ГЕНРИ ДЖЕЙМС

THE LETTERS OF HENRY JAMES. VOL. II

Генри Джеймс

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The Letters of Henry James, (Vol. II):

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Henry James
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VI
Rye (*continued*)
(1904-1909)

The much-debated visit to America took place at last in 1904, and in ten very full months Henry James secured that renewed saturation in American experience which he desired before it should be too late for his advantage. He saw far more of his country in these months than he had ever seen in old days. He went with the definite purpose of writing a book of impressions, and these were to be principally the impressions of a "restored absentee," reviving the sunken and overlaid memories of his youth. But his memories were practically of New York, Newport and Boston only; to the country beyond he came for the most part as a complete stranger; and his voyage of new discovery proved of an interest as great as that which he found in revisiting ancient haunts. The American Scene, rather than the letters he was able to write in the midst of such a stir of movement, gives

his account of the adventure. On the spot the daily assault of sensation, besetting him wherever he turned, was too insistent for deliberate report; he quickly saw that his book would have to be postponed for calmer hours at home; and his letters are those of a man almost overwhelmed by the amount that is being thrown upon his power of absorption. But the book he eventually wrote shews how fully that power was equal to it all—losing or wasting none of it, meeting and reacting to every moment. Ten months of America poured into his imagination, as he intended they should, a vast mass of strange material—the familiar part of it now after so many years the strangest of all, perhaps; and his imagination worked upon it in one unbroken rage of interest. He was now more than sixty years old, but for such adventures of perception and discrimination his strength was greater than ever.

He sailed from England at the end of August, 1904, and spent most of the autumn with William James and his family, first at Chocorua, their country-home in the mountains of New Hampshire, and then at Cambridge. The rule he had made in advance against the paying of other visits was abandoned at once; he was in the centre of too many friendships and too many opportunities for extending and enlarging them. With Cambridge still as his headquarters he widely improved his knowledge of New England, which had never reached far into the countryside. At Christmas he was in New York—the place that was much more his home, as he still felt, than Boston had ever become, yet of all his American past the most unrecognisable relic in the

portentous changes of twenty years. He struck south, through Philadelphia and Washington, in the hope of meeting the early Virginian spring; but it happened to be a year of unusually late snows, and his impressions of the southern country, most of which was quite unknown to him, were unfortunately marred. He found the right sub-tropical benignity in Florida, but a particular series of engagements brought him back after a brief stay. It had been natural that he should be invited to celebrate his return to America by lecturing in public; but that he should do so, and even with enjoyment, was more surprising, and particularly so to himself. He began by delivering a discourse on "The Lesson of Balzac"—a closely wrought critical study, very attractive in form and tone—at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, and was immediately solicited to repeat it elsewhere. He did this in the course of the winter at various other places, so providing himself at once with the means and the occasion for much more travel and observation than he had expected. By Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis he reached California in April, 1905. "The Lesson of Balzac" was given several times, until for a second visit to Bryn Mawr he wrote another paper, "The Question of our Speech"—an amusing and forcible appeal for care in the treatment of spoken English. The two lectures were afterwards published in America, but have not appeared in England.

The beauty and amenity of California was an unexpected revelation to him, and it is clear that his experience of the west, though it only lasted for a few weeks, was fully as fruitful as all

that had gone before. Unluckily he did not write the continuation of The American Scene, which was to have carried the record on from Florida to the Pacific coast; so that this part of his journey is only to be followed in a few hurried letters of the time. He was soon back in the east, at New York and Cambridge again, beginning by now to feel that the cup of his sensations was all but as full as it would hold. The longing to discharge it into prose before it had lost its freshness grew daily stronger; a year's absence from his work had almost tired him out. But he paid several last visits before sailing for home, and it was definitely in this American summer that he acquired a taste which was to bring him an immensity of pleasure on repeated occasions for the rest of his life. The use of the motor-car for wide and leisurely sweeps through summer scenery was from now onward an interest and a delight to which many friends were glad to help him—in New England at this time, later on at home, in France and in Italy. It renewed the romance of travel for him, revealing fresh aspects in the scenes of old wanderings, and he enjoyed the opportunity of sinking into the deep background of country life, which only came to him with emancipation from the railway.

He reached Lamb House again in August, 1905, and immediately set to work on his American book. It grew at such a rate that he presently found he had filled a large volume without nearly exhausting his material; but by that time the whole experience seemed remote and faint, and he felt it impossible to go further with it. The wreckage of San Francisco, moreover, by

the great earthquake and fire of 1906, drove his own Californian recollections still further from his mind. He left The American Scene a fragment, therefore, and turned to another occupation which engaged him very closely for the next two years. This was the preparation of the revised and collected edition of his works, or at least of so much of his fiction as he could find room for in a limited number of volumes. To read his own books was an entirely new amusement to him; they had always been rigidly thrust out of sight from the moment they were finished and done with; and he came back now to his early novels with a perfectly detached critical curiosity. He took each of them in hand and plunged into the enormous toil, not indeed of modifying its substance in any way—where he was dissatisfied with the substance he rejected it altogether—but of bringing its surface, every syllable of its diction, to the level of his exigent taste. At the same time, in the prefaces to the various volumes, he wrote what became in the end a complete exposition of his theory of the art of fiction, intertwined with the memories of past labour that he found everywhere in the much-forgotten pages. It all represented a great expenditure of time and trouble, besides the postponement of new work; and there is no doubt that he was deeply disappointed by the half-hearted welcome that the edition met with after all, schooled as he was in such discouragements.

While he was on this work he scarcely stirred from Lamb House except for occasional interludes of a few weeks in London; and it was not until the spring of 1907 that he allowed himself

a real holiday. He then went abroad for three months, beginning with a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Wharton in Paris and a motor-tour with them over a large part of western and southern France. With all his French experience, Paris of the Faubourg St. Germain and France of the remote country-roads were alike almost new to him, and the whole episode was matter of the finest sort for his imagination. From The American to The Ambassadors he had written scores of pages about Paris, but none more romantic than a paragraph or two of The Velvet Glove, in which he recorded an impression of this time—a sight of the quays and the Seine on a blue and silver April night. From Paris he passed on to his last visit, as it proved, to his beloved Italy. It was the tenth he had made since his settlement in England in 1876. Like every one else, perhaps, who has ever known Rome in youth, he found Rome violated and vulgarised in his age, but here too the friendly "chariot of fire" helped him to a new range of discoveries at Subiaco, Monte Cassino, and in the Capuan plain. He spent a few days at a friend's house on the mountain-slope below Vallombrosa, and a few more, the best of all, in Venice, at the ever-glorious Palazzo Barbaro. That was the end of Italy, but he was again in Paris for a short while in the following spring, 1908, motoring thither from Amiens with his hostess of the year before.

Meanwhile his return to continuous work on fiction, still ardently desired by him, had been further postponed by a recrudescence of his old theatrical ambitions, stimulated, no doubt, by the comparative failure of the laborious edition of his

works. He had taken no active step himself, but certain advances had been made to him from the world of the theatre, and with a mixture of motives he responded so far as to revise and re-cast a couple of his earlier plays and to write a new one. The one-act "Covering End" (which had appeared in The Two Magics, disguised as a short story) became "The High Bid," in three acts; it was produced by Mr. and Mrs. Forbes Robertson at Edinburgh in March, 1908, and repeated by them in London in the following February, for a few afternoon performances at His Majesty's Theatre. "The Other House," a play dating from a dozen years back which also had seen the light only as a narrative, was taken in hand again with a view to its production by another company, and "The Outcry" was written for a third. The two latter schemes were not carried out in the end, chiefly on account of the troubled time of illness which fell on Henry James with the beginning of 1910 and which made it necessary for him to lay aside all work for many months. But this new intrusion of the theatre into his life was happily a much less agitating incident than his earlier experience of the same sort; his expectations were now fewer and his composure was more securely based. The misfortune was that again a considerable space of time was lost to the novel—and in particular to the novel of American life that he had designed to be one of the results of his year of repatriation. The blissful hours of dictation in the garden-house at Rye were interrupted while he was at work on the plays; he found he could compass the concision of the play-form only by writing with his own hand,

foregoing the temptation to expand and develop which came while he created aloud. But his keenest wish was to get back to the novel once more, and he was clearing the way to it at the end of 1909 when all his plans were overturned by a long and distressing illness. He never reached the American novel until four years later, and he did not live to finish it.

To W. D. Howells

Dictated.

Lamb House, Rye.
Jan. 8th, 1904.

My dear Howells,

I am infinitely beholden to you for two good letters, the second of which has come in to-day, following close on the heels of the first and greeting me most benevolently as I rise from the couch of solitary pain. Which means nothing worse than that I have been in bed with odious and inconvenient gout, and have but just tumbled out to deal, by this helpful machinery, with dreadful arrears of Christmas and New Year's correspondence. Not yet at my ease for writing, I thus inflict on you without apology this unwonted grace of legibility.

It warms my heart, verily, to hear from you in so encouraging and sustaining a sense—in fact makes me cast to the winds all timorous doubt of the energy of my intention. I know now more than ever how much I want to "go"—and also a good deal of why. Surely it will be a blessing to commune with you face to face, since it is such a comfort and a cheer to do so even across the wild winter sea. Will you kindly say to Harvey for me that I shall have much pleasure in talking with him here of the question of something serialistic in the North American, and will broach the matter of an "American" novel in *no* other

way until I see him. It comes home to me much, in truth, that, after my immensely long absence, I am not quite in a position to answer in advance for the quantity and quality, the exact form and colour, of my "reaction" in presence of the native phenomena. I only feel tolerably confident that a reaction of some sort there will be. What affects me as indispensable—or rather what I am conscious of as a great personal desire—is some such energy of direct *action* as will enable me to cross the country and see California, and also have a look at the South. I am hungry for Material, whatever I may be moved to do with it; and, honestly, I think, there will not be an inch or an ounce of it unlikely to prove grist to my intellectual and "artistic" mill. You speak of one's possible "hates" and loves—that is aversions and tendernesses—in the dire confrontation; but I seem to feel, about myself, that I proceed but scantly, in these chill years, by those particular categories and rebounds; in short that, somehow, such fine primitive passions *lose* themselves for me in the act of contemplation, or at any rate in the act of reproduction. However, you are much more passionate than I, and I will wait upon *your* words, and try and learn from you a little to be shocked and charmed in the right places. What mainly appals me is the idea of going a good many months without a quiet corner to do my daily stint; so much so in fact that this is quite unthinkable, and that I shall only have courage to advance by nursing the dream of a sky-parlour of some sort, in some cranny or crevice of the continent, in which my mornings shall remain my own, my

little trickle of prose eventuate, and my distracted reason thereby maintain its seat. If some gifted creature only wanted to exchange with me for six or eight months and "swap" its customary bower, over there, for dear little Lamb House here, a really delicious residence, the trick would be easily played. However, I see I must wait for all tricks. This is all, or almost all, to-day—all except to reassure you of the pleasure you give me by your remarks about the *Ambassadors* and cognate topics. The "International" is very presumably indeed, and in fact quite inevitably, what I am *chronically* booked for, so that truly, even, I feel it rather a pity, in view of your so benevolent colloquy with Harvey, that a longish thing I am just finishing should not be *disponible* for the N.A.R. niche; the niche that I like very much the best, for serialisation, of all possible niches. But "The Golden Bowl" isn't, alas, so employable.... Fortunately, however, I still cling to the belief that there are as good fish in the sea—that is, *my* sea! … You mention to me a domestic event—in Pilla's life—which interests me scarce the less for my having taken it for granted. But I bless you all. Yours always,

HENRY JAMES.

To Edward Lee Childe

The name of this friend, an American long settled in France, has already occurred (vol. i. p. 50) in connection with H. J.'s early residence in Paris. Mr. Childe (who died in 1911) is known as the biographer of his uncle, General Robert E. Lee, Commander of the Confederate forces in the American Civil War.

Lamb House, Rye.
January 19th, 1904.

My dear old Friend,

You write in no high spirits—over our general *milieu* or moment; but high spirits are not the accompaniment of mature wisdom, and yours are doubtless as good as mine. Like yourself, I put in long periods in the country, which on the whole (on this mild and rather picturesque south coast) I find in my late afternoon of life, a good and salutary friend. And I haven't your solace of companionship—I dwell in singleness save for an occasional imported visitor—who is usually of a sex, however, not materially to mitigate my celibacy! I have a small—a very nice perch in London, to which I sometimes go—in a week or two, for instance, for two or three months. But I return hither, always, with zest—from the too many people and things and words and motions—into the peaceful possession of (as I grow older) my more and more precious home hours. I have a

household of good books, and reading tends to take for me the place of experience—or rather to *become* itself (pour qui sait lire) experience concentrated. You will say this is a dull picture, but I cultivate dulness in a world grown too noisy. Besides, as an antidote to it, I have committed myself to going some time this year to America—my first expedition thither for 21 years. If I do go (and it is inevitable,) I shall stay six or eight months—and shall be probably much and variously impressed and interested. But I am already gloating over the sentiments with which I shall expatriate myself here.

You ask what is being published and "thought" here—to which I reply that England never was the land of ideas, and that it is now less so than ever. Morley's Life of Gladstone, in three big volumes, is formidable, but rich, and is very well done; a type of frank, exhaustive, intimate biography, such as has been often well produced here, but much less in France: partly, perhaps, because so much cannot be told about the lives—private lives—of the grands hommes there. Of course the book is largely a history of English politics for the last 50 years—but very human and vivid. As for talk, I hear very little—none in this rusticity; but if I pay a visit of three days, as I do occasionally, I become aware that the Free Traders and the Chamberlainites *s'entredévorent*. The question bristles for me, with the rebarbative; but my prejudices and dearest traditions are all on the side of the system that has "made England great"—and everything I am most in sympathy with in the country appears to be still on the side of it, notably the

better—the best—sort of the *younger* men. Chamberlain hasn't in the least captured these.... But it's the midnight hour, and my fire, while I write, has gone out. I return again, most heartily, your salutation; I send the friendliest greeting to Mrs. Lee Childe and to the dear old Perthuis, well remembered of me, and very tenderly, and I am, my dear Childe, your very faithful old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

To W. E. Norris

Lamb House, Rye.
January 27th, 1904.

My dear Norris,

I have as usual a charming letter from you too long unanswered; and my sense of this is the sharper as, in spite of your eccentric demonstration of your—that is of *our* disparities, or whatever (or at least of your lurid implication of them,) it all comes round, after all, to our having infinitely much in common. For I too am making arrangements to be "cremated," and my mind keeps yours company in whatever pensive hovering yours may indulge in over the graceful operations at Woking. If you will only agree to postpone these, on your own part, to the latest really convenient date, I would quite agree to testify to our union of friendship by availing myself of the same occasion (it might come cheaper for two!) and undergoing the process *with* you. I find I do desire, from the moment the question becomes a really practical one, to throw it as far into the future as possible. Save at the frequent moments when I desire to die very *soon*, almost immediately, I cling to life and propose to make it last. I blush for the frivolity, but there are still so many things I want to do! I give you more or less an illustration of this, I feel, when I tell you that I go up to town tomorrow, for eight or ten weeks, and that I believe I have made arrangements (or incurred the making of

them by others) to meet Rhoda Broughton in the evening (à peine arrivé) at dinner. But I shall make in fact a shorter winter's end stay than usual, for I have really committed myself to what is for me a great adventure later in the year; I have *taken* my passage for the U.S. toward the end of August, and with that long absence ahead of me I shall have to sit tight in the interval. So I shall come back early in April, to begin to "pack," at least morally; and the moral preparation will (as well as the material) be the greater as it's definitely visible to me that I must, if possible, let this house for the six or nine months....

But what a sprawling scrawl I have written you! And it's long past midnight. Good morning! Everything else I meant to say (though there isn't much) is crowded out.

Yours always and ever,
HENRY JAMES.

To Mrs. Julian Sturgis

Julian Sturgis, novelist and poet, a friend of H. J.'s by many ties, had died on the day this letter was written.

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.
April 13, 1904.

