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Letter from Ex-President Buchanan, HIS REPLY TO GENERAL SCOTT.

BEGINNING OF THE REBELLION.

To the Editors of the National Intelligencer: On Wednesday last, I received the National Intelligencer, containing General Scott's address to the public. This is throughout an undisguised and unreserved censure of my conduct during the last months of the Administration in regard to the seven Cotton States now in rebellion.

1. The first and most prominent among these charges is my refusal immediately to garrison nine enumerated fortifications, scattered over six of the Southern States, according to the recommendation of General Scott, in his 'views' addressed to the War Department on the 29th and 30th of October, 1860.

This refusal is attributed, without the least cause, to the influence of Governor Floyd. All my Cabinet must bear witness that I was the President myself, responsible for all the acts of the Administration; and certain it is that during the last six months previous to the 29th of October, 1860, the day on which he resigned his office, after my request, he exercised less influence on the Administration than any other member of the cabinet.

But why did I not immediately garrison these nine fortifications, in such a manner, to use the language of General Scott, 'as to make any attempt to take any one of them by surprise or coup de main ridiculous?' There is one answer, both easy and conclusive, even if other valid reasons did not exist. There were no available troops within reach which could be sent to these fortifications.

Five companies—four hundred men—to occupy and reinforce nine fortifications in six highly excited Southern States! The force 'within reach' was so entirely inadequate that nothing more need be said on the subject. To have attempted such a military operation with so feeble a force, and the Presidential election impending, would have been an invitation to collision and secession.

But why was there no greater force within reach? This question could be better answered by Gen. Scott himself than by any other person. Our small regular army, with the exception of a few hundred men, were out of reach, on our remote frontiers, where it had been continuously stationed for years, to protect the inhabitants and the emigrants, on their way thither, against the attacks of hostile Indians.

These views of General Scott exhibit the crude notions then prevailing even among intelligent and patriotic men on this subject of secession. In the first sentence the General, whilst stating that 'to save time the right of secession may be conceded,' yet immediately says 'this is instantly balanced by the correlative right on the part of the Federal Government against an interior State or States to re-establish by force, if necessary, its former continuity of territory.'

apply to a case of secession that makes a gap in the present Union. The falling off of Tex., or of all the Atlantic States, from the Potomac south, (the very case which has occurred,) was not within the scope of General S.'s 'provisional remedies;' that is to say, to establish by force, if necessary, the continuity of our territory. In his 'views' he also states as follows: 'But break this glorious Union by whatever line or lines that political madness may contrive, and there would be no hope of recruiting the fragments except by the laceration and despotism of the sword. To effect such result the intestine wars of our Mexican neighbors would, in comparison with ours, sink into mere child's play.'

I trust I have said enough, and more than enough, to convince every mind why I did not, with a force of five companies, attempt to reinforce Forts Jackson and St. Philip, on the Mississippi; Fort Morgan, below Mobile; Forts Pickens and McCrea, in Pensacola harbor; Fort Pulaski, below Savannah; Forts Moultrie and Sumpter, Charleston harbor, and Fort Monroe, in Virginia.

II. and III. General Scott states that he arrived in Washington on the 12th, and, accompanied by the Secretary of War, held a conversation with the President on the 15th of December. Whilst I have no recollection whatever of this conversation, he doubts states correctly that I did refuse to send three hundred men to reinforce Major Anderson at Fort Moultrie, who had not then removed to Fort Sumter. The reason for this refusal is manifest to all who recollect the history of the time.

There are some details of this conversation in regard to which the General's memory must be defective. At present I shall specify only one. I could not have stated that on a future contingent occasion I would telegraph 'Major Anderson, of Fort Moultrie, to hold the forts (Moultrie and Sumpter) against attack' because, with prudent precaution, this had already been done several days before, through a special messenger sent to Major Anderson for this very purpose. I refer to Major Buell, of the army.

