

Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 27 April [1873], from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1093.1 (46)

1 Cambridge

2 Sunday April 27th

3 My darling Harry

4 We have just risen from our Sunday dinner of oysters cold beef, tomatoes &
5 Apple-pie, I give you the whole carte—but have left out the best part of it; for desert, we
6 had the reading of your last letter to Will, wh father brought in just as we sat down— The
7 period of your happy sojourn in Rome is fast drawing to a close, and to speak the truth I
8 shall be glad when you get safely into a more salubrious climate— Tivoli I presume will
9 be so, being among hills it will be purer and more tonic. You speak strongly of the
10 soporific effect of the climate upon you— I cannot but think, ~~although as you~~ that
11 delicious and soothing as this mild winter has been to you, the invigorating influence of
12 your native frosts is better for the body, and in the long run more healthful and stimulating
13 to the mind too; but of course one cannot consent to count for nothing the benign influence
14 of all the loveliness and ineffable charm of which you speak, which goes with that relaxing
15 languidifying temperature— I shall be glad to hear that the Tweedys and all of you have
16 got safely farther North. I presume as you merely speak of Miss Tweedy's protracted
17 illness that she is not considered in immediate danger— There has been a report here that
18 she was not expected to live— I understand perfectly the ~~state~~ uncomfortable state of mind
19 of the Tweedys for I have so often seen their utter want of decision, their need of some
20 determining influence in their lives—

21 We are beginning to dread as the time approaches the arrival of the Bootts, as if we each
22 had a personal responsibility in the matter— I trust we will escape the care of them this
23 summer, but I am haunted by the fear that they may drop into M^{rs} Channing's house next
24 door, which she is just leaving to go and live with the Childs— M^{rs} Moering has bought it,
25 will improve it, and it will be ready for occupation in the late summer— My hope is that it
26 may be too high a rent for them—

27 Howells sat with Father an hour this morning, talking over his Article on Modern
28 Diabolism which he wants his to curtail as it is too long for the next number. H. says that
29 he cannot find room for yours either, on account of its length, it being 11 instead of 5 or 6
30 pages as he asked for— He says your article is charming, but he will be obliged to let it lie
31 over until the July No. He says he would be very glad to have you in every month, but that
32 it is a necessity that you limit yourself to 6 pages. The North American sent \$65 for your
33 article on Gautier You will not be half as indignant as your friends and admirers here are,
34 when you see the Nation. ~~with~~ The meanness of Dennet in his Notice of your article & His
35 sarcasm are beneath contempt, and ~~is~~ a disgrace to the paper for which he writes—

36 Alice's letter will have reached you giving an account of her N. Y. visit— Aunt K. came
37 back with her for a week. She seemed cheerful, and begged me to tell you that she had
38 written to you and addressed you Hotel de Rome—so look after the letter— [^]Alice's
39 letter was also addressed there—[^]

40 Will has been taking a month of lifting with Mann's Machine with [^]such[^] decidedly
41 favorable results, that Alice had decided to make another trial for ~~ther~~ her head's sake.

42 Immediately after our conversation about it this morn^g, Alice saw Julia Kellogg, who said
43 she was going to leave Cambridge and did not know what she should do with her

44 Machine—would we like to kept it for her?— So we are providentially furnished and I feel
45 sanguine about its being very useful to us all. It has the side lifting, and does not require
46 any change of dress. The Spring ~~hinges~~ [^]holds back[^] in an unusual way. Will came in
47 to dinner, saying he had been sitting for an hour with Sara in the Norton woods, and that it
48 was warm and delicious— The heat will of course come with a leap— Grace A. and Theo.
49 S. have gone to Ashfield to make summer arrangements for the Nortons, and also for
50 themselves. Their hope is to find a house there, and M^{rs} Godkin has proposed taking one
51 with them The Godkins are most afflicted people, and I trust the scheme will not succeed
52 for Sara's sake whose sympathies are already too much taxed.

53 M^{rs} Child has just returned from watching the last hours of her brother M^r Ellery Sedgwick
54 who died apparently of a broken heart. That audacious woman his wife has recently been
55 writing to him that she intends to return—~~and~~ she dictates her own conditions, which are
56 that her daughters shall have no friends who do not receive her— It is thought that much as
57 he must have desired to live to see his children, he had not the strength to meet the coming
58 conflict and died—

59 Our last gaiety was a delightful little family dinner at the Fields. The invitation was so
60 friendly to come by ourselves, Father, Alice & I, with a Rev M^r Denormandie (Unitarian
61 Clergyman from Portland who I think was staying with them) being the party— I never
62 saw M^{rs} F. so natural & sweet, nor F. himself so unexceptionable. We are to entertain
63 to-morrow at dinner, the Aldriches! & Howells.! Don't you wish you were here? I would
64 ask Sargy, but he says that Aldrich always reminds him of a rotten apple— The association
65 at the dinner table would not be agreeable.

