

THE DEFENSE OF SUMTER

ONLY ONE OF ITS FOUR COMMANDERS LIVING.

GEN. HUGUENIN TELLS A GRAPHIC STORY—A STRUCTURE AGAINST WHICH NEARLY 50,000 SHOT AND SHELL WERE HURLED FROM UNION GUNS—A STUBBORN RESISTANCE.

CHARLESTON, S. C., July 16.—Only one of the four Confederate officers who in turn commanded at Fort Sumter from 1861 to 1865, and throughout the memorable defense of that work during the last three years of the war, is living to-day. The survivor is Gen. Thomas A. Huguenin, the last of the four to command, and the last man to leave Fort Sumter when its evacuation was ordered from Confederate headquarters.

The first commander of Fort Sumter was Col. Alfred Rhett, the second Major Stephen Elliot, the third Capt. John C. Mitchell, and the fourth Capt. Thomas A. Huguenin. Col. Rhett commanded the fort at the time of the first naval attack of April 7, 1863. He was soon afterward detached and advanced in position. Major Elliot held command on the night of the naval assault. He was detached May 4, 1864, and ordered to Virginia. He was succeeded by Capt. John C. Mitchell, who was killed July 20, 1864, by a shell from Morris Island.

Within three hours after the fall of Mitchell the command was taken by Huguenin, then a Captain in the First South Carolina Infantry (regular) and an officer only twenty-six years of age. On Huguenin devolved the duty of holding battered Sumter with some 300 infantrymen, and this he did under the most terrific fire ever delivered from the Morris Island batteries. Huguenin's orders on assuming the command of the fort were the same as those given Elliot and Mitchell. He was never, as long as a man remained alive, to surrender Fort Sumter, and he was never, unless so ordered, to evacuate the place.

When Huguenin assumed command on the night of July 20, 1864, the fort was undergoing the ordeal of the third great bombardment. This bombardment opened on July 7 and continued without intermission until Sept. 7. I this time 14,666 shot and shell were fired at Sumter, the Union batteries engaged on Morris Island consisting of four eleven-inch Dahlgren naval guns, one 300-pound Parrott rifle, three 200-pound and one 100-pound Parrott rifles, two ten-inch columbiads, and twelve ten-inch and two thirteen-inch mortars—the most powerful battery that had up to that time been erected against Sumter. All of the guns on Fort Sumter had been silenced during the first and second great bombardments, with the exception of three, and these remaining three were the guns of the water battery covering the channel approach between Forts Moultrie and Sumter. This three-gun battery remained intact to the very last, being protected in the rear by an immense bomb-proof structure of sand.

To understand what Sumter underwent it should be known that during its occupancy by the Confederates there were hurled against the work more than 46,000 shot and shell, the majority of the projectiles being of the heaviest type used at that day in siege-gun work. Though there were three particular bombardment periods, there was seldom a day from the beginning of the first great bombardment, Aug. 17, 1863, to the time of the evacuation, on Feb. 17, 1865, that Fort Sumter was not under fire. Even after the conclusion of the third great bombardment, on Sept. 7, 1864, a desultory fire averaging about thirty shots a day was kept up during the months of October and November. But in the month of December only seven shots were received, and in January, 1865, sixty-four.

It was in the course of the period following the conclusion of the third great bombardment that Huguenin succeeded in making Sumter more invincible, perhaps, than at any time in its history. The fort had fairly silenced the guns that had once silenced its own pieces, for as the reports of Gillmore and Foster show, fifty-one rifled cannon in the Union batteries burst or were otherwise destroyed by reason of the terrific strain they were subjected to in firing upon Sumter.

The garrison of Fort Sumter was able despite the desultory firing during the Fall of 1864 to cover up much of the ruin of the great bombardments, and, as a result, the fort when taken possession of by the Union forces was found to be in a remarkably well-kept condition. The ruin as described by Major Johnson, the famous engineer officer of the fort, had been well-nigh covered up and concealed; trim ranks of gabions held up the slopes of sand or debris, capacious and comfortable quarters sheltered in perfect safety the garrison, the parade even looked swept and garnished, the crest of the walls showed some lines of regularity, and over all dominated the bomb-proof covering of the stair tower at the southwestern angle, with not one inch lost from the original level of the fort at that point, forty feet above high-water mark.

THE TIMES'S correspondent talked the other day with Gen. Huguenin, on whom military men bestow unstinted praise for the doggedness of his defense. The General is one of the prominent citizens of Charleston, and was recently Adjutant General of the State militia. In appearance he is a man of medium stature, of active temperament, possessing a broad forehead, and eyes that look one straight in the face.

"I was only a boy, comparatively," said Gen. Huguenin, "when I entered the Confederate service. I must have been about twenty-two or twenty-three years of age when the war broke out. There was great need of men who had had previous military education, and as I happened to have been graduated from the South Carolina Military Academy in 1859 I had no trouble in getting a commission in the First South Carolina Infantry, (regular.)"

