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**The War Fifty Years Ago**

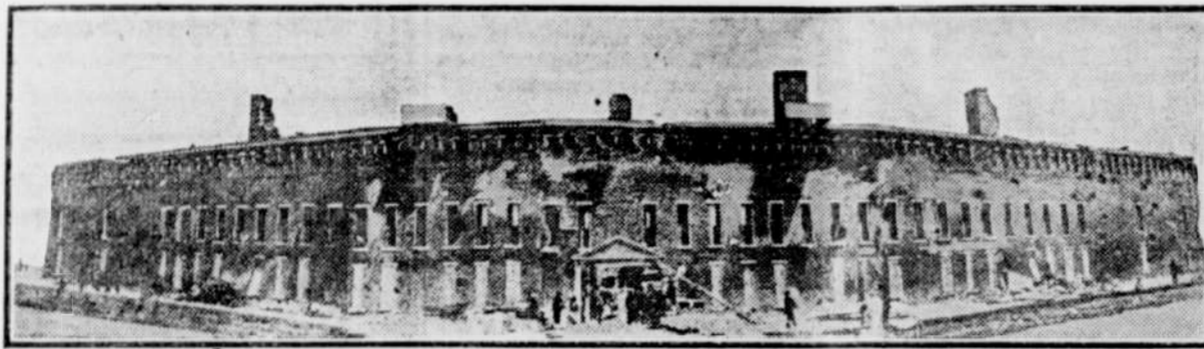
**A Battle Royal Between Fort Sumter and Federal Iron-  
clads---Nine New and Powerful Monitors Steam  
Within 1,300 Yards---A Fierce Rain of Confederate  
Shells---Batteries Adjoining the Old Fort Lend Aid  
Against the Monitors---Over 500 Shots Land on the  
Target---Six Ironclads Disabled---One Riddled Like  
a Colander---Little Damage to the Fort---Lincoln  
Reviews the Army of the Potomac In Camp.**

By Captain GEO. L. KILMER, Late U. S. V.  
On April 7, 1863, a Federal fleet  
made the first attempt to re-  
cover Fort Sumter. The officers  
and sailors of the fleet were  
stimulated by a latent desire to see  
the old flag floating once more from  
the staff where it had been humiliated  
April 14, 1861, but that was not the  
sole end in view.

The genesis of this attack on Fort  
Sumter was the invention of the iron-  
clad. Big guns will batter down con-  
crete parapets if they get near enough,  
but wooden floating batteries were use-  
less under the fire which the Confed-  
erates could pour upon an attacking

fired when they saw the signal to re-  
treat. It was then 5 o'clock p. m. The  
Keokuk was found to be the worst  
hurt of them all. "She was riddled  
like a colander and the worst mauled  
ship one ever saw," wrote Dupont's  
chief of staff. Her hull was pierced  
by thirteen holes, and her turret had  
been bored through and through. Her  
gallant commander, Captain Rhind,  
came forward bleeding and limping  
from a wound received that day. He  
anchored his ship, but she soon went  
to the bottom.

On all of the ships the mechanics  
worked the whole night to repair the  
damage in anticipation of a renewal of



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**FORT SUMTER, TARGET OF THE FIRST IRONCLAD ATTACK.**

fleet from Sumter batteries around the  
harbor. The attacking guns must be  
protected by iron walls, and Admiral  
S. F. Dupont, the Federal fleet com-  
mander, waited for an ironclad fleet to  
be created before making the first  
dash at Sumter.

In order to test the new class ships  
Dupont sent the Montauk to batter at  
the mud walls of Fort McAllister. The  
fort was not severely harmed, but the  
ironclad stayed for hours under a rain  
of shots which barely dented her  
armor.

**Fleet of New Ironclads.**

Seven of the nine ironclads in Du-  
pont's fleet were monitors, each carry-  
ing one eleven inch and one fifteen inch  
gun in a single turret. These were the  
Montauk, Catskill, Weehawken, Pa-  
passco, Nantucket, Passaic and Na-  
hant. In the fleet also were two ex-  
periments in ironclads, the Keokuk and  
the New Ironsides. The New Iron-  
sides was an armored battleship, some-  
thing after the pattern of the Confed-  
erate ram Merrimac. She was not  
armed with a ram, and her roof was  
flat instead of sloping. Her armament  
were two 150 pounder pivot rifles and  
fourteen eleven inch guns in broad-  
side. The Keokuk was a double turret  
monitor of extra length and width.

