

Transcription Guide

All letters presented in DearHenryJames.org begin with a two-line header, supplied by the editors. The first line indicates the names of the correspondents, the date of the letter, and the place of the letter's composition. Square brackets in the date and the place name indicate that these are not stated in the letter but are supplied by the editors. The second line of the header indicates the form of the source text—autograph letter signed (ALS) or unsigned (AL) or typed letter copy of a lost original (TLC)—the name of the manuscript repository (which is always Harvard's Houghton Library for this initial release), and the repository's catalogue information.

In the relatively few instances when an envelope has been preserved with the original letter, DearHenryJames.org provides information on the address written and the postmarks stamped on that envelope in the space between the text of the letter and the explanatory notes.

In a couple of instances, letters include content other than that written by the letter writer, for instance the James Osgood and Co. letterhead stationery that Thomas Sergeant Perry used in his 13 December 1872 letter to Henry James or the newspaper clipping that Henry James, Sr. pasted into his 9 August 1873 letter to Henry James. This content is an integral part of the letter in which it appears, which is why we include it in its appropriate place in our transcription of the letter. And yet it is also distinct from the handwritten part of the letter, which is why we use `this different, Courier New, font` and an explanatory note to render the non-handwritten content.

In editing for publication the 65 letters to James included in the initial release of DearHenryJames.org, we have been guided for the most part by the editing philosophy and procedures used for *The Complete Letters of Henry James*. We have transcribed all the letters from microfilm of the manuscripts or directly from the manuscripts themselves and proofread them in two-person, side-by-side, word-by-word readings of transcripts against copies of the manuscripts, after which we checked each letter a final time against the manuscript. We have attempted to keep endnotes to the minimum we deem necessary to comprehend the letters and to relate them to other surviving letters among the James family and friends. The notes consist of translations of foreign-language words and phrases, identification of works of literature and art mentioned in the letters, citations of other extant letters that the letters mention, and identification of now obscure people, places, and events necessary to comprehension of these letters. When the letters to James in DearHenryJames.org refer to another letter which we do not believe exists any more, we provide no explanatory note. We do not provide an explanatory note either (just a cross reference to the appropriate letter) when an explanation is best provided by Henry James's own letters.

Our approach to editing the letters to James included in DearHenryJames.org follows the principles of plain text editing—with a few exceptions—used in *The Complete Letters of Henry James*, and for details, readers should consult the general editors' introduction to the first volume of that edition. In brief, however, plain text editing seeks to represent in an easily legible form as many of the significant details as possible of the manuscript, without, though, becoming a facsimile of the manuscript. In the past, editors of letters often felt that part of their task was to "clean up" their source

texts, creating what in textual editing theory is called a clear text. This led to such practices as the spelling out of abbreviations, conversion of ampersands to the spelled out word "and," "correction" of writers' slips and even of idiosyncratic characteristics of grammar, punctuation, and style that weren't considered incorrect at the time. We, on the other hand, leave all such matters exactly as they appear in the manuscript. When readers of DearHenryJames.org discover what seem to be errors in the texts of the letters, including omitted and misspelled words, doubled words, or incorrect capitalization, they should assume that those errors are in the texts of the original.

Doubled words often appear at a new line or new page in the manuscript, as the writers begin the new line or page where they ended the previous one. This is the case, for instance, in "Dana's paper is assailing Grant grossly, but but ineffectually" in Henry James, Sr.'s 27 April [1869] letter to Henry James. In the manuscripts the line and page breaks make it sufficiently clear why the repetition occurs. The transcribed letters on the site do not preserve the line breaks in the originals; therefore doubled words can appear in the middle of a line. Readers should nevertheless assume that the doubling usually occurs in the original at a line or page break.

We render as superscripting superscripted content in the manuscripts, which is very frequent within abbreviations and numbers, especially in dates (i.e. 1st or 3rd, D^r or Wth).

Handwritten letters (especially Henry James's) are full of single and multiple underlined text, and plain text editing differs from clear text editing in its handling of underlining. Clear text editors have always treated underlining in manuscript letters as a printer treats underlining in a manuscript submitted for publication: transforming it to

italics. While modern readers are usually familiar with the convention that underlining in a manuscript becomes italics in print, James and his correspondents also used multiple underlining, which has no conventional corresponding equivalent in print. Clear text editors, historically, have resorted to SMALL CAPS or BLOCK CAPS or various combinations of these and italics to render multiple underlined manuscript content. Word processing software, Acrobat Adobe PDF software, and most page setting today, though, easily allow for single and double underlining, and for DearHenryJames.org we have rendered all the underlining in the manuscripts as single or double underlining. Fortunately, none of the 65 letters included in the initial release of DearHenryJames.org contains triple (or more) underlining, which our basic software does not support. Faced with triple, quadruple, quintuple (or more) underlining in any manuscripts to appear in future releases, we will—unless software upgrades should permit otherwise—render *all* multiple underlining as double underlining. We will indicate as much in the introductory pages of later releases. In this initial release, we have been able to render the dotted underlining that Catharine Walsh occasionally uses in her letters as heavy dotted underlining. (For an extensive, detailed discussion of plain text editing, including underlining and paragraph indentation, readers should see Robert H. Hirst's "Editing Mark Twain, Hand to Hand, 'Like All D—d Fool Printers,'" in *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 88.2 [1994]: 157-88, and the editing rationale to the third volume of *Mark Twain's Letters* [Berkeley: U. California P].)

