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FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 4, 1862.

LETTER FROM BEAUFORT.

[Special Correspondence of the Pittsburgh Gazette.]

BEAUFORT, S. C., March 24, 1862.

I owe you some apology for not writing oftener, and you must find it in the pressure of work, of which I have had enough to keep me busy, without a moment's leisure, until within a few days since.

And as for news, I am situated, here, outside of the circle within which news is sought for; and then there is no news to seek for. The capture of Fernandina was the only thing to break the monotony of military stagnation in this region, and the gunboat, with intelligence of that event, was well on her way to Baltimore before the fact was fully known at Hilton Head. It was a bloodless achievement after all; and the army officers say that if the navy hadn't spent a day in foolishly sounding the channel and planting buoys, and had sailed right up to the town boldly, they would have captured fifty more guns, which the rebels dismounted and carried off while they were sounding their way. But then there is just the least possible mite of bad feeling between the army and navy, you know, and a slight carping is consequently unavoidable.

Fort Pulaski is completely cut off from supplies. Tatnall comes down every day and tries to run our batteries, but it in vain. He has also essayed a land attack upon our forces which guard them; but so far he has accomplished nothing, and the inevitable doom of Pulaski approaches.

We are consoled from our own inactivity by the stirring news we get from home by every mail. The tidings of the capture of Forts Donelson and Henry, the driving out of the rebels from Missouri and Kentucky, the occupation of Nashville, New Madrid and Columbus by our troops, the abandonment of Manassas, the onward march of Banks' division, the brave advance of Burnside and the restoration of Fremont, have come to us swiftly and rapidly, each arrival heralding to us a new victory and making us wish we were among those who are directly participating in these stirring events.

The intelligence that Hunter is to command here, is, however, evidence that the government expects some fighting down here, soon; and my own conviction is that, as the army on the Potomac and that in the West drive the rebels southward, they will concentrate in front of the lines now occupied by this division of our forces. If so, we shall have stirring times here, too; and the government cannot be too quick in forwarding all its spare troops to this point. It may be, and there is nothing improbable in the supposition, that in the winding up of this rebellion, we may witness on the part of the rebels a repetition of the tactics of the Indians in the Florida wars—a retreat to swamps and morasses, from whence they will have to be hunted singly. How, in that event, will the chivalrous slave hunters like to hear upon their scent the bay of dogs with which they have so often hunted their own dusky attached and faithful runaways.

In the lack of news to tell you, I will be allowed, I know, to chat about what I have seen in my wanderings through this labyrinth of islands. I found, in passing from place to place, various items of interest to *me*, and I hope that for similar reasons, they will prove of some interest to your readers.

First among these things is an old fort, about four miles below here, on Beaufort river, at the mouth of an inlet connecting Beaufort with Broad and Coosaw rivers. It was built, tradition says, by the Spanish, in 1555; but upon what authority the tradition rests I cannot say. It is a square enclosure, with a salient angle, facing inland, within which one gun was mounted. The walls were built of concrete—oyster shells pounded into small fragments, mixed with water and sand, and pounded in a semi-liquid state into a frame prepared to receive it. It soon hardens, and becomes a wall much more impervious to shot than stone. The walls as they now stand are about ten feet high and three feet thick; but the sand has probably drifted several feet about their base. Except upon the water front, where the tide has undermined them, the walls are still nearly as sound as when built. The point upon which the front is built is called Smith's Point, and a man of the singular name of Smith had a plantation there, his residence being just back of the fort. It was a comfortable house, surrounded by a beautiful grove of live oaks, standing apart in regular rows, and looking, at a distance, very much like the large old orchards of apple trees one sees in York and Lancaster counties of your State. The old rebel named Smith knew he was guilty or he would not have run off from such a pleasant spot. His house is now a depot for a government cotton agent, and a picket station for our troops; and his "nigs" are working for the government that would have protected him if he had not been such a fool.

This reminds me that there are a *few* loyal South Carolinians, (excluding the blacks, whom the government refuses to count among its citizens.) One, named Rustin, returned here a short time since, and took possession of his estate. His parents are dead, and his executors had sent him North to be educated. He was at College when the war broke out; but he remained loyal, and has therefore come into possession of an estate out of which the executors would probably have defrauded him. Two others occupy a small plantation on Hunting Island. They had only four slaves, and devote themselves to the raising of hogs for market. They belong to the class of poor whites.