Dearest Mrs. Julian,

I ask myself how I can write to you and yet how I cannot, for my heart is full of the tenderest and most compassionate thought of you, and I can't but vainly say so. And I feel myself thinking *as* tenderly of him, and of the laceration of his consciousness of leaving you and his boys, of giving you up and ceasing to be for you what he so devotedly was. And that makes me pity him more than words can say—with the wretchedness of one's not having been able to contribute to help or save him. But there he is in his sacrifice—a beautiful, noble, stainless memory, without the shadow upon him, or the shadow of a shadow, of a single grossness or meanness or ugliness—the world's dust on the nature of thousands of men. Everything that was high and charming in him comes out as one holds on to him, and when I think of my friendship of so many years with him I see it all as fairness and felicity. And then I think of *your* admirable years and I find no words for your loss. I only desire to keep near you and remain more than ever yours,

To J. B. Pinker

Mr. Pinker was now acting, as he continued to do till the end, as H. J.'s literary agent. This letter refers to *The Golden Bowl*.

Lamb House, Rye.
May 20th, 1904.

Dear Mr. Pinker,

I will indeed let you have the whole of my MS. on the very first possible day, now not far off; but I have still, absolutely, to finish, and to finish right.... I have been working on the book with unremitting intensity the whole of every blessed morning since I began it, some thirteen months ago, and I am at present within but some twelve or fifteen thousand words of Finis. But I can work only in my own way—a deucedly good one, by the same token!—and am producing the best book, I seem to conceive, that I have ever done. I have really done it fast, for what it is, and for the way I do it—*the* way I seem condemned to; which is to *overtreat* my subject by developments and amplifications that have, in large part, eventually to be greatly compressed, but to the prior operation of which the thing afterwards owes what is most durable in its quality. I have written, in perfection, 200,000 words of the G.B.—with the rarest perfection!—and you can imagine how much of that, which has taken time, has had to come out. It is not, assuredly, an economical way of work in the short run, but it

is, for me, in the long; and at any rate one can proceed but in one's own manner. My manner however is, at present, to be making every day—it is now a question of a very moderate number of days—a straight step nearer my last page, comparatively close at hand. You shall have it, I repeat, with the very minimum further delay of which I am capable. I do not seem to know, by the way, *when* it is Methuen's desire that the volume shall appear—I mean after the postponements we have had. The best time for me, I think, especially in America, will be about next October, and I promise you the thing in distinct time for that. But you will say that I am "over-treating" this subject too! Believe me yours ever,

HENRY JAMES.

To Henry James, junior

Lamb House, Rye.
July 26th, 1904.

Dearest H.

Your letter from Chocorua, received a day or two ago, has a rare charm and value for me, and in fact brings to my eyes tears of gratitude and appreciation! I can't tell you how I thank you for offering me your manly breast to hurl myself upon in the event of my alighting on the New York dock, four or five weeks hence, in abject and craven terror—which I foresee as a certainty; so that I accept without shame or scruple the beautiful and blessed offer of aid and comfort that you make me. I have it at heart to notify you that you will in all probability bitterly repent of your generosity, and that I shall be sure to become for you a dead-weight of the first water, the most awful burden, nuisance, parasite, pestilence and plaster that you have ever known. But this said, I prepare even now to *me cramponner* to you like grim death, trusting to you for everything and invoking you from moment to moment as my providence and saviour. I go on assuming that I shall get off from Southampton in the Kaiser Wilhelm II, of the North German Lloyd line, on August 24th—the said ship being, I believe, a "five-day" boat, which usually gets in sometime on the Monday. Of course it will be a nuisance to you, my arriving in New York—if I do arrive; but that got

itself perversely and fatefully settled some time ago, and has now to be accepted as of the essence. Since you ask me what my desire is likely to he, I haven't a minute's hesitation in speaking of it as a probable frantic yearning to get off to Chocorua, or at least to Boston and its neighbourhood, by the very first possible train, and it may be on the said Monday. I shall not have much heart for interposing other things, nor any patience for it to speak of, so long as I hang off from your mountain home; yet, at the same time, if the boat should get in late, and it were possible to catch the Connecticut train, I believe I could bend my spirit to go for a couple of days to the Emmets', *on the condition that you can go with me*. So, and so only, could I think of doing it. Very kindly, therefore, let them know this, by wire or otherwise, in advance, and determine for me yourself whichever you think the best move. Grace Norton writes me from Kirkland Street that she expects me *there*, and Mrs. J. Gardner writes me from Brookline that *she* absolutely counts on me; in consequence of all of which I beseech you to hold on to me tight and put me through as much as possible like an express parcel, paying 50 cents and taking a brass check for me. I shall write you again next month, and meanwhile I'm delighted at the prospect of your being able to spend September in the mountain home. I have all along been counting on that as a matter of course, but now I see it was fatuous to do so—and yet rejoice but the more that this is in your power.... But good-night, dearest H.—with many caresses all round, ever your affectionate

To Mrs. W. K. Clifford

Chocorua, N.H., U.S.A.
September 16th, 1904.

My dear, dear Lucy C.!

One's too dreadful—I receive your note and your wire of August 23rd, in far New England, under another sky and in *such* another world. I don't know by what deviltry I missed them at the *last*, save by that of the Reform being closed for cleaning and the use of the *Union* (other Club) fraught with other errors and delays. But the Wednesday a.m. at Waterloo was horrible for crowd and confusion (passengers for ship so in their *thousands*,) and I can't be sorry you weren't in the crush (mainly of rich German-American Jews!) But that is ancient history, and the worst of this, now, here, is that, spent with letter-writing (my American postbag swollen to dreadfulness, more and more, and interviewers only kept at bay till I get to Boston and New York,) I can only make you to-night this incoherent signal, waiting till some less burdened hour to be more decent and more vivid. I came straight up here (where I have been just a fortnight,) and these New Hampshire mountains, forests, lakes, are of a beauty that I hadn't (from my 18th-20th years) dared to remember as so great. And such *golden* September weather—though already turning to what the leaf enclosed (picked but by reaching out of window) is a very poor specimen of. It is a pure bucolic and

Arcadian, wildly informal and un-"frilled" life—but sweet to me after long years—and with many such good old homely, farmy New England things to eat! Yet a she-interviewer pushed into it yesterday all the way from New York, 400 *miles*, and we ten miles from a station, on the mere *chance* of me, and I took pity and *your* advice, and surrendered to her more or less, on condition that I shouldn't have to read her stuff—and I *shan't*! So you see I am well *in*—and to-morrow I go to other places (one by one) and shall be in deeper. It's a vast, queer, wonderful country—too unspeakable as yet, and of which this is but a speck on the hem of the garment! Forgive this poverty of wearied pen to your good old

HENRY JAMES.

To Edmund Gosse

The Mount,
Lenox, Mass.
October 27th, 1904.

My dear Gosse,

The weeks have been many and crowded since I received, not very many days after my arrival, your incisive letter from the depths of the so different world (from this here;) but it's just because they have been so animated, peopled and pervaded, that they have rushed by like loud-puffing motor-cars, passing out of my sight before I could step back out of the dust and the noise long enough to dash you off such a response as I could fling after them to be carried to you. And during my first three or four here my postbag was enormously—appallingly—heavy: I almost turned tail and re-embarked at the sight of it. And then I wanted above all, before writing you, to make myself a notion of how, and where, and even *what*, I was. I have turned round now a good many times, though still, for two months, only in this corner of a corner of a corner, that is round New England; and the postbag has, happily, shrunken a good bit (though with liabilities, I fear, of re-expanding,) and this exquisite Indian summer day sleeps upon these really admirable little Massachusetts mountains, lakes and woods, in a way that lulls my perpetual sense of precipitation. I have moved from my own fireside for long years so little (have

been abroad, till now, but once, for ten years previous) that the mere quantity of movement remains something of a terror and a paralysis to me—though I am getting to brave it, and to like it, as the sense of adventure, of holiday and romance, and above all of the great so visible and observable world that stretches before one more and more, comes through and makes the tone of one's days and the counterpoise of one's homesickness. I am, at the back of my head and at the bottom of my heart, transcendently homesick, and with a sustaining private reference, all the while (at every moment, verily,) to the fact that I have a tight anchorage, a definite little downward burrow, in the ancient world—a secret consciousness that I chink in my pocket as if it were a fortune in a handful of silver. But, with this, I have a most charming and interesting time, and [am] seeing, feeling, how agreeable it is, in the maturity of age, to revisit the long neglected and long unseen land of one's birth—especially when that land affects one as such a living and breathing and feeling and moving great monster as this one is. It is all very interesting and quite unexpectedly and almost uncannily delightful and sympathetic—partly, or largely from my intense impression (all this glorious golden autumn, with weather like tinkling crystal and colours like molten jewels) of the sweetness of the country itself, this New England rural vastness, which is all that I've seen. I've been only in the country—shamelessly visiting and almost only old friends and scattered relations—but have found it far more beautiful and amiable than I had ever dreamed, or than I ventured to

remember. I had seen too little, in fact, of old, to have anything, to speak of, to remember—so that seeing so many charming things for the first time I quite thrill with the romance of elderly and belated discovery. Of Boston I haven't even had a full day —of N.Y. but three hours, and I have seen nothing whatever, thank heaven, of the "littery" world. I have spent a few days at Cambridge, Mass., with my brother, and have been greatly struck with the way that in the last 25 years Harvard has come to mass so much larger and to have gathered about her such a swarm of distinguished specialists and such a big organization of learning. This impression is increased this year by the crowd of foreign experts of sorts (mainly philosophic etc.) who have been at the St. Louis congress and who appear to be turning up overwhelmingly under my brother's roof—but who will have vanished, I hope, when I go to spend the month of November with him—when I shall see something of the goodly Boston. The blot on my vision and the shadow on my path is that I have contracted to write a book of Notes—without which contraction I simply couldn't have come; and that the conditions of life, time, space, movement etc. (really to *see*, to get one's material,) are such as to threaten utterly to frustrate for me any prospect of simultaneous work—which is the rock on which I may split altogether—wherefore my alarm is great and my project much disconcerted; for I have as yet scarce dipped into the great Basin at all. Only a large measure of Time can help me—to do anything as decent as I want: wherefore pray for me constantly; and all the more that if I can only arrive at

a means of application (for I see, already, from here, my *Tone*) I shall do, verily, a lovely book. I am interested, up to my eyes—at least I think I am! But you will fear, at this rate, that I am trying the book on you already. I *may* have to return to England only as a saturated sponge and wring myself out there. I hope meanwhile that your own saturations, and Mrs. Nelly's, prosper, and that the Pyrenean, in particular, continued rich and ample. If you are having the easy part of your year now, I hope you are finding in it the lordliest, or rather the *un*lordliest leisure.... I commend you all to felicity and am, my dear Gosse, yours always,

HENRY JAMES.

To W. E. Norris

Boston.
[Dec. 15, 1904.]

My dear Norris,

There is nothing to which I find my situation in this great country less favourable than to this order of communication; yet I greatly wish, 1st, to thank you for your beautiful letter of as long ago as Sept. 12th (from Malvern,) and 2nd, not to fail of having some decent word of greeting on your table for Xmas morning. The conditions of time and space, at this distance, are such as to make nice calculations difficult, and I shall probably be frustrated of the felicity of dropping on you by exactly the right post. But I send you my affectionate blessing and I aspire, at the most, to lurk modestly in the Heap. You were in exile (very elegant exile, I rather judge) when you last wrote, but you will now, I take it, be breathing again bland Torquay (*bland*, not blond)—a process having, to my fancy, a certain analogy and consonance with that of quaffing bland Tokay. This is neither Tokay nor Torquay—this slightly arduous process, or adventure, of mine, though very nearly as expensive, on the whole, as both of those luxuries combined. I am just now amusing myself with bringing the expense up to the point of ruin by having come back to Boston, after an escape (temporary, to New York,) to conclude a terrible episode with the Dentist—which is turning out an

abyss of torture and tedium. I am promised (and shall probably enjoy) prodigious results from it—but the experience, the whole business, has been so fundamental and complicated that anguish and dismay *only* attend it while it goes on—embellished at the most by an opportunity to admire the miracles of American expertness. These are truly a revelation and my tormentor a great artist, but he will have made a cruelly deep dark hole in my time (very precious for me here) and in my pocket—the latter of such a nature that I fear no patching of all my pockets to come will ever stop the leak. But meanwhile it has all made me feel quite domesticated, consciously assimilated to the system; I am losing the precious sense that everything is strange (which I began by hugging close,) and it is only when I know I am quite whiningly homesick *en dessous*, for L.H. and Pall Mall, that I remember I am but a creature of the surface. The surface, however, has its points; New York is appalling, fantastically charmless and elaborately dire; but Boston has quality and convenience, and now that one sees American life in the longer piece one profits by many of its ingenuities. The winter, as yet, is radiant and bell-like (in its frosty clearness;) the diffusion of warmth, indoors, is a signal comfort, extraordinarily comfortable in the travelling, by day—I don't go in for nights; and a marvel the perfect organisation of the universal telephone (with interviews and contacts that begin in 2 minutes and settle all things in them;) a marvel, I call it, for a person who hates notewriting as I do—but an exquisite curse when it isn't an exquisite blessing. I expect

to be free to return to N.Y., the formidable in a few days—where I shall inevitably have to stay another month; after which I hope for sweeter things—Washington, which is amusing, and the South, and eventually California—with, probably, Mexico. But many things are indefinite—only I shall probably stay till the end of June. I suppose I am much interested—for the time passes inordinately fast. Also the country is *unlike* any other—to one's sensation of it; those of Europe, from State to State, seem to me less different from each other than they are all different from this—or rather this from them. But forgive a fatigued and obscure scrawl. I am really *done* and demoralized with my interminable surgical (for it comes to that) ordeal. Yet I wish you heartily all peace and plenty and am yours, my dear Norris, very constantly,

HENRY JAMES.

To Edmund Gosse

The Breakers Hotel,
Palm Beach,
Florida.
February 16th, 1905.

My dear Gosse,

I seem to myself to be (under the disadvantage of this extraordinary process of "seeing" my native country) perpetually writing letters; and yet I blush with the consciousness of not having yet got round to *you* again—since the arrival of your so genial New Year's greeting. I have been lately in constant, or at least in very frequent, motion, on this large comprehensive scale, and the right hours of *recueillement* and meditation, of private communication, in short, are very hard to seize. And when one does seize them, as you know, one is almost crushed by the sense of accumulated and congested matter. So I won't attempt to remount the stream of time save the most sketchily in the world. It was from Lenox, Mass., I think, in the far-away prehistoric autumn, that I last wrote you. I reverted thence to Boston, or rather, mainly, to my brother's kindly roof at Cambridge, hard by—where, alas, my five or six weeks were harrowed and ravaged by an appalling experience of American transcendent *Dentistry*—a deep dark abyss, a trap of anguish and expense, into which I sank unwarily (though, I now begin

to see, to my great profit in the short human hereafter,) of which I have not yet touched the *fin fond*. (I mention it as accounting for treasures of wrecked *time*—I could do nothing else whatever in the state into which I was put, while the long ordeal went on: and this has left me belated as to everything —"work," correspondence, impressions, progress through the land.) But I was (temporarily) liberated at last, and fled to New York, where I passed three or four appalled midwinter weeks (Dec. and early Jan.;) appalled, mainly, I mean, by the ferocious discomfort this season of unprecedented snow and ice puts on in that altogether unspeakable city—from which I fled in turn to Philadelphia and Washington. (I am going back to N.Y. for three or four weeks of developed spring—I haven't yet (in a manner) seen it or cowardly "done" it.) Things and places southward have been more manageable—save that I lately spent a week of all but polar rigour at the high-perched Biltmore, in North Carolina, the extraordinary colossal French château of George Vanderbilt in the said N.C. mountains—the house 2500 feet in air, and a thing of the high Rothschild manner, but of a size to contain two or three Mentmores and Waddesdons.... Philadelphia and Washington would yield me a wild range of anecdote for you were we face to face—will yield it me then; but I can only glance and pass—glance at the extraordinary and rather personally-fascinating President—who was kind to me, as was dear J. Hay even more, and wondrous, blooming, aspiring little Jusserand, all pleasant welcome and hospitality. But I liked poor dear queer

flat comfortable Philadelphia almost ridiculously (for what it is—extraordinarily *cossu* and materially civilized,) and saw there a good deal of your friend—as I think she is—Agnes Repplier, whom I liked for her bravery and (almost) brilliancy. (You'll be glad to hear that she is extraordinarily better, up to now, these two years, of the malady by which her future appeared so compromised.) However, I am tracing my progress on a scale, and the hours melt away—and my letter mustn't grow out of my control. I have worked down here, yearningly, and for all too short a stay—but ten days in all; but Florida, at this southernmost tip, or almost, does beguile and gratify me—giving me my first and last (evidently) sense of the tropics, or *à peu près*, the subtropics, and revealing to me a blandness in nature of which I had no idea. This is an amazing winter-resort—the well-to-do in their tens, their hundreds, of thousands, from all over the land; the property of a single enlightened despot, the creator of two monster hotels, the extraordinary agrément of which (I mean of course the high pitch of mere monster-hotel amenity) marks for me [how] the rate at which, the way *in* which, things are done over here changes and changes. When I remember the hotels of twenty-five years ago even! It will give me brilliant chapters on hotel-civilization. Alas, however, with perpetual movement and perpetual people and very few concrete objects of nature or art to make use of for assimilation, my brilliant chapters don't get themselves written—so little can they be notes of the current picturesque—like one's European notes. They can only be notes

on a social order, of vast extent, and I see with a kind of despair that I shall be able to do here little more than get my saturation, soak my intellectual sponge—reserving the squeezing-out for the subsequent, ah, the so yearned-for peace of Lamb House. It's all interesting, but it isn't thrilling—though I gather everything is more really curious and vivid in the West—to which and California, and to Mexico if I can, I presently proceed. Cuba lies off here at but twelve hours of steamer—and I am heartbroken at not having time for a snuff of that flamboyant flower.

