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1872

HENRY JAMES SR. AND MARY WALSH JAMES

20 May [1872]

ALS Houghton

bMS Am 1094 (1773)

5

Algeria May 20<sup>th</sup>

Dearest parents.

I scribble this single line to add to Aunt Kate's, to show you I too am alive & kicking. Our voyage has been prosperous but boisterous, & the ship is decidedly a roller. Alice has suffered somewhat, but on the whole done very well & not at all justified our more exaggerated fears. There are probably twenty women on board, in good health who have fared much worse. She has shewn great courage & patience & has lived as much as possible on deck. She is really a quite tolerable sailor, instead of being the desperate case we imagined. — Land is just in sight: divine vision! — a faint violet silhouette on the horizon. We touch Queenstown tonight & Liverpool tomorrow p.m (Wednesday) I hope in time to land. — I myself have been wonderfully well & not missed a meal at table! I have been useful, for A. K. at first was rather taken down. — I am sure Alice is really better than when she left home & that as soon as we land, she will go up like a rocket. We have had a voyage it would be most unreasonable to grumble at — not a gale, & dry decks. A mean lot of passengers, giving discouraging views of human nature. We will of course write from Liverpool. With much love, ever

H. James jr

Previous publication: *HJL* 1: 283

3.6 Algeria • The *Algeria* was scheduled to leave New York for Liverpool on 11 May 1872 (*Boston Post*, 10 May 1872, 4).

*The Complete Letters of Henry James*

MARY WALSH JAMES

23 May [1872]

ALS Houghton

bMS Am 1094 (1774)

5

Queen Hotel Chester. May 23<sup>d</sup>

Dearest mother.

10

15

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The above is a feeble sketch of the position & circumstances of your exiled daughter. She sits before a great bow=window, looking out into an elegant & verdurous garden. The ivy crowds and clammers in along the edges of the casement; the birds make deafening music in the shrubbery & the high=walled garden is filled with dark rich greenery & mild, moist cloud=broken

sunshine. Behind her sit Aunt Kate & I, driving our respective pens, and not far from a gentle fire, which harmonizes with this English May. The fruit of Alice's present exertions you will doubtless receive with this, but you will not object to a letter from each of us. You will have received the hasty scrawls Aunt Kate & I despatched from Queenstown & learned that our voyage was prosperous and reasonably comfortable. After Queenstown it became as pleasant as anything can be at sea, & as we steamed up the Irish channel between a blue sea & a blue heaven & sat watching the pale chiaroscuro of the Welsh coast through the mild haze, we almost forgot that we had been spending ten days in muttering curses not loud but deep. The voyage then was very fair, as voyages go, and if I could strike a bargain never to fare worse at sea, I shouldn't feel that I was being cheated. Alice bore it really well, with the inevitable abatements; but these were not such as to be fatal to tolerable comfort (from a strictly sea-sick point of view) & she is now not only revived, but ravished & transported by the little (very little as yet) she has already seen. We landed at Liverpool, just at the end of our tenth day & a half, in exact season to turn at last into Christian beds at the Adelphi. We lay long & late on the morrow, but we had time to drive about Liverpool & do various things before proceeding hither. Chief among these was securing a state-room on the Algeria for Oct. 15. We weighed the matter duly & decided that, taking one thing with another we couldn't do better. A. K. & Alice know the ship & its people, its best & its worst & feel perfectly satisfied to try her again. In most points, (in all really essential ones) she is capital I find England just as I left it—still, to American eyes, full of the old world. Our little journey from Liverpool here was full of the native English charm and Alice could not have had a better introduction to English verdure than the blooming garden-scenery which borders the railway. We are here at a singularly agreeable hotel, where we have invested for perfect