The fleet was to enter a channel  
planted with obstructions as well as  
torpedoes and there face the fire of  
sixty-nine guns which swept the sea.  
Dupont's orders were to concentrate  
the fire of the ships upon the center  
embrasure of Sumter. The walls of  
the fort rose forty-five feet above high  
water and were built of gray brick  
laid with mortar, a concrete of pound-  
ed oyster shells and cement. A still  
firmer concrete had been used for the  
embrasures, which always get the  
hardest blows in a fight. In thickness  
the walls varied from five to ten feet.

**Old Fort Moultrie Opens Fire.**

The batteries at the entrance to the  
channel paid no attention to the ad-  
vancing fleet as it passed silently on,  
steering for Sumter, but when the  
Weehawken came within range of Fort  
Moultrie a salute of thirteen guns an-  
nounced the opening of Sumter's new  
career as a Confederate. It was then  
3 o'clock. Fort Moultrie fired the first  
shot, which the Weehawken answered.  
Then Sumter, Battery Bee and Battery  
Beauregard, Cumming's Point and  
Battery Wagner opened fire.

The first adventures came to the  
monitor Weehawken, which ran close  
up to some obstructions in the channel  
between Sumter and Moultrie and got  
in the first shot. Finding his ship in  
danger of being snared by the obstruc-  
tions, the captain turned her about,  
fighting from the stern. As the ves-  
sel turned a torpedo exploded under  
her bow, but did no serious damage.

Dupont's flagship, Ironsides, proved  
unwieldy in action. She steamed  
within 1,500 yards of Sumter, but was  
at the mercy of the current, which  
carried her directly over a torpedo  
holding 2,000 pounds of powder and  
connected with Battery Wagner by an  
electric wire. The Confederate elec-  
trician in Wagner was accused of  
treachery for not sending her to the  
bottom, but the wire was proved to be  
"out of order" at the time.

**The Keokuk a Floating Wreck.**

While the Ironsides lay drifting in  
the current Moultrie directed all its  
fire upon her. This was answered by  
a broadside, the only shots fired at  
Moultrie. Meanwhile the other ships  
ran their course up to the obstructions,  
opened fire as directed and only re-

the attack in the morning. But day-  
light revealed the fleet's hopeless con-  
dition, and the battle was postponed.  
The purpose of the attack on the 7th  
was to reconnoiter the channel and  
test the ships. All the ship command-  
ers agreed with the admiral that the  
forts were stronger than ironclad  
ships.

The Weehawken was struck fifty-  
three times and her deck smashed so  
that the water ran through, while her  
turret could scarcely be revolved, owing  
to the dents of heavy blows. The  
Passaic received thirty-five hits, one  
gun was disabled, and the turret jam-  
med so as to be immovable. One rifle  
shot broke eleven plates of the turret  
and upset the pilot house. The Pa-  
passco was struck forty-seven times.

The Nantucket was struck fifty-one  
times and her turret was disabled.  
The Nahant received thirty-six shots,  
and her turret was disabled. The Mon-  
tauk and Catskill were hit many times,  
but not disabled. The Ironsides was

mostly ricochet shots, which glanced  
from the water over the fort and to  
the right or left of it. The battle casu-  
alties on both sides were slight. Five  
men were wounded in Sumter, four  
killed and four wounded in Wagner  
by accident and one killed in Moultrie.

**Lincoln at the Front.**

President Lincoln reviewed the in-  
fantry corps of the Army of the Poto-  
mac on a field near the great camps  
along the Rappahannock on April 9.  
This was a novel and interesting epi-  
sode of the executive's relationship to  
the army. The "lady of the White  
House" witnessed the parade of the  
troops from a barouche drawn up on  
the edge of the reviewing field. By the  
president's side when he rode along  
the line of soldiers was his third son,  
"Tad," mounted on a pony.

This was the third appearance of  
Mr. Lincoln in camp just at the time  
of what was described in those days  
as "a bitter feeling" on the part of  
the army toward the administration.  
The first was at Harrison's Landing, in  
July 1862, after the disastrous expe-  
riences in the Chickahominy swamps  
before Richmond. The second was at  
Antietam soon after the battle and the  
proclamation of emancipation.

Many of the soldiers thought that  
the disasters of the peninsula had been  
brought on by interference at Wash-  
ington; also that the victory of forcing  
Lee to abandon Maryland was a vindic-  
ation of the army and its leader and

