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THE DEFENSE OF FORT WAGNER.

AMONG my comrades at the venerable College of Charleston, there was a youth of apparently frail physique, of quiet and retired manners, in whom, although he achieved no special scholastic distinction in the orthodox curriculum, his associates recognized certain peculiar talents. His art instincts were strong, and he displayed far more than a simple taste for mechanics. He had executed the first of an admirable series of oil-paintings before he was ten, and made unaided a singularly ingenious model of a steam-engine at the age of fourteen. This engine took a prominent prize at the Carolina Institute Fair.

We all believed that our friend, Robert C. Gilchrist, would secure fame and fortune as a painter or inventor, perhaps as both. I used to observe upon his face that strange, introspective look which strikes one in the portraits of Watt and Stephenson. Circumstance, however, is a strange master; and circumstance seems, in a perverse, mysterious way, to have opposed the development of the gifts indicated. Had some shrewd *Gitana* ventured to foretell in our "salad days" the sort of reputation which Gilchrist was destined to win, there is no doubt she would have been laughed to scorn.

And yet, *au fond*, there was wild, hot blood, blood of the born soldier, in this quiet young man's veins. He inherited a gallant and determined temper from his English ancestors, especially from his grandfathers Adam and Robert Gilchrist, who emigrated from Great Britain shortly previous to the Revolution, and served with distinction in the Continental army.*

Thus, after all, nothing could have been more natural by the law of heredity than their descendant's martial conduct when his section and State were threatened by Federal invasion. True, he was a Union man, and deprecated secession as a matter of policy, but no sooner was war inevitable than he went strenuously to work; and he was mainly instrumental in raising the "Charleston Zouave Cadets," the first company to volunteer their services to Governor Pickens after South Carolina (un-

der her right in the old Constitution) had reassumed her position of independent sovereignty.

Subsequently he organized the Gist Guard Artillery, which won such brilliant renown in the defense of Battery Wagner. Though but a lieutenant,† he commanded this company all through the protracted and terrible siege, and his name deserves to be handed down to posterity as one of its truest heroes.

Scarcely of the medium height, pale, thin, and delicate of aspect, so exceptional, still, was the resiliency of his constitution, backed by a strong soul, that he out-labored and out-wore not a few of the most vigorous looking men in the garrison. Active, observant, constantly at his post by day and by night, it is clear that a description of the battle of Fort Wagner and the momentous incidents which accompanied and followed it could not have fallen into better hands. I was consequently much interested when I received a copy of the "Charleston Year-Book for 1884," containing an article by Major Gilchrist, on the "Confederate Defense of Morris Island."

It is an essay carefully prepared, and rife with material beyond price to the future historian. When in years to come the Xenophon or Thucydides shall arise commissioned to write of the great secession contest, he will doubtless be led by his beneficent Muse to consult among other memorabilia this lucid and truthful narrative.

Meanwhile, I have the author's permission to use his facts; he consents, good reader, to be your guide and mine through a labyrinth of somewhat devious events, and to show us the different phases of one of the sternest and grandest acts in the tragedy of modern warfare.

* * * * *

Any one sailing or stemming into the harbor of Charleston will observe toward the south, as he approaches the city, and to the left of what is called "The Ship Channel," a long, low, and sparsely-wooded island which, upon examining the map, he will find designated as

†During the last year of the war, Gilchrist (a lawyer by profession) was detached from his command to serve as Judge Advocate General in the Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, and thus became the law-adviser of that department. He was promoted to be a major of artillery, and fought on General Hardee's staff in several desperate engagements.

*One served as captain, the other as lieutenant. After the war, Robert Gilchrist settled in New York. He became an influential merchant there. Adam, settling in Charleston, prospered in business also as a merchant. He was one of the founders of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce, and officially connected with the Branch Bank of the United States.

"Morris Island." It is a famous place, and must so remain for centuries. Thence the first shot which effectually cut the bond of Union was fired at the Star of the West; "later it gave to the world its first lesson in iron-clad armor;"* and finally, it was the theater of the defense of an earth-work as stubborn, and a subsequent siege and bombardment as memorable," as the war annals of ancient or modern times can furnish.

Let us examine this island minutely. It is about four miles, or to be literal, three and three fourths miles long, and its greatest breadth is twenty-five hundred yards. Nowhere is it much more than two feet above high-water mark.

The soil composing it is peculiar, being what is denominated "quartz-sand, which has no cohesion, and weighs, when dry, eighty-six pounds to the cubic foot. To its power in resisting the penetration of shot and, when displaced, of falling buck again to the very spot it had occupied, is due the comparative invulnerability of the works constructed out of it."

Less than a mile from Cumming's Point, the position of Battery Gregg, the marsh on the west encroaches, leaving a narrow strip between it and the ocean. Here stood Fort Wagner. Next to Morris Island, southward, is Little Folly Island, separated from Morris Island by an inlet only four hundred yards wide. Behind the northern hills, covered by myrtle bushes, of this insulated sand-barren every facility was offered to the enemy for the erection of masked batteries. The fact was patent, or ought to have been so to the veriest military tyro; and yet the Confederates, dominating for weeks this important strategic point, were guilty of the incredible fatuity of allowing the tree growths to remain just as they were—a convenient shelter for quiet and deadly preparations on the part of a foe decidedly more shrewd and active, *quoad hoc*, than they showed themselves to be.

