

OUR CHARLESTON LETTER.

THREE CLASSES OF POLITICIANS—THE DELUSION OF THE RHETT CLIQUE—GOV. PICKENS, JUDGE MAGRATH AND MR. MEMMINGER—NEGROES ON A STAMPEDE—THE TRUE SECURITY—THE MEN WHO CAN PREVENT VIOLENCE—THE UNION FEELING—PATRIOTISM—NEGRO DISAFFECTION—THE FLOATING BATTERY—THE INSPIRATION FROM THE ASPECT OF THINGS, ETC.

From Our Own Correspondent.

CHARLESTON, March 7, 1861.

The population of this city are now divided into three parties. The first and loudest are the followers of the immortal BROOKS, disciples of the chivalrous RHETT, men who, forgetting the patriots of the Revolution, and the glories of their achievements on behalf of the whole country, have degenerated from Americans into mere South Carolinians—men who proclaim aloud, as I heard a maniacal individual, who bunks in an engine house, do last night—that the State was his God. These may be termed fire-eaters, indeed. The second class are composed of men of a higher order of intellect, who, though at present think themselves secessionists, are still yearning in their hearts for reconstruction as the only safeguard of their rights, their property, and their homes. You may set down Mr. MEMMINGER, the present Secretary of the Treasury at Montgomery, as a representative man of this class. At the head of the third class you may place that good old American gentleman, Mr. PETTIGREW—the ablest lawyer and the greatest wit of whom the Cotton States can boast. The rank and file are merchants, clerks, and mechanics, who are, in the deep recesses of their hearts, true to their country, to freedom, and to the memories of Independence Hall. Many of them, I mourn to say, have bowed the knee to Baal, urged by the exigencies of their own position, and the dependence of their families for support on labor, which they have to perform for the two former classes. The first class, or RHETT-ites, want to fight, and they say they want to fight *at once*. They speak of the capture of Fort Sumter as though Major ANDERSON and they had changed places—they being the experienced and valorous soldiers, and he the green rattlesnake militiaman. They bellow loudly about State rights, Southern rights, and sailors' rights, and at the same time advocate the assassination of every man who dares to hint at the possibility of there being two sides to a question. They are the men who, having all their lives cheated *themselves* into the belief that they were a superior class, presume that they are now about to force the dogma down the throats of their *countrymen*, at the bayonet's point. Poor deluded RHETT-ites! What a pity it is that one single hour of reason cannot dawn upon their benighted minds. Then, indeed, would they hesitate to rush into the jaws of death, and cease to urge on a barbarous civil war. But these now being past reason, how vast and awful a responsibility rests upon the middle class that I have just spoken of.

Governor PICKENS, Judge MAGRATH, and Mr. MEMMINGER have sense enough, if they will but exercise it, to know that President LINCOLN speaks God's truth when he says that the South can gain nothing by war—can gain nothing by being traitorous to their country's flag and rebels against its laws. They know *more* than this. They know that their peculiar institution can never obtain that protection and security outside the Union which it has within it. Nay, they are beginning to feel it. As lately as Tuesday evening last, only sixty-five miles from this city, there was a stampede of nearly a hundred negroes from a plantation which never lost a negro before. Their masters were down here breaking the laws, and the negroes took the opportunity to follow their example.

Mr. LINCOLN has said, and the great majority of the Northern people stand by him, that he will faithfully execute the Fugitive Slave law; but they have no right to presume that the North would act as slave-catchers for a "foreign" country. If they return to their allegiance, they will find that even these troublous times have not alienated from them the sympathy and brotherly feeling of the great heart of the North, and that though there are extreme men North as well as South, whom free institutions and the dignity of the law require should be protected in their right of free speech, yet there are also there men who will on all occasions defend them from any intingement of their State rights, and who, if their homes or families were attacked by a half-civilized mob, or their liberties threatened by a foreign foe, will ever be found ready to fight by their side, and die in their defence. The times are getting serious. Mr. LINCOLN, as an honest man, who, unlike General TWIGGS, believes in the inviolability of his oath, must shortly proceed to collect the revenue and execute the laws. The men I have named to you have power in this State, and in this city, to provide against interference with his officers and prevent civil war. Will they do it? Will they send their names down to posterity as the men who stayed the tide of revolutionary violence, and saved the spilling of their brothers' blood, or will passion rule the hour. We shall see, and that very soon. But I must not be too despairing. The Union men are daily increasing. Little coteries of them may be found in a dozen places. I can name many, who, though they still wear uniforms, to avoid the violent and tyrannical espionage which is carried on here, will yet never use their arms against the flag of their country, or the laws of the United States. The captain of a company told me last night, though he was compelled to play soldier with them, yet he would never take up arms to engage in a fight for such a cause, and said if war came, it would find him at his own door, to protect his wife and children, but not at Morris Island to commit treason and perjury against the United States. Another man, who