"I was Captain of a company when a portion of the regiment, including my company, was ordered to occupy Fort Moultrie. We were assigned to heavy artillery duty, and my particular battery was the centre one on the sea wall. When Admiral Du Pont advanced up the channel, on April 7, 1863, with the monitor fleet, an eight-inch columbiad of my battery fired the first shot of that day's conflict. I remember that after the repulse of the fleet, when talking with Capt. F. H. Harleston, one of the artillery officers in Sumter, I was asked why I fired grape from that first gun. I replied that I had fired a solid shot. I then learned what afterward became apparent, that our shot, in many instances, was of too poor material to serve for penetrating iron. The first shot had so split up upon striking the monitor's turret as to cause its fragments to give a grape effect upon the water."

"I remained in Fort Moultrie throughout all the early operations of the Federal forces against Batteries Wagner and Gregg on Morris Island. On the night of the principal assault on Wagner I viewed the scene from the ramparts of Moultrie. Little could be seen from our position save the sheets of flame, which enveloped the parapet of Wagner from one end to the other. As a blinding flash of fire broke forth it seemed to play along the face of the parapet like a flame of lightning, breaking out again and again, then gradually slackening and dying out altogether. But though the assault had terminated, an occasional enfilading gun from one or more of our batteries kept up a constant booming throughout the night. In the course of a few hours we learned of the repulse of the assaulting column and the loss of some 2,000 Union men."

"From doing duty in Moultrie I was ordered to the command of Battery Beauregard, on Sullivan's Island, and it was while in command of this battery that I received an order about dinner time on Sept. 3, 1863, transferring me to Morris Island. I immediately left with my command of sixty-five men, and proceeded to Battery Gregg, sending thirty men on to Wagner, distant about one-half mile further down the level. The next morning a hasty order summoned me to Wagner to take up the duties of Major F. F. Warley, the chief of artillery, who had been severely wounded. Mounting, and immediately took charge of all the artillery."

"My first thought was to inspect the fort. The enemy, I learned, were digging approaches not over 150 yards from our ditch. I desired to take a look, but first, raising my cap on a stick, I found it was immediately pierced by two rifle shots from the Federal sharpshooters. I managed finally to get a sheep through one of the loopholes used by one of our own sharpshooters. I opened up very shortly on the enemy with our guns, and managed to silence his working for that day, but toward evening some of the Federal Parrotts did such beautiful shooting that I was compelled to close up the embrasures of one of the guns that it would seem the enemy was determined to destroy."

"I found the garrison numbering about 900 men. There was not sufficient room for this force to occupy the bomb-proofs, and even if there had been, the terrible heat and stench would have driven them out. In consequence the greater portion of the men sought shelter behind the parapet, and many behind the sand hills in the rear of the fort. When the sun would set the men in the bomb-proofs marched out, and on being joined by those behind the sand hills, all would take their places to repulse an assault."

"Some of the scenes in Battery Wagner during these closing days of its siege were frightful and harrowing to behold. The odor from dead bodies added to the horrors of the inclosure, and water, such as was to be had, was too

terrible to be drunk. I went thirty-six hours without a drop of water to drink, and many men went even a longer time than this."

"On the third day after my arrival the Federal batteries opened on us with 100 and 200 pounder Parrott rifles, supplemented with mortar fire, the monitors, and the new Ironsides. No place inside of Wagner was free from danger. Passages and corners which had been considered safe were now slaughter pens. The artillerymen who kept at the guns were shot down at times in whole detachments, and again one by one, their places being filled every moment by new details. All through the night the shells rained in upon us. There was no sleep, no rest."

"Sunday, the day following, came the orders to abandon Wagner. The enemy had now pushed his sap up to the ditch, and was about to pass the southern side of the work. Wagner, in consequence, could no longer be held, and preparations were made to fall back. The orders to evacuate Wagner included also Gregg."

"By 11 o'clock at night we had withdrawn all of our men save about thirty-five, which I distributed along the parapet to keep up a desultory fire. So near was the enemy that we had to cover the gun vents with sandbags in order to deaden the sound of the spiking of the pieces. A safety fuse was laid to the magazine, but before I would fire it I went back alone with a lantern and made my way into the bomb-proofs to see if anybody alive remained. As I walked through the darkness, lighted only by my lantern, and found all so silent where only a short time before there had been 1,200 men, the pause in the darkness, broken only by the dripping water from overhead on the planks below, the dull sound of the firing outside, the sight of the upturned faces of the dead lying about, and the terrible solitude all tended to make the moment the most impressive one of my life."

"Convinced that there was no one living in the works, I made my way out, lighted the train, and started on the double-quick for Gregg. I was suffering at the time from a wound in the knee and had not gone far when I gave out. I managed to drag myself along to where the boats should be, which I estimated at only a few hundred yards. These boats served to transfer the garrisons of Gregg and Wagner from Cumming's Point to Sumter."

