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Secdm
James A.
Hon^{ble}
Sec^y of War
Richmond
Va.

Headqrs. Department of S. C. Ga. & Florida
Charleston S. C. July 20th 1863.

Sir,

Your letter of the 12th instant was handed me some days ago, but my incessant occupation with the current duties of my position, at such a juncture, has not allowed me time for the preparation of such an answer as would give the Department any very clear knowledge of the details of the occurrences on Morris Island.

A full report will be made as soon as subordinate officers shall have placed these Head Quarters in official possession of the facts connected with their operations, and until then, I must ask the patience of the Department, especially since the service and thoughts of all here are really necessary for the efficient discharge of the momentous duties intrusted to us.

Preliminary to that report it may be of interest, however, to write somewhat less formally and generally of affairs here than in a battle report.

The enemy having gained a lodgment on Morris Island, it was at once considered whether he could be dislodged when reinforcements had been received and decided to be impracticable for reasons that will be exhibited in a special paper here after.

Copy of Report

It next became the question to determine what modifications in the system of defence must necessarily be introduced - first, by the lodgment already gained on Morris Island, and secondly, in case the whole Island fell into the Enemy's hands.

It was decided to prepare to make the stoutest possible defence of the works, in & after the other, and in every possible way prolong our possession to gain time to surround the enemy with such a fire as to make the Island of little use to him as a place of offence against Fort Sumter, and to make other modifications of our defensive works to meet new conditions of attack.

The contest therefore, is now purely one of Military Engineering, (especially since the unenviable slaughter which resulted from the two efforts so signally foiled, to carry Battery Wagner), involving three elements essential to success - time, labor, and long-range guns, with sufficient and proper ammunition.

Well aware of the pressure on the limited resources of the War Department, both of men and material, I endeavored to employ and handle my own to the best advantage to meet and repel the attempt by way of Morris Island, as soon as the point of attack was clearly revealed. For only when that discovery was made could I ^{venture} ~~venture~~

to concentrate here the small widely scattered ~~Infantry~~ force at my disposition. This I did, but meantime, as reported, the enemy had assailed and carried our positions south of Battery Wagner for the want of troops to effectually oppose them, for their lack of works of proper size and strength, and suitable armament, as I had always feared must be the result if that method of attack were seriously resorted to by an officer of Capacity, with the immense resources of the United States at his disposition.

Charleston, it is proper to say, was assailable from three quarters: First, through Jamies Island, via the Sound, left open by the abandonment of Coler Island.

Secondly, by Morris Island, via Folly Island, also left exposed by yielding Coker Island. Thirdly, Sullivan's, via Long Island.

The first point being regarded as clearly vital to the defence of the harbour, and city, was guarded by 1184 Infantry, 1869 Artillery, and 183 Cavalry, or 2,906 men of all arms, instead of the force estimated heretofore to wit, 11,500

The second point was occupied by 612 Infantry, 989 Artillerists and 268 Cavalry, or 927 men, instead of about 8,000 men of all arms, and the third point by 207 Infantry, 726 Artillerists and 228 Cavalry, or 1138 men, instead of at least

3,500 men of all arms. While in the City of Charleston, a small reserve of 87th Cavalry Artillery, and Infantry was maintained as a guard and ready to be thrown in an emergency whenever the enemy might develop his point of attack, but principally to reinforce James Island.

Leaving a force on Folly Island after the attack in April, the enemy gave only occasional evidences of any intention to resort to the Morris Island way of attack until a day or two before the South end of the Island was carried, and at which time the defence on Morris Island, consisted of Battery Wagner, an excellent work located by Genl Pemberton to play the important part it is now doing so well. That is, as a defence against an approach by land and Battery Slegg built as an additional defence to the mouth of the Harbour, and to command the gorge of Battery Wagner - located by my orders and erected by the lamented Capt Oliver. These Batteries were nearly completed, lacking, however, certain heavy guns, and material to the perfection of their armaments. In addition, certain batteries and Infantry emplacements, projected, but delayed from want of labor, were under construction at the Southern extremity, and

at other points near Morris Island, as counter-
 demonstrations to the demonstrations of the enemy
 on Folly Island.

The force of the enemy may be esti-
 mated as at least four Brigades, of 2,500 men
 each, or a total of some 10,000 men, with ample
 means of transportation and every appliance
 of war supported by the guns of a powerful and
 numerous fleet.

Making a strong demonstration against
 James Island, filling the Stons with Gun Boats and
 troops, and occupying Battery Island in force,
 the enemy at the same time vigorously attacked
 the small force available for defence of the South
 end of Morris Island with his main force, under
 cover of a powerful battery of long-range guns
 placed in a battery thrown up on North end
 of Little Folly Island. He soon overpowered the
 small force and weak batteries which alone
 could be opposed to his offensive movements
 at the time, and drove our troops out of their
 works, back to the shelter of Battery Wagner.
 We could do any effort be made to dislodge
 him before the arrival of reinforcements, by
 which time he had so firmly established
 his naturally strong position, as to make
 any offensive attempt desperate and im-
 practicable - that is without the support of

a strong naval force.

It may be asked: why was not this catastrophe guarded against? To which I have to say generally, that stronger works could not be erected for lack of labor, though every effort was exhausted to secure negroes, from the day I took command of the Dept, up to the 1st July 1863. Further, I had not been able to get the armament essential for such works, and besides, as before said, I did not have a gunner sufficiently strong for Morris, James and Sullivan's Islands at the same time.

The holding of the position were secondary to that of James Island, which must first be secured beyond peril, if possible, of surprise & capture. But my reports to the War Dept. are full of these details, showing the relative positions and value of these approaches to and defenses of Charleston, in fact all the information necessary for a correct appreciation and comprehension of the state of affairs here.

I shall of course, allow no opportunity to pass for annoying the enemy and shall make every effort to anticipate and foil my adversary, and if practicable, dislodge him from his present position.

Respectfully
Your Obedt. Servt.
G. T. Beauregard.

Genl. Comdr.