

My Dear Maria

I have just returned from the Woodlands where I have been staying as home with our old friend Peggy Hamilton. she is greatly afflicted. indeed the whole family appear to feel very sensibly the awful dispensation that has deprived them of the good James. Dr. L.'s publication seems much calculated to increase the regrets of his mourning family. I think nothing ~~would~~ aggravate grief more keenly, than the idea that the life of a beloved relative might have been prolonged had proper medical assistance been given. and that assistance withheld. probably these things often occur - or that unskilfulness in physicians may produce fatal effects. but humanity would dictate that this should be kept secret. since it must fill the breast of every mourner with unavailing grief.

James died without a will, so that his immense fortune will be divided into fifths. poor Becky will not be much the better for her part. unless she is divorced. which was in contemplation but not effected when the family heard last. I hope it will be removed before the account of this acquisition of fortune reaches England. as otherwise is over head & ears in debt. if she could bring her children to America now she might educate them & live respectable & happy. her sisters would be rejoiced to receive her. Peggy said, Beckys return would be a great consolation. if she continued to love them. but her neglect has evidently weakened their confidence in her. the Lyles are amiable & attentive. they are the adopted children of their aunts affection. and if Becky continues to withhold her regards. she will soon lose all influence over their feelings. Andrew will of course soon return. \$7000 per year. of the unbroken entailed estate of Lancaster descends to him. besides the large portion of the other property.

I am happy to hear you have been so much gratified in your visit to Fishkill these dear little boys will ever be objects of the tenderest interest - may they long enjoy the affectionate protection of their grand parents -

This will be handed you by Isaac Moses, who would take no denial, a letter he must have to carry to New York, and in the midst of abundance of work I must write to you - within a few days the project was formed & executed. Rachel & all her children are to pass the month of August in New York. I should be quite lost without them - but for the anticipation of Hyman & Jo's return. My Brother Simon has been severely attacked with bilious cholera, he is just regaining his strength again. but since Sunday has been very languid.

The Young Lady Brewster has chosen was the belle of Mrs Brewster's house while I was there, she is a smart girl but by no means handsome -

I refer you to Rachel for all the news - or rather for an account of your friends here - I saw Helen Abensworth yesterday - she is much changed by the changing fortunes of her family, she looks ill & unhappy. Maria has returned & they all live together again with the father, whose wife behaves very well to them - but their mortification is of a character not to be gotten over.

embrace your dear children for me - and present me affectionately to your husband. God bless you my Beloved Maria - believe me always,
your affectionate M^r -

N.D.

Mr. Ogden Hoffman

New York

James M. Hodes Junr.