'The Brooklyn, with Captain Vodge's company alone, left the Chesapeake for Fort Pickens about January 22d, and on the 29th, President Buchanan, having entered into a quasi armistice with certain leading seceders at Pensacola and elsewhere, caused Secretaries Holt and Toucey to instruct in a joint note the commander of the war vessels off Pensacola, and Lieut. Slemmer, commanding Fort Pickens, to commit no act of hostility, and not to land Capt. Vodge's company unless the fort should be attacked.'

These statements betray a singular want of memory on the part of General Scott. It is scarcely credible that this very joint note, presented in such odious colors, was submitted to General Scott on the day it was prepared (30th January), and met his entire approbation. I would not venture to make this assertion if I did not possess conclusive evidence to prove it. On that day Secretary Holt addressed me a note, from which the following is an extract: 'I have the satisfaction of saying that, in submitting the paper to General Scott he expressed himself satisfied with it, saying that there could be no objection to the arrangement in a military point of view or otherwise.'

A revolutionary outbreak had occurred in Florida; the troops of the United States had been expelled from Pensacola and the adjacent navy yard; and Lieutenant Slemmer, of the artillery, with his brave little command, had been forced to take refuge in Fort Pickens, where he was in imminent danger every moment of being captured by a vastly superior force.

This proposal was carefully considered, both with a view to the safety of the fort and to the unhappily effect which an actual collision, either at that or any other point, might produce on the Peace Convention then about to assemble at Washington. The result was, that a joint despatch was carefully prepared by the Secretaries of War and Navy, accepting the proposal, with important modifications, which was transmitted by telegraph, on the 29th January, to Lieutenant Slemmer and to the naval command near the station.

The result was highly fortunate. The Brooklyn had a long passage. Although she left Fort Monroe on the 24th January, she did not arrive at Pensacola until the 6th February. In the meantime Fort Pickens, with Lieutenant Slemmer, (whose conduct deserves high commendation), and his brave little band, were placed by virtue of this arrangement, in perfect security until an adequate force had arrived to defend it against any attack. The fort is still in our possession. Well might Gen. Scott have expressed his satisfaction with this arrangement. The General was correct in the supposition that the arrangement was to expire on the termination of the Peace Convention.

V. But we now come to an important period, when dates will be essentially necessary to disentangle the statement of General Scott.—The South Carolina Commissioners were appointed on the 22d, and arrived in Washington on the 27th December. The day after their arrival it was announced that Major Anderson had removed from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter. This rendered them furious. On the same day they addressed an angry letter to the President demanding the surrender of Fort Sumter. The President answered this letter on the 30th December by a peremptory refusal. This brought forth a reply from the Commissioners on the 2d January, 1861, of such an insulting character that the President instantly returned it to them with the following endorsement: 'This paper, just presented to the President, is of such a character that he declines to receive it.'

extra muskets or rifles, ammunition and subsistence? It is hoped that a sloop-of-war and cutter may be ordered for the same purpose 'tomorrow.'

The General seems not to have then known that Mr. Floyd was out of office. Never did a request meet a more prompt compliance. It was received on Sunday evening, December 30th. On Monday morning I gave instructions to the War and Navy Department, and on Monday evening General Scott came to congratulate me that the Secretaries had issued the necessary orders to the army and navy officers, and that they were in his possession. The Brooklyn, with troops, military stores and provisions, was to sail forthwith from Fort Monroe for Fort Sumter. I am therefore utterly at a loss to imagine why the General, in his statement, should have asserted that 'the South Carolina Commissioners had already been many days in Washington, and no movement of defence (on the part of the United States) was permitted.'

Again, General Scott asserts, in the face of these facts, that the President refused to allow any attempt to be made—to reinforce Fort Sumter—because he was holding negotiations with the South Carolina Commissioners. And still again, that 'afterwards Secretary Holt and myself endeavored, in vain, to obtain a sloop-of-war for the purpose, and were finally obliged to employ the passenger steamer Star of the West.' Will it be believed that the substitution of the Star of the West for the war steamer Brooklyn, of which he now complains, was by the advice of Gen. Scott himself? I have never heard this doubted until I read the statement.

