

## From the Diary of Mary Boykin Miller Chestnut / April 1861

*April 12th.* - Anderson will not capitulate. Yesterday's was the merriest, maddest dinner we have had yet. Men were audaciously wise and witty. We had an unspoken foreboding that it was to be our last pleasant meeting. Mr. Miles dined with us to-day. Mrs. Henry King rushed in saying, "The news, I come for the latest news. All the men of the King family are on the Island," of which fact she seemed proud.

While she was here our peace negotiator, or envoy, came in - that is, Mr. Chestnut returned. His interview with Colonel Anderson had been deeply interesting, but Mr. Chestnut was not inclined to be communicative. He wanted his dinner. He felt for Anderson and had telegraphed to President Davis for instructions - what answer to give Anderson, etc. He has now gone back to Fort Sumter with additional instructions. When they were about to leave the wharf A. H. Boykin sprang into the boat in great excitement. He thought himself ill-used, with a likelihood of fighting and he to be left behind!



I do not pretend to go to sleep. How can I? If Anderson does not accept terms at four, the orders are, he shall be fired upon. I count four, St. Michael's bells chime out and I begin to hope. At half-past four the heavy booming of a cannon. I sprang out of bed, and on my knees prostrate I prayed as I never prayed before...

*April 13th.* - Nobody has been hurt after all. How gay we were last night. Reaction after the dread of all the slaughter we thought those dreadful cannon were making. Not even a battery the worse for wear. Fort Sumter has been on fire. Anderson has not yet silenced any of our guns. So the aides, still with swords and red sashes by way of uniform, tell us. But the sound of those guns makes regular meals impossible. None of us go to table. Tea-trays pervade the corridors going everywhere. Some of the anxious hearts lie on their beds and moan in solitary misery. Mrs. Wigfall and I solace ourselves with tea in my room. These women have all a satisfying faith. "God is on our side," they say. When we are shut in Mrs. Wigfall and I ask "Why?" "Of course, He hates the Yankees, we are told. You'll think that well of Him."

Not by one word or look can we detect any change in the demeanor of these negro servants. Lawrence sits at our door, sleepy and respectful, and profoundly indifferent. So are they all, but they carry it too far. You could not tell that they even heard the awful roar going on in the bay, though it has been dinning in their ears night and day. People talk before them as if they were chairs and tables. They make no sign. Are they stolidly stupid? Or wiser than we are; silent and strong, biding their time?

From the Diary of Mary Boykin Miller Chestnut / June 1861



*June 27, 1861* ...Mr. Lawrence Keitt joined us en route. With him came his wife and baby. We don't think alike, but Mr. Keitt is always original and entertaining. Already he pronounces Jeff Davis a failure and his Cabinet a farce. "Prophetic," I suggested, as he gave his opinion before the administration had fairly got under way... We wrangled, as we always do...

Soldiers everywhere. They seem to be in the air, and certainly to fill all space. Keitt quoted a funny Georgia man who says we try our soldiers to see if they are hot enough before we enlist them. If, when water is thrown on them they do not sizz, they won't do; their patriotism is too cool.

To show they were wide awake and sympathizing enthusiastically, every woman from every window of every house we passed waved a handkerchief, if she had one. This fluttering of white flags from every side never ceased from Camden to Richmond. Another new symptom - Parties of girls came to every station simply to look at the troops passing. They always stood (the girls, I mean) in solid phalanx, and as the sun was generally in their eyes, they made faces. Mary Hammy never tired of laughing at this peculiarity of her sister patriots...

In Mrs. Davis's drawing-room last night, the President took a seat by me on the sofa where I sat. He talked for nearly an hour. He laughed at our faith in our own powers. We are like the British. We think every Southerner equal to three Yankees at least. We will have to be equivalent to a dozen now. After his experience of the fighting qualities of Southerners in Mexico, he believes that we will do all that can be done by pluck and muscle, endurance, and dogged courage, dash, and red-hot patriotism. And yet his tone was not sanguine. There was a sad refrain running through it all. For one thing, either way, he thinks it will be a long war. That floored me at once. It has been too long for me already. Then he said, before the end came we would have many a bitter experience. He said only fools doubted the courage of the Yankees, or their willingness to fight when they saw fit. And now that we have stung their pride, we have roused them till they will fight like devils...