ГЕНРИ ДЖЕЙМС

THE LETTERS OF HENRY JAMES. VOL. I

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Содержание

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN Henry James wrote the reminiscences of his youth he shewed conclusively, what indeed could be doubtful to none who knew him, that it would be impossible for anyone else to write his life. His life was no mere succession of facts, such as could be compiled and recorded by another hand; it was a densely knit cluster of emotions and memories, each one steeped in lights and colours thrown out by the rest, the whole making up a picture that no one but himself could dream of undertaking to paint. Strictly speaking this may be true of every human being; but in most lives experience is taken as it comes and left to rest in the memory where it happens to fall. Henry James never took anything as it came; the thing that happened to him was merely the point of departure for a deliberate, and as time went on a more and more masterly, creative energy, which could never leave a sight or sound of any kind until it had been looked at and listened to with absorbed attention, pondered in thought, linked with its associations, and which did not spend itself until the

remembrance had been crystallised in expression, so that it could then be appropriated like a tangible object. To recall his habit of talk is to become aware that he never ceased creating his life in this way as it was lived; he was always engaged in the poetic fashioning of experience, turning his share of impressions into rounded and lasting images. From the beginning this had been his only method of dealing with existence, and in later years it even meant a tax upon his strength with which he had consciously to reckon. Not long before his death he confessed that at last he found himself too much exhausted for the 'wear and tear of discrimination'; and the phrase indicates the strain upon him of the mere act of living. Looked at from without his life was uneventful enough, the even career of a man of letters, singularly fortunate in all his circumstances. Within, it was a cycle of vivid and incessant adventure, known only to himself except in so far as he himself put it into words. So much of it as he left unexpressed is lost, therefore, like a novel that he might have written, but of which there can now be no question, since its only possible writer is gone.

Fortunately a great part of it survives in his letters, and it is of these that his biography must be composed. The material is plentiful, for he was at all times a copious letter-writer, overflowing into swift and easy improvisation to his family and to the many friends with whom he corresponded regularly. His letters have been widely preserved, and several thousands of them have passed through my hands, ranging from his twenty-

fifth year until within a few days of his last illness. They give as complete a portrait of him as we can now hope to possess. His was a nature in which simplicity and complexity were very curiously contrasted, and it would need all his own power of fusing innumerable details into coherency to create a picture that would seem sufficient to those who knew him. Yet even his letters, varied as they are, give full expression to one side of his life only, the side that he shewed to the world he lived in and loved. After all the prodigal display of mind that is given in these volumes, the free outpouring of curiosity and sympathy and power, a close reader must still be left with the sense that something, the most essential and revealing strain, is little more than suggested here and there. The daily drama of his work, with all the comfort and joy it brought him, does not very often appear as more than an undertone to the conversation of the letters. It was like a mystery to which he was dedicated, but of which he shrank from speaking quite openly. Much as he always delighted in sociable communion, citizen of the world, child of urbanity as he was, all his friends must have felt that at heart he lived in solitude and that few were ever admitted into the inner shrine of his labour. There it was nevertheless that he lived most intensely and most serenely. In outward matters he was constantly haunted by anxiety and never looked forward with confidence; he was of those to whom the future is always ominous, who dread the treachery of apparent calm even more than actual ill weather. It was very different in the presence of his work. There he never

knew the least failure of assurance; he threw his full weight on the belief that supported him and it was never shaken.

That belief was in the sanctity and sufficiency of the life of art. It was a conviction that needed no reasoning, and he accepted it without question. It was absolute for him that the work of the imagination was the highest and most honourable calling conceivable, being indeed nothing less than the actual creation of life out of the void. He did not scruple to claim that except through art there is no life that can be known or appraised. It is the artist who takes over the deed, so called, from the doer, to give it back again in the form in which it can be seen and measured for the first time; without the brain that is able to close round the loose unappropriated fact and render all its aspects, the fact itself does not exist for us. This was the standard below which Henry James would never allow the conception of his office to drop, and he had the reward of complete exemption from any chill of misgiving. His life as a creator of art, alone with his work, was one of unclouded happiness. It might be hampered and hindered by external accidents, but none of them could touch the real core of his security, which was his faith in his vocation and his knowledge of his genius. These certainties remained with him always, and he would never trifle with them in any mood. His impatience with argument on the whole aesthetic claim was equally great, whether it was argument in defence of the sanctuary or in profanation of it. Silence, seclusion, concentration, he held to be the only fitting answer for an artist.

He disliked the idea that the service of art should be questioned and debated in the open, still more to see it organised and paraded and publicly celebrated, as though the world could do it any acceptable honour. He had as little in common with those who would use the artistic profession to persuade and proselytise as with those who would brandish it defiantly in the face of the vulgar.

Thus it is that he is seldom to be heard giving voice to the matters which most deeply occupied him. He preferred to dwell with them apart and to leave them behind when he emerged. Sometimes he would drop a word that shewed what was passing beneath; sometimes, on a particular challenge, or to one in whom he felt an understanding sympathy, he would speak out with impressive authority. But generally he liked to enter into other people's thought and to meet them on their own ground. There his natural kindliness and his keen dramatic interest were both satisfied at once. He enjoyed friendship, his letters shew how freely and expansively; and with his steady and vigilant eye he watched the play of character. He was insatiable for anything that others could give him from their personal lives. Whatever he could seize in this way was food for his own ruminating fancy; he welcomed any grain of reality, any speck of significance round which his imagination could pile its rings. It was very noticeable how promptly and eagerly he would reach out to such things, as they floated by in talk; it was as though he feared to leave them to inexpert hands and felt that other people could hardly be

trusted with their own experience. He remembered how much of his time he had spent in exploring their consciousness when he spoke of himself as a confirmed spectator, one who looked on from the brink instead of plunging on his own account; but if this seemed a pale substitute for direct contact he knew very well that it was a much richer and more adventurous life, really, than it is given to most people to lead. There is no life to the man who does not feel it, no adventure to the man who cannot see the whole of it; the greatest share goes to the man who can taste it most fully, however it reaches him. Henry James might sometimes look back, as he certainly did, with a touch of ruefulness in reflecting on all the experience he had only enjoyed at second hand; but he could never doubt that what he had he possessed much more truly than any of those from whom he had taken it. There was no hour in which he was not alive with the whole of his sensibility; he could scarcely persuade himself that he might have had time for more. And indeed at other moments he would admit that he had lived in the way that was at any rate the right way for him. Even his very twinges of regret were not wasted; like everything else they helped to swell the sum of life, as they did to such purpose for Strether, the 'poor sensitive gentleman' of *The Ambassadors*, whose manner of living was very near his creator's.

These letters, then, while they shew at every point the abundant life he led in his surroundings, have to be read with the remembrance that the central fact of all, the fact that gave

everything else its meaning to himself, is that of which least is told. The gap, moreover, cannot be filled from other sources; he seems to have taken pains to leave nothing behind him that should reveal this privacy. He put forth his finished work to speak for itself and swept away all the traces of its origin. There was a high pride in his complete lack of tenderness towards the evidence of past labour—the notes, manuscripts, memoranda that a man of letters usually accumulates and that shew him in the company of his work. It is only to the stroke of chance which left two of his novels unfinished that we owe the outspoken colloquies with himself, since published, over the germination of those stories—a door of entry into the presence of his imagination that would have been summarily closed if he had lived to carry out his plan. And though in the prefaces to the collected edition of his works we have what is perhaps the most comprehensive statement ever made of the life of art, a *biographia literaria* without parallel for fulness and elaboration, he was there dealing with his books in retrospect, as a critic from without, analysing and reconstructing his own creations; or if he went further than this, and touched on the actual circumstances of their production, it was because these had for him the charm of an old romance, remote enough to be recalled without indiscretion. So it is that while in a sense he was the most personal of writers—for he could not put three words together without marking them as his own and giving them the very ring of his voice—yet, compared with other such deliberate craftsmen as Stevenson or Gustave Flaubert, he baffles

and evades curiosity about the private affairs of his work. If curiosity were merely futile it would be fitting to suppress the chance relic I shall offer in a moment—for it so happens that a single glimpse of unique clarity is open to us, revealing him as no one saw him in his life. But the attempt to picture the mind of an artist is only an intrusion if it is carried into trivial and inessential things; it can never be pushed too far, as Henry James would have been the first to maintain, into a real sharing of his aesthetic life.

The relic in question consists of certain pencilled pages, found among his papers, in which he speaks with only himself for listener. They belong to the same order as the notes for the unfinished novels, but they are even more informal and confidential. Nothing else of the kind seems to have survived; the schemes and motives that must have swarmed in his brain, far too numerously for notation, have all vanished but this one. At Rye, some years before the end, he began one night to feel his way towards a novel which he had in mind—a subject afterwards abandoned in the form projected at first. The rough notes in which he casts about to clear the ground are mostly filled with the mere details of his plan—the division of the action, the characters required, a tentative scenario. These I pass over in order to quote some passages where he suddenly breaks away, leaves his imaginary scene, and surrenders to the awe and wonder of finding himself again, where he has so often stood before, on the threshold and brink of creation. It is as though for once, at an hour of midnight silence and solitude, he opened the innermost

chamber of his mind and stood face to face with his genius. There is no moment of all his days in which it is now possible to approach him more closely. Such a moment represented to himself the pith of life—the first tremor of inspiration, in which he might be almost afraid to stir or breathe, for fear of breaking the spell, if it were not that he goes to meet it with a peculiar confidence.

> I take this up again after an interruption—I in fact throw myself upon it under the *secousse* of its being brought home to me even more than I expected that my urgent material reasons for getting settled at productive work again are of the very most imperative. Je m'entends—I have had a discomfiture (through a stupid misapprehension of my own indeed;) and I must now take up projected tasks—this long time *entrevus* and brooded over, with the firmest possible hand. I needn't expatiate on this—on the sharp consciousness of this hour of the dimly-dawning New Year, I mean; I simply make an appeal to all the powers and forces and divinities to whom I've ever been loyal and who haven't failed me yet—after all: never, never yet! Infinitely interesting—and yet somehow with a beautiful sharp poignancy in it that makes it strange and rather exquisitely formidable, as with an unspeakable deep agitation, the whole artistic question that comes up for me in the train of this idea … of the *donnée* for a situation that I began here the other day to fumble out. I mean I come back, I come back yet again and again, to my only seeing it in the dramatic way—as I can only see everything and

anything now; the way that filled my mind and floated and uplifted me when a fortnight ago I gave my few indications to X. Momentary side-winds—things of no real authority—break in every now and then to put their inferior little questions to me; but I come back, I come back, as I say, I all throbbingly and yearningly and passionately, oh mon bon, come back to this way that is clearly the only one in which I can do anything now, and that will open out to me more and more, and that has overwhelming reasons pleading all beautifully in its breast. What really happens is that the closer I get to the problem of the application of it in any particular case, the more I get *into* that application, so that the more doubts and torments fall away from me, the more I know where I am, the more everything spreads and shines and draws me on and I'm justified of my logic and my passion.... Causons, causons, mon bon—oh celestial, soothing, sanctifying process, with all the high sane forces of the sacred time fighting, through it, on my side! Let me fumble it gently and patiently out—with fever and fidget laid to rest—as in all the old enchanted months! It only looms, it only shines and shimmers, *too* beautiful and too interesting; it only hangs there too rich and too full and with too much to give and to pay; it only presents itself too admirably and too vividly, too straight and square and vivid, as a little organic and effective Action....

Thus just these first little wavings of the oh so tremulously passionate little old wand (now!) make for me, I feel, a sort of promise of richness and beauty and variety; a sort of portent of the happy presence of the elements. The

> good days of last August and even my broken September and my better October come back to me with their gage of divine possibilities, and I welcome these to my arms, I press them with unutterable tenderness. I seem to emerge from these recent bad days—the fruit of blind accident—and the prospect clears and flushes, and my poor blest old Genius pats me so admirably and lovingly on the back that I turn, I screw round, and bend my lips to passionately, in my gratitude, kiss its hands.

To the exaltation of this wonderful unbosoming he had been brought by fifty years of devout and untiring service. Where so little is heard of it all, the amount of patience and energy that he had consecrated to it might easily be mistaken. His immense industry all through his crowded London years passes almost unnoticed, so little it seems to conflict with this life in the world, his share in which, with the close friendships he formed and the innumerable relations he cultivated, could have been no fuller if he had had nothing to do but to amuse himself with the spectacle. In one way, however, it is possible to divine how heavily the weight of his work pressed on him. The change that divides the general tone and accent of his younger and middle age from that of his later years is too striking to be overlooked. The impression is unmistakeable that for a long while, indeed until he was almost an old man, he felt the constant need of husbanding and economising his resources; so that except to those who knew him intimately he was apt to seem a little cold and cautious, hesitating to commit himself freely or to allow

promiscuous claims. Later on all this was very different. There were certain habits of reserve, perhaps, that he never threw off; all his friends remember, for example, how carefully he distinguished the different angles of his affection, so to call them —adjusting his various relations as though in fear lest they should cross each other and form an embarrassing complexity. Yet any scruples or precautions of this sort that still hung about him only enhanced the large and genial authority of his presence. There seemed to have come a time when after long preparation and cogitation he was able to relax and to enjoy the fruit of his labour. Not indeed that his labour was over; it never was that, while strength lasted; but he gave the effect of feeling himself to be at length completely the master of his situation, at ease and at home in his world. The new note is very perceptible in the letters, which broaden out with opulent vigour as time goes on, reaching their best comparatively late.

That at last he felt at home was doubtless indeed the literal truth, and it was enough to account for this ample liberation of spirit. His decision to settle in Europe, the great step of his life, was inevitable, though it was not taken without long reflection; but it was none the less a decision for which he had to pay heavily, as he was himself very well aware. If he regarded his own part as that of an onlooker, the sense in which he understood observation was to the highest degree exacting. He watched indeed, but he watched with every faculty, and he intended that every thread of intelligence he could throw out to seize the truth of the old

historic world should be as strong as instruction, study, general indoctrination could make it. It would be useless for him to live where the human drama most attracted him unless he could grasp it with an assured hand; and he could never do this if he was to remain a stranger and a sojourner, merely feeding on the picturesque surface of appearances. To justify his expatriation he must work his own life completely into the texture of his new surroundings, and the story of his middle years is to be read as the most patient and laborious of attempts to do so. Its extraordinary success need hardly be insisted on; its failure, necessary and foredoomed, from certain points of view, is perhaps not less obvious. But the great fact of interest is the sight of him taking up the task with eyes, it is needless to say, fully open to all its demands, and never resting until he could be certain of having achieved all that was possible. So long as he was in the thick of it, the task occupied the whole of his attention. He took it with full seriousness; there never was a scholar more immersed in research than was Henry James in the study of his chosen world. There were times indeed when he might be thought to take it even more seriously than the case required. The world is not used to such deference from a rare critical talent, and it certainly has much less respect for its own standards than Henry James had, or seemed to have. His respect was of course very freely mingled with irony, and yet it would be rash to say that his irony preponderated. He probably felt that this, in his condition, was a luxury which he could only afford within limits. He could never forget that he had

somehow to make up to himself for arriving as an alien from a totally different social climate; for his own satisfaction he had to wake and toil while others slept, keeping his ever-ready and rebellious criticism for an occasional hour of relief.

The world with which he thus sought to identify himself was a small affair, by most of our measurements. It was a circle of sensibilities that it might be easy to dismiss as hypertrophied and over-civilised, too deeply smothered in the veils of artificial life to repay so much patient attention. Yet the little world of urbane leisure satisfied him because he found a livelier interest, always, in the results and effects and implications of things than in the groundwork itself; so that the field of study he desired was that in which initial forces had travelled furthest from their prime, passing step by step from their origin to the level where, diffused and transformed, they were still just discernible to acute perception. It is not through any shy timidity that so often in his books he requires us to infer the presence of naked emotion from the faintest stirrings of an all but unruffled surface; it is because these monitory signals, transmitted from so far, tell a story that would be weakened by a directer method. The tiny movement that is the last expression of an act or a fact carries within it the history of all it has passed through on the way—a treasure of interest that the act, the fact in itself, had not possessed. And so in the social scene, wherever its crude beginnings have been left furthest behind, wherever its forms have been most rubbed and toned by the hands of succeeding generations, there he found, not

an obliteration of sharp character, but a positive enhancement of it, with the whole of its past crowded into its bosom. The kind of life, therefore, that might have been thought too trifling to bear the weight of his grave and powerful scrutiny was exactly the life that he pursued for its expressive value. He clung to civilisation, he was faithful throughout to a few yards of town-pavement, not because he was scared by the rough freedom of the wild, but rather because he was impatient of its insipidity. He is very often to be heard crying out against the tyrannous claims of his world, when they interfere with his work, his leisure, his health; but at the moment of greatest revulsion he never suggests that the claims may be fraudulent after all, or that this small corner of modernity is not the best and most fruitful that the age has to shew.

It must be a matter of pride to an English reader that this corner happened to be found among ourselves. Henry James came to London, however, more by a process of exhaustion than by deliberate choice, and plenty of chastening considerations for a Londoner will appear in his letters. If he elected to live among thick English wits rather than in any nimbler atmosphere, it was at first largely because English ways and manners lay more open to an explorer than the closer, compacter societies of the mainland. Gradually, as we know well, his affection was kindled into devoted loyalty. It remained true, none the less, that with much that is common ground among educated people of our time and place he was never really in touch.

One has only to think of the part played, in the England he frequented, by school and college, by country-homes, by church and politics and professions, to understand how much of the ordinary consciousness was closed to him. Yet it is impossible to say that these limitations were imposed on him only because he was a stranger among strangers; they belonged to the conditions of his being from much further back. They were implied in his queer unanchored youth, in which he and his greatly gifted family had been able to grow in the free exercise of their talents without any of the foundations of settled life. Henry James's genius opened and flourished in the void. His ripe wisdom and culture seemed to have been able to dispense entirely with the mere training that most people require before they can feel secure in their critical outlook and sense of proportion. There could be no better proof of the fact that imagination, if only there is enough of it, will do the work of all the other faculties unaided. Whatever were the gaps in his knowledge—knowledge of life generally, and of the life of the mind in particular—his imagination covered them all. And so it was that without ever acquiring a thousand things that go to the making of a full experience and a sound taste, he yet enjoyed and possessed everything that it was in them to give.

