

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz

November 31, [1834]

I have been sadly idle My dear Sister, and my punishment is that I have not dared to expect a letter from you, while my conscience told me that I did not deserve one _ it is a greater shame to me too as the last fortnight has been fertile in domestic events, Jo told you that Harriet Ettings second son was born on the 16th. Inst _ just eleven months younger than his brother Frank, but as she is perfectly well, and this time able to nourish her baby she is quite satisfied with the bounties of providence in raising her up a family so unexpectedly in one year _ and as her next door neighbour has a pair of twin daughters born since master Frederic-Henry, she considers herself fortunate that a single boy was her allotted portion, our brother Jac too has recieved an appointment which gives him occupation and fixes him in what I hope will prove a comfortable employment. for really the last year has been so unprofitable to him in a worldly sense that I feared he would go to the forests and {go} cut his own timbers in centre county _ now this would be no evil to a man of enterprise at 25 years of age _ but verily with one of our Brothers habits & dispositions seemed little better than banishment _ he is now absent on the canal. and I expect will be so frequently but shall not complain, as I know his mind is cheerfully engaged in the duties of his office _ last week Becky Cohen had another attack of paralysis which we all thought would have terminated fatally _ but she still lives _ one side completely palsied, and in a state of helpless debility _ I never witnessed a more distressing scene than on the day of her attack _
[end of page]

to all appearances the prolongation of life offers little but a continued state of suffering & feebleness _ yet the anxious affection of her sisters & brothers crave the boon as tho their own happiness hung on the result _ God is merciful and in his hands the destiny of all his creatures are safest and most wisely disposed of perhaps her present condition may reconcile her family to a separation and awaken their minds to the necessity of submission _ alas they have not yet ceased to grieve for their mothers removal _ and yet the burthen of poverty presses heavily upon them, and makes even younger strength bend to severe hardships _ our Young cousin Gratz Myers fell a victim to the pestilence at Mahon where the disease was introduced into the Constillation _ he was a very promising officer, and a most amiable youth _ poor fellow he was an orphan.

never knew the blessing of a mothers love _ and was reared away from his Fathers house _ there was a sadness on his countenance _ which seemed always to [proclaim] his state _ he resembled his mother _ who was the gayest and sweetest & prettiest of Mr. Ettings family _ and we loved her like a Sister _ but poor Gratz had not her bright smile _ how should he _ she died in his infancy _ at sixteen he entered the navy _ and ten Years of toil & triumph among strangers was his whole round of life _ he has left a brother one year older than himself a Surgeon in the Army _ when their Father died all domestic ties were broken and they determined to devote their lives to their country _ last evening Reuben brought me an obituary notice, which his Son Gratz had written and requested to have published it came from the hospital where he resides almost entirely _ but bears no mark of having been written by one of its tenants _

We have the celebrated Harriet Martineau on a visit to our city she stays at Mr. Furness' _ and of course I went to see her _ she is very unaffected _ sensible and easy of access _ indeed she courts the conversation of her own sex, she is deaf and uses a tube one end of which she applies to her ear, and at the other there is a bell into which you speak without elevating your voice _ she is pleased & surprised to find that her tales have been read here [end of page]

and speaks of them with unaffected modesty, as tho the subject alone was the sole interest, and no credit due to her ingenuity for making a dry science easily comprehended and [exceptionally?] useful _ she has access to all our institutions and seems particularly anxious of getting a clear idea of the penitentiary system _ she is neither young nor handsome enough to be sought after by merely fashionable society but is visited generally _ I spent an evening with her last week and was much pleased with her conversation _ but the most fascinating person with whom I have long met is Mrs. Butler _ the lovely Fanny Kemble _ in making my Autumnal visits I left a card for her _ which provided me a charming visit from her _ she is quite as attractive in her real character _ as in any display of her wonderful talents I have witnessed _ her voice is melody _ her eyes "perforating" _ and her manner altogether attractive & interesting _ have you seen Mrs. Jamesons sketch of her in her agreeable "Visits & Sketches abroad & at home" after you have read that _ you will not be disappointed in Mrs. Butler _ some people think, she cannot continue in private life that her genius will again draw her into public _ but I hope she will rather exercise her pen than again appear upon the stage _ our Theatre is not fit for a high minded virtuous female _ and I do not think [we?] shall ever be reconciled to the association in private life of professors of "the fine Arts _" as Miss Martineau calls her Actress _

your bonnet & Cloaks were sent with Mr. Tilfords goods about 2 weeks ago _ and I hope will have reached you before this _ I received from Hyman \$79.75 the amount of bills which shall be

forwarded by private opportunity

our Sisters & their families are well, and desire affectionate remembrances to you, Fanny is so taken up with her grand children that she forgets all her own infirmities _ even Isabella has turned [nurse?] and sempstress for the young brood _ Frank is certainly a noble little fellow, but Sister bade me tell Howard he is not to be rivalled in her affection, Mr. Clay told Henry Etting that he had seen you recently and reports favorably of you all _ he merely passed through the city to visit his son _ I suppose we shall hear of him anon from
[end of page]

the forum _ little good in politicks may be anticipated what a waste of eloquence was poured out last winter at washington _ next week they will renew the charge _ probably with no better success _ present my most tender love to my dear Brother _ I am glad he is free from the turmoil of public life _ and can pursue the even tenure of his way as a good citizen I trust fortune will smile on his enterprises. and prosperity crown his exertions _ let me hear from you soon My dear Sister _ and pray embrace the dear boys for me _ you must not let them forget me _
[God bless you] _ believe me, now as ever your unalterably attached
Sister RG _

Novr. 30th.

[Address:]

To

Mrs. Benjamin Gratz

Lexington Ky

[Editors' Note: The year of this letter is based on the birth date of Frederick Henry Etting on November 16, 1834.]