

Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 21 September [1869], from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1093.1 (37)

1 Cambridge

2 Sept 21<sup>st</sup>

3 My own darling Harry

4 It is three weeks to-morrow since we got your last letter, and as this is a much  
5 longer time than we have ever been without hearing from you, we begin to look for and  
6 long very much for news of you— We have been thinking of you for the last two weeks  
7 as no longer dwelling among the clouds, but as having descended to our own level, and  
8 having exchanged the grand for the beautiful— I trust the descent into warmer latitudes  
9 will not take away your strength<sup>^</sup>, or act in any way unfavorably upon you— I wrote  
10 you ten days ago and sent you some addresses for rooms in Venice sent by the Howells—  
11 I told you too of our anticipated friend Dr Wilkinson He came and spent two weeks only  
12 in the country— He took a trip of 10 days in which he saw Niagara the St Lawrence—  
13 Canada Lakes Champlain & George & the Hudson— He rung at our door one Sunday  
14 morning and spent the day with us, but would not stay at night or make any arrangement  
15 by which we could arrange a meeting with Emerson for the next day, Emerson whose  
16 heart seemed set on seeing him— He looks more like an old gentleman than he used to,  
17 and gives me the impression of thinking more of his personal comfort— He was kind  
18 and friendly, but said nothing to impress one— He was delighted with his journey. The  
19 natural scenery was what he talked most about, making no comment at all upon men or  
20 manners— He seems astonished at the facility with which we travel, and says it is as

21 easy to get over 1.000 miles here as 200 at home— He says he means to come very soon  
22 again and see California and the West— He seemed to take a good deal of interest in  
23 Will's condition— He made a thorough examination of all his symptoms— He's says  
24 the original strain is not now the trouble but the morbid condition of his whole system  
25 which is the result of it— He says he believes he can bring him all right, by the use of  
26 high dilutions of Rhus & Nux Vomica which act wonderfully in such chonic cases—  
27 Will has promised to follow his directions faithfully for a month and then report himself  
28 to him— If these fails he will try again— Will bids me say that he wants dreadfully to  
29 write to you, but that he has so much to say that he hardly dares begin— He has just  
30 been writing an article for the N. A on Mill's & Bushnell's books Before this reaches  
31 you you will have got a letter from Bob Temple telling his own story— You may  
32 imagine we were surprised to see him— He looks grey and grave beyond his years and is  
33 such an image of his father that it is startling— He tells Father that he has perfect self  
34 control in drinking, and he certainly looks perfectly steady— He counts upon Temple  
35 Emmet who is largely interested in Rail-roads in Oregon to give him employment What  
36 he would prefer to any other occupation (a high ideal you will think) is to go to Texas and  
37 keep a grocery store! Something I presume will be provided for him by the blessed  
38 Emmets and a ,another[,] chance will be given him— He was here for some days, but  
39 after the wedding went back to Kittys. I am glad he is gone for his company is any thing  
40 but inspiring to Will upon whose hands he is thrown Wilky having gone to Florida— In  
41 contrast to Bob we had a visit of a few days from Kitty Prince who is as sweet aspiring  
42 and unworldly a being as one ever meets with— Her husband is cast adrift again, and  
43 Kitty was staying with some friends at Newton and wrote us that she would come She is