At the interview already referred to between the General and myself, on the evening of Monday, the 31st of December, I suggested to him that, although I had not received the South Carolina Commissioners in their official capacity, but merely as private gentlemen, yet it might be considered an improper act to send the Brooklyn with reinforcements to Fort Sumter until I had received an answer from them to my letter of the preceding day; that the delay could not continue more than forty-eight hours. He promptly concurred in this suggestion as gentlemanly and proper, and the orders were not transferred to the Brooklyn on that evening. My anticipations were correct, for on the morning of the 2d of January I received their insolent note, and sent it back to them. In the meantime, however, the General had become convinced, by the representations of a gentleman whom I forbear to name, that the better plan, as the Secretaries of War and Navy informed me, to secure secrecy and success and reach the fort, would be to send a vast side-wheel mercantile steamer from New York with the reinforcement. Accordingly the Star of the West was selected for this duty.

The change of programme required a brief space of time; but the Star of the West left New York for Charleston on the evening of the 4th January. On the very day, however, when this ill-fated steamer left New York, a telegram was dispatched by Gen. Scott to Col. Scott to countermand her departure; but it did not reach its destination until after she had gone to sea. The reason for this countermand shall be stated in the language of Secretary Holt, to be found in a letter addressed to him by Mr. Thompson, the late Secretary of the Interior, on the 13th March, 1861, and published in the National Intelligencer. Mr. Holt says: 'The countermand spoken of (by Mr. Thompson) was not more cordially sanctioned by the President than it was by General Scott and myself; not because of any dissent from the order on the part of the President, but because of a letter received that day from Major Anderson, stating, in effect, that he regarded himself secure in his position; and yet more from intelligence which late on Saturday evening (5th January, 1861), reached the Department, that a heavy battery had been erected among the sand hills, at the entrance to Charleston harbor, which would probably destroy an unarmed vessel (and such was the Star of the West) which might attempt to make its way to Fort Sumter. This important information satisfied the Government that there was no present necessity for sending reinforcements, and that when sent they should go, not in a vessel of commerce, but of war. Hence the countermand was dispatched by telegraph to New York; but the vessel had sailed a short time before it reached the officer (Colonel Scott) to whom it was addressed.'

A statement of these facts, established by dates, proves conclusively that the President was not only willing but anxious in the briefest period to reinforce Fort Sumter. On the 4th of January, the day before the departure of the Star of the West from New York, as General Scott in his statement admits, success was sent to Fort Taylor, Key West, and to Fort Jefferson, Tortugas Island, which reached these points in time for their security. He nevertheless speculates on the consequences which might have followed, had the reinforcements not reached their destination in due time; and even expresses the extraordinary opinion, that, with the possession of these forts, 'the Rebels might have purchased an early recognition.'

I shall next advert to the statement that the expedition under Captain Ward, of three or four small steamers belonging to the Coast Survey, was kept back by something like a truce or armistice [made here, embracing Charleston and Pensacola harbors, agreed upon between the late President and certain principal seceders of South Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, &c. And this truce lasted to the end of the Administration.] Things altogether distinct in their nature are often so blended in this statement that it is difficult to separate them. Such is eminently the case in connecting the facts relative to Charleston with Pensacola. Having already treated of the charge of having kept back reinforcements from Pensacola, I shall now say something of the charge of having also kept them back from Charleston. Neither a truce, nor quasi truce, nor any thing like it, was ever concluded between the President and any human authority, concerning Charleston. On the contrary, the South Carolina Commissioners, first and last, and all the time, were informed that the President could never surrender Fort Sumter, nor deprive himself of the most entire liberty to send reinforcements to it whenever it was believed to be in danger, or requested by Major Anderson. It is strange that Gen. Scott was not apprised of this well known fact. It was then, with some astonishment, that I learned from the statement of the General, that he had, on the 12th March, 1861, advised that Major Anderson should be instructed to evacuate the fort as soon as suitable transportation could be procured to carry himself and his company to New York. A military necessity for a capitulation may have existed in case there should be an attack upon the fort, or a demand for its surrender; but surely none could have existed for its voluntary surrender and abandonment.

is of this expedition that Gen. Scott thus speaks: 'At that time, when this (the truce) had passed away, Secretaries Holt and Toucey, Capt. Ward, of the Navy, and myself, with the knowledge of the President, settled upon the employment, under the Captain, of three or four steamers belonging to the Coast Survey, but he was kept back by the truce.'

