

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Fenno Hoffman

December 29, [1811]

Philadelphia Decr. 29th.

My Dear Maria

I have been delighted to see your Husband, and to listen to his accounts of you and your little darlings, I have scarcely ever seen him look better or appear in more agreeable spirits his visits on Thursday cheered us all, and I do not know when I felt happier than while in his company _ but since then I have constantly been disappointed every time he called I have been out _ Miss Rachel must just take it into her head to play a naughty trick, and has been quite sick in consequence of it, she has been obliged to keep her bed for two days _ but is now much better, and I hope will take better care of herself for the future _ she acknowledges with some mortification that this untoward circumstance cost her as much suffering as she might anticipate with a blessing annexed to it had she prospered in her undertaking _ and as the annals of such Ladies as you & she continually present the rise & progress of a new generation I cannot help lamenting every mischance that occurs in your fruitful [careers] _ From Mr. Hoffmans hints I presume you are in expectation of the arrival of your hour of trial very soon, You have always been so mercifully sustained through those perils. that I confidently rely on the continued blessing of Providence to guard you in the present _ at the same time my love, I beseech you to act with the utmost prudence, as this inclement season must require. and the absence of your husband particularly imposes on you _ you have much of my thoughts, and my constant prayers for your preservation & happiness _ your good neighbours the Ogdens must supply the place of your absent friends, and in some measure upon Elizas loss, I know they love you. and that they are capable of great kindness when they love. I am sorry to hear dear little George has been so sick, do not [end of page]

be afraid of the worm oil it sometimes produces no other visible effects than restoring the appetite, I think you had better give it to him again after an interval of three or four weeks _ has Charles perfectly recovered?

I never saw Ann look better, she has a fine colour and appears to enjoy perfect health _ I am sorry to find you have such good grounds to complain of her, because I thought she had been at last awaken'd to a proper sense of all your kindness towards her, and I have heard her express so much affection for you, that I hoped it would influence her future conduct. but really I believe she has not any idea that her omission must appear ungrateful in your eyes _ she has been always such a favoured Child of fortune so much caressed _ and so much attended to _ that she seems to think her friends sufficiently rewarded by the pleasure they feel in obliging her _ since her return from New York we have seen very little of her _ we have

sometimes felt hurt, that she neglected us in our misfortunes _ and have thought we had claims on her _ but a little reflection has banished every angry feeling and convinced us that the error, if there be any _ arose from her natural disposition. I hope she may long find her path through life smooth, & strewn with flowers, that she may like the Bee, rove from one sweet to another and gather honey from the fairest _ she has the talent of pleasing whoever pleases her _ and while youth & loveliness lasts she will always be successful _ & of course happy _ I do not doubt she will think more seriously by & bye, ~~and~~ [then] learn to distinguish who are really her Friends _ If she does not love you with all her heart & soul then _ I shall never presume to have any Knowledge of her character _ I wrote a note to her enclosing an extract of your letter respecting Lucys mother, which brought her round to see us, we had not met before in a long time, but she has been here twice since, and as she does not go into company this winter, she has promised to come more frequently here _ she is delighted with her father & Brother's visit _ she reads a great deal _ and passes her time at home very profitably _ Kiss sweet Julia for me _ she must be very lovely and very interesting, I should love to see her mimicry _ my little namesake [end of page]

is so lazy with her tongue & other accomplishments that I fear it will be along time before she will overtake Julia, she cannot run alone yet _ but is recovering her strength & good looks.

Sally sends you a great deal of love, and so do Mrs. Hays Etting & Rachel _ indeed so do all the Boys to use a phrase, that seems to have lost it propriety in our family _ you remember we used to laugh at the Hamiltons for applying that title to their Brothers, and now might take the same liberty on another occasion, as the Miss Lyles tho' by far the tallest women in the family are termed the children, and have so much thrown off their childish habits that it has been currently reported that Ellen was engaged to be married _ tho' I believe there is no truth in it _ Poor Becky is undergoing the hardships of a [soldiers] wife, and has probably had a child born in a camp, the family have not heard from her for a [long time?] [...] that her husband is by no means reformed _ that he is very [...] [...] Parents unrelenting _ they reside in Ireland in a very [remote] [...] [...] destitute of friends, or the comforts she used to think indispensable _ she has tempted a most adverse fate _ and her [sister] Peggy says has destroyed her peace also _ I have written quite a gossiping letter, which you must pardon me for My dear Friend _ I know it will not please you unless by a miracle it finds your virtues napping _ but to trifle thus is only a crime, for a petty [theft] of time, and I chose rather [...] than make you sad in which attempt I have certainly failed because the evils or wrongs of life have preponderated in almost every image that is placed before you _ Adieu, May Good angels guard you My dear Maria and bear you safely & happily through all the perils of life _ believe me
your affectionate RG _
give my best love to Eliza _ & Mary _ and embrace all your children for me _

[Address:]
Mrs. Ogden Hoffman
New York

[Editors' Note: This letter is dated 1811 based on the names of Maria Fenno's children Rebecca mentions, the birth year of Harriet Matilda Hoffman, and the recent marriage of Eliza Fenno.]