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## MIDDLETON CORRESPONDENCE, 1861-1865

Edited by ISABELLA MIDDLETON LELAND

(Continued from January)

*Harriott Middleton to Susan Middleton, Columbia*

Flat Rock April 13th [1863]

... Do tell me if what we hear is true, that 32 holes were knocked into Fort Sumter. Her walls cracked from top to bottom, and that one missile of some kind went through the thick wall and lodged in the interior of the fort. Mama thinks it must be true, because she hears that Beauregard has sent to Columbia for sandbags! I hope it may prove false! Alice had, what shall I say—the pleasure of seeing the fight. First from Louise's house, and then from the battery. Sumter she says looked "splendid," in brilliant sunlight with her two flags flying, one I suppose that beautiful battle flag,<sup>70</sup> which I still hope, we may one day adopt entirely. They were forced out of town on Wednesday morning.

*Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock*

Columbia - Saturday  
April 18

... Papa says the stories we have heard of the "serious injuries" to Sumter are absurd. All the people he saw, who had been in the fort during the action or after it, agreed that they were trifling—and Gen. Gustavus Smith,<sup>71</sup> who again offered his services to Beauregard after the fight, "as private, courier, anything," has had carte blanche given him "to strengthen Fort Sumter," which he is eminently competent to do, for they say the U. S. Army had no better engineer. He is already at work, lining the walls with sand-bags and cotton-bales, and thinks it can be made strong enough to resist any possible attack. I hear the

<sup>70</sup> In 1862 Beauregard, wishing a special battle flag that would not be confused with the Union Emblem, designed the famous banner with diagonal blue bars bearing white stars, crossed on a red field. T. Harry Williams. *P. G. T. Beauregard: Napoleon In Gray* (Baton Rouge, 1954), 109.

<sup>71</sup> Smith was Division Commander under General Joseph E. Johnston, Commander of the Confederate Army defending Richmond in 1862. When Johnston was wounded at Fair Oaks, Smith was next in command, succeeded the following day by Lee.

reason why the great torpedo would not explode was because a gun-carriage had passed over the connecting wire in the Fort and broken it. It would have been such a delightfully brilliant incident of the Victory to have blown the "Ironsides" to atoms! and now I am afraid she will never come in again to be experimented upon. Mr. Read is certainly a lucky man—the only one of Ripley's Staff who was in Sumter during the engagement, which of course he both saw and heard to great advantage—the great balls could be distinctly seen going and coming. Indeed, with a glass Papa could see them from the town. The first battle of Sumter all say was nothing to it. . . .

I have no news to tell you, except a report that Mr. Christopher Hampton is a prisoner with the Yankees. He is said to have been captured with Mrs. Henry Duncan, while riding out with her in Mississippi near their plantations. She was released soon afterwards, being found such a good Yankee, I suppose. They say she is suspected of having come to the South as a spy. The Miss Hamptons do not allow her name to be mentioned in their presence, and she has written them some very insolent letters—so much for ill assorted friendships!

Saturday April 25/27

. . . The discontented people of Charleston are finding fault with Ripley for his waste of ammunition in the late fight—and even talk of an "investigation of his conduct," but I hear Beauregard is satisfied with a mild "regret," in his general orders, that the guns of Battery Bee should have been fired, as the enemy never were within their range. The economists say the victory cost us 100,000 dollars in powder and shot—and might have been won for much less!

*Harriott to Susan*

Flat Rock April 25

. . . I remember hearing of a most impertinent letter written by Mrs. Dunkin to one of her Carolina friends in Secession times, in which she asked what such a dirty little sand heap as South Carolina meant by behaving in that manner! I have grown too old to feel boiling indignation at such things—I can feel only contemptuous pity for those who have so thrown away their birthright, that they have lost all perception of the moral, and can see only the material in life.

*Susan to Harriott*

Columbia - Saturday May 2nd

. . . Livy went to the Hampton party last night, with little Lizzie, where they danced till 3 o'clock. Partners from "*town*," which expression, I hear, excited the wrath of the Columbia people, who say, "Where do you mean? Are you not in a town now?" The distinction between *a* town and *the* town seems, however, broad enough to us Charlestonians!

[May 9/10]

. . . We have been abusing Papa ever since his arrival because he has come from town and brought no news. Mary and Emma are on the Battery, and delighted with the new house. Helen is at South Bay for a short visit. There has been a very gay party at the Charles Manigaults' to which they all went, and Gist<sup>72</sup> goes to Vicksburg with a Major-general's command—8 fine regiments from So. Ca. and Georgia. Colquitt's among them—and under Gist is Gen. W. H. T. Walker—commonly called "Bag of Bullets"—a veteran, who has been many times wounded, but never has the balls extracted! Everybody is scandalized at his being sent *under* the orders of such a greenhorn and nonentity as Gist. This is positively *all* we can get out of Papal We hear of Aiken's cavalry also going to Mississippi, and the other troops, ten thousand in all, they say, from our Coast. . . .

