

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz

June 23, 1823

There is very little credit due, My dearest Maria for compliance with a request is agreeable to our own inclination, so I beg you will not consider me the most obliging of correspondents, when you see the very first mail brings an answer to your letter _ I began to feel the want of some communication between us, and even before the arrival of yours determined to write indeed had I been at home & happy you would not have had so long a respite _ but the increased indisposition of my friend Mrs. Hoffman induced me to make a visit to New York the latter part of May. and I have been but one week home _ she still continues ill _ but as her situation may not vary much during the Summer I have promised to see her again during the season. and came away. leaving her evidently in a condition which admits no hope of recovery. My dear Ben can tell you how deserving she is of affection. and how long we have known & loved each other _

I do not know any thing My dear Maria, that has so general an effect on the countenances of our family circle as one of your letters. we were all so bright and smiling and delighted Yesterday _ that a stranger would have taken us for a set of the best tempered people in the world _ and your description of your darling boys charmed us into lavishing such a multitude of kind epithets, that had you been present you would have had no difficulty in fixing their titles for life _ without searching the Scriptures in imitation of your pious friend. I like your idea of combining an agreeable association with the denomination of a child. and this is the [end of page]

reason family names are so constantly perpetuated from one generation to another _ but then fashion & fancy are so various and our children not feeling the dignity of bearing a title down to posterity which sounded well to antediluvian ears and in ancient tongues may not sympathize in our taste. and hence the difficulty I have witnessed in other parents. before you _ though I must confess it has continued longer with you than most others. I suppose because yours are boys and are not to change them as girls do _ It may be too, that you experience an inconvenience you are willing to save your sons' wives. for Maria is certainly too pretty a name to exchange for Benjamin and yet the prodigality of modern usage gives up all to husbands and unless when personally & familiarly addressed you are as much Mrs. Benjamin Gratz as if you had never received

a feminine appellation _ I hope my future nieces may not have to make such a sacrifice _ pray seek out from among your or our relations some well sounding as well as good name. or else let the dear little fellows be the first of the Gratzs that bring a handsome name into the family for their grand children to carry forward _ I met with a young couple in New York suffering under similar difficulties for their first daughter _ they belong to the enormous family of Ogdens _ who have named for mother & grandmother, thro' so many branches. that Sarah & Mary are no longer a title by which an individual can be identified, they must have their parents name tacked to it _ and yet the perplexed lady feared it might be visited on her as a mark of disrespect to the memory of these cherished relations should she venture to deviate _

I bless you and my dear Ben, for keeping in mind your promised visit _ speak of it still, and bring it as near as possible _ notwithstanding your pretty simile of the [untamable] Pheasant I should like to see you figuring in our brightest circles of fashionable society [end of page]

and think a Winter in Philadelphia would suit your taste full as well as any other season. the climate is not so severe as to exclude comfort. and there are some novelties that would amuse you _ but come when you please you will [find] a joyful reception from your friends _ Our Brother Jo has not said a word about the prospect to which you allude. but I heartily wish he would take unto himself a wife. even if he were obliged to proceed more slowly in the damsels favor, than your partiality predicts _ we think it might not have been so difficult a matter to relate your son's smart sayings as you suppose. and they would have appeared more astonishing by the contrast his cousin Horace offers. who with a very intelligent face. and bright countenance is obliged to device some means independent of his tongue to make himself understood he cannot connect a single sentence yet, altho he articulates certain words _ his sister Gertrude has her sex's promptness and will probably speak first she is a sweet little infant indeed _ I saw Gratzs little sea-shore rival young Master Emmet in New York and thought him a fine smart fellow. he was a neighbour of Mrs. Hoffmans. and visited Georges squirrel very often. he interested me particularly because I fancied Gratz was about his size and character. and loved to watch his play from the idea that they were alike _

I cannot regret that my friend Mrs. Stokes has transferred her Epistolary attentions to you. she sent me a commission which I could not execute _ to have diligent search made thru' the church registers & magistrates records for many years back to find out whether her quondam husband was married in Phila. to the person who now usurps her rights _ this neither my patience nor modesty

could undertake nor is there the least probability of such an enquiry being successful _ she is indeed an oddity _ and if I did not really pity her unhappy situation should be amused at her extravagance she strongly imagines that her private wrongs, should engage the public and is [quixotick] enough to believe her champion would be immortalized thro' every state [in] christiandom _ no doubt Mr. Clay would gain [more] fame [by] pleading her cause, than by the office of President
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for which his friends are so industriously electioneering _ Ellen bids me announce her resussitation. and declares her intention of soon appearing before you in form of a letter _ poor girl she has been house keeping, and house cleaning for me during my absence. and has been sick besides so, this time she will be able to make a very sufficient excuse _ all our Sisters & Brothers send you much love _ they are well. Simon is about commencing his summers [tour] to his town in Penna. Jack talks about his centre-county journey _ but he loves to be at home so much that I know he will not be long gone _ he left a message of affection to you as he passed the Library door on his way to his chamber. & Jo is waiting till I close this ere he bids good night. Adieu my beloved Brother & Sister, embrace your boys for me & believe me most affectionately your unalterably attached RG
June 23rd. 1823 _

[Address:]
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Lexington Ky

[Endorsement:]
Rebecca Gratz