

Salute

In the chapter titled "Salute," the situation at Fort Sumter is portrayed as increasingly difficult for the soldiers stationed there. Asst. Surgeon Crawford, who had previously been in good health, expresses concern about his deteriorating condition, feeling the toll of stress and fatigue. He writes to his brother, longing for a break and lamenting the state of the country, indicating a bleak outlook for the future. The pervasive fear of an impending attack weighs heavily on the troops, with Crawford noting the frantic activity of the Carolinians working on their defenses, likening them to bees.

Despite his pride in his service, Crawford conveys bitterness regarding the lack of reinforcements, criticizing the policies of President Buchanan that left them vulnerable. He believes they are being sacrificed in a political strategy to sway public opinion against those who would attack them. Yet, he acknowledges that the first shot fired at Fort Sumter will likely rally the nation to arms, signaling a significant shift in the conflict.

On February 22, Major Anderson made the notable decision to fire a salute in honor of George Washington's birthday, which marked a departure from their usual conservative approach to ammunition. The salute consisted of thirty-four shots representing each state, including those that had seceded. Crawford supervised the firing, noting the interest of spectators at the opposing Confederate forts who contemplated the meaning of such military displays.

Anderson's actions drew criticism from figures like Mary Chesnut, who viewed the salute as an affront to the newly declared Confederate States. The chapter encapsulates a moment of tension, embodying both the pride and sorrow of military duty under dire circumstances as the country sits on the brink of war. It highlights the emotional strain on the men at Fort Sumter, who grapple with their loyalty to duty amidst growing hostility and uncertainty.