His taste, indeed, his judgment of quality, seems to have been bestowed upon him in its essentials like a gift of nature. From the very first he was sure of his taste and could account for it. His earliest writing shews, if anything, too large a portion of

tact and composure; a critic might have said that such a perfect control of his means was not the most hopeful sign in a young author. Henry James reversed the usual procedure of a beginner, keeping warily to matter well within his power of management—and this is observable too in his early letters—until he was ready to deal with matter more robust. In his instinct for perfection he never went wrong—never floundered into raw enthusiasms, never lost his way, never had painfully to recover himself; he travelled steadily forward with no need of guidance, enriching himself with new impressions and wasting none of them. He accepted nothing that did not minister in some way to the use of his gifts; whatever struck him as impossible to assimilate to these he passed by without a glance. He could not be tempted by any interest unrelated to the central line of his work. He had enough even so, he felt, to occupy a dozen lives, and he grudged every moment that did not leave its deposit of stuff appropriate to his purpose. The play of his thought was so ample and ardent that it disguised his resolute concentration; he responded so lavishly and to so much that he seemed ready to take up and transform and adorn whatever was offered him. But this in truth was far from the fact, and by shifting the recollection one may see the impatient gesture with which he would sweep aside the distraction that made no appeal to him. It was natural that he should care nothing for any abstract speculation or inquiry; he was an artist throughout, desiring only the refracted light of human imperfection, never the purity of colourless reason. More

surprising was his refusal, for it was almost that, of the appeal of music—and not wordless music only, but even the song and melody of poetry. It cannot be by accident that poetry scarcely appears at all in such a picture of a literary life as is given by his letters. The purely lyrical ear seems to have been strangely sealed in him—he often declared as much himself. And poetry in general, though he could be deeply stirred by it, he inclined to put away from him, perhaps for the very reason that it meant too forcible a deflection from the right line of his energy. All this careful gathering up of his powers, in any case, this determined deafness to irrelevant voices, gave a commanding warrant to the critical panoply of his later life. His certainty and consistency, his principle, his intellectual integrity—by all these the pitch of his opinions, wherever he delivered them, reached a height that was unforgettably impressive.

I have tried to touch, so far as possible, on the different strains in Henry James's artistic experience; but to many who read these letters it will be another aspect altogether that his name first recalls. They will remember how much of his life was lived in his relations with his countless friends, and how generously he poured out his best for them. But if, as I have suggested, much of his mind appears fitfully and obscurely in his letters, this side is fully irradiated from first to last. Never, surely, has any circle of friendship received so magnificent a tribute of expressed affection and sympathy. It was lavished from day to day, and all the resources of his art were drawn upon to present it with

due honour. As time goes on a kind of personal splendour shines through the correspondence, which only becomes more natural, more direct a communication of himself, as it is uttered with increasing mastery. The familiar form of the letter was changed under his hand into what may really be called a new province of art, a revelation of possibilities hitherto unexplored. Perfect in expression as they are, these letters are true extemporisations, thrown off always at great speed, as though with a single sweep of the hand, for all their richness of texture and roundness of phrase. At their most characteristic they are like free flights of virtuosity, flung out with enjoyment in the hours of a master's ease; and the abundance of his creative vigour is shewn by the fact that there should always be so much more of it to spare, even after the exhausting strain of his regular work. But the greater wonder is that this liberal gesture never became mechanical, never a fixed manner displayed for any and all alike, without regard to the particular mind addressed. Not for a moment does he forget to whom he is speaking; he writes in the thought of his correspondent, always perceptibly turning to that relation, singled out for the time from all the rest. Each received of his best, but some peculiar, inalienable share in it.

If anything can give to those who did not know him an impression of Henry James's talk, it will be some of the finest of these later letters. One difference indeed is immediately to be marked. His pondering hesitation as he talked, his search over the whole field of expression for the word that should do justice

to the picture forming in his mind—this gives place in the letters to a flow unchecked, one sonorous phrase uncoiling itself after another without effort. Pen in hand, or, as he finally preferred, dictating to his secretary, it was apparently easier for him to seize upon the images he sought to detach, one by one, from the clinging and populous background of his mind. In conversation the effort seemed to be greater, and save in rare moments of exceptional fervour—no one who heard him will forget how these recurred more and more in the last year of his life, under the deep excitement of the war—he liked to take his time in working out his thought with due deliberation. But apart from this, the letters exactly reflect the colour and contour of his talk—his grandiose courtesy, his luxuriant phraseology, his relish for some extravagantly colloquial turn embedded in a Ciceronian period, his humour at once so majestic and so burly. Intercourse with him was not quite easy, perhaps; his style was too hieratic, too richly adorned and arrayed for that. But it was enough to surrender simply to the current of his thought; the listener felt himself gathered up and cared for—felt that Henry James assumed all the responsibility and would deal with the occasion in his own way. That way was never to give a mere impersonal display of his own, but to create and develop a reciprocal relation, to both sides of which he was more than capable of doing the fullest justice. No words seem satisfactory in describing the dominance he exerted over any scene in which he figured—yet exerted by no over-riding or ignoring of the presence of others, rather with

the quickest, most apprehending susceptibility to it. But better than by any description is this memory imparted by the eloquent roll and ring of his letters.

He grew old in the honour of a wide circle of friends of all ages, and of a public which, if small, was deeply devoted. He stood so completely outside the evolution of English literature that his position was special and unrelated, but it was a position at last unanimously acknowledged. Signs of the admiration and respect felt for him by all who held the belief in the art of letters, even by those whose line of development most diverged from his —these he unaffectedly enjoyed, and many came to him. None the less he knew very well that in all he most cared for, in what was to him the heart and essence of life, he was solitary to the end. However much his work might be applauded, the spirit of rapt and fervent faith in which it was conceived was a hermitage, so he undoubtedly felt, that no one else had perceived or divined. His story of the Figure in the Carpet was told of himself; no one brought him what he could accept as true and final comprehension. He could never therefore feel that he had reached a time when his work was finished and behind him. Old age only meant an imagination more crowded than ever, a denser throng of shapes straining to be released before it was too late. He bitterly resented the hindrances of ill-health, during some of his last years, as an interruption, a curtailment of the span of his activity; there were so many and so far better books that he still wished to write. His interest in life, growing rather

than weakening, clashed against the artificial restraints, as they seemed, of physical age; whenever these were relaxed, it leaped forward to work again. The challenge of the war with Germany roused him to a height of passion he had never touched before in the outer world; and if the strain of it exhausted his strength, as well it might, it gave him one last year of the fullest and deepest experience, perhaps, that he had ever known. It wore out his body, which was too tired and spent to live longer; but he carried away the power of his spirit still in its prime.

NOTE

The best thanks of the editor are due to Henry James's family, and particularly to his niece, Mrs. Bruce Porter, for much valuable help. Mrs. Porter undertook the collecting and copying of all the letters addressed to correspondents in America; and it is owing to her that the completion of these volumes, inevitably hindered by the war, has not been further delayed.

I
FIRST EUROPEAN YEARS (1869-74)

THE letters in this section take up the story of Henry James's life at the exact point to which he brought it in the second instalment of his reminiscences, *Notes of a Son and Brother*. It will be remembered that the third volume, *The Middle Years*, of which only a fragment was written, opens with his arrival in England in February 1869; and the first letter here printed is dated from London a few days later. But in evoking his youth it was no part of Henry James's design to write a consecutive tale, and the order of dates and events is constantly obscured in the abundance of his memories. For convenience, therefore, a brief summary may be given of the course of his early years.

Henry James was born on April 15, 1843, at 2 Washington Place, New York. He was the second child of his parents, the elder by a year being his brother William. The younger members of the family were Wilkinson ('Wilky'), Robertson ('Bob'), and Alice. Their father Henry James the elder, was a man whose striking genius has never received full justice except at the hands of his illustrious sons, though from them with profound and affectionate admiration. He was the most brilliant of a remarkable group of many brothers and sisters, whose portraits,

or some of them, are sketched in *A Small Boy and Others*. Originally of Irish descent, the James family had been settled for a couple of generations in the State of New York, and in particular at Albany. The founder of the American branch had been a prosperous man of business, whose successful career left him in a position to bequeath to his numerous descendants a fortune large enough to enable them all to live in complete independence of the commercial world. Henry James the elder has been sometimes described as 'the Reverend,' but in fact he never occupied any position but that of a detached philosopher, lecturer, man of letters. To his brothers and their extensive progeny he was a trusted and untiring moral support of a kind that many of them distinctly needed; the bereavements of the family were many, their misfortunes various, and his genial charity and good faith were an inexhaustible resource. His wife was Mary Walsh. She too belonged to a substantial New York family, of Scotch origin, several members of which are commemorated in *A Small Boy*. Her sister Katharine was for many years an inmate of the elder Henry's household, and to the end of her life the cherished friend of his children.

The second Henry James has left so full and vivid a portrait of his father that it is unnecessary to dwell on the happy influences under which the family passed their youth. The 'ideas' of the head of the house, as his remote speculations were familiarly known at home, lay outside the range of his second son; but in the preface to a collection of papers, posthumously issued in 1884,

they are sympathetically expounded and appraised by William James, whose adventurous mind, impatient of academic rules and forms, was more akin to his father's, though it developed on quite other lines. It is natural to speak of the father as a Swedenborgian, for the writings of Swedenborg had been the chief source of his inspiration and supplied the tincture of his thought. He did not, however, himself admit this description of his point of view, which indeed was original and unconventional to the last degree. It was directed towards an ideal, to use William James's words, of 'the true relation between mankind and its Creator,' elaborated and re-affirmed in book after book, and always in a style so peculiarly vivacious and attractive that it is difficult to explain the indifference with which they were received and which has allowed them to fall completely forgotten. To the memory of his father's courageous spirit, his serene simplicity and luminous humour, none of which ever failed in the face of repeated disappointment, the younger Henry, years later, devoted his beautiful tribute of art and piety.

His recollections of childhood began, surprisingly enough, when he was little more than a year old. In the summer of 1844 the parents carried their two infants, William and Henry, for a visit to Europe, an adventure not altogether lost upon the younger; for he actually retained an impression of Paris, a glimpse of the Place Vendôme, to be the foundation of all his European experience. His earliest American memories were of Albany; but the family were soon established in Fourteenth

Street, New York, which was their home for some ten years, a settlement only broken by family visits and summer weeks by the sea. The children's extraordinarily haphazard and promiscuous education went forward under various teachers, their father's erratic rule having apparently but one principle, that they should stay nowhere long enough to receive any formal imprint. To Henry at least their schooling meant nothing whatever but the opportunity of conducting his own education in his own way, and he made the utmost of the easy freedom they enjoyed. He was able to stare and brood to his heart's content, and thus to feed his imagination on the only pasturage it required.

In 1855 the whole household migrated to Europe for a visit of three years. This, the grand event of Henry's childhood, was really the determination of his whole career; for he then absorbed, once for all, what he afterwards called the 'European Virus'—the nostalgia for the old world which made it impossible for him to rest in peace elsewhere. All this time was one long draught of romance; though indeed as an initiation into the ways of French and English life it could hardly have been a more incoherent enterprise. True to his law, the head of the household planted the young family in one place only to sweep them away as soon as they might begin to form associations there. The summer of 1855 was spent at Geneva, then the classic spot for the acquisition of the 'languages,' according to the point of view of New York. But Geneva was abandoned before the end of the year, and the family settled in London for the winter, at first

in Berkeley Street, afterwards in St. John's Wood. For any real contact with the place, this was a blank interlude; the tuition of a young Scotchman, later one of R. L. Stevenson's masters, seems to have been the solitary local tie provided for the children. By the middle of 1856 they were in Paris, and here they were able to use their opportunities a little more fully. Of these one of the oddest was the educational 'Institution Fezandié,' which they attended for a time. But there was more for them to learn at the Louvre and the Luxembourg, and it was to this time that Henry James afterwards ascribed his first conscious perception of what might be meant by the life of art. In the course of the two following years they twice spent some months at Boulogne-sur-mer, returning each time to Paris again. During the second visit to Boulogne Henry was laid low by the very serious attack of typhus that descends on the last page of *A Small Boy*.

In 1858 the family was rushed back to America for a year at Newport; but they were once more at Geneva for the winter of 1859-60. Here Henry was at first put to the strangest of all his strange educational courses, at the severely mathematical and commercial 'Institution Rochette.' But presently pleading for humaner studies, he was set free to attend lectures at the Academy, where at sixteen, for the first time and after so many arid experiences, he tasted instruction more or less adapted to his parts. Needless to say it did not last long. In the following summer the three elder boys were sent as private pupils to the houses of certain professors at Bonn. By this time William's

marked talent for painting had decided his ambition; and it was quite in line with the originality of the household that they should at once return to America, leaving Paris behind them for good, in order that William might study art. Henry alone of them, by his account, felt that their proceedings needed a great deal of explanation. The new experiment, as short-lived as all the rest, was entered upon with ardour, and the family was re-established at Newport in the autumn of 1860. The distinguished master, William Hunt, had his studio there; and for a time Henry himself haunted it tentatively, while his brother was working with a zeal that was soon spent.

If we may trust his own report, Henry James had reached the age of seventeen with a curiously vague understanding of his own talent. No doubt it is possible to read the 'Notes' too literally; and indeed I have the fortunate opportunity of giving a side-light upon this period of his youth which proves as much. But if he was not quite the indeterminate brooder he depicts, he was far from rivalling the unusual precocity and decision of his brothers, and he was only now beginning to take real stock of his gifts. He had been provided with almost none of the sort of training by which he might have profited; and it is not to be supposed that his always indulgent parent would have neglected the taste of a literary son if it had shewn itself distinctly. He had been left to discover his line of progress as best he might, and his advance towards literature was slow and shy. Yet it would seem that by this time he must have made up his mind more definitely

than he suggests in recalling the Newport years. The side-light I mentioned is thrown by some interesting notes sent me by Mr. Thomas Sergeant Perry, who made the acquaintance of the family at Newport and was to remain their lifelong friend. His description shews that Henry James had now his own ambitions, even if he preferred to nurse them unobtrusively.

> The first time I saw the James boys (writes Mr. Perry) was at the end of June or early in July 1858, shortly after their arrival in Newport for a year's stay. This year of their life is not recorded by H. J. in his 'Notes of a Son and Brother,' or rather its memories are crowded into the chronicle of the longer stay of the family in America, beginning with 1860. Mr. Duncan Pell, who knew Mr. James the father, told his son and me that we ought to call on the boys; and we did, but they were out. A day or two later we called again and found them in. We all went together to the Pells' house and spent the evening in simple joys.
>
> I have often thought that the three brothers shewed that evening some of their characteristic qualities. I remember walking with Wilky hanging on my arm, talking to me as if he had found an old friend after long absence. When we got to the house and the rest of us were chattering, H. J. sat on the window-seat reading Leslie's Life of Constable with a certain air of remoteness. William was full of merriment and we were soon playing a simple and childish game. In 'A Small Boy and Others' H. J. speaks of Wilky's 'successful sociability, his instinct for intercourse, his genius for making friends,' and these amiable traits

shewed themselves that evening as clearly as his other brother's jollity. Very soon afterwards H. J. with his two younger brothers entered the school where I was studying, that of the Rev. W. C. Leverett, who is mentioned in the 'Notes.' I recall H. J. as an uninterested scholar. Part of one day in a week was devoted to declaiming eloquent pieces from 'Sargent's Standard Speaker,' and I have not forgotten his amusement at seeing in the Manual of English Literature that we were studying, in the half page devoted to Mrs. Browning, that she had married R. Browning, 'himself no mean poet.' This compact information gave him great delight, for we were reading Browning. It was then too that he read for the first time 'The Vicar of Wakefield' and with great pleasure.

It was at that time that we began to take long walks together almost every afternoon along the Cliffs, over the beaches to the Paradise Rocks, to the Point, or inland, wherever it might be. A thousand scrappy recollections of the strolls still remain, fragments of talk, visions of the place. Thus it was near the Lily Pond that we long discussed Fourier's plan for regenerating the world. Harry had heard his father describe the great reformer's proposal to establish universal happiness, and like a good son he tried to carry the good news further. At another time, he fell under the influence of Ruskin; he devoted himself to the conscientious copying of a leaf and very faithfully drew a little rock that jutted above the surface of the Lily Pond. These artistic gropings, and those in Hunt's studio where he copied casts, were not his main interest. His chief

interest was literature. We read the English magazines and reviews and the Revue des Deux Mondes with rapture. We fished in various waters, and I well remember when W. J. brought home a volume of Schopenhauer and showed us with delight the ugly mug of the philosopher and read us amusing specimens of his delightful pessimism. It was W. J. too who told us about Renan one cool evening of February when the twilight lingers till after six. H. J. in his books speaks without enthusiasm of his school studies, but he and I read together at Mr. Leverett's school a very fair amount of Latin literature. Like Shakespeare he had less Greek.

The departure of the James family to Geneva in October 1859 was a grievous blow. They returned, however, with characteristic suddenness the next September and came at once to Newport. During their stay abroad H. J. and I had kept up a lively correspondence. Most unfortunately all his letters, which I had faithfully preserved, were destroyed during one of my absences in Europe, and among them a poem, probably the only thing of the kind he ever tried, a short narrative in the manner of Tennyson's 'Dora.' He had entirely forgotten it, very naturally, when he said in his 'Notes': 'The muse was of course the muse of prose fiction —never for the briefest hour in my case the presumable, not to say the presuming, the much-taking-for-granted muse of rhyme, with whom I had never had, even in thought, the faintest flirtation.'

