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MIDDLETON CORRESPONDENCE, 1861-1865

Edited by ISABELLA MIDDLETON LELAND

(Continued from April)

[Susan Middleton to Harriott Middleton, Flat Rock]

Columbia—Saturday

[July 5-7, 1862]

Today has brought very sad news. Frank Ravenel's ⁴⁷ death. Hal is here, on a two days' visit, her husband being in charge of one of the hospitals, and she called to see us very kindly yesterday, when we arranged to meet again this morning, but, on going to the Hotel, we were shocked to find that they had just received the painful intelligence. On our return we had a note from Mrs. Young asking for the carriage to go there. I have written to Hal and wish so much I could do something for her, but think I had better not go just now, it must be so trying to see even one's friends, except the nearest, at such a time. Mrs. Young says he was killed in the battle of the 1st—we have heard no particulars. . . .

These are indeed dark days—there is mourning all around us this week. Mr. Coffin's funeral took place this morning, the Haynes have lost their son, and one of our next-door neighbours their's (the second in a few days) the Miss Rhetts their brother and cousin—Grimke Rhett was so terribly mangled they were obliged to bury him at once upon the field. Poor old Dr. Trezevant seems broken down by the death of his son, and Dr. Goodwyn has just buried another child—of course you cannot feel interested in these people whom you have never seen, but I feel for them, they have been very kind to us. You speak of J. Haskell ⁴⁸—I was glad to hear from Wms. Heyward yesterday that they now have hope of his recovery. His parents reached him before his arm was amputated, and telegraph two days after the operation that he was doing well. Of course you will have known of young Cheves's ⁴⁹ death—is he not an only child? I hear Henry Rutledge led the charge splendidly in Ransom's Brigade,

⁴⁷ Frank Ravenel, brother-in-law of Harriott Horry Ravenel, was killed July 1, in the battle of Malvern Hill, the last of the Seven Days Battles.

⁴⁸ Major John Cheves Haskell, nephew of Langdon Cheves, was one of seven brothers who fought for the South. He lost his arm at Mechanicsville, first of the Seven Days.

⁴⁹ Edward Cheves was the only son of Dr. John Cheves, constructor of a system of torpedo defences at Charleston.

proprietor. Jan. 1859, title changed to *Unionville Times* with McKnight and W. H. Wallace, owners; Wallace and Charles E. Boyd, editors. August 1859, Dr. P. M. Wallace, owner.

YORK

Yorkville Miscellany, weekly, est. 1844. 300

ScU:

... —.

Jan. 22, 1851-Jan. 18,
1854, almost complete.

1851, Lewis G. Grist, editor and proprietor. Jan. 24, 1852, Grist sold paper to his father, John E. Grist. April 17, 1852, T. J. Bell, editor. Feb. 3, 1853, co-partnership formed between J. E. and L. M. Grist. Nov. 1854, paper merged with *Yorkville Remedy*, and sold to W. Rice. Title changed to *Yorkville Citizen*.

The Yorkville Remedy, weekly, est. Sept. 1851.

ScU:

1851, very scattered
issues.

T. J. Eccles, founder. June 2, 1853, purchased by J. Judge Moore and Major J. Felix Walker. Nov. 1854, purchased by W. Rice and titled changed to *Yorkville Citizen*.

Yorkville Citizen, weekly, est. Nov. 2, 1854. Successor to *Yorkville Remedy* and *Yorkville Miscellany* with W. Rice, owner and publisher; J. Felix Walker, editor. 1855, Rice, editor and publisher. Nov. 1856, merged with the *York District Chronicle* under name of latter.

ScU:

1855, very scattered
issues.

Yorkville Enquirer, weekly, est. Jan 6, 1855.
— . . . 2,208.

CtY:

1855-1860, almost
complete.

John L. Miller and Samuel W. Melton, editors and proprietors, and Lewis M. Grist, publisher. March 1857, John L. Miller & Co. proprietors, with L. M. Grist, publisher, and J. H. Black, editor. On March 18, 1858, John L. Miller and Joseph H. Black sold the plant to Lewis M. Grist; Melton, editor.

ScU:

1857-1860, complete.

ScR:

1857-1860, complete.