What was the consequence of this infatuated neglect? It enabled the Federals, says Major Gilchrist "to secretly place in battery forty-

*When it was determined to reduce Fort Sumter (under Anderson) with artillery, a clerk in the Planters and Mechanics Bank, Charleston, whose peculiar genius had never been dreamed of, devised and built at Cumming's Point, Morris Island, the first iron-clad fortification ever erected! Over heavy timbers he placed railroad T iron, laid at an angle of forty-five degrees. The amazing success of his plan revolutionized modern warfare. The name of this inventor was Clement H. Stevens.

seven pieces of artillery, with two hundred rounds of ammunition for each gun, provided with suitable parapets, splinter-proof shelters, and magazines."

During the entire progress of this work the Confederates were actually within speaking distance of their cunning, indefatigable enemy.

The Federal occupation of Folly Island thus potentially backed was the first act in the bloody tragedy of Wagner.

It seems that a vast amount of speculation and recrimination subsequently occurred as to the person or persons who were specially blameworthy in this matter. But the truth is now obvious. The commander-in-chief, General Beauregard, believed, no doubt upon what seemed to him the best procurable evidence, that the Federal advance would be over James Island. "The holding," he himself says, "of the position (on Morris Island) is secondary to that of James Island, which must first be secured beyond peril of surprise or capture." By his express order "every negro laborer was withdrawn from Morris Island to strengthen the fortifications elsewhere."

Even Fort Wagner, then but half completed, was so far abandoned that only the men of the Gist Guards and Matthews Artillery were left to work upon it. The commander went farther still. When he discovered that his colleague, General Ripley, employing his own engineer, "had begun to fortify the neighborhood of Light-house Inlet,† he peremptorily ordered the work to stop." But about this period there arose a rumor to the effect that a Federal detachment had been seen working upon Folly Island. Beauregard appears then to have modified his views. At all events, General Ripley was permitted to send two companies "of the First South Carolina Artillery, Captain John C. Mitchell‡ commanding, who, with the assist-

†This is the name of the inlet between Morris and Little Folly islands.

‡While at Fort Sumter, in the early part of 1862, I made the acquaintance of Captain Mitchell. He was then about twenty-six or seven, a young man of medium height and decidedly delicate appearance. His profession (if my memory serves me) was that of an engineer, and he had resided previous to his coming South for some years in the State of New York. In no particular did he resemble his distinguished father excepting his high *morale* and indomitable courage. The elder Mitchell was rather tall, dark complexioned, with regular features, and deep flashing eyes, and his manners were remarkably cordial and agreeable. His son, on the contrary, was of the more ordinary Milesian type, with a light skin and light eyes, his one striking feature being a thin, firm

ance of the Twenty-first South Carolina Volunteers, Colonel Graham, built among the sand-hills of the south end of Morris Island nine independent one-gun batteries, which were eventually to meet the concentrated fire of forty-seven guns in the masked batteries on Folly Island, and 8-, 11-, and 16-inch guns in the monitors."

The battle of Secessionville, at an earlier period, had been fought and lost by the Federals. The breathing space granted to their opponents was properly utilized, since during this interval Captains Frank D. Lee and Langston Cheves, of the Confederate States Engineer Corps, planned and built Fort Wagner.

Its position I have already indicated. As for the character of this fort, Major Gilchrist tells us that it was an inclosed earth-work, measuring within the interior slopes, from east to west, six hundred and thirty feet; and from north to south, two hundred and seventy-five feet. The sea-face contained a bomb-proof magazine, forming a heavy traverse to protect the three guns north of it from the land fire. Behind this sea-face was a bomb-proof which could not accommodate more than nine hundred men standing elbow to elbow; and this capacity was further reduced by cutting off one third for the hospital. The land-face was irregular, with re-entering angles, and with chambers for five guns, to sweep the land approach. The front was protected by a ditch filled with water at high tide.

The armament of Wagner comprised a single 10-inch columbiad, one thirty-two pounder

mouth, which closed, as it were, over his thoughts like an iron vise. To most persons he was reserved; but only with his confidence and he could be a charming companion. He possessed a large fund of humor, which, odd to say, was rather Scotch than Irish in its inferences and quaint *taucendo*. Many a night have I met him in his quarters while he smoked and talked and told amusing anecdotes of his earlier years and his adventures in America and "over seas."

Under his tranquil exterior there was a world of enthusiasm and soldierly ambition. One morning, while examining through his glass from the walls of Sumter the disposition of the Federal fleet, there came a significant puff from the port-hole of a distant monitor. An officer near him (Captain Perlinneau) leaped down behind the defenses and urged Mitchell to do likewise. "Time enough," said the latter, "I'll follow you directly." Almost before these words had left his lips, the unfortunate man had been smitten by a shell and terrifically mangled. He died in a few hours, I believe, and in great agony, borne with a fortitude that was sublime. His body rests in Magnolia Cemetery, near Charleston, and a beautiful marble monument marks the place of the young martyr's repose.

smooth bore, one forty-two pounder carronade, two naval 8-inch shell guns, three thirty-two pounder carronades, two thirty-two pounder siege howitzers, two twelve-pounder bronze howitzers, and one 10-inch mortar.

