

Henry James, Sr., to Henry James, [late] July 1872, from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1092.9 (4193)

1 Cambridge, July 1872

2 My dear Harry:

3 My heart yearns to you this morning, so radiant in the paternal panoply you wear
4 toward Aunt K & Alice and I would give a great deal to see you. The enclosed scrap of a
5 letter from Willy is sent in order to prove to you how vastly improved are his eyes, when
6 you shall have learned that he has written us within the last four or five days 20 pages of
7 like density to these. He would fain persuade us to go to Mount Desert but “our feet are
8 on our native heath”, and we shall not budge. Perhaps later we may go to Quebec, but we
9 are so comfortable together, reading Trollope and talking philosophy, that we cheerfully
10 dismiss the future from our regard. Mama is free & active & bracing. She is a domestic
11 Nor Wester, carrying balm and bloom into every nook and corner of her empire. She has
12 gone to enjoy a little “reading” as Wilky used to call it, in Aunt Kate’s bed this afternoon;
13 and I am writing in Alice’s room, which is now my favourite haunt of an afternoon. It
14 sounds as if she might be reading aloud now & then, or murmuring in fitful accord with
15 the movement of the breeze, as it stirs the green leaves. But “whether waking or asleep”
16 she is altogether lovely, I would have you to know. Tell Alice I hope she may always
17 enjoy her husband’s approbation to to the same extent her mother does mine. She is
18 reading the Eustace Diamonds. I read, or rather tried vainly to read George Sand’s
19 Francia. I dont think I ever read any thing that reflects a viler light on her personal
20 history. How bestial a woman ever to have been born, or become, to grovel
21 spontaneously in such filth. Dont be tempted to buy it. I have unfortunately done so.

22 Mrs Channing & Miss Ann Ashburner take tea with us this evening. According to
23 Mrs C. Mrs Moering's trouble with Charley grows apace. He eats six meals a day, kicks
24 the servants (occasionally) black & blue, is obstinate beyond belief, helps himself seven
25 or eight times to ice cream, and is thought by his intimates not idiotic but morally
26 depraved & ruined by indulgence. This is the sum of the intelligence from Quincy St this
27 morning. Tell Alice however in addition that Lizzy Sparks sports a Dolly Varden of
28 extravagant dimensions: that Professor ^Cooke[^] passed a couple of hours with us on the
29 piazza last evening in refined intellectual converse: that the Washburne's are off to
30 Calafornia; that Mrs Fiske holds her own—and more: that the Berkeleins saw & heard
31 Miss Jewett recite & act the other evening at Mr Albert Browne's, and predict a brilliant
32 career for on the stage for which she is preparing; and that Miss Prince still maintains her
33 philosophic interest at our tea-table. I send you the Nation regularly. Do you get it? It is
34 hard to say whether Greeley is going ahead or not: as well as I can judge, not. The
35 conflict is getting very bitter. Greeley is probably the best hated man just now extant. The
36 new North American Review is out. A not very interesting article of of Chauncey Wright
37 on Mivart; a scandalous (in point of taste) essay of Mr Stirling on Buckle, full of Scotch
38 conceit, sarcasm, insolence, and "wit"; a very, very laboured article of James Lowell on
39 Dante, in which he determines to exhaust knowledge: and these are all I have read. Mr
40 Stirling of course makes Buckle ridiculous; but he stamps himself a very shabby creature.
41 Love to all & believe me darling boy Your most loving daddy.

Notes

[late] July 1872 • Henry James, Sr., left a blank space between the month and the year for the date of this letter and neglected to fill it. In her 26 July [1872] letter to Henry James, Mary Walsh James mentions

being “absorbed for the last two days in the Eustace Diamonds”; because Henry James, Sr., also refers to her reading Trollope’s *The Eustace Diamonds*, this letter had to have been written around the same time

22 Mrs Channing • See Mary Walsh James to Alice James, 18 July [1872]

23 Mrs Moering [...] Charley • Anna L. Moering (or Moring; sources vary as to the spelling) lived at 12 Quincy Street; in 1874 she also owned 16 Quincy Street, the house immediately adjacent to the Jameses

27 Lizzie Sparks • Elizabeth (Lizzie) Sparks, daughter of Jared Sparks (1789-1866), former president of Harvard, and Mary Crowninshield Silsbee Sparks (1809-1887); in 1874 she would marry Edward C.

Pickering (1846-1919), professor of physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

28 Professor ^Cooke[_^] • Josiah Parsons Cooke, tutor, instructor, and then professor of mineralogy and chemistry at Harvard, 1849-1894

31 Miss Jewett • Actress Sara Jewett, a student of Fanny Morant; she made her New York City début in Septemebr 1872

32 Miss Prince • Presumably Louise Lander Prince

36-37 article of of Chauncey Wright on Mivart • “Evolution by Natural Selection,” which reviews *The Origin of Species* and two books by St. George Mivart, *North American Review* July 1872: 1-31

37 Buckle • “Henry Thomas Buckle, his problems and his Metaphysics” by J. H. Stirling, *North American Review* July 1872: 65-104

38-39 article of James Lowell on Dante • “The Shadow of Dante,” a review of Maria Francesca Rossetti’s *The Shadow of Dante: Being an Essay towards Studying Himself, His World, and His Pilgrimage* (Boston: Roberts, 1872), *North American Review* July 1872: 139-210

To cite this letter, according to MLA style guidelines:

James, Henry, Sr.. Letter to Henry James. [Late] July 1872. James Family Papers. Houghton Library.

Harvard University. Cambridge, Mass. Dear Henry James.org Ed. Pierre A. Walker et al. 2005.

Salem State College. *[insert your date of access here]* <http://www.dearhenryjames.org>.