

Fort Moultrie
Nov. 20, 1860

My dear Sister,

I have received your letter of the 14th and Mothers of the 16th inst. I hope that the fears we all entertain may never be realized but it is useless to conceal from ourselves that we are fast verging to a crisis fraught with the utmost danger to the whole country. The reluctance with which every man has hitherto contemplated the possibility of a dismemberment of our glorious Union has been one of the chief causes which has plunged us into the grave perils that now surround us. Heaven grant that we may pluck the rose of safety from this nettle danger. The South wearied of the persistent attacks of Northern fanaticism feel that the moment has at length arrived when they must make a determined stand for their rights. With them it is no longer a mere question of Politics, in the ordinary acceptation of that term, but whether they will quietly submit to be despoiled of their property and their fair land made a second San Domingo. The people of the Southern states generally are loyal to the Union and the Constitution and many of them will withdraw most unwillingly from our present compact. It remains to be seen whether the Northern states will retrace their steps and abide by the compromises of that Constitution.

Major Anderson, arrived here yesterday. I had never seen him before and have not had any opportunity of forming an opinion of him. He is a man about 50 years, of grave and polite demeanor and said to be an excellent officer. He told that he had received special orders from the Secy of War for his conduct here, that it was his intention to place the command in as high a state of discipline as possible and that he anticipated no collision with the people here. He was ordered here so suddenly that he had not time to bring on with him his wife and children who will follow. It is a positive relief to all of us to have a man here in command of Anderson's reputation. Col. Gardner, utterly incompetent to command a post under the most favorable circumstances was peculiarly unfit at the present time. When the commanding officer, should possess the utmost discretion tact and firmness. Col. Gardner, is ordered to San Antonio, to report for duty with the companies of his Regt serving in Texas. Col. G pretends that he is going there, but I have not the slightest idea that he will comply with the order. He will in all probability apply for a leave of absence of a sick leave, which will be granted him. I am sorry for the Gardners, who are doubtless severely mortified by these orders. The Colonel affects to consider it a piece of

persecution on the part of the Secy of War, because he, Col. G. would not be likely to prove a pliant tool to carry out the views of the administration & c !!! Col. Huger, a South Carolinian and one of the best officers in the Army, has been ordered and is now at the U.S. Arsenal at Charleston. There is rather less inflammatory speech making in Charleston, money is very tight and business dull, everybody looks grave and anxious, but there is not the slightest faltering in their determination to secede. They consider that it would be a disgrace to the state if after all their talk they were now to fail to act. Alone if needs be, South Carolina secedes to a certainly. But it does not follow that she will not come back again and gladly too, if not supported and joined by other Southern states. There is the greatest anxiety to avoid collision with the Genl Govt. at present and the least action which may be construed to foreshadow the policy of the administration with regard to them, is watched for and commented on most eagerly.

We are having most delightful weather and I hope that you are equally favored. As you will judge from my letter we talk and think of little else than public affairs, but you must not give much credit to the sensation rumors coming from here. The pretended capture of Fort Moultrie, for instance, was a mere trick of the N.Y. stockbrokers. In reality, the So Carolinians are as averse to meddling with us as we with them. You will be glad to know that I am in better health than usual. My best love to Mother and believe me ever

Your affectionate brother
Theodore

Ft. Sumter, So. Ca.
Jan 3. 1860 [1]

Dear Mother,

The Gov. of So. Ca. has cut off our mail communications for two or three days but to day sent our letters down & the messenger promises to mail nay private letters for us. I have not time to write more than to say that I am perfectly well and that you must not have the slightest uneasiness on my account. We are in an impregnable position here and cannot be interfered with in any way except by cutting off our mail facilities. As false impressions may be endeavored to be created with regard to our course here let my friends understand that wholly irrespective of the question as between the North & South we as military men and in obedience to our oaths must maintain the defensive until the wishes of the Genl. Govt are known. Even the So Carolinians we understand begin to acknowledge that we are in the right in this respect. Light have been put out buoys taken up & c so that we may have communicating seaward for some time and for any other we depend on the will of the Governor.

Again let me assure you that you need not have the slightest fear about our entire safety come what may. Give my best love to sister I am ever your effect son.

