

Catharine Walsh to Henry James, 13 January [1873], from New York

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1095 (54)

1 121, West 44th Street.

2 New York. Jan^y 13th

3

4 Darling Harry:

5 Many thanks for your affectionate sympathetic letter of Dec. 1st from Paris.

6 I have heard of you since through Cambridge and the 'Nation'—Your "Parisian Stage"
7 having appeared in the Jan^y 9th issue. It gave new zest to the memory of my one evenn^s
8 at the fascinating Théâtre Français. By this time you are thoroughly settled down in
9 Rome, and it is comforting to think that you are in the midst of friends. 'Aunt Mary's'
10 account of the delicious sunshine they had been enjoying in the early winter makes me
11 tremble a little for the latter part of it. I had a most kind sympathetic letter from her about
12 ten days since, and the fact that it took just a month to reach me makes Rome and you
13 seem very far distant. We are all longing to hear about your Roman quarters, and I want
14 much to know whether you find there the old charm. Your mother writes that you had
15 learned to love Paris before you left it, and I am so glad that you staid long enough to do
16 so. I wish so much that Alice could have had a good long quiet draught of it. To live
17 there for awhile is as soothing, as to hurry through it is irritating. I had a letter from your
18 mother yesterday, giving a good account of them all. Wilk had been making them a four
19 days visit, and was looking well, but a little depressed with monotonous work in a close
20 office—but darling Rob's long lane had at last come to its turning, by an appointment to

21 take charge of the R. R Station at “Prairie du chien”, at a salary of \$1800, with some
22 thing more from a Steamer which connects the road at this point. I remember the place
23 well, as remarkably beautiful in situation, being just where the Mississippi takes a most
24 lovely bend, and the sail through its rapid windings for about a half hour, I found
25 exquisitely picturesque. It is about 8 hours from Milwaukee, and about 10 from St Paul.
26 Rob writes in the loveliest spirit about this change in his life, and at the risk of your
27 having heard it before I will quote from your mother’s letter. “Rob says, that “M^r Holton
28 recommends it, and Mary is willing to go. We both of us feel launched now upon the
29 open sea of life. Perhaps we shall have more foul than fair weather, but whatever it be,
30 there shall never creep into our thoughts any thing but trust and love. It may be that the
31 work will be hard, and the town may be vulgar and dull for Mary, and it may be too, that
32 all will be pleasant and prosperous, but you must always remember that we both have
33 such an asylum of love and hope to dwell in, that where or how we live is a matter of
34 small account.” Isn’t all this delightful! Your mother also writes of Will’s first lecture,
35 which must have been an entire success. He said he felt perfectly self-possessed before a
36 class of sixty, and gave an introductory lecture of an hour without notes, without
37 hesitation and without embarrassment, and succeeded far better than he expected.—Now
38 isn’t this a pleasant account of his “maiden” effort! As news travels fast, I suppose you
39 ^will[_] have heard of M^r John Gray’s engagement to Miss Nina Mason! Your mother
40 says it is the sensation of the day, and causes his friends great surprise. As M^{rs} Lombard
41 and Fanny talk of remaining in Paris this winter,—if the climate suits M^{rs} L.—and in
42 order to save the expense of a journey to Mentone—! you will not be likely to run against
43 one another yet awhile. I am passing my time pleasantly here in N. York.—being a

