

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz

July 30, [1834]

I thank you most sincerely My Dear Maria for your kind letter. you are always so good in writing when there is no cause for silence _ that you must not wonder at my importunity after every long interval _ besides I felt that you were sad _ sympathy has its signs as well as free masonry. when I took Henry Hart by the hand _ I could have wept at the thoughts of your meeting with him _ but now My Sister, you must be happy in his society _ he loves you so warmly _ and you are of so much consequence to him _ that you must recover your spirits, to teach him how to regulate his feelings _ he must have wonders to relate of his various travels by field & flood _ and the beautiful testimonials of his remembrance from every shore round the world's surface will afford histories to win your pliant ear. It will be worth while to arrange & class these shells so as to afford a kind of map for the circumnavigator and his young cousins _ while to you they will have a value beyond their scientific worth in the recollection that they were gathered for you _ have you seen John Randolphs letters? Sarah is reading them aloud to her Sisters & me, as [an?] hour's exercise of a morning _ and we are much pleased with them _ there is much affection, and rational domestic kindness for which we never gave that eccentric genius credit, the nephew to whom they are addressed was a frequent visitor at our house, and was warmly attached to his Uncle, it is a pity subsequent caprice should have separated them. I am glad these letters are published _ for they vindicate [end of page]

Randolphs character from the charge of heartlessness. he was so deeply interested for his sisters children, and took upon him to provide for so many young destitute boys that he must have been by nature tender, & generous _ compare the character of his mind during this period _ with that exhibited in public later in life _ and just before his death & I think there can be no doubt that he laboured under occasional aberrations of mind, which were as decidedly a disease as any that afflicted his body _ If he had been blest with a tender wife, how different might have been the colour of his destiny! _ whatever the lords of the creation may [imagine] they are infinitely the most helpless beings in the decline of life unconnected by the ties of family _ the sedentary habits of women keep them only dependent for a few comforts on their friends _ but the man who has no one to influence, and

console [him], when vehement passions, painful diseases and disappointed pride cross [this] vexed spirits _ is a sad spectacle of suffering _ & helplessness _ I should be frightened for our own single brothers when such a picture is presented to my mind _ if it were not for the hope that I may be able to repay all their goodness to me _ by keeping up a domestic home _ [with] those charities alive, which may [rescue] them from the worst effects of bachelorship _ a care-for-nobody independence _

This is giving a new turn to self-importance is it not? My dear Sister? and if you did not know that the spirit of humility had set her stamp on my character I would not venture to take such a view of my situation _ but indeed, we who have neither fortune to support, nor other right to an [establishment] must endeavour to set up a claim to usefulness in some subordinate way to reconcile us to the idea of not being a burden to our relations _ you will remember I have six single nieces besides, for whom to think forward _ Mr. Moses has been again indisposed, he has recovered, but looks ill _ our Sister [end of page]

Etting is much as usual the rest well, Ellen is gaining strength slowly. Sally gives you full credit for kind feelings towards her. she remembers you will love enough to entitle her to her new relationship. Richea declares that she loves her better every time they meet. and she is very cheerful & happy. such a temper is truly a treasure, for she [has] no other prospect of wealth than that derived from contentment.

I have not seen Mrs. Hankey since her return from Lexington but shall call for the pleasure of hearing her talk of you _ Mrs. Williams is in great affliction for the loss of her niece, the only child of her brother William, to whom they were all much attached _ she was a lovely little girl _ & her death very unexpected _ do you remember Elizabeth Keppeler? if you do not Ben will remind you of her _ you will find her marriage announced to John R Latimer. about a fortnight ago, this gentleman [and] old beau of hers, went 10 years ago to Canton to seek his fortune, and continued there all that time _ a few weeks after his return, he told his mother that if he [found] Elizabeth unchanged _ he would address her _ and in three weeks more they were married _ “this is “the romance of real life”! exclaimed our friend Miss Peters with her usual enthusiasm _ such a long attachment!! _ but if we look into the romance _ & long attachment _ we shall find that had her mother consented, she might have married a widower during Mr. Ls absence, and had that been the case the old attachment would not have been remembered by John Latimer _ it is however a most agreeable match to all

parties, and will no doubt be happier than half the romantic marriages of the loves at first sight which so much interest our novel reading friends. he has purchased a fine house and is fixing up quite a nabob establishment _ she sent out Cake & Wine to the widows & Orphans, every body likes the bride and thinks she is justly rewarded for her charitable labours _ and when they return from Niagara, will be greeted with joy by every body _
[end of page]

William Meredith & his wife are also very handsomely fixed _ there is but one more to be married in the family _ and then I hope long engagements will be discarded from fashion in Phila. _ It is so long since I have known James Hall, that I hardly know him at all _ but I am glad to hear you speak so well of him, [he] is the only one of my old friends, Sons deserving of her talents _ and the one perhaps from whom least was expected _ there were 2 or 3 considered geniuses _ who are little better than adventurers _ James went to the west _ married & has turned out a Judge & an Author _ give my love to my dear Brother, and embrace your darling boys for me _ I hope you are all well again _

Jo was absent when dear Ben's letter arrived _ he returned on Tuesday

and bids me say he will answer it in a few days _ he sends his love to you all, and so do Horace & Sarah _ and the girls next door, Sarah Hays is in the country _ & Betty Blair at Washington _ God bless you my own dear Sister, you do not know what comfort the sight [of?] your hand writing in Jos letter, gave to the heart of your RGratz

Tell Henry Hart "Aunt Becky" sends her love to him, and is very [proud?] of his relationship _

July 30th.

We were all pleased with Cary [...?], [...?] when you see him

[Address:]

To

Mrs. Benjamin Gratz

Lexington Ky.

[Editors' Note: The year of this letter is based on the death date of Julia Rush Williams's niece, J Roberts Rush, on July 6, 1834.]