

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Fenno Hoffman

May 18, [1820]

I have delayed long to thank you, my dearest Maria for your interesting account of the Ogden's _ tho' my heart is grieved for them and I share their loss _ we shall all miss our dear Bella during the rest of our pilgrimage as one whose faithful heart glowed with affection, whose life was an example of piety to God, and good will to her fellow creatures _ her departure was as exemplary as her life and I echo your wish that we may be as well prepared when our hour arrives _

her impressive dream has been a good deal spoken of here, Mrs. Meredith whose strong mind is a good deal tinctured with superstition on that subject dwells on it as a remarkable circumstance, beyond our power to resolve _ and if it tends to console the mourners grief in so heavy a calamity. who would wish to reason against it? indeed when such things unquestionably occur, it would be idle to argue about them. and if dreams had always the effect of strength'ning the mind, (as in this instance,) to meet a dispensation of God. we should consider them as divine messengers of good

Dr. Abercrombie paid Mrs. Meredith a visit of condolence and on hearing of Bella's dream, he related one which indicated to him the death of his son John _ but here credulity stopped far short of his description _ nothing but an extravagant imagination could have conceived such a vision, and the genius of Sweden-borge must have assisted him with a description of the outer court of Heaven, where he had an interview with the spirit of his son, and was informed by him of the period of his departure from the earth _ I was never more shocked with the presumption of man, than [on] this occasion _ after a most serious & vivid account [end of page]

of the state in which he found [Legions] of Angels, or spirits of departed men _ he assured us it was his firm belief that, this vision was sent to prepare him for, and console him in the affliction which the death of John occasioned _ one month afterwards he heard that his son had fallen in a duel _

when you see the Ogdens give my love to them, poor girls! I realize all they suffer yet can scarcely reconcile that Bella is indeed no more _ Mrs. Waddington has been here for a day or two and Bishop Bowen has arrived _ these are new trials to Mrs. Meredith I have seen very little of her in the last fortnight _ but she is well _ no one, recovers their fortitude sooner, after an affliction than she does. her feelings are strong _ but under good control _ yet to love such a Sister, must lacerate her heart

Mr. Meredith is very much interested in a new Institution

for the Deaf & Dumb lately established here _ and I believe she shares his feelings. and frequently visits the school if you have never witnessed an exhibition of a similar kind, you can scarcely form an idea of the affecting appeal they make on your compassion _ Mr. Seixas has Eleven Scholars whom he has taught several months _ and every person who sees them are astonished at their improvement _ his humanity & disinterested conduct towards them excites universal admiration _ they are all indigent children _ and have been almost maintained as well as instructed during the winter, without any compensation _ he accidentally became acquainted with, and much attached to a Young Deaf & dumb man, 2 or 3 years ago. and finding that he succeeded in making himself understood by him. induced him to the undertaking which _ induced our citizens to establish a school _ you have been several years before us in this good work _ how gratefull is the reflection _ that "There is a balm in Gilead" for every calamity poor human nature is heir to _ and that
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God has given to man, the power of administering to each others wants, and supplying the deficiency of one sense by the application of others _

I hope my dear Maria you are agreeably fixed in your new habitation and recovered from your cold, I wish you would before the summer sets in, come to Phila _ I long to see you again, and Julia is old enough to make a pleasant travelling companion. the ride would be of service to you _ and the joy your presence would afford us all. would reward your exertion _ pardon the vanity of such expectations _ your often tried affection emboldens me to form [them]

Mr. Marx of Richmond brings very favorable accounts of Mr. Nicholas, he says he is much admired & attended to, has been visited & invited by the best society of the place and is already quite celebrated for his musical talents _ he tells them, he expects Ann in the Autumn _ and I have no doubt she will be pleased with a residence there _ that is if she can overcome the difficulty of living in the midst of a slave population _ poor Bellas, humanity was often shocked during last winter at Charleston _ and my friends the Miss [...] found it very obnoxious to their feelings _ indeed the [...] still unreconciled to it _ and say the most effectual [...] to fix northern partialities _ is to reside in the southern states.

does Ann & her children enjoy health at the lake? we never hear of her now _ at all _ when you write remember me affectionately to her _ Rachel & her children are well, they are going to pass the Summer in the country. have taken a place belonging to Mrs. Dr. Rush near my Brothers &

Mrs. Ettings. I shall miss her very much, and should not be so well satisfied, if she were in any other neighbourhood, as she will be confined there _ She sends a great deal of love to you and so does Ellen _ have you heard lately from Edward?
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Hyman [has] gone down to Alabama & it will be late in the summer before he returns _ Ben's visit is postponed on his wifes account but I hope to see them in the Autumn _ Give my love to Eliza Rodman, I hope her health will improve as the season advances _ Remember me Affectionately to your husband & Mr. Verplanck. how are his little boys? will you not see them this summer my heart yearns towards them for their dear mothers sake _ Miriams youngest son was here a few weeks ago with his grand-father _he is a very interesting boy _ and looks like his mother _ what tender remembrances _ of the beloved companions of [our] youth _ are these little darlings _ dear Maria, how many do we miss, of the happy circle which strode lifes early path with us _ but it is this _ which prepares us for our change
Adieu My beloved friend, May God bless you with health and long life, prays your unalterably attached

RG

18th. May.

[Address:]
Mrs. J. O. Hoffman
New York

[Courier:]
Mr. J. Moses

[Editors' Note: The year of this letter is based on the death date of Isabella Ogden in April 1820.