concessions,” presumably that Hammond sell the women. Hammond refused. Catherine’s rage persisted and in December 1850 she left him. She first fled to Charleston with their daughters to stay with family, then moved to the Sand Hills, near Augusta, Georgia, a community favored as a haven from lowland fevers later named Summerville.

Her absence stretched from weeks to months. In that interval they lost a son, William Cashel, sixteen, who died of typhoid fever while staying with his mother at the supposedly fever-free resort. The boy had expected to

return to school the next day. “I can make no comments on this calamity,” Hammond wrote in his diary. “I feel overwhelmed by it and attendant circumstances. My thoughts and feelings are unutterable.”

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NO ONE WAS MORE surprised than Hammond when, in 1857, the South Carolina legislature decided he was the man to replace one of the state’s U.S. senators, who had died in office. His self-banishment had taken him from public view, and amid the political clamor raised by the states’ rights crowd, his absence and his quiet had made him seem conservative, just what the legislature wanted. The balloting—only state legislators could vote—took place over three days, starting November 27, 1857, with Hammond the victor in the final poll, besting the next-closest candidate 85 to 59. “I record now the strangest and most unexpected chapter of my history, or of almost any history,” he wrote in his diary on December 9. He added: “This is a signal triumph over all my enemies and, speaking as a mere mortal, a full compensation and more for all I have endured. It wipes off every calumny and puts my name among the foremost of SoCa without a stain.”

By this point he and his wife had achieved a rapprochement and were again living together. Catherine had come to accept the presence of Sally and Louisa with the proviso that they occupy quarters far from the main house. Catherine agreed to move with him to Washington.

They arrived in early January 1858 with three of their children, and occupied rooms in a hotel favored by Southern delegates, Brown’s Hotel, situated on Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the Capitol. Hammond found a city far different from the one he had encountered as a young congressman two decades earlier, both in terms of its physical appearance and the vibrance of its social life. The National Mall, previously a muddy and barren expanse, was now nicely landscaped, and a number of elaborate new federal buildings had been erected, among them the Treasury building and Smithsonian Institution, though the Washington Monument remained an unfinished stub. Hammond received myriad invitations to

receptions, dinners, and balls, even one from fellow senator William Henry Seward of New York, an outspoken critic of slavery who was considered the likely Republican nominee in the upcoming 1860 presidential election. Hammond's wife found the city's heated social atmosphere intimidating. "I began to despair of making anything but blunders and mistakes, and heartily wished myself at home before I should be disgraced," she wrote in a letter to her brother-in-law Marcellus. Hammond, on the other hand, seemed to fit right in. At a White House dinner, even President James Buchanan showered him with attention. "In a word, he is in his place," Catherine told Marcellus.

Hammond entered the Senate as the nation writhed through yet another conflict over slavery. In May 1854, Sen. Stephen Douglas of Illinois had won passage of what became known as the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which established two new territories and allowed the inhabitants of each to decide whether to permit slavery, a doctrine known as popular sovereignty. It also repealed the Missouri Compromise, which had banned slavery in all new territory north of the 36º30' parallel. The act set off a race between slaveholders and free-soil advocates to populate the new territories in order to influence the choice. In Kansas, that race soon led to open warfare between factions and gave rise to the term "Bleeding Kansas." Opponents of the bill founded a new party committed to halting the expansion of slavery and eventually settled on the name Republican. Southerners dubbed its leaders "Black Republicans."

Hammond was uneasy at first about his status in the Senate and was reluctant to make any formal speeches. He wrote many practice drafts until finally, on March 4, 1858, he at last addressed his fellow senators—and delivered a speech that would eclipse even his previous congressional address as a milestone in proslavery rhetoric. The speech would make clear to anyone who paid attention just how deep the chasm had become between North and South.

Only the day before, Senator Seward, deploying strikingly impolitic language, had described the South as a "conquered province." The South

was anything but conquered, Hammond proclaimed in his speech, and proceeded to outline the South's strengths in warlike fashion.

"If we never acquire another foot of territory for the South, look at her," he said. "Eight hundred and fifty thousand square miles; as large as Great Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Spain. Is that not territory enough to make an empire that shall rule the world?" The South had "the finest soil, the most delightful climate," twelve thousand miles of shoreline, and most of the Mississippi Valley. What's more, slavery assured that the white male populace would be free to fight without disrupting the economy. "At any time, the South can raise, equip, and maintain in the field, a larger army than any Power of the earth can send against her, and an army of soldiers—men brought up on horseback, with guns in their hands."

But the most potent weapon, he proclaimed, was the South's control of cotton. "Without firing a gun, without drawing a sword, when they make war on us we can bring the whole world to our feet." The South could simply stop producing this vital crop, he warned. "What would happen if no cotton was furnished for three years? I will not stop to depict what everyone can imagine, but this is certain: old England would topple headlong and carry the whole civilized world with her."

And here he waved a scimitar of words that would bring him lasting fame: "No, sir, you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares make war upon it. Cotton *is* King."

He also used the occasion to argue that the enslavement of Blacks simply fulfilled a societal imperative. Someone had to do the menial work, "to perform the drudgery of life"—to serve as the "mud-sills" of Southern society, as he put it, alluding to the portion of a house that stands between the frame and the earth. "Fortunately for the South, she found a race adapted to that purpose to her hand. A race inferior to herself, but eminently qualified in temper, in vigor, in docility, in capacity to stand the climate, to answer all her purposes. We use them for the purpose, and call them slaves." The speech would be known to future generations simply as the "Mudsills Speech," a watershed moment in the South's decades-long movement to reassure itself that slavery was indeed a positive good.

Always needful of affirmation, Hammond was delighted with the reaction to his speech. Congratulations flowed from the South, intense attack from the North. “The speech was extremely successful in the Senate and in the country,” he wrote in his diary. “It justified my friends and my State in sending me there. It fixed me at once as the Peer of any one upon the Senate floor. That was glorious to me.” He was immediately taken up by Washington society and invited to the most important dinners and receptions. Lord Francis Napier, British minister to the United States, invited him and his family to a formal party at his Washington mansion.

At the close of the Senate session, June 14, 1858, Hammond returned home to adulation and talk of his being a candidate for president in the 1860 election.

What no one appreciated at the time was the extent to which Hammond’s “cotton is king” thesis would blind Southern radicals to the risk that if the South seceded, real war could result, prolonged and ugly. The North would not dare make war, the reasoning went: It could not afford to lose its supply of cotton. And if a war did begin, it would be short—all the South needed to do was shut down cotton production, and the North’s economy would collapse. Nor could the North risk the corollary wrath of Britain, which also depended on Southern cotton and would surely throw its might into the fray on behalf of the seceded states.

Cotton was the radicals’ scepter. A simple agricultural product could bring the mighty industrial North to its knees.

LINCOLN

The Chasm

1858

TWO DAYS AFTER JAMES HAMMOND'S departure from Washington, another speech, from an unheralded source, made headlines and further charged the political firmament.

On June 16, 1858, Lincoln, then forty-nine, won the Republican Illinois State Convention's nomination to run for a seat in the U.S. Senate against the Democratic incumbent, Stephen Douglas, forty-five. The goal was to win the votes not of the public, but of state legislators, who, just like in South Carolina, were responsible for picking the state's U.S. senators. What made the prospect of this battle particularly magnetic was that Lincoln, at six-four, stood a foot taller than the Little Giant.

In an address that night closing the convention, Lincoln delivered one of his best—and perhaps most foolhardy—speeches, for it may well have cost him the Senate seat. It positioned him as a man unabashedly opposed to slavery, thereby raising concerns that he might be too much of a radical for the Illinois electorate. Upon hearing Lincoln read a draft of it in advance, his law partner, William Herndon, while acknowledging the rightness of its central construct, told him, "It is true, but is it wise or politic to say so?"

The speech targeted Douglas and his Kansas-Nebraska Act, which Lincoln denigrated as having reinflamed the conflict over slavery, hitherto

quieted by the Missouri Compromise. The new policy, Lincoln told his audience, had been initiated to end the turmoil but instead had managed to increase it.

"In *my* opinion," he said, "it *will* not cease, until a *crisis* shall have been reached, and passed"—

And here he deployed a familiar admonition attributed to Jesus in the New Testament gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

" 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' "

"I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*."

He cautioned that he did not expect the Union to dissolve, "but I do expect it will cease to be divided.

"It will become *all* one thing, or *all* the other."

Lincoln emphasized that he was not seeking the abolition of slavery but rather hoped to reach a point where further expansion of it was halted and "where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction." In Lincoln's view, Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska Act had altered the landscape so as to make this outcome far less likely. He closed with a vow that the Republican Party, "over thirteen hundred thousand strong," would not let slavery's apostles win. "The result is not doubtful," he said. "We shall not fail—if we stand firm, we shall not fail. *Wise counsels* may *accelerate* or *mistakes delay* it, but sooner or later the victory is *sure* to come."

It was the start of a campaign during which he would deliver sixty-three major speeches, travel over four thousand miles by all manner of conveyance, and, with Stephen Douglas as his opponent, engage in what would become the single most famous debate cycle in the nation's history.

Though he would lose the election, he gained immediate national prominence. And his use of that "house divided" admonition, attributed to Jesus, would forever stand out as a prescient warning of what was to come.

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FOUR MONTHS LATER, WITH the midterm congressional elections of 1858 in full swing, another prominent speaker made an offering to the cross of division. Speaking on October 25, 1858, in Rochester, New York, Sen. William H. Seward delivered an attack on slavery that echoed Lincoln's earlier "house divided" thesis but took it further, to a point where even Republicans backed away, fearing that his remarks were too divisive.

Seward took direct aim at the South's argument that slavery was a beneficent system that protected the enslaved from the vicissitudes of the free market. "The slave system," Seward countered, "is one of constant danger, distrust, suspicion, and watchfulness." The free-labor system, on the other hand, "educates all alike, and by opening all the fields of industrial employment and all the departments of authority, to the unchecked and equal rivalry of all classes of men, at once secures universal contentment, and brings into the highest possible activity all the physical, moral, and social energies of the whole State."

The two systems, he said, were incompatible, no matter how many "pretended compromises" Congress stooped to accept. "It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slaveholding nation, or entirely a free-labor nation." He specified that there was only one way to ensure that free labor prevailed. "The Democratic Party must be permanently dislodged from the government. The reason is, that the Democratic Party is inextricably committed to the designs of the slaveholders."

He then led his audience onto more dangerous ground, deploying the images and language of war. "I know, and you know, that a revolution has begun," he said. "I know, and all the world knows, that revolutions never go backward." Citing the unprecedented growth of antislavery sentiment in Congress, he launched into his closing passage: "While the government of the United States, under the conduct of the Democratic Party, has been all that time surrendering one plain and castle after another to Slavery, the people of the United States have been no less steadily and perseveringly gathering together the forces with which to recover back again all the fields

and all the castles which have been lost, and to confound and overthrow, by one decisive blow, the betrayers of the Constitution and Freedom forever."

Just as Lincoln's speech lodged the phrase "a house divided" into the American psyche, and Hammond's speech the "cotton is king" thesis, so Seward's speech deposited a phrase that would color political discourse for the next three climactic years: "an irrepressible conflict."

VIRGINIA

The Rubicon

1859

By October of 1859, Edmund Ruffin recognized that his efforts to stoke disunion in his home state of Virginia had led to nothing, and not for want of trying. He had worked obsessively to promote secession. He traveled the countryside preaching disunion and took every opportunity to rage at Northern "tyranny," arguing that the South was even more oppressed by the North than the early colonists had been by the British before the American Revolution. His zeal prompted one observer to call him "a fiery agent of disunion." He looked the part: A man of middling height—five feet, eight inches, neither short nor tall—he wore his white hair down to his shoulders; his facial features were sharp and spoke of abstention and judgment, as if he were some biblical character sent to smite the evils of this world—meaning, mainly, Yankees. He loathed the North; like his friend James Hammond, he deemed slavery to be a morally correct and beneficial institution.

Now sixty-five, Ruffin was a deeply discouraged man, all but ignored by his fellow Virginians, who dismissed him as a hate-mongering fanatic. By mid-month he began musing about taking his own life. He had endured grotesque personal tragedy. He was tired, and bored, needful of affirmation that never came. His dream of Southern independence seemed unlikely to be fulfilled. Even books, once his great love—by the age of ten he had read

all of Shakespeare's plays—were losing their appeal. "Fond of reading as I am," he wrote, "I cannot take pleasure in reading all day, and day after day."

In an entry in his diary dated October 18 at his Beechwood plantation, he wrote, "I have lived long enough—and a little more of such unused and wearisome passage of time will make my life too long."

The next day, news arrived of an event that had occurred two days earlier at the northern end of the state, something so unexpected, so shocking, especially to Southerners, that by the time Ruffin heard of it the South was calling for war.

It very likely saved his life.

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UNLIKE HAMMOND, RUFFIN HAD been born into the planter aristocracy, the chivalry. He grew up on a plantation called Evergreen at Coggin's Point, Virginia, one of the great planting and slaveholding enterprises in the state; upon his father's death in 1810, he inherited the plantation and the enslaved laborers who worked its vast fields. A year later he married Susan Travis, a member of one of the state's oldest families. She was eighteen, he seventeen.

He knew little about farming and learned what he did know mainly by reading agricultural texts. Over time he acquired three additional plantations and raised his total population of enslaved laborers to sixty-six. He gained stature as a capable planter, but this gave him only limited satisfaction. As so many planters seemed obliged to do, he decided to try his hand at politics and ran for a seat in the Virginia state senate. He won, only to quickly realize that he was ill-suited to the art of politicking. He had no skill at public speaking, as he himself acknowledged, and his personality was too rigid for the endless compromises that politics seemed to require. He resigned and returned to Coggin's Point, where he devoted himself once again to farming.

Convinced that prevailing agricultural practices were wearing out Virginia land, he began experimenting with using "marl"—manure

comprised of crushed, fossilized shells, a source of calcium carbonate—to reduce the acidity of soil. His efforts brought a striking increase in yields per acre. He was so pleased with the results that he wrote a book on the subject, *An Essay on Calcareous Manures*. It was no *Ivanhoe*, much adored by the planting class, but its publisher did issue 750 copies in the book's first printing, a substantial number for such an obscure work. Ruffin was so taken with marl that when he acquired a new plantation of nearly a thousand acres on the Pamunkey River northeast of Richmond, he named it Marlbourne.

Marl became his obsession. He believed it to have near boundless power to revitalize sterile soils. No one else seemed to care. His book, although respectfully received—it drew a fifteen-page review in the highly regarded *American Journal of Science and Arts*—did not bring the attention Ruffin had hoped for, and Ruffin lived for attention.

He was gratified, therefore, when he discovered that his agricultural theories did gain at least one influential adherent, James Hammond, who, while governor of South Carolina, approached him with the idea of conducting a statewide survey of agricultural lands, mainly to locate undiscovered deposits of marl, but also to gauge the overall condition of the state's soils and farms. Ruffin began the survey in January 1843 at the age of forty-nine and in the course of the year became close friends with Hammond. In South Carolina, Ruffin found himself appreciated in a way he had never felt in Virginia; he was captivated by the state, where he found his own secessionist impulses echoed by Hammond and a cadre of radical politicians. Charleston in particular appealed to him. He likened the city to "a gentleman born and bred, simply but perfectly well dressed."

His survey took him from South Carolina's Lowcountry to the Upcountry. The Lowcountry held the lush, flat, swampy lands that were ideal for growing rice and cotton, where planters readily accumulated wealth, slaves, and political power. Its summer climate was deemed too hostile for white people but fine for enslaved Blacks, whom racist anatomists determined would thrive in such harsh conditions. Here were the big plantations of myth, with magnolia-lined drives, house slaves in livery,

and commodious homes with columns and piazzas, the “show plantations” owned by “swell heads,” as yeoman farmers called them. The Upcountry, above the so-called fall line, where rapids and waterfalls gave way to navigable rivers, was rougher territory, denigrated by the coastal aristocracy as being a primitive and uncultured domain. Most of the plantations Ruffin visited were small farms with one or two slaves, far from what Northern abolitionists tended to imagine.

This was rugged travel. Roads were bad, accommodations crude. Natural hazards abounded. Heavy rains turned creeks into freshets; snow fell. Snakes were ever present—cottonmouth and highland moccasins, copperheads, diamondback rattlers. (James Hammond’s own planting journals made repeated reference to the killing of rattlesnakes.) Night was filled with the roar of insects, a sound so prominent that when Southerners traveled north its absence was striking. Ruffin was beset nightly by biting flies called “no-see-ums” and clouds of mosquitoes, which swarmed the Lowcountry in particular. One Southern soldier pronounced the mosquitoes to be so large they were “almost able to shoulder a musket.”

Ruffin brought Hammond with him on some of his inspections and to meetings of local agricultural societies. In the evenings they sipped brandy and talked of their mutual devotion to Southern independence and secession. They shared confidences and commiserated about the cultural and personal isolation their livelihoods and interests fostered. Ruffin saw himself as an intellectual but deemed the South a realm that devalued rigorous thought and artistic achievement, and offered little opportunity for interaction with like-minded souls. He was lonely, intellectually and socially, a condition shared by other planters, including Hammond. Except when visiting cities like Charleston and Columbia, planters lived in a profoundly rural landscape separated from one another by miles of fields and forests, distances not speedily covered on horseback or by carriage; so primitive that wolves still roamed the forests and were known on occasion to settle under a planter’s porch.

Ruffin and Hammond shared their woes. “I have now lived so long by myself and in myself that I am utterly incapable of going into any crowd,”

Hammond wrote to Ruffin. “I have no one in 50 miles of me more sensible and companionable than my driver Tom.”

Tom was one of his enslaved workers.

Hammond and Ruffin were, by their own mutual appraisal, lonely knights in an anti-intellectual kingdom. “I have no assistant, no sympathizer, no consoler,” Hammond wrote.

Ruffin understood. “If it be of any consolation to you to know of others suffering like yourself,” he told Hammond, “I can afford you some of it.”

Ruffin’s isolation grew more pronounced with the death of his wife, Susan, in 1846, after thirty-five years of marriage, during which she had borne eleven children, of whom three had died soon after birth. There were brief moments when the world seemed to awaken to his self-assessed greatness, as when in October 1851 the influential *De Bow’s Review* published an admiring biography of him written using details he himself had provided. Best of all, the *Review* published his portrait, “enough a likeness to make me known when seen afterwards by strangers.”

This was a momentary brightness. In South Carolina summer was always a worrisome time, the “sickly season,” when diseases like yellow fever and malaria settled over the landscape, borne by mosquitoes, though this connection was not yet recognized. Typhoid, an artifact of contaminated water, was present year-round. Local myth held that enslaved Blacks were resistant to these diseases, a fiction that allowed planters to justify assigning them to brutal work in the fields under blistering sun without a flicker of conscience, while the planters themselves fled inland to mountain redoubts that were cooler and drier.

In July 1855 Ruffin’s daughter Jane died of fever, possibly typhoid. She had lived with Ruffin at Marlbourne, along with three sisters; her abrupt absence from his daily life made his grief particularly acute. He prayed that he would not have to witness the deaths of any of his other children. He hoped to die first. “Oh God!” he wrote in his diary. “In thy mercy spare me this sorrow, by my being first called and removed by death.”

It was a prayer promptly denied. His youngest daughter, Ella, died a month later after a “slow fever.” A third daughter, Rebecca, died in

November, in her thirties. Three daughters in a single year.

He lost another daughter as well, but not to disease. On July 30, 1859, his last unmarried daughter—his confidante and helpmate Mildred—announced that she had become engaged to a Kentucky schoolmaster. It took Ruffin utterly by surprise. “She is so dear to me that it would be a great source of grief for me to part with her,” he wrote in his diary. His sorrow was compounded when he learned that Mildred and her husband planned to move to Frankfort, Kentucky, five hundred miles away, which in this time, for Ruffin, was a distance as good as death.

His isolation deepened; so too did his sense of underappreciation and his dismay at his state’s unwillingness to embrace secession. He nursed a growing bitterness toward his fellow men, which stained the world around him. Once his ire was raised, he acknowledged, “my resentment is implacable.”

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THE FIRST REPORTS CAME by telegraph. Newspaper offices posted each new message on their public bulletin boards and then pieced the story together in news articles for later publication.

On October 16, 1859, John Brown, a fierce abolitionist, led a company of twenty-one men in an assault on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in northern Virginia with the intent of arming the region’s enslaved Blacks and sparking a widespread uprising. (The town resides now in West Virginia, which joined the Union as a free state in June of 1863.) Local citizens and militia battled Brown to a standoff until a federal force arrived, led by Col. Robert E. Lee, for the moment an officer in the U.S. Army. Lee quickly crushed Brown’s insurgency, killing ten of Brown’s men, including two of his sons. The effect throughout the South was galvanic. The raid and its leader were the embodiment of the chivalry’s darkest imaginings of slave uprisings. As one historian would later put it, “Not even the fieriest radical could ever have made the threat of an internal holocaust appear so real and imminent to Southerners as had the grim, dedicated Brown.”

Ruffin understood at once that this changed everything. He was elated. Although the news at first seemed hard to believe, he wrote in his diary, “it really seems now most probable that the outbreak was planned and instigated by Northern abolitionists, and with the expectation of thus starting a general slave insurrection. I earnestly hope that such may be the truth of the case. Such a practical exercise of abolition principles is needed to stir the sluggish blood of the South.”

In the North, reaction was laden with a surprising degree of nuance. Widespread condemnation of the raid was tempered by warm praise for Brown’s character and his moral stand. Even William Lloyd Garrison’s the *Liberator* made a distinction between the act and the underlying principle. Garrison described Brown as “conscientious, truthful, brave,” but called the raid “a misguided, wild and apparently insane” escapade. The New York *Independent* echoed this, declaring, “The insanity of the act does not impeach the rectitude of the motive.”

In the South, there was only rage and fear. Existing state militias saw a surge in new recruits; new companies formed as well and began actively drilling their volunteers. Stockpiles of arms expanded. Communities formed vigilance committees to identify and eject citizens who might be harboring abolitionist views. An Atlanta newspaper warned, “We regard every man in our midst an enemy to the institutions of the South who does not boldly declare that he or she believes African slavery to be a social, moral, and political blessing.”

Always ready to feel affronted and to express outrage, Charleston seemed particularly inflamed. Announcements in two city newspapers called for the interrogation of *every* male citizen to “learn whether he is for us or against us in the conflict now waged by the North against our property and our rights.” Outsiders and free Blacks in particular merited close interrogation. Scrutiny became aggressive. Despite a lack of evidence as to their true attitudes toward slavery, two South Carolina teachers with Northern roots found themselves expelled from the town in which they lived. One newspaper defended the action with the argument that since the

teachers were from the North, they were "*necessarily imbued with doctrines hostile to our institutions*." The newspaper provided the emphasis.

In Charleston, Brown's raid also produced a general awakening to the "demoralization" of enslaved Blacks. This did not mean the city suddenly began to worry about slave morale; rather, that Blacks had been given too much opportunity to consort among themselves in their own churches, schools, and communal residences and were showing far too much independence. The city, it seemed, had allowed its vigilance to wane. Some Blacks even had the nerve to subscribe to the antislavery *New York Tribune*. One domain where the city's watchfulness had slipped was that of fashion, a particularly obvious marker of newfound pride. Blacks had begun dressing like wealthy white men and women, particularly on Sundays —"negro day"—when the city's free Blacks supplanted whites in promenading along the Battery. One white visitor, in a letter to his wife, described how "the negro wenches crowd the streets in the height of fashion," their male counterparts—"the n—r bucks"—doing the same. He found it risible. "All through the week they sweat and bark in the sun with a slouch hat, shirt sleeves rolled up and on Sundays they dress up in fine clothes, wear a silk hat and gloves." He told his wife it was "enough to make a horse laugh."

It was simply too much, and interlopers were deemed responsible. When the state legislature met in November 1859, it passed a number of measures aimed at reducing dangerous outside influences. One act required traveling salesmen to get a license. To apply, they needed two letters from South Carolinians attesting to their bona fides, had to post a three-thousand-dollar bond, and were required to swear that they would not interfere with or infringe any laws or regulations "made for the government of slaves and free persons of color." A salesman caught without a license faced a two-thousand-dollar fine or as much as six months in jail. Even traveling circuses came in for scrutiny as likely sources of alien influence. The legislature increased the price of circus licenses by one hundred dollars.

The state's then governor, William Gist, saw Brown's raid as the logical culmination of the North's growing antislavery agitation. The North, he

said, had “crossed the Rubicon.” Alarm grew when evidence presented during Brown’s trial revealed maps of South Carolina with various targets identified. At stake was something existential: control of the entire Black race, as expressed by a Charleston grand jury in the wake of the raid. “It is proper,” the jury declared, “that the line of demarcation between the castes should be broad and distinct, more particularly at this time for reasons which need not be mentioned. It is full time that slaves and free persons of color should know and understand their position.”

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UNTIL NOW, JAMES HAMMOND had been undecided about returning to Washington for the December 1859 start of the next Senate session. His bowels and gut continued to harry him, and the memory of his past trauma still haunted him. He feared, too, that appearing in the House could only hurt his nascent presidential ambitions. By this point he had begun to moderate his views on secession, arguing that at least for the time being, the South would do better within the Union than outside it, provided Congress left slavery alone. But after John Brown’s raid, Congress was in no mood for reasoned debate on the subject. Hammond once had described abolitionism as “dying out for want of fuel”; now Brown had provided fuel in abundance. Hammond felt that he had no choice but to return to Washington. He told a friend, “I fear it would appear like shrinking from duty not to go.”

He found Congress seething with sectional malice; it took the House seven weeks to at last elect a speaker. Every debate seemed to turn back to slavery. The mood in both chambers degraded to the point where representatives and senators began carrying guns, prompting Hammond to observe, “The only persons who do not have a revolver and a knife are those who have two revolvers.”

He himself had a pistol, but unlike many of his peers, he kept it in his desk. He did what he could to staunch debate on slavery, fearing that such endless argument and deprecation could eventually drive Congress to

concoct some form of legislation to regulate the institution. He repeatedly put forth motions to adjourn but nonetheless found himself becoming caught up anew in the drive toward secession.

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HIS FRIEND EDMUND RUFFIN reveled in the growing national chaos, or more precisely, in the attention it brought him. While he still could not deliver a spirited speech, he proved adept at leveraging his new notoriety.

His rising fame annoyed Hammond. Both men had always been needful of public applause and praise, and now Ruffin was getting it in torrents. Hammond was jealous of Ruffin and his ability to win public acclaim by so deftly riding the crest of secessionist sentiment—jealous to the point where it caused a rift in their friendship. In a letter to novelist Simms, their mutual friend, Hammond condemned Ruffin's "vanity and egotism."

But to Ruffin, Hammond had become stale bread. It was time for his own dreams of secession to be realized at last.

When John Brown was sentenced to death on November 2, 1859, after a five-day trial, Ruffin saw a fresh opportunity to further raise his own profile as an apostle of disunion. He resolved to attend Brown's execution, scheduled to take place in Charles Town—then in Virginia—and to make sure everyone knew it. Upon learning that only members of the military could attend, Ruffin persuaded the Virginia Military Institute to make him a cadet for just that one day. He was fully aware that his advanced age and his appearance could not help but draw notice, especially as the institute dressed him in a full uniform and placed him in its color guard. "When I made my appearance," Ruffin wrote in his diary that day, "I could see what was very natural and excusable, that my position was very amusing, and perhaps ludicrous, to the young men, and it required all the constraint of their good manners to hide their merriment." Ruffin loved it.

Ruffin found himself impressed with how Brown ascended the gallows steps seemingly without fear. Brown, he wrote, exhibited "physical or

animal courage, or the most complete fearlessness of and insensibility to danger and death. In this quality he seems to me to have had few equals."

Ruffin managed to take possession of a number of the "pikes"—long spear-like weapons—that Brown's men had possessed, and urged the Virginia legislature to distribute them to all the governors of slave states as a reminder of the "unscrupulous and measureless enmity" of Northern abolitionists. When the legislature declined, Ruffin did it on his own but kept one pike for himself. He carried it on his travels after first labeling it "Sample of the favors designed for us by our Northern Brethren."

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THE RAID DEEPENED RUFFIN'S conviction that Northern abolitionists posed a serious threat to Southern society. Ever inept at oratory, he sought to sound the alarm through writing. In February 1860, he read a novel called *Wild Scenes of the South* that envisioned a post-secession world. Dismissing it as "a very foolish book," Ruffin decided he could write something along the same lines, only do it much better. He began work at once, framing his novel around the imagined letters of a correspondent for the London *Times* reporting from America just after William Henry Seward of New York won the 1864 presidential election. The novel, didactically entitled *Anticipations of the Future: To Serve as Lessons for the Present Time* (the complete title went on for another twenty-three words), allowed Ruffin to give full expression to his hatred of abolitionists and the North.

Early in the novel the *Times* correspondent reports that he came to America convinced that slavery was wrong but changed his view, judging slaves to be "very far better provided for, and more happy and contented, than either the agricultural, manufacturing or mining laborers of England." The *Times* man refers to enslaved people as "bodies without minds."

"President Seward" sets out to destroy slavery, and soon the South finds itself in a state of "virtual bondage" to the North. At last the South rouses itself to action—Ruffin sets this in 1868—and in short order, six states secede and South Carolina occupies Fort Sumter. In response, the Union

army marches into Virginia, prompting the rest of the South to secede as well. Now comes gore and retribution. A force of eight hundred Ohio abolitionists and twenty-seven hundred Blacks led by none other than John Brown's son, Owen, bursts into Kentucky, slaughtering white people left and right, hoping to free the state's slaves—but in Ruffin's fantasy, the slaves don't want to be freed. Kentucky militia companies counterattack. The Black soldiers of the North prove lazy, confused, and cowardly. "The fire of the Kentucky riflemen and infantry, as advancing nearer and nearer, was delivered rapidly and accurately upon the now disordered black mass." The Kentucky men obliterate the abolitionist army and hang Owen Brown, along with twenty-seven of his white officers, all from the branches of a single oak tree, their bodies left dangling to be consumed by vultures. In a gleeful extra flourish, Ruffin has Blacks conduct the executions.

He prophesied economic mayhem. Without access to Southern markets, the North reels from financial distress; the South prospers thanks to trade with Europe. Violence breaks out in major Northern cities. In New York, mobs run riot (an eerie forecast of the "draft riots" that would occur three years hence). In two hours the entire city is engulfed in flames. The fire destroys every house in New York and Brooklyn, then technically a separate city, leaving ruins strewn with "charred and partly consumed skeletons."

Ruffin wrote the novel at a daunting pace. He completed its 426 pages in two months and promptly published it in the *Charleston Mercury* in installments, with the idea of issuing it later in book form. He knew it wasn't great literature. In his diary he confessed to fearing "deserved censure for literary demerit." But he had a higher goal: "I cannot help sanguinely hoping that the book, as an argument and incentive to defense and resistance by the South, and for disunion, will have noted and good effect."

Soon after Ruffin finished writing the book, the Republican Party, on May 18, 1860, at a clamorous convention in Chicago, nominated its candidate for the presidency.

Resilience

Brown's raid and the turmoil that followed had little lasting effect on the slave trade. By January 1860 prices were soaring. "Our Negro market is very brisk indeed at this time," wrote Hector Davis, a Richmond trader. "In fact good young men are as high or higher than I ever saw them."

In Charleston that month, business at Ryan's Mart flourished, with at least eight slave auctions involving 658 enslaved Black men, women, and children, including infants and toddlers.

One boy, Little Joe, was three years old.

RUFFIN

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The Landscape of Fear

1860

THE CHOICE OF LINCOLN AS the Republican nominee surprised Ruffin and disappointed him, because Lincoln seemed too moderate, too respectful of the Constitution's protections of slavery, to spark the outrage necessary to drive the entire South from the Union, let alone galvanize Ruffin's torpid home state of Virginia.

Ruffin had hoped the party would nominate Seward, a confirmed Black Republican; doing so, Ruffin believed, would have gone far in pushing the South toward secession. This new man, this "Lincoln of Illinois, inferior in ability and reputation to all—and whom no one had mentioned before," as Ruffin put it, seemed less likely to have the same effect. Something needed to happen. Virginia continued to dismay him by its lack of action, its willingness, as he put it, "to swallow black republicanism, n—r, tariff, and all."

Disgusted, he sought respite in a journey to White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, where he planned to meet his recently married daughter, Mildred, whom he sorely missed. She and her new husband were now settled in Frankfort, Kentucky, but Ruffin hoped to draw her away for a vacation at the springs.

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AS HE TRAVELED THROUGH Virginia, Ruffin traversed a landscape charged with fear about slave uprisings and suffused with a generalized uneasiness about the future. John Brown's raid had caused slaveholders to imagine a vast, organized conspiracy of abolitionists intent on instigating an insurrection. They found proof wherever they chose to look.

A large fire in Dallas said to have been started by enslaved Blacks sent rumors flying through one train that a large-scale uprising was underway in Texas. Slaves were said to have poisoned food and water supplies, poison being a particularly fearsome thing for planters, given the easy access of house servants to the kitchens of their masters' homes. In February 1860, South Carolina congressman Laurence M. Keitt, thirty-six years old and an outspoken advocate of secession, learned by telegram that his brother, Dr. W. J. Keitt, a state senator in Marion County, Florida, had been murdered by his own slaves while lying ill in bed, "his throat cut from ear to ear," according to one news report. Representative Keitt learned later that his brother's district had been one of the targets marked on John Brown's maps.

Most Southerners did not share Ruffin's appraisal of Lincoln as being politically moderate. His nomination guaranteed that in the months before Election Day, the South's anxiety would only increase. It left Representative Keitt virtually unhinged with fear. "If Lincoln is elected—what then?" Keitt wrote in a terror-filled letter to James Hammond. He envisioned poisoned wells and plantation houses set on fire. "With poison and fire how can we stand it? I confess this new feature alarms me more than even everything in the past. If Northern men get access to our negroes to advise poison and the torch we must prevent it at every hazard."

Underlying these fears was the deeper dread that newly emancipated Blacks would take their place beside whites at all social levels, or even supplant them, perhaps even marry their daughters, the maximally feared "amalgamation." That Lincoln himself never actually envisioned or encouraged racial equality, let alone intermarriage, became irrelevant. The South had reached a point where its suspicions alone confirmed these as his foremost goals and the primary objectives of the Republican Party. "If the South acquiesces in a Republican administration," wrote South Carolina

congressman William Boyce in a public statement in August 1860, “the question of negro equality is settled against us, and emancipation only a question of time.”

Adding to the overall disquiet was a severe drought that settled over the South, from Georgia to Texas, and lasted from July through the following autumn. In Texas it caused the tinderbox conditions that were likely the true culprit in the fires alleged to have been lit by slaves. The cotton harvest fell by over 30 percent, which had the effect of not only reducing planter income but also undercutting the system of credit in which cotton served as the security that allowed planters to expand their holdings. The corn crop was hit especially hard, raising fears of famine. Food prices soared.

As the South simmered and Texas prairies grew parched, Southern fears about a world coming to an end became amplified. The approach of Election Day and the seemingly inevitable election of Lincoln seemed to many to threaten apocalypse.

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RUFFIN REACHED WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, Virginia, at seven A.M. on August 11 after spending a full night in a stagecoach. It had to be a welcome sight: a peaceful enclave of cottages and a large white hotel set in a valley among softly peaked hills along the west front of the Allegheny Mountains.

The resort was a popular destination for planters and politicians from throughout the South seeking to avoid the perils of the sickly season. One visitor counted guests from fourteen states and territories. A new and majestic hotel nicknamed “Old White” dominated the grounds, but the prime accommodations were the many brick or frame cottages and cabins arrayed in rows named for states. Here was Alabama Row, for example, and Carolina Row, where Cottage No. 16 belonged to Robert E. Lee, who, in addition to his army career, directed three plantations and managed some two hundred enslaved Blacks owned by his late father-in-law. A three-hundred-foot-long dining hall seated up to twelve hundred guests at a time; every day its kitchen staff slaughtered two cattle, twenty-two sheep, and

three hundred chickens and turned out five hundred pies. The food was apparently as big a draw as the water. “When the dinner bell sounds here,” noted one visitor, John S. Skinner, founder of the *American Farmer*, “it is amusing to see how simultaneously all these cabins are emptied of their tenants, and how even all the dear ladies come flocking to be fed, like pigeons called down from the dove-cot.” The resort had a bath house for those who liked to bathe in the waters, and a domed structure that covered the spring itself for those who preferred to drink the water, which flowed at thirty gallons per minute at a constant temperature of sixty-two degrees. The water contained a stew of minerals, the largest single component being sulphate of lime. “The water has somewhat the flavor of a half-boiled, half-spoiled egg; is very clear, but not very cold,” wrote sixteen-year-old Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte, Jr., a relative of the French emperor, during a stay at the springs. “Although the taste is very nauseous at first, the visitors become very fond of it in a short time.”

People came ostensibly for the therapeutic effects of the water, which was said to have curative powers over such afflictions as bowel irritation, chronic diarrhea, hemorrhoids—“piles,” in the parlance of the day—and dyspepsia, “the especial scourge of the sedentary and the thoughtful,” according to a promotional booklet. But the leading families of the South also converged here each summer to “mingle together under circumstances well calculated to promote social intercourse, and to call out the kindliest feelings of our nature.” The springs drew planters, bankers, and politicians intent on advancing their careers. Buchanan came, as did other presidents before him, and stayed in a cottage known as the Summer White House. The social gyre began at dawn when guests first began guzzling the waters—four or five tumblers at a time, according to one devotee—until the evening, when the resort hosted concerts and balls, both masquerade and fancy. The resort was renowned as well for fostering romance. It was here that Francis W. Pickens of South Carolina, a twice-widowed father of five living daughters who would soon become the state’s governor, met his current wife, Lucy Holcombe, a sometime novelist twenty-eight years his junior who was renowned for her beauty. The romantically inclined could

lose themselves in the “Courtship Maze,” a forested labyrinth with paths identified as “Lovers Walk,” “Lovers Leap,” “Lovers Rest,” “Acceptance,” “Way to Paradise”—and, of course, “Rejection.” Life at the springs was glamorous and exciting, too much so for one guest, who called it “a sink hole of extravagance.”

By the time Ruffin arrived, the resort was flush with over sixteen hundred visitors. He had always liked the springs but now judged it to be overcrowded and tedious. “I find much of the time here to hang heavy on my hands,” he wrote in his diary. Unmoved by the lighthearted atmosphere around him, Ruffin took every opportunity he could to argue the case for secession and to hand out proslavery pamphlets, but he found that amid the distractions of this festive environment—the gossip, the flirting, the promenades; the beautiful women and dandified men—his listeners paid scant attention. “I find myself alone as an avowed disunionist *per se*,” he wrote, “and I avow that opinion on every occasion.”

Here he received the sad news, by letter, that Mildred would not be able to join him after all. Crushed, he resolved to visit her instead and left the next morning, Friday, August 31. This was no casual journey, especially for the now sixty-six-year-old Ruffin: It would take six days and involve travel by stagecoach, train, and ferry, and be plagued by delays and hazards, including a railroad derailment and incessant attack by mosquitoes.

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IN FRANKFORT, RUFFIN WAS disconcerted to learn just how strongly residents of Kentucky favored preservation of the Union. Even his son-in-law was a unionist, and this, as in all times of political stress, made dinnertime conversation problematic. Politely seeking to be a good guest, Ruffin avoided argument as much as possible. When prodded for his views by curious visitors who knew of his extremist reputation, he would try in a “jocular” manner to laugh the conversation into safer channels.

Meanwhile, he bombarded Southern newspapers with lengthy letters espousing secession and states’ rights.

While at his daughter's home, he received two copies of his newly published *Anticipations of the Future*, in book form at last, but was dismayed to see that it was full of typographical errors and encased in a cheap binding. It emerged to resounding critical silence.

By this point, Ruffin had come to see grave threat in Lincoln's ascendance. A Lincoln presidency, he told fellow fire-eater William Lowndes Yancey, would constitute "the beginning of a sure and speedy progress to the extermination of negro slavery and the consequent and utter ruin of the prosperity of the South."

Election Day, seven days off, approached at the steady pace of a funeral cortege.

PART TWO

TREACHERY IN THE WIND

(November 1860–January 1861)

WHEN YOU BELIEVE YOURSELF AGGRIEVED, be silent on the subject, speak to no one about the matter, and see your friend, who is to act for you, as soon as possible.

—The Code Duello

BUCHANAN

The Unfairness of It All

NOVEMBER

PERHAPS NO ONE WAS MORE unhappy about Lincoln's election than the incumbent president, James Buchanan. Above all, Buchanan wanted harmony and resented all this turmoil so near the end of his administration. It was, he said, very unfair—"very hard"—that he likely would not be able to "finish my term of office in peace, at my time of life."

He had hoped for it ever since his own inauguration in 1857, when he told his audience that his goal was to preside over the country "in such a manner as to restore harmony and ancient friendship among the people of the several states." He even tried to minimize the crisis then flaring in Kansas, where violence supplanted debate over whether the territory would enter the Union as a free or slave state. "This is, happily, a matter of but little importance," he said, noting that he was content to leave the resolution to the Supreme Court, "before whom it is now pending, and will, it is understood, be speedily and finally settled."

By this he was referring to the *Dred Scott* decision, which would be issued just two days after his inauguration by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, seventy-nine, who loved the South and feared for the survival of Southern civilization. In his decision, Taney ruled that Blacks could not be citizens, that slaves were property that could be moved at will, and, further, that

Congress could not bar slavery from any territory. The Kansas-Nebraska Act had already repealed the Missouri Compromise, but Taney's ruling went a step further and declared that it had been unconstitutional in the first place.

Though Buchanan promised to "cheerfully submit" to whatever the court decided, in fact he had secretly helped shape the court's deliberations and knew the overall content of Taney's opinion even before delivering his inaugural speech. Buchanan himself considered slavery to be a "moral evil" and claimed to be glad to live in a state that did not permit it; but he had no objection to Southerners' holding slaves and blamed abolitionists for making slavery such a contentious issue. He hoped Taney's decision would at last end the slavery debate. "Most happy it will be for the country," he told his inaugural audience, "when the public mind shall be diverted from this question to others of more pressing and practical importance." He expressed his faith in a more metaphysical power. "Time," he said, "is a great corrective."

But neither time nor Taney resolved anything. And now, four years later, as the nation seethed and his presidency neared its end, Buchanan began writing his final annual message to Congress, which by custom would be read aloud by clerks in the House and, separately, in the Senate.

The address, to be delivered to Congress on December 3, would be the most important speech of Buchanan's administration. He knew it would be reported and reprinted in every newspaper in the country, relayed by telegram, parsed by Republicans, Democrats, and fire-eaters. The address would go a long way toward determining his legacy, how people in future generations would think of him. The nation needed to know that a steady hand was at the helm.

What Buchanan needed was ninety days of peace. Then, on March 4, the nation's crisis would become Lincoln's problem. The underlying question was, would there even be a country to govern come Inauguration Day? As the never bashful *Charleston Mercury* proclaimed two days after the election: "The tea has been thrown overboard, the revolution of 1860 has been initiated."

Buchanan settled into a room at the State Department and began to write.

RUFFIN

The Scent of Rebellion

NOVEMBER 10

AFTER THE ELECTION, EDMUND RUFFIN promptly set out for South Carolina convinced that it alone had the resolve to act. (He had voted for John C. Breckinridge, Buchanan's vice president and the candidate put forth by the Southern faction of the fractured Democratic Party.) He arrived in Columbia, the state's capital, in time to be present on November 10, 1860, when, spurred by Lincoln's victory, the legislature debated holding a special convention to decide whether South Carolina should secede from the Union.

Unlike in Virginia, Edmund Ruffin found himself feted as a hero. A contingent of students from South Carolina College begged him to come and speak. He declined, fearing failure, but was tickled all the same. Both houses of the state legislature offered him a seat on the main floor to better observe the proceedings. To draw further attention to himself, he had a seamstress affix a blue cockade ostentatiously to his hat. The cockade was a round rosette of ribbon two and a half inches in diameter that evoked the badges of the French Revolution and by now had become the emblem of those who favored secession.

The legislature approved the measure. It was only a preamble, a basic but essential bureaucratic step, but it moved the state closer to fulfilling

Ruffin's dream. He was thrilled. "Thus this great and important measure, which I have so long anxiously desired, is adopted," Ruffin wrote, "and on this hereafter glorious day, the 10th of November, is inaugurated the revolution which will tear the slave-holding states from their connection with the Northern section and establish their separate independence."

With the vote concluded and the secession convention scheduled to convene in mid-December, he set out for Charleston. "The time since I have been here has been the happiest of my life," he wrote to his sons on November 11. "The public events are as gratifying to me as they are glorious and momentous, and there has been much to gratify my individual and selfish feelings." He acknowledged that some of the praise for him was undoubtedly mere flattery, but it was pleasing all the same; it filled a hole in him that had existed since childhood. "What a contrast to my position in my native state, and among most of my countrymen!"

As Ruffin made his way toward Charleston, he was cheered and applauded. He was made the guest of honor at a rural pro-secession rally, where he was greeted by a band and cannon fire and was serenaded by the crowd. This was a Southern custom, a kind of call-and-response ritual where a musical serenade, either instrumental or choral, was rewarded with a speech. He obliged and for one shining moment found that his oratorical handicap had disappeared. Another crowd awaited him in Charleston on the street in front of his hotel with another serenade as women waved kerchiefs from the hotel balcony.

All of Charleston seemed caught up in the drive toward secession. Lincoln's election and the prospect of the South's coming under the authority of a Black Republican government had caused a spontaneous, universal upwelling of indignation, wrote Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, president of South Carolina College, in a public letter to the *Richmond Enquirer*. "You might as well attempt to control a tornado as to attempt to stop them from secession. They drive politicians before them like sheep."

Ruffin saw, to his amazement, that secession, to which he had devoted much of his adult life, might indeed come to pass. His optimism and that of his like-minded peers was reinforced when Horace Greeley, editor of the

New York Tribune, weighed in with an editorial that many in the South chose to see as an acknowledgment of their right to exit the Union.

Greeley at this point was forty-nine years old, easily recognized in a crowd by his distinctive, and distinctly peculiar, beard—a ring of gray whiskers that radiated outward from underneath his chin like a bird's nest, a likeness further enhanced by the egg-like appearance of his bald head. Greeley's views mattered. The *Tribune* was the single most potent voice in American public opinion, with a weekly readership of one million people at a time when the nation's population was 31.4 million.

Greeley wrote, "If the Cotton States shall become satisfied that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace."

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ENERGIZED BY HIS STAY in South Carolina, Ruffin traveled next to Georgia to do what he could to foment disunion there as well. He watched as the state legislature debated whether to hold a secession convention just as South Carolina had done, but found Georgia's leaders depressingly reluctant. He returned to Virginia, to Richmond, and saw that there, too, nothing had changed. Far from it. Critics condemned his actions in South Carolina and went so far as to threaten to run him out of town. Ever contrary, Ruffin stumped around the city with his blue cockade, his wild white hair flowing in the breeze.

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

Party Malice

NOVEMBER 20

In Springfield, the atmosphere of exuberant celebration that had prevailed on Election Day rapidly gave way to an unexpected calm. “The contest has been so long and so exhaustive, that this town almost immediately settled down into its usual quietness,” John Nicolay wrote to his fiancée on Sunday, November 11, as the city prepared somewhat listlessly for the obligatory formal celebration of Lincoln’s victory—a “Jollification”—set to take place nine days later. He had, after all, won the town with only a twenty-two-vote margin. “Seeing the city, and noticing the people on Friday and Saturday, one would not imagine there had been a Presidential election for a year,” Nicolay wrote. “People look and act as if they were almost too tired to feel at all interested in getting up a grand hurrah over the victory and I believe they would not do it at all were it not that it is a formality which in this case cannot well be omitted.”

Some in Springfield harbored a sense of dread. One young woman, Anna Ridgely, the nineteen-year-old daughter of a prominent city banker—a Democrat sympathetic to the South who nonetheless often played cards with Lincoln—wrote in her diary of her disappointment at his election, “for we had hoped that such a man as he without the least knowledge of state affairs, without any polish of manner would not be chosen to represent this

great nation, but so it is.” Lincoln’s apparent lack of political acumen and poise worried her. “I tremble for our country,” she wrote. “I hope foreigners will not judge us by our head. I hope he will keep the peace but I am afraid that our union has commenced to break and will soon fall to pieces but God knows what is best and we can leave all in his hands.”

Henry Villard, an ambitious young émigré from Germany assigned by the *New York Herald* to cover Lincoln in Springfield, knew him about as well as anyone, and, like Anna Ridgely, also had his doubts. “The present aspect of the country, I think, augurs one of the most difficult terms which any President has yet been called to weather,” Villard wrote, “and I doubt Mr. Lincoln’s capacity for the task of bringing light and peace out of the chaos that will surround him. A man of good heart and good intention, he is not firm. The times demand a Jackson”—this a reference to Andrew Jackson, who thirty years earlier had forcefully quashed South Carolina’s nullification revolt.

Villard recalled an encounter with Lincoln during his 1858 senatorial campaign in which Lincoln himself expressed skepticism about his own political prowess. Villard was waiting for a train to take him back to Springfield after covering a rally in Petersburg, Illinois, twenty miles northwest of the city. The Petersburg station was primitive, basically a parcel of ground where trains stopped, with no waiting room or other physical structures. The night was hot and sticky. At about nine o’clock a buggy pulled up and dropped off Lincoln, his frame unmistakable: “lean, lank, indescribably gawky,” as Villard put it. The train was supposed to arrive about then but did not. They waited half an hour, then a thunderstorm tore open the skies. With no shelter in sight, the two fled to an empty freight car on a siding. “We squatted down on the floor of the car and fell to talking on all sorts of subjects,” Villard wrote.

At one point, Lincoln told him that when he was a clerk in a country store, his greatest ambition had been to become a state legislator. “I did not consider myself qualified for the United States Senate,” he told Villard, “and it took me a long time to persuade myself that I was. Now, to be sure, I am convinced that I am good enough for it; but in spite of it all, I am saying

to myself every day: ‘It is too big a thing for you; you will never get it.’ ” But his wife, he said, insisted that he would become not only a senator, but president as well. At this, according to Villard, Lincoln laughed his oddly high-pitched laugh, “with his arms around his knees, and shaking all over with mirth at his wife’s ambition.”

Lincoln then exclaimed, “Just think of such a sucker as me as President!”

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EVEN AS THE CRISIS INTENSIFIED, Lincoln, sequestered in Springfield, seemed to have scant appreciation for the depth of Southern discontentment. He still believed that the majority of Southerners favored the Union, that only extremists and fire-eaters wanted to destroy it, and that with time the South would come to its senses. He also found it hard to grasp how anyone could see him as a radical Black Republican hell-bent on abolishing slavery. He considered his stance to be a moderate one, protecting slavery where it existed but opposing its extension elsewhere. He supported the federal Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, much hated in the North, which allowed planters to retrieve runaway slaves even from free states, on grounds that it was a duly enacted law that only Congress could eliminate. He understood, however, that in the weeks before his inauguration anything he said could prove incendiary; he chose, therefore, to say nothing. Or almost nothing.

While he avoided public comment and steered inquisitive souls to his published speeches and previously reported remarks, he also deftly seeded the firmament by recruiting sympathetic news editors and political allies to convey his views to the public and to Washington without attribution to him. One example of this occurred in Springfield on Tuesday, November 20, the night Republicans had designated for Lincoln’s “Jollification.”

It was a festive night, although it got a lukewarm review from young Miss Ridgely. “I liked some of the things very much,” she wrote. “Almost all the houses in town were lighted with colored lanterns hung out of the windows. The state house was lighted with little candles in all the window

panes. Some of the fireworks were beautiful, but most of them were rockets and Roman candles that we have seen all summer long, while the torch light procession was the smallest I ever saw."

The big event that night was to be a speech by U.S. senator Lyman Trumbull, whose reelection by the Illinois Assembly was all but assured and thus worthy of celebration as well. Five years earlier Trumbull had bested Lincoln for the Senate seat but had since become an ally whose firsthand knowledge of political currents in Washington was proving invaluable. (Mary Lincoln still nursed resentment toward Trumbull for his prior victory, and also toward Trumbull's wife.) Reporters speculated that Trumbull's speech might reflect Lincoln's own thinking. Certainly they hoped for something other than the persistent silence from Springfield that thus far had prevailed. They could not know it, but Lincoln had secretly drafted a lengthy passage for Trumbull to include in his speech, most of which the senator did include, although with a few modifications.

Lincoln's main goal was to reassure the South. In his draft for Trumbull he vowed that under Republican leadership every state would be left in complete control of its own affairs. Referring to himself in the third person, he wrote, "Those who have voted for Mr. Lincoln, have expected, and still expect this; they would not have voted for him had they expected otherwise."

Lincoln had one more paragraph, startlingly naïve, that he'd wanted Trumbull to include. Two sentences long, and reflecting his persistent belief that pro-Union sentiment would triumph in the South, it proposed that the many Southern militias forming in the slave states were a good thing because they could eventually be put to use in taming rebellion. "I am rather glad of this military preparation in the South," Lincoln wanted Trumbull to say. "It will enable the people the more easily to suppress any uprisings there, which their misrepresentations of purposes may have encouraged."

Even the ever-loyal Trumbull balked at this one.

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THANKS TO THE PRACTICE of newspapers' routinely republishing one another's news stories, Trumbull's speech was widely disseminated, but it did little to ease the nation's malaise. It affirmed Lincoln's conviction that he should not yet speak directly to the public, a point he reasserted on November 28 in a "Private and Confidential" note to Henry J. Raymond, the staunchly Republican editor of the then-hyphenated *New-York Times*. This was Lincoln's reply to an earlier letter from Raymond that challenged his reasons for keeping silent. Citing Trumbull's speech, Lincoln wrote, "I now think we have a demonstration in favor of my view….Has a single newspaper, heretofore against us, urged that speech upon its readers with a purpose to quiet public anxiety? Not one, so far as I know." Instead, he wrote, the *Boston Courier* and other Republican papers condemned it for sacrificing party principles, while the *Washington Constitution* and sister papers claimed the speech constituted a declaration of war against the South.

"This is just as I expected, and just what would happen with any declaration I could make," Lincoln wrote. "These political fiends are not half sick enough yet. 'Party malice' and not 'public good' possesses them entirely." Lincoln found further support for his own silence in the gospel of St. Matthew. " 'They seek a sign,' " he told Raymond, " 'and no sign shall be given them.' At least such is my present feeling and purpose."

Raymond later snipped Lincoln's signature from the letter and gave it to a friend who wanted his autograph.

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NOW CAME THE LONG wait until the electoral certification on February 13, 1861, and Lincoln's subsequent inauguration, which if all went well would take place nineteen days afterward at the U.S. Capitol in Washington. In certain circles, dark talk held that Lincoln would never make it to Inauguration Day. For the slaveholding states, his election conjured the real possibility of abolition and its inevitable—and intolerable—consequence, the utter loss of control over the Black race. On November 22, 1860, James

Clement Furman, a prominent Baptist minister and first president of Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, published an open letter that encapsulated the South's great abiding fear of what would happen if slavery were abolished. "Then every negro in South Carolina and every other Southern State will be his own master; nay, more than that, will be the equal of every one of you."

Another Southern orator, quoted in the *New York Herald*, issued an even more vivid warning. "What will you do with these people? Will you allow them to sit at your own table, marry your daughters, govern your States, sit in your halls of Congress and perhaps be president of the United States?"

CHARLESTON

Placing the Knife

NOVEMBER 22

FOR MARY CHESNUT IN CHARLESTON, Lincoln's election was deeply troubling. She sensed that suddenly the tension in the nation had become something more than mere North-South rivalry. To her, his election augured war.

She learned of it on a train as she traveled back to South Carolina after visiting her sister in Florida, a sojourn she described as "two weeks amid hammocks and everglades oppressed and miserable." Word spread through "the cars," as rail coaches were called, that "Lincoln was elected and our fate sealed." Certain that momentous events lay ahead, she began keeping her diary. She made her first entries on loose paper, then acquired her bound book. The diary was for herself for now and would be kept secure. Even her husband, *especially* her husband, would not see it.

"I do not allow myself vain regrets or sad foreboding," she wrote in the first sentence of what would be a four-and-a-half-year, four-hundred-thousand-word endeavor. "This southern Confederacy must be supported now by calm determination—and cool brains. We have risked all, and we must play our best for the stake is life or death."

During her journey she had also learned that her husband, U.S. senator James Chesnut, had resigned his seat to protest Lincoln's election and to more firmly ally himself with South Carolina's drive for secession. He had

done so against her wishes, but she was unable to stop him. “Alas I was in Florida,” she wrote. “I might not have been able to influence him—but I should have tried.” She wished her husband was more ambitious, more *great*, really, than his nature appeared to allow. “If I had been a man in this great revolution,” she wrote, “—I should have either been killed at once or made a name and done some good for my country. Lord Nelson’s motto would be mine—Victory or Westminster Abbey”—meaning a tomb under the floor. *She* had the ambition that he lacked, and she sought to exercise it through him. It was something of a curse, she acknowledged, not a source of delight and satisfaction. In one diary entry she wailed, “Why was I born so frightfully ambitious?”

Mary was thirty-seven. She and James had no children, though they had tried. They lived on a vast plantation called Mulberry, owned by the Chesnut family, that occupied five square miles in Camden, South Carolina, in the middle of the state. Its household grounds were neatly planted with boxwood, jessamine, crab apple, Cherokee roses, violets, opopanax (sweet myrrh), and gardenias, pierced by an allée of live oaks. Hundreds of enslaved Blacks managed the gardens and cotton fields and the big plantation house, a three-and-a-half-story brick box with thirteen bedrooms and seven bathrooms, which alone was tended by twenty-five servants, among them Romeo, the cook; Big Judy, the pastry chef; and Quash and Scipio, stable masters—Scipio standing six-two, “a black Hercules,” as Mary described him, “and as gentle as a dove.”

Mulberry was a self-sustaining enclave with a lumber mill, grist mill, stables, forges, cotton gin, ice house, slave quarters, and other structures; a big two-story building held the kitchen and accommodations for the house slaves. The plantation was big enough to have its own Black church, where Mary now and then attended services. The grounds were enchanting, bucolic; all her needs were tended to within an instant; and the library in the big house was well stocked with books to fill her day. Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, of course, and chivalric delights by Byron, Scott, Tennyson, Milton, Swift, Coleridge, Burns. But she also read beyond the

bounds of planter fantasy: Rabelais, Voltaire, Schiller, Goethe, in French and German.

Mary had a clear-eyed view of slavery. She had lived among enslaved men and women all her life and understood that it was the foundation of Southern society. She opposed abolition and called Lincoln a “horrid black republican ogre.” But she loathed the institution’s most unsavory aspect, the sexual abuse of enslaved women and girls. “God forgive us, but ours is a monstrous system, a wrong and an iniquity!” she wrote. “Like the patriarchs of old, our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines; and the mulattoes one sees in every family partly resemble the white children. Any lady is ready to tell you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody’s household but her own. Those, she seems to think, drop from the clouds. My disgust sometimes is boiling over.” Mary’s biographer, Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, notes that nowhere in Mary’s diary is there any evidence to suggest that her own husband, James, was guilty of such offenses.

As lovely and engaging as Mulberry was, the plantation was remote, as were most plantations throughout the South. “There hangs here as in every Southern landscape the saddest pall,” Mary wrote. Days could be tedious, unlike when her husband was a senator and they stayed for long periods in Washington City (the U.S. capital’s formal name until it became the District of Columbia in 1871). There, she lived among other Southerners, the “Southern mess,” at Brown’s Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue and thrived on the city’s social carousel. Mulberry offered no such stimulation. “I take this somnolent life coolly,” she wrote. “I could sleep upon bare boards if I could once more be amidst the stir and excitement of a live world. These people have grown accustomed to dullness. They were born and bred in it.”

What’s more, at Mulberry she lived in claustrophobically close emotional quarters with family and the inhabitants of neighboring plantations. “Peace, comfort, happiness, I have found away from home,” she wrote. “Only your own family, those nearest and dearest, can hurt you. Wrangling, rows, heart burnings, bitterness, envy, hatred and malice, unbrotherly love, family snarls, neighborhood strife, and ill blood—a lovely

brood I have conjured up. But they were all there, and for these many years I have almost forgotten them. I find them always alive and rampant when I go back to semi-village life. For after all, though we live miles apart—everybody flying round on horses or in carriages—it amounts to a village community. Everybody knows exactly where to put the knife."

In Washington, by contrast, her life was "delightful." She became celebrated for her wit and her deep knowledge of literature, and her willingness to confront men and women alike with difficult topics of conversation. John Manning, the very handsome former governor of South Carolina, described a conversation with Mary in a letter to his wife: "Mrs C very talkative introducing great names in her discourse as if intimate with them and giving her husband sharp hits in a quite unprovoked way."

With her husband out of office, Mary returned to Mulberry with reluctance. "Going back to Mulberry to live," she sighed in her diary, "was indeed offering up my life on the altar of country."

The train journey from Florida was long and grueling. At length she reached Camden and found that the news of Lincoln's election had managed to disrupt its usual slumber. "Camden was in unprecedented excitement," she wrote. "Minute men arming with immense blue cockades and red sashes, soon with sword and gun, marching and drilling."

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HALF AN HOUR AFTER receiving the news that Senator Chesnut had resigned, James Hammond, South Carolina's only remaining U.S. senator, sent off his own resignation letter. Hammond confessed in his diary that he wasn't quite sure why Chesnut had quit and, for that matter, wasn't even sure why he himself had done likewise, though he conceded that he had felt out of place in the Senate ever since his election and had long hoped for "a good pretext" to escape it. Even success—his mudsill speech of 1858—had made him ill. "C'est fini," he wrote to his son Marcus. Secessionist passions now ruled the state, he told him. "People are wild. The scenes of the French Revolution are being enacted already."

For a time, Hammond had become wary of secession, especially if the movement were led by South Carolina, a state known for erratic judgment. An independent South had been “the cherished dream and hope of my life,” he wrote, but it had to be done right. Better, he felt, for a state without South Carolina’s radical reputation to lead the way. The prospect of a war did not worry him; he doubted secession would lead to violence. But he did harbor the concern that once having exited the Union, the Southern states might descend into a political free-for-all dominated by radicals—“the little great men”—seeking only power and personal gratification. But with Lincoln’s election and South Carolina’s secession looking more and more like certainties, and having satisfied himself that “it was a movement of the *People* of the South,” not just fire-eaters and silver-tongued demagogues, Hammond set aside his reservations and fell into line. He held a secret meeting at his home attended by an array of South Carolina leaders, including then governor William H. Gist and James Orr, a former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, to discuss the best way to orchestrate the state’s departure.

“Whatever happens the die is cast with us,” he wrote to an acquaintance on November 22. Carolina would undoubtedly secede and was perfectly willing to go out alone, he wrote, but added he felt strongly that the state should make its exit in company with others. “What she desires,” he wrote, exercising his penchant for deploying feminine pronouns to refer to the state, “is a Southern Slaveholding Confederacy and to exemplify to the world the perfection of our civilization, the immensity of our resources and that the wonderful progress of these United States is mainly due to us.”

He vowed to a friend, “I will support it with all the strength I have.”

BUCHANAN

Aunt Fancy Speaks

DECEMBER 3

BUCHANAN SPENT MORNINGS WORKING ON his annual message and from time to time summoned his assistant secretary of state, William Henry Trescot, to bring him copies of treaties and other documents. Born in Charleston into one of Carolina's loftiest families, Trescot was a member of the state's aristocracy, the chivalry. His nominal superior was Secretary of State Lewis Cass, seventy-eight years old, a former U.S. senator from Michigan, but Cass occupied the post mainly as a figurehead; Buchanan himself, with Trescot's help, fulfilled the State Department's responsibilities. Now, with South Carolina seemingly on the verge of secession, Trescot, thirty-eight, was proving an invaluable source of intelligence about the state's attitudes and grievances.

Buchanan was convinced South Carolina would in fact secede, and he feared the conflict that was likely to result over the federal forts in Charleston Harbor. "I assured him," Trescot wrote, "that I did not think he had much to apprehend in the way of unlawful force, that the people of So.Ca. not only held the right of Secession but that they took special pride in carrying out that right quietly, regularly, peaceably as a *right* not as a revolutionary measure—that I really believed it would mortify them to be compelled to resort to force." In Trescot's treacly view, South Carolina's

exit would be no more fraught than a routine business negotiation. Once the state passed its ordinance of secession, Trescot told Buchanan, it would send envoys to Washington to work out details of the separation.

"But," Buchanan interrupted, "you know I cannot recognize them, all I can do is to refer them to Congress."

As long as Buchanan did so "courteously" and "in good faith," Trescot assured him, the state would be content to wait for a congressional decision. But Buchanan, Trescot saw, remained "very cautious and his great hope seemed to be by temporizing to avoid an issue before the 4th March."

When Buchanan had completed a draft of his message, he invited U.S. senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi to the White House and read it to him. Davis, the South's leading statesman, suggested various changes, which Buchanan "very kindly accepted," according to Davis's later recollection. Davis left the meeting feeling confident that Buchanan's final address would affirm that South Carolina did indeed have a constitutional right to exit the Union. But Buchanan, as it happened, had not yet finished tinkering.

Once the speech was complete, he decided to send a copy as a courtesy to South Carolina's Governor Gist and to have Trescot deliver it to him in person. The governor and his family were such ardent believers in the Southern cause that Gist's brother's given name was States Rights Gist.

At about nine o'clock on Sunday night, December 2, with his address due in Congress the next day, Buchanan sent for Trescot. Buchanan told him that the speech spoke "the truth boldly and clearly" and that the South ought to find it acceptable.

Trescot disagreed. Having read the address, he forecast that South Carolina "would not only secede but that it would secede immediately."

The next morning, Trescot set out for South Carolina bearing Buchanan's courtesy copy.

The following day, Tuesday, December 4, Buchanan's address—all three thousand words—was read in the House chamber by a clerk, after which printed copies were distributed to each member. "Never was any document listened to with such marked attention before," the *New-York*

Times reported. “Not an eye was turned from the reading Clerk; not a word or look passed between the members until the close of that portion relating to secession.”

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A DEMOCRAT FOR NEARLY four decades, Buchanan had always been a problematic candidate in the eyes of the electorate, but this had nothing to do with his political competence. On paper, at least, he had one of the most illustrious records of any politician anywhere. From the age of twenty-three, when he won a seat in the Pennsylvania Assembly, he had won eleven straight elections, which moved him firmly into the heart of federal politics. James K. Polk made him secretary of state; Franklin Pierce selected him as his vice presidential running mate, though Buchanan declined the opportunity. Buchanan was tall, handsome, blond, and apparently never had to shave. He did have one conspicuous imperfection: a misalignment of his eyes that caused his gaze to diverge in an alarming fashion. To compensate, he would tip his head forward and to the side with one eye focused on his listener, thereby imparting a look of skepticism or keen interest. One Sunday Edmund Ruffin spotted Buchanan on Pennsylvania Avenue in the midst of one of the president’s solo walks through Washington. “As we first passed,” Ruffin wrote in his diary, “he had one eye shut, (as is his frequent habit,) and with the other he stared at me as if he thought he knew me.”

Otherwise, Buchanan seemed to be an ideal catch for any woman, but therein lay the problem: He had no particular interest in being caught. Buchanan was a lifelong bachelor, a phenomenon American voters could not quite grasp. His one brush with marriage had occurred in 1819 when he became engaged to a young woman named Ann Coleman. She broke it off, complaining that he spent too much time attending to his public activities and not enough to her. Invariably, broken engagements raised public speculation. Coleman fled to Philadelphia both to recover her emotional health and to restore her social standing, but she died soon after her arrival,

at twenty-three years of age, her demise attributed to “hysterical convulsions.” Speculation further intensified when it became known that her father would not allow Buchanan to attend the funeral. The mystery of it all gave rise to questions as to whether Coleman might have killed herself or overdosed on some kind of sleep elixir, like laudanum, or had committed that worst of public sins, gotten pregnant out of wedlock, for clearly *something* had caused her father’s callous treatment of Buchanan.

Buchanan had remained single ever since. Newspapers called him “Aunt Fancy.” For years when he was in Washington he roomed with a fellow senator, William R. King of Alabama, himself an accomplished politician. The pair was so close both in public and in private that newspapers described them as a married couple, with Buchanan the husband, Senator King his wife. The death of King in 1853 left Buchanan bereft and alone.

During the 1856 presidential election the Democratic Party wrestled with the problem of his bachelorhood and came up with a solution. Introducing him at the party’s 1856 national convention, a fellow Pennsylvania Democrat announced, “Ever since James Buchanan was a marrying man, he has been wedded to THE CONSTITUTION, *and in Pennsylvania we do not allow bigamy.*” Which prompted some wags to note that this particular wife was rather old. Others likened him to a spinster. Even Polk said that he “sometimes acts like an old maid.” There was something fusty about him. A popular term of the day, “old fogey,” seemed to apply. The press came to refer to him routinely as the “Old Public Functionary,” or OPF for short.

None of this seemed to bother Buchanan, who on occasion even referred to himself as OPF, but his situation often left him feeling isolated. Upon occupying the White House, he recruited his vivacious niece, Harriet Lane, to come live there as his companion and social hostess, a role she embraced wholeheartedly.

From the start of his political career Buchanan had demonstrated a pronounced affinity for Southerners and the South, despite having lived his whole life in Pennsylvania, where he owned a three-story, seventeen-room mansion called Wheatland situated on twenty-two acres of plantation-like

grounds outside Lancaster. In the political vernacular of the time, this made Buchanan a “dough face,” someone who seems outwardly to be one thing but is actually another. The South returned the affection: In the 1856 presidential election, Buchanan won almost universal support from the slaveholding states, with only Maryland choosing to stray. Four of Buchanan’s cabinet members were wealthy Southern planters. A fifth, Navy Secretary Isaac Toucey, was from Connecticut, but he, too, was a doughface, a Northerner who embraced the Southern states’ rights doctrine. For Buchanan the cabinet served as more than an advisory body. Without a wife and children he was lonely, as he himself acknowledged; his cabinet members, especially Treasury Secretary Howell Cobb, a Georgian who once owned a thousand enslaved Blacks, were his personal companions, his friends, his family. This closeness had the effect of limiting his ability to view the political landscape with any degree of impartiality and caused him to act in ways that skirted the line between mere favoritism and treason.

As Senator Seward noted in a letter to his wife, Frances, “The White House is abandoned to the seceders. They eat, drink, and sleep with him.”

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BUCHANAN’S ADDRESS OPENED WITH a question that captured the perplexity many felt about Southern unrest. After observing that the country had experienced a greater surge in prosperity than any nation before it, Buchanan asked: “Why is it, then, that discontent now so extensively prevails, and the Union of the States, which is the source of all these blessings, is threatened with destruction?”

He promptly answered: It was all the North’s fault.

What caused the current crisis, he said, was Northern antislavery agitation that had inspired “vague notions of freedom” among enslaved people. “Hence a sense of security no longer exists around the family altar,” he said, meaning the *Southern* family altar. In its place had risen a fear of slave insurrections. “Many a matron throughout the South retires at night in dread of what may befall herself and children before the morning,” he

wrote. If this fear deepened and became pervasive, he warned, “then disunion will become inevitable.”

But the crisis had not yet reached that point, he argued; happily the solution was simple and near at hand: “All that is necessary to accomplish the object, and all for which the slave states have ever contended, is to be let alone and permitted to manage their domestic institutions in their own way.” The North had no more right to interfere with slavery in these “sovereign States” than in Russia or Brazil. It was up to the “good sense and patriotic forbearance” of the North to restore harmony, for no president, whatever his politics, had the power to do so on his own.

By the same token, Buchanan said, the mere election of a new president, meaning of course Lincoln, did not provide sufficient cause to break up the Union. Only some overt act—not the mere fear of future actions—could justify secession. “It is said, however, that the antecedents of the President-elect have been sufficient to justify the fears of the South that he will attempt to invade their constitutional rights. But are such apprehensions of contingent danger in the future sufficient to justify the immediate destruction of the noblest system of government ever devised by mortals?”

No constitutional right to secession existed, he said. If it did, the Union would be merely “a rope of sand, to be penetrated and dissolved by the first adverse wave of public opinion in any of the States.” But, he noted, states confronted by egregious federal behavior could follow another path. In that case secession would be justified by a higher law of “revolutionary resistance” that superseded even the Constitution. “Secession is neither more nor less than revolution,” he wrote. “It may or it may not be a justifiable revolution, but still it is revolution.”

He further argued that if a state did ultimately secede, there was nothing he or the federal government could do about it. “Without descending to particulars,” he wrote, “it may be safely asserted that the power to make war against a State is at variance with the whole spirit and intent of the Constitution.”

The address pleased no one. Jefferson Davis, angered by Buchanan’s denial of a right to secede, vowed to sever all “friendly intercourse” with

him, both social and political. Lincoln professed to be stunned by Buchanan's attribution of blame to the North and took particular offense at his insinuation that "the antecedents of the President-elect" provided ample justification for Southern fears. The address left William Seward baffled. "It shows conclusively that it is the duty of the President to execute the laws—unless somebody opposes him; and that no state has a right to go out of the Union—unless it wants to."

The *New-York Times* denounced the message as "an incendiary document" that would only deepen sectional conflict. "It backs up the most extravagant of the demands which have been made by the South,—endorses their menace of Disunion if those demands are not conceded,—and promises the seceding States that the power of the Federal Government shall not be used for their coercion." The *Times* accused Buchanan of a "flagrant dereliction of duty" and groaned, "The country has to struggle through three months more of this disgraceful imbecility and disloyalty to the Constitution."

Pledge

IN WASHINGTON THE NATION'S TURMOIL buffeted Buchanan's cabinet. On Saturday, December 8, Howell Cobb, his treasury secretary, resigned and cast his lot with his home state of Georgia.

Soon afterward, Lewis Cass, Buchanan's secretary of state, also resigned, but out of anger at Buchanan for doing nothing to halt South Carolina's drive toward secession. He had urged Buchanan to act quickly and aggressively to quash the nascent rebellion, just as Andrew Jackson had done in the nullification crisis of 1832. But Buchanan was no Jackson. He wanted above all to exit the White House while the nation was still at peace. Frustrated by Buchanan's passivity, Cass resigned. "The people in the South are mad; the people in the North asleep," Cass said. "The president is pale with fear."

That Saturday, a delegation of four South Carolina congressmen called on Buchanan and made it clear to him just how critical the matter of the forts in Charleston Harbor had become. The meeting led to an informal agreement whose meaning and validity were anything but certain—the result of wishful thinking among the Carolinians, and Buchanan's persistent need to avoid conflict.

Buchanan suggested "for prudential reasons" that the congressmen summarize the meeting in writing. The next day, Sunday, December 9, they delivered a one-paragraph recapitulation in which they stated that South Carolina would not attack the forts before the results of both the upcoming secession convention and subsequent negotiations as to the disposition of

federal property in the state, “provided that no reinforcement shall be sent into those Forts and their relative military status remains as at present.”

Buchanan returned their letter with a brief memorandum scrawled on back in which he told them that if Carolina forces attacked the forts, “this would put them completely in the wrong” and would make them “the authors of the Civil War.” He also balked at the word “provided,” which, as he wrote later in his own summary of the meeting, “might be construed into an agreement on my part which I never would make.” The congressmen, according to Buchanan’s account, replied that “nothing was further from their intention; they did not so understand it.” They further acknowledged that they were not acting as official representatives of their state, but on their own authority as individuals.

Nonetheless, the delegation came away certain that Buchanan had made a concrete pledge to preserve the military status quo in Charleston Harbor, and they communicated this to Carolina authorities.

Buchanan saw it differently: “I considered it as nothing more in effect than the promise of highly honorable gentlemen to exert their influence for the purpose expressed.”

By injecting honor into the equation, this “alleged pledge,” as Buchanan called it, would in short order advance the nation one more step toward war.

CHARLESTON HARBOR

A Confidential Visit

DECEMBER 11–14

At fort moultrie, one of the garrison's artillery officers, Capt. Truman Seymour, thirty-six, also a veteran of the Seminole Wars and the Mexican War, gave Major Anderson a three-page memorandum conveying his thoughts on how to defend the fort against an attack that he was certain would soon occur. Seymour was a particularly acute observer: At West Point, which required cadets to take drawing lessons, he had studied under the famed painter Robert Walter Weir, whose *Embarkation of the Pilgrims* had been installed in the Capitol rotunda in 1843. Seymour demonstrated such prowess that West Point made him an assistant professor of drawing. Soon, at Moultrie, he would be supplying sketches of the fort and its officers, including Anderson, to *Harper's Weekly* in New York in response to a request by its managing editor. Sensing trouble, the editor, John Bonner, told Anderson, "I shall await anxiously the promised sketches."

Seymour had thought deeply on the subject of making Moultrie more resistant to attack. He suggested that the Carolinians might attempt a ruse by setting fire to a building outside the fort, "and while our attention is drawn off, the rush is made from any point where assailants are hidden."

But he also reminded Anderson that in the coming battle the garrison's honor would be at stake. "The country will be ashamed of us and of our

science if every possible precaution is not taken to defeat an attack by surprise," he wrote, then warned: "There's no *time* left us."

Another of Moultrie's officers likewise believed that a "collision" was inevitable. Samuel Wylie Crawford, thirty-one, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in Philadelphia, was technically an assistant surgeon, but for the time being, with his superior away on leave, he was the Army's sole doctor in Charleston. He had been at Moultrie only since September, but in that time, especially after Lincoln's election, he had seen the populace around him grow ever more resentful and belligerent. In a letter to his brother, A. J. Crawford, he wrote, "If you have yet any ideas of further compromise, or that these people will take one step backward, I beg you to relinquish them."

He forecast that South Carolina would secede and immediately demand possession of Moultrie, Fort Sumter, and the other federal properties in Charleston.

"Let me assure you," he continued, "that this State is in revolution. I never saw before such unanimity and I never in my life believed that such hatred could be exhibited to the Union." Even children were caught up in the secessionist fervor, Crawford wrote; if anything, the women were more ardent than the men. "The time for argument my dear brother is past and past forever, and you and I have lived to see the saddest sight that will ever be witnessed by man. I never knew, I never felt how much I loved my country until now."

There would be no gentle disengagement, he warned. "We are *preparing for war* with these mad Carolinians."

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ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, Major Anderson received a visitor at his Moultrie headquarters, Assistant Adjutant General Don Carlos Buell, whose name would soon become familiar—and at times decried—in both North and South. For now, however, Major Buell was serving as a messenger, dispatched from Washington in secret by Buchanan's war secretary, John B.

Floyd, to deliver verbally an overarching directive as to how Anderson should manage his garrison and the forts under his command as the crisis in South Carolina deepened—*verbally* because the telegraph and mails were deemed too permeable.

The instructions were anything but precise; rather, they seemed to reflect Floyd's own conflicting loyalties. "You are carefully to avoid every act which would needlessly tend to provoke aggression," Buell relayed, "and for that reason you are not, without evident and imminent necessity, to take up any position which could be construed into the assumption of a hostile attitude. But you are to hold possession of the forts in this harbor, and if attacked you are to defend yourself to the last extremity."

Floyd's directive acknowledged that Anderson's garrison was too small to effectively occupy and defend all three of the most important forts—Sumter, Moultrie, and Castle Pinckney—but authorized him that if any of them were attacked, he could then put his men into whichever fort "you may deem most proper to increase its power of resistance."

Now came the obfuscating element. "You are also authorized," Buell said, "to take similar steps whenever you have tangible evidence of a design to proceed to a hostile act." Exactly what might constitute "tangible evidence" was left for Anderson to decide.

Anderson warned Buell that in this increasingly antagonistic environment secrecy was impossible; the nature of his visit would be discovered. And indeed, the day before Buell's arrival, the Washington correspondent for the *Charleston Mercury* had notified his editor that Major Buell and several other officers were on their way to Charleston. "They were sent for no good to us," he wrote. "See that they make no change in the distribution of soldiers, so as to put them all in Fort Sumter. That would be dangerous to us."

The correspondent's letter soon appeared in the *Mercury* as a brief news item, which Anderson then clipped and forwarded to Adj. Gen. Samuel Cooper in Washington, Buell's superior, to show him "the almost impossibility of keeping anything secret."

For the moment, Anderson wrote, things were relatively calm. “I shall, of course, prepare here for the worst.”

RUFFIN

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To Dare

DECEMBER 17–20

THEY CONVENED ON A MURKY, wet Monday in December 1860 in Columbia, which lay under a heavy fog. Here gathered 169 of South Carolina's leading political figures, including five former congressmen, four former governors, and four former U.S. senators (among them the recently resigned James Chesnut), many accompanied by one or more enslaved servants to tend to their daily needs. All were men, all were members of Carolina's social elite; all had significant wealth, with an average net worth of over one hundred thousand dollars, equivalent to $3.7 million in twenty-first-century dollars. The majority owned at least one slave; twenty-seven owned one hundred or more; one delegate owned more than five hundred. Forty percent were graduates of the same school, South Carolina College.

They found the city electric with disunionist ardor but also tense and fearful owing to a force having nothing to do with politics.

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THE CONVENTION BEGAN AT NOON, December 17, at the city's First Baptist Church. The choice of Columbia had been a point of controversy. At first glance it made perfect sense, given that Columbia was the capital and located more or less in the middle of the state, but the delegates who

favored secession, among them the fire-eater Robert Barnwell Rhett, worried that Columbia might not only be central in terms of geography, but centrist also in attitude. Unionist sentiment in the state remained strong, with some prominent conservatives publicly opposed to secession, including James Petigru, seventy-one, a devoted unionist and former state attorney general revered for his principled behavior and his acerbic wit. A strong seam of conservatism ran through the ranks of the delegates selected for the convention, many of whom lobbied to have it convene later, in mid-January or early February, in hopes that the passions raised by Lincoln's election would by then have cooled. A public meeting in Spartanburg issued a declaration: "Resolved, That according to our opinion S.C. is now acting rather hastily; that the Convention was called prematurely."

The secessionists sensed that the mood in Columbia, unlike in radical Charleston, was uncertain. This became apparent early on, when, as their first order of business, the delegates elected a convention president. Many assumed that fire-eater Rhett would win the post; so did Rhett himself, who by now was famous throughout the nation as an apostle of secession with all the overheated passion of a John Brown, but not, so far at least, Brown's predilection for murder. The delegates gave him only five votes out of a possible 169 and instead elected David Flavel Jamison—"General" Jamison—a planter from Orangeburg District, tellingly neither purely Upcountry nor Lowcountry, who was deemed to be a man of sturdy and deliberate demeanor. Rhett had long counted him as a friend, as did James Hammond. Jamison had stood by Hammond throughout the political and personal crises sparked by his dalliances with his nieces and his slaves.

In a brief address accepting the presidency of the convention, Jamison first ran through a list of offenses committed by the North against the South, dating to the Missouri Compromise, but omitting any direct reference to the great fear that had really brought all these men here: that Lincoln might abolish slavery. Jamison discouraged the delegates from acting "from too great impatience" but also spurred them forth with a variation of the motto deployed by Georges-Jacques Danton at the start of the French Revolution: "To dare! and again to dare! and without end to dare!"

The delegates were only willing to dare so much, however, as became evident when word passed among them that a minor outbreak of smallpox in Columbia seemed to be intensifying. On December 16, the day before the convention began, the state Board of Health had reported fourteen new cases. The radicals, fanning fears of a wider outbreak, urged adjournment to Charleston; the delegates agreed, in the process bruising Columbia's pride. The state legislature also fled to Charleston.

The delegates' avid embrace of evacuation prompted accusations of cowardice and tarnished honor. One observer noted a peculiar irony, that the delegates "are prepared to face a world in arms, but they run away from the smallpox." Another wrote, with poetic flare:

> Our brave secessionists have met, and
> Tarried but a day…
> Like children scared and terrified…
> They broke and ran away.

The *New York Tribune*'s Columbia correspondent called the move a "cowardly stampede."

Smallpox, however, was a real and grim threat. Vaccination against it had by this time been available in America for half a century, and inoculation ever since the Revolutionary War, but the disease remained a scourge. The memory was still fresh in people's minds of an outbreak in Charleston in 1853, also in December, when smallpox sickened sixty-four people and killed eleven of them. Concern had lingered into the following February, prompting one slave trader to urge his employer, a prominent Charleston broker named Ziba B. Oakes, to "please have my negroes vaxinated on arrival."

The secessionist crowd was thrilled with the move, convinced that once the convention arrived in Charleston, the supercharged radicalism of the city would help shape the outcome. Lest the change of venue somehow interrupt momentum, the radicals insisted that before the delegates left Columbia they had to pledge to endorse immediate secession the moment

the convention reconvened in Charleston. The delegates approved the pledge by unanimous vote, then evacuated. Early the next morning, Tuesday, December 18, they and their spouses, children, and enslaved attendants clustered at the station to catch the four A.M. train to Charleston.

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THE DELEGATES GATHERED TWELVE hours later at Charleston's Institute Hall, the largest such hall in the city, with capacity for three thousand people. Something about the place seemed to foster divisiveness. The proslavery Democratic Party had met there the previous April and blew apart, leaving a Northern and a Southern variant, virtually assuring Lincoln's election—exactly the outcome that pro-secession radicals had hoped for in the belief that his election would cause every slave state to flee the Union.

The convention delegates moved again the next day, Wednesday, December 19, this time to St. Andrews Hall, a smaller venue often used for banquets and balls, and for meetings of the South Carolina Jockey Club.

It was at this point that Edmund Ruffin at last arrived, certain that his presence would help keep the delegates focused and inflamed. He was more resolute than ever. Another family tragedy, the death of his daughter Elizabeth, thirty-nine years old, in childbirth, had redoubled his drive for secession. Just four days after her funeral, he was packed and ready to begin the journey to South Carolina. He woke to find snow blanketing the landscape, with more snow falling. By nightfall nine inches lay on the ground, assuring that Ruffin would not reach Columbia in time for the start of the convention and threatening that he might even miss it entirely. He was not able to depart until two days later, when the convention was scheduled to begin. He fought his way south, enduring obstacle after obstacle, including an icebound steamboat and another derailed locomotive. He hoped to exert his influence to ensure speedy action by the delegates. Delay, he knew, was the enemy.

He had left Richmond at four A.M. on Tuesday, about the time the South Carolina secession delegates were boarding the cars to make their escape.

Ruffin's train was bound for Columbia, but along the way he learned of the delegates' evacuation and switched trains. At eight-thirty the next morning, Wednesday, he reached Charleston, where he was lucky to find a small unheated room at the Charleston Hotel.

Convention president Jamison personally offered him a seat in the new hall, a particular honor because this building was so small, and so packed, that most people had to stand. Instantly recognizable, he was greeted with cheers and applause and renewed attention from the press. In his diary, he pasted a clipping from *Frank Leslie's Weekly* that described him as "laden with years, and having the air of a patriarch" while promptly adding that he was by no means in a "doddering state," nor was his body bent or his step slow. "On the left side of his hat he wears the ever present cockade," the *Weekly* reported, "and so with this symbol of resistance hoisted at the peak, the old man goes from Convention to Convention, a political Peter the Hermit, preaching secession where ever he goes."

Nothing was perfect, however: Ruffin judged the accompanying portrait to be "a coarse and bad picture." But it, too, wound up pasted into his diary.

Ruffin was present as well the next day, Thursday, December 20, when, shortly before one P.M., the committee charged with writing the secession ordinance presented its handiwork to the convention for final approval. By now, thanks to heavy editing by Robert Barnwell Rhett meant to pare the wording down to its simplest elements and thus avoid the risk of further debate, the ordinance was a spare 137 words long. It concluded: "The union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States, under the name of 'The United States of America,' is hereby dissolved."

One by one, in a voice vote, every delegate approved the measure. The process of disunion took eight minutes. "Such remarkable unanimity is unprecedented," Ruffin noted in his diary. The *New York Tribune*'s Charleston correspondent found the moment an odd one. It seemed to him that the delegates were "startled rather than pleased at what they had done."

Having thus indeed *dared*, the delegates choreographed a signing ceremony meant to rival the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The convention adjourned at three forty-five, then reassembled at six-

thirty that evening at St. Andrews Hall in order to march in procession back to Institute Hall—now “Secession Hall”—for the ceremony, set to begin at seven o’clock.

The delegates were met at the base of the steps by the state’s leading legislators, wearing ceremonial robes, who then led the delegates up the steps and into the hall. President Jamison carried the sacred ordinance, which by now had been printed on a piece of linen parchment measuring roughly two feet by two feet, and embossed with the Great Seal of South Carolina (designed tellingly in 1776). As they entered the hall, a roar rose from the three thousand spectators who had crammed themselves within, a level of riotous cheer that in fact had been absent those eighty-four years earlier when the founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence. According to Pennsylvania’s Benjamin Rush, they did so then amid a “pensive and awful silence,” convinced they were signing “what was believed by many at the time to be our own death warrants.”

There was no such dread evident at Secession Hall. This was now strictly a legal matter, a contract broken, a compact dissolved; no hard feelings; even that lofty oracle of public sentiment, Horace Greeley, had said, “Go in peace.”

Once again Ruffin was honored with a seat on the Institute floor, at the heart of things. The delegates occupied the center of the chamber; members of the state legislature sat along the sides, the House on one flank, the Senate on the other.

As each delegate’s name was called, he walked to the table on which the ordinance lay and signed his name. At either side stood a palmetto, the state tree, readily recognizable by its palm-like leaves and the spiky fronds that protruded from its trunk. The crowd cheered each man but saved its best for delegate Rhett, now just one day from turning sixty, who had fought for secession for three decades. As he walked to the table, the hall erupted with volcanic cheers and applause. He had been snubbed in the vote for convention president, yes, but this was his moment all the same, and by God, he would take advantage of it. The crowd rose, bursting with emotion; women waved white kerchiefs from the gallery. Men and women alike wept

at the breast-swelling beauty of the moment: Here was Robert Barnwell Rhett, the almost old man, achieving his goal at last. Rhett made a show of it. He dropped to his knees, raised his hands over his head, bowed to the ground, and said a prayer.

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AND HOW EDMUND RUFFIN, consigned to the audience, must have envied him; how this scene surely rekindled his own hurt at being ill-treated by his home state of Virginia. Ruffin's diary, otherwise so detailed in its description of the day's events, makes no reference to Rhett at all, or his display.

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AT NINE-FIFTEEN P.M. it was over. Convention president Jamison declared the state an "independent commonwealth." Spectators raced up to the palmettos and tore off the dagger-like fronds for keepsakes. As the delegates exited the hall, they were greeted by a tumult of celebration. On the city's Battery, the guns of the East Bay Artillery disgorged smoke and noise as militias—among them the Vigilant Rifles, Zouaves, and Washington Light Infantry—marched and innumerable bands played. The bells of St. Michael's Church pealed. Citizens wore blue cockades and lit bonfires in barrels of rosin. Fireworks exploded in the sky. The *Charleston Mercury*, owned and edited by Rhett's son, was ready with a special "EXTRA" edition whose entire front page consisted of a reprint of the ordinance and a single headline in giant black letters: "THE UNION IS DISSOLVED!"

Laurence Keitt, whose brother was killed by slaves, and who in 1858 tried to choke a fellow congressman, a Republican, on the floor of the House during an acrimonious debate, and who resigned his own congressional seat to become a convention delegate, put it another way: "We have carried the body of this Union to its last resting place, and now we will drop the flag over its grave."

Observing the festivities, James L. Petigru, the staunch unionist, was said to quip, “South Carolina is too small for a Republic, and too big for an insane asylum.” His mood, however, was somber. “I have seen the last happy day of my life,” he told a friend.

Nonetheless, Petigru voted for secession. He agreed with a friend’s assessment that the state was “going to the devil,” but in accord with honor and loyalty to home, two of the most powerful forces in the South, he felt compelled to go with it.

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THE CACOPHONY CONTINUED WELL into the night with firecrackers, rockets, and gunfire. Ruffin retired to his room, glad to have secured one of the signatories’ pens as a memento. “As I now write, after 10 P.M., I hear the distant sounds of rejoicing, with music of a military band, as if there was no thought of ceasing.” But now, he noted, the convention had to address such “troublesome incidental questions” as how to take over the operations of the U.S. Post Office and the customs house so that there was no interruption in either service. Some advocated letting federal officers continue running these operations until otherwise directed, Ruffin noted, but many others objected on grounds that doing so would constitute submission to Northern tyranny. But these were details for others to resolve. The great task had been completed. It was time for Ruffin to move on. Florida, he knew, was about to convene its own secession convention, and he wanted to be present for that as well.