York District Chronicle (Yorkville), weekly, est. Aug. 1856. — . . . 600.

NcD:

1858, very scattered
issues.

T. J. Eccles, founder. Nov. 1856 merged with *Yorkville Citizen* as *York District Chronicle*, T. J. Eccles, editor and publisher.

and hope all is still well with him. Poor dear Sally⁵⁰ can only rejoice with trembling, however, in times like these, at such news. And how Lise must long and long for some tidings from home! . . .

. . . Pray tell me of Mr. Cheves's balloon,⁵¹ of which I have heard nothing. One of McClellan's was said to have come down before the Telegraph office in Richmond out of gas! but the story is not confirmed, so I suppose it was only a hoax of the Operators. . . .

Columbia July 12th

. . . Papa got back this morning from Charleston, which he says continues to look very deserted and forlorn—no men in the streets but soldiers and negroes, and the Battery converted into a fortification on which no guns are yet mounted. An Englishman, just from Port Royal, says they talk there of an attack on the 1st of August, but his information is not thought to be very reliable. Mr. Malet, who has been staying with the Pickenses, gives an account of his interview with Seward and Lincoln, who assured him that the "Union sentiment" was still very strong even in S. Carolina! Getting to Richmond, he found hatred to the U. States and its government the universally prevailing feeling among all classes—in Charleston it was even stronger, and in Columbia strongest of all. He thought it his duty, as a Christian and a clergyman, to write Mr. Lincoln a letter charging him with misrepresentation and disabusing him of his "delusion" as to the "loyalty" of the South, and at the same time informed him of his grievous error in supposing he had an *army* at Hilton Head, where he found only a *mob*. He says he never conceived of anything like the patriotism of the Southern people, and told Mr. L. he had felt it incumbent upon him to write to Lord Palmerston and other influential men at home giving very different statements of things here from those systematically supplied from Northern sources. . . .

The falseness and wickedness of that Yankee notion has certainly never before been equalled. Did you hear of their enticing away nearly a whole plantation of Mr. H. Read's negroes? Catching three, they dressed them in fine new uniforms, and filled their pockets with money, sending them back as a lure to the rest, who, of course, eagerly followed, when the stratagem had succeeded, the clothes and money were immediately

⁵⁰ Sally Rutledge Pinckney, sister of Henry and Lise Rutledge. Lise is still held in Nashville by its fall to the Federals.

⁵¹ Capt. Langdon Cheves, Jr., John's brother, built at his own expense in Savannah a silk reconnaissance balloon used in the Seven Days. See J. H. Easterby, "Captain Langdon Cheves, Jr., and the Confederate Silk Dress Balloon," *S. C. Hist. Mag.*, XLV (1944), 1-11, 99-110.

taken back. Mr. Yates, the seaman's preacher, whose family are our next door neighbour, was giving us an instance the other day of their dealing with their own soldiers. He is constantly at the Marine Hospital, where the Yankee wounded were first lodged. One poor Englishman, who was wounded and captured on James island, he said interested him much. Turned out of a Phil[adelphi]a factory and in great want, he had at first refused to enlist, and walked with a comrade near 300 miles in search of work. They reached New Hampshire in a starving condition, but were still unable to find employment, when they were offered \$50 bounty with \$150 in gold, at the end of the war, besides 160 acres of land in So[uth] Ca[rolina]! The evening before the Secessionville fight, the men were told by their General that in six hours after that battery was attacked, they would be in Charleston, liquor was freely distributed among them, every officer was more or less drunk, and the canteens were filled with whiskey just before going into action. He said, "We had won that battle, Sir, before that Louisiana batallion came up, but, when I saw those men, and heard the horrid yells, and the cries of "Butler and Revenge" ⁵² with which they rushed upon us, I was paralysed. I could fight no longer." . . . Mary had a letter yesterday from Mr. Read, 15 miles from Richmond, having rejoined Ripley. He says the city is one vast hospital, and he never before had any idea of the real horrors of war. The battlefield already has but few traces of the late conflicts, only the woods everywhere destroyed by shot and shell, and arms lying about in all directions, which are being collected and brought in by wagon loads. Frank Ravenel behaved with conspicuous gallantry, and fell on Tuesday evening, while leading a regiment to attack a battery. They failed, and he was missing, and the next morning, when the Staff went to search for him, they found he had already been recognized and interred by two friends. He had been shot through the heart, and must have died instantly.

