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MIDDLETON CORRESPONDENCE, 1861-1865

Edited by ISABELLA MIDDLETON LELAND

(Continued from April)

Harriott to Susan, Columbia

Flat Rock July 6th [1863]

. . . Do you mind hearing a speech about round dancing? I am always a little afraid that I ought not to say anything to you, derogatory, but if you object skip the next few lines. The speech we thought rather amusing. A young lady with a strong inclination to it, told our correspondent that the officers said they have but to open their arms and the Charleston ladies rush into them—that it is very delightful to have them in their arms but it would be much more convenient on the sofa than whirling round when they often have great weight to carry! Now don't repeat this to the girls! Pinckney Lowndes tells Miss Lucas that he is glad he has no sisters in company for the speeches made of the young ladies by those who dance with them are so objectionable. Our friend says, what we hear from many, that there is a very vulgar set of men in Charleston and they with the dreadful fast set of girls have carried every thing before them. . . .

Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock

Columbia—Monday
[July 6]

. . . Livy speaks of no parties, but plenty of visitors, among others, Vizitelly, who, is, you know, a Mr. Vaughan, extremely clever and amusing, but incomparably vulgar—she says he kept them all in fits of laughter until after eleven o'clock. I confess, from what I had heard of him previously, I was a little startled to hear of him as visiting there at all, but our old-fashioned ideas are all too narrow for the present social condition of things in Charleston. . . .

Dr. Ravenel came up yesterday, and brought rather bad news, that there is quite an outcry in Charleston at all the troops being sent away, but they are more needed at Vicksburg and in Virginia, so Beauregard protests in vain as brigade after brigade is ordered off. . . . People are trembling for Vicksburg, and a Capt. Hammond, just from the West,

Sunday, Dec. 23, 1860. Cloudy and chilly. Church A. M. 89 w[hite] 12 coloured. Omitted the Prayer for the President of the United States and for Congress. Used special prayers set forth by the Bishop of So. Car. for the Governor and Legislature and for the State Convention. . . .

Friday, December 28, 1860. Church A. M. Prayers. 13 present. At the Cars—stirring news about the forts in Charleston Harbour. Mr. Sam Legare made me a present of a Revolver—a fine shooter with case &c. . . .

Saturday, December 29, 1860. A Cold drizzling day. Rec'd from the Bishop an Order for \$150—the amount of my half yearly salary from the Advancement Society.

Paid Wessels \$100.

Monday, December 31, 1860 . . . Went to the Cars at 8¼ P. M. to meet Mr. Dunlin Parkinson and family, but they did not come. Many persons there to hear from the conductor the latest news from Washington. Most of the Cabinet and Gen. Scott resigned. Maj. Anderson remanded to Fort Moultry.

Mrs. Cornish and Rhoda and Mattie and Mary have spent the evening in my study, writing letters and chatting very pleasantly.

So ends 1860. Gracious is the Lord and merciful has he been to me and mine through the past year. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

O, my soul, what can you say,
For every month and week and day,
That with this year has passed away?

Peccavi, peccavi
Miserere, Domine. Amen.

reports that "the whole army from the Brigadiers down to the horseboys, execrates Pemberton—no one feels the least confidence in him." This is particularly soothing and agreeable to the discontented in Charleston who detest him, and call him "a traitor," but military men generally, I am told, esteem him in proportion as civilians abase him. Lee and Beauregard have confidence in him, and the President says "there is no better soldier in the Confederacy." I think Dr. Ravenel called him "Davis's darling," or something of that sort. His manner of talking made me feel quite gloomy, but, as Miss Lizzie Huger said the other day, "You know the Ravenels are always a little lugubrious," about the war, of course. . . .

