

Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 4 August [1873], from St. John

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1093.1 (49)

1 Hotel Victoria

2 St John

3 Aug 4th

4 (My birthday)

5 My darling Harry

6 Behold us established in this truly comfortable house, in this pleasant city,
7 where the Therm—“reaches on an average 68°—and once perhaps during the summer
8 reaches 80°— We arrived here on the Even^g of the 26th in time to receive our family who
9 came in, in good condition about 2 hours later. Alice we found in splendid condition, after
10 the knocking about she had had, and rejoicing more in her gains in in the way, than in the
11 “sunny memories” she had gathered of her journey— If you have received Aunt Kate’s
12 letter written from Quebec, and directed unfortunately to Montreux you will have heard
13 from them during the pleasantest point of their journey— Alice means to write to you in a
14 few days, and you will see for yourself what a good thing it has been for her— Cousin H.
15 & H. R & Henry remained here three days, and we took together a sail up the St John
16 River— It is a fine river, with a good deal of variety in its scenery, but not astonishing to us
17 who know the Hudson— After our friends had left us (which they did for home) the very
18 serious question arose, as to what we were to do with ourselves, ourselves meaning Father.
19 After the experience of our travellers, we were not slow to decide that it would not be
20 possible to take Father any where into the country ^places[^], where the accommodations

21 were so wretched, and every thing was so dead and forbidding— This Hotel seemed the
22 only spot to be thought of where he could stay, and finding that we could make an
23 arrangement by the week at a very reduced price for the month of Aug. we have settled
24 down here, to the full content and enjoyment of each of us. This house is a very fine one
25 under American management, beautifully clean, and in all respects very well kept. We
26 have delightful rooms, looking out upon the harbour & an admirable table for \$15.50 per
27 week! Father seems thoroughly content. He has his table & papers, and books, and
28 extreme quiet in the house; and in this delicious coolness, he can walk about the town, and
29 with the variety there is in the house, has much more exercise and change than at home—
30 There are some pleasant little excursions to be made from this place, and carriage hire is
31 reasonable, Aunt Kate & Alice have had so much travel, that they are too happy to be at
32 rest; so I think we may say that our lives have fallen in pleasant places; to me much
33 pleasanter than I had any hope of finding when I left home— The crowning blessing is the
34 climate (notwithstanding the fogs) and the fact that we have escaped such unprecedented
35 heat at home— So rejoice with us. How much I have longed to have you here, after
36 hearing of your sufferings in your two last letters. You were just packing up to go to
37 Homburg, when you last wrote, and we are longing to hear, whether you found relief
38 there— There may be a letter at home from you, but Will has not been there to send it, and
39 we must wait his movements to get it— We have heard twice from him since we reached
40 here, in excellent spirits; the last from the Atlantic House, where he had gone to get some
41 sea baths. His out of door life for the last few weeks has had a very [] so regenerating an
42 effect upon him judging from his letters, and I am quite at a loss to conceive what his
43 decision will be about his work for next winter He ought to have time to try his power of

44 study before he decides, and his answer will have to be given by the 20th The wiser
45 decision would be to go abroad and rest for a year, but he seems unwilling under the
46 circumstances to do it, unless absolutely forced by a feeling of entire incompetency for his
47 work. ~~to do it~~ Lizzy B. forgot to give or send me Mary's cross before I left, which I was
48 sorry for. We had a lovely letter from Bob since we came here. From what we hear Wilky
49 will probably be married in Oct. and they will live at M^r Cary's. I fear he is not a man
50 whom one would willingly be indebted to, but Carrie and Wilky have had a long time to
51 think about it, and I presume are doing what they think best.

52 The Henrys James were both favorably noticed for their last articles— One very
53 discriminating critic said "M^r H. James' contribution entitled "Roman rides" ~~was~~ is in his
54 usually charming graceful style [^]&c[^]— He contributes ^also[^] another article in quite
55 a different vein entitled Modern Diabolism, which is interesting and very original" You
56 will each soon be groaning under this double weight of honor—

57 The perfection of this Aug. day is some thing wonderful, and for radiance and transparency
58 of atmosphere, something unusual in this place— The Therm stands in our room at
59 mid-day at 68° and as I look out of my window every spire and tree [^]top[^] on the
60 elevated ground that surrounds the harbor stands out in the clearest relief— The city is
61 built on a series of eminences around the harbor, which gives when when the atmosphere
62 permits pretty views at every turn—

63 I enclose Will's last letter which shows his good spirits, and will be gratifying to your fillial
64 heart— All send lots of love of the very first quality only exceeded by that of your loving
65 Mother

Notes

14 Cousin H. • Helen Rodgers Wyckoff Perkins

15 H. R. • Helen Ripley

15 Henry • Henry Wyckoff

36 your last two letters • The first of these is Henry James to Henry James, Sr., 29 June [1873]; the second is a lost letter written, most likely, on 8 July 1873 (see Henry James to Mary Walsh James, 15 July [1873]); it may be a letter that William James says he accidentally tore up (see *The Correspondence of William James* 4: 441)

39 We have heard twice from him • William James to Alice James, 24 July [1873] (see *The Correspondence of William James*, 4: 441-42) is the first of these; the letter from the Atlantic House does not survive

40 Atlantic House • A hotel in Scarborough, Maine

47 Lizzy B. • Lizzie Boott

47 Mary's cross • While in Rome, Henry James had given the Bootts, who were returning to America, a cross to bring home as a wedding gift for his new sister-in-law, Mary Lucinda Holton James; a photograph of Mary Lucinda Holton James wearing this cross is reproduced in Jane Maher, *Biography of Broken Fortunes: Wilkie and Bob, Brothers of William, Henry, and Alice James* (108-109)

53 "Roman rides" • "Roman Rides," *Atlantic Monthly* August 1873: 190-98

55 Modern Diabolism • Henry James, Sr.'s, "Modern Diabolism," *Atlantic Monthly* August 1873: 219-24

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