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WHILE SOUTH CAROLINA WAS busy declaring its independence, Mary Chesnut visited a large rice plantation, Combahee, owned by the husband of one of her cousins. It was situated along a short “blackwater” river of the same name in South Carolina’s Lowcountry, near Beaufort, which was ideal for rice cultivation and, incidentally, for breeding mosquitoes in the sickly season. It was, Mary wrote, “a most beautiful country seat. Live oaks in all

their glory, Camelias as plentiful on the lawn as the Hawthorn in an English hedge."

She and her hosts followed the news closely, or at least as closely as one could with mail and newspapers from Charleston first having to travel forty miles south over soggy terrain zebraed by rivers—the Wadmalaw, Ashepoo, and Edisto—and innumerable creeks, among them the Lower Toogoodoo. Another guest, Sabina Lowndes, also married to a prominent Combahee River planter, was present when news reached the house that the secession ordinance had passed.

"We sat staring in each other's faces," Mary wrote.

Sabina quoted the Old Testament book Deuteronomy, "As our days so shall our strength be."

Mary seemed to glimpse what lay ahead. She wrote, "I am truly glad I have seen those lovely Combahee places—they are so exposed they will doubtless suffer from invasion."

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FROM THE PARAPETS OF Fort Moultrie, Major Anderson and his men saw fireworks light the sky above Charleston and heard the booming of cannon. At the fort there was only darkness and cold, and the certainty that now things must surely reach a climax. Nothing lay ahead that seemed likely to cool Carolina's passions. In two months, barring some unexpected event, Congress would certify Lincoln's election.

LINCOLN

Frustration

DECEMBER 20–24

IN WASHINGTON THAT NIGHT, A Navy lieutenant named David Dixon Porter, soon to become a focus of national attention, set out to learn what he could about the day's events. On the way downtown, he passed the home of Mississippi senator Jefferson Davis and his wife, Varina, a leased twenty-three-room mansion at Eighteenth and G streets near the White House, and decided to stop in. The house was brightly lit and a party seemed to be underway.

Porter, forty-seven, came from a prominent naval family and was wholly loyal to the Union but made a point of building friendships with leading men in Washington from both camps "to ascertain if there was any prospect of a peaceful termination of the difficulties between the North and South." He had close connections within the city's Southern delegations—too close, in the appraisal of some Navy officials. He was particularly friendly with the Davises. He was also a man of intense ambition, "given to intrigues," according to his future boss, Gideon Welles, soon to be Lincoln's pick for secretary of the Navy. Porter liked Davis, whom he called "a distinguished Southern gentleman," but especially admired his wife, "a magnificent woman." As a friend of the family's, it was not surprising that Porter would appear at the party.

“As I approached the front door I met Mrs. Davis coming hastily down the steps wrapped in a cloak, and there was loud and boisterous talking in the parlor,” he wrote. She seemed very excited; as soon as she saw him, she exclaimed, “Oh Captain I am *so* glad to see you, I want you to walk with me to the President’s.” Meaning, of course, the White House, which in this time was open to any visitor who chose to stop by. “There is glorious news,” she continued, “we have just heard that South Carolina has seceded, and I wish to go right to the President’s.”

Apparently she was so convinced that Buchanan secretly favored secession that she believed he would be in a celebratory mood. Gauging the distance too far for her to walk, Porter found a “hack,” or hackney carriage, and drove her to the White House. Along the way Varina gushed about her delight at South Carolina’s secession. Porter felt otherwise, he told her, but she brushed this away. She offered to make him an admiral in the new secessionist navy. “You will join us,” she said; “we are going to have a glorious monarchy.”

“And be made Duke of Benedict Arnold?” he countered. Porter doubted any such regime could succeed but kept his skepticism to himself. “In my mind’s eye, however, I could see a number of dirty little republics, tearing each other’s vitals out, and following in the footsteps of our republican sister, Mexico.”

He left Varina at the White House door, not wishing to “witness the congratulations she said she was going to offer Mr. Buchanan.” Porter drove back to the Davises’ house intending to return the carriage and then go home, but, “anxious still to find a peg on which to hang a hope,” he went back into the parlor. “There I witnessed a scene I shall never forget.”

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A DOZEN MEN, APPARENTLY Davis’s Mississippi constituents, were in the room, “some of them having evidently dined out”—Porter’s oblique way of saying they had been drinking. “They were vociferating and congratulating each other in the most frantic manner,” he wrote. “Mr. Davis was the only calm

man present, and there was a quiet look of pleasure beaming on his countenance, which plainly showed that the news from South Carolina was very acceptable to him."

All in the room save Porter seemed to think the secession of South Carolina was the best thing that had ever happened—"that anyone ought to be too happy to be allowed to share in that rich adventure." But it struck him that the "wild excitement" in the room was overheated. "I thought the men before me somewhat fuddled with wine, and trusted that a good night's sleep would bring them to their senses." He felt deep disappointment that Davis, a man he respected, would endorse Carolina's rebellion, "but then I imagined that he might have been drinking an extra glass and was humoring those madcaps."

At length the party decided to follow Varina and go to the White House. Porter did not join them. "This fraternizing with rebels by the President of the United States struck me at the time as very singular," he wrote. "I could not understand how a man who had sworn to uphold the Constitution, and maintain the laws of the country could, at such a time as that, be receiving the felicitations of a rebel cause…yet so it was, and there they all went, drunk and sober, to call upon James Buchanan at eleven o'clock at night, when he should have been in session with his cabinet, calling out his armies and manning the Navy, to put a stop to the further progress of the rebellion."

Given Buchanan's antipathy toward turmoil in these last months of his presidency, it is hard to imagine his receiving the Davis crowd with open arms, but as to this, the historical record is silent.

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IN NEW YORK THAT SATURDAY, December 22, Horace Greeley, whose earlier editorial proposed that the South should be allowed to "go in peace," wrote a letter to Lincoln in which he now deployed a markedly more bellicose tone. He recruited a surrogate scribe to copy the letter to ensure that Lincoln could actually read it—Greeley's penmanship left recipients of his letters

universally flummoxed, as he confessed to Lincoln in a postscript. “So many people entertain a violent prejudice against my handwriting that I have had the above copied to save you trouble in deciphering it.”

If enough states wanted to exit the Union all at once—“seven or eight contiguous States (not one small one)”—they should be allowed to go, he told Lincoln. But, he cautioned, “if the seceding State or States go to fighting and defying the laws—the Union being yet undissolved, save by their own say-so—I guess they will have to be made to behave themselves. I am sorry for this, for I would much sooner have them behave of their own accord; but if they won’t, it must be fixed the other way.”

Above all, Greeley wanted to avoid resorting yet again to compromise, with the result that the slave states would always be able to use the threat of secession to get their way. “I fear nothing, care for nothing, but another disgraceful back-down of the Free States,” he told Lincoln. “That is the only real danger. Let the Union slide—it may be reconstructed; let Presidents be assassinated—we can elect more; let the Republicans be defeated and crushed—we shall rise again; but another nasty compromise, whereby everything is conceded and nothing secured will so thoroughly disgrace and humiliate us that we can never again raise our heads, and this nation becomes a second edition of the Barbary States as they were sixty years ago.”

Greeley, who hitherto had downplayed the threat of Southern unrest, now acknowledged its severity. “The Cotton States *are going*,” he told Lincoln. “Nothing that we can offer will stop them. The Union-loving men are cowed and speechless; a Reign of Terror prevails from Cape Fear to the Rio Grande. Every suggestion of reason is drowned in a mad whirl of passion and faction. You will be President over no foot of the Cotton States not commanded by Federal Arms. Even your life is not safe, and it is your simple duty to be very careful of exposing it.” He cautioned Lincoln about traveling to Washington for his inauguration and warned “it is not yet certain that the Federal District will not be in the hands of a Pro-Slavery rebel array before the 4th of March.”

Unlike Buchanan, the president-elect wanted to act but could not. He declined to speak in public about the secession crisis for fear of further alienating not just the South but also the North, where the clamor for a more aggressive campaign to end slavery was mounting. Ever the lawyer, Lincoln was acutely aware that he wasn't even truly the president yet. The certification of electoral votes and his inauguration had yet to occur, and a rising swell of rumor warned that these might be disrupted, possibly by an invading force of Southern militia.

With secession now a reality, the risk of armed conflict grew. Lincoln received a letter from Rep. Elihu Washburne, an ally from Illinois, summarizing a conversation he'd had with Gen. Winfield Scott, America's aging and very large commanding general—three hundred pounds, six-four, some accounts say six-five—in which the general raised concerns about the vulnerability of forts Moultrie and Sumter in Charleston Harbor if Southern forces chose to attack. Legendary for his valor in the Mexican War, Scott still drew public reverence, but among officials who dealt with him in person he had come to seem less and less effective as a commander. He was seventy-four years old and often ill, periodically left prostrate by stomach problems and gout. Visitors would find him sitting with his feet bathed in a tub of ice. Navy lieutenant Porter, who had fought with Scott in 1847 during the Siege of Vera Cruz, found that age had seriously diminished his competence. "Fifteen years and the gout together had not improved his abilities or his temper and paying him a visit was very much like calling on a sick bear."

Still, General Scott understood war and military strategy. In Scott's view, Moultrie, which was manned only by a small detachment of U.S. soldiers, would be next to impossible to defend. The same held for Sumter, which didn't even have a garrison of soldiers, only a crew of laborers. Scott told Washburne that both forts should be reinforced.

After reading Washburne's summary, Lincoln on December 21 asked the congressman to pay a return visit to General Scott "and tell him, confidentially, I shall be obliged to him to be as well prepared as he can to

either *hold*, or *retake*, the forts, as the case may require, at, and after the inaugeration." The correct spelling of the word consistently eluded Lincoln.

Over the next few days Lincoln heard speculation that Buchanan might simply surrender the forts to keep the peace. "I can scarcely believe this," he wrote to Senator Trumbull, his man in Washington, on Christmas Eve, "but if it prove true, I will, if our friends at Washington concur, announce publicly at once that they are to be retaken after the inaugeration." Signaling his continued faith that a potent pro-Union vanguard existed in the South, Lincoln added that this "would give the Union men a rallying cry."

For the time being, however, faith was about all that Lincoln possessed. "The political horizon looks dark and lowering," he wrote to Peter H. Silvester, a New York lawyer and former congressman, "but the people, under Providence, will set all right."

Inwardly, Lincoln's frustration was mounting, occasionally bursting forth in remarks both stark and direct. In an offhand comment to private-secretary Nicolay, Lincoln said that if it was true that Buchanan planned to surrender the Charleston forts, "they ought to hang him."

CHARLESTON

The Major Gets an Idea

DECEMBER 22–24

THE OFFICER WHO LED THE work of physically buttressing the forts in Charleston Harbor was Capt. John G. Foster of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who operated more or less independently of Major Anderson and reported directly to the commander of the Corps in Washington. He was thirty-seven years old with a mutton-chop beard and a slight limp caused by a wound in the Mexican War.

Upon arriving in Charleston in the summer of 1860, Foster had begun recruiting civilian workers both to complete the construction of Fort Sumter and to reinforce Moultrie; he hired stonemasons from as far north as Baltimore. In December, his workers at Moultrie began digging a "wet ditch" fifteen feet wide around the fort. He would have preferred a deep moat filled with water, but soil conditions prohibited the necessary excavation. Instead, the men created a ditch whose bottom consisted of what Foster described as quicksand, an effective obstacle to advancing troops because it was "very yielding to pressure, like a quagmire." The workers also began erecting a picket fence along the edge of the ditch and installed new structures on the fort's walls to better defend it against infantry attack. In a letter to Washington on December 13 he projected that all the work—except the picket fence—would be completed within four

days. He also proposed to run submerged wires from a powerful Daniell electric battery (commonly used in telegraph systems) at Moultrie to the main powder magazine at Fort Sumter, thereby allowing Major Anderson to blow up the latter should it be occupied by secessionist forces.

Foster also wanted muskets to arm his engineering force. From his perspective, the need to equip the men with small arms was obvious and beyond debate. Quietly, he requisitioned forty muskets from Charleston's federal arsenal. Ordinarily this would have been the most routine of acts; now it threatened to spark war, in large part because the commander of the arsenal, Col. Benjamin Huger, a Charlestonian appointed by War Secretary Floyd, had taken it upon himself to promise South Carolina's governor that no weapons would be removed.

The matter quickly ascended the Army's hierarchy. At two A.M. on Thursday, December 20, a telegram arrived for Captain Foster from Floyd, who told him he had just learned about the forty muskets. "If you have removed any arms," Floyd wrote, "return them instantly."

Foster complied, though given the rising threat of conflict between federal troops and Carolina forces, he believed that doing so was "almost suicidal."

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ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, a messenger arrived at Fort Moultrie from the War Department bearing a letter written by Secretary Floyd for delivery directly to Anderson.

By now the war secretary had become a deeply controversial figure and an embarrassment to President Buchanan, which was saying something, since the administration itself was widely considered to be an embarrassment. Floyd was deemed by many to be a paragon of corruption, and a traitor to boot. He had become embroiled in a financial scandal dating to 1858 that resulted in $870,000 in federal funds—equivalent to over thirty-two million in twenty-first-century dollars—being looted from the U.S. Treasury and the Department of Interior.

On the same day that Floyd had issued his order to Captain Foster to return the muskets, Floyd ordered the federal arsenal at Pittsburgh to ship 124 cannon, including 113 of the largest guns in service, to two outlying federal forts in the South, one on a remote barrier island off the coast of Mississippi, the other at Galveston, Texas. Given his Virginia roots, this immediately struck his critics as fishy. Neither fort was fully manned; neither was complete enough to receive such weapons. The order seemed like a gift to the South, especially coming as it did on the day that South Carolina exited the Union. If Mississippi and Texas seized the forts, they would receive a windfall of formerly federal weaponry. Loyal citizens in Pittsburgh protested and stopped the transfers.

Floyd began his new letter to Anderson by citing Don Carlos Buell's previous verbal instruction to hold the forts and defend them against attack at all costs. Now with secession a reality, Floyd tempered that earlier directive. "Under these instructions, you might infer that you are required to make a vain and useless sacrifice of your own life and the lives of the men under your command, upon a mere point of honor," Floyd wrote. "This is far from the President's intentions."

This surely perplexed Anderson, given the prior exhortation to fight to the "last extremity." The next paragraph transformed perplexity to suspicion. "It is neither expected nor desired that you should expose your own life or that of your men in a hopeless conflict in defense of these forts," Floyd wrote. "If they are invested or attacked by a force so superior that resistance would, in your judgment, be a useless waste of life, it will be your duty to yield to necessity, and make the best terms in your power."

Doing so, Floyd assured him, "will be the conduct of an honorable, brave, and humane officer, and you will be fully justified in such action." He added that these new orders "are strictly confidential, and not to be communicated even to the officers under your command, without close necessity."

Floyd may have felt he could count on his fellow Southerner to read between the lines and surrender the forts. But to Anderson this communiqué smelled of treason. Anderson was not alone in his suspicion, as Nicolay and

fellow secretary John Hay later observed in their ten-volume history of Lincoln's administration. "So far then from being a humanitarian precaution," they wrote, "the order seems plainly to have been worded to prepare the mind of Anderson for that easy surrender of his post which was now clearly the next step in the conspirators' program."

Floyd's directive further crystalized an idea that Anderson had been mulling for at least a week. As an expert in artillery, he understood from the start of his tenure in Charleston that the only truly defensible outpost among the forts under his command was Fort Sumter. His antagonists in Charleston knew it as well.

Anderson recognized that any attempt on his part to occupy Sumter would spark outrage among Carolina officials. He decided, however, that if indeed the federal government hoped to retain possession of the forts in the harbor, the only practicable course was to move the garrison from Moultrie to Sumter, with or without permission from Washington. He began planning just such a move but said nothing to his officers.

RUFFIN

A Signal at Christmas

DECEMBER 22–26

On Christmas Eve, South Carolina's secession convention issued a formal "Declaration" to explain to the larger world why the state had decided to exit the Union, composed by delegate Christopher G. Memminger. Unlike the colonial Declaration of Independence with its stirring and forward-looking deposition that all men were created equal (a concept Edmund Ruffin dismissed as "both false and foolish"), this was a declaration of grievance. It did, however, hark back to that earlier declaration in that it quoted, inexactly, Thomas Jefferson's famous addition, "that whenever any 'form of government becomes destructive of the ends for which it was established, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government.' "

The United States, the statement argued, had broken its compact with the slaveholding states, mainly in violating the fourth article of the Constitution, which, without directly mentioning slavery, nonetheless made it clear that slaves were property, and that all escaped slaves had to be returned to their rightful owners. The convention's declaration also cited the 1778 Articles of Confederation, which asserted that each "State retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence," the base upon which Southern polemicists had built their case for secession—never mind that in asserting

such rights the declaration also indirectly provided justification for the personal-liberty laws that Northern states had passed to prevent the seizure of escaped slaves from within their boundaries.

To the dismay of some delegates who believed that the convention's statement should be couched solely in terms of states' rights to make it more palatable to the world—namely South Carolina's potential future trading partners in France and England—delegate Memminger veered straight into the heart of the matter and made slavery the central issue. Touching that especially tender place, Southern honor, he complained that the free states "have denounced as sinful the institution of slavery; they have permitted open establishment among them of societies, whose avowed object is to disturb the peace and to eloign the property of the citizens of other States. They have encouraged and assisted thousands of our slaves to leave their homes; and those who remain, have been incited by emissaries, books and pictures to servile insurrection." Moreover, he wrote, the free states had now elected "a man to the high office of President of the United States, whose opinions and purposes are hostile to slavery. He is to be entrusted with the administration of the common Government, because he has declared that that 'Government cannot endure permanently half slave, half free,' and that the public mind must rest in the belief that slavery is in the course of ultimate extinction." Memminger further alleged—inaccurately—that this benighted government had "announced" that starting March 4, Inauguration Day, "a war must be waged against slavery until it shall cease throughout the United States."

In concluding the statement, Memminger wrote that South Carolina now declared the federal Union dissolved and in so doing "has resumed her position among the nations of the world, as a separate and independent State; with full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent States may of right do."

Now, on Christmas Eve, the state dispatched three envoys—"commissioners"—to Washington to negotiate "with the Government of

the United States for the delivery of the forts, magazines, light-houses, and other real estate" within South Carolina.

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MAJOR ANDERSON CHOSE CHRISTMAS Day for his move from Moultrie to Sumter with the idea of capitalizing on the ordinary distractions of the holiday. He kept his plans secret from his officers and superiors in Washington. On December 25, a Tuesday, Captain Foster and his wife planned to hold a Christmas party at their home outside the fort in the adjacent hamlet of Moultrieville, favored by Charlestonians as a summer resort. The couple invited Anderson and the garrison's other officers, as well as a few locals unafraid to fraternize with Northern men.

One officer, Asst. Surgeon Crawford, noted that Anderson made a special point of urging all his men to attend church on Christmas Day.

That evening Anderson wrote a letter to his wife, Eba, who knew nothing of his plan. He could barely keep himself from revealing it. "I promised to go to Captain Foster's for a little while tonight," he told her, "but have really no inclination whatever to do so. I am sorry I have no Christmas gift to offer you. Never mind—the day may *very* soon come when I shall do something which will gratify you enough to make amends for all the anxiety you now feel on my account."

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THROUGHOUT SOUTH CAROLINA AND the slaveholding South, Christmas was indeed a day of distraction. "At Christmas the china closet gives up its treasures," wrote Mary Chesnut of how the season unfolded at Mulberry Plantation. "The glass, china, silver, fine linen reserved for grand occasions, comes forth." A visiting child, Esther Davis, recalled later how enslaved Black waiters in dark-blue broadcloth brought calf's-head soup, partridge, wild duck, ham, corned beef, and two kinds of turkey—roast and boiled—and deftly positioned it all on a damask tablecloth. "The crowning point of the dinner to us children was when, the table being cleared, simultaneously

each person raised a glass and the waiters most dexterously removed the cloth, revealing a second of spotless damask, and dessert was brought in." Now came plum pudding, mince pie, cranberry pie, custards, syllabub—whipped cream flavored with wine—and plates piled high with fruit, including bananas, an exotic treat. After dessert the waiters removed this cloth as well, exposing the gleaming mahogany table underneath, and then served a closing course of wine and nuts. Even the children got to drink champagne.

On plantations throughout the South, planters briefly eased the strictures that ruled their enslaved populations. They invited field hands into the big house, the one time each year that such a visit was allowed. James Hammond typically held a barbecue for his slaves. At one Christmas he gave a calico frock to every female who had given birth during the preceding year. Formerly enslaved people interviewed decades later by the Federal Writers' Project recalled being treated by their masters to alcoholic drinks, namely whiskey and eggnog. A custom at many plantations, including Mulberry, called for the white members of the household to provide slaves with a present if they managed to call out "Christmas gift!" before the white member could say "Merry Christmas." The slaves "would spring out of unexpected corners and from behind doors," wrote a planter's wife. In Mississippi, one plantation's Christmas tradition called for enslaved children to bring a stocking of their choosing to the master's house, to be filled with treats and gifts. "They all wanted one of Old Miss'es stockings cause now she weighed near on to three hundred pounds."

A good many planters simply ignored Christmas and worked their enslaved men and women as if it were any other day, but most gave them time off, which provided a respite from the constant supervision of plantation overseers. At Mulberry, enslaved workers got three days of freedom and joined others on shopping trips into Camden, where a few stores stayed open just to cater to the many Black shoppers who during these several days filled the town's commercial district.

For escape-minded Blacks, the holiday offered an opportunity. The famous slave fugitives William and Ellen Craft fled their plantation right

before Christmas and reached Philadelphia on Christmas Day. One former South Carolina slave, John Andrew Jackson, used his time off to get a robust head start in fleeing his plantation. “We all had three days’ holiday at Christmas,” he wrote, “and I, therefore, fixed upon that time as most appropriate for my escape.” He found the customs of Christmas helpful all along the way. The Black operator of a river ferry told him that on Christmas he was able to keep all the money paid for crossings, “and as this was Christmas Day, he was only too glad to get my money and ask no questions.” When challenged by a hotel operator as to where he was going, Jackson replied, “I am going on my Christmas holiday.” He continued on his way.

Christmas was also a time of heightened worry about slave insurrections, a curious thing given the repeated avowals of planters and proslavery writers that they had nothing to fear from their enslaved workers. With slaves given time off and drinking alcohol and being allowed to visit peers on other plantations, rumors of potential uprisings inevitably began to circulate over the holiday. In 1856 in Kentucky and Tennessee word spread that Black ironworkers planned a Christmas insurrection. Frederick Law Olmsted, in his travels through the South, heard about an Alabama planter who so worried about what his slaves would do over Christmas that he built a secret redoubt in the woods to which his family retreated for the holiday. On December 22, 1860, Keziah Brevard, one of the South’s few female planters, expressed her own uneasiness. “Can we doubt God’s protection—there have been several houses this week without a white gentleman at home and yet we are safe—has not our God been with us?”

During this particular Christmas, North Carolina unionist James C. Johnston took the opportunity to berate South Carolina for secession. In a letter to his friend James Petigru, the Charleston unionist, he wrote, “Xmas was no doubt a very merry one with you in Charleston where every body is drunk or crazy and I hope the new year may be a happy one and that all of you may come to your senses before the end of it.” He likened South Carolina to “an old woman who has been engaged in scolding all her life

until at last she works herself up into a fit of hysterics and thus has all kinds of fantasies and imaginations…and like a wild cat is ready to fly at any person who looks at her.”

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ON CHRISTMAS EVE, EDMUND RUFFIN at last departed Charleston for Florida, where the state’s secession convention was scheduled to begin on Thursday, January 3. He was encouraged by yet another nod to his rising fame—the gift of a free steamer passage to Fernandina, on Florida’s Atlantic coast, offered to him personally by the steamship line’s president.

Ruffin boarded and braced himself for seasickness, to which he was prone. He took off only his coat and boots, then settled into his berth. At ten-thirty that night he heard a sudden rush of steam and learned that an engine malfunction had knocked out one of the ship’s two paddle wheels. The vessel returned to Charleston, where it arrived at four A.M. on Christmas Day. Repairs and other delays stranded Ruffin in the city for the rest of the day and most of the next, during which he received a letter from his son Julian with the news, “not unexpected,” that the infant son of his newly deceased daughter Elizabeth had likewise died. He made no further reference in his diary to either his grandson or his daughter. At six P.M. he again boarded ship and at 7:10 was underway.

“After we had passed Fort Moultrie about 4 miles,” he wrote in his diary that night, December 26, “I was on the upper deck looking out on the water, when I heard two loud discharges of cannon from that fort, in quick succession. It was an unusual occurrence, as everything there latterly has been conducted so as to be as quiet as possible. There has not even been the firing of a gun at sunset as is the general practice of all fortresses.”

He suspected it might be a signal of some sort, though its meaning escaped him.

ANDERSON

Subterfuge

DECEMBER 25–26

MAJOR ANDERSON SET HIS PLAN in motion. He understood that every step he took would be watched and parsed and would need a plausible explanation. He had long expected that South Carolina forces would attempt to seize Fort Sumter. He now told his officers that he believed such an attack to be imminent and that therefore it would be prudent to remove the wives and children—twenty women, twenty-five children—from the vicinity of Fort Moultrie to a safer area, namely Fort Johnson, the abandoned Revolutionary War–era fort on James Island across the shipping channel. To even the most skeptical observer, the move would seem prudent: If South Carolina seized Sumter, any subsequent armed action would without doubt take place between state forces newly ensconced at Sumter and the U.S. garrison at Moultrie.

Anderson ordered his quartermaster, Lt. Norman J. Hall, to charter three schooners for the purpose. Unaware of Anderson's actual plan, Quartermaster Hall did so openly. Outwardly, this too made perfect sense and undoubtedly appealed to the Carolinians' sense of honor and gallantry: How chivalric of the major to send the women and children off to a place of safety before a clash of arms. Sir Walter Scott would be proud. Anderson, however, had no intention of sending the families to Fort Johnson.

Having primed his men to expect an attack at any time, his next move seemed plausible as well: He asked engineer Foster to stop mounting cannon within Fort Sumter, as “they would certainly be turned against us.” Foster, also ignorant of Anderson’s plan, agreed, and went a step further. While he could not remove the guns at Sumter—they were too heavy—he could incapacitate them. He packed up the key components needed to mount and aim the guns and shipped these to Fort Moultrie.

Neither of these steps—the evacuation of families nor the neutering of Sumter’s guns—was likely to cause much alarm to military observers in Charleston; rather, they would further affirm the idea that Anderson did indeed intend to stay at Fort Moultrie. Anderson realized, too, that Foster’s frenzied work on strengthening Moultrie’s defenses would also reinforce that belief. “Both these measures were good blinds,” Anderson explained in a letter to his wife.

On Christmas morning, Foster loaded the artillery components onto a boat and shipped them to Moultrie. When the boat reached Moultrie, however, Major Anderson informed the unsuspecting crew that he had no place to store the materials and ordered the men to keep them aboard for the time being.

A rainstorm forced Anderson to postpone the move to Sumter until the next night, Wednesday, December 26. He directed Quartermaster Hall to remove all of Moultrie’s food supply from its commissary and send it along with the families, but—again for the benefit of hostile observers—to leave a month’s worth at Moultrie. He also ordered his officers to pack up their personal belongings and send them along with the women and children; they were to keep only those items that would fit into a knapsack or small bag. This, too, would make sense to anyone spying on the fort, Anderson reasoned: It suggested that he and his men planned to fight to the last and wanted to be able to grab their belongings at the last second, before blowing up the fort. “In this way,” he told his wife, “I got nearly everything, both public and private, on the three vessels which were to take the women and children to Fort Johnson.”

After the families boarded with all their possessions—including caged canaries—Anderson gave Quartermaster Hall secret instructions. He and the families were to sail to Fort Johnson, but not debark; rather, he was to linger in the bay while ostensibly seeking suitable accommodations ashore. Upon hearing two cannon blasts from Moultrie, however, he was to set sail immediately for Fort Sumter and deliver the families and provisions.

On Wednesday morning, the day after Christmas, Anderson ordered his garrison to pack their knapsacks and bring them to their usual posts at Moultrie. To further allay suspicions of an imminent departure he issued a standing order that the knapsacks should be brought every day as a precaution against the much-expected attack. What he actually planned, however, was to move the men to Sumter that evening.

His big fear was that the boats transporting the men would be discovered by the two Carolina guard steamers in the channel. To minimize the possibility, he planned to move his men at dusk, around five or six o'clock. The patrol vessels typically began their watch a few hours later. One factor heightened the risk, however: The moon that night would be one day away from full, a waxing gibbous, and the sky was clear.

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ANDERSON KEPT HIS PLANS so secret that in the afternoon, the wife of Capt. Abner Doubleday, Anderson's second-in-command, laid out all the makings of an afternoon tea in their quarters within the fort. While Mary Doubleday added the final touches, her husband set off to find Anderson to invite him to take part. "The sun was just setting as I ascended the steps leading to the parapet and approached him," Doubleday wrote in a later memoir. "He was in the midst of a group of officers, each of whom seemed silent and distrait"—distracted, or preoccupied. Among the officers was the fort's assistant surgeon, Samuel Crawford.

"It is a fine evening, Crawford," Doubleday said.

The surgeon barely responded, his thoughts clearly elsewhere.

"I saw plainly that something unusual had occurred," Doubleday wrote.

In the next moment, Major Anderson approached Doubleday and told him quietly, “I have determined to evacuate this post immediately, for the purpose of occupying Fort Sumter, I can only allow you twenty minutes to form your company and be in readiness to start.”

Doubleday was surprised but pleased. He had long urged Anderson to transfer the force to Sumter and chafed at the lack of direction from the War Department in Washington. The government’s apparent indifference, he wrote, “made us feel like orphan children of the Republic.”

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DOUBLEDAY WALKED TO THE barracks, mustered his men, and conducted a quick inspection. Satisfied that they had their knapsacks, muskets, and sidearms, he ordered them to stand ready.

He left and returned to his quarters, where the planned Christmas tea was quickly forgotten. He directed his wife to prepare to leave immediately. Still maintaining the ruse, he told her “the fighting would probably commence in a few minutes.” She threw her clothing into a trunk; Doubleday summoned two soldiers to carry it to the home of the garrison’s chaplain, Rev. Matthias Harris, in nearby Moultrieville. Once the shooting started, he told her, she was to take cover behind the sand hills. He walked with his wife to the gate, where, he wrote, “we took a sad and hasty leave of each other, for neither knew when or where we would meet again.”

Doubleday strapped on his revolver and tied a blanket across his shoulders, then told Anderson his men were ready. They marched through the gate and proceeded in silence for a quarter mile to where three large rowboats with six oars each were secured behind a cluster of large rocks that had once been part of a seawall.

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ANDERSON PLANNED TO TRANSPORT Moultrie’s two companies of soldiers across the channel to Fort Sumter in two movements of three boats each. Once the first contingent arrived at the fortress, the boats were to be sent

back to Moultrie for the second group. Two boats were commanded by engineering lieutenants; Major Anderson rode in one of these. Captain Doubleday commanded the third. A small group of men, including Captain Foster, Asst. Surgeon Crawford, and a lieutenant named, improbably, Jefferson C. Davis, was to stay behind to man six of Moultrie's biggest cannon, now fully loaded, with orders to fire on the patrol steamers if they attempted to intercept the boats. Anderson carried the garrison's U.S. flag carefully folded under his arm.

The boats shoved off after sunset, with the moon visible above the northeast horizon, moonrise having occurred at 4:04 P.M. They made slow progress. The boats were unwieldy, and some of the men designated as oarsmen proved to have no talent for rowing.

As it happened, one of the patrol steamers was still at its wharf; a second, however, was moving slowly along the channel from west to east, towing a small vessel toward the bar at the ocean end of the channel. The two boats directed by Foster's engineers, including the one carrying Anderson, steered in a wide circle to avoid the patrol steamer, but Captain Doubleday gauged that the steamer was still far enough away that he could proceed on a direct course straight across the channel to Sumter. "It was after sunset, and the twilight had deepened, so that there was a fair chance for us to escape," Doubleday wrote.

He was wrong. The steamer was still far off, but the ineptitude of Doubleday's oarsmen so impeded his boat's progress that "it soon became evident that we would be overtaken in mid-channel," Doubleday wrote. He removed his cap and opened his coat to hide its buttons; he ordered his men to remove their caps and coats and to use the coats to cover their muskets, which they had settled along the side of the boat below the oarlocks. "I hoped in this way that we might pass for a party of laborers returning to the fort," Doubleday wrote.

The patrol steamer was the *General Clinch*, named for Major Anderson's father-in-law. When the steamer was about one hundred yards away, its paddle wheels stopped turning.

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AT FORT MOULTRIE, CAPTAIN FOSTER and Asst. Surgeon Crawford watched uneasily through a telescope, ready to fire on the patrol steamer. On the beach below, Captain Doubleday's wife also stood vigil, accompanied by Chaplain Harris, and paced up and down the beach watching and listening for signs of trouble.

To Captain Foster it seemed likely that lookouts aboard the patrol steamer might have eased their vigilance because of the Christmas holiday.

Captain Doubleday was less optimistic: He was certain the men aboard the patrol steamer had spotted his boat and that disaster was sure to follow. The guard ship was known to be armed with cannon, but gunfire wouldn't even be necessary. The steamer could simply ram the rowboat and leave its passengers to drown.

Tension suffused the boat; the men kept rowing. Otherwise the scene was all serenity—the bay in twilight under a rising moon, the only discernible sound being the knocking of oarlocks. Moments passed. And then, to Doubleday's surprise and great relief, the paddle wheels of the guard ship again began turning. The steamer continued on its way eastward toward the Charleston Bar and the Atlantic. Doubleday's men began rowing as fast as their limited maritime skills allowed and soon reached the wharf at Sumter.

Now a new problem arose. As the soldiers disembarked they were met by a throng of workmen from within the fort. A few cheered the new arrivals, most did not. Many wore the blue secession cockade and angrily demanded an explanation for the soldiers' arrival.

Doubleday ordered his men to form up and "charge bayonet," meaning to prepare the bayonets on their weapons for an assault. He ordered them to advance; they quickly drove the workers back inside the fort. Doubleday directed his men to occupy the guard rooms, which overlooked the fort's main entrance, and then posted armed sentries.

Major Anderson's boat arrived soon afterward, as did the third. The boats were then sent back to Moultrie to pick up the remaining troops.

Shortly before eight o'clock, in accord with Anderson's instructions, the men at Moultrie fired two blank cannon discharges. Asst. Surgeon Crawford fired one of them. These discharges—which had so perplexed Edmund Ruffin—were indeed a signal: They announced that all the boats had safely landed. They also served to instruct Quartermaster Hall, in charge of the vessels carrying the garrison's women and children, to immediately set a course for Sumter and land the families. In all, Anderson managed to transfer seven officers, seventy-five enlisted men, and forty-five women and children. "The whole movement was successful beyond our most sanguine expectations," Captain Doubleday wrote, "and we were highly elated."

But now came disorder and confusion. Soldiers and families entered Sumter's interior courtyard, the parade, in cold and darkness and found themselves wandering around a surreal landscape of construction debris and death-dealing apparatuses, including fifty-six hundred shells and cannonballs. Man-made lighting was sparse. The gleam from the Fresnel lens in the fort's lighthouse high overhead did nothing to dispel the darkness below (it would soon be moved to the center of the parade, where it would illuminate the interior grounds). For now the primary source of light was the nearly full moon, which cast a milky glow over the fort, or at least those areas where the light was not obstructed by Sumter's high walls. Elsewhere shadow prevailed. Into this farrago of rubbish and iron came the families: Mrs. Hammer, wife of Artillery Sergeant William H., with their two children; Mrs. Neilen, wife of Private Patrick, and their three; and twenty other children, including a couple of infants, and their mothers.

Anderson's officers directed the families to temporary quarters. The big barracks for enlisted men, meant to hold over six hundred soldiers, were not yet finished; the viable quarters within were already occupied by civilian laborers. The soldiers and their families were given rooms in the officers quarters, a three-story brick building that spanned the rear wall of the fort. Household furniture brought over from Moultrie, which had been dumped "pell-mell" on the parade, was now retrieved and placed in designated rooms. "I chose an apartment near the mess hall," Captain Doubleday

wrote, “and made it so comfortable that Anderson and Seymour”—the artist—“came there temporarily to live with me.”

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AT EIGHT O’CLOCK THAT NIGHT, Anderson jotted a quick note to his wife in which he thanked God “for His having given me the will, and shown me the way to bring my command to this Fort. I can now breathe freely. The whole force of S. Carolina would not venture to attack us.”

At the moment, he knew, this was anything but accurate. He and his fellow officers, well trained and experienced in warfare, understood that there would be no better time for Carolina forces to attempt to seize the fort. The only way to prevent it, he believed, was to make Sumter as lethal and unassailable as possible, and make sure authorities in Charleston knew it. Right now, however, it was about as impregnable as one of the beachside cottages across the bay.

Anderson also composed a brief message to Adjutant General Cooper in Washington notifying him of the move. “I have the honor to report that I have just completed, by the blessing of God, the removal to this fort of all of my garrison except the surgeon, four non-commissioned officers, and seven men. We have one year’s supply of hospital stores and about four months’ supply of provisions for my command. I left orders to have all the guns at Fort Moultrie spiked, and the carriages of the 32-pounders, which are old, destroyed. I have sent orders to Captain Foster, who remains at Fort Moultrie, to destroy all the ammunition which he cannot send over. The step which I have taken was, in my opinion, necessary to prevent the effusion of blood.”

The colonel would not receive Anderson’s letter until December 29, though by then word of the major’s move had raced around the world.

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BACK ON MOULTRIE, CAPTAIN FOSTER and his men faced a busy night. They began moving through the fort and packing up all remaining supplies,

ammunition, and personal possessions that the soldiers had been unable to take with them, including musical instruments owned by members of the garrison's band. They disabled the fort's guns and set fire to their wooden carriages and cut down the fort's flagpole.

"You may be assured that I saw the thing well done," Captain Foster wrote.

On the morning of December 27, with the help of the civilian workmen at Moultrie, Foster loaded his schooners with ammunition and the remaining stores and transported these to Sumter.

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THAT MORNING, THE FIRST indication the citizens of Charleston received as to what had occurred the night before was the sight of smoke rising from Fort Moultrie and the absence of its flag. Until then, even residents of nearby Moultrieville, just a quarter mile up the beach, had no idea that the garrison had somehow managed to achieve the thing everyone had feared and that the guard ships were supposed to have prevented.

FLORIDA AND WASHINGTON

Strange News

DECEMBER 27

TWO DAYS AFTER CHRISTMAS, IN the midst of a stunning sunrise, Edmund Ruffin's steamer was in the Atlantic Ocean off Florida approaching the city of Fernandina at the mouth of the St. Mary's River, once a key destination for smugglers engaged in the illegal African slave trade. As he had done in South Carolina and less satisfyingly in Georgia, which had not yet seceded, he hoped now to do what he could to tilt the Florida legislature toward secession.

At Fernandina, Ruffin planned to catch a one P.M. train on the new Florida Rail Road for a hundred-mile journey inland to Gainesville, and from there to make his way to the Marion County plantation of a friend, William Owens, whose lands and soils Ruffin planned to study before setting off for the state capital, Tallahassee, to be present for the January 3 start of Florida's secession convention.

At stations along the way, passengers received telegrams addressed to them aboard the train and were also able to have their own telegrams transmitted, confident that the web of wires that laced the country would somehow deliver the messages to their recipients, whether in the next town or a thousand miles away. One telegram brought aboard Ruffin's train was from Charleston and conveyed disconcerting news. "On the route," Ruffin

wrote, “we were astounded by seeing a telegraphic dispatch which stated that the garrison had blown up Fort Moultrie, and passed over to Sumter.” This seemed too extraordinary to be believed. When the train reached the town of Baldwin, Florida, a key center of communication thanks to the intersection of two railroad lines, Ruffin and fellow passengers sent a message to the telegraph operator at Savannah, Georgia, who had relayed the initial message from Charleston “to obtain either the contradiction or confirmation of this strange and incredible report.”

A return message confirmed that the U.S. Army garrison at Fort Moultrie had indeed moved to Fort Sumter, and added details: The soldiers had spiked Moultrie’s cannon and burned the wooden carriages that supported them. Ruffin imagined that Charleston must be blazing with “a fever of excitement and rage.” He wished he were there and regretted missing “the beginning of such interesting events.” He considered abandoning his Florida journey and returning to Charleston, which he believed he could reach by December 29, but he was still uncertain as to whether the news was correct. Although telegraphic communication was efficient, the messages carried were themselves often unreliable, with a patina of false credibility conferred by the technical novelty of the medium. Ruffin was not confident enough to turn back. But, he wrote, “if it is true, the authorities and other principal friends of S.C. have been egregiously deceived by the President and Secretary of War.” Here, like many back in South Carolina, he assumed that Anderson had transferred his garrison to Sumter on orders from Washington. That a lowly officer would do such a thing of his own volition was beyond even Ruffin’s capacity for imagining Northern perfidy.

The plantation of his friend “General” Owens was located near Fort Drane, Florida, an abandoned outpost dating to the Seminole Wars about two dozen miles south of Gainesville. Once there, Ruffin felt as if stranded on an atoll of ignorance. He became frustrated by his inability to learn the latest news of Major Anderson’s maneuver, Fort Drane being, he wrote, “more out of the world than anyplace I was ever in before.” The latest

newspaper, from Tallahassee, was dated December 22, four days before Anderson's reported move. For Ruffin, the uncertainty was excruciating.

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THE THREE COMMISSIONERS DISPATCHED by South Carolina to negotiate with President Buchanan reached Washington at about three in the afternoon on December 26 flush with the hubris of men who believed themselves to represent a wholly new nation—and expecting to be treated with as much dignity and respect as would the emissaries of any foreign empire. They checked into their lodging on Franklin Row, half a dozen blocks from the White House, an elegant home befitting visiting dignitaries that they had leased for a month in anticipation of lengthy and fruitful negotiations. They then announced their arrival to William Trescot, who a week earlier had resigned as assistant secretary of state and vowed fealty to South Carolina. He had remained in the city at the request of the state's governor to serve as an unofficial liaison between him and Buchanan. Trescot promptly set out for the White House to tell the president the commissioners had arrived and to arrange a meeting the next day, Thursday, at one o'clock, this despite Buchanan's previous assertion that the best he could do was refer them to Congress.

On Thursday morning, December 27, Trescot was conversing with the commissioners at their lodgings when a U.S. senator from Texas, Col. Louis T. Wigfall, a big, often drunk, always hot-tempered fire-eater, burst in to report that Major Anderson had moved his garrison to Fort Sumter overnight.

The men were stunned, though not entirely convinced that Wigfall's report was true. Trescot turned to Wigfall: "Well at any rate Colonel, true or not, I will pledge my life that if it has been done it has been without orders from Washington."

As Trescot said this, another man arrived: U.S. Secretary of War John B. Floyd. When told the news he also was incredulous. Trescot repeated his

conviction that Anderson had acted without orders and again staked his life on it.

But Floyd doubted the move had even happened. “You can pledge your life Mr. Trescot that it is not so,” he said, smiling. “It is impossible.”

Trescot asked if he could borrow Floyd’s carriage and drive home to see if he had received any telegrams confirming the news. He returned with messages for one of the commissioners. “I am afraid governor,” he said, addressing Floyd, a former governor of Virginia, “it is too true.”

After being assured that the source of the new telegrams was reliable, Floyd stood. “I must go to the department at once.”

Upon reaching his office he sent a telegram of his own to Major Anderson. “Intelligence has reached here this morning that you have abandoned Fort Moultrie, spiked your guns, burned the carriages, and gone to Fort Sumter,” Floyd wrote. That he chose to use the word “abandoned” testified to his level of pique. “It is not believed,” Floyd wrote, “because there is no order for any such movement. Explain the meaning of this report.”

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ANDERSON’S REACTION UPON RECEIVING War Secretary Floyd’s telegram can only be imagined. The major had long pleaded for orders of any kind. He had heard nothing beyond Don Carlos Buell’s verbal injunction to avoid conflict but if necessary to fight “to the last extremity,” and Floyd’s subsequent tempering of that directive. While Floyd was indeed embroiled in scandal at this point, that alone did not explain his failure to take control of the situation in Charleston Harbor. Floyd seemed determined to keep Anderson isolated.

Anderson’s reply was crisp and immediate. “The telegram is correct,” Anderson wired back. “I abandoned Fort Moultrie because I was certain that if attacked my men must have been sacrificed, and the command of the harbor lost. I spiked the guns and destroyed the carriages to keep the guns from being used against us.

“If attacked,” he continued, “the garrison would never have surrendered without a fight.”

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NOW ANDERSON CONFRONTED THE challenge of getting Fort Sumter cleaned up and ready for battle as quickly as possible. With the light of the morning, the sheer magnitude of that task became obvious to all.

FORT SUMTER

Smoke and Cheers

DECEMBER 27

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN DAWN, but within Sumter's fifty-foot walls, it could be hard to tell. The rising sun cast black shadows across the parade. "The fort itself was a deep, dark, damp, gloomy-looking place, enclosed in high walls, where the sunlight rarely penetrated," wrote Captain Doubleday.

A prime example of a sea fortress, Sumter was a giant brick pentagon built on an artificial atoll of rock in the middle of Charleston's shipping channel, surrounded on all sides by water. The nearest land was Morris Island, three-quarters of a mile due south; Charleston's famous Battery esplanade was three miles to the northwest. The rocks themselves compounded South Carolina's resentment of the fort: These were *Northern* rocks, granite from quarries in New York and New England. The fort was part of a network of large coastal fortresses meant to prevent a repeat of the humiliation inflicted on America by Britain in 1814 when its navy burned the U.S. Capitol and the "President's House," as the White House was known at the time. Construction began in 1829, but now, thirty years later, the fort was still far from complete. By the time of Anderson's move, only fifteen guns were mounted, though the fort's design called for 120 more. Sixty-six giant cannon, unmounted, lay about the interior grounds like beached black whales.

Here, too, were half a dozen temporary wooden structures, used as shops and storehouses, and all manner of rubbish: piles of brick, stone flagging, sand, and high mounds of oyster shells. When burned, the shells produced lime for cement. The fort's wharf and esplanade, which surrounded its exterior walls, were piled with flagstone, sand, and twenty thousand bricks. The disarray made communication within the fort difficult, though it is likely the garrison's twenty-five children found ways to use it all profitably.

The officers, at least, could look forward to a fair degree of comfort once the enlisted men's barracks were completed and all the soldiers and their families moved out of the officers quarters. The building had spacious, airy apartments, each with three floors and thirteen-foot ceilings, the top floor consisting of a single very bright room with windows on both sides but no masonry protection, apparently in the belief that in battle these third-floor aeries could be blown away at no great cost to the efficacy of the fort. The apartments had "water closets"—meaning bathrooms—and multiple fireplaces and large kitchens on the first floor. The water closets drained into the harbor. Tall windows overlooked the interior ground. The opposite walls abutted the exterior wall, or "scarp," of the fort and were penetrated only by one-foot-wide apertures called loophole windows, three per room, that admitted a narrow shaft of light and a sliver of view. Known in fortress terminology as the "gorge," this wall was Sumter's weakest and least-heavily armed; here, too, as at Moultrie, the fort's designers never anticipated having to defend against an attack from behind by a rebellious state. The kitchens were probably quite dark, since the only exterior light was admitted through three such loopholes. In two apartments the kitchens were even less convivial, given that they shared walls with two large magazines packed with nearly forty thousand pounds of gunpowder. Mercifully, the walls of these magazines were six and a half feet thick. "The quarters," Asst. Surgeon Crawford wrote, in something of an understatement, "have a warlike expression."

The other four of Sumter's five sides were designed to house the bulk of its eventual complement of heavy guns. Each wall had three levels. The

first was the “casemate” tier, where guns were housed in vaulted, virtually bombproof enclosures and fired through arched openings in the walls, called embrasures. Guns on the second tier were similarly shielded and also fired through embrasures, but guns on the third tier, the “barbette,” or parapet level, would be positioned out in the open to fire over the tops of the walls. Both the casemate and top tiers were in good shape to receive guns and already held eleven large cannon. The second level, however, was nowhere near complete. It had forty-one openings in its wall, but none had yet been turned into a functional embrasure. Twenty were covered only with boards; the rest were open or haphazardly closed with brick. The problem here was that these openings could be readily breached by enemy soldiers bearing tall ladders, a battle tactic known since the sixteenth century as “escalade.”

Most of the fort’s cannon were thirty-two-pounders, each with a muzzle bore diameter of just over six inches, capable of firing a solid ball weighing —no mystery here—thirty-two pounds. The gun could also fire explosive shells that exited the barrel with a lit fuse; for close-order battle, it fired “canister” and “grape.” A round of canister shot, consisting of a can filled with small iron balls, was meant to hit the ground in front of advancing troops and break apart, spraying the men with lethal bits of metal. Grapeshot consisted of iron balls in a fabric sack that ruptured immediately upon firing, essentially turning the cannon into a very large shotgun.

At seventy-five hundred pounds each, these guns were not easy to lift into place. But the fort had cannon that were even heavier. The largest were the ten-inch “columbiads,” gargantuan weapons that fired cannonballs ten inches in diameter and weighing 128 pounds. The exact origin of the name “columbiad” remains a mystery, though military historian Emanuel Lewis, who also happened to be the longest-serving Librarian of the U.S. House, noted that a two-volume epic poem about Christopher Columbus, published in 1809, was entitled *The Columbiad*. Each of these guns weighed over fifteen thousand pounds, equivalent to fifteen concert grand pianos. Sumter had three such cannon. Anderson decided these should go on the fort’s

topmost tier, but first came myriad other tasks, one of the most important of which was purely symbolic.

At 11:45 that Thursday morning following the move, Major Anderson ordered all soldiers and loyal workers to gather at the fort's flagstaff at the western end of the parade ground. The eight members of the regimental band climbed to the parapet above. At noon, garrison chaplain Harris, who came over that morning from his home in Moultrieville, offered a prayer of thanks for the safe transfer to Sumter and of hope "that our flag might never be dishonored but soon again float over the whole country—a peaceful, and prosperous nation." The men removed their hats; Anderson fell to his knees, as did others. When the prayer ended, the major stood and grasped the halyard attached to the flagstaff. A sergeant did the actual raising, hoisting the flag hand over hand. The band played "The Star-Spangled Banner." When the flag reached the top, the soldiers burst into a prolonged round of boisterous cheers.

Anyone in Charleston inclined to disbelieve the news of the garrison's move to Sumter need only have looked through a spyglass to find confirmation not just in the flag, but in the federal troops now grinning from the parapets. Sumter's Pvt. John Thompson, an artillery man from Northern Ireland, marveled at what Anderson had done. "So completely did our Commander keep his own counsel," Thompson wrote in a letter to his father back home, "that none in the garrison, officer or soldier, ever dreamed that he contemplated a move, until the movement had actually been made."

Thompson described Anderson's coup with glee. "The consternation of the Carolinians may be imagined next morning when they observed Fort Moultrie enveloped in flames and smoke, and at noon saw the Stars and Stripes proudly waving from the battlements of Fort Sumter. What they feared, and endeavored to prevent, had taken place, and they had the pleasure of witnessing Uncle Sam's troops in a position scarcely assailable in any other way than by the slow process of starvation."

Aware perhaps that this was not necessarily the kind of letter a father wanted to receive, Private Thompson sought to offer some reassurance.

“You need not be in any unnecessary anxiety on my account,” he wrote, “for to tell the truth in spite of all their bluster I am almost sure they never will fire a shot at us, indeed I think they are only too glad to be let alone.”

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SOUTH CAROLINA’S GOVERNOR, the newly elected Francis Pickens—pugnacious, with low-set ears and the face of a bar brawler—was furious. He felt betrayed. He had been assured time and again that Buchanan had pledged not to reinforce Sumter. For Pickens, as for many others in the state, repetition and distortion had turned Buchanan’s so-called pledge into a concrete, immutable pact. And now Buchanan had broken it, an act of dishonor.

That afternoon, Pickens dispatched two officers to Sumter: his aide-de-camp, Col. J. Johnston Pettigrew, and Maj. Ellison Capers. Pettigrew, who was distantly related to the unionist lawyer James Petigru, was thirty-two years old; Capers was twenty-three.

The men were brought into the fort and taken to Anderson’s office on the second floor of the officers quarters. Several other Sumter officers were also present, including Captain Doubleday and Asst. Surgeon Crawford. The Sumter men greeted the Carolina men cordially, but the two were in no mood for pleasantries. “Their looks were full of wrath,” wrote Captain Doubleday, “and they bowed stiffly and indignantly in answer to our smiling salutations.” Anderson invited the Southern officers to sit down. They declined. Their demeanor was almost farcically formal, especially that of Major Capers, a boy really, in an overly elaborate uniform with red sash and saber.

Colonel Pettigrew began warily. “Can I communicate with you in the presence of these officers on the subject for which I am here?” He gestured toward the other Sumter officers. (Crawford reconstructed the conversation in his journal.)

“Certainly Sir,” Anderson said.

Pettigrew got right to the point. “The Governor of South Carolina desires me to say that he is much surprised that you have reinforced this work.”

“I beg pardon Sir,” Anderson said. “There has been no reinforcement. I have transferred my command from Fort Moultrie to this Fort, changing my command from one post to another as I had a right to do.”

Pettigrew bristled. “When the present Governor came into office he found an understanding existed between the previous Governor, and the President of the United States by which all property within the limits of our State was to remain as it was; that no reinforcements were to be sent here, particularly to this Fort.” The agreement, he added, also specified that “the state of affairs in this Harbor should remain unchanged.”

“I know nothing of any arrangement between the Government and the authority of South Carolina,” Anderson countered. “I merely acted.” He explained that he moved to Sumter because Moultrie was indefensible and his position there was constantly threatened by Carolina troops.

“*How?*” snapped young Capers.

Anderson patiently explained that every night steamers full of Southern troops had passed near Moultrie, raising the fear that these forces would land behind the fort and occupy the sand hills that overlooked it. From there, a mere company of riflemen could take control of the fort, he said, and in a gentle jab at the young major added that this was something any man with a military mind would grasp immediately.

“I removed on my own responsibility,” Anderson continued, “my sole object being to prevent bloodshed.” There was no malice involved, he said; it was his sworn duty to do all that was necessary to ensure the safety of his command. “In this controversy between the North and the South, my sympathies are entirely with the South,” he said. He turned to his own officers. “These gentlemen know it perfectly well.”

“Well, Sir,” Pettigrew said, “however that may be, the Governor of the State directs me to say to you, courteously but peremptorily, to return to Fort Moultrie.”

“My compliments to the Governor,” Anderson said. “I decline to accede to his request.”

“Then Sir my business is done. Good morning sir.”

And off he went, with young Capers in tow. Later that day, Colonel Pettigrew sent Governor Pickens a brief summary of the encounter. Its closing paragraph read, “I cannot express myself too favorably as to the impression made upon me by the soldierly, courteous even kind bearing of Maj. Anderson.”

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THE SECESSION-MINDED MEN AMONG the workers at Sumter demanded to be released from the fort. The next morning, on Anderson’s orders, they were loaded aboard schooners and sent to Charleston. Over the next few days a total of 150 workers departed, for various reasons, prominent among them a wish not to be killed in the battle for Sumter that seemed certain to come. A loyal cadre of fifty-five laborers remained at the fort.

WASHINGTON

Blood and Dishonor

DECEMBER 27

IN WASHINGTON THAT THURSDAY MORNING, William Henry Trescot, the former assistant secretary of state, raced to the Senate chamber and told the news to two senators, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi and Robert Mercer Taliaferro Hunter of Virginia, or R.M.T. Hunter for short. The three immediately left and drove by carriage to the White House, where they asked to meet with Buchanan.

The president walked in a few moments later, clearly nervous, according to a later account by Trescot. “I knew his manner too well to be mistaken,” Trescot said.

Buchanan, profoundly unhappy at the prospect of getting bad news from the men, made some discursive remark about the U.S. consul in Liverpool.

“Mr. President,” Senator Davis said, “we have called upon an infinitely greater matter than any consulate.”

“What is it?” Buchanan asked. He stood beside the fireplace. His eye disorder imparted a look of particular wariness—chin down, face turned, left eye acutely focused.

“Have you received any intelligence from Charleston in the last two or three hours?” Davis asked.

“None.”

“Then, I have a great calamity to announce to you.”

Davis told him of Anderson’s move from Fort Moultrie to Sumter. “And now Mr. President you are surrounded with blood and dishonor on all sides.”

As Buchanan listened, he broke a cigar into pieces in his hand, a habitual act that Trescot had witnessed many times in the past. Buchanan sat down. This news of Anderson had come on the heels of South Carolina’s secession and revelations of Floyd’s financial scandal. “My God,” Buchanan said, “are calamities never to come singly. I call God to witness—you gentlemen better than anyone know—that this is not only without but against my orders, it is against my policy.”

So unlikely was the news the men brought that Buchanan doubted its accuracy. If true, he said, why had he heard nothing from War Secretary Floyd? He dispatched a messenger to summon the secretary.

Floyd, on arrival, told Buchanan that no official telegram had been received by the War Department, and that his senior men doubted the report could possibly be true; Floyd added that he had just sent a telegram to Anderson expressing his incredulity. He had not yet seen Anderson’s reply.

Buchanan postponed his planned meeting with the three South Carolina commissioners and called a cabinet meeting, an extraordinary and fateful session that would span, at intervals, three days and four nights.

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IT CONVENED ON THURSDAY, December 27, with new men filling the posts left by the resignations of Howell Cobb and Lewis Cass. The men who comprised the new cabinet were Jeremiah S. Black, formerly Buchanan’s attorney general, now replacing Cass as secretary of state; Edwin M. Stanton, an assistant attorney general who now stepped into his former boss’s seat as attorney general; Philip F. Thomas, replacing Cobb at Treasury (he would last all of a month); Joseph Holt, postmaster; Isaac Toucey, secretary of the Navy; Floyd, war secretary; and Jacob Thompson, Interior. A former congressman from Mississippi, Thompson favored

secession and cast himself rather openly in the role of court spy on behalf of South Carolina. By now the news of Anderson's move had been confirmed.

That War Secretary Floyd even dared to attend the meeting was a surprise, given that a few days earlier Buchanan, through an intermediary, had asked him to resign. But not only did Floyd dare—he behaved with an aggravating hauteur. He read aloud a three-paragraph statement that began: "It is evident now, from the action of the commander of Fort Moultrie, that the solemn pledges of the Government have been violated by Major Anderson." Having lost the confidence of South Carolina, he read, "one remedy only is left, and it is to withdraw the garrison from the harbor of Charleston altogether. I hope that the President will allow me to make that order at once. This order, in my judgment, can alone prevent bloodshed and civil war."

Secretary of State Black forcefully disagreed and declared his own support for Anderson's occupation of Sumter. A former Supreme Court justice whose most salient physical features were eyebrows that resembled cumulonimbus clouds, he was often referred to as Judge Black. "Good," Black said of Anderson's move. "I am glad of it. It is in precise accordance with his orders."

"It is not," Floyd said.

"But it is," Black countered. "I recollect the orders distinctly word for word." The written original of these orders—the "last extremity" directive delivered verbally to Anderson by Buell but issued first in writing by Floyd himself—was then retrieved; it explicitly refuted Floyd's charge.

During this session, Interior Secretary Thompson likewise proposed that Sumter be evacuated, but as a gesture of generosity to South Carolina. The state, he argued, was a small one, "with a sparse white population," while the Union was large and powerful. "We could afford to say to South Carolina, 'See, we will withdraw our garrison as an evidence that we mean you no harm.' "

At this, Stanton, the new attorney general and a staunch unionist, turned to Buchanan. "Mr. President, the proposal to be generous implies that the Government is strong, and that we, as the public servants, have the

confidence of the people." Nothing was further from the truth, Stanton later recalled saying. "No administration has ever suffered the loss of public confidence and support as this has done." With Floyd still present, Stanton went on to allude to Floyd's financial scandal. "Now it is proposed to give up Sumter. All I have to say is, that no administration, much less this one, can afford to lose a million of money and a fort in the same week."

Floyd said nothing.

This proved to be Floyd's last cabinet meeting. With his dismissal by Buchanan still not disclosed, Floyd now saw a way to craft his exit as a decision of his own, in high moral terms, to restore his reputation among the public—or at least that portion of the public living below the Mason-Dixon Line. He raised anew Buchanan's alleged pledge to maintain the military status quo in Charleston Harbor and charged that in now breaking that pledge, Buchanan had engaged in an act of dishonor that Floyd (overlooking for the moment his own scandal) could not abide.

"Our refusal or even our delay to place affairs back as they stood under our agreement, invites a collision and must inevitably inaugurate civil war," Floyd wrote in his formal letter of resignation on Saturday, December 29. "I cannot consent to be the agent of such a calamity. I deeply regret to feel myself under the necessity of tendering to you my resignation as Secretary of War, because I can no longer hold the office under my convictions of patriotism, nor with honor, subjected, as I am, to a violation of solemn pledges and plighted faith."

In a one-paragraph reply two days later, Buchanan accepted Floyd's resignation and told him he had appointed Postmaster Holt, a strong unionist, as his provisional replacement.

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AT ONE POINT WHILE the cabinet was in session, Sen. Robert Toombs of Georgia came to the White House and asked to see Buchanan, who stepped out to meet with him in an adjacent room. Toombs told him that he had received inquiries from several leading citizens of Savannah as to whether

Anderson would continue to occupy the fort, and whether the United States intended to retain possession. It was this meeting, according to William Trescot, that first brought home to Buchanan the true magnitude of what was occurring in the South—"the first time he seemed really to begin to believe in what was so near at hand." Until then, Buchanan "thought it likely that South Carolina would secede but that she would not be supported by any other state."

Buchanan told Toombs he had not yet decided how to proceed with regard to Sumter. "The Cabinet is now in session upon that very subject."

"I thank you Sir for the information that is all I wanted to know," Toombs said, and prepared to exit.

"But Mr. Toombs, why do you ask?"

"Because Sir my State has a deep interest in the decision."

This perplexed Buchanan. "How your state—what is it to Georgia whether a fort in Charleston harbor is abandoned?"

"Sir," Toombs answered, "the cause of Charleston is the cause of the South."

"Good God Mr. Toombs, do you mean that I am in the midst of a revolution?"

"Yes Sir—more than that—you have been there for a year and have not yet found it out."

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PRESSURE ON BUCHANAN WAS mounting, and not just from the South. Anderson's move galvanized the North, where his lone and courageous act was all the more striking when juxtaposed against the behavior of an administration whose salient feature was inaction. The major became an immediate hero. One admirer called him America's "*one true man*." The legislature of the Nebraska Territory unanimously passed a resolution of thanks to Anderson and wished him a happy New Year. Requests for autographs poured in from Boston; New York; St. Louis; Philadelphia; Chicago; and Batavia, New York. One even came from a man in Charlotte,

North Carolina, who explained that while he sided with the South, he nonetheless approved of Anderson's move for the sake of the Union. A publisher, Rudd and Carleton, asked Anderson and his officers to keep notes on their experiences following the move to Sumter for a later book, to be called tentatively, and optimistically, " 'A Month' or 'Two Months at Fort Sumter.' " The book, they said, "would sell like wild-fire."

Buchanan recognized that the rising outcry from the North proscribed his range of options and made his own peaceful exit less and less likely. "If I withdraw Anderson from Sumter," he said, "I can travel home to Wheatland by the light of my own burning effigies."

CHARLESTON HARBOR

Turmoil

DECEMBER 27–31

IN CHARLESTON ON DECEMBER 27, the day after Anderson occupied Sumter, South Carolina governor Francis W. Pickens, newly elected, ordered the state militia to seize all remaining federal properties in Charleston Harbor. He did not necessarily have the power to do so, since the governorship of South Carolina was mainly ceremonial, but he did it anyway, even overriding the objections of the state legislature.

First to fall was Castle Pinckney, situated on a small, uninhabited island called Shutes Folly less than a mile from the Charleston waterfront. At around four P.M., some 150 state militia crossed to the fort aboard the patrol steamer *Nina*, then stormed ashore bearing long ladders to scale the walls. First, however, they tried to enter through the fort's main entrance. Not surprisingly the gate was locked. They deployed the ladders. A dozen or so men clamored up and over the walls, and upon descending to the fort's interior found its grounds all but empty, occupied only by a lieutenant, an ordnance sergeant and his family, and a dozen or so workmen. They promptly raised the palmetto flag. An officer of the invading militia found Kate Skillen, the fifteen-year-old daughter of the ordnance sergeant, weeping as if bereft and told her not to worry, they would not harm her.

“I am not crying because I am afraid!” she sneered through her tears (this according to Captain Doubleday’s account).

“What is the matter, then?” the officer asked.

She pointed to the palmetto flag. “I am crying because you have put that miserable rag up there.”

From Sumter’s parapets, Anderson’s men watched this adventure with amusement, despite the obvious gravity of the moment. Pvt. John Thompson, in his letter to his father in Northern Ireland, offered a wry commentary: “They can scale the walls of an *unoccupied* Fort with a gallantry highly commendable. In fact their martial ardor seemed to have taken a turn in this direction for the same day they assaulted the remaining *empty* Fort in the harbor and amid shouts exultantly raised their Palmetto flag, to announce their bloodless victory.”

The second fort was the now vacant Moultrie, which the militia seized that evening, again with no resistance. Also that day, a force of Carolina militia seized Charleston’s federal arsenal just as Captain Foster of the engineers ventured into the city to withdraw money to pay the laborers he had discharged. “There I found the greatest excitement to exist,” he wrote to a Baltimore friend, John H. B. Latrobe, “and although I saw nothing to warrant apprehensions of personal violence, yet I was informed by many friends to leave the city, because it was generally believed that I had come to blow up the arsenal. Before I left I had the satisfaction of seeing two companies in quick march to seize and protect the arsenal from my incendiary presence.”

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WITH CHRISTMAS BEHIND HER, Mary Chesnut left her friends’ plantation on the Combahee River and returned to Charleston, where she was reunited with her husband, James, still serving as a delegate to the secession convention. They stayed at a well-appointed boarding house at 43 Church Street managed by Mrs. P. R. Gidiere about four blocks south of Ryan’s Mart, the city’s thriving slave market. In Charleston at this time, as in many locales,

boarding houses were a popular form of accommodation for visiting planters and yeomen alike.

On Thursday morning, December 27, Mrs. Gidiere returned from market and announced Anderson's move into Sumter. "Very few understood the consequences of that quiet move of Major Anderson—at first it was looked on as a misfortune," Mary wrote in her diary. But it prompted other states to move quickly to seize federal properties within their boundaries, and in so doing to accelerate their own drive for secession. This all felt familiar to Mary. She had grown up in a household that embraced and promoted states' rights. Her father had been governor of South Carolina during John C. Calhoun's nullification campaign and wholly supported it. "So I was of necessity a rebel born," Mary wrote.

Still, she wasn't at all sure that South Carolina's leaders were up to the job of managing the state's exit. She bemoaned the kind of men now in charge: "Invariably some sleeping dead head long forgotten or passed over. Young and active spirits ignored. Places for worn out politicians seemed the rule—when our only hope is—to use *all* the talents God has given us."

She described Governor Pickens as "a great old horse fly buzzing and fuming and fretting."

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ANDERSON'S MOVE ENRAGED THE Carolina commissioners in Washington, who saw it as a complete betrayal of Buchanan's pledge not to alter the military status quo in Charleston. By now that murky pledge might as well have been engraved in marble. Their honor bruised, their hubris abruptly deflated, the commissioners composed a peevish note to the president. In prose that dripped presumption, they told Buchanan that they had initially planned to negotiate "with the earnest desire to avoid all unnecessary and hostile collision, and so to inaugurate our new relations as to secure mutual respect, general advantage, and a future of good will and harmony, beneficial to all the parties concerned. But the events of the last twenty-four hours render such an assurance impossible."

They demanded that Buchanan immediately withdraw all federal forces from Charleston Harbor. “Under present circumstances they are a standing menace which renders negotiation impossible, and, as our recent experience shows, threatens speedily to bring to a bloody issue questions which ought to be settled with temperance and judgment.”

With the help of Secretary of State Black and Attorney General Stanton, Buchanan drafted a reply. He told the commissioners that upon learning of Anderson’s move, “my first promptings were to command him to return to his former position.” But then he learned that state authorities, “without waiting or asking for an explanation,” had acted within hours to seize the other forts.

Evacuation of Sumter was therefore no longer possible, Buchanan wrote, for the simple reason that there was no place left to evacuate to. “In the harbor of Charleston we now find three forts confronting each other, over all of which the Federal flag floated only four days ago; but now over two of them this flag has been supplanted, and the palmetto flag has been substituted in its stead. It is under all these circumstances that I am urged to withdraw the troops from the harbor of Charleston, and am informed that without this, negotiation is impossible.”

With a surprising display of backbone, the president declared: “This I cannot do; this I will not do.”

It was now clear to the commissioners that there would be no meeting with Buchanan. The next day, New Year’s Day 1861, the commissioners launched their final retort, laced with frustration and hurt feelings. These men were, after all, the most upstanding of the South Carolina chivalry, accustomed to having their way with slaves and yeomen alike.

They charged that Anderson, in moving to Sumter, had “waged war.” The state, in seizing Moultrie and the other federal holdings, had merely acted in “simple self-defense.” They closed their letter with a mighty wag of fingers. “By your course,” they wrote, “you have probably rendered civil war inevitable. Be it so.”

Buchanan refused to take delivery, according to the official U.S. record: “This paper, just presented to the President, is of such a character that he

declines to receive it.”

FORT SUMTER

Ominous Doings

DECEMBER 28–31

BEYOND SUMTER'S WALLS, THERE WERE menacing signs that South Carolina was preparing for outright war. Governor Pickens urged planters to establish their own gun batteries along the Santee River, the second-largest river on the nation's East Coast, and also on the shores of Winyah Bay, fifty miles north, which afforded access to the port city of Georgetown. Pickens sought to rally the planters with an allusion to the role their forebears played in winning the Revolutionary War: "I doubt not that the same Patriotism which characterized your Sires burns as strongly in your Breasts now."

On December 28 Pickens banned all shipments of arms and supplies to Fort Sumter (he permitted mail service), claiming the ban was meant "to prevent irregular collisions, and to spare the unnecessary effusion of blood." But Anderson's lookouts saw signs that Carolina forces were establishing new outposts on nearby islands. On New Year's Eve, steamers deposited eighty soldiers, draught horses, and an array of construction equipment on Morris Island, just south of Sumter. To Anderson it was obvious that the state planned to erect new artillery batteries in easy range of the fort.

Anderson was perplexed by Governor Pickens's bellicosity; it seemed foolhardy. "He knows not how entirely the city of Charleston is in my

power," Anderson wrote in a letter to Adjutant Cooper on January 1. "I can cut his communication off from the sea, and thereby prevent the reception of supplies, and close the harbor, even at night, by destroying the light-houses." He added: "These things, of course, I would never do, unless compelled to do so in self-defense."

Anderson was perversely pleased to learn that South Carolina military officials, during a meeting, had unanimously praised his move to Sumter as "one of consummate wisdom; that it was the best one that could have been made." He told Cooper: "I must confess that I feel highly complimented by the expression of such an opinion (from those most deeply affected by it) of the change of position I felt bound to take to save my command and to prevent the shedding of blood. In a few days I hope, God willing, that I shall be so strong here that they will hardly be foolish enough to attack me."

Although former war secretary Floyd had not approved of Anderson's move, many others in the U.S. Army had, including America's top general, Winfield Scott, who communicated his praise through an intermediary. For the moment, however, the general's powers were at a decidedly low ebb. As the nation spiraled into its gravest domestic crisis ever, its senior-most military commander, its general-in-chief, was suffering extravagantly from a several-day siege of diarrhea that had robbed his nights of sleep and left him exhausted and more or less incapacitated. On Sunday, December 30, however, the general managed to rouse himself enough to compose a secret message to President Buchanan with his recommendation for how to support Major Anderson and his garrison. As always in his formal communiqués, General Scott referred to himself in the third person.

"It is Sunday," Scott wrote. "The weather is bad, and General Scott is not well enough to go to church. But matters of the highest national importance seem to forbid a moment's delay, and if misled by zeal, he hopes for the President's forgiveness.

"Will the President permit General Scott, without reference to the War Department and otherwise, as secretly as possible, to send two hundred and fifty recruits from New York Harbor to re-enforce Fort Sumter, together with some extra muskets or rifles, ammunition, and subsistence stores?

“It is hoped that a sloop of war and cutter may be ordered for the same purpose as early as tomorrow.”

What General Scott envisioned was a show of force; the ship he had in mind was the new U.S.S. *Brooklyn*, a large steam warship moored at the Gosport Naval Shipyard in Norfolk, Virginia. It was a “screw sloop,” driven by propellor rather than paddle wheels, and carried twenty-one guns. Its captain was David G. Farragut of eventual “Damn the torpedoes” fame.

This was exactly the thing that Anderson’s men at Sumter hoped to see through their spyglasses, according to Captain Doubleday. “As the insurgents at this period had but few field-guns, and a very scanty supply of cannon-powder, the *Brooklyn* alone, in my opinion, could have gone straight to the wharf in Charleston, and have put an end to the insurrection then and there.” The garrison at the time had no knowledge of any specific plan involving the *Brooklyn* or any other warship but nonetheless watched the distant bar closely for smoke from a ship’s funnel or the glint of a tall sail. “If we ascended to the parapet, we saw nothing but uncouth State flags, representing palmettos, pelicans, and other strange devices,” Doubleday wrote. “No echo seemed to come back from the loyal North to encourage us. Our glasses in vain swept the horizon; the one flag we longed to see was not there.”

On New Year’s Eve, General Scott sent a message directly to the commander of Fort Monroe in Virginia, which protected the Gosport shipyard, ordering him to get the *Brooklyn* ready and to load it with troops and arms, and provisions to last ninety days.

“Manage everything as secretly and confidentially as possible,” Scott admonished, and added: “*Look to this*.”

SPRINGFIELD

The Real Danger

DECEMBER 31

WITH ANDERSON AT SUMTER, THE national crisis immediately became more charged. Lincoln's frustration deepened, fed by numerous tributaries, foremost among them his own inability to direct events in the administrative vacuum left by Buchanan, but also by lesser founts, like the unrelenting surge of petitioners seeking patronage jobs in his administration. Journalist Henry Villard called them "place-wanting cormorants." A deluge of correspondence threatened to overwhelm him, much of it stained with hatred and carrying threats both veiled and blatant that he would not survive long enough to become president. News reports hinted at plots against the city of Washington itself, with the *Springfield Republican* conveying an explicit threat from radical U.S. senator Louis T. Wigfall of Texas that "the capital would be in the hands of the secessionists before Inauguration Day." The proslavery *New York Herald* added detail to this miasma of menace when it reported earnestly on New Year's Day that a large Southern force had in fact already been marshaled and was primed to seize Washington.

Adding to the pressure Lincoln felt was the looming matter of his inaugural speech, which seemed certain from the perspective of the day to be the most important speech of his life, and, owing to his public silence

thus far, certain to command the nation's attention. Yet two months remained until he could deliver it and at last take office. "I would willingly take out of my life a period in years equal to the two months which intervene between now and my inauguration to take the oath of office now," he told a friend in a moment of unusual despond. In those two months, anything could happen. "Because every hour adds to the difficulties I am called upon to meet, and the present Administration does nothing to check the tendency toward dissolution, I, who have been called to meet this awful responsibility, am compelled to remain here, doing nothing to avert it or lessen its force when it comes to me." Citing scripture, he told his friend, "My cup of bitterness is full and overflowing."

A rising chorus echoed Lincoln's frustration. His friend and political advisor, Thurlow Weed, through his newspaper the *Albany Evening Journal*, posited, "Our only regret is, that Mr. Lincoln could not have taken the helm of state, as successor to Mr. Buchanan, on the first Monday in December." Another concurring voice, this one Southern, was former congressman Alexander H. Stephens, a proslavery Georgian who at least for the moment favored preservation of the Union. In a December 30 letter he urged Lincoln to do what he could to "save our common country," and advised: "A word fitly spoken by you now would be like 'apples of gold in pictures of silver,' " this last a reference to Proverbs 25:11 in the Old Testament of the Bible. A diminutive man of one hundred pounds or so, Stephens was nicknamed "Little Ellick" and often referred to as "the Little Pale Star from Georgia." Which he apparently did not mind, once describing himself as "a malformed ill-shaped half-finished thing." Though small, he was also fiery, and in his mind mighty, always willing to express moral certitude. When a fellow Georgian said, "I could swallow him whole and never know the difference," Stephens shot back, "If you did there would be more brains in your belly than there ever will be in your head!" In his letter to Lincoln, Stephens warned, "When men come under the influence of fanaticism, there is no telling where their impulses or passions may drive them."

Lincoln did get some good news, however, when William Seward, on Friday, December 28, fully fourteen days after Lincoln's invitation, at last accepted the post of secretary of state, this after "due reflection and with much self-distrust," as Seward put it. Having thus delayed, however, he had no compunction about now recommending rapid action. "Habit has accustomed the public to anticipate the arrival of the President elect in this city about the middle of February," he told Lincoln in a letter dated the same day, "and evil minded persons would expect to organize their demonstrations for that time." He urged Lincoln to forgo tradition and come to Washington "a week or ten days earlier. The effect would probably be reassuring and soothing."

But it was not the inauguration that troubled Lincoln. He felt reasonably assured that Commanding General Winfield Scott would make good on his pledge, delivered through an intermediary, to protect him upon his arrival in the capital. The old general with reassuring élan had promised that if any secessionist forces "show their faces or raise a finger I'll blow them to hell."

Lincoln's concern lay elsewhere. "I have been considering your suggestions as to my reaching Washington somewhat earlier than is usual," Lincoln wrote in his reply to Seward. "It seems to me the inauguration is not the most dangerous point for us. Our adversaries have us more clearly at disadvantage, on the second Wednesday of February, when the votes should be officially counted." Here he referred to the constitutionally mandated final count and certification of the electoral vote, to be conducted in the House on February 13, 1861, by Buchanan's vice president. Ordinarily this would be the most routine of events, a celebration of the constitution and of peaceful succession, but the tensions of the times raised all manner of concern, especially given the fact that the vice president, the man who would count and certify the electoral votes, was Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, who not only sympathized with the South but had been Lincoln's leading opponent in the presidential election. "If the two Houses refuse to meet at all, or meet without a quorum of each, where shall

we be?" Lincoln wrote. "I do not think that this counting is constitutionally essential to the election; but how are we to proceed in absence of it?"

In light of this, he told Seward, "I think it is best for me not to attempt appearing in Washington till the result of that ceremony is known."

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SO ENDED THE YEAR, with none of the optimism that past New Year's celebrations had brought, only the promise of tumult to come, perhaps even violence. "Oh God save our dear City Charleston," wrote planter Keziah Brevard on December 29. "Let not a head be bruised by the Northern people—thou canst save us, Oh save us!! This old year truly goes out full of trouble. Let better signs soon gleam on us and Oh that '61 could bring peace and love to thy people."

On New Year's Eve she had a dream, a nightmare, in which "fearful" clouds drifted overhead. She was standing near the brick oven in her mother's home. In the corner of her yard she saw fire—"two raging, smoking fires, the flames burning high at intervals." She cried out. She ordered the fire extinguished. The fear woke her.

"Now about 2 O'clock A.M.—" she wrote, "and all gloom without—My Country!!! My Country!!!"

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IN WASHINGTON, NEW YEAR'S DAY was subdued, despite excellent weather: "a fine clear and rather cool day," according to diarist Charles Francis Adams, who made a point of noting weather conditions in the first line of each of his diary entries. As per New Year's custom, Adams made the rounds of various homes and receptions.

He had planned to call on General Scott, but the general was ill "and did not receive me." Adams made numerous other visits and talked for a time with Senator Seward. "I thought Mr. Seward was graver than usual today," Adams wrote, "and he talked much of the obligation of the people of this city to make preparations for defense. On the whole, I suspect there is

something in it." He learned as well, to his relief, that General Scott had *not* been named secretary of war to replace the disgraced Floyd, something Adams had feared. He interpreted the appointment of Joseph Holt as a signal that Buchanan might be planning to toughen his approach to the secession crisis. "This was the only encouraging thing of the day," he wrote.

Varina Davis made the rounds as well. This New Year's Day was for her an especially poignant one. She and her husband, Jeff, who would soon resign from the Senate, were preparing to leave town and return to Brierfield, Davis's plantation in Mississippi. Varina went to the White House to say goodbye to Buchanan by herself, her husband having vowed never to have any future interaction with the man. She described her farewell as "affectionate."

In a letter to a friend, she complained that a pall seemed to have settled over Washington this New Year's Day. There were no parties or dinners; Southern men now shunned Buchanan because of what they perceived to be his betrayal over Sumter. The city had become a "great mausoleum," the atmosphere full of "gloom," she wrote. Varina did not share her husband's harsh disavowal of Buchanan. "I love the dear old man," she wrote, "and would like to forget that I do."

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ELSEWHERE IN WASHINGTON, TEXAS senator Wigfall, the fire-eating advocate of rebellion, learned of War Secretary Floyd's exit and his replacement by Holt; on January 2 he wired the news to Charleston.

"Holt succeeds Floyd. It means war."

1861

PART THREE

PRECIPICE

(January 1–February 11)

USE EVERY EFFORT TO SOOTHE and tranquilize your principal; do not see things in the same aggravated light in which he views them; extenuate the conduct of his adversary whenever you see clearly an opportunity to do so, without doing violence to your friend's irritated mind. Endeavor to persuade him that there must have been some misunderstanding in the matter. Check him if he uses opprobrious epithet towards his adversary, and never permit improper or insulting words in the note you carry.

—*The Code Duello*

PHILADELPHIA

Dorothea's Warning

JANUARY

On a Saturday in January 1861, a woman walked into the Philadelphia office of Samuel M. Felton, Sr., president of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, with an urgent story to tell, something she had discovered while traveling through the South promoting the creation of more-humane asylums. Her story had nothing to do with insanity, however—at least not the organic kind that consumed her days.

Felton knew this visitor, Dorothea Dix, from years of prior acquaintance. Out of respect for her work he had given her a rail pass for free travel on his road. Now fifty-eight years old, she was tall and thin, a flagstaff in dark silk. She wore her deep-brown hair parted at the center, drawn back into a braided bun; her facial features were small—not pinched, exactly, but cramped in a way that gave her a vinegary aspect. In contrast, Felton, fifty-one, clean-shaven and smooth-featured, conveyed an affable openness.

Ordinarily confident to the point of seeming imperious, Dix had found herself uncertain as to who should hear her story, even whether she should tell it at all, for to tell it risked betraying the confidences of others. During her travels she had encountered many Southerners at all levels of society who welcomed her into their inner circles despite her New England roots.

She despised abolitionists, befriended slaveholders. While ardently and single-mindedly committed to helping the insane, and convinced that she acted at the direction of God—“I am the instrument to do his holy will”—she expressed little concern for the vastly greater proportion of the South’s population consigned to slavery. Instead she embraced the proslavery ethos of James Hammond and Edmund Ruffin, at one point observing, while traveling in North Carolina, that “negroes are gay, obliging, and anything but miserable.”

As a result, her Southern hosts spoke to her with great candor about their fear of Lincoln and what he might do once in office. Although for the most part oblivious to politics, even Dix understood that there was more here than simple anxiety. This was desperation. The wild passion for secession was, she acknowledged, a kind of insanity in itself. She told Felton she had found evidence of a rapidly advancing plot to assassinate Lincoln and take over the government. Her deep voice and grave appearance added an aura of credibility to her story. “For more than an hour she related to me what I had heard before in rumors,” Felton wrote. “The sum of it was that there was an organized and extensive conspiracy to seize Washington.” The conspirators would then declare themselves to be the government, Dix told him. “The whole was to be a coup d’état.” She had details: She described how the conspirators had studied the rail bridges into Baltimore and how they proposed also to interrupt the railroad line south of the city, the only north–south line into Washington. Whoever controlled it and the telegraph lines that ran alongside would control all access to the capital from the north.

Her story echoed reports from Felton’s own men about similar plans they had overheard while working along the railroad’s Philadelphia-to-Baltimore route. They told Felton that secessionists planned to burn railroad bridges and commandeer the large steam ferry at Havre de Grace, Maryland, which carried trains and other traffic across the Susquehanna River. The bridges were made of wood; the ferry was the sole means by which trains from the North could connect to the final forty-mile stretch of tracks into Baltimore, and thus a crucial and fragile nexus.

Alarmed anew, Felton sent an associate to Washington to meet with Gen. Winfield Scott and convey all that Dix had told him. With Lincoln soon to begin his inaugural journey, the danger seemed imminent. Felton also took more direct and practical action. His railroad and others had long employed Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, founded in 1850, to protect their lines and prevent theft by employees. Conductors, the agency found, were deft at pocketing money from cash fares, a few dollars here, a quarter there. Felton now contacted the agency's founder, Allan Pinkerton, and asked him to investigate not just the threat to the president-elect, but to the tracks, trestles, and other structures that comprised his railroad, all of which seemed likely targets for sabotage.

A man of the Railroad Age, Pinkerton immediately set out for Philadelphia, arriving on January 19 to meet in person with Felton. Pinkerton took the assignment. A week later, in a January 27 letter to Felton, he outlined his plan, which hinged on placing "an *unceasing Shadow*" on the likely conspirators, even in their homes or boarding houses.

Five days later, on February 1, Pinkerton and eight of his agents, whom he called "operatives," were on their way south, among them twenty-seven-year-old Kate Warne, chief of the agency's female detectives, who, according to Pinkerton, could be commanding and vivacious but also possessed "that rare quality in womankind, the art of being silent." The plan was to converge on Baltimore. There, Lincoln's train would stop at the city's Calvert Street Station; he would then have to walk or ride by carriage about a mile to another station, at Camden Street, for the final leg of his journey to Washington. Under ordinary circumstances, this would have afforded an ideal opportunity for a welcome parade to escort Lincoln to his next train, but these were anything but ordinary times, and this was no ordinary city. Maryland was a slave state, part of what was considered the border South, and Baltimore, its principal city, seethed with secessionist zeal. Pinkerton and Felton agreed that it was during that transfer between trains, in a slaveholding city sympathetic to disunion, that Lincoln would be most vulnerable. Moreover, the city's chief of police, George P. Kane, was

an avowed secessionist who made it clear that he had no intention of deploying officers to help protect Lincoln as he traversed the city.

On the way south, Pinkerton placed agents at various points in Delaware and Maryland to gauge the level of unrest. They followed Pinkerton's tried-and-true modus operandi: infiltrate and observe. In his manual for training new operatives he called it "Testing," a potentially months-long process that hinged on the operatives' "being entirely unobserved and unnoticed."

In Baltimore, Pinkerton himself rented a house on South Street to use as his headquarters. "The building I had selected was admirably adapted for my purpose," he wrote later, "and was so constructed that entrance could be gained to it from all four sides, through alleyways that led in from neighboring streets." He also rented an office downtown, which he occupied in the guise of "John H. Hutchinson," a fictive stockbroker from Charleston. One of his operatives, Timothy Webster, managed to join a volunteer militia in Perrymansville, Maryland, that had the stated goal of repelling invasion from the North. Webster soon found that its true intent was to ensure that "no damned Yankee could ever get through to sit in the Presidential chair."

Kate Warne, deploying an understanding of Southern men and manners gained from a prior investigation in Alabama, pinned a blue cockade to her clothing and posed as a zealous secessionist; she gained entrée to the highest levels of Baltimore society. Still another operative—Harry Davies, under the alias Joseph Howard—claimed to have won an introduction to the alleged head of an assassination cabal in Baltimore. He was then invited to participate in a clandestine ceremony held in a dark room, where participants swore themselves to secrecy and drew lots for the privilege of killing Lincoln. The coveted ballots, eight of them, were marked in red. Once Lincoln was dead, the assassins would board a waiting steamship and flee south to what they expected would be a hero's welcome.

Pinkerton claimed that he, too, had met the cabal's ringleader, Cypriano Ferrandini, a Baltimore barber, and heard him vow, "Lincoln shall die in this city."

WASHINGTON

Crisis

JANUARY 1–8

On new year's day, Edmund Ruffin left his friend's plantation outside Gainesville, Florida, and resumed his journey to the state capital, Tallahassee, to attend the state's secession convention. Passing again through the rail nexus at Baldwin, where he had to wait five hours for his next train, he saw numerous telegrams sent from both Charleston and Washington that provided final confirmation of Major Anderson's move to Fort Sumter, supplemented by reports that some sort of Union effort to resupply the fort might be underway. He welcomed this. "Probably this news, and the beginning of war, with some bloodshed, will serve to determine quicker the position of the Convention," he wrote. Florida seemed inclined to wait for other states to declare their intentions. But, he wrote, "this is no time to advocate delay."

He reached Tallahassee on January 3 for the scheduled beginning of the convention only to find that the delegates had voted to postpone the start for two days to give fifteen delayed members time to arrive. That day, January 5, happened to be Ruffin's sixty-seventh birthday. At a time when the median age of Americans was 19.4 years (compared with 38.3 in 2020) and life expectancy was 39.4 (78.9), this was quite old, but Ruffin seemed quick

and energetic. The adjective most often applied to him in press reports was "venerable."

The convention opened at noon and, after various preliminary actions, approved a motion to allow Ruffin to take a seat in the hall itself among the delegates. He was escorted to the floor by two deputies in an ostentatious manner. "I would have preferred a less ceremonious introduction," he wrote in his diary, "but I could not avoid it." His sincerity here is doubtful, for he loved nothing more than being the object of elaborate public attention.

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ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2, President Buchanan reconvened his cabinet, now to discuss the pressing question of whether to send reinforcements to Major Anderson.

The cabinet called for the South Carolina commissioners' last letter, the one Buchanan had officially declined to receive, and now had it read aloud. The effect was striking. When read silently as mute text the letter was bitter and aggrieved; read aloud, it was a bellicose rant. "After this letter," exulted Secretary of State Black, "the cabinet will be unanimous." Interior Secretary Thompson, true to his secessionist bent (Nicolay and Hay referred to him as "the traitor Thompson"), still argued against reinforcement, but the rest of the cabinet, with its new pro-Union orientation, was in favor.

Buchanan knew that events had forced his hand. "It is now all over," he said, "and reinforcements must be sent."

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FOR THE WAR DEPARTMENT the question now became *how* to send the reinforcements. General Scott by this point had begun to rethink the wisdom of sending the *Brooklyn* to reinforce Fort Sumter. The ship's draft was so deep that it would only be able to cross the Charleston Bar at certain times; also, pulling so many troops from Fort Monroe in Virginia, the Union's most important active fortress, would deplete its garrison at a time when its strategic value seemed to grow by the day.

On January 2, the general canceled the *Brooklyn* mission in favor of a new plan inspired by several civic-minded businessmen from New York who offered to send volunteer troops to Sumter aboard a commercial steamer. The volunteers were rejected, the ship accepted. An Army staff officer headed north to New York City, and on the next evening, Thursday, met with the ship's agent and its owner to negotiate the cost of chartering and supplying the vessel, a large side-wheeler in regular service to Havana and New Orleans named the *Star of the West*.

The plan called for utmost secrecy. The ship would depart from New York as if on one of its regular voyages but would pick up two hundred well-armed U.S. Army regulars at Governor's Island in New York Harbor before heading south. Telegrams were to be avoided for fear of interception, with all telegraphy between Governor's Island and surrounding cities suspended for the duration of the voyage. Whenever the ship came in sight of another vessel, the soldiers were to go below decks; they would hide there as well when the ship approached Charleston. The plan was kept secret even from Interior Secretary Thompson out of the quite reasonable concern that he would reveal it to his Carolina contacts.

Preparations began at once, and on Saturday, January 5, at five P.M., the *Star of the West* began its voyage south, pausing to pick up the soldiers. At about nine o'clock it exited New York Harbor at Sandy Hook and entered the Atlantic.

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THAT DAY THE WAR Department received a letter from Major Anderson that he had mailed from Fort Sumter nearly a week earlier, on New Year's Eve. Ordinarily the letter would have taken about two days to make it to Washington; now, for whatever reason—possibly interference by Charleston authorities—it had taken six days. Anderson may have been in a contemplative end-of-year mood when he wrote it, for he expressed quiet satisfaction at having moved to Sumter and bolstering its defenses. "The

more I reflect upon the matter," he wrote, "the stronger are my convictions that I was right in coming here."

