

**Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz**

**May 5, [1833]**

"Whether the thoughts & feelings of my lazy hours, will give as much pleasure to those who get them, as to me [who?] [bestow?] is a consideration" \_ [quizz?], My Dear Maria what sympathy was there between your physical & mental sensations when you wrote the letter, from which the above is quoted? for I should rather have termed it an inspired than a lazy hour, which produced such a spontaneous overflowing of vivid and agreeable thoughts. we have bible authority too, for believing the highest aspirations of mind may take place when the body is inert as the Prophets vision visited him when he lay in a trance with his eyes open" \_ now this might be a dangerous argument to those who are inclined to indulge laziness but to you who always feel that you should be doing something. a word of encouragement may be given \_ to change your occupations as the Spirit moves \_

I am a little in doubt My dear Maria, whether you have found out the weak point in my character, or are only quizzing me, when you fancy me so little vulnerable to praise. believe me dear, not a word of commendation that drops from your pen or lips but finds its way to my heart. all I can honestly claim is unquestioned \_ and the rest is to be sowed or engrafted & cultivated for a new growth of approbation, as you aver that you love in proportion to the worth of your friends \_ I once knew [an] whimsical old Lady, who declared she never liked a person who was not beautiful, but she had such an accommodating taste that she seldom saw the human face divine" in which she could not see some beauty \_ now you are quite as ingenious [end of page]

in [finding] out the good points in characters to satisfy your benevolent likings. for instance \_ you give me credit for a very judicious letter [you] wrote to Sally Cohen, because I mentioned to you how much they stood in need of comfort. I held up a mirror and you praise me for the beauties you saw reflected in it \_ but I like the kind of self examination which led to this conclusion, and often find pleasure & profit in tracing back an idea to its source, it is there we see the mechanism of our own minds. from the minutest thought to the highest aspiration our souls are capable of attaining \_ even to the bright hopes which carry us beyond our present

state & being. I do not know my dear Sister, whether we are ever justified, in thinking "it would have been better for us, that we had not been born" \_ for we were created by a merciful and benevolent being \_ and the gift of life is certainly a blessing. since it is improvable by the exercise of faculties so wonderful & productive of happiness \_ and yet so limited as to leave us dependent on God for the perfecting of all our works \_ and as far as we can comprehend his Goodness we must believe the desire to do his will to the best of our knowledge & abilities are acceptable \_ we are told all may approach God, who have "clean hands and a pure heart" \_ and tho' men differ so materially on various points of religious belief and keep up such a perpetual warfare in flesh & in spirit \_ we see daily the manifestation of divine love, and care extended equally over all the creation \_ man in every clime & nation, acknowledge God the creator \_ and the sincerity of heart in which they strive to honor him, is more in his sight \_ than the forms by which [their] devotion is visible. yet my sister, I do not hold lightly the laws & ceremonies of external religion \_ and feel bound by the [mosiacal?] dispensation as the guide of my life while I respect the opinions of other creeds. and believe the gates of heaven equally open to all, who are good \_  
[end of page]

your religious labours & opinions command my admiration and respect, may God enlighten you to [find] out a path perfectly satisfactory to your own pure heart in which to lead your children safely to the foot of His throne \_ I am sure you will keep his attributes constantly before their eyes. and with light from above, you may avoid the errors & difficulties in which you deem the antient laws encumbered. I agree with you in desiring to be of that faith which is purest & best \_ only I believe the Jewish faith as pure as human institutions can be made. and its character being of divine origin. I give it firm & perfect belief. yet consider its adoption too inconvenient to be fitted for the present times \_ and were it not for the [miracle] that it has out lived all other remains of the olden times, we might believe what Jesus said \_ that he came to fulfil & not destroy it. and that it was not intended by the Almighty to be perpetual \_ as it stands it is an evidence to all men \_ and those who even despise it \_ acknowledge it a wonder past finding out \_ that Jews should still exist \_ spurned & hated \_ yet upheld, and found among all people & languages upon the face of the earth \_ every where [wor?]shipping in the hebrew \_ and [practicing] their peculiar tenents

I must still leave you my dear Sister in the pleasant state of uncertainty respecting our visit \_ your season of

roses will be past \_ but we shall find what we love  
better, if we do make out to come \_ it has been talked of  
sometimes, as if it might take place and Sarah & Horace  
think of it perpetually. still it is not concluded on, I will  
let you know as soon as I know whether either of our  
brothers \_ can or will leave home \_ and whether so great  
an object can be effected by our selves \_ this summer

Harriet has gone to her Sister's Wedding. Isabella I think  
better, and the rest well \_ Jo has just returned from N. York  
a half day accomplishes the journey by steam & rail road.

your graphic pictures of the dear boys, places them  
before us, delightfully. and makes each ones pet the subject  
of loving speaches \_ I love them all so well, that I am jealous of  
favoritism & embrace them each \_ every body greets you &  
[end of page]

and our beloved Ben with tender messages \_ I have got to  
the end of my paper, without saying half I intended \_ but  
John has heard the clock strike and he comes in with [broad?] hints  
first with the casters & other preparations for dinner, and as  
Sunday is the privileged day for his class to claim long after  
noons \_ I must give him the table \_ Adieu My dear Sister  
May God Bless you with all that can contribute to your  
happiness \_ and keep you secure in the possession of all his

bounty has already bestowed on you, is most fervently  
the wish of your Attached RG\_ May 5th. \_

The Cohens desire you will accept their love, they are  
very sad, have never been out of their house, and seemed  
unwilling to be comforted, poor girls they have other causes for grief  
besides the loss of their beloved mother

[Address:]

To

Mrs. Benjamin Gratz

Lexington Ky

[Editors' Note: This letter is 1833 based on the death of Rebecca's aunt, Beliah (Belle) Simon My  
Cohen, in January 1833, and the wedding of Harriet Marx Etting's sister Caroline Marx Barton on  
April 30, 1833.]