Saint Augustine, Feb. 18th.

I had to break off day before yesterday, and I have completed meanwhile, by having come thus far north, my sad sacrifice of an intenser exoticism. I am stopping for two or three days at the "oldest city in America"—two or three being none too much to sit in wonderment at the success with which it has outlived its age. The paucity of the signs of the same has perhaps almost the pathos the signs themselves would have if there *were* any. There is rather a big and melancholy and "toned" (with a patina) old Spanish fort (of the 16th century,) but horrible little modernisms surround it. On the other hand this huge modern hotel (Ponce de Leon) is in the style of the Alhambra, and the principal church ("Presbyterian") in that of the mosque of Cordova. So there are compensations—and a tiny old Spanish cathedral front ("earliest church built in America"—late 16th century,) which appeals with a yellow ancientry. But I must pull off—simply sticking

in a memento[1] (of a public development, on my desperate part) which I have no time to explain. This refers to a past exploit, but the leap is taken, is being renewed; I repeat the horrid act at Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis, San Francisco and later on in New York—*have* already done so at Philadelphia (always to "private" "literary" or Ladies' Clubs—at Philadelphia to a vast multitude, with Miss Repplier as brilliant introducer. At Bryn Mawr to 700 persons—by way of a *little* circle.) In fine I have waked up *conférencier*, and find, to my stupefaction, that I can do it. The fee is large, of course—otherwise! Indianapolis offers £100 for 50 minutes! It pays in short travelling expenses, and the incidental circumstances and phenomena are full of illustration. I can't do it *often*—but for £30 a time I should easily be able to. Only that would be death. If I could come back here to abide I think I should really be able to abide in (relative) affluence: one can, on the spot, make so much more money—or at least I might. But I would rather live a beggar at Lamb House—and it's to that I shall return. Let my biographer, however, recall the solid sacrifice I shall have made. I have just read over your New Year's eve letter and it makes me so homesick that the bribe itself will largely seem to have been on the side of the reversion—the bribe to one's finest sensibility. I have published a novel—"The Golden Bowl"—here (in two vols.) in advance (15 weeks ago) of the English issue—and the latter will be (I don't even know if it's

[1] Card of admission to a lecture by H. J. (The Lesson of Balzac), Bryn Mawr College, Jan. 19, 1905.

out yet in London) in so comparatively mean and fine-printed a London form that I have no heart to direct a few gift copies to be addressed. I shall convey to you somehow the handsome New York page—don't read it till then. The thing has "done" much less ill here than anything I have ever produced.

But good-night, verily—with all love to all, and to Mrs. Nelly in particular.

Yours always,
HENRY JAMES.

To Mrs. W. K. Clifford

Hotel Ponce de Leon,
St. Augustine, Florida.
February 21st, '05.

Dearest old Friend!

I am leaving this subtropical Floridian spot from one half hour to another, but the horror of not having for so long despatched a word to you, the shame and grief and contrition of it, are so strong, within me, that I simply seize the passing moment by the hair of its head and glare at it till it pauses long enough to let me—as it were—embrace you. Yet I feel, have felt, all along, that you will have *understood*, and that words are wasted in explaining the obvious. Letters, all these weeks and weeks, day to day and hour to hour letters, have fluttered about me in a dense crowd even as the San Marco pigeons, in Venice, round him who appears *to* have corn to scatter. So the whole queer time has gone in my scattering corn—scattering and chattering, and being chattered and scattered to, and moving from place to place, and surrendering to people (the *only* thing to do here—since things, apart from people, are *nil*;) in *staying* with them, literally, from place to place and week to week (though with old friends, as it were, alone—that is mostly, thank God—to avoid new obligations:) doing that as the only solution of the problem of "seeing" the country. I *am* seeing, very well—but the

weariness of so much of so prolonged and sustained a process is, at times, surpassing. It would be a strain, a weariness (kept up so,) *anywhere*; and it is extraordinarily tiresome, on occasions, here. Vastness of space and distance, of number and quantity, is the element in which one lives: it is a great complication alone to be dealing with a country that has fifty principal cities—each a law unto itself—and unto *you*: England, poor old dear, having (to speak of) but one. On the other hand it is distinctly interesting—the business and the country, as a whole; there are no exquisite moments (save a few of a *funniness* that comes to that;) but there are none from which one doesn't *get* something....And meanwhile I am *lecturing* a little to pay the Piper, as I go—for high fees (of course) and as yet but three or four times. But they give me gladly £50 for 50 minutes (a pound a minute—like Patti!)—and always for the same lecture (as yet:) *The Lesson of Balzac*. I do it beautifully—feel as if I had discovered my vocation—at any rate amaze myself. It is *well*—for without it I don't see how I could have held out.

This winter has been a hideous succession of huge snow-blizzards, blinding polar waves, and these southernmost places, even, are not their usual soft selves. Yet the very south tiptoe of Florida, from which I came three days ago, has an air as of molten liquid velvet, and the palm and the orange, the pine-apple, the scarlet hibiscus, the vast magnolia and the sapphire sea, make it a vision of very considerable beguilement. I *wanted* to put over to Cuba—but one night from this coast; but it was,

for reasons, not to be done—reasons of time and money. I *shall* try for Mexico—and meanwhile pray for me hard. My visit is doing—*has* done—my little reputation here, save the mark, great good. *The Golden Bowl* is in its *fourth* edition—unprecedented! You see I "answer" your last newses and things not at all—not even the note of anxiety about T. Such are these cruelties, these ferocities of separation. But I drink in everything you tell me, and I cherish you all always and am yours and the children's twain ever so constantly,

HENRY JAMES.

To Edward Warren

University Club,
Chicago.
March 19th, 1905.

Dearest Edward,

This is but a mere breathless blessing hurled at you, as it were, between trains and in ever so grateful joy in your brave double letter (of the lame hand, hero that you are!) which has just overtaken me here. I'm not pretending to write—I can't; it's impossible amid the movement and obsession and complication of all this overwhelming *muchness* of space and distance and time (consumed,) and above all of people (consuming.) I start in a few hours straight for California—enter my train this, Monday, night 7.30, and reach Los Angeles and Pasadena at 2.30 Thursday afternoon. The train has, I believe, barber's shops, bathrooms, stenographers and typists; so that if I can add a postscript, without too much joggle, I will. But you will say "*Here* is joggle enough," for alack, I am already (after 17 days of the "great Middle West") rather spent and weary, weary of motion and chatter, and oh, of such an unimagined dreariness of *ugliness* (on many, on most sides!) and of the perpetual effort of trying to "do justice" to what one doesn't like. If one could only damn it and have done with it! So much of it is rank with good intentions. And then the "kindness"—the princely (as it were)

hospitality of these clubs; besides the sense of *power*, huge and augmenting power (vast mechanical, industrial, social, financial) everywhere! This Chicago is huge, *infinite* (of potential size and form, and even of actual;) black, smoky, *old*-looking, very like some preternaturally *boomed* Manchester or Glasgow lying beside a colossal lake (Michigan) of hard pale green jade, and putting forth railway antennae of maddening complexity and gigantic length. Yet this club (which looks old and sober too!) is an abode of peace, a benediction to me in the looming largeness; I *live* here, and they put one up (always, everywhere,) with one's so excellent room with perfect bathroom and w.c. of its own, appurtenant (the *universal* joy of this country, in private houses or wherever; a feature that is really almost a consolation for many things.) I have been to the south, the far end of Florida &c—but prefer the far end of Sussex! In the heart of golden orange-groves I yearned for the shade of the old L.H. mulberry tree. So you see I am loyal, and I sail for Liverpool on July 4th. I go up the whole Pacific coast to Vancouver, and return to New York (am due there April 26th) by the Canadian-Pacific railway (said to be, in its first half, sublime.) But I scribble beyond my time. Your letters are really a blessed breath of brave old Britain. But oh for a talk in a Westminster panelled parlour, or a walk on far-shining Camber sands! All love to Margaret and the younglings. I have again written to Jonathan—he will have more news of me for you. Yours, dearest Edward, almost in nostalgic *rage*, and at any rate in constant affection,

To Mrs. William James

Hotel del Coronado,
Coronado Beach, California.
Wednesday night,
April 5th, 1905.

Dearest Alice,

I must write you again before I leave this place (which I do tomorrow noon;) if only to still a little the unrest of my having condemned myself, all too awkwardly, to be so long without hearing from you. I haven't all this while—that is these several days—had the letters which I am believing you will have forwarded to Monterey sent down to me here. This I have abstained from mainly because, having stopped over here these eight or nine days to write, in extreme urgency, an article, and wishing to finish it at any price, I have felt that I should go to pieces as an author if a mass of arrears of postal matter should come tumbling in upon me—and particularly if any of it should be troublous. However, I devoutly hope none of it has been troublous—and I have done my best to let you know (in any need of wiring etc.) where I have been. Also the letterless state has added itself to the deliciously simplified social state to make me taste the charming sweetness and comfort of this spot. California, on these terms, when all is said (Southern C. at least—which, however, the real C., I believe, much repudiates,) has completely

bowled me over—such a delicious difference from the rest of the U.S. do I find in it. (I speak of course all of nature and climate, fruits and flowers; for there is absolutely nothing else, and the sense of the shining social and human inane is utter.) The days have been mostly here of heavenly beauty, and the flowers, the wild flowers just now in particular, which fairly *rage*, with radiance, over the land, are worthy of some purer planet than this. I live on oranges and olives, fresh from the tree, and I lie awake nights to listen, on purpose, to the languid list of the Pacific, which my windows overhang. I wish poor heroic Harry could be here—the thought of whose privations, while I wallow unworthy, makes me (tell him with all my love) miserably sick and poisons much of my profit. I go back to Los Angeles to-morrow, to (as I wrote you last) re-utter my (now loathly) Lecture to a female culture club of 900 members (whom I make pay me through the nose,) and on Saturday p.m. 8th, I shall be at Monterey (Hotel del Monte.) But my stay there is now condemned to bitterest brevity and my margin of time for all the rest of this job is so rapidly shrinking that I see myself *brûlant mes étapes*, alas, without exception, and cutting down my famous visit to Seattle to a couple of days. It breaks my heart to have so stinted myself here—but it was inevitable, and no one had given me the least inkling that I should find California so sympathetic. It is strange and inconvenient, how little impression of anything any one ever takes the trouble to give one beforehand. I should like to stay here all April and May. But I am writing more than my time permits

—my article is still to finish. I ask you no questions—you will have told me everything. I live in the hope that the news from Wm. will have been good. At least at Monterey, may there be some.... But good night—with great and distributed tenderness. Yours, dearest Alice, always and ever,

HENRY JAMES.

To William James

Dictated.

95 Irving Street,
Cambridge, Mass.
July 2nd, 1905.

Dearest W.,

I am ticking this out at you for reasons of convenience that will be even greater for yourself, I think, than for me.... Your good letter of farewell reached me at Lenox, from which I returned but last evening—to learn, however, from A., every circumstance of your departure and of your condition, as known up to date. The grim grey Chicago will now be your daily medium, but will put forth for you, I trust, every such flower of amenity as it is capable of growing. May you not regret, at any point, having gone so far to meet its queer appetites. Alice tells me that you are to go almost straight thence (though with a little interval here, as I sympathetically understand) to the Adirondacks: where I hope for you as big a bath of impersonal Nature as possible, with the tub as little tainted, that is, by the soapsuds of *personal*: in other words, all the "board" you need, but no boarders. I seem greatly to mislike, not to say deeply to mistrust, the Adirondack boarder....I greatly enjoyed the whole Lenox countryside, seeing it as I did by the aid of the Whartons' big strong commodious new motor, which has fairly converted me to the sense of all the

thing may do for one and one may get from it. The potent way it deals with a country large enough for it not to *rudoyer*, but to rope in, in big free hauls, a huge netful of impressions at once—this came home to me beautifully, convincing me that if I were rich I shouldn't hesitate to take up with it. A great transformer of life and of the future! All that country charmed me; we spent the night at Ashfield and motored back the next day, after a morning there, by an easy circuit of 80 miles between luncheon and a late dinner; a circuit easily and comfortably prolonged for the sake of good roads....But I mustn't rattle on. I have still innumerable last things to do. But the portents are all propitious—*absit* any ill consequence of this fatuity! I am living, at Alice's instance, mainly on huge watermelon, dug out in spadefuls, yet light to carry. But good bye now. Your last hints for the "Speech" are much to the point, and I will try even thus late to stick them in. May every comfort attend you!

Ever yours,
HENRY JAMES.

To Miss Margaret James

The project of a book on London was never carried further, though certain pages of the autobiographical fragment, *The Middle Years*, written in 1914-15, no doubt shew the kind of line it would have taken.

Lamb House, Rye.
November 3rd, 1905.

Dearest Peg,

In writing to your father (which, however, I shall not be able to do by this same post) I will tell him a little better what has been happening to me and why I have been so unsociable. This unsociability is in truth all that has been happening—as it has been the reverse of the medal, so to speak, of the great arrears and urgent applications (to work) that awaited me here after I parted with you. I have been working in one way and another with great assiduity, squeezing out my American Book with all desirable deliberation, and yet in a kind of panting dread of the matter of it all melting and fading from me before I have worked it off. It does melt and fade, over here, in the strangest way—and yet I did, I think, while with you, so successfully cultivate the impression and the saturation that even my bare residuum won't be quite a vain thing. I really find in fact that I have more impressions than I know what to do with; so that, evidently, at the rate I am going, I shall have pegged out two distinct volumes

instead of one. I have already produced almost the substance of one—which I have been sending to "Harper" and the N.A.R., as per contract; though publication doesn't begin, apparently, in those periodicals till next month. And then (please mention to your Dad) all the time I haven't been doing the American Book, I have been revising with extreme minuteness three or four of my early works for the Edition Définitive (the settlement of some of the details of which seems to be hanging fire a little between my "agent" and my New York publishers; not, however, in a manner to indicate, I think, a real hitch.) Please, however, say nothing whatever, any of you to any one, about the existence of any such plan. These things should be spoken of only when they are in full feather. That for your Dad—I mean the information as well as the warning, in particular; on whom, you see, I am shamelessly working off, after all, a good deal of my letter. Mention to him also that still other tracts of my time, these last silent weeks, have gone, have *had* to go, toward preparing for a job that I think I mentioned to him while with you—my pledge, already a couple of years old to do a romantical-psychological-pictorial "social" *London* (of the general form, length, pitch, and "type" of Marion Crawford's *Ave Roma Immortalis*) for the Macmillans; and I have been feeling so nervous of late about the way America has crowded me off it, that I have had, for assuagement of my nerves, to begin, with piety and prayer, some of the very considerable reading the task will require of me. All this to show you that I haven't been wantonly uncommunicative. But good-night, dear

Peg; I am going to do another for Aleck. With copious embraces,

HENRY JAMES.