As to the troops, there were upon Morris Island, in the early part of July, twelve hundred men of all arms. These were necessarily divided,* occupying different points.

It is proper to state in this connection that General Beauregard's entire available force in his department, comprising South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, slightly exceeded fifteen thousand men, and never could he muster for the immediate defense of Charleston more than five thousand eight hundred and sixty-one.

General Gilmore, *au contraire*, had—magnificently equipped and armed—in South Carolina alone no less than seventeen thousand four hundred and sixty-three, officers and men inclusive. His force actually employed on Morris Island at one time, Major Gilchrist assures us, did not vary much from eleven thousand five hundred, aided, let us remember, by a powerful fleet of iron-clads. Opposed to these the world will be amazed to hear that the Confederate "grand total" on the island never mounted higher than sixteen hundred men,† and that so inadequate a force was often reduced to less than one thousand.

On the 3d or 4th of July (1863), a Confed-

*Here is Major Gilchrist's detailed estimate, viz: "Nine hundred and twenty-seven men, Colonel R. F. Graham, of the Twenty-first South Carolina Volunteers, in command; Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph A. Yates, of the First South Carolina artillery, as Chief of Artillery; Captain C. E. Cletcher, of the Gist Guard Artillery, commanding Fort Wagner (by right of seniority). Artillery companies: Gist Guard, Lieutenant R. C. Gilchrist; and Matthewes Artillery, Captain J. R. Matthewes. In Battery Gregg, at Cumming's Point, was Captain Henry R. Lesesne, of the First South Carolina artillery, with his company. At the south end of the island, defending the nine single batteries erected there to dispute landing from Folly Island, were companies I and E, and a detachment of H (two hundred men), of the First South Carolina Artillery, Captains John C. Mitchell (son of the Irish patriot) and J. R. Macbeth, and Lieutenant H. W. Frost, and a detachment of fifty men of the First South Carolina Infantry, under Captain Charles T. Haskell, and the Twenty-first South Carolina Volunteers (six hundred and twelve men) under Major G. W. McIver."

†Some editorial wag affirmed, during the war, that the highest number of men on Morris Island at any period was increased for an hour or so by the advent of two volunteers from the remote interior swamps of Carolina, who no sooner caught sight of a monitor, however, than they "skodaddled" at treble-quick time back to the alligators.

erato scout saw a long, low, rakish-looking vessel approach the south entrance to Light-house Inlet. She proved to be a blockade-runner, a steamer called the Ruby, and unfortunately she got aground near Folly Island.

The toil-stained, weary, half-famished Confederates beheld plenty within their reach. Is it extraordinary that they should have left their labor on the batteries for a while and engaged in the business of "wrecking" so rich a prize?

Their absorbed eagerness was such, their natural anxiety to secure some creature comforts so great, that they had neither eyes to see nor ears to hear what was progressing within five hundred yards of their position. No glint flashed upon any man's vision of blue uniforms behind the trees; nor did a single ominous sound of hammer, or saw, stealthily plied perhaps in ambush, reach any man's hearing. Indeed, the enemy in that quarter were supposed to be at a comfortable distance; the delusion did not long continue.

The morning of the 10th of July broke over the city and the adjacent waters brightly and tranquilly.

Citizens of comfortable age and Falstaffian panaches, long past, like Baillie Nichol Jarvie, the responsibilities of "sword and buckler" service, were about to turn over for a charming day-dawn nap, when a sudden and tremendous boom, the simultaneous discharge of forty-seven pieces of heavy artillery, saluted them from half way down the harbor! The enemy had unmasked his Folly Island batteries with a vengeance, and aided by four monitors delivering enfilade broadsides, and as many more howitzer launches, poured a *feu d'enfer* upon the unfinished Confederate works.

Under cover of this bombardment (heard more than a hundred and thirty miles inland)* twenty-five hundred Federals, under Brigadier-General Strong, putting out in small boats from Folly River, landed at Oyster Point. Our men, enormously outnumbered, fought behind their feeble defenses until almost every gun was dismounted. Then, when capture was imminent, the few gallant survivors, disputing every inch of ground, fell slowly and sullenly back. Not for a moment did the monitors at close range

cease to fire shrapnell and shells, while the Federals deploying across the island delivered murderous fusillades.

A portion of the Seventh battalion of South Carolina infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel Nelson, landed just in time to cover our retreat.

The guns of Wagner now also had a chance, and very effectually stopped all further pursuit. But the enemy had gained a great advantage. At 9 A. M. the "stars and stripes" were floating over Colonel Graham's captured headquarters. Thus were the operations against Wagner inaugurated. On this first day of blood and carnage, the skilled engineer, Captain Cheves, to whom chiefly the fort owed its existence, lost his life under especially pathetic circumstances. He was sitting in his quarters, when a soldier, entering, gravely saluted him, communicating the intelligence that his favorite nephew, Captain Charles T. Haskell had just been killed. This sudden announcement unmanned him.

