

Mary Walsh James to Henry James and Alice James, 26 July [1872], from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1093.1 (40)

1 Cambridge

2 July 26th

3

4 Thanks my darlings both, for your sweet faithful letters that come to us so
5 unfaithfully. They comfort us in our childlessness, and make the time fly on wings of joy
6 and gratitude— More than half the time has passed, and I can hardly believe it, so great
7 have been our consolations— The weather has become deliciously cool for a week past,
8 and the abundant rains which comes every two or three days keep every thing bright and
9 fresh as spring; nothing has been burnt up by the intense heat— I never knew Father so
10 perfectly content— The delight he takes in hearing from and writing to you; this entire
11 freedom from all kind of responsibility; no little girl on hand to manage or inspect him, no
12 one but his docile little wife to make much of him, and be made much of by him; life is
13 quite ideal to us both— The most exciting news I have to give came to us yesterday, a few
14 hours after it happened. M^r Emerson's house was burnt to the ground early yesterday
15 morn^g The fire broke out in the roof, probably from a defective flue. His books and all the
16 furniture were saved, every thing of value, but some literary remains of M^r William
17 Emerson's which were in the garret— There was an insurance of \$2.500 upon it, which
18 will not rebuild a house for the poor old man, but his rich friends will probably help him—
19 Will writes July 21st "I was overjoyed yesterday by a letter from Bowditch offering me his
20 college place, if Elliot wd consent. Elliot arrived here yesterday in his yacht I showed him

21 the letter. He said nothing, save that he would write about it to Bowditch; but I have little
22 doubt of his agreeing. I feel as if the advantage to me would be inestimable”— “Glad to
23 hear such pleasant accounts from Europe, but can’t excuse not stopping at Boulogne”—
24 Of his fellow boarders he says, “Miss Bessie who Green is here, a well favored girl, but
25 cantankerous, and too jealous of her independence and intellectual initiative, is
26 disagreeable to me so far; as is also Miss Lilian Clarke by reason of her outward aspect and
27 deportment. She seems to be always tasting her own sweetness—and is a servile adorer of
28 the Green”. There is no fear of harm being done to your brothers heart by either of these
29 model young ladies— He adds, Sara is more and more perfect—Sara evidently brightens
30 by the contrast.

31 He says in the close “I am getting good from the place— My eyes improve steadily” How
32 good it all is!!

33 Fanny Morse writes me that she is to go with her Father & Mother in Aug. to Lake
34 Superior, and that they intend stopping for a day or two at Milwaukee—where she
35 evidently expects to make the acquaintance of the prospective M^{rs} Jameses!—

36 I do not believe that either Wilky or Bob will care to ask their respective fair ones to be
37 trotted out for the inspection of any of their Boston friends, who have as little claim upon
38 them as M^r & M^{rs} Morse? Miss Cary may be up to it; but I am sure that little Mary
39 []won’t[].

40 The Berkeley Street household [re]ceived a letter from Aunt Ka[te] yesterday with great
41 pleasure— I am very anxious to hear of your meeting with the Bootts, and the result, also
42 of Anna Hallowell’s condition, and how Louly Shaw has borne so great a trial— I envy
43 you much the added pleasure you will have from having the Bootts with you— Give my

44 love to them both— I hear nothing of the result of the Fire-Island experiment— I asked
45 Lilly Walsh to let me know—and I have not written to Cousin Helen because I do not know
46 how to address there— I should think she would be afraid of being caught in New York
47 again until the hot weather is quite over—so greatly must they all [hav]e suffered there—
48 If the weather [i]s comfortable I shall send for her to come to us the 1st Sept. As an
49 evidence of the free domestic atmosphere that prevails in the house, I have been absorbed
50 for the last two days in the Eustace Diamonds! peacefully absorbed! What a wonderful
51 romancer he is! no exaggeration, no sensationalism, such fertility of imagination, and such
52 truth to nature— He seems inexhaustible, and always so good.
53 I am impatiently waiting until to-morrow, hoping for Harry's second letter— Let Harry's
54 wares be ever so good, unless he can find a brisker market for them than the Atlantic
55 Monthly & Nation afford, they will neither add to his reputation nor fill his purse— Why
56 does'nt the Atlantic Monthly publish what he gave them a year ago? We see nothing of
57 Howells—

58 ceaseless love to each of you

59 Your loving Mother

Notes

- 19 Bowditch • Henry Pickering Bowditch (1840-1912), assistant professor at the time of physiology at Harvard; he had offered William James his course on anatomy
- 24 Miss Bessie who Green • Mentioned in letters by William James and Alice James, Rayburn Moore identifies her as Elizabeth Greene of Mt. Desert Island (see *The Correspondence of William James* 4: 426, 440-41; “The Letters of Alice James to Anne Ashburner” 28, 53 n. 4)
- 26 Miss Lilian Clarke • Identified in *The Correspondence of William James* as Lilian Freeman Clarke (d. 1921), the daughter of James Freeman Clarke (4: 428 n. 2)
- 29 Sara • Sara Sedgwick
- 33 Fanny Morse [...] her Father & Mother • Frances (Fanny) Rollins Morse (1850-1928) was a close friend and a long-time correspondent of Alice James; her parents were Samuel T. Morse (d. 1890) and Harriet Jackson Lee Morse (d. 1911); and Mary Lee Morse (Elliott) was Fanny’s sister. (Some important Alice James sources—Jean Strouse’s *Alice James: A Biography* and *The Correspondence of William James*—give the correct names for Fanny’s parents, but *The Death and Letters of Alice James*, “The Letters of Alice James to Anne Ashburner, 1873-78: The Joy of Engagement,” and the Houghton Library catalogue indicate that the parents were named “Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Morse.” Boston and Beverly, Massachusetts city directories for the 1870s to 1890s, the Frances R. Morse papers at the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe, and the Suffolk County [i.e. Boston] Probate records for 1890 confirm that the parents were Samuel T. and Harriet J. Morse.)
- 35 the prospective M^{rs} Jameses • Mary Lucinda Holton (1849-1922) and Caroline Cary (b.1851)
- 40 [re]ceived [...] Ka[te] • Manuscript torn
- 42 Anna Hallowell’s condition, and how Louly Shaw has borne so great a trial • See Mary Walsh James to Alice James, 18 July [1872]
- 47 [hav]e • Manuscript torn
- 48 [i]s • Manuscript torn
- 53 Harry’s second letter • “A European Summer. II. Lichfield and Warwick,” *Nation* 25 July 1872: 57-58

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