As a consequence, he wrote, he felt no urgency to be reinforced. The government could move troops to the fort "at its leisure." Soap, candles, and coal were in short supply, Anderson acknowledged, but added, "we can cheerfully put up with the inconvenience of doing without them, for the satisfaction we feel in the knowledge that we can command this harbor as long as our Government wishes to keep it."

So contrary was the tenor of this letter to the urgency Anderson had conveyed in previous dispatches that Buchanan abruptly canceled the *Star of the West* relief mission. The War Department sent a telegram to naval authorities in New York ordering them to halt the sailing, but the message arrived too late, and the only means of calling the ship back was to send a faster ship in pursuit.

General Scott again requisitioned the screw sloop *Brooklyn.* This time he directed its captain to overtake the *Star of the West* and deliver the cancellation orders directly to the officer in charge of the mission, Lt. Charles R. Woods. Under no circumstances, however, was the *Brooklyn* to cross the bar into Charleston Harbor.

Another factor influencing the dispatch of the *Brooklyn* may have been Buchanan's realization that the secrecy upon which the *Star of the West* mission so heavily rested had clearly been compromised. In New York, reporters accustomed to monitoring the arrivals and departures of ships had noticed an unusual degree of activity. On Monday, January 7, the *New York Tribune* reported that the *Star of the West* had departed amid a fog of mystery. "This steamer cleared on Saturday for Havana and New Orleans. Rumors were rife that she was to convey troops to Charleston, but the story was ridiculed at the office of the owners, and they requested its contradiction." The *Tribune* noted, however, that several people associated with the ship "said that she was going to Charleston, and would take on troops in the stream during the night."

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AT FORT SUMTER, MAJOR ANDERSON had no idea that the *Star of the West* was underway, or that the *Brooklyn* was speeding along behind it. No message had been sent by telegraph for fear it would be intercepted. The first formal notice to him was sent by regular mail from New York on the day of the *Star of the West*'s departure in a communiqué that contained a crucial instruction: If the ship was fired upon, the guns of Fort Sumter "may be employed to silence such fire; and you may act in like manner in case a fire is opened upon Fort Sumter itself." Just how long it would take for the letter to reach Anderson was anyone's guess.

In the meantime, Anderson had a pleasant surprise. His wife, Eba, feeling she must do *something* to support him, decided that despite her infirmity she would go to Charleston and try to see him. She recruited the help of a man who had been Anderson's orderly during the Mexican War, Peter Hart, by now a member of the New York City Police Department. Hart, ever loyal, not only agreed to escort her, but also to join the Sumter garrison, with the idea that Anderson would benefit simply by having him at his side. This suited Hart; he craved a chance to get into the fray. Hart and Eba left New York by train on January 3 and arrived in Charleston three days later. Governor Pickens approved Eba's visit but balked at first at letting Hart go along. He finally assented on condition that Hart agree to serve only in a civilian role.

Eba's arrival was a complete surprise to Anderson, who raced to the end of the wharf and exclaimed, "My glorious wife!"

The men found this meeting to be very "affecting," according to Asst. Surgeon Crawford. No one at the fort had any foreknowledge of the visit, but the garrison was delighted. The visit briefly dispelled the winter gloom and for a time lifted the soldiers' sense of utter isolation. "Her arrival," wrote Crawford in his journal, "was most gratifying to us all."

Eba was so exhausted from travel and her persistent lethargy that she had to be carried up a stairway to reach Anderson's rooms in the officers quarters. The two had dinner. What else transpired has been lost between the sheets of history. She remained at the fort until four o'clock.

The visit eased Eba's concerns. "She felt much easier in her mind," Captain Doubleday wrote, "now that the major had Hart to look after him."

She began her return journey that evening.

The garrison continued its drive to strengthen the fort's defenses and mount more guns. On January 5, Asst. Surgeon Crawford wrote to his brother, A.J., to tell him about the measures being taken to repel an attack by Carolina forces, which seemed inevitable.

"My arrangements for the hospital are all made," he wrote. "My amputating table ready, and the lint, bandages, and instruments all prepared."

CHARLESTON HARBOR

Crossing the Bar

JANUARY 8

THE *STAR OF THE WEST* met unseasonably fine weather and made good time. At one point it anchored off the coast of North Carolina so the men aboard could fish. On Tuesday afternoon, January 8, the officer in charge, Lieutenant Woods, issued guns and ammunition to the two hundred troops aboard. He did not know that the secret of their voyage had been revealed, let alone that the mission had been canceled and that the *Brooklyn* had been dispatched to deliver the news.

At midnight, as the *Star* approached Charleston, its captain, John McGowan, ordered all lights aboard extinguished. A new moon with its attendant lack of lunar illumination made the darkness complete but also allowed the soldiers to come on deck. An hour and a half later the ship reached the Charleston Bar, where McGowan discovered that the harbor lighthouses had been darkened and a key navigational buoy removed. Even with an experienced pilot aboard, he found the darkness and lack of navigational guides daunting. He resorted to the ancient technique of measuring depth by sounding, wherein a crewman lowered a plummet, typically made of lead, into the sea until it touched bottom or until enough cord had played out to provide assurance that the ship would not run aground. “We proceeded with caution, running very slow and sounding,

until about 4 a.m, being then in 4 ½ fathoms water [about 27 feet], when we discovered a light through the haze which at the time covered the horizon." This light, McGowan concluded, must have been cast by the small lighthouse, or "range light," at Fort Sumter itself.

Later, in his official report, Lieutenant Woods would offer a less-than-scientific description for their nighttime approach: He called it "groping in the dark."

McGowan and his pilot used the Sumter light to take their bearings and then proceeded southwest toward the entrance to the main shipping channel. McGowan did not dare cross the bar in such darkness and resolved to "hove to" until sunrise. Time was running short, however. The bar was tricky to cross in the best of conditions, but now an ebb tide had begun drawing seawater out of the harbor, lowering the depth over the bar and making it even more treacherous.

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DAYBREAK BROUGHT A TROUBLING discovery. A steamer, obviously on watch, lay nearby at a point between the ship and shore. McGowan made no effort to disguise the fact that the *Star of the West* was an American vessel; he kept its flag aloft.

The guard steamer ignited a blue light and two red lights, apparently a signal meant to elicit a response from McGowan as to his ship's identity and purpose. When he did not reply, the guard steamer hurried off and crossed the bar into the harbor, still burning lights but now also firing rockets. McGowan followed warily.

Up ahead both Fort Sumter and Fort Moultrie became visible in the haze. An American flag flew over Sumter, no flag over Moultrie. McGowan tried to keep as much distance as possible from Moultrie, and this brought him close to the north end of Morris Island at the opposite shore of the bay, half a mile to his left. Sumter lay dead ahead.

The ship's lookouts spotted an unfamiliar flag flying over Morris Island: brilliant red, very large (later determined to measure seven by ten feet), and

emblazoned with a white palmetto tree. It flew from a point inland of the island's beach. The lookouts saw no sign of guns or any other military presence.

Fort Moultrie was their primary concern. Thankfully Moultrie's guns remained silent.

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AT FORT SUMTER THAT morning Capt. Abner Doubleday woke early. He took his spyglass to the parapet, as usual, and scanned the horizon toward the bar. He was alone. Major Anderson was in his bed in the fort's officers quarters.

The red palmetto flag, Doubleday knew, marked the location of a hidden gun battery with five cannon whose installation he and his fellow officers had monitored. It had been built by enslaved workers and appeared to be manned by cadets from the Citadel, who were quartered in an adjacent former smallpox hospital. The orientation of its guns affirmed that its purpose was not to fire on Fort Sumter but rather to defend the shipping channel against incursions by Union ships.

Rumors of a possible relief mission had filtered to Sumter, notably in a newspaper brought over the day before in a boat carrying a group of laborers. It reported that the *Star of the West* had departed days earlier from New York. No one at the garrison took the rumor seriously, Doubleday wrote later. "It was hard to believe the Government would send to us a mercantile steamer—a mere transport, utterly unfitted to contend with shore batteries—when it could dispatch a man-of-war furnished with all the means and appliances to repel force by force."

Even so, Doubleday had taken to regularly observing the bar for inbound ships. This morning his vigilance was rewarded. "As I looked seaward," he wrote, "I saw a large steamer pass the bar and enter the Morris Island channel. It had the ordinary United States flag up; and as it evidently did not belong to the navy, I came to the conclusion it must be the *Star of the West*."

As he watched, a boll of white smoke burst from the battery on Morris Island, followed an instant later by the sound of the discharge. The shot landed in the channel ahead, well away from the ship, and seemed meant to get its captain's attention and stop his advance.

The ship kept coming. A new flag appeared on its foremast, "an immense United States garrison-flag," Doubleday wrote.

Doubleday turned and raced down a stairwell to Major Anderson's rooms.

STAR OF THE WEST

Under Fire

JANUARY 9

NOW THE BATTERY TOOK AIM at the ship itself. The men on deck could follow the progress of the balls as they arced through the air. Several flew overhead.

"One shot just passed clear of the pilot-house," Captain McGowan wrote, "another passed between the smoke-stack and walking beams of the engine, another struck the ship just abaft the fore-rigging and stove in the planking, while another came within an ace of carrying away the rudder." The walking beams, a crucial component of the ship's propulsion system, transferred power from its steam pistons to the giant side wheels. One shot came bounding across the surface of the water and, according to Lieutenant Woods, "struck us in the fore-chains, about two feet above the water line, and just below where the man was throwing the lead." This was pronounced *led* and referred to the plummet the crew was using to conduct the sounding.

The *Star of the West* was a large vessel and presented an easy target. That the guns failed to do much damage could have been due to the inexperience of the fifty or so cadets who manned them, on duty only since New Year's Day. In the Citadel's lexicon, these were "first-classmen,"

meaning seniors, and “second-classmen,” juniors. One observer noted that the battery appeared to fire wildly.

Two guard steamers approached, one towing an armed schooner, a confiscated Union cutter. The hidden battery continued to fire, and soon guns at Fort Moultrie began firing as well.

The *Star of the West* raised and lowered its U.S. flag in an apparent effort to get Fort Sumter’s attention.

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AT SUMTER, DOUBLEDAY WOKE Anderson and told him of the ship’s arrival and the attack from the hidden battery. Anderson ordered him to have the garrison drummers beat the “long roll” to summon the troops to their posts. This was a blood-spurring tattoo consisting of briskly repeated beats. Anderson also ordered Doubleday to station gunnery crews at the cannon on the fort’s parapets.

In minutes the guns were ready. A corporal, Francis J. Oakes, stood by a howitzer with its lanyard in his hand, ready to fire.

Anderson saw the ship lower then raise its flag and, intending to reply, ordered the fort’s flag dipped as well, but its halyard had become tangled around the flagstaff and could not be moved.

As Anderson watched the ship approach, the Moultrie guns began to fire, prompting Sumter’s Lt. Jefferson Davis to suggest that the fort open fire on Moultrie. This, he argued, would be more fruitful than attempting to silence the hidden battery on Morris. Implicit in the lieutenant’s remarks was the assumption that Anderson would indeed order Sumter’s guns to fire. How could he not? A ship clearly flying the American flag was now under brisk attack by the forces of a rebel state.

For Anderson, this was a difficult moment. His affinity for the South and his duty to the U.S. Army created a conundrum that offered no clear solution. He had the guns and the authority to fire if he wished, and his sense of duty required that this insult to the American flag be redressed. At the same time he had good reason to resent the position in which he now

found himself, for he had received no official word that a relief ship was on its way, let alone that it would be so vulnerable a vessel.

To fire, he knew, was to ignite the war everyone feared. The state's forces—planters, planters' sons; the chivalry—held themselves to an almost cult-like sense of honor that would leave them no choice but to fire back with every gun at their disposal. They seemed, in fact, to be hoping for just such a pretext.

But Anderson's sense of duty was exacting. He felt no loyalty toward the North; he loathed the abolitionist fanatics of New England. But he had sworn fealty to the United States Army.

Anderson ordered Lieutenant Davis to report to the lower tier of the fort and prepare two of the big guns aimed at Moultrie.

Another lieutenant, R. K. Meade, one of Sumter's engineers and a native of Virginia, urged Anderson to hold fire, lest he trigger all-out civil war.

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ABOARD THE *STAR OF THE WEST*, Lieutenant Woods, commander of the Army forces aboard, assessed the situation he now faced. Cannonballs were hissing past; the harbor steamer towing the armed cutter was fast approaching; the tide had already fallen three feet. If the *Star of the West* were to retreat it would have to do so soon, before the receding tide made it impossible to escape the harbor. If the ship stalled at the bar, or worse, ran aground, it would be an easy prize and an even more humiliating loss for the Union.

"Finding it impossible to take my command to Fort Sumter," Lieutenant Woods wrote, "I was obliged most reluctantly to turn about."

Owing to the ebb tide, the ship retreated with caution, sounding all the way. The firing from the cadets' battery continued but did no damage, and soon the shots began falling into the sea behind the ship. At the bar, the keel touched bottom "two or three times," according to Lieutenant Woods, but the ship managed to cross safely. Captain McGowan immediately turned

north and set a course to New York. A steamer from Charleston followed for several hours, then turned back.

The two hundred soldiers aboard the *Star* had been below decks the whole time, never in view; the ship carried no cannon. If secrecy had prevailed, the ship very likely could have entered the harbor without challenge, just another merchant vessel plying the port. But as Anderson had warned, secrecy was impossible.

Lieutenant Woods would write in his official report, “From the preparations that had been made for us I have every reason to believe the Charlestonians were perfectly aware of our coming.”

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THE U.S. NAVY’S *BROOKLYN*, meanwhile, missed the entire show. The ship searched for the *Star of the West* but never found her and eventually sailed home.

MISSISSIPPI

The True Enemy

JANUARY 9

THE SECESSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA, coupled with Major Anderson's move to Fort Sumter, energized the advocates of disunion throughout the Deep South. Any indecision, any thought of pausing to give Lincoln a chance, was swept away by a surge of enthusiasm for independence from the hated North and an end to the sneering intrusion of Northern abolitionists. News of the *Star of the West* relief attempt would only intensify the South's anger.

On Wednesday, January 9, Mississippi's secession convention voted 84 to 15 in favor of immediate exit from the Union and became the second state after South Carolina to do so. The delegates were very clear about their motivation.

"Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery—the greatest material interest of the world," they wrote in their official declaration. "Its labor supplies the product which constitutes by far the largest and most important portions of commerce of the earth. These products are peculiar to the climate verging on the tropical regions, and by an imperious law of nature, none but the black race can bear exposure to the tropical sun. These products have become necessities of the world, and a blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilization."

The delegates were convinced that Lincoln and the Republican Party planned to abolish slavery. “Utter subjugation awaits us in the Union,” the declaration warned; secession was their only alternative. “It is not a matter of choice,” they said, “but of necessity.”

A howl of indignation and hurt feelings rose from each of the fifteen claims in the declaration, each a single sentence long. All attributed the state’s action to the Union’s enduring “hostility” to slavery. The declaration depicted this hostility as a corporeal villain, an “it” having a multitude of destructive powers. “It advocates negro equality, socially and politically, and promotes insurrection and incendiarism in our midst,” one claim asserted. The next: “It has enlisted its press, its pulpit and the schools against us, until the whole popular mind of the North is excited and inflamed with prejudice.”

It was an implacable enemy. “It knows no relenting or hesitation in its purposes; it stops not in its march of aggression, and leaves us no room to hope for cessation or for pause.”

The pace at which the Union began to disintegrate was breathtaking, and Lincoln had yet to set foot in Washington.

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BUCHANAN DID NOTHING. On that Wednesday, he delivered an address that by its title, “Message on Threats to the Peace and Existence of the Union,” seemed to signal some form of decisive action. Instead, he offered what sounded very much like a capitulation.

After describing the damage the crisis had done to American prosperity and reiterating his belief that no state had a right to secession, Buchanan essentially threw up his hands and announced that the conflict between the states “has assumed such vast and alarming proportions as to place the subject entirely above and beyond Executive control.” It was up to Congress to save the day, he said. He did, however, assert a federal right to use force against “those who assail the property of the Federal Government,” calling that right “clear and undeniable.” When he referred to

Major Anderson's move from Fort Moultrie to Sumter, he called him "that gallant officer," drawing both hisses and applause from the spectator gallery.

He closed his address on a wistful note. "I feel that my duty has been faithfully, though it may be imperfectly, performed; and, whatever the result may be, I shall carry to my grave the consciousness that I at least meant well for my country."

WASHINGTON

A Wife's Disappointment

JANUARY 9—12

WITH CRISIS CAME SUSPICION. IN Washington the House established a new "Select Committee" comprised of five members given more or less unlimited power to investigate potential acts of treason within the government. The "Committee of Five," also called the "Treason Committee," included two Republicans, two pro-Union Democrats from the North, and one Southerner, a Democrat from North Carolina.

The committee soon found itself the recipient of confidential intelligence from an unusual source in the highest echelons of Buchanan's government: his newly appointed attorney general, Edwin M. Stanton. Once the committee convened, Stanton began providing clandestine information on a daily basis to its two Republican members. He left unsigned messages in secret places, including hollow cavities in trees. The members would retrieve these late at night, read them, then put the messages back where they found them. "There is a Northern traitor in the cabinet," read one such message. "Arrest him tonight. Pensacola has been given up. Stop him before it is too late."

The "traitor" in question was Buchanan's secretary of the Navy, Isaac Toucey, whom the Treason Committee called to appear at two closed-door hearings. Stanton's suspicions of him were aroused after the Navy allowed

Southern forces to seize the federal navy yard in Pensacola, Florida, without resistance. (A nearby federal fortress in the Gulf of Mexico, Fort Pickens, remained in federal possession.) Subsequent testimony revealed that the Navy had twenty-eight ships tied up in U.S. ports, of which none was ready for immediate service, despite a $646,000 fund specially allocated for ship repair. Overriding the objections of its one Southern member, the committee proposed that the House formally censure the Navy secretary. The House, where Republicans now held a majority, did so by a vote of 95 to 62.

The Treason Committee then turned to matters more grave. Under a resolution proposed by Senator Seward of New York (Lincoln's pick for secretary of state), the committee was directed to investigate a widely rumored threat to the city of Washington by Southern forces hoping to seize the government. The fear of such a coup became pervasive, stoked by wildly inflammatory reports and rumors. A Richmond newspaper came right out and demanded that Maryland and Virginia take steps to block Lincoln's inauguration. The South-leaning *New York Day Book*, breathing fire, called upon the South to "save the republic of Washington from the taint of n—rism;—they must expel Lincoln and his free-n—r horde from the federal district."

As Lincoln's inauguration approached, the rumors gained detail, if not necessarily credence. Seward, apparently acting on information supplied by Attorney General Stanton, notified Lincoln that "a plot is forming to seize the capital on or before the 4th of March." Inauguration Day.

The ubiquity of these rumors, and their increasingly credible sources—like Dorothea Dix and Philadelphia railroad executive Samuel Felton—prompted Commanding Gen. Winfield Scott to order over six hundred troops to take up positions in the city and to make their presence visible. This seemed to have a positive effect. Rumors of insurrection faded.

The troops remained, however. The counting of the electoral vote had yet to occur.

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IN CONGRESS, EVERY DAY brought rhetorical combat, with "Black" Republicans attacking slavery, Southern Democrats threatening secession. The most mundane procedural act could unleash cataracts of words in hours-long speeches, as senators and representatives sought fresh opportunities to irritate one another by picking at old issues that had inflamed debate for months. Verbal scuffles were routine, with otherwise sober and dignified members of Congress flinging petty procedural motions at one another like handfuls of gravel.

Mississippi's Sen. Jefferson Davis, who had not yet resigned his seat, threatened bloodshed: "masses of men sacrificed, to the demon of civil war." But his Republican counterpart, Senator Seward, considered by many to be a radical abolitionist and the man who would likely be the real leader in the new administration, surprised everyone, to the great disappointment of his own wife.

In a speech on January 11, the day after Davis spoke, Seward addressed what he perceived to be the South's main sources of discontent. He affirmed that how any state viewed its property, whether human or otherwise, was up to the state itself, and condemned Northern personal-liberty laws that interfered with that right. Further, he declared his willingness to vote for an amendment to the Constitution that would bar any future attempt to empower Congress "to abolish or interfere with slavery in any State."

The speech shocked Carl Schurz, a German-born lawyer prominent in Republican politics. "What do you think of Seward?" Schurz wrote to his wife. "The mighty is fallen. He bows before the slave power."

In a letter to Seward a week later, Lincoln wrote, "Your recent speech is well received here; and, I think, is doing good all over the country." But in fact, Lincoln found the conciliatory nature of the speech disturbing. In remarks to a visitor that made their way into the *New York Herald*, Lincoln said, "I will suffer death before I will consent or will advise my friends to consent to any concession or compromise which looks like buying the privilege of taking possession of this government to which we have a constitutional right; because, whatever I might think of the merit of the

various propositions before Congress, I should regard any concession in the face of menace the destruction of the government itself."

Seward's wife, also displeased, was more direct in her criticism. "My dearest Henry," she wrote. "Eloquent as your speech was it fails to meet the entire approval of those who love you best." His friends, she wrote, would have preferred "that you had not spoken at all." She found the speech morally offensive and had no reservations about telling him so. "Compromises based on the idea that the preservation of the Union is more important than the Liberty of nearly 4,000,000 human beings cannot be right—The alteration of the Constitution to perpetuate slavery—the enforcement of a Law to recapture a poor, suffering fugitive—giving half of the Frontier of a free Country to the curse of Slavery—these compromises cannot be approved by God or supported by good men."

She assured him that she understood the gravity of the moment. "No one can dread War more than I do—for 10 years I have prayed earnestly that our Son might be spared the misfortune of raising his hand against his fellow man—yet I could not to-day assent to the perpetuation or extension of slavery to prevent war. I say this in no spirit of unkindness." Her conscience, she said, impelled her to warn him that he risked having his name "execrated by the humane and generous."

Then, overnight, came regret. The next day she dispatched a brief note. "My dear Henry, The letter I sent yesterday was written under the influence of a violent headache which had affected me all night—I presume it was exaggerated—I wish you would destroy it."

She retracted nothing, however, and Seward kept the letter intact.

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WHAT SEWARD HAD NOT addressed in his speech, and perhaps did not truly understand, was that at this point in the crisis, the thing that the South most resented was the inalterable fact that the North, like the rest of the modern world, condemned slavery as a fundamental evil. In so doing, abolitionists and their allies impugned the honor of the entire Southern white race, for if

slavery was indeed evil, then the South itself was evil, and its echelons of gentlemen, the chivalry, were nothing more than moral felons. Yet the chivalry, thanks to Edmund Ruffin, James Hammond, and others, had persuaded themselves of a different reality: Slavery was a positive good; it was endorsed by the Bible and by anthropological observation; even two famed *Northern* anthropologists, Louis Agassiz and Charles Morton, both of Harvard, no less, had proclaimed on the basis of purportedly scientific research that the Black race was not only inferior, but a different species altogether. If slavery was good, then slaveowners were good, and anyone who said otherwise abraded their honor, something no Southerner could forgive.

Lincoln had only a partial grasp of this reality. “You think slavery is *right* and ought to be extended,” Lincoln wrote in a December letter to Alexander “Little Ellick” Stephens, the Georgia congressman, “while we think it is *wrong* and ought to be restricted. That I suppose is the rub. It certainly is the only substantial difference between us.”

But it was here in this clash of moral perception that hatred simmered and violence became imaginable. More than simply a “substantial difference,” it was a chasm that even the most generous package of concessions could never bridge.

FORT SUMTER

Forbearance

JANUARY 9–12

As major Anderson and his men watched from the Sumter parapet, the *Star of the West*, under fire from Fort Moultrie, made a long sweeping turn and headed back toward the Atlantic. Sumter's cannon were loaded and manned; gunners stood ready, grasping the lanyards that would fire the guns.

"Hold on; do not fire," Anderson commanded. "I will wait. Let the men go to their quarters, leaving two at each gun—I wish to see the officers at my quarters."

This infuriated Captain Doubleday, who saw the attack on the ship as an outrage against the American flag. Sumter's inaction must have "astonished" the Southern men at Fort Moultrie, he wrote in a later recollection; Anderson should have fired back. By doing so "we could have kept down the fire there long enough to enable the steamer to come in. It was plainly our duty to do all that we could." The ship might already have been badly hit and about to sink, he wrote. "Had she gone down before our eyes, without any effort on our part to aid her, Anderson would have incurred a fearful responsibility by his inaction."

The officers gathered in Anderson's quarters. The major told them he was considering using the fort's guns to close the harbor. He polled the

officers for their views. His adjutant and quartermaster, Lt. Norman Hall, agreed with the plan, as did Captain Doubleday, who urged immediate bombardment. Others counseled delay, Lieutenant Meade of the engineers in particular. Meade, a Virginian, had often expressed sympathy for the South. He argued now that the garrison was under orders to act only in defense; he repeated his conviction that firing would lead to civil war.

Anderson decided not to fire and not to close the harbor. He resolved instead to send a protest to Governor Pickens and to delay any drastic action until he received a response. He composed a note, which his officers approved; he then ordered Quartermaster Hall to bring it personally to the governor under a flag of truce.

Hall arrived at Charleston in full uniform. His welcome was decidedly chilly. A rumor had circulated that his mission was in fact to put the city on notice that it was about to be shelled by the guns of Fort Sumter. A crowd followed him to the governor's temporary office in Charleston's city hall, where the lieutenant presented Anderson's letter of protest.

"Two of your batteries fired this morning upon an unarmed vessel bearing the flag of my Government," it began. "As I have not been notified that war has been declared by South Carolina against the Government of the United States, I cannot but think that this hostile act was committed without your sanction or authority."

For that reason alone, Anderson wrote, Sumter's guns did not return fire. "I have the honor, therefore, respectfully to ask whether the above mentioned act—one, I believe, without a parallel in the history of our country or of any other civilized government—was committed in obedience to your instructions, and to notify you, if it be not disclaimed, that I must regard it as an act of war, and that I shall not, after a reasonable time for the return of my messenger, permit any vessels to pass within range of the guns of my fort."

Pickens replied with a single, very long paragraph that reminded Anderson "that the political connection heretofore existing between the State of South Carolina and the States which were known as the United

States had ceased," and that the state was within its rights to fire on the *Star of the West*. "The act," he told Anderson, "is perfectly justified by me."

Anderson still did not fire. His orders, after all, were to act strictly in a defensive manner. And for the moment, at least, he and his men did not seem to face imminent attack. Instead of following through on his promise to take control of the harbor, he again gathered his officers in his quarters and told them he had decided to send a man north for direct consultation with the War Department as to how to proceed. He designated Lt. Theodore Talbot, an officer perpetually on the fort's sick list owing to a chronic lung ailment. Anderson immediately sent him to Governor Pickens with a request that he be allowed to travel through the state unmolested. Pickens assented. One of Pickens's aides accompanied Talbot back to the wharf so that the lieutenant could retrieve his baggage without interference by a crowd of some eighty people who had gathered at his boat. Prudently, Talbot wore street clothes. The carriage took him to the train station.

Pickens also allowed another officer, Asst. Surgeon Crawford, to pick up mail that the governor previously had prohibited from being delivered to the fort. Pickens gave no explanation for his change of heart, but Crawford attributed the "marked courtesy" shown by the governor during this meeting to his relief at Anderson's decision not to open fire and to put the whole matter in the hands of his superiors in Washington.

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THIS MOMENT OF CONCILIATION PASSED. Two days later, on Friday, January 11, just after noon, a small steamer named *Antelope* bearing a white flag approached the fort. Someone aboard shouted, "Message from the Governor."

Anderson dispatched a boat to meet the steamer, which then returned with two men, South Carolina Secretary of State Andrew G. Magrath, and the state's secretary of war, David F. Jamison. Magrath was the former federal judge who had resigned after Lincoln's election; Jamison had been president of the state's secession convention. Anderson greeted them at the

wharf, then showed them to a nearby chamber ordinarily occupied by the officer of the guard. The two men presented the major with a brief note from Pickens requesting, in the politest of terms, that he surrender the fort.

After a lengthy conversation, Anderson once again gathered his officers and put the question to them: “Shall we accede to the demand of the Governor, or shall we not?”

The answer was a unanimous no.

Anderson returned to the guard room and told the Carolinians that he could not comply with their request; it was not his decision to make. He urged that they try to resolve the conflict through diplomacy and vowed, “I will do anything that is possible and honorable to do to prevent an appeal to arms.”

Which was followed by what Crawford called “an impressive silence.”

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ANDERSON PREPARED A LETTER for the two Carolina officials to bring to Governor Pickens in which he reiterated his inability to comply with the governor’s surrender demand. But now he proposed sending still another man to Washington to deal specifically with the question of surrender. He further suggested that this messenger be accompanied by a South Carolina representative so that both could make their case directly to President Buchanan and the War Department.

Pickens liked the idea. Anderson chose for this ambassador his personal aide and quartermaster, Lieutenant Hall; Pickens selected the state’s attorney general, Isaac W. Hayne, who was instructed to inform Buchanan that if he attempted to reinforce Sumter with troops, South Carolina would regard it as a “declaration of war” against the state. Hayne was directed, further, to demand the withdrawal of Anderson and his men and the surrender of the fort.

The two reached Washington on the evening of Saturday, January 12.

To Captain Doubleday back at Sumter, this approach seemed foolhardy —“a fatal measure.” He advocated prompt action to close the harbor. Delay,

he argued, gave the state “an immense advantage.” While negotiations were underway, the United States would be honor bound not to send a naval force to secure Sumter; meanwhile, South Carolina could continue building its batteries and acquiring supplies of shot and shell, thereby increasing its ability to repel any such force. The state could install guns and stockpile provisions, while the garrison at Sumter struggled even to find firewood.

RUFFIN

A Little Treason

JANUARY 9–12

EDMUND RUFFIN WAS STILL IN Tallahassee monitoring Florida's secession convention when on January 9, with the convention still undecided, news arrived of the attempt by the *Star of the West* to reinforce Fort Sumter. This seemed to have a galvanizing effect on the delegates. Some who had staunchly opposed secession now endorsed it. The next morning, the convention approved an ordinance of secession by a vote of 62 to 7. Ruffin immediately telegraphed the good news to Governor Pickens in Charleston and to the editors of the *Richmond Enquirer*. He also complained in his diary of the extortionate cost of doing so—six dollars and thirty cents for a total of six words (over two hundred dollars today).

But fresh news more than balanced his displeasure. That day he learned of Mississippi's secession and that Southern states were moving rapidly to occupy federal forts and arsenals. He credited Anderson's transfer to Sumter and Buchanan's willingness to let the major remain there. "If Fort Sumter had not been treacherously garrisoned," Ruffin wrote, "no state would have seized a fort, or at least not in advance of actual secession."

He decided to return to Charleston. It was hard work, this secession crusade. He left Tallahassee at four P.M., first taking a train to Monticello, Florida, then a stagecoach for the twenty-seven-mile ride to Quitman,

Georgia, to catch a train on the Albany Rail Road to Savannah. Even over the mostly flat topography of northern Florida the ride was bone-jarring, especially for a man of sixty-seven. The roads were unpaved and pronged with old tree stumps and where they traversed swamps were corduroyed with logs. In describing a ride of similar length, one much younger contemporary wrote, “It almost killed me.” Ruffin reached Quitman after nightfall. His train was waiting but not scheduled to depart until two hours later. The coach dropped him off fifty yards away with his trunk. He made his way over rough ground in pitch darkness, “once falling and hurting my shin over a log.” The train was stone cold, with every seat already occupied by sleeping railroad employees (including the conductor) who had turned the car into a temporary bunkhouse. Ruffin went back outside and found a group of workers clustered around two piles of burning logs and stood by the fire for the next two hours. The train departed at 3:30 A.M.; it reached Savannah nine and a half hours later. There Ruffin received more heartening news: Alabama’s secession convention had just voted to secede by a margin of 61 to 39.

Ruffin was back in Charleston by one o’clock the next afternoon; the following day, Sunday, January 13, he joined South Carolina Secretary of War Jamison on a tour of the forts in Charleston Harbor that had been seized by state forces after Anderson’s move to Fort Sumter. Their steamer carried various engineers and civilian volunteers, as well as “100 negro slaves, sent by their owners gratuitously, to work on the fortifications,” Ruffin wrote. He added, “At Fort Moultrie, all was activity and gayety.”

Members of the chivalry—the militia volunteers—also helped. Enslaved Blacks hauled and piled sand to be used in building protective mounds and to fill sandbags; the white volunteers directed the action and moved sand in wheelbarrows to various parts of the fort. Ruffin stood for a time near where the slaves dumped their sand and the soldiers loaded it into the barrows. Always acutely aware of how he appeared in the eyes of the public, Ruffin asked one volunteer if he might take his place for a few minutes “so as to allow me to commit a little treason to the northern government.”

The soldier gave him his shovel, and Ruffin, white hair flying, filled the wheelbarrow.

FORT SUMTER

Lethal Secrets

JANUARY 11–28

Of the two emissaries sent north by Major Anderson, the first to return was Lieutenant Talbot, who brought with him a letter from War Secretary Joseph Holt. Just a day earlier Holt had shed his acting status to become Buchanan's official appointee; he was promptly confirmed by the U.S. Senate. The fort's other emissary, Quartermaster Hall, and his South Carolina counterpart, Isaac Hayne, were still in Washington.

As Talbot walked to the city's wharf, he encountered an unsettled mass of civilians who at times seemed to threaten violence. Members of the crowd told Talbot they harbored a particular dislike for Sumter's Captain Doubleday, widely known to be an abolitionist. His reputation had grown progressively darker as the crisis deepened until he became the equivalent of a villain in a fable. Upon arriving at the fort, Talbot made sure to convey to Doubleday the current state of his ignominy.

"He brought me the pleasant information that the mob were howling for my head, as that of the only Republican, or, as they called it, 'Black Republican,' in the fort," Doubleday wrote. Soon afterward, Doubleday received a letter from a Charleston resident "informing me that, if I were ever caught in the city, an arrangement had been made to tar and feather me as an Abolitionist."

If Major Anderson had hoped for a specific directive from Secretary Holt as to how to proceed, he was now to be disappointed. The letter, dated three days earlier, once again left him adrift, though Holt reassured him that the War Department approved of his conduct thus far. “You rightly designate the firing into the *Star of the West* as ‘an act of war,’ and one which was actually committed without the slightest provocation,” Holt wrote. “Had their act been perpetrated by a foreign nation, it would have been your imperative duty to have resented it with the whole force of your batteries.”

Holt told Anderson that his recent dispatches and Talbot’s personal report “have relieved the Government of the apprehensions previously entertained for your safety. In consequence, it is not its purpose at present to re-enforce you. The attempt to do so would, no doubt, be attended by a collision of arms and the effusion of blood—a national calamity which the President is most anxious, if possible, to avoid.” Instead, Holt instructed Anderson merely to report “frequently” on his condition and on the preparations of the South Carolina forces arrayed around him. “Whenever, in your judgment, additional supplies or re-enforcements are necessary for your safety, or for a successful defense of the fort, you will at once communicate the fact to this Department, and a prompt and vigorous effort will be made to forward them.”

In fact, the threat to Fort Sumter was rising by the day. South Carolina forces and over a thousand enslaved Blacks worked furiously around the clock to turn the harbor’s beaches into a ring of armor and guns. The state had secured much of this weaponry when it seized Fort Moultrie, Castle Pinckney, and the Charleston arsenal—fifty-five cannon at Moultrie, twenty-two at Pinckney, and from the arsenal, 22,423 rifles, muskets, carbines, and pistols. From the parapets at Sumter, Captain Doubleday, watching through his spyglass, estimated that some six hundred slaves were at work shoring up the defenses of Moultrie alone. He also noticed that the opposing forces had painted their guard boats black to make them as invisible as possible at night.

Especially troubling was a new battery that the Carolinians were building at Cummings Point on Morris Island, just 1,325 yards south of Sumter, opposite its weakest flank, the rear wall or gorge. Through telescopes, Captain Doubleday and Sumter's engineering chief, Captain Foster, closely monitored the battery's construction and noted that there, too, large numbers of enslaved Blacks comprised the workforce. The workers first laid a frame of heavy timbers, then covered this with a layer of wood planking to produce a roof that leaned away from the beach at a forty-five-degree angle to better deflect shells and shot. Over this they added one more layer, the most crucial and novel element: a roof of iron rails ordinarily meant for railroad tracks, which caused the emplacement to be named "the Iron Battery." Atop this layer the workers piled a deep berm of sand, making the battery, in Doubleday's view, "almost impregnable." They would learn eventually that the design was the brainchild of a cashier at a bank in Charleston.

Now was the time to open fire, Doubleday knew, but Anderson stuck to his orders to avoid "collision" at all costs. Doubleday found it maddening that he and the rest of the garrison could do nothing but watch as the opposing battery took shape. The work was so close to Sumter that he could hear the sound of heavy materials being maneuvered into place. Steamers came and went, dropping off timber, rails, draught animals, supplies, men, and provisions without any interference from the very men against whom the battery's guns would be used. "The troops opposite to us were now regularly receiving supplies and re-enforcements, and drilling daily, while all the necessaries of life were constantly diminishing with us," Doubleday wrote.

Ominously, Major Anderson learned that South Carolina would soon receive from England three cannon of a new and particularly effective design, capable of firing rifled shells along a nearly horizontal trajectory. "Such an addition to their battery would make our position much less secure than I have considered it," he wrote to Adjutant Cooper in Washington. In the event of a "collision," he warned, these guns alone would make reinforcement of Sumter a necessity.

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TOWARD THE END OF January a violent storm moved in with high winds and heavy rain that hampered outdoor work both at Sumter and among the Carolina batteries. The storm lasted over a week, during which Anderson turned to measures that acknowledged the full reality of what a battle would involve. He ordered the removal of flagstone paving from the parade in the hope that any explosive shells that fell there would sink into the earth before exploding, and do less damage. Chief engineer Foster placed two howitzers—small cannon—outside the walls to sweep right and left, these capable of being fired from inside the fort using extra-long lanyards. Intended for use against attacking troops, the guns would fire grapeshot, which would lacerate the wharf beyond and cause a disheartening degree of carnage. A test of these guns using blank charges had the unfortunate and unexpected effect of diminishing the fort's already limited supply of rice. Possibly owing to the awful weather, no one thought to open the windows in the gorge wall when the guns were test-fired. The concussion shattered not just the window panes but some of their wooden sashes as well, throwing splinters of glass into rice that had been laid out to dry.

For the moment, at least, the spoiled rice posed no particular worry. The fort had an adequate supply of provisions, and more food was in the offing—if Anderson chose to accept it. This was because Lieutenant Talbot's return from Washington, for reasons unclear, had brought forth a new mood of conciliation from Governor Pickens. On January 19, the state's quartermaster notified Anderson that he had been directed by the governor to send, by the next morning's mail boat, "two hundred pounds of beef and a lot of vegetables" and thereafter supply whatever Anderson wished on a daily basis.

Before Anderson could reject the offer, as he planned to do, the boat arrived at Sumter with the provisions. Asst. Surgeon Crawford watched its approach and found the ensuing scene amusing. "The boat had hardly touched the wharf before one quarter of beef was on its way to the mess hall," Crawford wrote. Having learned of Anderson's intention, Crawford

went down to the wharf to try to stop the delivery. “Each man had a vegetable, poor fellows, they had not tasted anything but pork for so long.”

Crawford ordered the supplies returned to the boat. The meat made it back; the vegetables got away, spirited to the men’s quarters and hidden under pillows, in bedding, in knapsacks.

Anderson’s rejection of the provisions tickled his men, even though it meant a continuation of tedious meals of salt pork and water. “Anderson showed a good deal of proper spirit on this occasion,” conceded Captain Doubleday. Sumter’s Pvt. Samuel Millens, after detailing for his father the earnest preparations the state was making for attack, added, “Oh—by the by—they took pity on us a few days ago, laboring under the idea that without doubt we were in a starving condition, [and] kindly or contemptuously sent us some fresh meat, but we deeming it inconsistent with our honor to eat their meat to-day, and cut their throats (if forced to it) to-morrow, returned it untouched.”

Anderson did, however, take this opportunity to request that the state allow the women and children of the fort to be evacuated to New York by steamer. “The compliance with this request,” Anderson wrote, in a letter to Secretary of War Jamison, “will confer a favor upon a class of persons to whom similar indulgences are always granted, even during a siege in time of actual war, and will be duly appreciated by me.” Governor Pickens authorized the evacuation.

All this mollycoddling infuriated at least one prominent Charlestonian, however. Fire-eater Robert Barnwell Rhett grew so frustrated that he strode into Governor Pickens’s office and demanded that he immediately authorize the taking of Sumter.

Pickens and Rhett detested each other, but the governor reacted with forbearance and wit.

“Certainly, Mr. Rhett; I have no objection!” Pickens replied. “I will furnish you with some men, and you can storm the work yourself.”

“But, sir, I am not a military man!”

“Nor I either,” Pickens said, “and therefore I take the advice of those that are!”

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ALL IN ALL, the beef incident was imbued with the South's peculiar sense of chivalry: The state would be civil, generous, courteous, while also planning to exterminate the garrison with a bombardment on a scale the nation had never seen—akin to serving a man his favorite meal before slipping a noose around his neck. As a Southerner, Anderson understood the rules of honor. He knew that these kindnesses from Pickens meant nothing in terms of the ultimate fate of Anderson's garrison and the fort. On that score he and his men had no illusions. The state continued to erect and reinforce gun batteries, and to dig entrenchments to allow the passage of troops between the batteries and their quarters. In his letter to War Secretary Holt, Anderson estimated that his little garrison of seventy-five men was now opposed by some two thousand Carolina soldiers.

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IN WASHINGTON, BUCHANAN'S CABINET experienced yet more upheaval. On January 11, his new treasury secretary, Philip F. Thomas, who had succeeded the departed Howell Cobb, submitted his resignation after just one month on the job, having failed to arrange a bond to pay interest on the national debt.

Buchanan replaced him with John A. Dix, a former U.S. senator from New York, who as a northern Democrat had supported Buchanan's presidential campaign.

Dix was more than a mere stand-in appointed to fill an empty post for the remaining forty-four days of Buchanan's term. Buchanan considered Dix a friend, and friends were what he needed most. With neither a wife nor close family circle, he grew increasingly lonely amid the mounting turmoil.

As the secession crisis deepened and talk of civil war became prevalent, Buchanan invited Dix to move into the White House. He needed the company. There, like some ghostly spirit, Buchanan would visit Dix in the night to talk about the national crisis.

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AFTER SHOVELING A LITTLE treason, Edmund Ruffin left Charleston and returned to his home in Virginia, where he stayed only briefly. On Monday, January 21, he headed to Richmond to do what he could to foster rebellion among his fellow Virginians. Along the way he learned of Georgia's secession, which put the dilatory efforts of his home state in even starker relief. Yes, the Virginia legislature had voted to seat a secession convention, set to start early in February, but otherwise Ruffin saw only a wish for delay and a lack of will. He returned home "heartily disgusted."

During this time, however, he found his own stature lofted a bit higher by the publication of two positive reviews of his bloodthirsty novel, *Anticipations of the Future,* in the prestigious *De Bow's Review* and the *Literary Messenger.* "These are almost the first indications I have had that my book had not fallen dead from the press—neither denounced by enemies nor noticed by friends, if not unknown to all."

On Monday, January 28, he received the "joyful news" about Louisiana's secession, which brought the total of seceded states to six. Everything that Ruffin had hoped for seemed to be coming to pass, albeit without the bloodshed that he seemed to crave, and without the participation of Virginia. It was thrilling: A new nation, a Southern empire free of Northern tyranny, was being born. The seceded states were to converge on Montgomery, Alabama, in a week to bind themselves, officially, as a new confederacy and to craft its governing constitution.

He found it remarkable that the U.S. government had not yet employed military force to impede secession, and attributed this to "the imbecility" of Buchanan's administration. But Lincoln would soon take office, and when he did, his abolitionist government, as Ruffin described it, would gain full control of all federal arms. By then, Ruffin believed, the South needed to have built as large and united a confederacy as possible with a dozen or more slaveholding states.

"Under such circumstances," Ruffin wrote, "it would be a degree of folly or infatuation altogether inconceivable, for the northern section to

attempt the coercion and conquest of the south by war."

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AT SUMTER, HEAVY WIND and rain persisted. It hampered the departure of the fort's families and deepened the gloom raised by the prospect of their leaving. As always, Asst. Surgeon Crawford kept a close record of the weather:

> MONDAY, JAN. 21: "Day cold, and wet, rain at night."
> TUESDAY, JAN. 22: "Day wet and cold."
> WEDNESDAY, JAN. 23: "Rainy and cold—no mail—no news. Sick in my room all day."
> FRIDAY, JAN. 25: "Rainy and cold."
> SATURDAY, JAN. 26: "Rainy and cold."

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ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, a "lighter," a barge-like vessel used for the transfer of passengers to and from larger ships, took the families across the bay to Charleston. They were allowed to bring their trunks, bedsteads, bedding, and some articles of furniture. They stayed at one of the city's preeminent hotels, the Mills House, until the storm subsided and their ship, the *Marion*, a large side-wheeled steamer, could leave for New York. The rough weather continued through the next day, Saturday, with sufficient intensity to halt work at Sumter and at the Carolina batteries. It was suddenly a lot quieter at the fort with no children or women on the grounds, but there was also a sense of relief that at least the families would be safe. Their departure had a further practical benefit in that it reduced demand for the fort's supply of food, water, candles, and, importantly, soap.

Rain was still falling as of eleven A.M. on Sunday morning, but the *Marion* at last departed. Barely visible in the murk and windblown spume, the ship sailed near Sumter and the families gathered on deck. "As they

passed the fort outward-bound," Captain Doubleday wrote, "the men gave them repeated cheers as a farewell, and displayed much feeling; for they thought it very probable they might not meet them again for a long period, if ever." The men fired a gun in salute.

WASHINGTON

Dread

FEBRUARY

General Scott's troops and cannon were visible throughout the city, a potent symbol of the Army's resolve to ensure that the electoral count and certification of Lincoln's election, set for February 13, would occur without disruption. One of the most common rumors held that the biggest threat came from Baltimore, where six thousand men were reputed to be armed and prepared to act. As the date of the count neared, one hundred police officers from New York and Philadelphia converged on Washington to further ensure its successful completion.

The city lay below the Mason-Dixon Line within marching range of Virginia and Maryland, and many residents were sympathetic to the South. New defections from the government seemed to take place every day. Half of its 4,470 civil and military employees came from states "where the revolutionary movement was openly advocated and urged," said Senator Seward. "Disaffection lurked, if it did not openly avow itself, in every department and every bureau, in every regiment and in every legation and consulate from London to Calcutta."

Jeremiah Black, secretary of state, wrote to Buchanan that although no hard evidence had yet been discovered of a conspiracy to seize Washington,

it was clear “that the possession of this city is absolutely essential to the ultimate design of the secessionists.”

To Black, a Democrat loyal to the Union, the underlying logic was itself probative. “If they can take it and do not take it,” Black wrote, “they are fools.”

WASHINGTON AND MONTGOMERY

A Solemn Council

FEBRUARY 4

As LINCOLN PREPARED FOR HIS journey to Washington, he received encouraging news that reinforced his belief that unionism in the northernmost slave states remained strong. On Monday, February 4, a week before his departure, Virginia held an election to choose delegates for a state convention to consider secession, set to convene on February 13, which was also the day the electoral count would be formally certified in Washington. Of the 152 delegates elected, the great majority—80 percent—favored remaining in the Union, though not without qualification. Lincoln's secretary of state designee, Seward, received a warning that for such support to continue, Republicans would have to "come forward promptly with liberal concessions." Seward, however, felt renewed confidence. Virginia's support was just the beginning, he believed; he expected the so-called border states—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—likewise to reject secession. Once they did, the Deep South would surely follow; even the seceded states would seek a return to the fold.

Virginia's apparent pro-Union leaning provided a much-needed respite from the mounting tension and suspense. In Boston, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., son of the congressman and diarist of the same name, got word of Virginia's vote on the afternoon of Tuesday, February 5. "I was skating

on Jamaica Pond, all by myself," he wrote in his diary, "when I noticed the throng of skaters flocking together on the further side of the Pond, and almost immediately they began to shout and cheer with all their souls. Some one had come out bringing a paper with fuller and final returns. The tears almost stood in my eyes; and I skated off to be alone, for I realized that the crisis was actually passed."

A few days later, Tennessee voters delivered an even more striking affirmation of Lincoln's and Seward's belief in the latent pro-unionism of the South when in a statewide referendum they voted not to hold a convention at all. Seward was delighted, according to another Adams son, Henry, twenty-three, private secretary to his father. "The ancient Seward is in high spirits and chuckles himself hoarse with stories," Henry wrote.

Meanwhile, 133 delegates from twenty-one states—fourteen free, seven slave—gathered in Washington for a "Peace Convention" to try to find a way out of the secession crisis. This was set to begin on Monday, February 4, but bad weather hampered the travels of many delegates. When they eventually arrived they found a tense city with soldiers, guns, and cannon everywhere and a palpable fear of invasion by rebel forces, which one delegate proclaimed himself "prepared each morning to see." Buchanan's attorney general, Edwin Stanton, harbored the private fear that by Inauguration Day the city would be in Southern hands.

As a display of defiance against unrest, authorities had ordered an American flag flown from the Washington Monument, which at 156 feet was only about 30 percent complete, a stub of blue gneiss granite faced with white marble, surrounded by tumble-down work sheds and scattered pieces of stone. Seward called the flag-raising "more effective than the most eloquent speech," although skeptics might have been inclined to see the structure below it more as a symbol of failure. Construction of the monument had begun in 1848 with enslaved labor but ceased ten years later, just as America's sectional crisis neared its peak, and would not resume until 1880. Owing to the use of a different marble upon resumption, the tower's face would forever after have two tones, inadvertently immortalizing in stone America's antebellum division.

At length the full quorum of conference delegates managed to reach Washington and convened at the city's Willard Hotel in its adjacent Willard's Dancing Hall. The conference offered hope, however wan, at a time when the crisis increasingly seemed to be lurching toward violence. Buchanan urged both Congress and the seceding states to abstain from taking any actions "to produce a collision of arms" while the conference was in session. Knowing souls understood this plea to be a reflection of his own fervent hope to make it through Inauguration Day without a civil war.

The delegates were, to put it kindly, an august group, though Horace Greeley was not inclined to kindness when he dubbed it an "Old Gentlemen's Convention" whose attendees were "political fossils, who would not have been again disinterred" if not for the crisis at hand. Greeley's nickname stuck. One elderly delegate died during the conference.

The attendees resolved early on to keep all proceedings secret from the public to avoid the likelihood that conferees would play to the press with overlong speeches and inflammatory remarks. The speeches occurred anyway, day in day out, in a ceaseless grind of words having all the verve of a glacier.

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AS THE PEACE CONVENTION doddered on, officials from South Carolina and the other five states that had seceded thus far gathered in Montgomery for a convention of their own, this one to found the Confederate States of America and establish a provisional congress. They designated Montgomery their capital and chose a president for the congress, Howell Cobb, former U.S. secretary of the Treasury.

Montgomery was a curious choice for a capital. With a total population of 8,843 people, half of whom were enslaved, it barely qualified as a city, though judging by the state capitol building it had high hopes of becoming one. A broad unpaved boulevard, Market Street (now Dexter Avenue), ended at a shallow promontory, Goat Hill, that formed the base of the building, a massive white Greek Revival structure built a decade earlier

with six three-story columns, a large dome, and a clock. It was here that delegates from the seceded states met, surrounded by elegant interior woodwork and graceful curving stairways crafted by Horace King, a renowned architect, carpenter, and bridge builder who also happened to be Black and formerly enslaved. The building was situated half a mile from the Alabama River, uphill from a wharf where riverboats unloaded delegates and enslaved Blacks alike.

A newspaper called the *Montgomery Daily Post* and subtitled "An Independent South" provided a sense of the commerce that fueled the city. Here were one-inch ads for such things as caskets, carriages, dental services, whiskey, and women's "dancing pumps." The *Post* was given now and then to attempts at humor. What do you call "The Valet of the Shadow of Death?" Why, "The Undertaker," of course. Out on the street, visitors to Montgomery might encounter an obvious marker of some retail specialty, such as a giant boot at the boot maker's shop at the corner of Commerce and Market, or the immense gold tooth at the office of Dr. H. Seger, dentist. At Glackmeyer's Apothecary on Market, under the eagle sign, you could get a cocaine preparation for your hair, or a French pomade, or an elderflower extract for the complexion, or a particularly tantalizing product called "Dupuy's Kiss-me-Gently."

A photograph of Market Street at the time shows two lines of three-story shops and mostly covered sidewalks fronted by drainage ditches receding toward the distant capitol, seemingly afloat in a light haze like some mystical temple from *The Arabian Nights*. In the foreground are a handful of freight wagons pulled by listless oxen and mules; clusters of men, mostly Black, sit peacefully around the Artesian Basin, a large round cistern on Court Square. William Russell, a correspondent for the *Times* of London who visited in 1861, found it bleak and desultory. "The streets are very hot, unpleasant, and uninteresting. I have rarely seen a more dull, lifeless place; it looks like a small Russian town in the interior."

The choice of Montgomery did make a certain sense, however, in that it was the center of the domestic slave trade in Alabama and for much of the Deep South. Scores of enslaved Blacks arrived daily by riverboat and by

train, and by overland coffles, to be deposited in slave "depots," or pens, located throughout the city. On Market alone there were nine businesses engaged in trading, auctioning, or investing in slaves, and at least eight pens where men, women, and children alike were stored before sale. A slave pen on South Decatur Street stood just a block from the capitol. Additional depots and trading houses operated from side streets. The city's slave auctions were typically held at the Artesian Basin, which made slave shopping about as convenient as possible. The state courthouse stood on an adjacent corner for the filing of slave mortgages, probate agreements, and other instruments; nearby stood a row of banks and insurers that specialized in financing the trade, including the founding office of a firm even then called Lehman Brothers. Advertisements in the *Montgomery Daily Post* touted enslaved people for sale, made available because of deaths, bankruptcies, and other legal actions. One ad offered a distinctly Southern service. Headlined "Negro Dogs," it was posted by one W. L. Staggers, who specialized in finding escaped Blacks: "I have a first rate pack of Negro Dogs, with which I will hunt for Negroes at five dollars a day, and ten dollars for each Negro I succeed in securing."

On February 9, James Chesnut and the other convention delegates gathered inside the capitol building and elected former U.S. senator Jefferson Davis president of the provisional government of the Confederacy. For vice president, they chose Alexander H. Stephens, Georgia's "Little Ellick."

Mary Chesnut would join her husband in two weeks.

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DAVIS GOT THE NEWS on February 10 at his home, Brierfield Plantation, near Vicksburg, Mississippi. He and Varina were cutting roses at the time. As Davis stood reading the telegram, Varina watched him with concern. Telegrams, still objects of fascination, often brought the worst kind of news. "When reading the telegram," she wrote, "he looked so grieved that I feared

some evil had befallen our family. After a few minutes' painful silence he told me, as a man might speak of a death sentence."

Davis initially was uncertain as to whether to accept the appointment. It was an honor, of course, but he was not at all sure that he was the right man for the post. "I have no confidence in my ability to meet its requirement," he said. He could serve as a general, yes. He was, after all, a West Point graduate (though he graduated twentieth out of thirty-three students in his class) and a celebrated hero of the Mexican War, and had been Secretary of War under Franklin Pierce. But president—especially at this time, with the Confederacy so newly formed—seemed initially to be too great a challenge. He did accept, however. "We are without machinery, without means, and threatened by powerful opposition," he said, "but I do not despond and will not shrink from the task before me."

Varina also had her doubts, as she would confess in her later biography of her husband. "He did not know the arts of the politician," she wrote, "and would not practice them if understood."

Now, as President-elect Lincoln continued his silence and prepared for his great journey to Washington, President-elect Davis set out from Brierfield to begin an eastward journey of his own, toward Montgomery and his own inauguration, set for February 18.

During the five days of his journey through a rugged and primitive landscape, he made twenty-five speeches in which he proclaimed that the time for Southern independence had come, even if it meant war. "Our separation from the old Union is complete," he declared. "*No compromise; no reconstruction can be now entertained*."

WASHINGTON

To Sell or Collide

FEBRUARY 6

By the first week of February, South Carolina's preparations for attacking Sumter appeared to be nearing completion. At Cummings Point on Morris Island, site of the nearest battery, workers were installing iron shutters on the bombproof redoubts that housed the guns, the final phase of construction. "They are, I suspect, pretty nearly ready over there," Major Anderson reported to Adjutant Cooper on Wednesday, February 6. "God grant that these people may not make the attack for which they have so long threatened."

That same day the Hall-Hayne mission to Washington ran aground on a reef of mutual naïveté. Whatever Quartermaster Hall's contribution was to this is lost to history, but South Carolina Attorney General Hayne and U.S. War Secretary Holt both seemed to have little grasp of how important Fort Sumter was to the other.

Hayne marched into the White House with the idea that he could simply demand the surrender of the fort, negotiate some kind of payment, and then go home. "I do not come as a military man to demand the surrender of a fortress," he told Buchanan and Holt, "but as the legal officer of the State—its attorney general—to claim for the State the exercise of its undoubted right of eminent domain, and to pledge the State to make good all injury to

the rights of property which arise from the exercise of the claim." He proposed to acquire the fort through a simple legal maneuver used routinely in domestic civic life and then to pay for it "to the full extent of the money value of the property," as if it were simply a house in the path of a planned railroad.

Holt found this extraordinary. He rejected without qualification Hayne's assertion of eminent domain and added that the president had no constitutional power to sell any public property. Only Congress could do so. "The President, as the head of the executive branch of Government only, can no more sell and transfer Fort Sumter to South Carolina than he can sell and convey the Capitol of the United States to Maryland."

But now Holt revealed his own naïveté about the crisis and in particular about the power of honor in shaping Southern attitudes. The fort, he told Hayne, continued to serve merely the purposes for which it was built, the defense of America, generally, and Charleston in particular. "How the presence of a small garrison, actuated by such a spirit as this, can compromise the dignity or honor of South Carolina, or become a source of irritation to her people, the President is at a loss to understand," Holt wrote. "The attitude of that garrison, as has often been declared, is neither menacing, nor defiant, nor unfriendly. It is acting under orders to stand strictly on the defensive, and the government and people of South Carolina must well know that they can never receive aught but shelter from its guns, unless, in the absence of all provocation, they should assault it, and seek its destruction."

Holt's letter offended Hayne. He felt chastised and diminished, his honor bruised, enough so as to raise fears among his Southern compatriots that he might try to persuade South Carolina authorities, always testy, to launch an immediate assault on Sumter. Rumor of this reached the delegates at the Washington Peace Convention, who feared that an attack now would disrupt and perhaps even abort their efforts. Former U.S. president John Tyler, presiding over the conference, wired Governor Pickens in South Carolina. "Can my voice reach you?" he wrote on Thursday, February 7. "If so, do not attack Fort Sumter."

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GOVERNOR PICKENS, HOWEVER, WAS in a warlike mood. In a letter to a friend in Baltimore, he declared the sudden increase in federal troops in Washington to be a circumstance of “deepest degradation” to Maryland and Virginia. “If you can bear this, then you can bear anything,” Pickens lectured his friend. To end federal rule, he wrote, the two states need only seize control of two powerful forts, McHenry in Baltimore and Monroe in Norfolk.

Pickens blithely proposed a path to do so. The two states should immediately seize Washington, D.C., and in the ensuing “convulsion” simply take the two forts. One immediate benefit, Pickens argued, would be that Lincoln would have to find another location for his March 4 inauguration, thereby causing tumult in the North. “It would all be over in three weeks, and as far as the Southern States are concerned there would be peace, and the North would be divided and in confusion. It looks violent at first but I sincerely believe it would be the most certain mode of saving the country from a permanent and bloody civil war.”

Even former senator James Hammond of Redcliffe Plantation was ready for action, as he told a friend, A. B. Allen, in a letter that same Thursday. The fact that Allen was still an ally was something of a miracle. The former editor and cofounder of the *American Agriculturist* lived in New York and opposed slavery and had told Hammond as much. That Hammond’s reply did not ignite the stationery upon which it was written is also a miracle.

“I have traveled over all the grounds so often that I am sick of the subject and feel now as we all do more disposed to fight it out than argue any more,” Hammond wrote. It was views like Allen’s, he charged, that lay at the root of the conflict. “You think our system an evil—a sin, and one that, therefore, cannot last,” Hammond wrote. “We think the same precisely of yours, but while we don’t trouble ourselves about yours, you make all sorts of war on us about ours in which we see no evil, no sin, and nothing but good. We think it far better than yours—at least for us—in all respects.

“Can you not let us alone?”

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AT FORT SUMTER, ANDERSON received a very welcome letter from his wife, Eba, after her safe return to New York, in which she recounted a visit paid to her at Brevoort House by a planter and botanist from South Carolina named Henry Ravenel, author of the not very famous but minutely authoritative five-volume *Fungi Caroliniani Exsiccati*.

The conversation inevitably turned to secession and Fort Sumter, she wrote. She told Ravenel of her concerns but also expressed her rising fury, and shame. She vowed that she would "never be found in the same Confederacy with *South Carolina*…that really, for the first time in my life, I was ashamed of being a *Southerner*, since the whole North was crying out at the little pitiful, contemptible course *his* State was pursuing towards the fort in her harbor. Indeed, I said a great many very unpleasant truths, in the most pleasant manner possible."

She did hope for an amicable resolution to the crisis, she told her husband, but she added that if he and his garrison were made to abandon the fort and cede it to South Carolina, "*I*, for one, will not be satisfied."

"Do ask those in authority at Washington," she wrote. "*I* would make it a special request—to let you blow it up, sky high, on leaving it."

CHARLESTON

Race Week

FEBRUARY 6

GOVERNOR PICKENS HAD A FURTHER incentive for not attacking Fort Sumter just yet. This was Race Week in Charleston, the city's premier social event.

During the week, ordinary life ceased. Schools and courts closed, as did many businesses. According to one witness, everyone " 'talks horse' morning, noon and night." The week typically drew breeders from surrounding states and spectators from as far away as New York who arrived aboard specially chartered ships. Having a horse in the races gained a planter access to the array of dances and banquets that took place at the track and in the city, and to private parties, like the one hosted by Mrs. A. M. VanderHorst. "The music was fine," she wrote in her diary on February 6, 1861, "the gentlemen and ladies in high spirits, and the supper under the shining silver with the sparkling champagne most enlivening." It was, she bragged to herself, "the party of the Season."

Many of the South's leading lights were away, plotting rebellion. But the planters who did attend brought with them wives and eligible sons and daughters. They brought retinues of Black servants and between races sold or acquired others. The jockeys were enslaved; the trainers were enslaved. White planters relied on slaves to maximize the value of their horses and in the process burnish their own social cachet.

In this milieu a horse was much more than just a horse. As the South Carolina Jockey Club's biographer put it in 1857, horses were "the impersonation of Carolina chivalry—the *embodied spirit* of Carolina blood and Carolina honor." The planters were knights engaged in chivalric contests. Winning mattered. Observing the effect of a loss on the backers of one racehorse, a Carolina writer noted in 1859 how it made these "manly men" feel restless and dissatisfied. "Their cavalier blood is stirred—they cannot brook such defeat—they cannot go home thus shorn, stripped of their trophies, bankrupt of applause—not a green leaf of all their laurels, now only a crown of thorns." The winner, on the other hand, according to another writer, "assumed the airs of a hero or German potentate."

Race Week brought together the most powerful men in the state, typically planters, affirming their lofty stature while also building connections among them and shoring the mutual conviction that theirs was indeed the best of all worlds. All this mingling, observed a writer for the *Charleston Courier,* fostered "unanimity in our councils, and particularly in the State Legislature. Hence union, political union, is confirmed and established."

It was because of this that James Henry Hammond, hoping to further cement his place among the state's elite, had resolved early in his planting career to acquire a share in a five-year-old thoroughbred named Argyle, for which he and a partner paid eight thousand dollars, or $256,000 today. As pricey as it was, the horse was a bargain at a time when thoroughbreds imported from England could cost twenty thousand dollars (nearly $700,000).

A horse was, literally, a planter's ticket to the various events of the week, hosted by the Jockey Club. The foremost of these was the Jockey Club Ball, the most glamorous social gathering of the entire year, held in Charleston's St. Andrews Hall, the same venue where delegates to South Carolina's secession convention had voted the state out of the Union. The ball began at eleven P.M. and ended at six the next morning with dancing and an elaborate banquet; it drew only the "very select," according to one attendee, "none but the higher classes." Single men and women alike found

it a worthy place to meet potential future spouses, though one visiting British author, Margaret Hunter Hall, found the event less than stellar. The gentlemen were “very second-rate,” she wrote in her book, *The Aristocratic Journey.* As for the women: “I never in my life saw so many ugly women gathered together.”

All these were mere distractions, however, as the attendees awaited the focal event, the Jockey Club Purse. During Race Week 1861, this took place on February 6 and featured a race between a four-year-old thoroughbred named Albine and a five-year-old, Planet, in which Albine, the winner, broke the course record in a grueling race that consisted of four one-mile heats. Total time: 7 minutes, 36.5 seconds. Albine’s sire was a horse named Jeff Davis.

Albine’s owner, Jack Cantey, a cousin of James Chesnut’s, had bought the horse for what at the time seemed no good reason because of its prior poor performance. But Cantey hired an expert trainer, an enslaved Black named Hercules, who transformed the horse from a chronic loser to a champion. The Sinkler family owned Hercules and roughly two hundred other enslaved people, but Hercules fell into that special category of slave who had a particular expertise and would be hired out to other planters who hoped for similar success with their own horses.

After the race, Hercules recommended champagne and offered to buy it. Cantey paid for it instead. The stable was soon crowded with tippling celebrants.

No one knew it yet, of course, but this would be Charleston’s last Race Week for nearly two decades.

Yard Sale

FEBRUARY 9

To help pay for his journey to Washington, Lincoln sold furniture from his home. One eager buyer was Samuel H. Melvin, a Springfield dealer in medicinal drugs and supplies. According to a receipt signed by Lincoln and dated February 9, 1861, Melvin spent $82.25 on the following items:

6 CHAIRS
1 SPRING MATTRESS
1 WARDROBE
1 WHATNOT *[a cabinet with open shelves, equivalent to a French étagère]*
1 STAND
9 1/2 YARDS stair carpet
4 COMFORTERS

Lincoln and his wife and sons moved into a hotel, Chenery House, for their final days in Springfield.

SPRINGFIELD

Departure

FEBRUARY 11

AT LAST THE DAY ARRIVED. Lincoln was up early and left his hotel at seven-thirty. By all counts it was a gloomy morning. Not cold in that savage way that characterizes February in the plains, but rather wetly cold, with lowering clouds and rain. At times snow fell. Lincoln boarded a carriage that took him to the city's Great Western Railroad depot, a grand-sounding name for a lonesome one-story structure with a flat roof and generous eaves. A crowd had gathered. Though some observers, exercising the reportorial license of the day, put the number of people at one thousand or more, at least two witnesses estimated only one to two hundred people. Another man present, a sculptor named Thomas D. Jones who had spent days working on a bust of Lincoln, recalled later that Lincoln used the depot waiting area as a reception room where friends and neighbors filed past to gravely shake his hand. There was silence and an upwelling of emotion, Jones recalled. Tear-filled eyes. Quiet farewells. "When the crowd had passed him," Jones wrote, "I stepped up to say good-bye. He gave me both his hands—no words after that."

At length Lincoln climbed onto the end platform of a train composed just for this first leg of his journey, a small but cheery "Special" with a locomotive and wood-filled tender, baggage car, and a single bright-yellow

passenger car. The locomotive was a tried-and-true 4-4-0—four unpowered small wheels on a guide "bogie" up front, four giant fifty-four-inch-diameter drive wheels under the cab and body—built by the Hinkley Locomotive Works of Boston, and, per custom, given a name: "L. M.Wiley." Whether Lincoln knew it at the time or not, the engine's namesake, Leroy M. Wiley, sixty-six, a wealthy director of the Great Western Railroad, was a slaveholder from Alabama with plantations in Eufaula and Macon County. He would soon be declared an "alien enemy."

At about this time Mrs. Lincoln entered the crowd below. She and their youngest sons would not accompany Lincoln on this first day but were scheduled to join him the next morning in Indianapolis. Lincoln would be anything but alone on this leg, however. His eldest son, Robert, joined him, as did two dozen other compatriots, including private secretaries Nicolay and Hay.

Sculptor Jones gave Mrs. Lincoln his arm and drew her as close to the train as possible to better hear Lincoln's parting remarks. The rain fell faster. Lincoln, sheltered by the overhanging roof of the car's end platform, removed his hat. Many in the crowd did likewise, but without the benefit of shelter. The train stood poised to depart, with a full head of steam, its conductor standing ready to pull the bell rope that would signal the engineer to engage the drive wheels and get the journey underway. Now, at last, the "Sphinx of Springfield" would speak.

What exactly he said has long been a matter of small controversy, with most authors relying on the one existing copy, partly in Lincoln's hand, partly in that of Nicolay, and written *after* Lincoln had spoken, apparently aboard his inaugural train. But there was another version, reported by the *Illinois State Journal*, that has an extra hundred words and the ring of Lincoln; his own law partner, William Herndon, considered this to be the most authentic.

"Friends," Lincoln began. "No one who has never been placed in a like position, can understand my feelings at this hour, nor the oppressive sadness I feel at this parting. For more than a quarter of a century I have lived among you, and during all that time I have received nothing but

kindness at your hands. Here I have lived from my youth until now I am an old man. Here the most sacred ties of earth were assumed; here all my children were born; and here one of them lies buried.”

Lincoln would turn fifty-two the next day. The death he referred to was that of his second son, Edward, who had died in 1850 just shy of his fourth birthday, the cause thought to have been tuberculosis.

“To you, dear friends, I owe all that I have, all that I am. All the strange, checkered past seems to crowd now upon my mind. To-day I leave you; I go to assume a task more difficult than that which devolved upon General Washington.”

Only with God’s guidance and support, the same that “directed and protected” George Washington, would he succeed, he said. “Let us all pray that the God of our fathers may not forsake us now. To him I commend you all—permit me to ask that with equal security and faith you all will invoke His wisdom and guidance for me.”

By this point, witnesses agree, as rain fell and Lincoln visibly struggled with powerful emotions, a veil of eye-glistening sorrow descended over the crowd.

“With these few words,” he said, “I must leave you—for how long I know not. Friends, one and all, I must now bid you an affectionate farewell.”

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THE TRAIN BEGAN TO MOVE. It was eight o’clock. Rain continued to fall, raising a coat of steam from the skin of the hot boiler. Soon the yellow car was just a daub of color against the gray.

This was February 11, 1861; the electoral count was to take place in Washington two days later. If all went well, Lincoln would reach the city ten days after that.

PART FOUR

JOURNEY

(February 11–March 4, 1861)

AFTER ALL EFFORTS FOR A reconciliation are over, the party aggrieved sends a challenge to his adversary, which is delivered to his second.

—*The Code Duello*

The Silence Breaks

FEBRUARY 11–12

LINCOLN'S FIRST MORNING ON THE rails took him through twenty towns in Illinois before he reached the Illinois-Indiana state line, according to a special "Time Card" produced for the journey by the Great Western Railroad. Here were Illiopolis at 8:49 A.M.; Niantic at 8:58; Cerro Gordo, 9:54; Sadorus, 10:40; Philo, 11:07; Homer, 11:30; and Catlin, twenty-nine minutes later. Often Lincoln stood on the rear platform as the train passed through town, fulfilling his goal of letting the people *see* him; to enable them to put a face and a body to this man they had heard so much about and who had struck such fear into the South. "Every station along the road had its crowd," one newspaper reported, "all anxious to see the man whose election to the first office in the gift of a free people has been the cause (whether with reason or not) of the distracted state of the country."

Three times that morning—at Decatur, Tolono, and Danville—the train stopped long enough to allow Lincoln to speak so that the public could also *hear* him and marvel at how such an immense man could produce that reedy, high-pitched voice. He kept it brief, as at Tolono, where the train stopped for wood and water:

"I am leaving you on an errand of national importance, attended, as you are aware, with considerable difficulties," Lincoln said. "Let us believe, as some poet has expressed it:—

" 'Behind the cloud the sun is still shining.' "

The train reached the state line at 12:38, eight minutes behind schedule; here Lincoln disembarked to have his midday dinner while his train received a new locomotive and shifted to the tracks of the Toledo and Wabash line. The food was not only “miserable,” according to journalist Henry Villard, a member of Lincoln’s party, but overpriced, with Lincoln and his companions “charged one dollar per head, twice the amount charged to common travelers.”

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ON THAT AFTERNOON OF February 11, Lincoln’s Special stopped at Thorntown, Indiana, to once again take on fuel. As had occurred at every prior stop, a crowd gathered and demanded a speech. Lincoln parried this by offering to tell one of the folksy stories of which he seemed to have an inexhaustible supply. He cautioned, however, that he probably shouldn’t be telling stories, given that he was on his way to assume the highest office in the land, but he would tell it, “if you promise not to let it out.”

He began: A man running for a county office had a favorite horse that was sure-footed but slow. The man knew he was likely to win the nomination for the office. On the day of the convention he set out on his horse for the county seat, but the animal insisted on nibbling every comely bush along the way, despite the would-be candidate’s use of a whip and spurs to prod it along.

Lincoln was midway through a sentence when the train began to move.

Lincoln laughed; the crowd laughed. Someone shouted that he need not worry about this particular story getting out. Lincoln waved; the train gained speed.

At the next stop—Lebanon, Indiana—ten miles farther on, Lincoln stepped out onto the end platform of his car just as a group of people came running up along the tracks. These were local citizens, but a joke circulated that they were actually residents of Thorntown, the previous stop, who had run all the way and were “panting outside to hear the conclusion of the story.”

Lincoln found this hilarious and retold the story, this time to completion—how the horse moved so slowly that the candidate arrived at the county seat after the convention had ended.

If he gave a speech at every stop, Lincoln said, the same would happen to him; he would not reach Washington until the inauguration was over.

Again he laughed—he always did like his own jokes. And again his audience laughed too.

"I bid you an affectionate farewell," he said. "I cannot miss the inauguration."

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THE DAY'S JOURNEY ENDED in Indianapolis at the Bates Hotel, where he was to spend the night. First, however, he delivered a speech from the hotel balcony to a throng estimated to number forty-five thousand.

All that grueling day he had strived to avoid saying anything even remotely incendiary, fully aware that thanks to the miracle of telegraphy his remarks would be transmitted far and wide, north and south, immediately, and then subjected to whatever interpretation editors chose to apply. He was especially mindful of the fact that among the items he had brought with him from Springfield were copies of his inaugural address tucked into a black satchel that he had given to Robert for safekeeping. Before his departure, Lincoln had arranged to have twenty copies secretly printed on the presses of the *Illinois State Journal* by a friend, William H. Bailhache, an owner of the journal. Lincoln's great fear was that somehow the address would make its way into the hands of a reporter. Robert was seventeen years old and had quickly become a celebrity in his own right, with the nickname "Prince of Rails" in recognition both of his father's nickname, "Railsplitter," and of the Prince of Wales's North American tour. (The prince traveled as far south as Richmond, where a big slave auction scheduled for the same time had to be cancelled owing to his known antipathy to slavery.) Robert, weary of carrying the satchel, left it with the hotel clerk and set off for an evening with a group of Young Republicans.

Immediately upon arrival in the city Lincoln had given a brief, cautious, carefully written speech, but now, on the hotel balcony, he abandoned that caution.

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ON THIS PROMONTORY IN front of the Bates Hotel, dressed in black, Lincoln looked like a very tall undertaker. After greeting the thousands gathered below and thanking them for the city's warm welcome, he ventured directly into the fray. "The words 'coercion' and 'invasion' are in great use about these days," he said. "Suppose we were simply to try if we can, and ascertain what, is the meaning of these words. Let us get, if we can, the exact definitions of these words—not from dictionaries, but from the men who constantly repeat them—what things they mean to express by the words. What, then, is 'coercion'? What is 'invasion'?"

Given that the first microphone would not be invented for another fifteen years, most in this vast audience could not hear a word, but those in the first ranks knew that Lincoln was about to enter territory he thus far had avoided. The great silence was being broken.

"Would the marching of an army into South Carolina, for instance, without the consent of her people, and in hostility against them, be coercion or invasion?" he asked. "I very frankly say, I think it would be invasion, and it would be coercion too, if the people of that country were forced to submit. But if the Government, for instance, but simply insists upon holding its own forts, or retaking those forts which belong to it"—

A great cheer rose from the crowd.

—"or the enforcement of the laws of the United States in the collection of duties upon foreign importations—

Another round of cheering.

—"or even the withdrawal of the mails from those portions of the country where the mails themselves are habitually violated; would any or all of these things be coercion?"

He chided those who contended that the federal government had no right to take such steps. If indeed states considered those acts to be coercion or invasion, he said, “then it occurs to me that the means for the preservation of the Union they so greatly love, in their own estimation, is of a very thin and airy character.”

Lincoln knew he had his audience now; its energy flowed upward in an electric embrace and caused him to cast aside his last reticence. He summoned an earthy analogy certain to please his listeners.

“In their view, the Union, as a family relation, would not be anything like a regular marriage at all, but only as a sort of free-love arrangement”—laughter convulsed the crowd—“to be maintained on what that sect calls passionate attraction.”

The laughter continued.

He asked what power gave a state the right to seize federal property within its boundaries when such property was placed there solely because of the state’s affiliation with the Union; what “principle of original right” allowed it “to play tyrant over all its own citizens, and deny the authority of everything greater than itself?”

Which drew still more laughter.

“I say I am deciding nothing, but simply giving something for you to reflect upon.”

At which point, reminding his listeners that he had foresworn long speeches, he said goodbye.

The street below swelled with cheers. “The applause was deafening,” wrote John Hay, “and there were loud exclamations from the crowd, of ‘That’s the talk,’ ‘We’ve got a President now,’ &c.”

Still the speech begged the question: Why had he been so careful thus far, only to launch this fiery ember into the firmament two days before the electoral count and three weeks before his inauguration?

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NEITHER LINCOLN'S BREVITY NOR humor altered the fact that he had clearly posited the government's right to retake forts, arsenals, and other federal property, and to collect duties and enforce laws in the seceded states. A Virginia congressman called the speech a declaration of war. And Lincoln could not take back that free-love allusion, which, along with the rest of the speech, was telegraphed to newspapers around the country and caused some critics to wonder if Lincoln had the dignity to hold the highest office in the land. At Fort Sumter, Asst. Surgeon Crawford expressed dismay. "If Mr. Lincoln fancies he can carry out the policy indicated by the speech at Indianapolis he will find himself very much mistaken," Crawford told his brother after finally being able to read the speech. "Civil War with all its horrors will ensue and no human foresight can tell what the end will be. I should think his vulgar exhibitions, and his so-called speeches since his pilgrimage to Washington began would greatly disgust his supporters and friends." Crawford revealed a deeper fear, one shared by many Northerners, as to the threat Lincoln might pose to the racial status quo. Crawford feared that the Republican Party had become populated with abolitionist zealots. "I abhor fanaticism and despise cant," he wrote. "The party is full of both, and any proposition to lift the negro to the social level of the *white man* is to me monstrous and insane."

The speech, however, pleased Northern Republicans, who had grown weary of the endless effort to appease the South. The *Chicago Tribune* said it "electrified the true Republicans and has given the fishy ones 'fever and ague.' "

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NOW A GOOD PORTION of Indianapolis surged into the Bates Hotel for a closer look at the president-elect, exhibiting, according to secretary Hay, "too many elbows, too much curiosity, and a perfectly gushing desire to shake hands with somebody—the president, if possible; if not, with somebody who had shaken hands with him." After freeing himself and struggling to secure a dinner in the hotel dining room, Lincoln turned his attention to his

inaugural speech. He wanted to give a copy to a friend, Orville Browning, for his comments. Browning, soon to become a U.S. senator from Illinois, had accompanied him on the day's journey but planned to return home the next morning.

Lincoln's son Robert, guardian of the speech, was still out with the Young Republicans. On his return, possibly a bit drunk, Robert found his father in an atypical state of distress, demanding to know the whereabouts of the satchel. One witness recalled, "I had never seen Mr. Lincoln so much annoyed, so much perplexed, and for the time so angry."

With studied insouciance, and exhibiting a "bored and injured virtue," as another account put it, Robert told his father that he had left the satchel at the front desk.

"And what did the clerk do with it?" Lincoln asked.

"It is on the floor behind the counter," Robert answered.

Stunned, as "visions of his inaugural in all the morning's newspapers floated before the president-elect," Lincoln, according to this account, leapt into action. Without another word, he rushed from the room and descended the stairs, plowing through a cloud of onlookers who had jammed the hotel halls to get a glimpse of him. "One single stride of his long legs swung him across the clerk's desk, and he fell upon the small mountain of luggage accumulated behind it." This was not the sort of thing one expected from a newly elected president. "Bystanders craned their necks, and the horrified clerk stood open-mouthed." At one point Lincoln, disgusted with himself, bowed his head and quietly said, "I guess I have lost my certificate of moral character, written by myself."

Lincoln drew a small key from his pocket. There were many black bags behind the desk, and they all looked the same. Given the imprecise nature of luggage locks, the key was likely to fit a number of them. Lincoln opened one bag and found nothing. Then another. One bag yielded shirt collars, playing cards, and a bottle of whiskey. This so amused onlookers that even Lincoln had to laugh. After six tries, he found the correct bag. Robert was freed of all his luggage-watching responsibilities for the rest of the trip.

Lincoln gave a copy of his inaugural to Browning, who after just one day on the rails was more than happy to leave this particular adventure behind. “Had to sleep two in a bed, and accommodations were very poor,” he wrote in his diary. “It is just about as much of that sort of thing as I want.”

Happily, Browning and the others awoke to a day so lovely that it could have been spring. This was also Lincoln’s birthday. At fifty-two he was not exactly “old,” as he had described himself to his audience in Springfield, but certainly at a point where men understood that they had entered the far side of their lives.

The train wore festive attire. Thirty-four stars circled the engine’s smokestack, representing every state, including those that had seceded, and one for newly admitted Kansas, which had joined the Union two weeks earlier as a free state. Portraits of past presidents hung from the locomotive’s forward end, prominent among them George Washington. Along the train’s length were decorations of all kinds, including evergreens splayed along the boiler and tender.

Lincoln’s Special departed midmorning, now with his wife and two youngest sons, Willie, ten, and Tad, eight, aboard as well.

OHIO

“Pimp!”

FEBRUARY 13–15

LINCOLN’S SPECIAL REACHED COLUMBUS, OHIO, at two P.M. on Wednesday, February 13, the day Congress was to certify the electoral vote; the day also that Virginia was to begin its secession convention. But as the hours and miles passed, Lincoln heard nothing. His train had expanded to three cars. Among the riders invited to travel with him on this leg was Larz Anderson, Major Anderson’s brother, from Cincinnati. The weather was “magnificent,” according to journalist Villard.

In Columbus, Lincoln was greeted by cannon fire and escorted by soldiers to the state house, where the Ohio legislature had convened to greet him. He gave a brief but curious speech that seemed crafted to counteract the aggression he had extemporaneously signaled in Indianapolis.

“I have not maintained silence from any want of real anxiety,” he said. “It is a good thing that there is no more than anxiety, for there is nothing going wrong. It is a consoling circumstance that when we look out, there is nothing that really hurts anybody. We entertain different views upon political questions, but nobody is suffering anything. This is a most consoling circumstance, and from it we may conclude that all we want is time, patience and a reliance on that God who has never forsaken this people.”

Even as he said this, however, concern in Washington mounted that the electoral count might be disrupted. That day crowds of irate Southerners had gathered in Washington and converged on the Capitol clamoring to get inside. General Scott, however, was well prepared. Soldiers manned the entrances and demanded to see passes before letting anyone in. Scott had positioned caches of arms throughout the building. A regiment of troops in plainclothes circulated among the crowd to stop any trouble before it started. The throng outside grew annoyed at being barred from entry and began firing off obscenities like grapeshot. If words could kill, one observer wrote, “the amount of profanity launched forth against the guards would have completely annihilated them.”

Much of this tirade was aimed at General Scott. It had no effect. He vowed that anyone who obstructed the count would be “lashed to the muzzle of a twelve-pounder and fired out of the window of the Capitol.” Scott would then “manure the hills of Arlington with the fragments of his body.”

Concern about the count was real and had intensified as the day approached. The fact was, the electoral votes were vulnerable. These were paper certificates that had to be transported from the Senate to the House, where Vice President Breckinridge would certify the count and announce the result. “This was the critical day for the peace of the capital,” wrote New York diarist George Templeton Strong. “A foray of Virginia gents… could have done infinite mischief by destroying the legal evidence of Lincoln’s election.”

Rep. Charles Francis Adams made it a point to attend the session. “I had never seen the ceremony before,” he wrote in his diary. “It is an imposing one, and yet it is the weak part of the constitution.” The founding fathers had offered no clear mechanism to manage a situation in which electoral votes were stolen or destroyed, he wrote. Still, the count went smoothly. “The proceeding occupied two hours, but it was conducted in profound tranquility, which relieves us all of a great weight.”

This tranquility abruptly disappeared, however, when Vice President Breckinridge issued the long-awaited announcement: “Abraham Lincoln, of

Illinois, having received a majority of the whole number of the electoral votes, is elected president of the United States, for four years, commencing on the fourth of March."

By this point quite a few unhappy people had managed to get inside the Capitol despite the Army's vigilance. The galleries were packed, according to diarist Adams; members of the Peace Convention had flooded the House floor. Upon Breckinridge's announcement, a burst of anger rose from within the chamber, with salvos of profanity launched at Winfield Scott, including such pearls as "Old dotard!" and "Free-state pimp!"

Lincoln got the news in a telegram that reached him at four-thirty P.M. while he was still in Columbus, where he would spend the night. "The votes were counted peaceably," the telegram read. "You are elected." A correspondent for the *New York World* observed that Lincoln "read it with his usual equanimity. The dispatch caused much rejoicing among his friends."

But another, graver, threat loomed.

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AS LINCOLN'S JOURNEY ADVANCED, reports from Pinkerton's agents accumulated. The detective increasingly saw the threat to Lincoln as credible, or, as others would later claim, saw the value to himself of proclaiming it so. The Barnum of detective work, Pinkerton pursued his profession with the instincts of both a showman and a novelist, always aware of points of drama. His operatives were strictly limited to providing observations and were forbidden to talk to one another or to interpret what they saw. Only Pinkerton had that mandate. He cast himself as the intellectual center of his operation, the one who collected the various fragments of evidence and pieced them together to solve a crime. To allay any doubts that he was indeed the mastermind, he often wrote about his role or hired ghostwriters to do it for him. By the time of his death in 1884 at age sixty-four, he had published eighteen novels based loosely on his cases, among them *The Somnambulist and the Detective* and *The Expressman and*

the Detective, and in so doing established himself as one of the most famous lawmen of all time.

The danger in Baltimore seemed extreme enough that Pinkerton decided to alert Lincoln's aides. He knew that one of Lincoln's friends was a key member of his traveling entourage, a railroad lawyer named Norman Judd who had been one of Pinkerton's early clients—"a chunky gentleman of about five feet five inches," according to one Washington correspondent.

Pinkerton sent Judd a tentative warning when Lincoln's train passed through Cincinnati on February 13—so tentative, apparently, that Judd did not relay it to Lincoln. By Sunday, February 17, Pinkerton's own observations and reports from his agents had convinced him that the plot to kill Lincoln was indeed real and that it would happen in Baltimore. He composed a letter in which he described his concerns, and then dispatched his lead female detective, Kate Warne, to New York to intercept Lincoln's party and present the letter to Judd.

Warne arrived in New York early on February 19 and traveled to the Astor House, Lincoln's hotel, where she arrived at about four in the morning. She had a long wait: Lincoln's train wouldn't reach New York for another eleven hours.

LINCOLN

The Time Will Come

FEBRUARY 17–21

On sunday, lincoln's friend orville Browning wrote to him with an appraisal of his proposed inaugural address. "When I read your inaugural at Indianapolis, I did so in very great haste, and my attention was more attracted to the clear, bold and forcible statement of principles which are just and true than to considerations of policy and expediency," he wrote. But now after reading it again more carefully, one passage troubled him—a sentence that struck him as unduly aggressive: "All the power at my disposal will be used to reclaim the public property and places which have fallen; to hold, occupy, and possess these, and all other property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties on imports, but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion of any state."

Browning urged Lincoln to drop the part about *reclaiming* public property. Lincoln had already asserted the right to do so in his Indianapolis speech, but this was the inaugural address, a speech for the nation as a whole, in which every word would be dissected for clues as to how Lincoln's administration would address the North-South divide. A vow to reclaim property would be "construed into a threat, or menace, and will be irritating even in the border states," Browning wrote. He told Lincoln that

in whatever conflict might lie ahead, it was “very important” that the secessionists be made to appear as the aggressors. “The first attempt that is made to furnish supplies or reinforcements to Sumter,” he wrote, “will induce aggression by South Carolina, and then the government will stand justified, before the entire country, in repelling that aggression.”

Browning later would offer Lincoln another telling observation: “The time is not yet, but it will come when it will be necessary for you to march an army into the South and proclaim freedom to the slaves.”

Lincoln adopted Browning’s suggestion. He also made a note on the back of the letter’s last page, a whisper of a sentiment Lincoln would later incorporate in his address: “Americans, all, we are not enemies, but friends—We have sacred ties of affection which, though strained by passions, let us hope can never be broken.”

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LINCOLN FOUND LARGE CROWDS at every stop, no matter what the weather. In one city, a man gave him an apple, which prompted a small but savvy boy to shout, “Mr. Lincoln! That man is running for postmaster!” Everyone laughed, including Lincoln. Even this boy understood that Lincoln was now being dogged at every stop by swarms of people seeking patronage jobs in the new administration. The character and size of his retinue changed dramatically from city to city. His cars took on office seekers the way his locomotive took on water. At Girard, Ohio, Horace Greeley himself climbed aboard bearing his familiar red-and-blue traveling blanket, and accompanied Lincoln for a short leg of his journey. As testimony to the fast-changing character of the age, at least one of Lincoln’s trains reached sixty miles an hour.

Lincoln veered east to Albany, where a certain well-respected actor was onstage performing in a play called *The Apostate*. The actor, John Wilkes Booth, threw himself so energetically into his role that at one point he fell on his character’s dagger and carved open a three-inch wound. So well

known was Booth as a “tragedian” that the incident made news as far away as Montgomery, Alabama.

The entourage reached New York City the next day, Tuesday, February 19. The streets outside the Astor House were unusually quiet because all buses and carriages had been shunted to other streets. Among the many who witnessed Lincoln’s arrival was poet Walt Whitman.

“Presently two or three shabby black barouches”—carriages with two large rear wheels, two smaller in front, and two rows of seats facing each other—“made their way with some difficulty through the crowd, and drew up at the Astor House entrance,” Whitman wrote. “A tall figure stepp’d out of the center of the barouches, paused leisurely on the sidewalk, look’d up at the dark granite walls and looming architecture of the grand old hotel—then, after a relieving stretch of arms and legs, turn’d round for over a minute to slowly and good-humoredly scan the appearance of the vast and silent crowds.”

Whitman’s perch afforded him “a capital view of it all and especially of Mr. Lincoln: his looks and gait; his perfect composure and coolness; his unusual and uncouth height; his dress of complete black, stovepipe hat pushed back on his head; dark-brown complexion; seamed and wrinkled yet canny-looking face; black, bushy head of hair; disproportionately long neck; and his hands held behind, as he stood observing the people.”

—

AS LINCOLN MADE HIS way toward the hotel, Kate Warne, Pinkerton’s chief female detective, also got a first look at the president-elect and registered a different impression. In her report she described him as looking “very pale and fatigued.” That evening, she sent a note to Lincoln aide Norman Judd by way of a hotel messenger, urging him to meet her in her room.

Judd complied. “I followed the servant to one of the upper rooms of the hotel,” he wrote, “where, upon entering, I found a lady seated at a table with some papers before her.”