But the cannonade without grew fiercer. All space seemed to vibrate and "hum" as with the war-song of Brobdignag bees." Time enough for the indulgence of a private grief. Duty summoned him, and rising, he "crossed the threshold of his door toward one of the magazines." At that instant a shell, the *very first shell* launched especially at the fort, bursting, scattered its fragments all around. One of these fragments struck him, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, his spirit had gone to join that of the young kinsman whose death he had so passionately mourned but a few minutes before! But his great work did not perish with him. "Artillery, which reduced the walls of Sumter to a shapeless mass four thousand five hundred yards away, at less than one third the distance made, in fifty-eight days, but little impression on this monument of his genius and labor."

If the amount of shell and shot rained in an iron deluge upon and about it could, like the seeds of Cadmus, have sprouted into armed men, there would have been no need of Northern "draughtings," but South Carolina, and in fact the entire Southern Confederacy, would have been immediately overrun by such countless hordes as must have put to shame the armies of a Zenghis Khan or a Xerxes!

And if, on the other hand, all this hurtling iron had been suddenly and miraculously changed into "golden grain," one can not help fancying that the lust of war would have cooled down, and that, during some blessed

* It is astonishing to what distances sound may be conveyed. In the autumn of 1861, I recollect hearing, upon the Charleston Battery, the successive rounds of Dupont's fleet in the battle of Port Royal with an accuracy and distinctness which seemed to locate the conflict within a distance of ten, instead of seventy-five or eighty miles.

interregnum of slaughter; both sides, their "swords changed into pruning hooks," might have joined in a beneficent "harvest home."

A strange flower of fancy, I grant you, to spring from the core of carnage! Still, it holds a certain bloom and perfume, and one's thoughts are purified by them.

Among the great engineers of the world, assuredly the fame of Langton Cheves is destined to be perennial. Few perhaps are aware of the fact, that of the "only two models of fortification now used for purposes of instruction to the West Point cadets, one is Fort Wagner, the other Sebastopol."

During the night of the 10th, the garrison of Wagner, suspecting an assault, was on the *qui vive*. Every man was at his post. The artillerymen slumbered but lightly in their gun-chambers. Near dawn the outlying pickets heard the cautious advance of stealthily-placed footsteps. Forms vaguely discerned, crept along the sand ridges. Yes, there could be no doubt of it! here was a storming-party, anxious to effect a surprise. But they could not be accommodated.

The guns to the right and right center of the ramparts were instantaneously manned by the South Carolinians. The Georgians guarded the left and left center; the Eighteenth battalion occupied the southeast bastion; the First Georgia along the sea-front to the left; the Twelfth Georgia battalion to the right, Colonel Graham commanding the whole.

The Federal attack by four companies of the Seventh Connecticut, under Lieutenant-Colonel Rodman, was so rapid that they mounted the crest of the sea-face upon the very heels of our retreating picket force!

Just then, Lieutenant Gilchrist, heading the Gist Guard, tells us that he perceived a dim silhouette against the sky-line—the uncertain proportions of a human figure. He challenged him sternly and quickly, and as quickly the man's rifle was leveled, and a minie-ball combed the lieutenant's hair with unnecessary closeness, while the powder blinded his eyes. Nevertheless, there followed a deep response from a double-shotted thirty-two pounder, the entire load of grape and canister passing through the assailant's body. His emptied rifle dropped with a hollow clang, inside the wall.

Then, as at a signal, the whole battery became transformed, as it were, into a vast earth-cloud darting lightnings and bellowing thunder. The great columbiad pealed forth its bass of death; cannonades, howitzers, and mortars

joined in the deadly din; and one could detect, perhaps, through the awful *crescendo* the sharp crack of Reamington and revolver.

Through the smoke-wreaths, as daylight brightened, decimated and demoralized bands of blue-coats were seen rushing to gain the shelter of the sand-hills.

A remnant of the forlorn hope of the Seventh Connecticut had sheltered themselves against the scarp when our fire was hottest. They crawled in and surrendered, one hundred and thirty prisoners, rank and file. Over a hundred were buried in front of Wagner, and in addition three hundred and fifty wounded were carried to Hilton Head. General Strong reports his losses in the two days fighting as four hundred and thirty-six. The total loss in the fort was one officer and five men killed, and one officer and fifteen men wounded. Thus it will be seen that the repulse of the Confederates on the day previous (the 10th) was terribly avenged.

Events now hastened toward the fiercest of the Wagner battles; a conflict so desperate and murderous, and characterized by such indomitable valor on both sides, that it may fairly rank among the sternest fights of the secession or any other war.

While the Federals, after their defeat of the 11th, were strengthening their position, a council of general officers, it seems, was called by General Beauregard, "to discuss the practicability of driving the enemy from Morris Island." This, with the limited resources at hand, was found to be impossible.

Between the 11th and 17th the exhausted Confederates in the fort were relieved by an accession of fresh troops*.

Brigadier-General William Taliaferro succeeded General Graham as commander-in-chief.

It was remarked that the Federal fleet had quietly disappeared from Stono.