After his return to America in 1860, the question what he should do with his life became more urgent. Of course it was in literature that he took the greatest interest. One

task that he set himself was translating Alfred de Musset's 'Lorenzaccio,' and into this version he introduced some scenes of his own. Exactly what they were I do not recall, though I read them with an even intenser interest than I did the original text. He was continually writing stories, mainly of a romantic kind. The heroes were for the most part villains, but they were white lambs by the side of the sophisticated heroines, who seemed to have read all Balzac in the cradle and to be positively dripping with lurid crimes. He began with these extravagant pictures of course in adoration of the great master whom he always so warmly admired.

H. J. seldom entrusted these early efforts to the criticism of his family—they did not see all he wrote. They were too keen critics, too sharp-witted, to be allowed to handle every essay of this budding talent. Their judgments would have been too true, their comments would have been too merciless; and hence, for sheer self-preservation, he hid a good part of his work from them. Not that they were cruel, far from it. Their frequent solitude in foreign parts, where they had no familiar companions, had welded them together in a way that would have been impossible in America, where each would have had separate distractions of his own. Their loneliness forced them to grow together most harmoniously, but their long exercise in literary criticism would have made them possibly merciless judges of H. J.'s crude beginnings.

The following anecdote will shew what I mean. Mr. James the father was getting out a somewhat abstruse book called 'Substance and Shadow, or Morality and Religion in

their Relation to Life.' W. J. amused himself and all the family by designing a small cut to be put on the title page, representing a man beating a dead horse. This will illustrate the joyous chaff that filled the Jameses' house. There was no limit to it. There were always books to tell about and laugh over, or to admire, and there was an abundance of good talk with no shadow of pedantry or priggishness. H. J.'s spirits were never so high as those of the others. If they had been, he still would have had but little chance in a conflict of wits with them, on account of his slow speech, his halting choice of words and phrases; but as a companion in our walks he was delightful. He had plenty of humour, as his books shew, and above all he had a most affectionate heart. No one ever had more certain and more unobtrusive kindness than he. He had a certain air of aloofness, but he was not indifferent to those who had no claim upon him, and to his friends he was most tenderly devoted. Those who knew him will not need to be assured of that.

The Civil War, which presently broke upon the leisurely life of Newport, went deep into the mind and character of Henry James; but his part in it could only be that of an onlooker, for about this time an accidental strain developed results that gave him many years of uncertain health. He had to live much in the experience of his brothers, which he eagerly did. The two youngest fought in the war, Wilky receiving a grave wound of which he carried the mark for the rest of his life—he died in 1883. Henry went to Harvard in 1862, where William, no longer a painter but a man of science, had preceded him the year before. By the beginning

of 1864 the rest of the family had settled in Boston, at Ashburton Place, whence they finally moved out to Cambridge in 1866. This was the end of their wanderings. For the remainder of his parents' lives Cambridge was Henry's American home and, with the instalment there of his brother William, the centre of all the family associations. But the long connection with New England never superseded, for Henry at least, the native tie with New York, and he was gratified when his name was at last carried back there again, many years afterwards, by another generation.

In Boston and Cambridge Henry James at length touched a purely literary circle. The beginning of such fruitful friendships as those with Professor C. E. Norton and Mr. W. D. Howells meant his open and professed dedication to literature. The Harvard Law School left as little direct impression on him as any of his other exposures to ordinary teaching, but at last he had finished with these makeshifts. His new friends helped him into his proper channel. Under their auspices he made his way into publication and became a regular contributor of criticism and fiction to several journals and reviews. There followed some very uneventful and industrious years, disturbed to some extent by ill-health but broken by no long absences from Cambridge. His constant companion and literary confidant was Mr. Howells, who writes to me that 'people were very much struck with his work in the magazine'—the *Atlantic Monthly*, of which this friend was at that time assistant editor—'but mostly not pleased with it. It was a common thing to hear them say, "Oh, yes, we like

Mr. James very much, but we cannot bear his stories".' Mr. Howells adds: 'I could scarcely exaggerate the intensity of our literary association. It included not only what he was doing and thinking himself in fiction, and criticism of whatever he was reading, but what other people were trying to do in our American magazines.' Beneath these activities we are to imagine the deep pre-occupation, growing and growing, of the idea of a possible return to Europe. It is not very clear why the satisfaction of his wish was delayed for as long as it was. His doubtful health can hardly have amounted to a hindrance, and the authority of his parents was far too light and sympathetic to stand in his way. Yet it is only by the end of 1868, as I find from a letter of that time, that a journey to Europe has 'ceased to look positively and aggressively impossible.' Thereafter things move more quickly, and three months later he arrives at the great moment, memorable ever afterwards, of his landing at Liverpool.

From this point the letters speak for themselves, and only the slenderest commentary is required. He went first to London, where the hospitable Nortons had been installed on a visit for some while. These good friends opened the way to many interesting impressions for him, but he was only briefly in London at this time. For health's sake he spent three weeks alone at Great Malvern, in some sort of hydropathic establishment, among very British company. He writes of his great delight in the beauty of the place, and how he is 'gluttonised on British commonplace' indoors. After a tour which included Oxford and

Cambridge and several English cathedrals, he had a few weeks more of London, and then passed on to Switzerland. He was at Geneva by the end of May, from where he writes that he is 'very well—which has ceased to be a wonder.' The Nortons joined him at Vevey. He left them in July for a small Swiss tour before making the great adventure of crossing the Alps for the first time. By Venice and Florence he reached Rome in November. He gave himself up there to rapturous and solitary wanderings: 'I see no people, to speak of, or for that matter to speak to.' In December he was at Naples for a fortnight, and then returned northwards by Assisi, Perugia, Genoa, Avignon, to Paris. Italy had made the deep and final impression on him for which he was so well prepared; 'already,' he writes, 'I feel my bows beneath her weight settle comfortably into the water.... Out of Italy you don't know how vulgar a world it is.' Presently he was in England and at Malvern again, everywhere saturating himself in the sense of old history and romance, to make the most of an opportunity which he did not then hope to prolong. 'It behoves me,' he writes to Professor Norton, 'as a luckless American, diabolically tempted of the shallow and the superficial, really to catch the flavour of an old civilization (it hardly matters which) and to strive to raise myself, for one brief moment at least, in the attitude of observation.' At the end of April 1870 he sailed for America.

After a year of Europe his hunger for the old world was greater than ever, but he had no present thought of settling there permanently. For two years he resumed the quiet life

of his American Cambridge, busily engaged on a succession of sketches, reviews, and short stories of which only one, 'A Passionate Pilgrim,' survives in the collected edition of his works. 'I enjoy America,' he says in a letter of 1870, 'with a poignancy that perpetually surprises me'; but 'the wish—the absolute sense of need—to see Italy again' constantly increases. He spends 'a quiet, low-toned sort of winter, reading somewhat, writing a little, and "going out" occasionally.' He wrote his first piece of fiction that was long enough to be called a novel—'Watch and Ward,' afterwards so completely disowned and ignored by him that he always named as his first novel Roderick Hudson, of four years later. But the memory of Italy had fatally shaken his rest, and there began a long and anxious struggle with his sense of duty to his native land. In his letters of this time the attitude of the 'good American' remains resolute, however. 'It's a complex fate, being an American,' he writes, early in 1872, 'and one of the responsibilities it entails is fighting against a superstitious valuation of Europe.' It was still as a tourist and a pilgrim only that he crossed the Atlantic again, with his sister and aunt (Miss Katharine Walsh), in May 1872.

He came with a definite commission to contribute a series of 'Transatlantic Sketches' to the American *Nation*, and the first material was gathered in an English tour that ranged from Chester to North Devon. Still with his sister and aunt he wandered for three months in Switzerland, North Italy and Bavaria, settling upon Paris, now alone, for the autumn. It was

here that he began his intimacy with J. R. Lowell, in afternoon walks with him between mornings of work and evenings at the Théâtre Français. He declares that he saw no one else in Paris—his mind was firmly set upon Italy. To Rome he went for the first six months of 1873, where he was now at home enough among ancient solitudes to have time and thought for social novelty. Thirty years later, in his life of William Wetmore Story, he revived the American world of what was still a barely modernised Rome, the world into which he was plunged by acquaintance with the sculptor and his circle. Now and thenceforward it was not so much the matter for sketches of travel that he was collecting as it was the matter for the greater part of his best-known fiction. The American in Europe was to be his own subject, and he began to make it so. The summer months were mainly spent at Homburg, which was also to leave its mark on several of his tales. His elder brother joined him when he returned to Rome, but William contracted a malaria, and they moved to Florence early in 1874. Here Henry was soon left alone, in rooms on Piazza Sta. Maria Novella, for some months of close and happy concentration on Roderick Hudson. The novel had already been engaged by Mr. Howells for the *Atlantic Monthly*, and its composition marks the definite end of Henry James's literary apprenticeship. He had arrived at it by wary stages; of the large amount of work behind him, though much of it was of slight value, nothing had been wasted; every page of his writing had been in the direct line towards the perfect literary manners of his matured skill. But

hitherto he had written experimentally and to occasion; he was now an established novelist in his own right.

He returned to America in the autumn of 1874, after some summer wanderings that are shewn by the 'Transatlantic Sketches' to have taken him through Holland and Belgium. But it happens that at this point there is an almost empty gap of a year and more in his surviving correspondence, and it is not possible to follow him closely. He disappears with the still agitating question upon his hands—where was he to live?—his American loyalty still fighting it out with his European inclination. The steps are lost by which the doubt was determined in the course of another year at home. It is only certain that when he next came to Europe, twelve months later, it had been quieted for ever.

To Miss Alice James

H. J.'s lodging in Half Moon St., and his landlord, Mr. Lazarus Fox, are described, it will be remembered, in *The Middle Years.* He had arrived in London from America a few days before the date of the following letter to his sister. Professor Charles Norton, with his wife and sisters, was living at this time in Kensington.

7 Half Moon St., W.
March 10th [1869].

Ma sœur chérie,

I have half an hour before dinner-time: why shouldn't I begin a letter for Saturday's steamer?… I really feel as if I had lived—I don't say a lifetime—but a year in this murky metropolis. I actually believe that this feeling is owing to the singular permanence of the impressions of childhood, to which any present experience joins itself on, without a broken link in the chain of sensation. Nevertheless, I may say that up to this time I have been crushed under a sense of the mere magnitude of London—its inconceivable immensity—in such a way as to paralyse my mind for any appreciation of details. This is gradually subsiding; but what does it leave behind it? An extraordinary intellectual depression, as I may say, and an indefinable flatness of mind. The place sits on you, broods on you, stamps on you with the feet of its myriad bipeds and

quadrupeds. In fine, it is anything but a cheerful or a charming city. Yet it is a very splendid one. It gives you here at the west end, and in the city proper, a vast impression of opulence and prosperity. But you don't want a dissertation of commonplaces on London and you would like me to touch on my own individual experience. Well, my dear, since last week it has been sufficient, altho' by no means immense. On Saturday I received a visit from Mr. Leslie Stephen (blessed man) who came unsolicited with the utmost civility in the world and invited me to dine with him the next day. This I did, in company with Miss Jane Norton. His wife made me very welcome and they both appear to much better effect in their own premises than they did in America. After dinner he conducted us by the underground railway to see the beasts in the Regent's Park, to which as a member of the Zoological Society he has admittance 'Sundays.' … In the evening I dined with the invaluable Nortons and went with Chas. and Madame, Miss S. and Miss Jane (via underground railway) to hear Ruskin lecture at University College on Greek Myths. I enjoyed it much in spite of fatigue; but as I am to meet him some day through the Nortons, I shall reserve comments. On Wednesday evening I dined at the N.'s (toujours Norton, you see) in company with Miss Dickens—Dickens's only unmarried daughter—plain-faced, ladylike (in black silk and black lace,) and the image of her father. I exchanged but ten words with her. But yesterday, my dear old sister, was my crowning day—seeing as how I spent the greater part of it in the house of Mr.

Wm. Morris, Poet. Fitly to tell the tale, I should need a fresh pen, paper and spirits. A few hints must suffice. To begin with, I breakfasted, by way of a change, with the Nortons, along with Mr. Sam Ward, who has just arrived, and Mr. Aubrey de Vere, *tu sais*, the Catholic poet, a pleasant honest old man and very much less high-flown than his name. He tells good stories in a light natural way. After a space I came home and remained until 4-1/2 p.m., when I had given rendez-vous to C.N. and ladies at Mr. Morris's door, they going by appointment to see his shop and C. having written to say he would bring me. Morris lives on the same premises as his shop, in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury, an antiquated ex-fashionable region, smelling strong of the last century, with a hoary effigy of Queen Anne in the middle. Morris's poetry, you see, is only his sub-trade. To begin with, he is a manufacturer of stained glass windows, tiles, ecclesiastical and medieval tapestry, altar-cloths, and in fine everything quaint, archaic, pre-Raphaelite—and I may add, exquisite. Of course his business is small and may be carried on in his house: the things he makes are so handsome, rich and expensive (besides being articles of the very last luxury) that his *fabrique* can't be on a very large scale. But everything he has and does is superb and beautiful. But more curious than anything is himself. He designs with his own head and hands all the figures and patterns used in his glass and tapestry, and furthermore works the latter, stitch by stitch, with his own fingers—aided by those of his wife and little girls. Oh, ma chère, such a wife! *Je n'en reviens pas*—she haunts

me still. A figure cut out of a missal—out of one of Rossetti's or Hunt's pictures—to say this gives but a faint idea of her, because when such an image puts on flesh and blood, it is an apparition of fearful and wonderful intensity. It's hard to say whether she's a grand synthesis of all the pre-Raphaelite pictures ever made—or they a 'keen analysis' of her—whether she's an original or a copy. In either case she is a wonder. Imagine a tall lean woman in a long dress of some dead purple stuff, guiltless of hoops (or of anything else, I should say,) with a mass of crisp black hair heaped into great wavy projections on each of her temples, a thin pale face, a pair of strange sad, deep, dark Swinburnian eyes, with great thick black oblique brows, joined in the middle and tucking themselves away under her hair, a mouth like the 'Oriana' in our illustrated Tennyson, a long neck, without any collar, and in lieu thereof some dozen strings of outlandish beads—in fine complete. On the wall was a large nearly full-length portrait of her by Rossetti, so strange and unreal that if you hadn't seen her you'd pronounce it a distempered vision, but in fact an extremely good likeness. After dinner (we stayed to dinner, Miss Grace, Miss S. S. and I,) Morris read us one of his unpublished poems, from the second series of his un-'Earthly Paradise,' and his wife, having a bad toothache, lay on the sofa, with her handkerchief to her face. There was something very quaint and remote from our actual life, it seemed to me, in the whole scene: Morris reading in his flowing antique numbers a legend of prodigies and terrors (the story of Bellerophon, it was), around us all the picturesque

bric-a-brac of the apartment (every article of furniture literally a 'specimen' of something or other,) and in the corner this dark silent medieval woman with her medieval toothache. Morris himself is extremely pleasant and quite different from his wife. He impressed me most agreeably. He is short, burly, corpulent, very careless and unfinished in his dress, and looks a little like B. G. Hosmer, if you can imagine B. G. infinitely magnified and fortified. He has a very loud voice and a nervous restless manner and a perfectly unaffected and business-like address. His talk indeed is wonderfully to the point and remarkable for clear good sense. He said no one thing that I remember, but I was struck with the very good judgment shown in everything he uttered. He's an extraordinary example, in short, of a delicate sensitive genius and taste, saved by a perfectly healthy body and temper. All his designs are quite as good (or rather nearly so) as his poetry: altogether it was a long rich sort of visit, with a strong peculiar flavour of its own.... Ouf! what a repulsively long letter! This sort of thing won't do. A few general reflections, a burst of affection (say another sheet), and I must close.... Farewell, dear girl, and dear incomparable all—

Your H.

To his Mother

7 Half Moon St., W.
March 26, 1869.

My dearest Mother,

This will have been my fifth weekly bundle since my arrival, and I can't promise—or rather I forbear to threaten—that it shall be as hugely copious as the others. But there's no telling where my pen may take me. You see I am still in what my old landlord never speaks of but as 'this great metropolis'; and I hope you will believe me when I add, moreover, that I am in the best of health and spirits. During the last week I have been knocking about in a quiet way and have deeply enjoyed my little adventures. The last few days in particular have been extremely pleasant. You have perhaps fancied that I have been rather stingy-minded towards this wondrous England, and that I was [not] taking things in quite the magnanimous intellectual manner that befits a youth of my birth and breeding. The truth is that the face of things here throws a sensitive American back on himself—back on his prejudices and national passions, and benumbs for a while the faculty of appreciation and the sense of justice. But with time, if he is worth a copper, the characteristic beauty of the land dawns upon him (just as certain vicious chilblains are now dawning upon my poor feet) and he feels that he would fain plant his restless feet into the rich old soil and absorb the burden of the misty air. If I were in

anything like working order now, I should be very sorry to leave England. I should like to settle down for a year and expose my body to the English climate and my mind to English institutions. But a truce to this cheap discursive stuff. I date the moment from which my mind rose erect in impartial might to a little sail I took on the Thames the other day in one of the little penny steamers which shoot along its dirty bosom. It was a grey, raw English day, and the banks of the river, as far as I went, hideous. Nevertheless I enjoyed it. It was too cold to go up to Greenwich. (The weather, by the way, since my arrival has been horribly damp and bleak, and no more like spring than in a Boston January.) The next day I went with several of the Nortons to dine at Ruskin's, out of town. This too was extremely pleasant. Ruskin himself is a very simple matter. In face, in manner, in talk, in mind, he is weakness pure and simple. I use the word, not invidiously, but scientifically. He has the beauties of his defects; but to see him only confirms the impression given by his writing, that he has been scared back by the grim face of reality into the world of unreason and illusion, and that he wanders there without a compass and a guide—or any light save the fitful flashes of his beautiful genius. The dinner was very nice and easy, owing in a great manner to Ruskin's two charming young nieces who live with him—one a lovely young Irish girl with a rich virginal brogue—a creature of a truly delightful British maidenly simplicity—and the other a nice Scotch lass, who keeps house for him. But I confess, cold-blooded villain that I am, that what I most enjoyed was a

portrait by Titian—an old doge, a work of transcendent beauty and elegance, such as to give one a new sense of the meaning of art.... But, dearest mammy, I must pull up. Pile in scraps of news. Osculate my sister most passionately. Likewise my aunt. Be assured of my sentiments and present them to my father and brother.