Columbia—Tuesday morning

My dearest Harriott—I promised you to write if there was any "war news," well, there is, and there is not! I will begin my letter, and perhaps, before tonight's mail closes, I may hear something more definite than what has reached us as yet. Yesterday, while we were wondering what the "important movements" might be which were announced in the morning paper, we were startled by an "extra" telling of the arrival off the bar of seven ironclads and thirty-five transports—it was, however, only a private despatch which brought this news, and now, they say the authorities have stopped all military telegrams, so that, altho' so much nearer, we know little more than you do. . . . All yesterday I listened for heavy guns, and today, too, it is so calm and clear that we ought to hear it if heavy firing is going on. A letter just came from Papa, who went down on Sunday—says (writing yesterday afternoon) that the iron-clads had *not* yet crossed the Bar, they were lying outside, and it was thought the weather being hazy, they were afraid to come over. But no one doubts that the hour of trial is at hand, and non-combatants, he says, are leaving in great numbers. He had just started Mary, the girls, and the children for Cooper river, and evidently both he and Mr. Read are greatly relieved to get rid of their responsibilities. . . .

Wednesday—The morning paper will have told you of the startling news we got yesterday afternoon, the beginning of the bombardment! We have just heard what tomorrow's paper will tell *you*—when it reaches you with this—the sinking of the "Montauk," and a confirmation of the reported disabling of the "Ironsides." Is it not all delightful? Writing seems absurd in these days of telegraphing. Here is Papa's letter, written only yesterday, and just come, and he talks of the Fleet having sailed northwards—the weather being too unfavourable to attack the Forts! they must have been steaming into the harbour at the moment, and last night we knew they had been repulsed! . . .

Columbia—Friday
[July 10]

... Frederic, writing yesterday from Sullivan's Island, where Clingman⁷⁶ is now stationed, says all is so quiet opposite that some are of opinion the Yankees are leaving Morris island. He thinks they are only waiting for re-inforcements to renew the attack, also that the inefficiency of the Monitors has been plainly shown in all this bombardment, and that they would never stand the Sullivan's Island Batteries. I am told the heaviest guns in the harbour are in Battery Bee, in range of which the Ironclads have never yet come. Some apprehension is felt about the being able to provision Fort Wagner now that the moonlight nights are upon us, but there will be no difficulty if they have down on the coast only the pale "glimpses of the moon" we have here. We have rain every day, and clouds, and a light southeast wind blowing straight from Charleston, and after breakfast this morning we could hear the heavy guns distinctly in the piazza. Many people hear them in this neighbourhood, but until today I fancied it might be imagination—there was no mistaking *these* reports. And it is only a little more than 100 miles, whereas I have read that the guns at Waterloo were heard on the coast of Kent, nearly 200 miles off, but to-be-sure over sea a great part of the way. . . .

Mary has not written since Sunday, when Mr. Read had just got back from Morris Island. He was not there during the fight, but spent the next morning going over the field. He recognized the body of Quincy Shaw, probably you knew him at Newport. Sabina Morris's old admirer. He afterwards married Pauline Agassiz. He fell on our parapet—two feet in advance of his men, with his black orderly near him. Our officers refused to let the Yankees have his body, but buried him first in the trench, filling it with negroes, and sent word he should "lie with his brethren."

Ella thinks this dreadful, but, setting aside what the North is pleased to call our "prejudices," I see no reason why a man of Black Republican principles should object to contact with his free-and-equals—why an officer should not rest in death with his men. Think of the baseness of these wretches—Mr. Stock says that John Bee's clothes, watch, money etc. were found on Sunday upon the dead Yankees killed in the assault, they had robbed him before he was dead! Ravenel Macbeth, however, writes that *he* is kindly treated at Port Royal, having fallen into the hands of a man who married a school friend of his sister Mrs. Cain. By-the-by, Mary says that young Ferguson, who died at the Cooper river

⁷⁶ Brig. Gen. T. L. Clingman, whose headquarters were on Sullivan's Island.

pine-land of typhoid fever, days before the fleet appeared, when no one dreamed of a fight in Charleston, cried out in his delirium, "Charles Haskell is dead, but his men are safe!" and later, "Why Ravenel Macbeth! what is the matter, old fellow? they have handled you roughly, your face is covered with blood!" as though he were lifted out of time and space and had already a glimpse of eternity. A few days before the attack we captured one of the enemy's signal Corps on Morris island, who for a bribe of \$250 revealed their signal alphabet, and when they telegraphed their officers to bombard fiercely on Saturday evening slack fire at dark, and prepare for an assault, our officers read it as quickly as theirs. You saw the attack was not "unexpected," also the Mercury's "caution," which we suppose referred to this. Ella is quite miserable because she wrote it to Mr. Rutledge, and the letter might fall into the enemy's hands in a raid!