The "New Ironsides" steamed in over the bar. Their forces on the island increased. Four powerful batteries—the nearest within thirteen

*Namely, by the Fifty-first North Carolina, six hundred and eighty-seven men, under Colonel H. McKethan, detachments from Captains Buckner and Dixon's companies of Sixty-third Georgia artillery. Captains Tatem and Adams' companies of First South Carolina Infantry as artillery; section of howitzers of DeSausure's artillery, Captain DePass; section of howitzers, Blake's artillery, Lieutenant Waties; Charleston battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel P. C. Gattlard, Thirty-first North Carolina troops, Lieutenant-Colonel Knight.

hundred and thirty yards of Wagner—were built, magnificently armed.

Before sunrise on the 18th, the mortars opened; and at noon the fire of eleven monitors, combined with that of the land batteries, was concentrated, for eight hours, upon Cheves' *chef-d'œuvre!* Nine thousand shell, averaging twenty per minute, were expended, we may say comparatively wasted, since the fort stood intact, and of its defenders but eight were killed and twenty wounded!

This infernal bombardment ceased at dark only to allow the Federals a fair chance for assaulting in force. Sumter and Gregg prepared to fire over Wagner at the advancing columns. The James Island batteries made ready to enfilade its face. General Johnson Hagood (subsequently Governor of South Carolina, and a most gallant soldier) was ordered to support General Taliaferro, and one Georgia regiment, Colonel Harrison, hastened to reinforce the garrison.

This much for the Confederates.

On the other side, it had been arranged that the brigade of Brigadier-General Strong was to lead, comprising Colonel Shaw's Fifty-fourth Massachusetts and Colonel Chatfield's Sixth Connecticut regiments (with a battalion of the Seventh Connecticut); the Third New Hampshire, Forty-eighth New York, Ninth Maine, and Seventy-sixth Pennsylvania regiments, to be supported by Colonel Putnam's brigade, which included one New Hampshire, one New York, and two Ohio regiments. Brigadier-General Thomas Seymour commanded.

The sun had almost reached the horizon when these regiments, glittering in blue and gold, the last rays of the luminary flashing in ominous brightness from bayonets, swords, and epaulets, were formed on the beach, to the rear of their batteries, in columns of eight companies closed at half distance; the Sixth Connecticut to lead and attack the southeast salient angle of the fort, the Forty-eighth New York to pass along the sea-front, and, facing inward, to attack there; the other regiments of the brigade to charge the south front, extending inward toward the marshes on the left, while to the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts colored-volunteers, one thousand strong, splendidly drilled, and accoutered, the honor was given of a position in advance of all.

They were to distinguish themselves in the ambitious and romantic role of *enfants perdus!* Colonel Robert G. Shaw commanded these men, and, doubtless, his pride and confidence

were high, as he beheld (in the striking language of Mr. George H. Boker),

"Down the long, dusty line,
Teeth gleam and eyeballs shine."

In personal appearance, this young officer is described as of slight and short figure, arrayed in a short jacket, but with long light hair which fell low upon his neck and across his shoulders.

There seems, by the way, to have been no question whatever among the Federals as to the success of their assault. They fondly fancied that the guns of Wagner had been effectually silenced, that the garrison was feeble and demoralized, that all they had to do was to make one rapid charge, and *regarder vous! un fait accompli!* Of course, they said complacently, "We'll sleep in that battered earth-work to-night."

"And so many a poor fellow did!" remarks Major Gilchrist, with grim pity. A ghastly and mysterious slumber, in which the unbreathing warrior

"Dreams of battle-fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking."

As sunset faded and twilight deepened into night, the Federal bombardment on land and sea suddenly and completely ceased. A great calm ensued; but it was quiet, portentous, and terrible. It seemed as if the heart of Nature stood still, awed by a prescience of the impending and fearful catastrophe.

Gradually the smoke of the cannonade, swathed about the fort for hours, so far lifted that the enemy were seen debouching from their first parallel and advancing over the narrow approach between it and the fort. Then from bomb-proof and sand-hills the garrison quickly gathered along the ramparts. Field-pieces were ranged; the artillerymen double-shotted their guns, and,

Each gunner moveless by his piece with rigid aspect
stands,
The ready lanyards firmly grasped in bold untrem-
bling hands,
So moveless in their marble calm, their stern heroic
guise,
They look like forms of statued stone with burning
human eyes.

Three companies of the Charleston battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Guillard (than whom no braver and nobler soldier ever lived and fought a *l'outrance*, and no marvel, since he bore in his veins the blood of one who led the *Gaule Glacks*),* manned the right of the bat-

*Does my reader remember the exploit of the *Gaule Glacks*. It is well told by Lawrence, author of

tery, and next on the left stood the Fiftieth North Carolina Volunteers, Colonel Henry McKethan. The southeast salient, owing to the inefficiency of some raw recruits, remained undefended, while the remaining companies of the Charleston battalion occupied the extreme left, near the beach.

On rushed the Federals at a double quick, saluted by a simultaneous outbreak of hot shot; an implacable, concentrated fire from Sumter, Gregg, and James Island. They began to appreciate just then the full meaning of "a Roland for one's Oliver."

And conspicuous in the van, on came the little misguided and unfortunate Massachusetts Colonel Shaw, his long hair waving behind him, as he led his sable *enfants perdus*. A portion followed him over the ditch, and planted their flag upon the ramparts, where the Colonel was shot and instantly killed. The others, however, could not endure the sight of that gaping ditch—or the revolting sensation of winged metal, viciously near—therefore, they broke, and under the influence a panic, disgraceful and irretrievable, acted rather like wild brutes let loose from a menagerie, than reasoning, responsible men. They blundered first upon the Ninth Maine, and afterward upon the Seventy-Sixth Pennsylvania, partially destroying the organization of both.