He read Pinkerton's letter. Inexplicably, Judd also kept this one to himself, possibly out of the conviction that it was just one more false threat, like so many others Lincoln had received since his election.

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DURING ONE OF THE many receptions arranged for Lincoln in New York, he met P. T. Barnum, the famed showman, who repeatedly invited him to visit his American Museum. Never one to miss a marketing opportunity, Barnum placed an advertisement on the front page of the *New York World* inviting New Yorkers to come to the museum and use its windows and balconies to observe Lincoln's departure from the city. "Remember, this is the last chance in New York," the ad bellowed. "Come early and get a good place." While there, visitors "at no extra charge" could take in the museum's exhibits, including "The Great Lincoln Turkey," a forty-pounder allegedly to be presented to Lincoln on Inauguration Day; a giant two-thousand-pound bear named Samson; two "living Aztec children"; an albino family from Madagascar; a "man monkey"; thirty living "monster snakes"; a $150 speckled brook trout; and perhaps that most novel of phenomena, "The Living Happy Family." Lincoln didn't go, but his wife and sons did, with the exception of Tad, who demurred on grounds that he had no need to see any more bears; there were "plenty of bears" back home. That night Lincoln took in a popular opera, *Un Ballo in Maschera, A Masked Ball*, by Giuseppe Verdi, set improbably in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, and featuring the assassination of the "governor of Boston." Lincoln did not stay for the climactic murder.

He left for Philadelphia at nine o'clock Thursday morning, February 21, the day before George Washington's birthday. Along the way he stopped in Trenton, the first of a number of moments scheduled to create an allusive link between the nation's first president and its next. Here he addressed the secession crisis head-on. "I fear we shall have to put the foot down firmly," he told his spellbound audience of state legislators; he then raised and lowered his own foot. It was a "quick, but not violent gesture," according to

John Hay. The audience roared approval and kept on roaring. “It was some minutes before Mr. Lincoln was able to proceed,” Hay wrote.

When Lincoln arrived in Philadelphia that afternoon, he was met by a crowd estimated by the *Philadelphia Daily News* at “not less than a quarter of a million people” watched over by 550 city police officers, everyone chilled by a brisk westerly wind. Now and then snow fell. He did not expect to give a formal address but found himself compelled to speak anyway, and delivered the most important speech of his journey, one that whispered a theme soon to be clarified in blood.

First, however, he received disturbing news.

WASHINGTON AND PHILADELPHIA

Dual Warning

FEBRUARY 21

IN WASHINGTON, GEN. WINFIELD SCOTT, who had received Dorothea Dix's warning as relayed by railroad executive Samuel Felton, heard further talk of a potential assassination and launched his own investigation.

The general recruited expert help: the head of the New York City police department, John A. Kennedy, who had recently achieved notoriety for authorizing the seizure in New York Harbor of a shipment of muskets bound for Georgia. Of his own volition, Kennedy had already sent three of his detectives to Washington to investigate threats to the city and to the peaceful transfer of power; now he resolved to go himself "to look over the field."

General Scott offered Kennedy an aide from his own staff and gave him a choice between two accomplished officers, Col. Charles P. Stone and another colonel named Robert E. Lee. "I don't know what induced me to select" Stone, Kennedy said later, "but I did so, and told him of my three detectives in the city and their findings." After a four-year hiatus from the U.S. Army, Stone had newly returned to military life at the request of General Scott, who appointed him inspector general of the District of Columbia Militia.

Like Pinkerton before him, Kennedy also sent detectives into Southern cities. New York officers found themselves exploring the demimonde of Baltimore, Richmond, and Alexandria. In Baltimore a New York police detective named David S. Bookstaver posed as a music agent. Whether Bookstaver ever ran into Pinkerton or his operatives is unclear, but suddenly, it seems, the border South and Baltimore in particular were crawling with detectives, all hearing the same alarming chatter in hotels, bars, and billiard rooms. Bookstaver was so unsettled by what he heard that he took his concerns directly to Colonel Stone in Washington, who in turn passed them on to General Scott.

Lincoln was now two days away from his arrival at Baltimore and his perilous transfer to the B&O line for the final run to Washington. On Thursday, February 21, General Scott met with William Henry Seward and described what the New York detectives and Colonel Stone had learned about the conspiracy now apparently maturing in Baltimore. Seward, too, grew concerned. He asked Scott to have Stone put his report in writing.

Seward resolved to send a warning to Lincoln by the most secure messenger at hand: his own son, Frederick, thirty, soon to become his assistant secretary of state. Seward sent for him at once.

“I was in the gallery of the Senate Chamber shortly after noon on Thursday,” Frederick wrote later, “when one of the pages touched my elbow, and told me that Senator Seward wished to see me immediately.” He found his father waiting in the building lobby. Seward handed Frederick a letter that he himself had just written to Lincoln, along with Colonel Stone’s report and a note from General Scott.

“Whether this story is well founded or not,” Seward told his son, “Mr. Lincoln ought to know of it at once.” He saw no reason for doubt. “General Scott is impressed with the belief that the danger is real,” he told Frederick. “Colonel Stone has facilities for knowing, and is not apt to exaggerate.” Lincoln needed to see these documents as soon as possible, Seward said. “I want you to go by the first train. Find Mr. Lincoln, wherever he is. Let no one else know your errand.”

He also told Frederick that in his cover letter he was advising Lincoln to change the time of his planned passage through Baltimore. “I know it may occasion some embarrassment, and, perhaps, some ill-natured talk,” Seward said. “Nevertheless, I would strongly advise him to do it.”

All Frederick knew at this point was that Lincoln by now would be somewhere in Philadelphia. He boarded the next train and headed north.

“The train, a tedious one, brought me into Philadelphia about ten o’clock at night,” he recalled.

Along the way he had learned from his fellow passengers and from newspaper reports that Lincoln and his retinue planned to spend that night at the Continental Hotel, a massive Italianate structure at Ninth and Chestnut in the heart of the city, four blocks from Independence Hall. At the time of its completion a year earlier it was reputed to be the largest hotel in the nation, with seven hundred rooms for up to twelve hundred guests. Frederick made his way there through streets crowded with cheering celebrants and resounding with music. “Within, the halls and stairways were packed, and the brilliantly-lighted parlors were filled with ladies and gentlemen, who had come to ‘pay their respects,’ ” he wrote. The crowd seemed to grow especially dense ahead of him, and he presumed that Lincoln would be at its center. “Clearly, this was no time for the delivery of a confidential message.”

He found Lincoln’s son Robert and introduced himself; Robert in turn directed him to Ward Lamon, Lincoln’s tall and powerfully built bodyguard, who took Frederick by the arm and said he would bring him to Lincoln right away.

Frederick hesitated; he wanted as private a meeting as possible. At this, Lamon laughed.

“Then, I think I had better take you to his bedroom,” Lamon said. “If you don’t mind waiting there, you’ll be sure to meet him, for he has got to go there some time tonight; and it is the only place I know of where he will be likely to be alone.”

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ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY, on that same day, Lincoln's aide, Norman Judd, received a cryptic message requesting that he come to another hotel—the St. Louis, on Chestnut Street—to meet a man named J. H. Hutchinson. Judd arrived around six forty-five P.M. and this time found Allan Pinkerton himself. Also present was Samuel Felton, the railroad president.

Pinkerton wanted this meeting because he believed the details of the alleged plot had grown alarming enough that Lincoln needed to be informed face-to-face. The detective told Judd he was so convinced that an assassination attempt would be made in Baltimore that he believed the president-elect should abandon the rest of his schedule and leave for Washington immediately to upset whatever arrangements the conspirators might have in place.

Lincoln still had a long night ahead of him full of social responsibilities, set to culminate in a display of fireworks. It was after ten P.M. by the time he was at last free to meet with Pinkerton—roughly the same time that Frederick Seward was making his way to the Continental Hotel. By this time Pinkerton had left his own hotel and had come to the Continental, to Judd's room, wholly unaware that Seward's son would soon be in the same building. Judd sent Lincoln a note asking him to come to his room "so soon as convenient on private business of importance."

Lincoln arrived around eleven P.M. followed by a large crowd, which one of his associates managed to halt at the door. Lincoln recognized Pinkerton from prior business encounters and greeted the detective warmly. Pinkerton told his story. Lincoln listened intently but was skeptical. Pinkerton watched him. "During the entire interview," Pinkerton wrote, "he had not evinced the slightest evidence of agitation or fear. Calm and self-possessed, his only sentiments appeared to be those of profound regret, that the Southern sympathizers could be so far led away by the excitement of the hour, as to consider his death a necessity for the furtherance of their cause."

When Pinkerton urged Lincoln to leave immediately for Washington on a train scheduled to depart Philadelphia in one hour, he rejected the idea. "I didn't like that," Lincoln would later tell an early biographer. "I had made

engagements to visit Harrisburg and go from there to Baltimore and I resolved to do so. I could not believe there was a plot to murder me."

Lincoln considered the next morning to be particularly important. He had timed his Philadelphia stop to coincide with Washington's birthday itself. He was scheduled to climb atop a stage in front of Independence Hall and raise the new thirty-four-star American flag. The symbolism was powerful. The flag represented the entire Union, seceded states and all. Only his actual arrival in Washington would have more importance.

Meanwhile, in Lincoln's bedroom at the Continental, Frederick Seward waited, savoring the quiet "that was in such contrast to the bustle outside."

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AFTER FREDERICK HAD WAITED over an hour, he was at last retrieved by Ward Lamon for his meeting with Lincoln. Frederick had never seen Lincoln in person, only "campaign portraits," but now here came the man himself, striding toward him down the hall. "I could not but notice how accurately they had copied his features," Frederick wrote, "and how totally they had omitted his care-worn look, and his pleasant, kindly smile."

The two exchanged greetings. Lincoln made polite inquiries about Frederick's father and how things were going in Washington. Frederick gave him the three messages: one from his father, one from General Scott, and the report from Col. Charles Stone. Lincoln took a seat at a table under a gas lamp and began to read. Gas lamps were not yet able to cast light directly downward, only up into globes or reflectors, which made reading possible but difficult. The gas made a quiet whooshing sound, like someone blowing air softly through his lips.

Stone's report was direct. Its first sentence read: "A New York detective officer who has been on duty for three weeks past, reports there is serious danger of violence to, and the assassination of, Mr. Lincoln, in his passage through the city should the time of passage be known." The detective, Stone wrote, had only recently come to believe Lincoln might be endangered, "but

now he deems it imminent—He deems the danger one which the authorities and people in Balt. cannot guard against.”

Lincoln read the report in silence with no sign of worry, at least none that Frederick could detect. “Although its contents were of a somewhat startling nature,” Frederick recalled, “he made no exclamation, and I saw no sign of surprise in his face.” Frederick was unaware of Lincoln’s meeting earlier that night with Allan Pinkerton.

Lincoln read the report through, then read it again. He turned to Frederick.

“Did you hear anything about the way this information was obtained?” he asked. “Do you know anything about how they got it?”

This was the first of a number of pointed questions that Frederick was hard-pressed to answer.

“Your father and General Scott do not say who they think are concerned in it,” Lincoln said. “Do they think they know?”

Frederick could offer little, other than to say that he believed his father’s knowledge of the conspiracy was limited to the contents of Colonel Stone’s report.

“Did you hear any names mentioned?” Lincoln pressed. “Did you, for instance, ever hear anything said about such a name as Pinkerton?”

No, Frederick answered; only General Scott and Colonel Stone.

Lincoln paused.

“I may as well tell you why I ask,” Lincoln said. He explained that even before his departure from Springfield there had been rumors of trouble. “I never attached much importance to them—never wanted to believe any such thing.” Meanwhile, he continued, Pinkerton without his knowledge had become involved and had begun reporting his findings to Norman Judd. Lincoln told Frederick that earlier that very evening he had met with Pinkerton and heard him warn of “an attempt on my life in the confusion and hurly-burly of the reception at Baltimore.”

To Frederick this seemed “a strong corroboration” of the danger Lincoln faced, but Lincoln did not see it that way.

He smiled, shook his head. “That is exactly why I was asking you about names. If different persons, not knowing of each other’s work, have been pursuing separate clues that led to the same result, why then it shows there may be something in it. But if this is only the same story, filtered through two channels, and reaching me in two ways, then that don’t make it any stronger. Don’t you see?”

Frederick told him he believed the two investigations were independent and that out of prudence Lincoln should adopt his father’s suggestion to change the time and manner of his final train ride to Baltimore.

“Well, we haven’t got to decide it to-night,” Lincoln said, “and I see it is getting late.”

Lincoln sensed Frederick’s disappointment at his not immediately heeding the warning. With kindness in his voice (as Frederick later recalled), Lincoln said: “You need not think I will not consider it well. I shall think it over carefully, and try to decide it right; and I will let you know in the morning.”

PHILADELPHIA

Change of Plan

FEBRUARY 22

IN PHILADELPHIA ON FRIDAY MORNING, February 22, Lincoln climbed into a carriage drawn by four white horses and proceeded to Independence Hall. “The President elect had enjoyed a good night’s rest, and felt better for it,” the *Philadelphia North American* reported, adding that “he came forth fresh as a daisy.”

A large crowd was already present and demanded not only that he raise the flag, as planned, but also make a speech, which he had not planned. He obliged. As often happened when he spoke extemporaneously—as had happened in Indianapolis—he let down his guard. A reporter for the *Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin* noted that he spoke “in a low tone, hardly audible.”

He was deeply moved, he said, to find himself standing in the place where the nation was founded. “I have never had a feeling politically that did not spring from the sentiments embodied in the Declaration of Independence.”

A loud cheer rose from his audience.

He explained that the struggle for independence and the enduring nature of the resulting confederation of states had often led him to ponder what guiding principle had made it so durable. “It was not the mere matter of the

separation of the colonies from the mother land," he said, "but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time."

Great applause, here.

"It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights should be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that *all* should have an equal chance."

Another round of cheering.

"This is the sentiment embodied in that Declaration of Independence.

"Now, my friends, can this country be saved upon that basis? If it can, I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help to save it. If it can't be saved upon that principle, it will be truly awful. But, if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle"—he slapped a hand against his knee—"I was about to say I would rather be assassinated on this spot than to surrender it."

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HE ASCENDED A SPECIAL platform erected around a tall flagstaff outside the hall. The crowd had multiplied. Surrounding trees were ornamented with men. Lincoln removed his coat and hauled the flag up hand over hand. The resulting cheers were described by one observer as "maniacal" and resounded for minutes.

The thing that lingered was Lincoln's reference to equality, the uniquely American promise "that *all* should have an equal chance." A reporter for the *New York Herald* was quick to discern the greater meaning of Lincoln's remark: Fulfillment of that promise, he wrote, meant "nothing more or less than the progressive steps of African emancipation."

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THAT MORNING LINCOLN AGREED to alter his schedule in accord with a plan put forth by Pinkerton and Norman Judd. First, however, he insisted on

fulfilling his obligations in Harrisburg, where he was to speak to the state legislature.

Under the new plan, Lincoln would then leave Harrisburg in secret on a special train bound for Philadelphia to catch Samuel Felton's regularly scheduled midnight express to Baltimore, which would arrive at the city's Calvert Street station at three-thirty in the morning. There, before dawn, he would change trains for the final run to Washington.

Lincoln understood there was a political risk in seeming to sneak into the capital, especially when the rest of the journey had been so public. This did not daunt him. "Unless there are some other reasons besides fear of ridicule," he said, "I am disposed to carry out Judd's plan."

FORT SUMTER

Salute

FEBRUARY 22

For the men at fort Sumter, the stress and fatigue of heavy work and constantly being on guard was taking an increasing toll. Asst. Surgeon Crawford had always been in robust health, but the stress was wearing him down. “If we get out of this place safely I must have some holiday,” Crawford wrote to his brother. “I need rest and quiet. My throat still burns like a coal and my general health for the first time in my service is not good. My heart is sad at the condition of the country and as far as I can see there is no prospect of better times.”

He made no effort to reassure his brother. “You have cause for all your concern for us, for we daily, I may say hourly anticipate an attack,” he wrote in another letter. “Everything foreshadows it and it cannot be long postponed. We have not been reinforced and you ask with great pertinence, *Why*. Why indeed. Simply because the ‘don’t initiate’ policy of Mr. Buchanan has led us on by degrees to the point at which to *reinforce* us would require an army and a general battle.” The Carolinians were working at a furious pace twenty-four hours a day, Crawford wrote. “I have just looked over at their works at Cummings Point. They look like bees, so large a force is at work there.”

Crawford expressed a degree of bitterness, leavened with pride, and made it clear that he had no illusions about the subtext of what was occurring. “We are to be left to ourselves and our own exertions *as a sacrifice* to turn public opinion against those who attack us, and then if possible save the border states and the Union,” he wrote. “But there is a power behind the throne, the first gun fired at our fort will call the country to arms; the bugle that sounds the attack upon *us* will echo along the slopes of the Alleghenies, and the granite hills of the North, along the shores of the great lakes, and far away on the rolling prairies of the west and the earth will shake with the tread of armed men.”

His foremost hope, he told his brother, is that “we come honorably out of our difficulties. That is my earnest prayer now.”

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ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, Major Anderson broke his commitment to conserving ammunition and authorized his gun crews to fire a salute in honor of George Washington’s birthday.

This began at noon. The men fired thirty-four times, one shot for each state, including the seceded states, at thirty-second intervals. “These were loaded with canister and produced a fine effect,” wrote Asst. Surgeon Crawford, who happened to be on guard duty. He directed the fire of guns located at Sumter’s gate. Spectators crowded the ramparts of the opposing forts now in Confederate hands, Crawford noted, and “drew their inferences as to what *shot and shell* would do from the same sources.”

Diligent always, Major Anderson wrote a message to his superiors notifying them of the tribute, even as the guns were booming and gusting white smoke into the air.

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“THE INSOLENT WRETCH!” WROTE Mary Chesnut in her diary when she learned of Anderson’s salute several days later. “Anderson fired 34 guns for all the original United States—in utter scorn of our ‘Confederate States.’ ”

WASHINGTON

One Very Dark Night

FEBRUARY 22

ON THE WAY TO HARRISBURG, Lincoln stopped in Leaman Place, Pennsylvania, near Lancaster. He was so hoarse he could barely speak. The waiting crowd, said to number five thousand, called instead for his wife to appear, at which point, according to the *Lancaster Daily Evening Press*, "Mr. L. brought her out, and said he had concluded to give them 'the long and the short of it!' This remark—alluding to the disparity between his height and hers—produced a loud burst of laughter, followed by enthusiastic cheers as the train moved off."

This was Friday, February 22, the last day before Lincoln's arrival in Washington. After Harrisburg, he was to travel in secret, accompanied only by his putative bodyguard Ward Lamon. The rest of his retinue would follow on the scheduled train and reach Baltimore at midday. "Tomorrow we enter slave territory," secretary Hay wrote to a friend. "There may be trouble in Baltimore. If so, we will not go to Washington, unless in long, narrow boxes."

Anxiety about the coming inauguration seemed to permeate the atmosphere. From William Seward's home in Auburn, New York, his wife, Frances, wrote, "I shall not feel that you are quite safe until the 4th of March has passed. I am glad there is but 10 days more." She added a wry

observation about Lincoln's journey thus far and his propensity for flirting with, and sometimes kissing, young women. "Mr. Lincoln is having a pleasing tour—it must be especially gratifying to the damsels who were kissed in the presence of the multitude. I wish men would not allow women to make fools of them but they do sometimes."

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IN WASHINGTON, GENERAL SCOTT'S soldiers, now numbering close to seven hundred, watched the streets—all armed, some on horseback, others manning cannon placed in sensitive locations. The cannon in particular raised dark imaginings and heightened the atmosphere of impending danger. Not everyone approved. The one Southern member on the House Treason Committee proposed a resolution demanding the immediate removal of the troops. Buchanan refused. He replied that if he had not deployed these men and "evil consequences" had followed, "I should never have forgiven myself."

And then, that Friday night, an incident occurred that seemed to confirm the necessity of it all.

A thirty-six-year-old Republican congressman from New York named Charles H. Van Wyck strolled through a dark neighborhood just north of the U.S. Capitol. This was *not* the Van Wyck for whom a particularly clogged New York expressway would one day be named; that honor would go to future mayor Robert Van Wyck, who at this moment was eleven years old.

Van Wyck loathed slavery and was outspoken on the subject. The South still smarted from a speech he had delivered in March 1860 in which he had attacked slavery and the Democratic Party in lurid terms. He issued what to the Southern mind was an unforgivable slander: He called Southerners cowards. When published in the *Congressional Globe*, precursor to the *Congressional Record*, the speech ran to nearly eight full pages. It had not gone over well with Southern members of Congress. One, from Mississippi, called him a "scoundrel" and invited him to "go outside of the District of

Columbia and test the question of personal courage with any southern man."

Newspapers around the country reported Van Wyck's speech. Death threats followed. But Van Wyck was undeterred. On Friday, February 22, as Lincoln was making his way to Harrisburg, Van Wyck delivered another attack on slavery. That night, as on other nights, he traveled armed, with a pistol in his pocket.

At about 11:30, three men approached. One came up beside him with a large bowie knife and stabbed him in the chest. The knife easily penetrated Van Wyck's heavy overcoat, but the blade's progress was impeded by a copy of the *Globe* folded several times over and "a pocket memorandum book of unusual thickness," as the *New-York Times* reported. Otherwise, the *Times* judged, this first strike likely would have been fatal.

But now Van Wyck leapt into action. As he struggled with the first attacker, another, also armed with a knife, tried to stab him. Van Wyck grabbed that blade with his left hand and knocked the assailant down with a single right-hand punch, then pulled out his gun and shot the first man, who fell to the ground. A third attacker stepped in and knocked Van Wyck unconscious.

The men fled, undoubtedly afraid that Van Wyck would now draw from his coat a fully loaded cannon and full complement of cavalry. Van Wyck's performance left the *Times* awestruck. "One man against three, attacked without any warning, in an unfrequented place, and in the shadow of a thick row of shade trees, and yet he managed to shoot one of his assailants, knock down another, and escaped with his life."

Van Wyck survived. Whether the attack was politically motivated was never determined, but it seemed to be one more marker of the nation's descent toward violence. As the *Times* asked, "Is this the beginning of assassination of Republicans here for the exercise of free speech?"

WASHINGTON

The Man in the Felt Hat

FEBRUARY 22–23

LINCOLN PUT ON A WORN overcoat and carried a hat of a kind he had never worn before, but which by now had become fashionable in America: a "kossuth" hat made of soft felt, with a low crown, named after Hungarian politician Lajos Kossuth de Udvard et Kossuthfalva, or Louis Kossuth for short, who had been exiled to America in 1851 after Russia invaded Hungary. His ardent support for democracy made him a popular figure in the 1850s; his hat, plumed with an ostrich feather, had become popular too. A variation of it became standard issue for the U.S. Army in 1858, but without the plume. Lincoln also carried a shawl, and walked with his shoulders slumped forward to disguise his height.

The plan worked well. Incredibly, no one appeared to recognize Lincoln despite his great height, craggy features, and overall distinctive look. As a precaution the American Telegraph Co. agreed to temporarily sever all telegraph lines from Harrisburg "in all directions," according to one planner's account; the company's superintendent was to dispatch "a professional Climber to do the needful thing in the right place and at the right time. I think we may safely rely that Harrisburg will be isolated completely."

Lincoln traveled through the night, stopping first in Philadelphia, where he, Ward Lamon, Pinkerton, and detective Kate Warne boarded the rearmost sleeping car of the night express to Baltimore, scheduled to leave at ten-fifty P.M. Warne had secured these berths by tipping the conductor; she claimed she needed them for "a sick friend and party." By sheer coincidence New York City's police superintendent, John Kennedy, occupied a berth at the front of the same car, having decided to go to Baltimore himself to provide personal assistance to Lincoln. Kennedy had no idea Lincoln was on his train, nor did Lincoln or Pinkerton know that Kennedy was aboard.

Lincoln, to further disguise his presence and act the part of an ailing friend, leaned on Pinkerton's arm and walked with an exaggerated stoop.

Soon after leaving Philadelphia, the train entered Delaware, the first slave state of Lincoln's inaugural journey; then came Maryland, the second. He reached Baltimore at three-thirty in the morning on Saturday, February 23. His sleeping car was dragged without hazard through the empty streets of the city and attached to his final train. Kate Warne left the group here and checked into a hotel. She filed her report, closing with, "Mr. Lincoln is very homely, and so very tall that he could not lay straight in his berth."

The train left Baltimore at four-fifteen A.M. Two hours later, bodyguard Ward Lamon caught a first glimpse of the incomplete dome of the U.S. Capitol.

This was Lincoln's triumphant arrival: an empty railroad station, before dawn, in disguise, at just about the same time that his originally planned train would be leaving Harrisburg with his wife and sons aboard.

The depot wasn't entirely empty, however. As Pinkerton told it, the three men—Lincoln, Lamon, and he—had just stepped off the train when a shadowy male figure emerged from behind a pillar and looked sharply at Lincoln. "Abe," the man said, "you can't play that on me." He rushed forward.

Pinkerton, alarmed, blocked him. "I hit the gentleman a punch with my elbow as he was close to me, staggering him back, but he recovered himself, and again took hold of Mr. Lincoln remarking that he knew him. I

was beginning to think that we were discovered, and that we *might* have to fight, and drew back clenching my fist, and raising it to take the gentleman a blow, when Mr. Lincoln took hold of my arm saying, 'Don't strike him Allan, don't strike him—that is my friend Washburne—don't you know him?' "

This was Rep. Elihu Washburne, one of only two men in Washington who had been alerted to Lincoln's new arrival time. The other was Senator Seward, who was not present in the station.

Washburne's own account was rather less dramatic—and perhaps more accurate. "I planted myself behind one of the pillars in the old Washington and Baltimore depot where I could see and not be observed," he wrote. "Presently the train came rumbling in on time. I saw every car emptied and there was no Mr. Lincoln. I was well-nigh in despair and about to leave when I saw slowly emerge from the last sleeping car, three persons." One of these was a tall man wearing "a low-crowned hat, a muffler around his neck, and a short bob-tailed overcoat," which imparted to him the look of a "well-to-do farmer."

Washburne immediately saw through the disguise. He stepped forward. "How are you, Lincoln?" he said.

This did startle Lincoln and his companions, but, as Washburne put it, Lincoln "relieved them at once by remarking in his peculiar voice, 'This is only Washburne!' "

They headed for the exit and a carriage that Washburne had arranged.

According to Washburne, Seward overslept and missed the arrival. Pinkerton, in a report dated that day, agreed that Seward was not at the station. But Seward claimed otherwise—or at least that's what he told his wife in a letter later that day.

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WASHBURNE TOOK LINCOLN TO the Willard Hotel, located on Pennsylvania Avenue just steps from the White House. They entered through the "Lady's Entrance" and were met by one of the Willard brothers, according to

Pinkerton. It was only now that Seward arrived, by Washburne's recollection, "much out of breath and somewhat chagrined to think he had not been up in season to be at the depot."

Seward would not allow himself to miss future opportunities. Just as Lincoln needed Seward's allegiance, so Seward tried at every turn to seduce Lincoln into hearing his counsels and following his will, much to the annoyance of Lincoln's wife, Mary, who called him "that hypocrite Seward" and a "dirty abolition sneak." His fellow cabinet members, like Navy Secretary Gideon Welles, chafed at Seward's growing connection to Lincoln. Seward, Welles wrote in his diary, "spent a considerable portion of every day with the President, instructing him, relating interesting details of occurrences in the Senate, and inculcating his political party notions." He loved to be thought of as "premier," Welles wrote; he "runs to the President two or three times a day,—gets his ear, gives him his tongue, makes himself interesting and artfully contrives to dispose of many measures, or give them direction independent of his associates."

Seward waged his campaign of influence across all fronts, shamelessly, even once buying kittens for Lincoln's sons, Willie and Tad, knowing how much Lincoln adored the boys and kittens too; soon he would begin taking Lincoln along with him on late-afternoon carriage rides through the city, ostensibly just to take in the evening sights.

But always underneath his obliging exterior ran a current of resentment—that it was Lincoln, not he, who occupied the White House, which was visible from his own house, a three-story rental on Lafayette Square. "I am a chief reduced to a subordinate position," Seward wrote to his wife, "and surrounded with a guard, to see that I do not do too much for my country, lest some advantage may revert indirectly to my own fame."

When told on one occasion that his failure to offer a prominent Republican a foreign posting would cause widespread disappointment, Seward could hold back no longer. "Disappointment!" he snapped. "You speak to me of disappointment. To me, who was justly entitled to the Republican nomination for the presidency, and who had to stand aside and see it given to a little Illinois lawyer. You speak to me of disappointment!"

That he referred to the six-foot-four Lincoln as “little” can only be seen as a measure of the intensity of his irritation.

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BY NOW, THE WILLARD, built by brothers Joseph and Henry Willard, had become the social hub of the city. The hotel, observed Nathaniel Hawthorne, “could more justly be called the center of Washington and the Union than either the Capitol, the White House, or the State Department.” Getting to this point had been a struggle for the Willards, however, until their hotel was selected in 1859 to host an eighteen-hundred-guest sendoff for Britain’s ambassador to America, Lord Napier, and then, in May 1860, to lodge a delegation of seventy-seven emissaries from notoriously insular Japan, who arrived for a three-week stay to deliver a ceremonial copy of a history-making trade agreement with America. “We began to doubt whether we were not on another planet,” one of the Japanese guests said, upon seeing Americans dance. They were mystified, too, by American religion. “The principal object of their worship,” wrote another Japanese guest, “is a naked man of about forty nailed through the hands and feet to a cross, and whose side is pierced.”

First Lincoln was given room 13 on the second floor; he soon transferred to parlor suite 6, also on the second floor, but far more spacious and luxurious, with two bedrooms, two parlors, and a bathroom, as well as views of Pennsylvania Avenue and his future home. Originally he and his family were booked by the inaugural “Committee on Arrangements” to stay at the National Hotel, at Pennsylvania Avenue and Eighth Street, two and a half miles from the White House. Mary balked. The National had been the site five years earlier of a lethal outbreak of ptomaine poisoning caused by fecal matter in food and water. It had seriously sickened James Buchanan (then America’s minister to Britain) and killed his nephew and Harriet Lane’s brother. It left Buchanan so haunted by nausea and diarrhea that he feared he might collapse during his 1857 inauguration; he stationed a doctor nearby ready with two trusted cure-alls, smelling salts and brandy. Mary

Lincoln did not want to risk a repeat. The Willard, only a block from the White House, looked promising and was the hotel of choice for Republicans, but was fully booked with Peace Convention delegates—until the Arrangements Committee persuaded one of them, William E. Dodge of New York, to give up his prime second-floor suite, number 6, for the president's use.

Apparently the hotel managed to find a room for Pinkerton, who also checked in, and, after a bath and breakfast, sent telegrams to Norman Judd and to others who had assisted in getting Lincoln safely to Washington. Pinkerton's coded communications were no longer necessary, but, always with an eye for drama, he encrypted the last message anyway: "Plums has Nuts—arr'd at Barley—all right."

Plums was Pinkerton;

Barley was Washington;

and Nuts, for whatever reason, was Lincoln.

In all, Lincoln had traveled nearly two thousand miles and given over one hundred speeches, all without incident, a remarkable thing given the accumulating rumors of impending violence and the fact that he had traveled with only minimal security—all that way, only to arrive at his new hometown in secret and disguise. It was a mistake, he realized. Just how big a mistake would soon become painfully apparent.

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ON THAT SATURDAY OF Lincoln's arrival, one more state fled the Union. Texas voters overwhelmingly approved secession, by a vote of 46,129 to 14,697, thereby bringing the total of seceded states to seven, or roughly one-fifth of the country.

A week earlier, facing a minimal threat from a mob of civilians and ragtag militia, the general in charge of U.S. Army forces in Texas, Georgia-born David E. Twiggs, seventy-one years old, had surrendered all federal outposts in the state to the Confederacy, including the fabled Alamo, along with their stockpiles of weapons, in the process cutting adrift twenty-four

hundred federal soldiers, or about 15 percent of the existing United States Army. Buchanan fired him for “treachery to the flag of his country.”

But Twiggs quickly found another employer: the Confederate States Army, which made him a brigadier general.

WASHINGTON

A Rumor of Plaid

FEBRUARY 23

LINCOLN'S SECRET ARRIVAL TRANSFIXED WASHINGTON. A correspondent for the *New-York Times* gushed, "The whole city has been agreeably surprised by the coup d'état of the President elect, who transported himself as if by the wand of an enchanter, from Philadelphia to Washington, without having been seen or even dreamed of."

An article on the paper's front page the next day, Monday, February 25, embedded an indelible image in the national imagination when it stated that Lincoln "wore a Scotch plaid cap and a very long military cloak, so that he was entirely unrecognizable." Cartoonists, blessing the day, added a kilt; one depicted Lincoln with the now requisite Scotch cap peering from a freight car in wide-eyed terror at a cat in full hiss. *Harper's Weekly* titled a four-part cartoon "The Flight of Abraham," with Lincoln demonstrating courage in the first panel but then bolting in panic toward Washington, wearing of course a tam-o'-shanter. The legend made its way into Mary Chesnut's diary. "Lincoln flew through Baltimore, locked up in an express car," she wrote. "He wore a Scotch cap." In another entry, she derided his "noble entrance into the Government of a free people."

Columnists on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line skewered Lincoln, though the secessionist press tended to sneer rather than laugh. "Everybody

here is disgusted at his cowardly and undignified entry," reported the *Charleston Mercury*'s man in Washington. He accused Lincoln of exhibiting "the most wretched cowardice." The proslavery *New York Herald* likened Lincoln's arrival to that of a "thief in the night." A number of newspapers observed that Lincoln's journey was like a passage on the Underground Railroad, thereby conjuring in racist minds an image of Lincoln as a fugitive slave.

All this underscored an inescapable truth, that at a time when Lincoln needed to appear as commanding as possible, he had slipped quietly into the capital of the country he was now expected to lead. Thoughtful observers found little to laugh at. A diarist identified only as "Public Man" wrote that "when we have reached a point at which an elected President of the United States consents to be smuggled through by night to the capital of the country, lest he should be murdered in one of the chief cities of the Union, who can blame the rest of the world for believing that we are a failure?" Another diarist, George Templeton Strong, warned that much rested on whether the assassination plot was real. "It's to be hoped that the conspiracy can be proved beyond cavil," he wrote. "If it cannot be made manifest and indisputable, this surreptitious nocturnal dodging or sneaking of the President-elect into his capital city, under cloud of night, will be used to damage his moral position and throw ridicule on his administration."

Unfortunately for Lincoln, the existence of a credible plot was anything but manifest and indisputable. No weapons were confiscated, no arrests made. The barber Ferrandini was accused of planning to kill Lincoln but was never formally indicted. No grand jury convened; no trial was held. Ward Lamon doubted that a specific plot existed. "It is perfectly manifest that there was no conspiracy," he would write a decade later. Pinkerton dismissed him as a "brainless egotistical fool." When Chicago's mayor publicly accused Pinkerton of concocting a hoax, the two wound up battling it out with their fists on the street.

Doubts and competing claims would drive Pinkerton in 1868 to publish a defense meant not just to confirm the existence of the plot, but also to ensure that he got all the credit for saving Lincoln's life and to rebut the

counter claims of New York police superintendent John Kennedy that it was actually he and his New York City detectives who saved the day. Even so, doubts would linger into the twenty-first century, when an expert on Pinkerton's practices would write, "There is no confirmation of a single particular of the plot outside of Pinkerton's word."

It was also the case that the original train, still commonly believed to be carrying Lincoln and still hewing to its published itinerary, and therefore still a likely target for any conspiracy, was unmolested when it entered Baltimore, according to private secretary Nicolay. Lincoln's family, he wrote, "witnessed great crowds in the streets of Baltimore, but encountered neither turbulence nor incivility of any kind."

Meanwhile newly elected Confederate President Jefferson Davis strode into Montgomery for his own inauguration ablaze with war lust, proclaiming that the North must be ready to "smell southern gunpowder and feel southern steel."

WASHINGTON

The Old Gentlemen Pay a Call

FEBRUARY 23–24

ON FEBRUARY 23, THE DAY of Lincoln's arrival in Washington, the president-elect invited the delegates of the Washington Peace Convention—all of them—to a reception at nine P.M. in his room at the Willard, parlor suite number 6. He was particularly interested in meeting one of them, William Cabell Rives of Virginia, sixty-seven years old, a former U.S. congressman and senator who had studied law under Thomas Jefferson at Monticello. Though Rives owned nearly one hundred slaves, he was a devout unionist. What Lincoln did not know was that he was quite short, a trait relevant only because of the encounter soon to occur.

Rives had not intended to do much speaking at the Peace Convention, but as it grew deadlocked, with each side increasingly convinced of its own virtue, he felt he could no longer just sit and watch. At one point he leapt to his feet and launched into a ninety-minute wholly extemporaneous plea for North and South to find a way to reunite. "I condemn the secession of States," he said. "I detest it. But the great fact is still before us. Seven states have gone out from among us." Coercion to bring them back would solve nothing, he warned. "You may spend millions of treasure, you may shed oceans of blood, but you cannot conquer any five or seven States of this Union." He urged both sides to recognize that unless they made immediate

concessions, Virginia, whose secession convention was still underway, and fellow border states also would secede, but he addressed the Republican members in particular. “War is impending,” he said. “Do you wish to govern a country convulsed by civil war? The country is divided. Do you wish to govern a fraction of the country?”

He had personal experience with the horrors of civil war, he told his audience, an allusion to the time he spent as America’s minister to France. “I have seen the pavements of Paris covered, and her gutters running with fraternal blood: God forbid that I should see this horrid picture repeated in my own country.”

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ONE HUNDRED OR SO delegates showed up at parlor suite number 6. Despite the crush, they had no problem spotting Lincoln, who towered over them all, an aspect of the president-elect that they undoubtedly had read about but now were able to appreciate in person. Far from the hell-raising John Brown surrogate they may have expected, Lincoln moved among them with a cordial grace, escorted from delegate to delegate by Salmon Chase, a former governor of Ohio who helped found the Republican Party. He was also a conferee and would soon become Lincoln’s treasury secretary, though this had not yet been made final.

“They saw a tall, powerful man whose grand face overlooked them all; whose voice was kindly, who greeted every one with dignity and a courteous propriety of expression which surprised his friends,” wrote Vermont delegate Lucius E. Chittenden, the official keeper of Peace Convention records. Now and then a delegate would ask Lincoln a pointed question tinged with “a slight contemptuous disrespect,” Chittenden recalled. “Then his stature seemed to grow loftier, and there was a ring to his voice and flash from his eyes which discouraged a repetition of the experiment.”

Upon being introduced to Rives, Lincoln told him, “You are a smaller man than I supposed.”

He meant no offense; he often deployed his own great height as a device to warm initial meetings with strangers, as he had done repeatedly during his train journey to Washington. Lincoln now quickly qualified his remark: “I mean in person: every one is acquainted with the greatness of your intellect. It is, indeed, pleasant to meet one who has so honorably represented his country in Congress and abroad.”

The ever-courtly Rives took this for the compliment it was and replied in kind, telling Lincoln, “I feel myself to be a small man in your presence.” After asserting his own dedication to saving the Union, Rives observed that “the clouds that hang over it are very dark. I have no longer the courage of my younger days. I can do little—you can do much. Everything now depends on you.”

An uncomfortable pause followed as Lincoln considered a response.

“I cannot agree to that,” he said at last. “My course is as plain as a turnpike road. It is marked out by the Constitution. I am in no doubt which way to go. Suppose now we all stop discussing and try the experiment of obedience to the Constitution and the laws. Don’t you think it would work?”

Rives came away from this encounter feeling that Lincoln, though “good-natured and well-intentioned,” did not grasp the true gravity of the crisis, as he wrote in a letter to his son the next day. “He seems to think of nothing but jokes and stories.”

A few days later the Peace Convention approved a proposed Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution to be submitted to Congress for a vote. All seven of its clauses dealt with slavery, including one nicknamed the “Never-Never” clause, which would bar Congress from ever interfering with slavery as it existed in any state or territory in the country. The seven clauses underscored the fact that for all of the South’s efforts to blame the crisis on Northern tyranny in imposing tariffs, collecting revenue, and ordaining “internal improvements,” the crux of the crisis was in fact slavery. This was obvious to all at the time, if not to members of a certain school of twentieth-century historiography who sought to cast the conflict in the bloodless terms of states’ rights. As famed historian Samuel Eliot

Morison observed, “I wish that some of our evasive historians, our mufflers of great passionate issues, who are trying to persuade the American public that Negro slavery had nothing to do with the Civil War, would read the debates in this Peace Convention.”

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RIVES, EXHAUSTED, PREPARED TO return to Virginia but received another message from Lincoln, this one requesting that he and several other key Southern delegates return to the Willard for a second meeting, this also at nine P.M.

Lincoln, too, seemed tired; he sat in a chair with his feet up on a spindle, elbows on his bent knees, his hands at the sides of his face. The conversation quickly grew testy, though Lincoln began it with remarks aimed at putting the delegates at ease, repeating his vow to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act and protect slavery in states where it already existed. One of his guests, ominously named Charles Slaughter Morehead, a former governor of Kentucky, entreated Lincoln to remove all federal troops from Fort Sumter lest violence break out and a “fratricidal war” result. At this, Rives stood and warned that if Lincoln resorted to coercion, his own home state of Virginia, despite its border status, would not hesitate to secede. “Old as I am,” Rives said, “and dearly as I love this Union, in that event I go, with all my heart and soul.”

Lincoln rose and walked up to Rives, according to Morehead’s recollection. “Mr. Rives!” Lincoln said. “Mr. Rives! If Virginia will stay in, I will withdraw the troops from Fort Sumter.”

Rives disclaimed holding the power to direct Virginia’s course but told Lincoln, “If you do that it will be one of the wisest things you have ever done. Do that, and give us guarantees, and I can promise you that whatever influence I possess shall be exerted to promote the Union and restore it to what it was.”

But Lincoln offered no guarantees. Stung by the aggressive character of the conversation that night, Lincoln closed the meeting with a jab that bore

an uncharacteristic degree of hurt. “Well, gentlemen,” he said, “I have been wondering very much whether, if Mr. Douglas or Mr. Bell had been elected President you would have dared to talk to him as freely as you have to me.”

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THE SENATE RECEIVED THE amendment proposed by the Peace Convention and promptly voted it into oblivion, 28 to 7. It never went to the House. But a vestige survived in the form of a parallel constitutional amendment proposed in the House by Rep. Thomas Corwin of Ohio and in the Senate by William Seward that guaranteed that Congress would not interfere with slavery where it currently existed.

This vestigial stub fared better. The House approved it by a vote of 133 to 65; the Senate did likewise, 24 to 12. Lincoln later forwarded the proposed amendment, the original thirteenth, to all state governors, including those in the Confederacy, for ratification by their legislatures. He neither endorsed it nor denounced it. As he saw it, the amendment merely made explicit—“express and irrevocable”—a principle already embodied in the Constitution and one he himself had espoused many times.

Only a few states would ultimately ratify the amendment before events made it irrelevant. Known to future centuries as the Shadow or Ghost Amendment, it remained an active congressionally approved but unratified amendment into the twenty-first century, theoretically still open to a final vote by the states.

MONTGOMERY

Mary Chesnut's Diary

FEBRUARY 23–25

In Montgomery, delegates to the Confederacy's founding convention continued their deliberations. With their new president, Jefferson Davis, now in office, they turned their attention primarily to conceiving a new constitution.

Mary Chesnut arrived in Montgomery on Saturday, February 23, to join her husband, James, a delegate. "We had a shocking day on the road—bad roads and hot cars," she wrote. "Sunday morning it seemed like a dream that I was here, I had been so ill all night. I found my husband well—apparently glad to see me—and working so hard. I could hear scratch scratch go the pen as I would wake in the night."

But in short order, after church, she was again holding court. She dined with Judge Thomas Jefferson Withers, "The Judge," Mary's uncle by marriage, who nursed his latest pet peeve, the Confederacy's provisional congress. "*Raved* and abused" it, Mary wrote. One grievance of many: that the congress gave newly inaugurated Confederate President Jefferson Davis a house. (Though Mary surely did not know it, Withers was the same Withers who as a young man at South Carolina College had shared salacious letters with James Henry Hammond, the recently resigned U.S. senator and planter.) Other visitors arrived, including John L. Manning, "the

handsome ex Governor" of South Carolina, said to be one of the richest men in the South and owner of 648 enslaved Blacks; he would soon become a big presence in her life and a source of jealousy for her husband.

That night James got into a tiff with Withers. The Judge had set off on a new rant, this time about his own constituents back in South Carolina, whom he called "knaves and fools."

At this point, Mary wrote, her husband's patience ceased. "Then you ought to go home," James snapped at the Judge. "If I thought as you do of my constituents I would not keep office an hour. I would not represent such people."

"Angry words went on," Mary wrote, "and I felt frightened to death. It is such pity the Judge will be so harsh—and abusive of everybody."

That was Sunday. Monday brought more visitors and another grievance for Judge Withers, this time the extravagance of having six white horses (two more than Lincoln's carriage in Philadelphia) pull Jefferson Davis's carriage to his inauguration ceremony.

Then came a story, too, about a friend of the Chesnuts' from Washington, Aurelia Fitzpatrick; how she attended Davis's inauguration and "made herself conspicuous" by sitting among the all-male members of the provisional congress seated behind the podium, the only woman to do so—"and then poking Jefferson Davis in the back with her parasol before the assembled multitude to make him speak to her. What a woman."

More engagements followed. "A brilliant dinner." Then home, to find Alabama's governor, Andrew B. Moore, and Withers, tamed for the moment, waiting for her in order to take her to a ball at the home of a local judge. Mary closed her diary entry for the day with an exhalation: "And they say it is dull in Montgomery!"

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IN FACT, SHE DID not think much of the city. "Every body persists in opening conversation by saying, 'How do you like Montgomery?' " she wrote in her diary. "And I, hideous Hypocrite, answer, 'charmed.' "

Jefferson Davis seemed to like it, or at least hoped to persuade his wife, Varina, of its virtues. “This is a gay and handsome town of some eight thousand inhabitants, and will not be an unpleasant residence,” he wrote to her two days after his inauguration; he failed to note that half the population was enslaved. “As soon as an hour is my own, I will look for a house and write to you more fully.”

Varina had little choice in the matter. Theirs was a marriage rife with subterranean tension. Davis was a creature of the planter aristocracy, patriarchal in the extreme, a trait made even more pronounced by the nearly two-decade difference in their ages. They had married in 1845, when she was eighteen years old and he thirty-seven. She caught a glimpse of this aspect of him during their courtship. “He impresses me as a remarkable kind of man,” she told her mother, “but of uncertain temper, and has a way of taking for granted that everybody agrees with him when he expresses an opinion, which offends me.”

What pained Varina most was that part of Davis seemed to still be in love with his first wife, Sarah Knox Taylor, daughter of future president Zachary Taylor, whom Davis had married ten years earlier. Within three months she was dead, of fever. As Varina would write years later, by way of warning a friend against letting his daughter, Belle, marry a widowed man, “I gave the best and all my life to a girdled tree. It was live oak, and was good for any purpose, except for blossom and fruit, and I am not willing for Belle to be content with anything less than the whole of a man’s heart.” On their honeymoon, Davis took Varina to see his dead wife’s grave.

Varina at first put up a spirited resistance to Davis’s inclination toward control, but she often found herself powerless to shape her marital destiny. She had not wanted him to fight in the Mexican War; he did anyway and received a serious foot wound; she did not want him to accept President Franklin Pierce’s offer of a cabinet post, and believed he had actually done as she wished—until with no forewarning to her he agreed to become secretary of war while attending Pierce’s inauguration. When Davis left for Washington for his first term as a U.S. senator, in 1847, he left Varina behind, telling her by letter that he did so because he could not stand her

“constant harassment, occasional reproach, and subsequent misrepresentation.”

For a time, she decided the best strategy was to strive to become the acquiescent wife Davis appeared to want. She read a book by Sarah S. Ellis called *The Guide to Social Happiness* that contained this bit of advice: “It is impossible but that woman should feel her own inferiority, and it is right that it should be so.” Varina, whose nickname was Winnie, did try. In one letter, in 1850, she wrote, “Winnie is Husband’s baby and baby is your devoted Wife.” She called him “Uncle Jeff.”

By 1857, however, the couple had come more or less to terms. The death in infancy of their firstborn child, Samuel, two years earlier from measles brought them together over the common terrain of grief. Happily, five more children would follow, the first being a daughter, Maggie, born nine months after Samuel’s death and said to be so full of spunk that when a dog barked at her, she bit it on the nose. As joyous as these births were, they also imposed constraints on Varina’s life. “It is getting to be a great many years since I have ceased to do what I would, and been forced to do what I could,” she told her father. “That is the lot of all flesh, I suppose—But oh it would be lovely sometimes to cut duty, and go on a *bust*.”

And now she was headed to Montgomery as the wife of the new president of the Confederate States of America, with war a near certainty.

Davis was not an ardent secessionist. He had little patience for insouciant visitors to his home who talked so blithely of civil war. He would listen politely, but after they left, Varina wrote, he would erupt, “God help us, war is a dreadful calamity even when it is made against aliens and strangers. They know not what they do.”

WASHINGTON

The Premier's Advice

FEBRUARY 24–27

LINCOLN AGAIN TURNED HIS ATTENTION to his inaugural speech. He asked two more men to review it and give him their thoughts. One was Francis P. Blair, Sr., father of Lincoln's proposed postmaster general, Montgomery. The elder Blair gave the address his wholehearted approval.

Lincoln also gave a copy to William Seward, and Seward, imbued still with his belief in himself as the true power behind the government, gave the draft the closest possible reading, to the point of numbering each line of the speech in order to isolate his proposed changes as precisely as possible. Seward sent his recommendations, six pages in all, to Lincoln on the evening of Sunday, February 24, Lincoln's second day in Washington.

In his letter, Seward proclaimed himself the one man who truly understood the situation. "I, my dear sir, have devoted myself singly to the study of the case—here, with advantages of access and free communication with all parties of all sections….You must, therefore, allow me to speak frankly and candidly." Others in the Republican Party, he wrote, "know nothing of the real peril of the crisis. It has not been their duty to study it, as it has been mine. Only the soothing words which I have spoken have saved us and carried us along thus far. Every loyal man, and, indeed, every disloyal man in the South, will tell you thus."

Like Orville Browning before him, Seward found particular danger in two paragraphs in Lincoln's draft, where Lincoln vowed fealty to the Republican platform and declared his intention to reclaim federal property in places where it had "fallen." These passages, Seward warned, would antagonize the secessionists to the point where even Virginia and Maryland would secede, and, he feared, "we shall within ninety, perhaps within sixty, days be obliged to fight the South for this capital, with a divided North for our reliance, and we shall not have one loyal magistrate or ministerial officer south of the Potomac." Merely editing the two paragraphs would not suffice, Seward warned; they had to be excised entirely, otherwise "the dismemberment of the republic would date from the inauguration of a Republican Administration." He urged, too, that Lincoln inject a little warmth into the speech, "some words of affection. Some of calm and cheerful confidence."

Seward suggested forty-nine changes ranging from altering a single punctuation mark to deleting whole sentences and paragraphs. Lincoln accepted twenty-seven of these. He cut the second and third paragraphs, per Seward's admonition, and eliminated the notion of *reclaiming* fallen properties, but at a point roughly halfway through the speech, as eventually delivered, he did insert the following: "The power confided to me, will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property, and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion—no using of force against, or among the people anywhere."

Seward felt strongly that Lincoln also needed a better ending. Lincoln's draft had closed on a belligerent note, with Lincoln asserting that he was obligated to "preserve, protect and defend" the government: "You can forbear, the assault upon it, I can not shrink from the defense of it. With you, and not with me, is the solemn question of 'Shall it be peace, or a sword?' "

Seward sent along a paragraph of his own as a possible ending that emphasized Lincoln's intent to serve the entire country, "east, west, north

and south.” Lengthy and convoluted, it was utterly unlike anything Lincoln himself would ever have written. One sentence was 139 words long.

Lincoln suggested that he try again.

Seward’s second attempt at least offered a few phrases that flickered with stylistic promise. Alluding to the bonds that tied Americans to their shared past, Seward wrote of “mystic chords” and “patriot graves.” These Lincoln liked. Seward’s proposed ending also made reference to “the guardian angel of the nation,” though Seward toyed with changing this to “better angels” of our nation before crossing it out. But that phrase, too, caught Lincoln’s eye.

The final ending, though heavily influenced by Seward’s changes, was very much Lincoln’s own, laden with reverence and barely suppressed emotion. “I am loth to close,” he wrote. “We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels in our nature.”

Seward, however, had no idea as yet whether Lincoln had incorporated any of his suggested changes into his final draft. For all he knew, Lincoln was still planning to announce his intention to reclaim fallen properties.

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THE PEACE CONVENTION ENDED on Wednesday, February 27. Outside Willard’s Dancing Hall the city shuddered with the celebratory firing of one hundred cannon, an ironic form of salute given the pacific mission of the conference.

William Rives, feeling the first symptoms of what would become a ferocious cold, went home to his Castle Hill plantation in Albemarle County, Virginia, and promptly took a “nap”—for twenty hours.

Two fellow Virginians, John Tyler and former congressman James Seddon, returned as well and condemned the amendment approved by the conference. Seddon called it “a delusion, a sham, an insult, an offense to the

South.” He and Tyler both now publicly endorsed secession. Hard-line Lincoln Republicans also dismissed the result, denouncing it as just another accommodation to Southern grievance. “Away with such compromise!” wrote Horace Greeley—the government, he said, should “not concede an inch.”

From Lincoln’s home state of Illinois, however, came renewed confidence that time would heal all, with the *Vermilion County Press* projecting that “secession will play itself out in less than six months if left to itself.” In a breezy aside the paper added: “There may be some bloodshed but it will not be much.”

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IN MONTGOMERY THAT WEDNESDAY, the provisional Confederate government took another step toward war—a small one, but one that revealed the depth of detail its military planners were contemplating.

A military engineer named Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard—P.G.T. Beauregard for short—sent a secret telegram to a friend in New York City, Capt. G. W. Smith, who served as the city’s street commissioner. Both men were veterans of the Mexican War, as was Confederate President Davis.

Beauregard directed Smith to buy sixteen “Drummond lights” that burned calcium oxide—quicklime—to produce intense light capable of illuminating harbors at night. This “limelight” was commonly used in theaters to light stages. Beauregard wanted ten lights shipped to New Orleans, six to Charleston.

“Let the whole matter be as secret as practicable,” Beauregard wrote.

Captain Smith did as requested. The lights, he promised, would be shipped in about ten days.

FORT SUMTER

Query

FEBRUARY 28

ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, MAJOR Anderson asked his officers to give him an assessment of how many men and ships would be required to effectively reinforce Sumter, with the idea of passing these on to the War Department and, presumably, to Lincoln. He specified that each officer was to do this on his own without consulting his colleagues. He did not actually want the government to resort to force; rather, he hoped that by providing a realistic appraisal of the size and complexity of a reinforcement mission he might be able to deter the incoming administration from entertaining any such plan. On that score, the estimates were satisfyingly bleak.

Captain Foster, chief engineer, came in with the highest estimate: "To land and carry the batteries on Cummings Point and Morris Island, 3,000 regulars, or 10,000 volunteers; to land and carry the batteries on Sullivan's Island (at the same time), 3,000 regulars, or 10,000 volunteers more; to *hold* the above positions after taking them, 10,000 regulars, or 30,000 volunteers. The forces to be overcome in the attack are supposed to be those of the South Carolinians, aided by troops that may be gathered from the adjoining States *at short notice*."

Artillery Capt. Truman Seymour offered a particularly dire appraisal. To attempt a resupply mission by ruse or deception was now impossible, he

wrote, “such is the unceasing vigilance employed to prevent it. To do so openly by vessels alone, unless they are shot-proof, is virtually impossible, so numerous and powerful are the opposing batteries.” Any Union attempt to raise the necessary force of men and ships would be telegraphed south immediately; vessels approaching the fort would be exposed to continuous fire. “A projected attack in large force would draw to this harbor all the available resources in men and material of the contiguous States. Batteries of guns of heavy caliber would be multiplied rapidly and indefinitely. At least twenty thousand men, good marksmen and trained for months past with a view to this very contingency, would be concentrated here before the attacking force could leave Northern ports.” The Confederate forces would effectively close the harbor, forcing an inbound fleet to land its troops well away from the protective covering fire of Fort Sumter. “Charleston Harbor would be a Sevastopol in such a conflict, and unlimited means would probably be required to insure success, before which time the garrison of Fort Sumter would be starved out.” The carnage of the “Siege of Sevastopol,” 1854–55, which claimed over one hundred thousand casualties and ended the Crimean War, was still fresh in the world’s psyche and needed no elaboration by Seymour.

Estimates provided by Sumter’s other officers called for invading forces that ranged in size from three thousand to ten thousand troops, transported and defended by warships. Quartermaster Hall, who advocated deploying seven warships, provided a detailed description of how his plan could be carried out but acknowledged that its success would depend “upon the most fortunate and improbable circumstances. It might succeed; but I think failure would be the rule.”

Anderson sent these on to Washington with his own concurring assessment, in which he wrote, “I confess that I would not be willing to risk my reputation on an attempt to throw re-enforcements into this harbor… with a force of less than twenty thousand good and well-disciplined men.”

What he was recommending was an invading force larger than the entire U.S. Army as then constituted.

WASHINGTON

Seward's Trick

MARCH 2

WITH ONLY TWO DAYS LEFT until Inauguration Day, Lincoln had still not made the configuration of his cabinet final. The selection process thus far had been fraught with political rancor and wrangling. William Seward had accepted appointment as secretary of state, but other cabinet posts remained in contention.

Lincoln seemed certain to tap Salmon Chase, an impassioned abolitionist, as his secretary of the treasury, which appalled Seward. In addition to just plain disliking Chase, Seward feared that the man's intense hatred of slavery would further increase the likelihood that Virginia and other states of the upper South would follow their Deep South brethren out of the Union.

Seward wasn't entirely sure of his own standing with Lincoln. He still did not know whether Lincoln had taken any of his suggestions for modifying his inaugural. On top of this, an unfounded but widely circulated rumor held that Lincoln might even drop Seward as secretary of state and give the post to Chase.

On March 2, with no forewarning, Seward took himself out of consideration. In a note to Lincoln he wrote, "Circumstances which have occurred since I expressed to you in December last my willingness to

accept the office of Secretary of State, seem to me to render it my duty to ask leave to withdraw that consent.”

He did not offer an explanation.

“This,” wrote Lincoln secretaries Nicolay and Hay, “from the man who for several months had held intimate counsel with him, had taken active part in the formation of the Cabinet, and had read and partly revised the inaugural, was unexpected.”

Lincoln, a canny judge of men, did not immediately acknowledge Seward’s note. To Nicolay he said, “I can’t afford to let Seward take the first trick.”

CHARLESTON

Interesting News

MARCH 1–3

At Fort Sumter, Private Millens learned from his father that interest in Fort Sumter back home was high, and decided to send an update.

"Well, we are still here and, as yet, unmolested; the Charlestonians, however, are vigorously pushing their works around us, all of which are nearly completed. Morris Island, directly opposite us, has been converted into one enormous battery of several miles in length—at least I may so call it, for the batteries are so numerous and at such short intervals apart, that from our point of view they cannot be distinguished but as one enormous continuation."

Millens told his father about a particularly fearsome weapon said to be nearing completion in Charleston, the floating battery. This was their "master machine," he wrote. "Until such time as I can get a peep at this machine, I shall not attempt to describe it; from accounts it must be a rather formidable affair, but at the same time clumsy and unmanageable. They intend to have this battery towed to a convenient point on our weakest side, within 600 yards of our walls, and from that point breach the fort with their heavy guns (42 pounders) four of which they will have on board. Whether or not they will be allowed quietly to take this position remains to be seen; they evidently expect that they will." He added, however, that this seemed

unlikely: To allow it would be “too much like cutting a stick to break our own head.”

He promised his father “more interesting news” in his next letter, exactly what any father wanted to hear, and added: “We expect to live peaceably until March 4. As to what may occur after that is more than I can tell; everything depends on the line of policy adopted by the incoming Administration.”

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ON FRIDAY, MARCH 1, the Confederate States of America officially took control of military operations in Charleston. Confederate President Jefferson Davis placed engineer Beauregard in command and promoted him to brigadier general. Beauregard left for Charleston immediately.

That day as well, Confederate Secretary of War Leroy P. Walker wrote to Governor Pickens to assure him that President Davis shared his view “that Fort Sumter should be in our possession at the earliest moment possible.” But he added a caveat. “Thorough preparation must be made before an attack is attempted, for the first blow must be successful, both for its moral and physical consequences, or otherwise the result might be disastrous to your State in the loss of many of those whom we can least afford to lose. A failure would demoralize our people and injuriously affect us in the opinion of the world as reckless and precipitate.”

In short, the Confederacy planned not only to move against Sumter, but to do so with overwhelming force to avoid the humiliation of failure. And a deadline was fast approaching. In just three days the man deemed by most Southerners to be the blackest of Black Republicans, Abraham Lincoln, would be sworn in as president of the United States.

Beauregard arrived in Charleston on Sunday, March 3. Standing five-seven and weighing only 150 pounds, Beauregard, forty-two years old, was a stern, taut, unsmiling razor of a man whose Creole ancestry and vaguely French accent caused many on first meeting him to presume he was French. The women of the city swooned. They sent him flowers and flags, scarves,

even furniture, which littered and perfumed his headquarters at 105 Meeting Street, a block north of the Mills House Hotel and four blocks from Ryan's slave mart. A visiting correspondent noted that the general's desk was surrounded by flowers—two vases full, and "a little hand bouquet of roses, geraniums, and scented flowers," which he used as a paperweight.

War Secretary Walker appeared unable at first to grasp how the Confederacy's first brigadier general could be named Pierre. In his letter to Governor Pickens, Walker referred to the general as Peter.

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AMONG THE MEN WHOM Beauregard appointed to be staff officers was one Samuel Wragg Ferguson, twenty-six, formerly of the U.S. Army. He had been a lieutenant stationed in Walla Walla in Washington Territory but resigned as soon as he learned of South Carolina's secession. The news reached Walla Walla shortly after Christmas; Ferguson immediately headed east and had been traveling ever since. He did not reach Charleston until March 1.

What he encountered startled him. "I had been so long and so far removed from the course of events," he wrote, "that I was totally unprepared for the intense excitement that pervaded all classes."

He was delighted to find that secession brought opportunity. On arrival he was commissioned a captain of infantry in the state's regular army. Beauregard made him an aide-de-camp, a role that would place him at the center of all that would soon unfold.

—

FLUSH WITH THE HUBRIS of men who had founded a new nation, authorities in Montgomery now dispatched a new trio of commissioners north, three seeming to be the magic number for Southern deputations. Their mandate authorized the men to negotiate with the Union, this time on behalf of the entire Confederacy, not just South Carolina.

The first to arrive was Martin J. Crawford, who reached Washington on Sunday, March 3, the day before Lincoln's inauguration, and checked into the National Hotel (the hotel once afflicted by ptomaine poisoning and thus rejected by Mrs. Lincoln); the other two, André B. Roman and John Forsyth, followed soon afterward.

Commissioner Crawford found a hot city made anxious by anticipation of Lincoln's inaugural. It had been a week of "unexampled warm weather," observed diarist and congressman Charles Francis Adams that day; strong winds had raised clouds of dust from the city's dry, unpaved streets. The city was full of new arrivals hoping to witness so climactic an inauguration. "I was obliged to walk home a third time," wrote Adams, "as the Omnibuses were crowded, so I got back late, and very tired."

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EDMUND RUFFIN'S DISGUST AT Virginia's continued reluctance to secede deepened to the point where he felt he could no longer live in the state. In his diary he made a vow: "I will be out of Va before Lincoln's inauguration, and so will avoid being, as a Virginian, under his government even for an hour. I, at least, will become a citizen of the seceded Confederate States, and will not again reside in my native state, nor enter it except to make visits to my children, until Va shall also secede, and become a member of the Southern Confederacy."

True to his word, at three o'clock Saturday afternoon, March 2, Ruffin left Richmond for Charleston, South Carolina, and arrived thirty-two and a half hours later, on Sunday, March 3.

This city, at least, was primed for war. Crews of enslaved Blacks and privileged white volunteers continued to erect and expand gun batteries and to reinforce the newly seized federal forts, Moultrie and Castle Pinckney. Volunteer soldiers marched and sang. Draft horses labored through the streets hauling gun carriages and wagons filled with ammunition to the city's wharf for transport to the batteries rising on the harbor islands. Where once enslaved people from Africa arrived by the hundreds, bewildered and

ill after enduring the horrors of the Middle Passage, their captive descendants now shouldered barrels of gunpowder, iron shielding, and heavy timbers. Steamers showing the palmetto flag kept watch on Sumter, whose sail-sized U.S. flag flew as ever in a continued affront to the honor of the South, an indignity to be borne, officials vowed, only a little while longer.

Ruffin checked into the Charleston Hotel, which hummed with talk about what the next day—Inauguration Day—would bring.

LONDON

On the Scent

MARCH 3

EVEN FROM HIS DISTANT VANTAGE, John Delane, editor of the *Times* of London, sensed that political conflict in America had reached an intensity that could erupt in violence. This would, of course, constitute a very good story for his readers, who might take a certain pleasure in seeing England's wayward offspring bruised by a rebellion of their own.

He decided it was time to dispatch the paper's celebrated reporter, Sir William Howard Russell, to America to serve as its special correspondent "in observing the rupture between the Southern States and the rest of the Union, consequent upon the election of Mr. Lincoln and the advent of the Republicans to power." Russell was well known around the world, especially for his reporting on the Crimean War, which brought to life for readers the doomed British attack that inspired Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade."

Delane's instincts had first been piqued several weeks earlier when he initially suggested the assignment to Russell, but the correspondent did not immediately accept. His wife's health was fragile, his children were growing fast, and over the prior seven years he had been, as he put it, "constantly in exile in the Crimea, Russia, India, and Italy." He had settled into a happy domestic rhythm. "My life was at that time very pleasant," he

wrote. At his social club, the Garrick, he consorted with the likes of Thackeray, Dickens, and Trollope. He knew little about the unfolding crisis in America, though he had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and portions of speeches by various Southern firebrands that had been reprinted in the London press. One evening, at the Garrick, he told Thackeray of his reluctance to take on the assignment. "You must go," Thackeray told him. "It will be a great opportunity! As to waiting till you understand the political questions, you will never do it here! You must go out and see them at work on the spot."

Russell accepted, and on Sunday, March 3, sailed from Queensland, Ireland, aboard the steamship *Arabia*. His fellow passengers included several wealthy Southerners, among them a former member of the U.S. Legation in St. Petersburg, Russia, who had quit to ally himself with the Confederacy, and a U.S. Army colonel, Robert S. Garnett of Virginia, who planned to resign his own commission and then join the Confederate army. The colonel proved to be a living primer on that mythic creature, the Southern planter. "He laughed to scorn the doctrine that all men were born equal in the sense of all men having equal rights," Russell wrote in his diary. "Some were born to be slaves—others to follow useful mechanical arts—the rest were born to rule and to own their fellow men." To Colonel Garnett, slavery was anything but evil. "Divine institution"—the colonel declared—"an Abolitionist opposes the laws of God himself!" He loathed Yankees. "I would die a hundred times to keep them out!" As it happened, a centile of his wish would be fulfilled five months later when he became the first Confederate general killed in the coming war.

The *Arabia* was considered one of the fastest ships afloat, but the voyage still took fourteen days, during which Russell's conversations with the Southerners aboard (including another planter, from Louisiana, who owned five hundred slaves) and the arrival of a large shipment of newspapers delivered by pilot boat had given him a thorough education in the unfolding crisis. As best he could tell, it distilled to a single question: Who had a right to possess two federal properties, Fort Pickens in Florida, and Fort Sumter in South Carolina?

“Under the circumstances every one is asking what the Government is going to do,” Russell wrote in his diary. “The Southern people have declared they will resist any attempt to supply or reinforce the garrisons and in Charleston, at least, have shown they mean to keep their word. It is a very strange situation. The Federal Government, afraid to speak and unable to act, is leaving its soldiers to do as they please.”

PART FIVE

COERCION

(March 4–March 29, 1861)

THE CHALLENGEE HAS NO OPTION when negotiation has ceased, but to accept the challenge.

—*The Code Duello*

WASHINGTON

—

Mystic Chords

MARCH 4

THE CITY WAS ODDLY QUIET. Shops were closed, flags flew from buildings, but there was an almost taciturn feel to the day, according to journalist Henry Villard. He attributed this to the fact that over the years, with Southerners filling the government's myriad patronage positions, Washington had become very much a Southern city. Despite the 1850 federal ban on commercial slave trading within its boundaries, slavery as an institution clearly still thrived. Washington had about half the enslaved Blacks it did in the early 1800s, but residents still owned more than three thousand, meaning roughly one in twenty of the city's population was enslaved. "The city itself indicated, by the scantiness of festive array, that the mass of the inhabitants were hostile to the new rule," Villard wrote.

Washington's divided loyalties made it a canvas for the tensions throughout the nation. "We are now in such a state," General Scott observed, "that a dog-fight might cause the gutters of the capital to run with blood."

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LINCOLN SLEPT BADLY. He woke at five A.M. to weather that was at first cloudy and raw, with a brisk wind blowing from the northwest. Rain threatened,

but only a few drops fell, not enough to tamp the dust that billowed from cross streets. Anxious still about his speech, Lincoln asked his son Robert to read it aloud.

Lincoln had so far said nothing to Seward about the senator's last-minute refusal to become secretary of state. Only now, on the morning of Inauguration Day, did Lincoln reply. "It is the subject of most painful solicitude with me," Lincoln wrote, "and I feel constrained to beg that you will countermand the withdrawal. The public interest, I think, demands that you should; and my personal feelings are deeply inlisted"—Lincoln's spelling—"in the same direction." Lincoln asked Seward to reconsider and to send an answer by nine o'clock the next morning.

President Buchanan drove to the Willard and met briefly with Lincoln; the two then emerged from the Fourteenth Street side of the hotel and were joined by two senators, one from Oregon, the other from Maryland. They all climbed into Buchanan's carriage and, with a military escort and mounted cavalry at each side, began the nearly two-mile drive southeast along Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol. A procession followed comprised of judges, clergy, diplomats, soldiers, members of the Peace Convention, and, as the *New-York Times* put it, "a host of minor great men." A cheerfully decorated vehicle carried thirty-four little girls who represented the states of the Union, even those that had seceded. There had been a brief debate about whether Lincoln's carriage should have its top raised or lowered. With the recollection of his secret entry into Washington still sharp in his mind, Lincoln insisted that the top be down.

As the carriage moved through the city, the Capitol directly ahead grew steadily larger, the building's disarray more evident. It was anything but complete, an aborted wedding cake interrupted at the third tier. Cranes and scaffolding covered its north face. It seemed a metaphor for larger forces at play. The Union was literally falling apart. Virginia tottered, its convention waiting to hear what Lincoln had to say before taking a final vote on whether to secede. The man next to him, the ineffectual James Buchanan, had let all this come to pass without making any substantive effort to stop it.

All Buchanan wanted to do now was go home to Wheatland. He could not wait to leave the White House.

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THAT MORNING, GENERAL SCOTT paid a brief visit to William Seward's home before the procession to the Capitol set out, and assured him that his troops had been posted "quietly and unostentatiously." Seward's son Frederick found otherwise. "In point of fact, there were squads of riflemen on housetops, along the avenue"—Pennsylvania Avenue—"and at the windows of the wings of the Capitol, and under the steps leading to the platform, while batteries of light artillery were ready for immediate service to quell any street riot." Soldiers on foot and on horseback raised tempests of dust and seemed omnipresent.

At the Capitol, before the inauguration ceremony began, Buchanan took Lincoln aside. Private secretary John Hay watched. "I waited with boyish wonder and credulity to see what momentous counsels were to come from that gray and weather-beaten head. Every word must have its value at such an instant. Buchanan said: 'I think you will find the water of the right-hand well at the White House better than that of the left.' "

The ceremony was to be held on the East Portico, where senators, representatives, members of the diplomatic corps, and the Supreme Court justices now gathered. Lincoln stepped to the podium; before him spread an audience estimated to number anywhere from twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand people. The dreary morning had given way to sunshine and heat, with temperatures expected to surpass eighty degrees. Lincoln wore a new suit made of black cashmere and a black top hat of silk, and, in an uncharacteristically fussy sartorial diversion from his norm, carried a black walking stick with a gold tip. "Mr. Buchanan looked old and worn out," wrote diarist Charles Francis Adams, "whilst Mr. Lincoln looked awkward and out of place."

In accord with the custom prevailing at the time, Lincoln would give his speech *before* taking the oath of office, administered by Supreme Court

Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, author of the *Dred Scott* decision; only then would Lincoln officially become president. For a moment he struggled to find a place to rest his hat. Stephen Douglas, his most bitter antagonist in the presidential election and in the Senate race before that, took the hat with a smile and held it for him.

That Lincoln had survived to this point was to many a surprise and a relief; but now anxiety shifted to the matter of the speech itself. In Lexington, Virginia, a pro-Union lawyer, James Davidson, wrote to a friend, "I have been looking towards Washington all day—this momentous day. Whilst I feel that Lincoln's message will be pacific, yet I am much worried."

Oddly enough the first six words Lincoln spoke were among the most heavily cheered: "Fellow citizens of the United States." It was "the signal for prolonged applause," observed the *Times* correspondent, "the good Union sentiment thereof striking a tender chord in the popular breast."

In its final form, tempered by the suggestions of Seward and Orville Browning, Lincoln's speech carved a line between conciliation and provocation and seemed to make no one happy, though his closing paragraph, with its mystic chords and better angels, moved many in the audience to tears and would be largely responsible for lodging his address in the pantheon of the greatest speeches ever delivered. Abolitionists and the most ardent Republicans felt he had gone too far in placating the South. Frederick Douglass found the speech disheartening. "Some thought we had in Mr. Lincoln the nerve and decision of an Oliver Cromwell," he said, "but the result shows that we have merely a continuation of the Pierces and Buchanans, and that the Republican President bends his knee to slavery as readily as any of his infamous predecessors."

Only as Lincoln spoke did Seward realize the extent to which he had accepted his revisions. But the speech in its final form did nothing to soothe secessionist ire. One key member of the ongoing Virginia Convention, Robert Young Conrad, a Unionist, said its effect was "like an earthquake." Confederate officials reached the immediate conclusion that it signaled hostility toward the South. Just after hearing Lincoln speak, Texas senator

Louis Wigfall, never much inclined toward equanimity, telegraphed from Washington:

"Inaugural means war."

But Lexington lawyer Davidson, after reading the complete speech in a newspaper, took a more judicious view. He saw it as "a somewhat Jesuitical striving to please both sides" and to avoid belligerence. "Mark it," he wrote to a friend. "He don't intend seriously to attempt Coercion. He knows it will fail if attempted and could serve no good purpose."

Davidson told his friend about a conversation he'd had with Lincoln toward the end of the Washington Peace Convention in which Davidson tried to ascertain Lincoln's attitude toward the use of force.

"There will be no necessity for coercion," Lincoln told him. "That word is misunderstood and misinterpreted. No armies ever will be marched through the Southern States."

Davidson, hoping to draw Lincoln out, said, "Suppose South Carolina —"

Lincoln cut him off. "If I am struck at, may I not strike back?"

Davidson hoped to provoke Lincoln into revealing more. "Aggression," Davidson said, "might change the case."

"If we have a government let us know it," Lincoln said, playfully (in Davidson's judgment). "If we can't keep the family together, might it not be as well to break up housekeeping?"

The two shook hands. "Mr. President," Davidson told him, "we now return to our mountains. Farewell! The question of Peace or War is in your hands."

"Farewell," Lincoln said, bowing his tall frame. "There will be no war."

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THE LINCOLNS TOOK POSSESSION of the White House. As Buchanan exited, he told Lincoln, "If you are as happy, my dear sir, on entering the house as I am in leaving it and returning home, you are the happiest man in this country." The thirty-four girls now paused at the door and sang "Hail

Columbia," at the time widely considered to be America's unofficial national anthem.

That night the Lincolns attended the Inaugural Ball, held in a temporary building erected for the event behind city hall. "It was very large and quite pretty," observed diarist Charles Francis Adams, "and every body expected it would be densely crowded. But the fact was quite otherwise. The numbers were just sufficient to give no appearance of nakedness."

The Lincolns arrived late, which struck Adams as being socially inept; news reports put their arrival at eleven o'clock. "They are evidently wanting in all the arts to grace their position," Adams wrote. "He is simple, awkward, and hearty. She is more artificial and pretentious."

Frederick Seward found the event oddly subdued. "There was no crowd, little dancing," he reported, "and one might almost say, no gayety." In Montgomery, Mary Chesnut learned that the ball was attended by Mr. and Mrs. George Parker, whom the *New York Herald* identified as members of "the elite" of Washington society. Mary snorted metaphorically. "The Parkers," she wrote, "were our *grocers* in Washington—and they were spoken of as the *Elite*—poor Washington."

Stephen A. Douglas, who had graciously held Lincoln's hat earlier in the day, danced a quadrille with Mrs. Lincoln.

The president left the ball at about one A.M.; his wife, always game for a party, stayed on.

Sickened

MARCH 4

IN CHARLESTON, EDMUND RUFFIN READ the inaugural in segments as each installment arrived by telegraph at the office of the *Mercury*, which posted them on its bulletin board. A large and excited crowd read along with him.

"It settles the question that there must be war," he wrote in his diary that day. Like so many in the South, Ruffin saw in the address what he had primed himself to see. He noted that Confederate General Beauregard had just taken charge of Charleston's defense. Ruffin expected Beauregard to attack Sumter and hoped that Lincoln would trigger an immediate conflict by launching an expedition to send troops and supplies to the fort. "I earnestly hope," he wrote, "that this may be the beginning, and if war is to occur, that such attempt to reinforce may be made before another week passes."

He was gratified to see that the crowd standing around him at the bulletin board shared his enthusiasm. "I heard not a single expression of regret or of apprehension," he wrote, "but on the contrary, many of gratification that things would now be brought to an issue."

IN MONTGOMERY, WHERE JAMES CHESNUT was helping organize the provisional government of the Confederacy, his wife adopted the same daily routine she exercised back in South Carolina. She made frequent visits to the homes of city residents and delegates alike, then received the obligatory return calls. In her diary, she kept up a withering fire of snipery, describing one woman as “fat and stupid,” another “cross eyed,” still another “ugly as sin.” After a dinner at one home she wrote, “I can give a better dinner than that!”

One caller, former South Carolina governor John Manning, took a liking to Mary, one that would soon develop, on his side at least, into an undisguised flirtation. Mary was accustomed to this kind of attention. “I never was handsome,” she wrote; “I wonder what my *attraction* was, for men did fall in love with me wherever I went.”

Mary also paid a call at the rooms occupied by Jefferson Davis and Varina, soon to be a close friend. Varina “met me with open arms,” Mary wrote. “What a chat that was, *two* hours. She told me all the Washington news.” They avoided politics, however. Much of the conversation centered on Varina’s encounter with Queen Victoria’s son, Edward Albert, the Prince of Wales, during his visit to Washington the preceding October, including his penchant for exclaiming, “Oh, uncommon fine!”

Mary noted, “I could only get away by promising to come back every day.”

On Inauguration Day, while making her rounds in Montgomery, Mary encountered a scene that occurred routinely in the city and throughout the South but that left her feeling heart-sunk and unnerved, so much so that she had to sit down on a stool in a nearby shop.

“I saw today a sale of Negroes,” she wrote.

She had come across a slave auction in progress. A mulatto woman stood on a raised platform high enough to be seen above the crowd. “Mulatto women in *silk dresses*—one girl was on the stand. Nice looking—like my Nancy”—this a reference to her own enslaved maid. In a later much-modified version of her journal meant for publication, she added detail: “She was magnificently got up in silks and satins. She seemed delighted with it all—sometimes ogling the bidders, sometimes looking

quite coy and modest, but her mouth never relaxed from its expanded grin of excitement."

Something about the moment caved Mary's spirits. "South Carolina slave holder as I am my very soul sickened," she wrote. "It is too dreadful. I tried to reason—this is not worse than the willing sale most women make of themselves in marriage—nor can the consequences be worse. The Bible authorizes marriage and slavery—poor women! poor slaves!"

The next day, March 5, she read Lincoln's address. By now the full inaugural had been telegraphed to newspapers around the country. "Means he war or peace," she wondered, this an allusion to an 1808 ballad by the beloved Sir Walter Scott featuring the knight Lochinvar, who uses trickery to steal off with his future bride. "O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war," Scott wrote, "Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?"

"An insidious villain," Mary wrote. "I fear he only means, if he can, to get away from us the border states."

She was taken aback by how quickly the men around her became bellicose. "The cry today is *war,*" she wrote on March 6. "Still I do not believe it."

THE WHITE HOUSE

First Day

MARCH 5

On Tuesday, March 5, Lincoln's first day in office, he received a letter from William Seward confirming that he would in fact accept appointment as secretary of state.

Seward explained his turnabout to his wife, Frances, after first congratulating himself on having "slipped quietly out of Congress, without getting any bones broken."

Lincoln, he told her, "is determined that he will have a compound Cabinet; and that it shall be peaceful, and even permanent"—a reference to the fact that Lincoln's cabinet choices not only had clashing personalities but that a number of them, including Seward himself, had competed against him for the Republican presidential nomination. "I was at one time on the point of refusing—nay, I did refuse, for a time to hazard myself in the experiment. But a distracted country appeared before me; and I withdrew from that position. I believe I can endure as much as any one; and may be that I can endure enough to make the experiment successful. At all events I did not dare to go home, or to England, and leave the country to chance."

That morning when Lincoln arrived at his office, as his friend Orville Browning would later recall, "the very first thing placed in his hands" was a letter from Major Anderson at Fort Sumter, accompanied by a note from

outgoing war secretary Joseph Holt. This was Anderson's report summarizing the estimates made by his officers as to the number of troops and the quantity of supplies that would be necessary to sustain the fort against Confederate attack.

Lincoln immediately forwarded these materials to Gen. Winfield Scott, who read them promptly and returned them the same day. On Holt's letter he scrawled: "I see no alternative but a surrender."

Scott went so far as to draft an order to that effect, to be issued to Anderson. "Sir: The time having been allowed to pass by when it was practicable to fit out an expedition adequate to the succor of your garrison, before the exhaustion of its means of subsistence—you will, after communicating your purpose to His Excellency, the Governor of So. Carolina,—engage suitable water transportation, and peacefully evacuate Fort Sumter."

He did not send it.

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ON THAT TUESDAY, MARCH 5, the new U.S. Senate, now under Republican control because of Southern defections, confirmed Lincoln's full slate of cabinet nominees, among them Seward as secretary of state.

Lincoln wrote to Seward: "Please give me an interview at once."

FORT SUMTER

Activity and Determination

MARCH 5

THE MEN AT FORT SUMTER would not learn the contents of Lincoln's inaugural address for two days, but they saw visual evidence of a fresh surge of activity at the batteries around Charleston Harbor, which they attributed to both the speech and the contemporaneous arrival of General Beauregard.

On March 4, Sumter's Captain Foster observed three steamers deliver troops and supplies to the Iron Battery at Cummings Point. A large force was also landed the next night, followed soon after by a shipment of nine new cannon. Portable "hot shot" furnaces were delivered to some batteries, these used to heat cannonballs to the point where they would set fire to whatever flammable materials they struck. The number of new troops apparently exceeded the available shelter at Cummings Point, or so Foster assumed after seeing large numbers of soldiers gathered around their "bivouac fires." They arrived during a period of fine weather, but this changed abruptly on the night of March 5. Foster was sympathetic. "Their suffering must have been considerable during the night, for the weather suddenly changed from the warm temperature of the preceding days to a high degree of cold for this climate, the wind blowing fresh from the north."

Despite only being able to watch from afar, Foster thought he detected a change in the tenor of the work at the Carolina batteries: “more earnestness.” Major Anderson noticed it as well. He understood, further, that the batteries were now in very capable hands. He knew Beauregard; he had taught him artillery tactics at West Point. Beauregard in turn rated Anderson his favorite teacher and had worked for him briefly as his assistant. The two men considered each other friends.

Anderson wrote to Adjutant Cooper in Washington, “Everything indicates activity and determination.”

There was a small glimmer of positive news, however. Bits of intelligence and some diligent spyglassing caused Captain Foster to conclude that the much-feared “floating battery” was not so fearsome after all. The barge by itself had a draft of seven feet, which alone would make positioning it close to the fort difficult; but this was before the addition of heavy guns and iron shielding. Even now the barge was clumsy and unwieldy, Foster observed; its tendency to tip forward required the placement of a counterweight at its stern.

Foster reported his assessment to Washington: “I do not think this floating battery will prove very formidable.”

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GENERAL BEAUREGARD NEEDED ALL the time he could get to accumulate the guns and powder he would need to repel enemy ships and conduct an effective artillery siege against Sumter, let alone gather and train volunteers. “I am of the opinion that, if Sumter was properly garrisoned and armed, it would be a perfect Gibraltar to anything but constant shelling, night and day, from the four points of the compass,” he wrote to the Confederacy’s new secretary of war, Gen. L. P. Walker. “As it is, the weakness of the garrison constitutes our greatest advantage, and we must, for the present, turn our attention to preventing it from being re-enforced.” If the time came to open fire on Sumter, he told Walker, he wanted to be as ready as possible. “All that I ask is time for completing my batteries and preparing and

organizing properly my command, which is still in a more or less confused state, not having yet my general staff officers around me.”

His chief engineer, Major W.H.C. Whiting, felt that given the scarcity of men and equipment, the immediate priority should be to prevent a federal fleet from reaching Sumter in the first place.

The labor problem would soon be resolved, as Charleston’s planters, inflamed by patriotism toward their new nation, volunteered to become regimental officers and, more importantly, donated the labor of their enslaved workers.

But in this crucible of tension, inexperience raised the prospect that an accident could ignite a war.

WASHINGTON

Relief

MARCH 8

FOR MONTHS, INAUGURATION DAY HAD stood in the temporal distance as a day to be dreaded, girded for, and survived. It seemed an endpoint in itself, like an assignation for a duel: one dared not look beyond. First the inauguration had to take place; only then could the nation get back to constructing its future, with the helm of state securely in new hands. Now that March 4 had come and gone and no secret force had seized the Capitol and no assassin had leapt onto the East Portico, relief supplanted disquiet.

Without knowing it, on March 8, Frances and William Seward wrote each other a letter, she from freezing Auburn, New York, where the day before, the temperature had fallen below zero; he from an unusually warm Washington, where temperatures over the preceding five days had reached as high as eighty-three degrees. Frances opened with grim news about a family friend, fifty-seven years old, who lay ill and was not expected to survive, a victim, she believed, of worry over the inauguration. “Ethan Warden is still living,” she wrote, “but I think there is no ground for expecting his recovery—I believe his anxiety about you [on] the 4th injured him, but I went to see him Tuesday and found him composed and sensible though exceedingly feeble. He talked of you continually with reverence and affection. ‘Well the Governor is Safe’ were his first words.”

After a few more references to family matters, she turned to William himself. “Now that the season of our greatest apprehension has gone by I see the almost insurmountable difficulties by which you are surrounded,” she wrote. “Without being able to see how, I have faith and hope that you will be able to surmount them.”

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WILLIAM’S LETTER TO FRANCES confirmed that now the hard work had begun. He had been to his office for nine hours on each of the previous two days, he wrote—his office consisting of two rooms on the northeast corner of a simple two-story brick building with six white columns on its north façade. A good portion of his day was spent parrying the crush of office seekers, “an hundred taking tickets where only one can draw a prize.” He placed his son Frederick, now assistant secretary, in an office across the hall; Frederick handled most of the patronage entreaties. “I do not know what I should do without him,” William wrote.

But his son could do little to ameliorate the overall strain of establishing a new government in the midst of a national crisis, especially when Seward saw himself as that government’s primary bulwark. “Last night,” William told Frances, “I broke down, and sent for Dr. Miller. I have kept my chamber today, except an hour, when I went on a necessary errand to the White House.

“I wish I could tell you something of the political troubles of the country; but I cannot find the time. They are enough to tax the wisdom of the wisest”—implying here that *he* was among the wisest. “Fort Sumter in danger,” he wrote. “Relief of it practically impossible. The Commissioners from the Southern Confederacy are here. These cares fall chiefly on me. The country will, before long, come to a severe trial of its patience and patriotism.”

Seward’s son felt his condition sufficiently serious as to merit a telegram to Frances, who was immediately alarmed. Even the press had got wind of it, with one source noting that he had been “detained from the

Department by physical disability." On the morning of March 9 Seward wrote to Lincoln, telling him, "I am yet kept indoors, but I would muffle up and ride to your House if necessary at anytime today."

Seward appeared to be suffering from "a severe attack of lumbago," according to a contemporary's account. Although a century later lumbago would be rendered a comical term, in 1861 it was a diagnosis for disabling back pain believed to arise from any number of potential causes, among them rheumatism, gout, tuberculosis, tumors, intestinal inflammation, even syphilis (though this appears not to have been suspected in Seward's case).

At ten o'clock Saturday morning, March 9, Frances wrote to Frederick in reply to his telegram. "My dear Son, We have your telegram this moment—I knew your Father must be ill if he was not super human." She was ready to leave immediately for Washington, she told him: "Do send for me if your Father is not entirely well when this reaches you."

She urged Frederick to keep nothing from her. She closed, "With best love to your Father and a prayer that he may not be crushed by upholding a nation—Do not fail to tell me the truth and the whole truth."

Three days later Frederick wrote back to assure his mother that the intensity of work seemed about to lessen. "The pressure of visitors, applicants for office, is enormous, but the Department fortunately is much more defensible against intrusion either in person or by letter than a private house is, and I think after the first two or three weeks his life will be much more pleasant than while he was in the Senate. It would be one constant levee now"—a term for a formal reception—"if he would see everybody, but he sets apart three hours a day for the purpose and so gets some time for thought and for recreation, as well as for work."

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IN CHARLESTON THE LIKELIHOOD of war dominated conversation. One knowledgeable soul predicted "flagrant war" within three days. Even so, Edmund Ruffin began to experience a degree of tedium. "I already find the

passage of time heavy, for want of some employment," he wrote on March 5, the day after the inauguration.

He managed to acquire a permit to visit Confederate-held Fort Moultrie, "which now is a difficult matter, and rarely conferred." Upon entering the fort, he was pleased to have his need for appreciation at least partially fulfilled. He was warmly greeted by the fort's new commander, Col. Roswell S. Ripley, and noted in his diary that he "received much attention from him and other officers." As he had done back in January, Ruffin also toured other Confederate batteries and found preparations for battle considerably advanced. The floating battery appeared to be nearly completed.

Flagrant war did not occur, however—much to Ruffin's disappointment. Bored, he left the city on Saturday, March 9, to visit friends in the surrounding countryside and to inspect their farms. Three days later a rumor reached him that Lincoln had ordered Major Anderson to surrender Fort Sumter. Ruffin doubted this, but soon more reports arrived. The morning's newspapers seemed to corroborate the news. One dispatch held that a messenger was on his way now from Washington to deliver the order.

Ruffin did not want to miss a moment's action. Although still skeptical, he returned to Charleston the next day. He found the city awash with rumors of the imminent surrender but also got a whiff of something he found far more compelling. "Another report is that several ships of war, with soldiers, have set off for the south, and, as supposed, to reinforce Fort Sumter."

He doubted this as well but loved the prospect. The resulting conflict would, he was certain, bring Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina into the Confederacy.

For the moment, however, Ruffin found conditions in Charleston far too peaceful. On Saturday morning, March 16, he boarded a steamer for a tour of the federal forts now under Southern control, led by South Carolina Secretary of War Jamison. On board he found "a large party of ladies as well as gentlemen," including two former governors—all in a festive mood.

Ruffin once again wondered at the lack of violence thus far. He found it strange, and demoralizing. He was dismayed to learn that Major Anderson was still able to send and receive mail. It was said that Anderson and General Beauregard were actually friends.

After five days of stasis, Ruffin set off for North Carolina to see what he could do there to generate enthusiasm for secession. A convention was due to begin the next day. As always Ruffin hauled along one of John Brown's pikes as a reminder of what Lincoln and the abolitionists of the North really planned for the South.

