

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Fenno Hoffman

February 9, [1823]

Philadelphia Feby 9th.

You have made me rich My dear Maria, _ two such treasures as your kind letters have not been in my possession for an age before, and if you pay so high for my poor wares, I shall become quite covetous. indeed my beloved your second, was a balm to the anxiety, which your first account of the state of your health excited. and tho' I am sure you have made the best of your present feelings I hope you will consider your self [and] invalid, and take every possible means for your restoration _ when I read your letters I longed to be with you _ and indeed this desire is not likely to subside _ I have lived on in the hope and under the shadow of an expectation of this kind for two years _ and trust the present one will not close without giving me that happiness. but I cannot consent to your proposition of meeting half way, you must either come to me, or I will go to you _ and then [should] such a plan be eligible we will journey to gether _

Your friend S. Verplanck spent but one day in Phila. he dined with us and we tried to detain him for a ball the next evening but could not succeed _ it was the first I had been to this winter _ and was the most splendid one. at Mrs. Markoes, Joseph Bonaparte & his daughter were there. the latter is very diminutive and rather homely. except when she speaks, her eyes are fine _ and she has a good expression of countenance _ the King has a face of good-ness and his manners are [the] most affable and condescending considering the station he has filled. he appears desirous of becoming familiar with our society and conducts himself like a well bred gentleman among his peers _ Markoes house is very handsome. and calculated for entertainments. the host & hostess are charming. and every thing conducted in the very best style [end of page]

there were six rooms open. and more than 200 visitors _ The Ladies dress a great deal. and really, it was quite a pagent to the spectators the Countess does not dance but she seemed much pleased _ they accept all invitations and give return dinners once a week _ after which the party are invited to adjourn to the Theatre. where the Count has always a box. this is an arrangement which suits the young lady very well. as she speaks very little english and having no matron would be awkwardly situated at large parties at home _ it is reported Bonaparte has taken Sims' house _ but I suppose he will not occupy it this winter _ the family have not moved yet _

I have scarcely ever known a failure which excited more feeling

than this _ formerly Mr. Sim's was the standard [for] rich men _ and it was giving a sufficient standing to any fortune. that could bear a comparison with his _ now all his property is for sale _ and its value so much depreciated by change of times that perhaps when all is sold his creditors will not be satisfied _ his misfortune has risen out of bad possessions in real estate not bad speculations _ ships unemployed _ houses & stores untenanted _ and taxes mortgages & interests to pay _ poor Mrs. Sims has been an invalid too for more than a year from a stroke of palsy and the evening of their lives seem likely to set in reverses & miseries _

I mentioned in my last letter that Gratz Etting was expected home & am happy to add he arrived in a much better state than we apprehended. and that we entertain great hopes of his entire recovery

What you say of Miss Bollman is corroborated by the manner in which she speaks of W. Irving here. I am told they are both quite [enthusiastic] in his praise, but speak with a freedom from any [embarrassment] such an engagement would be likely to produce. I met them at Mrs. Markoes but was not introduced. and made no acquaintance with them.

did you see an article from "the John Bull" on the subject of [Shakespeare?]
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monument & Washington Irvine _ republished in Walshs gazette last week? _

I have not yet seen the Pioneer, but shall read it at my first leisure _ we are just completing our new Orphan Asylum. and are preparing it for the reception of the family. I am one of 4 ladies who are to furnish it & move the family which gives us a good deal of business. and to tell you the truth we have had much vexation and trouble since the unfortunate fire last year. I do not know, that we have any thing to complain of more than might be expected by those who are acquainted with public institutions _ but such is human nature, that misfortunes of any kind _ [lose?] us friends _ and reputation when once the prosperity of either an individual or a society has received a [check]. confidence is weakened _ and we are too apt to suspect the prudence or the good faith. which we relied on before _ this has been the case with us _ we have lost several [members?] and having been obliged to supply their places with [strangers?] to business _ has given more duties to the old ones _ but my dear friend I have not this to offer for my past negligence _ indeed I have never had so much to do, that I could not write to you. and since you have been over frank in condemning your self all, for the languid state of our correspondence it behoves me to acknowledge a great falling off in my self _ not that I love you less _ nor think of you less. but am apt to indulge in silent ruminations. and enjoy a selfish association with my friends without using my pen. but my best Maria, this shall not keep me from you again so long. and I most sincerely hope you will also indulge me _ I wish you would draw cheerful society frequently about you in a domestic way _ that

you may stay at home and yet not be too much left to yourself
your dear children are all you could desire _ every body commends
them. I hope the time will come, when the friendship which has been
such a happiness to their mothers, may be cultivated between them and our
little girls & boys _ God bless you my beloved Friend _ keep up your
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spirits and may health & every happiness a mothers heart can
know be yours. Rachel & Ellen bid me send their best love _ give
mine to Mr. H. & your children _ and believe me devotedly your RG _

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