44 very much improved in looks, and Will and Alice were very much interested in her—  
45 She is entirely absorbed in getting occupation for the Docter's son and daughter, both of  
46 whom have gifts which if the right places can be found may help to make them  
47 independent— Another mail dear Harry, and no letter— I am trying not to be anxious—  
48 Aunt Kate's last letter was from Zurich— She says she is enjoying every moment—  
49 So M<sup>r</sup> Davies (you have doubtless heard her speak of their travelling companions Mr &  
50 Mrs Davies) turns out to be the lovely Julien with such beautiful eyes whom Elly Van  
51 Buren plighted her faith to, but so soon abandoned— Elly Temples wedding went off  
52 very quietly, Aunt Mary alone represented the family— I have heard no one speak of  
53 Temple Emmet but Bob who is not at all to be relied upon— He seems to be disgusted  
54 with the match, and expresses himself in the most undisguised way <sup>^</sup>about it[<sub>^</sub>] at the  
55 same time that he is seeking favors from him— You know they have been living (I mean  
56 Elly & M<sup>r</sup> E—) in the house together for several <sup>^</sup>months,[<sub>^</sub>] and he has been in the habit  
57 of lavishing presents upon her and jestingly saying what he was going to give her when  
58 she became his “little wife”— No one thought of the possibility of such a thing. In this  
59 way they both became accustomed to the thought— He told Kitty that <sup>^</sup>when[<sub>^</sub>] he found  
60 ~~himself~~ Elly's fascinations exerting such power over him he made up his mind that it  
61 could not be and that he must tear himself away—but he could not do it— And it seems  
62 there was no need, the fascination was mutual— I only trust that it has not been his good  
63 things (for it seems he has prospects of great wealth) that have seduced Elly— Father's  
64 book appeared about a fortnight ago. No critical notice has yet appeared of it— He has  
65 been and is still shut up with a boil the most torpid thing in healing I ever saw. He got  
66 out for a few days, and found that the spot was irritated with putting on his leg, so he is in

67 the house again— It would do your heart good so see how well Alice looks and seems.  
68 She takes a walk every day, and shows no fatigue and languor as of yore— A little  
69 society (of the right kind if it can be got), is what she most needs— Society of almost  
70 any kind is better than none—  
71 We have had a great deal of hot weather since we got back which has been rather  
72 trying— We were visited in this part of the world on the 13<sup>th</sup> by a very severe gale (I see  
73 it is called a hurricane) which was not very wide in its extent, but most serious in its  
74 consequences— Trees without number were taken up by the roots every where, houses  
75 in exposed places unroofed a chimnies innumerable thrown down. In the Norton woods  
76 25 trees were uprooted. Newport it is said is quite desolated— The Main Street has  
77 suffered very much, but the College ground have not been been much despoiled— Sargy  
78 looked fresh and bright on Sunday, and as usual did justice to the roast beef. W. Holmes  
79 rings the bell as usual at 8 1/2 o'clk on Saturday Even<sup>g</sup> and we [^]are[^] all falling into our  
80 good old ways— Eliza you know was deposed last Spring, and a much less despotic  
81 spirit reigns at present in her place— Little Isabella's health gave out, and her successor  
82 I am happy to say is much stronger and equally competent— Ellen remains in statu quo,  
83 she is stout and rosy as ever and always grateful for your remembrances—  
84 Blessings upon your head my darling boy—send us good news, and that speedily for we  
85 are longing to hear Love from all— Your loving Mother—

## Notes

- 4 your last letter • Henry James to William James, 12 August [1869] from Gersau
- 9-10 I wrote you ten days ago • Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 6 September [1869], from Cambridge
- 30 an article for the N. A. • William James's review for the *North American Review* of Bushnell's *Women's Suffrage* and Mill's *The Subjection of Women*
- 31 a letter from Bob Temple • Robert (Bob) Temple to Henry James, 17 September 1869 from Cambridge
- 39 Kittys • Kitty Temple Emmet
- 42 Her husband • Dr. William Henry Prince
- 45 the Doctor's son and daughter • John Prince (1850-1911) and Louise Lander Prince (1848-1895)
- 50-51 Elly Van Buren • Ellen Van Buren (b. 1844), Henry James's first cousin, daughter of Smith Van Buren and Ellen King James Van Buren
- 52 Aunt Mary • Mary Temple Tweedy
- 63-64 Father's book • *The Secret of Swedenborg*
- 75 the Norton woods • Shady Hill, the Nortons' Cambridge estate, bounded by Kirkland Street on the south and the Cambridge-Somerville line on the east, was extensive
- 77 Sargy • Thomas Sergeant Perry

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