Thy HENRY jr.

To his Mother

Florence, Hôtel de l'Europe.
October 13th, 1869.

My darling Mammy,

For the past six weeks that I have been in Italy I've hardly until within a day or two exchanged five minutes' talk with any one but the servants in the hotels and the custodians in the churches. As far as meeting people is concerned, I've not as yet had in Europe a very brilliant record. Yesterday I met at the Uffizi Miss Anna Vernon of Newport and her friend Mrs. Carter, with whom I had some discourse; and on the same morning I fell in with a somewhat seedy and sickly American, who seemed to be doing the gallery with an awful minuteness, and who after some conversation proposed to come and see me. He called this morning and has just left; but he seems a vague and feeble brother and I anticipate no wondrous joy from his acquaintance. The 'hardly' in the clause above is meant to admit two or three Englishmen with whom I have been thrown for a few hours.... One especially, whom I met at Verona, won my affections so rapidly that I was really sad at losing him. But he has vanished, leaving only a delightful impression and not even a name—a man of about 38, with a sort of quiet perfection of English virtue about him, such as I have rarely found in another. Willy asked me in one of his recent letters for an 'opinion' of the English,

which I haven't yet had time to give—tho' at times I have felt as if it were a theme on which I could write from a full mind. In fact, however, I have very little right to have any opinion on the matter. I've seen far too few specimens and those too superficially. The only thing I'm certain about is that I like them—like them heartily. W. asked if as individuals they 'kill' the individual American. To this I would say that the Englishmen I have met not only kill, but bury in unfathomable depths, the Americans I have met. A set of people less framed to provoke national self-complacency than the latter it would be hard to imagine. There is but one word to use in regard to them—vulgar, vulgar, vulgar. Their ignorance—their stingy, defiant, grudging attitude towards everything European—their perpetual reference of all things to some American standard or precedent which exists only in their own unscrupulous wind-bags—and then our unhappy poverty of voice, of speech and of physiognomy—these things glare at you hideously. On the other hand, we seem a people of *character*, we seem to have energy, capacity and intellectual stuff in ample measure. What I have pointed at as our vices are the elements of the modern man with *culture* quite left out. It's the absolute and incredible lack of *culture* that strikes you in common travelling Americans. The pleasantness of the English, on the other side, comes in a great measure from the fact of their each having been dipped into the crucible, which gives them a sort of coating of comely varnish and colour. They have been smoothed and polished by mutual social attrition. They

have manners and a language. We lack both, but particularly the latter. I have seen very 'nasty' Britons, certainly, but as a rule they are such as to cause your heart to warm to them. The women are at once better and worse than the men. Occasionally they are hard, flat, and greasy and dowdy to downright repulsiveness; but frequently they have a modest, matronly charm which is the perfection of womanishness and which makes Italian and Frenchwomen—and to a certain extent even our own—seem like a species of feverish highly-developed invalids. You see Englishmen, here in Italy, to a particularly good advantage. In the midst of these false and beautiful Italians they glow with the light of the great fact, that after all they love a bath-tub and they hate a lie.

16th, Sunday. I *have* seen some nice Americans and I still love my country. I have called upon Mrs. Huntington and her two daughters—late of Cambridge—whom I met in Switzerland and who have an apartment here. The daughters more than reconcile me to the shrill-voiced sirens of New England's rock-bound coast. The youngest is delightfully beautiful and sweet—and the elder delightfully sweet and plain—with a plainness *qui vaut bien des beautés*....

Maman de mon âme, farewell. I have kept my letter three days, hoping for news from home. I hope you are not paying me back for that silence of six weeks ago. Blessings on your universal heads.

Thy lone and loving exile,
H. J. jr.

To William James

Hôtel d'Angleterre, Rome.
Oct. 30th [1869].

My dearest Wm.

The afternoon after I had posted those two letters I took a walk out of Florence to an enchanting old Chartreuse—an ancient monastery, perched up on top of a hill and turreted with little cells like a feudal castle. I attacked it and carried it by storm —i.e. obtained admission and went over it. On coming out I swore to myself that while I had life in my body I wouldn't leave a country where adventures of that complexion are the common incidents of your daily constitutional: but that I would hurl myself upon Rome and fight it out on this line at the peril of my existence. Here I am then in the Eternal City. It was easy to leave Florence; the cold had become intolerable and the rain perpetual. I started last night, and at 10-1/2 o'clock and after a bleak and fatiguing journey of 12 hours found myself here with the morning light. There are several places on the route I should have been glad to see; but the weather and my own condition made a direct journey imperative. I rushed to this hotel (a very slow and obstructed rush it was, I confess, thanks to the longueurs and lenteurs of the Papal dispensation) and after a wash and a breakfast let myself loose on the city. From midday to dusk I have been roaming the streets. Que vous en dirai-je? At last—for the

first time—I live! It beats everything: it leaves the Rome of your fancy—your education—nowhere. It makes Venice—Florence—Oxford—London—seem like little cities of pasteboard. I went reeling and moaning thro' the streets, in a fever of enjoyment. In the course of four or five hours I traversed almost the whole of Rome and got a glimpse of everything—the Forum, the Coliseum (stupendissimo!), the Pantheon, the Capitol, St. Peter's, the Column of Trajan, the Castle of St. Angelo—all the Piazzas and ruins and monuments. The effect is something indescribable. For the first time I know what the picturesque is. In St. Peter's I stayed some time. It's even beyond its reputation. It was filled with foreign ecclesiastics—great armies encamped in prayer on the marble plains of its pavement—an inexhaustible physiognomical study. To crown my day, on my way home, I met his Holiness in person—driving in prodigious purple state—sitting dim within the shadows of his coach with two uplifted benedictory fingers—like some dusky Hindoo idol in the depths of its shrine. Even if I should leave Rome tonight I should feel that I have caught the keynote of its operation on the senses. I have looked along the grassy vista of the Appian Way and seen the topmost stone-work of the Coliseum sitting shrouded in the light of heaven, like the edge of an Alpine chain. I've trod the Forum and I have scaled the Capitol. I've seen the Tiber hurrying along, as swift and dirty as history! From the high tribune of a great chapel of St. Peter's I have heard in the papal choir a strange old man sing in a shrill unpleasant soprano. I've seen

troops of little tonsured neophytes clad in scarlet, marching and countermarching and ducking and flopping, like poor little raw recruits for the heavenly host. In fine I've seen Rome, and I shall go to bed a wiser man than I last rose—yesterday morning....

A toi,
H. J. jr.

To William James

'Minny Temple' is the beloved young cousin commemorated in the last pages of *Notes of a Son and Brother*. The news of her death came to H. J. at Malvern almost immediately after the following letter was written.

Great Malvern.
March 8th, 1870.

Beloved Bill,

You ask me in your last letter so 'cordially' to write home every week, if it's only a line that altho' I have very little to say on this windy March afternoon, I can't resist the homeward tendency of my thoughts. I wrote to Alice some eight days ago —raving largely about the beauty of Malvern, in the absence of a better theme: so I haven't even that topic to make talk of. But as I say, my thoughts are facing squarely homeward and that is enough.... Now that I'm in England you'd rather have me talk of the present than of pluperfect Italy. But life furnishes so few incidents here that I cudgel my brains in vain. Plenty of gentle emotions from the scenery, etc.; but only man is vile. Among my fellow-patients here I find no intellectual companionship. Never from a single Englishman of them all have I heard the first word of appreciation and enjoyment of the things here that I find delightful. To a certain extent this is natural: but not to the extent to which they carry it. As for the

women, I give 'em up in advance. I am tired of their plainness and stiffness and tastelessness—their dowdy beads and their lindsey woolsey trains. Nay, this is peevish and brutal. Personally (with all their faults) they are well enough. I revolt from their dreary deathly want of—what shall I call it?—Clover Hooper has it—intellectual grace—Minny Temple has it—moral spontaneity. They live wholly in the realm of the cut and dried. 'Have you ever been to Florence?' 'Oh yes.' 'Isn't it a most peculiarly interesting city?' 'Oh yes, I think it's so very nice.' 'Have you read *Romola*?' 'Oh yes.' 'I suppose you admire it.' 'Oh yes, I think it so very clever.' The English have such a mortal mistrust of anything like criticism or 'keen analysis' (which they seem to regard as a kind of maudlin foreign flummery) that I rarely remember to have heard on English lips any other intellectual verdict (no matter under what provocation) than this broad synthesis—'so immensely clever.' What exasperates you is not that they can't say more, but that they wouldn't if they could. Ah, but they are a great people for all that.... I re-echo with all my heart your impatience for the moment of our meeting again. I should despair of ever making you know how your conversation m'a manqué or how, when regained, I shall enjoy it. All I ask for is that I may spend the interval to the best advantage—and you too. The more we shall have to say to each other the better. Your last letter spoke of father and mother having 'shocking colds'—I hope they have melted away. Among the things I have recently read is father's *Marriage* paper in the *Atlantic*—with great enjoyment of

its manner and approval of its matter. I see he is becoming one of our prominent magazinists. He will send me the thing from *Old and New*. A young Scotchman here gets the *Nation* sent him by his brother from N.Y. Whose are the three French papers on women? They are 'so very clever.' A propos—I retract all those brutalities about the Engländerinnen. They are the mellow mothers and daughters of a mighty race. But I *must* pull in. I have still lots of unsatisfied curiosity and unexpressed affection, but they must stand over. Farewell. Salute my parents and sister and believe me your brother of brothers,

H. JAMES jr.

To his Father

Great Malvern
March 19th, '70.

Dear Father,

The other afternoon I trudged over to Worcester—through a region so thick-sown with good old English 'effects'—with elm-scattered meadows and sheep-cropped commons and the ivy-smothered dwellings of small gentility, and high-gabled, heavy-timbered, broken-plastered farm-houses, and stiles leading to delicious meadow footpaths and lodge-gates leading to far-off manors—with all things suggestive of the opening chapters of half-remembered novels, devoured in infancy—that I felt as if I were pressing all England to my soul. As I neared the good old town I saw the great Cathedral tower, high and square, rise far into the cloud-dappled blue. And as I came nearer still I stopped on the bridge and viewed the great ecclesiastical pile cast downward into the yellow Severn. And going further yet I entered the town and lounged about the close and gazed my fill at that most soul-sustaining sight—the waning afternoon, far aloft on the broad perpendicular field of the Cathedral spire—tasted too, as deeply, of the peculiar stillness and repose of the close—saw a ruddy English lad come out and lock the door of the old foundation school which marries its heavy gothic walls to the basement of the church, and carry the vast big key into

one of the still canonical houses—and stood wondering as to the effect on a man's mind of having in one's boyhood haunted the Cathedral shade as a King's scholar and yet kept ruddy with much cricket in misty meadows by the Severn. This is a sample of the meditations suggested in my daily walks. Envy me—if you can without hating! I wish I could describe them all—Colwell Green especially, where, weather favouring, I expect to drag myself this afternoon—where each square yard of ground lies verdantly brimming with the deepest British picturesque, and half begging, half deprecating a sketch. You should see how a certain stile-broken footpath here winds through the meadows to a little grey rook-haunted church. Another region fertile in walks is the great line of hills. Half an hour's climb will bring you to the top of the Beacon—the highest of the range—and here is a breezy world of bounding turf with twenty counties at your feet—and when the mist is thick something immensely English in the situation (as if you were wandering on some mighty seaward cliffs or downs, haunted by vague traditions of an early battle). You may wander for hours—delighting in the great green landscape as it responds forever to the cloudy movements of heaven—scaring the sheep—wishing horribly that your mother and sister were—I can't say *mounted*—on a couple of little white-aproned donkeys, climbing comfortably at your side. But at this rate I shall tire you out with my walks as effectually as I sometimes tire myself.... Kiss mother for her letter—and for that villainous cold. I enfold you all in an immense embrace.

Your faithful son,
H.

To Charles Eliot Norton

Professor Norton and his family were still at this time in Europe. Arthur Sedgwick was Mrs. Norton's brother.

Cambridge, (Mass.)
Jan. 16, '71.

My dear Charles,

If I had needed any reminder and quickener of a very old-time intention to take some morning and put into most indifferent words my frequent thoughts of you, I should have found one very much to the purpose in a letter from Grace, received some ten days ago. But really I needed no deeper consciousness of my great desire to punch a hole in the massive silence which has grown up between us....

Cambridge and Boston society still rejoices in that imposing fixedness of outline which is ever so inspiring to contemplate. In Cambridge I see Arthur Sedgwick and Howells; but little of any one else. Arthur seems not perhaps an enthusiastic, but a well-occupied man, and talks much in a wholesome way of meaning to go abroad. Howells edits, and observes and produces—the latter in his own particular line with more and more perfection. His recent sketches in the *Atlantic*, collected into a volume, belong, I think, by the wondrous cunning of their manner, to very good literature. He seems to have resolved himself, however, [into] one who can write solely of what his fleshly eyes have seen;

and for this reason I wish he were "located" where they would rest upon richer and fairer things than this immediate landscape. Looking about for myself, I conclude that the face of nature and civilization in this our country is to a certain point a very sufficient literary field. But it will yield its secrets only to a really *grasping* imagination. This I think Howells lacks. (Of course *I* don't!) To write well and worthily of American things one need even more than elsewhere to be a *master*. But unfortunately one is less!… I myself have been scribbling some little tales which in the course of time you will have a chance to read. To write a series of good little tales I deem ample work for a life-time. I dream that my life-time shall have done it. It's at least a relief to have arranged one's life-time....

There is an immensity of stupid feeling and brutal writing prevalent here about recent English conduct and attitude—innocuous to some extent, I think, from its very stupidity; but I confess there are now, to my mind, few things of more appealing interest than the various problems with which England finds herself confronted: and this owing to the fact that, on the whole, the country is so deeply—so tragically—charged with a consciousness of her responsibilities, dangers and duties. She presents in this respect a wondrous contrast to ourselves. We, retarding our healthy progress by all the gross weight of our maniac contempt of the refined idea: England striving vainly to compel her lumbersome carcase by the straining wings of conscience and desire. Of course I speak of the better spirits

there and the worst here.... We have over here the high natural light of chance and space and prosperity; but at moments dark things seem to be almost more blessed by the dimmer radiance shed by impassioned thought.... But I must stay my gossiping hand....

To his Parents

This next visit to Europe had begun in the spring of 1872. He had reached Germany, in the company of his sister and aunt, by way of England, Switzerland and Italy.

Heidelberg,
Sept. 15th, '72.

Dear Father and Mother,

I think I should manifest an energy more becoming a child of yours if I were to sustain my nodding head at least enough longer to scrawl the initial words of my usual letter: we are travellers in the midst of travel. You heard from me last at Innsbrück—or rather, I think, at Botzen, just before, a place beautiful by nature but most ugly by man; and [we] came by an admirable five hours' run through the remnant of the Tyrol to Munich, where we spent two rather busy days. It's a singular place and one difficult to write of with a serious countenance. It has a fine lot of old pictures, but otherwise it is a nightmare of pretentious vacuity: a city of chalky stucco—a Florence and Athens in canvas and planks. To have come [thither] from Venice is a sensation! We found reality at last at Nüremburg, by which place, combined with this, it seemed a vast pity not to proceed rather than by stupid Stuttgart. Nüremburg is excellent—and comparisons are odious; but I would give a thousand N.'s for one ray of Verona! We came on hither by a morning and noon of railway, which has

not in the least prevented a goodly afternoon and evening at the Castle here. The castle (which I think you have all seen in your own travels) is an incomparable ruin and holds its own against any Italian memories. The light, the weather, the time, were all, this evening, most propitious to our visit. This rapid week in Germany has filled us with reflections and observations, tossed from the railway windows on our course, and irrecoverable at this late hour. To me this hasty and most partial glimpse of Germany has been most satisfactory; it has cleared from my mind the last mists of uncertainty and assured me that I can never hope to become an unworthiest adoptive grandchild of the fatherland. It is well to listen to the voice of the spirit, to cease hair-splitting and treat one's self to a good square antipathy—when it is so very sympathetic! I may 'cultivate' mine away, but it has given me a week's wholesome nourishment.

Strasbourg. We have seen Strasbourg—a palpably conquered city—and the Cathedral, which beats everything we have ever seen. Externally, it amazed me, which somehow I hadn't expected it to do. Strasbourg is gloomy, battered and painful; but apparently already much Germanized. We take tomorrow the formidable journey to Paris....

Yours in hope and love,
H. JAMES jr.

To W. D. Howells

Mr. Howells's novel, just published, was *A Chance Acquaintance*. An allusion at the end of this letter recalls the great fire that had recently devastated the business quarter of Boston.

Berne, June 22d [1873].