To H. G. Wells

Lamb House, Rye.
November 19th, 1905.

My dear Wells,

If I take up time and space with telling you why I have not *sooner* written to thank you for your magnificent bounty, I shall have, properly, to steal it from my letter, my letter itself; a much more important matter. And yet I *must* say, in three words, that my course has been inevitable and natural. I found your first munificence here on returning from upwards of 11 months in America, toward the end of July—returning to the mountain of arrears produced by almost a year's absence and (superficially, thereby) a year's idleness. I recognized, even from afar (I had already done so) that the Utopia was a book I should desire to read only in the right conditions of *coming* to it, coming with luxurious freedom of mind, rapt surrender of attention, adequate honours, for it of every sort. So, not bolting it like the morning paper and sundry, many, other vulgarly importunate things, and knowing, moreover, I had already shown you that though I was slow I was safe, and even certain, I "came to it" only a short time since, and surrendered myself to it absolutely. And it was while I was at the bottom of the crystal well that Kipps suddenly appeared, thrusting his honest and inimitable head over the edge and calling down to me, with his note of

wondrous truth, that he had business with me above. I took my time, however, there below (though "below" be a most improper figure for your sublime and vertiginous heights,) and achieved a complete saturation; after which, reascending and making out things again, little by little, in the dingy air of the actual, I found Kipps, in his place, awaiting me—and from his so different but still so utterly coercive embrace I have just emerged. It was really very well he was there, for I found (and it's even a little strange) that I could read *you* only—*after you*—and don't at all see whom else I could have read. But now that this is so I don't see either, my dear Wells, how I can "write" you about these things—they make me want so infernally to talk with you, to see you at length. Let me tell you, however, simply, that they have left me prostrate with admiration, and that you are, for me, more than ever, the most interesting "literary man" of your generation—in fact, the only interesting one. These things do you, to my sense, the highest honour, and I am lost in amazement at the diversity of your genius. As in everything you do (and especially in these three last Social imaginations), it is the quality of your intellect that primarily (in the Utopia) obsesses me and reduces me—to that degree that even the colossal dimensions of your Cheek (pardon the term that I don't in the least invidiously apply) fails to break the spell. Indeed your Cheek is positively the very sign and stamp of your genius, valuable to-day, as you possess it, beyond any other instrument or vehicle, so that when I say it doesn't break the charm, I probably mean that it largely constitutes it, or constitutes

the force: which is the force of an irony that no one else among us begins to have—so that we are starving, in our enormities and fatuities, for a sacred satirist (the satirist *with* irony—as poor dear old Thackeray was the satirist without it,) and you come, admirably, to save us. There are too many things to say—which is so exactly why I can't write. Cheeky, cheeky, cheeky is *any* young-man-at-Sandgate's offered Plan for the life of Man—but so far from thinking that a disqualification of your book, I think it is positively what makes the performance heroic. I hold, with you, that it is only by our each contributing Utopias (the cheekier the better) that anything will come, and I think there is nothing in the book truer and happier than your speaking of this struggle of the rare yearning individual toward that suggestion as one of the certain assistances of the future. Meantime you set a magnificent example—of *caring*, of feeling, of seeing, above all, and of suffering from, and with, the shockingly sick actuality of things. Your epilogue tag in italics strikes me as of the highest, of an irresistible and touching beauty. Bravo, bravo, my dear Wells!

And now, coming to Kipps, what am I to say about Kipps but that I am ready, that I am compelled, utterly to *drivel* about him? He is not so much a masterpiece as a mere born gem—you having, I know not how, taken a header straight down into mysterious depths of observation and knowledge, I know not which and where, and come up again with this rounded pearl of the diver. But of course you know yourself how immitigably the thing is done—it is of such a brilliancy of *true* truth. I really

think that you have done, at this time of day, two particular things for the first time of their doing among us. (1) You have written the first closely and intimately, the first intelligently and consistently ironic or satiric novel. In everything else there has always been the sentimental or conventional interference, the interference of which Thackeray is full. (2) You have for the very first time treated the English "lower middle" class, etc., without the picturesque, the grotesque, the fantastic and romantic interference of which Dickens, e.g., is so misleadingly, of which even George Eliot is so deviatingly, full. You have handled its vulgarity in so scientific and historic a spirit, and seen the whole thing all in its *own* strong light. And then the book has throughout such extraordinary life; everyone in it, without exception, and every piece and part of it, is so vivid and sharp and *raw*. Kipps himself is a diamond of the first water, from start to finish, exquisite and radiant; Coote is consummate, Chitterlow magnificent (the whole first evening with Chitterlow perhaps the most brilliant thing in the book—unless that glory be reserved for the way the entire matter of the *shop* is done, including the admirable image of the boss.) It all in fine, from cover to cover, does you the greatest honour, and if we had any other than skin-deep criticism (very stupid, too, at that,) it would have immense recognition.

I repeat that these things have made me want greatly to see you. Is it thinkable to you that you might come over at this ungenial season, for a night—some time before Xmas? Could

you, would you? I should immensely rejoice in it. I am here till Jan. 31st—when I go up to London for three months. I go away, probably, for four or five days at Xmas—and I go away for next Saturday-Tuesday. But apart from those dates I would await you with rapture.

And let me say just one word of attenuation of my (only apparent) meanness over the *Golden Bowl*. I was in America when that work appeared, and it was published there in 2 vols. and in very charming and readable form, each vol. but moderately thick and with a legible, handsome, large-typed page. But there came over to me a copy of the London issue, fat, vile, small-typed, horrific, prohibitive, that so broke my heart that I vowed I wouldn't, for very shame, disseminate it, and I haven't, with that feeling, had a copy in the house or sent one to a single friend. I wish I had an American one at your disposition—but I have been again and again depleted of all ownership in respect to it. You are very welcome to the British brick if you, at this late day, will have it.

I greet Mrs Wells and the Third Party very cordially and am yours, my dear Wells, more than ever,

HENRY JAMES.

To William James

Lamb House, Rye.
November 23rd, 1905.

Dearest William,

I wrote not many days since to Aleck, and not very, very many before to Peggy—but I can't, to-night, hideously further postpone acknowledging your so liberal letter of Oct. 22nd (the one in which you enclosed me Aleck's sweet one,) albeit I have been in the house all day without an outing, and very continuously writing, and it is now 11 p.m. and I am rather fagged.... However, I shall write to Alice for information—all the more that I deeply owe that dear eternal Heroine a letter. I am not "satisfied about her," please tell her with my tender love, and should have testified to this otherwise than by my long cold silence if only I hadn't been, for stress of composition, putting myself on very limited contribution to the post. The worst of these bad manners are now over, and please tell Alice that my very next letter shall be to her. Only *she* mustn't put pen to paper for me, not so much as dream of it, before she hears from me. I take a deep and rich and brooding comfort in the thought of how splendidly you are all "turning out" all the while—especially Harry and Bill, and especially Peg, and above all, Aleck—in addition to Alice and you. I turn you over (in my spiritual pocket,) collectively and individually, and make you chink and rattle and

ring; getting from you the sense of a great, though too-much (for my use) tied-up fortune. I have great joy (tell him with my love) of the news of Bill's so superior work, and yearn to have some sort of a squint at it. Tell him, at any rate, how I await him, for his holidays, out here—on this spot—and I wish I realized more richly Harry's present conditions. I await him here not less.

I mean (in response to what you write me of your having read the *Golden B.*) to try to produce some uncanny form of thing, in fiction, that will gratify you, as Brother—but let me say, dear William, that I shall greatly be humiliated if you *do* like it, and thereby lump it, in your affection, with things, of the current age, that I have heard you express admiration for and that I would sooner descend to a dishonoured grave than have written. Still I *will* write you your book, on that two-and-two-make-four system on which all the awful truck that surrounds us is produced, and *then* descend to my dishonoured grave—taking up the art of the slate pencil instead of, longer, the art of the brush (vide my lecture on Balzac.) But it is, seriously, too late at night, and I am too tired, for me to express myself on this question—beyond saying that I'm always sorry when I hear of your reading anything of mine, and always hope you won't—you seem to me so constitutionally unable to "enjoy" it, and so condemned to look at it from a point of view remotely alien to mine in writing it, and to the conditions out of which, *as* mine, it has inevitably sprung—so that all the intentions that have been its main reason for being (with *me*) appear never to have reached you at all—and

you appear even to assume that the life, the elements forming its subject-matter, deviate from felicity in not having an impossible analogy with the life of Cambridge. I see nowhere about me done or dreamed of the things that alone for me constitute the *interest* of the doing of the novel—and yet it is in a sacrifice of them on their very own ground that the thing you suggest to me evidently consists. It shows how far apart and to what different ends we have had to work out (very naturally and properly!) our respective intellectual lives. And yet I can read *you* with rapture —having three weeks ago spent three or four days with Manton Marble at Brighton and found in his hands ever so many of your recent papers and discourses, which, having margin of mornings in my room, through both breakfasting and lunching there (by the habit of the house,) I found time to read several of—with the effect of asking you, earnestly, to address me some of those that I so often, in Irving St., saw you address to others who were not your brother. I had no time to read them there. Philosophically, in short, I am "with" you, almost completely, and you ought to take account of this and get me over altogether.—There are two books by the way (one fictive) that I permit you to *raffoler* about as much as you like, for I have been doing so myself—H. G. Wells's *Utopia* and his *Kipps*. The *Utopia* seems to me even more remarkable for other things than for his characteristic cheek, and *Kipps* is quite magnificent. Read them both if you haven't —certainly read Kipps.—There's also another subject I'm too full of not to mention the good thing I've done for myself—that

is, for Lamb House and my garden—by moving the greenhouse away from the high old wall near the house (into the back garden, setting it up better—against the *street* wall) and thereby throwing the liberated space into the front garden to its immense apparent extension and beautification....

But oh, fondly, good-night!

Ever your
HENRY.

To W. E. Norris

Lamb House, Rye.
December 23rd, 1905.

My dear Norris,

It is my desire that this, which I shall post here to-morrow, shall be a tiny item in the hecatomb of friendship gracing your breakfast table on Christmas morning and mingling the smoke of (certain) aged and infirm victims with the finer and fresher fumes of the board. But the aged and infirm propose and the postman disposes and I can only hope I shall not be either disconcertingly previous or ineffectively subsequent. If my mind's eye loses you at sweet (yet sublime) Underbank, I still see you in a Devonshire mild light and feel your Torquay window letting in your Torquay air—which, at this distance, in this sadly Southeasternized corner, suggests all sorts of enviable balm and beatitude. It was a real pang to me, some weeks ago, when you were coming up to town, to have to put behind me, with so ungracious and uncompromising a gesture, the question, and the great temptation, of being there for a little at the same moment. But there are hours and seasons—and I know the face of them well—when my need to mind my business here, and to mind nothing else, becomes absolute—London tending rather over-much, moreover, to set frequent and freshly-baited traps, at all times, for a still too susceptible and guileless old country

mouse. All my consciousness centres, necessarily, just now, on a single small problem, that of managing to do an "American book" (or rather a couple of them,) that I had supposed myself, in advance, capable of doing on the spot, but that I had there, in fact, utterly to forswear—time, energy, opportunity to write, every possibility quite failing me—with the consequence of my material, my "documents" over here, quite failing me too and there being nothing left for me but to run a race with an illusion, the illusion of still *seeing* it, which is, as it recedes, so to speak, a thousand lengths ahead of me. I shall keep it up as a tour de force, and produce my copy somehow (I have indeed practically done one vol. of "Impressions"—there are to be two, separate and differently-titled;) but I am unable, meanwhile, to dally by the way—the sweet wayside of Pall Mall—or to turn either to the right or the left. (My subject—unless I grip it tight—melts away —Rye, Sussex, is so little like it; and then where am I? And yet the thing interests me to do, though at the same time appalling me by its difficulty. But I didn't mean to tell you this long story about it.) I hope you are plashing yourself in more pellucid waters —and I find I *assume* that there is in every way a great increase of the pellucid in your case by the fact of the neighbouring presence of your (as I again, and I trust not fallaciously assume) sympathetic collaterals. I should greatly like, here, a collateral or two myself—to find the advantage, across the sea, of the handful of those of mine who *are* sympathetic, makes me miss them, or the possibility of them, in this country of my adoption, which is

more than kind, but less than kin.... I spend the month of January, further, in this place—then I do seek the metropolis for 12 or 14 weeks. I expect to hear from you that you have carried off some cup or other (sculling for preference) in your Bank Holiday Sports—so for heaven's sake don't disappoint me. You're my one link with the Athletic world, and I like to be able to talk about you. Therefore, àpropos of cups, all power to your elbow! I know none now—no cup—but the uninspiring cocoa—which I carry with a more and more doddering hand. But I am still, my dear Norris, very lustily and constantly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

To Paul Harvey

Lamb House, Rye.
March 11, 1906.

My dear Paul,

It is delightful to me, please believe, not wholly to lose touch of you—ghostly and ineffective indeed as that touch seems destined to feel itself. I find myself almost wishing that the whirligig of time had brought round the day of your inscription with many honours on some comfortable "retired list" which might keep you a little less on the dim confines of the Empire, and make you thereby more accessible and conversible. Only I reflect that by the time the grey purgatory of South Kensington, or wherever, crowns and pensions your bright career, I, alas, shall have been whirled away to a sphere compared to which Salonica and even furthest Ind are easy and familiar resorts, with no crown at all, most probably—not even "heavenly," and no communication with you save by table-raps and telepathists (like a really startling communication I have just had from—or through—a "Medium" in America (near Boston,) a message purporting to come from my Mother, who died 25 years ago and from whom it ostensibly proceeded during a séance at which my sister-in-law, with two or three other persons, was present. The point is that the message is an allusion to a matter known (so personal is it to myself) to no other individual in the world but *me*—not *possibly* either to

the medium or to my sister-in-law; and an allusion so pertinent and *initiated* and tender and helpful, and yet so unhelped by any actual earthly knowledge on any one's part, that it quite astounds as well as deeply touches me. If the subject of the message had been conceivably in my sister-in-law's mind it would have been an interesting but not infrequent case of telepathy; but, as I say, it couldn't thinkably have been, and she only transmits it to me, after the fact, not even fully understanding it. So, I repeat, I am astounded!—and almost equally astounded at my having drifted into this importunate mention of it to you! But the letter retailing it arrived only this a.m. and I have been rather full of it.)—I had heard of your present whereabouts from Edward Childe … and I give you my word of honour that my great thought was, already before your own good words had come, to attest to you, on my own side, and pen in hand, my inextinguishable interest in you. I came back from the U.S. after an absence of nearly a year (11 months) by last midsummer, whereupon my joy at returning to this so little American nook took the form of my having stuck here fast (with great arrears of sedentary occupation &c.) till almost the other day … I found my native land, after so many years, interesting, formidable, fearsome and fatiguing, and much more difficult to see and deal with in any extended and various way than I had supposed. I was able to do with it far less than I had hoped, in the way of visitation—I found many of the conditions too deterrent; but I did what I could, went to the far South, the Middle West, California, the whole

Pacific coast &c., and spent some time in the Eastern cities. It is an extraordinary world, an altogether huge "proposition," as they say there, giving one, I think, an immense impression of material and political power; but almost cruelly charmless, in effect, and calculated to make one crouch, ever afterwards, as cravenly as possible, at Lamb House, Rye—if one happens to have a poor little L.H., R., to crouch in. This I am accordingly doing very hard—with intervals of London inserted a good deal at this Season—I go up again, in a few days, to stay till about May. So I am not making history, my dear Paul, as you are; I am at least only making my very limited and intimate own. Vous avez beau dire, you, and Mrs Paul, and Miss Paul, are making that of Europe—though you don't appear to realize it any more than M. Jourdain did that he was talking prose. Have patience, meanwhile —you will have plenty of South Kensington later on (among other retired pro-consuls and where Miss Paul will "come out";) and meanwhile you are, from the L.H. point of view, a family of thrilling Romance. And it *must* be interesting to améliorer le sort des populations—and to see real live Turbaned Turks going about you, and above all to have, even in the sea, a house from which you look at divine Olympus. You live with the gods, if not like them—and out of all this unutterable Anglo-Saxon banality —so extra-banalized by the extinction of dear Arthur Balfour. I take great joy in the prospect of really getting hold of you, all three, next summer. I count, fondly, on your presence here and I send the very kindest greeting and blessing to your two

companions. The elder is of course still very young, but how old the younger must now be!

