

Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 6 September [1869], from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1093.1 (36)

1 Cambridge

2 Sept 6th

3 My darling Harry

4 Imagine me seated this beautiful Sunday morning in my old accustomed place in
5 my room, writing to my absent boys, and beginning with you the dearest because the
6 farthest away, perhaps— We have been at home ten days, and Father wrote to you last
7 week— Your letters are more and more a comfort, because they give us as time goes on
8 greater reason to hope in the efficacy of your remedial life— You must by this time, if
9 you have carried out your plan have crossed into Italy. I have had some anxiety from
10 what I have heard about your going South too soon not only on account of the heat, but
11 lest you should be devoured by mosquitoes, which are said in Venice especially to be a
12 terrible scourge up to Nov. Howells & his wife were here yesterday, and say that they
13 are glad notwithstanding that you will see Venice while the weather is warm— No one
14 they say knows any thing about its beauty who does'nt see it in the summer— With
15 regard to the mosquitoes there are some situations much more favorable than others;
16 where for instance a draught passes through the rooms they are carried away. Howells
17 wrote two addresses which they think in point of situation very desirable, and where they
18 lived themselves The one marked 1st and []to[] which they seem to give the preference,
19 has the one disadvantage of having a very roguish landlord; that is he Da Rù took
20 shameful advantage of an American lady whom they recommended to go there— There

21 need be no trouble if you are very explicit in your arrangement of terms having every
22 thing written down— They paid for this apartment with linen & silver and table china,
23 but \$1 per day Of course it must be dearer now— You however could not live alone in
24 one of these apartments unless you could find some one to share it with you—
25 We have a very unusual excitement before us this week, which is nothing less than a visit
26 from D^r Wilkinson He arrived in the China last Tuesday, and is to spend ten days in
27 America He came over with a nervous American man a patient of his, who had the
28 possession to use the Doctor's own words, that no one could coach ^him[^] across the
29 intermediate sea but him He went immediately up the Hudson by boat on to Niagara,
30 Quebec, Lake Champlaine &c and will reach Boston & Cambridge I presume about the
31 middle of the week— Father has been on his crutches the last eight days with a
32 miserable boil on his leg; I sincerely trust he will be all right when the Doctor reaches
33 us— He writes very loving sentimental letters, with a growing affectation and
34 mannerism about them, which is not an improvement upon the Wilkinson of yore—
35 However it will be pleasant to see how he looks upon American soil, and it will be but a
36 look— Bob writes us that he has been recommended as Treasurer & Secretary of a rail-
37 road in Galveston Texas, with a salary of \$15000, and a fair prospect after a while of
38 getting the managership of the road. Of course at the first going off it looks like a piece
39 of good luck, but upon a moment's reflection it seems to me a wholly unsuitable place for
40 Bob— When one remembers his peculiar and troublesome temperament, how dependent
41 he is upon his social surroundings for his happiness, it frightens me to think of his living
42 among the kind of people that he will be likely to find there— The climate & the great
43 distance from all of us ought to have great weight in deciding him— Of course it says

44 well for Bob that he has been thought of for the place, as it is one of responsibility and
45 trust—and this is the best thing about it— Wilky wanted to go South last week; but I
46 have held him back for awhile and now I am delighted he is here on Wilkinson’s account
47 I have just got a note from Kitty Prince saying she is at Newton and will come and spend
48 a few days with us— The Doct. is afloat again Elly Temple is to be married on the 15th
49 But Minny writes yesterday that Temple Emmet’s affairs are so unsettled that they may
50 be obliged to be married at a day’s notice and go directly to the Steamer— Poor little
51 Elly she certainly has great pluck— She is perhaps safer than she would be with an older
52 man— I have no doubt she thinks so— Parke Godwin wrote Father that he had met you
53 in Geneva—that you seemed a very bright boy, and had doubtless got your brightness
54 from your mother!— Aunt Kate’s last was from Paris on the 15th Aug— She is well and
55 enjoying herself— What you want most to hear dear Harry is about our ailing ones—
56 Alice is doing “nicely”— She feels that she needs to have her muscular system
57 exercised, and means to try the lifting again— She is so much stronger now nervously
58 that I am in hopes it will be just what she needs— Will has gone somewhat back from
59 the great improvement he had at one time in Pomfret—but talks of going next week to
60 Newport to the Tweedies & La Farges whose plans (the latter I mean) are as uncertain as
61 ever— After that he means to offer a visit to M^{rs} Tappan, if he remains of the same
62 mind— All this looks plucky— He is writing a notice of Mill & Bushnell’s books for
63 the North American which interests but tries him I fear—
64 Addy Watson is rapidly sinking with lung disease and can last but a little while— Sylvia
65 is very much out of health— Jeanny & Annie married what a changed household—

66 A thousand blessings from each of our loving hearts upon your precious our dear one—
67 Now we shall look for those letters from “a pen dipped in purple & gold” Your loving
68 Mother

Notes

- 4 beautiful Sunday morning • 6 September 1869 was a Monday
- 12 Howells & his wife • William Dean Howells (1837-1920) and Elinor Mead Howells (1837-1910)
- 26 D^r Wilkinson • James John Garth Wilkinson (1812-1899)
- 47 Kitty Prince • Katharine Barber James Prince (1834-1890), first cousin of William, Henry, and Alice James
- 48 The Doct. • Psychiatrist William Henry Prince (1817-1883), husband of Kitty Prince
- 52 Parke Godwin • an old friend of Henry James, Sr.
- 62 He is writing a notice of Mill & Bushnell’s books for the North American • William James reviewed Horace Bushnell’s *Women’s Suffrage: The Reform Against Nature* (New York: Scribner, 1869) and John

Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (New York: Appleton, 1869) for the *North American Review*

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74-76 Addy Watson is rapidly sinking with lung disease and can last but a little while— Sylvia is very much out of health— Jeanny & Annie married what a changed household • Robert Sedgwick Watson, of Milton, Mass., had six daughters, including: Sylvia Hathaway Watson (1834-1917), who was a friend of Alice James and who married William Ralph Emerson in 1873; Jane (Jenny) Sedgwick Watson (1838-1912), about whose engagement to Edward (Ned) Cranch Perkins, who was “more than five years younger,” Alice wrote her friend Fanny Morse on 22 July [1866]; Anna Russell Watson (1843-1909), who married William Jones Ladd; and Adelaide Howard Watson (1841-1869)

67 “pen dipped in purple & gold” • In his 12 August [1869] letter to William James, Henry James had written from Gersau, near Lucerne: “The tenor of this & my last letters has been very dull—owing to the fact that in walking you quite sweat the rhapsodical faculty out of you & have no eloquence left for talk.[...] Wait till I get into Italy—& then I'll dip my pen in purple & gold.”

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