


At the
Dry Tortugas
During the War



by **Emily Holder**

Part Two

On January 1, 1861, a rumor came that Mordaci, the owner of the Isabel, had offered her to Carolina for a man-of-war, our mail contract going with her.

There was a cloud on the horizon that looked larger than a man's hand, and it affected our spirits. People began to be suspicious of their neighbors. Those who claimed to be Northern sympathizers owned their servants. There were many Southerners in Key West; but a goodly number were originally from the North, who, dwelling many years in that climate, and owning simply their house servants, were doubtful whether, if Florida seceded, they ought not stand by the State of their adoption. The Northern residents who did not own slaves were true Unionists from the first. The slave seemed to be the turning point. The Conchs, as people from Bahama were called, were boisterous in their demonstrations of loyalty to the South; but, at the first suggestion of their doing duty in case of necessity, they packed their goods and sailed for the British Isles.

One morning the first news that greeted the gentlemen on the street was that the militia of the town had attempted to take Fort Taylor during the night. A futile effort, however, as Captain Brannon had sent the two companies of regulars from the barracks the night before after dark, leaving the harmless gun carriages covered, so that no one suspected the removal of the guns. Captain Hunt had turned the workmen into soldiers, and they had been employed all the previous day in taking the wharf away and every available means of entrance; so that an unexpected bath would have been the result of the attempt to gain entrance over the planks innocently leading to the open spaces.

A great state of excitement now prevailed. Letters that were sent to Washington were opened and destroyed; and our own from the North were delayed purposely, and sometimes not forwarded from Charleston, so that we began sending our mails north via Havana.



I was beginning to weary of the very name of secession; for there was little else discussed, and it made us gloomy if we allowed ourselves to dwell upon the outlook, although no one yet admitted that there was to be a war.

Affairs began to assume such a serious aspect that Captains Meigs, Hunt and Brannon held a council on board the Mohawk, resulting in our leaving for Tortugas the next day. Captain Maffitt met with the officers, but he resigned the next morning, leaving his ship there; he afterwards commanded the Confederate privateer Florida.

There were joking remarks made by our friends that if we found the fort in possession of the secessionists we could return, -not in the least cheering to us, although we treated them with as much levity as they did; but I think when we were near enough to our little island home to discern with a glass that the flag that floated over it was the stars and strips it was a greater relief than, perhaps, any of us wanted to acknowledge.

Our defenseless situation was almost an invitation to the enemy to capture us; and why they did not was rather a mystery to us. The WyandottZØ, we heard, was on the way to take possession of both forts, and could have taken Fort Jefferson simply by steaming in and claiming it; for there was not a single gun on the island.

Active work began on our return. A drawbridge was made and raised every night, all communication with the outside being cut off.

The evening of the seventeenth of January Captain Meigs called, and I remember his reading Shakespeare aloud, and discussing some of the historical plays with my husband. They were both students of Shakespeare. In the midst of it Mr. Howells came in saying that the sheriff had arrived from Key West to arrest the fishermen, and they had sent for Captain Meigs to intercede for them.

The facts of the case were that the State of Florida had made a new law that none of the fishermen could obtain a clearance to go to Havana without paying a fine or license of two or three hundred dollars. Of course they could not pay it; and the object was to drive them home. They were mostly from Connecticut; and there were fourteen smacks in the harbor. They came down every winter to fish, taking their catch to Havana market.

Captain Meigs sent word to them not to pay it, and to the sheriff that he was Governor of that island, and he had better return to Key West. Then he sent Mr. Howells off privately that night to Key West for guns. He felt it was time to take the responsibility, even if he was censured for it.



I asked if he apprehended any danger. He looked at me as though he were thinking whether it was best to alarm me, and said: "No, Madam, but I want to be prepared in case of emergency. If we had a few guns we should not be molested. Guns are not so much to use as to keep people away."

He was the man for an emergency; and I think General Scott, instead of censuring him, praised his prompt action fully.