FORT SUMTER

A Ball at Sunrise

MARCH 8

EARLY ON THE MORNING OF Friday, March 8, Confederate guns began firing from Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island, and from Cummings Point on Morris. This in itself was not unusual. The Confederate gunners were constantly firing off blank charges for no apparent purpose other than practice or perhaps to intimidate the men at Sumter. During Friday's demonstration the first three shots were indeed blanks, fired from Moultrie, followed by two more blank discharges from Cummings Point. A third shot from Cummings Point was a surprise.

An actual cannonball came tearing through the air and struck the water about thirty yards from Sumter. The ball ricocheted twice, then slammed into the rubble foundation of Sumter's wharf. Bits of masonry rocketed into the sky. The ball penetrated four inches.

The impact astounded a burly German-born soldier on guard at the fort's main gate, at the end of the wharf. He quickly recovered and slammed the gate shut. The fort came alive. The long roll was beaten. Sumter's gunnery squads ran to their stations. "Our men were ready," wrote Asst. Surgeon Crawford in his journal, "and only awaited the signal to begin."

Major Anderson and a couple of other officers were on the parapet watching the opposing batteries through their spyglasses. It was

immediately obvious that the Confederates manning those guns were even more astonished than the men at Sumter. And terrified. The chivalry bolted, red sashes flying, sabers clanking, as they tried to get as far away from their own guns as possible, as quickly as possible, before Sumter returned fire. “Negroes left their spades,” Crawford saw, “men of war rushed madly, and in a twinkling there was no human form to be seen on the beach.” Only the horses remained in place, standing quietly as the sea gently washed the shore.

The shot was so clearly an accident that Anderson withheld fire. “The Major laughed, the officers laughed, everybody laughed,” wrote Crawford, “and instead of taking to bombs we took to breakfast.”

But Anderson did want an apology. None came—at least not immediately. Anderson was preparing to send two officers to Cummings Point to demand an explanation, when at ten forty-five A.M. a Confederate boat arrived bearing an officer holding a white flag. Crawford met him at the wharf and took him into the guard room, then sent for Anderson, who spoke with the emissary. “He apologized handsomely—that it was accidental—gun had been loaded sometime and recruits were drilling—very sorry and was much obliged to us for our forbearance—would have been over before but had to get authorized,” Crawford wrote. Seeking authorization took time because the Confederate headquarters on the island was a distance away, and the officer did not have a horse.

The emissary was Maj. Peter F. Stevens, in charge of the Cummings Point batteries. He was also the Citadel instructor whose cadets had fired on the *Star of the West*, a fact that did not endear him to the Sumter men.

Anderson was civil. He told Stevens that “it must be obvious to all by this time” that he was anxious to avoid a collision.

Stevens said, “I am sure, Sir, this last act of yours would prove it. You might have fired, and I am sure no one could have blamed you for firing. We are certainly very much obliged to you for your forbearance.”

Again, forbearance: Captain Doubleday, for one, had wanted to fire back at the Cummings Point battery. He was tired of being patient and

apparently was not alone. “One and all,” he wrote, “desired to fight it out as soon as possible.”

As Stevens prepared to leave, he told Anderson, “I hope Major this may be the last shot, although I doubt it.” Stevens then asked—“hesitatingly,” according to Crawford—whether the errant cannonball had hit the fort. Anderson, apparently unwilling to give him any satisfaction, told him no, that it had gone beyond the fort, into the water.

But later, in a letter to a brother, Crawford wrote: “By the way, it was a *good shot* and only required a little elevation to accomplish its object, i.e.: our main gate.”

WASHINGTON

The Commissioners

MARCH 9–13

FROM THEIR VARIOUS CONNECTIONS, THE three Confederate commissioners in Washington learned that Lincoln might indeed remove Anderson's garrison from Fort Sumter. A rumor to that effect was already in wide circulation. The prospect drew scathing condemnation from Northern critics. Here was Lincoln, who had pledged in his inaugural to hold existing federal properties, now relinquishing one of the foremost such properties without a fight. New York diarist George Templeton Strong offered a vivid denunciation. "The bird of our country," he wrote, "is a debilitated chicken, disguised in eagle feathers."

The Confederate commissioners, however, were heartened. "Things look better here than was believed," they telegraphed to the Confederacy's new secretary of state, Robert Toombs, former U.S. senator from Georgia, on Saturday night, March 9. Word in "Administration circles" was that the fort would be evacuated in ten days, they reported. Similar news appeared in the *New York Herald* the next day.

The commissioners' sources convinced them that Lincoln's secretary of state, William Seward, was the real ruling power in the administration and that the evacuation was his idea, even though he had no love for secession. He favored evacuation, the commissioners understood, as a means of

maintaining peace to give time for secessionist passions to cool and allow latent pro-Union sentiment to come forward. “This gentleman is urgent for delay,” they told Secretary Toombs. To acquire the great prize of Sumter, the commissioners were willing to play along. “Until we reach the point of pacific negotiations, it is unimportant what may be his subsequent hopes and plans. It is well that he should indulge in dreams which we know are not to be realized.”

On Monday, March 11, the commissioners attempted their first contact with the administration, but they did so obliquely—by sending a request for an “informal interview” to Seward via an intermediary, U.S. senator R.M.T. Hunter of Virginia.

Seward demurred; he told Hunter he could not grant such an interview, no matter how informal, without first consulting Lincoln. The next day, he sent Hunter a reply: “It will not be in my power to receive the gentlemen of whom we conversed yesterday. You will please explain to them that this decision proceeds solely on public grounds and not from any want of personal respect.”

Senator Hunter conveyed this to the commissioners at eleven o’clock that morning. They took it as an affront. They saw themselves as honorable men from an honorable land and felt they deserved better than this cool rebuff.

Their pride abraded, they sent a report to Toombs in which they noted first that Seward’s reply had at least been “polite,” something that as Southern gentlemen they felt worth acknowledging, but this did little to ease their sense of insult. Having failed to gain even an informal interview, they concluded that a similarly unofficial request made directly to Lincoln would also be denied. “We deemed it not compatible with the dignity of our Government to make a second effort,” they reported to Toombs. “Our only remaining course was plain, and we followed it at once in the preparation of a formal note to the State Department informing the United States Government of our official presence here, the objects of our mission, and asking an early day to be appointed for an official interview.”

Toombs applauded their refusal to be cowed. “You have shown to the Government of the United States with commendable promptness and becoming dignity that you were not supplicants for its grace and favor, and willing to loiter in the antechambers of officials to patiently await their answer to your petition; but that you are the envoys of a powerful confederacy of sovereignties, instructed to present and demand their rights.”

The commissioners presented their formal request to Seward on March 13, again through an intermediary, this being a man they had recruited to be their official secretary, John T. Pickett, to emulate the methods of established foreign legations. Although the petition as written sought only to arrange a formal meeting with Lincoln as soon as possible, all parties knew that what the commissioners were in fact seeking was official recognition of the Confederacy.

Pickett promised to return at noon the next day for a reply. When he arrived at the State Department he was received by Seward’s son Frederick, assistant secretary of state, who told Pickett that his father had been too busy to draft a formal response but would do so soon and have it delivered to the commissioners’ hotel.

Another day passed; Pickett returned on Friday, March 15, to seek an answer. This time he was met only by the department’s chief clerk, who assured him that Seward was preparing his reply; it just wasn’t ready yet.

The commissioners found this insulting, but by this point they had come to share Seward’s belief that delay could be useful, albeit for different reasons. The commissioners now believed that putting off a diplomatic confrontation also benefitted the Confederacy by providing time both to resolve the incendiary issue of Fort Sumter and to establish a cohesive government better able to meet whatever military threat might yet arise.

That Friday, one of the commissioners, John Forsyth, outlined their new strategy in a letter to Confederate Secretary of War Walker in Montgomery. “We are feeling our way here cautiously,” Forsyth wrote. “We are playing a game in which time is our best advocate, and if our Government could afford the time I feel confident of winning. There is a terrible fight in the Cabinet. Our policy is to encourage the peace element in the fight, and at

least blow up the Cabinet on the question." Forsyth revealed a flawed perception of the mood in the North, equivalent to the North's own failure to correctly gauge the passions of the South. "The outside pressure in favor of peace grows stronger every hour," Forsyth wrote. "Lincoln inclines to peace, and I have no doubt that General Scott is Seward's anxious and laborious coadjutor in the same direction. If Seward were not a coward, and would have had an official conference with us, we could have strengthened his hands."

He added with rather more acuity: "The great danger is that from ignorance of the true state of things in the South they may blunder us into a war when they really do not mean it."

The commissioners resolved that for the time being, they would not press their demands.

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SECRETARY SEWARD, FOR HIS part, understood that the administration could never recognize the Confederacy, let alone signal that it considered the commissioners to be bona fide representatives of any government entity. If they insisted on a formal answer, he knew, he would have to issue an official declaration turning them down—in effect, denying their existence.

And this, he believed, was the surest path to war.

FORT SUMTER

To Lift a Columbiad

MARCH 9

At first Anderson wanted to place his ten-inch columbiads, the big fifteen-thousand-pound guns, on the topmost tier of the fort, the barbette or parapet level, where he believed they would be most effective. His engineers managed to improvise a block-and-tackle apparatus capable of lifting that much weight. Still, the effort of raising the first gun required brute strength. The men successfully hauled it up to the top level and slowly heaved it into position.

Then came the second gun. Again the men struggled, and slowly the big gun rose. It passed the first level. It passed the second.

Just as it came even with the top level, a key element of the lifting apparatus broke "and down it came," wrote Asst. Surgeon Crawford in a letter to his brother. "It went into the ground butt foremost and buried itself to the trunnions." The trunnions were axle-like protrusions midway up the barrel.

No one was hurt. They decided to leave it where it was and take advantage of its convenient partial burial by converting it into an improvised mortar, a kind of cannon that fired projectiles along a steep upward trajectory so they could soar over walls and other obstacles.

The men repaired the lifting apparatus and began hoisting the third columbiad. This one ascended without hazard.

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TO PROTECT AGAINST INVADING infantry, the fort's chief engineer, Captain Foster, had his men seal the main gate, which was at the center of the rear, west-facing wall, the "gorge." The weakest wall.

Here, just inside the gate, Foster installed a new barrier six feet high and nearly four feet thick, with an entryway only twenty inches wide. He called this a "manhole," an apt description because it was only wide enough to admit one soldier at a time. If an invader somehow made it through he would find himself confronting an eight-inch howitzer aimed directly at his chest.

Foster, whose imagination verged on the diabolical, also arrayed 225 explosive shells at various points along the parapet to be shoved off onto soldiers below. Lanyards affixed to these shells would engage at a point about four feet—roughly chest height—above the esplanade that surrounded the fort. At several locations he installed "thunder barrels," large containers filled with stone, brick, and other materials and packed with explosives. He had his men dig two pits and likewise filled these with debris and gunpowder, and hid them from view in a ditch at the base of the exterior walls. These were "fougasses." By this point in history bits and pieces of material in an exploding shell were already being called "shrapnel" thanks to one Henry Shrapnel, an early-nineteenth-century British officer, who, borrowing an idea from Leonardo da Vinci, invented ordnance that would rupture and disperse small bits of metal in all directions.

Foster also installed two mines under the wharf, each containing about twenty-five pounds of powder.

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LIFE AT SUMTER WAS not all centered on sowing death and mayhem. Along with board games and cards, the men played leapfrog and, according to Asst. Surgeon Crawford, “ball.” He did not specify what kind, but it was likely a variant of baseball, by then a popular sport that fellow officer Captain Doubleday would often, wrongly, be credited with inventing.

They fished for blackfish and eels. On Sundays, when the weather allowed, they rowed a six-oared barge around the fort’s perimeter.

There were fewer opportunities in the evening. The fort had run out of candles, so reading books and writing letters became difficult. For light they filled bowls with oil from the fort’s beacon and floated wicks on the surface using small rafts of wood.

They were also out of soap. This they could not improvise.

WASHINGTON

Lincoln

MARCH 9–15

General Scott's offhand appraisal of the situation in Charleston—that Sumter should simply be surrendered—had rattled Lincoln, but in a subsequent in-person encounter, the general told him that since then he had "given the subject a more full and thorough consideration." Lincoln wanted to hear more and, in a letter dated Saturday, March 9, asked Scott to answer three questions in writing:

"1st To what point of time can Major Anderson maintain his position at Fort Sumpter, without fresh supplies or reinforcement?" (Just as Lincoln had difficulty spelling "inauguration," he could never quite manage "Sumter," which has no *p*.)

"2d Can you, with all the means now in your control, supply or reinforce Fort Sumpter within that time?

"3d If not, what amount of means and of what description, in addition to that already at your control, would enable you to supply and reinforce that fortress within the time?"

In his reply two days later Scott told Lincoln that Fort Sumter had enough "hard bread, flour and rice" to last about twenty-six days, and enough "salt meat" for forty-eight days; how long Anderson could hold out, however, "cannot be answered with absolute accuracy," but certainly not

long enough to allow the mounting of an expedition large enough to succeed now that Charleston Harbor was ringed with heavy artillery and thousands of troops.

Lincoln's third question pressed Scott as to timing: What would he need in order to reinforce Sumter *within* the period remaining before its provisions would be exhausted?

"I should need a fleet of war vessels and transports which, in the scattered disposition of the Navy (as understood), could not be collected in less than four months; 5,000 additional regular troops and 20,000 volunteers; that is, a force sufficient to take all the batteries, both in the harbor (including Fort Moultrie), as well as in the approach or outer bay. To raise, organize, and discipline such an army (not to speak of necessary legislation by Congress, not now in session) would require from six to eight months. As a practical military question the time for succoring Fort Sumter with any means at hand had passed away nearly a month ago. Since then a surrender under assault or from starvation has been merely a question of time."

Lincoln mulled this as he wrestled with the continuing crush of office seekers and the need to make important new appointments. "Solicitants for office besiege him," Secretary of State Seward wrote home to his wife. He saw this firsthand on his many visits to the White House. "The grounds, halls, stairways, closets, are filled with applicants, who render ingress and egress difficult."

In the meantime, at the urging of Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, Lincoln met with a former U.S. Navy lieutenant named Gustavus Vasa Fox, who claimed to have devised an effective plan for the relief of Sumter. Fox was a vain man, according to a fellow naval officer, Lt. David Dixon Porter. "He was vain of his physique, which was excellent, he could knock down a bull. He was vain of his personal appearance." He had a large head, broad forehead, and could have passed for a poet, Porter wrote. "He thought himself superior to the Secretary [of the Navy] and all the rest of the cabinet, in his political talents, whereas if he had thrown away his corks, he would have sank to the bottom."

Fox had extensive service on transatlantic civilian ships but little experience with naval combat, and he was now the manager of a decidedly landlocked fabric mill in Massachusetts. He was, however, an ambitious man with a powerful need for recognition. He was also Postmaster Blair's brother-in-law. As early as February he had imagined himself leading an expedition to rescue Major Anderson and his men and on February 6 had presented a plan to General Scott. To make sure he got all the credit, Fox insisted on full control. Scott liked the plan; so did then war secretary Holt. That day Fox wrote to his wife, "Anderson's fame will be nothing to mine if I succeed."

But President Buchanan had rejected it, apparently fearing a repeat of the *Star of the West* debacle, and, more to the point, hoping to shove the whole crisis forward to the next administration. Fox went back to his mill.

Since then Fox had revised his plan, and now, on March 14, he presented it to Lincoln and his cabinet, including Fox's brother-in-law, the postmaster. Lincoln found it compelling; similarly he found the thirty-nine-year-old Fox to be a forceful, dynamic evangelist for its execution. At a meeting the next day, March 15, the cabinet debated the plan; afterward, Lincoln sent each member a brief note asking a single question: "Assuming it to be possible to now provision Fort-Sumpter"—that *p* again—"under all the circumstances, is it wise to attempt it?"

Some answered that day, others the next. Together the responses demonstrated how complex the issue was. Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase said he would oppose reinforcement if it meant civil war, but that seemed unlikely to him, so he offered a qualified endorsement. Secretary of War Simon Cameron voted no: He agreed with General Scott and Major Anderson's officers that an attempt now was impossible. Attorney General Edward Bates voted no as well. Navy Secretary Gideon Welles—whom Lincoln referred to as "Father Neptune"—argued that from both a political and military perspective, it would be "unwise." Interior Secretary Caleb Smith ventured that "the probabilities are in favor of the success of the proposed enterprise" but believed "it would not be wise under all the circumstances."

Postmaster Blair offered a nuanced view: He blamed the spreading rebellion on “the connivance of the late administration” and argued that the responsibility for ending it now lay in the hands of the inhabitants of the seceded states; that to achieve this, Lincoln needed to act forcefully. The secessionists, he wrote, already believed the North to be “deficient in the courage necessary to maintain the Government.” It was time to prove otherwise. “You should give no thought for the commander and his comrades in this enterprise”—an allusion to the relief expedition and its officers, including presumably his own brother-in-law, Fox. “They willingly take the hazard for the sake of the country and the honor which, successful or not, they will receive from you and the lovers of free government in all lands.”

The seventh and most influential member of the cabinet, Secretary of State Seward, voted against reinforcement. “If it were possible to peacefully provision Fort Sumter, of course I should answer that it would be both unwise and inhuman not to attempt it,” he wrote. But as things stood, an attempt to do so seemed likely to trigger civil war and drive the border states from the Union. He argued that maintaining a defensive posture was the best way to retain them. At the moment, he said, those states “indicate a disposition to adhere to the Union, if nothing extraordinary shall occur to renew excitement and produce popular exasperation.”

He also made the point that any expedition would be impaired from the start by the impossibility of keeping it secret. “In this active and enlightened country,” Seward wrote, “in this season of excitement, with a daily press, daily mails, and an incessantly operating telegraph, the design to reinforce and supply the garrison must become known to the opposite party at Charleston, as soon, at least, as preparations for it should begin. The garrison would then almost certainly fall by assault, before the expedition could reach the harbor of Charleston.”

In sum: five noes, one definitive yes, and one qualified yes. The cabinet’s position was clear, but Lincoln was unsure: On an instinctive level he felt that giving up Sumter would be wrong, “utterly ruinous,” as he would later put it, arguing that “at home, it would discourage the friends of

the Union, embolden its adversaries, and go far to insure to the latter, a recognition abroad; that in fact it would be our national destruction consummated.”

He remained intrigued by Fox’s plan but wanted more information, intelligence of a more direct and observational nature, and directed War Secretary Cameron to help him get it. Cameron in turn assigned the task to General Scott. “The President requires accurate information in regard to the command of Major Anderson in Fort Sumter, and wishes a competent person sent for that purpose,” Cameron wrote to the general on Tuesday, March 19. “You will therefore direct some suitable person to proceed there immediately, and report the result of the information obtained by him.”

Scott proposed Gustavus Fox, possibly the least objective agent he could have chosen.

Lincoln approved.

MONTGOMERY

Of Spiders and Entrails

MARCH 11

In Montgomery, Mary Chesnut kept up her social spelunking. Delegates and their wives often gathered at her boarding house. “In full conclave tonight,” she wrote, on Monday, March 11, “—the drawing room was full of judges, governors, senators, generals, congressmen.” Story after story flew past, flurries of gossip: the deep piety of John C. Calhoun; one attorney’s confessed admiration for a beautiful woman back in Washington who was not his wife. Then came a random story told by Judge Withers, Mary’s daunting uncle, of a married couple “who quarreled on a bridge and the man said, blubbering, ‘Nancy, take the baby; I will drown myself.’ But she said, ‘No, take the baby with you. I want none of your breed left!’ What a tale.”

The tale telling that night went on a little too long for Mary’s husband, James, who had retreated upstairs. “Mr. Chesnut making such a stamping over head,” she wrote. “I knew his patience at my long stay was exhausted.” She ignored it. She and several other women then turned to the subject of the laws governing divorce. “These women had studied it thoroughly,” Mary wrote. “One especially seemed to have so exact a knowledge of its various provisions in every state, her husband seemed to dislike the suspicion such knowledge cast upon her.”

The marital excavations continued. One woman, Mrs. Lafayette Borland, suddenly went quiet as Mary "expatiated on the folly of a woman's leaving her husband."

As Mary now learned, Mrs. Borland had left her husband several years before.

"Here after," Mary wrote in her diary, "I deal in generalities!"

They eventually circled to her own husband, James, who claimed to have felt hurt by a chance remark from a Georgia man who had accused him of keeping things to himself.

"Mr. C, thinking himself an open, frank, confiding person, asked me if he *was not*," Mary wrote. "Truth required me to say that I knew no more what Mr. C thought or felt on any subject now than I did twenty years ago. Sometimes I *feel* that we understand each other a little—then up goes the Iron Wall once more."

She took a moment that day to reflect on her own diary keeping. "I think this journal will be disadvantageous for me," she wrote, "for I spend the time now like a spider spinning my own entrails instead of reading as my habit was at all spare moments." She was paraphrasing a passage from a seventeenth-century play, *Marriage à la Mode*, by John Dryden, who wrote, "Our souls sit close and silently within,/And their own webs from their own entrails spin."

FORT SUMTER

Practice Makes Perfect

MARCH 12–21

EACH DAY THE QUIET AT Sumter was punctuated by the booming of cannon from Confederate batteries as their inexperienced crews practiced firing and sought to determine optimal angles for hitting the fort and ships in the main channel.

Firing a heavy gun was an art, and a dangerous one; practice was necessary. A mistake at the wrong moment could be fatal. A typical gunnery crew, as specified by the Army's *Heavy Ordnance Manual of 1861*, had seven men—a gunner and six cannoneers. The gunner directed the action. In casual usage, however, the term *gunner* could be used to describe all members of the crew.

Among artillery men, a cannon was known as a "piece." Three cannoneers stood on each side of the barrel about three yards apart; the gunner, also known as the "chief of piece," stood behind and to the left. Various "accoutrements" lay nearby to be used in loading the gun and adjusting its position and for the all-important step of sponging the barrel between each shot. The gunner's pouch, which contained various tools for sighting the gun, was hung from the "cascabel," the knob at the rear of the barrel, as was the "tube-pouch," which contained the firing lanyard and

ignition devices, called friction tubes. The ammunition was piled to the left of the cannon's muzzle.

On the gunner's command *From Battery!* the men used long, heavy poles of wood, or handspikes, to back the gun away from the embrasure. The gunner guided the process by repeating the command *Heave!* The cannoneers positioned their spikes at various points under the gun carriage and levered the gun far enough away from the wall to allow access to its muzzle.

Next the gunner shouted *Load!* If the gun had just been fired, the first step was to shove a sponge on a long pole into the barrel. At the command *Sponge!* two men forced the sponge against the bottom of the barrel and gave it three turns, left to right, and then three more, right to left. This was to ensure that no spark or flame remained in the barrel from the previous discharge. Either could cause a premature detonation of the next round as the gun was being loaded, with a lethal result.

Now the round and its powder-filled cartridge were shoved into the barrel and rammed to the bottom. A small opening at the exterior base of the barrel, called a vent, allowed the gunner to insert a sharp pick to tear a tiny hole in the cartridge bag jammed within. The gunner then commanded *In Battery!* and the six cannoneers muscled the piece back into firing position.

Next the gunner ordered *Point!* and directed the cannoneers through a series of adjustments in the gun's position to "lay," or aim, the weapon. Once it was properly laid the cannoneers stepped aside. One man attached the lanyard to a friction tube and then pushed the tube through the vent into the cartridge bag within. He stretched the lanyard taut. At the gunner's command *Fire!* this cannoneer gave it a final yank. If all went well—if the charge detonated, if the barrel did not explode—the round within would rocket off toward whatever destiny awaited, and the firing process would begin anew. Typically a heavy gun could be fired a dozen times per hour.

A misstep could be lethal. U.S. Navy records, for example, show more than thirty fatal artillery accidents during the Civil War, including one that would occur on Christmas Eve 1864 during the Union navy's bombardment

of a Confederate fort in North Carolina, when a very large cannon exploded aboard the U.S.S. *Ticonderoga,* killing eight men and wounding half a dozen others. Other ordnance accidents during the same bombardment killed or injured dozens of men on four other ships. A Navy surgeon listed the dead and wounded and described their injuries. One sailor was Theodore Abos, a second-class fireman: "left leg, thigh, hip, arm, and forearm fractured; soft parts extensively lacerated; killed by hemorrhage and shock." Another was Henry Payne, an officer: "both thighs broken, cavity of the pelvis, and part of the abdomen opened; death by shock." And then there was young James D. Ennels, first-class boy: "left leg and thigh shattered and lacerated; died shortly after amputation."

David Dixon Porter (the Navy officer who encountered an elated Varina Davis leaving her house on the night South Carolina seceded) was by this point a rear admiral and wrote the official report on the *Ticonderoga* incident. The gun in question was a "Parrott rifle" that fired one-hundred-pound shot and had by this time gained a reputation for bursting despite the innovative barrel reinforcement developed by its designer, Robert Parker Parrott. The guns, Porter concluded, were "calculated to kill more of our men than those of the enemy."

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ON TUESDAY, MARCH 12, the guns at Fort Moultrie alone fired off one hundred blank cartridges. Sumter's Captain Foster monitored their progress, and saw great improvement. During one practice session Confederate gunners using live shot fired repeatedly and accurately toward a buoy five-eighths of a mile from Sumter. "The practice was excellent, all the shot striking the water nearly in the same spot," Foster reported, "so it will be seen that the ranges are well understood now, and any vessel coming in must not expect to fare as well as the Star of the West."

The Confederates also began practicing with heavy mortars installed on Morris Island, these capable of launching shells high into the air so that they would drop within Sumter's walls and then explode. Beauregard's

forces continued to add additional firepower. A new battery appeared on Sullivan's Island, near Moultrie House, the resort hotel up the beach that was now occupied by Confederate officers and soldiers who watched the gunnery practice from the piazzas that encircled the building.

Sumter's guns remained silent. Its supply of cartridges was so limited that Major Anderson ordered Quartermaster Hall to retrieve a supply of flannel shirts from storage to be cut up and turned into cartridge bags. The men sewed five hundred of them. Anderson lamented the fact that he could not engage in the same window-rattling display as the Confederates, who seemed to have an unending reserve of shot, shell, and powder. "I have no ammunition to spare," he told his superiors in Washington, "and, therefore, do not show them our proficiency in artillery practice."

His supplies of provisions were running low as well. After Anderson rejected Governor Pickens's offer of free beef and vegetables, he secured from Pickens permission to acquire such foods on his own from city suppliers using the fort's existing contracts. But delivery was erratic. Attempts to acquire even minor supplies, such as condiments, required permits from Pickens himself. It was a small humiliation but it prompted Anderson to write a long letter of complaint to the governor, in which he sulked that it might be better to have no supplies at all.

Anderson complained, too, that South Carolina authorities had detained the fort's only hired servant, a free Black named Thomas Moore Lynch, after he had ventured into Charleston bearing a permit signed by the U.S. secretary of war. The boy's return, Anderson told Pickens, "was undoubtedly called for in this case by common civility and courtesy, as the officers have no opportunity of replacing him."

Civility and courtesy thus invoked, the incident now became a matter of honor. David Jamison, South Carolina's secretary of war, replied on the governor's behalf and told Anderson that in fact Thomas Lynch was a slave, and that it was "the unquestionable privilege of a slave owner to permit or not, at his own pleasure, the return of his slave to a hostile fort."

But there was more to the story, Jamison wrote. Charleston police had discovered that Lynch was carrying on "a very improper correspondence"

with his mother. They found a letter in his possession in which the boy told her that if a battle broke out in Charleston between Sumter's men and the state, "the negroes would rise" and assist the federal forces. This of course raised the specter of the kind of insurrection slaveholders had always feared. Moreover, Jamison wrote, the police investigation had turned up letters written by Lynch's mother in which she described "operations in this city which were not proper to be communicated to anyone in your garrison."

But now Jamison managed, perhaps unknowingly, to impugn Anderson's honor by recounting how the Black servant's behavior "clearly showed that his temper and principles had not been improved by a residence in Fort Sumter."

This drew a testy reply from Anderson in which he first took to task "the professed owner of the boy, who, neglecting his duty as owner or master for months, had permitted the boy to hire himself out, every one supposing him to be free." But Anderson, former slaveowner, understood the rules and told Jamison that if indeed the boy was someone's property "of course, that ends the matter."

What really irritated Anderson, however, was Jamison's remark about the boy's experience at Sumter. "I regret exceedingly," he wrote, "that your letter contains the remark it does in reference to the effect of a residence at Fort Sumter on the boy's 'temper and principles,' and am satisfied that, upon further consideration, you will regret it."

He heard nothing back.

WASHINGTON

The Commissioners

MARCH 15–21

On Friday, March 15, two singularly august men paid a call on Secretary of State Seward on behalf of the Confederate commissioners. These were Samuel Nelson of New York and John A. Campbell of Alabama, both associate justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, both committed to finding a peaceful resolution to the national crisis. They believed the best way to avoid war was for Seward to offer the commissioners a formal interview to allow them to state their case and to assure them that the administration wanted peace.

"I wish I could do it," Seward told the justices. But no, he said, "there is not a member of the Cabinet who would consent to it."

Next Seward displayed the cunning that had made him such a resilient politician. Intent on cooling inflamed passions on both sides, he told the justices, "If Jefferson Davis had known the state of things here he would not have sent those commissioners; the evacuation of Sumter is as much as the administration can bear."

That one word, "evacuation," dropped so casually by Seward, caught Campbell by surprise.

"I had not before this had a hint of the proposed evacuation of Sumter," Campbell wrote later. It changed everything. Campbell felt this was

something the commissioners needed to know, and asked Seward's permission to tell them. Seward not only assented but told Campbell that he could also tell them the evacuation would happen within five days. Moreover, Seward said, Campbell could assure the commissioners that there also would be no effort to change the military status of Fort Pickens, the U.S. sea fortress in the Gulf of Mexico off Pensacola, Florida.

Seward omitted the fact that these were guarantees he had not been authorized to make.

Campbell immediately took this news to commissioner Martin Crawford and urged him to hold off on trying to get an official response to his demand for a meeting with Lincoln. Crawford was skeptical. He insisted that Justice Campbell put in writing all that he had just relayed, and Campbell did so.

"I feel perfect confidence in the fact that Fort Sumter will be evacuated in the next five days," Campbell wrote, "and that this is felt to be a measure imposing vast responsibility upon the Administration.

"I feel perfect confidence that no measure changing the existing status of things prejudicially to the Southern Confederate States is at present contemplated.

"I feel entire confidence that an immediate demand for an answer to the communication of the Commissioners will be productive of evil and not of good. I do not believe that it should be pressed."

Justice Campbell made it clear to the commissioners, however, that he understood full well Seward's true motivation, which was to calm things long enough that secession would "wither under sunshine."

The commissioners agreed that for the time being they would not press their demands, and Campbell relayed this to Seward.

The commissioners then telegraphed their own Secretary of State Toombs in Montgomery and told him they knew that if they pushed Seward they could get an immediate answer to their official note, but that the answer would likely be negative, and if so, "adverse to recognition and peace." It was best now to wait, they said. "We are sure that within five days Sumter will be evacuated." This would ease the tension, they

reasoned, and might make Washington more receptive to recognizing them as official delegates of the Confederacy. “With a few days’ delay a favorable answer may be had. Our personal interests command us to press. Duty to our country commands us to wait. What shall we do?”

This was Friday, March 15; if Justice Campbell was correct, the problem of Sumter would be resolved by the following Wednesday. Toombs approved. He authorized the commissioners to wait “a reasonable time” and then to contact him for further instructions.

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IN FACT, SEWARD HAD already prepared a formal answer to the commissioners’ demands but did not give it to them. Rather, he wrote it in the form of a for-the-record memorandum to be deposited in the State Department’s archive, accessible to anyone who chose to retrieve it. He did not sign it. He filed it that Friday.

This was a curious form of political brinksmanship, very much in line with Seward’s penchant for quiet manipulation, or “line-pulling,” as backroom dealings were known. He could not send this memo directly to the commissioners, because doing so would constitute a form of official recognition. He understood the quandary the commissioners now confronted: If they truly wanted the government’s response, they could retrieve the memorandum from the archive. By this point they knew of its existence. But its contents would shatter any hope they had of receiving formal recognition and, Seward believed, would likely trigger an attack on Fort Sumter and Fort Pickens.

If they did not ask for it, the memo would simply reside in the archive, unopened and unread.

Seward believed that the longer the commissioners waited, the more likely it was that the Sumter crisis would be resolved peacefully; that absent an incendiary event, the South’s commitment to secession must eventually wane.

The memorandum would remain undisturbed in the department's archive for another twenty-four days.

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AT SUMTER, ANDERSON ASKED Quartermaster Hall to provide him with an accounting of all the food supplies on hand. Hall reported back on Thursday, March 21. The fort's supply of salt pork was now down to twenty-six barrels, from thirty-eight in late January. The supply of flour had dwindled alarmingly, down to six barrels, from thirty-seven. At least now, however, there was a fresh supply of candles: three boxes of them.

Firewood for fuel was in especially short supply and much in need. Even though it was now officially spring, the weather was changeable, pleasant one day, cold and blustery the next, with damaging winds. The day before the spring equinox, which arrived at nine-fifty A.M. on March 20, snow had fallen. A chest cold began circulating within the fort; its hospital reported half a dozen cases of dysentery. To provide heat the garrison retrieved floating logs that drifted near the fort. They also broke apart unneeded gun carriages and disassembled the various sheds and other temporary structures that had initially cluttered the parade ground.

Rumor that Lincoln planned to surrender Sumter finally reached the garrison, but Captain Foster was skeptical. He continued improving the fort's defenses. However, just in case an evacuation order did arrive, he also began taking an inventory of all federal property within its walls.

NEW YORK

Russell, of the Times

MARCH 17–26

Up early on his first day in New York City, Sunday, March 17, William Russell of the London *Times* was struck by how odd the city looked. "Abnormal," he wrote. One of the first things he saw was a procession of forty or fifty Irishmen wearing green silk sashes and shamrocks in their hats marching to Sunday mass. The city otherwise seemed populated by domestics, whites and free Blacks alike, clothed in fancy suits and dresses, with Black women the fanciest of all. The streets, on the other hand, were still raggedly dressed in the late-winter garb that in all centuries would mar the city's vistas. Dirty snow. Deceptively deep pockets of slush. Broadway, for example: Russell found it crowded with people despite "the piles of blackened snow by the kerbstones, and the sloughs of mud, and half frozen pools at the crossings."

Worse than blackened snow was the prevalence on streets, tavern floors, and hotel carpets of expectorated chewing tobacco. American men seemed determined to mark every standing object with tobacco juice, despite the presence of innumerable spittoons left out for its collection. British visitors invariably found the habit appalling. Before Charles Dickens set out on his 1842 tour of America, he'd heard stories from other travelers about the country's obsession with chewing tobacco but assumed their accounts were

overblown. He found otherwise: “The thing itself is an exaggeration of nastiness, which cannot be outdone,” he wrote in *American Notes*, his chronicle of the journey. He found tobacco spoor everywhere. “In all the public places of America this filthy custom is recognized. In the courts of law the judge has his spittoon, the crier his, the witness his, and the prisoner his; while the jurymen and spectators are provided for, as so many men who in the course of nature must desire to spit incessantly.” The custom of chewing and spitting tobacco was “inseparably mixed up with every meal and morning call, and with all the transactions of social life.” Target spitting appeared to be a particular preoccupation, though one at which few men were adept, judging by the splatters of brown spit that marked the terrain in front of and around spittoons, fireplace hearths, and lamp posts. “I was surprised to observe,” Dickens wrote, “that even steady old chewers of great experience are not always good marksmen, which has rather inclined me to doubt that general proficiency with the rifle, of which we have heard so much in England.”

Twenty years later, Russell found that nothing had changed. He was particularly impressed by how this ubiquitous splatter of gnawed and saliva-infused tobacco had even made its way into the corridors of supposedly elegant hotels. “The tumult, the miscellaneous nature of the company, the heated, muggy rooms, not to speak of the great abominableness of the passages and halls, despite a most liberal provision of spittoons, conduce to render these institutions by no means agreeable to a European.”

By now, Russell was well known in America’s upper echelons. His reportage from far-flung theaters of war was routinely reprinted in newspapers throughout the country. Before the year was out, even Mary Chesnut in South Carolina would find herself expressing grudging respect for his work. “To me it is evident that Russell, the *Times* correspondent, tries to tell the truth, unpalatable as it is to us. Why should we expect a man who recorded so unflinchingly the wrongdoing in India to soften matters for our benefit—sensitive as we are to blame.” Though sometimes she had quibbles: “He describes slavery in Maryland but says that it has worse

features further south," she wrote in her public diary. "Yet his account of slavery in Maryland might stand as a perfectly accurate picture of it here. God knows, I am not inclined to condone it, come what may. It is very well done for a stranger who comes and in his haste unpacks his three p's—pen, paper, and prejudices—and hurries through his work."

After arriving in New York, Russell was courted by leading citizens who invited him for dinners, meetings, and simple conversation. At a breakfast gathering of New York editors he encountered such influential men as Charles A. Dana of the Republican-leaning New York *Tribune* and Henry Raymond of the *New-York Times;* Frederick Law Olmsted was present as well. At these sessions, conversation inevitably veered toward the secession crisis, but often with an unexpected inflection: Despite being far north of the Mason-Dixon Line, the city was an island of pro-South sentiment. Its banks, merchants, and shipping companies maintained close commercial ties with Southern planters and routinely issued credit secured by the planters' holdings of enslaved Blacks. At a dinner hosted by a city banker, Russell heard the persistent view that the federal government had no authority to suppress secession; a former New York governor, Horatio Seymour, unabashedly declared that secession was a right. The proslavery *New York Herald* openly mocked Lincoln, Russell noted in his diary. "The *Herald* keeps up the courage and spirit of its Southern friends by giving the most florid accounts of their prospects and making continual attacks on Mr. Lincoln and his Government."

He was struck by the Lincoln administration's inability to influence events. "Everywhere the Southern leaders are forcing on a solution with decision and energy," Russell wrote, "whilst the Government appears to be helplessly drifting with the current of events, having neither bow nor stern, neither keel nor deck, neither rudder, compass, sails, or steam."

After a few days in the city Russell resolved that to really understand the crisis he needed to travel south and see things for himself. While paying a call on Horace Greeley, he revealed his intention. Greeley was delighted. "Be sure you examine the slave-pens," Greeley told him. "*They* will be afraid to refuse you, and you can tell the truth."

Russell set out on Monday, March 25, at six P.M. and, upon leaving his hotel, the Clarendon, immediately received further unhappy exposure to the city as his carriage dragged him “over the roughest and most execrable pavements through several miles of unsympathetic, gloomy, dirty streets, and crowded thoroughfares, over jaw-wrenching street-railway tracks, to a large wooden shed covered with inscriptions respecting routes and destinations.” He barely made his train, which likewise offered little in the way of comfort. Unlike the first-class coaches he was accustomed to in London, with their plush upholstery and cozy compartments, this car was one long box with a passage down the center and uncomfortable seats on either side. “The passengers were crowded as close as they could pack,” he wrote, “and as there was an immense iron stove in the center of the car, the heat and stuffiness became most trying.” He found a seat beside an American diplomat, Henry S. Sanford, Lincoln’s new minister to Belgium. When the train reached Philadelphia, Russell and Sanford, like Lincoln and Pinkerton before them, secured berths in a sleeping car, which Russell conceded to be “an American institution of considerable merit.”

In Washington, Sanford was met by his personal carriage and gave Russell a ride to his hotel, the Willard, now more than ever the center of city life. Its corridors were crowded with men seeking patronage jobs from the new administration; its writing room was packed, so much so that “the rustle of pens rose to a little breeze,” Russell wrote. The hotel restaurant served twenty-five hundred guests a day; its waiters “never cease shoving the chairs to and fro with a harsh screeching noise over the floor.” Tobacco stains marred this floor as well. The hotel, Russell wrote, “probably contains at the moment more scheming, plotting, planning heads, more aching and joyful hearts, than any building of the same size ever held in the world.”

Russell’s encounter with Sanford yielded more than just a ride to the hotel. Sanford invited him to dinner that night at his home, and there Russell met William Seward for the first time. Always adept at close observation of physiognomy, Russell seemed particularly captivated by Seward’s appearance and wrote a detailed description in his diary. “A well-

formed and large head is placed on a long, slender neck, and projects over the chest in an argumentative kind of way, as if the keen eyes were seeking for an adversary; the mouth is remarkably flexible, large but well formed, the nose prominent and aquiline, the eyes secret, but penetrating, and lively with humor of some kind twinkling about them; the brow bold and broad, but not remarkably elevated; the white hair silvery and fine—a subtle, quick man, rejoicing in power, given to perorate and to oracular utterances, fond of badinage, bursting with the importance of state mysteries, and with the dignity of directing foreign policy of the greatest country—as all Americans think—in the world."

Dinner conversation inevitably turned to secession. Seward declared himself to be skeptical that the movement would endure. "All through this conversation his tone was that of a man very sanguine and with a supreme contempt for those who thought there was anything serious in secession," Russell wrote in his diary. He quoted Seward as saying, "Why, I myself, my brothers, and sisters, have been all secessionists—we seceded from home when we were young, but we all went back to it sooner or later. These States will all come back in the same way."

Russell got the impression that Seward had never actually visited the South, but this did not stop the secretary from disparaging Southerners as being sixty or seventy years behind New York in terms of social and cultural development. As Seward saw it, "in the North all was life, enterprise, industry, mechanical skill," Russell wrote. "In the South there was dependence on black labour, and an idle extravagance which was mistaken for elegant luxury—tumble-down old hackney-coaches, such as had not been seen north of the Potomac for half a century, harness never cleaned, ungroomed horses, bad cookery, imperfect education. No parallel could be drawn between them and the Northern States at all."

Seward seemed remarkably detached from what Russell even in his short time in America had come to see as the true gravity of the crisis. The two federal forts on everyone's mind, Pickens and Sumter, somehow had become flint points capable of igniting a civil war. Russell understood, however, that the true cause of the conflict, no matter how hard anyone tried

to disguise it, was slavery. He called it a “curse” and likened it to a cancer whose inner damage was masked by the victim’s outward appearance of health. He marveled that the South seemed intent on staking its destiny on ground that the rest of the world had abandoned. “Never,” he wrote, “did a people enter a war so utterly destitute of any reason for waging it.”

Given Seward’s presumed influence, this encounter had been invaluable to Russell in providing a glimpse into why Lincoln seemed so ineffectual in confronting the secession crisis.

But it would soon bear even riper fruit—a meeting with Lincoln himself.

WASHINGTON

Trust

MARCH 20–23

SEWARD HAD PROMISED THE CONFEDERATE commissioners that Fort Sumter would be evacuated within five days. The five days passed.

During that week, Washington experienced a period of brutal cold. On March 18 the temperature, as recorded by diarist Charles Francis Adams, had fallen to six degrees Fahrenheit, “two degrees below any point reached at Washington, during the Winter.” Adams set out for Boston and on arrival there found high winds and heavy snow. “The winter,” he wrote, “seems to be just setting in.”

It was now Wednesday, March 20, the first day of spring and the date that Fort Sumter, according to Seward’s projection, was to have been evacuated. But as best anyone could tell it remained in federal hands. Confederate Secretary of State Toombs in Montgomery sent a five-word telegram to the commissioners in Washington to ask what was happening. Its peculiar and almost plaintive phrasing suggested growing unease: “We can’t hear from you.”

To which the commissioners replied, “You have not heard from us because there is no change. If there is faith in man we may rely on the assurances we have as to the status. Time is essential to a peaceful issue of

this mission. In the present posture of affairs precipitation is war. We are all agreed."

But the commissioners also were uneasy. They wired an inquiry to General Beauregard in Charleston. "Has Sumter been evacuated? Any action by Anderson indicating it?"

None, Beauregard answered. "Sumter not evacuated," he telegraphed back, "no indications whatever of it. Anderson working still on its defenses."

Alarmed, the commissioners asked their intermediary, Justice Campbell, to again meet with Seward. On Thursday, March 21, Campbell visited the State Department accompanied by Justice Nelson of New York. Seward assured them both that all was well but declared himself too busy just then for a meeting; the two should come back the next day. On the strength of this brief encounter, Campbell told the commissioners that his confidence that Sumter would be evacuated remained "unabated."

The justices returned to the State Department the next morning, Friday, March 22, and heard a "buoyant and sanguine" Seward assure them that the fort would indeed be evacuated; it was simply taking longer than expected.

This prompted Campbell to write a second memorandum for the commissioners in which he reiterated his confidence that the evacuation would happen and assured them that "no delay that has occurred excites in me any apprehension or distrust." Moreover, he told them he did not expect any detrimental change in "the state of things" at Fort Pickens. "I counsel inactivity in making demands on this Government for the present."

Later that day, Justice Nelson left Washington for New York, thereby ending his role as co-intermediary, but not before assuring Campbell that Seward "will not deceive you."

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CAPT. GUSTAVUS FOX, THE naval officer whom Lincoln assigned to scout conditions at Fort Sumter, reached Charleston on the morning of March 21.

Fox was able to meet with Governor Pickens, who after some debate granted him permission to visit the fort.

This, too, was a matter of honor: Fox gave Pickens his word that the visit was a peaceful one, intended solely to collect the "accurate information" that Lincoln wanted, and showed the governor an order from General Scott to that effect. But honor only went so far. Pickens also required that a Confederate naval official accompany Fox to the fort. This was Capt. Henry J. Hartstene, a former U.S. Navy officer now in charge of South Carolina's naval forces, who happened to be one of Fox's friends. Pickens directed him to stay with Fox the whole time. Negotiating this permission apparently took quite a while, for Fox and Hartstene did not reach the fort until around eight-thirty P.M., when, well after dark, unexpected and unannounced, they stepped from their boat onto the fort's wharf.

The visit lasted two hours, during which Fox managed to have a brief conversation alone with Anderson. He and the major climbed to the parapet, a precarious three-story ascent in the pitch-dark of the fort, and there in a serendipitous moment Fox found affirmation for his plan. As he looked out on the water he heard the oars of a boat but could not see it until it almost reached the wharf, vivid proof of the power of darkness to shield Union boats seeking to deliver supplies and troops.

Anderson revealed to Fox the dire condition of the fort's dwindling stockpile of food and authorized Fox to report to the War Department "that the 15th of April, at noon, would be the period beyond which the fort couldn't be held unless supplies were furnished."

Fox left for Washington that night.

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AFTER THE VISIT, CAPTAIN HARTSTENE met with Beauregard, who asked, "Were you with Captain Fox all the time of his visit?"

"All but a short period when he was with Major Anderson," Hartstene replied.

“I fear,” Beauregard said, “that we shall have occasion to regret that short period.”

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ANDERSON WAS TROUBLED BY Fox’s conclusion that a reinforcement mission could succeed. Fox had gone so far as to point out a location outside the rear wall of the fort that seemed well suited for the landing of troops and supplies.

Anderson disagreed. The next day, March 22, he reported Fox’s assessment to the War Department and sought to refute his conclusion. “I have examined the point alluded to by Mr. Fox last night,” he wrote. “A vessel lying there will be under the fire of thirteen guns from Fort Moultrie.” He added that Sumter’s chief engineer, Captain Foster, had told him that even at high tide a vessel with a ten-foot draft seeking to land at the optimal point adjacent to the fort would have to anchor forty feet out in the passage. “The Department can decide what the chances will be of a safe debarkation and unloading at that point under these circumstances.”

On arrival in Washington, perhaps to increase the likelihood that his plan would be adopted, Captain Fox hinted that Anderson’s loyalty might be compromised, that his opposition to a reinforcement mission was motivated by his sympathy for the South. Fox later wrote, “*I did intend*” to provide Anderson with “a complete history of the conditions of things at Washington, and the dilemma Mr. Lincoln was in on account of contrary counsels, but as I found him to be on the other side, *politically* as well as in military point of view, I refrained.”

Captain Fox proved to be a compelling salesman. His confidence was reassuring, and it persuaded Lincoln that a mission to resupply Fort Sumter would indeed be feasible. But for Lincoln, one more question remained.

CHARLESTON

Some Good Thing in the Wind

MARCH 24–27

WHAT LINCOLN NEEDED WAS A better sense of just how much pro-Union sentiment really did exist in South Carolina. Like Seward, Lincoln believed, on basically no evidence, that loyalty to the Union was pervasive, but unlike Seward, he now wanted proof. Soon after Captain Fox's return from Sumter, Lincoln dispatched two more emissaries to Charleston, both friends of his, with instructions to talk with residents and gauge the local mood. They took the train together and reached the city early on Sunday morning, March 24.

One of these friends was Stephen A. Hurlbut, traveling ostensibly as a private citizen on his way to visit his sister in Charleston. Hurlbut had grown up in the city; he had also been run out of town in 1845 for forgery and embezzlement. He moved to Illinois, where he and Lincoln became friends, though Lincoln apparently had no knowledge of his past financial wrongdoing.

On the train south Hurlbut noticed energetic preparations for war and reported these to Lincoln. In Richmond men readied shipments of projectiles and other materials. His train passed two open flatcars loaded with shells. At Charleston's rail depot he counted eight newly arrived mortars awaiting placement.

Exactly how many people Hurlbut talked to and who they were is unclear. By his own account he went to church that Sunday afternoon and chatted with old friends, and on Monday he called on as many prominent people as he could think of. He did not meet with Governor Pickens or with Major Anderson. His most significant encounter was a more than two-hour meeting with his friend and legal mentor, Judge James Petigru, the state's foremost unionist, at Petigru's home.

Hurlbut stayed in Charleston all of thirty-six hours before heading back to Washington. On March 27 he sent a sixteen-page report to Lincoln. One paragraph stood out: "From these sources," Hurlbut wrote, "I have no hesitation in reporting as unquestionable—that Separate Nationality is a fixed fact, that there is an unanimity of sentiment which is to my mind astonishing—that there is no attachment to the Union." He added, "The Sentiment of National Patriotism always feeble in Carolina, has been Extinguished and overridden by the acknowledged doctrine of the paramount allegiance to the State."

Hurlbut quoted none of his sources, not even Petigru, but did offer his own opinion on a wide range of associated points, as well as his conclusion "that this whole matter of Secession could have been stopped in the bud, by prompt and gallant action on the part of the late administration." But now, he warned, any action by Lincoln to enforce federal law in the seceded states would result in war. "I cannot close without repeating to the President, that this is a time to expect and be prepared for the worst."

More confounding and problematic was the foray of the second emissary, Ward Lamon, Lincoln's sometime bodyguard who had accompanied him on his inaugural journey. In Charleston he and Hurlbut parted company. Lamon checked into the Charleston Hotel and there met with Governor Pickens. Lamon was known to be a close associate of Lincoln's, and thus his visit had a quasi-official aura. He also bore with him a letter of introduction from Postmaster General Montgomery Blair stating that he had been sent to Charleston as an agent of the post office, but no one seemed to take this letter seriously. The conversation quickly turned to the standoff in Charleston Harbor. The only way to prevent war, Pickens told

him, was for Lincoln to accept secession and to pledge not to reinforce any Southern forts. With absolutely no authority to do so, Lamon assured the governor that Lincoln planned to evacuate Fort Sumter.

Pickens gave Lamon permission to meet with Major Anderson in the apparent belief that Lamon proposed to work out details of the garrison's exit. Lamon reached the fort at about two P.M. on March 25 accompanied by a member of Pickens's staff who apparently allowed the men to converse by themselves. One Sumter officer observed that the two "remained closeted" for an hour and a half, during which Lamon explained that the president wanted more information to bolster his plan to withdraw the garrison. Lamon left no doubt that the fort would soon be evacuated, possibly within days.

The matter of honor again intervened. Anderson expressed to Lamon his concern that before any evacuation of the fort, he would be required to agree to a formal military surrender, as if he had lost a battle. He considered it a dishonorable proposition. Lamon relayed his concern to General Beauregard before leaving town.

Lamon and Hurlbut took the same train north on Monday night, March 25.

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THE NEXT DAY, BEAUREGARD sent Anderson a note to correct the impression left by Lamon. It was cordial and apologetic, but these were tetchy times, when an imprecise phrase or a minor misunderstanding could raise hackles and hurt feelings.

First Beauregard assured Anderson that no such surrender was contemplated, as "our countries" were not at war. He promised that whenever Anderson was ready, the Confederacy would provide his garrison with transportation to whatever post he designated.

But now Beauregard addressed a second matter, one based on erroneous information conveyed to him by Lamon. While showing Lamon the fort, Anderson had told him about the various mines, thunder barrels, and other

defensive devices put in place by Sumter's engineers. Lamon, who had little expertise in military matters, concluded that their purpose was to blow up the fort after the garrison departed. For some reason he felt compelled to convey this to Beauregard and Governor Pickens. Now, in allusive, oblique prose, Beauregard wrote: "All that will be required of you on account of the public rumors that have reached us will be your word of honor as an officer and a gentleman, that the fort, all public property therein, its armament, &c., shall remain in their current condition, without any arrangements or preparation for their destruction or injury after you shall have left the fort." He closed his letter in civil fashion: "Hoping to have the pleasure of meeting you soon under more favorable circumstances, I remain, dear major, yours, very truly, G. T. Beauregard." An officer in a boat rowed by enslaved men and flying a white flag of truce carried this message out to Sumter.

Anderson took immediate offense and sent back a reply to Beauregard via the same officer and oarsmen. "I am much obliged to his excellency the governor and yourself for the assurances you give me," Anderson wrote, "but you must pardon me for saying that I feel deeply hurt at the intimation in your letter about the conditions which will be exacted of me, and I must state most distinctly that if I can only be permitted to leave on the pledge you mention I shall never, so help me God, leave this fort alive."

Anderson's reply, so laden with Jane Austen dudgeon, clearly took Beauregard by surprise. He promptly sent another apology, by return boat. It had never been his intention, Beauregard wrote, "of wounding, in any manner whatsoever, the feelings of so gallant an officer by anything I may have written in my letter of this morning." But, he added, he had only alluded to Anderson's alleged intention of blowing up the fort because of the "*high source* from which the rumors spoken of appeared to come"—meaning Ward Lamon.

He added, "I regret now having referred to the subject."

But for Anderson it did not end there. News took time to travel. A controversy resolved could, with the next mail delivery, arise anew, like an ember left unwatched.

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IN WASHINGTON, COMMANDING GENERAL Winfield Scott learned of Anderson's supposed plan to blow up Fort Sumter and sent the major a scalding order:

"I have heard of your declaration to Col. Lamon, indicating a desperate purpose. I forbid it as your Commander, it being against your duty both as soldier and Christian."

For Anderson, this was very nearly the last straw. He immediately wrote back:

"I confess that I am deeply mortified at the want of confidence in me, as a 'Soldier and Christian,' shown in your favor of the 29th March. I had hoped that if you ever heard any thing calculated to raise a doubt as to my pursuing a proper course, you would have thought that there must have been some misunderstanding about it. I do not, of course, know what terms Col. Lamon used in repeating the declaration referred to." Anderson acknowledged that when he first arrived in Charleston and sensed the intensity of local hostility toward the Army's presence, he had imagined circumstances that might compel him to blow up the structures—namely if his forts were overrun by a hostile force and faced extinction. But a peaceful transfer of control was a different matter.

Anderson did not stop here, although prudence and forbearance might have suggested that he do so. He had been under so much pressure, with so little guidance, for so long, that now being called to account for an inept remark by Colonel Lamon drove him to scold General Scott right back.

"Cut off from all intercourse with my Government," he wrote, "I have been compelled to act according to the dictates of my own judgement; and, had the contingency referred to arisen, I should, after prayerfully appealing to God to teach me my duty, have cheerfully and promptly performed it.

"You have not the time, my dear General, to read, nor have I time to detail, the delicate and important points which have arisen since I have been in this harbor. I have tried to perform all my duty, and I trust that I have, by the blessing of God, so acted that the most searching investigation shall show that I have done nothing amiss.

“I must say that I think the Government has left me too much to myself—has not given me instructions, even when I have asked for them—and that responsibilities of a higher and more delicate character have been devolved upon me than was proper—and I frankly say that such is the fact at this present moment.”

—

ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, MARCH 27, the *Times*’ Russell met again with Secretary Seward, this time in Seward’s office at the State Department. Both men recognized the importance of each to the other. Russell knew that Seward was widely believed to be the real source of power in the government. Seward for his part understood that Russell, as the voice of the London *Times*, had significant influence over British public opinion and that having him as an ally would be useful in assuring that Britain did not recognize the Confederacy.

As Seward and Russell were meeting, Italy’s minister to the United States arrived in full regalia so that Seward could bring him to the White House for a scheduled introduction to Lincoln. Seward invited Russell to come along and assigned son Frederick to be Russell’s personal escort. At the White House, Seward led the minister, Giuseppe Bertinatti, to the center of a large reception room to wait for Lincoln. Frederick guided Russell to one side.

Russell had seen many images of Lincoln rendered in sketches and woodcuts, so many and so often that he believed Lincoln must be the most recognizable man in the world. But nothing prepared Russell for the man in the flesh. Once again, in his diary, the correspondent invoked his virtuosic skill at description. What stood out for him was Lincoln’s face. “The mouth is absolutely prodigious; the lips, straggling and extending almost from one line of black beard to the other, are only kept in order by two deep furrows from the nostril to the chin; the nose itself—a prominent organ—stands out from the face, with an inquiring anxious air, as though it were sniffing for

some good thing in the wind; the eyes dark, full, and deeply set, are penetrating, but full of an expression which almost amounts to tenderness."

First Seward introduced Bertinatti, but what he most wanted was for Lincoln to meet the English reporter. Lincoln held out his hand. "Mr. Russell, I am very glad to make your acquaintance, and to see you in this country. The London *Times* is one of the greatest powers in the world—in fact, I don't know anything which has much more power—except the Mississippi. I am glad to know you as its minister."

They chatted briefly; Lincoln offered up "two or three peculiar little sallies" and Russell departed, feeling "agreeably impressed with his shrewdness, humor, and natural sagacity."

That night Russell again dined with Seward, this time in company with Henry Sanford, the new minister to Belgium. The subject of relieving Fort Sumter came up—"the great object of public curiosity"—but Seward would only say, "with a pleasant twinkle of the eye," that the government's policy had been set out in Lincoln's inaugural and would not be altered. Upon reading the inaugural, however, Russell found no particular guidance. To him, it seemed as if they were waiting for events to unfold rather than acting upon "any definite principle designed to control or direct the future."

—

SEWARD'S SECRET MARCH 15 memorandum explaining why the U.S. government could not recognize the Confederate commissioners still lay unread in the State Department's archive. Gustavus Fox, Stephen Hurlbut, and Ward Lamon all returned to Washington. Lincoln continued to struggle with the ever-mounting crush of patronage seekers.

He also prepared for the first official state dinner of his administration, to take place on Thursday, March 28. Mary Lincoln anticipated a glorious night of conversation and dancing. Lincoln invited the *Times*' William Russell.

Shortly before the dinner began, Lincoln received a disturbing recommendation from Gen. Winfield Scott that infuriated him and led

indirectly to the final extinguishment of all hesitation and doubt as to what to do about the crisis in Charleston Harbor.

FORT SUMTER

Firewood

MARCH 26

AT FORT SUMTER, THE DAYS and nights remained cold. A storm was coming. “The sixth and last temporary building on the parade is being demolished for fuel,” chief engineer Foster reported on March 26. “Some lumber and one condemned gun carriage have already been burned.”

Outsiders tended to overlook these details. They saw only the heroism and gallantry of Anderson and his men, a classic David and Goliath story: the major and his little garrison—it was invariably described in the press as “little”—standing up to a far larger force that outnumbered them by at least twenty-five to one.

Anderson’s men saw it in starker terms. Details mattered. In a memorandum to Anderson about how to protect the fort against attack by infantry, Captain Doubleday identified the various points on the structure that would need a sentry, and recommended that one of the fort’s drums (it had five) be placed at the center of each flank of the fort to be beaten at the first sign of an attack. Captain Seymour closed his list of recommendations with this: “It would be well to arrange a privy, in a place of security.”

To Anderson’s nephew, R. C. Anderson, it was all very thrilling. His children felt likewise; his son proudly steered visitors to Anderson’s photograph, calling him “Uncle Robert Major.” (R.C. lived in Frankfort,

Kentucky, home also to Mildred Ruffin, beloved daughter of fire-eater Edmund.) “Had I not a family to provide for and protect in these unsettled times,” nephew Anderson wrote, “I would long before this have been at your side or died in the attempt.” Never mind that the major had a family as well.

In another letter, this nephew revealed a heartfelt fear:

“I believe that if there is a calamity which, of all conceivable misfortunes would forever crush my spirits and overwhelm my hopes, it would be the news that ‘Fort Sumpter’ had been surrendered and that the miserable ensign of S.C. floated in the place of your glorious Stars and Stripes.”

Encouragingly, he added: “The announcement of your death—much as I love you—would not make me half so unhappy.”

CHARLESTON

The Handsomest Man

MARCH 25

ACROSS THE BAY IN CHARLESTON, life among the chivalry followed its usual rhythms, with little regard for the prospect of civil war. Carriages and fine horses moved at an easy pace along the Battery as wealthy men and women strolled upon its paved frontage and greeted one another and made arrangements for tea and dinner, and for midday visits having no purpose at all. Now and then a cannon blast punctuated the conversation, but these became so frequent as Beauregard adjusted and tested his many guns that they drew no notice.

By March, Mary Chesnut had become one of the most interesting topics of the day. She had attracted the attention of former-governor Manning, who in addition to being one of the richest men in the South—he owned six hundred enslaved Blacks at several plantations in South Carolina and Louisiana—was one of the most handsome. He was also married. He had decided to engage in a "flirtation" with Mary. He did not, apparently, contemplate a true love affair with all the social opprobrium, and likely bloodshed, that could bring. A flirtation was a bona fide noun deployed in Southern culture to describe something society found much more palatable, even welcomed, for the distraction it provided.

It seems to have begun, as these things do, on a train, on Monday, March 25, when Mary and her husband traveled to Charleston from their Mulberry plantation in Camden, South Carolina. “Came down on the cars yesterday with an immense crowd,” she wrote in her diary. The train was full of men, planters mostly, attending the state’s secession convention, which continued to deliberate all manner of things, even though the main act was long over. Among the travelers was Manning, who, Mary wrote, “flew in to beg me to reserve the seat by me for a young lady under his charge.” Mary’s husband was seated on the same bench. He stood in courtly fashion to make room, she wrote. “ ‘*Place aux dames*,’ said my husband politely and went off to seek a seat somewhere else.”

As it happened, Manning’s request was a ruse. “As soon as we were fairly under way,” Mary wrote, “Governor Manning came back and threw himself cheerfully down in the vacant place. After arranging his umbrella, overcoat, &c to his satisfaction, he coolly remarked, ‘I am the young lady.’ ”

Mary did not mind the attention. “He is always the handsomest man alive (now that poor William Taber has been killed in a Rhett duel),” she wrote, “and he can be very agreeable. That is, when he pleases. He does not always please.” She was flattered, but she also saw value in the fact that Manning’s attention would irk her own husband, something Mary appeared to enjoy doing not out of spite, but rather to get *his* attention.

The Chesnuts and others of their crowd stayed at the Gidiere boarding house, where they shared a table in the dining room with other prominent souls, among them Mary’s irascible uncle, Judge Withers, and William Henry Trescot, Buchanan’s former assistant secretary of state and Confederate court spy. On Tuesday morning, March 26, the Judge was in an exceptionally acerbic mood.

Turning toward Mary, he said, “Your conversation reminds me of a flashy second-rate novel.”

“How?”

“By the quantity of French you sprinkle over it. Do you wish to prevent us from understanding you?”

Trescot, conspiratorial as always, cut in. “No,” he said in French. “We are using French against Africa.” Trescot gestured toward the enslaved staff. “We know the black waiters are all ears now, and we want to keep what we have to say dark. We can’t afford to take them in our confidence, you know.”

The Judge glared and “in unabated rage” turned away to talk with another member of the breakfast party.

On Thursday, well after James Chesnut and the other men had left the breakfast table, Manning slid over and sat in one of the empty chairs beside Mary.

“I looked at him in amazement,” Mary wrote, “as he was in full dress, ready for a ball. Swallowtail and all, at that hour!”

“What is the matter with you?” she said.

“Nothing. I am not mad, most noble Madame, I am only going to the photographer. My wife wants me taken *thus*.”

He needed the photograph for a “*carte de visite*,” a photographic calling card, then de rigueur among the chivalry. He insisted Mary join him, and she in turn retrieved her husband, ordered him to dress in formal attire, and took him along. “Mr. M,” she noted, referring to Manning, “promised me his likeness.”

Later, the day took a somber turn. Mary joined two other women for a carriage ride to the city’s Magnolia Cemetery to visit the tomb of the VanderHorst family, one of Charleston’s oldest families, “there to see the VanderHorst way of burying their dead,” she wrote. “One at least, is embalmed or kept lifelike by some process, dressed as usual—can be seen through a glass case. I did not look. How can anyone?”

She returned home “with the worst attack of the blues.”

That night, her husband chastised her for all the time she was spending with other men, especially Manning. “After dinner, Mr. Chesnut made himself eminently absurd by accusing me of flirting with John Manning, &c. I could only laugh—too funny!”

WASHINGTON

Change of Heart

MARCH 27

On thursday, march 28, shortly before Lincoln's first state dinner, the president received a memorandum from Gen. Winfield Scott, whose prior appraisal of what would be required to save Fort Sumter had been so discouraging. This new assessment was doubly so.

First, Scott addressed Sumter. With the passage of time, he argued, Anderson's position had become more and more untenable due to Beauregard's installation of so many new artillery batteries. To relieve the fort now, Scott wrote, would require a full-on invasion with enough ships and troops to seize control of those batteries. He estimated that organizing such an offensive would take ten months, during which Anderson undoubtedly would be starved out or forced to surrender by a Confederate assault. An expedition like the one proposed by Gustavus Fox would at best provide only temporary relief. "An abandonment of the fort in a few weeks, sooner or later, would appear, therefore, to be a sure necessity," Scott wrote, and he added it was best to do it soon, gracefully, as a gesture of the government's sincere interest in peace.

But now he went further. He argued that Sumter's evacuation alone was no longer enough to persuade the upper South and border states to stay in the Union. Citing "recent information from the South," he wrote that the

situation had degraded to the point where only the evacuation of *both* Sumter and Fort Pickens would be persuasive. “Our Southern friends,” he wrote, were clear that this “would instantly soothe and give confidence to the eight remaining slaveholding States, and render their cordial adherence to this Union perpetual.”

Lincoln was stunned. Until now, no one had suggested a voluntary evacuation of Fort Pickens. Moreover, Scott seemed to be basing his judgment on political, rather than military, considerations. Who were these “Southern friends,” and what was this “recent information”? The memo, Lincoln said later, gave him “a cold shock,” but with his state dinner about to begin, he could not immediately address it. At seven P.M., Lincoln and Mary led a procession of guests into the state dining room, accompanied by the Marine band. William Russell, an invited guest, noted that “a babel of small talk” filled the room, interrupted now and then by sudden silence as Lincoln told one of his homespun stories. Mrs. Lincoln in particular captured Russell’s attention. She was, he wrote, strikingly plain, “her nose and mouth of an ordinary type, and her manners and appearance homely, stiffened, however, by the consciousness that her position requires her to be something more than plain Mrs. Lincoln, the wife of the Illinois lawyer; she is profuse in the introduction of the word ‘sir’ in every sentence.” She used a hand fan “with much energy.”

Lincoln seemed utterly at ease and clearly enjoyed the gleam and energy of the evening. Russell had no idea that inwardly Lincoln was deeply troubled owing to General Scott’s memorandum.

Now the correspondent got his first direct experience of Lincoln’s penchant for telling jokes and stories and saw immediately that it had a tactical element, allowing him to extricate himself from awkward conversations. “Mr. Lincoln raises a laugh by some bold west-country anecdote and moves off in the cloud of merriment produced by his joke,” Russell wrote. At one point during the dinner, Lincoln, with Russell present, heard his new attorney general, Edward Bates, express opposition to the appointment of a certain lawyer to a federal judgeship. “Come now, Bates,” Lincoln said, “he’s not half as bad as you think.” Lincoln explained

that the lawyer in question had once done him a favor: Lincoln was walking to a courthouse about a dozen miles away when the lawyer overtook him in his coach and offered a ride. The driver of the coach drove erratically; Lincoln looked outside and watched a moment. The driver appeared intoxicated. Lincoln told this to the lawyer, who then shouted at the driver, "Why, you infernal scoundrel, you are drunk!" The driver halted the horses and gravely turned to the lawyer. "By gorra!" the driver said, "that's the first rightful decision you have given for the last twelvemonth."

At which point, under cover of laughter, Lincoln "beat a quiet retreat from the neighborhood of the Attorney-General."

Russell had hoped to learn something substantive that night about how Lincoln planned to address the secession crisis but found himself disappointed. He wrote to a friend: "I dined with the Presdt. on Thursday and with his Cabinet, and am not a bit the wiser."

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AS LINCOLN'S STATE DINNER wound down, he discreetly asked the members of his cabinet who were present to join him in an adjacent room. Making no attempt to hide his irritation, Lincoln read General Scott's message aloud.

"A long pause of blank amazement followed," according to John Hay and John Nicolay. Postmaster Blair recalled a "very oppressive silence." Blair broke it, growling that Scott was "playing politician and not General."

Lincoln asked the members to convene for a formal cabinet meeting at noon the next day, Friday, March 29. "That night," his secretaries recalled, "Lincoln's eyes did not close in sleep."

At the next day's meeting, Lincoln summarized the information he had accumulated thus far, including the report from his friend, Stephen Hurlbut, on the absence of pro-Union sentiment in South Carolina. Lincoln asked for another vote on whether to send an armed resupply mission to Fort Sumter, and each man wrote a brief statement of his views. Now, just fourteen days after their initial vote, the cabinet largely reversed itself, with Blair, Welles, and Treasury Secretary Chase all voting to resupply Sumter. Seward

remained opposed; Interior Sec. Caleb Smith also voted no. Attorney General Bates offered a conclusion so noncommittal as to be almost funny: “As to Fort Sumter,” he wrote, “I think the time is come either to evacuate or relieve it.”

Blair urged action *now* to spare more bloodshed later. “South Carolina is the head and front of this rebellion,” he wrote, “and when that State is safely delivered from the authority of the United States it will strike a blow against our authority from which it will take us years of bloody strife to recover.”

All of the six members present, including Seward, endorsed directly or implicitly the reinforcement of Fort Pickens.

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LINCOLN AUTHORIZED BOTH EXPEDITIONS. This was a bold decision for a fledgling administration facing the imminent disintegration of the Union. But what would soon prove calamitous was that the commanders of both expeditions hinged their success on the use of the same powerful warship, a side-wheel steam frigate called the *Powhatan.*

Lincoln inadvertently assigned this one ship to both.

PART SIX

COLLISION

(March 29–April 9, 1861)

If the insult be of a serious character, it will be the duty of the second of the challenger, to say, in reply to the second of the challengee: “We have been deeply wronged, and if you are not disposed to repair the injury, the contest must continue.” And if the challengee offers nothing by way of reparation, the fight continues until one or the other of the principals is hit.

—*The Code Duello*

CHARLESTON

The Flirtation

MARCH 30

ON SATURDAY, MARCH 30, JAMES Chesnut joined a group of other men on an excursion to visit the forts in Charleston Harbor. Mary declined to go, deeming the wind too strong and likely to raise too much dust on the harbor islands. “Mr. C gave me his *cheek* for farewell,” she noted. “I hope Anderson will not pay them the compliment of a salute with shotted guns as they pass Fort Sumter, as pass they must.”

When she returned to her rooms after breakfast, she found a bouquet of roses from some friends and settled into the prospect of a peaceful Saturday.

It was not to be, however.

“Now, a loud banging at my door,” she wrote. “I get up in a pet and throw it wide open.”

She found John Manning “smiling radiantly.”

“Oh,” he said. “Pray excuse the noise I made. I mistook the number. I thought it was Rice’s room. That is my excuse. Now that I am here, come go with us to Quinby’s.” (Another photographer’s shop, a favorite of the chivalry, for a second round of *carte de visite* photos.) “Everybody will be there—who are not on the island. To be photographed is the rage just now.”

Afterward, Mary and Manning toured the city in an open carriage and paid calls on a number of homes, “the handsome ex-governor doing the

honors gallantly." When she first made this reference in her diary, she wrote "*my*" handsome ex-governor, then later changed it to "the."

Her husband returned from the day's excursion in a foul mood, "enraged," she wrote, accusing her of having declined to accompany him so that she could stay home and flirt with John Manning. "I went to bed in disgust."

She tried to erase this passage, too.

That night, while Mary was in her room, General Beauregard stopped by the house. Mary did not come out of her room to greet him. "He is the hero of the hour," she wrote. "That is, he is believed to be capable of great things. A hero-worshiper was struck dumb because I said, 'So far he has only been a captain of artillery or engineers or something.' "

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THE NEXT DAY, SUNDAY, March 31, likely did not improve Mr. C's mood. Friends came for tea. Many friends.

John Witherspoon (a cousin of Mary's; his mother, Betsey, would soon be murdered by her enslaved servants).

Dr. Smith.

Theo Stark.

Dr. Morrow (medical officer on Commodore Matthew Perry's 1853–54 voyage to Japan).

Dr. Gibbes.

Mr. Miles.

Sam Shannon.

And the indefatigable and resolutely handsome John Manning.

Who, much to James Chesnut's disgust, insisted on speaking to Mary alone, in a whisper.

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NEARBY, AT THE CHARLESTON HOTEL, Governor Pickens grew impatient. Lincoln's emissary, Ward Lamon, had promised that Sumter would be

evacuated within days. Nothing had happened. On Saturday, March 30, Pickens telegraphed the Confederate commissioners, still in Washington, to tell them details of Lamon's visit, namely his explicit statement that the surrender of the fort was imminent. The commissioners in turn showed this telegram to their intermediary, Justice Campbell, who then brought it to the State Department and asked for another interview with Secretary Seward to learn whether Sumter really would be evacuated.

Seward found himself in a profoundly awkward position. He had assured the Confederate commissioners that Sumter would soon be surrendered, but now the cabinet had endorsed the opposite path.

He promised to respond to the commissioners' latest query on Monday, April 1; in the meantime, he showed Governor Pickens's telegram to Lincoln.

WASHINGTON

Seward's Play

APRIL 1

When justice campbell returned to the State Department on Monday, April 1—All Fools' Day, as it was known then—to discuss Governor Pickens's telegram about the promised evacuation of Fort Sumter, Secretary Seward wrote out a brief statement for Campbell to bring to the commissioners. "The President," he wrote, "may desire to supply Fort Sumter, but will not undertake to do so without first giving notice to Governor Pickens."

The note startled Campbell. "What does this mean?" he asked. "Does the President design to supply Sumter?"

"No, I think not," Seward replied, despite knowing that concrete plans for a Sumter rescue were underway. "It is a very irksome thing to him to evacuate it. His ears are open to everyone, and they fill his head with schemes for its supply. I do not think that he will adopt any of them. There is no design to reinforce it."

Campbell relayed the message to the commissioners and told them, mainly on the strength of Seward's verbal assurances, that he remained confident Fort Sumter would be evacuated.

Commissioner Crawford was skeptical. That same day, he telegraphed General Beauregard in Charleston: "My opinion is that the President has not

the courage to execute the order agreed upon in Cabinet for the evacuation of the fort, but that he intends to shift the responsibility upon Major Anderson, by suffering him to be starved out. Would it not be well to aid in this by cutting off all supplies?"

Beauregard promptly relayed this to Confederate War Secretary Walker in Montgomery, with one line appended: "Batteries here ready to open Wednesday or Thursday"—two to three days hence. "What instructions?"

—

SEWARD, TOO, WAS GROWING frustrated. He still hoped to evacuate Sumter to buy time for the realization of his dream of Union restoration despite the Cabinet's decision to resupply the fortress. He remained convinced that a deep reservoir of pro-Union sentiment existed in the South and that a period of calm would bring it to the surface. Lincoln, meanwhile, seemed overwhelmed and distracted by the petty responsibilities of establishing his government. In a March 26 letter to Charles Francis Adams, Seward complained that Lincoln had "no conception of his situation."

But here Seward sensed opportunity. The administration's disarray seemed to create an avenue for him to step forward and exercise the power he all along presumed himself to wield.

On April 1, he sent Lincoln a memorandum entitled "Some thoughts for the President's consideration" that he had written after consultation with two allies, Thurlow Weed, editor of the *Albany Evening Journal*, and Henry J. Raymond of the *New-York Times*. Seward's handwriting was so abysmal that he had his son Frederick copy the memorandum in his own hand. To avoid the prying eyes of intermediaries, Frederick carried it directly to Lincoln.

The text was critical of Lincoln in an insinuative manner. "We are at the end of a month's administration and yet without a policy either domestic or foreign," Seward began. "This, however, is not culpable, and it has been unavoidable." He understood that the need to fill patronage positions and secure Senate confirmations had distracted the president from other more

serious matters. “But,” Seward wrote, “further delay to adopt and prosecute our policies for both domestic and foreign affairs would not only bring scandal on the Administration, but danger upon the country.”

He again urged that Fort Sumter should be surrendered and Fort Pickens retained, and, further, proposed that Lincoln consider engineering a war with France or Spain to distract the nation from the secession crisis.

“But whatever policy we adopt,” he told Lincoln, “there must be an energetic prosecution of it.” He hinted that he, Seward, was the man for the task. “Either the President must do it himself, and be all the while active in it,” he wrote, “or Devolve it on some member of his Cabinet.” As if to ensure that Lincoln did not miss the point, Seward then added, “It is not in my especial province. But I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility.”

Seward fully expected Lincoln to endorse his proposals, according to a witness, *New-York Times* correspondent James B. Swain—so certain, in fact, that he had arranged in advance for Weed’s *Journal* and Raymond’s *Times* to publish the memorandum along with Lincoln’s expected response. The two editors would then launch an aggressive editorial campaign to support Seward’s twin goals of evacuating Sumter and conjuring a pro-Union resurgence in the South, while also emphasizing that he alone could achieve them.

The *Times* was ready. The paper held open a portion of its front page ordinarily devoted to national news; correspondent Swain waited in Washington to receive Seward’s memorandum and Lincoln’s reply and then telegraph them to New York.

Blinded perhaps by his own sense of self-importance, Seward had misread his employer. What he did not recognize yet was that there was steel in this Illinois lawyer and that it glinted most keenly when adversaries challenged his resolve. “It is a little difficult to imagine what must have been the feelings of a President…on receiving from his principal councilor and anticipated mainstay of his Administration such a series of proposals,” Nicolay and Hay would later write in their biography of Lincoln. Another president might have fired Seward on the spot, but Lincoln certainly

understood that Seward was a talented statesman and shrewd politician, and that his sudden departure at this moment would add more confusion to an already chaotic situation.

Lincoln wrote his answer in the form of a letter; what he did with it then is unclear. The letter and its envelope would be found years later among Lincoln's papers, suggesting that he had never actually sent it to Seward; no copy exists in Seward's papers. Lincoln may have asked Seward to return it, or decided simply to read it to him in person. That Seward did receive it in some form, however, is beyond question.

The letter revealed with clarity what Lincoln thought of Seward's memorandum and of his temerity. It was direct and polite, which astonished John Nicolay, who observed later that "had Mr. Lincoln been an envious or a resentful man, he could not have wished for a better occasion to put a rival under his feet."

Lincoln reiterated his inaugural pledge to hold and possess property belonging to the government and reminded Seward that he, too, had endorsed that policy. Nothing had changed, Lincoln wrote, with the exception that now Seward proposed to abandon Fort Sumter. Lincoln ignored Seward's idea of starting a war.

The only hint of annoyance in the letter came when he addressed Seward's comment that *someone* needed to take America's helm firmly and energetically in hand.

"I remark that if this must be done," Lincoln wrote, "*I* must do it."

The incident remained private, according to Nicolay and Hay. "So far as is known, the affair never reached the knowledge of any other member of the Cabinet, or even the most intimate of the President's friends." The *Times* and *Albany Evening Journal* never printed Seward's memorandum, which would reside among Lincoln's papers until 1888, when the two secretaries discovered it and published it in the *Century Magazine*.

On that momentous Monday, April 1, Seward wrote to his wife, who was at their home in Auburn, New York, "Dangers and breakers are before us. I wish you were near enough to share some of my thoughts and feelings, and fears, and trials."

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TWO DAYS AFTER MEETING with Seward, Justice Campbell, a sitting member of the United States Supreme Court, took the extraordinary step of writing directly to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, chief of the rebellion aimed at destroying the Union. Campbell specified that his letter was to be kept "strictly confidential and private."

"I do not doubt that Sumter will be evacuated shortly, without any effort to supply it," Campbell told Davis; he noted that no "settled plan" seemed to exist regarding Fort Pickens in Pensacola. With a touching degree of naïveté, he added, "I have no expectation that there will be bad faith in the dealings with me."

Campbell addressed the lingering question of whether the commissioners should press for a final answer to their demand for a formal meeting with Lincoln. The administration, he wrote, would readily provide an answer but would prefer, he believed, to withhold it. "So far as I can judge, the present desire is to let things remain as they are, without action of any kind."

This in fact dovetailed perfectly with Confederate President Davis's own belief that for the time being delay would be beneficial. Even as Campbell wrote this, a letter from Montgomery was en route to the commissioners conveying Davis's view that the current stalemate enabled the seceded states "to make all the necessary arrangements for the public defense, and the solidifying of their Government, more safely, cheaply, and expeditiously than they could were the attitude of the United States more definite and decided."

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ALL THIS SOTTO VOCE communication between Seward, Justice Campbell, and the Southern commissioners eventually caught the attention of Seward's fellow cabinet members and prompted Navy Sec. Gideon Welles to remark, "A strange state of things, when the first officer of the cabinet and one of

the judges of the highest court were in communication with rebels discussing measures having in view a disruption of the union.”

Lincoln’s secretaries, Nicolay and Hay, were more direct: They described the justice as giving “ ‘aid and comfort’ to the enemies of his Government.” It came as no surprise when the Confederacy eventually named Campbell its assistant secretary of war.

FORT SUMTER

Any Minute Now

APRIL 1–3

AT FORT SUMTER, EVERY DAY brought the expectation that a messenger from Washington would arrive with the order to vacate the fort, or that Ward Lamon himself would return and tell the garrison to get ready for departure. Anderson was prepared to fight if necessary but had come to believe that abandoning the fort was the only way to avoid bloodshed. This was not, however, something he felt authorized to do on his own. Capitulate under fire, yes; walk away, no. Doing so, moreover, would confirm the suspicions of those who wondered about his loyalty, and might make him appear to be another General Twiggs, the U.S. Army commander in Texas who had surrendered all federal outposts in the state. Once again Anderson was left without clear direction from Washington.

Tempers at the fort flared. Anderson took to calling the garrison's tenure at Sumter "imprisonment." On Monday, April 1, he sent a report to the Army's new adjutant general, Col. Lorenzo Thomas, who had assumed the post after his predecessor, Samuel Cooper, fled Washington to join the Confederacy. Thomas and Anderson were friends.

"I have the honor to report that everything is still and quiet, as far as we can see, around us," Anderson told Thomas. Which at that moment was not all that far. A dense fog had turned Sumter into a fortress of ghosts. Sentries

stood watch, but with visibility reduced to a few yards, they saw only a wall of gray.

Anderson told Thomas some startling news: The fort's supply of food would be expended a lot sooner than he had previously indicated. His prior estimate was based on discharging the civilian laborers from the fort, thereby reducing consumption of food, but orders authorizing him to do so had never arrived from Washington, and now Governor Pickens wouldn't allow the workers to leave. Pickens understood that the longer they stayed and consumed the fort's provisions, the sooner Anderson would have to surrender. Pickens had also sharply reduced the flow of beef and vegetables from Charleston markets; he halted entirely the delivery of butter. This tightening convinced Anderson that Pickens would soon cut off all access to supplies.

As a consequence, Anderson told Thomas, he was compelled to revise his estimate. He now expected his provisions to last just one more week, or until about April 8, and even then only if the governor allowed the laborers to leave. Pickens seemed unlikely to do so.

Thomas received the letter four days later and passed it on to Lincoln.

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ON THE AFTERNOON OF Wednesday, April 3, a 180-ton schooner, the *Rhoda H. Shannon*, en route from Boston to Savannah with a load of ice, arrived at what its captain, Joseph Marts, believed to be the entrance to the Savannah River off Tybee Island. Powerful winds scoured the sea and raised a spume that impaired his ability to locate navigational waypoints. Hoping to draw the attention of a distant pilot vessel, he ordered one of his crew to display an American flag in the schooner's fore-rigging. No pilot approached.

Captain Marts decided to proceed anyway, despite the rough surf. He ordered the flag taken down and continued onward, until he realized that this was not, after all, the Savannah River. In fact, he had entered Charleston Harbor seventy-five miles to the north.

A cannon boomed and a shot passed in front of his boat. Marts thought this was a signal that he should display his ship's colors, so he again raised the American flag.

Two more shots hissed past.

Unsure of what the authorities on shore wanted him to do, he kept to his course and sailed deeper into the harbor until he was abreast of Morris Island and its new channel-facing batteries. Fort Sumter was still roughly a mile ahead. Captain Marts was aware of the unrest in Charleston but had heard reliable reports that Sumter was soon to be turned over to the Confederacy. He continued onward.

Now the guns started firing *at* his ship. One shot passed through his mainsail two feet above the boom. He turned the schooner about and ran back toward the harbor mouth with hardshot falling around him. Instead of continuing on into the Atlantic, however, he anchored just inside the bar in a zone of rough water. The Morris Island guns continued to fire but at too great a distance to have any effect.

At Sumter soldiers manned and loaded their guns. These could not have reached the battery that fired on the schooner but could easily have struck Fort Moultrie and batteries elsewhere on Morris Island. Captain Doubleday advocated action. Anderson, however, merely sent two officers over to Charleston "in a boat with a white flag to ask for an explanation, with the usual result," Doubleday groused. The officers—Artillery Capt. Truman Seymour and Engineering Lt. G. W. Snyder—met with Confederate officers and then rowed out to visit the schooner and interview Captain Marts. They returned to Sumter.

As it happened, the incident had another audience. Governor Pickens and General Beauregard watched the whole thing unfold while standing on the piazza at Moultrie House, the hotel near Fort Moultrie. They, too, were perplexed by what they saw and conducted an investigation of their own.

The next day, Thursday, April 4, Sumter's Lieutenant Snyder met with Governor Pickens and Beauregard and learned that a Confederate guard boat that should have been on patrol outside the bar to warn unauthorized ships against entering had not been on duty. Its captain had claimed "that

the weather was too boisterous and the sea too rough," Snyder wrote in his report.

Governor Pickens assured Snyder that the guard boat's captain had been summoned to account for his actions and would be dismissed. The governor further stated that "peremptory orders had been sent to Morris Island to stop this random firing."

Once again, civility and courtesy ruled. But this time Anderson's forbearance took a toll on the garrison's morale. Captain Doubleday understood his motivation but found his inaction frustrating. "In amplifying his instructions not to provoke a collision into instructions not to fight at all, I have no doubt he thought he was rendering a real service to the country," Doubleday wrote. "He knew the first shot fired by us would light the flames of a civil war that would convulse the world, and tried to put off the evil day as long as possible. Yet a better analysis of the situation might have taught him that the contest had already commenced, and could no longer be avoided."

Asst. Surgeon Crawford likewise believed Anderson should have fired back. He and Anderson had a long conversation during which the major invited him into his office and showed him the orders he had received thus far from Washington, all urging him to avoid collision unless the safety of his command was at stake. "I regard this as the qualifying clause which will cover him in not firing yesterday," Crawford wrote in his journal. "—But I still think we should have fired as we would have been sustained by the whole world. Not one word has yet come to us from the new administration…The Major is very greatly depressed in Spirits, and today told me he thought of taking down our flag. Without supplies, without encouragement, we are left to ourselves, and the greatest depression prevails among us."

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IN CHARLESTON, THE INCIDENT served to increase anxiety. A new wave of rumor came rolling through the harbor with contradictory news. Some

reports posited with absolute certainty that a Northern fleet would soon arrive; others with equal certainty that Sumter would shortly be evacuated.

On Thursday night, April 4, the fiery Louis Wigfall of Texas was summoned to give an impromptu speech to a crowd that had gathered in front of the city's Mills House hotel. War with the North was beyond doubt, he declared; within the next year he would return to Washington "in the saddle." When Mary Chesnut learned of the speech, she knew at once that his saddle remark was an allusion to Sir Walter Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*, for she knew Wigfall well and knew his penchant for quoting romantic literature in his speeches. In Scott's novel, the heroic knight, James Fitz-James, proclaims his intention to suppress the unruly Clan Alpine. "Like Fitz-James—when he visits Clan Alpine again—it is to be in the saddle, &c&c.," Mary wrote, gently mocking the Texan. "So let Washington beware."

She was at dinner with friends during the speech itself and was sad to have missed it. "But the supper was a consolation," she wrote: "—pâté de foie gras, salad, biscuit glacé, and champagne frappé."

Later that night, her mood more serious, she wrote: "A ship was fired into yesterday and went back to sea. Is that the first shot?

"How can one settle down to anything? One's heart is in one's mouth all the time. Any minute this cannon may open on us, the fleet come in, &c&c."

WASHINGTON

The Correspondent

APRIL 3

On wednesday, april 3, william Russell of the London *Times* met with two of the Southern commissioners, Martin Crawford and John Forsyth. They chatted for over an hour, during which Russell became convinced that if the opinions they expressed were indeed representative of Southern thinking, there was little hope that the Union could be restored. “They have the idea they are ministers of a foreign power treating with Yankeedom,” Russell wrote in his diary, “and their indignation is moved by the refusal of [the] Government to negotiate with them, armed as they are with full authority to arrange all questions arising out of an amicable separation—such as the adjustment of Federal claims for property, forts, stores, public works, debts, land purchases, and the like.”

Two days later he met with the commissioners again, this time all three, the third being André Roman of Louisiana. A number of other secession-minded men were present as well, including Col. George E. Pickett, destined one day to lead an ill-fated charge at Gettysburg. They dined at Gautier’s, a French restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue run by Charles Gautier, a prominent restaurateur and confectioner who had catered Lincoln’s inaugural party. Gautier was known at Christmas to build a display of sweet concoctions that included a twelve-hundred-pound cake.

The commissioners and their Southern friends disparaged Lincoln and Seward and all Northerners, especially New Englanders, with a savagery that seemed out of alignment with what Russell believed to be the actual state of affairs in America. “Whether it be in consequence of some secret influence which slavery has upon the minds of men,” he wrote, “or that the aggression of the North upon their institutions had been of a nature to excite the deepest animosity and most vindictive hate, certain it is there is a degree of something like ferocity in the Southern mind toward New England which exceeds belief.”

In the course of the evening’s conversation, Russell heard much about the South’s obsession with honor, including a vehement defense of dueling. “The man who dares tamper with the honor of a white woman knows what he has to expect,” one guest said. “We shoot him down like a dog, and no jury in the South will ever find any man guilty of murder for punishing such a scoundrel.” The commissioners revealed an intractable belief that Northern men were cowards. As evidence, they cited the 1856 caning of Republican senator Charles Sumner, a fervent critic of slavery, in the Senate chamber and his refusal to challenge his attacker to a manly duel. Here their argument abandoned logical constraint: As they saw it the violence of the assault was Sumner’s fault, never mind that his assailant, Rep. Preston Brooks, struck first and from behind while Sumner was seated at his Senate desk, as Russell reminded them. The commissioners brushed this aside; Brooks, they said, struck “a slight blow at first and only inflicted the heavier strokes when irritated by the Senator’s cowardly demeanor.”

When the conversation turned to slavery, it seemed to Russell to slip all tethers to reality. “The gentlemen at table asserted that the white men in the slave States are physically superior to the men in the free States; and indulged in curious theories in morals and physics to which I was a stranger.”

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THE EVENING REINFORCED RUSSELL'S growing conviction that Northerners had little understanding of their brethren below the Mason-Dixon Line. Southerners, he noted, routinely traveled North, but Northerners were far less likely to go South, in part out of a concern, he realized, for safety.

William Seward's ignorance was particularly striking to Russell. The secretary dismissed Southerners as being "in every respect behind the age, with fashions, habits, level of thought, and modes of life, belonging to the worst part of the last century. But still he never has been there himself!"