The manuscript letters by and to Henry James include a variety of forms of paragraphing and paragraph indentation. Letter writers do not rely exclusively on an indented new line to signal a new paragraph. Some letter writers, Mary Walsh James in

particular, resort to an unindented new line. This poses an interpretive problem when a sentence begins a new line but the previous sentence ends at the right margin of the previous line; does this mean a new paragraph or not? Readers should beware that in the manuscript they can see that the new sentence begins a new line and therefore *might* be the beginning of a new paragraph. Since our transcriptions do not preserve the line breaks in the originals readers will not be able to notice these few ambiguous instances. By the same token, in the few instances in our transcriptions where the line preceding a new, unindented paragraph ends at our right margin, our readers will not necessarily notice that there is a new paragraph, unless they have recourse to the manuscript.

Some letter writers, Henry James in particular as well as Minnie Temple, indicate new paragraphs not by a new line but with a dash between sentences (though in James's case this is often ambiguous). While this use of the dash in nineteenth century letters was not widespread, it was common enough. Twentieth century clear text editors often suppressed the dashes and inserted their own new, indented paragraphs, but we consider such a practice an unwarranted intrusion on the editors' part. We preserve all dashes and do not begin new lines, indented or not, unless they appear in the manuscript. Readers, however, should be aware of the possible use in letters to and from Henry James of the dash to signal a new paragraph.

When indenting does occur in the manuscripts of the letters in DearHenryJames.org, we use one or more five-space tabs in order to preserve the relative degree of indentation. During the twentieth century, most editors of manuscript letters have standardized the return address, date lines, and closing and signature lines and the indentation of new paragraphs. While the amount of indentation varies considerably

from writer to writer and even from letter to letter by the same writer, we preserve the relative degree of indentation we find throughout each individual manuscript, including in the openings and closings, even in cases where the first line of one new paragraph is indented more than another, as occurs frequently in Charles Eliot Norton's letters.

Plain text editing also treats the documents they represent not as static documents but as texts in the making. Most if not all of the personal letters of the James family and circle of friends and virtually all of the letters included in DearHenryJames.org were composed and sent as written, without being copied out in a clean, final draft. This means that the manuscripts include erasures, deletions, and insertions, and we feel that our readers are best served by including these, since this permits readers to see the composition of the letter unfold, sometimes in clear fits and starts, giving readers, as a result, a unique glimpse into the letter writer's mind. Therefore, we show deletions in the manuscripts made by a single or multiple crossing-out of content with ~~single~~ or ~~double~~ strikethrough (any triple or higher multiple strikethrough, because of the limitations of the software and as with multiple underlining, is rendered as ~~double~~ strikethrough).

James and his correspondents also add content into their letters; they would insert words and phrases above the line, sometimes using a caret and sometimes omitting it, and on occasion they would insert content within a line. For caret material inserted above a line we use an opening caret and a closing bracketed caret [] to render these caret insertions. If a manuscript insertion appears above a line but without a caret we indicate it by setting the material off with a pair of [] bracketed carets []. Whereas *The Complete Letters of Henry James* also indicates manuscript insertions that do not appear above the

line through a textual note, because of the added complication, for DearHenryJames.org we have not indicated such insertions.

Also in order to avoid complication, the editing practice of DearHenryJames.org also differs from *The Complete Letters of Henry James* in not indicating manuscript deletions made through overwriting. Overwriting is the most difficult content to decipher in the manuscript letters to and from Henry James, especially with a high degree of accuracy, and we know of no way to indicate it as overwriting other than through recourse to textual notes. However, if funding and time permit, we will add overwritten content to later releases of this web site.

One challenge of editing the letters of a variety of writers, such as for DearHenryJames.org, is the need to adjust to different letter writing habits. These different habits are idiosyncratic and therefore convey, we believe, something of the individual writer's personality; as a result we have attempted to preserve these differences in our transcriptions. Mary Walsh James, for instance, uses periods and dashes interchangeably as sentence-ending punctuation. Distinguishing her periods, which are but the finest of dots, from her dashes is different from distinguishing those of her novelist son, whose dots are usually short vertical or horizontal (or diagonal) strokes that in his mother's writing we would read as dashes. Furthermore, for all the writers included in DearHenryJames.org we uniformly close up the space before and after dashes, whether between or within sentences. But Mary Walsh James consistently allows substantial space after the dashes that end her sentences (and after other sentence-ending punctuation); because we consider this a significant feature of her letters, we have given two standard spaces after her dashes when they end sentences (but not for dashes within

sentences). Another idiosyncrasy of Mary Walsh James's letter writing is that she often (though not always) treats the right margin of the page as a substitute for the punctuation to end a sentence, thus omitting the sentence's final period or dash. Since line breaks do not usually occur in the same place in our transcriptions as in her manuscripts, readers will find, in our transcriptions of her letters, sentences that end with no punctuation at all. These, however, will be apparent enough, as we always insert two standard spaces between these and the following sentences.

An idiosyncrasy of Charles Eliot Norton's letters occurs in some of the spaces between paragraphs. While Norton indents his new paragraphs, he also occasionally inserts a diagonal line in the tab space between the new paragraph and the line above. We render this line as a two-em dash on a line of its own between the paragraphs.

The letter writers in Henry James's circle of acquaintance also varied considerably in the way they wrote ampersands. James himself wrote a highly abbreviated ampersand that usually looks like a cross between a plus sign and an infinity sign, while other letter writers, like his mother or Charles Norton wrote more complete ampersands. While *The Complete Letters of Henry James* will attempt to print a symbol akin to James's abbreviated ampersand, for the letters in DearHenryJames.org we use a full ampersand systematically, regardless of how full or abbreviated it appears in the manuscripts.