The following morning, January 18, 1861, our excitement culminated in the news that a man-of-war was in sight and steaming up the harbor. Every one was wild with excitement, running to the bastion with glasses to see what flag she floated; yet even that might have been a deception if it proved to be the red, white and blue. But she carried no flag, a fact we considered suspicious.

Captain Meigs sent Dr. Gowland to meet them as they stopped outside the reef, sending a boat ashore in a spot known to us as very dangerous, unless the navigators knew the channel exactly. It was a narrow opening in the reef, called the "five-foot channel," and only used by our small sail-boats. Dr. Gowland carried orders, that if they were enemies they could not land. A verbal resistance was the only one he could offer, but as soon as the two boats met a signal was given to those on board the steamer, and the stars and striped flew to the masthead. The feeling of those who were watching from the fort can better be imagined than described; and none of us realized the tension we had been under until this relief came.

It proved to be the steamer Joseph Whitney, with Major Arnold in command, from Fort Independence, at Boston, with troops for our relief.

The reception they received must have left no doubts in their minds regarding their welcome. We were more than overjoyed; and the commotion and excitement of unloading the steamer, for she was to return immediately, as her expense to the Government was six hundred dollars a day, was something that tested the ability of every one. It did not take long to put us in a state of defense and everything in military order. We were now aroused at sunrise by the reveille. A sentinel walked in front of the guardhouse, at the drawbridge, and one was posted in the lighthouse tower.

Already our quiet life was a thing of the past. The large guns came from Key West, were soon mounted, and we began to feel as though we were on a war footing. Yet with all this Major Arnold did not think there would be war, and we surely hoped not. The New Orleans boat was taken off, and our only method of sending and receiving mail was through Havana, where the schooner Tortugas was sent for it.



The papers now received were old, but did duty all over the garrison. The officers would meet and discuss the prospects; but even the firing on the Star of the West in Charleston harbor did not convince Major Arnold that we would have war.

I presume we heard strange rumors that never made an impression at the North, they were so quickly followed by others of greater importance. The news from Pensacola was warlike. Two thousand men surrounded the fort; and the commanding officer's wife going into town to do some shopping was taken as a spy and detained as a prisoner. It was said that the Senator from Florida, before he resigned, examined the plans of Fort Jefferson and Fort Taylor in Key West. Captain Meigs thought if he came there then he would find something not in his copy.

When Florida seceded she reappointed all the old Government officers; and my husband was told that under the new law he was a member of the Engineer Corps.

Those were very exciting times to us, not that we expected to be attacked, but we were within the line of attraction. We heard that the officers in Washington had concluded to send their families out of the city. Captain Meigs advised his family to go to Philadelphia. How strange it seemed to think of such things in our own country.

At this time two large ships-of-war came in bringing guns and news of more troops on the way. One of the ships came from Portsmouth, N. H., where it was thirteen degrees below zero. Major Arnold said that he expected to find us in the hands of the secessionists. General Scott gave him orders that if the fort had been taken to retake it if possible; if he failed, to cruise around Fort Jefferson for sixty days, with the understanding that he was to be reinforced by a war steamer from Pensacola. January 22d the Mohawk came back to ply between Key West, Havana and Tortugas regularly. All the able-bodied men had been put upon the roll, and guns and ammunition dealt out to them. At that time there were in the harbor two steamers of war, one side-wheel steamer, a revenue cutter, two barges and some dozen sloops and schooners. We were no longer out of the world; yet the steamer Magnolia from New York stopped and left a month's collection of mail.

The last of February brought news of the secession of six of the Southern States, and that a Southern confederacy had been formed at Montgomery, Ala, with Jefferson Davis as President. On March fifth Lieut. Gillman arrived with Major Tower of the Engineers, having arrived in Havana from New York just in time to come over in the Tortugas. Lieut. Gillman belonged to Lieut. Slemmer's command at Fort Pickens. He was granted



permission to go through the invested district, but preferred going that way and landing under the protection of the stars and stripes.

