

# Suspense

In the chapter titled "Montgomery and Richmond," the tension mounts in early April as Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his cabinet grow increasingly anxious about the situation. Their confidence relies solely on the assurances from their intermediary, Justice Campbell. The Confederate commissioners in Washington—who were accustomed to power and command—struggle with feelings of disrespect, particularly due to Secretary of State Seward's refusal to meet them. They anticipated being treated as representatives of a new republic, but the reality is more disheartening.

Campbell's reassurances increasingly conflict with rising rumors about impending military action against the Confederacy, including reports of ships armed with troops heading to Fort Sumter. As they grow alarmed, the commissioners communicate that President Lincoln is meeting with naval officers, which raises their concerns even further. In response, Confederate Secretary of War L. P. Walker instructs General Beauregard to maintain a state of "watchful vigilance" as if anticipating an attack.

Meanwhile, in Charleston, John Manning, an aide to Beauregard, continues to engage in a flirtation with Mary Chesnut, capturing the lighter, yet complex social dynamics amidst the brewing conflict. Mary documents moments from their encounters in her diary, notably how Manning shared his secret with his wife about their flirtation, creating an amusing twist in personal relationships during such tumultuous times.

In Richmond, the Virginia Convention holds a vote on a proposed ordinance of secession on April 4, which is soundly rejected, prompting outrage from figures like Edmund Ruffin in Charleston. He expresses his disdain for the convention's reluctance to secede, hoping that a naval attack from Lincoln would finally spur Virginia into action. Ruffin's frustrations are palpable as he wishes for circumstances that would justify secession and rid him of the burden of explaining Virginia's hesitation.

Thus, the chapter juxtaposes the growing sense of foreboding regarding military conflict with the intrigues of social interactions, underscoring the conflicting emotions experienced by individuals in positions of power and their personal lives amid uncertainty.