My veritably dear Howells,

Your letter of May 12th came to me a week ago (after a journey to Florence and back) and gave me exquisite pleasure. I found it in the Montreux post-office and wandered further till I found the edge of an open vineyard by the lake, and there I sat down with my legs hanging over the azure flood and broke the seal. Thank you for everything; for liking my writing and for being glad I like yours. Your letter made me homesick, and when you told of the orchards by Fresh Pond I hung my head for melancholy. What is the meaning of this destiny of desolate exile—this dreary necessity of having month after month to do without our friends for the sake of this arrogant old Europe which so little befriends us? This is a hot Sunday afternoon: from my window I look out across the rushing Aar at some beautiful undivided meadows backed by black pine woods and blue mountains: but I would rather be taking up my hat and stick and going to invite myself to tea with you. I left Italy a couple of weeks since, and since then have been taking gloomy views of

things. I feel as if I had left my "genius" behind in Rome. But I suppose I am well away from Rome just now; the Roman (and even the Florentine) lotus had become, with the warm weather, an indigestible diet. I heard from my mother a day or two since that your book is having a sale—bless it! I haven't yet seen the last part and should like to get the volume as a whole. Would it trouble you to have it sent by post to Brown, Shipley & Co., London? Your fifth part I extremely relished; it was admirably touched. I wished the talk in which the offer was made had been given (instead of the mere résumé), but I suppose you had good and sufficient reasons for doing as you did. But your work is a success and Kitty a creation. I have envied you greatly, as I read, the delight of feeling her grow so real and complete, so true and charming. I think, in bringing her through with such unerring felicity, your imagination has *fait ses preuves*.... I should like to tell you a vast deal about myself, and I believe you would like to hear it. But as far as vastness goes I should have to invent it, and it's too hot for such work. I send you another (and for the present last) travelling piece—about Perugia etc. It goes with this, in another cover: a safe journey to it. I hope you may squeeze it in this year. It has numbers (in pages) more than you desire; but I think it is within bounds, as you will see there is an elision of several. I have done in all these months since I've been abroad less writing than I hoped. Rome, for direct working, was not good —too many distractions and a languefying atmosphere. But for "impressions" it was priceless, and I've got a lot duskily garnered

away somewhere under my waning (that's an *n*, not a *v*) *chevelure* which some day may make some figure. I shall make the coming year more productive or retire from business altogether. Believe in me yet awhile longer and I shall reward your faith by dribblings somewhat less meagre.... I say nothing about the Fire. I can't trouble you with ejaculations and inquiries which my letters from home will probably already have answered. At this rate, apparently, the Lord loveth Boston immeasurably. But what a grim old Jehovah it is!…

My blessing, dear Howells, on all your affections, labours and desires. Write me a word when you can (B. & S., London) and believe me always faithfully yours,

H. JAMES jr.

To Miss Grace Norton

Florence, Jan. 14th, '74.

Dear Grace,

I have been jerked away from Rome, where I had been expecting to spend this winter, just as I was warming to the feast, and Florence, tho' very well in itself, doesn't go so far as it might as a substitute for Rome. It's like having a great plum-pudding set down on the table before you, and then seeing it whisked away and finding yourself served with wholesome tapioca. My brother, after a month of great enjoyment and prosperity at Rome, had a stroke of malaria (happily quite light) which made it necessary for him to depart, and I am here charitably to keep him company. I oughtn't to speak light words of Florence to you, who know it so well, and with reason love it so well: and they are really words from my pen's end simply and not from my heart. I have an inextinguishable relish for Florence, and now that I have been back here a fortnight this early love is beginning to shake off timidly the ponderous shadow of Rome.... Just as I was leaving Rome came to me Charles's letter of Dec. 5th, for which pray thank him warmly. I gather from it that he is, in vulgar parlance, taking America rather hard, and I suppose your feelings and Jane's on the matter resemble his own. But it's not for me to blame him, for I take it hard enough even here in Florence,

and though I have a vague theory that there is a way of being contented there, I am afraid that when I go back I shall need all my ingenuity to put it into practice. What Charles says about our civilization seems to me perfectly true, but practically I don't feel as if the facts were so melancholy. The great fact for us all there is that, relish Europe as we may, we belong much more to that than to this, and stand in a much less factitious and artificial relation to it. I feel forever how Europe keeps holding one at arm's length, and condemning one to a meagre scraping of the surface. I have been nearly a year in Italy and have hardly spoken to an Italian creature save washerwomen and waiters. This, you'll say, is my own stupidity; but granting this gladly, it proves that even a creature addicted as much to sentimentalizing as I am over the whole *mise en scène* of Italian life, doesn't find an easy initiation into what lies behind it. Sometimes I am overwhelmed with the pitifulness of this absurd want of reciprocity between Italy itself and all my rhapsodies about it. There is certainly, however, terribly little doubt that, practically, for those who have been happy in Europe even Cambridge the Brilliant is not an easy place to live in. When I saw you in London, plunged up to your necks in that full, rich, abundant, various London life, I knew that a day of reckoning was coming and I heaved a secret prophetic sigh. I can well understand Charles's saying that the memory of these and kindred things is a perpetual private [? pang]. But pity our poor bare country and don't revile. England and Italy, with their countless helps to life and pleasure, are the

lands for happiness and self-oblivion. It would seem that in our great unendowed, unfurnished, unentertained and unentertaining continent, where we all sit sniffing, as it were, the very earth of our foundations, we ought to have leisure to turn out something handsome from the very heart of simple human nature. But after I have been at home a couple of months I will tell you what I think. Meanwhile I aspire to linger on here in Italy and make the most of it—even in poor little overshadowed Florence and in a society limited to waiters and washerwomen. In your letter of last summer you amiably reproach me with not giving you personal tidings, and warn me in my letters against mistaking you for the *Nation*. Heaven forbid! But I have no *nouvelles intimes* and in this solitary way of life I don't ever feel especially like a person. I write more or less in the mornings, walk about in the afternoons, and doze over a book in the evenings. You can do as well as that in Cambridge....

To His Mother

Florence,
May 17th, 1874.

Dearest Mother,

The days pass evenly and rapidly here in my comfortable little dwelling on this lively (and also dusty) old Piazza Sta. Maria Novella. (The centre of the square is not paved and the dust hovers over it in clouds which compel one to live with closed windows. But I remove to my bedroom, which is on a side-street and very cool and clean.) Nothing particular happens to me and my time is passed between sleeping and scribbling (both of which I do very well,) lunching and dining, walking, and conversing with my small circle of acquaintance.... Tell Willy I thank him greatly for setting before me so vividly the question of my going home or staying. I feel equally with him the importance of the decision. I have been meaning, as you know, for some time past to return in the autumn, and I see as yet no sufficient reason for changing my plan. I shall go with the full prevision that I shall not find life at home *simpatico*, but rather painfully, and, as regards literary work, obstructively the reverse, and not even with the expectation that time will make it easier; but simply on sternly practical grounds; i.e. because I can find more abundant literary occupation by being on the premises and relieve you and father of your burdensome financial interposition. But I shrink

from Willy's apparent assumption that going now is to pledge myself to stay forever. I feel as if my three years in Europe (with much of them so maladif) were a very moderate allowance for one who gets so much out of it as I do; and I don't think I could really hold up my head if I didn't hope to eat a bigger slice of the pudding (with a few more social plums in it, especially) at some future time. If at the end of a period at home I don't feel an overwhelming desire to come back, it will be so much gained; but I should prepare myself for great deceptions if I didn't take the possibility of such desire into account. One oughtn't, I suppose, to bother too much about the future, but arrange as best one can with the present; and the present bids me go home and try and get more things published. What makes the question particularly difficult to decide is that though I should make more money at home, American prices would devour it twice as fast; but even allowing for this, I should keep ahead of my expenses better than here. I know that when the time comes it will be unutterably hard to leave and I shall be wondering whether, if I were to stay another year, I shouldn't propitiate the Minotaur and return more resignedly. But to this I shall answer that a year wouldn't be a tenth part enough and that besides, as things stand, I should be perplexed where to spend it. Florence, fond as I have grown of it, is worth far too little to me, socially, for me to think complacently of another winter here. Here have I been living (in these rooms) for five weeks—and not a creature, save Gryzanowski, has crossed my threshold—counting out my little

Italian, who comes twice a week, and whom I have to *pay* for his conversation! If I knew any one in England I should be tempted to go there for a year, for there I could work to advantage—i.e. get hold of new books to review. But I can't face, as it is, a year of British solitude. What I desire now more than anything else, and what would do me more good, is a *régal* of intelligent and suggestive society, especially male. But I don't know how or where to find it. It exists, I suppose, in Paris and London, but I can't get at it. I chiefly desire it because it would, I am sure, increase my powers of work. These are going very well, however, as it is, and I have for the present an absorbing task in my novel. Consider then that if nothing extremely unexpected turns up, I shall depart in the autumn. I have no present plans for the summer beyond ending my month in my rooms—on the 11th of June. I hope, dearest mammy, that you will be able to devise some agreeable plan for your own summer, and will spend it in repose and comfort.... Has the trunk reached Quincy St.? Pray guard jealously my few clothes—a summer suit and a coat, and two white waistcoats that I would give much for here, now. But don't let Father and Willy wear them out, as they will serve me still. Farewell, sweet mother. I must close. I wrote last asking you to have my credit renewed. I suppose it has been done. Love abounding to all. I will write soon to Willy. I wrote lately to A.

Yours ever,
H.

II
PARIS AND LONDON
(1875-1881)

AFTER another uneventful American year at Cambridge (1874-5,) during which Roderick Hudson was running its course in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Henry James came to Europe again with the clear intention of staying for good. His first idea was to settle in Paris. There he would find the literary world with which he had the strongest affinity, and it does not seem to have occurred to him at the time to seek a European home anywhere else. His knowledge of England was still very slight, and he needed something more substantial to live and work upon than the romance of Italy. In Paris he settled therefore, in the autumn of 1875, taking rooms at 29 Rue du Luxembourg. He began to write The American, to contribute Parisian Letters to the *New York Tribune*, and to frequent the society of a few of his compatriots. He made the valued acquaintance of Ivan Turgenev, and through him of the group which surrounded Gustave Flaubert—Edmond de Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, Guy de Maupassant, Zola and others. But the letters which follow will shew the kind of doubts that began to arise after a winter in Paris—doubts of the possibility of Paris as a place where an American imagination could really take root and flourish. He

found the circle of literature tightly closed to outside influences; it seemed to exclude all culture but its own after a fashion that aroused his opposition; he speaks sarcastically on one occasion of having watched Turgenev and Flaubert seriously discussing Daudet's *Jack*, while he reflected that none of the three had read, or knew English enough to read, *Daniel Deronda*. During a summer stay at Etretat these doubts increased, and when he went back to Paris in the autumn of 1876 he had already begun to feel the tug of an inclination towards London. His brother William seems to have given the final impulse which sent him over, and before the end of the year he was in London at last.

He took rooms at 3 Bolton Street, just off Piccadilly, and at first found the change from 'glittering, charming, civilised Paris' rather rude. But within a few weeks he was deep in London, with doors unnumbered opening to him and a general welcome for the rising young novelist from America. Letter after letter was sent home with accounts of the visits and dinner-parties which were soon his habitual round. He quickly discovered that this was his appointed home and set himself deliberately to cultivate it. But his relief at finding a place of which he could really take possession was entirely compatible with candid criticism. Letter after letter, too, is filled with caustic reflections on the minds and manners of the English; and as the following pages contain not a few of these, so it should here be pointed out that his correspondence was the only outlet open to these irrepressible sentiments, and that they must be seen in due proportion with

the perfect courtesy of appreciation that he always shewed to his well-meaning hosts. He was very much alone in his observing detachment during these years. 'I wish greatly,' he writes to Miss Norton about this time, 'you and Charles were here, so that I might have some one to say the things that are in me too; I mean the things about England and the English—the feelings, impressions, judgments, emotions of every kind that are being perpetually generated, and that I can't utter to a single Briton of them all with the smallest chance of being understood.... The absence of a sympathetic, compatriotic, intelligent spirit, like yours, is my greatest deprivation here, and everything is corked up.'

But whatever the shortcomings of the English might be, London life closed round him and held him fast. He would break away for an occasional excursion abroad, or he would carry his work into seaside lodgings for the end of the summer. Otherwise he clung to London, with such country visits as sprang naturally from his numerous relations with the town and were simply an extension of these. During the years covered by the present section he spent some weeks in Rome towards the end of 1877, three months in Paris in the autumn of 1879, and two in Italy again, at Florence and Naples, in the following spring. By 1881 he was sufficiently acclimatised in London to feel the need of escaping from the 'season,' then so much more organised and exacting an institution than it has since become; he went to Venice in March and did not return till

July. But these were the only variations from the life of a 'cockney *convaincu*,' as he admitted himself to be. The wonder is that he found time under such conditions to accomplish the large amount of work he still put forth year by year. In spite of health that continued somewhat uncertain, he was able to concentrate upon his writing in the midst of all distractions. Daisy Miller, The Europeans, Confidence, Washington Square, and the Portrait of a Lady, all belong to the first five years of his London life, besides an unbroken stream of shorter pieces—fiction, picturesque sketches, reviews of books—contributed to several English and American periodicals. Time slipped by, and he began to wait upon the right opportunity for a long visit to his own country. It was not indeed that he felt himself to be losing touch with it; his appetite for American news was unassuageable, and by means of a correspondence as copious as ever he jealously preserved and cherished every possible tie with his old home. But he turned to his own family, then as always afterwards, with an affection stimulated by his unfathered state in England. His parents were growing old, his elder brother (who had married in 1878) was beginning to enjoy and exhibit the maturity of his genius, and it was more than time for a renewal of associations on the spot. By the autumn of 1881 he had finished The Portrait of a Lady, the longest and in every way the most important of his works hitherto, and he could also feel that his grounding in London, so to call it, was solid and secure. After six years of absence he then saw America again.

To his Father

29 Rue du Luxembourg.
April 11th [1876].

Dear Father,

The slender thread of my few personal relations hangs on, without snapping, but it doesn't grow very stout. You crave chiefly news, I suppose, about Ivan Sergeitch [Turgenev], whom I have lately seen several times. I spent a couple of hours with him at his room, some time since, and I have seen him otherwise at Mme. Viardot's. The latter has invited me to her musical parties (Thursdays) and to her Sundays *en famille*. I have been to a couple of the former and (as yet only) one of the latter. She herself is a most fascinating and interesting woman, ugly, yet also very handsome or, in the French sense, *très-belle*. Her musical parties are rigidly musical and to me, therefore, rigidly boresome, especially as she herself sings very little. I stood the other night on my legs for three hours (from 11 till 2) in a suffocating room, listening to an interminable fiddling, with the only consolation that Gustave Doré, standing beside me, seemed as bored as myself. But when Mme. Viardot does sing, it is superb. She sang last time a scene from Gluck's *Alcestis*, which was the finest piece of musical declamation, of a grandly tragic sort, that I can conceive. Her Sundays seem rather dingy and calculated to remind one of Concord 'historical games' etc.

But it was both strange and sweet to see poor Turgenev acting charades of the most extravagant description, dressed out in old shawls and masks, going on all fours etc. The charades are their usual Sunday evening occupation and the good faith with which Turgenev, at his age and with his glories, can go into them is a striking example of that spontaneity which Europeans have and we have not. Fancy Longfellow, Lowell, or Charles Norton doing the like, and every Sunday evening! I am likewise gorged with music at Mme. de Blocqueville's, where I continue to meet Emile Montégut, whom I don't like so well as his writing, and don't forgive for having, à l'avenir, spoiled his writing a little for me. Calling the other day on Mme. de B. I found with her M. Caro, the philosopher, a man in the expression of whose mouth you would discover depths of dishonesty, but a most witty and agreeable personage. I had also the other day a very pleasant call upon Flaubert, whom I like personally more and more each time I see him. But I think I easily—more than easily—see all round him intellectually. There is something wonderfully simple, honest, kindly, and touchingly inarticulate about him. He talked of many things, of Théo. Gautier among others, who was his intimate friend. He said nothing new or rare about him, except that he thought him after the Père Hugo the greatest of French poets, much above Alfred de Musset; but Gautier in his extreme perfection was unique. And he recited some of his sonnets in a way to make them seem the most beautiful things in the world. Find in especial (in the volume I left at home) one called *Les*

Portraits Ovales.... I went down to Chartres the other day and had a charming time—but I won't speak of it as I have done it in the Tribune. The American papers over here are *accablants*, and the vulgarity and repulsiveness of the Tribune, whenever I see it, strikes me so violently that I feel tempted to stop my letter. But I shall not, though of late there has been a painful dearth of topics to write about. But soon comes the *Salon*.... I am very glad indeed that Howells is pleased with my new tale; I am now actively at work upon it. I am well pleased that the *Atlantic* has obtained it. His own novel I have not read, but he is to send it to me.

Your home news has all been duly digested. Tell Willy that I will answer his most interesting letter specifically; and say to my dearest sister that if she will tell me which—black or white—she prefers I will send her gratis a fichu of écru lace, which I am told is the proper thing for her to have.

Ever, dearest daddy, your loving son,

H. JAMES jr.

To W. D. Howells

The 'story' was *The American*, which began to appear in *The Atlantic Monthly* in June, 1876.

29 Rue du Luxembourg, Paris.
May 28th [1876].

Dear Howells,

I have just received (an hour ago) your letter of May 14th. I shall be very glad to do my best to divide my story so that it will make twelve numbers, and I think I shall probably succeed. Of course 26 pp. is an impossible instalment for the magazine. I had no idea the second number would make so much, though I half expected your remonstrance. I shall endeavour to give you about 14 pp., and to keep doing it for seven or eight months more. I sent you the other day a fourth part, a portion of which, I suppose, you will allot to the fifth.