The two coast survey schooners were there at the same time with Lieut. Tirrell and three assistants on their way to New York. They were at Charleston Harbor, but their tents and instruments had been stolen, and they concluded to go to Havana, sending their schooners home; but we kept one of them, as the Tortugas had to take Lieut. Gillman to Pickens with dispatches from General Scott to Lieut. Slemmer.

Soon after this we had a great disappointment in the order that came for Captain Meigs to return to Washington. We could not help rejoicing on his account, yet felt that half the life of the place would go with him.

Captain Hunt came down from Key West to take charge until relieved; but fortunately for him the New Orleans boat came near enough that night to quietly send a boat ashore with Lieut. Reese, who had unceremoniously been put out at Fort Gaines at Mobile, without even having time to remove his personal property. He came to assist Lieut. Morton, whom we expected to fill the place vacated by Captain Meigs.

Lieut. Reese said that he was looked upon with great suspicion on board the steamer, as he was taken out to it in a small boat ostensibly as a passenger for Havana; but he told his story to the captain, who made an excuse to stop for fuel, and so landed him, as much to his own surprise as ours.

He of course had news from the Southern posts to give in exchange for much that we could give him, for he had been entirely alone. All the workmen left him; but he could not leave the fort until he had had orders to do so from Washington or it was taken from him, the latter not a difficult thing to do. He was very glad to get among friends, and was a pleasant acquisition to our now constantly changing society.

One day a little smack came into the harbor flying the Palmetto flag, the first we had seen. Major Arnold sent word for him to haul it down and put up the proper colors and salute them. He was promptly obeyed, and they came and apologized.

The steamer Daniel Webster now arrived with provisions and recruits, but took the latter with her, as she was going to Texas to meet the five companies that were leaving the dust of that State behind them, as it had seceded and General Twiggs had been dismissed from the army.

Work was going on rapidly. The engineer had a large force at work on the bastions, where they were to mount six heavy guns. Everything was bustle, and a great deal was



accomplished in a very short time. Reports from Key West were very unpleasant. Officers of the army were followed about the streets and insulted. Some of the mob were annoying peaceful citizens, threatening to take our schooner and Fort Taylor. One copy only of Lincoln's inaugural address came to Key West. It was kept quite a week before it reached us at Tortugas; and people there thought they could smell gunpowder on it.

I think, for its size, Fort Jefferson was one of the busiest places on the continent at this time; and the excitement was kept at a fever heat, either by some stray rumor from the many vessels coming in, or the detention of the mail and a dearth of reliable news, making us apprehensive of the imaginary evil.

The horizon was watched, not only by the sentinels, but by every one. I remember, one day, before the troops came, that Captain Meigs discovered smoke away to the southwest, as of several steamers moving in a very suspicious manner to us, who were so on the alert and were almost expecting invaders.

We all went to the ramparts and with glasses watched them, making out distinctly ten or twelve large vessels steaming about with concerted movements; and we could hear heavy firing. But they came no nearer; and, after watching a long time, we came to the conclusion that it was the Spanish fleet of war practicing, which we found to be the case some days afterwards, from a fishing-boat which had been near them.

The last of March, 1861, the steamer Daniel Webster returned, landing one company, reporting the Rush just behind with the others. The Webster came early in the morning; and just before dark the Rush arrived, with a band playing patriotic airs, the troops cheering lustily.

It was a motley crowd—camp women, children, and all the paraphernalia of camp life. A portion of them had marched from Forts Duncan and Brown some four hundred miles down the Rio Grande to Brazos; where they took the steamer.

On the way the rear of the battalion had an engagement with the Indians, during which several of the latter were killed. The Indians had commenced hostilities as soon as the troops were ordered to leave the State.

The officers had sent their families home by way of New Orleans, as they did not know how long they would remain or what kind of a place they were coming to.

There was discontent and disaffection among them; and two of the officers before many days sent in their resignations, as the State they came from had gone out of the Union.

We numbered at that time about four hundred, and represented a busy little town. The fort at night was brilliant with lights, and the place was active with the bustle of many people.



All this commotion brought comforts in the way of food to us who had only seen fresh beef and vegetables semi-occasionally; for a steamer was chartered to bring us six cattle at stated times, with other necessaries.

