

Mary Walsh James to Alice James, 25, 27 August [1872], from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1093.1 (27)

1 Cambridge

2 Sunday Aug 25th

3

4 My darling daughter

5 Father dashed off a few lines to you by the last steamer, at the last
6 moment, both of us having strangely forgotten the interesting fact that it was mail day,
7 until late in the day— It was my day for writing, but being the unnatural mother I am, I
8 was that morning entirely oblivious of my offspring so far away; and the weather being
9 cool and bright, after days of oppressive heat and drenching showers, I thought only of
10 my own pleasure, and rushed off to Boston to do some errands, and get a little
11 amusement in ^Boston streets![^] My neglect was not so flagrant as it might have been;
12 for I did not forget you in a time of suffering and need, but only when you were basking
13 under Italian (?) skies, and bathing in that paradise of natural beauty. After this
14 confession I take it for granted that I am forgiven I am looking forward with pleasure to
15 the return this week of the party from M^l Desert, which will break up in some degree the
16 monotony of our lives— Grace made her appearance quite unexpectedly yesterday
17 morning, bringing with her the tidings, that Will had come with her as far as Portland,
18 and had gone on to Scarborough, to take a few dips before coming home,—the others
19 Sara, Theo, & Arthur are to come the last of the week. Theodora has gained rapidly,
20 since she began to convalesce. From what Grace says I fear Will's second experiment

21 has been no more successful than the first—perhaps the good effect may come as is
22 sometimes the case later. Sara is the only one of the party who seems to have made any
23 positive improvement, and she is said to look and seem much more like her self— I
24 understand she has received a delightful letter from you— I saw Arthur for a few
25 minutes when he past through here— He looked thin, but not exhausted as you might
26 have expected from his work, and such heat, as New York has suffered from— He says
27 he likes his position, and Aunt Anne said in answer to our enquiries, that he had had the
28 entire control of the political department given to him, perhaps I should say work, and
29 that she inferred he was a good deal made of—perhaps that may all resolve itself into,
30 ~~into~~ [^]and[^] be accounted for by the strong social tendencies of the Godwin family—
31 Our last letters were two to-day week, one from Aunt K. and one from you, dated Aug 1st
32 Andermat, and 4 days later one from Harry dated Thusis, Via Mala. Aug 14th Of course
33 he meant 4th, on which ^day[^] I was charmed to know that the “dear old mother’s
34 birthday was remembered, and kept “in drinking a bumper”— Father sent the last Nation
35 with Harry’s fourth letter— It was lovely but did not go to my heart like the the third.
36 Neither has Will’s article on Taine yet found room—
37 Yesterday afternoon being lovely I screwed father up to the point of going with me to call
38 on the Aldrichs who have got James Lowell’s place— They had gone to Newport so we
39 did not get in; but I was repaid for the effort, by the rich beauty of vegetation in that
40 region, indeed every where. There never was such a summer for luxuriance and
41 freshness; and my eye was feasted as I walked home by the greenness and care that
42 surrounded all those pleasant looking homes in Brattle & Craigie Streets. I do not think I
43 ever walked through them before just at this season; or perhaps my starved senses are

44 more susceptible to enjoyment than usual; and I will not ask you satiated as you are to
45 dwell upon them for even a moment.

46 Did I tell you of the characteristic note Will received from M^{rs} Tappan— She said in
47 answer to his inquiries whether he could go to her this month, “I do not see my way clear
48 to mansions in the skies, by which I mean of course your heavenly visit &c &c” and ends
49 with give my love to your happy father & Mother, for whom even Cambridge has no
50 miseries”—

51 I hear M^r Child’s voice down stairs. He has been spending a few days at Newport with
52 his friends the Wales, and has come back with a new passion— Miss Anne Bigelow
53 aged 17 with wonderful; [^]eyes[^] and full of talent— Of course he has her picture and
54 will talk about her by the hour if you will let him—

55 What a happy boy he is, when he can get Lizzy and the children off his hands for a while,
56 and when he can’t, what an untiring patient old nurse he is—

57 If the weather this week continues comfortable, so as to sustain my resolution, I shall
58 propose to Cousin Helen to come on towards the last of next week, after the 5th when the
59 Dog-days are said to end— I think it will be a pleasant change for her at any rate, to get
60 away from the heated brick & mortar to this umbrageous spot— And Will promises to be
61 at home then, and will help along in taking care of Henry—

62 27th I was called away from my letter by Grace Ashburner who had come to dinner—

63 She does not look rejuvenated by her summer campaign— She had her hay cold to
64 contend ^with[^], also Theodora’s sickness— She was pleasant, and conversational as
65 usual, but there is not the ring about her there is about Anne. Howells came in and sat an
66 hour on Sunday, and was very much interested in hearing a Father read some parts of a

67 lecture he is writing on Swedenborg. I don't know when I have seen him so impressed.
68 His poor little wife is near her confinement, which I was very much surprised to hear She
69 has been all summer at Princeton where she found the air very invigorating to her, but
70 from what he says she has none too much strength to meet her trial—
71 Our letters have not come as usual this time— Sunday has so often been our holiday in
72 this respect that we begin to be impatient—

73 With oceans of love to Aunt Kate, and each of you my darling children

74 Your loving

75 Mother

Notes

5 Father dashed off a few lines to you by the last steamer • Possibly Henry James, Sr., to Alice James, 20 August [1872]

16 Grace • Grace Ashburner

19 Sara, Theo, & Arthur • Sara, Theodora, and Arthur Sedgwick

27 Aunt Anne • Anne Ashburner

- 32 one from Harry dated Thusis, Via Mala. Aug 14th • Henry James to Mary Walsh James, [5] August [1872]
- 35 Harry's fourth letter [...] the third • From Henry James's series of travel essays for the *Nation*: "A European Summer. I. Chester" (4 July 1872: 7-9), "A Summer in Europe. IV. Wells and Salisbury" (22 August 1872: 117-19), "A Summer in Europe. III. North Devon" (8 August 1872: 86-87)
- 36 Will's article on Taine • William James's review of *De l'intelligence* by Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893), *Nation* 29 August 1872: 139-41
- 46 M^{rs} Tappan • Caroline Sturgis Tappan
- 51 M^r Child • Francis James Child
- 55 Lizzy • Elizabeth Ellery Sedgwick (Mrs. Francis) Child
- 58 Cousin Helen • Helen Rodgers Wyckoff Perkins
- 61 Henry • Henry Wyckoff, brother of Helen Rodgers Wyckoff Perkins; Henry James called him "insane" in his letter of 27, 28 December 1869, 1 January 1870 to William James
- 68 His poor little wife is near her confinement • Elinor Mead Howells (1837-1910); her daughter Mildred was born in 1872

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