Columbia—Friday—noon
[July 10]

I hardly know how I shall write to you—just as I got my paper one of the servants who had been out doing some errands came in to tell me Charleston was attacked at 5 o'clock this morning, and he heard in the streets that the Yankee ships were all over the Bar! The coachman, who has just been several miles into the country, in a southeasterly direction, says he has heard heavy guns all the time he was gathering pine trash in the woods. Unluckily Papa has gone down to the plantation, but Emma is going now to the Bulletin board to try and hear the truth of the report. Oh! these last few days have been trying indeed. I have felt as if a heavy cloud hung over us ever since the first rumour of the fall of Vicksburg, and when the news was confirmed, it seemed as though the fair Peace we had dreaming of were indefinitely postponed. The blow falls with peculiar weight, too, coming just as we were all so buoyant with hope of decisive victories. . . .

Emma is back already, and says the heavy firing is from the batteries on Folly Island—it is such a relief to hear that it is not a surprise by the ironclads, which I have always dreaded. The sense of security in Charleston is dangerous.

Columbia—Monday aftn.
[July 13]

. . . The Yankee charge on Saturday was "splendid—" they came up, as at Secessionville last year, to the very mouth of the guns, our men reserving their fire til the last moment and then mowing them down. Mr.

Gilchrist called out to one to "come on—come in," till he had actually got on the parapet, and then blew him to atoms. The gentlemen say this was "a shocking waste of powder." The Irishmen in Fort Sumter are in a fever of impatience for "*their turn*." As the Monitors steam slowly by Morris Island, turning just before they get well within range of Sumter, they scream out: "Come a little nearer, you d—d coward, *please!*" Yesterday there was a report that John Bee—Alice Ravenel's brother, was not killed, but wounded and a prisoner, it is only too true that Mr. Cheves, and Mr. Haskell are gone. Oh, Harriott, what a loss to Isabella and her children! I thought of them before his own family. There is but one voice. All say how much virtue, worth, usefulness, lost not only to his immediate family, but to friends, and the State! What a terrible blow to the household at Abbeville, hearing at once of the death of husband and father—son and brother! Mr. Harleston Read was speaking to Capt. Haskell when he was shot, and saw Mr. Cheves fall, struck by a shell as he crossed the parade-ground at Battery Wagner. Mary says Mr. Read, who came to town for a few hours on Saturday evening looked twenty years older, and she could scarcely hear what he said, his voice was so faint—he escaped unhurt, except bruises, but was worn out, having been since Friday morning without food. The regiment lost everything—their camp being occupied by the enemy. . . .

Harriott to Susan, Columbia

Flat Rock July 13

We were so shocked yesterday to hear all this bad news, after the first glowing accounts. It was so rainy that only Alice and Harry got to church when the service was almost over. Mrs. Trenholm then told Alice the news, and gave her a paper. She was dreadfully overcome by the news of Mr. Cheves's death. What a loss! Besides his family, it is to Isabella a great blow, and Carolina has lost another son, whose talents and patriotism might one day have rendered her great service. I think his whole course from Secession days has been so noble. Family, fortune, everything was put aside, he lived but for the public welfare. I suppose you heard of his taking the position of overseer to the negroes working on Morris Island. Some of his family were very indignant at it, thinking that he ought to have some more shining and equally useful place, that his talents demanded a more extensive sphere, but he was quite unmoved by their arguments. No other man equally well fitted would take the place, and he took it, and has spent all his time in building the works of which other men have had the glory. It makes Isabella so indignant

to hear cousin Lizzie glorifying Cleland Huger for having command of Battery Wagner, when Langdon Cheves had given to it months of toil. . . . Isabella still hopes that the report may be false, but I am afraid it is true. We have always said that he would be among the first to go, and he need not have been there, for he had no military position. What trying days these are! . . .

Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock

Columbia

. . . You know, I told you that we heard the guns even here on Friday morning—it was the most terrific bombardment of all, and had not the Truce boat interrupted the firing, Fort Wagner could not have held out half an hour longer. Whilst the prisoners were being transferred, Mr. Read was sent over to report the condition of the Battery, and nothing could be more deplorable—every gun on the sea-face dismounted, the works knocked to pieces, the earth ploughed up within 8 feet of the magazine, and the men cowed and demoralized! Taliaferro declared he could hold out no longer, and, unless he was permitted to evacuate that night, he preferred returning to town under arrest! Through God's mercy the enemy did not renew the fierce bombardment on Friday, but only fired slowly, why no one can tell, for their ironclads were within 500 yards, and they could with the naked eye plainly see what havoc they had made. Beauregard sent Taliaferro word that Wagner *must* be held for *three* days longer, if *he* could not do it, a general would be sent who *could* and *would*. Eason arrived in the evening to remount the guns, and the wornout garrison were at work all night. When Mr. Read went back on Saturday things were a different aspect—the Battery was repaired, and both General and men in spirits, but everyone seems agreed that Morris Island must be given up in a few days, that Sumter *must* follow! Heavy guns are coming in from Richmond, but *civilians* have but little hope of Charleston after Sumter is gone. . . .

. . . One of the new batteries you will see is called after Mr. Cheves. Fort Sumter is being strengthened with sand-bags, cotton bales, and raw hides! these are said to have a wonderful power of resisting shot. . . . 6000 shell fell in the Battery in one day—the horrid din tries the men as much as anything else. We are longing for news this afternoon, for guns have been heard all the morning plainly. . . .

Harriott to Susan, Columbia

Wednesday night
July 15

. . . Such a touching letter came from Sophy Haskell. They heard the same evening of the deaths of the uncle and two nephews—for Willy, you will have heard is gone too. What a world of woe, in the two sentences comprising the telegram "Willy was killed on the 2nd at Gettysburg! all of the rest of us are well." signed John Haskell. The two were peculiarly fond of one another I have often heard Sophy say. She says of her Mother "Mama goes about as if everyone were in trouble but herself." The letter is very calm. Twice only she breaks out, to wonder if the dreariness of life can much longer be endured. The Cheveses she says were stunned. . . . Mama looks as if she had lost a son, and Alice weeps all the time. I tell you this to show you what an impression he has made on all of us. Langdon looks nervous and troubled, but the others do not know what it all means. I had a long letter from Papa too, such a gentle, kind letter, full of thoughtfulness for other people's comfort, but he says nothing of moving the people. His remaining there, and keeping the negroes there makes us very anxious, and adds sadly to the burden of these trying days, for they are such dark days. Mama says she has looked her last upon her son, and is pale and exhausted all the time, but why worry you with our darkness, when you have your own. . . .

Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock

Columbia—Friday
[July 17]

. . . Troubles are falling thick upon our people. You will have heard of William Haskell's death. The same mail, they say, took his mother news of the loss of both sons and her brother . . . Battery Wagner . . . people talk of as "Mr. Cheves's monument"—he was the first who fell in it, you know. Capt. Haskell, too, was a volunteer at Morris Island. . . . John Bee was terribly wounded. . . . Col. Ferguson, too, you will see, has lost two sons in a week, and every day will add sorrow to sorrow now, for the names of privates and subordinate officers killed at Gettysburg are just beginning to come in. . . .

. . . I suppose you heard of the rocket sent up from the heart of the town and immediately answered from Morris isld. I am told that it "frustrated a grand design of Gen. Beauregard." Of course there are plenty of Yankee spies and traitors in the place, the difficulty is to lay hands on the right men. Two caught, (*or* suspected of) signalling the

enemy are just brought to the Jail here in irons, and two days ago a man was seized in the Main Street in woman's clothes. Perhaps he was only avoiding conscription! Apropos of *spies*—They say that Fanny Lamb was last heard of as "attending on the scaffold" the Col. Williams of our army whom Rosencranz executed in Tennessee not long ago as a spy. I saw in one of the papers a hint that it was not *military* business which had carried him into the enemy's lines, but that "a lady" was in some way mixed up in the affair."