*The Complete Letters of Henry James*

rests' & easy chairs' sake in this little & sitting room with its huge  
 clear window giving directly into the quiet & elegant garden  
 whose dark complexity of verdure colors the very light &  
 stillness in which we sit. & The ladies devoted ~~that~~ the remnant  
 5 of afternoon, yesterday, to repose; but I snatched a quiet stroll  
 through the town, into which I shall soon lead them forth; —  
 feeling already qualified to be a valet de place. It is a mighty fine  
 old thing of its kind & there is a certain winding & rambling, &  
 turning & bending two miles of old wall, along which three may  
 10 walk abreast, between a rare old city-view & a great screen of  
 shrubbery, which is about as handsome as need be. I am  
 impatient to close my letter & put Aunt K. & Alice into a cab &  
 dump them in the midst of it all. — I shall write again, a couple  
 of days hence, with further accounts of everything. — I find here  
 15 no news of these twelve days making, save that the Alabama  
 treaty seems haggling on. Oh, for an end of it. — I hope that  
 your prosperity & in Cambridge has been as obstinate. That you  
 fondly miss us, we suspect, but if you could take a look at us, as  
 we sit here, your regrets would be tempered by the fierce pangs  
 20 of jealousy. — We think of you with affection unadulterated by  
 envy & I do hope that I am not inconveniently missed round the  
 house — especially by Willy. I have at any rate the sense of being  
 of great use to my two fair protégées; ~~and~~. Believe in my  
 affection & receive the blessing of your faithful son & brother —  
 25 H. James jr.

Previous publication: *HJL* 1: 284–86

∞

5.2 ~~and~~ • [blotted out]

5.2 ~~fire~~ • [ire overwrites illegible letters]

5.25 ~~taking~~ • [ta overwrites so]

5.26 ~~better~~ • [be overwrites illegible letters]

5.34 ~~where~~ • [w overwrites &]

6.1 & sitting • [s overwrites illegible letter]

1872

- 6.4 ✦ The • [T *overwrites illegible letter*]  
 6.4 ~~that~~ the • [e *overwrites at*]  
 6.6 † — • [— *overwrites ,*]  
 6.17 † in • [in *overwrites †*]  
 6.23 † ~~and~~. Believe • [. *overwrites , and B overwrites nd*]

∞

4.6 Queen Hotel Chester • First-rate hotel connected to the Chester railroad station by a covered passage and about 1 km from the center of the city.

5.5–6 hasty scrawls [. . .] from Queenstown • HJ to parents, 20 May [1872].

5.23–24 a state=room on the Algeria for Oct. 15 • AJ and AK would return to the United States from Liverpool aboard the *Algeria*, departing 15 October 1872.

5.30 journey from Liverpool here • The subject of James's essay "A European Summer. I. Chester" (*Nation* 15 [4 July 1872]: 7–9).

6.7 valet de place • courier.

6.15–16 the Alabama treaty seems haggling on • Since 15 December 1871 international arbitrators from Brazil, Switzerland, and Italy had been meeting with British and American representatives in Geneva; the dispute would finally reach its resolution in September 1872. (See HJ to Grace Norton, 18 April [1869], *CLHJ*, 1855–1872 1: 287.27–28 and note.)

GRACE NORTON

25

24 May [1872]

ALS Houghton

bMS Am 1094 (888)

Chester, Queen's Hotel. May 24<sup>th</sup>

30

My dear Grace:

I stretch out my hand to you from English soil—very English indeed, as you know it to be, if you have visited this wondrous town. It is really no long time since I was reading †

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rejoicing in, your inestimable last letter from Cologne,  
 promising myself daily to answer it worthily, & finally, among  
 the multiplied occupations of my last ten days at home,  
 resigning myself to the prospect of writing my answer here &  
 5 now. Here we are in fact, with a fortnight of ocean & of  
 Liverpool behind us & Cambridge receding as dimly into time as  
 if time too were a huge tumultuous ocean & all experience were  
 sea=sickness. But it is over, for four or five good months, at least,  
 and we have slept in Christian beds & walked on the sweet old  
 10 walls of Chester and are sitting now beside a British hearth  
 looking out into a high=walled British garden, dark with British  
 verdure & the rolling clouds of a cold moist British May. Our  
 voyage was extremely prosperous, tho' somewhat boisterous & as  
 matters go at sea, may have been called fine. My sister got  
 15 through it fairly well, which was my chief anxiety; & I have the  
 pleasure of seeing her not only rested & revived, but ravished &  
 transported by what she finds here. Are you still in Paris or are  
 you in England—or are you en route? Where are you & how  
 are you? Your month in Paris has passed happily, I trust, and  
 20 brought you rest & occupation in all possible measure. Perhaps  
 you are finding it pleasant enough to stay on—in which case I  
 shall be divided between interest and sympathy. I regret a  
 possible postponement of our meeting—yet I hope that  
 whatever pleasantness of circumstance you find may abide with  
 25 you as long as possible. England is fine—but oh! England is  
heavy! I find the same old England I left—full of charm, yet full  
 of <sup>a</sup><sub>[Λ]</sub> duskiness indefinable. The charm however just now gives  
 us plenty to think about & we are enjoying it hugely. Chester is  
 full of it to overflowing & I think exceeds in this way anything I  
 30 saw in England before. I had never been here, & its immediate  
 juxtaposition with Cambridge is not quite so much to its  
 disadvantage as you might suppose. But you probably remember  
 it well.—I could find it in my heart nevertheless to scribble  
 much about it, were I not in demand to attend my ladies on an