To return to the forts. Above the old fort I have described, and between it and Beaufort, is an old fortification thrown up during the war of 1812. A similar fortification is to be seen on Hilton Head Island, near Seabrook. They are both earthworks, similar to those captured by us at Hilton Head and Bay Point. That at Seabrook commands the landing at that point—the very best on the island; and the one below Beaufort commands the river in both directions. They are in a good state of preservation, considering the shifting nature of the soil of which they were built; but the Rebels did not think of fixing them up and using them for *this* war. There was an odor of patriotism about them which repelled the scoundrels. They were built to resist the British—a foe the Rebels would welcome now with open arms.

The fort which the Rebels built to protect Beaufort is a small enclosure, for three guns, and was built at the lower end of the town. It was well placed; but when Beauregard came here to visit the works, he told its occupants that if we captured Bay Point and Hilton Head, the guns at Beaufort would do them no good. So the three pieces were removed to Fort Beauregard at Bay Point and fell into our hands there.

It is a striking commentary upon the bravery of these fellows that they took good care to secure their retreat safely. They dug a ditch six feet deep, running in a straight line from the fort, to the Shell Road, half a mile off through which to make their escape. At a short distance it looks like a rifle pit; and the calculation undoubtedly was that this deceptive appearance would make an advancing enemy cautious in approaching it, and so give them the greater time to get off. Once on the Shell Road they would have a fair chance to try the virtue of showing a clean pair of heels.

The Shell Road is a wide, substantial thoroughfare, running in nearly a straight line from here to Port Royal ferry. It was made by throwing the sand up from the sides and mixing it with oyster shells, forming a very firm superstructure. It forms a splendid drive of ten miles, and many a fast young man has trotted his fast horses over it to the astonishment and delight of the aristocratic young ladies of this southern Saratoga. Alas for the young bricks! They are now probably in Virginia or Tennessee, galloping away with all speed from our advancing troops, and the Shell Road is a thoroughfare for quartermasters' wagons and the Cavalry and Artillery of the hated Yankees.

The ride over this Shell Road is singularly attractive to northern eyes. The Road is shaded, nearly its entire length, with lofty pines and spreading water oaks, reveral of the latter, from their mysterious size and beautiful proportions, presenting splendid pictures in themselves. At one spot the trees form a lofty Gothic archway over the road. And from every limb of the trees on both sides of the leafy avenue the sad-colored moss hangs pendant, presenting a view something like that which scenic artists try to imitate in their conception of the splendors of the watery depths in which the Naiads dwell.

Quite a number of missionaries and teachers, both male and female, for the contrabands, have arrived here entered upon their arduous labor. The contrabands welcome them, and their schools are well attended. Nothing is so common, now, as to see the young negroes running to and from school, with their primer in their hands; and even grown up ones are to be seen, devoting every spare moment to the mysteries of the Alphabet. But they receive little encouragement elsewhere. Army officers, with honorable exceptions, sneer at them; some try to obstruct them; and with many it is considered as much a term of reproach to call them abolitionists as it would be to call the former occupants of this place rebels. Indeed, I fear that by some of our northern gentlemen it is considered a greater crime to be considered an abolitionist than a rebel. The abolitionists and rebels are the two ostracized classes in their estimation—the worst being placed first. I once labored under the idea that this was a war for freedom against slavery—was it a delusion?

In rummaging through a deserted house in this place I found the enclosed letter. It was written, you will see, by a husband to his wife, at Charleston, on the day that Fort Sumter was fired upon and captured; and as this was a letter in which there was no motive for deception, it may be said to confirm fully the report so much doubted, that Anderson's cannonade of Charleston killed no one. In that view of the case the author was right in saying that that was "one of the most extraordinary battles that has ever been fought."

From the addenda to the P. S. of this letter I should judge that "your Hubby" was a man of *taste*. R.

MILLS HOUSE, 1 *o'clock Friday night.*

MY DEAR WIFE:—Glorious news! *not one of our soldiers killed or wounded.* Willie is well and hearty as a Buck. I have just seen a man from Corninge Point, who reports having left him well and in fine spirits. This is one of the most extraordinary Battles that has ever been fought; the firing has been kept up since 5 o'clock this morning and *not* a man hurt on our side. How much Anderson has suffered we cannot learn of course, but the damage to the walls and to the officers' quarters must have been great. The report brought by John Johnson, about Surgeons being wanted is all fudge. I have just come up from the Battery where the male and female portion of the city are looking at the bomb shells that are thrown every 20 minutes into Sumter, and she is silent, for the best of reasons, there are no mortars in Sumter, and they require daylight to fire their guns. The ball will open again at daylight, and the s