Saturday [July 19, 1862]

. . . Do you see any of the Virginia papers? How very bitter they are against Gen. Huger.⁵³ I am glad the "Mercury" is not out upon him, it is always so ready to cavil and condemn that it must be consideration for his family which keeps it quiet on this occasion. Mary Preston ⁵⁴ says

⁵² Major Gen. Benj. F. Butler, U. S. A., took possession of New Orleans April 1861.

⁵³ Major Gen. Benjamin Huger was relieved of his command after the battle of Malvern Hill. He then served as an inspector of ordnance in the Trans-Mississippi Department.

⁵⁴ Daughter of Gen. John S. Preston. She married Dr. John Darby, Oct. 1864.

she saw a letter the other day from Lizzie to the Postmaster entirely exculpating himself and Mr. Huger was quite satisfied that he was not to blame. She added that he had just sent for his wife and daughter to join him at headquarters, but from others I hear he has been relieved from his command. Passing the Congaree House the other afternoon we saw the other delinquent General—Magruder. We did not know he was there, but hearing the Band playing we drew up to listen. As soon as the "Marseillaise" was done the crowd on the piazza opened, and a rather rowdy looking man in very shabby gray clothes came forward on the steps—some one introduced "Gen. Magruder," and then he made a very common-place little speech, which however, seemed to give great satisfaction to the "gentlemen of South Carolina", whom he declared he was "so happy to see" (they were chiefly negro women and boys!). There was loud cheering and then the Band played "Dixie," and we drove off very ungraciously wishing it had only been Price or Jackson, or indeed, almost any other General than Magruder. He looks much more dissipated and "seedy" than he used to do at Fort Adams, riding round the parade with a young lady by his side, and two lumbering dragoons clattering behind him. I daresay you remember seeing him often four or five years ago. Dr. Ravenel told us he had seen Gen. Price at Kingsville the other day—a stout man with a red face—who looked as if he would find great enjoyment in taking a large tumbler of brandy and water and then going to sleep, rather a disenchanting description! But of course heroes are not what we imagine them—at least not in appearance.

[July 25, 1862]

. . . Johnny⁵⁵ says it *was* Mr. Cheves's balloon which was captured in the "Teazer"—it was a perfect success—the first successful one made for our government—another is being made at Richmond by the same man, and will soon be finished. . . . Mr. Rutledge writes that Lieut. Nowell has got back with Enfield rifles (short) for the Dragoons, so that they will now have the pleasure of returning the compliment when the Yankee pickets fire at them across the river—he says they have several times lately hit the trees behind which our men were hiding, and the other day sent a ball between the legs of one of Trenholm's company, rather hard to bear armed only with sabre and pistols! now, however, it is a game at which *both* sides can play and we know which are the best marksmen. . . .

⁵⁵ John Izard Middleton, son of "Uncle John" of Crowfield, Georgetown.

[Aug. 2/3, 1862]

. . . Mrs. Read writes Mary an account of the late raid on Waccamaw—they carried off all the salt and things for making it belonging to Gov. Allston, Uncle John and others, and one of the latter negroes, screaming and pleading to be left behind. One of Dr. Parker's who has escaped and returned gives a piteous description of the condition of eight hundred, who have been stolen, and are now at South Island, among them, Mr. H. Read's. They are huddled together in close quarters closely watched and badly fed, on rough rice, having had meat but once in three weeks, all are disappointed, and anxious to return, but Mr. Mayrant's driver keeps guard over them, armed and shoots at those who attempt to get away. Dr. Parker had a long conversation with the Flag of Truce when he accused them flatly of stealing, lying and other villainies! . . .

[Harriott to Susan, Columbia]

Flat Rock—Thursday Evening

[Aug. 7, 1862]

My dearest Susan . . . It is reported that the country people here are going to attack Mr. Johnstone's house—Captain Cuthbert and one of the young Cuthberts are to sleep there tonight and other gentlemen tomorrow night. They sent here for some powder this morning! This seems to me to be the only *fact* in the story. I hope they won't come here for I should be frightened to death! . . .

[Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock]

Columbia—Friday

[Aug. 8/9, 1862]

. . . Last night we had Virginia letters from Mr. Read and John, who are both within a few miles of the city, and altho' at some distance from each other, both under Longstreet. . . . The custom is in the camps to ride in and dine at the Spottswood where shoals of acquaintance are always to be met. The first day John got to Richmond as they rode along, two gentlemen passed. One, in a fall suit of brown linen, called out to Mr. Drayton and turning, both joined them, the President and his aid, a son of Gen. Sidney Johnston. As they went through the streets, the little boys called out, "How dyedo Jeff," but he said he had only to "*look*" at tha little urchins and they were quiet.

Saturday [Aug. 16, 1862]

. . . "Uncle Alfred" made us a visit a few days ago. . . . He gave us what I suppose was the correct version of the VanderHorst and Rhett duel, he having been referee in the affair, and having tried in vain to accommo-

date matters. Wm. Huger was Arnoldus's second—Lieut. Mitchell Major Rhett's. It makes me think better of the latter than I ever did before to hear that he fired his second shot into the air, which put an end to the contest. It seems to have been the most causeless of quarrels—such a difficulty could only have grown up, I should think, between men who disliked each other before, and I have always heard there was no love lost between the Rhetts and VanderHorsts. Some one says "Ransom Calhoun will have to fight the whole Rhett family," and some one else adds "the sooner he begins it the better," but as he is the superior officer of Alfred Rhett, the chief offender, it seems both would have to resign their commissions before "settling any affair of honour." Hence the delay. . . .

What on earth were the country people going to attack Mr. Johnston's house for? I thought they were great favorites with all classes at Buncombe. Pray explain—it has such an unnatural sound in this country, even in these warlike times, a private house to be *attacked*! by ones own people! . . .

[*Harriott to Susan, Columbia*]

Flat Rock—Tuesday Aug. 19th

. . . The country people here objected to Mr. Johnston's bringing up his negroes from the plantation saying it would raise the price of provisions. A hundred men swore to put him and his people beyond the state line. All the gentlemen in the neighbourhood assembled at his house on the appointed day, and so prevented any demonstration. The men went off to a village near here and fought the Secessionists there. . . .

[*Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock*]

Columbia [Aug. 23/25, 1862]

I was delighted to get your letter yesterday, my dearest Harriott, but am a little at a loss how to do your bidding, that is, "tell you something of ourselves—what we do and what we talk about." There is nothing worth telling it seems to me, but you shall be gratified. Mama, who has been better lately, is busy making soap, sweatmeats, peach-leather, and pickles. Mary and Ella sew their children's clothes and write to their husbands—the girls read aloud to each other, and work for the soldiers. Papa goes to the Main Street, to get the news and buy fruit, vegetables, etc., and drives Mama out every afternoon. Oliver pores over his books much more than is good for him, and does not grow less pale and thin—and I—am knitting Graniteville yarn and reading two Virginia novels when I have finished my two hours of Schiller. There, are you satisfied with my comprehensive and explicit answer to your question of what we are doing?

As to what we *talk about*—Nothing but the war, it dwarfs ones interest in all other things. . . .

. . . Among the exchanged prisoners were also Lt. Warley, who said he had just heard from Bell, and they were all well in N. Orleans—and J. Pettigrew, who talked enough for the whole army of the silenced, and in his usual light gay style. He was first wounded in the throat and shoulder, and a man taking him up to carry him off was instantly shot dead. Pettigrew getting two more holes, in the arm and leg. He lay undisturbed till morning, when the Yankees took him. McClellan's officers treated him kindly, and behaved like "gentlemen," "provided you make the allowance for them which you must for all Yankees, they *will lie*." His wounds are nearly healed, but his right arm is still paralysed. He has gone to some Springs near Richmond, but hopes soon to be again in active service."