. . . Is it not sad that Jackson should have been shot by his own men? and Van Dorn assassinated! <sup>73</sup> what an end! He looks like the hero of a tragedy, in his photograph. . . .

*Harriott to Susan, Columbia*

Flat Rock May 11th

. . . Were you not sorry for the death of Pinckney Seabrook? . . . Alice says she was told repeatedly last winter that Willy Haskell, Pinckney Seabrook and a young Munroe were more distinguished for their gallantry than any other Carolinians in Virginia—that their names were known everywhere. Pinckney was twice offered promotion for gallantry on the field of battle, but declined it preferring to remain with Willy Haskell. I do not know whether it was this sad death awakening so many painful recollections in overwhelming strength, but I have never

<sup>72</sup> States Rights Gist, in command of the First District, with headquarters in Charleston.

<sup>73</sup> The dashing Earl Van Dorn met his death by a bullet from a jealous husband.

before felt so dispirited about the war. It seems to stretch interminably before us, carrying off all the youths and worth of the country. I can see nothing but desolated homes, and broken hopes. We seem to make so little impression on the North, the men we kill are foreigners, and there are hundreds of thousands more to fill their places. . . .

*Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock*

Columbia - Thursday aftn.  
[May 21/23, 1863]

. . . It sounded quite like old times to hear of the Rutledges and Susy taking tea, but I was brought back to the present when Ella said Vizitelly was also of the party. She says he is not "an elegant gentleman" certainly, and has some "peculiarities of manner," but is well-behaved enough, and extremely entertaining and amusing. He gave Emma a photograph of Stonewall Jackson touched up in India ink into a really good likeness, and promises to send her from Mississippi, where he has now gone, an original sketch of him. He was in Jackson's camp in Va. for three weeks, and saw him constantly, and admires him enthusiastically. It seems Jackson had travelled a great deal in Europe as well as in this country, and Vizitelly says it was most striking and impressive to hear him there, in the midst of all his warlike cares and toils, talk delightfully of all he had seen abroad. He was especially eloquent on the subject of the English Cathedrals—Salisbury in particular.

. . .

. . . On Sunday Columbia was in a ferment—the story of the day was that Beauregard had determined to evacuate Charleston and fall back ten miles from the coast! It all arose from his protesting against so many troops being sent away, when it was by no means certain that the Yankees would not make another attempt soon. Hagood's Brigade, which had started, was consequently ordered back, and I hear we have still 15,000 men between Charleston and Savannah. . . .

. . . Alice shortly after mentioned an interesting little fact. It seems that after round dancing, the favour having been so great, the men always say to the lady "Thank you," which Isabella declares is an announcement of its impropriety! . . .

May 29th

. . . How do you like Mr. Davis on the new stamps? They are so prettily engraved that I am afraid they were not done in the Confederacy, but I don't altogether like the face, altho' it looks *fine* as well as

firm—it has rather a keen, Northeasterly expression, and the nose is too sharp for a *Southern* American's.

*Harriott to Susan, Columbia*

Flat Rock June 1st

. . . A hundred deserters are lurking around, and in consequence all the militia of the County has been ordered out, half at one time, to be relieved by the other half. They are to continue under arms until all the deserters are taken. Last Thursday it was reported that two of them were in a house near here. A Sergeant and a few men were sent after them. When they approached the house the deserters fired, killing the sergeant. His men then fired, but were afraid that owing to the rain the guns had not gone off. The deserters then took to the woods, and the next day they were found a few hundred yards from the house, one dead, and the other dying. This morning I met two of the Henderson shopkeepers with their guns, looking highly delighted! Isabella has consequently ordered her pistol cleaned, and I heard Mama and herself this morning, talking of the extreme pleasure it would give them to shoot a Yankee! . . .

. . . Cousin Caroline and Mary . . . were very eloquent on the degeneracy of Charleston society. I suppose you have heard of the Roper, Allston and Whaley parties, and the extraordinary games played at them. We all looked very wise, and agreed that round-dancing was the entering wedge of every enormity! and Cousin Caroline deplored your father's having allowed his daughters to dance them—and they were intensely surprised at Lizzy's daughter having joined the ranks, and at her reasoning that "whatever is fashionable is right," which still strikes me as one of the most fearful dogmas for a mother to propound that I have ever heard. Anna Parker writing to Alice and speaking of the present state of things says she thinks it very fortunate for a great many young women that they are obliged to stay in the country until the end of the war, in which sentiment, she is sure that I will agree!

*Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock*

Columbia - Friday morning  
[June 12, 1863]

. . . Have you ever observed how incessantly English novels talk of tea and bread and butter? I did not use to notice it, but nowadays the descriptions of breakfast and tea-tables are quite tantalizing! My

dear! *are* you starving? Mama assures us three times a day that *we* are! but we have other evidence to prove the fact, and are happily unconscious of our wretched condition. Apropos, we took tea with our friend Mrs. Stark last week, and she showed us what interested me much, the crimson Flag of the "Hampton Legion." I thought of you and wished so much you could see it. It is all faded and torn by shot, having been borne through eleven battles. Mrs. Hampton has sent it to Mrs. Raoul, who worked one side of it, to have the names and dates of these battles embroidered upon it—the 1st Manassas in an arch over the Palmetto, and five on each side. . . .

Has it ever occurred to you to *turn* envelopes? Mine are getting very low so don't be surprised if you soon get one with an inner as well as an outer direction. I am determined to buy nothing that I can possibly do without, and I hear that letter paper in all shapes is at a fabulous price. Mrs. Waties tells me she does it constantly, the only thing is to remember when your letter comes not to tear it open quickly, but put in a pencil or anything round, and moving it carefully, and turning, you easily unglue it without tearing. I have several times thought of suggesting to you to turn my envelopes, but feared you might despise such small economies! Let me tell you that I think we ought *not* to, in times like these.

*Harriott to Susan, Columbia*

Flat Rock June 15th

. . . A basket from cousin Anne. Such delicious butter! We are not starving but living on bacon, rice and hominy. Those who can, eat bacon. The unfortunates who can't go without meat. I am in the latter class, which has so distressed Mamma, that she has sacrificed two chickens. I felt quite overwhelmed and said to Lang, "How shall I be able to eat this chicken when I think of the dozens of eggs and broods of chickens I am devouring." "Oh", said Lang smiling, "Aunt Harry, it is only a rooster." so that consoled me. . . .

*Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock*

Columbia - Thursday  
[June 18, 1863]

. . . A Mr. Phillips, a planter from the neighbourhood of Jackson, has just arrived here, having narrowly escaped being murdered by two of his most trusty negroes, instigated of course by the enemy. An old woman proved faithful, warned him of his danger, and assisted in getting



him off. The negroes were afterwards taken by our pickets in Yankee uniforms, and speaking openly of their own master's escape, and their intention of murdering two other gentlemen in the neighborhood, were hanged by our men. Mr. Philips reports the condition of things as terrible in the part of the country occupied by the Federal army—and the atrocities they commit, and incite the negroes to commit, shocking beyond description. . . .

We have a long letter from Emma this morning—no news but Sally Rhett's engagement to Col. Roman. They had been to call on Mrs. Miles. Mary thought her pretty but with very little to say—Livy says she is a small mass of self-consciousness, vanity, and conceit. Emma saw only the beauty of her light hair and fine complexion, but adds that Louise, who was at school with her in New York, declared that a pot of rouge and lily-white was there discovered under her pillow, and that she used to pull out the hairs in her eyebrows with tweezers to make them look pencilled! . . .

*Harriott to Susan, Columbia*

Flat Rock - June 24th

. . . Your letter was most particularly welcome for we got hardly any papers, and now must wait until next Wednesday. We sent to cousin Izard however for the *Carolinian*, and so learnt all the good news to which you allude. How delightful all this fluttering is in the northern cities. Oh! Susan I feel so bloodthirsty. I want our veterans to come into contact with the northern militia—what a slaughter there would be, but will our men burn and ravage as they ought to do. Cousin Izard declares that our men never can do such things. "Oh" said Isabella "Gen. Lee must set them the example." "But" said cousin Izard "Lee's heart will never allow him to do such things." "Then" said Isabella "let them carry a company of women along. We will do it for them with delight." I long to hear of burning and destruction and wading in militia blood!!! for that will be Yankee and not foreign blood. . . .

*Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock*

Columbia - Thursday aftn.

