

Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 18 May [1874], from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1093.1 (55)

1 Cambridge

2 May 18th

3

4 My darling Harry

5 Although I have not written to you so much of late, I believe I have never thought
6 so much about you as since Willy came home. I feel so often that I want to throw around
7 you the mantle of the family affection, and fold you in my own tenderest embrace— It
8 seems to me darling Harry that your life must need this succulent, fattening element more
9 than you know yourself That notwithstanding the charm and beauty that surrounds you,
10 [.]&[.] that so inspires and vivifies your intellectual and esthetic life, your social life, the
11 life of your affections must need the moisture & sunshine, which only home, or the
12 intercourse of a circle of familiar friends can give. I know only one thing that would
13 solve the difficulty, and harmonize the discordant elements in your life—
14 You would make dear Harry according to my estimate, the most loving and loveable and
15 happiest of husbands. I wish I could see you in a favorable attitude of heart towards the
16 divine institution of marriage. In the atmosphere of a happy home of your own, you
17 would thrive in every way, especially if your tent were pitched in Europe; but even in
18 your own less favored land, it would be a blessing to you. You will doubtless exclaim,
19 after getting thus far, what on earth has got into mother! the dear old soul is getting
20 childish, what does it all mean! It means simply that I see so much in favor of your

21 staying abroad, and I feel so much in favor of your coming home, that I am blindly
22 feeling about, for some way of reconciling the difficulty—that is all it means, and we will
23 say no more about it—

24 All is as usual with us. We are engaged more vainly even than usual in trying to find
25 some resort for the warm months— It is quite important that Alice and Aunt Kate should
26 be provided for July & Aug. and the difficulties seem to increase every year— I feel that
27 I must keep myself free that I may go and come with Father at pleasure—

28 Wendell Holmes & his wife go abroad for three months this summer— Essy Lombard
29 sails shortly to look after her mother— Perhaps she may decide to bring her home—
30 Father had a short dull letter this morn^g from Mary Tweedy How strangely her letters
31 always lack inspiration— They were packing up for departure at last for England by the
32 way of N. Germany and Holland— She sent two dreadful photographs of herself— The
33 Bootts finding that our plans were not to be relied upon, secured rooms for themselves at
34 Rye a month ago. M^r Child goes abroad for the vacation, at the earnest instigation of his
35 wife, who is anxious about his health— He has some functional trouble with his heart
36 which gives at times great uneasiness—

37 Miss Ashburner has come back She thinks that England has become very Americanized.
38 The papers this morning are filled with a heart rending accident. Three manufacturing
39 villages in the vicinity of Northampton have been submerged, entirely swept away by the
40 bursting of a reservoir of water, an acre square in size, which supplied the river (when
41 low) which worked their mills. 150 lives are said to be lost and \$1.000.000 of uninsured
42 property destroyed— There was an accident of the same kind occurred in Sheffield Eng,
43 and like this in all the details It is described by Charles Reade in one of his novels.

44 Father has been keeping up quite an animated and to him very interesting correspondence
45 with D^r Grynowsky How charmingly refined and gentlemanly he is in his tone and
46 manner— In a recent letter, I think to Will, he spoke of your looking so remarkably
47 well— For which good news I blessed him— Will is working his way gradually I think
48 into firm health— If we only give him []time[] I believe he will come out all right—
49 He looks as stout and ruddy as any one you'll meet.

50 The news from the West is good Wilky has apparently come to a change of fortune. He
51 writes most sanguinely about their business— They have evidently made a very fair
52 start—

53 Bob's last letter describes the boy seated in his little chair by the front door taking his
54 first lesson in the study of nature— He promises to make all his plans bend to their
55 coming home for a month next winter, when he says he has most leisure—
56 I want you to be sure and look up some little present to bring with you (if you come) for
57 Carrie— I think it will gratify Wilky, and I there is no doubt Mary has exhibited to them
58 her Cross—

59 Great preparations are being made to open the Memorial Hall for the Commencement
60 dinner—previous to which there will be some consecrating services— I have not yet
61 seen it, but it is pronounced to be a great success Very like Westminster and quite as
62 large—

63 Your article on Sienna is in the June A. M. which is just out, and the Independent has
64 been publishing your Florentine notes in scraps, the last two weeks.

65 We hear nothing of your story in the Atlantic— Howells has one of his own ready for the
66 Press, which has greatly absorbed and puzzled him to get through with— Alice wrote

67 you last week— She seems very bright and is rejoicing every day that the summer

68 tarries— Oceans of love from all Your loving

69 Mother

Notes

- 28 Essy Lombard • Apparently the sister of Fanny Lombard and daughter of Mrs. Lombard, often mentioned in the Jameses' correspondence
- 37 Miss Ashburner has come back • Anne Ashburner had been traveling in England
- 38 The papers this morning are filled with a heart rending accident • On Saturday, 16 May 1874, the dam of the Williamsburg, Massachusetts reservoir (a reservoir covering 100 acres), on the Mill River gave way, causing extensive damage and loss of life down stream in the manufacturing villages of Williamsburg, Skimmersville (part of Williamsburg), Haydenville (also part of Williamsburg), and Leeds (part of Northampton). Most of the first page of the 18 May 1874 *Boston Daily Advertiser* was devoted to reporting this disaster
- 42 an accident of the same kind occurred in Sheffield • On 11 March 1864 the Bradfield reservoir dam gave way, inundating a manufacturing valley near Sheffield, killing 250 people and causing £327,000 damage
- 43 Charles Reade in one of his novels • The last chapter of Reade's *Put Yourself in His Place* (1870) describes the Sheffield flood
- 45 D^r Grynowsky • Ernst Georg Friedrich Gryzanovski (see Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 8 December 1873)
- 50 Wilky has apparently come to a change of fortune • See Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 3 April [1874]
- 57-58 Mary has exhibited to them her Cross • See Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 4 August [1873]
- 63 Your article on Sienna is in the June A. M. • "Siena," *Atlantic Monthly* June 1874: 664-69
- 64 your Florentine notes • "Florentine Notes," *Independent* 23 April 1874: 2-3; "Florentine Notes," *Independent* 30 April 1874: 2-3; "A Florentine Garden," *Independent* 14 May 1874: 3-4; another "Florentine Notes" appeared in the 21 May 1874 issue (1-2)
- 65 your story in the Atlantic • "Guest's Confession," *Atlantic Monthly* October-November 1874: 385-403, 566-83

65-66 Howells has one of his own ready for the Press • *A Foregone Conclusion*, serialized in *Atlantic Monthly* July-December 1874: 1-15, 145-60, 345-61, 475-88, 534-50, 641-58

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