Seward persisted in his belief that secession was a short-lived thing. Later, over dinner and whist, Seward told Russell, "When the Southern States see that we mean them no wrong—that we intend no violence to persons, rights, or things—that the Federal Government seeks only to fulfill obligations imposed on it in respect to the national property, they will see their mistake and one after another they will come back into the union." This would happen soon, Seward forecast; he expected "that Secession will all be done and over in three months."

Seward's vision conflicted starkly with what Russell had learned from his contacts with Southern men in Washington. He decided it was time that he himself visit the South, and he began making arrangements to travel to the heart of the crisis, Charleston. "As matters look very threatening," he wrote in his diary on April 6, "I must go South and see with my own eyes how affairs stand there before the two sections come to open rupture."

To his imminent regret, he did not set off right away but rather lingered in Washington for another six days.

WASHINGTON

Conflict

APRIL 4–5

By the first week in April, Major Anderson, usually the model of stoicism and forbearance, seemed at last to become fed up with the lack of attention from Washington. The immediate trigger was his learning for the first time about the telegram sent by Confederate Commissioner Crawford to General Beauregard in which the commissioner warned that Lincoln lacked the courage to evacuate Fort Sumter and planned instead to leave the decision to Anderson, "by suffering him to be starved out." Crawford had sent that telegram to Beauregard on April 1; three days later news of its contents filtered to Anderson.

"I cannot but think that Mr. Crawford has misunderstood what he has heard in Washington," Anderson wrote to Adjutant General Thomas the next day, with evident irritation, "as I cannot think that the Government would abandon, without instructions and without advice, a command which has tried to do all its duty to our country."

He worried about public perception if he alone were to decide to abandon the fort. He found it inconceivable that at so sensitive a moment, with war in the wind, the government would leave such a fateful decision to him.

“I am sure that I shall not be left without instructions, even though they may be confidential,” he told Thomas. “After thirty odd years of service I do not wish it to be said that I have treasonably abandoned a post and turned over to unauthorized persons public property entrusted to my charge. I am entitled to this act of justice at the hands of my Government, and I feel confident that I shall not be disappointed. What to do with the public property, and where to take my command, are questions to which answers will, I hope, be at once returned.”

—

AS IT HAPPENED, a letter was on its way from Washington that would provide Anderson some guidance, but not the kind he was hoping for. By now he had become convinced that evacuation was the prudent course.

Anderson’s message warning that he would run out of food much sooner than expected had startled Lincoln. Based on information provided by Captain Fox after his March reconnaissance visit to the fort, Lincoln had come to believe that the Sumter garrison could hold out until April 15 “without any real inconvenience.” Now it appeared Anderson might run out of food a week earlier.

Lincoln personally drafted a set of instructions for the major, which he gave to War Secretary Cameron, who then sent a copy to Anderson under his own signature. The instructions, which referred to the president in the third person, contained no hint that they were actually composed by Lincoln himself.

Lincoln (via Cameron) first informed Anderson that his letter had caused “some anxiety.” He told the major that he had authorized a seaborne expedition to relieve Sumter, and indirectly affirmed that Captain Fox would be its commander. “Hoping still that you will be able to sustain yourself till the 11th. or 12th. inst[ant], the expedition will go forward; and, finding your flag flying, will attempt to provision you, and, in case the effort is resisted, will endeavor also to reinforce you. You will therefore hold out if possible till the arrival of the expedition.”

Lest this sound unduly draconian, Lincoln added that he didn't expect Anderson to subject his command to any danger beyond what "would be usual in military life." Further, he said he was confident that Anderson would "act as becomes a patriot and soldier, under all circumstances."

He ended with, "Whenever, if at all, in your judgment, to save yourself and command, a capitulation becomes a necessity, you are authorized to make it."

Cameron posted one copy of the letter on Thursday, April 4, by mail; two days later, he dispatched another copy by messenger, Sumter's own Lieutenant Talbot, still in Washington.

MONTGOMERY AND RICHMOND

Suspense

APRIL 5

In Montgomery, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his cabinet grew increasingly uneasy; so too did their commissioners in Washington, their trust sutured in place solely by the assurances of their intermediary, Justice Campbell.

This was hard for the commissioners. They were accustomed to mastery and command and proficient in the art of taking offense; they needed the unalloyed respect of all around them. Alexis de Tocqueville had observed this aspect of the planter class two decades earlier in his *Democracy in America* and attributed it to slavery. “The citizen of the Southern states becomes a sort of domestic dictator from infancy,” he wrote. “The first notion he acquires in life is, that he was born to command, and the first habit he contracts is that of ruling without resistance. His education tends, then, to give him the character of a haughty and hasty man,—irascible, violent, ardent in his desires, impatient of obstacles but easily discouraged if he cannot succeed upon his first attempt.”

The Confederate commissioners had come north expecting to be treated as the envoys of a grand new republic, the Confederate States of America, and here was Secretary of State Seward, via Campbell, treating them as if they were house servants demanding a day off. Seward’s continued refusal

to meet with them was a blow to their self-esteem, to their honor; in another context it might have required the dispatch of “a friend” to deliver a note of offense, in accord with the *Code Duello*.

Campbell’s assurances seemed increasingly at odds with what the great waxing tide of rumor was telling the commissioners: that ships were on the way with guns and legions of armed men aboard. During that first week of April their alarm grew daily. “The war wing presses on the President,” they warned in a telegram to Montgomery; “he vibrates to that side.” They reported, too, that Lincoln had met with a number of naval officers. They presumed the subject was Fort Sumter.

Confederate Secretary of War L. P. Walker wrote to General Beauregard to urge him to maintain a state of “watchful vigilance” and warned that he should comport himself “precisely as if you were in the presence of an enemy contemplating to surprise you.”

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IN CHARLESTON, FORMER GOVERNOR John Manning, now an aide-de-camp to General Beauregard, nonetheless found time to keep up his flirtation with Mary Chesnut.

Mary’s diary:

Tuesday, April 2: “Breakfasted today with John Manning. Mr C restive because I said I did not tell him every thing. Then John Manning brought me a bunch of violets.”

Wednesday, April 3: “Breakfasted with John Manning who made better jokes than usual.”

Then on Sunday morning, something unexpected: Manning revealed that he had told his own wife about the flirtation. “And now,” Mary wrote, “Mrs. M writes for Mr C’s likeness as she wants to begin a flirtation with him.”

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ON THURSDAY, APRIL 4, in Richmond, the still-seated Virginia Convention held a vote on a proposed ordinance of secession. The delegates rejected it 88 to 45.

Edmund Ruffin, in Charleston, was outraged and embarrassed by the vote. He had hoped for better. But the next day the convention again rejected secession by an even wider margin.

“This is worse than I supposed possible even of that submissive and mean body,” Ruffin wrote in his diary on April 5. He added the next day that he hoped—“with all my heart”—that Lincoln would indeed send a powerful naval squadron to attack Charleston. Such an attack, Ruffin believed, would at last force Virginia from its lethargy, with the corollary personal benefit of Ruffin’s being freed from continually having to explain the state’s reluctance.

WASHINGTON

Fatal Error

APRIL 5

LINCOLN'S ERROR IN ASSIGNING THE same warship, the *POWHATAN*, to the two relief expeditions came to light on April 5, a dreary night in Washington. He received a surprise visit from Secretary of State Seward and Navy Secretary Gideon Welles. The two men had set off for the White House after receiving a panicked telegram from New York, and arrived about midnight to find Lincoln still up and about.

"He looked first at one and then at the other," Welles recalled. Lincoln read and reread the telegram and asked if there wasn't some mistake. "He took upon himself the whole blame," Welles wrote—"said it was carelessness—heedlessness on his part—he ought to have been more careful and attentive."

Lincoln turned to Seward. His tone peremptory, he told him it was imperative that the *Powhatan* accompany the Sumter expedition, "that on no consideration should it be defeated or rendered abortive," Welles recalled.

Even at this juncture Seward continued to believe that he needed to take the reins of government and could still engineer a peaceful evacuation of Fort Sumter. He tried to make the case that the Florida expedition was more important.

Lincoln emphatically disagreed. The relief of Sumter was to him far more pressing. He ordered Seward to telegraph the navy yard in New York immediately and hold the ship for the Sumter expedition.

Seward stalled again, arguing that it was too late to send a telegram.

Lincoln insisted.

Seward capitulated—but may have dragged his feet in getting the message onto the wires. The telegram did not reach New York until the next afternoon, after the *Powhatan* had been secured by the expedition to Fort Pickens and had begun its voyage to Florida. Undeterred, the commander of the navy yard dispatched a fast steamer to overtake the ship and call it back to port.

The steamer did catch up, but the *Powhatan*'s newly assigned captain, Lt. David Dixon Porter, ignored the order. He argued that his own instructions, signed by Lincoln himself, trumped the recall command, which was signed only by Seward, a mere cabinet secretary.

Lieutenant Porter proceeded South to Fort Pickens with the *Powhatan*, where he would meet no resistance and would successfully deposit four hundred troops and six months of supplies. To Porter's everlasting sorrow, however, he would not get to fire a shot. "The great disappointment of my life," he wrote in his journal, "was not having had the pleasure of firing the first broadside into the rebels."

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IN NEW YORK, CAPT. Gustavus Fox, in charge of the expedition to Fort Sumter but unaware of the *Powhatan* confusion, speedily gathered troops, supplies, and ships. He would lead a small but mighty fleet of steam-powered vessels: three oceangoing tugs, the *Thomas Freeborn, Yankee,* and *Uncle Ben;* a large transport, the *Baltic,* carrying troops and supplies; a secondary transport, the *Illinois,* to carry whatever the *Baltic* could not; and most critical, four large warships: the *Pawnee, Harriet Lane, Pocahontas*—and, he presumed, the *Powhatan,* the most powerful of all.

For reasons never made clear, Fox had no idea that the all-important *Powhatan* was now on its way to Florida.

CHARLESTON

The Petrel's Delight

APRIL 7–8

THE WORKERS AT SUMTER AND the enslaved men in the Confederate batteries continued building defenses in preparation for battle, an outcome that with each day seemed more and more inevitable as the expected evacuation of Sumter failed to materialize.

The weather hampered both sides. Over several days high winds raked the bay and turned the weather cold. Throughout Saturday night and into Sunday morning, rain fell heavily and steadily, making sentry duty a misery. All day Sunday frequent intervals of heavy rain whitened the waters and drove workers indoors. The gloom and cold were oppressive and struck some Carolinians as ominous.

"The bad weather continues," wrote planter Keziah Brevard on Monday, April 8; she contended that wind and clouds had persisted ever since "Cessession," as she chose to spell it.

"—now near 2 O'clock P.M. and 'tis raining quite hard—such weather adds bad feelings to our sad hearts—Oh Lord save us!! save us!! but I see nothing to hope for"—

As she was writing this, lightning flared, followed quickly by thunder. She feared for her chickens.

“—my poor little chickens and two feeble little turkeys, I wish the sun could shine to dry your little bodies.”

None of this disrupted the social firmament of Charleston, however. “Yesterday it rained and we paid visits,” wrote Mary Chesnut.

She made the rounds despite a bad cold. She went first to the home of Henry King, then to the James Legares, then the Dr. Robert Wilson Gibbeses; the next morning she had breakfast with Mrs. Wigfall, wife of the famed Texas fire-eater, during which Mrs. Wigfall declared that Mary’s husband, Colonel Chesnut—Mr. C—would have been a “splendid match” for herself, as would Mary for her own husband. Then on Monday, April 8, there was tea with Dr. Gibbes and several others—“Mr. C offended because I did not wait for him,” Mary noted. After this came a session with another four people, including one Mrs. Letitia Gamble Holliday Latrobe, who, Mary added, “has had two husbands in two years.”

In the background there was always the minor chord of impending threat. On Sunday afternoon Mary tried reading to distract herself—an essay on the nineteenth-century feminist and transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, killed in a shipwreck in 1850 off New York’s Fire Island. Mary did not succeed. “The air is too full of war news,” she wrote. “And we are all so restless.” On Monday, her husband spoke of joining an artillery company. This only added to her unease. “News *so* warlike I *quake*.”

Others appeared not to share her concern. Mary noted that during one social encounter the wife of Isaac Hayne, the rebuffed emissary to Washington, said that all she felt about the coming conflict was pity for people who could not be present in Charleston to see it unfold.

Mary observed that Louis Wigfall, whom she nicknamed the Stormy Petrel, seemed to revel in the tension. He was, she wrote, “the only thoroughly happy person I see.”

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ON THAT SUNDAY, GENERAL BEAUREGARD notified Anderson that the fort would no longer be permitted to acquire any supplies from Charleston. The halt,

Beauregard wrote, was ordered by the Confederate government in Montgomery “in consequence of the delays and vacillations of the United States Government at Washington relative to the evacuation of Fort Sumter.” The mails, however, would continue.

In Washington, President Lincoln dispatched two messengers to Charleston to deliver to Governor Pickens his formal notice that he planned to resupply Fort Sumter with provisions, peacefully if possible, but if not, by force of arms. The two agents were Robert S. Chew of the State Department and Sumter’s Captain Talbot, who also carried a copy of Lincoln’s instructions to Anderson, to be delivered to the major in person. The copy posted by Secretary of War Cameron was still making its way south by mail.

If all went well—if the unusually foul weather did not slow their journey, if their trains did not derail, as happened all too often—Chew and Talbot would arrive on Monday evening, April 8.

THE ATLANTIC

Storm

APRIL 8

By Monday, April 8, captain Fox was ready to launch his fleet. He was proud beyond proud: He had been a Navy man; he had left the service to toil in the obscurity of civilian industry, and now glory beckoned. With the *Powhatan* among his force, as he believed it to be, his expedition to Charleston could not fail.

The first vessel to depart was the tug *Uncle Ben*, which left New York that Monday evening. Fox himself embarked the next morning aboard the *Baltic* confident that all his tugs and ships would rendezvous off Charleston two days later.

The ship exited New York Harbor into a full-on Atlantic gale. The *Baltic* was well designed and handled the seas well, but the storm impeded and scattered the rest of Fox's fleet, especially the ocean tugboats. It forced the *Uncle Ben* to seek shelter in the harbor at Wilmington, North Carolina. Another tug, the *Yankee*, was blown past Charleston and found refuge in Savannah. The tug *Freeborn* avoided the storm altogether: Deeming the risks of the expedition simply too great, its owners decided at the last minute to hold the vessel in New York.

Fox did not know any of this. He had no means of communicating with other ships except by visual signaling or veering close enough to shout. As

best he could tell, his plan for the relief of Fort Sumter was unfolding exactly as planned, if probably a bit behind schedule because of the gale. He expected to find the other ships of his fleet waiting for him just outside the entrance to Charleston Harbor. He would be especially happy to see the *Powhatan,* its troops and powerful guns at the ready.

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THAT MORNING, MONDAY, APRIL 8, Major Anderson and his men were startled by an explosion near Fort Moultrie across the channel to the east. The blast shattered a wooden house situated up the beach from the fort and revealed behind it a wholly new Confederate battery.

As best they could tell, it contained four large guns. The orientation of these was deeply troubling and forced Anderson and his engineers to rethink their own strategy for defending Sumter. “The discovery of this battery,” wrote Asst. Surgeon Crawford, “produced a marked and depressing effect upon Major Anderson. He seemed nervous and anxious.” Engineer Foster saw that the new guns exposed Sumter’s topmost tier to direct fire and likewise exposed an area outside the fort walls where deep-draft ships would be most likely to anchor and discharge their cargo. Anderson decided the new battery made the parapet level simply too dangerous and ordered its guns off-limits. “This, of course, was much less dangerous for the men,” Doubleday wrote, “but it deprived us of the most powerful and effective part of our armament.”

The new battery brought to nineteen the number of Confederate gun emplacements arrayed around the harbor, all fully manned. But Anderson knew that even without this numerical superiority the Confederates held a tremendous advantage: They had only one target to shoot at; Sumter confronted many.

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IN WASHINGTON, THE CONFEDERATE commissioners told Justice Campbell of their growing unease and urged him to convey this to Secretary Seward.

Campbell was apprehensive as well, increasingly concerned that Seward was using him to deceive the Southerners. He met with Seward on Sunday, April 7, and asked him whether the assurances he had given the commissioners thus far were “well or ill founded.”

The next day, Monday, April 8, Campbell received at his quarters a mysterious envelope containing a brief statement with neither date nor signature: “Faith as to Sumter fully kept; wait and see; other suggestions received, and will be respectfully considered.”

Campbell brought it to the commissioners, who surmised that Seward was its author. It did nothing to ease their concerns.

Weary of the “constant vacillation” of Lincoln’s government, the commissioners at last sent their official secretary, James Pickett, to the State Department to demand a formal answer to their original request for a meeting with Lincoln. What he received in response was the memorandum Seward had written on March 15 and that had lain in the department’s archive ever since.

FORT SUMTER

Confession

APRIL 8

THE THREE- OR FOUR-DAY DELAY in mail delivery between Washington and Fort Sumter confounded and confused communications and deepened Major Anderson's sense of isolation. But no one trusted the telegraph. Telegrams passed through too many nodes where they could be intercepted and forwarded to unauthorized parties. The mail was sacrosanct, its confidentiality honored by both sides.

Or so Anderson certainly expected.

On April 7, he at last received a copy of Lincoln's instructions and learned of his decision to resupply the fort, apparently using a plan devised by Capt. Gustavus Fox. Anderson was shocked. It utterly contradicted his understanding that Sumter would be evacuated. The next day, Monday, April 8, he wrote a confidential letter to his friend, Adjutant General Thomas in Washington, in which he advised that upon reading the letter, "you will be pleased to destroy it."

Fox's expedition, Anderson warned, would be seen by the South as a betrayal, given the assurances apparently made to the Confederate commissioners. "It is, of course, now too late for me to give any advice in reference to the proposed scheme of Captain Fox," Anderson wrote. "I fear that the result cannot fail to be disastrous to all concerned." He told Thomas

that Lincoln's aide, Ward Lamon, had convinced him that the garrison would be evacuated, but now clearly that was not the case. He was annoyed. "I ought to have been informed that this expedition was to come," he wrote.

And then he bared his soul—to the extent, that is, that a military man like Anderson could do so. "We shall strive to do our duty," he wrote, "though I frankly say that my heart is not in the war which I see is to be thus commenced."

The letter never made it to Washington; it came to rest instead on a desk across the bay, in the Charleston Hotel.

WASHINGTON

Dismay and Dishonor

APRIL 8

THE COMMISSIONERS READ SEWARD'S MEMORANDUM, written ominously in the third person.

"The Secretary of State understands the events which have recently occurred differently from the aspect in which they are presented by Mssrs. Forsyth and Crawford," Seward wrote. (At the time Seward prepared the memorandum, the third commissioner, André Roman, had not yet arrived.) "He sees in them, not a rightful and accomplished revolution, and an independent nation, with an established government, but rather a perversion of a temporary and partisan excitement."

Seward declared himself unable to satisfy the commissioners' request for a meeting with the president. "On the contrary, he is obliged to state to Mssrs. Forsyth and Crawford, that he has no authority, nor is he at liberty to recognize them as diplomatic agents, or hold correspondence or other communication with them."

The commissioners had no reason to be startled by this rejection, given Seward's persistent unwillingness to meet, but they were outraged all the same. This was yet another affront to their Southern honor.

Their reply steamed with anger. They accused Secretary Seward of dwelling in "delusions" and told him, "You now, with a persistence

untaught and uncured by the ruin which has been wrought, refuse to recognize the great fact presented to you of a completed and successful revolution; you close your eyes to the existence of the Government founded upon it."

They predicted "blood and mourning" and warned that history would lay the blame for it with Lincoln. "The undersigned, [on] behalf of their Government and people, accept the gage of battle thus thrown down to them."

Seward felt he could not directly answer even this, lest some shard of recognition be passed along to the commissioners; instead, with a little twist of the knife, he filed a new note in the archive consisting of a single sentence in which, again adopting the third-person voice, he stated that he presumed that the commissioners, having been formally told that he could not engage in official communication with them, would not expect a reply to their letter "beyond the simple acknowledgement of the receipt thereof, which he hereby very cheerfully gives."

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ON MONDAY EVENING, APRIL 8, Lincoln's two messengers, Chew and Talbot, arrived in Charleston and made their way to Governor Pickens's headquarters at the Charleston Hotel bearing Lincoln's statement of his intent to resupply Sumter. There Chew read it aloud and then handed Pickens the text: "I am directed by the President of the United States to notify you to expect an attempt will be made to supply Fort Sumter with provisions only, and that if such attempt be not resisted no effort to throw in men, arms, or ammunition will be made without further notice, or in case of an attack upon the fort."

Pickens summoned General Beauregard and read the message to him. Captain Talbot then requested permission to proceed to Sumter and rejoin the garrison. Beauregard "peremptorily refused," Talbot recalled. Talbot asked if he could at least meet with Anderson and afterward return to

Charleston, his intent clearly to deliver the copy of Lincoln's April 4 instructions, which he also carried with him. This request, too, was refused.

Chew and Talbot then set off for the train station, accompanied by two Confederate escorts, and left the city at eleven P.M. to return to Washington. Anderson himself did not directly receive a copy of Lincoln's resupply notice but soon learned of it.

Beauregard immediately sent a telegram to Confederate War Secretary Walker in Montgomery to notify him of the visit. In a masterly bit of editorial compression, Beauregard distilled Lincoln's message to its essence: "Authorized messenger from Lincoln just informed Governor Pickens and myself that provisions would be sent to Sumter peaceably, otherwise by force."

To which Walker immediately replied, "Under no circumstances are you to allow provisions to be sent to Fort Sumter."

—

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK THAT NIGHT, after receiving Lincoln's agents, Beauregard sent a brief, stern note to Major Anderson notifying him that all mail service to and from Sumter was now suspended. For unclear reasons, but possibly because high winds and rough water hampered delivery, Anderson did not personally receive this message until 2:15 the next afternoon.

Alarmed, he wrote to the general asking him, ever so politely, to return all the fort's outgoing mail, which he presumed to be sitting in the Charleston post office. There was valuable intelligence in those letters, Anderson knew, and one damning confession.

Beauregard denied his request.

CHARLESTON AND MONTGOMERY

Suspicion

APRIL 9

AT DAYBREAK ON TUESDAY, APRIL 9, Edmund Ruffin checked out of his hotel and walked to the Charleston wharf carrying a small carpet bag and a training musket that he had borrowed from the Citadel Military Academy. He boarded a steamer bound for Morris Island, where he planned to join in the island's defense. He knew he would be recognized immediately: The old secessionist, armed and somewhat dangerous, had arrived.

What he wanted was attention, and he got it. "My going on this occasion was made so much of, and I was accosted by so many individuals, mostly unknown to me, with words of high praise and compliment, that I felt ashamed of such exaggerated commendation for my very small effort or sacrifice." In fact, for Ruffin this was a tonic. He was doubly heartened when he arrived at Morris Island. The captain of a rifle company cried out, "Three cheers for Mr. Ruffin." A swarm of volunteer soldiers, all members of the Charleston aristocracy, gathered around him hurrahing wildly, "which I acknowledged," he wrote, "by taking off my hat, and bowing in silence."

But his arrival was also greeted with a degree of private mirth. "Mr. Ruffin insisted that he should be an active member and take his share in every duty," wrote one private, William Gourdin Young, thirty, a member of a prominent Charleston family. "It was arranged that he should do just

enough to satisfy him that he was not neglected. The old man managed to keep up with the boys, had a good time, fared sumptuously every day, and set an example of moderation in partaking of the good things furnished by our families and friends, an example not always followed, but we were not a very bad lot."

Several officers invited Ruffin to join their artillery militias, but he did not want to be stationed at some remote battery where his musket would be useless, and where, he wrote, "I could see no more of the engagement outside, than if I was in a cellar in Charleston."

Eschewing the offer of a bed in an officer's house, Ruffin made another showy gesture, opting to sleep on a pallet in a tent with other volunteers. He slept well and credited this to the cold air flowing into the tent through its open front entry.

Ruffin did accept an offer to join the Palmetto Guard, a high honor. The Guard was the state's premier militia company, staffed with the loftiest of Charleston's gentry and bearing the name of the state's revered emblem, the palmetto. "The Palmetto Guard," he noted, "is composed of very select members—no one being admitted who is not perfectly respectable."

He wrote out a formal agreement governing his status. This, too, was mainly for show, to cement his reputation as a heroic figure. He specified that he was only offering to participate in "actual military operations," ideally as an infantryman, but once the action ended his tenure as a volunteer would expire.

—

IN MONTGOMERY, ON TUESDAY morning, April 9, Confederate President Jefferson Davis, his face aflame with neuralgia, decided that he had tolerated enough deception from Washington and convened a meeting of his cabinet to discuss the fate of Fort Sumter. For months the fortress, with its huge U.S. flag stretched in the wind, had sat there in Charleston Harbor—"a standing menace" (in Davis's words) to Southern peace and independence.

Now a naval expedition of an indeterminate character was on its way to Charleston, ostensibly to provide food to a starving garrison. On the one hand the expedition appealed to the Southern sense of chivalry: No true gentleman could oppose so humanitarian an undertaking. At the same time, to allow the provisioning of the fort would mean to prolong its hated tenure in the harbor. Further, there was no guarantee that Lincoln really only intended to deliver provisions. Given the deception evident thus far in the treatment of the Confederacy's commissioners in Washington, how much could one trust Lincoln's notice of resupply delivered in Charleston the night before? According to news reports and supposedly authoritative telegrams from sources in Washington, the Union expedition included some of the U.S. Navy's most potent warships, filled with guns and infantry. Suppose the provisioning of Sumter was only a ruse—that the true goal was the military reinforcement of the fort or the outright seizure of Charleston itself?

Davis had concerns even about the provenance of Lincoln's notice. This "so-called notification," Davis wrote later, "was a mere memorandum, without date, signature, or authentication of any kind, sent to Governor Pickens, not by an accredited agent, but by a subordinate employee of the State Department. Like the oral and written pledges of Mr. Seward, given through Judge Campbell, it seemed to be carefully and purposely divested of every attribute that could make it binding and valid, in case its authors should see fit to repudiate it."

During the cabinet meeting Davis spoke kindly of Major Anderson, whom he considered a gallant officer and a friend; the two had fought together in the Mexican War. But Fort Sumter was an evil that had to be dealt with, and quickly. According to credible reports from Washington and New York, the U.S. fleet could reach Charleston any day. The cabinet knew of course that Confederate Secretary of War Walker had already instructed Beauregard to prevent the provisions from reaching the fort. They now leaned toward demanding that Anderson surrender the fort, and if he refused, then ordering Beauregard to destroy it.

As this debate was underway, Confederate Secretary of State Toombs joined the meeting. Once he grasped that his fellow cabinet members were discussing whether to attack Sumter, he objected. “Mr. President,” he said, “at this time it is suicide, murder, and will lose us every friend at the North. You will wantonly strike a hornet’s nest which extends from mountain to ocean, and legions now quiet will swarm out and sting us to death. It is unnecessary; it puts us in the wrong; it is fatal.”

Whether Toombs delivered his objection in such florid terms is open to question. But key accounts confirm that he did warn that an attack on Sumter would trigger a civil war “greater than any the world has yet seen.”

The cabinet reached a decision.

CHARLESTON

Perfidy

APRIL 9

THE THREE MEN WERE ON edge: Governor Pickens, General Beauregard, and former federal judge Andrew G. Magrath, one of Charleston's most eminent citizens, the federal judge who had resigned his office the day after Lincoln's election. They gathered on Tuesday morning, April 9, at Pickens's office at the Charleston Hotel around a table on which lay a bag of mail just delivered from the Charleston post office by one of his aides. This was Sumter's outbound mail that had been in the post office when Beauregard issued his order halting mail service to and from the fort.

In ordinary times, no honorable man would open another man's mail, but these times were decidedly not ordinary. As Pickens would explain it shortly afterward in a letter to Montgomery, "I did this because I consider a state of war is now inaugurated by the authorities at Washington, and all information of a public nature was necessary to us."

One of the men passed the mail bag to Judge Magrath, apparently in hopes that his judicial stature would confer upon the act a level of respectability. The judge would not touch it, according to one witness. "No," Magrath said, "I have too recently been a United States' Judge, and have been in the habit of sentencing people to the penitentiary for this sort of thing, so, Governor, let General Beauregard open them."

The general balked as well. “Certainly not,” he said. “Governor, you are the proper person to open these letters.”

“Well, if you are all so fastidious about it,” Governor Pickens said, “give them to me.” Pickens selected a letter and looked at it for a time. As if anyone needed a reminder of the sanctity of mail, Anderson’s letters were invariably sealed with wax. Pickens turned it over “nervously.”

“Go ahead, Governor, open it,” Judge Magrath said.

Then, like a man steeling himself to jump into freezing water, Pickens ripped into the letter “so nervously as almost to destroy it.”

The men agreed that they would only open official mail and send all clearly private letters on to their destinations. Inadvertently, while opening an official-looking envelope, they intercepted a letter from Anderson to his wife, but promptly resealed it.

Two letters proved particularly compelling. One contained a report to Washington from Sumter’s chief engineer, Captain Foster, in which Foster with his usual detail provided an update on Sumter’s defenses and an assessment of the work being done at the Confederate batteries. What really drew the attention of Pickens, Beauregard, and Magrath, however, was a letter by Major Anderson to Colonel Lorenzo Thomas in Washington, the U.S. Army’s adjutant general.

Lincoln had openly stated his intention to send provisions to Fort Sumter, but innumerable other reports of varying credibility had held that warships were on their way south. Here was proof. The letter, moreover, identified Captain Fox as the architect of the expedition. Fox’s perfidy was revealed, and by inference, the fundamental untrustworthiness of the Lincoln administration.

But there was more.

Anderson’s new status as a hero had become a problem for the Confederacy. Even Southerners, addicted as they were to honor, had to applaud his gallantry and courage and his apparently wholehearted commitment to the Union cause, however misplaced they found it to be. Now, on the table before the three men, lay the solution, a gift not quite from heaven and not quite honorably acquired, but nonetheless in their

possession, evidence that even Anderson did not believe in the Union's position. That crucial phrase: "though I frankly say that *my heart is not in the war* which I see is to be thus commenced."

The letter made its way to the press.

Mary Chesnut, for one, had no sympathy for the major. "He ought to have thought of that," she wrote, "before he put his head in the hole."

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GOVERNOR PICKENS PROMPTLY FORWARDED the pilfered mail to Montgomery, along with a note to Confederate President Jefferson Davis warning that he believed the arrival of the Northern expedition was imminent. "You see that the present scheme for supplying the fort is Mr. Fox's," Pickens wrote. "It is thought that the attempt will be made tonight, and we have doubled our steamboats on the harbor and bar."

Charleston was prepared, he assured Davis. Over two thousand troops had been deployed to Morris Island alone, where Union forces were deemed most likely to attempt a landing. Another eight hundred more were due to arrive by train that night. He expected to have over six thousand men in all positioned throughout the harbor. "I trust we are ready, and if they come we will give them a cordial reception, such as will ring through the country, I think."

CHARLESTON

Rumor and Cannon Fire

APRIL 9

MARY CHESNUT, STILL MISERABLE WITH a bad cold, spent Tuesday, April 9, reading and packing for her return to Mulberry plantation, "thinking nothing could induce me to dress and go out." But a friend, Robert Gourdin, called and she relented.

"I was sitting quietly talking to Mr. G when John Manning walked in, seated himself by me and in mock heroic style began, 'Madam your country is invaded.' "

She asked what he meant; he replied that "six men of war were outside the *bar*—and Talbot and Chew had arrived to announce war." These were the Lincoln messengers now on their way back to Washington; the part about the warships was false, however, an artifact of stressed imagination and the very bad visibility caused by the storm.

"I immediately told Mr. C who came in after inquiry & confirmed the story," Mary wrote. Next Wigfall arrived, this time quoting Byron: "There was a sound of revelry by night," the first line of Byron's "The Eve of Waterloo."

"All was stir and confusion," Mary wrote. "My heart beat so painfully. The men went off. Mrs. W and I retired to my room, &c, where she silently wept and we disconsolately discoursed upon the horrors of Civil War."

Then a cannon boomed, she wrote, “and then *shouts*.”

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IT WAS ELEVEN P.M.; heavy rain fell. Six more cannon blasts followed. In the Chesnuts’ boarding house and throughout the city fear spiked. Mary encountered the “blanched face and streaming eyes” of a fellow lodger, Mrs. Allen Green.

A man in a dressing gown emerged from his rooms and approached Mary in the hall. This was another former governor, John Means, a planter who had been a delegate at the state’s secession convention. He came out, she wrote, “to tell me that Pickens, the queer goose, had ordered seven cannon to be the signal for the gathering of the 17th regiment.”

Means knew this because he was a colonel in the regiment. The seven blasts meant that its members were to muster and board steamers that would transfer them to Morris Island in preparation for the expected Union assault.

Seven cannon, at night, with dozens of giant guns and mortars pointing every which way throughout the harbor, and a fleet of Union ships rumored to be waiting to attack: It was unnerving, almost cruel.

“Of course no sleep for me last night,” Mary wrote. “The streets were alive with soldiers—marching, shouting, &c.”

Edmund Ruffin, writing in his own diary in a tent on Morris Island as heavy rain thundered against its walls, observed with a degree of understatement, “The people of the city [are] greatly excited.”

PART SEVEN

FIRE!

(April 10–April 23, 1861)

WHEN THE DUEL IS ENDED by a party being hit, it is the duty of the second to the party so hit, to announce the fact to the second of the party hitting, who will forthwith tender any assistance he can command to the disabled principal.

—*The Code Duello*

FORT SUMTER

—

Preparations

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10

FOOD WAS ANDERSON'S IMMEDIATE WORRY. He placed the garrison on half rations and forecast that these would last only two more days; to be precise, until dinnertime—meaning the midday meal—on Friday, April 12. The men used the rice they had managed to pick from the shards of window glass broken back in January.

"The Major counsels economy and will not permit any crumbs to be left on the plates," Asst. Surgeon Crawford wrote in his journal. "At our meals some officers haul out of their pockets crumbs and pieces of crackers—Major reproved D[oubleday] today and called him back to eat a piece of cracker that was left. One cracker to a man morning and night—none at dinner." For supper, "rice and coffee." Doubleday found a potato and squirreled it away, Crawford noted. "He said somebody had tramped on it, but had not hurt it much."

That night, Wednesday, April 10, Anderson ordered his men to move their bedding from their barracks into the casemates on the first level of the fort.

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BEAUREGARD WORRIED THAT IF the expected Union fleet arrived that night, conditions favored an attack.

While the winds on the bay remained strong, the tide was expected to peak at about eight P.M. This would add water at the Charleston Bar and make the city's harbor more accessible. The night was also heavily overcast and therefore utterly dark, with no starlight or moonglow to silhouette the arriving ships.

A detail of soldiers and enslaved men filled three obsolete vessels with combustible materials and positioned them in the channel adjacent to Fort Sumter at a point where enemy ships would have to pass in order to reach the fort. If the Northern fleet did arrive, these hulks were to be set on fire to illuminate the invaders.

Four Telegrams

MONTGOMERY, APRIL 10, 1861

To General Beauregard, Charleston

If you have no doubt of the authorized character of the agent who communicated to you the intention of the Washington Government to supply Fort Sumter by force you will at once demand its evacuation, and if this is refused proceed, in such manner as you may determine, to reduce it. Answer.

—L. P. WALKER [CONFEDERATE SECRETARY OF WAR]

CHARLESTON, APRIL 10, 1861

To L. P. Walker

The demand will be made tomorrow at 12 o'clock.

—G. T. BEAUREGARD, BRIGADIER-GENERAL

MONTGOMERY, APRIL 10, 1861

To General Beauregard, Charleston

Unless there are special reasons connected with your own condition, it is considered proper that you should make the demand at an earlier hour.

—L. P. WALKER

CHARLESTON, APRIL 10, 1861

To L. P. Walker

The reasons are special for 12 o'clock.

—G. T. BEAUREGARD

CHARLESTON

Confusion

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

BEAUREGARD DID NOT OFFER AN explanation for his "special reason," but the reality was that he was simply not yet ready to wage war. For one thing, the general was running short of gunpowder. The exuberant displays by his batteries had wasted a lot of it, enough so that he ordered his forces to cut down their practice firing. He had only enough powder to sustain fire against Fort Sumter for a few hours and could not risk the humiliation of running out before the fort was subdued or destroyed. A fresh supply was on its way from Augusta, Georgia, due to arrive that night, but this would have to be distributed to the various batteries by steamboat, within easy range of Sumter's guns. It was a passage best achieved without guns blazing away throughout the harbor.

Beauregard's biggest problem was the lack of training and coordination among his officers and troops. The officers, while enthusiastic and dedicated, many from the state's finest planting families, were inexperienced, daunted by the strain of managing thousands of scantily trained volunteers. New companies of such troops arrived each day from all over the state; three thousand were expected to arrive that Wednesday alone. The soldiers on Morris Island "are not in as complete a state of organization as I desire," Beauregard told War Secretary Walker in

Montgomery, “but I hope, in the event of an attempt to land by the enemy, that I will be able to give you a satisfactory account of them.”

The raw state of recruits had been a problem all along, as Col. Roswell Ripley, commander of Fort Moultrie, had reported to Beauregard’s headquarters a month earlier when he complained that he had “some 290 indifferent artillerymen” and “318 helpless infantry recruits, almost without arms, without clothing, and totally and entirely unfit to meet the enemy.”

These problems persisted, but Beauregard had little patience for complaints. On Wednesday he sent a message to Ripley’s superior in which he stated, “This is one of those moments when the word impossible must be ignored.”

Now and then hints of desperation crept into the otherwise matter-of-fact exchange of messages between Beauregard and his officers. On Wednesday night, one officer, Henry J. Hartstene (who had taken Capt. Gustavus Fox to meet Anderson), warned that on a night this dark the Northern fleet could reinforce Sumter by using boats launched from ships outside the bar. He told Beauregard that time was running short; if he planned to seize Sumter, he “had better be making a beginning.” Hartstene composed this letter while aboard one of his steamers, the *Gordon*, where ambient conditions had put him in a dismal mood. “Excuse my bad writing,” he wrote. “My hands are so cold, and my light is so bad that I can scarcely see.”

One key officer seemed to wilt under the strain: Maj. W.H.C. Whiting, a Confederate engineer serving as assistant adjutant general on Morris Island. He found himself in charge of managing the disposition of a mélange of batteries and newly arrived troops, all of them volunteers, all untested and more or less untrained. It was all hopelessly disorganized. “I am expected to be engineer and everything else,” Whiting complained to Beauregard. “Cannot you take charge, or at least come here and see the state of affairs?”

The island’s batteries had been ordered to be “in readiness,” Whiting wrote, but all he saw was confusion. “We are ready, perhaps, to open fire, but we are not ready to support it,” he told Beauregard on Thursday, April 11. “For God’s sake have this post inspected by yourself, or some one else

competent, before you open fire. I am alone here, as you know, and heretofore have been exclusively occupied with the construction of batteries." One newly arrived contingent of men was "helter-skelter," he complained; all were volunteers. "There are no regulars here at all."

Beauregard tried to calm him. "Things always appear worst at first sight when not perfect," he wrote. "We cannot delay now."

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"EXCITEMENT INCREASES HOURLY," Edmund Ruffin wrote in his diary.

At six P.M. Thursday, his regiment, the Palmetto Guard, was mustered and ordered to quick-march to their gun batteries, located at Cummings Point at the northern tip of Morris Island, about a third of a mile away. Ruffin brought his musket. His post, the rail-roofed Iron Battery, housed three large cannon—columbiads—capable of firing sixty-four-pound ordnance. Another ten guns and mortars stood elsewhere on the island. Of all the gun emplacements in Charleston Harbor, those at Cummings Point were nearest to Sumter, which was only thirteen hundred yards away. The bombardment was to begin with the firing of a signal round from a mortar at Fort Johnson, the hitherto abandoned colonial fort. Early orders issued before the final ultimatum had indicated this would be done at eight P.M.

Beauregard assigned the honor of firing the first actual combat shot to the Palmetto Guard, which in turn offered it to Ruffin. This was to be fired immediately after the signal round. Ruffin was thrilled. "Of course I was highly gratified by the compliment, and delighted to perform the service," Ruffin wrote. His designated cannon was one of the big sixty-four-pounders loaded with an exploding shell.

At eight o'clock, Ruffin was at his gun and holding the lanyard that would ignite the powder in the cannon. He and the men around him waited "in anxious expectation and great excitement" for the signal to fire.

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NEARBY, CONFEDERATE ASST. SURGEON Francis LeJau Parker took note of the mood around him. “For days,” he wrote, “the community had anticipated commencement of hostilities, public suspense was at its height….All eyes were turned towards the signal point. Eight o’clock came, no shell. Nine o’clock came and passed and still no sign of commencing hostilities. We began to think there would be no fight, men wondered why; some said they knew it would be so.”

General Beauregard ordered the batteries to stand down. Among the gunners, excitement gave way to disappointment and perplexity. But then came reassuring news that the bombardment was merely postponed and might begin early the next morning.

Just in case, Ruffin resolved that he would go to bed in his clothing. He dined on a personal supply of cheese and crackers, then settled in for the night on a pallet under two thick blankets. He removed only his coat and his shoes.

Outside, rain fell; the wind hissed through the adjacent beach grass. Quiet settled over the camp. Asst. Surgeon Parker observed that everything was “hushed in sleep.”

Then came the drums.

WASHINGTON

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The Correspondent

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

ON THURSDAY, APRIL 11, WILLIAM Russell of the London *TIMES* set out for dinner at the "modest" lodgings of the man in charge of military forces guarding Washington, Gen. Winfield Scott. As Russell arrived, he found soldiers on horseback out front "parading up and down the street." Inside he again encountered William Seward. Also present was Attorney General Bates and at least one other military officer, Maj. George W. Cullum, a stern-eyed Army engineer who had supervised the construction of many U.S. fortifications, among them Fort Sumter, and whose engineering feats included a berm of deftly repositioned hair that closely covered his bald scalp.

The dinner was well underway—"a most excellent dinner," Russell noted, with wines from France, Spain, and Madeira—when an orderly arrived bearing a dispatch. General Scott took it and read it and apologized for his rudeness in doing so, but said it was from Lincoln.

He handed it to Seward.

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THE COMMUNIQUÉ CLEARLY CAUGHT Seward's attention. "The Secretary read it, and became a little agitated," Russell saw, "and raised his eyes inquiringly

to the General's face, who only shook his head."

Seward passed the dispatch to Attorney General Bates, "who read it and gave a grunt, as it were, of surprise."

In order to give Seward, Scott, and Bates a chance to discuss the message in private, Russell walked outside into the garden accompanied by Major Cullum. Russell lit a cigar. The major pointed toward two soldiers standing watch and said there were others posted around the house to protect General Scott. Russell found this surprising: "a curious state of things for the commander of the American army, in the midst of a crowded city, the capital of the free and enlightened Republic, to be placed in!"

When they went back inside they learned the contents of the message: The South Carolina batteries arrayed around Charleston Harbor had been ordered to fire on Sumter if Anderson did not surrender.

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DINNER LASTED ANOTHER HOUR or so. Afterward, Seward took Russell back to the Willard. They drove up Pennsylvania Avenue, which was empty of people and traffic. Along the way, Russell asked Seward whether he was concerned about the possibility of an attack on Washington from adjacent Virginia. Unconfirmed reports held that a force of five hundred men had gathered to enact "some daring enterprise," Russell wrote—possibly the kidnapping of Lincoln and his cabinet.

Seward acknowledged that the capital was vulnerable, "almost defenseless," but added that the South was no more ready for armed conflict than the North; both sides, he said, were "equally unprepared for active measures of aggression."

Russell decided to leave for Charleston the next day, Friday, April 12. He would first go north to Baltimore to catch a southbound steamship. He left the Willard at six P.M. in "a storm of rain" and arrived in Baltimore two hours later, where he found the city's streets coursing with water. At his hotel, Eutaw House, a nineteen-thousand-square-foot box of brick-sheathed luxury in the center of the city, an employee told him the bombardment of

Fort Sumter had begun. Russell was skeptical; he had heard many such reports over prior days, none true.

He made his way to the hotel bar and found it packed, the air vibrating with talk of Sumter. “I was asked by many people whom I had never seen in my life, what my opinions were as to the authenticity of the rumor.”

But Russell now found himself in an unaccustomed position: He was just as much in the dark as they were.

CHARLESTON HARBOR

The Angel of Death

FRIDAY, APRIL 12

CAPT. GUSTAVUS FOX, ABOARD THE *BALTIC*, arrived at his fleet's planned rendezvous point ten miles off Charleston at three A.M. on Friday, April 12, amid punishing surf and high winds.

He scanned the horizon for lights. It was still too dark to see the pillars of smoke that ordinarily would have marked the approach of the other ships. The *Powhatan* was the one he most hoped to see. He sailed in toward the bar, and then back out, and repeated the process in hopes of coming across one of the ships. During one such foray, his own *Baltic* was driven aground on a submerged ridge named Rattlesnake Shoal, but was soon able to pull away. He saw no sign of the *Powhatan*, which was at this moment far to the south in waters off Florida.

Of all the ships assigned to his own expedition, only one was present, the *Harriet Lane,* and it had experienced a near mutiny.

En route to Charleston, its captain, John Faunce, found himself confronting an unhappy crew. The ship, ordinarily assigned to the Treasury Department, was a dozen hours south of New York when Faunce opened sealed orders that told him for the first time where he was headed and what his objective would be. The orders included instructions for Faunce to lower the flags that identified the ship as a Treasury vessel and replace them

with those of the U.S. Navy. The ship's crew, accustomed to the relatively tame occupation of collecting taxes and customs fees, balked. Fighting a battle at sea, they grumbled, was not in their bailiwick.

Faunce mustered the men. He was an accomplished captain and did not brook dissent.

"I appreciate your surprise and point of view," he told the men. "Still, as your commanding officer, I will say right here and now that every man must do his duty and obey orders implicitly, *or*"—he gathered steam—"*by God, he will never have a chance to see a gun fired in action*! My orders are to take the ship to Charleston and to report to the senior officer, and I'm going to do so if I have to bury half of this ship's company on the way.

"Go forward, now, and do your duty like good Americans."

He dismissed them; the ship proceeded without further incident.

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AT SUMTER, CAPTAIN DOUBLEDAY, perhaps improvidently, moved his bedding into a powder magazine set against the wall that faced Cummings Point on Morris Island. Though the magazine was mostly empty, it had been used to fashion and fill gun cartridges; loose powder lay on the floor around him. He was sound asleep until awakened at about four o'clock Friday morning "by someone groping about my room in the dark and calling out my name."

This was Major Anderson, who had come to tell him about Beauregard's final ultimatum, which three Confederate officers, including James Chesnut, had just delivered. The Confederate batteries would begin firing at four-twenty A.M., Anderson said; he told Doubleday that he would not return fire until after sunrise.

"As we had no lights," Doubleday wrote, "we could in fact do nothing before that time, except to wander around in the darkness, and fire without an accurate view of the enemy's works."

Doubleday went back to sleep.

—

ACROSS THE BAY, IN CHARLESTON, word spread quickly as to the time when the bombardment would begin. To Capt. Samuel Ferguson, the Beauregard aide-de-camp, it seemed as though everyone in the city were converging on the Battery esplanade and the wharves along the eastern flank of the city to await the start of the firing. Many others, he saw, watched from windows and rooftops. As the moment approached, the crowd went quiet.

"The silence became oppressive," Ferguson wrote; "it was weird, unnatural in so dense a throng, and seemed almost as though the Angel of Death had already passed over."

—

ON MORRIS ISLAND, the drumming began at four A.M., the "long roll," rousing Edmund Ruffin, Asst. Surgeon Parker, and the Palmetto Guard. "Men were seen emerging in hot haste from their tents and running quickly to their respective batteries," Parker wrote. "Surgeons with bandages and lint in hand, with pocket case under their arms, with laudanum and chloroform and splints, all hurried to the posts assigned them."

The morning was black under a carpet of thick clouds. Rain fell; a ragged surf snapped at the beach. Off in the murk lay Sumter, which Parker described as seeming "quiet as death." At four-thirty—ten minutes later than Beauregard's promised start of four-twenty, a delay that irked the general—the mortar at Fort Johnson fired the signal round. The shell rose in a high luminous arc, "the lit fuze trailing behind, showing a glimmering light, like the wings of a fire fly," one witness reported. On Charleston's Battery, anticipation grew. There was joy, and dread. People prayed. Captain Ferguson heard an occasional long "deep drawn sigh."

Ferguson watched the shell rise. As it tore through the sky it made a hissing sound like an angry cat. "At first, it ascended rapidly, sending out a long jet of flame, then more and more slowly as it neared the highest point of its flight; then it seemed to pause for a moment, next, its descent began, at first slowly, then with ever accelerated velocity, until it was lost to sight beyond the dark walls of Sumter."

—

THIS WAS RUFFIN'S CUE. He yanked the lanyard on his gun. The resulting blast launched a sixty-four-pound exploding shell that soared off into the darkness and struck the fort's parapet at its northeast corner. Hitting an immense fortress roughly a mile away was still considered an act of remarkable accuracy, especially for an initial firing. Ruffin could take no credit, however. The big gun had been aimed by its more experienced attendants.

—

"THE THRILL THAT RAN through our veins at this time was indescribable," wrote Private Thompson at Sumter. He saw no fear among his fellow soldiers, "but something like an expression of awe crept over the features of everyone, as battery after battery opened fire and the hissing shot came plowing along leaving wreck and ruin in their path."

Shell and shot arrived from four distinct directions. Hardshot hammered Sumter's walls; shells exploded in the parade and surrounding structures. A rifled "Blakely" gun on Morris Island, capable of precision firing, posed the greatest danger. "Almost every second shot would come in through the embrasure," Thompson wrote, "and those who failed to come in had struck all around the embrasure knocking it completely out of shape and endangering the men's lives inside from the showers of broken brick, knocked loose at every shot." Three men sustained facial injuries, but none of these was serious enough to require treatment by Asst. Surgeon Crawford.

Still Sumter did not return fire. The Confederate guns began firing more rapidly, and more accurately. Two hours passed. "They no doubt expected that we would surrender without a blow," Thompson wrote, "but they were never more mistaken in their lives."

A ball fired from a Confederate gun on Cummings Point slammed into the exterior of the wall just behind Sumter's Captain Doubleday, "and by

the sound seemed to bury itself in the masonry about a foot from my head, in very unpleasant proximity to my right ear," he wrote. Large chunks of masonry began to "crumble and fall in all directions."

Now he did get out of bed.

—

THE MOST DANGEROUS ROUNDS were those fired by mortars, which lobbed explosive shells that soared in high arcs over Sumter's walls, then descended along an almost vertical trajectory to land on the parade within the fort.

Brick and mortar seemed to erupt everywhere; plumes of pulverized masonry rolled through the fort propelled by gale-force winds. Rain fell.

—

ON MORRIS ISLAND, RUFFIN was worried. Despite a punishing barrage from the Confederate batteries, Fort Sumter still did not return fire. Round after round poured into the fort or burst overhead. An hour passed, and none of Sumter's guns replied. Then two hours. It made Ruffin uneasy. This was, after all, an affair of honor. There was nothing manly or chivalric about firing at an opponent who would not fire back. In fact, the *Code Duello* forbade it and dismissed such behavior as "children's play." Ruffin and his fellow militia feared a repeat of the caning of Charles Sumner, who endured a withering attack but did not strike his assailant.

Ruffin was concerned that Anderson's men might be so well protected in Sumter's sturdy casemates that he planned not to fire at all, a depressing prospect. "It would have cheapened our conquest of the fort, if effected, if no hostile defense had been made," he wrote.

Sumter's guns stayed mute.

—

AT MRS. GIDIERE'S BOARDING house, Mary Chesnut and fellow boarders climbed to the roof despite the foul weather. "Prayers from the women and imprecations from the men, and then a shell would light up the scene." Mary grew tired. "Up on the housetop I was so weak and weary I sat down on something that looked like a black stool," she wrote.

A man shouted, "Get up, you foolish woman—your dress is on fire."

She stood. "And he put me out," she wrote. "It was a chimney, and the sparks caught my clothes." Another man and a woman came to help. "But my fire had been extinguished before it broke out into a regular blaze."

FORT SUMTER

Sunrise

FRIDAY, APRIL 12

AT DAWN, CAPTAIN DOUBLEDAY WENT to breakfast. Reveille was at six A.M., announced by drums; the call for breakfast, six-thirty. He found the other officers already seated at a long table in the mess room used by the fort's company of engineers. They dined on salt pork and water and a small portion of farina that Asst. Surgeon Crawford had found in his hospital. They also cooked the last of the rice that had been rescued from the shattered windows. "Our party were calm, and even somewhat merry," Doubleday wrote.

After breakfast, the officers divided the garrison force into gunnery squads so that once a squad grew weary, another could step in and resume firing. Doubleday led the first group to the guns in the casemates that faced the Iron Battery at Cummings Point on Morris Island, due south. "In aiming the first gun fired against the rebellion I had no feeling of self-reproach," he wrote, "for I fully believed that the contest was inevitable, and was not of our seeking." As Doubleday saw it, he was fighting for the survival of the United States. "The only alternative was to submit to a powerful oligarchy who were determined to make freedom forever subordinate to slavery."

He did have one regret, however—that the fort's biggest and most effective guns, those on the parapet, were by Anderson's order not to be

used. These stood in the open, protected only by the top of the wall in front of them, which would have provided ample protection if the opposing force were a fleet of ships in the shipping channel. But with Confederate guns firing from all directions, the parapet guns were too exposed and their use would put the men at grave risk. The casemates on the lowest level, however, were virtually bombproof.

At six-thirty, Major Anderson at last gave the order to fire. Doubleday pulled the lanyard to discharge Sumter's first shot. It struck the Iron Battery on Cummings Point but bounced off its sloped roof and caused no damage. Ball after ball did likewise, though one appeared to disable an iron shutter that shielded the battery's embrasure between firings, thereby putting the gun behind it out of action.

More of Sumter's guns fired and added fresh bursts of smoke and muzzle flare to the ambient cacophony. "It would be useless for me to attempt to describe the scene for the next four hours," wrote Private Thompson. "If viewed from a distance it must have been grand."

—

THE CONFEDERATE GUNS FIRED briskly. "Showers of balls from ten-inch Columbiads and forty-two-pounders, and shells from thirteen-inch mortars poured into the fort in one incessant stream, causing great flakes of masonry to fall in all directions," Doubleday wrote. Mortar rounds became embedded in the soft ground of the parade. When these exploded, Doubleday wrote, the blasts "shook the fort like an earthquake."

The Confederate gunners seemed particularly intent on bringing down Sumter's American flag, the Stars and Stripes. Shot after shot rocketed past the flagstaff and landed in the water beyond the fort. On three occasions shells set fire to the officers quarters, but these fires were quickly extinguished. Fire was the great danger, given the three hundred barrels of powder—over thirty thousand pounds—stored in the fort's main magazine. All day the wind blew at gale force and rain fell heavily as cannonballs

hissed overhead and shells exploded seemingly everywhere, launching squalls of iron shrapnel.

The men at the embrasures were trained to step to the side whenever they saw the burst of smoke and flame that indicated that a Confederate gun across the channel had fired, just in case the ball or shell happened to pass through the opening. Now and then a cannonball clipped the edge of an embrasure and sent a swarm of brick shards into the casemate chamber. Doubleday's men worked the guns for three hours, which, given the labor involved in preparing and loading them between firings, brought the men to the point of exhaustion. A fresh squad arrived, led by Capt. Truman Seymour, who was known to have a sense of humor.

"Doubleday," he said, "what in the world is the matter here, and what is all the uproar about?"

"There is a trifling difference of opinion between us and our neighbors opposite," Doubleday said, "and we are trying to settle it."

"Very well, do you wish me to take a hand?"

"Yes," Doubleday said, "I would like to have you go in."

The firing resumed.

—

ON MORRIS ISLAND, at the Iron Battery, Confederate gunners likewise watched for the muzzle flare of Sumter's guns. The transit of a ball or shell would take four to six seconds. Lookouts watched for the flare and called out a warning with each discharge. They were able to see the balls and shells as they moved through the air. The lookouts' warnings gave Ruffin and the men at his battery time to duck behind a thick berm of sand or a reinforced bulwark.

Ruffin saw a number of men, eight or ten, running "at their utmost speed" away from the beach and at first thought they were running because they were terrified. In fact, they were gleefully chasing the balls that had missed their mark and now were rolling across the terrain. The men were hoping "to secure them as memorials or trophies," Ruffin realized. This was

a dangerous pastime, given that a rolling cannonball could easily break an arm or a leg. “This hunt was eagerly pursued by the men throughout the siege, whenever a ball from the fort stopped near enough to be noticed and recovered.”

After firing his gun, Ruffin became one of the lookouts. He warned of approaching shells, but mainly monitored the accuracy of his own battery’s fire and called out directions to improve it. Soon other soldiers not engaged in firing guns joined him on the battery’s makeshift parapet “to indulge their curiosity,” Ruffin wrote.

Meanwhile Confederate balls and explosive shells ripped into Sumter’s walls. The men watching from Morris Island critiqued each shot, as recorded by Asst. Surgeon Parker: “Cries of that’s a good one, hurrah for that one—bad—poor—try it again.”

This drew the attention of the battery’s commander, Col. Wilmot G. De Saussure, a prominent planter and slaveholder, who ordered Ruffin and his fellow onlookers to get off the parapet, “lest we should attract the notice and fire of Major Anderson,” Ruffin wrote. The colonel replaced him with a private named Henry Buist, himself a member of Charleston’s chivalry. Disappointed and a little hurt, Ruffin found other locations from which to observe the action.

He was by now drenched. He had not bathed for days; his white hair clung to his scalp and hung over his shoulders in wet daggers. Out of sympathy or pity, Ruffin was invited by various gun crews to fire their cannon, and so the old secessionist, musket in hand, made his way from gun to gun, drawing cheers as cannon boomed and smoke billowed and projectiles of all configurations flew toward Sumter at seventeen hundred feet per second. He was a popular cannoneer; in all he fired guns twenty-seven times.

Despite the rain and cold, the atmosphere on Morris Island was festive and lighthearted. The men at the Confederate batteries cheered each time Fort Sumter fired a shot, to honor the gallant Major Anderson, whose performance thus far was deemed very much in accord with the chivalry’s

code of honor. For the moment, at least, this was not war but rather an elaborate if perilous form of sport.

The Sumter Expedition

AT SEVEN A.M. ON FRIDAY, a second warship arrived off Charleston, the *Pawnee,* which anchored near the *Harriet Lane* and Captain Fox's ship, the *Baltic*. Although there was still no sign of the tugboats, or of either the *Powhatan* or the fourth warship, the *Pocahontas,* with their soldiers and heavy guns, Captain Fox resolved to attempt the first phase of his mission, the peaceful delivery of provisions to Fort Sumter.

His ship raised steam and, accompanied by the *Pawnee* and *Harriet Lane*, sailed toward Charleston. They saw distant smoke and soon heard the faint booming of cannon. "Nearing the bar," Fox wrote, "it was observed that war had commenced, and, therefore, the peaceful offer of provisions was void."

His orders called for him now to force his way into the harbor. He had hoped to enter that night with his full complement of ships and, masked by darkness, get as close as possible to Sumter to launch boats full of men and supplies. But now, with an intense bombardment clearly underway, this did not seem possible. With so many Confederate guns around the harbor, advancing without a full armed escort would be foolhardy. His own ship, the *Baltic,* a commandeered passenger vessel, had no armor or guns whatsoever. "The heavy sea, and not having the sailors (three hundred) asked for, rendered any attempt from the *Baltic* absurd," Fox wrote.

The ships waited.

CHARLESTON HARBOR

—

The Great Darkness

FRIDAY, APRIL 12

AT MIDDAY FRIDAY, SUMTER'S PRIVATE Thompson saw that a third large steamship had joined the two that had lain off the bar since dawn. "We were certain they were an expedition fitted out to relieve us, and the hopes of speedily getting assistance compensated for the lack of anything in the shape of dinner."

The ships remained in place. This did not surprise Thompson. He expected they would wait until nightfall, and then, "it being as dark as pitch and raining," they would come.

—

CONFEDERATE LOOKOUTS SPOTTED THE ships as well and alerted their superiors. They counted three large steam vessels and were able to identify them. Two were warships, the *Pawnee* and *Harriet Lane.* The third was the *Baltic.* One of the ships appeared to be carrying row boats large enough to land troops.

Using a field glass, Ruffin surveyed the damage done thus far to Fort Sumter. Two or three guns on its topmost level were disabled, knocked from their carriages. Half a dozen chimneys on structures within the fort had been destroyed. There was no way to tell what kind of harm the projectiles had done within the fort itself, but myriad holes and gouges in the outside

walls bore evidence of accurate fire from the Confederate side. Still, no clear breach of the walls had been achieved.

The Sumter guns fired back only with hardshot, and at long intervals. Most of these missed the Morris Island emplacements and fell into the marsh beyond, though Ruffin estimated that nine or ten balls had struck his Iron Battery and been deflected harmlessly away by its angled iron roof. The men at the Confederate batteries continued to cheer each new shot fired from Sumter.

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TO EVERYONE'S SURPRISE, the federal warships stayed where they were, now and then prompting disdainful jeers from the Confederate gunners, who attributed the fleet's restraint to cowardice. Nightfall, however, brought renewed anxiety. It seemed highly likely that once the bay was fully enveloped in darkness, the warships would launch a flotilla of boats filled with soldiers and provisions.

The wind and rain persisted; shortly after nightfall a pounding rain hammered the Confederate emplacements for half an hour. The firing from Sumter ceased; the Confederate batteries fired mortar rounds through the night, but at twenty-minute intervals to discomfit Anderson's men and interrupt their sleep. "After dark," Ruffin wrote, "I went out of our tent to observe the appearance of the shells, in their luminous course, as seen in the night. A line of light shows along the whole curve of the course, preceded by the brilliant explosion of the discharge of the shell from the mortar, and another made by the final bursting of the shell."

The tide reached its peak, but still the federal fleet remained off the bar. The men on Morris Island found it disgraceful that the ships were not now racing to rescue the courageous Major Anderson. "Tide going down," Asst. Surgeon Parker noted; "no signs of fleet, miserable cowards…the execrations of our men are loud against them." Parker took note of the weather: "Night black and stormy, rain is falling with lightning and thunder."

At seven P.M. Ruffin returned to his tent to try to sleep, but could not, and went outside again hoping to catch a glimpse of the federal ships in the quicksilver glare cast by periodic emanations of sheet lightning.

At about twelve-thirty A.M., having returned to his tent and finally fallen asleep, he was jarred awake by the sound of small arms fire and shore cannon. “I hastily struck a light,” he wrote. He threw on his clothes, grabbed his musket, and stepped outside, “thinking that the enemy from the ships had certainly landed, or were trying in the great darkness to pass in boats up the channel.”

As Ruffin approached the beach, a shell hissed into the sky, fired with the apparent goal of providing a burst of illumination over the bay.

Down the beach from him, out of his visual range, a boat had in fact landed.

—

THE SOUND OF MUSKET fire pocked the darkness; one of the channel guns fired. A small boat with two men went aground on the beach. Confederate soldiers raced to seize it but then hurriedly stepped away as a cry rose behind them: “*Clear the beach, we fire*.”

A howitzer boomed. In the next instant, grapeshot meant to be used at close range against advancing infantry peppered the boat and the water around it. By now Asst. Surgeon Parker was on the scene and saw the two occupants of the boat throw themselves into its bottom. “Friends!” the men shouted. “Southern Confederacy, don’t shoot for God’s sake!”

The boat began to drift down the beach, pushed along by the surf. Soldiers followed and fired their muskets.

“Don’t shoot,” the men in the boat cried. “We are friends.”

As the waves pushed the boat back to shore, soldiers again rushed it and seized the two men. They proved to be drunk and lost, surgeon Parker wrote. They had rowed over earlier in the day to ferry two Palmetto guardsmen to Cummings Point and had decided to put ashore for the night. In the storm-wracked darkness, the little boat had caught the Confederate

soldiers by surprise, despite sentries stationed on the beach and gunners watching from the channel batteries. As a precaution against another such surprise, two companies of infantry now quickly converged on the point through the wind and drenching rain. Once the confusion subsided and the identity of the two boatmen was made clear, most of the soldiers turned in for the night inside armored shelters known as “rat holes.” But Ruffin returned to his tent, wholly exposed to weather and gunfire, “and,” as he proudly noted in his diary, “was the only lodger therein for that night.”

Sumter’s guns remained quiet; the fort had stopped firing an hour before nightfall. The Confederate batteries kept up their dirge-like barrage, launching one mortar shell every twenty minutes, a reminder that more would come at dawn.

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IN THIS RELATIVE LULL, Sumter’s chief engineer, Captain Foster, went outside onto the esplanade that surrounded the fort to inspect the walls for damage. He found none that concerned him, only myriad scars that marked where balls had struck the brick face and become embedded there or bounced off.

A detail of men continued to sew cartridge bags into the night by the scant glow of candles. As before, they cut up extra clothing, but now they also used surplus hospital bed linen and whatever coarse paper they could find. It was slow going: They had six needles. At midnight Anderson ordered them to stop.

The tide was up, the night black, but still the federal ships did not advance. Now that a battle had actually begun and the fear of starting one was moot, the men at Sumter earnestly hoped to receive the reinforcements those ships seemed likely to offer. It was a matter of pride and honor; also, they were starving, down to a half ration of rice and coffee. They were surrounded by heavy artillery and vastly outnumbered, and Union warships had come to rescue them. So why did they not get on with it?

Periodic spasms of lightning revealed that the ships had not moved from their positions outside the bar. Explosive shells from the Confederate guns

continued to land in and around the fort throughout the night, but at a slower pace. Between these orange eruptions and the intermittent waxy glow of lightning, the swirl of wind and the silvery curtains of rain, the parade ground could have been a set for *Faust*, the popular Gounod opera that had debuted two years earlier in Paris.

Exhausted by labor and stress, Anderson's men went to bed in the casemates while sentries stood watch, listening hard for the sound of oars and the rhythmic splash of approaching steamers. "The enemy kept up a slow but steady fire on us during the entire night, to prevent our getting any rest," wrote Private Thompson. "I for one slept all night as sound as ever I did in my life."

The Sumter Expedition

Captain Fox felt helpless. He again considered trying to fight his way in but believed that without the *Powhatan* and its guns and its hundreds of soldiers, the attempt would be folly, especially in such rough seas. Fox still expected the ship to arrive, but in the meantime he hoped to supply Major Anderson with at least a few days' worth of food, thanks to the improvisational thinking of one of his officers.

The *Pawnee*'s captain, Stephen C. Rowan, seized a private schooner waiting off the bar and presented the vessel to Captain Fox with the idea of using it to ferry at least some provisions and a few men to Sumter while the fleet awaited the arrival of the *Powhatan*. Fox had no problem collecting volunteers and soon raised a full crew of officers, soldiers, and sailors ready to man the schooner. Despite the wind and rolling seas, they were able to fill it with guns and food. They planned to cross the bar late the following night, Saturday, April 13.

Their prospects were good: A small vessel sailing in absolute night had a solid chance of making it to Sumter's wharf without detection, and even if spotted, its modest size and the darkness would make it next to impossible to hit with a cannon from shore.

CHARLESTON HARBOR

—

The Worst Fear

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

SATURDAY MORNING THE AIM OF the Confederate gunners seemed to improve, according to Sumter's chief engineer, Captain Foster, who noted the change in his engineering journal. In a telling shift in rhetoric, Foster referred to Sumter's opponents as "the enemy." The pace of their fire increased. One shot struck the rim of one of Sumter's ground-level embrasures and sent a cascade of masonry fragments into the casemate, along with the spent ball. The fragments injured four men, none seriously. An explosive shell landed inside the fort and detonated near the casemates, wounding a laborer. It became apparent that the Confederate batteries had begun firing "hot shot," cannonballs heated in furnaces. One or two balls came to rest inside the fort, where one of them set a man's bed on fire.

At about nine o'clock, a shell from a mortar burst through the roof of the officers quarters. Heavy smoke rose from within. The location of the fire was too exposed to allow men to effectively fight it, Foster realized. He alerted Anderson that if the fire continued to burn out of control, it could detonate the fort's cache of gunpowder, the thirty thousand pounds stored in barrels in Sumter's main magazine.

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ACROSS THE CHANNEL, ON Morris Island, Confederate Asst. Surgeon Parker reveled in the beauty of the morning. “The sun has risen, the lingering clouds are flying across the heavens,” he wrote; “everything looks bright and cheerful, our men are in fine spirits and the firing is steady, continuous and determined. Sumter shows no signs of yielding.”

When the fort resumed firing, it seemed to Parker to focus its attentions solely on Fort Moultrie and the floating battery. This made Parker sad. There was no heroism in sitting around watching other soldiers engage in battle. “She seems to have forgotten Cummings Point and Morris Island batteries entirely,” Parker wrote.

He and Ruffin and their fellow Guard members converged at the camp mess for breakfast. For the first time in forty hours, Parker sat at an actual table. He observed with satisfaction how readily they all had grown accustomed to being fired at with heavy guns. “Would our friends think we could so casually take our meal while amidst the cannon balls!”

After breakfast Parker and the men around him began lighting cigars and settled back to smoke. This was interrupted when, at about nine A.M., a loud cheer rose from the direction of the beach. They ran toward it “pell mell,” Parker wrote, and found their fellow soldiers standing on every available promontory cheering wildly. The sound was deafening. “It goes on, from hill to hill till it reaches the farthest end of the Island.”

Fort Sumter, they saw, was on fire.

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THIS FIRE PERSISTED AND INTENSIFIED. A succession of mortar shells fell into and around the burning structure, as did salvos of incendiary cannonballs. Walls and woodwork caught fire. Captain Doubleday, like Foster, recognized that this fire now threatened the main powder magazine, which was embedded within the ground floor of the burning structure. Though the magazine was heavily shielded with masonry and a heavy copper door and thus largely bombproof and fireproof, the risk remained that an errant spark

might penetrate the chamber through its ventilator and detonate powder stored inside, with catastrophic consequences.

The men used axes to cut away walls, stairs, posts, and timbers to starve the fire of as much fuel as possible. Anderson decided the powder was still too vulnerable and ordered his men to move the barrels to the casemates at the opposite side of the parade. The task was hazardous beyond calculation. It required the men to open the magazine's door and leave it open for prolonged periods, which left the powder within exposed. They rolled each barrel across the grounds, then covered them with water-soaked blankets. They did this as mortar shells and superheated cannonballs landed in and around the burning building. The Confederates fired at a faster rate, with the obvious intention of worsening the blaze. At this they succeeded.

Sumter's men managed to rescue ninety-six barrels of powder before the fire grew so intense and the shell bursts so frequent that the men had to suspend the work and close the copper door. Soon after this, a shot struck the door itself and damaged its lock, making the door impossible to open. By eleven A.M. about one-fifth of the fort was on fire, by Captain Doubleday's estimate. Three iron cisterns full of water suspended over hallways were ruptured by shot and flooded the quarters below. This had the effect of briefly suppressing the fire, but the loss of so much water also hampered subsequent attempts to fight it. Smoke rose in a dense, black mass; the wind blew the smoke across the compound and forced it into the casemates where the men sheltered. "It seemed impossible to escape suffocation," Doubleday wrote. "Some lay down close to the ground, with handkerchiefs over their mouths, and others posted themselves near the embrasures, where the smoke was somewhat lessened by the draught of air."

The smoke became so dense, so suffocating, that Doubleday climbed outside the fort through an embrasure and sat on the exterior esplanade, fully exposed to Confederate fire. The opposing gunners had little sympathy and now fired at Doubleday.

The smoke and flames brought all firing by the Sumter garrison to an end. The cessation appeared to cause an outburst of jubilation among the

Confederate forces, which irked Doubleday. “I thought it would be as well to show them that we were not all dead yet, and ordered the gunners to fire a few rounds more.”

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IN CHARLESTON, THE CHIVALRY and their wives gathered by the hundreds on the city’s Battery in the now fine weather to watch the destruction of the fort. Doubleday longed to fire a shell in their direction, but the only weapons at Sumter capable of reaching the city—the improvised mortars on the parade—were too exposed to be used safely amid the rain of shells being lobbed into the fort by Confederate mortars.

“The scene at this time was really terrific,” Doubleday wrote. “The roaring and crackling of the flames, the dense masses of whirling smoke, the bursting of the enemy’s shells, and our own which were exploding in the burning rooms, the crashing of the shot, and the sound of masonry falling in every direction, made the fort a pandemonium.”

A tower capped each of the five angles formed by the fort’s walls. One of these held a large store of shells that began to explode from the heat and fire. The tower shattered. The building that housed the officers quarters was a forest of charred timbers. The fire also destroyed the fort’s immense main gate, which had been made of wood studded with large iron nails. Behind this, Sumter’s engineers had built their backup wall with its “manhole” entry. Now this lay shattered as well.

Had Beauregard decided to launch an infantry assault against Sumter at this moment, his men could simply have walked inside.

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ON MORRIS ISLAND, RUFFIN had his breakfast—crackers and coffee from a tin cup—at one of the mortar batteries. Afterward, with no task assigned to him, he sat against the inside of a protective wall made of squared logs in front of a mortar, and there fell asleep. The gun crew at the mortar surely saw him there and knew who he was.

Nonetheless, they fired it.

The sound and shock wave jolted Ruffin awake. The roar was stupefying and deafening, all the more so because he was seated so near the mortar and more or less in front of it, though the muzzle was pointed skyward. “Thus placed, the sound and concussion were unusually powerful, and I was roused not only by the loud and close report, but by a great shock to my ears and sense of hearing,” he wrote. He feared the damage was permanent, but went on firing guns anyway, all day long. “It was after this,” he wrote, “that I fired off the greater number of the 27 discharges which, in all, I let off, of cannon and mortars, but took care not again to be in front of the mouths of the mortars when fired off.”

Across the bay, the conflagration intensified. The smoke grew blacker, the flames higher. As Ruffin watched, he experienced a clash of emotions. “I looked on, with my feelings of joy and exultation at our new certain prospect of speedy success mixed with awe and horror at the danger of this terrible calamity, and pity for the men exposed to the consequences—and with high admiration for the indomitable spirit of the brave commander—who seemed determined to hold his position to the last extremity.”

The Confederates may have appreciated Anderson’s gallantry, but this did not stop them from seeking to take utmost advantage of the moment. They continued to pour shell after shell into the western end of the fort to worsen the conflagration and keep Anderson’s men from putting it out. On Morris Island, the gunners in the Iron Battery filled its three giant columbiads exclusively with exploding shells and fired at will. The island’s three ten-inch mortars dropped shell after shell into the fort as its twin forty-two-pounders also blasted away. The only gun that did not fire was the new Blakely rifle, which had long before run out of what Ruffin called “its peculiar ammunition.”

Now and then flames appeared above Sumter’s parapets; a geyser of white smoke suggested the fire had ignited a cache of gunpowder. At intervals small bright explosions burst from the smoke as well. “It was manifest that the flames, or heat, had reached a magazine of loaded shells and hand grenades,” Ruffin wrote.

The fire gained ferocity as it moved eastward with the wind. “The only remaining buildings were consumed, and it seemed, to our outside view and inferences, that the whole area of the fort must have been so hot, and full of suffocating smoke, as to be intolerable to the garrison.”

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AT 12:48 P.M. SATURDAY, the Confederate gunners at last succeeded in bringing down the fort’s flag. A ball or shell shattered its staff and the great flag collapsed into the smoke below. “Then arose the loudest and longest shout of joy—as if this downfall of the flag, with its cause, was the representation of our victory,” Edmund Ruffin wrote in his diary.

The disappearance of the flag was not immediately apparent to all observers, however. Huge rollers of black smoke obscured the view.

The Sumter Expedition

Off the Charleston bar on Saturday morning, April 13, Captain Fox and his crew of volunteers readied themselves for the foray they hoped to execute that night using their captured schooner. It remained windy, but the sun was bright, the sky mostly clear.

By midmorning, heavy black smoke was rising from the harbor. Fox heard the firing abruptly intensify.

The *Pawnee*'s Captain Rowan grew impatient. He proposed an immediate attack. Fox dissuaded him. Without the *Powhatan*, such a full-on charge would yield only disaster.

And the *Powhatan* was nowhere in sight.

CHARLESTON

Tea and Angst

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

IN CHARLESTON ON SATURDAY, ANXIETY made routine acts impossible to perform. The weather at least had improved. The heavy rain of the morning gave way to brilliant sun, which suffused the city and lit the face of the Mills House hotel and dropped long black bars of shadow across Meeting Street. The cannon fire and shell bursts from across the bay increased in frequency as if some new battle had begun. It had nothing to do with an attack by the Union fleet. The ships remained quiescent, swaying off the bar, their ineffectual colors rippling in the wind. Cowards, or so the spectators on rooftops deemed them—staying in place even though Fort Sumter, their treasured fort, was on fire.

The night before there had been a period of jubilant relief when word arrived that no one in the Confederate batteries had been injured. “Nobody hurt after all,” Mary wrote. “How gay we were last night.” Beauregard’s guns also had come through unscathed. “Not even a battery the worse for wear,” Mary wrote. “So the aides—still with swords and red sashes by way of uniform—tell us.” James Chesnut had returned by now after helping deliver Beauregard’s ultimatum, with saber and sash intact—these, Mary confided, having been given to him by another lodger in their boarding house “who rummaged” them, Mary wrote, “from somewhere.”

But Mary and the other wives at Mrs. Gidiere's could not relax. Now it was Saturday, and heavy firing had resumed—the heaviest firing yet. Enslaved Blacks served breakfast in the dining room; the cheery scent of coffee and baked goods filtered through the halls. "But the sound of those guns makes regular meals impossible," Mary wrote. "None of us go to table. But tea trays pervade the corridors, going everywhere."

The stress affected each of the women differently. "Some of the anxious hearts lie on their beds and moan in solitary misery," Mary observed. "Mrs. Wigfall and I solace ourselves with tea in my room."

Many prayed. "These women have all a satisfying faith," Mary wrote. " 'God is on our side,' they cry." But when Mary and Mrs. Wigfall were alone with their tea, they asked each other why God would be on their side. "We are told, 'Of course He hates the Yankees.' "

A friend of Mary's, Louisa Hamilton—"Lou"—came to the boarding house, which had become, as Mary put it, "a sort of news center." Louisa's husband, Jack Randolph Hamilton, had designed the floating battery, and she could not stop talking about it. To divert her, Mary asked about her new son, of whom Louisa was equally proud, for her prior marriage had yielded no children. Mary asked if the boy could talk yet.

"No—" Louisa said, "—not exactly." But he did imitate one of the especially loud cannon, she said. "When he hears that, he claps his hands and cries 'Boom boom.' "

Mary marveled at the calm of the Black servants in the house. Some were employees hired out by their owners, each wearing the required badge. Other enslaved servants were brought along by the families lodged within. "Not by one word or look can we detect any change in the demeanor of these negro servants," Mary wrote. "Laurence"—her husband's enslaved valet—"sits at our door, as sleepy and as respectful and as profoundly indifferent. So are they all. They carry it too far. You could not tell that they hear even the awful row that is going on in the bay, though it is dinning in their ears night and day. And people talk before them as if they were chairs and tables. And they make no sign. Are they solidly stupid or wiser than we are, silent and strong, biding their time?"

A tray of tea and toast arrived, Mary noted in her diary. “Also came Colonel Manning, A.D.C. [Aide de Camp]—red sash and sword—to announce that he has been under fire and didn’t mind.”

In fact, Manning was quite proud of his performance and wanted to be sure that Mary, his flirtation, knew of it. “It is one of those things,” he told the women: “A fellow never knows how he will come out of it until he is tried.”

FORT SUMTER

Doubleday's Revenge

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

THE LOSS OF SUMTER'S FLAG was for Anderson and his men a heartbreaking and humiliating event. The flag was a tactile representation of nationhood. In merely firing on it, the Confederates who claimed so noisily to revere honor had engaged in a singularly dishonorable act. To bring it down by gunfire was heinous beyond measure.

Sumter's unofficial infantryman, Peter Hart, the New York City police officer who had accompanied Anderson's wife on her surprise visit to the fort, set off through the smoke and fire and came back with a long spar to replace the shattered flagstaff. Hart also retrieved the flag and nailed it by its edge to the spar. He then fixed the spar to a gun carriage on the parapet level, all this while fully exposed to Confederate fire. Once again the wind caught the flag. It did not fly as high as it had, but it did fly, and in impossibly dramatic fashion. Its new height was not enough to overtop the smoke billowing from the fort, but at intervals wind gusts created temporary clearings that revealed the flag gamely flying amid striations of smoke. To the onlookers on Charleston's Battery, the scene had a strange beauty: black smoke, white pillows of cloud, dazzling blue sea and sky, and over the water an indigo shadow cast by pulsing orbs of smoke backlit by the sun.

For Captain Doubleday, gallantry was fine, but he wanted a more concrete form of redress. Before the bombardment began he had noticed through his spyglass that Moultrie House, the resort hotel on Sullivan's Island up the beach from Fort Moultrie, was full of what appeared to be Confederate officers and troops using the hotel as a barracks. The hotel was an airy two-story structure with piazzas surrounding each level. Doubleday directed two of his gun crews to take aim at the second story, then ordered them to fire. Two forty-two-pound cannonballs sailed toward the hotel, their passage through the sky visible to a careful watcher.

"The crashing of the shot, which went through the whole length of the building among the clapboards and interior partitions, must have been something fearful to those who were within," wrote Doubleday with evident glee. "They came rushing out in furious haste, and tumbled over each other until they reached the bottom of the front steps, in one writhing, tumultuous mass."

The shots killed no one.

—

THE BRIGHT WEATHER REVEALED with fresh clarity that the U.S. ships were still off the bar. None showed any sign of advancing. For the men at Sumter this was perplexing and frustrating. Perversely, it also angered many among the ranks of the Confederates, who could not understand why the fleet did not come to rescue Anderson and his garrison. This did not, however, cause their batteries to relent in their bombardment. Mortar rounds fell among Sumter's barracks and officers quarters, where they started fresh fires.

As the flames spread, the risk grew that even the barrels of powder rescued from the magazine would explode. Anderson ordered all but five thrown into the sea through the embrasures. He understood that this decision had broader consequences than simply helping preserve the safety of his garrison. The powder in the five remaining barrels would be consumed quickly, leaving the fort unable to fight. Without food and

powder, they would need to surrender soon—unless the U.S. ships outside the bar managed to deliver the promised men and supplies.

At Sumter the effort to fight the inferno and to jettison the endangered powder caused a reduction in the rate of fire from the fort's guns, "a shot every two or three minutes to let them know we were not giving up yet," wrote Private Thompson. Sumter became a cauldron of heat, smoke, and lacerating shrapnel. One soldier suffered a severe but not mortal injury, "a large piece of shell tearing some frightful flesh wounds in his legs," Thompson wrote.

The wind briefly opened a clearing in the casemate where Thompson was stationed. A group of gunners rushed toward him bearing muskets. Only the much-feared infantry assault could have made these men leave their posts. It took a moment or two for Thompson to grasp what was occurring.

There was a man *outside* the fort, standing on the esplanade, waving a sword and white flag and asking to come inside.

FORT SUMTER

Wigfall

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

FROM EDMUND RUFFIN'S VANTAGE POINT, the Sumter flag appeared to remain down. The officers at Moultrie could see its makeshift replacement; Ruffin and the lookouts on Morris Island could not.

The apparent absence of the flag and the lack of return fire caused the commander on Morris Island, Brig. Gen. James Simons, to conclude that conditions within Sumter had become so grave that Anderson might be ready to surrender. He ordered his batteries to cease fire. He directed Texas fire-eater and former U.S. senator Col. Louis T. Wigfall to row out to Sumter "for the purpose of ascertaining from Major Anderson whether his intention was to surrender, his flag being down and his quarters in flames," according to a later report by General Beauregard.

Wigfall, now one of Beauregard's aides-de-camp, was a big man known for drinking heavily and for violent fits of passion. His face, according to Russell of the London *Times*, "was one not to be forgotten—a straight, broad brow, from which the hair rose up like the vegetation on a river bank, beetling black eyebrows." His permanent expression was one of barely suppressed rage.

Behaving with what General Simons called "his accustomed indifference to danger," Wigfall gladly accepted the mission and the

opportunity it presented to display courage and honor—and draw attention to himself.

A small boat had just landed on Morris Island carrying soldiers back from a repair task in Charleston. Wigfall commandeered the boat and its three enslaved oarsmen, even though the boat was small, had a significant leak, did not have a rudder, and seemed hardly likely to withstand the roiled waters between the island and Sumter. Another officer warned Wigfall that the boat was unsafe and offered to go and get his own much sturdier boat moored in a nearby creek bed. Wigfall would not have it. There was no time to lose; Anderson was in trouble and might not be able to communicate his intentions. “A brave garrison is in great danger, likely to perish for want of help,” Wigfall exclaimed.

The Texan appeared to be “under great excitement,” according to thirty-year-old Private William Gourdin Young of the Palmetto Guard, who helped secure the small boat. Wigfall turned to Young and identified himself, though Young already knew who he was. Wigfall asked Young if he would come along. The private assented after Wigfall assured him that as an aide to Beauregard he had the authority to free him from his regular duties.

When the boat pulled away from shore, Private Young asked Wigfall what he hoped the voyage would achieve. Wigfall told him that he was under orders to go to Sumter “under a flag of truce”—a white flag—to determine what Anderson planned to do now that the fort was aflame and its flag was no longer flying.

Private Young asked, no doubt delicately, how Wigfall expected to approach the fort when he had no white flag with him.

Wigfall acknowledged that he had not thought that far ahead. Undeterred, he pulled out a white handkerchief, drew his sword, and thrust it through two opposing corners to make a primitive flag—too primitive, it turned out, for the ambient weather conditions. “I caught it just as the wind was taking it away,” Private Young wrote.

Young cut two threads from the sleeve of his shirt and, while Wigfall held the sword steady, secured the handkerchief to the sword. Seeking to

extract the most drama from the moment, Wigfall stood up in the boat and held the sword and flag aloft, achieving briefly an unintended parody of George Washington crossing the Delaware.

The progress of the boat was visible to onlookers far off in Charleston, among them members of four generations of Private Young's family watching from the roof of the family home. They had no idea he was in the boat, he later learned, and, upon seeing one cannonball nearly hit it, pronounced the escapade "a foolish risk, and said if sunk the fate was deserved."

Only when Wigfall was too far out to be recalled did his commander on Morris Island, General Simons, catch sight of the newly rehung American flag at Sumter, briefly visible through the smoke and fire, and realize that in fact Sumter was still on a battle footing. The flag's new location and reduced height made it invisible to Wigfall.

At about this time a cannonball fired from one of the Confederate guns at Fort Moultrie splashed into the water just ahead of Wigfall's boat. To Private Young it seemed obvious that this was meant as a warning shot to compel the boat to turn around. He said as much to Wigfall.

But Wigfall huffed that Fort Moultrie had no say in whether he completed his mission. The boat proceeded.

"In a few moments," Young wrote, "we had another shot so near, it looked as if it was intended to hit us." In this he was correct, as he discovered later from Moultrie's commander, Colonel Ripley. When Wigfall's boat did not stop after the first shot across its bow, Ripley had decided to sink it, reasoning that some self-aggrandizing politician seeking glory was meddling in something that was none of his business.

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AFTER THE ARRIVAL OF the second cannonball, the oarsmen in Wigfall's boat stopped rowing. Water filled half the boat. Without forward motion to propel it over the crests of waves, the boat became prey to the surrounding surf and slipped into a trough, where it nearly became swamped. Wigfall

and Young persuaded the oarsmen to begin rowing again. Two rowed; one bailed water. Young stressed the importance of quickly reaching the fort and getting behind its walls. A third cannonball landed so near that the splash poured more water into the hull.

The shelter Private Young had hoped for did not exist. Balls and shells from other batteries on the harbor landed near, and balls that struck the parapets above tore loose showers of brick shrapnel.

Piles of debris blocked access to the fort's usual landing place. The big door at the main entrance from the wharf had disintegrated and burned. Charred fragments sagged from hinges. A howitzer behind the door lay on its side. Smoke drifted from the remains of the gun's carriage.

It was apparent that no one at the fort had seen Wigfall's boat arrive. He and Private Young called out but got no response. Wigfall ordered Young to land the boat as near the main gate as possible. Young entered the water and hauled the boat to shore. Wigfall also climbed out. With great drama he told Young he feared "we had come to the habitation of the dead."

Wigfall and Young clambered onto the esplanade that circled the fort. They had gone only a short way when Young saw that the oarsmen were getting ready to leave. He raced back just as the men began rowing. He drew his pistol. The men came back. Young ordered them into the water and directed two of them to hold the boat to prevent it from being crushed against the rocks. As before, the third bailed water.

Wigfall continued along the esplanade, hoping to find a way inside. He disappeared around a corner.

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AS PRIVATE YOUNG WAITED, two Union officers came out through the shattered entry gate. One was Major Anderson, the other an aide. Anderson asked Young what he was doing standing there with a boat outside the fort. Young explained that he had arrived with a senior Confederate officer bearing a flag of truce, who, unable to draw the attention of anyone within, "had gone around to the other side of the fort in hopes of making an entrance."

Anderson walked back into the fort. Moments later he returned, annoyed, and said he could not find any officer; he ordered Young to come with him. Young hesitated, convinced that the moment he left the boat, the oarsmen would make their escape. He insisted that Anderson send someone to watch over it. The oarsmen pleaded with Anderson “for God’s sake” to find them a safe place to shelter.

Anderson replied that “they were in as safe a place as was to be found in the neighborhood.”

It was then that a Sumter officer called out to Anderson and told him there was indeed a Confederate officer inside the fort waiting to see him.

FORT SUMTER

—

Peculiar Circumstances

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

PRIVATE YOUNG REMAINED OUTSIDE THE fort and at around one o'clock noted that firing from the Confederate batteries had halted. The sun shone; clouds sped; smoke poured over the ramparts; but now, suddenly, there was quiet, save for the sound of waves against the rock foundation of the fort.

The delay made the oarsmen uneasy. They urgently wished to depart, Young saw, and expressed the belief that Anderson "must have killed the other gentleman"—meaning Wigfall—and that the same would happen to Young if he remained.

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ANDERSON FOUND THE INTERLOPER: Louis T. Wigfall, wild-haired, half-soaked, holding a sword with a white handkerchief skewered at the end.

Wigfall had been authorized merely to inquire as to what Anderson now planned to do, but, never one to bank his fires, instead told Anderson that he had come to negotiate the fort's surrender.

Anderson asked what terms he proposed to offer.

"Any terms that you may desire," Wigfall said: "—your own terms—the precise nature of which General Beauregard will arrange with you."

With Sumter in flames and out of food, its men exhausted, Anderson knew the time had come. He said he would be willing to accept the same terms that Beauregard had proposed two days earlier in his initial ultimatum: to evacuate the fort, along with all small arms and personal and regimental property, and to salute its flag, and then have the garrison transported to whatever post he wished.

Wigfall agreed. Anderson ordered Sumter's American flag removed and replaced with a white flag.

Moments later Wigfall stormed out to the wharf through Sumter's shattered main gate flushed with excitement. Major Anderson, he exclaimed to Private Young and the oarsmen, had surrendered the fort to him. The battle was over; the Confederacy had won.

Wigfall prodded the oarsmen to make maximum speed back to Morris Island. One remarked, "I hope if I ever bring another buckra man to a fight, the Lord will kill me"—*buckra* being a slang term for white. Another oarsman was more philosophical. "Now that it is all over and I am alive, I am glad I came. It will be a good thing to tell my wife." To which the third replied, "That may be so, but I would not like to try it again."

Private Young was inclined to agree. He felt he deserved some kind of acknowledgment for the danger to which he had been exposed. He persuaded Wigfall to bring him along to Charleston if Wigfall were sent to personally announce his achievement to General Beauregard.

As their boat approached Morris Island, with Wigfall waving wildly, the beach ahead filled with jubilant soldiers and officers. It was one-fifty P.M. when the boat reached the beach, according to Asst. Surgeon Francis Parker. "Boat returning," he wrote in his telegraphic style. "Wigfall waving his hat—cheers—she nears the shore, he stands erect and shouts 'Sumter is ours'—Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah, three cheers boys,—boat in surf, men rush in and seize Wigfall and Young—they raise them on their shoulders, great cheering—Wigfall shouting, men scrambling, hats waving, hurrah for South Carolina."