44 comfort to Cousin Helen, who is as kind and good as she can be. Henry is something of a
45 bore, but one gets used to him after awhile, and never in this world can we have every
46 thing cut and carved to suit our individual tastes and wishes. I find much pleasure in
47 Helen Ripley's companionship. She is as sweet, amiable and graceful as ever. Why
48 some clever fellow, worthy of her, doesn't woo and win her, I marvel daily. We have
49 been attending this winter a most charming course of lectures, or talks I might rather call
50 them, by Prof. Kingsley, on France and Germany. He takes his auditors on delightful
51 tours through these countries, telling them every thing of interest connected with the
52 places through which he passes. His anecdotes and legends are charming. So Louis
53 Napoleon has gone, and the world is unmoved, and the poor bigoted Empress proclaims
54 herself Regent.!! Have you seen or heard any thing of the Van Burens.? We heard some
55 time ago that Ed had gone to Rome immediately on his arrival in Europe; and yesterday I
56 heard that Smith was in an Insane Asylum ^somewhere,[^] his disease 'softening of the
57 brain," having reached a point which demanded this provision for him. I suppose M^{rs}
58 Van Buren's sister must be within reach to help her in such a time of need in a strange
59 land.

60 I saw Henriette Temple in the 5th Avenue the other day. She says she "is out" this winter,
61 and seems the same Henriette as of yore. She is losing her exquisite delicacy of
62 complexion which of course doesn't improve her beauty. I also met yesterday Lucy
63 Washburn with "Kate Valerio".—the latter looking used up—worn out—. I hope Bill is
64 "good to her".—As Frank was to have been married on the 1st of Jan^y I suppose he is now
65 the happiest of men. The Rodgerses are in their "frail ordinary", only perhaps, "more so".
66 Helen has the prospect of spending the remainder of the winter in Nassau with the

67 Rumsey's old Fishkill friends, who are there for change of climate. Miss Marsh whom
68 you may remember as with Kit, is about to marry a M^r Coy of New Haven, to whom she
69 was just engaged before leaving for Europe—no wonder that the getting of letters was the
70 great event of her tour.! Adieu darling Harry. Do let me have a letter now and then, and
71 remember if you are ever in need of the wherewithal, that I should be proud and happy to
72 meet your want, but only on condition that nobody hears of it but myself.—My eyes are
73 giving me less trouble. I use them quite freely, and am in hopes that one of these days I
74 may get over the uneasiness in my right one. Give a great deal of love to Aunt Mary and
75 tell her that I mean to write to her very soon again. I hope she has long ere this got my
76 letter written sometime before I received hers. My love also to M^r Boott who I know will
77 never forget his Berne friend! To M^r Tweedy also much love ever darling Harry Your
78 affectionate “old tante.”
79 Catharine Walsh.
80
81 Cousin Helen sends a great deal of love.

Notes

- 6 your “Parisian Stage” • “The Parisian Stage,” *Nation* 9 January 1873: 23-24.
- 9 Aunt Mary • Mary Temple Tweedy
- 41 Fanny • Fanny Lombard
- 44 Cousin Helen • Helen Rodgers Wyckoff Perkins
- 44 Henry • Henry Wyckoff
- 55 Ed • Edward Livingston Van Buren, son of Smith Van Buren and Ellen King James Van Buren
- 56 Smith • Smith Van Buren
- 57-58 M^{rs} Van Buren • Henrietta Irving Van Buren (d. 1921), Smith Van Buren's second wife
- 63 Lucy Washburn • Sister of Frank Washburn and William (Bill) T. Washburn and sister-in-law of Katharine Sedgwick Valerio Washburn
- 63-64 “Kate Valerio” ... Bill • Katharine Sedgwick (1831-1884), younger sister of Elizabeth Ellery Sedgwick Child, was married twice: to Joseph Valerio and then to William (Bill) T. Washburn (1841-1916), Lucy and Frank Washburn’s brother
- 64 Frank • Francis Tucker Washburn (1843-1873), brother of Lucy and William (Bill) T. Washburn
- 65 The Rodgerses • Alexander Robertson Rodgers (b. 1807), Mary Walsh James’s and Catharine (Aunt Kate) Walsh’s first cousin, and his wife, Mary Ridgely Darden Rodgers (d. 1888); they had eight children, including Katherine (Katie) Outram Rodgers (b. 1841), to whom letters by Henry James survive, and Henrietta (Nettie) Rodgers (1843-1906)

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