

Trust

In the chapter titled "Trust," the narrative unfolds during a tumultuous time in early spring of 1861, particularly focusing on the fate of Fort Sumter. Secretary of State Seward had assured Confederate commissioners that the Fort would be evacuated within five days; however, as March 20 rolled around—the supposed evacuation day—Fort Sumter remained under federal control. Meanwhile, Washington was grappling with an unexpected and brutal cold snap, deepening the sense of urgency for a resolution.

Confederate Secretary of State Toombs expressed growing concern with his telegram sent to the Washington commissioners, marking their unease. They responded, emphasizing a need for patience and faith in Seward's assurances. Despite the continuing lack of communication regarding the Fort's status, the commissioners remained hopeful, seeking updates from General Beauregard in Charleston, who confirmed that Sumter had not been evacuated and that troops were still fortifying its defenses.

The tension escalated as Justice Campbell, serving as an intermediary, met with Seward, who insisted that everything was under control but suggested Campbell return the following day for a more thorough meeting. Subsequently, Seward's optimism about the evacuation was reaffirmed. However, upon further inquiry, the commissioners discovered serious concerns regarding the status of Fort Sumter.

Captain Gustavus Fox, tasked by Lincoln to assess conditions at Fort Sumter, arrived on March 21 and sought permission from Governor Pickens for a visit to the fort. Despite delays, he finally met Major Anderson within the fort. This visit clarified the dire supply situation, with Anderson declaring that the fort could only hold out until April 15 without resupply.

Post-visit, Captain Hartstene met with Beauregard, raising alarms about the brief unmonitored time Fox spent with Anderson. Following their discussions, Anderson reported to Washington, disputing Fox's optimistic assessment of potential reinforcements and pointing out significant logistical challenges. Captain Fox, in Washington, suggested that Anderson's hesitance might stem from Southern sympathies, increasing tensions surrounding loyalty and decision-making among Union officers.

The chapter concludes with a palpable tension in the air; Fox's persuasion of Lincoln regarding the resupply mission signals growing complexities in the political and military landscape of the time as the fate of Fort Sumter hangs in the balance.