The Tortugas returned from Fort Pickens with no news except that Major Tower of the Engineers was not allowed to land, having to remain on the Brooklyn.

Lieut. Morton and his two assistants arrived, proving a most energetic and efficient officer, one whom we like exceedingly. He had just returned from making a survey for a route across the Isthmus of Panama. Naturally, none of the officers fancied being sent here; it was like imprisonment when there was so much excitement in the North, but they all did their duty conscientiously.

On April fourth a loud call from the sentinel on the lighthouse tower announced a steamer; and as usual we took the glasses to the ramparts, where could plainly be seen a vessel loaded with people; and on the wheel-house we distinguished officers. We felt that there were as many people on the island as could be accommodated, and wondered what it could mean. As the steamer neared the wharf, to our great surprise we recognized Captain Meigs. The other officers proved to be Col. Brown and staff, and they had come under sealed orders. When Captain Meigs called to see us, I asked him what it all meant.

He laughed, and replied: "That is a secret. No one but Col. Brown and myself know; but what we are here for is to get some light guns, Lieut. Reese, an overseer, twenty negroes, thirty men, a scow and a load bricks; and we can only stop two hours and a half."

They brought papers only a week old, but new to us. They had on board four hundred men besides the officers and crew, and sixty horses.

Lieut. Reese had that morning arrived from Havana with an assistant of Captain Hunt. He joined the excited party; and before dark they were steaming out of the harbor, with the schooner, scow and a load of bricks in tow.

The destination of Captain Meigs and his party was a secret. It naturally aroused much conjecture on our little island; but we soon heard that the expedition had arrived at Fort Pickens, and that the object was to reinforce the garrison there. Even this movement did not convince our genial commander, Major Arnold, that war was imminent; yet with the vigilance of the soldier he was prepared for the struggle that was to come, and began a series of fortifications that would have made the island a difficult place to capture. In fact, fully armed, the Dry Tortugas was almost impregnable; and everything pointed to the conclusion that the garrison would soon be in a position to defend itself against the world.



The outside fortifications began with a breastwork on Bush Key, which hitherto had been the home of the sea-gull. The trees were cut and made into facines. Sand Key was to have a battery; and finally we learned that the fort was to become a naval station, vessels being on the way with stores.

Key West was now under Federal authorities. New officers were appointed, to command the four hundred men on the ground; and we were assured that more would be sent if necessary. I asked Major Arnold if it was fear of a foreign power that all this preparation was being made, as no one thought England or France would acknowledge a Southern confederacy.

He replied that possibly the Government thought that, in case of war, Spain might stand ready to pick up what spoils could be easily taken during a national explosion.

Lieutenant Morton now went to Key West for shovels, wheelbarrows and workmen. He had sent to New York for three hundred men, and some sappers and miners, who came on the last boat; and work on Bird Key began at once.

One day men discovered a large cannon several feet from the shore in very good condition. It had been spiked, and had the English arms and date of seventeen hundred on it. We invested it with a romance at once, probably not far from the truth, as it belonged to the pirates; who must have been followed, and who had spiked and thrown it overboard to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy.

These islands were known to have been the resort of Spanish buccaneers years before. Captain Benners, the lighthouse keeper, found several thousand dollars in Spanish doubloons on East Key, ten miles nearer Key West; and many stories were told of other finds.

It was summer; the men worked bravely in the broiling sun. The mercury stood at 91 degrees on many days; yet no case of sunstroke occurred, but other troubles came. The men began to have scurvy for want of proper food, and some had to be sent North.

The day we received the news of the attack on Fort Sumter was a memorable one. The officers were demoralized; for none of them, I think, had fully realized that the end was to be war, and the country scenes of bloodshed. They felt as restless as though they were imprisoned. All wanted to go to the front, and share in the glory and excitement; and it certainly was very trying to remain here doing nothing but guard a fort that now would not in any probability be in danger of an attack, so well fortified were we.



