

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz

April 4, [1820]

I take a long sheet of paper My dear Maria without being able to promise my self that I shall fill it agreeably, but I have delayed answering your letter so long, and have thought of it so often that I fancy I have a great deal to say. tho' as you will not introduce me into your domestic repositories, I should in like manner treat you as a parlour visitor but I am getting tired of ceremony, and as the spring advances we may venture to lounge on a corner sofa and feel perfectly at our ease _

we have been expecting our friend Col. Morrison for a week past but he has not yet made his appearance. the sad occurrence at Washington must have changed the whole gay circle there into a groupe of Mourners, indeed it has produced much sorrow here Decatur was a Philadelphian and much beloved. the manner of his death was so shocking _ that one can scarcely be reconciled to it, so glorious a life as his should have come to a better end. I wish we were a less barbarous people. and could count among us heroes who would not [stain] their hands with human blood _ unless in the field of battle for their country's honor and safety _ Decatur surely had no need to fight a duel _ he could never have been deemed a coward. and the example of such a man's declining to fight _ might have done much to abolish the practice _ his poor wife is now one of the most desolate of human beings. she is alone in the world _ her husband was her idol _ his glory _ the pride of her heart she had no children to divide her love _ and is of course more wretched in her present bereavement. what a contrast does a few weeks make in her fate & her feelings _ perhaps no two human beings could be more different than Mrs. Decatur in Jany. and at this moment _ but you have already had enough of this melancholy theme the newspapers are filled with it _

and what do you think they are [doing] here? all sorts of wicked things _ this city of "brotherly love." has become a den of thieves _ [there have] been prison insurrections, and incendiary [confraga] -tions, our beautiful Theatre was last night reduced to ashes and the whole neighbourhood endangered _ the adjoining houses were unroofed. & much property destroyed _ this was unquestionably the work of design _ our citizens patrole the streets from early in the evening till sun rise. but have not yet succeeded in detecting the gang
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I met Mrs. Dr. Caldwell a few days ago in a miliner shop, she immediately accosted me with news from the west, and gave me an opportunity of congratulating her on the promotion of her son

She very modestly threw up her hands & eyes and made an exclamation expressive of astonishment that one so young should be so highly appreciated. she expects to enlighten Your hemisphere in June and if your Ladies step forth to distinguish the fair Philadelphian with as much hospitably as the men have bestowed on her important husband. you will do her great honour _ I am all impatience to see how the Dr. will justify himself to the literary world for his scraping and borrowing in the life of Green. did you ever see a more severe criticism, or one more provokingly playful than that he has to answer? I hope the western review will arrive before the Dr. he will feel rather awkward if it does not _

I have sent you a bonnet which I hope will please you it is fashionable. you will agree with me that these are not the times to indulge in the luxury of fine leghorns. I divided one with you. and had them made exactly alike except in the colour of the trimming. mine is white _

Tell Ben, his old acquaintance David Seixas is distinguish-ing himself among the benefactors of mankind, and is likely to reap the reward due to his talents and humanity _ he has been privately engaged six or seven months teaching a class of indigent Deaf & Dumb children _ and has succeeded so well as to attract the notice of our humane & scientific citizens to whom he has recently exhibited his school _ they approve his system, which the Abbé Correa who has visited the European schools, says is on a truly philosophical plan _ they are about establishing an Institution. of which this ingenious and [philanthropic] young man will be the principal _

It is impossible my dear Maria, to con[sci]eve a more interesting sight than these unfortunates exhibit he has eleven, who write exceedingly well _ communicate with their hands very intelligibly _ read, spell and cypher and appear cheerful & happy _ I hope ere long you will have an opportunity of witnessing their [acquirements] _

By a Mr. Jones of Virginia Jac. has sent the life of Napoleon to you, have you received Ivanhoe? when you have read it tell me what you think of my name sake Rebecca tell my dear Brothers they are most fondly cherished [end of page]

in the affection of their family _ and that I have thought and wished for them incessantly this week _ to celebrate the Passover at home. tell me dear Maria when we may expect you here, Hyman says he sees nothing to prevent your coming _ ask Ben & your self whether there be any impediment in the way of our wishes _

Jac, is very impatient that I should get to the end of my letter, as he has some ready for the office

and he is fearful his post-boy will be taken up by
the patrol if I detain him later _ this is a fortunate
interruption for you, as I feel very much disposed to
go to the end of my paper, not having got thru' one half
of what I intended to write _ but I dare not stay another
minute so my dear, you must take a great deal of
love from us all in as few words as possible and believe
me with great truth [your] affection RG _

My best love to my dear Brothers _

April 4th.

[Address:]
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