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which --- must be both beneficial and agreeable.

What has become of Ann? Her sister complains of her not writing - is she still in the country? I was nursing a little babe yesterday about the age of yours and fancied the whole time - it must be very like her - you cannot imagine how much I want to see her - unless you have a friend you love as much as I do you, who has just such a mother every time I see a young happy mother - the image of Maria dances before me - Mrs. Otto (---) lost her first child, and is now three weeks the mother of a daughter. I went to see her on Saturday and really never saw so much joy in a face before. I have been thinking of her ever since.

Sophia Dallas is going to be marriage to Richard Bache very shortly and Patty Jones to a Mr. Adams. I believe you know both ladies - there are also several other weddings talked of - among the ---- but that not so confidently as the others - and will not --- soon take place. I suppose you see Lee James frequently and hear all about the family from him - Andrew is expected home this spring - but no a married man - poor fellow! He has another disappointment to bewail - but I guess this lop is greater to his purse, than his heart.

My mother and the girls send you their best love. Make mine acceptable to your dear husband - and - Ann and Mary - God Bless you, my dearest Maria, let me hear soon of your Caroline and accept my best wishes for your happiness - ever your own, Rebecca G.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This letter, part of a lifelong correspondence between Rebecca Gratz and her childhood friend Maria Fenno, reflects many important facets of society in the early nineteenth century. Life in the young American nation was exciting. Filled with optimism, many Americans of this era realized that they were involved in an experiment of great promise. The most immediate concerns of young women of affluence, such as Gratz, were family and social relations, as shown by Gratz's reports of her own activities and her inquiries about the health and happiness of her friend.

Yet despite their privileged world, even the wealthy could not escape the instability caused by disease and other dangers. Fenno had lost both her parents in the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1798, and Gratz's concerns for her friend's health betray the fragility of life in this period. Gratz later became involved in much more than the personal relations of family and friends that filled the lives of most of the women of her status. Her exposure to the problems faced by Maria and others provided the impetus for a lifetime of work on behalf of orphans and other unfortunates of her time.

For more information on this letter and the life of Rebecca Gratz, go to JWA's *Women of Valor* exhibit at <http://www.jwa.org/exhibits/wov/gratz>.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What type of information does Gratz report to her friend and what information does she seek in return?
2. What aspects of this letter are similar to correspondence between friends today? What aspects are specific to the time period?
3. How did the fragility of life in this time period affect personal relationships?
4. How would this letter have been different if it had been written from one man to another?