

# PETER HART:

A BALLAD OF THE SIEGE OF SUMTER

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BY EDWARD S. RAND, JR.

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'Twas when the rebel batteries were firing shot and shell,  
When thick round Sumter's battlements the deadly missiles fell,  
Where worn and weary from the siege the gallant little band,  
'Gainst countless and o'erwhelming odds right nobly made their stand.

Then spake our gallant Anderson: 'Stand forth, my fearless men,  
And give the traitors one more round, and man the guns again;  
The flag that floats above our heads was raised with tears and prayer:  
God willing, its bright starry folds shall float forever there.'

Then at the word stood forth the men, bold-hearted, brave, and true,  
Shame on procrastinating rule, alas! they were too few!  
And with a cheering, ringing shout, 'mid shot and bursting shell,  
Right manfully they serve the guns, and do their duty well.

Yet one remains! say, can it be amid that little band,  
A traitor lurks, to plot and bring woe on his native land?  
Not so! with half-averted eye, tears streaming down his cheeks,  
From quivering lip and faltering tongue, a patriot soul out-speaks:

'Where broad Hudson's swelling tide drives back the ocean's foam,  
In the great city of New-York, I have my little home;  
But chance from all I hold most dear has borne me far away,  
And the same chance has watched my steps and brought me here to-day.

'But when in Charleston's streets I stood amid the rebel crew,  
They made me swear a solemn oath e'er they would pass me through,  
That come what might, through wrong or right, on water or on land,  
Against the Southern foe in fight I'd never lift my hand.

'I took the oath, with faltering tongue, but 't was to save my life,  
And came — it might be I could aid a little in the strife:  
I cannot join to man the guns, the solemn oath I spoke,  
And Peter Hart thus far in life his promise never broke.

'But on the battlements I'll stand, and call aloud, 'Beware!'  
And watch to tell when shot and shell come darting through the air,  
That all take warning: Peter Hart must to his oath be true,  
But for his country he will dare all that a man may do.'

And there upon the battlements through all the siege he stood,  
All ready, if it need be, to baptize them with his blood ;  
And as the rebel port-holes flashed, called loudly, 'Shot!' or 'Shell !'  
And when it struck, then came the word: 'Thank God, for all is well !'

Why tell how traitor force prevailed ? each child through all the land,  
Can lisp the story of the siege, tell how the little band,  
'Mid blazing barracks, bursting shells, fasting, and weak and worn,  
Fought till their failing strength gave out, till every means was gone,  
And then in honor, with their flag, marched from the stronghold forth,  
Leaving the rebels blackened walls, sailed for the loyal North.

O loyal city of New-York ! be proud, as well you may,  
That yours divide with Anderson the honors of that day ;  
We loved you as the mighty one, the country's boast and pride,  
But a bond now knits us unto you that nothing may divide.

Away with petty rivalry, with every vain dispute,  
In the country's song of Freedom, let jarring notes be mute !  
New-England sends thee greeting, in love extends her hand,  
And we swell the cheers for Union which are echoing through the land.

And not in vain 'gainst Sumter's walls, the waves of rebel ire  
Broke in a storm of shot and shell, and sheets of smoke and fire ;  
And not in vain the starry flag bowed to a traitor band ;  
It has roused to life the spirit of a mighty loyal land.

Already on the eastern hills the dawn of Freedom's day,  
Tells that the plague-spot of our land shall soon be purged away ;  
That the down-trodden shall be raised, and ours shall truly be,  
As often vainly vaunted, land of the brave and *Free* !

You who have toiled and waited — oh ! great will be your gain.  
Ye soldiers in the camp and field, ye labor not in vain !  
Remember each when heavy paths your weary feet have trod,  
To toil in patience, working out the purposes of God.

*Glen Ridge, Mass.*