Yours, my dear Paul, always and ever,

HENRY JAMES.

To William James

Professor and Mrs. William James had been in California at this time of the great San Francisco earthquake and conflagration. They fortunately escaped uninjured, but for some days H. J. had been in deep anxiety, not knowing their exact whereabouts.

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.
May 4th, 1906.

[2]Beloved Ones!

I wrote you, feverishly, last Saturday, but now comes in a blest cable from Harry telling of your being as far on your way home as at Denver and communicating thence in inspired accents and form, and this, for which I have been yearning (the news of your having to that extent shaken off the dust of your ruin), fills me with such joy that I scrawl you these still agitated words of jubilation—though I can't seem to you less than incoherent and beside the mark, I fear, till I have got your letter from Stanford which Harry has already announced his expedition of on the 28th. (This must come in a day or two more.) Meanwhile there was three days ago an excellent letter in the *Times* from Stanford itself (or P.A.) enabling me, for the first time, to conceive a little, and a trifle less luridly to imagine, the facts of your case. I had at first believed those facts to be that you were thrown bedless and roofless upon the world, semi-clad and semi-starving, and

with all that class of phenomena about you. But how do I know, after all, even yet? and I await your light with an anxiety that still endures. I have just parted with Bill, who dined with me, and who is to lunch with me tomorrow—(I going in the evening to the "Academy Dinner.") I have, since the arrival of Harry's telegram, or cable of reassurance—the second to that effect, not this of to-day, which makes the third and best—I have been, as I say, trying, under pressure, a three days' motor trip with the Whartons, much frustrated by bad weather and from which I impatiently and prematurely and gleefully returned to-day: so that I have been separated from B. for 48 hours. But I tell you of him rather than talk to you, in the air, of your own weird experiences. He is to go on to Paris on the 6th, having waited over here to go to the Private View of the Academy, to see me again, and to make use of Sunday 6th (a *dies non* in Paris as here) for his journey. It has been delightful to me to have him near me, and he has spent and re-spent long hours at the National Gallery, from which he derives (as also from the Wallace Collection) great stimulus and profit. I am extremely struck with his *seriousness* of spirit and intention—he seems to me *all* in the thing he wants to do (and awfully intelligent about it;) so that in fine he seems to me to bring to his design quite an exceptional quality and kind of intensity.... What a family—with the gallantries of the pair of *you* thrown in! Well, you, beloved Alice, have needed so exceedingly a "change," and I was preaching to you that you should arrive at one somehow or perish—whereby you have had

it with a vengeance, and I hope the effects will be appreciable (that is not altogether accurst) to you. What I really now *most* feel the pang and the woe of is my not being there to hang upon the lips of your conjoined eloquence. I really think I must go over to you again for a month—just to listen to you. But I wait and am ever more and more fondly your

HENRY.

To William James

The Athenaeum, Pall Mall, S.W.
May 11th, 1906.

Dearest William,

To-day at last reach me (an hour ago) your blest letter to myself of April 19th and Alice's not less sublime one (or a type-copy of the same,) addressed to Irving St. and forwarded by dear Peg, to whom all thanks … I have written to Harry a good deal from the first, and to your dear selves last week, and you will know how wide open the mouth of my desire stands to learn from you everything and anything you can chuck into it. Most vivid and pathetic these so surprisingly lucid pictures dashed down—or rather so calmly committed to paper—by both of you in the very midst of the crash, and what a hell of a time you must have had altogether. What a noble act your taking your Miss Martin to the blazing and bursting San Francisco—and what a devil of a day of anxiety it must have given to the sublime Alice. Dearest sublime Alice, your details of feeding the hungry and sleeping in the backyard bring tears to my eyes. I hope all the later experience didn't turn to *worse* dreariness and weariness—it was probably kept human and "vivid" by the whole associated elements of drama. Yet how differently I read it all from knowing you now restored to your liberal home and lovely brood—where I hope you are guest-receiving and housekeeping

as little as possible. How your mother must have folded you in! I kept thinking of her, for days, please tell her, almost more than of you! It's hideous to want to condemn you to *write* on top of everything else—yet I sneakingly hope for more, though indeed it wouldn't take much to make me sail straight home—just to talk with you for a week.

I return to Rye on the 16th with rapture—after too long a tangle of delays here. However, it is no more than the right moment for adequate charm of season, drop (unberufen!) of east wind etc.—But why do I talk of these trifles when what I am after all really full of is the hope that they have been crowning you both with laurels and smothering you with flowers at Cambridge. Also, greedily (for you), with the hope that you didn't come away *minus* any lecture-money due to you....

But good-bye for now—with ever so tender love.

Ever your HENRY.

To Miss Margaret James

Lamb House, Rye.
November 8th, 1906.

Dearest Peggot,

I have had before me but an hour or two your delightful, though somewhat agitating letter of October 29th, and I am so touched by your faithful memory of your poor fond old Uncle, and by your snatching an hour to devote to him, even as a brand from the burning, that I scribble you this joyous acknowledgment before I go to bed. I have been immensely interested in your whole Collegiate adventure—fragments of the history of which, so far as you've got, I've had from your mother—and all the more interested that, by a blest good fortune, I happen to *know* your scholastic shades and so am able, in imagination, to cling to you and follow you round. I seem to make out that you are very physically comfortable, all round, and I have indeed a very charming image of Bryn Mawr, though I dare say these months adorn it less than my June-time. I yearn tenderly over your home-sickness—and fear I don't help you with it when I tell you how well I understand it as, at first, your inevitable portion. To exchange the realm of talk and taste of Irving St. and the privileges and luxury of your Dad's and your Mother's company and genius for the common doings and sayings, the common air and effluence of other American homes,

represents a sorry drop—which can only be softened for you by the diversion of seeking out what charms of sorts these other homes may have had that Irving St. lacks. You may not find any, to speak of, but meanwhile you will have wandered away and in so doing will have left the bloom of your nostalgia behind. It doesn't remain acute, but there will be always enough for you to go home with again. And you will make your little sphere of relations—which will give out an interest of their own; and see a lot of life and realise a lot of types, not to speak of all the enriching of your mind and augmentation of your power. Your poor old uncle groans with shame when he bethinks himself of the scant and miserable education, and educative opportunity, *he* had [compared with] his magnificent modern niece. No one took any interest whatever in *his* development, except to neglect or snub it where it might have helped—and any that he was ever to have he picked up wholly by himself. But that is very ancient history now—and he is very glad to have picked up Lamb House, where he sits writing you this of a wet November night and communes, so far as possible, on the spot, with the ghost of the little niece who came down from Harrow to spend her holidays in so dull and patient and Waverley-novelly a fashion with him.... I rejoice greatly in your sweet companion—I mean in the sweetness of her as chum and comrade, *for* you, and I send, I hope not presumptuously, a slice of your Uncle's blessing. Also is it uplifting to hear that you find Miss Carey Thomas benevolent and inspiring—she struck me as a very able and accomplished

and intelligent lady, and I should like to send her through you, if you have a chance, my very faithful remembrance and to thank her very kindly for her appreciation of my niece. But I hope she doesn't, or won't, work you to the bone! Goodnight, dear Child.

Your fond old Uncle.

To Mrs. Dew-Smith

This refers to the revision of *Roderick Hudson*, which was to head the "New York" edition of his novels, now definitely announced.

Lamb House, Rye.
November 12th, 1906.

Dear Mrs. Dew-Smith,

Very kind your note about the apples and about poor R.H.! Burgess Noakes is to climb the hill in a day or two, basket on arm, and bring me back the rosy crop, which I am finding quite the staff of life.

As for the tidied-up book, I am greatly touched by your generous interest in the question of the tidying-up, and yet really think your view of that process erratic and—quite of course—my own view well inspired! But we are really both right, for to attempt to retouch the *substance* of the thing would be as foolish as it would be (in a *done* and impenetrable structure) impracticable. What I have tried for is a mere revision of surface and expression, as the thing is positively in many places quite *vilely* written! The essence of the matter is wholly unaltered—save for seeming in places, I think, a little better brought out. At any rate the deed is already perpetrated—and I do continue to wish perversely and sorely that you had waited—to re-peruse—for this prettier and cleaner form. However, I ought only to be

devoutly grateful—as in fact I am—for your power to re-peruse at all, and will come and thank you afresh as soon as you return to the fold; as to which I beg you to make an early signal to yours most truly,

HENRY JAMES.

To Mrs. Wharton

The desired visit to George Sand's Nohant was brought off in the following year, when H. J. motored there with Mrs. Wharton. "Rue Barbet de Jouy" is the address in Paris of M. Paul Bourget.

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.
November 17th, 1906.

Dear Mrs. Wharton,

I had from you a shortish time since a very beautiful and interesting letter—into the ink to thank you for which my pen has been perpetually about to dip, and now comes the further thrill of your "quaint" little picture card with its news of the Paris winter and the romantic rue de Varenne; on which the pen straightway plunges into the fluid. This is really charming and uplifting news, and I applaud the free sweep of your "line of life" with all my heart. We shall be almost neighbours, and I will most assuredly hie me as promptly as possible across the scant interspace of the Channel, the Pas-de-Calais &c: where the very first question on which I shall beset you will be your adventure and impression of Nohant—as to which I burn and yearn for fond particulars. Perhaps if you have the proper Vehicle of Passion —as I make no doubt—you will be going there once more—in which case *do* take me! And such a suave and convenient crossing as I meanwhile wish you—and such a provision of philosophy

laid up, in advance, for use in, and about, rue Barbet de Jouy! You will have finished your new fiction, I "presume"—if it isn't presumptuous—before embarking? and I do so for the right of the desire to congratulate, in that case, and envy and sympathise—being in all sorts of *embarras* now, myself, over the finish of many things. I pant for the start of that work and languish to take it up. I think I have had no chance to tell you how much I admired your single story in the Aug. *Scribner*—beautifully done, I thought, and full of felicities and achieved values and pictures. All the same, with the rue de Varenne &c., don't go in too much for the French or the "Franco-American" subject—the real field of your extension is *here*—it has far more fusability with *our* native and primary material; between which and French elements there is, I hold, a disparity as complete as between a life led in trees, say, and a life led in—sea-depths, or in other words between that of climbers and swimmers—or (crudely) that of monkeys and fish. Is the Play Thing meanwhile climbing or swimming?—I take much interest in its fate. But you will tell me of these things—in February! It will be *then* I shall scramble over. I go home an hour or two hence (to stay as still as possible) after a night—only—spent in town. The perpetual summonses and solicitations of London (some of which *have* to be met) are at times a maddening worry—or almost. I am wondering if you are not feeling just now perhaps a good deal, at Lenox, in the apparently delightful old 1840 way—a good snowstorm ending, and the Westinghouse colouring, as I suppose, a good

deal blurred. But how I want to have it all—the gossip of the countryside—from you! Some of it has come to me as rather dreadful … and that is what some of the lone houses in the deep valleys we motored through used to make me think of!…

I am meanwhile yours very constantly,
HENRY JAMES.

To W. E. Norris

16 Lewes Crescent,
Brighton.
December 23rd, 1906.

My dear Norris,

I think it was from here I wrote you last Christmas; by which I devoutly hope I don't give you a handle for saying: "And not from anywhere since then." But I am but too aware that it has been at the best a hideous record of silence and apparent gloom, and also fully feel that after such base *laideurs* of behaviour explanations, attenuations, protestations, are as the mere rustle of the wind and had really better be left unuttered. That only adds to the dark burden of one's consciousness when one does write; one crawls into the dear outraged presence with all one's imperfections on one's head. So I'll indulge, at any rate, in no specific plea—but only in that general one of the fact that the letter-writing faculty within me has become extinct through increasing age, infirmity, embarrassment (the spelling faculty, even, you see, *almost* extinct,) and general demoralization and desolation. Twenty reproachful spectres rise up before me—out of whom your fine sad face is only the most awful. All I can say for myself (and *you*) is that among these feeble reparations that I am trying to make in the way of "hardy annuals"—hardy in the sense, I fear, of a sort of shameful brazenness

—this "Christmas letter" to you takes absolute precedence. I wrote indeed to Rhoda Broughton a couple of days since, from town, but that was a melancholy matter on the occasion of my having gone up to poor dear Hamilton Aïdé's memorial service (where I didn't see her, though she may have been present, and of which I thought she would care for some little account. It was a very beautiful and touching musical service. But I haven't seen *her* for a long time, alas!—amid these years of more and more interspaced—and finished—occasions.) Of course I am hoping that this will lie on your table on Xmas morning—in all sorts of charming company, and not before and not after. But it's difficult to time communications at this upheaved season, especially from another (non-London) province, and I trust to the happy hazard, though still a little ruffled by a sense of the break-down of things (the "public services") that compelled me yesterday, coming down here from Victoria, to be shoved into (as the only place in the train) the small connecting-space between two Pullmans, where I stuck, all the way, in a tight bunch of five or six other men and three portmanteaux and boxes: quite the sort of treatment (one's nose half in the w.c. included) that the English traveller writes from Italy infuriated letters to the *Times* about. I figure you at all events exempt from any indignity of movement (and the conditions of movement nowadays almost all include indignity) and still sitting up on your Torquay slope as on a mild Olympus and with this strife of circulating humans far below you. But when I reflect that I don't *know*, for certain, any

of your actualities I reflect with a crimson countenance on the months that have elapsed. I have before me as I write a beautiful letter from you, of the date of which nothing would induce me to remind you—but that is not quite your contemporary history.... Putting your own news at its quietest, however, my own runs it close—for save for this small episode (a stay with some old and intensely tranquil American friends established here for the ending of *their* days,) and putting aside a few days at a time in London, which I find periodically inevitable, and even quite like, I haven't stirred for ages from my own house, the suitability of which to my modest scheme of existence grows fortunately more and more marked. I spent last summer there—the most beautiful of one's life I think—without the briefest of breaks—and that gregarious time is the one at which I like least to circulate. The little place, alas, becomes itself—like all places save Torquay, I judge—more and more gregarious: and there were a good many days when even my own small premises bristled too much with the invader. But there is a great virtue in sitting tight—you sit out many things; even bores are, comparatively speaking, loose; and I had a blest sort of garden (by which I'm far from meaning gardening) summer. What it must have been beside your sapphire sea! I return, at any rate, in a few days, to sit tight again, till early in February, when there are reasons for my probably going for five or six weeks to Paris; and even possibly—or impossibly—to Rome; one of the principal of these being that the prospect fills me with a blackness of horror that I find really alarming as a sign

of moral paralysis and abjection; so that I ought to try to fly in the face of it. But I shall fly at the best, I fear, very low!…

I needn't tell you how much I hope and pray that this may find you, as they say, in health. There's an icy blast here to-day—yet I take for granted that if it weren't Sunday you would be doing something very prodigious and muscular in the teeth of it. The prize (of long activity and sweet survival) is with those whose hardness is greater than other hardnesses. And yours is greater than that of the sea-wave and all the rest of opposing nature—though I make this imputation only on behalf of your sporting resources. I appeal to the softest corner of the softest part of the rest of you to make before too long some magnanimous sign to yours very constantly,

HENRY JAMES.

To Thomas Sergeant Perry

Mr. Perry, whose recollections of H. J. and his brothers at Newport have been read on an early page of these volumes, was at this time living in Paris.

Brighton.

Boxing Day, 1906.

My dear Thomas,

I have remained silent—in the matter of your last good letter—under a great stress of correspondence *de fin d'année*; which you on your side must be having also to reckon with. The end is not yet, but I want to greet you without a more indecent delay and to impress you with a sense of my cordial and seasonable sentiments; such as you will communicate, please, unreservedly to les vôtres around the Xmastide hearth. I am spending the so equivocal period with some very quiet old friends at this place, and I write this in presence of a shining silvery shimmery sea, on one of the prettiest possible south-coast mornings. It's like the old Brighton that you may read about (Miss Honeyman's) in the early chapters of the "Newcomes." But you are of course bathed, in Paris, in a much more sumptuous splendour. But what a triste Nouvel An for the poor foolish, or misguided church (not) of France! A little more and "we Protestants"—you and I—will have to subscribe for it. Your "Censeur" was very welcome, and the portrait of Mme Barboux of the last heart-breaking

expertness. But somehow these things are all *pen*, as if all life had run to it—and one wonders what becomes of the rest (of consciousness—save the literary). Yet the literary breaks down with them too on occasion—as in the apparent failure to discover that the value of Shakespeare is that of the most splendid poetry, as expression, that ever was on earth, and that they are reckoning for him apparently as by the *langue* of Sardou. How funnily solemn, or solemnly funny, the little Goncourt Academy!—yet when they *have* made up their mind I shall like to hear on whom and what, and you must tell me, and I will get the book.