My heart was touched by your regret that I hadn't given you "a great deal of my news"—though my reason suggested that I could not have given you what there was not to give. "La plus belle fille du monde ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a." I turn out news in very small quantities—it is impossible to imagine an existence less pervaded with any sort of *chiaroscuro*. I am turning into an old, and very contented, Parisian: I feel as if I had struck roots into the Parisian soil, and were likely to let them grow tangled and tenacious there. It is a very comfortable and profitable place, on

the whole—I mean, especially, on its general and cosmopolitan side. Of pure Parisianism I see absolutely nothing. The great merit of the place is that one can arrange one's life here exactly as one pleases—that there are facilities for every kind of habit and taste, and that everything is accepted and understood. Paris itself meanwhile is a sort of painted background which keeps shifting and changing, and which is always there, to be looked at when you please, and to be most easily and comfortably ignored when you don't. All this, if you were only here, you would feel much better than I can tell you—and you would write some happy piece of your prose about it which would make me feel it better, afresh. *Ergo*, come—when you can! I shall probably be here still. Of course every good thing is still better in spring, and in spite of much mean weather I have been liking Paris these last weeks more than ever. In fact I have accepted destiny here, under the vernal influence. If you sometimes read my poor letters in the *Tribune*, you get a notion of some of the things I see and do. I suppose also you get some gossip about me from Quincy St. Besides this there is not a great deal to tell. I have seen a certain number of people all winter who have helped to pass the time, but I have formed but one or two relations of permanent value, and which I desire to perpetuate. I have seen almost nothing of the literary fraternity, and there are fifty reasons why I should not become intimate with them. I don't like their wares, and they don't like any others; and besides, they are not *accueillants*. Turgenev is worth the whole heap of them,

and yet he himself swallows them down in a manner that excites my extreme wonder. But he is the most loveable of men and takes all things easily. He is so pure and strong a genius that he doesn't need to be on the defensive as regards his opinions and enjoyments. The mistakes he may make don't hurt him. His modesty and naïveté are simply infantine. I gave him some time since the message you sent him, and he bade me to thank you very kindly and to say that he had the most agreeable memory of your two books. He has just gone to Russia to bury himself for two or three months on his estate, and try and finish a long novel he has for three or four years been working upon. I hope to heaven he may. I suspect he works little here.

I interrupted this a couple of hours since to go out and pay a visit to Gustave Flaubert, it being his time of receiving, and his last Sunday in Paris, and I owing him a farewell. *He* is a very fine old fellow, and the most interesting man and strongest artist of his circle. I had him for an hour alone, and then came in his "following," talking much of Emile Zola's catastrophe—Zola having just had a serial novel for which he was handsomely paid interrupted on account of protests from provincial subscribers against its indecency. The opinion apparently was that it was a bore, but that it could only do the book good on its appearance in a volume. Among your tribulations as editor, I take it that this particular one is not in store for you. On my way down from Flaubert's I met poor Zola climbing the staircase, looking very pale and sombre, and I saluted him with the flourish natural to

a contributor who has just been invited to make his novel last longer yet....

Your inquiry "Why I don't go to Spain?" is sublime—is what Philip van Artevelde says of the Lake of Como, "softly sublime, profusely fair!" I shall spend my summer in the most tranquil and frugal hole I can unearth in France, and I have no prospect of travelling for some time to come. The Waverley Oaks seem strangely far away—yet I remember them well, and the day we went there. I am sorry I am not to see your novel sooner, but I applaud your energy in proposing to change it. The printed thing always seems to me dead and done with. I suppose you will write something about Philadelphia—I hope so, as otherwise I am afraid I shall know nothing about it. I salute your wife and children a thousand times and wish you an easy and happy summer and abundant inspiration.

Yours very faithfully,
H. JAMES, jr.

To William James

Etretat,
July 29th [1876].

Dear Wm.

I have little to tell you of myself. I shall be here till August 15-20, and shall then go and spend the rest of the month with the Childes, near Orléans (an ugly country, I believe,) and after that try to devise some frugal scheme for keeping out of Paris till as late as possible in the autumn. The winter there always begins soon enough. I am much obliged to you for your literary encouragement and advice—glad especially you like my novel. I can't judge it. Your remarks on my French tricks in my letters are doubtless most just, and shall be heeded. But it's an odd thing that such tricks should grow at a time when my last layers of resistance to a long-encroaching weariness and satiety with the French mind and its utterance has fallen from me like a garment. I have done with 'em, forever, and am turning English all over. I desire only to feed on English life and the contact of English minds—I wish greatly I knew some. Easy and smooth-flowing as life is in Paris, I would throw it over tomorrow for an even very small chance to plant myself for a while in England. If I had but a single good friend in London I would go thither. I have got nothing important out of Paris nor am likely to. My life there makes a much more succulent figure in your letters, my mention of its thin ingredients

as it comes back to me, than in my own consciousness. A good deal of Boulevard and third-rate Americanism: few retributive relations otherwise. I know the Théâtre Français by heart!

Daniel Deronda (Dan'l himself) is indeed a dead, though amiable, failure. But the book is a large affair; I shall write an article of some sort about it. All desire is dead within me to produce something on George Sand; though perhaps I shall, all the same, mercenarily and mechanically—though only if I am forced. *Please make a point of mentioning*, by the way, whether a letter of mine, upon her, exclusively, *did* appear lately in the Tribune. I don't see the T. regularly and have missed it. They misprint sadly. I never said, e.g., in announcing her death, that she was '*fearfully* shy': I used no such vile adverb, but another —I forget which.

I am hoping from day to day for another letter from home, as the period has come round.... I hope your own plans for the summer will prosper, and health and happiness be your portion. Give much love to Father, and to the ladies.

Yours always,
H. JAMES jr.

To William James

H. J. had by this time been settled in London for some three months

Athenaeum Club, Pall Mall.
March 29th, '77.

Dear Wm.

London life jogs along with me, pausing every now and then at some more or less succulent patch of herbage. I was almost ashamed to tell you through mother that I, unworthy, was seeing a bit of Huxley. I went to his house again last Sunday evening—a pleasant, easy, no-dress-coat sort of house (in our old Marlboro' Place, by the way). Huxley is a very genial, comfortable being—yet with none of the noisy and windy geniality of some folks here, whom you find with their backs turned when you are responding to the remarks that they have made you. But of course my talk with him is mere amiable generalities. These, however, he likes to cultivate, for recreation's sake, of a Sunday evening. (The thundering Spencer I have not lately seen here.) Some mornings since, I breakfasted with Lord Houghton again—he invites me most dotingly. Present: John Morley, Goldwin Smith (pleasanter than my prejudice against him,) Henry Cowper,

Frederick Wedmore, and a monstrous cleverly, agreeably talking M.P., Mr. Otway. John Morley has a most agreeable face, but he hardly opened his mouth. (He is, like so many of the men who have done much here, very young-looking.) Yesterday I dined with Lord Houghton—with Gladstone, Tennyson, Dr. Schliemann (the excavator of old Mycenae, etc.) and half a dozen other men of 'high culture.' I sat next but one to the Bard and heard most of his talk, which was all about port wine and tobacco: he seems to know much about them, and can drink a whole bottle of port at a sitting with no incommodity. He is very swarthy and scraggy, and strikes one at first as much less handsome than his photos: but gradually you see that it's a face of genius. He had I know not what simplicity, speaks with a strange rustic accent and seemed altogether like a creature of some primordial English stock, a thousand miles away from American manufacture. Behold me after dinner conversing affably with Mr. Gladstone—not by my own seeking, but by the almost importunate affection of Lord H. But I was glad of a chance to feel the 'personality' of a great political leader—or as G. is now thought here even, I think, by his partisans, ex-leader. That of Gladstone is very fascinating—his urbanity extreme—his eye that of a man of genius—and his apparent self-surrender to what he is talking of, without a flaw. He made a great impression on me—greater than any one I have seen here: though 'tis perhaps owing to my naïveté, and unfamiliarity with statesmen....

Did I tell you that I had been to the Oxford and Cambridge

boat-race? But I have paragraphed it in the *Nation*, to which I refer you. It was for about two minutes a supremely beautiful sight; but for those two minutes I had to wait a horribly bleak hour and a half, shivering, in mid-Thames, under the sour March-wind. I can't think of any other adventures: save that I dined two or three days since at Mrs. Godfrey Lushington's (they are very nice *blushing* people) with a parcel of quiet folk: but next to a divine little Miss Lushington (so pretty English girls can be!) who told me that she lived in the depths of the City, at Guy's Hospital, whereof her father is administrator. Guy's Hospital —of which I have read in all old English novels. So does one move all the while here on identified ground. This is the eve of Good Friday, a most lugubrious day here—and all the world (save 4,000,000 or so) are out of London for the ten days' Easter holiday. I think of making two or three excursions of a few hours apiece, to places near London whence I can come back to sleep: Canterbury, Chichester etc. (but as I shall commemorate them for lucre I won't talk of them thus).

Farewell, dear brother, I won't prattle further.... Encourage Alice to write to me. My blessings on yourself from your fraternal

H. J. jr.

To Miss Grace Norton

3 Bolton St., Piccadilly.
August 7th, 1877.

Dear Grace,

I feel now more at home in London than anywhere else in the world—so much so that I am afraid my sense of peculiarities, my appreciation of people and things, as *London* people and things, is losing its edge. I have taken a great fancy to the place; I won't say to the people and things; and yet these must have a part in it. It makes a very interesting residence at any rate; not the ideal and absolutely interesting—but the relative and comparative one. I have, however, formed no intimacies—not even any close acquaintances. I incline to believe that I have passed the age when one forms friendships; or that every one else has. I have seen and talked a little with a considerable number of people, but I have become familiar with almost none. To tell the truth, I find myself a good deal more of a cosmopolitan (thanks to that combination of the continent and the U.S.A. which has formed my lot) than the average Briton of culture; and to be—to have become by force of circumstances—a cosmopolitan is of necessity to be a good deal alone. I don't think that *London*, by itself, does a very great deal for people—for its residents; and those of them who are not out of the general social herd are potentially deadly provincial. I have become in all these years

as little provincial as possible. I don't say it from fatuity and I may say it to you; and yet to be so is, I think, necessary for forming here many close relations. So my interest in London is chiefly that of an observer in a place where there is most in the world to observe. I see no essential reason however why I should not some day see much more of certain Britons, and think that I very possibly may. But I doubt if I should ever marry—or want to marry—an English wife! This is an extremely interesting time here; and indeed that is one reason why I have not been able to bring myself to go abroad, as I have been planning all this month to do. I can't give up the morning papers! I am not one of the outsiders who thinks that the "greatness" of England is now exploded; but there mingles with my interest in her prospects and doings in all this horrible Eastern Question a sensible mortification and sadness. She has not resolutely played a part—even a wrong one. She has been weak and helpless and (above all) unskilful; she has drifted and stumbled and not walked like a great nation. One has a feeling that the affairs of Europe are really going to be settled without her. At any rate the cynical, brutal, barbarous pro-Turkish attitude of an immense mass of people here (I am no fanatic for Russia, but I think the Emperor of R. might have been treated like a gentleman!) has thrown into vivid relief the most discreditable side of the English character. I don't think it is the largest side, by any means; but when one comes into contact with it one is ready to give up the race!

I saw the Lowells and can testify to their apparent good-

humour and prosperity. It was a great pleasure to talk with Lowell; but he is morbidly Anglophobic; though when an Englishman asked me if he was not I denied it. I envied him his residence in a land of colour and warmth, of social freedom and personal picturesqueness; so many absent things here, where the dusky misery and the famous "hypocrisy" which foreign writers descant so much upon, seem sometimes to usurp the whole field of vision. But I shall in all probability go abroad myself by Sept. 1st: go straight to our blessed Italy. I hope to be a while at Siena, where you may be sure that I shall think of you....

Yours always, dear Grace, in all tender affection,

H. JAMES jr.

To Miss Grace Norton,

Paris, Dec. 15th [1877].

Dear Grace,

I hoped, after getting your letter of October 15th, to write you from Siena, but I never got there. I only got to Rome (where your letter came to me,) and in Rome I spent the whole of the seven weeks that I was able to give to Italy. I have just come back, and am on my way to London, whither I find I gravitate as toward the place in the world in which, on the whole, I feel most at home. I went directly to Rome some seven weeks since, and came directly back; but I spent a few days in Florence on my way down. Italy was still more her irresistible ineffable old self than ever, and getting away from Rome was really no joke. In spite of the "changes"—and they are very perceptible—the old enchantment of Rome, taking its own good time, steals over you and possesses you, till it becomes really almost a nuisance and an importunity. That is, it keeps you from working, from staying indoors, etc. To do those things in sufficient measure one must live in an ugly country; and that is why, instead of lingering in that golden climate, I am going back to poor, smutty, dusky, Philistine London. Florence had never seemed to me more lovely. Empty, melancholy, bankrupt (as I believe she is), she is turning into an old sleeping, soundless city, like Pisa. This sensible sadness, with

the glorious weather, gave the place a great charm. The Bootts were there, staying in a villa at Bellosguardo, and I spent many hours in their garden, sitting in the autumn sunshine and staring stupidly at that never-to-be-enough-appreciated view of the little city and the mountains....

I have had an autumn of things rather than of people, and have not much to relate in regard to human nature. Here in Paris, for a few days, I find I know really too many people—especially as they are for the most part acquaintances retained for the sake of social decency rather than of strong sentiment. They consume all my time, so that I can't even go to the Théâtre Français! In Rome I found the relics and fragments of the ancient American group, which has been much broken up—or rather broken down. But neither in its meridian nor in its decline has it had any very irresistible charms. The chief quality acquired by Americans who have lived thirty years in Europe seems to me a fierce susceptibility on the subject of omitted calls.

Public matters here, just now, are more interesting than private—and in France indeed are as interesting as can be. Parliamentary government is really being put to the test, and bearing it. The poor foolish old Marshal has at last succumbed to the liberal majority, and has apparently no stomach to renew his resistance. Plevna is taken by the Russians and England is supposed to be dreadfully snubbed. But one is only snubbed if one feels it, and it remains to be seen how England will take the Russian success. But one has a feeling now—to me it is a

very painful one—that England will take anything; that over-cautious and somewhat sordid counsels will always prevail. On the continent, certainly, her ancient "prestige" is gone; and I almost wish she would fight in a bad cause, if only to shew that she still can, and that she is not one vast, money-getting Birmingham. I really think we are assisting at the political decadence of our mighty mother-land. When so mealy-mouthed an organ as the *Times* is correctly held to represent the sentiment of the majority, this *must* be. But I must say that even the "decline" of England seems to me a tremendous and even, almost, an inspiring spectacle, and if the British Empire is once more to shrink up into that plethoric little island, the process will be the greatest drama in history!

This will reach you about Xmas-time, and I imagine you reading it at a window that looks out upon the snow-laden pines and hemlocks of Shady Hill. That white winter light that is sent up into a room from the deep snow is something that one quite loses the memory of here; and yet, as I think of it now, it is associated in my mind with all kinds of pleasant and comfortable indoor scenes. I am afraid that, for you, the season will have no great animation; but you will, I suppose, see a good deal of infantine exhilaration about you....

To William James

8 Bolton St., W.
May 1st, '78.

Dear William,

There were many interesting allusions in your letter which I should like to take up one by one. I should like to see the fair Hellenists of Baltimore; and I greatly regret that, living over here, my person cannot profit by my American reputation. It is a great loss to have one's person in one country and one's glory in another, especially when there are lovely young women in the case. Neither can one's glory, then, profit by one's person—as I flatter myself, even in your jealous teeth, that mine might in Baltimore!! Also about my going to Washington and its being my 'duty,' etc. I think there is much in that; but I can't whisk about the world quite so actively as you seem to recommend. It would be great folly for me, à peine established in London and getting a footing here, to break it all off for the sake of going to spend four or five months in Washington. I expect to spend many a year in London—I have submitted myself without reserve to that Londonizing process of which the effect is to convince you that, having lived here, you may, if need be, abjure civilization and bury yourself in the country, but may not, in pursuit of civilization, live in any smaller town. I am still completely an outsider here, and my only chance for becoming a little of an

insider (in that limited sense in which an American can ever do so) is to remain here for the present. After that—a couple of years hence—I shall go home for a year, embrace you all, and see everything of the country I can, including Washington. Meanwhile, if one will take what comes, one is by no means cut off from getting impressions here.... I know what I am about, and I have always my eyes on my native land.

I am very glad that Howells's play seemed so pretty, on the stage. Much of the dialogue, as it read, was certainly charming; but I should have been afraid of the slimness and un-scenic quality of the plot. For myself (in answer to your adjuration) it has long been my most earnest and definite intention to commence at play-writing as soon as I can. This will be soon, and then I shall astound the world! My inspection of the French theatre will fructify. I have thoroughly mastered Dumas, Augier, and Sardou (whom it is greatly lacking to Howells—by the way—to have studied:) and I know all they know and a great deal more besides. Seriously speaking, I have a great many ideas on this subject, and I sometimes feel tempted to retire to some frugal village, for twelve months, where, my current expenses being inconsiderable, I might have leisure to work them off. Even if I could only find some manager or publisher sufficiently devoted to believe in this and make me an allowance for such a period, I would afterwards make a compact and sign it with my blood, to reimburse him in thousands. But I shall not have to come to this, or to depend upon it.

I received a few days since your article on H. Spencer, but I have not yet had time to read it. I shall very presently attack—I won't say understand it. Mother speaks to me of your articles in Renouvier's magazine—and why have you not sent me those? I wish you would do so, punctually. I met Herbert Spencer the other Sunday at George Eliot's, whither I had at last bent my steps. G.H. Lewes introduced me to him as an American; and it seemed to me that at this fact, coupled with my name, his attention was aroused and he was on the point of asking me if I were related to you. But something instantly happened to separate me from him, and soon afterwards he went away. The Leweses were very urbane and friendly, and I think that I shall have the right *dorénavant* to consider myself a Sunday *habitué*. The great G.E. herself is both sweet and superior, and has a delightful expression in her large, long, pale equine face. I had my turn at sitting beside her and being conversed with in a low, but most harmonious tone; and bating a tendency to *aborder* only the highest themes I have no fault to find with her....

We expect to hear at any hour that war has broken out; and yet it may not be. It will be a good deal of a scandal if it does—especially if the English find themselves fighting side by side with the bloody, filthy Turks and their own Indian Sepoys. And to think that a clever Jew should have juggled old England into it! The papers are full of the Paris exhibition, which opens today; but it leaves me perfectly incurious. Blessings on all from yours fraternally,

To Miss Alice James

H. J. was at this time contributing a series of articles on English life and letters to the American *Nation*.

Tillypronie, Aberdeen.
Sept. 15th, 1878.