Slave Stampedes on the Southern Borderlands

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holds a very responsible and lucrative position here, told me his patience was worn out, and his hopes that reason would return to the people had died; that he was sorry he had not taken the last steamer North; but that if he remained, he would be true to the old flag and its glorious associations. Last week there were scores of Union men here. This week there are hundreds, and the more Mr. LINCOLN'S speech is read, the stronger will they become in numbers and in faith.

I am happy to tell you that the Secessionists have given up all idea of persuading Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee or Maryland to join them, or aid them in their reckless projects. They have sense enough to discover that Mr. LINCOLN'S strong determination to prevent any interference with slavery where it exists, and his avowals that the Fugitive Slave law is constitutional, and ought to be executed in good faith, have disarmed the disaffected in those cooler States, where reason instead of passion reigns. They are anxiously laboring now to make themselves believe that they never wanted the Border States; but it is a bitter pill for them to swallow. They have almost, if not quite, given up North Carolina, and I heard some loud-mouthed men grossly insulting her, as they thought, by staying, that she was unworthy to bear the name of Carolina—that she produced nothing but "rosin," and that she was a fit

companion for the "watermelon State," though I know not why they should thus sneer at such a fine State as New Jersey.

I spoke above of a stampede of negroes having taken place on Tuesday. I regret to say that there have been several lately, and though the account of them, for some reasons, has not appeared in the Southern papers, yet I have reason to know what I say to be true. A person connected with the night train of the South Carolina Railroad has communicated to me some intelligence which makes me fear that there is considerable disaffection amongst the negroes in the centre of the State, and, from what I hear, it arises entirely from the absence from home of their masters, and their consequent ill-treatment by overseers—men who, never having had servants, know not how to treat them. My sincere and earnest hope is, that the slave-owners will not longer allow themselves to be the tools of Charleston politicians, but will return to their families and their homes, and then I am certain we need none of us fear violence on the part of the negroes, for their devotion to, and trust in, their masters, when properly cared for and kindly treated, is too notorious to need mention from me.

I cannot help once more noticing the celebrated floating battery. I was invited yesterday, by one of the workmen—a Northern man—to go on board, and had time and opportunity to examine it minutely. It is in the mud at the foot of Hasel street, though I believe it floats at high water. It is eighty feet long by forty six wide, and has four port-holes for thirty-six pounders. The front of it is protected by palmetto logs, riveted together, and forming a substance of about three feet and a half; the outside is covered by four thicknesses of railroad iron. The top or "sky side" is entirely unprotected—the front part being much the heaviest. The back is ballasted with some hundreds of sand bags. Between the rafts lie a few hundred of thirty-six-pound balls. This result of native genius is not calculated to do much harm—for, in consequence of the construction of the port-holes, the guns can point no other way than at the water, poise them as they will. Major ANDERSON, in the goodness of his heart, will probably not trouble it. A company, however, has been found to man it, and should a stray shot strike it, or a shell drop over the top of it, I tremble to think of the slaughter pen it would become. In that case the hospital which is to be towed in the rear of it, will be of immense service. I heard some fussy little man, sitting at dinner at the Mills House yesterday, tell his neighbor that he had been appointed "Surgeon on the floating battery," and if he dodges the shots, as I think his size will enable him to do, he will prove a very useful man on board of that wonderful result of ingenuity and skill, "the floating battery." But these details of warlike preparation, whether powerful or contemptible, are very sad and sickening, and I almost feel inspired to risk my life by making an appeal to the men by whom I am surrounded, to dispel the madness of the hour, and for the sake of the memory of the great and illustrious WASHINGTON, whose name is a symbol of patriotism and virtue in all lands; for the sake of the Anglo-Saxon race, whose mission is civilization and peace; by the recollections of Bunker Hill, and for Auld Lang Syne, to cease these barbarous preparations, and to take their place again in the Union—and then, instead of being a scorn and a by word for ages to come, as the men who were traitors to their country and to freedom, their names will be honored and revered for having sacrificed their selfish ends and political advancement for the good of their common country, and for the cause of humanity.

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