

1 Pomfret

2 Aug 8th

3

4 My darling Harry

5 This is the most perfect of summer days. The solar eclipse that took place
6 yesterday (and that marked the interesting event of dear Alice's majority seems to have
7 left that great luminary more glorious and life-giving than ever— There seems nothing
8 wanting to me on this sweet quiet Sunday in these delicious shades than your dear
9 presence— You say you are having a very hot summer. I am glad you are in those high
10 altitudes. We have had a decidedly cold one, more so than we have desired in this out of
11 door life we are leading here— Our surroundings are altogether in strong and favorable
12 contrast with those of last summer Our rooms are large and comfortable the table
13 remarkably good for the country, neat and well served, and presided over by a landlady,
14 who is a most pleasing specimen of a country woman, sweet rosy and good natured; and
15 the strongest contrast one could conceive to our raw-boned "heaving" friend of last
16 summer— Our social life, now that the Bootts have left is not quite so satisfying, still we
17 are enjoying a great refreshment at the present moment in a visit from W. Holmes and
18 John Grey— They came unexpectedly for two days, and I am delighted to see them on
19 Will's account. Will went out to drive with Wendell and has not yet returned, and Alice
20 is seated with Mr Grey under the trees, and at the present moment I hear them discussing

21 “Harry’s stories” You may be sure her sisterly heart is glowing with pride as she hears
22 their warm praises sounded— I hear Wendell’s voice so they have got back. He wanted
23 to go and shed a tear over the grave of his great grand-father who lived and died in the
24 town of Woodstock about five miles away— He (Wendell) is as fresh and jolly as usual,
25 and John Grey as placidly sensible and gentlemanly— Your name recurs frequently in
26 our talk, and there is great wonder and pleasure felt in hearing of your pedestrian feats
27 Since your last letter darling Harry I have had a new anxiety awakened in my too
28 susceptible mind by thinking of your traversing alone those mountain solitudes. Of
29 course I know you would not attempt any dizzy heights or any but well beaten tracks
30 without a guide— But you might easily over estimate your strength, and sink down with
31 sudden exhaustion— However I hope from what you say that that part of your
32 pilgrimage is nearly accomplished. I hope you will go to St Moritz. From what we hear
33 of its stimulating air and steel baths it must have a good effect upon you. It is said to be
34 filled up in Aug. by a number of Italian families who go there every year— It is a
35 pleasant and easy journey from there into Italy which will just suit you—
36 I am strongly in hopes Will has got through the worst, and that his present improvement
37 will be permanent— If so, my theory about him (of which I said little) will I think be
38 proved which is, that the complete rest which he kept up so long was bad for him, that he
39 was in a morbid state. The change of habit which he unconsciously adopted in ~~living~~
40 coming here, has been the very thing to break that up— No atmosphere could possibly
41 have been brought about him that could have helped him so much His interest in the
42 artistic work that was going on around him, brought him out of doors, diverted him from
43 reading, and furnished him with a moderate bodily activity from which he could always

44 rest— This beneficent influence gave him a decided start from which he has gone on to
45 improve so as to take walks of a half mile every day without too much fatigue— But of
46 course he has told you all about it— Alice walked last evening to the Post and back, a
47 walk of 2 1/2 miles, and was very bright after it— So my darling boy, the skies are
48 clearing for us all, and health & strength and happy working days lie before us all— So
49 grant it heaven! There is a bit of family news. Kitty Temple has a boy, to be called
50 William Temple— She was very ill and there was much anxiety about mother & child—
51 You will no doubt get a description of the infant from its “doting old aunty”—
52 I got a nice letter a week or more ago from Sara Sedgwick, which I answered
53 immediately. She said nothing about her intention to return this Autumn—so I presume
54 her mind is not made up— I had a very strong appeal from Jane Norton to write to her,
55 some time ago in a letter to Father, and I have never done it— I suppose I ought to have
56 done it, but I fear to bore her by a stupid letter and then I hate to become enlisted in a
57 regular correspondence with her, for she will be sure to answer my letter immediately,
58 and look for another—

59 Aug 9th Our guests have just left us— I think they have enjoyed their visit, we certainly
60 have Wendell Holmes looks as if he needed recreation—but his good spirits are
61 unabated— How charmingly fresh and boyish he is, and with such a power of work
62 too— Wilky has gone to Newport for a few days— He said he didn’t mean to go this
63 summer, but frequent invitations from George Wetmore have made it irresistible I
64 suppose— Bob’s letters are delightful, I never knew him so perfectly contented— Libby
65 Gourlay writes that Howard James is in Albany again. He came in to their house the
66 other day far from sober, and said that he had come from St Augustine to go into the

67 Binghampton Asylum. He proposes to get some occupation there that will pay his board!
68 Old Mrs Worth is dead, and Josy alienated from her family Can you conceive greater
69 misery— Good bye beloved child only send us good news and we will ask nothing
70 more— Your loving Mother

Notes

17 W. Holmes • Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

18 John Grey • John Chipman Gray

27 your last letter • Presumably Henry James's letter of 26, 29 July [1869] to Alice James

51 its “doting old aunty” • Minny Temple

64-65 Libby Gourlay writes that Howard James is in Albany again • Elizabeth Gourlay was Henry James,
Sr.’s. maternal first cousin; she lived in Albany with her sisters, Catharine, Jeannette, and Margaret;

Howard James (1828-1887) was Henry James, Sr.’s youngest brother; he battled alcoholism all his life

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