Theodore

Southern Historical Collection
Manuscripts Department, Wilson Library
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Grimball Family Papers
Collection No. 980

William H. Grimball

Fort Sumter,
Jany 12, 1862 [1863]

My dear Mother,

Some time having passed since I have written home, I will endeavor to make a letter out of nothing, at least to hear from you. Col[.] Alfred Rhettⁱ is now in command of the Regiment and of Fort Sumter. This which struck some of the officers with surprise, was notified to the Battalion a few days ago by a special order from Gen[.] Ripley.ⁱⁱ The public feeling which was so expressive immediately after his duel with Col[.] Calhounⁱⁱⁱ seems to have died out, and he has shrewdly waited for this to happen, before pushing himself in to the position vacated by the death of his antagonist. To me however it matters very little who is in command for in [the] event of his being unpleasant I can always take refuge in the obscurity of my position, and the military requires on to be seen and not heard, so that I submit always perhaps with pleasure, perhaps with regret.

It has been very gay among the officers of the Troops stationed around the harbor lately. Capt[.] Farley^{iv} of our Regiment had a pleasant party at Castle Pinckney about a week ago, and three days ago, there was one at Fort Pemberton.^v I could have gone to this one but being the night before on guard and therefore having been forced to keep awake twenty four hours, I felt so tired that I preferred to remain at the Fort. On Wednesday there is to be a ball in Charleston given by twenty young men, all officers

except one, who each subscribed fifty Dollars. It is expected to be a very handsome affair[.]

I am invited specially but as yet am uncertain Whether I will be allowed to go. Does it not look as if Nero again was fiddling while Rome is burning? How I wish for all your sakes that this war would stop, so that you could leave your dull and uncongenial residence in Spartanburg.^{vi}

I heard some very painful reports about Elliott[']s^{vii} children, that the eldest was dumb & had gone blind and deaf, and that it was feared the second was also dumb. If this is true, what an affliction it must be. The story goes that Mrs. Elliot, rang a bell by the ear of the eldest child, and she gave no indication whatever of having heard it, and that she will not wink until you have almost touched the ball of her eye. Of course every body cries out that comes from first cousins marrying as if they only had deaf and dumb children, or as if one or a hundred instances make a rule in a world as large as this of ours.

Arthur received a letter from John some time ago Advising him to apply to Richmond for a position in the Marine Corps, which, A[rthur], I think very wisely has not done. Since he did not stand the ghost of a chance of getting the place, having no influence whataever to exert in his behalf, I think too, he has a very pleasant place and seems to be satisfied.

I don't think since the destruction of some of the Yankee Iron clads, which is believed by all our navy men, that there is much likely hood of an attack in Charleston and if it does not come soon, I believe that peace with its quiet hand will put an end to all alarms here.

I don[']t believe the signal corps here are very much pleased with Fort Sumter, being gentlemen they are naturally alive to any expression of superiority by officer to them as privates, and they are to be found here as

well perhaps as every where else, men who become stuck up by some petty distinction, and are forward to show. This is exceedingly distasteful to them and very justly so. I am rather glad that they are going to leave which they expect to do soon on Arthur['] account. It is so expensive.

Last month, we lived in our mess chiefly on Beef and peas soup. We had no butter and bought no bread, and what do you think I had to pay \$30 a month for this. It is only the strictest attention to my money matters which enable me to make both ends meet, which I am happy to say I do as I would not take a dollar from Pa now If I had to live on soldier[']s rations.

I am in some trouble with my servant, a little lazy worthless scoundrel, he has left me, and I find it very hard to get another. And a servant is very important thing to an officer here. I must stop now[.]

Love to Pa[,] Elizabeth[,] E[,] L[,] & Harry. I hope Pa has received my letter about the affidavit for the Negroes. Telling him to make it & send it to Orr.^{viii}

ⁱ Alfred Moore Rhett, commanded the 1st South Carolina Artillery Regiment. He killed the unit's previous commander, Col. William Ransom Calhoun, in a duel on 22 September 1862. On 11 December 1862, Rhett, the regiment's major, was promoted to colonel and given command of the First.

ⁱⁱ Brigadier General Roswell Sabine Ripley commanded the 1st Military District which included Fort Sumter.

ⁱⁱⁱ Colonel William Ransom Calhoun.

^{iv} Captain Henry S. Farley commanded Company H, 1st SC Artillery Regiment.

^v Fort Pemberton was an earthen fortification built on James Island where the Stono River and Elliot's Cut meet.