Bill, I am afraid meanwhile, will have been absent from your Yuletide revels: if he has gone to Geneva (of the *bise*) as he hinted to me that he might and as I don't quite envy him. But à cet âge —!… I think I really shall see you dans le courant de février. I presently go home to work toward that end, *ferme*. I send again a thousand friendships to Mrs. Thomas and the Miss Thomases and am always yours and theirs,

HENRY JAMES.

To Gaillard T. Lapsley

Mr. Lapsley, now settled in England, had become the neighbour (at Cambridge) of Mr. A. C. Benson and the present editor—the "Islander" and the "Librarian" of the following letter.

16 Lewes Crescent,
Brighton.
December 27th, 1906.

My dear, dear Gaillard,

I am touched almost to anguish by your beautiful and generous letter, and lose not an instant in thanking you for it with the last effusion. It is no vain figure of speech, but a solemn, an all-solemn verity, that even were I not thus blessedly hearing from you at this felicitous time, I should have been, within the next two or three days, writing to you, and I had formed and registered the sacred purpose and vow, to tell you that really these long lapses of sight and sound of you don't do for me at all and that I groan over the strange fatality of this last so persistent failure—during long months, years!—of my power to become in any way possessed of you. (My own fault, oh yes—a thousand times; for which I bow my forehead in the dust.) My intense respect for your so noble occupations and your so distinguished "personality" have had a good deal to say to the matter, moreover; there is a vulgar untimeliness of approach to the highly-devoted and the deeply-cloistered, of which I have always hated to appear

capable! It is just what I may, however, even now be guilty of if I put you the crude question of whether there isn't perhaps any moment of this January when you could come to me for a couple of deeply amicable days?… I don't quite know what your holidays are, nor what heroic immersions in scholastic abysses you may not cultivate the depressing ideal of carrying on even while they last, but I seem to reflect that you never *will* be able to come to me free and easy (there's a sweet prophecy for you!) and that my only course therefore is to tug at you, blindfold, through, and in spite of, your tangle of silver coils. I know, no one better, that it's hateful to pay visits, and especially winter ones, from (far) and *to* (far) 'tother side of town; but to brood on such invidious truths is simply to plot for your escaping me altogether; and I reflect further that you are, with your great train-services, decently suburban to London, and that the dear old *4.28* from Charing Cross to Rye brings you down in exactly two not discomfortable hours. Also my poor little house is now really warm—even hot; I put in very effective hot-water pipes only this autumn. Ponder these things, my dear Gaillard—and the further fact that I intensely yearn for you!—struggle with them, master them, subjugate them; then pick out your pair of days (two full and clear ones with *me*, I mean, exclusive of journeys) and let me know that you arrive. I hate to worry you about it, and shall understand anything and everything; but come if you humanly can.

When I think of the charm of possibly taking up with you

by the Lamb House fire the various interesting impressions, allusions, American references and memories etc., with which your letter is so richly bedight, I kind of feel that you *must* come, to tell me more of everything.... So, just yet, I shall reserve these thrills; for I feel that I shall and must, by hook or by crook, see you. I expect to go abroad about Feb. 5th for a few weeks —but *that* won't prevent. I rejoice to hear your news, however sketchy, of the Islander of Ely and the Librarian of Magdalene. Commend me as handsomely as possible to the lone Islander— how gladly would I at the very perfect right moment be his man Friday, or Saturday, or, even better, Sunday!—and tell Percy Lubbock, with my love, that I missed him acutely the other week at Windsor (which he will understand and perhaps even believe.) What disconcerted me in your letter was your mention of your having, while in America, been definitely *ill*—a proceeding of which I wholly disapprove. I desire to talk to you about that, too, even though I meanwhile discharge upon you, my dear Gaillard, the abounding sympathy of yours always and ever,

HENRY JAMES

To Bruce Porter

Mr. Bruce Porter had written from San Francisco, describing the earthquake of the preceding spring.

Lamb House, Rye.
February 19th, 1907.

My dear Bruce Porter,

I have had from you a very noble and beautiful letter, which has given me exceeding great joy, and which I have only not sooner thanked you for—well, by reason of many interruptions and preoccupations—mainly those resulting from my being in London (the *hourly* importunate) when it came to me; at which seasons, and during which sojourns, I always put off as much correspondence as possible till I get back to this comparative peace. (I returned here, but three days since.) How shall I tell you, at any rate, today, how your letter touches and even, as it were, relieves me? I had felt like such a Backward Brute in writing mine, but now in communication with your treasures of indulgence and generosity, I feel only your admirable virtue and the high price I set upon your friendship. So I thank you, all tenderly, and assure you that you have poured balm on much of my anxiety, not to say on my shame. Your account of those unimaginable weeks of your great crisis are of a thrilling and uplifting interest—and yet everything remains unimaginable to me—as to the sense of your whole actual situation; and the lurid

newspapers, on all this, do nothing but darken and distract my vision. I hope you are living in less of a pandemonium than they, basest afflictions of our afflicted age, give you out to be—but verily the bridge of comprehension is strained and shaky and impassable between this little old-world russet shore and your vertiginous cosmic coast. Let me cling therefore to you, dear Bruce Porter, *personally*, as to the friend of those three or four all but fabulous antediluvian days, and keep my hands on you tight, till, by gentle insistent pressure, I have made you yield to that delightful possibility of your perhaps at some nearish day presenting yourself here. You speak of it as a discussable thing—it's the cream of your letter. Let me just say once for all you shall have the very eagerest and intensest welcome. Heaven therefore speed the day. I go to the continent for a few weeks—eight or ten, probably at most—a fortnight hence; but return after that to be here in the most continuous fashion for months and months to come—all summer and autumn. You are vividly interesting too on the subject of Fanny Stevenson and her situation—and your picture is filled out a little by my hearing of her as in a rather obscure and inaccessible town "somewhere on the Riviera"; communicating with a friend or two in London in an elusive and deprecative fashion—withholding her address so as not to be overtaken or met with (apparently.) Poor lady, poor barbarous and merely *instinctive* lady—ah, what a tangled web we weave! I probably shall fail of seeing her, and yet, with a sneaking kindness for her that I have, shall be sorry wholly to lose

her. She won't, I surmise, come to England. But if I see you here I shall repine at nothing. *Do* manage to be sustained for the gallant pilgrimage—and do let it count a little, for that, that I *am* here, my dear Bruce Porter, ever so clingingly and constantly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

To Miss Grace Norton

Lamb House, Rye.
March 5th, 1907.

Dearest Grace,

Hideous as is really the time that has elapsed since I last held any communication with you (on that torrid July 3d, p.m., in Kirkland St.—I won't name the year!) it has seemed to me extraordinarily brief and has in fact passed like a flash! Measured by the calendar it's incredible—measured by my sense of the way the months whizz by (more and *more* like the telegraph-posts at the window of the train,) it has been a simple good "run" from the eve of my leaving America to the present moment. I came straight back here—to a great monotony and regularity and tranquillity of life (on the whole,) and haven't had really (and *shouldn't* have, didn't I begin to count!) any of the conscious desolation of having drifted away from you. However, beginning to count makes it another and rather horrible matter—or *would* make it so if you and I ever counted (in the dreary way of "times" of writing,) or ever had, or ever will. At the same time I *yearn* to hear from you, and it may increase my chance of that boon if I tell you with all urgency how much I do. On that side, though you, through your habitual magnanimity, won't "mind" my long silence unduly, I mind it myself, with this very first word of my breaking it. Because I'm *talking* with you now again, and that

brings back so many, too many things; and to do so seems the pleasantest and dearest and most natural thing in the world. I leave this place tomorrow for Paris—that is sleep at Dover—but an hour and a half hence—and go farther the next day; which is the first time I've stirred (except for an occasional week in London) since I last stirred out of sight of you. I've been for a long time under the promise of going over to see William's Bill, who is working tooth and nail, to every appearance, at Julian's studio— …If I can I shall dash down to Italy—to Florence and Venice—for a short spell before restoration—to *this* domicile—the last time, I daresay, that I shall ever brave the distinctly enfeebled spell (as I last felt it to be—seven years ago) of those places; so utterly the prey of the Barbarian now that if you still ever yearn for them take an easy comfort and thank your stars that you knew them in the less blighted and dishonoured time. It is very singular to me, living here (in this comparatively old-world corner which has nothing else but its *own* little immemorial blots and vulgarisms—besides all its great merits) to find myself plunged into the strain of the rankest and most promiscuous actuality as soon as, crossing to the Continent, I direct myself to the shrines of a superior antiquity. One is so out of the stream here that one almost wholly forgets it—and then it is incongruously the most sacred pilgrimages that most vociferously remind one—because (to put it as gracefully as possible) most cosmopolitanly. "Left to myself" I really think I should scarce ever budge from here again—unless to go back to

the U.S., which, honestly, I should like almost as much as I should (in some connections—the "travelling" above all) dread it. But the dread wouldn't be the same dread of the American-Anglican and German Italy. These will strike you as cheerful sentiments for the eve of a pleasure-trip abroad, and I shall feel better when I've started; but even so the travel-impulse (which I've had almost no opportunity in my life really to gratify) is extinct as from inanition (and personal antiquity!) and above all, more and more, the only way I care to travel is by reading. To stay at home and read is more and more my *ideal*—and it's one that you have beautifully realized. I think it was the sense of all that it has so admirably done for you that confirmed me while I was with you in my high estimation of it. Great, every way, dear Grace, and all-exemplary, I thought the dignity and coherency and benignity of your life—long after beholding it as it has taken me (by the tiresome calendar again!) to make you this declaration. I at any rate have the greatest satisfaction in the thought—the fireside vision—of your still and always nobly leading it. I don't know, and how should I? much about you in detail—but I think I have a kind of instinct of how the side-brush of the things that I do get in a general way a reverberation of touches and affects you, and as in one way or another there seems to have been plenty of the stress and strain and pain of life on the circumference (and even some of it at the centre, as it were) of your circle, I've not been without feeling (and responding to,) I boldly say, *some* of your vibrations. I hope at least the most acute of them have

proceeded from causes presenting for you—well, what shall I say?—an *interest*!! Even the most worrying businesses often have one—but there are sides of them that we could discover in talk over the fire but that I don't appeal to you lucidly to portray to me. Besides, I can imagine them exquisitely—as well as where they fail of that beguilement, and believe me, therefore, I am living with you, as I write, quite as much as if I made out—as I used to—by your pharos-looking lamplight through your ample and lucid window-pane, that you were sitting "in," as they say here, and were thereupon planning an immediate invasion. I have given intense ear to every breath of indication about Charles and his condition, and in particular to the appearance that, so far as I understand, he has been presiding and dignifying, as he alone remains to have done, the Longfellow centenary—a symptom, as it has seemed to me, of very handsome vitality....

I have been very busy all these last months in raising my Productions for a (severely-sifted) Collective and Definitive Edition—of which I even spoke to you, I think, when I saw you last, as it was then more or less definitely planned. Then hitches and halts supervened—the whole matter being complicated by the variety and the conflict of my scattered publishers, till at last the thing is on the right basis (in the two countries—for it has all had to be brought about by quite separate arts here and in America,) and a "handsome"—I hope really handsome and not too cheap—in fact sufficiently dear—array will be the result—owing much to close amendment (and even "rewriting") of the

four earliest novels and to illuminatory classification, collocation, juxtaposition and separation through the whole series. The work on the earlier novels has involved much labour—to the best effect for the vile things, I'm convinced; but the real tussle is in writing the Prefaces (to each vol. or book,) which are to be long—very long!—and loquacious—and competent perhaps to *pousser à la vente*. The Edition is to be of 23 vols. and there are to be some 15 Prefaces (as some of the books are in two,) and twenty-three lovely frontispieces—all of which I have this winter very ingeniously called into being; so that *they* at least only await "process" reproduction. The prefaces, as I say, are difficult to do—but I have found them of a jolly interest; and though I am not going to let you read one of the fictions themselves over I shall expect you to read all the said Introductions. Thus, my dear Grace, do I—not at all artlessly—prattle to you; artfully, on the contrary, toward casting some spell of chatter on yourself.... Meanwhile the Irving Street echoes that have come to me have been of the din of voices and the affluence of strangers and the conflict of nationalities and the rush of everything. I don't quite distinguish you in the thick of it, but I suppose Shady Hill has had its share. Will you give my tender love there when you next go? Will you kindly keep a little in the dark for the present my fond chatter about my poor Edition? Above all, dearest Grace, will you believe me, through thick and thin, your ever devoted old friend,

HENRY JAMES.

To William James, junior

Grand Hotel, Pau.
March 26, 1907.

Dearest Bill,

This is just a word to tell you that your poor old far-flying Uncle is safe and sound and greatly enjoying [himself], so far, after étapes consisting of Bois, Poictiers, and Bordeaux, with wonderful minor stops, déjeuners and other impressions in between. We got here last night—into the balmiest, tepidest, dustiest south, and stay three days or so, for excursions, going probably after today's luncheon to Lourdes and back. This large, smooth old France is wonderful (*wisely* seen, as we are seeing it,) and I know it already much more infinitely well. The motor is a magical marvel—discreetly and honourably used, as we are using it—and my hosts are full of amenity, sympathy, appreciation, etc. (as well as of wondrous other servanted and avant-courier'd arts of travel,) so that we are an excellent combination and most happy family—including our most admirable American chauffeur from Lee, Mass., whose native Yankee saneness and intelligence (projected into these unprecedented conditions) makes me as proud of him as he is of his Panhard car. On Thursday or Friday (at furthest) we turn "her" head to Paris—but of course with other stops and impressions—though none, I think, of more than one night. Don't dream of troubling to write

—I will write again as we draw nearer. I hope these efflorescent days (if you have them) don't turn your stomach too much against the thick taste of the Julian broth. I already long to see you again.

Ever your affectionate
HENRY JAMES.

To Howard Sturgis

The plan of approaching Italy through South Germany and Austria was not carried out. He presently went straight from Paris to Rome.

58 Rue de Varenne, Paris.
April 13th, 1907.

Dearest Howard,

I find your beautiful tragic wail on my return from a wondrous, miraculous motor tour of three weeks and a day with these admirable friends of ours, who so serve one up all the luxuries of the season and all the ripe fruits of time that one's overloaded plate will hold. We got back from—from everywhere, literally—last night; and in presence of a table groaning under arrears and calendars and other stationery I can but, as it were, fold you in my arms. You talk of sad and fearful things … and I don't know what to say to you (at least in this poor inky, scratchy way.) What I should like to be able to say is that I will come down to Rome and see you even now; but this alas is not in my power without my altering all sorts of other pressing arrangements and combinations already made. I do hope to go to Rome for a little—a very little—stay later; but not before the middle or 20th of May; a time—a generally emptier, quieter time—I greatly prefer there to any other. It is of extreme importance to me to be (to remain) in Paris till May 1st—I haven't been here for years and

shall probably never once again be here (or "come abroad" once again, like you) for the rest of my natural life. *Ergo* I am taking what there is of it for me—I can't afford, as it were, not to. And I have made my plans (if they hold) for approaching Italy by South Germany, Vienna, Trieste, Venice &c.—all of which will bring me to Rome by the 20th of May about, when, I fear, you will well nigh—or certainly—have cleared out altogether. From Rome and Florence … I shall return straight home—where at least, then, I must infallibly see you. Or shall you pass through this place—homeward—before May 1st? The gentlest of lionesses bids me tell you what a tenderest welcome you would have from them. Hold up your heart, meanwhile, and remember, for God's sake, that there is a point beyond which the follies and infirmities of our friends and our *proches* have no right to ravage and wreck our own independence of soul. That quantity is too precious a contribution to the saving human sum of good, of lucidity, and we are responsible for the *entretien* of it. So keep yours, shake yours, up—well up—my dearest friend, and to this end believe in your admirable human use. To be "crushed" is to be of no use; and I for one insist that you shall be of some, and the most delightful, to *me*. Feel everything, tant que vous voudrez—but *then* soar superior and don't leave tatters of your precious person on every bush that happens to bristle with all the avidities and egotisms. We shall judge it all sanely and taste it all wisely and talk of it all (even) thrillingly—and profitably—yet; and I depend on your keeping that appointment with me. This is all, dearest

Howard, now. I almost blush to break through your obsessions to the point of saying that my three weeks of really *seeing* this large incomparable France in our friend's chariot of fire has been almost the time of my life. It's the old travelling-carriage way glorified and raised to the 100th power. Will you very kindly say to Maud Story for me, with my love, that I am coming to Rome very nearly *all* to see her. I bless your companions and am your tout dévoué

HENRY JAMES.