Some of the frightened creatures ran like deer; others, in the base paralysis of terror, prostrated themselves upon the ground, crawling along on hands and feet.*

Then, in startling contrast with this pusillanimity of "the Black Regiment," by the side of which even the action of the Spartan Helots (who confronted bravely enough their masters' spears, and covered only at the crack of the whip) looks like loftiest heroism; then a grand deed, what the old Northerners would have called a deed of *derring-do*, was performed by men of the ever dominant Caucasian race, the thought

"*Border and Bastille.*" They were attacking some town in the wars of the Fronde. The breach was scarcely practicable; and the best of the besieging army had recoiled from it with immense loss. The Black Mousquetaires stood by in all the coquetry of scarf and plume, and fringed scented gloves, laughing louder and more insolently at each repulse of the linesmen. The soldiers heard, and gnashed their teeth. At length there was a murmur, and then, a shout. *En avant! les Gants Glacés!* Whereupon the Household brigade went up and carried the breach, leaving one third of their number on it. The General made the whole army defile past their *guidon*, and salute it with sloped standards.

*Vide Judge Cowley's *Life Afloat and Ashore*, page 93.

of which, as I write a quarter of a century after its occurrence, here in the tranquil Indian summer, makes my heart beat and pulses throb tumultuously. Across the narrow and fatal stretch before the fort—every inch of which was swept by a hurricane of fire, a besom of destruction—the Sixth Connecticut, Colonel John Chatfield, charged with such undaunted resolution upon the southeast salient, that they succeeded, in the very face of hell, one may say, in capturing it.

What though their victory was a barren achievement! what though for three hours they were penned in, no support daring to follow them! friend and foe alike now, as then, must honor and salute them as the bravest of the brave!

Grinly they held on to the salient they had taken. Indeed, retreat was next to impossible. Even a body of *eroc mitaines* are naturally indisposed to taste twice of the Hudean flambol. Vainly a section of the Charleston Irish volunteers endeavored to dislodge them. They were repulsed, and their Captain, Ryan, killed. A detail from Major David Ramsay's command, advancing upon the same errand, the gallant Major was struck in the back by a shot from the bomb-proof, and fell mortally wounded. But the enemy were at this time retreating from all parts of the field. Their demoralization was complete. Nevertheless, a sharp fire of grape and musketry hissed over the faces of the salient until the Thirty-first Georgia regiment (who had just reached the island with Brigadier-General Hagood) charged over the south scarp and two companies of the Charleston battalion, Captain Julius Blake, deployed along the western face, when the Sixth Connecticut, convinced that the game was up, sensibly surrendered!

The history of the war, rife with desperate conflicts, can show no more terrific strife than this. It was, in more than one particular, a battle of giants.

Of the overwhelming character of the Federal defeat there can not be the shadow of a doubt.

I have conversed with old Confederates in regard to the night succeeding this great assault, and have remarked how seasoned veterans shuddered when they recalled its horrors. Four thousand of the enemy had been dashed against our impenetrable earth-work, and when re-formed within their own lines how many, think you, answered to their names?

Only six hundred!

Their commander-in-chief, Brigadier-General Strong, was wounded unto death. Colonels Chatfield, Putnam, and Shaw lay dead within our lines.

An awful silence had fallen over the field of late so shaken by the tramp of squadrons and the roar of innumerable guns. But through the stillness there would rise at intervals sinister and significant sounds—the low wail of the wounded, the last, sobbing, hysterical call of the dying.

Wearily the dark hours passed, and a Sabbath morning (Oh, Christ! the merciful! must not thine eyes have turned from the glory of the sea of glass and the mysterious splendor of thy Heaven, as beheld by St. John at Patmos, to grow moist with human tears at such a spectacle!)—a Sabbath morning dawned over the sand-hills, and every detail of the revolting scene was brought out and emphasized in bold relief! An eye-witness, with fearful realism, depicts it thus: "Blood, mud, water, brains, and human hair matted together, men lying in every possible attitude, with every conceivable expression on their countenances; their limbs bent into unnatural shapes by the fall of twenty or thirty feet; the figures rigid, outstretched, as if they had clutched at the earth to save themselves; pale, beseeching faces, looking out from among the ghastly corpses, with moans and cries for help and water, and dying gasps and death struggles!"

In the salient, on the ramparts, they lay (these Federal corpses) heaped up often three deep; conspicuous among them was a tall, superbly-formed man, an officer, whose calm features—only the more clearly cut by the chisel of death—gazed toward the cloudless sky! A breathless Apollo! This was Colonel Putnam, of the Seventh New Hampshire. Although, horrible to relate, the entire back part of his head had been blown off, the wonderful beauty of his face remained intact and unshadowed, evoking from his foes a sigh of pity.

On the crest, surrounded by a few—a very few—of his sable troops, at the foot of the flag he had vainly planted, was the body of Colonel Shaw. One would have thought at a cursory glance that it was the corpse of a mere boy.