^{vi} With the 11 November 1861, US capture of Port Royal Sound followed by their move up the Stono River and landing on James Island preceding the 16 June 1862 battle of Secessionville, John Berkley Grimball looked for a safe place to evacuate his family. On 17 May 1862, he was in Spartanburg and rented the Left/East wing of St. John's College in Spartanburg for \$40 per month. It consisted of seven rooms, two basement rooms, and a "long gallery for the servants." The family arrived on 7 June 1862 and occupied three rooms downstairs, two large rooms upstairs, and a turret room for Harry to use as a bedroom. Grimball's sister, Mrs. Butler and her daughters occupied the remains rooms. See John Grimball's journal entries for 20 May & 7 June 1862, and Meta Grimball's 16 May 1862 journal entry.

^{vii} Possible reference to Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Elliott, Jr. who commanded the Holcombe Legion Infantry Battalion.

^{viii} Unidentified.

Southern Historical Collection
Manuscripts Department, Wilson Library
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Grimball Family Papers
Collection No. 980

Arthur Grimball

Fort Sumter
Feb 6 1863

My Dear Father,

I intended to write home for some days past but as I was unable to get away from Charleston on account of wind blowing so high as to render a Steamer leaving for the Fort impossible, and writing materials at the house are scarce together with fire. I found my self unable to under take my Intention.

Therefore I delayed until now. Willie has just handed me a letter from you and I am pained that things are so dear up there and I do sincerely wish the war would end.

I believe I would give up my life for it to end in a week. The Country if feeling it more & more. But it cant last much longer any how[.] This winter must see the end, and it will be a bloody end.

I applied to Col[.] Yates^{viii} to apply for me from Capt[.] Manigault^{viii} to go on the expedition^{viii} with him[.] I wanted to see a fight and altho I thought it very apt to be a firrile yet I thought they might be some change seeing smoke anyhow. One night Bull[.] Lowndes^{viii} and my self had orders to report to Col[.] Yates at [the] mills house^{viii} the next morning, which we did, and there we found out that we were not to be mounted from the scarcity of forage on Johns Island (We ought to have been mounted for Gen.

Cooper^{viii}, A G, CSA says when ever signal men are employed in the field [they] then are to be mounted). So we heard this news with disgust and immediately pronou[n]ced the expedition a humbug and we were fools to go on it, but as we were it for it there was no backing out. Col[.] Yates was not there but ordered us to report across the New bridge^{viii} which we did but he was not there, so we determined to go by [the] Cars to Rantowles^{viii} and there await the Train. But when we got there as a wagon was handy going by the Marions^{viii} Camp some 6 miles off we jumped in and for that place we started. I surprised Berkley very much by walking into his tent. He is looking very well and is trying for a furlough. About 4 o[']clock the next morning we started off in a wagon Capt P.^{viii} sent us[.] It snowed and was [an] awfully dark ride and you can imagine slightly c^old.

A little after daylight we arrived at the bridge connecting Jo[h]ns Isld & the main[land], w[h]ere we found Col[.] Yate[s] who was as he said wondering the whole night w[h]at in the world had become of us. He offered us a wagon to ride in, but my pride revolted at the I dear, so I determined to walk accompanied by Bull. We walked all day and arrived that afternoon at Mr Burd's^{viii} place & went to Mr[.] Paul Grimball[']s^{viii}. We lost our way once and walked three miles out of our way. We had only a few hard biscuits but they were fine when one is real[l]y hungry. The next day Smythe^{viii} on[e] of the S. C. ^ orps^{viii} was & myself were ordered to Sol Legare Place^{viii} on the Stono^{viii}, [and] Bull & Lowndes to Leagreville^{viii}. At Mr. Leagare[']s^{viii} Place were four James guns & I think~~ing~~ two Brass 12 pd rifled [guns were] in the yard[,] in an old field in front of the house were a parrot gun^{viii} [and] two siege howitzers. The rest of the guns were below us on Mr. Grimball[']s Place & between us & Mr G. So you see my station was right in among the

guns. The morning after I got there Bull & Lowndes signaled to me she was coming up. I immediately sent of[f] a courier to Col[.] Yates informing him but she did not do so and it was a false alarm[.] Later in the day I went to sleep and the Sargent woke me up saying the Boat was coming. I ran out of the house and B & L told me she was coming up, I was answering them when she came up behind Legareville and I drooped my flag to prevent her seeing me, and expecting something to be in the wind. So I walked to the House and the Picket Guard[,] Smythe & myself do[d]ged behind the house. after sending up to Col[.] Yates awaiting like Ma___ber [for] something to turn up[.] She went past the house. We could have about hit her with a pistol and had she had landed