Columbia—Monday
[July 20]

. . . Mary's letter yesterday morning gave us an account of the terrific bombardment of the day before, often, she says, as many as six tremendous reports as fast as you could count them, and then a minute's pause, and then it began again—this went on all day. She had closed her letter before the assault of which the paper tells us. She says "the noise *disjoins* one," and Mrs. Holbrook writes to Hal that she feels "*bruised*." The flag-staff was struck and the flag was left hanging low—every moment Mary looked to see a white one run up, thinking no mortal men could stand that fire—but you see we had only *four* killed before the *night* attack on the works! . . .

On Saturday night—they probably mustered every available man for that assault, and you see how they were slaughtered—even during the day, under our artillery fire, Mr. Rose says, they went down like ninepins. They had withdrawn all their troops from James Island, where, by-the-by, Mr. Read says, they *ran* beautifully, both blacks and whites—it had been an understood thing among our men that no negro prisoners were to be taken. Unluckily Colquitt's Brigade from Va. were not aware of the arrangement, and brought in those 15, all but 2 Massachusetts negroes—Mr. Read said he really pitied them—they were made to double-quick $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile to the rear before a squad of cavalry—their tongues hanging out of their mouths as they ran, and when they flagged it was: "Yankee sergeant, eh, you scoundrell" and a prick with sword or bayonet. They are now in Castle Pinckney, and nobody knows what to do with them—they can't be hanged, for fear of retaliation, but people say their lives must be taken in some way. I have no doubt they will get off in the end—clemency is a grace in which our government and people do so super-abound. If they are severely dealt with, it will be for an example—as a matter of policy they certainly deserve more mercy than white instigators.

Miss Lizzie Huger, who was here this morning, and is not going for several days, says she hears from Miss Harleston that they are building

a line of water-batteries between Fort Johnson and Battery Wagner—of cotton bales planted in the marsh—they hope to prevent the enemy (who are cutting a canal across Morris Island to bring round light-draft boats) from flanking our right. Besides—if our men have to retreat, they can fall back by these, across the bridges from point to point, to James Island—instead of depending upon boats in the harbour. One of the prisoners taken says they fight desperately because they are promised the sack and pillage of Charleston if they take it—and told that when *that* place falls the War will be over! . . . I wish the Vice President's speech could have been heard in the Yankee camps down there, and the shouts when he said that if Charleston fell, and Mobile, and Wilmington, and Richmond, and a dozen other towns and cities, still the vitals of the Republic were untouched—and if the War lasted two years, seven years, *twenty-seven* years, we were "*on for the War*," not only the men, but the *boys*, upon which a cluster of little shavers by our carriage bawled out: "Here they are!" Passing through on Saturday he addressed the people from the Piazza of the Congaree House, and we all drove down to hear him. I never heard any stump-speaking before, so I don't know how good this was. It seemed to me very ordinary, an utter disregard of grammar, no order or arrangement in the ideas, not a single *new* idea or fact, and endless repetition, *yet* it was very interesting, and we listened for an hour and a half, and were sorry when he stopped. . . . He was told a prisoner taken lately said they meant to have Charleston if it cost 60,000 lives, such was their spite against it. He didn't doubt the Administration in Washington would willingly give 600,000 lives to get it—"so long as it wasn't one of themselves!" But to crush out the rebellion, they would have not only to take *all* the cities, but to march *all over* the country, and *across* it, and *through* it—in fact do "like the planters in *my* State do, when they want to exterminate Bermuda grass—cross-plough it, and rake it!" Here everybody clapped and screamed—apparently delighted with the bare idea of being cross-ploughed and raked by the Yankee army! . . . He is a frail small shabby-looking man, his face a funny mixture of an old man's and a moon-struck boy's, but it is really impressive while he is speaking. I had a good near view of him yesterday after church, where he sat just in front of me. . . .

Col. DeSaussure fell early in the action on the 2nd, and was buried by his servant in the enemy's lines. The man has since returned—he was in the hands of the Yankees, but preferred coming home, and they let him Mrs. DeSaussure bore the announcement better than the family had dared to hope. She is calm—but too ill to be moved from Charleston. The poor old father when he was told of it, said, "He was my *only* son—he belongs to the country"—not a murmur, not even a regret, *ex-*

pressed—and every day one hears of like instances of submission—fortitude—worthy to be remembered—like the old stories of Greece and Rome, only there seems sometimes now even a nobler spirit under suffering—a Christian grace added to the stern virtue of the ancients. I can't understand how people bear up as one blow comes after another. . . . Gen. Meade is Mrs. Tom Huger's brother—The Postmaster says so, in a very amusing letter he wrote me before the "shock" at Charleston. He "knew him well, but never dreamed that Fate had in store for him such an affliction as to make him a Major General, and send him to fight *Beel*". . .