66 Since beginning my letter a letter comes from Lizzy Boott asking us to look out for a house

67 in Cambridge for them for a year; and also bidding us take rooms [^]for them[^] in the
68 country wherever we go from the middle of July through Aug. Cool is'nt it? I'm sorry
69 they hang on so, for I fear being with them again this summer may prove fatal to our
70 friendly relations for the future— Your allusions to your ragged underclothing my darling
71 boy fills me with the tenderest longings to get hold of them. We talk much and think more
72 Alice & I especially, about our absent “angel” A. is full of the most vivid memories of all
73 your love and care last summer, and is so eloquent on the subject, that she brings wrath
74 upon Will's countenance, while she brings tears into my eyes. I think she enjoys her
75 journey more and more in thinking it over, and her greatest delight would be to go again
76 and stay longer. This is not to thought of now, but nor will it ever be possible during
77 Father's life time—still it is a great source of pleasure to her both in the past and in the
78 future—
79 I must hurry off my letter, and can only add my maternal blessing— Will told me last
80 evening that he had got rid entirely for last two weeks ~~that has~~ of that nervousness and
81 irritability that he has suffered so much from all winter— I trust the ^improvement[^] will
82 last, for that condition passing away, I do not see why he should not get quite well—

83 Oceans of love from all

84 Your loving Mother

Notes

- 6 your last letter to Will • Henry James to William James, 9 April 1873
- 16-17 Miss Tweedy's protracted illness • In his 26, [27] January 1873 letter to his mother, Henry James mentions that Edmund Tweedy's "brother John Tweedy, with his wife and daughter" were also visiting Rome, and in his 25, 26 April [1873] letter to Alice James, Henry James mentioned that "Mr. & Mrs. John Tweedy ... are still detained here by their daughter's illness. She is now convalescent and sitting up, but she has had a hard time."
- 23 M^{rs} Channing • Mrs. Edward T. Channing (see Mary Walsh James to Alice James, 18 July [1872])
- 24 M^{rs} Moering • Anna L. Moering (see Henry James, Sr., to Henry James, [late] July 1872)
- 27-28 his Article on Modern Diabolism • "Modern Diabolism," *Atlantic Monthly* August 1873: 219-24
- 29 yours either • "A Roman Holiday," *Atlantic Monthly* July 1873: 1-11
- 32-33 your article on Gautier • "Théâtre de Théophile Gautier: Mystères, Comédies, et Ballets," *North American Review* April 1873: 310-29
- 34 Dennet in his Notice of your article • "The North American Review for April," *Nation* 24 April 1873: 288-90, by Harvard teacher and former *Nation* literary editor, John R. Dennett (1838-1874)
- 36 Aunt K. • Catharine (Aunt Kate) Walsh
- 42 Julia Kellogg • Julia A. Kellogg (1830-1914), a disciple of Henry James, Sr. (she published *The Philosophy of Henry James* in 1883) and friend of the family; she would cross the Atlantic in October 1873 on the same ship as William James
- 47 Sara • Sara Sedgwick
- 48 Grace A. • Grace Ashburner
- 48-49 Theo. S. • Theodora Sedgwick
- 51 The Godkins are most afflicted people • Edwin Lawrence Godkin and his wife, Frances Foote Godkin, had recently lost two children
- 53 M^{rs} Child • Elizabeth Ellery Sedgwick Child

53 M^r Ellery Sedgwick • William Ellery Sedgwick (1825-1873); Katharine Sedgwick Valerio Washburn
was also his sister

54 his wife • Constance Irving Brevoort Sedgwick (b. 1828)

56 her daughters • Ellery and Constance Sedgwick had two daughters: Laura Brevoort Sedgwick
(1859-1907) and Helen Ellery Sedgwick (1861-1884)

62 M^{rs} F. • Annie Adams Fields

62 F. • James Thomas Fields

64 Sargy • Thomas Sergeant Perry

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To cite this letter, according to MLA style guidelines:

James, Mary Walsh. Letter to Henry James. 27 April [1873]. James Family Papers. Houghton Library.

Harvard University. Cambridge, Mass. Dear Henry James.org Ed. Pierre A. Walker et al. 2005.

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