

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Fenno Hoffman

December 13, [1819]

I have long been your debtor, my Dear Maria, and I fear you will think me very neglectful. tho' I assure you it is far from my intention to be so, but a variety of occupations have interfered with my wishes, and the many changes that have been making in the family has engaged my mind too constantly to leave me leisure or spirits to write _ My Brother Hyman soon followed Ben to Kentucky _ and Sister Etting has moved into the country. her son Edward gone to sea. & Maria Hays & Isabella to Baltimore so that we have been scattering until a small portion only of the family are left _

we have hitherto lived so much together that what appears in general the natural consequence of large families is quite a privation to us _ I had a letter from Ben on Friday announcing his marriage which took place on the 24th. ult _ I have already spoken to you on this subject, and have only to add that I hope he will come to reside among us which will [greatly] take from my regret.

The Girls visit to Baltimore was on a summons to attend the wedding of our cousin Kitty Etting which is to take place on Wednesday.

I suppose you have heard from your Brother Edward and hope his health is improved by travelling, and
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that he did not arrive too soon at New Orleans for the healthiness of the climate _ Maria Nicholas sailed last week for Savannah accompanied by Mary, she had a daughter born here they appear very happy and cheerful, what you say of Charles is very honorable to him, I regret their motives for the present arrangement of their family is not generally known _ that what appears extraordinary, and to many censurable, might be understood, and gain them the credit they deserve for self-denial instead of illiberal animadversion. I cannot but think the sacrifice is greatest on Ann's part, except indeed the satisfaction of educating her children and having them constantly with her _ Charles has the society of all his old friends, his old habits, and every comfort except his family and perhaps to him this is a less privation than it would be to many. as his occupations are so constantly abroad _ and his intimacy in domestic circles so agreeable.

I saw your friend Gertrude Paulding as she passed on, and think I never saw either James or her look better, they seem

very proud of their son, and very happy together _

We had a most melancholy proof of Washington Irving's theory, that a broken-heart is not so entirely a fable as is general believed _ in a Young Lady from Lancaster (Miss Coleman) who fell a victim to disappointed affection, the circumstances are these.

She had been some time engaged to a young Lawyer, and the time appointed for their Marriage drew near, when she discovered in his conduct & manner such indications of indifference, as obliged her to believe her large fortune, rather than her self was the object of his choice _ after many painful efforts, she resolved
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not to approach the altar under such humiliating circumstances and when she could no longer believe her self beloved, she communicated to him her determination and dissolved the engagement, after her bridesmaids had arrived every preparation made for her marriage, and household _ she came to the city with her Sister last week _ that her feelings might be relieved by removing from the scene of her recent hopes _ & disappointment _ nothing could be more delicate than her conduct, nothing more severe than her conflict _ she strove to appear cheerful _ and succeeded so far as to deceive her friends into the hope that time would restore her peace _ she walked out on Tuesday Morning _ and consented to join a party to the theatre on Wednesday Evening _ but finding herself too much indisposed prevailed on her sister to go without her _ she retired to her chamber, and her bed _ from which she was never more to rise _ an hysterical agitation at her [chest?] was the only perceptible symptom, and [th...] not [...] violent as to alarm her physicians, when sent for but [...] fatal shaft _ was struck she never spoke again and expired without a sigh at mid night _ after her death blood issuing from her mouth indicated the rupture of a vessel near her heart _ which is attributed to suppressed emotion _ she was young, rich, and pretty. how tender a heart she possessed he can tell for whom she died _ I have never known a more general sympathy excited _ her family are almost distracted they are intimate friends of ours. and perhaps the wealthiest family in the State _ but what is riches in the scale of human happiness? poor Ellen who was very much attached to her is sadly distressed _ Sarah Coleman is her best beloved friend, and she participated
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in her sorrow. they followed the funeral procession to Lancaster on Friday and we are all anxious to hear how the poor old Lady is she was made quite ill by the news _

Let me hear from you soon My dear Maria, and tell how your children are _ present me affectionately to your husband

and believe me with ardent affection your faithful friend
RG_

[Address:]
Mrs. Ogden Hoffman
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[Editors' Note: The year of this letter is based on the death date of Ann Caroline Coleman in 181