

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

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1095 (54)

1           121, West 44<sup>th</sup> Street.

2           New York. Jan<sup>y</sup> 13<sup>th</sup>

3

4 Darling Harry:

5           Many thanks for your affectionate sympathetic letter of Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> from Paris.

6 I have heard of you since through Cambridge and the 'Nation'—Your "Parisian Stage"  
7 having appeared in the Jan<sup>y</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> issue. It gave new zest to the memory of my one evenn<sup>s</sup>  
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<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>rs</sup> Lombard  
41 and Fanny talk of remaining in Paris this winter,—if the climate suits M<sup>rs</sup> 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<sup>rs</sup>  
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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> of Jan<sup>y</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>r</sup> Boott who I know will  
77 never forget his Berne friend! To M<sup>r</sup> 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<sup>rs</sup> 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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