[June 26, 1863]

. . . Aunt Sally is reported to be most particularly well just now. They have lately had a letter and parcel from Aunt Eliza. My dear, *could* you use a toothbrush sent by the Fishers? <sup>74</sup> I think I would rather

<sup>74</sup> Susan's Aunt Eliza was married to Francis Fisher of Philadelphia.

lose my teeth. I did a very horrible thing the other day, and to a relation of *your's*. We were driving with Mrs. and Miss Newton, and, in the midst of the daughter's conversation, I heard Mrs. Newton telling Mama how she hoped our troops would behave properly when they got into the enemy's country, that the Federals acting like Goths and vandals would not excuse one doing likewise, that she trusted discipline would be maintained in our army, private property respected—that by such an example of moderation the peace-party in the Northern States would be strengthened, and a good deal more of that sort, and there sat Mama, (whom, you know, we consider quite a good Yankee, in *her* way) listening to it all, so politely and calmly, as if she entirely agreed. Of course *I* should not have spoken, but I thought of the smoking ruins at Combahee as Oliver had described them, and of a hundred such scenes, and worse, all over our country, and I could *not* bear it—silently—so I burst out with something very bitter and contemptuous about Yankees in general and the peace-party in particular, and something in the form of a wish, as fervent as it was sincere, for the utter ruin of the State of Pennsylvania, which relieved me at the moment, but has made me feel quite penitent ever since, although, I am sure my fault was not having the feeling, but expressing it so, unnecessarily. Mrs. Newton looked as if she thought I was suffering from temporary derangement. I want very much to send Mrs. N. your letter, the post-script, about “wading in militia blood”. She knows *you* to be *sane*, at least. . . .

. . . Living is getting very hard here too, meat we have given up, it is so very bad when you can get it, and poultry we only *remember*—but we shall not starve, for the garden is beginning to produce our dinner—okra soup and tomatoes are come, and Mama has just been showing me in triumph the length of her young ears of corn! . . .

*Harriott to Susan, Columbia*

Sunday afternoon June 28th

. . . What do you think of our conduct in Pennsylvania? We were dreadfully disappointed at first, tho' I fancy we shall in time get reconciled to the true grandeur of Gen. Lee's method of conducting the war. It will make a noble page in History, and doubtless receive the “well done” of our Great Judge here-after, but Oh! Susan, it seems to me that vengeance in the garment of retaliation would be sweet. I now hope that their militia will come to the rescue, and receive their reward.

. . .

*Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock*

Columbia - Saturday aftn.

. . . I am wishing hourly for Papa's return. He is very good and writes to us every day, but apparently means to stay and see the fight out. He seems impatient, like the rest of Charleston, that the Yankees should "come and be killed." Beauregard's despatch about "the ladies of Charleston" set the whole Legislature in a titter. I think he must be disgusted with the contumacy and curiosity of the class so-called, yet I have a desire to be there almost strong enough to carry me. Mrs. Dan Huger, who arrived here a day or two ago from Augusta, says the cars were crowded with soldiers and women "going to Charleston." Her son waited for there was no chance of his getting a seat, and he was not strong enough to make the journey without one. He is much better however, and has got a furlough of thirty days more to get well in. She will be here a week, I hear. The cars from this place go to town full of soldiers. "Ladies" are turned back, they tell me. You saw Gen. Hampton's call for men—he went down the same night with a hundred, and Thomas, who left on Tuesday, is now Major of a battalion of four companies. All the way down at the stations men would get into the cars calling out for Capt. Thomas. Papa says troops are pouring in all the time, and we had several days ago a larger force on James island than the enemy were said to have landed. Mr. Read saw the Keokuk's "turret demolished and her bow riddled," and says the fight far surpassed Sharpsburg or anything that he has seen, yet Fort Sumter is but little injured. Lise read me yesterday a letter from Frank Blake, written after the engagement. He too says the damage to the fort was not serious. It was being speedily repaired, and, if the enemy made another attempt, he thought they would be even more severely dealt with. It seems to me that we do not yet realize what a glorious thing this repulse of the iron-clads is, and that respectable class, "the croakers," are saying, "Don't rejoice, we are not out of the woods yet," but I think we have every cause for rejoicing over the past, and reason for hope in the future. I was so glad to hear that the little drummer boy, whom perhaps the whole country was pitying, was not dead, but wounded, and doing well,<sup>75</sup> He is only 17, and a great pet with the garrison, he got his wound by curiosity, for in spite of remonstrance, he would put his head above the parapet to see the fight—you will be surprised to hear that this

<sup>75</sup> This may refer to the report carried in the *Charleston Daily Courier*, April 8, 1863: "During the battle a drummer boy, named Ahrens, was killed at Fort Sumter. . . ."

little creature has a wife, smaller still and only 14 years old, who goes down occasionally to pass a week with him! Papa says the bombardment, as a spectacle, disappointed him, but I suppose they could not see it well from the town. . . .

*(To be continued)*