



Nicholas B. Wainright, ed., *A Philadelphia Perspective: The Diary of Sydney George Fisher* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1967)

p. 385-386     *April 18, 1861*

The town is more tranquil, tho in an excited state. It is at the risk of any man's life that utters publicly a sentiment in favor of secession or the South., and many persons, particularly southern men living here or persons with southern property or connections, are in a painful position. We live under a democracy & mob rule and, tho the Democrats are quiet now & most of them are zealous in their support of the government, the party nevertheless chafes at defeat and will take advantage of any turn in affairs to create trouble. They hate Lincoln and the Republicans cordially and they know how to rouse & direct the brute force of society to serve their purposes. Called to see Chas. Ingersoll & had along talk with him. He is greatly excited and his opinions are most extravagant & absurd. If he were to utter in the street one half of what he said to me, he would lose his life. His father is still more violent. I feel by no means easy about them.

p. 399     *August 12, 1861*

Called at McMichael's. Found several gentlemen there. . . . They were listening to an account by [Captain] du Pont of things he had heard in Washington, whence he had just returned. He says the government will be obliged to declare martial law there as the place is full of secessionists, men & women, ladies & gentlemen in society, who communicate intelligence to the enemy and openly sympathize with the South. The ladies send delicacies to the prisoners of war – wine, cake, morning gowns and embroidered slippers. [Henri] Mercier, the French minister, is a secessionist; so is Lord Lyons [the British Minister to the U.S.] & others of the diplomatic circle. There is quite a clique of them who dine together every week. . . .

p. 400     *August 20, 1861*

The only news of interest this morning was that yesterday Pierce Butler was arrested on a charge of treason and sent off to Fort Hamilton at New York. It is said that he had been in correspondence with the secessionists in the South, which I do not believe, unless about private business. He has expressed, however, since his return the strongest opinions in favor of the southern cause and wishes for its success in earnest language, as he did here the other day, and in such times as these that alone is sufficient to justify his arrest. I am sorry for him and for his daughters & sisters, and yet think it was right to commit him. Perhaps also it is a good thing for him, as it will keep him quiet and out of harm's way. I suppose he will comfortable at the Fort and will meet there a number of gentlemen from Baltimore, prisoners like himself & congenial companions.

p. 405 *September 23, 1861*

Saw Henry. He went to Washington on Saturday & returned last night. He went for the purpose of obtaining Pierce Butler's release and succeeded. I think he was wrong to make the application & the government to grant it. It is true that no overt acts of treason were committed by Butler, not was he committed for punishment or for trial, but as a precaution & because his general conversation was seditious & tended to strengthen the influence of the rebellion in this part of the country. He refused to take an oath of allegiance and is morally as much of a traitor as any man in the Confederate army. His arrest had a very good effect here and his release will have a bad effect. It will be ascribed to the influence of his position and of rich friends. I hope when he gets out he will either go to Georgia & stay there or go to Europe and am sorry that Henry has connected himself with the affair at all.

p. 405-406 *October 13, 1861*

. . . . At 1 we drove to . . . Mr. J.R. Ingersoll's. Charles Ingersoll came whilst we were down there. He is wild & rabid about secession & the South, and if his notions should prevail, we would have civil war all over the North or else become here the tame & submissive servants of Jeff Davis and the cotton planters.

p. 424 *April 26, 1862*

Saw Chas. Ingersoll in town. He gave me a pamphlet he has just published about public questions involved in the war.

p. 424 *April 27, 1862*

In the evening read Chas. Ingersoll's pamphlet. It is a strange mixture of extravagant ideas & good sense and displays a very narrow partizan spirit. It cannot be called a good argument. He thinks the Union must be restored or the country doomed to ruin & constant war for many years. That the southern people can never be conquered. Therefore the only thing to be done is conciliate the South. This will never be done he says by the party now in power, but would be done by Democratic Party, which of course alone can save the country. The Democratic Party is sure to triumph he thinks at the next election, in Dec. 1863 - & will restore the Union, Peace & Prosperity if the South can hold out that long. By conciliating the South he means treating with armed rebels & yielding to all their demands. When the Democrats return to power, he declares that their former alliance with the South will be renewed & the nation be saved, unless meanwhile, the Republican Party carry out its plan of abolishing slavery, in which case reunion would become impossible. It is the dread of this very union of the South & democracy which induced many to advocate sweeping measures of abolition, that the cause of the war may not become again active.