On this Sunday the wounded were removed, the dead buried. Of the latter, eight hundred mangled bodies were interred near the beach.

Negotiations for the exchange of prisoners followed; and the 27th of July was appointed as the day. All the Confederate batteries were ordered to stop firing. Not so the Federals!

To their disgrace (after having deliberately assaulted Wagner, pending a flag of truce some days before), they ranged their whole fleet abreast of the fort, and from both fleet and earth-works opened a concentrated fire. Behind bomb-proof traverses and emplacements the Confederates sought shelter. With the means of an effective response, they kept scornfully silent.

While the exchange of prisoners progressed, General Talliferro, holding council with his officers, decided that the place was no longer tenable!

But there was one officer there, who, knowing the fort and its tremendous capabilities far better than the others, since from the first spadeful of sand thrown up, he had seen it grow to completion, shared not the general feeling of insecurity. He manned the gig of the Gist Guard Artillery, of which he was captain, sought General Ripley's Charleston headquarters, and after an interview with that plucky commander, returned to Wagner with orders that the fort should be held. These orders were confirmed by Beauregard. Thus, observes Major Gilchrist, "incidentally through the personal efforts of Captain E. C. Chichester, Wagner, and, in fact, the city itself was saved at that date from falling into the enemy's hands!"*

It became evident to the Federals in the latter part of July that Wagner was not to be carried by *coups de main*! Thenceforth the method of siege by regular approach and bombardment was resorted to. Every facility existed for this undermining sort of work.

Sumter by the 18th or 20th had been practically annihilated; and, protected by their iron-clads on the right flank and impenetrable marshes on the left, with only the guns on James Island, upward of two miles away, to ineffectually oppose them, they established their parallels one after the other until the very salient-port of Wagner had been almost reached.

Subsequent to the 20th, life upon Morris Island resolved itself for the most part into stern, obstinate endurance. Morning, noon, and night, the fort seemed the center of a perfect *Inferno*. Sea batteries and land batteries belched their venom against it. Torrid heats, reflected from the white sand surfaces, tormented the garrison, unprotected alike from sun and shower. Carcasses of men and horses,

*The fall of Wagner then would have gravely impaired the safety of Charleston, as the defenses in the inner harbor were incomplete.

unearthed, together with piles of putrid provisions thrown along the beach, gave out through every pore of a steaming decomposition a smell, a stench, such as the world has no name for, no conception of—hellish, suffocating, and insupportable. A huge fly of brilliant color, a species of insect scavenger attracted by this corruption, inflicted wounds more painful, actually, than the enemy's shot, if not so deadly. Water was scarce, and the food, often spoiled in transit, scarcely edible. Picture, too, the unventilated bomb-proofs filled with the smoke of lumps and smell of blood.

Of sleep, healthful and refreshing sleep, of course there was none. How, with the everlasting crash of artillery and the bursting of shells, could "Nature's sweet restorer" have exerted her beneficent spells. Every day, though all circumstances considered the casualties were by no means numerous, added to the list of killed and wounded. Nor, be sure, did the enemy escape. "Monitors were worsted or destroyed. Explosions not infrequent occurred in the besiegers' advancing ranks. But there is a limit to mortal endurance. The different commands had to be relieved at stated intervals, and what greater proof, Major Gilchrist asks, can be had of their courage and devotion than that, with personal knowledge of the dangerous and loathsome nature of the service, the same commands returned time and again with full ranks and even greater *esprit de corps* as the struggle grew more intense."

It is impossible to elaborate details in a sketch like this. Early in September it became apparent that the end was near. For fifty-seven days Wagner had been subjected to a continuous and unparalleled fire. "At last the enemy had burrowed their way within the moat. Nearly all the guns were useless. Transportation was well nigh impracticable. Federals by thousands literally swarmed over the island. Calcium lights on their fleet made noonday of the blackest midnight. Every corner and crevice of our defenses was exposed, while sharpshooters, themselves safely sheltered, could pick off our men at leisure."

Evacuation was therefore a necessity. Orders to that effect were given by Beauregard. The most careful preparations were made to insure its successful accomplishment. They were supervised by a judgment, tact, and adroitness which completely deceived the foe. True; he suspected some new movement among the Confederates, but supposed it might be a mere increase of garrison. His keen calcium

lights betrayed those who watched instead of those who retreated.

It was the Sunday night of September the 7th. Boats were ready for embarkation. Their crews, most admirably disciplined, contributed mainly to the fortunate issue of the adventure. Quietly and swiftly, as each detachment left, other boats grounded on the strand to receive their loads. Meanwhile, a sufficient number of men were retained in the fort to keep up the firing. Finally, Lieutenant-Colonel Pressley, with only two companies remained. The Federals in their sap were but thirty steps away, and so our guns were not spiked. The slightest unusual noise would have betrayed us. At midnight Wagner was abandoned.

On the next morning, General Gilmore knocked at the sally-port for admission. What must have been his surprise and chagrin to find, as Major Gilchrist humorously observes, "nobody at home." His magnificent elaborations for another assaulting carnival of death had been needless. . . .