Dr. Gibbs. . . was all over the battlefield yesterday—the marsh covered with dead Yankees. They asked leave to bury their dead, but it was refused and our men sent to do it. The slaughter of negroes was so great that at last the generals ordered the men to stop firing on them. One cried out, "Please, Massa, don't shoot, I never fire a gun in my life!" but he was bayoneted notwithstanding. The paper says a part of our works was held for an hour, but a private letter says that is—some Yankees *got in*, but none ever got *out*—all were killed that got inside. The Battery being built within Wagner enfilades all the Yankee works on the Island. . . .

Columbia—Friday

[August 14/15]

. . . It is a wonder to me what people do for *clothes* when they get married nowadays. I was told not long ago of the despair of a reverend bridegroom, a refugee, no church and no salary, but he must needs have a wife, altho' he had one or two already. His dilemma was *shirts*! "Three I can get out of my surplice, and three more out of an old table cloth I have—but where *are* the others to come from?"

A prisoner in the Jail here belonging to the "100th New York" says there was some difficulty among the negroes on the transport which brought him from Hilton Head—when six of them were instantly pushed overboard and drowned. They certainly are between the upper and nether mill-stone throughout this war. . .

Columbia—Thursday

[Aug. 21, 22]

. . . Major Stephen Elliott nightly goes into the enemy's lines and scatters torpedoes, which are known to explode. You will have heard, of course of the wonderful fish-shaped boat,⁷⁷ built at Mobile, and

⁷⁷The *Hunley*, which ushered in submarine warfare when she sank the *Housatonic*, Feb. 17, 1864.

brought here in sections overland. It goes entirely under water, has a propeller at one end, and torpedo at the other. It has *fins*, with valves in them to let in air—altho' it holds a sufficient supply to last 8 men 3 hours after it is submerged. Papa has seen a man, who saw a man, who made a voyage in this contrivance from one wharf to another—he was 20 minutes under water—and suffered no inconvenience. The inventor tells Mr. Read he is sure the *boat* will do its part, and if he had not been confident that his *heart* would not fail him he would never have come so far to make the attempt. They are only waiting for good weather—any bright morning we may hear that the "Ironsides" is sunk. Mr. Wagner offers 100,000 for her destruction, and 50,000 for the "Wabash." I hear Beauregard says if he can only get rid of the "Ironsides" he thinks we can manage the Monitors. Capt. Carlin, too, is in the lists—and went down two nights ago with our home-built torpedo-boat. He got as far as Sumter, but could go no further, the sea was so heavy. Our new gun-boat the "Charleston" is also ready for action at last. The best news is the arrival at Wilmington in the old "Sumter" of two enormous Blakely guns, weighing 24,000 lbs. each. They carry 5 miles, and the Yankees have nothing so good. The weight seems to us uninitiated people fabulous Since church time we have all been stitching away at sandbags . . .

Columbia—Friday

[Aug. 28, 29]

. . . Last week Carlin actually reached the "Ironsides" one night, but the tide was so strong that he ran into her side-ways, instead of striking in the torpedo on his bow. The guard called out at once, when he had presence of mind enough to answer, "Yankee—despatch-boat," making the best of his way off, as he apologized for his "awkwardness." They then took him for a blockade-runner, beat to quarters, and gave him a broadside—but all the shot went over, and he got safely back to town. The fishboat too has been "under the 'Ironsides'"—but the torpedo got off—and the water was too shallow where she lay for them to have done her much injury. They must have 60 feet of water to dive into, in order to get force enough in rising to make a hole in her bottom. People are offering the 8 men who go in this machine \$10,000 each for their places and chances in the enterprise. Some say the thing looks like a log on the water, others that it is like a gigantic metallic coffin—but all say it is wonderful, only the sanguine believe it will work wonders. . . .

(To be continued)