

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz

December 27, 1834

Decr. 27th. 1834
Saturday night

Yesterday My dear Sister I wrote a letter of introduction to you for Miss Martineau which you will probably not receive before June _ but I am sure you will be pleased with her. she has been spending a month in this city, and made her home at Mr. Furness'. now tho she has been entertained at "great mens tables" _ gone the round of fashionable routs _ received the suffrage of philosophers & poets _ been admitted to all public institutions _ from the academy of science to the [grim] penitentiary _ I believe the most acceptable testimony I can offer of her worth, is the enthusiastic admiration of the frank hearted Mrs. F. you will find her perfectly well bred & unaffected _ her conversation full of interesting anecdote of men & manners _ quite unassuming & willing to talk of her own works with candour _ and in all respects such a woman, as one rarely meets, and cannot fail to [admire] _ I believe you have read her tales _ I know I have told you how much they pleased me _ and therefore you may imagine how much gratified I was to find their author so accessible and warm hearted _ if she turns upon us the point of a satiric pen "when she leaves the country. I shall never again trust to my judgment in descrying the reality of candour from its courtly counterfeit _ I was not able to entertain her, because Becky Cohen has been in a state of living death ever since her arrival and I could not tell from day to day whether I could keep an engagement. but she was plentifully feasted here _ and in giving her a passport to our acquaintance I have done more for her gratification, and our credit _ than if I had given her ten parties _ Poor Becky! it would touch [your] heart to see how the inward as well as the outward woman is changed _ she is so affectionate _ so amiable, that it seems as if the spirit of benevolence _ so long masked under a cold asperity [end of page]

had been inborn in her nature _ the one feeble hand she can yet use, grasps with such friendly warmth, when ever I go to see her. but she was so ill on my two last visits that the girls thought even my presence might agitate her _ her change is I think fast approaching _ they all are prepared for it _ and are devoted in their attentions _ all human characters have some advantage point in which they are to be viewed. our male cousins in this family are ministering angels, round

the couch of their dying Sister _

and so your cloaks were making a winter voyage while you were in need of their services _ I was greatly annoyed at not meeting with an obliging stage traveller to Pittsburg to give them a more rapid conveyance from Phila. to the Ohio _ but even that would not have expedited their peregrinations as they were destined to taste the wasters of the Mississippi _ I hope if they like Elijahs mantle could part the waters _ they retain no parts of them on their surface, led in these degenerate days such spots might not be thought an improvement to their beauty _ I have just heard that Mr. Crutchfield _ so long detained here by sickness (and by whom I hope to have [sent] your dress) _ has gone home _ but Hy-man has promised to seek out some other traveller _ in case of failure _ I believe I must apply to your old friend R M. Johnson for a frank _ as I am determined if possible to have them sent in time for your occasions _ a Bachelors Ball is announced here for Twelfth night _ to which all the Belles are looking with eager anticipation _ and would you believe it _ we are so ignorant as not to know to what Twelfth night owes its origin _ pray my dear Sister enlighten us on the subject. some have conjectured that it owed its notoriety to the change of Style. when Christmas was so far back on the calendar _ but some learned authorities tell us that the Romans had a custom of choosing a King & Queen on twelfth night which they derived from the Greeks. I once heard a long discussion on the antiquity of “April fools” _ and here is another familiar custom equally obscure _ however on such innocent points it is better even the learned should dispute _ than on as trifling & unimportant differences of opinion on graver subjects which have kept the world in long continued ferment _ and “broken the bonds of brotherhood asunder” in the great family
[end of page]

of mankind _ I was talking to a beautiful young enthusiast last evening [of] [belonging?] to the Orthodox church _ who would not go to see Miss Martineau at Mr. Furness’ house _ nor be induced on any consideration to enter the Unitarian church _ tho’ I verily believe the Apostle Paul could never have been more eloquent or more pious than the good preacher of that temple _ they admit that his discourses are excellent moral lessons _ but not religious _ is not this a distinction in which religion is scarified to [prejudice]?