They told us that if there should be an attack the women and children were to be put in an empty reservoir under one of the bastions farthest from the enemy; and our plans were all laid, and rehearsed by the children day after day.

One day, after having been to Bird Key, we saw a very dense smoke on the horizon, which was moving slowly along. Speculation was rife at once. As we came up the walk Major Arnold called from the upper piazza to know if we were going out on the water again, as sentinels were posted on every side. The large guns were loaded and two brass field-pieces in the gateway were also prepared, with the men ready to use them at a moment's notice.

My house boy told me that there was a rumor that the fort was to be attacked, and that a workman, an American lately engaged, who came from Havana, had been arrested as a spy but that they were not able to prove anything against him: a sample of the rumors in our little settlement.

The next morning the steamer was still in sight, going back and forth in a mysterious manner; and we could see that some sailing vessels had joined her. They disappeared before night, however, and we heard nothing from them; but later news came that the Confederate yacht *Wanderer* was out as a privateer by permission of President Davis; so we concluded that it was she, while the steamer might have been a convoy.

One day I suddenly heard the sentinel on the east face shout, "Corporal of the guard, post number one," in a shrill, excited tone. This was taken up by the next sentinel, "Corporal of the guard, post number one," still another repeating it, until the word reached the guardhouse. In a few moments a corporal went up the walk on the run, and I soon saw him on the fort; then the men began to go up; and soon we were all on the ramparts. Away on the horizon was a steamer headed for the channel. The suspicious black smoke was rising every moment. She evidently knew the channel.

My husband was the health officer; and I soon saw his eight-oared barge pulling across the Long Key reef with the officer of the day. It was their duty to intercept the vessel off the second buoy. On came the steamer, a black, suspicious-looking craft, still showing no signal; and such headway did she make that she passes the Sand Key buoy before the barge reached her, and steamed on rapidly, paying no attention to their signals, heading now for the inside buoy. The long roll was sounded, the men fell in; and in a trice the big guns were manned, and with a roar the first gun belched forth its warning from the Dry Tortugas. A solid shot whistled across the bow of the incomer so near the cutwater that half an hour



later I heard the Captain say: "Well, Major Arnold, I must compliment you on that shot. Three more turns of our wheels, and you would have blown my bow to splinter."

The steamer was a transport in need of coal; and its officers had simply misunderstood the signals. They brought no news, except that the Spanish government had refused to admit vessels flying the Confederate flag into the harbor of Havana, which was in a measure comforting to us.

The following day the man-of-war St. Louis came in, her officers adding much to the social life of the Key.

During their stay Lieutenant Morton invited us down to see the oath of allegiance taken by Captain Wilson and the crew of the schooner Tortugas. It was quite an impressive ceremony, after which they were provided with two brass guns and small arms; and we called her our gunboat.

The coming in of so many steamers relieved somewhat the monotony of our lives; yet we did feel very far away, and the officers were still impatient at the isolation.

The Tortugas now went out as a gunboat, flying the stars and stripes, saluting it with thirteen guns. Captain Wilson evidently enjoyed his command.

A steamer came in with news to the eleventh, ordering the St. Louis back to Fort Pickens, and taking all the sand bags we had made to stop the open spaces in our second tier of casemates, as we had no fear of needing them then.

Anxiety continued to increase. Mutterings of war were heard on every hand. Neither side seemed likely to yield; and, if an agreement could not be brought about, it must inevitably result in that most horrible of all wars, a civil one.

The Southern States were arraiging themselves, one after another, like line of battle ships bristling for an engagement; and every man who had lived in any of these States immediately felt that his duty called him to stand by it, regardless of the Constitution.

One officer sympathized so strongly with three States that he had a fever of secession as each one threw off the yoke of allegiance to the Union; but he managed to stand by the colors he was educated under until the last of the three fell out of line, when he sent in his resignation, and became a noncombatant.

These were sad days, though sadder ones were to follow; yet I think no one dreamed that if war came it would be a long one. A few months would settle the difficulty. I think that was the feeling of all the older officers.