p. 433 *August 25, 1862*

On Saturday evening the Democrats had a town meeting to express their opinions about the war. It had been announced for some days & great efforts were made to render it successful. It is represented in the paper this morning as a failure. The numbers at it were few & there was no enthusiasm, many of the wards refusing to turn out at all. . . . The resolution

professed loyalty, but denounced abolition & the course of the government, tho they were not extravagant in their tone and neither were their speeches, except that of Charles Ingersoll. He was extremely violent, far beyond the general feeling of the assembly. He declared that the Democratic Party had a majority and at the next election would hurl the administration from power, with much more wild talk of the same sort. Young Terry [Mahoney], who comes every day to copy . . . for me, was at the meeting. He said the applause was confined to a few around the stand, that Charles' speech was "rabid," and did not meet with approbation. That he heard many denounce it as going too far. Terry is a Democrat and, as the son of an old servant of the Ingersolls, is disposed to receive with favor anything that Charles does. I can easily understand what sort of speech he made from what I have heard him say on the subject. He is very excitable and impulsive, even passionate, and wholly incapable of thinking or speaking calmly about the war or anything connected with it.

p. 434 Came home by Dewey's Lane. Met there Mr. [Alexander] Bacon, who had just got the cars at the station. I asked him what was the news. He said nothing from the army, adding, "I suppose you have heard that Charles Ingersoll was arrested this morning." I asked the reason & he said because of his speech at the Democratic meeting on Saturday. As I was near William Wister's gate, I went in to hear more. . . . I told both him and Bacon that I thought it was an impolitic step. That the meeting was a failure, that the Union Party was strong enough to despise such efforts and the severe measures would only tend to make side issues, to excite passion and to give consequence to men, who let alone, would become insignificant. They agreed with me. . . . Edward Ingersoll here after dinner. He confirmed the news. He said that Charles was arrested by [William H. Kern] the *provost marshal*, for it seems one has been appointed for this city, who took a bond for his appearance next Wednesday. Edward said that Charles and his family laughed at the whole affair and treated it very lightly. I hope they may find it a laughing matter.

p. 434-435 *August 26, 1862*

At 2 went to town, chiefly to hear about Charles. . . . Charles had told me that he was arrested by the provost marshal and had given a bond to deliver himself up to him tomorrow at 12 o'clock. I asked him what course he intended to take. He said that he would take out a writ of habeus corpus. I told [him] I thought it would be very unwise to do so. That the writ was suspended. That to appeal to it would be regarded as an act of contumacy & defiance & make his position far worse. That the best plan would be for some one of his friends who knew Mr. Seward to write to him and state the case, suggesting that it did not justify an arrest as there was nothing treasonable in the affidavit on which the arrest was founded. He said that he could not take such a course as it would be derogatory toward him. That he would not succumb to the government. That the writ was not legally suspended & he intended to try the question of legality. . . . I said that whether the writ was legally suspended or not, the fact of its suppression was a reality not to be resisted. That if the court should issue the writ & order his discharge, the order would be, of course, disregarded and that his imprisonment for an indefinite period would follow as a matter of course. . . . Charles, however, had made up his mind. He thought the arrest an outrage, that his rights were invaded, that the course of the government was unjust, tyrannical, & unconstitutional, and he felt it due to himself to appeal the law. He had hopes, however, that the provost marshal, who had gone to Washington, would bring back an order for his release. After leaving them I met Pierce Butler & spoke of the matter to him. He approved of Charles' course & said that an appeal to Mr. Seward would certainly fail. He spoke of the arrests and what he

considers the tyrannical conduct of the government with great bitterness, and said that Charles could not be taken without bloodshed in the streets, that he *knew* an attempt to carry him to prison would forcibly resisted. Butler, however, is very wild in his notions, and, having been arrested himself, resentment is added to his passions by which he is moved as a secessionist and a southern man, as he considers himself, tho he was born and bred in the North.