Dearest Sister,

On this howling stormy Sunday, on a Scotch mountainside, I don't know what I can do better than give you a little old-world news. I have had none of yours in some time; but I venture to interpret that as a good sign and to believe that peace and plenty hovers over Quincy Street. I shall continue in this happy faith and in the belief that you are gently putting forth your strength again, until the contrary is proved. Behold me in Scotland and very well pleased to be here. I am staying with the Clarks, of whom you have heard me speak and than whom there could not be a more tenderly hospitable couple. Sir John caresses me like a brother, and her ladyship supervises me like a mother.... I have been here for four or five days and I feel that I have done a very good thing in coming to Scotland. Once you get the hang of it, and apprehend the type, it is a most beautiful and admirable little country—fit, for 'distinction' etc., to make up a trio with Italy and Greece. There is a little very good company in the house, including my brilliant friend Lady Hamilton Gordon, and every day has brought with it some pretty entertainment. I

wish I could relate these episodes in detail; but I shall probably do a little of it in mercenary print. On the first day I went to some Highland sports, given by Lord Huntly, and to a sumptuous lunch, in a coquettish marquee, which formed an episode of the same. The next day I spent roaming over the moors and hills, in company with a remarkably nice young fellow staying in the house, Sidney Holland, grandson of the late Sir Henry (his father married a daughter of Sir Chas. Trevelyan, sister of my friend Mrs. Dugdale). Nothing can be more breezy and glorious than a ramble on these purple hills and a lounge in the sun-warmed heather. The real way to enjoy them is of course supposed to be with an eye to the grouse and partridges; but this is, happily, little of a shooting house, though Holland keeps the table—one of the best in England (or rather in Scotland, which is saying more)—supplied with game. The next day I took part in a cavalcade across the hills to see a ruined castle; and in the evening, if you please, stiff and sore as I was, and am still, with my exploits in the saddle, which had been sufficiently honourable, I went to a ball fifteen miles distant. The ball was given by a certain old Mr. Cunliffe Brooks, a great proprietor hereabouts and possessor of a shooting-lodge with a ball-room; a fact which sufficiently illustrates the luxury of these Anglo-Scotch arrangements. At the ball was the famous beauty Mrs. Langtry, who was staying in the house and who is probably for the moment the most celebrated woman in England. She is in sooth divinely handsome and it was 'extremely odd' to see her dancing a Highland reel (which she had

been practising for three days) with young Lord Huntly, who is a very handsome fellow and who in his kilt and tartan, leaping and hooting and romping, opposite to this London divinity, offered a vivid reminder of ancient Caledonian barbarism and of the roughness which lurks in all British amusements and only wants a pretext to explode. We came home from our ball (where I took out two young ladies who had gone with us for a polka apiece) at four a.m., and I found it difficult on that morning, at breakfast, to comply with that rigid punctuality which is the custom of the house.... Today our fine weather has come to an end and we are closely involved in a ferocious wet tornado. But I am glad of the rest and quiet, and I have just bolted out of the library to escape the 'morning service,' read by the worthy Nevin, the American Episcopal chaplain in Rome, who is staying here, to which the dumb and decent servants are trooping in. I am fast becoming a good enough Englishman to respect inveterately my own habits and do, wherever I may be, only exactly what I want. This is the secret of prosperity here—provided of course one has a certain number of sociable and conformable habits, and civil inclinations, as a starting-point. After that, the more positive your idiosyncrasies the more positive the convenience. But it is drawing toward lunch, and I can't carry my personality quite so far as to be late for that.

I have said enough, dear sister, to make you see that I continue to see the world with perhaps even enviable profit. But don't envy me too much; for the British country-house has at moments, for

a cosmopolitanised American, an insuperable flatness. On the other hand, to do it justice, there is no doubt of its being one of the ripest fruits of time—and here in Scotland, where you get the conveniences of Mayfair dovetailed into the last romanticism of nature—of the highest results of civilization. Such as it is, at any rate, I shall probably have a little more of it.... Scotland is decidedly a thing to see and which it would have been idiocy to have foregone. Did I tell you I was now London correspondent of the *Nation*? Farewell, dearest child and sister. I wish I could blow you a little of the salubrity of bonnie Scotland. The lunch-bell is striking up and I hurry off with comprehensive blessings.

Ever your faithfullest
H. J. jr.

To William James

The brief allusion at the end of this letter to two memorable visits will recall the picture he long afterwards made of them, and of the lady who inducted him, in *The Middle Years*. The closing paragraph of *Daisy Miller*, it may be mentioned, gives a glance at the hero's subsequent history and a hint that he became 'much interested in a clever foreign lady.' The story about to appear in the *Cornhill* was *An International Episode*.

Devonshire Club, St. James's, S.W.
Nov. 14th, '78.

My dear William,

I was much depressed on reading your letter by your painful reflections on *The Europeans*; but now, an hour having elapsed, I am beginning to hold up my head a little; the more so as I think I myself estimate the book very justly and am aware of its extreme slightness. I think you take these things too rigidly and unimaginatively—too much as if an artistic experiment were a piece of conduct, to which one's life were somehow committed; but I think also that you're quite right in pronouncing the book 'thin' and empty. I don't at all despair, yet, of doing something fat. Meanwhile I hope you will continue to give me, when you can, your free impression of my performances. It is a great thing to have some one write to one of one's things as if one were a third

person, and you are the only individual who will do this. I don't think however you are always right, by any means. As for instance in your objection to the closing paragraph of *Daisy Miller*, which seems to me queer and narrow, and as regards which I don't seize your point of view. J'en appelle to the sentiment of any other story-teller whatsoever; I am sure none such would wish the paragraph away. You may say—'Ah, but other *readers* would.' But that is the same; for the teller is but a more developed reader. I don't trust your judgment altogether (if you will permit me to say so) about *details*; but I think you are altogether right in returning always to the importance of subject. I hold to this, strongly; and if I don't as yet seem to proceed upon it more, it is because, being 'very artistic,' I have a constant impulse to try experiments of form, in which I wish to not run the risk of wasting or gratuitously using big situations. But to these I am coming now. It is something to have learned how to write, and when I look round me and see how few people (doing my sort of work) know how (to my sense,) I don't regret my step-by-step evolution. I don't advise you however to read the two last things I have written—one a thing in the Dec. and Jan. *Cornhill*, which I will send home; and the other a piece I am just sending to Howells. They are each quite in the same manner as *The Europeans*.

I have written you a letter after all. I am tired and must stop. I went into the country the other day to stay with a friend a couple of days (Mrs. Greville) and went with her to lunch with

Tennyson, who, after lunch, read us Locksley Hall. The next day we went to George Eliot's.

Blessings on Alice. Ever your

H. J. jr.

To his Mother

3 Bolton St., W.
January 18th [1879].

My dearest Mother,

I have before me your letter of December 30th, with its account of your Christmas festivities and other agreeable talk, and I endeavour on this 'beastly' winter night, before my carboniferous hearth, to transport myself into the family circle.

Mrs. Kemble has returned to town for the winter—an event in which I always take pleasure, as she is certainly one of the women I know whom I like best. I confess I find people in general very vulgar-minded and superficial—and it is only by a pious fiction, to keep myself going, and keep on the social harness, that I succeed in postulating them as anything else or better. It is therefore a kind of rest and refreshment to see a woman who (extremely annoying as she sometimes is) gives one a positive sense of having a deep, rich, human nature and having cast off all vulgarities. The people of this world seem to me for the most part nothing but *surface*, and sometimes—oh ye gods! such desperately poor surface! Mrs. Kemble has no organized surface at all; she is like a straight deep cistern without a cover, or even, sometimes, a bucket, into which, as a mode of intercourse, one must tumble with a splash. You mustn't judge her by her indifferent book, which is no more a part of her than a pudding

she might make.... Please tell William and Alice that I received a short time since their kind note, written on the eve of their going to Newport, and complimenting me on the first part of the *International Episode*. You will have read the second part by this time, and I hope that you won't, like many of my friends here (as I partly know and partly suspect,) take it ill of me as against my 'British entertainers.' It seems to me myself that I have been very delicate; but I shall keep off dangerous ground in future. It is an entirely new sensation for them (the people here) to be (at all delicately) *ironised* or satirised, from the American point of view, and they don't at all relish it. Their conception of the normal in such a relation is that the satire should be all on their side against the Americans; and I suspect that if one were to push this a little further one would find that they are extremely sensitive. But I like them too much and feel too kindly to them to go into the satire-business or even the light-ironical in any case in which it would wound them—even if in such a case I should see my way to it very clearly. Macmillan is just on the point of bringing out Daisy Miller, The International Episode, and Four Meetings in two little big-printed volumes, like those of the *Europeans*. There is every reason to expect for them a very good success, as Daisy M. has been, as I have told you before, a really quite extraordinary hit. I will send you the new volumes.... Farewell, dearest Mother. I send my filial duty to father, who I hope is worrying comfortably through the winter (I am afraid that since you wrote you have had severe weather)—and looking

and listening always for a letter, remain your very lovingest

H. JAMES jr.

To Miss Grace Norton

The 'short novel' he was now just finishing was *Confidence*

3 Bolton St., W.
Sunday a.m., June 8th [1879].

My dear Grace,

It is difficult to talk to you about my impressions—it takes a great deal of space to generalise; and (when one is talking of London) it takes even more to specify! I am afraid also, in truth, that I am living here too long to be an observer—I am sinking into dull British acceptance and conformity. The other day I was talking to a very clever foreigner—a German (if you can admit the "clever")—who had lived a long time in England, and of whom I had asked some opinion. "Oh, I know nothing of the English," he said, "I have lived here too long—twenty years. The first year I really knew a great deal. But I have lost it!" That is getting to be my state of mind and I am sometimes really appalled at the matter of course way of looking at the indigenous life and manners into which I am gradually dropping! I am losing my standard—my charming little standard that I used to think so high; my standard of wit, of grace, of good manners, of vivacity,

of urbanity, of intelligence, of what makes an easy and natural style of intercourse! And this in consequence of my having dined out during the past winter 107 times! When I come home you will think me a sad barbarian—I may not even, just at first, appreciate your fine points! You must take that speech about my standard with a grain of salt—but excuse me; I am treating you —a proof of the accusation I have brought against myself—as if you were also a dull-eyed Briton. The truth is I am so fond of London that I can afford to abuse it—and London is on the whole such a fine thing that it can afford to be abused! It has all sorts of superior qualities, but it has also, and English life, generally, and the English character have, a certain number of great plump flourishing uglinesses and drearinesses which offer themselves irresistibly as pin-cushions to criticism and irony. The British mind is so totally un-ironical in relation to itself that this is a perpetual temptation. You will know the things I mean—you will remember them—let that suffice. Non ragioniam di lor!—I don't suppose you will envy me for having dined out 107 times—you will simply wonder what can have induced me to perpetrate such a folly, and how I have survived to tell the tale! I admit that it is enough for the present, and for the rest of the summer I shall take in sail. When the warm weather comes I find London evenings very detestable, and I marvel at the powers of endurance of my fellow "factors," as it is now the fashion to call human beings—(actors—poor blundering unapplauded Comedians would be a better name). Would you like a little gossip? I am afraid I have

nothing very lively in hand; but I take what comes uppermost. I am to dine tonight at Sir Frederick Pollock's, to meet one or two of the (more genteel) members of the Comédie Française, who are here just now, playing with immense success and supplying the London world with that invaluable boon, a topic. I mean the whole Comédie is here *en masse* for six weeks. I have been to see them two or three times and I find their artistic perfection gives one an immense lift out of British air. I took with me one night Mrs. Kemble, who is a great friend of mine and to my sense one of the most interesting and delightful of women. I have a sort of notion you don't like her; but you would if you knew her better. She is to my mind the first woman in London, and is moreover one of the consolations of my life. Another night I had with me a person whom it would divert you to know—a certain Mrs. Greville (a cousin, by marriage, of the Greville Papers:) the queerest creature living, but a mixture of the ridiculous and the amiable in which the amiable preponderates. She is crazy, stage-struck, scatter-brained, what the French call *extravagante*; but I can't praise her better than by saying that though she is on the whole the greatest fool I have ever known, I like her very much and get on with her most easily.... I am just finishing a short novel which will appear presently in six numbers of Scribner. This is to say please don't read it in that puerile periodical (where its appearance is due to—what you will be glad to hear—large pecuniary inducements,) but wait till it comes out as a book. It is worth being read in that shape. I have asked you no questions

—yet I have finished my letter. Let my blessing, my tender good wishes and affectionate assurances of every kind stand instead of them. Divide these with Charles, with your mother, with the children, and believe me, dear Grace, always very faithfully yours,

H. JAMES jr.

To W. D. Howells

H.J.'s forthcoming story in the *Cornhill* was *Washington Square*

3 Bolton Street, W.
Jan. 31st [1880].

My dear Howells,

Your letter of Jan. 19th and its enclosure (your review of my *Hawthorne*) came to me last night, and I must thank you without delay for each of them....

Your review of my book is very handsome and friendly and commands my liveliest gratitude. Of course your graceful strictures seem to yourself more valid than they do to me. The little book was a tolerably deliberate and meditated performance, and I should be prepared to do battle for most of the convictions expressed. It is quite true I use the word provincial too many times—I hated myself for't, even while I did it (just as I overdo the epithet "dusky.") But I don't at all agree f with you in thinking that "if it is not provincial for an Englishman to be English, a Frenchman French, etc., so it is not provincial for an American to be American." So it is not provincial for a Russian, an Australian, a Portuguese, a Dane, a Laplander, to savour of

their respective countries: that would be where the argument would land you. I think it is extremely provincial for a Russian to be very Russian, a Portuguese very Portuguese; for the simple reason that certain national types are essentially and intrinsically provincial. I sympathize even less with your protest against the idea that it takes an old civilization to set a novelist in motion —a proposition that seems to me so true as to be a truism. It is on manners, customs, usages, habits, forms, upon all these things matured and established, that a novelist lives—they are the very stuff his work is made of; and in saying that in the absence of those "dreary and worn-out paraphernalia" which I enumerate as being wanting in American society, "we have simply the whole of human life left," you beg (to my sense) the question. I should say we had just so much less of it as these same "paraphernalia" represent, and I think they represent an enormous quantity of it. I shall feel refuted only when we have produced (setting the present high company—yourself and me—for obvious reasons apart) a gentleman who strikes me as a novelist—as belonging to the company of Balzac and Thackeray. Of course, in the absence of this godsend, it is but a harmless amusement that we should reason about it, and maintain that if right were right he should already be here. I will freely admit that such a genius will get on *only* by agreeing with your view of the case—to do something great he must feel as you feel about it. But then I doubt whether such a genius—a man of the faculty of Balzac and Thackeray—*could* agree with you! When he does I will lie flat

on my stomach and do him homage—in the very centre of the contributor's club, or on the threshold of the magazine, or in any public place you may appoint!—But I didn't mean to wrangle with you—I meant only to thank you and to express my sense of how happily you turn those things.—I am greatly amused at your picture of the contributing blood-hounds whom you are holding in check. I wish immensely that you would let them fly at me —though there is no reason, certainly, that the decent public should be bespattered, periodically, with my gore. However my tender (or rather my very tough) flesh is prescient already of the Higginsonian fangs. Happy man, to be going, like that, to see your plays acted. It is a sensation I am dying (though not as yet trying) to cultivate. What a tremendous quantity of work you must get through in these years! I am impatient for the next *Atlantic*. What is your *Cornhill* novel about? I am to precede it with a poorish story in three numbers—a tale purely American, the writing of which made me feel acutely the want of the "paraphernalia." I *must* add, however (to return for a moment to this), that I applaud and esteem you highly for not feeling it; i.e. the want. You are certainly right—magnificently and heroically right—to do so, and on the day you make your readers—I mean the readers who know and appreciate the paraphernalia—do the same, you will be the American Balzac. That's a great mission—go in for it! Wherever you go, receive, and distribute among your wife and children, the blessing of yours ever,

H. JAMES jr.

To Charles Eliot Norton

3 Bolton Street, W.
Nov. 13th, 1880.

My dear Charles,

I wish you could take a good holiday and spend it in these countries. I have got to feel like such an old European that I could almost pretend to help to do you the honours. I am at least now a thoroughly naturalised Londoner—a cockney "convaincu." I am attached to London in spite of the long list of reasons why I should not be; I think it on the whole the best point of view in the world. There are times when the fog, the smoke, the universal uncleanness, the combined unwieldiness and flatness of much of the social life—these and many other matters—overwhelm the spirit and fill it with a yearning for other climes; but nevertheless one reverts, one sticks, one abides, one even cherishes! Considering that I lose all patience with the English about fifteen times a day, and vow that I renounce them for ever, I get on with them beautifully and love them well. Our dear Vasari, I fear, couldn't have made much of them, and they would have been improved by a slight infusion of the Florentine spirit; but for all that they are, for me, the great race—even at this hour of their possible decline. Taking them altogether they are more complete than other folk, more largely nourished, deeper, denser, stronger. I think it takes more to make an Englishman, on the whole, than

to make anyone else—and I say this with a consciousness of all that often seems to me to have been left out of their composition. But the question is interminable, and idle into the bargain. I am passing a quiet autumn. London has not yet waked up from the stagnation that belongs to this period. The only incident of consequence that has lately occurred to me was my dining a few days since at the Guildhall, at the big scrambling banquet which the Lord Mayor gives on the 9th November to the Cabinet, foreign ministers, etc. It was uncomfortable but amusing—you have probably done it yourself. I met Lowell there, whom I see, besides, with tolerable frequency. He is just back from a visit to Scotland which he appears to have enjoyed, including a speech-making at Edinburgh. He gets on here, I think, very smoothly and happily; for though he is critical in the gross, he is not in the detail, and takes things with a sort of boyish simplicity. He is universally liked and appreciated, his talk enjoyed (as well it may be, after some of their own!) and his poor long-suffering wife is doing very well. I therefore hope he will be left undisturbed by Garfield to enjoy the fruition of the long period of discomfort he has passed through. It will be in the highest degree indecent to remove him; though I wish he had a pair of secretaries that ministered a little more to the idea of American brilliancy. Lowell has to do *that* quite by himself....