"As I neared the beach I heard our boats engaged with the barges of the Federal fleet, and finding, as I thought, all means of escape cut off, I prepared to burrow in the sand to afford myself some protection from small-arm fire. I was about to make my way back from the beach when I observed a ten-oared boat, peculiar to our fishermen in those waters, pulling in, evidently with the intention of heading out to seaward. I called out to the boat and in a moment heard somebody exclaim:

"Why, there is Huguenin!"

"Lieut. Odenheimer of our navy, who was in charge of the boat, called out to me to wade out as far as I could, and with Odenheimer standing up at full length firing with his pistol into a Federal barge distant about 200 yards, I was pulled into the canoe. Odenheimer steered up to the eastward, and after running the gantlet of the Federal boats made for Sumter. I do not think the enemy on Morris Island discovered the evacuation of Wagner until the last boat had landed at Sumter. For some unaccountable reason the slow-match failed to ignite the magazine. I watched it burn for some time and only quit the work when I felt sure of its success."

"I again assumed command of Battery Beauregard, on Sullivan's Island, as soon as able to take charge, and remained at that post until the night of July 20, 1864, when I was directed to take command of Fort Sumter. The lamented Mitchell, my predecessor, was killed some three hours prior to my arrival."

Gen. Huguenin's subsequent defense of Fort Sumter is familiar to military students. It was marked by a lionlike stubbornness and a fertility of resource not previously excelled in the history of the fort's resistance. The story of the defense is perhaps nowhere recounted with so much attention to detail and with such marked fairness of spirit as in the work of Major Johnson, the Confederate engineer officer of Fort Sumter, entitled "The Defense of Charleston."

Gen. Huguenin remarked to THE TIMES'S correspondent that no sooner did he arrive in Fort Sumter than he was impressed with the remarkable accuracy of the Federal fire from Morris Island. "It was a saying with us," said the General, "that the Federal gunners could hit any brick they aimed at in Fort Sumter. The naval fire, though good, was never so accurate as that of Morris Island—due, no doubt, to the uncertainty in range with which the naval vessels had to deal. The Morris Island gunners knew the range to a foot to any part of the work."

"The fire of our own guns," continued the General, "from Sullivan's Island and John's Island was always good, at least whenever we had our own powder. We knew by buoy marks the range all over the harbor, but as we had various brands of powder, and always used the same weight of charges, it often happened that the muzzle velocities imparted differed widely. A gun laid twice at the same angle of elevation would, using the same charges, often drop her two shots 100 yards apart. This was not the case, of course, when the same brand of powder was used successively. Although we received most of our powder from the Confederate powder works at Augusta, Ga., a considerable quantity reached us from England."

"We were always deficient in ordnance. We had no guns equal to the 200 and 300 pounder Parrott rifles, such as were used against us from Morris Island, nor had we any gun equal in power to the fifteen-inch Dahlgren, such as was carried by the monitors. The nearest approach we had to the Parrott gun was the Brooke rifle, which was manufactured at the Tredegar Iron Works, Richmond, Va. We used seven-inch and eight-inch Brookes. These guns were either double or treble banded, and the treble-banded gun had in addition a brass breeching passing around the breech and reaching the trunnions."

"We always suffered for the want of projectiles which would not break up on striking. With the exception of our Brooke guns the two eleven-inch Dahlgren guns captured by us from the monitor Keokuk were the best pieces of ordnance we were able to bring into service. Two large Blakely guns obtained through the blockade from England were mounted on the Charleston water front, but were never brought into action."

"During my command of Sumter I always had three months' provisions in reserve. I never touched the reserve. I had occasion several times to put the garrison on a pint of water a day per man and issue provisions proportionally, but I never allowed the reserve to be touched."

When asked if the passage of the Union fleet past Sumter necessarily meant the surrender of the fort, Gen. Huguenin said it did not. The fact that he had instructions never to withdraw from Sumter until ordered would have settled the question of the garrison's duty. But the General was of the opinion that, rather than see the city destroyed, orders would have been issued to evacuate the forts. Sullivan's Island, the General declared, was in nowise dependent upon Charleston, neither was John's Island; but unless Sumter could have been supplied from Sullivan's Island the garrison of that fort would necessarily soon have been starved out."

When Gen. Huguenin evacuated Fort Sumter on the night of the 18th of February, 1865, his evening gun was fired as usual, his preparations to resist assault made as was the regular practice every night, the light guns ran up to sweep the slopes, and then, having everything in readiness, he personally relieved the sentinels, saw every man aboard the transports, and, with the assistance of an aide, cast off the lines with his own hands and stepped aboard. No property was destroyed, and when taken possession of, Sumter was found by the Union soldiers all ready to receive an assault, and lacking only the men who for so long had held the fort against the most powerful artillery fire known to that date in the military world."