

Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 28 February [1873], from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1093.1(43)

1 Cambridge

2 Feb<sup>ry</sup> 28<sup>th</sup>

3

4 My darling Harry

5 Your letter to Alice Feb<sup>ry</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> has just come in, and we have been assembled  
6 with joyful hearts to hear its blissful contents from the lips of the sympathetic sister who  
7 claims to be the best interpreter not only of the letter but [^]also[^] the spirit of your  
8 letters— This she does at great length for Willy's especial benefit— She bids me say that  
9 she would so gladly write to you if her weak head would permit, but she is obliged to save  
10 herself for other demands upon her; she responds with all her hearts to all your love, and is  
11 full of sympathy in all your enjoyments— Your letter speaks of a long interval ~~in~~  
12 [^]between[^] our letters— I cannot account for this, except to say in apology for myself  
13 that I have just been going through with a domestic bouleversement, and have spent most  
14 of my time for three or four weeks past, in the horse-cars and intelligence offices; and the  
15 little intervals at home in house-work— To such straits have I come through the sickness  
16 of Lizzie and Maria both of whom have given up work for a time; and the worthlessness  
17 and bad faith, of those whom I have ~~got~~ come, or engaged to come, to replace them— I  
18 have had a weeks respite, but will have to-morrow I presume from present indications to  
19 begin again ~~to-morrow~~—

20 You seem to be on the top of the wave socially, and we enjoy much your accounts of your

21 ~~grand~~ dinners and receptions in grand old Roman palaces, and medieval halls and in vain  
22 try in imagination to accompany you; and wonder how you must feel— What gives us  
23 most pleasure is your equestrian experiences— They must do you I am sure a world of  
24 good every way. We rejoice in M<sup>r</sup> Tweedy's recovery; give him my love and  
25 congratulations— I am sorry to hear that the demon of good housekeeping pursues Aunt  
26 Mary even to old Rome. I imagined that that one did not try to keep house there, but only to  
27 live, and that if that unmerciful spirit did ~~appear~~ invade one's peace, it was easily exorcised  
28 by the combined strength of those about you—

29 Alice has just gone out with Sara Sedgwick who has called for her in a sleigh. The air is  
30 soft, and the sleighing good, a rare combination; but this winter has been a festive time for  
31 the lovers of sleighing— The winter has ~~worn~~ a more winty aspect than usual, because  
32 there has been much more snow than usual, and at intervals after melting and freezing very  
33 perilous walking— But we have all enjoyed it, with its bright sunshine, and entire absence  
34 of wind, and no severe storms— New York has had a much harder time I should judge;  
35 every <sup>^</sup>severe[<sub>^</sub>] storm there has been modified before it reached us—

36 Sara Sedgwick is not at all strong, but sweeter than ever. Theodora seems quite like her old  
37 self, and grows decidedly too portly for a ~~single~~ maiden Alice sees them every day, and  
38 they all young and old take great pleasure I think in her visits. Arthur writes that the Nation  
39 has bought out the "Week" a two penny paper in New York and that he is installed editor of  
40 it, with an Office of his own, and \$2500 a year! The labor will not be great, as it is chiefly  
41 fitted with borrowed matter, and he will be able to continue his work on the  
42 Atlantic-Monthly, and Nation, and occasional letters to the Pall-Mall as well. So Arthur  
43 seems to have fallen on his feet. The Nortons have taken passage for early in May for

44 Boston which makes them all feel that the time is very near— It will be good for them all  
45 when it is over Sargy Perry lives in Boston and is at work upon the N. A. R— He dines  
46 ^with us[^] or intends to do so every Thursday. He looks remarkably and is genial and  
47 funny, but always in the same old way. Wendell Holmes dined with us a few days ago. His  
48 whole life, soul and body is utterly absorbed in his last work upon his Kent. He carries  
49 about his manuscript in his green bag and never loses sight of it for a moment. He started  
50 to go to Will's room to wash his hands, but came back for his bag, and when we went to  
51 dinner, Will said don't you want to take your bag with you, he said yes, I always do so at  
52 home— His palid face, and this fearful grip upon his work, makes him a melancholy sight.  
53 He seems cheerful [^]however[^] and said that Fanny was very well. I hear of her at dinner  
54 parties and walking a bitter cold night from their house on the mill-dam to the Museum and  
55 infer she must be as well as ever— There is some talk of their going abroad for a short  
56 time, but whether it is merely the desire of their friends, who think it would be an admirable  
57 thing for both of them, or their own plan I cannot say.