The sublime, beneficent, _ holy Spirit, to which all forms are but the outward costumes in which different nations chuse to dress it _ is still the same. and all who lift their souls on high in Adoration _ may walk the earth in charity with one another. but this is a strange turn to give “my April fool” _ forgive me dearest Maria, as I am not expected to agree with the disputants I hear all sorts of opinions discussed _ Why did you not send me your Orphan Society report _ it would have come just in time for

my occasion _ pray my dear Secretary let it come when you next write, it should be printed in your newspapers. you need not place your name to it, but the public like to know what is done with their money. and each subscriber likes to feel that they have [contributed?] to the benefits you tell them has been received from their bounty. but I never see the Lexington papers unless my dear Brother [directs] them to us, Harriet & Ben are quite charmed by your plan for their sons, and they are as proud & happy at the prospect before them as you could desire _ in fact Frank is such a noble little fellow that he is “the observed of all observers” _ and you know how dear that is to a parents vanity _ the highest praise he ever receives, is when he reminds us of sweet Carys infant loveliness _ this he can only do by intelligence for he is not so large & [rudy?] as your boy was _ I am charmed with your family sketches & adventures Canewood has a thousand agreeable associations in my mind _ there is no spot in Kentucky I should better like to visit _ your boys will think their cousin Horace a dull city youth _ totally ignorant of sports by field or flood _ and will have to teach him all their country sports. but they will find him as boyish as themselves _ and heartily disposed to love them dearly _ Sarah & [Lizzie] are inseparable _ and always
[end of page]

happy together, Elizabeth has had recollection to stay here during the vacation, her father thinking she had better not risk a winter journey she is a sweet girl _ very like her mother, and as happy & gay as at 16 she should be _ I have just left them all at the next house discussing Bulwers last novel “the last days of [Pompeii]”

Sally & the Dr. dined with me to day _ I told her of your proposition for young settlers in the West _ and find it much to her taste. our Sister Etting has recovered wonderfully _ she visits her grandchildren frequently _ and begins to wear an appearance of health

Jac saw Dr. Coit while in Phila. and he said many fair things of you _ he was delighted to meet with such brilliant talents _ so highly cultivated _ &c _ and your husband _ too, had his share of commendations

which I would fain tell you if I had room _ Mr. Biddle thinks him a very clever fellow _ he received much kindness from him in Boston, and Dr. Coit staid at his house here for some days _ to use his lawyer phrases _ he does not consider him equal to Horace Binney or John Sergeant _ but likes him, and therefore gave him an introduction to his friend _ he told Jac that if his wife consents, he should accept the offer of President to your college _ I hope if he does

they will be more to your taste than the Woods
I have only room _ to send the love of all here in a heap _ and to beg you will tell your dear husband & children how devotedly I am their & your affectionate

Sister RG

Jo is recovering his health _
Jac goes out of town [on?] tuesday again _ he is constantly
on the road _

Monday,

I am more mortified _ than I have words
to tell it in _ my dear Maria, that you and Sara
should be so disappointed about your Cloaks
they were carefully packed in a box with your bonnet
two or three [souss?] _ a pair of eider down sleeves & 2 feather

Fans _ and left this on the 20th. Novr. directed to your Husband _ to the care of Messrs. Tilford
Crutchfield
[with] whose goods they were to travel _ I hope you have got them _ by this time _ pray let me h
as
soon as they arrive _ in the mean time, if you would. be very fashionable wrap yourselves in
horse-blankets for shawls _ and you will be dressed a la philadelphian _

Benjamin Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz

Undated

My dear Wife _ Your concerns here are as well as
they can be without you _ Cary behaves like a little
man giving no trouble to any one _ as my time is as
usual engrossed in business I have had none to
enquire after the town tattle of which you care
so little _ Becky has spread herself to the

extent of her paper and I have none other
than this _ as you are not in a [rein?] of luck I
was fearful to send your gown by the stage and
not knowing your movements, you [will receive?] it

by Sara who will bring it back if you have bent your
course homewards _ altho' you know how difficult
it is for me to get along without you, I wish you to
[exercise?] your judgment and inclination about
returning _ Heaven bless you Benj_

[Address:]
Mrs. Benjamin Gratz
Lexington Ky

[Editors' Note: Benjamin Gratz may have received this letter in Lexington, KY, added his own notes and then forwarded it to Maria.]