The population increased so rapidly that in June, 1861, the census was taken, showing that 550 souls were living on this sandbank of thirteen acres, too large a number we deemed for safety, little thinking that before long Fort Jefferson would be the home of several thousand men.

By enforcing a strict quarantine my husband kept the spectre of yellow fever, that was in Havana sixty miles away, though the strict confinement told upon us in other ways.

In June the gulls always came in thousands to lay their eggs on Bird Key, the season being in the nature of a festival and feast for us, as we made up egg-collecting parties. The eggs were enjoyed by us, as they were luxuries here. The quantity of eggs may be imagined when it is known that we could hardly walk in some places without stepping upon them, and would often take away a flour barrel full of the speckled beauties.

This year the men had taken possession of and were engaged in throwing up a battery on the island; and we were interested to learn whether it would result in the birds seeking some other place. At first they were shy and distrustful; but when they found that the soldiers did not disturb them they took possession of the old places, and could be seen from the fort hanging over the Key like a black cloud, while near at hand their cries drowned the voice.

On the night of the 1st of July we saw the comet of '61 from the top of the fort. Its appearance was sublime, as it extended over nearly half of the heavens. The colored people were inclined to be superstitious; and many wondered if the world was not coming to an end.

On the night of the 4th of July Captain Morton, whose nervous energy never seemed to flag, took us to Bird Key in the barge, with Chinese lanterns at the top of each of the two masts. The black boys accompanied us with their banjos and guitars, and made very sweet music. There we built bonfires and displayed some fireworks, celebrating our Fourth on this little coral island in the Gulf.

The afternoon had its excitement in the arrival of the steamer State of Georgia with two companies of Wilson's zouaves. It was supposed they were sent here as a safe place to drill them, as we had all the troops that were needed.

On the seventeenth a bark from New York came in, and also the steamer Vanderbilt from Fort Pickens, bound directly for New York. We concluded to avail ourselves of the opportunity of going North on a visit, and sailed on the evening of the 20th of July, leaving the fort with the most beautiful sunset for a background, the gorgeous colors



streaming up behind, the fort looking almost as though it were going to be consumed in the blaze of glory that covered all that part of the sky. It was so impressive that we watched it from the deck of the steamer until the fort stood grim and dark against the sky.

We were four days going to New York. The steamer carried but nine passengers, officers who had been promoted and were going to join their regiments, all eager to go to the front.

The captain of the steamer had some fear of the Florida, which was cruising in those waters, and watched the horizon for black smoke. He kept one engine banked, as the steamer was short of coal, until we were up the coast beyond North Carolina, when he put on all steam, and we almost flew through the water.

When we took on a pilot off Barnegat we heard of the first Bull Run disaster.

During our stay North we visited Captain Woodbury in Washington. What a contrast to our visit of less than two years before, when the grass was literally growing in some of the streets; and it seemed a sleepy, restful place, where people took life calmly and enjoyed it. Now the streets were deeply cut by heavy wagons transporting guns. Everybody was rushing about with an excited air. Most of the men one met on the street wore uniforms significant of their duties; and we heard little talk beside war and rumors of war.

While here we also met Captain Meigs and Captain Craven, the latter there awaiting orders.

One day during our visit my husband came home and reported that he seen the smoke of the battle of Munson's Hill from the top of the Treasury, —a fact which brought home the reality that the seat of war was not far from the National capital. My husband felt that his services were need at the fort, as he was acclimated. So our visit was cut short; and we were soon on our way back to Tortugas, on the old transport Philadelphia, which we afterwards learned had been condemned.

We left in a driving snowstorm, and lay off Fort Hamilton until morning, when we took on board Major Haskins with one company of troops for Key West and some officers for Fort Pickens. My sister and Mrs. C——, who was returning from a summer spent North, were the only ladies besides myself on board.

The old Philadelphia, was not the most reliable ship, but she carried us safely, and did much more duty even after she had been finally condemned.