58 Charles Grinnel has come several times to dine and spend the night, and his fine genial  
59 social spirit fills the house with refreshment. He is very much interested in reading father's  
60 books; how profound his interest I do not know, but it is evidently very sincere and  
61 intelligent and a great pleasure to Father— The Fruënds sailed for the Fatherland land a  
62 few days ago— Ellen was more anxious to go they say than the Docter— Life I presume is  
63 easier to her there than here; where the relation between Master and servant is so different.  
64 The Docter could not adapt himself to ours

65 The Ashburner family are living at Arcachson in the south of France— Annie writes most  
66 despondingly of her limited social life; she is however studying French, and singing, and

67 has one friend a Scotch lady who sings with her, and seems to be a consolation to her. I  
68 shall be very glad to hear some thing about the Andrew family, and the truth about their  
69 losses. It is said that Tom Appleton is in commu<sup>^</sup>nication[<sup>^</sup>] with the spirit of his father  
70 seeking counsel as to what “Natty” ought to do in the Bowles business—but “Natty”  
71 believes in the Bowles, and this makes a difficulty—  
72 We have the loveliest letters from Bob— He works very hard rising at 5 o’clk, and having  
73 no rest until 9 in the Even<sup>g</sup>—but seems blissfully happy—  
74 His letters are very bulky, but I can <sup>^</sup>not[<sup>^</sup>] forbear putting in the last, it is so curious and  
75 delightful, and brings dear little Mary so pleasantly upon the scene— Wilky has gone to  
76 Watertown about 1 1/2 hours from Milwaukee— It is a more responsible place than his  
77 present one, and the work is more varied and out of doors—  
78 Pecuniarily it is no better, but he takes it only for a time, being bent on getting into some  
79 other business in Milwaukee. He says he has strong hopes that something will turn up  
80 there for him; for there he will be obliged to stay during M<sup>r</sup> Cary’s life time— Wilky finds  
81 himself in rather a tight place, but I trust he will if patient find his way out.  
82 Will wrote you last week; and Father wrote to Miss Dodge, not having received your  
83 manuscript. I hear much delight expressed in the Madonna of the future, also in your  
84 Middle March article, which was first rate; I am only sorry that it was without your  
85 signature— Father received \$60 for the Bethnal green article; but has received nothing on  
86 your account from the Nation since the \$250 for the first five letters. You have had one  
87 letter, and two other articles since— I presume they send directly to you?  
88 Father bids me say that he will be sure to write you next week—  
89 You will think that this is a real Mother’s scraul— but I know you will like it all the

90 better—

91 Love to the Bootts—Lizzie writes that they have taken passage for home in July—what  
92 craziness! have they forgotten our heat, and the difficulty of knowing where to go. Alice  
93 says, no, they just mean to join us at once wherever we may be, and will no doubt write to  
94 us to provide for them before sailing.

95 Love to Aunt Mary, from whom I have long expected a letter—

96 With love from the whole household

97 Your loving

98           Mother

## Notes

- 5 Your letter to Alice Feb<sup>ry</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> • Henry James to Alice James, 10 February 1873
- 25-26 Aunt Mary • Mary Temple Tweedy
- 36 Theodora • Theodora Sedgwick
- 38 Arthur • Arthur George Sedgwick
- 45 N. A. R. • *North American Review*
- 48 his Kent • Holmes was editing the twelfth edition of James Kent's *Commentaries on American Law*
- 53 Fanny • Fanny Bowditch Dixwell Holmes; she had married Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., on 17 March 1872
- 58 Charles Grinnel • Charles E. Grinnell, an old friend of Henry and William James, Thomas Sergeant Perry, Henry Adams, William Dean Howells, Arthur George Sedgwick, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.
- 61-62 The Fruënds [...] Ellen [...] the Docter • Dr. Maximilian Bernhard Freund (b. 1835), German physician, and his wife, Ellen Washburn Freund, sister of Francis Tucker Washburn, William (Bill) T. Washburn, and Lucy Washburn
- 65 The Ashburner family [...] Annie • Sam Ashburner (b. 1816), brother of Grace and Anne Ashburner, his wife Annie Barstow (1820-1895), and their daughter, Annie (1846-1909), who was a close friend of Alice James
- 65 Arcachon • presumably Arcachon, on the Atlantic coast of France
- 70 Bowles • Bowles Brothers, the Paris banker located rue de la Paix
- 82-83 Father wrote to Miss Dodge, not having received your manuscript • “The Sweetheart of M. Briseux,” which Mary Abigail Dodge had solicited for possible publication in *Wood’s Household Magazine*, but which was published in the *Galaxy* June 1873: 760-79
- 83 the Madonna of the future • “The Madonna of the Future,” *Atlantic Monthly* March 1873: 276-97
- 83-84 your Middle March article • Henry James’s review of George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, *Galaxy* March 1873: 424-28

85 the Bethnal green article • “The Bethnal Green Museum,” *Atlantic Monthly* January 1873: 69-75

86 the first five letters • “A European Summer. I. Chester,” *Nation* 4 July 1872: 7-9; “A European Summer. II. Lichfield and Warwick,” *Nation* 25 July 1872: 57-58; “A Summer in Europe. III. North Devon,” *Nation* 8 August 1872: 86-87; “A Summer in Europe. IV. Wells and Salisbury,” *Nation* 22 August 1872: 117-19; “A European Summer. V. Swiss Notes,” *Nation* 19 September 1872: 183-84

86-87 You have had one letter, and two other articles since • Actually one letter and three articles: “A European Summer. VI. From Chambery to Milan,” *Nation* 21 November 1872: 332-34; “Henri Regnault,” *Nation* 2 January 1873: 13-15; “The Parisian Stage,” 9 January 1873: 23-24; “Laugel’s Notes on Travel,” *Nation* 27 February 1873: 152

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