

Smoke and Cheers

The chapter titled "Smoke and Cheers" from "The Demon of Unrest" begins at Fort Sumter, where the atmosphere is one of gloom and tension. Captain Doubleday describes the fort—its dark, damp, and unfinished structure—with only fifteen guns mounted out of a planned one hundred and twenty. Despite its formidable design as a coastal fortress meant to protect against invasions, it remains incomplete, with debris cluttering the interior, making communication within the fort challenging.

The officers, however, anticipate greater comfort once their quarters are completed, featuring airy rooms with high ceilings, a water closet, and fireplaces, albeit with some potentially hazardous locations due to their proximity to gunpowder magazines. Most of the fort's artillery consists of thirty-two-pound cannons, with the heaviest being ten-inch "columbiads," which weigh around fifteen thousand pounds—significant firepower for the time.

The tension escalates when Major Anderson, the commanding officer, assembles all troops to raise the flag at the newly occupied Fort Sumter on December 27. A prayer is offered for peace and national unity, followed by the flag being hoisted amidst cheers from the garrison, prompting disbelief and fear among the Carolinians—that what they tried to prevent had happened.

Governor Francis Pickens of South Carolina feels betrayed by President Buchanan, believing he had been promised no reinforcement at Sumter. In a fit of anger, he sends officers to confront Anderson, who defends his actions by asserting his right to relocate for safety, given the threats from local southern troops.

Despite the tense dialogue, Anderson remains composed and explains that the move was made without malice, purely to prevent bloodshed, while expressing sympathy towards the South. His firm refusal to return to Fort Moultrie results in the southern officers leaving, though they are impressed by his demeanor. In the aftermath, secessionist workers at Sumter request to leave, leading to many departing the fort, demonstrating the uncertainty and looming conflict surrounding the fortified position .