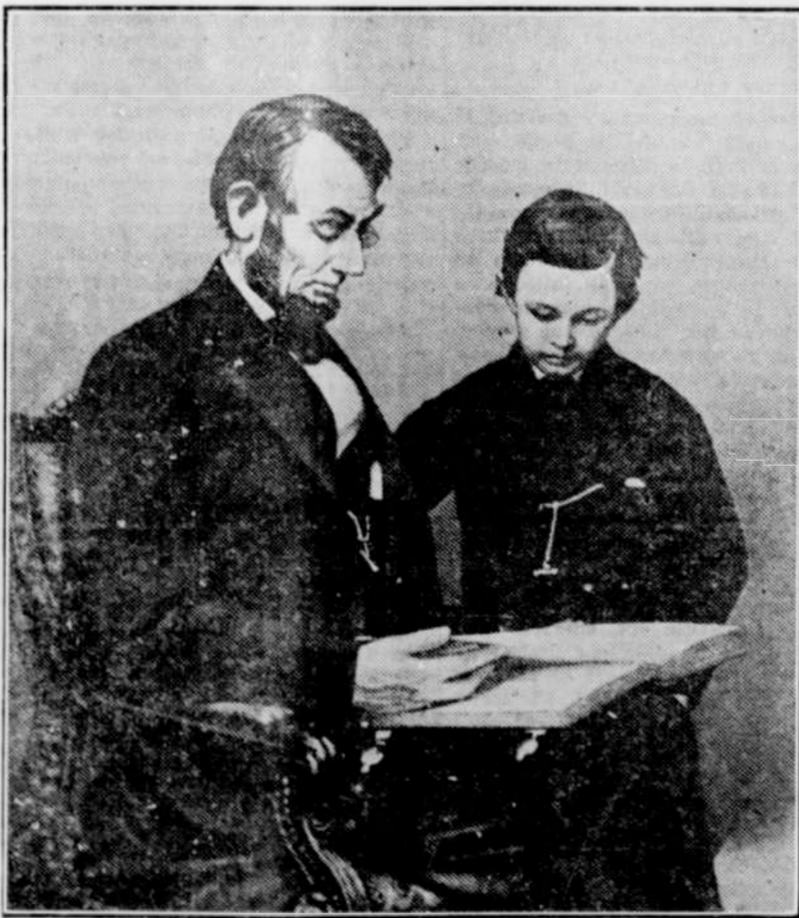
a rebuke to their critics. And some,  
including prominent and influential of-  
ficers, didn't want to fight an "abol-  
ition war."

All of the executive excursions to  
camp had been well timed. This may  
or may not have been due to delibera-  
tion. One thing Mr. Lincoln could al-  
ways depend upon, "even bank on"--  
that was the popular affection for and  
imperishable faith in "Old Abe."

Of Mr. Lincoln absent the soldiers  
could have "bitter" thoughts. Face to  
face he was always "Father Abra-  
ham." (The writer was present on the  
three occasions cited and well remem-  
bers that Mr. Lincoln's appearance  
somehow always allayed that "bitter  
feeling.")

**Little "Tad" on Horseback.**

It was a new view of "Father Abra-  
ham" which the army had that su-  
perb April day on the broad slopes of  
Stafford. The president, Mrs. Lincoln  
and "Tad" had been at the front three



**PRESIDENT LINCOLN AND "TAD," HIS SON.**

hit ninety-five times, but with little  
damage. During the battle the balls  
could be distinctly seen in their course  
with the naked eye.

**Slight Effect on the Fort.**

The ironclad fire damaged Fort Sum-  
ter in a few places, particularly on the  
outer wall or sea front, where two  
monitor shells from fifteen inch and  
eleven inch guns struck together, mak-  
ing a crater six feet high and eight  
feet wide. In another place the para-  
pet was loosened for a space of twenty-  
five feet. The ironclads fired 151  
shots at the fort, and fifty-five hit the  
mark.

Sumter's guns fired 810 shots, and  
the surrounding batteries fired 1,300.  
Out of 2,200 shots fired at the iron-  
clads 520 landed on the vessels, and  
six out of nine ships were practically  
disabled in action. The vessels stood  
off 1,300 to 1,400 yards from Sumter  
and a greater distance from the other  
batteries. The Federal shots were

days. Their presence was general-  
ly known. It brought the color of  
home into the cheerless camps. "Tad"  
was a child in spite of his zouave cap  
and jacket and "boots and spurs." His  
military outfit was a home fad. Now  
for once, he was a soldier among sol-  
diers, even having an "orderly" duly  
equipped, to ride after him. The or-  
derly was a real soldier, being a bugler  
at the headquarters of General Sickles.  
"Tad" was ten years old and his or-  
derly about the same age.

The task before Mr. Lincoln, this  
time fifty years ago, was to inspire the  
confidence of the army as a whole in  
his new appointee for commander,  
General Joseph Hooker. The army  
well knew of the one personal falling  
of Hooker which all but defeated his  
candidate for leadership. Surprise  
rather than bitterness followed his ap-  
pointment. However, during the two  
months that had elapsed, surprise had  
given way to an inclination to make  
the best of it.

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