When Captain Dodd, in Charles Rendé's inimitable novel of "Hard Cash," rises wounded from the bloody deck of his ship after a whole day's fight with buccaneers, he waves his hand in triumph toward their retreating vessels, exclaiming, "Good bye, ye Portuguese lubbers, out-fought, out-maneuvred, and out-sailed!" And thus, I think, our Confederates might in somewhat of the same spirit have saluted their evidently chagrined adversaries.

Out-fought they were not and could not have been; but they were out-maneuvred, baffled, and outwitted.

A summary of the Morris Island battles and the protracted siege is lucidly given by our author. He says:

For fifty-eight days, Wagner and Gregg, with a force never exceeding sixteen hundred men, had withstood a thoroughly equipped army of eleven thousand five hundred men, the Ironsides, eight monitors, and five gunboats. For every pound of sand used in the construction or repairs of Wagner, its assailants had expended two pounds of iron in the vain attempt to batter it down. At the close of the bombardment it stood, sullen, strong, defiant as ever.

The total loss in killed and wounded on the island from July 10th to September 7th, was only six hundred and seventy-two men. Deducting the killed and wounded, due to the landing on the 10th of July, and to the assaults of the 11th and 18th of July, the killed and wounded by the terrible bombardment, which lasted almost uninterruptedly night and day for fifty days, only amounted to forty-seven killed and two hundred and eighty men wounded, many of whom were but slightly injured.

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What, then, had the Federals gained by the lavish expenditure of the material of war, boundless treasure, and the fearful sacrifice of life they had sustained during those two weary months? The sole object of the occupation of Morris Island, as stated by General Gillmore, was "the demolition of Sumter as preliminary to the entrance of the iron-clads." That accomplished, it was thought that the gate to Charleston would be thrown open to the navy, and the "Cradle of Secession" would fall. From the 30th of August, 1863, only a morning and evening gun (thirty-two pounder) saluted its flag. Sumter was eliminated from the defense of the harbor. Yet for eighteen months thereafter the fleet remained in the outer harbor, viewing the spires of Charleston over the low hills of Morris Island, and all this time the two hundred- and three hundred-pounder rifle Parrotts mounted at Cumming's Point kept up ever and anon an ineffectual fire at St. Michael's steeple and other points in the city. It was not until the 18th of February, 1865, when a row-boat, sent by the municipal authorities of Charleston, informed Admiral Dahlgren in the outer harbor that the Confederate forces had evacuated the city, and that the frowning batteries lining the shores of the Ashley and Cooper rivers were without men to man their guns, did his feet venture to enter; then, without fear of torpedo or harbor obstruction, did monitors and gunboats steam up to the wharves of the city.

The capture of Wagner has been pronounced by Federal historians a great victory.

"Victory!" exclaims Major Gilchrist, with a natural contempt; "victory! seven hundred and forty men driven out of a sand-hill by eleven thousand five hundred! Two months to advance half a mile toward Charleston!"

There were great men before Agamemnon, great wars before that of Troy; and there will be great men and great wars hereafter; but no prowess in the storied past, or anticipated future, can possibly, through fact or imagination, cast a depreciating shadow upon the heroism, uncalculating and sublime, of the defenders of Wagner.

. . . One who visits Morris Island to-day will vainly search for a solitary fragment of the grand old Confederate earth-work.

The winds, with unseen, ethereal fingers, have twisted up the former foundations, and with stormy breath have blown the ancient boundaries afar. The ocean also is not idle. Those waves which, as the subtlest and most wonderful of enchanters, carve and recarve in their fluid sculpturing the curves and constellations of the world, which destroy to-day only to create to-morrow, seem bent upon obliterating—for an æon or two perhaps—the site of Fort Wagner.

Let the sand-hills go! Let the last phantasmal vestige of the place be annihilated! But, rescued from all mocking transformations, the sanctifying genius of the spot remains and must remain so long as the spirit of duty, self-sacrifice, and chivalric honor abides to permeate with its fires of nobility the too gross earthiness of our common humanity!

Paul Hamilton Hayne.

THE MATELESS BIRD.

Full half a warm and budding day
 Within a little grove I lay,
 And still, from noon to evening's fall
 I heard a lonely wood-bird call.
 He wandered south, he wandered north,
 With restless flitting back and forth,
 And still his tender, 'plaining cry
 Smote on my sympathizing ear;
 And still I marked him wand'ring by,
 Now hurrying on, now pausing near.

The happy birds the boughs among
 Were singing blithely as could be,
 Love's bliss the theme of every song;
 But still that pensive melody
 Upon the tranquil air would float,
 A sweetly melancholy note.
 At last, for that one sound of woe,

I felt my foolish eyes o'erflow,
 I pitied so the birdling's grief;
 And thus, to give my heart relief,
 "Poor bird," I cried, "can this thing be,
 Has Nature been unfair to thee,
 And left thee single and forlorn?
 From dawn to eve disconsolate,
 Thy only task thy fate to mourn,
 Fore-doomed to live without a mate?"

Nay, little one, it is not so;
 Somewhere, in some secluded spot,
 There mourns a little bird, I know,
 As discontented with her lot;
 Flit on, sad heart, flit east and west,
 With cries still ease thy burdened breast,
 Fly on, fly on, fly far and fast,
 For thou shalt find thy mate at last."

Danske Dandridge.