The morning before reaching Key West Major Haskins surprised us all with reveille, which sounded very cheerful in the still morning air. Very soon afterward we met the



Rhode Island, which hailed us and sent a boat with her pilot, and took letters from us for New York. She had on board an officer whom we left at Tortugas; and they also gave us the news of the bombardment of Fort Pickens, which place the steamer had just left. It was quite an excitement; for, although she was not more than one hundred yards distant, the little boats in going back and forth were entirely hidden by the waves.

The next morning found us anchored safely in Key West harbor, where we spent the day and left my sister with Mrs. C——in her lovely home under the cocoanut trees.

The next night at ten we were outside the buoy at Tortugas, where the captain of the steamer threw up rockets and burned blue lights; but no pilot came out until morning, when we were soon anchored opposite to the sally-port, where Captain Morton met and escorted us up to our old home.

There had been a great many changes during the few months of our absence. Major Arnold had left; and most of the troops had been exchanged; but one great pleasure I found on my return was in the addition of three ladies to the garrison.

I presume it will be difficult to realize fully the isolation of that kind of fort life,—even a great contrast to a life on the plains miles away from any town or ranch. We were in an inclosure of thirteen acres sixty miles from Havana, with nothing outside of the towering brick walls to walk on but a narrow seawall inclosing it, sixty feet away— wide enough for two people to walk, with water on each side.

On the plains, if one wearied of their surroundings or were tired of their neighbors, they could ride out of sight, returning when they chose; but here it behooved people to keep up amiable relations with their surroundings, as they could not get away from them. I have been told by people who have crossed the plains, with parties who were most desirable companions for the first few weeks, that the isolation and constant companionship of the same persons day after day changed them entirely, developing freaks of nature unknown to them before, which proves that a change of scene and people is good for human nature generally.

This life was certainly a test of our dispositions in that respect; for we were entirely dependent upon ourselves for all our pleasures, and, I might almost say, comfort, for a want of harmony very materially interferes with that.

Captain Morton's assistant had brought his wife with him; and they formed a mess in the quarters we occupied before going North. He gave us the choice of remaining with them or taking a small house across parade which the Engineer Department was building. We accepted the house, remaining with them until it was finished.



The newcomers were Mr. and Mrs. J——, Mrs. R——, who had been an army lady, and Mrs. H——, whose husband had been promoted from the ranks. With Mr. Phillips' family, consisting of a wife, son and two daughters, and with the wife and niece of the lighthouse keeper, we could gather quite a party of ladies, making us feel much less out of the world; and we soon became quite sociable.

The increase of people brought many necessaries which added to our comfort, although everything was expensive: Butter fifty cents a pound, lard twenty, and other things in proportion.

The government began to tax all salaries exceeding eight hundred dollars, and many other things, which, with some whose patriotism was exceedingly sensitive when it touched their pockets so directly, caused no little grumbling. Later in the season, while my husband was on the mainland, he came across a camp of irregular Florida cavalry; and the following lines in pencil were handed him, nameless as to authorship; but whoever it was evidently felt that the cause hardly warranted all he was going through:

We are taxed for our clothes,
Our meat and our bread,
On our baskets and dishes,
Our tables and bed.
On our tea, on our coffee,
Our fuel and lights; And we are taxed so severely
We can't sleep o' nights.
And it's all for the nigger!
Great God! can this be,
In the land of the brave
And the home of the free? We are stamped on our mortgages,
Checks, notes and bills,
On our deeds, on our contracts,
And on our last wills!
And the star spangled banner
In mourning doth wave
O'er the wealth of the nation
Turned into the grave.
And its all for the nigger, etc.

At the Dry Tortugas During the War, Part Two



We are taxed on our office,
Our stores and our shops,
On our stoves and our barrels,
Our brooms and our mops,
On our horses and cattle;
And if we should die
We are taxed for our coffins
In which we must lie.
And its all for the nigger, etc.
We are taxed for all goods
By kind Providence given;
We are taxed for the Bible,
Which points us to Heaven:
And when we ascend
To the Heavenly goal
They would, if they could
Stick a stamp on our soul!!

And its all for the nigger!
Great God! can this be,
In the land of the brave And the home of the free!