p. 435 *August 28, 1862*

Went to Charles' house. Another charge, it seems, had been made against him, on which he was still in the custody of the marshal, who had an officer in the house keeping a nominal watch over him. He was treated throughout with courtesy & every consideration, the officer was sitting in the office. . . . Charles had taken out a writ of habeas corpus which was heard today at 12 o'clock. He was unmoved in his determination to try the case & seemed to contemplate with unconcern the possibility of a contest should the judge order his discharge and the marshal refuse to give him up. The writ was issued by John Cadwalader, the district U. S. judge, and Charles feels quite sure of a favorable decision from him, why I do not know, unless because Cadwalader is a Democrat & known to have sympathies with the South. Wrongheaded & violent as Charles is & absurd his notions, he shows spirit and pluck. . . . Harry and I came down to the library and talked over Charles' affair. We differed entirely in our notions about the rights of the government and the duties of the citizen & the legality of Charles' arrest. We agreed, however, in the desire to get him released, and, as I thought the arrest at this time impolitic, I was willing to do anything I considered right to get him released. . . . Went to town at 8 o'clock. Saw Milevan, the marshal. He was very civil & sent a telegram to Washington at once. . . . Going to town I read in the cars this morning the last affidavit against Charles containing extracts from the *phonographic* [a verbatim report taken in shorthand] report of his speech. It is much more stronger & more violent in language and sentiment than that in the *Ledger*. He declares that the whole object of the war is to abolish slavery and that no government in the world is so corrupt and so tyrannical as this. If he is sent to Fort Warren, I must say he will meet merited retribution. This is no time to denounce the government & to tell people that it is not worth supporting or defending. . .

p. 437 *September 1, 1862*

Charles Ingersoll has been released by order of the Secretary of War. Came out at 5 o'clock. Edwd. Ingersoll here, He said that the government had "backed down" from its position in releasing Charles. These Democrats never give anybody credit for good intentions who is not of their own party. The truth is that the arrest was made by the provost marshal without orders, except general orders from the government, and as soon as the facts were known the department a discharge was ordered.

p. 437 *September 6, 1862*

Harry Ingersoll here in the morning. He talked more absolute nonsense about the Constitution, etc., than I supposed possible for any sane man to utter. He had now become a *personal* enemy of the government because it had arrested his brother! Mr. Lincoln was a mountebank. He had violated the Constitution & *therefore* was not legally President & might be resisted. Mr. Binney's essay on habeas corpus was *prattle*, etc. The worst of it is others talk in the same way and meetings of the people express similar absurdities in their resolutions.

p. 447 *December 17, 1862*

Met Charles Ingersoll in the street. He expressed such exultation and delight at the defeat of the Union army and his language was so violent & extravagant, that I was disgusted. He is imbued with narrowest partizan passions & is wholly insensible to argument, and incapable of any but the most petty views about the situation of the country.

p. 445 *January 10, 1863*

McMichael told me that Chas. Ingersoll had made a speech on Thursday at the opening of Democratic club, just established & that it was in yesterday's *Press*. Went to the office of the *Press* and read it. It is even more extravagant than his former efforts. He declares that slaves are just like any other kind of property; that the northern people are pro-slavery; that the Union must be restored and as that cannot be done by war, it must be done by submission to the South; that when the Democrats come to power, they will say to the South, "Gentlemen, make your own terms." He recommends calling a national convention to settle the war, and as the governor & Senate of Penna. are Republican, whilst the House is Democratic, he thinks the House should stop the supplies to coerce the government into its measures. These sentiments, the report says, were loudly applauded. I think they are calculated to injure him and his cause, as their extravagant folly & absurdity must disgust all sensible men of his own party.