1872

expedition to Eaton Hall. I talk about scribbling of these things,  
 my dear Grace, because I conceive that time & experience have  
 already dulled somewhat the acuteness of your immediate  
 trouble. That this has been as far as possible the case with  
 Charles, assure him, with my love, that I earnestly hope—and 5  
 that he has found himself little by little more able to be  
 interested in what the world still has to give him. We shall all  
 have everything to talk about when we meet. I hope to hear  
 from you soon where this is likely to be, if your own plans &  
 movements are at all definite. Ours as yet are very vague, and 10  
 depend on Alice's ~~condition~~ <sup>[A]</sup>feelings. <sup>[A]</sup>We are likely to leave  
 London, as fatiguing, to the last, and to try and dispose of a  
 month, at least, in the country, in the interval. We shall manage  
 a few days in Oxford & shall probably spend a fortnight at the 1  
 Lakes. We had a notion of the North Devon Coast, but my Aunt 15  
 & Alice refuse for the present to hear the mere name of the  
 sea—even far=seen from Devonshire ~~moors~~ <sup>[A]</sup>lanes. <sup>[A]</sup>! Please  
 address me therefore in this uncertainty Brown, Shipley & Co.  
Bankers London. Alice & my Aunt beg to be included in this  
 greeting & send their especially especial & cordial regards. 20  
 Commend me most affectionately to your mother, who has been  
 well enough, I hope, to enjoy Paris somewhat actively. That I  
 have this same good hope for you, dear Grace, I need hardly  
 add—the more since your touching mention in your last letter of  
 those constant limits to your seeing & doing which you have so 25  
 patiently suffered during these years in Europe. Give my love to  
 Charles & Jane & tell them how much pleasure I feel in being  
 near them. Remember my impatience & send me a word as soon  
 as possible.

Yours dear Grace, ever faithfully H. James jr. 30

Theodora told me the name of your Paris hotel, but I have forgotten it & must use Barings.

No previous publication

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8.3 occupations • occu= | pations

8.18 ≠? • [? *overwrites* —]

8.22 sympathy • sym= | pathy

8.23 postponement • postpone= | ment

8.24 circumstance • cir= | cumstance

8.27 duskiness • duski= | =ness

8.33 nevertheless • never= | theless

9.6 himself • him= | self

9.14–15 †Lakes • [L *overwrites* l]

9.20 ~~especially~~ especial • [l *overwrites* l and *blotted* ly]

9.31–32 Theodora [. . .] Barings. • [*written across the letter's first page*]

∞

8.1–19 from Cologne [. . .] Are you still in Paris [. . .] Your month in Paris has passed happily • After the death of Susan Sedgwick Norton, the Nortons decided to return sooner than originally planned to the United States. They therefore left Dresden in April 1872 and, with a stop in Halle, made their way to Paris. Their intention was to stay there for a few weeks and then spend the summer in England before embarking for Boston in the fall. However, they learned that the Gurneys were not prepared to vacate the Nortons' home, Shady Hill, before their lease expired in the spring of 1873 (Turner 248). As a result, the Nortons stayed in Paris until June, then moved to the suburb of Saint-Germain-en-Laye; they would spend the last weeks of September in Paris and then travel to England in early October. They finally departed from Liverpool for the United States on 15 May 1873.

9.1 Eaton Hall • Manor house belonging to the Marquis of Westminster located 5.5 km south of Chester. Its art gallery includes several paintings by Peter Paul Rubens.

9.31 Theodora • Theodora Sedgwick; see *CLHJ*, 1855–1872 2: 393.