To Howard Sturgis

From Rome H. J. went to Cernitoio, Mr. Edward Boit's villa near Vallombrosa.

Hôtel de Russie, Rome.
May 29th, 1907.

Dearest Howard,

I've been disgustingly silent in spite of your so good prompt, blessed letter—but the waters of Rome have been closing over my head, for I have, each day, a good part of each, something urgent and imperative to do, "for myself," as it were—and everything the hours and the "people" bring forth has to be crowded into too scant a margin; with a consequent sensation of breathlessness that ill consorts alike with my figure, my years and my inclinations. I am "sitting for my bust," into the bargain—to Hendrik Andersen (it will be, I think, better than some other such work of his,) and that makes practically a great hole of two hours and a half in the day—without which, in truth (the promise to hold out to the end of the ordeal,) I should already have broken away from this now very highly-developed heat and dust and glare. My days "abroad" are violently shrinking—I am long since due at home; and my yearning for a damp grey temperate clime hourly develops. However, I didn't mean to pour forth this plaintive flood—but rather to take a fine healthy jolly tone over the fact of your own so happily achieved (I trust) liberation from

the Roman yoke and your probable inhalation at this moment of the fresh air of the summits and of the tonic influence of admirable friends. Need I say that I number poor dear deafened Rhoda's Florentine contact as among the stimulating?—since it surely must take more than deafness, must take utter and cataclysmal *dumbness*—and I'm not sure even *that* would get the better of her practical acuity—to make her fall from the tonic. But I'm very sorry—I mean for her I trust temporary trouble—and if I but knew where she is—which you don't mention—and *when* departing, or how long staying, would reach her if I might. I cherish the thought of getting off Tuesday at very latest—if I return intact from a long motor-day that awaits me at the hands of the Filippo Filippis on Saturday—as I believe. I drove with Mrs. Mason out yesterday afternoon to the Abbotts' villa—that is a very charming late afternoon tea-garden, and they told me you are soon to have them at Cernitoio. Expansive (not to say expensive) and illimitable you! All this time I don't tell you—tell Mildred Seymour—a tenth of the comfort I am deriving amid continued tension from the sense that *her* (and your bow is for the time unstrung and hung up for the Vallombrosa pines to let the mountain-breeze loosely play with it.... I expect to be here till Tuesday a.m.—but I see I've said so. You shall then, and so shall Edward Boit (to whom and his girls I send tanti saluti, as well as to brave and beneficent Mr. William) have further news of yours, my dear Howard, ever affectionately,

HENRY JAMES.

To Madame Wagnière

The name of this correspondent recalls a meeting at Florence, described in an early letter (vol. i, p. 28). Madame Wagnière (born Huntington) was now living in Switzerland.

Palazzo Barbaro,
Venice.
June 23rd, 1907.

Dear Laura Wagnière,

I have waited since getting your good note to have the right moment and right light for casting the right sort of longing lingering look on the little house with the "*Giardinetto*" on the Canal Grande, to the right of Guggenheim as you face Guggenheim. I hung about it yesterday afternoon in the gondola with Mrs. Curtis, and we both thought it very charming and desirable, only that she has (perhaps a little vaguely) heard it spoken of as "damp" which I confess it looks to me just a trifle. However, this may be the vainest of calumnies. It does look expensive and also a trifle contracted, and is at present clearly occupied and with no outward trace of being to let about it at all. For myself, in this paradise of great household spaces (I mean Venice generally), I kind of feel that even the bribe of the Canal Grande and a *giardinetto* together wouldn't quite reconcile me to the purgatory of a very small, really (and not merely relatively) small house.... Mrs. Curtis is eloquent on the sacrifices one must

make (to a high rent here) if one *must* have, for "smartness," the "Canal Grande" at any price. She makes me feel afresh what I've always felt, that what I should probably do with my own available ninepence would be to put up with some large marble halls in some comparatively modest or remote locality, especially *della parte di fondamenta nuova*, etc.; that is, so I got there air and breeze and light and *pulizia* and a dozen other conveniences! In fine, the place you covet is no doubt a dear little "fancy" place; but as to the question of "coming to Venice" if one can, I have but a single passionate emotion, a thousand times Yes! It would be for me, I feel, in certain circumstances (were I free, with a hundred other facts of my life different,) the solution of all my questions, and the consolation of my declining years. Never has the whole place seemed to me sweeter, dearer, *diviner*. It leaves everything else out in the cold. I wish I could dream of coming to *me mettre dans mes meubles* (except that my *meubles* would look so awful here!) beside you. I presume to enter into it with a yearning sympathy. Happy you to be able even to discuss it....

This place and this large cool upper floor of the Barbaro, with all the space practically to myself, and draughts and scirocco airs playing over me indecently undressed, is more than ever delicious and unique.... The breath of the lagoon still plays up, but I mingle too much of another fluid with my ink, and I have no more clothes to take off.... I greet affectionately, yes affectionately, kind Henry, and the exquisite gold-haired maiden, and I am, dear Laura Wagnière, your very faithful old friend,

To Mrs. Wharton

The Vicomte Robert d'Humières, poet and essayist, fell in action in France, April 26, 1915.

Lamb House, Rye.
August 11th, 1907.

My dear Edith and my dear Edward,

The d'Humières have just been lunching with me, and that has so reknotted the silver cord that stretched so tense from the first days of last March to the first of those of May—wasn't it?—that I feel it a folly in addition to a shame not yet to have written to you (as I have been daily and hourly yearning to do) ever since my return from Italy about a month ago. You flung me the handkerchief, Edith, just at that time—literally cast it at my feet: it met me, exactly, bounding—rebounding—from my hall-table as I recrossed my threshold after my long absence; which fact makes this tardy response, I am well aware, all the more graceless. And then came the charming little picture-card of the poor Lamb House hack grinding out his patient prose under your light lash and dear Walter B.'s—which should have accelerated my production to the point of its breaking in waves at your feet: and yet it's only to-night that my overburdened spirit—pushing its way, ever since my return, through the accumulations and arrears, in every sort, of absence—puts pen to paper for your especial benefit—if benefit it be. The charming d'Humières

both, as I say, touring—*training*—in England, through horrid wind and weather, with a *bonne grace* and a wit and a Parisianism worthy of a better cause, amiably lunched with me a couple of days since on their way from town to Folkestone, and so back to Plassac (don't you *like* "Plassac," down in our dear old Gascony?) the seat of M. de Dampierre—to whom, à ce qu'il paraît, that day at luncheon we were all exquisitely sympathetic! Well, it threw back the bridge across the gulfs and the months, even to the very spot where the great nobly-clanging glass door used to open to the arrested, the engulfing and disgorging car—for we sat in my little garden here and talked about you galore and kind of made plans (wild vain dreams, though I didn't let *them* see it!) for our all somehow being together again.... But oh, I should like to remount the stream of time much further back than their passage here—if it weren't (as it somehow always is when I get at urgent letters) ever so much past midnight. It was only with my final return hither that my deep draught of riotous living came to an end, and as the cup had originally been held to my lips all by your hands I somehow felt in presence of your interest and sympathy up to the very last, and as if you absolutely should have been *avertie* from day to day—I did the matter that justice at least. Too much of the story has by this time dropped out; but there are bits I wish I could save for you.... But I must break off—it's 1.15 a.m.!

Aug. 12th. I wrote you last from Rome, I think—didn't I? but it was after that that I heard of your having had at the last awful delays and complications, awful *strike*-botherations, over your

sailing. I knew nothing of them at the time.... I can only hope that the horrid memory of it has been brushed and blown away for you by the wind of your American kilometres. I remained in Rome—for myself—a goodish while after last writing you, and there were charming moments, faint reverberations of the old-time refrains—with a happy tendency of the superfluous, the incongruous crew to take its departure as the summer came on; yet I feel that I shouldn't care if I never saw the perverted place again, were it not for the memory of four or five adorable occasions—charming chances—enjoyed by the bounty of the Filippis.... My point is that they carried me in their wondrous car (he drove it himself all the way from Paris via Macerata, and with four or five more picked-up inmates!) first to two or three adorable Roman excursions—to Fiumicino, e.g., where we crossed the Tiber on a medieval raft and then had tea—out of a Piccadilly tea-basket—on the cool sea-sand, and for a divine day to Subiaco, the unutterable, where I had never been; and then, second down to Naples (where we spent two days) and back; going by the mountains (the valleys really) and Monte Cassino, and returning by the sea—i.e. by Gaeta, Terracina, the Pontine Marshes and the Castelli—quite an ineffable experience. This brought home to me with an intimacy and a penetration unprecedented how incomparably the old *coquine* of an Italy is the most beautiful country in the world—of a beauty (and an interest and complexity of beauty) so far beyond any other that none other is worth talking about. The day we came down from

Posilipo in the early June morning (getting out of Naples and round about by that end—the road from Capua on, coming, is archi-damnable) is a memory of splendour and style and heroic elegance I never shall lose—and never shall renew! No—you will come in for it and Cook will picture it up, bless him, repeatedly—but I have drunk and turned the glass upside down—or rather I have placed it under my heel and smashed it—and the Gipsy life *with* it!—for ever. (Apropos of smashes, two or three days after we had crossed the level crossing of Caianello, near Caserta, seven Neapolitan "smarts" were *all* killed dead—and this by no coming of the train, but simply by furious reckless driving and a deviation, a *slip*, that dashed them against a rock and made an instant end. The Italian driving is *crapulous*, and the roads mostly not good enough.) But I mustn't expatiate. I wish I were younger. But for that matter the "State Line" would do me well enough this evening—for it's again the stroke of midnight. If it weren't I would tell you more. Yes, I wish I were to be seated with you to-morrow—catching the breeze-borne "burr" from under Cook's fine nose! How is Gross, dear woman, and how are Mitou and Nicette—whom I missed so at Monte Cassino? I spent four days—out from Florence—at Ned Boit's wondrous—really quite divine "eyrie" of Cernitoio, over against Vallombrosa, a dream of Tuscan loveliness and a really admirable séjour.... I spent at the last two divine weeks in Venice—at the Barbaro. I don't care, frankly, if I never see the vulgarized Rome or Florence again, but Venice never seemed to me more loveable—though the vaporetto

rages. They keep their cars at Mestre! and I am devotedly yours both,

HENRY JAMES.

To Miss Gwenllian Palgrave

Lamb House, Rye.
Aug. 27, 1907.

My dear Gwenllian Palgrave,

It is quite horrid for me to have to tell you (and after a little delay caused by a glut of correspondence, at once, and a pressure of other occupations) that your gentle appeal, on your friend's behalf, in the matter of the "favourite quotation," finds me utterly helpless and embarrassed. The perverse collectress proposes, I fear, to collect the impossible! I haven't *a* favourite quotation —absolutely not: any more than I have *a* favourite day in the year, a favourite letter in the alphabet or a favourite wave in the sea! And the collectress, in general, has ever found me dark and dumb and odious, and I am too aged and obstinate and brutal to change! Such is the sorry tale I have to ask you all patiently to hear. I wish you were, or had been, coming over to see me from Canterbury—instead of labouring in that barren vineyard of other friendship. Do come without fail the next time you are there; and believe me your—and your sister's—very faithful even if very flowerless and leafless well-wisher from long ago,

HENRY JAMES.

To William James

Lamb House, Rye.
October 17th, 1907.

Dearest William,

I seem to have followed your summer rather well and intimately and rejoicingly, thanks to Bill's impartings up to the time he left me, and to the beautiful direct and copious news aforesaid from yourself and from Alice, and I make out that I may deem things well with you when I see you so mobile and mobilizable (so emancipated and unchained for being so,) as well as so fecund and so still overflowing. Your annual go at Keene Valley (which I'm never to have so much as beheld) and the nature of your references to it—as this one to-night—fill me with pangs and yearnings—I mean the bitterness, almost, of envy: there is so little of the Keene Valley side of things in my life. But I went up to Scotland a month ago, for five days at John Cadwalader's (of N.Y.) vast "shooting" in Forfarshire (let to him out of Lord Dalhousie's real principality,) and there, in absolutely exquisite weather, had a brief but deep draught of the glory of moor and mountain, as that air, and ten-mile trudges through the heather and by the brae-side (to lunch with the shooters) delightfully give it. It was an exquisite experience. But those things are over, and I am "settled in" here, D.V., for a good quiet time of urgent work (during the season here that on the whole

I love best, for it makes for concentration—and il n'y a que ça —for *me*!) which will float me, I trust, till the end of February; when I shall simply go up to London till the mid-May. No more "abroad" for me within any calculable time, heaven grant! Why the devil I didn't write to you after reading your *Pragmatism*— how I kept from it—I can't now explain save by the very fact of the spell itself (of interest and enthralment) that the book cast upon me; I simply sank down, under it, into such depths of submission and assimilation that *any* reaction, very nearly, even that of acknowledgment, would have had almost the taint of dissent or escape. Then I was lost in the wonder of the extent to which all my life I have (like M. Jourdain) unconsciously pragmatised. You are immensely and universally *right*, and I have been absorbing a number more of your followings-up of the matter in the American (Journal of Psychology?) which your devouring devotee Manton Marble … plied, and always on invitation does ply, me with. I feel the reading of the book, at all events to have been really the event of my summer. In which connection (that of "books"), I am infinitely touched by your speaking of having read parts of my American Scene (of which I hope Bill has safely delivered you the copy of the English edition) to Mrs. Bryce—paying them the tribute of that test of their value. Indeed the tribute of your calling the whole thing "köstlich stuff" and saying it will remain to *be* read so and really gauged, gives me more pleasure than I can say, and quickens my regret and pain at the way the fates have been all against (all finally and

definitely now) my having been able to carry out my plan and do a second instalment, embodying more and complementary impressions. Of course I *had* a plan—and the second vol. would have attacked the subject (and my general mass of impression) at various *other* angles, thrown off various other pictures, in short *contributed* much more. But the thing was not to be....

But I am writing on far into the dead unhappy night, while the rain is on the roof—and the wind in the chimneys. Oh your windless (gateless) Cambridge! *Choyez-le*! Tell Alice that all this is "for her too," but she shall also soon hear further from yours and hers all and always,

HENRY.

To W. E. Norris

Lamb House, Rye.
December 23rd, 1907.

My dear Norris,

I want you to find this, as by ancient and inviolate custom, or at least intention, on your table on Christmas a.m.; but am convinced that, whenever I post it, it will reach you either before or after, and not with true dramatic effect. It will take you in any case, however, the assurance of my affectionate fidelity—little as anything else for the past year, or I fear a longer time, may have contributed to your perception of that remembrance. The years and the months go, and somehow make our meetings ingeniously rarer and our intervals and silences more monstrous. It is the effect, alas, of our being as it were antipodal Provincials—for even if one of us were a Capitalist the problem (of occasional common days in London) would be by so much simplified. I am in London less, on the whole (than during my first years in this place;) and as you appear now to be there never, I flap my wings and crane my neck in the void. Last spring, I confess, I committed an act of comprehensive disloyalty; I went abroad at the winter's end and remained till the first days of July (the first half of the time in Paris, roughly speaking—and on a long and very interesting, *extraordinarily* interesting, motor-tour in France; the second in Rome and Venice, as to take leave of *them* forever.)