Tuesday [Sept. 9, 1862]

. . . The Rhetts . . . seem to have determined that poor Col. Calhoun, at least, should not "live" out his natural term, which would not have been long in any case, it appears. Mary Preston tells Livy he could scarcely have lasted many months longer, his health was so broken, and Ft. Sumter was killing him fast—he would have resigned even if he had not had this duel on hand. He is said to have fired in the air—Rhett, who has been practicing two hours a day for months, killed him at the first shot—that is he did not reach Judge King's alive. He asked Dr. Wragg in the carriage if anything could be done for him, and when he answered, "I fear not, you must die," only said, "It is hard, God have mercy upon my soul," and turning his head died. The indignation felt was intense—"lynching" was talked of, but Maj. Rhett could not be found—"a demonstration against the "Mercury Office" but that failed, and finally arrests were made of all parties concerned, by the civil authorities. Dantzler, Calhoun's second, and Furman, Rhett's, and Gen. Simons, who was on the field, they *say*, are in jail but "they say" tells more stories than ever nowadays. Calhoun said he told Rhett, sometime ago, that he would not call him to account for his insults, because his duty at present was to his country, after the war, he would settle his private quarrels, but more lately, he has been constantly persecuted, and when VanderHorst was drawn in, he declared it was time for him to act for himself, he could not bear that his friends should be called out in his defence. He would have married Mary Preston's sister, I am told, but for some recent difficulties with their brother, who was in his Battalion of Artillery. . . .
. . . John writes "7 miles from Fairfax C.H." on the 2nd. He had come round, under Longstreet, and was under fire on the 23rd at the Rappa-

hannock, and on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, but escaped unhurt. He gives us quite an interesting account of the great battle-field, and tells us of Jackson sitting on his horse during the fight with his head uncovered praying "for two hours more" and calling out to his men to come on, "now is your time, boys." . . .

Columbia, Sunday

[Sept. 14, 16, 1862]

. . . We are getting to be great politicians here! going every day to the Convention. I assure you it is quite interesting, and we were *almost* indignant on one occasion, when the gallery was ordered to be closed for a secret session. We have heard Mr. Robert Barnwell, Mr. B. Rhett, Mr. Langdon Cheves, Mr. McCrady, Judge Inglis, and others. Mr. Barnwell is by far the best speaker, and it is delightful to hear Davis and the Government ably upheld in answer to Mr. Rhett, who is like a whole volley of cross "Mercury" Editorials, but he speaks with great facility, and earnestness, although he has a wretched scolding voice, and none of the calmness and finish of Mr. Barnwell, who is very persuasive. His opponents call him "dangerous" and "wish he had stayed in Richmond." Think of his saying that "the defensive policy was a *mere myth*—no one had *ever* adhered to it," "it was *sickness* alone which has kept our armies so long on our own soil." He does not inspire one with entire confidence certainly, but he is very delightful to listen to and you agree to all he says while he is saying it, although you do go back to your old way of thinking afterwards. . . .

. . . The talk about who is to be next governor is beginning. Col. Manning, Mr. John Preston, and Gen. Hampton are proposed, but Mr. Chestnut stands the best chance I hear, next to Gen. Jamison, who, Willie Smith⁵⁶ tells me, is "one of the first gentlemen in the country," and "makes a first-rate President of Convention." He certainly has an endless fund of patience and amiability. He is one of the chiefs of the Citadel, hence Willie's enthusiasm. It is delightful to see any one as happy as this young gentleman who has just gone on to Greenville, after a visit to his Grandmother here, and one to cousin Emma at Augusta. He says "Aunt Em has a splendid house, twelve rooms, elegant furniture, and keeps a great deal of company, visits thirty families, and drives out in style, with a pair of mules and that same old buggy. . . ."

⁵⁶ William Mason Smith, son of William Mason Smith and Eliza C. Middleton Huger, died at the age of twenty-one from wounds received at Cold Harbor June 1864.

[Harriott to Susan, Columbia]

Flat Rock, September 18th

. . . Some very strange things have taken place here this summer, but the strangest happened this morning. Old Dr. and Mrs. Hanckel, Mr. and Mrs. Means and Miss Wilson were carried off to the Henderson jail, accused of having beaten an old country woman nearly to death! She was found tied to her bed, and dreadfully bruised and cut up, and averred that they had done it. The whole church was convulsed after service today on hearing this. The Johnstons had met them in the Sheriff's custody, when they were coming to church. Mr. Farmer hurried off, and I hardly think they really could have been committed to jail, for as a magistrate he would prevent it. It shows the bitter feeling entertained here to the low country people. . . .