A strange inconsistency. The truce had expired with Mr. Holt's letter to Colonel Hayne on the 5th of February, and Gen. Scott, in his statement, says: 'It would have been easy to reinforce this fort down to about the 12th of February.' Why, then, did not the reinforcements proceed? This was simply because of communications from Major Anderson. It was most fortunate that they did not proceed; because the three or four small steamers which were to bear them would never have reached the fort, and in the attempt must have been captured or destroyed. The vast inadequacy of the force provided to accomplish the object was demonstrated by information received from Major Anderson at the War Department on the last day of the Administration.

I purposely forbear at present to say more on this subject, lest I might, however unintentionally, do injustice to one or more of the parties concerned in consequence of the brevity required by the nature of this communication. The facts relating to it, with the appropriate accompaniments, have been fully presented in a historical review, prepared a year ago, which will ere long be published. This review contains a sketch of the four last months of my Administration. It is impartial; at least such is my honest conviction. That it has not yet been published has arisen solely from an apprehension, no longer entertained, that something therein might be unjustly perverted into an interference with the government in a vigorous prosecution of the war for the maintenance of the Constitution and the restoration of the Union, which was far, very far, from my intention.

After a careful retrospect, I can solemnly declare before God and my country that I cannot reproach myself with any act of commission or omission since the existing trouble commenced. I have never doubted that my countrymen would yet do me justice. In my special message of the 8th of January, 1861, I presented a full and fair exposition of the alarming condition of the country, and urged Congress either to adopt measures of compromise, or failing in this, to prepare for the last alternative. In both aspects my recommendation was disregarded. I shall close this document with a quotation of the last sentence of that message, as follows:—

'In conclusion, it may be permitted me to remark that I have often warned my countrymen of the dangers which now surround us. This may be the last time I shall refer to the subject officially. 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. My obedient servant, JAMES BUCHANAN.'

Wheatland, near Lancaster, Oct. 28, 1862.

To YOUNG MEN.—Two young men commenced the salt making business, at Philadelphia. They bought a lot of ducks from Stephen Girard on credit, and a friend had engaged to endorse for them. Each caught a roll and was carrying it off when Girard remarked: 'Had you not better get a dray?' 'No, it is not far, and we can carry it ourselves.' 'Tell your friend he needn't endorse your note. I'll take it without.'

AN ENROLLING OFFICER SHARPLY ANSWERED.—One of the enrolling marshals, the other day, in the Quaker City, received strong hints from a down town female. Stopping at the lady's house, he found her before the door endeavoring to effect with a vegetable huckster a 20 per cent abatement in the price of a peck of tomatoes.

'Have you any men here, madam?' 'No,' was the gruff reply. 'Have you no husband, madam?' 'No.' 'Nor brothers?' 'No.' 'Perhaps you have a son, Madam?' 'Well what of it?' 'I should like to know where he is?' 'Well he isn't here.'

'So I see dear madam. Pray, where is he?' 'In the Union army, where you ought to be.' The crest fallen marshal hastened around the corner. He didn't further interrogate the lady.

One day a simple farmer who had just buried a rich relation, an attorney, was complaining of the fat expense of a funeral cavalcade in the country. 'Why, do you bury your attorneys here?' asked Foote. 'Yes, to be sure we do; how else?' 'Oh, we never do that in London.'

'No!' said the other, surprised, 'how do you manage?' 'Why, when the patient happens to die, we lay him out in a room over night by himself, lock the door, throw open the sash, and in the morning he is entirely off.'

'Indeed!' said the other: 'what becomes of him?' 'Why, that we cannot tell; all we know there's a strong smell of brimstone in the room the next morning.'

Below par.—Abolitionists since the election.