

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz

January [10?], [1836]

Philadelphia Jany [10th.?)

As I dated this letter My dear Maria, I recollected that I once told you [a] date was always the introduction to a dull letter _ for if one had any thing to say _ they did not wait to note the time, _ and so I have prejudged this one when I only meant to try my pen _ if we were always obliged to account for [our] idle expressions _ we should be more careful to examine into their consequences _ and tho I by no means mean to gain-say the above observation, I beg you will have patience to get to the end of my sheet before you are confirmed in its truth.

It seems a long time since I have written to you, but I have been so busy _ and our anniversary after all was on a rainy day and few persons came to hear Mr. Barnes preach _ and he read the reports in such a monotonous voice _ and stopped to spell some words that he could not make out in my cramped [hand]-writing that little as I liked it before _ it lost all the grace I had hoped it might gain from the manner of a favorite preacher _ I thought of Lexington and your better plan and wished for your tact and courage to help Mr B out of his blunders _ then our school master is a singular looking pug nosed [Yankey]. a poet for sooth _ who composed the hymn he taught the children to sing _ and being doubly anxious that justice should be done to his work _ he stood forth at the head of his school _ in so [ludicrous] a manner _ and raised his voice on high that some of our mischievous girls could not resist the temptation to laugh _ and indeed Mr. M's looked such a perfect personification of the picture of a Hamburg singing school in Jo's book of caricatures that I forgot my own mortification in his apparent triumph _ but the children were almost all there & looked well _ and the Ladies were pleased and so you need not say one word of your Sisters [dissent] from the general opinion [end of page]

your boys are very well _ are learning to play chess these long evenings and Jac pronounces Howard first rate at the game _ he is smart enough at every thing, and I think you would have been amazed at his representation of a circumstance, which occurred on Friday, your letter made him so happy, and proud _ that he could not bear any one should read it _ until he had enjoyed the perusal by himself _ so he took it up stairs and deposited it in his wardrobe _ the next morning he indulged us with a sight _ and went down to deliver the messages from America to her Kitchen friends. when a pretty little Irish girl

I hired a few days before _ said “yes indeed, and a young lady at the ball [cry’d] because you were not there” Howard turned to her in the utmost astonishment and demanded how she knew _ he might have thought her a witch _ as he could not suppose she would [presume?] to use natural _ but unwarrantable means to discover the contents of his letter _ but she candidly confessed that she could read and had found his treasure in its hiding place _ Yesterday he had the Key of his wardrobe suspended by a guard chain round his neck, and to morrow Mrs. Paul Pry is to leave the premisses _ as I do not consider a person so little scrupleous with her eyes responsible for the [honesty] of her other dealings Bernard was delighted with your letter too, and prizes the wholesome advice & sound philosophy conveyed with such maternal love _ he has the tenderest of hearts. and great strength of mind and it is delight-ful to witness his thoughtful affection for both you & his dear father he is unwilling to retire at night until Jo returns home. that he may get letters _ (I hope the next mail will bring tidings of your husband from Lexington) respecting Bernards tooth My dear Sister, I think you would change your opinion if you were to examine the position of his entire set _ neither of his eye teeth have come down well for want of room _ and the space of the broken one would be filled and his teeth all be much sounder & more even for room to grow in _ where as if the piece is left in _ (beside the chance of decay which _ is very probable from all the vessels & nerve being exposed) he will have the inconvenience and discomfort of a false tooth which at best is disfiguring, when newly adopted _
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however _ you will be able to decide when you see him, and hear the advice of a dentist on the subject _ Gardett has sent repeated messages recommending the removal of the tooth _ which I would not heed until you & his Father are here to sanction _ I was greatly disappointed on seeing Mr. [Sutherlands] name in the paper to find he had anticipated the day of his departure to Washington _ and sent to his house for packages he hoped you were in possession of _ your shawl & Beckys shoes must now wait some other travellers movements. If you accept the Capts escort to Richmond he will take them _ should the weather be favorable, I think Henry Etting will afford a good opportunity for the boys to pay their visit to Washington _ the last week in this month or the first in Feb. their quarter at school will be out _ and before you wish to send them back we may expect the rivers to be free from ice _ we have had bad weather for nearly a week and for the last 12 hours a heavy fall of snow, which is beautiful _ almost like unto the one you witnessed the winter you passed with us _ if I did not see how much more gaily and happily you are passing your time I might wish you back _ but I abhor selfishness _ and it so often excuses an undetected influence over us _ that it would be unpardonable

and willful sin, to encourage such a wish _ with my strong conviction that [with?] our dear Sisters society alone, the balance would be again of me _ and at the [capital] your pleasures are more intellectual _ more [improving] _ more suited to your taste than any we could offer Mrs. Campbell says it is the duty of intelligent women to visit Washington during the Winter _ I suppose she wishes to raise the standard of female influence _ and so My dear Sister [my] patriotism [acquiesces] in your longer stay. even against my will _ pray how is Mr. Clay? his afflictions give him the privilege of your society _ and he cannot seek it, so I hope you sometimes go to see him _ pray present him my sincere regards and sympathy _ the Affection I bore his dear & lovely daughter entitles me to feel for her parents bereavement _ I thought of writing to Mrs. Clay but feared it might be an intrusion on her sorrows _ & forbore to do so _ I am glad to hear dear Lizzie has recovered _ embrace her and My dear Becky for me _ I hope my sweet good little Hymans face is well again. tell cousin Becky she must read the story of Murad the unlucky” to him _ that he may learn to be careful, and keep out of the way of accidents
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Kiss my darling Cary for me, [and] thank him for remembering Aunt Becky so well _ Jac returned on Friday Evening _ the good news we had from Ben Etting induced me to write to him, and you may be sure he rejoices in the recovery of that long suffering invalid _ Is it not strange _ (according to human calculations) that on the broad ocean, amidst privations of all kinds he should have entirely recovered _ after every [act] of medicine had failed _ I have always thought Hymans health returned unaided by the hand of man _ and in this care too _ God alone has visited the poor cripple _ and removed the burden from his racked limbs _ Harriet will now forget her sorrows _ and look forward with hope _ may she learn to look to him who loveth forever. for all her blessings. and submit to his will under chastening! Ben’s letter was dated 22 Oct. he had a pleasant passage _ agreeable companions _ and they say here has a good prospect of a prosperous voyage _ but if he comes home well _ it will be a

good voyage whether his golden returns are great or small _

give My love to dear Mr. & Mrs. Blair and my friend Montgomery _ our Sisters & nieces all desire you will accept theirs _ Sara is writing to her sister and will express her glowing love better than I can tell you _ but she loves to talk of you _ as you love to be talked of _ our Brothers hold you in their “heart of hearts _” God Bless You My dearest believe me now and ever your true Sister
RG.

[Address:]

To

Mrs. Benjamin Gratz
Washington City

D.C.

[Editors' Note: The year of this letter is based on the death of Anne Brown Clay Erwin on December 10, 1835.]