[Susan to Harriott, Flat Rock]

Columbia—Saturday

[Sept. 20, 1862]

My dearest Harriott . . . Two letters have come from Mr. Read lately—no mails are yet established, and couriers leave rarely, so they send by return wagon-trains, which take ever so long to connect with the railroad. He writes from Leesburg, and Frederick, on the 10th. In the latter place the shops were all shut, and many of the houses—now and then ladies were to be seen in the street—some smiled at them, and some turned up their noses! He heard more than he saw of the “enthusiasm of the people,” who seemed unwilling to commit themselves, lest the “rebel” invasion should prove only a “raid.” . . . The crossing of the Potomac by moonlight, he says, was a grand scene—the water was waist deep, running over a rocky bed, and a steep bank on the opposite shore, as the head of each column reached this, there would rise deafening shouts, by sunrise the whole division was over—guns and all. They have an immense amount of artillery, at one time Ripley alone had sixty pieces under his command. Their welcome at Warrenton, Va., was overpowering. Mr. Read rode into the town with Julian Mitchell, and in a little while they had six invitations to dinner. The Staff were taken to spend the night at a large and elegant house, where any number of young ladies assembled to do them honour—all “F. F. V's,” of course. They would not suffer the Officers to be waited on at supper by servants, and seemed to regard each Southerner as a special deliverer. Mr. Read says the streets were full of the most beautiful women he ever saw! you know he is very gallant, and thinks nearly all women beautiful! These poor Warrenton women had

reason to be joyful at their deliverance, they had been sorely oppressed by Pope's army. The account of the field at Manassas, after the fight is sickening—the hospital accommodations, of course, were insufficient, and only impromptu temporary arrangements could be made, so far from the cities, and in a country utterly desolated. He saw at least two thousand dead and dying still lying there exposed—the groans were terrible, as you passed along, unable to do anything for the wounded. . . .

. . . Mr. Prioleau Ravenel . . . said he had tried in vain to get at the facts of that horrid duel, but everyone concerned keeps very "dark" about it, until the Inquest is over. Dr. Wragg said, however, that before they fought, Col. Calhoun said to him, that he wished he had remained in Virginia—he would gladly lay down his life for his country on any battlefield, but the idea of being shot in a duel was very revolting to him. He asked for three days after accepting Rhett's challenge, and has left a written statement of the whole affair, which I suppose, will be made public in time. By the old army law, they say, Rhett ought to be not only cashiered, but shot, but, of course, nothing of that sort will be done to him in Carolina. Gen. Pemberton is said to have been aware it was going on, but would take no measures to prevent the meeting, because the information was brought by a civilian! We catechized poor Mr. Ravenel until I was sorry for him, as to the guns in the Forts and batteries and works on the islands, where at last they have 1500 negroes digging—600 passed thro' here the other day, with their spades and shovels, etc., yelling and shouting with delight as they went from one depot to the other, just like boys out of school. . . .

Friday [Sept. 26, 1862]

. . . we hear of Col. Means's widow, not far off, literally dying of grief—she is a sister of our friend Mrs. Stark. It is impossible to realize all the sorrow and suffering this war is hourly bringing to us. Mrs. Waties has just got home, after a three weeks' visit to Charleston—she saw Gen. Beauregard on the Battery, and says his hair is as white as cotton. She would never have recognized him, if he had not been pointed out to her, he is so bent, and looks such a wreck of what he was eighteen months ago. John Waties saw a beautiful letter written by Col. Calhoun just before his death, in which he declared he could not tell why it was that Rhett persecuted him so persistently. I hear the clergyman, Mr. Porter, says he seriously believes it would be for the good of the State, if the whole Rhett family could be exterminated! Ransom Calhoun was a cousin of Mrs. Waties's—whose Mother was a Calhoun.

. . . Poor old Dr. Trezevant hears today that another son is wounded, perhaps mortally, and another of Dr. Goodwyn's is severely wounded —there seems no end to the trouble which has come to some families.

. . .

(To be continued)