

Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 15 December [1872], from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1093.1 (41)

1 Cambridge

2 Dec 15<sup>th</sup>

3 My darling Harry

4 You may remember that I promised you that I would either write myself, or see that  
5 you got a letter from some one of us every week— You will say that thus far I have  
6 fulfilled my promise, although to the utter putting aside of myself in the matter— Every  
7 time that I have planned to write, I have found some one—else either engaged in doing so,  
8 or anxiously craving the privilege—and <sup>as</sup> I desire that my letter should be the all  
9 absorbing sentiment of the hour at least; I have gladly again and again put myself aside for  
10 another chance— To-day I believe the coast is clear, and I shall enjoy your undivided heart  
11 & ear—

12 Will I believe wrote last, since the receipt of your last two letters, and told you doubtless  
13 how the first Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> (I believe) came two days later than the later date. They were both  
14 sent to Aunt Kate, so I cannot exactly give the dates— We were delighted not to lose the  
15 first, which told us that you were “well and happy; not lonely, and almost busy”— Nothing  
16 could be more delightful to us. The sole regret I have had in your absence thus far, is in  
17 hearing of your bad weather, that you should have lost our lovely autumn and early  
18 winter— Never have we had such abundant sunshine, and genial temperature in the month  
19 of November; and it is only within a week that we have been made to feel that winter is at  
20 hand. The accounts of late of the fearful gales even hurricanes on on the English & Irish

21 coasts are something terrific, and Paris too by the latest telegram had a very serious  
22 visitation of the same <sup>^</sup>kind[<sup>^</sup>]— I drew a long breath when I read it, praying that the fury  
23 of the storm had been spent before it reached ~~before it reached~~ the little Hotel de Rasstadt.  
24 What Will writes about himself may not be as cheering to you, as seeing him would. There  
25 is no doubt some great improvement must be going on, somewhere in him, or he could not  
26 have recovered the perfectly healthy even robust look that he has— His face has grown fat  
27 & ruddy, and all the old feebleness and languor of expression has gone from it— I presume  
28 his nervous system would be strengthened by being for a while in a less stimulating climate  
29 than this— But that just now is impossible, and perhaps even better than a change of  
30 climate may be the experience of staying here and finding that he can do with pleasure the  
31 work that he has got to do— He does not seem at all to dread it, and I have no doubt that if  
32 he finds he can interest his class, which with his fresh and lively way of looking at things I  
33 am sure he will not fail to do, he will find a stimulus in his work that will do him great  
34 good. Alice has found after six weeks experience at home, that the delicious breakfast of  
35 chocolate & roll in the morning does not agree with her as it did abroad. There is doubtless  
36 a stimulus in it which she could bear there but cannot bear here— She has given it up and  
37 is all right again— She continues to seem much stronger than she was before she went  
38 away, but the life here offers her so few distractions, and she has so little spontaneous  
39 activity in a practical way, that I fear she may suffer from the temptation to fall back upon  
40 her books too much— Her journey is still a source of lively and delightful memories to  
41 her, with which “dear Harry that loveliest of beings” is always associated. Father has  
42 written to often of late He seems only pretty well, but much comforted by Alice’s lovely  
43 and loving companionship, which he enjoys more than ever because it is not marred by the

44 old anxiety about her— You have of course heard from Alice and Will all about Aunt  
45 Kate's eyes, D<sup>f</sup> Derby's favorable opinion of them, his discovery of the cause of the  
46 irritation, which is a roughness on the under side of the lid which he thinks can easily be  
47 treated and as well done in N. York as here—

48 Kitty & D<sup>f</sup> Prince are here ^with us[\_] for a few days; having come on to Louise's wedding  
49 which takes place to-morrow morn<sup>g</sup> very quietly in D<sup>f</sup> Ellis' church Boston— The  
50 infatuation of the young man seems inconceivable, and her good-fortune equally hard to  
51 account for— The parents seem deeply sensible of this; Kitty says that it is a marriage ~~for~~  
52 that they could not at all have counted upon for her, and leaves them nothing to desire for  
53 her— She seems to hope much from the good influence of this excellent young man upon  
54 her—

55 Bob writes cheerfully since his return, of the £ more than friendliness of every one to him;  
56 except the Rail-road, which he says is too mean to be kind or reasonable. You have heard  
57 a great deal about little Mary from every one— There is [\_]not[\_] much to learn about her,  
58 I mean that does not appear on the surface— She is sweet and pretty and naturally refined,  
59 frank and not too Western in her manners, and made generally a very good impression—  
60 Alice took to her beautifully, and although she could not make a companion of her, found  
61 she could make a pet— We hear very seldom from Wilky whose matrimonial prospects do  
62 not brighten We hear through Lizzie Boott that the Tweedys have taken an apartment in  
63 Rome for six months— If you are there, which I take for granted you will be, it will be  
64 pleasant to think of you as so near friends— Do study dear Harry great prudence in all your  
65 habits this winter, and remember you cannot take the liberty with yourself you can at home.  
66 We are looking for a letter daily and should not be~~en~~ surprised to hear that you had taken

67 your flight to the “uttermost south”— The poor French when will they be at rest! It is to be  
68 hoped that Thiers will be strong enough to stand, but at the present moment it seems  
69 doubtful.

70 Your Bethnal Green Museum notice is in the last Atlantic and Father mails it to you to-day.

71 What are you doing?—are you finding any new organs The Nation [^]it[^] seems is  
72 overlaid with matter, and cannot be depended upon—

73 I must bring my letter to a close and mail it at once—

74 Oceans of love from each & all

75           Your loving Mother

76 I hear from Aunt K this morning that she is going to lectures & Concerts—and that she has  
77 taken a district in the Widows Society of which I am so glad—

78 What a dreadful swindle has been the failure of Bowles Bros— We hear that M<sup>rs</sup> Andrews  
79 had two years income in their hands! This I think can’t be true—no doubt they have lost,  
80 and any loss to them will be great—

## Notes

- 12 Will I believe wrote last • William James to Henry James, 24 November 1872
- 12 your last two letters • Henry James to Alice James 28 October [1872] and Henry James to Henry James, Sr., [early November 1872]
- 23 Hotel de Rasstadt • Hotel Rastadt
- 45 D<sup>f</sup> Derby • Dr. Richard Henry Derby
- 48 Kitty & D<sup>f</sup> Prince • Katharine (Kitty) Barber James Prince and William Henry Prince
- 48 Louise • Louise Lander Prince
- 50 the young man • Dudley Farley Phelps
- 70 Your Bethnal Green Museum notice is in the last Atlantic • “The Bethnal Green Museum,” *Atlantic Monthly* January 1873: 69-75
- 78 Bowles Bros • Paris banker located rue de la Paix

© This is copyrighted material; reproduction for commercial purposes is not permitted by law except with permission of the copyright owners

To cite this letter, according to MLA style guidelines:

James, Mary Walsh. Letter to Henry James. 15 December [1872]. James Family Papers. Houghton Library. Harvard University. Cambridge, Mass. [Dear Henry James.org](http://www.dearhenryjames.org) Ed. Pierre A. Walker *et al.* 2005. Salem State College. [insert your date of access here] <http://www.dearhenryjames.org>.