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SOON AFTER WIGFALL'S DEPARTURE, another boat approached Fort Sumter—so soon that it could not possibly be carrying any sort of response to Wigfall's news. This boat contained three more Confederate officers, these from Charleston, who knew nothing of Wigfall's prior visit.

Upon landing they were escorted to Major Anderson and told him that Beauregard had sent them "to inquire if he needed any assistance."

"Gentlemen," Anderson said, perplexed, "do I understand you have come direct from General Beauregard?"

When the officers affirmed this, Anderson's confusion turned to anger. He had just negotiated a surrender with a man who had no authority to do so. Anderson condemned Wigfall's unauthorized venture as "an exceedingly disagreeable and embarrassing mistake."

The officers asked Anderson to write down the surrender terms Wigfall had proposed. Anderson did so. But he was still angry; he felt he had been deceived—so angry that he threatened to again fly the fort's American flag and told the officers that he was sorry he had taken it down in the first place. He would not have done so, he said, had he known Wigfall had come on his own whim, not Beauregard's orders.

In light of these "peculiar circumstances," the Confederate officers urged Anderson not to reraise his flag—which would immediately have reignited the fighting—and instead to wait until they could show the terms to Beauregard and return with his reply.

Grudgingly, Anderson agreed; the men left; the white flag stayed put.

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ON MORRIS ISLAND, as Private Young had anticipated, General Simons ordered Wigfall to proceed immediately to Charleston to report his coup to Beauregard. True to his promise, Wigfall took Private Young with him, this time in a sturdier boat. Several officers joined them, including Col. James Chesnut, Mary's husband, and John L. Manning, her co-flirtationist. They brought the flag of the Palmetto Guard on a staff and flew it from the boat. The route took them close to Fort Sumter, where they saw members of

Anderson's garrison sitting on the exterior esplanade for respite from the smoke and fire within. Deeming it ungentlemanly to keep the palmetto flag prominently displayed when passing so near, Wigfall ordered it dipped out of respect for what the Union men had been through.

A steamer took them aboard and brought them to Charleston. Private Young promptly fell asleep on a soft bench, only to be awakened shortly afterward by a rough shake from Wigfall, who ordered him to carry the palmetto flag to Beauregard's headquarters. Young was reluctant at first. His main goal in wanting to come along to the city was "to get home, relieve the anxiety of my family, and get dry raiment." Wigfall would not let him go. This, he proclaimed, was a duty Young owed to his company.

A boisterous crowd met them upon landing. Wigfall was again lifted aloft and carried away. Private Young and the officers struggled to avoid the same fate.

Chesnut and Manning wore their bright-blue uniforms with sashes and swords. Not Private Young: "I was a sorry looking object without jacket; trousers shrunk six inches too short; shirt torn; it and my face black with smoke," Young recalled. As the group walked from the wharf, some onlookers concluded that the two shiny blue officers were in fact Anderson and Doubleday and that Young had taken them prisoner. "I was asked, in an undertone, which was Major Anderson, and if the other was Capt. Doubleday," Young wrote.

One of his family's house servants spotted Young and hurried back to report that he was "crooking arms with Gen. Anderson."

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AT SEVEN P.M. A group of four Confederate officers sailed out to Sumter and negotiated the final details of Anderson's surrender. The major insisted on one additional concession: His parting homage to the flag was to consist of a one-hundred-gun salute. In honor of Anderson's gallantry, the Confederate officers agreed. The evacuation would take place the next day,

Sunday, April 14, when Anderson's men were to be transported by steamship to the fleet still waiting off the bar.

General Beauregard rewarded the Palmetto Guard by granting the entire company the honor of taking part in the occupation of Fort Sumter. The Guard, in turn, chose Edmund Ruffin to carry the Guard's flag into the fort.

FORT SUMTER

Bloody Sunday

SUNDAY, APRIL 14

SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 14, THE day set for the evacuation of Sumter, was warm and sunny. Black smoke boiled from the fort. On Morris Island, Edmund Ruffin and the Palmetto Guard mustered at ten A.M. and boarded a steamer that took them to within 150 yards of the fort before dropping anchor. All around them white sails flashed and smoke spindled from an armada of schooners, cutters, and steamers that had set off from all points of the bay so that the chivalry, many in holiday finery, could take part in this moment of heart-thumping elation: the departure at last of Anderson and his garrison. They waited for hours.

The evacuation was supposed to occur at nine that morning, but delay after delay pushed the moment well into the afternoon. A pocket steamer, the *Catawba*, was to pick up the garrison and transport it to another harbor steamer, the *Isabel*, which would then take the men out beyond the bar and deposit them aboard the waiting *Baltic*. When the *Catawba* arrived, Major Anderson went aboard and introduced himself to its captain. Someone on the vessel asked Anderson if the planned cannon salute would involve thirty-four firings, one for each state in the former Union. Anderson at last let the strain of the past two days show. “No,” he said, “it is one hundred, and those are scarcely enough.” At which point he began to sob.

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DURING THE WAIT, THE men aboard Ruffin's steamer compared stories about their experiences during the siege. "We now first heard from all the remote batteries, and learned that they, like ours, had not had a man killed or wounded," Ruffin wrote. "It was more remarkable that the garrison had been almost equally exempt, there having been only a few slight wounds from flying splinters or fragments." Ruffin observed that Sumter had withstood the barrage without significant damage. "The walls outside were thickly sprinkled with marks of cannon balls, which had not penetrated more than from 6 to 18 inches, and had nowhere made a breach."

It was almost three o'clock when Ruffin and the others heard the first of the hundred cannon reports that would mark the end of Anderson's tenure at Sumter. Smoke still rose from the burning buildings within, but outside the fort, all was blue and peaceful in the spring sun.

Ruffin had counted forty-seven discharges when an additional blast occurred that seemed out of rhythm with the others. Soon after this, a boat from the fort came out to his steamer seeking the help of any surgeon aboard.

—

AT ABOUT TWO O'CLOCK Captain Doubleday had ordered his drummers to muster the garrison. The men formed up in a line; the laborers gathered as well and stood at attention, though not quite as crisply as the soldiers. The guns to be fired were those on the parapet, which Anderson had forbidden his men to use during the fight. By agreement with General Beauregard, the guns were to be fired one hundred times as the fort's U.S. flag was lowered and the nails at its side removed. The flag would then be carefully folded and given to Anderson. The time officially recorded as the moment of surrender was two-thirty P.M.

At the forty-seventh shot, a private named Daniel Hough—"an excellent soldier," Doubleday said—loaded a cartridge into one of the guns.

Apparently the barrel had not been thoroughly sponged after the preceding shot. The cartridge exploded and tore the private's arm off; the blast killed him in an instant. Sparks then detonated other cartridges hidden under nearby debris and caused a second blast that blew the adjacent gunners into the air. One of these, Pvt. Edward Galloway, would later die in a Charleston hospital. Four others were injured but survived. The salute was suspended to give the garrison time to dig a grave in the parade for Private Hough.

The private was placed in a coffin. Confederate and Union soldiers stood at attention on opposite sides of the grave. As the coffin was lowered, they solemnly presented arms. Confederate and Union soldiers alike removed their caps and stood at attention. "A unique and most impressive sight," wrote Beauregard aide Captain Ferguson, "considering the fact that only a few hours before they were actively engaged in trying by every known means to destroy each other."

The salute resumed, but Anderson directed that it be shortened to fifty discharges, half of his original demand. At four o'clock, with the salute completed, Anderson ordered the long roll beaten. The men lined up in parade formation. As Sumter's band played "Yankee Doodle," the garrison marched out through the fort's shattered gate and onto the waiting steamer. Shortly afterward they transferred to the *Isabel*.

During the day's delays the tide had receded and the light had faded, making it risky for the *Isabel* to cross the bar. The men remained in the harbor overnight, where they were compelled to stand witness to Charleston's jubilant celebration. Rockets tore through the sky and bonfires flared, mimicking the battle just concluded. In Charleston, Mary Chesnut and several friends drove along the Battery promenade in an open carriage. "What a changed scene," she wrote. "The very liveliest crowd I think I ever saw. Everybody talking at once. All glasses still turned on the grim old fort."

For Sumter's men on the *Isabel*, the indignity was eased somewhat the next morning by a gesture of gallantry from the Confederate forces. As the steamer passed Morris Island on its way toward the bar, Confederate gunners and infantry lined the shore and in silence removed their hats.

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SOMETHING HAD BEGUN, THOUGH exactly what was not yet clear. Was this the start of a war, or the beginning of a new relationship between the Confederacy and the Union?

As far as Governor Pickens, General Beauregard, and Confederate President Jefferson Davis were concerned, it was the moment when at last the Union took the South seriously. The Confederacy had reduced and seized one of the most powerful forts in the land, the symbol of Northern tyranny, as three of the Union's warships stood by.

That no one had been killed in the bombardment itself was remarkable given that the Confederate batteries had fired 3,341 shells and balls, and Fort Sumter about a thousand. To the religiously inclined, it was a miracle and seemed a harbinger of peace ahead. Few among South Carolina's chivalry expected that a real war would result; and even if war did come, they believed it would be short and unremarkable. A common expression often attributed to Col. James Chesnut forecast that the total amount of blood likely to be shed in a war over secession would fill "a lady's thimble." Chesnut also made the vivid pledge to drink whatever blood actually did get shed.

Here lay the greatest of ironies: In thirty-four hours of some of the fiercest bombardment the world had ever seen, no one was killed or even seriously injured, yet this bloodless attack would trigger a war that killed more Americans than any other conflict in the country's history.

CHARLESTON

Acclaim

APRIL 14–15

IT WAS ONLY ON SUNDAY, April 14, that the *TIMES'* Russell at last realized that Fort Sumter had indeed been bombarded, and had fallen, and that something larger and more tragic had begun to unfold.

He had spent the previous night aboard the steamer *Georgiana*, which took him from Baltimore to Norfolk. It was a hard night, during which he was kept awake by noise and the predations of mosquitoes, which made their way into his room despite the rough gauze curtains that were supposed to protect against them. Unable to sleep, with little blood left to give and breakfast not yet available, he dressed and walked the ship. He found its barroom full despite the early hour, with passengers having cocktails, especially mint juleps. "In the matter of drinks, how hospitable the Americans are!" Russell wrote. "I was asked to take as many as would have rendered me incapable of drinking again; my excuse on the plea of inability to grapple with cocktails and the like before breakfast was heard with surprise, and I was urgently entreated to abandon so bad a habit."

The ship reached the wharf at Norfolk before seven o'clock that morning and was greeted by men calling out the news. "The Yankees out of Sumter! Isn't it fine!" Russell spotted a few men who did not share this sentiment, whose expressions were "black as night," but the overall

atmosphere was one of great celebration. After disembarking, Russell boarded a steam ferry that took passengers across a creek to Norfolk proper.

The city had a decayed air. “An execrable, tooth-cracking drive ended at last in front of the Atlantic Hotel, where I was doomed to take up my quarters,” Russell wrote. Mosquitoes clouded its hallways. “It is a dilapidated, uncleanly place, with tobacco-stained floor, full of flies and strong odors. The waiters were all slaves: untidy, slip-shod, and careless creatures.”

A passerby dragged Russell to the office of a local newspaper, where a fresh telegraphic bulletin had just arrived. “The Yankees are whipped!” the man told him. Russell found a dirty sheet of yellow paper posted on a wall that carried an account of the shelling. He heard “joy and gratification” all around him. “Now I confess I could not share in the excitement at all,” he wrote. “The act seemed to me the prelude to certain war.” Convinced at last that the fort really had fallen, and dismayed at his own poor timing, Russell wrote to a colleague, “I hear today that I am late for the fair.” He resolved to continue south anyway.

The closer he got to Charleston, the wilder the celebrations became, the more visceral the declamations of hatred for the North and of the willingness to kill to sustain some inchoate standard of Southern life, foremost of which was the right to enslave Blacks.

Everywhere he saw the new Confederate flag—the first iteration, called the “Stars and Bars”: three broad horizontal bands of red and white, and a blue square in the upper-left corner with seven white stars, one for each seceded state. This flag would prove dangerously problematic, mistaken in battle for the American Stars and Stripes. A new flag would soon take its place, designed by General Beauregard, to prevent confusion: a perfect square, with a diagonal blue cross on a red background, and stars on the blue shafts of the cross—the flag that would grace Southern picnics and fly over Southern courthouses well into the twenty-first century.

At every stop Russell found “flushed faces, wild eyes, screaming mouths.” Bands of musicians played “Dixie’s Land” with varying success. The countryside through which his train traveled seemed wholly engulfed

by revolutionary passion. “It was a saturnalia,” Russell wrote. “What would the President do? How would the people of the North assert themselves? Was Fort Sumter a Bastille? Had the federal government gone down before a revolution like a Bourbon or an Orleans dynasty?”

At Portsmouth, Virginia, he boarded a train for the last and most revelatory leg of his journey.

WASHINGTON AND CHARLESTON

Hot Oxygen

MONDAY, APRIL 15

ON MONDAY, APRIL 15, LINCOLN issued a proclamation calling for "the several States of the Union" to muster their militias and contribute a total of seventy-five thousand troops for the suppression of rebellious "combinations" in the seceded states and to reassert the authority of U.S. law.

"I appeal to all loyal citizens to favor, facilitate and aid this effort to maintain the honor, the integrity, and the existence of our National Union, and the perpetuity of popular government," the proclamation read. Here Lincoln, in his own handwriting, added this phrase: "and to redress wrongs already long enough endured," a clear expression of his own frustration and lost patience.

He forecast that the first mission of this sudden new army "will probably be to repossess the forts, places, and property which have been seized from the Union," though he added that "utmost care" would be taken "to avoid any devastation, any destruction of, or interference with, property, or any disturbance of peaceful citizens in any part of the country." With that second reference to property, Lincoln sought to signal his continued commitment to protect slavery where it already existed, in the persistent hope that the border states and the upper South might still remain in the

Union. Virginia was still undecided about whether to secede; delegates to its ongoing convention continued to debate the matter.

Lincoln's proclamation ordered both houses of Congress to come back into session on July 4 "to consider and determine, such measures, as, in their wisdom, the public safety, and interest may seem to demand." His choice of date, Independence Day, was hardly an accident; it was meant to call forth those mystic chords of memory to which he had alluded in his inaugural speech. His secretary of war set quotas for the number of troops each state should provide, the largest—seventeen regiments—for New York.

The effect of the proclamation was explosive. If there had been any hope that after Sumter passions would subside and everyone would get back to their lives, that hope was now obliterated. Northern states reacted with jubilation. "Great rejoicing here over your proclamation," wrote Ohio governor William Dennison. In the South, however, even moderate governors professed to be enraged. "I can be no party to this wicked violation of the laws of the country, and to this war upon the liberties of a free people," wrote Gov. John Ellis of North Carolina, one of the four upper South states that Lincoln had hoped to retain in the Union. Tennessee's governor vowed that the state "will not furnish a single man for coercion, but fifty thousand, if necessary, for the defense of our rights, and those of our brethren." In Virginia, the sword at last fell: On April 17 the state's long-seated convention voted to secede. Even staunch pro-unionist William Rives voted in favor, stating, "The Government being already overthrown by revolution, I vote 'aye.' "

As shattering as Virginia's act was for the North, it was heartening for the South. And it prompted celebration by fire-eater Ruffin. When the news reached Charleston on Thursday, April 18, the *Courier* newspaper summoned him to its offices and invited him to fire the "secession cannon," which the newspaper had fired for every state that thus far had seceded, "one discharge for each act of secession." That day at a dinner party Ruffin broke his lifelong policy of abstinence and had a drink. Two drinks actually: "a glass of ale, and another of wine."

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ARKANSAS FOLLOWED, APPROVING SECESSION 65 to 5; a public vote ratified it on May 6. North Carolina and Tennessee acted next. One delegate to North Carolina's convention wrote, "This furor, this moral epidemic, swept over the country like a tempest, before which the entire populations seemed to succumb." The border states—Maryland, Missouri, Kentucky, and Delaware—did not leave the Union, but they balked at Lincoln's demand for volunteers. "Kentucky will furnish no troops for the wicked purpose of subduing her sister Southern States," wrote Gov. Beriah Magoffin. Missouri's governor called the request "inhuman and diabolical." Missouri would remain in the Union, but be claimed also by the Confederacy as a member state.

It was the crucible hour—the time for all to declare their loyalty, whether to nation or section. Caught up in the crisis was Virginia resident Robert E. Lee, a colonel in the United States Army, whom General Scott considered to be the Army's finest field officer. Lee was fifty-four, a storied veteran of the Mexican War, former superintendent of West Point, and the man who had quashed John Brown's insurrection. Acting through an intermediary—Francis Blair, father of Postmaster General Montgomery Blair—Lincoln offered Lee command of all Union land forces. That same day Lee learned that Virginia had seceded.

For Lee this was a wrenching moment. He considered slavery "a moral and political evil" and looked upon secession "as anarchy." Writing to Blair, he said, "If I owned the four million slaves in the South I would sacrifice them all to the Union; but how can I draw my sword upon Virginia, my native state?" He needed time. He spent two days in personal torment considering the offer before formally notifying General Scott in a letter on April 20 that he had decided to resign from the Army. He would have done it "at once," he told Scott, "but for the struggle it has cost me to separate myself from a service to which I have devoted all the best years of my life and all the ability I possessed."

To which Scott replied, “You have made the greatest mistake of your life, but I feared it would be so.”

Lee felt he had no choice. “Wherever the blame may be, the fact is, that we are in the midst of a fratricidal war,” Lee wrote in a letter to a Northern girl who had asked for his photograph. “I must side either with or against my section of country. I cannot raise my hand against my birthplace, my home, my children.” He still held out hope for peace, he told her, but added: “Whatever may be the result of the contest, I foresee that the country will have to pass through a terrible ordeal, a necessary expiation, perhaps, of our national sins.”

In a letter to his sister telling her of his resignation, he wrote, “Save in defense of my native State (with the sincere hope that my poor services may never be needed) I hope I may never be called upon to draw my sword.”

But now his state, too, had seceded. Far from sheathing his sword, Lee within days proffered his services to the Confederacy.

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ON THE DAY LINCOLN called for troops, London *Times* correspondent William Russell was midway through his journey south. He was struck by the primitive appearance of the kingdom through which his train passed. The tracks skirted the “Dismal Swamp” and plunged through what Russell called a primordial forest. At first he entertained himself by looking for alligators and large turtles, but this became monotonous. Soon he saw crude farms populated with worn-looking cattle and pigs and worn-looking people. “The women, palefaced, were tawdry and ragged; the men, yellow, seedy looking. For the first time in the States, I noticed barefooted people.”

Nonetheless, much to Russell’s amazement, at stations along the way these bleak forests yielded sophisticated travelers waiting for the train. “It really was most astonishing to see well-dressed, respectable looking men and women emerge out of the ‘dismal swamp’ and out of the depths of the forest, with silk parasols and crinoline, bandboxes and portmanteaus, in the most civilized style.” They were tended by enslaved men and women

“handling the baggage or the babies, and looking comfortable enough, but not happy.”

What struck him most during the journey was the warlike character of the South’s jubilation, amplified by Lincoln’s militia proclamation. “At every station the crowds were all cheering—men, women, and children, black and white,” Russell wrote. “Some were drunk, all noisy and jubilant. Many carried shotguns, old rifles, and revolvers.” The jubilation reached the level of spectacle when the train passed through Goldsboro, North Carolina, the first significant town Russell had come to since leaving Portsmouth that morning. “The station, the hotels, the street through which the rail ran was filled with an excited mob all carrying arms, with signs here and there of a desire to get up some kind of uniform—flushed faces, wild eyes, screaming mouths, hurrahing for ‘Jeff Davis’ and ‘the Southern Confederacy,’ so that the yells overpowered the discordant bands which were busy with ‘Dixie’s Land.’ ”

Russell believed that these expressions of passion and determination could lead to only one outcome. “The utter contempt and loathing for the venerated Stars and Stripes, the abhorrence of the very words United States, the intense hatred of the Yankee on the part of these people, cannot be conceived by anyone who has not seen them,” Russell wrote. “I am more satisfied than ever that the Union can never be restored as it was and that it has gone to pieces, never to be put together again in the old shape, at all events, by any power of earth.”

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TOWARD EVENING ON TUESDAY, April 16, Russell’s train reached the outskirts of Charleston, where he got his first look at the source of all the turmoil and celebration. “Cavalry horses were picketed in the fields, tents were visible in the woods, and troops were marching as if at drill on the meadows,” he wrote in a report to his newspaper. “A block-like building shimmered through the haze, rising island-like from the sea. Smoke curled upwards from an angle of the wall.” The Confederate “Stars and Bars” flew above.

When someone shouted “There’s Sumter!” the passengers cheered with joy. Russell found the city enraptured. “Charleston was in high revelry—triumph on every face, and an immense clinking of sabers and clatter of spurs and steel.

“In the middle of these excited gatherings,” Russell wrote, “I felt like a man in the full possession of his senses coming in late to a wine party.”

He checked into the Mills House, then set out to introduce himself to the local powers. At the Charleston Club on Meeting Street he talked with a number of the city’s chivalry, including James Chesnut and John Manning. The conversation grew heated. Russell found the men full of confident menace not just toward Yankees, but also any potential British interference. They were convinced that Britain, once confronted with the loss of Southern cotton, would ally itself with the Confederacy—the “cotton is king” thesis famously articulated in the U.S. Senate by James Henry Hammond. Russell tried to persuade them otherwise, with no success. “I found this was the fixed idea everywhere. The doctrine of ‘cotton is king,’ to them is a lively all powerful faith without distracting heresies or schisms.”

The next day, Wednesday, April 17, Russell at last got to visit Sumter itself during a special excursion arranged by Beauregard’s staff, men who in their past lives had been senators and governors. Russell wondered at the flamboyance of their uniforms: blue caps embroidered with palmetto trees; blue coats; shoulder straps trimmed with lace; gilt buttons; blue trousers adorned with gold cord; brass spurs—all this despite sweltering heat.

The massive brick-sheathed walls of the fort were pocked and gouged by shot, the edges of the parapets torn and jagged, but otherwise the structure seemed to Russell to have sustained little serious damage, “no injury of a kind to render the work untenable.” The worst damage seemed to be the destruction by fire of the barracks within the walls.

Overall he found himself unimpressed. Having witnessed the last charge of the Light Brigade and the siege of Sevastopol, he was perplexed by Sumter’s outsized importance. He wrote later, “A very small affair, indeed, that shelling of Sumter.”

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AS DARKNESS FELL, the steamer arrived back at Charleston's wharf. The city was ablaze with lights and war fervor. Drums rumbled, bands played; cheers and shouting rose everywhere. "The streets of Charleston present some such aspect of those of Paris in the last revolution," Russell wrote. "Crowds of armed men singing and promenading the streets. The battle-blood running through their veins—that hot oxygen which is called 'the flush of victory' on the cheek; restaurants full, reveling in barrooms, club-rooms crowded, orgies and carousing in tavern or private house, in taproom, from cabaret—down narrow alleys, in the broad highway."

For Charleston's enslaved and free Blacks the celebrations of their white overmen seemed to have little meaning. As Russell walked back to his hotel, a heavy bell began to ring, and he was passed by a swiftly moving mass of humanity, "the evening drove of Negroes, male and female, shuffling through the streets in all haste, in order to escape the patrol and the last peal of the curfew bell."

ABOARD THE *BALTIC*

Ovation

THURSDAY, APRIL 18

By Thursday morning, April 18, the *Baltic*, carrying Capt. Gustavus Fox, Major Anderson, and the Sumter garrison, lay off Sandy Hook, New Jersey, a prominent waypoint for ships bound for New York Harbor. While still aboard, Anderson dictated a 109-word summary of the whole Sumter ordeal that for its rueful simplicity spoke worlds about the futility of the affair. He addressed it to Lincoln's then secretary of war, Simon Cameron, and sent it by telegraph at ten-thirty A.M. after arriving in New York:

"Having defended Fort Sumter for thirty-four hours, until the quarters were entirely burned, the main gates destroyed by fire, the gorge walls seriously injured, the magazine surrounded by flames, and its door closed from the effects of heat, four barrels and three cartridges of power only being available, and no provisions remaining but pork, I accepted terms of evacuation offered by General Beauregard, being the same offered by him on the 11th instant, prior to the commencement of hostilities, and marched out of the fort Sunday afternoon, the 14th instant, with colors flying and drums beating, bringing away company and private property, and saluting my flag with fifty guns."

As the *Baltic* entered New York Harbor it was greeted with the same kind of exultation that had erupted in Charleston after the surrender of

Sumter. “All the passing steamers saluted us with their steam-whistles and bells, and cheer after cheer went up from the ferry-boats and vessels in the harbor,” Captain Doubleday wrote.

Lincoln issued a formal note of gratitude to Anderson and his men through the War Department, then followed it on May 1 with a personal acknowledgment to Anderson alone. “I now write this, as a purely private and social letter, to say I shall be much gratified to see you here at your earliest convenience, when and where I can personally testify my appreciation of your services and fidelity; and, perhaps, explain some things on my part, which you may not have understood.”

Two months later, in Washington, Lincoln would tell an aide, “Of all the trials I have had since I came here, none begin to compare with those I had between the inauguration and the fall of Fort Sumter. They were so great that could I have anticipated them, I would not have believed it possible to survive them.”

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GENERAL BEAUREGARD WAS PLEASED with how things turned out and was proud of how his soldiers had performed, and in a letter on Wednesday, April 17, he made sure that Confederate War Secretary Walker knew it. “With such material for an army, if properly disciplined,” Beauregard proclaimed, “I would consider myself almost invincible against any forces not too greatly superior.”

Mary Chesnut wrote in her red leather diary, “Must try and remember every thing about that wonderful siege and write it as soon as I have leisure.”

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WITH VIRGINIA NOW SECEDED, Edmund Ruffin decided to rescind his self-banishment, as he noted in a simple declaration in his diary on Friday, April 19: “The formal act of secession, and withdrawal from Lincoln’s government, terminates my voluntary exile.” He watched with satisfaction

as the nation began tilting toward war. “Strange events, or reports of, press on us fast,” he wrote.

Citizens crowded the bulletin boards at the *Charleston Courier* and other city newspapers to read the latest telegraphic reports. Northern troops marching toward Washington were attacked in Baltimore, leaving four soldiers and a dozen civilians dead. Virginia forces seized the Norfolk Navy Yard and the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry. Maryland stayed in the Union, but secessionists in the state burned railway bridges and shut down all telegraphic communication between Washington and the North, leaving the city isolated. Confederate War Secretary Leroy Walker declared that the “Confederate flag would float over the Capitol at Washington before the 1st of May.” Virginia’s governor asked Confederate President Jefferson Davis to authorize sending two thousand Carolina troops to the state to prepare for an attack on Washington. Ruffin resolved to go with them.

He reached Richmond on April 23 at six in the morning after a thirty-one-hour journey. He exulted in the change in atmosphere and the warmth with which he was received. Troops were everywhere; some three thousand volunteers were said to be in the city, and many more coming, including the Palmetto Guard. President Jefferson Davis was in town. A new general, a former U.S. Army colonel named Robert E. Lee, had taken charge of Virginia forces.

War seemed inevitable. Ruffin’s sons Edmund, Jr., and Thomas set off to join their regiments, each for a twelve-month stint. Ruffin doubted the war would last even six months and expected a quick Southern victory.

He was especially pleased when a third son, Charles, asked his approval to join the Palmetto Guard, which Ruffin gladly gave. This son had long been a disappointment. “God grant that this step may be a new direction and turning point in his progress, leading to usefulness and honor,” Ruffin wrote in his diary. “So far, he has lived for no good purpose, and has thrown away his time and opportunities. May he now deserve and achieve success, and acquire justly an honorable reputation, if not distinction and glory. But if not—an early and honorable death in fighting for his county’s rights and defense is preferable to a useless and inglorious life extended to old age.”

Like most of the volunteers gathering in Virginia, Charles had no military experience; by the end of May, he was encamped with the Guard at a point eighty miles north of Richmond, thirty west of Washington, called Manassas Junction, at the intersection of two major rail lines. A nearby stream was called Bull Run.

EPILOGUE

CAN EVERY INSULT BE COMPROMISED? is a mooted and vexed question. On this subject, no rules can be given that will be satisfactory.

—*The Code Duello*

A Toast

APRIL 14, 1865

JUSTICE CAME IN CIRCLES. SUMTER had fallen on April 14, 1861; now, four years later, President Lincoln wanted the American flag to again fly over the fort and wanted its former commander, Robert Anderson, to raise it. He left the choreography to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, who had replaced Simon Cameron. Stanton directed that the flag-raising take place during a public ceremony at Sumter—or what was left of it—at noon on April 14, 1865, exactly four years to the day after Anderson and his men had evacuated the fort. They would use the same flag.

Between the day Lincoln issued his order and the date of the planned ceremony, the Civil War had all but come to an end, with Gen. Robert E. Lee's surrender on April 9 at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. The "expiation" Lee had feared, what Mary Lincoln called "this hideous nightmare," had come to pass, killing 750,000 Americans. South Carolina alone lost 21,000 men, more than a third of the 60,000 state citizens who fought. Its planters grieved a more venal loss: The end of slavery cost them three hundred million dollars in human capital overnight.

Anderson, now fifty-nine years old and a retired general, still possessed the Sumter flag that Confederate guns had shot down on that April afternoon four years earlier. He agreed to take part in the ceremony, though he had hoped for something different than what Stanton had in mind. His religious nature unchanged by the war, Anderson envisioned a quiet

commemoration, perhaps a prayer or a moment of silence, to acknowledge the magnitude of the losses endured by both sides in the war. Stanton, however, wanted a ceremony attended by thousands, marked by great speeches, culminating with Anderson's hauling the flag up a 150-foot flagpole newly installed on Sumter's parade ground. Stanton's wishes prevailed.

Workmen erected bleachers for four thousand attendees. Ships brought participants and spectators alike to Charleston for the event; two hundred came aboard the *Oceanus*, a steamship from New York chartered for the occasion. Among its passengers was Henry Ward Beecher, the famed abolitionist firebrand, who brought with him many members of his Brooklyn congregation. Another abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, arrived aboard the steamship *Arago* along with eighty other New Yorkers. John Nicolay also came to Sumter that day.

The fort now looked nothing like it had when Anderson and his garrison had occupied it. Four years of shelling by Union guns, including near constant bombardment over the previous year and a half, had reduced it to a rounded hillock of earth and shattered masonry. One discernible wall remained, dented and scaled by the impacts of hardshot and explosive shells. Two months earlier, Charleston's mayor, Charles Macbeth, had surrendered the city to a force of Black soldiers, the 21st Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry.

The flag-raising ceremony began with a benediction by Matthias Harris, the fort's former chaplain, the same officiant who had said a prayer for the troops after their successful move to Sumter in December 1860. Three complete Psalms followed, and part of the twentieth: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God." Next, a senior Army official read aloud the one-paragraph report about the Sumter bombardment that Anderson had dictated while aboard the *Baltic* off Sandy Hook.

In the audience were members of Sumter's original garrison, including Abner Doubleday, now a major general and a Union hero, honored for the bravery he had demonstrated at Gettysburg two years earlier. Here, too, was

Peter Hart, the New York City police officer who had become an honorary member of the garrison and had rescued the fort's flag after its staff was shot away. With the reading of Psalms concluded, Hart stepped forward carrying a mailbag that contained the original flag, nail holes and all. At this the crowd broke into a tumult of cheers. Three Navy sailors attached the flag to a halyard; they added roses, mock orange blossoms, and an evergreen wreath.

Anderson stood and stepped forward. His son, now six years old, sat nearby on the dignitaries' platform. For a time Anderson did not speak. A brisk wind eddied his hair. One witness noted that he seemed to be "wrestling with intense emotion."

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THESE HAD BEEN A hard four years for Anderson, hard years for everyone. In the weeks after the fall of Fort Sumter, North and South began massing vast numbers of troops, especially in Virginia. At first only small military engagements occurred. The "real war," as Walt Whitman put it, did not begin until July 21, 1861, a lovely but hot Sunday when Union and Confederate forces clashed at Bull Run. Edmund Ruffin joined the fray, solemnly riding into battle on the barrel of a cannon. At one point he was invited to fire that cannon into the backs of retreating Union troops as they struggled in full panic to cross a small bridge dammed by an overturned wagon. He was delighted to do so. In the midst of the fighting, Capt. Samuel Ferguson, the Beauregard aide from Charleston, spotted Ruffin astride his cannon. He recognized him instantly. Ruffin was in the thick of it, "enveloped in smoke, seated with the cannoneers, on a caisson of a battery," rushing full speed into action "grasping a long, old musket resting across his knees, his long, snow white hair and beard flowing in the wind—a picture never to be erased from memory."

The next morning, Monday, in a cold mist, Ruffin and fellow soldiers rode out to scavenge the battlefield. He took great satisfaction in examining the Union dead and savored the details. "Clotted blood, in what had been

pools, were under or by almost every corpse," he wrote. "From bullet holes in the heads of some, the brains had partly oozed out. The white froth covering the mouths of others was scarcely less shocking in appearance."

Next he rode down to the bridge to examine his own handiwork. He found only three bodies. "This was a disappointment to me," he wrote. "I should have liked not only to have killed the greatest possible number—but also to know, if possible, *which* I had killed, and to see and count the bodies."

He was gratified afterward to hear from witnesses that he may have killed as many as eight Union soldiers with that first cannon shot but that their bodies had been moved by Confederate troops assigned to collect abandoned guns and wagons. He would eventually raise this tally to fifteen, an exaggeration that he came to believe was true.

Later that Monday, Russell of the London *Times,* who had covered the battle, mailed his first report to London; a second would follow four days later. It took time for these "letters," as he called them, to reach the *Times*' office and for copies of the editions in which they were published to make their way back to America. By the evening of August 20, thirty days later, newspapers in New York began publishing extracts.

The battle had been a humiliating defeat for the Union. Though American newspapers had been just as damning in the immediate aftermath of the battle, by the time Russell's detailed and vivid account appeared, the North had placed the disaster behind it. His criticism not only exhumed the hurt and humiliation, but coming as it did from a foreign observer, it seemed almost spiteful. The response was quick and harsh, the mails "swollen today by anonymous letters threatening me with bowie knife and revolver, or simply abusive, frantic with hate, and full of obscure warnings."

Russell found himself shunned on the street, his presence met by scowls and open snubs, "women turning up their pretty little noses." He was dubbed "Bull-Run Russell," and this was not meant kindly. Such name-calling perplexed him: "Oddly enough, the Americans seem to think that a

disgrace to their arms becomes diminished by fixing the name of the scene as a *sobriquet* on one who described it."

The most cutting response came from the Lincolns. One evening Russell encountered them in their carriage. "The President was not so good-humored, nor Mrs. Lincoln so affable, in their return to my salutation as usual," he wrote. "My unpopularity is certainly spreading upwards and downwards at the same time, and all because I could not turn the battle of Bull's Run into a Federal victory, because I would not pander to the vanity of the people, and, least of all, because I will not bow my knee to the degraded creatures who have made the very name of a free press odious to honorable men."

Russell was banned from military posts and forbidden to join units in action, his métier. Only one course remained. Without first conferring with his editor, Russell arranged passage back to England. He left New York on April 9, 1862, "with the head of our good ship pointing, thank Heaven, towards Europe."

Although a clear Confederate victory, the battle at Manassas Junction, soon to be known variously as the First Manassas or the First Bull Run, came at great cost to the victors as well as the Union. On the Confederate side, the battle killed 387 men, wounded 1,582, and left thirteen missing. (Ruffin's son Charles survived the battle but later deserted, much to his father's shame.) The Union suffered 481 killed, 1,011 wounded, and over 1,200 missing, most presumably taken prisoner. One victim was the naïveté that had marked the attitudes of both sides in the months after Lincoln's election, with both convinced that any war between North and South would be brief and tidy, spilling only enough blood "to fill a lady's thimble." They knew only what limited war looked like and lacked the visual memory and lexical tools to imagine a conflagration that would deposit corpses in their gardens, on their streets, and among the cotton bolls of their plantations.

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THE BATTLE BROUGHT AN endless procession of funerals to Richmond, which in May 1861 had been designated the new capital of the Confederacy. Mosquitoes, heat, and the risk of yellow fever, as well as the promise of more and better hotel accommodations, had driven the Confederate Congress north. Here Mary Chesnut and James, now one of President Jefferson Davis's trusted aides, had taken temporary residence. By this point, she understood that her flirtation with John Manning was over; it had been an artifact of that time when war had seemed a glorious and chivalric pursuit. Their flirtation had never been anything to her other than a distraction; to him possibly more, though he told her just before the Sumter bombardment that he wanted them to be friends. "John Manning knows I never believed in him or trusted him," she wrote in her diary. "Snake in the grass—*beautiful* as he is."

Her husband had fought well at Manassas. He, too, had been in the thick of it. "I felt so proud of my husband last night—and so happy," Mary wrote.

On July 22, 1861, she witnessed her first funeral procession, this accompanied by a band playing a well-known funeral march by George Frideric Handel. "The empty saddle—and the led war horse—we saw and heard it all," Mary wrote. "And now it seems we are never out of the sound of the Dead March in *Saul*. It comes and it comes until I feel inclined to close my ears and scream."

A couple of days later, Edmund Ruffin—"Old Ruffin," she called him—paid her a visit, during which he promised to give her one of the pikes he had salvaged after John Brown's capture.

This was only the beginning, of course, but even as things grew darker, the drive for social contact, for dinners and parties and teas, continued. With food supplies dwindling, people in Richmond threw "starvation parties" with dancing and music but little or no food. Women wore secondhand gowns; jewelry was scarce, most of it having been donated to the war effort. Mary's friend Varina made coffee from chestnuts and hickory. In an obvious effort to maintain spirits in gloomy times, the Davises held a reception every week at the executive mansion, a large gray box of a house with a tall eight-columned portico off the back.

James Chesnut found all this merrymaking hard to take. On January 5, 1864, Mary came home after a carriage drive with several companions—Varina's sister, Maggie; Gen. John Bell Hood, now missing one leg; and Sarah "Buck" Preston, whom Hood adored—to find James "in a bitter mood," as she put it in her diary. He suggested that "with so much human misery filling the air" she consider staying home and just thinking.

"And go mad?" she snapped back. "Catch me at it! A yawning grave—piles of red earth thrown on one side. That is the only future I ever see."

It wasn't just war. The wounds and deaths of battle came on top of the multitude of quotidian tragedies that occurred in any era, at any time. "You remember Emma Stockton," Mary told James, referring to the wife of one of their mutual cousins. "She and I were as blithe as birds, that day at Mulberry. I came here the next day, and when I got here—telegram—'Emma Stockton found dead in her bed.' It is awfully near—that thought of death—always. No, no, I will not stop and think."

Mary happened to be present as Varina and Jefferson Davis mourned the loss of another son, Joseph—"Little Joe"—who on April 30, 1864, fell from the roof of the portico of the executive mansion while Varina was bringing Davis dinner at his office; he died soon afterward. Mary and James went to the house, entered the drawing room, and heard Davis pacing back and forth in the room above.

"That night," Mary wrote, "with no sound but the heavy tramp of his foot overhead, the curtains flapping in the wind, the gas flaring, I was numb—stupid—half-dead with grief and terror."

Upon returning to South Carolina, Mary and James Chesnut found that their plantation, Mulberry, had been ransacked by Union forces. They had no money, not enough even to pay for a brief crossing on a river ferry on their journey back home. Soldiers had burned their cotton. The Chesnuts faced deep debts they had no money to pay.

Mary's experience of the war had been sad beyond measure. Now and then she would muse upon what had occurred. In a letter from Mulberry she told a friend, "There are nights here with the moonlight, cold and ghastly,

and the whippoorwills, and the screech owls alone disturbing the silence when I could tear my hair and cry aloud for all that is past and gone.”

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BY THE TIME OF Sumter’s fall, James Henry Hammond, the planter and former U.S. senator who had coined the phrase “cotton is king,” and whose proslavery writings had so influenced the South, had written nothing in his diary for over three years. He resumed making entries two days after the surrender. It became a chronicle both of his own physical decline and of his despair at the effects of war, though he had come to believe it was necessary; that only separation from the Union could save the South from abolition and the inevitable slave insurrections that would accompany it. But he recognized that the war had become something far worse than anyone had anticipated. “The War,” he wrote in 1862, “is gradually becoming on both sides one of fire and sword and extermination. Dreadful, dreadful.”

He remained a believer in the power of cotton to solve the South’s ills. “The Abolitionists can only do wanton cruelties inflicting horrid suffering on us *to no purpose*, for Cotton *is* King and the African *must be* a slave, or there’s an end of all things, and soon.”

But Hammond also grasped the fundamental crisis of the South, if not America as a whole. “Here we have in charge the solution of the greatest problem of the ages,” he wrote in a letter to his antislavery friend A. B. Allen in New York. “We are here two races—white and black—now both equally American, holding each other in the closest embrace and utterly unable to extricate ourselves from it. A problem so difficult, so complicated, and so momentous never was placed in charge of any portion of Mankind. And on its solution rests our all.”

Late in the grim autumn of 1864, Hammond’s health drove him to his bed for the last time. His son Edward, known by his middle name, Spann, chronicled his final decline. Hammond provided him with precise instructions as to where he was to be buried on the grounds of Redcliffe.

“But mind,” Hammond said, abruptly staring at Spann and pointing his finger, “if we are subjugated, run a plow over my grave.”

Hammond summoned the enslaved children of Redcliffe and asked them to sing his favorite song, but they did not know it and he at that moment could not remember it either. He sent them away.

The next morning, as Spann watched, Hammond was overcome by a terrifying seizure, “the whole movement, manner and tone as if something over-powering had pounced upon and was grappling furiously with him.”

He died November 13, 1864, five days after the reelection of Abraham Lincoln. Hammond’s mother-daughter slave lovers, Sally and Louisa, continued to live at Redcliffe, their presence recorded by U.S. Census takers in 1880. By that point Sally and Louisa had been free for fifteen years, and Mrs. Hammond, according to one Hammond expert, had come to accept their presence.

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IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING the attack on Sumter, Major Anderson’s health suffered. Lincoln had promoted him to brigadier general in charge of the Army’s Department of Kentucky, but Anderson could not tolerate the demands and sought medical help. According to the assessment of his doctor, R.M.J. Jackson, he exhibited “a frequent feeling of weariness and lassitude, incapacity to continue muscle exertion for any length of time, a consciousness of exhaustion from the most ordinary exercise, and occasional pain in the forehead and eyes.” To Jackson, the cause of these “morbid phenomena” was obvious: the intense stress of his Sumter experience, namely the protracted “anxiety,” the “painfully oppressive day and night watches,” and all the other events “necessarily experienced by a man who was doomed to watch the sharpening of the knife which was to cut his own throat.”

The doctor ordered a recuperative stay in the Allegheny Mountains at an “Orphan Sanitarium” until his health returned.

And now he was back at Sumter to raise the flag. Behind him, as captured in a photograph, the tops of masts and tall smokestacks of steamers rose above what remained of one of the fort's massive walls, the ships' rigging hung with banners and ensigns stretched taut by the wind. What had once been a well-defined brick rampart fifty feet high had been so heavily pummeled by Union guns that it was now a scree of disintegrated brick.

"I am here my friends, my fellow-citizens, and fellow soldiers, to perform an act of duty to my country dear to my heart, and which all of you will appreciate and feel," Anderson began. The crowd before him had reached five thousand, filling the bleachers thigh to thigh. Soldiers and sailors stood on the last tier, straining for a view. Taking the halyard, Anderson said, "I restore to its proper place this flag which floated here during peace, before the first act of this cruel Rebellion."

As the flag rose the crowd came to its feet waving hats and handkerchiefs, "and with one long, pealing, deafening, ecstatic shout of triumph hailed the dear flag until it touched the peak," one writer reported. Six guns on the Sumter parapet fired. Oddly enough, given the peaceable nature of the proceeding, they fired in the direction of Charleston. The wind stretched the flag to its full dimension and the crowd began to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner." Even then it was a difficult song to sing. Happily, the program for the event included the full lyrics for all four stanzas. Guns replied throughout the harbor, from forts Moultrie, Pinckney, and Johnson, and from Cummings Point on Morris Island, all back in Union hands. The cacophony drew hundreds of attendees to the parapet, awed by the eruptions of smoke and flame.

Anderson got his hundred-gun salute at last.

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THAT NIGHT AT A special dinner at the Charleston Hotel, one of the few structures in the city's core that remained intact, guests rose to propose what seemed to be an endless series of toasts. Doubleday honored the Sumter

garrison; former secretary of war Joseph Holt toasted Anderson. At length, at around ten o'clock, Anderson himself got up and delivered what was probably the most heartfelt of the tributes. "I beg you now," he said, "that you will join me in drinking the health of another man whom we all love to honor—the man who, when elected President of the United States, was compelled to reach the seat of government without an escort, but a man who now could travel *all* over our country with millions of hands and hearts to sustain him. I give you the good, the great, the honest man, Abraham Lincoln."

He could not know it, but at that instant, Lincoln lay dying of a gunshot wound in a box at Ford's Theater in Washington. Forever afterward John Nicolay would feel haunted by the coincidence, believing that had he not gone to Sumter for this commemoration, had he stayed behind in Washington, the assassination might not have occurred. Later, when Lincoln lay in state in Springfield, Miss Anna Ridgely, who had so harshly judged Lincoln and the town's election celebration, encountered Nicolay and was struck by his appearance. "He looked very much fatigued and his face was the picture of despair," she wrote. "He did not stay very long. I suppose his heart was too sad."

CODA

Blood Among the Tulip Trees

THE SURGE AND RETREAT OF Union forces across Virginia forced Edmund Ruffin and his family to flee his Marlbourne and Beechwood plantations. When Union soldiers occupied them, they made it clear they bore a grievance against the family, especially Edmund, for his role as an instigator of secession and for having triggered the Civil War with that first shot at Fort Sumter. Beechwood in particular became the object of their animus. On August 17, a Sunday, Ruffin and his son Edmund, Jr., rode to the plantation after receiving word that it had recently been evacuated by its Yankee occupiers. They found the lawn strewn with feathers from ruptured featherbeds. To Ruffin the pattern of damage revealed something other than simple plunder: This was personal. His bookcases and desk were broken and twenty years of correspondence stolen. Many other items had disappeared as well, including all the bells the Ruffins had used to summon their slaves.

The occupiers saved their worst for the interior walls. Soldiers used these as a target for spitting wads of chewed tobacco and appeared to have taken particular effort to do so. They signed their names—Ruffin counted thirty-one—and scrawled obscenities. It was here that the soldiers' enmity toward him, personally, bore clearest expression. One soldier cut to the heart of it: "You did fire the first gun on Sumter, you traitor son of a bitch."

Worse was to follow. On January 5, 1863, the day he turned seventy, he learned that his daughter Mildred had died two months earlier in Frankfort,

Kentucky, after an illness.

In a long self-pitying diary entry he mourned the lack of attention paid to him by his fellow Virginians throughout most of his life. “Yet, I have been elevated by fame to the character and position of a hero, and among the most lauded of the defenders of the Confederate States and their holy cause, merely for the accident of my having fired the first gun against Fort Sumter.” Without this, he wrote, “my patriotic labors and efforts would [have] been unknown—and my name almost forgotten in my own country, and by the generation which I have so zealously and effectively labored to serve.”

At first the momentum of the war favored the Confederacy, but then came crushing defeats that crippled Lee’s army. On May 23, 1864, Ruffin received word that his son Julian had been killed in action during a battle outside Richmond. Ruffin was startled by his own inability to grieve.

By now the old warrior had grown weary. For about a year, Ruffin had been living at a plantation in Amelia County, Virginia, that Edmund, Jr., had acquired as a safe haven away from likely zones of conflict closer to Richmond. Loneliness per se did not afflict him; but age, various infirmities, and seemingly boundless tedium had worn him down. “Under these circumstances,” he wrote, “my life has become a wearisome and galling burden to myself, and its termination, if to be speedy and painless, has already been more desired than dreaded.” He added: “I cannot die too soon.” The time had come, he decided, to end his own life.

He could not resist one final wail of anti-Union fury. In the last formal paragraph of his diary, he wrote, “I here declare my unmitigated hatred to Yankee rule—to all political, social and business connection with Yankees—and to the Yankee race. Would that I could impress these sentiments, in their full force, on every living southerner, and bequeath them to every one yet to be born!”

He noted the time and date: Ten A.M., June 18, 1865.

And added: “The End.”

This was page 4,099; he had kept the diary for seven and a half years. He would have killed himself at this moment but had to pause. “Kept

waiting by successive visitors to my son, until their departure at 12:15 P.M.” By twelve-thirty he was ready, even though his son’s new wife and two of her daughters were settled on a porch outside his window.

Ruffin sat in a chair, braced the butt of his loaded musket against a traveling trunk, settled a percussion “cap” in place (so named because these caps resembled tiny brass top hats), and placed the muzzle in his mouth. Ruffin used a forked stick to reach the trigger. The cap exploded, but the powder-filled cartridge in the breech did not.

Ruffin positioned a new cap, then pulled the trigger a second time. Now both cap and cartridge detonated. The bullet blew off the top of Ruffin’s head and, as the *Richmond Whig* reported, pasted “his brains and snowy hair against the ceiling of the room.”

Sources and Acknowledgments

WHENEVER I SEARCH FOR A book idea, I look first for a subject that is inherently suspenseful and lends itself to being told as a story with a beginning, middle, and end. I think of this central arc as a narrative spine, a Christmas tree; the fun part is finding and hanging the shiny ornaments, the revealing details hidden deep within archives, diaries, and memoirs. The search for these invariably becomes a journey full of unexpected surprises and revelations no matter how much a subject has been studied before—because every writer in every time brings to the field a unique lens through which to view the world, formed by his personal experiences and the character of his era.

I began working on this book in early 2020 during the first weeks of the COVID pandemic, when, between spraying groceries with Clorox and hunting for true N-95 masks, I started reading about Fort Sumter and the advent of the Civil War. Political unrest had heightened the chaos of the pandemic, and for whatever reason I began wondering, Exactly how *did* the Civil War begin? What really happened at Fort Sumter? My usual approach would have been to parachute immediately into some rich archive, like the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, but the pandemic had limited the accessibility of this and many other archives, and made travel problematic. While aimlessly wandering through various online repositories, I came across a collection of documents entitled *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* and learned that I could acquire a bound copy for a bargain price. The book arrived, and I was enthralled. Here, in meticulous

chronological order, were hundreds of letters, telegrams, and reports that captured in vivid detail the ticktock of America's march toward fratricide. There it was: my narrative spine.

Once the pandemic eased, I was at last able to visit Charleston, where I toured the fort and spent many happy hours in the reading room of the Charleston Historical Society. It is one thing to read about slavery in textbooks; it's quite another to open a file and find a list of enslaved Blacks—identified by name—who occupied a particular plantation; and to see flyers advertising slave auctions; and bank documents in which men, women, and children served as collateral for mortgages. At length the Library of Congress eased its pandemic rules and I was able to examine the papers of Maj. Robert Anderson, James Henry Hammond, Asst. Surgeon Samuel Wylie Crawford, and others.

The Library also holds *The Papers of Abraham Lincoln,* and has curated these online in brilliant fashion. Another digital archive, the *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln,* also proved exceptionally useful. Published by the Abraham Lincoln Association, this collection presents key documents from Lincoln's papers in chronological order, laced with invaluable contextual notations. The digital incarnations of both collections are a wonder; and, hallelujah, they're searchable. Before starting my journey, I had known little about Lincoln beyond what I'd learned through casual reading, but I quickly gained an appreciation of the sheer substance of the man, especially his warmth and sense of humor.

A number of secondary sources formed my core library: *Battle Cry of Freedom* by James M. McPherson; *Lincoln* by David Herbert Donald; *Lincoln on the Verge,* Ted Widmer; *Lincoln: President-Elect,* Harold Holzer; *Team of Rivals,* Doris Kearns Goodwin; *Crisis of Fear,* Steven A. Channing; and the virtuosic *Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant* by William W. Freehling. One work that proved particularly valuable was Drew Gilpin Faust's *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery,* full of intimate details about a man who helped shape Southern attitudes toward slavery and the North. The bible on Fort Sumter remains W. A. Swanberg's *First Blood,* published in 1957.

A particularly useful, if quirky, work is *Lincoln Day by Day: A Chronology*, Volume III, which lists in almost stenographic sequence the seminal events that occurred in Lincoln's life every day from January 1, 1861, to his death on April 15, 1865. (He was shot the night before.) The chronology ends with a particularly poignant entry. "Dr. Charles S. Taft at bedside records his observations: President stops breathing 'at 7:21 and 55 seconds in the morning of April 15th, and 7:22 and 10 seconds his pulse ceased to beat.' "

I never expected that a British war correspondent named William Howard Russell would prove to be a hugely valuable source, but he did, in part for his vivid firsthand descriptions of key individuals like William Seward and Lincoln, and for revealing an aspect of antebellum America that gets left out of most Civil War accounts: the prevalence of chewing tobacco and its residues. I was struck also by the candor with which certain nineteenth-century actors described their digestive travails, like James Henry Hammond's descriptions of his lifelong battle with what he called dyspepsia, and Gen. Winfield Scott's crippling bouts of intestinal unrest.

Nor did I know much about Mary Boykin Chesnut, an acute observer of her time, whose lacerating quips took me by surprise. She began keeping a diary with an eye to eventually publishing an expanded, more novelistic version for the public, but a heart attack intervened, taking her life on November 22, 1886, when she was sixty-three. The first published iteration came out twenty years later, called *A Diary from Dixie*, edited by Isabella D. Martin, who, alas, excised much of the original diary out of a concern that it was simply too personal to be published. The best version by far is *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, published in 1981. Edited and richly annotated by the great C. Vann Woodward, it is 833 pages long, more than three times the length of the original "private" diary, which Woodward co-edited with Elisabeth Muhlenfeld, and published under the title *The Private Mary Chesnut*. How refreshing to find such observations as Mary's description of Richmond: "What a place this is; how every one hates each other." Or this, regarding a female contemporary: "What a little miscreant."

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THIS BOOK COULD NOT have emerged without the enthusiastic help of a legion of loyal and enthusiastic allies.

As always I owe big thanks to my wife, Chris, for her careful reading of my initial draft and her invaluable margin notes, consisting mainly of smiley faces, sad faces, and long lines of zzzzzzz's. Incalculable thanks go to my editor, the brilliant and wise—and patient—Amanda Cook, who dropped everything to turn my abysmal first draft into the story I'd hoped for, in the process paring forty thousand words, none of which will ever be missed.

Assistant editor Katie Berry wrestled the manuscript into its final shape and would not tolerate my whimpering about needing to go through it just one more time. My agent, David Black, longtime friend and forever mensch, provided endless encouragement and some really terrific dinners as I struggled through various trials of the soul. Huge thanks as well to Julie Tate, ace fact-check ranger, for once again saving me from mortal ridicule. Thanks to Penny Simon, my friend and longtime publicist, who keeps me in line and does an incredible job of arranging book tours and winning the attention of reviewers and bookstores alike. Eliza Fischer at the always classy Steven Barclay Agency helped keep me from succumbing to introversion by setting up speaking events around the country. And special thanks to Carrie Dolan, friend and fellow cocktail enthusiast, who read the final iteration and realized that now, at last, she possessed a truly effective doorstop.

Once again the folks at Crown Publishing made birthing this book about as painless as could be. Julie Cepler, director of marketing, launched it boldly onto the digital sea, and, with Lorissa Shepstone, web designer, burnished my digital presence until it gleamed. Ruth Liebmann did likewise in the brick-and-mortar world of bookseller conferences while also treating me to one of the best meals I've had anywhere, at Selden Standard in Detroit. Mark Birkey, associate director of production editorial (yes, that is indeed his title), turned *Demon* into a physical, readable thing, deploying

Caroline Clouse to polish my prose and fix my inept spellings (the only trait I share with Lincoln), and Barb Jatkola to do the same with my endnotes and bibliography. Barbara Bachman once again marshaled her palette of type styles and fonts to create a clean and crisp interior design. Anna Kochman, associate director of design, dressed it up in a killer jacket. Bree Martinez, senior publicist, helped introduce the book to the world and get it into the hands of the people who matter most, its readers.

Special thanks to my daughters, who, along with my wife, helped keep me grounded while also tolerating my “dad alerts” reminding them to get their flu shots, avoid angry otters, and never fly in small private aircraft. A special shout, too, to grand-dog Rocco, the one-eyed Tibetan terrier whose panda Halloween costume helped distract me from the final deadline crush, and to his nemesis, Clocko, the cat.

In the following pages I identify the sources of quotations and odd-seeming facts, and material that appeared in the works of other writers. I do not cite everything, however. My collection of notes is long enough as it is. I have salted them with stories that for various reasons did not fit into the main narrative but, like little birds in a nest, seemed to cry out to be told.

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Notes

A BOAT IN THE DARK

“fell in torrents” Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis*, 242.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“long continued indisposition” Robert Anderson to Eliza Anderson, July 8, 1857, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“What would I not give” Robert Anderson to Eliza Anderson, September 20, 1856, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I pray that Our Heavenly Father” Robert Anderson to Eliza Anderson, April 8, 1857, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I never met a man” Samuel Wylie Crawford to A. J. Crawford, February 12, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the nearest to noblemen ” Bleser, *Hammonds of Redcliffe*, 49. Hammond felt such a kinship with the aristocrats of Britain that he commissioned a British researcher to do a genealogical study of his family, certain that his ancestry could be traced back to the nobility of yore. The genealogist, however, found no such roots, just that Hammond’s ancestors were “good honest yeomen.” This was not what Hammond wanted to hear. Infuriated, he burned the report and did not pay the genealogist. Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 326.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“How strange the aspect” Marshall, “ ‘They Are Supposed to Be Lurking,’ ” 192.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

They held jousting competitions Crooks and Crooks, *Ring Tournament*, 1–6. Mark Twain blamed Sir Walter Scott for the castle-like look of the Louisiana state capitol, “for it is not conceivable that this little sham castle would ever have been built if he had not run the people mad, a couple of generations ago, with his medieval romances.” Mires and Clark, “Mark Twain on Architecture,” 113.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“gallantry, stimulated by courage” Bruce, *Violence and Culture*, 213, 222.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“their Hyde Park” Steen, “Charleston in the 1850’s,” 38.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The Census Bureau’s tally In the fiscal year ending June 1, 1860, locomotive builders in the United States made a total of 470 locomotives, of which only 19 were built in the South. In 1861, total U.S. railroad mileage was 31,256, with two-thirds of that in the North. Nevins, *War for the Union*, 426.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“But when commerce” Davidson and Greenawalt, “Unionists in Rockbridge County,” 83.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“controlling instructions” Anderson to G. T. Beauregard, April 12, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:14.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“By authority of” Chesnut and Stephen D. Lee to Anderson, April 12, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:14.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If we never meet” Swanberg, *First Blood*, 296.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the merriest, maddest dinner” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 45.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The plot thickens” Ibid., 41.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“In any stir or confusion” Ibid., 43.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Patience oh my soul” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 58.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

PART I: THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

Springfield, Illinois: Cataclysm

elections in America Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect,* 22.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is a remarkable idea” Holzer, “Election Day,” 4–5.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The courthouse steps Nicolay, *With Lincoln,* 8.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Lincoln never poured” Stampp, “Lincoln and the Strategy of Defense,” 297.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. Lincoln was calm” Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect,* 33.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The city of New York” Holzer, “Election Day,” 8.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It seemed as if” Ibid., 11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“will serve to show” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:482.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“and it was filled” Nicolay, *With Lincoln,* 9.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I spoke again” Holzer, “Election Day,” 11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“In the political history” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, November 10, 1860.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“What is it I could say” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:132–33.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston Harbor: A Proper Commander

“of whom,” Gardner wrote Gardner to H. K. Craig, November 5, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:68.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“and not secured” F. J. Porter to Samuel Cooper, November 11, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:70–71.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am now ready” Robert Anderson to Eliza Anderson, May 4, 1860, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

He felt his talents Anderson to Cooper, October 4, 1860, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Major Robert Anderson, First Artillery” Asst. Adj. Gen. Lorenzo Thomas to Anderson, November 15, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:73.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“As you walk the streets” Benwell, *An Englishman’s Travels*, 203–4.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“should very decidedly relish” Steen, “Charleston in the 1850’s,” 45.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The scene was most painful” Ibid., 44.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Ryan’s Mart became The region’s most notorious slave sale—and certainly the most cruel—took place ninety miles south in Savannah, Georgia, in March 1859, to resolve the debts of a prominent

planter, Pierce M. Butler. It took place at the city's Ten Brock Race Course, and resulted in the sale of 436 enslaved souls—men, women, and children, whether members of families or not. Forever afterward it was known as "The Weeping Time," because during the two days of the auction, heavy rain fell, suggesting that even the skies were weeping at the magnitude of the atrocity below. Kristopher Monroe, "The Weeping Time," *The Atlantic*, July 10, 2014; Yuhl, "Hidden in Plain Sight," 594.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Prime Gang of 235 Negroes" Slave-auction flyer. DeSaussure Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The Andersons appear Detzer, *Allegiance*, 24n324.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Like yourself my sympathies" Anderson to W. A. Gordon, January 11, 1861, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"darkies" Robert Anderson to Eliza Anderson, April 21, 1857, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Unfortunately, he desired" Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 90.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"turned to the crowd" Chester, "Moultrie's Commandant," 550–59.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The Charlestonians would not venture" Anderson to Cooper, November 23, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:75.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Here lies the Union" McDonnell, *Performing Disunion*, 139–40.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The clouds are threatening" Anderson to Cooper, November 23, 1860, 1:75.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Hammond: The Awakening

“No passion rules” Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 12.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“When President of the U.S.” Ibid., 23.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the principles of honor and shame” *By-Laws of the South Carolina College*, 51.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“more than one hundred” Reesman, “A School for Honor,” 197.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The ensuing duel Franklin, *Militant South*, 18.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

One Hammond expert Carol Bleser, introduction to Hammond, *Secret and Sacred*, 5. Another Hammond expert, Drew Gilpin Faust, interpreted the sexual allusions in the letter as simple teasing for Hammond’s “unflagging competitiveness, for the ‘delight’ he took in dominance, even when it appeared in this somewhat inappropriate form. The physically violent expression of mastery, encouraged at every other level of life, here assumed its most elemental expression.” Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 18–19; 19n18.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I feel some inclination” Withers to Hammond, May 15 and September 24, 1826, Hammond Papers; Holmes, “James Henry Hammond.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Purchase of Jack, (a slave)” *By-Laws of the South Carolina College*, 81.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Young wags in Charleston” Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 58.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The planters here” Ibid., 134.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Hammond worked his slaves hard Hammond, *Secret and Sacred*, 72–73.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"One would think" Ibid., 78. Neonatal tetanus killed 5 to 10 percent of infants born to enslaved women. This initially confounded researchers, but the cause was later determined to be poor care of the umbilical stump left behind after cutting the umbilical cord. Steckel, "A Dreadful Childhood," 453.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

He selected the names Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 88.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

When Josiah Nott Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

To encourage marriage Ibid., 85; Plantation Books, 1857–58, Hammond Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The highest punishment" Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 100; Plantation Books, 1857–58.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Some fellows" Olmsted, *Journey in the Back Country*, 55.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

One especially dreary pen Corrigan, "Imaginary Cruelties?," 12.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

a "large sugar dish" Dickey, *Empire of Mud*, 114.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The would-be assassin Boissoneault, "Attempted Assassination."

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

As depicted in *United States Capitol*, 11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

a "very pleasant and commodious library" Dickens, *American Notes*, 117.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"We Carolinians" Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 167.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"a passive nobody" Hammond, *Secret and Sacred*, 269.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"such a nuisance" Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 163.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"On the contrary" Hammond, "Speech on the Justice of Receiving Petitions," 34.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"rush of blood to the head" Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 181.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Broken down at Twenty-Eight" Hammond, *Secret and Sacred*, 12.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

He resigned and on the advice In Belgium an extraordinary incident occurred that cemented Hammond's convictions about life in a free-labor society. The family was about to depart on a new leg of their journey when an innkeeper presented Hammond with an apparently inflated bill. By now thoroughly exasperated by Europe, Hammond became incensed and prepared to drive off without paying. A servant grabbed the reins. Hammond struck him on the hand with his walking stick. The servant, unfazed, and behaving in a profoundly unservile manner, prepared to do battle. Hammond struck him again. "He was a sturdy fellow and twice my strength," Hammond wrote, "but I held him off until I wore out my stick on him and then turning the butt gave him several severe blows on the head which sickened him, but the stick was too light to knock him down." Hammond was glad to find, however, that he had done the man considerable damage. His head, he wrote, "was in a gore and bled profusely."

Hammond was arrested and held in jail for six hours, until he consented to pay bail pending a trial set for ten days later. Having no intention of letting the yeomanry of Europe sit in judgment upon him, Hammond fled to France and soon after that sailed home. Faust, *James Henry Hammond,* 199.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I beat them" Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor,* 338.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: The Vile Wretch in Petticoats

"one mass of fanatical bitterness" Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House,* 113.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I would have the review" Duvall, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," 16.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Immediately after the book Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves,* 180–82.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Hammond: Scandal

"Here were four lovely creatures" Hammond, *Secret and Sacred,* 172–73.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I gave way" Ibid., 175.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"full of self-congratulation" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"the loose manners" Ibid., 172.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"a deliberate attempt" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“My wife, ignorant of every thing” Ibid., 170.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I would jump” Ibid., 178.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“They have gone” Ibid., 120.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“My policy then was concealment” Ibid., 170.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The crisis of my fate” Ibid., 124.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“and have produced quite a sensation” Ibid., 149.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“My career as a public man” Ibid., 215.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“She surrenders herself” Ibid., 226.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“and all the children of both” Hammond, *Secret and Sacred*, 19.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I can make no comments” Ibid., 250.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I record now” Ibid., 270–71.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I began to despair” Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 343.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"If we never acquire" *Congressional Globe*, March 5, 1858, 961. The entire speech runs from page 959 to 964.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The speech was extremely successful" Hammond, *Secret and Sacred*, 273.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Cotton was the radicals' scepter On March 23, 1858, three weeks after Hammond's speech, the still-Democratic Senate voted to admit Kansas as a slave state. In the House, however, debate flared. During one late-night session a brawl broke out between Democrats and Republicans after a Republican dared to venture across the aisle to talk with northern Democrats, a move that prompted the ever-fiery Lawrence Keitt of South Carolina to shout, "Go back to your side of the House, you Black Republican puppy!"

The "puppy" took offense and called Keitt a "negro-driver." Fists flew. Congressmen boiled forth from their desks with "some fifty middle-aged and elderly gentlemen pitching into each other," as one newspaper reported. Apparently they did little damage, "from want of wind and muscle." The House Speaker grabbed his official mace, a forty-six-inch ebony rod topped with a silver globe and a lethal-looking solid-silver American eagle with a wingspan of fifteen inches. Another member prepared to hurl a spittoon made of stone. Still another took hold of a member's hair with the idea of holding the man still so he could punch him in the face. The hair was fake. When the toupee flew off, laughter filled the chamber, and the melee came to an end.

The House defeated the measure. McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 168.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Lincoln: The Chasm

"It is true" Donald, *Lincoln*, 209.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"In *my* opinion" Abraham Lincoln, "House Divided" (speech, Springfield, Ill., June 16, 1858), Abraham Lincoln Online, www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/house.htm.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The slave system" William Henry Seward, "The Irrepressible Conflict" (speech, Rochester, N.Y., October 25, 1858), available at HathiTrust, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924032259578&seq=2.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Virginia: The Rubicon

"Fond of reading" Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:348.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I have lived long" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"a gentleman born" Craven, *Edmund Ruffin,* 80.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"almost able to shoulder a musket" Miller, "Historical Natural History," 3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I have now lived so long" Mathew, *Edmund Ruffin,* 162.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"If it be of any consolation" Faust, *James Henry Hammond,* 239.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"enough a likeness" Allmendinger, "Early Career," 153.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Oh God!" he wrote Ruffin, *Incidents of My Life,* 157.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"She is so dear to me" Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:326, 337.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"my resentment is implacable" Mathew, "Edmund Ruffin and the Demise of the *Farmers' Register,*" 21.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Not even the fieriest radical" Barney, *Road to Secession,* 121.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“it really seems now” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:349.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“conscientious, truthful, brave” Pierce, “Northern Reaction to the John Brown Raid,” 199.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The insanity of the act” Ibid., 209.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“We regard every man” Barney, *Road to Secession,* 156.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“learn whether he is for us” Channing, *Crisis of Fear,* 34.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“*necessarily imbued*” Ibid., 32.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

the “demoralization” of enslaved Blacks Ibid., 53.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the negro wenches” Ibid., 48–49.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“crossed the Rubicon” Faust, *James Henry Hammond,* 354.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is proper,” the jury declared Channing, *Crisis of Fear,* 47.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I fear it would appear” Faust, *James Henry Hammond,* 354.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The only persons” Ibid., 355.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“vanity and egotism” Faust, *Sacred Circle*, 137.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“physical or animal courage” Craven, *Edmund Ruffin*, 177.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Sample of the favors” Chambliss, “Edmund Ruffin of Virginia,” 428.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a very foolish book” Hobson, “Anticipations of the Future,” 86.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“very far better provided for” Ruffin, *Anticipations of the Future*, 40–41.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I cannot help sanguinely” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:463.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Resilience

“Our Negro market” Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, 126.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

In Charleston that month Slave auction advertisements, DeSaussure Papers. In Charleston there was nothing secret about who owned slaves, or about the wealth of individual citizens. Early each year the city published its *List of the Tax Payers of the City of Charleston*, in which it revealed the taxes each resident paid on income, investments, real estate, horses, mules, dogs, and captive humans, as well as other financial assets. The tax on a horse was $10; on a man or woman, $3; on a dog, $2. A gentleman named H. Bullwinkel paid a total tax of $171.80, including $21 for his seven enslaved Blacks domiciled in the city and $2 for a dog. James R. Pringle had fifteen slaves ($45) and two dogs ($4); in all, the various Pringles of Charleston owned 96 slaves ($288). A wealthy planter, W. J. Bennett, had the largest individual holding: 77 slaves, taxed at $231. A separate section of the taxpayer list recorded the assets and taxes of “persons of Indian descent and free persons of color.” Many of these were enslavers as well, like the several members of the Dareef family (identified as

"Indian"), who held two dozen enslaved Blacks. This list also included a number of female slaveholders of color, among them Maria Weston, who owned 14 Blacks, and Phoebe Lewis, who owned 11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Ruffin: The Landscape of Fear

"Lincoln of Illinois" Craven, *Edmund Ruffin*, 185.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"to swallow black republicanism" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"If Lincoln is elected" Channing, *Crisis of Fear*, 269.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"If the South acquiesces" Ibid., 235–36.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

One visitor counted Bishko, "John S. Skinner," 180.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Here was Alabama Row Moorman, *Virginia White Sulphur Springs*, 3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

every day its kitchen staff slaughtered Elizabeth Noel to Julia Noel, September 1, 1860, Lewis Family Papers, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"When the dinner bell sounds" Bishko, "John S. Skinner," 178–79.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The water has somewhat" Hoyt, "Journey to the Springs," 127.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the especial scourge” Moorman, *Virginia White Sulphur Springs*, 18, 21–22.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The romantically inclined Ibid., 3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a sink hole of extravagance” Robert T. Hubard Farm Journal, September 11, 1839, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I find much of the time” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:449.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

PART II: TREACHERY IN THE WIND

Buchanan: The Unfairness of It All

It was, he said, very unfair Johnson, *Lincoln's First Crisis*, 28.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"in such a manner" Carrafiello, "Diplomatic Failure," 148.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Most happy it will be" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The tea has been thrown" Bellows, "Of Time and the City," 167.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Ruffin: The Scent of Rebellion

"Thus this great and important measure" Craven, *Edmund Ruffin*, 195–96.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The time since I have been here" Ibid., 196.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"You might as well attempt" Channing, *Crisis of Fear*, 283. Channing writes, "Lincoln's election *meant* the ascendancy of abolitionists to national power—*meant* convulsive slave insurrection—*meant* emancipation of the Negro hordes with the political, social and economic chaos that must follow the breaking of those bonds. The only possible way to avoid this was secession. Secession was the release from unthinkable catastrophe." Ibid., 97 (emphasis in the original).

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"If the Cotton States shall become" Bonner, "Horace Greeley," 431.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Springfield, Illinois: Party Malice

“The contest has been so long” Nicolay, *With Lincoln*, 10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“for we had hoped” Corneau and Osborne, “Girl in the Sixties,” 418.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The present aspect” Villard, *Lincoln on the Eve*, 17.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Villard recalled an encounter Ibid., 6–7.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I liked some of the things” Corneau and Osborne, “Girl in the Sixties,” 418–19.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Those who have voted” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:141–42.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am rather glad” Ibid., 4:142.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I now think we have a demonstration” Ibid., 4:146.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Then every negro in South Carolina” Channing, *Crisis of Fear*, 287.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“What will you do with these people” Powers, “ ‘Worst of All Barbarism,’ ” 154; Goodheart, *1861*, 45.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: Placing the Knife

“two weeks amid hammocks” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I do not allow myself” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Alas I was in Florida” Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 96.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If I had been a man” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 179–80.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Why was I born” Ibid., 130.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a black Hercules” Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 46. For details about Mulberry Plantation, see Mulberry Plantation, National Historic Landmark Nomination.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“horrid black republican ogre” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“God forgive us” Duvall, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” 19.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Mary’s biographer Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 110.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“There hangs here” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 250.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I take this somnolent life coolly” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Peace, comfort, happiness” Ibid., 176.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mrs C very talkative” Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 70.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Going back to Mulberry” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 5; Ibid., 51–53.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Camden was in unprecedented excitement” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 5.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“C’est fini” Bleser, *Hammonds of Redcliffe*, 88.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the cherished dream” Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 360.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the little great men” Ibid., 358.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“it was a movement of the *People*” Ibid., 360.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Whatever happens the die is cast” Bleser, *Hammonds of Redcliffe*, 90.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I will support it” Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 359.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Buchanan: Aunt Fancy Speaks

“I assured him” Hunt, “Narrative and Letter of William Henry Trescot,” 537.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the truth boldly and clearly” Ibid., 538.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Never was any document” *New York Times*, December 5, 1860.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“As we first passed” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:267; Baker, *James Buchanan*, 19, 89.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The pair was so close Baker, *James Buchanan*, 25.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Ever since James Buchanan” Lynn, “Manly Doughface,” 599.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The White House is abandoned” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 488.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Buchanan’s address opened Buchanan, Fourth Annual Message to Congress, December 3, 1860, The American Presidency Project, University of California, Santa Barbara.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It shows conclusively” Swanberg, *First Blood*, 59; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 131.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“an incendiary document” *New York Times*, December 5, 1860.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Pledge

“The people in the South” Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis*, 9.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Buchanan suggested Buchanan to Robert W. Barnwell et al., December 31, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:116; Channing, *Crisis of Fear*, 278–79n54.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“this would put them” Buchanan to Robert W. Barnwell et al., 1:116–17; Channing, *Crisis of Fear,* 278.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I considered it as nothing more” Buchanan to Robert W. Barnwell et al., 1:117.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston Harbor: A Confidential Visit

“and while our attention is drawn off” Seymour, memorandum, December 3, 1860, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If you have yet any ideas” A. J. Crawford to Samuel Wylie Crawford, December 12, 1860, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“You are carefully to avoid” D. C. Buell, “Memorandum of Verbal Instructions,” December 11, 1860, *WOTR,* 1:89–90.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Major Buell and several other officers *Charleston Mercury,* December 10, 1860, enclosed with Anderson to Cooper, December 14, 1860, *WOTR,* 1:93–94.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I shall, of course, prepare here for the worst” Anderson to Cooper, December 14, 1860, 1:93.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Ruffin: To Dare

“Resolved, That according to our opinion” Kibler, “Unionist Sentiment in South Carolina,” 361.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“To dare! and again to dare!” Freehling, *Secessionists Triumphant,* 421; *Journal of the Convention,* December 17, 1860, 4.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“are prepared to face a world” Freehling, *Secessionists Triumphant,* 421.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Our brave secessionists” Ibid., 422.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“cowardly stampede” Kibler, “Unionist Sentiment in South Carolina,” 364.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“please have my negroes vaxinated” Drago, *Broke by the War,* 70.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“laden with years” Craven, *Edmund Ruffin,* 203.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Such remarkable unanimity” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:512.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

As he walked to the table Davis, *Rhett,* xiv; Freehling, *Secessionists Triumphant,* 422. Interestingly, the actress who played India Wilkes, sister of Ashley, in the film *Gone with the Wind* was Alicia Rhett, Rhett’s great-granddaughter. Davis, *Rhett,* 669.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“THE UNION IS DISSOLVED!” Davis, *Rhett,* 411; *Charleston Mercury,* December 20, 1860, in “South Carolina Secession,” National Park Service, March 30, 2021.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“We have carried the body” Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis,* 5.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“South Carolina is too small” Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism,* 371; Wright, *South Carolina,* 171.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I have seen” Kibler, “Unionist Sentiment in South Carolina,” 365.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“As I now write” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:512–13; Craven, *Edmund Ruffin,* 201.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“We sat staring” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 5; Deut: 33:25: “Thy shoes *shall* be iron and brass; and as thy days, *so shall* thy strength *be*.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am truly glad” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 5–6.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Lincoln: Frustration

“to ascertain if” David D. Porter, “Journal of D. D. Porter,” 41, Porter Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“given to intrigues” Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles,* 19.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“As I approached the front door” Porter, “Journal,” 42.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“we are going to have a glorious monarchy” Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis,* 9; Porter, “Journal,” 43.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“In my mind’s eye” Porter, “Journal,” 42.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“They were vociferating” Ibid., 43–45.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“This fraternizing with rebels” Ibid., 45.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“So many people” Greeley to Lincoln, December 22, 1860, Lincoln Papers. In the original postscript, Greeley wrote “deciffering.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“seven or eight contiguous States” Ibid.; Potter, “Horace Greeley and Peaceable Secession,” 157.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Fifteen years and the gout” Porter, “Journal,” 69.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“and tell him, confidentially” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:159.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I can scarcely believe this” Ibid., 4:162.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The political horizon looks dark” Ibid., 4:160.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“they ought to hang him” Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 163.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: The Major Gets an Idea

“If you have removed” John B. Floyd to John G. Foster, December 20, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:100.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

On the same day Swanberg, *First Blood*, 64–67.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Under these instructions” Floyd to Anderson, December 21, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:103.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is neither expected” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“So far then” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:41.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Ruffin: A Signal at Christmas

“both false and foolish” Craven, *Edmund Ruffin*, 44.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“have denounced as sinful” “Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I promised to go” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:46.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The glass, china, silver” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 349.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The crowning point” Davis, “Memories of Mulberry,” 11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Christmas Gift!” Ibid., 10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“would spring out of unexpected corners” Bigham and May, “Time O’ All Times?,” 275.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“They all wanted one” Ibid., 273.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“We all had three days’ holiday” Ashton, *I Belong to South Carolina*, 104–5, 118; Davis, “Memories of Mulberry,” 10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Can we doubt God’s protection” Brevard, *Plantation Mistress*, 62.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Xmas was no doubt” Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House*, 292–93.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“After we had passed” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:516.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Anderson: Subterfuge

“they would certainly be turned” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:47.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Both these measures were good blinds” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“in this way” Ibid., 3:48.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The sun was just setting” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 61.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the fighting would probably commence” Ibid., 63.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It was after sunset” Ibid., 65.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The whole movement” Ibid., 66.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Into this farrago *New York Times*, February 7, 1861; Samuel Wylie Crawford to “My Dear Brother,” February 21, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I chose an apartment” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 79.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“for His having given me” Lawton, *Major Robert Anderson*, 8–9.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I have the honor” Anderson to Cooper, December 26, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:2.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“You may be assured” White, “Evacuation of Fort Moultrie,” 3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Florida and Washington: Strange News

“On the route” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:517.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“more out of the world” Ibid., 1:518.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Well at any rate Colonel” Hunt, “Narrative and Letter of William Henry Trescot,” 543.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am afraid governor” Ibid**.,** 544.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Intelligence has reached here” Floyd to Anderson, December 27, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The telegram is correct” Anderson to Floyd, December 27, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Smoke and Cheers

“The fort itself” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 100.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

A prime example Oswald, “Building Fort Sumter,” 4.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The water closets drained Ferguson, “Fort Sumter,” 17.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The quarters” Samuel Wylie Crawford, “Journal of Samuel Wylie Crawford,” n.d., Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The exact origin Lewis, “Ambiguous Columbiads,” 111.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“that our flag might” There is some disagreement as to what song the band actually played. Historian Benson Lossing in his *Pictorial History of the Civil War* says it was “Hail Columbia”; Samuel Wylie Crawford says “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Crawford was there; I side with him. Lossing, *Pictorial History*, 131; Crawford, “Journal,” December 26, 1860.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“So completely” Thompson, “Union Soldier at Fort Sumter,” 99.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Their looks were full of wrath” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 79; Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 109–11; Pettigrew to Pickens, December 27, 1860, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I cannot express myself” Pettigrew to Pickens, December 27, 1860.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Blood and Dishonor

“I knew his manner” Hunt, “Narrative and Letter of William Henry Trescot,” 544.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is evident now” Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 150.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Good,” Black said Swanberg, “Was the Secretary of War a Traitor?,” 6.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“with a sparse white population” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln,* 3:73.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Our refusal” Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 150–51.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the first time” Hunt, “Narrative and Letter of William Henry Trescot,” 546.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“one true man” McPherson, *Battle Cry,* 265. For assorted other plaudits and requests, see Anderson Papers, vols. 9 and 11, documents 2020; 2040; 2034; 2036; 2012; 2037; 2476; 2301; 2048.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If I withdraw Anderson” Hunt, “Narrative and Letter of William Henry Trescot,” 552.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston Harbor: Turmoil

“I am not crying” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 72–73.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“They can scale the walls” Thompson, “Union Soldier at Fort Sumter,” 100.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“There I found” White, “Evacuation of Fort Moultrie,” 4.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Very few understood” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a great old horse fly” Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 116.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“with the earnest desire” R. W. Barnwell et al. to Buchanan, December 28, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:109.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“my first promptings were” Buchanan to Barnwell et al., December 31, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:118.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“This I cannot do” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“By your course” Barnwell et al. to Buchanan, Jan.1, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:124.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“This paper, just presented” Memorandum, January 2, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:125.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Ominous Doings

“I doubt not” Bellows, “Of Time and the City,” 169.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“to prevent irregular collisions” Pickens, memorandum, December 28, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:113.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“He knows not” Anderson to Cooper, December 28, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:113.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“one of consummate wisdom” Ibid., 1:112.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

As the nation spiraled G. W. Lay to Larz Anderson, December 29, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:113–14; Scott to Buchanan, December 30, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:114.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"It is Sunday," Scott wrote Scott to Buchanan, December 30, 1860, 1:114.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"As the insurgents" Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 101.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"If we ascended to the parapet" Ibid., 100.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Manage everything" Scott to Justin Dimick, December 31, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:119.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Springfield: The Real Danger

"place-wanting cormorants" Villard, *Lincoln on the Eve*, 41.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"the capital would be" Nicklason, "Secession Winter," 379–80.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The proslavery *New York Herald* Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 397.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I would willingly take" Ibid., 171.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Our only regret is" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"A word fitly spoken" Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:160–61; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 106, 177–78.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a malformed ill-shaped ” Lehrman Institute, “Abraham Lincoln and Alexander H. Stephens,” 10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I could swallow him” Ibid., 9.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“When men come under” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:160–61; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 106, 177–78.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“due reflection” Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 181, 195.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Habit has accustomed” Ibid. A variation of Seward’s letter appears in Ida M. Tarbell, “The Later Life of Lincoln,” *McClure’s Magazine* 7, no. 2 (December 1898), 169.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“show their faces ” Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 196.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I have been considering” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:170–71.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If the two Houses refuse to meet” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Oh God save our dear City” Brevard, *Plantation Mistress*, 65.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a fine clear and rather cool day” Adams, *Diaries*, January 1, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

a "great mausoleum" Cashin, *First Lady of the Confederacy,* 93.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Holt succeeds Floyd" Wigfall to H. L. Bonham, January 2, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:252; Swanberg, *First Blood*, 122.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

PART III: PRECIPICE

Philadelphia: Dorothea's Warning

she was tall and thin Gollaher, *Voice for the Mad* 2; Field, "Less Than Meets the Eye," 392.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I am the instrument to do his holy will" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"negroes are gay, obliging" Ibid., 394.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"For more than an hour" Searcher, *Lincoln's Journey*, 254; Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 65–66.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"an *unceasing Shadow*" Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, 23.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"that rare quality" Ibid., 67.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Testing" Bilansky, "Pinkerton's National Detective Agency," 70.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The building I had selected" Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, 126–27.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Lincoln shall die in this city" Ibid., 141; Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 166, 250.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Crisis

"I would have preferred" Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:525.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“After this letter” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:93.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the traitor Thompson” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is now all over” Ibid.; Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 174, 182.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The more I reflect” Anderson to Cooper, December 31, 1860, *WOTR*, 1:120.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“This steamer cleared” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:102.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“may be employed to silence” Lorenzo Thomas to Anderson, January 5, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:132.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“My glorious wife!” Samuel Wylie Crawford, “Journal of Samuel Wylie Crawford,” January 6, 1861, Crawford Papers; Swanberg, *First Blood*, 142.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Her arrival” Samuel Wylie Crawford, “Journal of Samuel Wylie Crawford,” January 6, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“She felt much easier” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 99.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“My arrangements for the hospital” Samuel Wylie Crawford to [A.J. Crawford], January 2 and 3, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston Harbor: Crossing the Bar

"We proceeded with caution" "Capt. McGowan's Report."

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"groping in the dark" Woods to Lorenzo Thomas, January 13, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:9–10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"It was hard to believe" Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 185; Doubleday, *Reminiscences,* 101.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Star of the West: *Under Fire*

"One shot just passed" "Capt. McGowan's Report."

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Finding it impossible" Woods to Lorenzo Thomas, January 13, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:9–10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"From the preparations" Ibid., 1:10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Mississippi: The True Enemy

"Our position is thoroughly identified" "Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union."

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Message on Threats" James Buchanan, "Message on Threats to the Peace and Existence of the Union" (speech, January 8, 1861), *Congressional Globe,* January 11, 1861, 294–95; Nicklason, "Secession Winter," 374.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: A Wife's Disappointment

"There is a Northern traitor" Nicklason, "Secession Winter," 376.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

to "save the republic of Washington" Ibid., 379.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"a plot is forming" Ibid., 380.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"What do you think of Seward?" Foner, *Fiery Trial*, 148.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Your recent speech" Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:176.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I will suffer death" Ibid., 4:175–76.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"My dearest Henry" Frances Seward to William Seward, January 19, 1861, Seward Project.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The letter I sent yesterday" Frances Seward to William Seward, January 20, 1861, Seward Project.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Louis Agassiz Here, for those with a strong stomach, is a sample of Agassiz's abhorrent thinking, from a letter he wrote to his mother after he was served by Blacks in a Philadelphia restaurant: "As much as I try to feel pity at the sight of this degraded and degenerate race, as much as their fate fills me with compassion in thinking of them as really men, it is impossible for me to repress the feeling that they are not of the same blood as us. Seeing their black faces with their fat lips and their grimacing teeth, the wool on their heads, their bent knees, their elongated hands, their large curved fingernails, and above all the livid color of their palms, I could not turn my eyes from their face in order to tell them to keep their distance, and when they advanced that hideous hand toward my plate to serve me, I wished I could leave in order to eat a piece of bread apart rather than dine with such service." Menand, "Morton, Agassiz, and the Origins of Scientific Racism," 112.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"You think slavery is *right*" Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:160–61.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Forbearance

“Hold on; do not fire” Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 186.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“we could have kept down” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 104.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Two of your batteries” Anderson to Pickens, January 9, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:134.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“that the political connection” Pickens to Anderson, January 9, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:135–36.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Shall we accede” Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 192.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a fatal measure” Ibid., 109.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Ruffin: A Little Treason

“If Fort Sumter” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:529.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It almost killed me.” Corneau and Osborne, “Girl in the Sixties,” 413.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“once falling and hurting my shin” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:529.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“100 negro slaves” Ibid., 1:531.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“so as to allow me” Ibid., 1:531–32.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Lethal Secrets

"He brought me" Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 113.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"You rightly designate" Holt to Anderson, January 16, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:140.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The troops opposite" Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 112.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Such an addition" Anderson to Cooper, February 7, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:169.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The concussion shattered John G. Foster, Engineer Journal, April 9, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:17; Foster to Joseph G. Totten, January 14, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:138–39.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"two hundred pounds" L. M. Hatch to Anderson, January 19, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:145.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The boat had hardly touched" Samuel Wylie Crawford to [A.J. Crawford], January 29, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Anderson showed" Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 113.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Oh—by the by" Millens to parents, January 25, 1861, in Berthoff, " 'When Once the Ball Is Commenced,' " 221.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The compliance with this request" Anderson to D. F. Jamison, January 19, 1861, *WOTR*, 1: 144–45.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Certainly, Mr. Rhett” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 114.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Buchanan invited Dix Baker, *James Buchanan*, 78.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“These are almost” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:536.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the imbecility” Ibid., 1:539.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Under such circumstances” Ibid., 1:540.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

a close record of the weather Samuel Wylie Crawford, “Journal of Samuel Wylie Crawford,” Crawford Papers. See entries for dates in text.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“As they passed the fort” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 117*;* Foster to Totten, January 31, 1861, *WOTR* 1:161; Anderson to Cooper, February 1 and 4, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:161.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Dread

“where the revolutionary movement” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 541.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“that the possession of this city” Nicklason, “Secession Winter,” 382.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington and Montgomery: A Solemn Council

“come forward promptly” Crofts, “Secession Winter,” 245.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I was skating” Adams, *Autobiography,* 71; Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis*, 98.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The ancient Seward” Crofts, “Secession Winter,” 246.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“prepared each morning to see” Gunderson, “William C. Rives,” 466.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Seward called the flag-raising Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Owing to the use Petroski, “Engineering: The Washington Monument,” 19, 20. For a nice photograph of the truncated Washington Monument, see Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 50.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Old Gentlemen’s Convention” Gunderson, “William C. Rives,” 467.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Here were one-inch ads *Montgomery Daily Post*, February 13, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The Valet” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

A photograph of Market Street See Charles Goode Gomillion and Robert J. Norell, “The Civil War and Its Aftermath,” Britannica, www.britannica.com/place/Alabama-state/The-Civil-War-and-its-aftermath.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The streets are very hot” Russell, *My Diary*, 118–19.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

On Market alone Equal Justice Initiative, “Montgomery Slave Trade.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I have a first rate pack” Ibid., February 22, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“When reading the telegram” Davis, *Jefferson Davis: A Memoir,* 18–19; Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American,* 328.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I have no confidence” Dodd, *Jefferson Davis,* 24; Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American,* 154–57, 244; Davis, *Jefferson Davis: Private Letters,* 123; Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American,* 328; Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge,* 104; McPherson, *Battle Cry,* 259.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“We are without machinery” Jefferson Davis to Varina Davis, February 20, 1861, in Davis, *Jefferson Davis: Private Letters,* 123.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“He did not know the arts” Bleser, “Marriage of Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis,” 18.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Our separation from the old Union” Cooper, *Jefferson Davis, American,* 329.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: To Sell or Collide

“They are, I suspect” Anderson to Cooper, February 6, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:169.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I do not come” Hayne to Buchanan, January 31 and February 7, 1861, Balzano Papers; Holt to Hayne, February 6, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:166.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“How the presence” Holt to Hayne, February 6, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:166.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Can my voice reach you?” Tyler to Pickens, February 7, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:254.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If you can bear this” Pickens to J. Thomson Mason, February 7, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I have traveled over” Hammond to Allen, February 7, 1861, Hammond Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

She vowed Swanberg, *First Blood*, 208.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: Race Week

everyone “ ‘talks horse’ ” Sparks, “Gentleman’s Sport,” 21.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The music was fine” Detzer, *Allegiance*, 201.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the impersonation of Carolina chivalry” Faust, *James Henry Hammond*, 159.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Their cavalier blood” Sparks, “Gentleman’s Sport,” 19.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“unanimity in our councils” Ibid., 24. One feature of Race Week 1804 was the “Learned Pig,” billed as being able to read, write, spell, tell time, and, supposedly, perform feats of elementary mathematics. Ibid., 21.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

hosted by the Jockey Club During the Civil War the Jockey Club moved its supply of old and valuable madeira to the basement of the insane asylum in Columbia, South Carolina. Union troops never found it. Sparks, “Gentleman’s Sport,” 29.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“none but the higher classes” Ibid., 23.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The gentlemen were “very second-rate” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

During Race Week 1861 Ibid., 27, 28.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The Sinkler family owned Davidson, *Last Foray,* 249–50.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Lincoln: Yard Sale

To help pay Lincoln, *Collected Works,* 4:189.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Springfield: Departure

“When the crowd had passed him” Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge,* 117; Starr, *Lincoln and the Railroads,* 175.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Whether Lincoln knew it Campbell, “Lincoln Inaugural and Funeral Trains,” 3; Liz Fabian, “Macon Cemetery Visitors Recall Early Millionaire,” *New York Times,* February 11, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Friends,” Lincoln began Abraham Lincoln, “Farewell Address at Springfield, Ill., February 11, 1861,” Version C, in Lincoln, *Collected Works,* 4:190–91.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

PART IV: JOURNEY

The Silence Breaks

a special "Time Card" "A Journey of the President-Elect," Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/exhibits/lincoln/interactives/journey-of-the-president-elect/index.html.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Every station along the road" Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:192–93.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I am leaving you" Donald, *Lincoln*, 238; Searcher, *Lincoln's Journey*, 13.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"if you promise not" Searcher, *Lincoln's Journey*, 23; Villard, *Lincoln on the Eve*, 99.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"panting outside" Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:192–93.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I bid you an affectionate farewell" Ibid.; Searcher, *Lincoln's Journey*, 24.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Lincoln had arranged Donald, *Lincoln*, 270; Searcher, *Lincoln's Journey*, 30.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Robert, weary of carrying Searcher, *Lincoln's Journey*, 30.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The words 'coercion' and 'invasion' " Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:192–93; Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 134–35.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If Mr. Lincoln fancies” Samuel Wylie Crawford to [A. J. Crawford], February 24, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“electrified the true Republicans” Ronald C. White, Jr., *The Eloquent President* (New York: Random House, 2005), 36.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“too many elbows” Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 137.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I had never seen Mr. Lincoln” Ibid., 139.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“bored and injured virtue” Cottman, “Lincoln in Indianapolis,” 10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“One single stride” Ibid.; Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 139.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Had to sleep” Searcher, *Lincoln’s Journey*, 37; Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 145–46.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Ohio: “Pimp!”