a small boat ^{^ or thought any person was there} I would have now either been non est, or a Yanke[e] prisoner, unless my legs had done exceeding good service. But by she passed & anchored about two miles below us opposite Tom Grimball's place on James Island. In about ten minutes our men were down from the woods where there were encamped out of sight, the Guns manned ready for the fight. It seemed an awfully long time time before any gun was fired. The first Gun was to fire from Paul Grimball[']s place, but as they were so long James Island opened on her. Then she [pulled] up anchor and commenced to go down the River to here consort lying off Kewar^{viii}. She came up to us firing pretty well all of our Guns playing on her[.] I was right in the midst of the fighting and when she run out her Guns to give us by Legare[']s House a broad side (I saidto my self Grimball my boy you are a goner)[.] But she did not fire it only shots in succession[.] About 300 or 500 yards from the house a ball went through her steam pipe. Hence she stopped and raised the white flag. The batteries below still Kept firing and Col[.]

Yates ordered us to signal that she had surrendered. I ___ed my white flag and went down to the River side and told them. You ought to have heard the ___ shouts that made the Stono ring. We had no boat to send about of her so Col[.] Yates made them send her boat and the first L[i]eut[.]^{viii} surrendered to Col[.] y[.] the Gunboat I[.] P[.] Smith carr[y]ing 9 guns, 1 parrot[t,]^{viii} 8, 8 inch Navy Guns or 64 pounders. The Commodore MacDonaugh^{viii}, then commenced shelling us and one shell while I was crossing the yard ploughed up the ground about four feet from me. We got off all our Guns and that night the Smith drifted up with the tide. I signalled almost the whole night and a little before daylight. Col[.]Yates['] staff and signal officers as the dispatch said took their leave. We were very highly complemented by Yates and when the Official Report comes out you will see the signal corps name mentioned[.] Also, he said I heard we were greatly instrumental in saving the boat by our Coolness and efficiency[.]We had one man wounded both legs shot off and I heard he had no doctor and bled to death.^{viii} There was only one Doctor for the whole expedition. The Yanke[e]s suffered more.^{viii} The engineer was horrib^ly wounded and died at Mr. W___ Whaley[']s^{viii} Negro house which was turned into hospital.

The Iron sides^{viii} is off Charleston and I hear an order is to be issued advising Women & Children to leave as a fight is shortly expected. Let them come for they will get their fill. I wish the Gun Boats could go out and attack the Iron sides[.] It will be good fight and Greek against Greek[.]

I must now close with

love to Ma Eliz Ella

Lotty & H and remain your aff Son.

Arthur Grimball Arnoldus Vanderhorst^{viii} meet me in the street and beg[ged]
to be remembered to the family when I wrote[.]

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Grimball Family Papers
Collection No. 980

William H. Grimball

Fort Sumter
Jany 13, 1864

My dear Elizabeth,

Your very pleasant new year letter was received by me some little while ago, and it has not been from any other cause but business that I have delayed so long its answer.

You will be by the heading above that I am again in our old quarters Sumter. The Company^{viii} was moved on Sunday night in a spell of very drizzly cold weather, and I confess, when I thought of the comfortable quarters we were leaving – the nice fires – and above [^]all the chance of being sometimes by oneself I felt as gloomy and out of sorts as the heavens. Still you must not suppose that Sumter is a very very disagreeable place. We live in the casemates on the North side of the Fort. There are a small number of bunks here and the sleepers being numerous Kemper^{viii} & myself occupy one bunk together in very close proximity. We divide the night together every twenty-four hours. One of us of staying awake until two o'clock, and the other from two to day break. This occurs every night and is very disagreeable, to one who is obliged from his inability to read at night to pass the weary hours in walking, whistling & singing out of tune, Humming, or any other mechanical act which an ennuied mind uses to pass time.

Sumter is tolerably strong now, although its fate rests with [an] uncertain future[.] I do not think, although I see the engineering skill of

which the Fort is a monument that we are yet able to say, we have determined it for ourselves.

I am very grateful to your friends the Kennedy[‘]s for their kind expression of opinion. There are some opinions however which however well meant, are ridiculous from their palpable absurdity. Such is the “handsome” part of the compliment. I know facts. I trust philosophy enough to recognize & disregard them.^{viii}

I am now writing in Col. Elliott[‘]s^{viii} office in a very uncomfortable position, so I must stop. I am tolerably well, although I think I have a touch of dyspepsia.

Love to all

Your Affec brother

W H G

I saw Pa in on Sunday, the day I left.