

Practice Makes Perfect

****Summary of Chapter: Practice Makes Perfect****

In the chapter titled "Practice Makes Perfect," the atmosphere at Fort Sumter is dominated by the sound of cannon fire as Confederate artillery crews engage in practice sessions. This practice is vital, as the firing of heavy guns is both an art and a dangerous endeavor, requiring precision and coordination among the crew, typically consisting of seven men. The term 'gunner' commonly refers to all crew members, but specifically, it is the chief directing the action. A single cannon is referred to as a "piece," with cannoneers managing the weapon's positioning and firing.

To execute the firing accurately, the gunners employ a series of commands and actions; they first pull the cannon away from the wall, sponge out any remnants of the last shot, load the cannonball, and finally aim and fire. The potential for disaster looms with each misstep, and historical records from the Civil War reveal numerous artillery accidents, including a catastrophic incident aboard the U.S.S. *Ticonderoga* that resulted in severe fatalities.

On March 12, the Confederate guns at Fort Moultrie discharge hundreds of blank rounds, showcasing their growing skill in hitting a buoy with impressive accuracy. In contrast, Fort Sumter's Major Anderson grapples with limited ammunition and resource shortages, opting to repurpose flannel shirts into cartridge bags. He reports to Washington on the impossibility of displaying proficiency in artillery under such constraints.

The chapter deepens further with administrative challenges, including issues over supplies and the detention of a young Black servant, Thomas Moore Lynch. The South Carolina government claims the young man, purportedly a slave, cannot return to Fort Sumter, citing concerns over his correspondence with his mother that suggested potential insurrection. This entangles the matter in a debate over honor and duty, with Anderson expressing his disdain for the implications about Lynch's character and status. The chapter culminates in visible tensions between Union soldiers and the state authorities of South Carolina as they navigate complex social and military dynamics amidst preparations for conflict.