Believe me always faithfully yours,

H. JAMES jr.

To his Mother

Mentmore, Leighton Buzzard,
November 28th, 1880.

Dearest mammy,

This is a pleasant Sunday, and I have been spending it (from yesterday evening) in a very pleasant place. 'Pleasant' is indeed rather an odd term to apply to this gorgeous residence, and the manner of life which prevails in it; but it is that as well as other things beside. Lady Rosebery (it is her enviable dwelling) asked me down here a week ago, and I stop till tomorrow a.m. There are several people here, but no one very important, save John Bright and Lord Northbrook, the last Liberal Viceroy of India. Millais, the painter, has been here for a part of the day, and I took a walk [with him] this afternoon back from the stables, where we had been to see three winners of the Derby trotted out in succession. This will give you an idea of the scale of Mentmore, where everything is magnificent. The house is a huge modern palace, filled with wonderful objects accumulated by the late Sir Meyer de Rothschild, Lady R.'s father. All of them are precious and many are exquisite, and their general Rothschild-ish splendour is only equalled by their profusion....

I have spent a good part of the time in listening to the conversation of John Bright, whom, though I constantly see him at the Reform Club, I had never met before. He has the

repute of being often "grumpy"; but on this occasion he has been in extremely good form and has discoursed uninterruptedly and pleasantly. He gives one an impression of sturdy, honest, vigorous, English middle-class liberalism, accompanied by a certain infusion of genius, which helps one to understand how his name has become the great rallying-point of that sentiment. He reminds me a good deal of a superior New Englander—with a fatter, damper nature, however, than theirs.... They are at afternoon tea downstairs in a vast, gorgeous hall, where an upper gallery looks down like the colonnade in Paul Veronese's pictures, and the chairs are all golden thrones, belonging to ancient Doges of Venice. I have retired from the glittering scene, to meditate by my bedroom fire on the fleeting character of earthly possessions, and to commune with my mammy, until a supreme being in the shape of a dumb footman arrives, to ventilate my shirt and turn my stockings inside out (the beautiful red ones imparted by Alice—which he must admire so much, though he doesn't venture to show it,) preparatory to my dressing for dinner. Tomorrow I return to London and to my personal occupation, always doubly valued after 48 hours passed among *ces gens-ci*, whose chief effect upon me is to sharpen my desire to distinguish myself by personal achievement, of however limited a character. It is the only answer one can make to their atrocious good fortune. Lord Rosebery, however, with youth, cleverness, a delightful face, a happy character, a Rothschild wife of numberless millions to distinguish and demoralize him, wears

them with such tact and bonhomie that you almost forgive him. He is extremely nice with Bright, draws him out, defers to him etc., with a delicacy rare in an Englishman. But, after all, there is much to say—more than can be said in a letter—about one's relations with these people. You may be interested, by the way, to know that Lord R. said this morning at lunch that his ideal of the happy life was that of Cambridge, Mass., "living like Longfellow." You may imagine that at this the company looked awfully vague, and I thought of proposing to him to exchange Mentmore for 20 Quincy Street.

I have little other personal news than this, which I have given you in some detail, for entertainment's sake.... I embrace you, dearest mother, and also your two companions.

Ever your fondest
H. JAMES jr.

To Mrs. Fanny Kemble

Hôtel de la Ville, Milan.
March 24th, '81.

My dear Mrs. Kemble,

Your good letter of nearly four weeks ago lies before me—where it has been lying for some days past—making me think of you so much that I ended by feeling as if I had answered it. On reflection I see that I haven't, however—that is, not in any way that you will appreciate. Shall you appreciate a letter from Milan on a day blustering and hateful as any you yourself can lately have been visited with? I have been spending the last eight days at this place, but I take myself off—for southern parts—to-morrow; so that by waiting a little I might have sent you a little more of the genuine breath of Italy. But I can do that—and I shall do it—at any rate, and meanwhile let my Milanese news go for what it is worth. You see I travel very deliberately, as I started for Rome six weeks ago, and I have only got thus far. My slowness has had various causes; among others my not being in a particular hurry to join the little nest of my compatriots (and yours) who cluster about the Piazza di Spagna. I have enjoyed the independence of lingering in places where I had no visits to pay—and this indeed has been the only charm of Milan, which has seemed prosaic and winterish, as if it were on the wrong side of the Alps. I have written a good deal (not letters), and seen that

mouldering old fresco of Leonardo, which is so magnificent in its ruin, and the lovely young Raphael in the Brera (the Sposalizio) which is still so fresh and juvenile, and Lucrezia Borgia's straw-coloured lock of hair at the Ambrosian Library, and several other small and great curiosities. I have kept pretty well out of the Cathedral, as the chill of Dante's frozen circle abides within it, and I have had a sore throat ever since I left soft San Remo. On the other hand I have also been to the Scala, which is a mighty theatre, and where I heard Der Freyschütz done à l'italienne, and sat through about an hour and three quarters of a ballet which was to last three. The Italians, truly, are eternal children. They paid infinitely more attention to the ballet than to the opera, and followed with breathless attention, and an air of the most serious credulity, the interminable adventures of a danseuse who went through every possible alternation of human experience on the points of her toes. The more I see of them the more struck I am with their having no sense of the ridiculous.

It must have been at Marseilles, I think, that I wrote you before; so that there is an hiatus in my biography to fill up. I went from Marseilles to Nice, which I found more than usually detestable, and pervaded, to an intolerable pitch, with a bad French carnival, which set me on the road again till I reached San Remo, which you may know, and which if you don't you ought to. I spent more than a fortnight there, among the olives and the oranges, between a big yellow sun and a bright blue sea. The walks and drives are lovely, and in the course of one of

them (a drive) I called upon our friends the George Howards, who have been wintering at Bordighera, a few miles away. But he was away in England getting himself elected to Parliament (you may have heard that he has just been returned for East Cumberland,) and she was away with him, helping him. The idea of leaving the oranges and olives for that! I saw, however, a most delightful little maid, their eldest daughter, of about 15, who had a mixture of shyness and frankness, the softness of the papa and the decision of the mother, with which I quite fell in love. I didn't fall in love with Mrs. William Morris, the strange, pale, livid, gaunt, silent, and yet in a manner graceful and picturesque, wife of the poet and paper-maker, who is spending the winter with the Howards; though doubtless she too has her merits. She has, for instance, wonderful aesthetic hair. From San Remo I came along the rest of the coast to Genoa, *not* by carriage however, as I might have done, for I was rather afraid of three days "on end" of my own society: that is, not on end, but sitting down. When I am tired of myself in common situations I can get up and walk away; so, in a word, I came in the train, and the train came in a tunnel—for it was almost all one—for five or six hours. I have been going to Venice—but it is so cold and blustering that I think to-morrow, when I depart from this place, the idea of reaching the southernmost point will get the better of me, and I shall make straight for Rome. I will write you from there—where I first beheld you: that is, familiarity (if I may be allowed the expression). Enough meanwhile about myself, my intentions

and delays: let me hear, or at least let me ask, about your own circumstances and propensities.... You must have felt *spattered*, like all the world, with the blood of the poor Russian Czar! Aren't you glad you are not an Empress? But you are. God save your Majesty!—Mrs. Greville sent me Swinburne's complicated dirge upon her poor simple mother, and I thought it wanting in all the qualities that one liked in Mrs T. I should like very much to send a tender message to Mrs Gordon: indefinite—but *very* tender! To you I am both tender and definite (save when I cross).

Ever very faithfully yours,
H. JAMES jr.

III
THE MIDDLE YEARS
(1882-1888)

AFTER his long absence Henry James had a few crowded months of American impressions, during the winter of 1881-2, in Boston, New York, and Washington. He was as sociable as usual, where-ever he went, and he used to the full the opportunity of reviving old memories and creating new. It will be seen that he confesses to having enjoyed "a certain success"; since the publication of Daisy Miller, three years before, he had known what it was to be a well-known author in London, but it was a fresh sensation on his native ground. Unhappily this interesting episode was cut short by the first great sorrow that had fallen upon his house. His mother died suddenly, in February 1882. To the end of his life Henry James was to remember this loss as the deepest stroke he had ever received; though she appears but little in his reminiscences there is no doubt that her presence, her completely selfless devotion to her husband and children, had been the greatest of all facts in their lives. Her care, her pride in them, the surrender of her whole nature and will to her love for them, had accompanied and supported all their doings; her husband, during the long years in which he poured out the strange fruits of his thought to a steadily indifferent world, had rested

unreservedly on her true and gentle companionship. Her second son's letters to her from Europe will already have shewn the easy and delightful relation that existed between her and her children; they confided in her and leaned on her and rallied her, with an intimacy deepened by the almost unbroken union of the whole household throughout their youth. Henry James stayed by his father for some months after her death, and would have stayed longer; but his father was anxious that he should return to his own work and life. He sailed for England accordingly in May 1882.

A summer in London was followed by the autumn excursion to Touraine and Provence portrayed in *A Little Tour in France*. At Tours he had the company of Mrs. Fanny Kemble and her daughter; and as usual he spent a few weeks in Paris before going home. He arrived in London in December to receive almost at once a message announcing that his father was seriously ill. He started immediately for America, but it was already too late; his father had died, so they felt, from mere cessation of the will to live bereft of their mother. "Nothing—he had enabled himself to make perfectly sure—was in the least worth while without her; this attested, he passed away or went out, with entire simplicity, promptness and ease, for the definite reason that his support had failed." So Henry James wrote, thirty years later, in the *Notes of a Son and Brother*, and his letters of the time confirm the impression. "There passes away with him," he says in one of them, "a certain sense of inspiration and protection which had, I think, accompanied each of us even to middle

life." Thenceforward it was to his elder brother that Henry James always looked for something of the same kind of support, and many letters will shew how close the bond remained. In the mere prose of business William took complete charge of his brother's share in the family affairs, for which the younger never claimed the smallest aptitude. But during the months that followed their father's death William was in Europe, and it fell to Henry to be occupied with the details of their property, for perhaps the first and last time. The patrimony consisted mainly of certain houses in the town of Syracuse, N. Y., where their grandfather had had interests, and where "James Street" is still one of the principal thoroughfares. Henry was kept in America by the necessity of taking part in some rather complicated dispositions arising out of the terms of their father's will; and also by his care for the future of his sister Alice, the youngest of the family. Her health was very insecure, and he proposed that she should join him in Europe; but for the present she preferred to settle in Boston, where he helped her to instal herself. He did not finally return to London until the following August, 1883.

This was his last visit to America for more than twenty years. He now subsided once more into the life of London, with its incessant round of sociability and its equally incessant accompaniment of creative work. Gradually his tone in regard to his English setting is modified and deepened. In the correspondence of these middle years it is no longer the interested but slightly rebellious immigrant who speaks; it is

rather the old-established colonist, now identified with his surroundings, a sharer in the general fortunes and responsibilities of the place. If he still regards himself as an observer from without and is still capable, as he once says, of "raging against British density in hours of irritation and disgust," it is none the less noticeable that English difficulties, English wars and politics and social troubles, of all of which these years were very full, begin to affect him as matters that concern his pride and solicitude for the country. There mingles with his exasperation an ardent desire that the English race may continue to stand high in the world, in spite of the many voices prophesying decadence and disaster. He writes as one who now has a stake in an old and honourable institution, and who feels a personal interest in its well-being and its good fame. Not indeed that he took, or ever for a moment wished to take, any share in the common life of the place but that of the most private fellowship; he resolutely avoided the least appearance of publicity, always refused to be drawn into popular functions, organisations, associations of any sort, and clung more and more, in the midst of all distractions, to the secrecy and seclusion of his work. And for that inner life these years were a very important turning-point. He now reached a period of his development when an immensely enlarged world of art seemed to open before him; and at the same time he made the discovery—one that had a deep and special effect upon him—that he was not the kind of writer who is rewarded with a big audience. Both these matters are heard of in the letters of this

time, but their consequences do not appear fully until somewhat later. They were various and far-reaching, and some of them can hardly be called fortunate.

Meanwhile the outward incidents of his life were as few and simple as ever. The stream of social engagements remained indeed at its height, notwithstanding his protests of withdrawal from the world; but otherwise there is little to chronicle but the publication of his books and his yearly journeys abroad. Early in 1884 he spent some weeks in Paris, where the death of Turgenev had made a gap that he greatly felt. For the rest of the year he was occupied in writing The Bostonians, and went no further from London than to carry his manuscript into lodgings at Dover for August and September. A little later his sister Alice arrived from America, to make the experiment of life in Europe for the benefit of her now confirmed ill-health. Her presence near at hand, for the few years that remained to her, was a source of much pleasure, and also of constant anxiety, to her brother. She was a woman of rare talent and of strongly marked character; but the life of an invalid, which proved to be all she was capable of, prevented her from using her opportunities and from taking the place that would have been open to her. She lived in great retirement, at first in London, afterwards chiefly at Bournemouth and Leamington. Henry James was unwearied in his care for her; he visited her constantly, and never without keen delight in her company and her vigorous talk. His brotherly attention had yet a further reward in the summer of 1885, when she was

at Bournemouth. To be near her he spent several weeks there, and was able at the same time to cultivate the society of another imprisoned invalid, close by, with whom he had already had some acquaintance. This was Robert Louis Stevenson, and the intimacy that thus arose very fortunately still survives in many admirable letters of each to the other. Stevenson's side of the correspondence, edited by Sir Sidney Colvin, is well known, and Henry James's can now be added to it; there could be no more illuminating interchange between two fine artists, so unlike in everything but their common passion.

By this time The Bostonians was beginning to appear in an American magazine, and a little later, again at Dover, The Princess Casamassima was finished. For two years Henry James now wrote nothing but shorter pieces (among them The Aspern Papers, The Lesson of the Master, The Reverberator,) with growing disconcertment as he found how tardily they seemed to appeal to editors, American or English. In the autumn of 1885 he spent his accustomed month in Paris, after which he scarcely stirred from London for another year. Early in 1886 he at last accomplished a move from his Bolton Street lodging, never a very cheerful or convenient abode, to a flat in Kensington (13 De Vere Mansions, presently known as 34 De Vere Gardens), close to the palace and the park, where he had much more agreeable conditions of light and air and quiet. He was planning, however, for another long absence in Italy, away from the interruptions of London, and this he secured during the first seven months

of 1887. For most of the time he was at Florence, where he took rooms in a villa overhanging the view from Bellosguardo; and he paid two lengthy visits to Venice, staying first with Mrs. Bronson, in the apartment so often occupied by Browning, and later with Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Curtis in the splendid old Palazzo Barbaro, where years afterwards he placed the exquisite and stricken heroine of The Wings of the Dove, for the climax of her story. He returned to England, late in the summer, to settle down to the writing of The Tragic Muse—the first time, as he mentions, that he had attacked a purely English subject on a large scale. "I am getting to know English life better than American," he writes in September 1888, when he was still working upon the book, " …and to understand the English character, or at least the mind, as well as if I had invented it—which indeed," he adds lightly, "I think I could have done without any very extraordinary expenditure of ingenuity." The end of the summer of 1888 was spent in an hotel at Torquay, which became one of his favourite retreats; and later in the autumn he was for a short while abroad, at Geneva and Paris, with a flying dip into Northern Italy. The letter to his brother, written from Geneva, with which this section closes, lucidly sums up the conclusions he had by now drawn from the experience of a dozen years of England. At the age of forty-five he could feel that he had exhausted the study of the old international distinctions, English and American, that had engaged him for so long. He was indeed to return to them again, later on, and to devote to them the final elaboration of his art;

but that lay far ahead, and now for many years he faced in other directions.

A vivid glimpse of Henry James at this time is given in the following note of reminiscence, kindly written for this page by Mr. Edmund Gosse:

> In the late summer of 1886 an experience, more often imagined than enjoyed, actually took place in the shape of a party of friends independently dispersed in the hotel or in lodgings through the Worcestershire village of Broadway, but with the home of Frank Millet, the American painter, as their centre. Edwin Abbey, John S. Sargent, Alfred Parsons, Fred Barnard and I, and others, lived through five bright weeks of perfect weather, in boisterous intimacy. Early in September Henry James joined us for a short visit. The Millets possessed, on their domain, a medieval ruin, a small ecclesiastical edifice, which was very roughly repaired so as to make a kind of refuge for us, and there, in the mornings, Henry James and I would write, while Abbey and Millet painted on the floor below, and Sargent and Parsons tilted their easels just outside. We were all within shouting distance, and not much serious work was done, for we were in towering spirits and everything was food for laughter. Henry James was the only sedate one of us all—benign, indulgent, but grave, and not often unbending beyond a genial chuckle. We all treated him with some involuntary respect, though he asked for none. It is remembered with what affability he wore a garland of flowers at a birthday feast, and even, nobly descending, took part one night in

a cake-walk. But mostly, though not much our senior, he was serious, mildly avuncular, but very happy and un-upbraiding.

In those days Henry James wore a beard of vague darkish brown, matching his hair, which had not yet withdrawn from his temples, and these bushy ornaments had the effect of making him in a sense shadowy. Almost every afternoon he took a walk with me, rarely with Sargent, never with the sedentary rest; these walks were long in time but not in distance, for Henry was inclined to saunter. He had not wholly recovered from that weakness of the muscles of his back which had so long troubled him, and I suppose that this was the cause of a curious stiffness in his progress, which proceeded rather slowly. He had certain preferences, in particular for the level road through the green landscape to the ancient grey village of Aston Somerville. He always made the same remark, as if he had never noticed it before, that Aston was "so Italian, so Tuscan."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.