“I have not maintained silence” Abraham Lincoln, “Address to the Ohio Legislature, Columbus, Ohio,” February 13, 1861, in Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:205.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

That day crowds of irate Southerners Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 191.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the amount of profanity” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“lashed to the muzzle” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“This was the critical day” Strong, *Diary,* 99.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I had never seen” Adams, *Diaries,* February 13, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Old dotard!” Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge,* 194.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The votes were counted” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“read it with his usual equanimity” *New York World,* February 14, 1861; Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge,* 194.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

By the time of his death Bilansky, “Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency,” 68.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

He composed a letter Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge,* 340.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Lincoln: The Time Will Come

“When I read your inaugural” Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect,* 345; Lokken, “Has the Mystery,” 429; Lincoln, *Collected Works,* 4:249.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The time is not yet” Donald, *“We Are Lincoln Men,”* 113; Foner, *Fiery Trial,* 163.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Americans, all, we are not enemies” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:271; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 346.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. Lincoln! That man” Searcher, *Lincoln’s Journey*, 95.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The actor, John Wilkes Booth Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 349; *Montgomery Daily Post*, February 18, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Presently two or three” Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 357.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a capital view” Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 335.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“very pale and fatigued” Ibid., 333.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I followed the servant” Ibid., 340.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Remember, this is the last chance” *New York Herald*, March 5, 1860; Starr, *Lincoln and the Railroads*, 188.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The Great Lincoln Turkey” *New York World*, February 21, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

That night Lincoln took in Searcher, *Lincoln’s Journey*, 208; Starr, *Lincoln and the Railroads*, 188.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I fear we shall have” Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 369–70.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington and Philadelphia: Dual Warning

"I don't know what" Searcher, *Lincoln's Journey*, 258.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Bookstaver was so unsettled Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 311; Searcher, *Lincoln's Journey*, 258.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I was in the gallery" Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 311; Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 508.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The train, a tedious one" Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 509.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Then, I think I had better take" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"so soon as convenient" Stashower, "Unsuccessful Plot."

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"During the entire interview" Ibid.; Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, 64.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I didn't like that" The biographer here was Benson J. Lossing, a widely read historian and illustrator, and author of the three-volume *Pictorial History of the Civil War*, published in 1866. Lossing's interview with Lincoln appears in volume 1, pp. 279–80. See also Searcher, *Lincoln's Journey*, 250.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Meanwhile, in Lincoln's bedroom Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 311; Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 508; Lokken, "Has the Mystery," 431.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I could not but notice" Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 509.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“A New York detective officer” Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, 131–32; Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 312; Searcher, *Lincoln’s Journey*, 258; Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 509.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Although its contents” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 509.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Did you hear anything” Ibid., 510.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Philadelphia: Change of Plan

“The President elect had enjoyed” *Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette*, February 23, 1861. For an excellent overview of Lincoln’s journey, curated with precise locations, excerpts of news reports, and images, see “The Journey of the President-Elect,” Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/exhibits/lincoln/interactives/journey-of-the-president-elect/index.html.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I have never had a feeling” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:240–41, 241n3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“nothing more or less than” Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 399.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Unless there are some” Donald, *Lincoln*, 278.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Salute

“If we get out of this place” Samual Wylie Crawford to [A. J. Crawford], February 21, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“These were loaded” Samuel Wylie Crawford to [A. J. Crawford], February 24, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The insolent wretch!” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: One Very Dark Night

“Mr. L. brought her out” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:242.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Tomorrow we enter slave territory” Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 403.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I shall not feel” Frances Seward to William Seward, February 22, 1861, Seward Project.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

called him a “scoundrel” *New York Times*, February 22, 1861; “A Near Fatal Attack on Charles H. Van Wyck of New York,” Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a pocket memorandum book” *New York Times*, February 23, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“One man against three,” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: The Man in the Felt Hat

a “kossuth” hat See Michael McAfee, “The Hungarian Connection to the Union Army’s Official Hat,” *Military Images*, December 2, 2015, www.militaryimagesmagazine-digital.com/2015/12/02/uniforms-history-winter-2016/.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“in all directions” Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, 73, 73n, 74.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a sick friend and party” Ibid., 14.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. Lincoln is very homely” Ibid., 81.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The train left Baltimore While Lincoln and Pinkerton waited for the train to depart, they heard a night watchman at the station attempt to awaken a ticket agent by pounding on a wall adjacent to the sleeping car, and shouting, “Captain, it’s four o’clock.” This went on for twenty minutes, with the watchman never altering the time—prompting much laughter and comment from Lincoln. “Mr. Lincoln appeared to enjoy it very much and made several witty remarks showing that he was as full of fun as ever,” Pinkerton wrote in his official report for the night. Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, 81.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Abe,” the man said Ibid., 82.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I hit the gentleman” Ibid.; Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge*, 428.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I planted myself behind” Searcher, *Lincoln’s Journey*, 261.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“much out of breath” Ibid., 262; Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, 148–49.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“that hypocrite Seward” Donald, *“We Are Lincoln Men,”* 155; Stahr, *Seward*, 266, 303, 356.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“dirty abolition sneak” Donald, *“We Are Lincoln Men,”* 155.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“spent a considerable portion” Welles, *Civil War Diary,* 46, 49.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

even once buying kittens Donald, *“We Are Lincoln Men,”* 158.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am a chief reduced” Ibid., 159; Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis,* 387n69.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Disappointment!” he snapped Donald, *“We Are Lincoln Men,”* 147.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“could more justly be called” Brownstein, “Willard Hotel,” 6; Gunderson, “William C. Rives,” 465.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“We began to doubt” Brownstein, “Willard Hotel,” 4.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The principal object” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Committee on Arrangements” Morison, “Peace Convention,” 61–62; Searcher, *Lincoln’s Journey,* 265.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Plums has Nuts” Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot,* 84; Searcher, *Lincoln’s Journey,* 263; Widmer, *Lincoln on the Verge,* 429.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“treachery to the flag of his country” General Orders, No. 5, *WOTR,* 1:597.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: A Rumor of Plaid

“The whole city” *New York Times,* February 26, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“wore a Scotch plaid cap” *New York Times*, February 25, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Lincoln flew through Baltimore” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 24.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Everybody here is disgusted” Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 397.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“thief in the night” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“when we have reached a point” Ibid., 398; Lokken, “Has the Mystery,” 419.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It’s to be hoped” Strong, *Diary*, 102.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is perfectly manifest” Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, xvii, 86; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 404–5; Searcher, *Lincoln’s Journey*, 263.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“brainless egotistical fool” Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, xvii, 86; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 404–5; Searcher, *Lincoln’s Journey*, 263.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“There is no confirmation” Bilansky, “Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency,” 80.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“witnessed great crowds” Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, 135.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“smell southern gunpowder” *New York Times*, February 18, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: The Old Gentlemen Pay a Call

“I condemn the secession” Sowle, “Trials of a Virginia Unionist,” 14.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“They saw a tall, powerful man” *New York Times*, July 23, 1900; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 414.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“You are a smaller man” Sowle, “Trials of a Virginia Unionist,” 15.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I wish that some” Morison, “Peace Convention,” 69.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Old as I am” Sowle, “Trials of a Virginia Unionist,” 18.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Shadow or Ghost Amendment Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 429.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Montgomery: Mary Chesnut’s Diary

“We had a shocking day” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Then you ought to go home” Ibid., 11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“made herself conspicuous” Ibid., 14.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“And they say it is dull” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 10n8, 11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Every body persists” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 35.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“This is a gay” Davis, *Jefferson Davis: Private Letters*, 123.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“He impresses me” Bleser, “Marriage of Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis,” 7.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I gave the best” Ibid., 8.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“constant harassment” Ibid., 11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is impossible but” Ibid., 12.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Winnie is Husband’s baby” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is getting to be” Ibid., 14–15.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“God help us” Davis, *Jefferson Davis: Private Letters*, 10.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: The Premier’s Advice

“I, my dear sir” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 512.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Seward's second attempt Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:262; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 444, 445.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I am loth to close" Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:271.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"a delusion, a sham" Gunderson, "William C. Rives," 474. See slightly different wording in Gunderson, "Letters from the Washington Peace Conference," 384; Morison, "Peace Convention," 77.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Away with such compromise!" Gunderson, "Letters from the Washington Peace Conference," 384.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"secession will play itself out" Ibid., 384–85.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Let the whole matter" Beauregard to Smith, February 27, 1861, *WOTR*, 53:126–27.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Query

"To land and carry" Foster to Joseph G. Totten, March 1, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:189.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"such is the unceasing vigilance" Seymour quoted in Simon Cameron to Lincoln, March 17, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:197.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"upon the most fortunate" Hall in Cameron to Lincoln, March 17, 1861, 1:201.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I confess" Anderson to Cooper, February 28, 1861, Anderson Papers. Anderson also quoted in Cameron to Lincoln, March 17, 1861, 1:197.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Seward's Trick

"Circumstances which have occurred" Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:370; Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 432.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"This," wrote Lincoln secretaries Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:371.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I can't afford" Ibid.; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 317–18.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: Interesting News

"Well, we are still here" Millens to parents, February 27, 1861, in Berthoff, " 'When Once the Ball Is Commenced,' " 221–22.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"that Fort Sumter should" Walker to Pickens, March 1, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:259.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

They sent him flowers Russell, *My Diary*, 80.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"a little hand bouquet" Ibid., 91.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I had been so long" Ferguson, "Fort Sumter: Notes," 3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

of "unexampled warm weather" Adams, *Diaries*, March 1 and 3, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I will be out of Va" Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:557.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

London: On the Scent

“in observing the rupture” Russell, “Recollections,” no. 495, 234.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“constantly in exile” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“You must go” Ibid., 234–35.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“He laughed to scorn” Russell, *My Diary*, 24–25.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Under the circumstances” Ibid., 29.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

PART V: COERCION

Washington: Mystic Chords

"The city itself indicated" Villard, *Lincoln on the Eve*, 103.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"We are now in such a state" Cuthbert, *Lincoln and the Baltimore Plot*, 141.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"It is the subject" Miers, *Lincoln Day by Day*, vol. III, 24; Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:273; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 317–18.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"quietly and unostentatiously" Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 516.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"In point of fact, there were" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I waited with boyish wonder" Goodheart, *1861*, 130.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Mr. Buchanan looked old" Adams, *Diaries*, March 4, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I have been looking" Davidson and Greenawalt, "Unionists in Rockbridge County," 89.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Some thought we had" Goodheart, *1861*, 404n99, 130.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"like an earthquake" Riggs, "Robert Young Conrad," 261.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Inaugural means war” Wigfall to F. W. Pickens, March 4, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:261.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a somewhat Jesuitical striving” Davidson and Greenawalt, “Unionists in Rockbridge County,” 90.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“There will be no necessity” Ibid., 92.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If you are as happy” Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 329; see variation in Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect*, 450.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It was very large” Adams, *Diaries*, March 4, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“There was no crowd” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 517.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The Parkers,” she wrote Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 32.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston and Montgomery: Sickened

“It settles the question” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:560.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“fat and stupid” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 13, 16, 19.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I can give a better” Ibid., 14.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I never was handsome” Ibid., 16.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“met me with open arms” Ibid., 18.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I saw today a sale” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 15, 282.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mulatto women in *silk dresses*” Ibid., 282.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Means he war or peace” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 23.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“O come ye in peace” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 16.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The cry today is *war*” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 25.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The White House: First Day

“slipped quietly out of Congress” William Seward to Frances Seward, March 8, 1861, in Seward, *Seward at Washington,* 518.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the very first thing” Lincoln, *Collected Works,* 4:279; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals,* 334.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I see no alternative” Lincoln, *Collected Works,* 4:279–80; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals,* 334.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Sir: The time having been” Swanberg, *First Blood,* 234; Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln,* 3:381.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Please give me” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 518.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Activity and Determination

“Their suffering” Foster to Totten, March 6, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:191.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Everything indicates” Anderson to Cooper, March 6, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:191.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I do not think” Foster to Totten, March 6, 1861, 1:191.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am of the opinion” Beauregard to Headquarters, Confederate States Army, report, March 6, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:26.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Relief

“Ethan Warden is still living” Frances Seward to William Seward, March 8, 1861, Seward Project.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“hundred taking tickets” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 518.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I do not know what” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Last night” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am yet kept indoors” Lokken, “Has the Mystery,” 426n23.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a severe attack of lumbago” Ibid., 427.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“My dear Son” Frances Seward to Frederick Seward, March 9, 1861, Seward Project.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The pressure of visitors” Frederick Seward to Frances Seward, March 12, 1861, Seward Project.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I already find the passage” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:560.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Another report” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:566.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a large party of ladies” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: A Ball at Sunrise

“Our men were ready” Samuel Wylie Crawford, “Journal of Samuel Wylie Crawford,” March 8, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Negroes left their spades” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“One and all” Doubleday, *Reminiscences,* 129–30.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I hope Major this may be” Crawford, “Journal,” March 8, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“By the way, it was a *good shot*” Samuel Wylie Crawford to [A. J. Crawford], March 9, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: The Commissioners

"The bird of our country" Strong, *Diary*, 109.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Things look better" Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:400; Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 451.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"This gentleman is urgent" Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:399; Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 450.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"It will not be in my power" Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:402; Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 452.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"We deemed it not compatible" Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:402; Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 452.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"You have shown to the Government" Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:403.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"We are feeling our way" Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 453.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: To Lift a Columbiad

"and down it came" Samuel Wylie Crawford to [A. J. Crawford], March 9, 1861, Crawford Papers; Ryan, "Historic Guns of Forts Sumter and Moultrie," 63.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Here, just inside the gate Truman Seymour and G. W. Snyder to Anderson, March 24, 1861, *WOTR*, 215.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Life at Sumter Samuel Wylie Crawford, "Journal of Samuel Wylie Crawford," January 18, February 27, and March 1 and 6, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Lincoln

"given the subject" Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:279.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"1st To what point" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"hard bread, flour and rice" Scott to Lincoln, March 11, 1861, Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:279n4.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I should need a fleet" Scott, quoted in Simon Cameron to Lincoln, March 15, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:197.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Solicitants for office besiege him" Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 530.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"He was vain" David D. Porter, "Journal of D. D. Porter," 167, Porter Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Anderson's fame will be nothing" Johnson, *Lincoln's First Crisis*, 255.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Assuming it to be possible" Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:284–85.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"the probabilities are in favor" Ibid.; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 336–37; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 268.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the connivance of the late administration” Blair to Lincoln, March 15, 1861, *WOTR*, 53:62–63; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 336–37; Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:284–85; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 268.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If it were possible” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 529; Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:284–85.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“utterly ruinous” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:382; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 268; Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:424.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The President requires” Cameron to Scott, March 19, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:208.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Montgomery: Of Spiders and Entrails

“In full conclave tonight” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 21.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. Chesnut making such a stamping” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 31.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“expatiated on the folly” Ibid., 32.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. C, thinking himself” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I think this journal” Ibid.; Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 23; Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 98, 236.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Practice Makes Perfect

A typical gunnery crew My description of the firing process is based primarily on *Artillery Through the Ages*.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

U.S. Navy records, for example U.S. Navy, "Casualties: US Navy and Marine Corps Personnel Killed and Injured in Selected Accidents and Other Incidents Not Directly the Result of Enemy Action"; " 'My Shirt Took Fire.' " An initial Navy report dated the day of the incident put the total of Ticonderoga deaths at five, with eight wounded, but "Casualties," compiled a century and a half later, presents what is presumably the definitive number: eight.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"calculated to kill" "My Shirt Took Fire."

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The practice was excellent" Foster to Joseph G. Totten, February 26, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:187.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I have no ammunition to spare" Anderson to Lorenzo Thomas, March 23, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:212.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"was undoubtedly called for" Anderson to Pickens, March 13, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:219.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"the unquestionable privilege" Jamison to Anderson, March 15, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:220.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"the professed owner" Anderson to Jamison, March 17, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:220.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: The Commissioners

"I wish I could do it" Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 457.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I had not before this" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I feel perfect confidence" Ibid., 458–59.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“adverse to recognition ” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:408; Johnson, “Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy,” 459. The entire saga of Seward, Campbell, and the commissioners is neatly laid out, document by document, in Davis, *Messages and Papers*, 84–98.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

***New York: Russell, of the* Times**

“Abnormal,” he wrote Russell, *My Diary*, 34.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the piles of blackened snow” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The thing itself” Dickens, *American Notes*, 113.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The tumult, the miscellaneous nature” Russell, *My Diary*, 41.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“To me it is evident” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 227; Russell, *My Diary*, 12.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The *Herald* keeps up the courage” Russell, *My Diary*, 64.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Everywhere the Southern leaders” Ibid., 36.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Be sure you examine the slave-pens” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“over the roughest” Ibid., 38.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the rustle of pens” Ibid., 40.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“All through this conversation” Ibid., 42.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Never,” he wrote, “did a people enter a war” Ibid., 210.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Trust

“two degrees below” Adams, *Diaries*, March 18 and 19, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“We can’t hear” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:409; Johnson, “Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy,” 459.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“You have not heard” Martin Crawford et al. to Toombs, March 20, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:277.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Has Sumter been evacuated?” Martin Crawford et al. to Beauregard, March 20, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:277.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Sumter not evacuated” Beauregard to Crawford et al., March 21, 1861, *WOTR*, 53:136; Johnson, “Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy,” 460.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“no delay that has occurred” Johnson, “Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy,” 460.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“will not deceive you” Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 333.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

As he looked out Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:389.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"that the 15th of April" Ibid.; Detzer, *Allegiance*, 229.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Were you with Captain Fox" Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 372; Swanberg, *First Blood*, 248–49.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I have examined the point" Anderson to Thomas, March 22, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:211; Detzer, *Allegiance*, 228; Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:389.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I did intend" Johnson, *Lincoln's First Crisis*, 345n9.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: Some Good Thing in the Wind

he had also been run Johnson, *Lincoln's First Crisis*, 136.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"From these sources" Hurlbut to Lincoln, March 27, 1861, Lincoln Papers; Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:391.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Pickens gave Lamon Samuel Wylie Crawford, "Journal of Samuel Wylie Crawford," March 25, 1861, Crawford Papers; Johnson, *Lincoln's First Crisis*, 137; John G. Foster to Joseph G. Totten, March 26, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:221.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"our countries" Beauregard to Anderson, March 26, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:222.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"All that will be required" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am much obliged” Anderson to Beauregard, March 26, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:222.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“of wounding, in any manner” Beauregard to Anderson, March 26, 1861, 1:223.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I have heard of your declaration” Scott to Anderson, March 29, 1861, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I confess” Anderson to Scott, April 1, 1861, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The mouth is absolutely prodigious” Russell, *My Diary*, 44–45.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. Russell, I am very glad” Ibid., 47.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“with a pleasant twinkle” Ibid., 47–48.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Shortly before the dinner began Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 365–66; McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision*, 229–30.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Firewood

“The sixth and last” Foster to Joseph G. Totten, March 26, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:221.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It would be well” Seymour to Anderson, February 27, 1861, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Had I not a family” R. C. Anderson [nephew] to Robert Anderson, January 12 and February 20, 1861, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I believe that” R. C. Anderson [nephew] to Robert Anderson, January 25, 1861, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: The Handsomest Man

“Came down on the cars” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 35; Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 47.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“He is always the handsomest” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 35; Paul Christopher Anderson, “John Laurence Manning,” *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, www.scencyclopedia.org/sce/entries/manning-john-laurence/.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Your conversation reminds me” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 36.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I looked at him in amazement” Ibid., 37

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. M,” she noted Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 49.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“there to see the VanderHorst way” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 37.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“After dinner, Mr. Chesnut” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 50.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Change of Heart

“An abandonment of the fort” Scott, memorandum, (n.d.), enclosed with Simon Cameron to Lincoln, March 15, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:200; Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln,* 3:394; Detzer,

Allegiance, 153.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a cold shock” Meigs quoting Lincoln, “Gen. M. C. Meigs,” 300.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a babel of small talk” Russell, *My Diary*, 48–49, 55.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. Lincoln raises a laugh” Ibid., 50.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I dined with the Presdt.” Crawford, “William Howard Russell,” 194.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“A long pause of blank amazement” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:395; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 339; Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 365.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“That night” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:395; Meigs, “Gen. M. C. Meigs,” 300; Klein, *Days of Defiance*, 354.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“As to Fort Sumter” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:432; Brauer, “Seward’s ‘Foreign War Panacea,’ ” 149–53.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“South Carolina is the head” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:432.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Lincoln inadvertently Donald, *Lincoln*, 290–92. Here you’ll find a good summary of the *Powhatan* fiasco.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

PART VI: COLLISION

Charleston: The Flirtation

"Mr. C gave me his *cheek*" Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 51; Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War,* 39.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Now, a loud banging" Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War,* 39.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"He is the hero" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The next day, Sunday, March 31 Ibid., 209; Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 52.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Seward found himself Goodwin, *Team of Rivals,* 341.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

He promised to respond Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 464.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Seward's Play

"The President," he wrote Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 404; Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 337.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"What does this mean?" Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 465; Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 337, 338; Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln,* 3:410.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"My opinion is" Martin Crawford to Beauregard, April 1, 1861, enclosed with Beauregard to Walker, April 1, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:283–84; Johnson, "Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy," 466.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Batteries here ready” Beauregard to Walker, April 1, 1861, 1:283–84.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“no conception of his situation” Sowle, “Reappraisal of Seward’s Memorandum,” 239; Nevins, *War for the Union*, 72; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 341.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Some thoughts” Sowle, “Reappraisal of Seward’s Memorandum,” 235; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 341–42; Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:317.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

so certain, in fact, that he had arranged Sowle, “Reappraisal of Seward’s Memorandum,” 235–36.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is a little difficult” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:447.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“had Mr. Lincoln been an envious” Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 342.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I remark” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:317; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 343; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 271; Nevins, *War for the Union*, 63; Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis*, 353; Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:447; Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 535.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“So far as is known” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:449.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Dangers and breakers” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 534.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I do not doubt that Sumter” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:411.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“So far as I can judge” Ibid.; Johnson, “Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy,” 466.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“to make all the necessary arrangements” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:412.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“A strange state of things” Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis*, 353.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“ ‘aid and comfort’ ” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 3:412; McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 822.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Any Minute Now

“imprisonment” Anderson to Thomas, April 2, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:232.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I have the honor to report” Anderson to Thomas, April 1, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:230.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

On the afternoon of Wednesday My account of the Rhoda H. Shannon incident derives mainly from the following sources: Truman Seymour and G. W. Snyder to Anderson, April 3, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:237–38; John G. Foster to Joseph G. Totten, April 5, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:243; Foster to Totten, April 4, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:239–40; Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 136.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“in a boat with a white flag” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 136.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“that the weather was too boisterous” Snyder to Anderson, April 4, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:241–42.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“peremptory orders had been sent” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“In amplifying his instructions” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 136–37.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I regard this” Samuel Wylie Crawford, “Journal of Samuel Wylie Crawford,” April 6, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“in the saddle” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 41n8; Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 54n3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Like Fitz-James” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 41.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“But the supper was a consolation” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“A ship was fired into yesterday” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: The Correspondent

“They have the idea” Russell, *My Diary*, 58.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Gautier was known DeFerrari, “How Sweet It Was.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Whether it be in consequence” Russell, *My Diary*, 61–62.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The man who dares tamper” Ibid., 62. According to Southern custom, if a woman committed a duel-worthy offense, she could not be challenged to a duel—but her husband could be. Walther, *William Lowndes Yancey*, 158.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a slight blow at first” Ibid., 63. Their account is utterly contradicted by Brooks’s own account. See Robert L. Meriwether, “Preston Brooks on the Caning of Charles Sumner,” *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 52, no. 1 (January 1951). “Every lick went where I intended,” Brooks wrote. “For about the first five or six licks he offered to make fight but I plied him so rapidly that he did not touch me. Towards the last he bellowed like a calf. I wore my cane out completely but saved the Head which is gold.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The gentlemen at table” Russell, *My Diary*, 62.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

as being “in every respect” Ibid., 64.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“When the Southern States” Ibid., 66.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“As matters look very threatening” Ibid., 64.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Conflict

“by suffering him” Crawford to Beauregard, April 1, 1861, enclosed with Beauregard to Walker, April 1, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:283–84; Johnson,”Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy,” 466.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I cannot but think” Anderson to Thomas, April 5, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:241.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“some anxiety” Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:321–22.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Montgomery and Richmond: Suspense

“The citizen of the Southern states” Franklin, *Militant South*, 67.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The war wing presses” Martin Crawford and A. B. Roman to Robert Toombs, April 2, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:284.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“watchful vigilance” Walker to Beauregard, April 2, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:285.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Mary’s diary Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 53, 54, 55.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“This is worse than I supposed” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:578.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Fatal Error

“He looked first” Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 4:5; Welles, *Civil War Diary*, 654.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The steamer did catch up Hay and Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln*, 4:6; Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis*, 275; Swanberg, *First Blood*, 258. David Dixon Porter offers a lengthy if one-sided account of the Fort Pickens expedition in his “Journal of D. D. Porter,” 85-94, Porter Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The great disappointment” Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis*, 275; Porter, “Journal,” 92.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: The Petrel’s Delight

“The bad weather continues” Brevard, *Plantation Mistress*, 112, 113. John G. Foster to Joseph G. Totten, April 5, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:243; Foster to Totten, April 8, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:293; Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 42; Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 55.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Yesterday it rained” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 55–56; Foster to Totten, April 8, 1861, 1:293.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

She made the rounds Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War,* 42; Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 55–56; Foster to Totten, April 8, 1861, 1:293.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The air is too full" Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War,* 43; variation at Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 55–56.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"News *so* warlike" Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 56.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"the only thoroughly happy" Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War,* 44.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"in consequence of the delays" Beauregard to Anderson, April 7, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:248.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The Atlantic: Storm

The blast shattered John G. Foster, Engineer Journal, April 9, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:16.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The discovery of this battery" Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 383.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"This, of course, was much less dangerous" Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 140.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"well or ill founded" Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 340.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Faith as to Sumter" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Confession

“you will be pleased to destroy it” Anderson to Thomas, April 8, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:293, 294.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: Dismay and Dishonor

“The Secretary of State understands” Davis, *Messages and Papers*, 84–98; Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 531.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“delusions” Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 343.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“beyond the simple acknowledgement” Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 538; Davis, *Messages and Papers*, 93; Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 343.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am directed by the President” Pickens and Beauregard, memorandum reporting Lincoln’s resupply notice, April 8, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:291.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“peremptorily refused” Talbot to Simon Cameron, April 12, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:251.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Authorized messenger from Lincoln” Beauregard to Walker, April 8, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:289.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Under no circumstances” Walker to Beauregard, April 8, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:289; Talbot to Cameron, April 12, 1861, 1:251. See also a series of brief communiqués between Confederate officials in *WOTR*, 1:289–91.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Alarmed, he wrote to the general Anderson to Beauregard, April 9, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:250; Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War*, 383.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston and Montgomery: Suspicion

“My going on this occasion” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:583–84.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. Ruffin insisted” Ringold and Young, “William Gourdin Young,” 29. See also William Gourdin Young, “Reminiscences,” DeSaussure Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I could see no more” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:584.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The Palmetto Guard” Ibid., 1:586.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“actual military operations” Ibid., 1:585.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a standing menace” Davis, *Messages and Papers,* 73.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

This “so-called notification” Johnson, “Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy,” 474; Pickens and Beauregard, memorandum reporting Lincoln’s resupply notice, April 8, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:291.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Mr. President,” he said Nevins, *War for the Union,* 68; see variation in Dodd, *Jefferson Davis,* 234.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“greater than any” Johnson, “Fort Sumter and Confederate Diplomacy,” 476; Dodd, *Jefferson Davis,* 234; Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis,* 215; Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 421.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: Perfidy

“I did this because” Pickens to Walker, April 9, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:292.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“No,” Magrath said Crawford, *Genesis of the Civil War,* 384, 385.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“He ought to have thought of that” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 45.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“You see that the present scheme” Pickens to Davis, April 9, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:292.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I trust we are ready” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: Rumor and Cannon Fire

“thinking nothing could induce” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 56.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I immediately told Mr. C” Ibid., 57; Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 43.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“There was a sound of revelry” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 57.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“All was stir and confusion” Ibid.; Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 43.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“blanched face and streaming” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut,* 57.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“to tell me that Pickens” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Of course no sleep” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The people of the city” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:583.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

PART VII: FIRE!

Fort Sumter: Preparations

"The Major counsels economy" Samuel Wylie Crawford, "Journal of Samuel Wylie Crawford," April 10, 1861, Crawford Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Doubleday found a potato Crawford, "Journal," April 11, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Four Telegrams

"If you have no doubt" For all four telegrams, see *WOTR*, 1:297.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: Confusion

"are not in as complete" Beauregard to Walker, April 11, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:300–301.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"some 290 indifferent artillerymen" Ripley to S. W. Ferguson, March 6, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:264.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"This is one of those moments" Beauregard to R.G.M. Dunovant, April 10, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:300.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

on a night this dark Hartstene to Beauregard, April 10, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:299.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I am expected to be" Whiting to Beauregard, April 11, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:302.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"We are ready" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Things always appear” Beauregard to Whiting, April 11, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:303.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Excitement increases hourly” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:585.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Of course I was highly gratified” Ibid., 1:588.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“For days” Parker, “Battle of Fort Sumter,” 65.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“hushed in sleep” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington: The Correspondent

“parading up and down” Russell, *My Diary*, 66–67.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a most excellent dinner” Ibid., 67.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The Secretary read it” Ibid.; Russell, “Recollections,” no. 495, 245.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a curious state of things” Russell, *My Diary*, 67.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“some daring enterprise” Ibid., 68.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“almost defenseless” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a storm of rain” Ibid., 70; Russell, “Recollections,” no. 495, 246.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I was asked by many” Russell, *My Diary*, 70; Russell, “Recollections,” no. 495, 246.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston Harbor: The Angel of Death

“I appreciate your surprise” Osbon, *Sailor of Fortune*, 117; Johnson, *Lincoln’s First Crisis*, 231.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“by someone groping” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 142.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The silence became oppressive” Samuel Wragg Ferguson, “Fort Sumter: Notes,” 15.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Men were seen” Parker, “Battle of Fort Sumter,” 66.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“At first, it ascended rapidly” Samuel Wragg Ferguson, “Fort Sumter: Notes,” 15–16.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The thrill that ran through” Thompson, “Union Soldier at Fort Sumter,” 102.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“They no doubt expected” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“and by the sound” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 144.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“children’s play” Wilson, *Code of Honor*, 27.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It would have cheapened” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:588–89.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Prayers from the women” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 46.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Get up, you foolish woman” Ibid., 47.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Sunrise

“Our party were calm” Doubleday, *Reminiscences,* 144; John G. Foster, Engineer Journal, April 9, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:21.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“In aiming the first gun” Doubleday, *Reminiscences,* 145–46.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It would be useless” Thompson, “Union Soldier at Fort Sumter,” 102.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Showers of balls” Doubleday, *Reminiscences,* 147.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Doubleday,” he said Ibid., 148.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“at their utmost speed” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:589.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Cries of that’s a good one” Parker, “Battle of Fort Sumter,” 67.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“lest we should attract” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:591.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The Sumter Expedition

"Nearing the bar" Fox to Simon Cameron, April 19, 1861, *WOTR,* 1:11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The heavy sea" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston Harbor: The Great Darkness

"We were certain" Thompson, "Union Soldier at Fort Sumter," 102.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Using a field glass Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:590.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"After dark" Ibid., 1:592.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Tide going down" Parker, "Battle of Fort Sumter," 67.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I hastily struck a light" Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:592.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Clear the beach, we fire" Parker, "Battle of Fort Sumter," 68.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Friends!" the men shouted. Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"was the only lodger" Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:593.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The enemy kept up” Thompson, “Union Soldier at Fort Sumter,” 103.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The Sumter Expedition

The *Pawnee*’s captain Swanberg, *First Blood*, 310, 324–25; G. V. Fox to Simon Cameron, April 19, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:11.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston Harbor: The Worst Fear

“the enemy” John G. Foster, Engineer Journal, April 13, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:21–22.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The sun has risen” Parker, “Battle of Fort Sumter,” 69.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“She seems to have” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Would our friends think” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It seemed impossible to escape” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 157.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I thought it would be” Ibid., 158.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The scene at this time” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The sound and shock wave Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:594.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Thus placed” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I looked on” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:596. See also Parker, “Battle of Fort Sumter,” 69.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“its peculiar ammunition” Ruffin, *Diary,* 1:596.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It was manifest” Ibid., 595.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Then arose the loudest” Ibid., 597

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

The Sumter Expedition

The *Pawnee*’s Captain Rowan Swanberg, *First Blood,* 310.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: Tea and Angst

“Nobody hurt after all” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War,* 48.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“But the sound” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Some of the anxious hearts” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“No—” Louisa said Ibid., 47.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Not by one word” Ibid., 48.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Also came Colonel Manning” Ibid., 48–49.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It is one of those things” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Doubleday’s Revenge

Hart also retrieved Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 159.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The crashing of the shot” Ibid., 162.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Anderson ordered all but five John G. Foster, Engineer Journal, April 10, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:17. See pp. 16–25 for Foster’s excellent, spare account of the period April 9 to April 17, 1861.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a shot every two or three minutes” Thompson, “Union Soldier at Fort Sumter,” 104.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Wigfall

“for the purpose of” Beauregard to Walker, April 27, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:32.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“was one not to be forgotten” Russell, *My Diary*, 87.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“his accustomed indifference to danger” “Report of Brig. Gen. James Simons of Operations Against Fort Sumter,” April 23, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:38.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“A brave garrison” Ringold and Young, “William Gourdin Young,” 31. See also William Gourdin Young, “Reminiscences,” DeSaussure Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“under great excitement” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:586.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I caught it” Ringold and Young, “William Gourdin Young,” 31; Young, “Reminiscences.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a foolish risk” Ringold and Young, “William Gourdin Young,” 35; Young, “Reminiscences.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“In a few moments” Ringold and Young, “William Gourdin Young,” 32.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“we had come to the habitation” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“had gone around” Ibid., 33.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Anderson replied Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Peculiar Circumstances

“must have killed” Ringold and Young, “William Gourdin Young,” 33; William Gourdin Young, “Reminiscences,” DeSaussure Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Any terms that you may desire” John G. Foster, Engineer Journal, April 13, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:23.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I hope if I ever bring” Ringold and Young, “William Gourdin Young,” 33; Young, “Reminiscences.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Boat returning” Parker, “Battle of Fort Sumter,” 70.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“to inquire if he needed” Stephen D. Lee et al. to D. R. Jones, April 15, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:64.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“peculiar circumstances” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

was “to get home” Young, “Reminiscences.”

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I was a sorry looking object” Ringold and Young, “William Gourdin Young,” 34.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Fort Sumter: Bloody Sunday

“No,” he said, “it is one hundred” Swanberg, *First Blood*, 328; Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:599.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“We now first heard” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:599.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“an excellent soldier” Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 328.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“A unique and most impressive sight” Samuel Wragg Ferguson, “Fort Sumter: Notes,” 21.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“What a changed scene” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 50.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a lady’s thimble” McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 238, 275; Reid, “Crisis at Fort Sumter,” 9. To underscore his belief that the war would be short, James Chesnut pledged to drink all the blood spilled in battle. Fire-eater Robert Barnwell Rhett did him one better, vowing to eat the bodies of those killed, emphasizing his belief that no war would occur. Davis, *Rhett*, 394.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Charleston: Acclaim

"In the matter of drinks" Russell, *My Diary,* 73.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"An execrable, tooth-cracking drive" Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The Yankees are whipped!" Ibid., 74.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I hear today that I am late for the fair" Crawford, "William Howard Russell," 194.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"flushed faces, wild eyes" Russell, *My Diary,* 80.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Washington and Charleston: Hot Oxygen

"the several States of the Union" Lincoln, *Collected Works,* 4:331.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I appeal to all" Ruffin, *Diary,* 2:549.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Great rejoicing" Lincoln, *Collected Works,* 4:333.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I can be no party" Donald, *Lincoln,* 297; Seward, *Seward at Washington,* 547.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"will not furnish" Seward, *Seward at Washington,* 547.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The Government being” Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 349.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“secession cannon” Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:606.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a glass of ale” Ibid., 1:607.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Kentucky will furnish” Donald, *Lincoln*, 297.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“inhuman and diabolical” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a moral and political evil” McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 281.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“If I owned” Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 350.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“You have made” McPherson, *Battle Cry*, 281.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Wherever the blame may be” Ibid. See also Freeman, *R. E. Lee*, 475–76.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Save in defense” Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 350.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The women, palefaced” Russell, *My Diary*, 76.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“It really was most astonishing” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“At every station” Russell, “Recollections,” no. 495, 248.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The station, the hotels” Russell, *My Diary*, 80.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The utter contempt” Ibid., 86.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Cavalry horses were picketed” Ibid., 80; Russell, “Recollections,” no. 496, 362.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Charleston was in high revelry” Russell, “Recollections,” no. 496, 362.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“In the middle” Russell, *My Diary*, 86.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I found this” Ibid., 82.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“no injury of a kind” Ibid., 86.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“A very small affair” Crawford, “William Howard Russell,” 195.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The streets of Charleston” Russell, *My Diary*, 82.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the evening drove” Ibid., 89.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Aboard the* Baltic: *Ovation

"Having defended Fort Sumter" Anderson to Cameron, report, April 18, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:12.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"All the passing steamers" Doubleday, *Reminiscences*, 175.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"I now write this" Lincoln, *Collected Works*, 4:350; Lincoln to Anderson, May 1, 1861, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Of all the trials" Nicolay, *With Lincoln*, 46–47.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"With such material" Beauregard to Walker, April 17, 1861, *WOTR*, 1:28.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Must try and remember" Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 62.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"The formal act" Ruffin, *Diary*, 1:607–8.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"Confederate flag would float" Seward, *Seward at Washington*, 549.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

"God grant that this step" Ruffin, *Diary*, 2:37–38.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

EPILOGUE

A Toast

“this hideous nightmare” Freidel and Pencak, *The White House*, 73.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Some trust in chariots” Committee Appointed by the Passengers of the Oceanus, *Trip of the Steamer Oceanus*, 49–50.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“wrestling with intense emotion” Ibid., 51.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“enveloped in smoke” Samuel Wragg Ferguson, “Fort Sumter: Notes,” 16.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Clotted blood” Ruffin, *Diary*, 2:93.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“This was a disappointment” Ibid., 2:94.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“swollen today by anonymous letters” Russell, *My Diary*, 299–300.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The President was not so good-humored” Ibid., 311.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“with the head of our good ship” Ibid., 340.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Snake in the grass” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 118; Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 133.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I felt so proud” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 103.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The empty saddle” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 107; Muhlenfeld, *Mary Boykin Chesnut*, 112; Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 101.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

A couple of days later Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 114.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“starvation parties” Lee, *Winnie Davis*, 3.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Mary’s friend Varina Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“in a bitter mood” Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 528.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“You remember Emma Stockton” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, 134; Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 528.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“That night,” Mary wrote Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, 601, 609.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“There are nights” Chesnut, *Private Mary Chesnut*, xxiii.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“The War,” he wrote Hammond, *Secret and Sacred*, 286.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Here we have in charge” Hammond to Allen, February 7, 1861, Hammond Papers; also quoted in Channing, *Crisis of Fear*, 293.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“But mind,” Hammond said Hammond, *Secret and Sacred*, 300.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“the whole movement” Ibid., 301.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“a frequent feeling” Jackson to Lorenzo Thomas, August 5, 1861, Anderson Papers.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I am here my friends” Committee Appointed by the Passengers of the Oceanus, *Trip of the Steamer Oceanus*, 52.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“and with one long, pealing” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I beg you now” Detzer, *Allegiance*, 319.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“He looked very much fatigued” Corneau and Osborne, “Girl in the Sixties,” 445.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

CODA

Blood Among the Tulip Trees

“You did fire” Ruffin, *Diary*, 2:420; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, 53.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Yet, I have been elevated” Ruffin, *Diary*, 2:548.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Under these circumstances” Ruffin, *Diary*, 3:702.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“I here declare” Ibid., 3:946.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“Kept waiting by” Ibid., 3:950.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Ruffin positioned a new cap Allmendinger and Scarborough, “Days Ruffin Died,” 81.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

“his brains and snowy hair” Ibid.

GO TO NOTE REFERENCE IN TEXT

Index

The page numbers in this index refer to the printed version of the book. Each link will take you to the beginning of the corresponding print page. You may need to scroll forward from that location to find the corresponding reference on your e-reader.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

A

abolitionist movement, 40

Abos, Theodore, 333–34

Adams, Charles Francis

on Buchanan, 299

on election day, 16

electoral count and, 241

Lincoln’s inauguration and, 301–2

Seward and, 373

on weather conditions, 169, 291–92, 346

Adams, Charles Francis, Jr., 213–14

Adams, Henry, 214

Agassiz, Louis, 42, 196

Alabama, secession and, 203

Alamo, 268

Albany Evening Journal, 167, 373, 374, 375

Albany Rail Road, 202

Albine (horse), 225

Allen, A. B., 221, 486

American Agriculturalist, 221

American Anti-Slavery Society, 40

American Farmer, 76

American Journal of Science and Arts, 63

American Museum, 246

American Notes (Dickens), 38, 341

American Telegraph Co., 263

Anderson, Eliza “Eba”

health of, 4–5

letter to husband from, 221–22

occupation of Fort Sumter and, 131, 141

slave trade, 27–28

visit from, 182–83

Anderson, Larz, 240

Anderson, R. C., 357–58

Anderson, Robert. *See also* Fort Sumter

after fall of Fort Sumter, 474

aniticipated surrender and, 377–78

Beauregard and, 352–53, 394

Buchanan and, 192

Buell and, 108–9

cabinet meeting and, 154–56

cannon and, 149

cartridges and, 334–35, 437

Davis and, 406

defenses and, 125

description of, 4

end of war and, 479–81, 487–88

family of, 4–5

fire in Fort Sumter and, 441

flag at Fort Sumter and, 149–50

Floyd and, 126, 127

Fort Moultrie battery and, 397

Fox and, 348–49

Holt's letter to, 204–5

intercepted letter from, 399–400

Jamison and, 335–36

lack of action from, 206

Lamon and, 351–52

lead-up to war and, 3–4, 30

letter from wife, 221–22

Lincoln's gratitude toward, 475

Lincoln's instructions to, 386–87, 395, 399

Lincoln's messengers and, 402

military career of, 24–25

occupation of Fort Sumter by, 128, 130–31, 135–42, 145–46

order to fire from, 430

Pickens and, 151–52, 199–201, 207–8

plan to blow up Fort Sumter and, 352–54

possible reinforcements for, 180–81

potential attack and, 107

powder and, 450

provisions and, 8, 207–8, 335, 339–40, 394, 415

reactions to move of, 153–57, 160–62

replacing Gardner, 24, 25

Ruffin's blaming of, 202

secession and, 118

Shannon incident and, 379

shots fired on Fort Sumter and, 315–17

slave trade and, 27–28

South Carolina commissioners and, 200–201

South Carolina's war preparations and, 163–64, 308–9

Star of the West and, 186, 188–89, 198

start of hostilities and, 425, 432

status of Fort Sumter and, 285, 286, 306–7, 357, 362, 385–86

on strength of forts, 29–30

support for, 157–58

surrender and, 8–10, 307, 314, 456–58, 460, 461, 462, 474

suspension of mail service and, 403, 409–10

during war, 486–87

war preparations and, 206, 219

Washington's birthday salute and, 259

weapon placement and, 322

wife's visit to, 182–83

Wigfall and, 456–57

Young and, 455

Antelope, 200

Anticipations of the Future (Ruffin), 70–72, 78, 210

antislavery societies, 40

Apostate, The, 245

Appomattox Court House, 479

Arabia, 294

Arago, 480

Argyle (horse), 224

Aristocratic Journey, The (Hall), 224

Arkansas, secession and, 468

Arrangements Committee, 267

Artesian Basin, 216, 217

Articles of Confederation, 129

artillery accidents, 333–34

Artillery School of Practice, Fort Monroe, 24–25

Astor House, 243, 245–46

Aunt Phillis's Cabin, 46

B

B&O line, 249

Bailhache, William H., 235

Baltic, 392, 396, 424, 433, 434, 460, 474, 480

Barnum, P. T., 246–47

Bates, Edward, 327, 363–64, 422–23

Bates, Therena, 19

Bates Hotel, 235–37

Battery esplanade, 147

Beauregard, P.G.T.

after fall of Fort Sumter, 475

Anderson and, 4, 308–9, 314, 352–53, 394

anticipation of attack and, 9, 415–16

arrival in Charleston, 290–91

Chesnut and, 370

Confederate commissioners and, 346–47

Confederate flag and, 465

Crawford and, 385

daily life in Charleston and, 359

fortifications and, 362

Fox and, 348

Lamon and, 352

Lincoln's messengers and, 402–3

preparations of, 334, 418–20

Ruffin and, 303

Shannon incident and, 379

Smith and, 284

start of hostilities and, 420–21, 425

status of Fort Sumter and, 372–73

surrender and, 456–59, 461, 463, 474

suspension of mail service and, 403, 408–9

telegram to and from, 417

Walker and, 389

Wigfall and, 452

Beecher, Henry Ward, 480

Beechwood (plantation), 489

Benwell, John, 26

Bertinatti, Giuseppe, 355

Black, Jeremiah S., 154–55, 161, 180, 212

Black Hawk War, 24

Black population, size of, 6

Black Republicans, 55, 74, 86, 90, 95, 194, 204, 290. *See also individual people*

Blair, Francis P., Sr., 281, 469

Blair, Montgomery, 281, 326, 327–28, 351, 364–65

Bleser, Carol, 33

Bonaparte, Jerome Napoleon, Jr., 77

Bonner, John, 107

Bookstaver, David S., 249

Booth, John Wilkes, 245

Borland, Mrs. Lafayette, 330–31

Boston Courier, 92

Boyce, William, 75

Breckinridge, John C., 20, 85, 168, 241–42

Brevard, Keziah, 133, 169, 393

Brevoort House, 221

Brierfield Plantation, 217

Brooklyn, U.S.S., 165, 180, 182, 184, 190

Brooks, Preston, 383

Brown, John, 66–67, 68–70, 74–75, 111, 314, 484

Browning, Orville, 238, 239, 244–45, 281, 300

Brown's Hotel, 54, 95

Buchanan, James

Anderson and, 201

annual address from, 98–100, 102–4

as bachelor, 100–101

cabinet and, 154–56, 180, 209

Charleston Harbor and, 105–6

Davises and, 169–70

description of, 100

Floyd and, 126

Fox and, 327

Hall-Hayne mission and, 219–20

Hammond and, 54

Holt and, 156, 169

lack of action from, 192

Lincoln's election and, 16, 83

Lincoln's inauguration and, 298–99, 301

occupation of Fort Sumter and, 150–51, 153–54, 158, 161–62

Peace Convention and, 215

ptomaine poisoning and, 267

safety measures taken by, 261

Scott and, 164–65

secession and, 120, 121, 123–24, 156–57

slavery and, 84

South and, 101–2

South Carolina commissioners and, 144–45, 161–62

Star of the West mission and, 182

Twiggs and, 268

in White Sulphur Springs, 77

Buell, Don Carlos, 108–9, 127, 146, 155

Buist, Henry, 432

Bull Run, 476, 481–82

Byron, Lord, 411

C

Cabin and the Parlor, The (Peterson), 45

calcium oxide, 284

Calhoun, John C., 34, 38–39, 161, 330

Cameron, Simon, 327, 328–29, 386–87, 474, 479

Campbell, John A., 337–39, 347, 370–72, 375–76, 388–89, 397–98

canister shot, 149

cannon, firing of, 332–33

Cantey, Jack, 225

Capers, Ellison, 151–52

Capitol building, 37–38

Cass, Lewis, 98, 105, 154

Castle Pinckney, 22, 29, 159–60, 205, 292

Catawba, 460

Century Magazine, 375

"Charge of the Light Brigade, The" (Tennyson), 293

Charleston. *See also* Fort Sumter

after fall of Fort Sumter, 471, 472

daily life in, 359

description of, 7, 25–26

Harpers Ferry raid and, 67

naval expedition to, 9

secession convention and, 112–14

slave trade in, 5, 26–27

Charleston Bar, 25

Charleston Club, 471

Charleston Courier, 224, 468, 475

Charleston Hotel, 25–26, 292, 351, 488

Charleston Mercury, 16, 72, 84, 116, 269, 303

Chase, Salmon, 273, 287, 327, 364

Chenery House, 226

Chesnut, James, Jr.

Beauregard's response and, 9–10

cannon fire and, 411

Confederate constitutional convention and, 277

Confederate States of America and, 217, 303

forecast from, 463

hostilities and, 446

in Montgomery, 330

occupation of Fort Sumter and, 160

resignation of, 93, 96

Russell and, 471–72

secession and, 110

start of hostilities and, 425

surrender and, 458, 459

during war, 483, 484, 485

wife's flirtation and, 361, 369, 370, 389

Mrs. Wigfall and, 394

Withers and, 278

Chesnut, Mary Boykin

after fall of Fort Sumter, 475

ambition of, 93–94

Anderson and, 410

anticipation of war and, 393–94

cannon fire and, 411–12

on Christmas, 131

diary of, 11, 93

dinner party and, 10–11

hostilities and, 446–48

lead-up to war and, 11–12
on Lincoln's arrival in Washington, 269
Lincoln's election and, 93, 96
Lincoln's inauguration and, 302, 305
Manning and, 359–61, 369–70, 389
on marriage, 330–31
in Montgomery, 277–78, 303–4, 330
occupation of Fort Sumter and, 160
on Russell, 342
secession and, 117–18
on slavery, 94–95, 304–5
start of hostilities and, 428
surrender and, 462
during war, 483–85
Washington's birthday salute and, 259
Wigfall and, 380–81
Withers and, 33, 278
Chew, Robert S., 394–95, 402, 411
chewing tobacco, 341–42
Chicago Tribune, 238

Chittenden, Lucius E., 273

chivalry, use of term, 5–7. *See also individual people*

Christmas celebrations, 131–33

circus licenses, 68

Clarkson, Thomas, 51

Clinch, Duncan Lamont, 28

Cobb, Howell, 102, 105, 154, 209, 215

cockades, blue, 85, 87, 96, 114, 116, 140, 178

Code Duello, 6–7, 13, 46, 81, 173, 231, 295, 367, 388, 413, 428, 477

Coffin Land, 25

Coleman, Ann, 100–101

Columbia, South Carolina

description of, 42

secession convention and, 110–11, 112

Columbiad, The, 149

columbiads, 149, 322

Columbus, Christopher, 149

Combahee (plantation), 117–18

Committee of Five, 193–94

Confederate States Army, 268

Confederate States of America

commissioners from, 291, 312, 318–21, 337–39, 346–47, 370–72, 376, 382–83, 388–89, 397–98, 401–2

flag of, 465

founding of, 215–16

military operations in Charleston and, 290

Congress, increased conflict in, 194–95

Congressional Globe, 261, 262

Congressional Record, 261

Conrad, Robert Young, 300

Constitutional Union Party, 16

Continental Hotel, 250, 251, 252

Cooper, Samuel, 109, 142, 163–64, 206, 219, 309, 377

Corwin, Thomas, 275

cotton

control of, 55–56, 472

“cotton is king” thesis, 56, 60, 472, 485–86

impact of Lincoln’s election on price of, 20

poor harvest of, 76

Craft, William and Ellen, 132

Crawford, A. J., 108, 183

Crawford, Martin J., 291, 338, 382, 401

Crawford, Samuel Wylie

Anderson and, 131

Anderson's wife's visit and, 183

Beauregard and, 385

on daily life in fort, 323

Fort Moultrie battery and, 397

on Fort Sumter's condition, 148

General Clinch and, 139

on likelihood of secession, 108

on Lincoln, 237–38

mail and, 200

move to Fort Sumter and, 137, 138

Pickens's men and, 151

provisions and, 207, 415, 429

Shannon incident and, 380

shots fired from Fort Moultrie and, 140

shots fired on Fort Sumter and, 315–16, 317

South Carolina commissioners and, 201

status of Fort Sumter and, 258–59, 372

weapon placement and, 322

on weather conditions, 210

Crimean War, 286, 293

Crockett, Davy, 38

Cullum, George W., 422–23

Cummings Point, 205–6, 219, 258, 308, 315, 316, 420, 429–30

D

Dana, Charles A., 343

Daniell electric battery, 125

Danton, Georges-Jacques, 111

Davidson, James, 300–301

Davies, Harry, 178

Davis, Esther, 131

Davis, Hector, 73

Davis, Jefferson

Buchanan and, 99, 103, 169

Campbell and, 375–76
M. Chesnut and, 304
commissioners and, 388
in Congress, 195
death of son, 485
inaugural of, 278
intercepted mail and, 410
military operations in Charleston and, 290
in Montgomery, 271, 278–79
occupation of Fort Sumter and, 153
as president of Confederacy, 217–18, 277
receptions given by, 484
secession and, 119, 120–21
start of war and, 476
status of Fort Sumter and, 405–7
surrender and, 463
on war, 280
Davis, Jefferson C., 138, 188–89
Davis, Joseph “Little Joe,” 485
Davis, Maggie, 280

Davis, Samuel, 280

Davis, Varina

Buchanan and, 169–70

M. Chesnut and, 304

Davis as CSA president and, 217–18

death of son, 485

marriage of, 279–80

on Montgomery, 278–79

Porter and, 119–20, 121

during war, 484

De Bow's Review, 65, 210

De Saussure, Wilmot G., 432

Declaration of Independence, 114, 115, 129, 255–56

Delane, John, 293

Democracy in America (Tocqueville), 388

Democratic Party. *See also individual politicians*

Lincoln's election and, 16

Seward's speech opposing, 60

in South Carolina, 113

Dennison, William, 468

Dickens, Charles, 7–8, 38, 293, 341–42

divorce, 330–31

Dix, Dorothea, 175–76, 194, 248

“Dixie’s Land,” 465, 471

Dodge, William E., 267

Doubleday, Abner

after fall of Fort Sumter, 474

Anderson and, 28

Anderson’s wife’s visit and, 183

baseball and, 323

on condition of Fort Sumter, 147

defense of Fort Sumter and, 357

end of war and, 480, 488

evacuation of families and, 211

fire in Fort Sumter and, 441, 442–43

Fort Moultrie battery and, 397

on lack of support, 165

Moultrie House and, 449–50

move to Fort Sumter and, 137–38, 139–40

opposition of to negotiations, 201

Pickens's men and, 151
provisions and, 207, 415
public dislike of, 204
Shannon incident and, 379–80
shots fired on Fort Sumter and, 316
on Skillen, 159–60
South Carolina's war preparations and, 205–6
Star of the West and, 186, 188, 198
start of hostilities and, 425, 427, 429–31
surrender and, 461
Doubleday, Mary, 137, 138, 139
Douglas, Stephen A.
at Inaugural Ball, 302
Kansas-Nebraska Act and, 54–55
Lincoln and, 58
Lincoln's election and, 17, 19
Lincoln's inauguration and, 299
Douglass, Frederick, 300
Dred Scott decision, 83–84, 299
drought, 75–76

Drummond lights, 284

Drunken Dick Shoal, 25

Dryden, John, 331

dueling, defense of, 383

dyspepsia, 41, 77

E

East Bay Artillery, 116

Edward Albert, Prince of Wales, 24, 235, 304

electoral count, 212, 213, 229, 237, 240, 241–42

Ellis, John, 468

Ellis, Sarah S., 279–80

Embarkation of the Pilgrims (Weir), 107

embrasures, 148–49

Englishman's Travels in America, An (Benwell), 26

Ennels, James D., 334

escalade, 149

Essay on Calcareous Manures, An (Ruffin), 62

Eutaw House, 423

"Eve of Waterloo, The," 411

Evergreen (plantation), 62

Expressman and the Detective, The (Pinkerton), 242

F

Farragut, David G., 165

fashion, 67–68

Faunce, John, 424–25

Federal Writers' Project, 132

Felton, Samuel M., Sr., 175–78, 194, 248, 250, 256

Ferguson, Samuel Wragg, 291, 425–26, 462, 481

Ferrandini, Cypriano, 178, 270

fire-eaters, 16, 21, 78, 84, 90. *See also* Rhett, Robert Barnwell; Ruffin, Edmund; Wigfall, Louis T.

First Bull Run, 483

First Manassas, 483

Fitzpatrick, Aurelia, 278

Fitzsimons, Ann (later Hampton), 43

Fitzsimons, Catherine (later Hammond), 34–35, 39

floating battery, 289, 309, 314

Florida. *See also* Fort Pickens

navy yard in, 193

secession and, 133, 143, 179–80, 202

Florida Rail Road, 143

Floyd, John B.

Anderson and, 25

cabinet meeting and, 154–56

occupation of Fort Sumter and, 145–46, 154, 164

resignation of, 156, 170

weapons sent to South by, 126–27

Forsyth, John, 291, 320–21, 382, 401

Fort Drane, 144

Fort Johnson, 10, 22, 135, 420, 426

Fort McHenry, 221

Fort Monroe, 24–25, 165, 180, 221

Fort Moultrie

Anderson assigned to, 25

Anderson's plan and, 135–36

battery on, 397

Charleston civilians and, 29

evacuation of, 135, 143–44

Foster and, 125–26

potential attack and, 107–8

reinforcement of, 292

Ruffin and, 313–14

secession and, 118

Shannon incident and, 379

shots fired from, 134, 140, 315–16, 334

South Carolina's possession of, 160

Star of the West and, 185, 187, 188–89

vulnerability of, 22–24, 123

weapons seized from, 205

Fort Pickens, 193, 294, 362–63, 365, 373, 376, 392

Fort Sumter. *See also* Anderson, Robert

Anderson's move to, 128, 130–31, 135–42, 143–44, 145–46

aniticipated surrender of, 377

cannon of, 148–49

Confederate plans to attack, 290

consideration of reinforcement of, 327–28

daily life in, 323–24

damage done to, 434, 440, 450–51

Davis and, 405–7

description of, 147–49

end of war and, 479–81, 487–88

evacuation of families from, 208, 211

evaluation of status of, 147–48, 285–86

fire in, 440, 441–42, 444

firewood and, 357

flag of, 149–50, 444, 449, 479–81, 487–88

Foster and, 125–26

Gardner and, 22

lack of instructions to Anderson regarding, 385–86

lead-up to war and, 3–4

Lincoln's plans for, 402–3

Pickens and, 150–52

plan to blow up, 352–54

Powhatan and, 391–92

preparations of, 393

provisions and, 4, 8, 339–40, 394, 415

reinforcements for, 180–81

rumors of evacuation of, 318, 337–39, 340, 351–52

Russell and, 294, 472

Scott and, 325–26, 362

Shannon incident and, 379–80

shots fired on, 315–17

start of hostilities and, 426–32

surrender negotiations and, 8–10

troops needed for, 29

vote to resupply, 364–65

vulnerability of, 123

weaponry of, 23, 322–23

Foster, John G.

Anderson's plan and, 135–36, 138, 139, 142

damage done to Fort Sumter and, 437

firewood and, 357

Fort Moultrie battery and, 397

lead-up to war and, 3–4

occupation of federal arsenal and, 160

occupation of Fort Sumter and, 131

reinforcement mission and, 349

rumors of evacuation and, 340

South Carolina's war preparations and, 205, 308, 334

on status of fighting, 440

status of Fort Sumter and, 285, 409

war preparations and, 207, 323

work on forts by, 125–26

fougasses, 323

Fox, Gustavus Vasa

after fall of Fort Sumter, 474

Anderson on, 399

arrival near Charleston, 424, 433

departure for Washington, 396–97

intercepted mail and, 409

lack of action from, 439, 445

preparations of, 392, 396

preparations to oppose, 410

proposal from, 326–27, 328–29, 362

status of Fort Sumter and, 347–49, 386

Frank Leslie's Weekly, 114

Freeborn, 396

Fugitive Slave Act (1850), 90, 275

Fuller, Margaret, 394

Furman, James Clement, 92

G

Gadsden, James, 27

Galloway, Edward, 461–62

Gardner, John L., 22–24, 25, 29

Garnett, Robert S., 294

Garrick (club), 293–94

Garrison, William Lloyd, 40, 66–67, 480

Gautier, Charles, 382

Gautier's, 382

General Clinch, 28, 139

Georgia, secession and, 209

Georgiana, 464

Ghost Amendment, 276

Gibbes, Robert Wilson, 370, 394

Gidiere, Mrs. P. R., 160, 360, 428

Gist, William H., 68, 97, 99

“Gold-Bug, The” (Poe), 22

Gordon, 419

gorge, 148

Gosport Shipyard, 24, 165

Gourdin, Robert, 411

Governor’s Island, 181

grapeshot, 149, 207

Great Expectations (Dickens), 7–8

Great Western Railroad, 227–28, 233

Greeley, Horace, 86–87, 115, 121–22, 215, 245, 283, 343

Green, Mrs. Allen, 412

Guard House Riot, 32–33

Guide to Social Happiness, The (Ellis), 279–80

gunners, 332–33

H

Hall, Margaret Hunter, 224

Hall, Norman J.

cartridges and, 334

Hall-Hayne mission and, 201

move to Fort Sumter and, 135, 136–37, 140

provisions and, 339–40

Star of the West and, 198–99

on status of Fort Sumter, 286

in Washington, 204, 219–20

Hamilton, Jack Randolph, 447

Hamilton, Louisa, 447

Hammer, William H., 141

Hammond, Catherine (née Fitzsimons)

husband's infidelities and, 47, 50, 53, 486

marriage of, 34–35

in Silver Bluff, 43

in Washington, 39, 54

Hammond, Edward Spann, 486

Hammond, Elisha, 32

Hammond, Harry, 53

Hammond, James Henry

background of, 31–32, 33, 34

on “the chivalry,” 5

on Christmas, 132

Columbia home of, 42–43, 47

in Congress, 37, 38–39, 40

“cotton is king” thesis and, 472

death of, 486

description of, 31

in Europe, 41–42

Harpers Ferry raid and, 69

holdings of, 31

Jamison and, 111

Lincoln’s nomination and, 75

marriage of, 34–35

Race Week and, 224

resignation of, 96

Ruffin and, 63, 64, 69

scandal involving, 50–52

secession and, 96–97

in Senate, 47, 53–54, 55–56, 69

sexual encounters with enslaved women and, 52–53

sexual encounters with nieces and, 47–50

slavery and, 35–36, 39–41, 45, 46, 51, 55–56, 221

during war, 485–86

Withers and, 277

Hammond, Marcellus, 54

Hammond, Marcus, 96

Hammond, William Cashel, 53

Hampton, Ann (née Fitzsimons), 43

Hampton, Catty, 43

Hampton, Christopher, 49

Hampton, Harriet, 43

Hampton, Wade, II, 43, 49–50, 51–52

Handel, George Frideric, 484

Harpers Ferry, 66–67, 68–69, 74–75, 475. *See also* Brown, John

Harper's Weekly, 107, 269

Harriet Lane, 392, 424–25, 433, 434

Harris, Matthias, 138, 139, 149–50, 480

Hart, Peter, 183, 449, 480

Hartstene, Henry J., 348, 419

Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 267

Hay, John

on Buchanan, 299

Campbell and, 376

Floyd and, 127

Lincoln's Bates Hotel speech and, 237, 238

on Lincoln's travels, 260

on Lincoln's Trenton speech, 247

Scott's recommendation and, 364

on Seward, 287–88

Seward's memorandum and, 374–75

on Thompson, 180

Hayne, Isaac W., 201, 204, 219–20, 228, 394

Heavy Ordnance Manual of 1861, 332

Hercules (horse trainer), 225

Herndon, William H., 17, 58, 228

Heyward, Nathaniel, 5

Hinkley Locomotive Works, 228

Holcombe, Lucy, 77

Holmes, George Frederick, 45

Holt, Joseph

Anderson and, 204–5, 209, 306–7
appointment of, 156, 169, 170
as cabinet member, 154
end of war and, 488
Fox's plan and, 327
Hall-Hayne mission and, 219–20
Hood, John Bell, 484
Hough, Daniel, 461–62
Huger, Benjamin, 126
Hunter, Robert Mercer Taliaferro, 153, 319
Hurlbut, Stephen A., 350–51, 352, 364
Hutchinson, J. H., 250

I

Idylls of the King (Tennyson), 6
Illinois, 392
Illinois State Journal, 228, 235
Inaugural Ball, 301–2
Independence Hall, 251–52, 255

Independent (New York), 67

Institute Hall, Charleston, 113, 115

Iron Battery, 206, 308, 420, 429–30, 431, 435, 444

Isabel, 460, 462

Ivanhoe (Scott), 6

J

Jackson, Andrew, 38, 39, 89, 105

Jackson, John Andrew, 132

Jackson, R.M.J., 487

James Island, 10, 135

Jamison, David Flavel

    Anderson and, 200, 208, 335–36

    Ruffin and, 114, 203, 314

    secession and, 111, 115, 116

Jeff Davis (horse), 225

Jefferson, Thomas, 129, 272

Jockey Club Ball, 224

Jockey Club Purse, 225

Johnson, Louisa, 52–53, 54, 486

Johnson, Sally, 52–53, 54, 486

Johnston, James C., 133

Jones, Thomas D., 227, 228

jousting competitions, 6

Judd, Norman, 242–43, 246, 250, 253, 256–57, 268

K

Kane, George P., 177

Kansas-Nebraska Act, 54–55, 58, 83

Keitt, Laurence M., 75, 116

Keitt, W. J., 75

Kennedy, John A., 248, 264, 270

Key, Francis Scott, 38

King, Henry, 394

King, Horace, 215

King, William R., 101

Kossuth, Louis, 263

“kossuth” hat, 263

L

Lady of the Lake, The (Scott), 11, 380–81

Lamon, Ward

Anderson and, 351–53, 354, 399

assassination plot and, 270

expectations regarding, 377

Pickens and, 370

F. Seward and, 250, 252

traveling with Lincoln, 260, 263, 264

Lancaster Daily Evening Press, 260

Lane, Harriet, 101, 267

Latrobe, John H. B., 160

Latrobe, Letitia Gamble Holliday, 394

Lawrence, Richard, 38

Lee, Robert E.

Brown and, 66

offer of command to, 469–70

Scott and, 248

start of war and, 476

surrender and, 479

in White Sulphur Springs, 76

LeFlore, Greenwood, 31

Legare, James, 394

Lehman Brothers, 217

L'Enfant, Pierre, 38

Leonardo da Vinci, 323

Lewis, Emanuel, 149

Liberator, 40, 66

Library of Congress, 38

Lincoln, Abraham

after fall of Fort Sumter, 475

arrival in Washington, 264–66, 268, 269–70

assassination of, 488

assassination plot against, 176, 178, 248–54

Buchanan's address and, 103

cabinet of, 287, 306

call for troops from, 467–68, 469

cartoons of, 269

certification of election of, 212

departure for Washington, 227–29

description of, 246, 355

in disguise, 263

economic impact of election of, 20

election of, 15–21, 83, 86, 88–90, 93, 96, 113, 130, 212

electoral count and, 241

emissaries from, 350–52

end of war and, 479, 488

Fox and, 327, 349

frustrations of, 166–68

Gautier and, 382

inaugural address of, 235, 238–39, 244–45, 281–83, 297–98, 299–301

instructions to Anderson from, 386–87, 395, 399

intercepted mail and, 409

on invasion and coercion, 236–37

Lee and, 469

naval expedition to Charleston and, 9

nomination of, 74, 75, 78–79

in Ohio, 240

Peace Convention and, 272–75

in Philadelphia, 247, 250, 251–52, 254–55

Pickens and, 371, 402–3, 406

Powhatan and, 391–92

proposed Thirteenth Amendment and, 276

Russell and, 355, 482

sale of furniture by, 226

Scott's recommendation and, 356, 362–63, 364

secession and, 121–24

Senate campaign of, 58–59

Seward and, 195

Seward's memorandum and, 373–75

slavery and, 90, 197

at state dinner, 363–64

status of Fort Sumter and, 306–7, 325–26, 328–29, 378, 385–86, 389, 394

threats against, 166, 242–43, 246

travel to Washington and, 177, 233–40, 243, 245–46, 247, 249, 256–57, 260, 263–64

Trumbull and, 91–92

vote to resupply Fort Sumter and, 364–65

Lincoln, Edward, 229

Lincoln, Mary

at Inaugural Ball, 302

in Lancaster, 260

Lincoln's election and, 20

Russell and, 482

on Seward, 266

at state dinner, 363

travel to Washington and, 228

Trumbull and, 91

on war, 479

in Washington, 267

Lincoln, Robert, 228, 235, 238, 239, 250, 297

Lincoln, Tad, 239, 247, 266

Lincoln, Willie, 239, 266

Literary Messenger, 210

Longstreet, Augustus Baldwin, 86

loophole windows, 148

Louisiana, secession and, 210

Lowndes, Sabina, 117–18

Lynch, Thomas Moore, 335–36

M

Macbeth, Charles, 480

Magoffin, Beriah, 469

Magrath, Andrew Gordon, 20, 200, 408–9

Mahan, Dennis Hart, 7

Manassas Junction, 476, 483

Manning, John L.

M. Chesnut and, 96, 277, 304, 359–61, 369–70, 389, 411, 448, 483

Russell and, 471–72

surrender and, 458, 459

Marion, 211

Marlbourne (plantation), 63, 489

Marriage à la Mode (Dryden), 331

Marts, Joseph, 378–79

McCord, Louisa, 45

McGowan, John, 184–85, 187, 189

Meade, R. K., 189, 198–99

Means, John, 412

Melvin, Samuel H., 226

Memminger, Christopher G., 129–30

Mexican War, 24, 107, 123, 125, 217, 279, 284, 406

Miles, Mr., 370

Millens, Samuel, 207–8, 289–90

Mills House, 25–26, 211, 380, 471

Mississippi, secession and, 191–92, 202

Missouri Compromise, 55, 58, 83, 111

Montgomery, Alabama

M. Chesnut in, 277–78

as Confederate capital, 215–16

Davis in, 278–79

description of, 216

slave trade in, 216–17

Montgomery Daily Post, 216, 217

Moore, Andrew B., 278

Morehead, Charles Slaughter, 275

Morison, Samuel Eliot, 274

Morris Island

battery on, 163, 205–6, 219, 289, 334

navigation of channel and, 25

position of Fort Sumter and, 147

Rhoda H. Shannon and, 379

Ruffin's arrival on, 404–5

shots fired from, 315

Star of the West and, 185, 186

start of hostilities and, 426, 429, 432

Morrow, Dr., 370

Morton, Charles, 196

Moultrie House, 29, 334, 449–50

"Mudsills Speech" (Hammond), 55–56, 96

Muhlenfeld, Elisabeth, 95

Mulberry (plantation), 94, 95–96, 131, 132, 485

N

Napier, Francis, 56, 267

National Era, 44

National Hotel, 267, 291

National Mall, 54

“negro curfew,” 5

Neilen, Patrick, 141

Nelson, Samuel, 337, 347

“Never-Never” clause, 274

New York Day Book, 194

New York Herald, 89, 92, 166, 195, 256, 269–70, 302, 318, 343

New York Tribune, 67, 86–87, 112, 114, 182, 343

New York World, 242, 246

New-York Times

Buchanan’s address and, 99–100, 103–4

Lincoln’s arrival and, 269

Lincoln’s inauguration and, 300

Peace Convention and, 298

Raymond and, 91, 343, 373

Seward’s memorandum and, 374, 375

Van Wyck and, 262

Nicolay, John

Campbell and, 376

end of war and, 480

Floyd and, 127

Lincoln's assassination and, 488

Lincoln's election and, 17, 18, 19, 88

Scott's recommendation and, 364

secession and, 124

on Seward, 287–88

Seward's memorandum and, 374–75

on Thompson, 180

travel to Washington and, 228, 271

Nina, 159

Norfolk Navy Yard, 475

North Carolina, secession and, 314, 468–69

Nott, Josiah, 36

nullification, 34, 39, 89, 105, 161

O

Oakes, Francis J., 188

Oakes, Ziba B., 112

Oceanus, 480

Olmsted, Frederick Law, 37, 133, 343

Orr, James, 97

Owens, William, 143, 144

P

Palmetto Guard, 405, 420, 426, 453, 458–59, 460, 476

palmettos, 115, 116

Parker, Francis LeJau, 420–21, 426, 432, 435, 436, 440–41, 457

Parker, George, 302

Parrott, Robert Parker, 334

Pawnee, 392, 433, 434, 439, 445

Payne, Henry, 334

Peace Convention, 214–15, 220, 242, 267, 272–75, 283, 298, 301

Pensacola, Florida, navy yard, 193

personal-liberty laws, 129, 195

Peterson, Charles Jacobs, 45

Petigru, James, 111, 116–17, 133, 151, 351

Pettigrew, J. Johnston, 151–52

Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, 175, 176–77

Philadelphia Daily Evening Bulletin, 255

Philadelphia Daily News, 247

Philadelphia North American, 255

Pickens, Francis W.

Anderson and, 199–201, 207–8, 335

Anderson's wife's visit and, 183

description of, 161

Florida secession and, 202

Fox and, 347–48

Lamon and, 351

Lincoln and, 394

Lincoln's messengers to, 402–3, 406

naval expedition to Charleston and, 9

occupation of Fort Sumter and, 150–51, 159

seizure of forts and, 220–21

Shannon incident and, 379

status of Fort Sumter and, 378

surrender and, 463

suspension of mail service and, 408–10

telegram from, 370–72

Walker and, 290–91

war preparations and, 163–64

in White Sulphur Springs, 77

Pickett, George E., 382

Pickett, James, 398

Pickett, John T., 320

Pierce, Franklin, 100, 217, 279

Pinckney, Harriott, 11

Pinkerton, Allan

investigation of unrest by, 177–78, 249

reality of conspiracy and, 270–71

travel to Washington and, 256, 263–65, 268

warnings from, 242–43, 246, 250–51, 253

Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, 176–78

Planet (horse), 225

Pocahontas, 392, 433

Poe, Edgar Allan, 22

Polk, James K., 100, 101

Poplar Spring (preparatory school), 32

popular sovereignty, 54–55

Porter, David Dixon, 119–21, 123, 326, 334, 392

Powhatan, 365, 391–92, 396, 397, 424, 433, 439, 445

Preston, Sarah “Buck,” 484

ptomaine poisoning, 267, 291

R

Race Week, 223–25

Railroad Age, 177

Rattlesnake Shoal, 424

Ravenel, Henry, 222

Raymond, Henry J., 91–92, 343, 373, 374

Redcliffe Plantation, 31, 221, 486

Republican Party. *See also individual politicians*

    Lincoln’s Bates Hotel speech and, 238

    Lincoln’s election and, 16

Revolutionary War, 163

Rhett, Robert Barnwell, 110, 111, 114, 115–16, 208, 360

Rhoda H. Shannon (schooner), 378–80

Richmond Enquirer, 86, 202

Richmond Whig, 491

Ridgely, Anna, 88–89, 90, 488

Ripley, Roswell S., 313, 419, 454

Rives, William Cabell, 272–75, 283, 468

Roman, André B., 291, 382, 401

Rosenberg, Charles, 26

Rowan, Stephen C., 439, 445

Rudd and Carleton (publisher), 157–58

Ruffin, Charles, 476, 483

Ruffin, Edmund

agricultural work of, 62–64

background of, 62–63

Brown and, 69–70

Buchanan and, 100

at Bull Run, 481–82

in Charleston, 203, 313–14

M. Chesnut and, 484

on Christmas, 133–34

damage done to Fort Sumter and, 434–35

death of, 490–91

deaths of children of, 65

Declaration of Independence and, 129

departure from Virginia of, 292

in Florida, 143, 179–80, 202

Hammond and, 69

Harpers Ferry raid and, 66

isolation of, 64–66

Lincoln and, 78–79

Lincoln’s election and, 19

Lincoln’s inauguration and, 303

Lincoln’s nomination and, 74

on Morris Island, 404–5, 412, 420, 435–37, 441, 443–44

novel by, 70–72, 78, 210

secession efforts of, 61, 78, 85–86, 87, 113–14, 116, 117

shots fired from Fort Moultrie and, 134, 140

start of war and, 420–21, 426–27, 428, 431, 476

Stowe in opposition to, 45

surrender and, 459, 460, 461

in Virginia, 209

Virginia secession vote and, 389–90, 468, 475

during war, 489–90

in White Sulphur Springs, 76, 78

Ruffin, Edmund, Jr., 476, 489, 490

Ruffin, Elizabeth, 113, 134

Ruffin, Ella, 65

Ruffin, Jane, 65

Ruffin, Julian, 134, 490

Ruffin, Mildred, 65, 74, 78, 357, 490

Ruffin, Rebecca, 65

Ruffin, Susan (née Travis), 62, 64–65

Ruffin, Thomas, 476

Rush, Benjamin, 115

Russell, William, 216

Russell, William Howard

Bull Run and, 482–83

Confederate commissioners and, 382–83

Lincoln and, 363–64

in Montgomery, 293–94

in New York, 341–45

Seward and, 354–56, 383–84, 422

in South, 464–66, 470–73

Wigfall and, 452

Ryan, Thomas, 27

Ryan's Slave Mart (Ryan & Sons Mart), 5, 27, 73

S

salesmen, licenses for, 68

Sanford, Henry S., 344, 355

Santee River, 163

Schurz, Carl, 195

Scott, Walter, 6, 11, 135, 305, 380–81

Scott, Winfield

Adams and, 169

assassination plot and, 248–49, 253

on division, 297

electoral count and, 212, 241, 242

Felton and, 176

Fox and, 327, 347

Lee and, 469

Lincoln's arrival and, 168

message to Lincoln from, 252

plan to blow up Fort Sumter and, 353–54

recommendations from, 123, 164–65, 356, 362–63, 364

reinforcements and, 180

rumors of insurrection and, 194

Russell and, 422–23

safety measures taken by, 261

Seward and, 299

Star of the West mission and, 182

status of Fort Sumter and, 307, 325–26, 328–29

screw sloops, 165

secession. *See also individual states*

advocates for, 30

Anderson on, 28

Buchanan and, 98–99, 103

convention regarding, 110–18

explanation of, 129–30

Hammond's concerns regarding, 96–97

impact of, 191

ordinance declaring, 114–16

reactions to, 119–24

in Ruffin's novel, 70–71

Ruffin's promotion of, 61

Secession Hall, Charleston, 115

Seddon, James, 283

Seminole War, 24

Seminole Wars, 107, 144

Sevastopol, 286, 472

Seward, Frances, 102, 260–61, 306, 311–12, 313

Seward, Frederick

as assistant to father, 312

Confederate commissioners and, 320

Lincoln and, 249–50, 251, 252–54

Lincoln's inauguration and, 299, 302

Russell and, 355

Seward's memorandum and, 373

Seward, William Henry

Adams and, 169

amendment proposed by, 275–76

assassination plot and, 249, 253

Buchanan and, 102, 103

Confederate commissioners and, 319, 320–21, 337–39, 346–47, 371–72, 388, 397–98, 401–2

correspondence of with wife, 311–12

description of, 344–45

on disaffection, 212

Hammond and, 54

health of, 312–13

inaugural address and, 281–83, 300

Lincoln's arrival and, 265–66

memorandum to Lincoln from, 373–75

Powhatan and, 391–92

pro-Union sentiment and, 350

Ruffin and, 74

in Ruffin's novel, 70–71

rumors of evacuation of, 318

Russell and, 344–45, 354–56

Scott and, 299

secession and, 213, 214

secretary of state position and, 167–68, 287–88, 298, 306, 307

slavery and, 59–60

on South, 55

on Southerners, 383–84

speech against abolition by, 195–96

start of hostilities and, 422–23

status of Fort Sumter and, 328

on supplicants, 326

Treason Committee and, 194

vote to resupply Fort Sumter and, 364–65

Seymour, Horatio, 343

Seymour, Truman, 107, 141, 357, 379, 431

Shadow Amendment, 276

Shannon, Sam, 370

Ship Channel, 25

Shrapnel, Henry, 323

Shutes Folly, 159

Siege of Vera Cruz, 123

Silver Bluff (plantation), 35–36

Silvester, Peter H., 124

Simms, William Gilmore, 6, 45, 69

Simons, James, 452, 454

Sinkler family, 225

Skillen, Kate, 159–60

Skinner, John S., 76–77

slave patrols, 5, 36

slave rebellions

fear of, 6, 40, 74–75, 102, 133

rumors of, 19

Turner's, 40

slave trade/slavery

Anderson and, 27–28

books addressing, 44–46

in Charleston, 5, 26–27

M. Chesnut and, 304–5

Chesnut on, 95

defenses of, 196–97

escapes and, 36–37

Hammond and, 35–36, 39–41, 51, 55–56

Lincoln and, 58–59, 90

Lincoln's election and, 20, 21

Mississippi's secession declaration and, 191–92

Montgomery, Alabama, and, 216–17

opposition to, 39–40

proposed amendments regarding, 274, 275–76

Ruffin's defense of, 70–71

Russell on, 345

secession and, 130

Seward's speech opposing, 59–60

South Carolina College and, 33–34

South's fear of abolition of, 92

strength of, 73

in Washington, 37, 297

whipping and, 36

smallpox, 112

Smith, Caleb, 327, 364

Smith, Dr., 370

Smith, G. W., 284

Smithson, Joseph, 39

Smithsonian Institution, 39, 54

Snyder, G. W., 379

Somnambulist and the Detective, The (Pinkerton), 242

sounding, 184, 187, 189

South Carolina

explanation of secession by, 129–30

Lowcountry versus Upcountry of, 63

secession and, 85–86, 98–99, 110–18

war preparations and, 219, 308–10, 314, 350

South Carolina College, 32–34, 85, 110

South Carolina Jockey Club, 113, 223–24

South-Carolinian, 51

Southern Times, 34, 35

Springfield Republican, 166

St. Andrews Hall, 113, 114–15, 224

St. Michael's Church, 5, 26, 116

St. Philip's Church, 26

Staggers, W. L., 217

Stanton, Edwin M.

Buchanan and, 154–56, 161

conspiracy to seize Washington and, 214

end of war and, 479–80

Treason Committee and, 193

Star of the West, 180–82, 184–91, 198, 202, 205, 316, 327

Stark, Theo, 370

"Star-Spangled Banner, The," 487

starvation parties, 484

Stephens, Alexander H., 167, 197, 217

Stevens, Peter F., 316–17

Stockton, Emma, 484

Stone, Charles P., 248–49, 252

Stowe, Harriet Beecher, 44–45, 46

Strong, George Templeton, 241–42, 270, 318

Sullivan's Island, 22, 25, 315, 334

Summer White House, 77

Sumner, Charles, 383, 428

Sumter, Thomas, 4

Supreme Court

Confederate commissioners and, 337

Dred Scott decision and, 83–84, 299

Swain, James B., 374

T

Taber, William, 360

Talbot, Theodore, 200, 204, 207, 387, 395, 402, 411

Taney, Roger B., 83–84, 299

Taylor, Sarah Knox, 279

Taylor, Zachary, 279

telegraph

election results and, 17, 18

severing of, 263

Tennessee, secession and, 214, 468

Tennyson, 293

Tennyson, Alfred, 6

Texas, secession and, 268

Thackeray, William, 293–94

Thirteenth Amendment, proposed, 274, 275

Thomas, Lorenzo, 377–78, 385, 399–400, 409

Thomas, Philip F., 154, 209

Thomas Freeborn, 392

Thompson, Jacob, 154–55, 180, 181

Thompson, John

on Anderson's move to Fort Sumter, 150

on battle, 427, 430, 438, 450–51

on Fort Sumter's defenses, 160

on Fox's ships, 434

Thornton, William, 37–38

thunder barrels, 323, 352

Ticonderoga, U.S.S., 333–34

Times of London, 293–94, 355, 482. *See also* Russell, William Howard

tobacco, 341–42

Tocqueville, Alexis de, 388

Toombs, Robert, 156–57, 318, 319, 338–39, 346, 406–7

Toucey, Isaac, 102, 154, 193

Travis, Susan (later Ruffin), 62, 64–65

Treason Committee, 193–94, 261

Trescot, William Henry, 98–99, 145, 153–54, 156, 360

Trollope, Anthony, 293

Trumbull, Lyman, 90–92, 123

Turner, Nat, 40

21st Regiment U.S. Colored Infantry, 480

Twiggs, David E., 268, 377

Tyler, John, 220, 283

U

Un Ballo in Maschera (*A Masked Ball*; Verdi), 247

Uncle Ben, 392, 396

Uncle Robin, in his Cabin in Virginia, and Tom Without One in Boston, 45–46

Uncle Tom's Cabin; Or Life Among the Lowly (Stowe), 44–45, 46, 293

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 125

U.S. Census, 5, 6, 7

U.S. Post Office, 117

V

vaccinations, against smallpox, 112

Van Wyck, Charles H., 261–62

Van Wyck, Robert, 261

VanderHorst family, 361

Verdi, Giuseppe, 247

Vermilion County Press, 284

Vesey, Denmark, 40

Vigilant Rifles, 116

Villard, Henry, 89–90, 166, 234, 240, 297

Virginia, secession and, 209, 213–14, 272, 292, 298, 389–90, 467, 468

vultures, 26

W

Walker, Leroy Pope

Beauregard and, 290–91, 309, 373, 389, 403, 406, 417, 418, 475

Confederate commissioners and, 320

Fort Sumter siege and, 8

prediction regarding outcome of war from, 476

Warden, Ethan, 311

Warne, Kate, 177, 178, 243, 246, 263–64

Washburne, Elihu, 122–23, 265

Washington

Chesnut in, 95–96

conspiracy to seize, 212, 221

description of, 38

slavery in, 37–38

Washington Constitution, 92

Washington Light Infantry, 116

Washington Monument, 54, 214

Webster, Timothy, 178

Weed, Thurlow, 18, 167, 373, 374

Weir, Robert Walter, 107

Welles, Gideon, 119, 266, 327, 364, 376, 391

wet ditch, 125

White House, 39

White Sulphur Springs, 76–78

Whiting, W.H.C., 309, 419–20

Whitman, Walt, 245–46, 481

Wigfall, Louis T., 145, 166, 170, 300, 380, 394, 411, 452–59

Wigfall, Mrs., 394, 447

Wild Scenes of the South, 70

Wiley, Leroy M., 228

Willard, Joseph and Henry, 267

Willard Hotel

Lincoln at, 265, 267–68, 272, 273, 275, 298

Peace Convention and, 214, 272, 273, 275

Russell and, 344, 423

Wilson, John Lyde, 13

Winyah Bay, 163

Withers, Thomas Jefferson, 33, 277–78, 330, 360–61

Witherspoon, John, 370

Woods, Charles R., 182, 184–85, 187, 189

Y

Yancey, William Lowndes, 78–79

Yankee, 392, 396

“Yankee Doodle,” 462

Young, William Gourdin, 404–5, 453–56, 457, 458–59

Young Men’s Secession Association (YMSA), 30

Z

Zouaves, 116

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The Naked Consumer

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ERIK LARSON is the author of six previous national bestsellers—*The Splendid and the Vile*, *Dead Wake*, *In the Garden of Beasts*, *Thunderstruck*, *The Devil in the White City*, and *Isaac's Storm*—which have collectively sold more than twelve million copies. His books have been published in nearly forty countries.

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THE DEMON OF UNREST

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you read other books on the Civil War? Did Erik Larson's book make you think differently about it? If so, how?
2. Why was Fort Sumter so crucial to all parties? What did it symbolize before and after South Carolina seceded from the Union?
3. Why does President Buchanan seem blindsided by secession? Why were both sides provoked by his final speech to Congress? How did it help pave the way for South Carolina and others to leave the Union?
4. How do the events of 1860–61 parallel the present day?
5. In the introduction, Larson notes, "At the heart of the story is a mystery that still confounds: How on earth did South Carolina, a primitive, scantily populated state in economic decline, become the fulcrum for America's greatest tragedy?" Does the book solve that mystery? What answers did you see?
6. Talk about the city of Charleston. How had it changed over the nineteenth century? What was at stake for "the chivalry," the state of South Carolina, and the Confederacy by 1860?
7. The title of the book comes from a letter written in 1860 by Dennis Hart Mahan, in reference to the long reign of the planter class: "But when commerce, manufacturers, the mechanic arts disturbed this condition of things, and amassed wealth that could pretend to more lavish luxury than planting, then came in, I fear, this demon of unrest which has been the utmost sole disturber of the land for years past." What does "this demon of unrest" describe?
8. What light does the book shed on Abraham Lincoln? Does it reinforce or change your view of him?
9. Mary Chesnut's diary gives a woman's perspective on the unfolding events. What did you learn and find most interesting about her character?
10. Why were Southern planters affronted by the abolitionist reports of—and novels like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* about—

plantation life? Why were they convinced that, in slavery, they had created an ideal society?

11. Examples throughout the book suggest that Northerners, including the likes of Abraham Lincoln, did not understand Southern society. What did they fail to consider in the lead-up to the start of the Civil War?
12. “Cotton is king” was a widely repeated phrase at the time. Why was the South so certain that the North would back down from ending slavery? What made them think the world would follow suit?
13. Discuss Major Robert Anderson. How do his actions resonate with his soldiers, his superiors, and the rest of the country? What do you, as a reader, think of them?
14. While Lincoln tried to reassure Southerners that he wouldn’t change the current slave-labor system, Senator William Seward stated unequivocally that a slave system and a free-labor system could not co-exist: “It means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slaveholding nation, or entirely a free-labor nation.” Why was this such a dangerous/brave/shocking thing to say? What does it reveal about the status quo of the day?
15. What was the public sentiment around Lincoln? What did his peers think about his political acumen? Why do you think Lincoln had his own doubts of his capacity to be president?
16. How much have the Democrat and Republican parties changed? What do the parties of 1860 look like when compared with those of today?
17. Discuss the concept of honor as it pertains to the players on each side. How does it inform their character? How does the South reconcile their concept of honor with the horrors of slavery?
18. To today’s reader, the Civil War seemed inevitable. Yet, at the time, people seemed to have little inkling of what was to come. Why did they think conflict would be brief, or unlikely to occur at all?
19. Talk about the campaign of disinformation that permeated 1860. What falsehoods endured? Is that similar to today?

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