This took London almost utterly out of my year, and I think I heard from Gosse, who happily for him misses you so much less than I do, (I mean enjoys you so much more—but no, that isn't right either!) that you had in May or June shone in the eye of London. I am not this year, however, I thank my stars, to repeat the weird exploit of a "long continental absence"—such things have quite ceased to be in my real *mœurs*—and I shall therefore plan a campaign in town (for May and June) that will have for its leading feature to encounter you somewhere and somehow. Till then—that is to a later date than usual—I expect to bide quietly here, where a continuity of occupation—strange to say—causes the days and the months to melt in my grasp, and where, in spite of rather an appalling invasion of outsiders and idlers (a spreading colony and a looming menace,) the conditions of life declare themselves as emphatically my rustic "fit" as I ten years ago made them out to be. I have lived *into* my little house and garden so thoroughly that they have become a kind of domiciliary skin, that can't be peeled off without pain—and in fact to go away at all is to have, rather, the sense of being flayed. Nevertheless I was glad, last spring, to have been tricked, rather, into a violent change of manners and practices—violent partly because my ten weeks in Paris were, for me, on a basis most unprecedented: I paid a *visit* of that monstrous length to friends (I had never done so in my life before,) and in a beautiful old house in the heart of the Rive Gauche, amid old private hotels and hidden gardens (Rue de Varenne), tasted socially and associatively, so

to speak, of a new Paris altogether and got a bellyful of fresh and nutritive impressions. Yet I have just declined a repetition of it inexorably, and it's more and more vivid to me that I have as much as I can tackle to lead my own life—I can't *ever* again attempt, for more than the fleeting hour, to lead other people's. (I have indeed, I should add, suffered infiltration of the poison of the motor—contemplatively and touringly used: that, truly, is a huge extension of life, of experience and consciousness. But I thank my stars that I'm too poor to have one.) I'm afraid I've no other adventure to regale you with. I am engaged, none the less, in a perpetual adventure, the most thrilling and in every way the greatest of my life, and which consists of having more than four years entered into a state of health so altogether better than I had ever known that my whole consciousness is transformed by the intense *alleviation* of it, and I lose much time in pinching myself to see if this be not, really, "none of I." That fact, however, is much more interesting to myself than to other people—partly because no one but myself was ever aware of the unhappy nature of the physical consciousness from which I have been redeemed. It may give a glimmering sense of the degree of the redemption, however, that I should, in the first place, be willing to fly in the face of the jealous gods by so blatant a proclamation of it, and in the second, find the value of it still outweigh the formidable, the heaped-up and pressed together burden of my years.

But enough of my own otherwise meagre annals.... I must catch my post. I haven't sounded you for the least news of your

own—it being needless to tell you that I hold out my cap for it even as an organ-grinder who makes eyes for pence to a gentleman on a balcony: especially when the balcony overhangs your luxuriant happy valley and your turquoise sea. I go on taking immense comfort in the "Second Home," as I beg your pardon for calling it, that your sister and her husband must make for you, and am almost as presumptuously pleased with it as if I had invented it. I am myself literally eating a baked apple and a biscuit on Xmas evening all alone: I have no one in the house, I never dine out here under *any* colour (there are to be found people who do!) and I have been deaf to the syren voice of Paris, and to other gregarious pressure. But I wish you a brave feast and a blameless year and am yours, my dear Norris, all faithfully and fondly,

HENRY JAMES.

To W. E. Norris

H.J. had inadvertently addressed the preceding letter to 'E. W. Norris Esq.'

Lamb House, Rye.
December 26: 1907.

My dear Norris,

It came over me in the oddest way, weirdly and dimly, as I lay soaking in my hot bath an hour ago, that my jaded and inadvertent hand (I have written so many letters in so few days, and you see the effect on everyone doubtless but your own impeccably fingered self) superscribed my Xmas envelope with the monstrous collocation "E.W."! The effect has been probably to make you think the letter a circular and chuck it into the fire—or, if you *have* opened it, to convince you that my handsome picture of my "health" is true—if true at all—of my digestion and other vulgar parts, at the expense of my brain. Clearly you must believe me in distinct cerebral decline. Yet I'm not, I am only—or was—in a state of purely and momentarily *manual* muddle. But the curious and interesting thing is: Why, suddenly, as I lay this cold morning agreeably *steaming*, did the vision of the hind-part-before order come straight at me out of the vapours, after three or four days, when I didn't know I was thinking of you?

Well, it only shows how much you are, my dear Norris, in the thoughts of yours remorsefully,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. I hope, now, I *did* do it after all!

To Dr. and Mrs. J. William White

H.J. had enjoyed the hospitality of these friends at Philadelphia, during his last visit to America.

Dictated.

Lamb House, Rye.
Jan. 1, 1908.

Dear William and Letitia!

It would be monstrous of me to say that what I most valued in William's last brave letter was Letitia's gentle "drag" upon it; and I hasten to insist that when I dwell on the pleasure so produced by Letitia's *presence in it* (to the extent of her gently "dragging") I feel that she at least will know perfectly what I mean! Explain this to William, my dear Letitia: I leave all the burden to *you*—so used as you are to burdens! It was delightful, I *can* honestly say, to hear from you no long time since—and whether by controlled or uncontrolled inspiration; and I tick a small space clear this morning—clear in an air fairly black with the correspondence "of the season"—just to focus you fondly in it and make, for the friendly sound of my Remington, a penetrable medium and a straight course. I am shut up, as mostly, you see, in the little stronghold your assault of which has never lost you honour, at least—I mean the honour of the brave besieger—however little else it may have brought you; and

I waggle this small white flag at you, from my safe distance, over the battlements, as for a cheerful truce or amicable New Year's parley. I think I must figure to you a good deal as a "banked-in" Esquimau with his head alone extruding through the sole orifice of his hut, or perhaps as a Digger Indian, bursting through his mound, by the same perforation, even as a chicken through its shell: by reason of the abject immobility practised by me while you and Letitia hurl yourselves from one ecstasy of movement, one form of exercise, one style of saddled or harnessed or milked or prodded or perhaps merely "fattened," quadruped, to another. Your letter—this last—is a noble picture of a free quadrupedal life—which gives me the sense, all delightful, of seeing you both *alone* erect and nimble and graceful in the midst of the browsing herd of your subjects. Well, it all sounds delightfully pastoral to one whose "stable" consists but of the go-cart in which the gardener brings up the luggage of those of my visitors (from the station) who advance successfully to the *stage* of that question of transport; and my outhouses of the shed under which my solitary henchman (but sufficient to a drawbridge that plays so easily up!) "attends to the boots" of those confronted with the inevitable subsequent phase of early matutinal departure! All of which means, dear both of you, that I do seem to read into your rich record the happiest evidences of health as well as of wealth. You take my breath away—as, for that matter, you can but too easily figure with your ever-natural image of me gaping through a crevice of my door!—the only other at all equal loss of

it proceeding but from my mild daily revolution up and down our little local eminence here. No, you won't believe it—that these have been my only revolutions since I last risked, at a loophole, seeing you thunder past. I shall risk it again when you thunder back—and really, though it spoils the consistency of my builded metaphor, watch fondly for the charming flash that will precede, and prepare! I haven't been even as far as to see the good Abbeys at Fairford—was capable of not even sparing that encouragement when she kindly wrote to me for a visit toward the autumn's end. I haven't so much as pilgrimised to the other shrine in Tite St.—and, having so little to tell you, really mustn't prolong this record of my vacancy. I am quite spending the winter here—"bracing" for what the spring and summer may bring. But I do get, as the very breath of the Spice-islands, the balmy sidewind of your general luxuriance, and it makes me glad and grateful for you, and keeps me just as much as ever your faithful, vigilant, steady, sturdy friend,

HENRY JAMES.

To Mrs. Wharton

The work just finished was the revision of *The High Bid*, shortly to be produced by Mr. and Mrs. Forbes Robertson.
Lamb House, Rye.
January 2nd, 1908.

My dear Edith,

G. T. Lapsley has gone to bed—he has been seeing the New Year in with me (generously giving a couple of days to it)—and I snatch this hour from out the blizzard of Xmas and Year's End and New Year's Beginning missives, to tell you too belatedly how touched I have been with your charming little Xmas memento—an exquisite and interesting piece for which I have found a very effective position on the little old oak-wainscotted wall of my very own room. There it will hang as a fond reminder of tout ce que je vous dois. (I am trying to make use of an accursed "fountain" pen—but it's a vain struggle; it beats me, and I recur to this familiar and well-worn old unimproved utensil.) I have passed here a very solitary and *casanier* Christmastide (of wondrous still and frosty days, and nights of huge silver stars,) and yesterday finished a job of the last urgency for which this intense concentration had been all vitally indispensable. I got the conditions, here at home thus, in perfection—I put my job through, and now—or in time—it may have, on my scant fortunes, a far-reaching effect. If it does have, you'll be the first

all generously to congratulate me, and to understand why, under the stress of it, I couldn't indeed break my little started spell of application by a frolic absence from my field of action. If it, on the contrary, fails of that influence I offer my breast to the acutest of your silver arrows; though the beautiful charity with which you have drawn from your critical quiver nothing more fatally-feathered than that dear little framed and glazed, squared and gilded étrenne serves for me as a kind of omen of my going unscathed to the end.... I admit that it's horrible that we can't—nous autres—talk more face to face of the other phenomena; but life is terrible, tragic, perverse and abysmal—besides, *patientons*. I can't pretend to speak of the phenomena that are now renewing themselves round you; for *there* is the eternal penalty of my having shared your cup last year—that I must *taste* the liquor or go without—there can be no question of my otherwise handling the cup. Ah I'm conscious enough, I assure you, of going without, and of all the rich arrears that will never—for me—be made up—! But I hope for yourselves a thoroughly good and full experience—about the possibilities of which, as I see them, there is, alas, all too much to say. Let me therefore but wonder and wish!… But it's long past midnight, and I am yours and Teddy's ever so affectionate

HENRY JAMES.

To Gaillard T. Lapsley

Reform Club,
Pall Mall, S.W.
March 17th, 1908.

My dear, dear Gaillard!

I can't tell you with what tender sympathy your rather disconcerting little news inspires me nor how my heart goes out to you. Alack, alack, how we do have to pay for things—and for our virtues and grandeurs and beauties (even as you are now doing, overworked hero and model of distinguished valour,) as well as for our follies and mistakes. However, you *have* on your record exactly that mistake of too generous a sacrifice. Fortunately you have been pulled up before you have quite chucked away your all. It must be deuced dreary—yet if you ask me whether I think of you more willingly and endurably *thus*, or as your image of pale overstrain haunted me after you had left me at the New Year, I shall have no difficulty in replying. In fact, dearest Gaillard, and at the risk of aggravating you, I *like* to keep you a little before me in the passive, the recumbent, the luxurious and ministered-to posture, and my imagination rings all the possible changes on the forms of your noble surrender. Lie as *flat* as you can, and live and think and feel and talk (and keep silent!) as idly—and you will thereby be laying up the most precious treasure. It's a heaven-appointed interlude, and cela ne tient qu'à vous (I mean to the

wave of your white hand) to let it become a thing of beauty like the masque of *Comus*. *Cultivate*, horizontally the waving of that hand—and you will brush away, for the time, all responsibilities and superstitions, and the peace of the Lord will descend upon you, and you will become as one of the most promising little good boys that ever was. Après quoi the whole process and experience will grow interesting, amusing, tissue-making (history-making,) to you, and you will, after you get well, feel it to have been the time of your life which you'd have been most sorry to miss. Some five years ago—or more—a very interesting young friend of mine, Paul Harvey (then in the War Office as Private Sec. to Lord Lansdowne), was taken exactly as you are, and stopped off just as you are and consigned exactly to your place, I think—or rather no, to a pseudo-Nordrach in the Mendips. I remember how I sat on just such a morning as this at this very table and in this very seat and wrote him on this very paper in the very sense in which I am no less confidently writing to you—urging him to let himself utterly go and cultivate the day-to-day and the hand-to-mouth and the questions-be-damned, even as an exquisite fine art. Well, it absolutely and directly and beautifully worked: he *recula*—to the very limit—pour mieux sauter, and has since *sauté'd* so well that his career has caught him up again.... Your case will have gone practically quite on all fours with this. I am drenching you with my fond eloquence—but what will you have when you have touched me so by writing me so charmingly out of your quiet—though ever so shining, I feel—little chamber in the great Temple

of Simplification? I shall return to the charge—if it be allowed me—and perhaps some small sign from you I shall have after a while again. I came up from L.H. yesterday only—and shall be in town after this a good deal, D.V., through the rest of this month and April and May. At some stage of your *mouvement ascensionnel* I shall see you—for I hope they won't be sending you up quite to Alpine Heights. Take it from me, dear, dear G., that your cure will have a social iridescence, for your acute and ironic and genial observation, of the most beguiling kind. But you don't need to "take" that or any other wisdom that your beautiful intelligence now plays with from any other source but that intelligence; therefore be beholden to me almost only for the fresh reassurance that I am more affectionately than ever yours,

HENRY JAMES.

To Mrs. Wharton

The first performance of *The High Bid* took place in Edinburgh three days after the date of the following.

Roxburghe Hotel, Edinburgh.
March 23rd, 1908.

My dear Edith!

This is just a tremulous little line to say to you that the daily services of intercession and propitiation (to the infernal gods, those of jealousy and *guignon*) that I feel sure you have instituted for me will continue to be deeply appreciated. They have already borne fruit in the shape of a desperate (comparative) calm—in my racked breast—after much agitation—and even to-day (Sunday) of a feverish gaiety during the journey from Manchester, to this place, achieved an hour ago by special train for my whole troupe and its impedimenta—I travelling with the animals like the lion-tamer or the serpent-charmer in person and quite enjoying the caravan-quality, the bariolé Bohemian or *picaresque* note of the affair. Here we are for the last desperate throes—but the omens are good, the little play pretty and pleasing and amusing and orthodox and mercenary and *safe* (absit omen!)—cravenly, ignobly *canny*: also clearly to be very decently acted indeed: little Gertrude Elliott, on whom it so infinitely hangs, showing above all a gallantry, capacity and *vaillance*, on which I had not ventured to build. She is a

scrap (personally, physically) where she should be a presence, and handicapped by a face too *small* in size to be a field for the play of expression; but allowing for this she illustrates the fact that intelligence and instinct are capables de tout—so that I still hope. And each time they worry through the little "piggery" it seems to me more firm and more intrinsically without holes and weak spots—in itself I mean; and not other in short, than "consummately" artful. I even quite awfully wish you and Teddy were to be here—even so far as that do I go! But wire me a word—*here*—on Thursday a.m.—and I shall be almost as much heartened up. I will send you as plain and unvarnished a one after the event as the case will lend itself to. Even an Edinburgh public isn't (I mean as we go here all by the London) determinant, of course—however, à la guerre comme à la guerre, and don't intermit the burnt-offerings. More, more, very soon—and you too will have news for yours and Edward's right recklessly even though ruefully,

HENRY JAMES.

To Henry James, junior

105 Pall Mall, S.W.
April 3rd, 1908.

Dearest Harry,

The Nightmare of the Edition (of my Works!) is the real *mot de l'Enigme* of all my long gaps and delinquencies these many months past—my terror of not keeping sufficiently ahead in doing my part of it (all the revising, rewriting, retouching, Preface-making and proof-correcting) has so paralysed me—as a panic fear—that I have let other decencies go to the wall. The printers and publishers tread on my heels, and I feel their hot breath behind me—whereby I keep *at* it in order not to be overtaken. Fortunately I have kept at it so that I am almost out of the wood, and the next very few weeks or so will completely lay the spectre. The case has been complicated badly, moreover, the last month—and even before—by my having, of all things in the world, let myself be drawn into a theatrical adventure—which fortunately appears to have turned out as well as I could have possibly expected or desired. Forbes Robertson and his wife produced on the 26th last in Edinburgh—being on "tour," and the provincial production to begin with, as more experimental, having good reason in its favour—a three-act comedy of mine ("The High Bid")—which is just only the little one-act play presented as a "tale" at the end of the volume of the "Two

Magics"; the one-act play proving really a perfect three-act one, dividing itself (by two *short* entractes, without fiddles) perfectly at the right little places as climaxes—with the artful beauty of unity of time and place preserved, etc.... It had a *great* and charming success before a big house at Edinburgh—a real and unmistakable victory—but what was most brought home thereby is that it should have been discharged straight in the face of London. That will be its real and best function. This I am hoping for during May and June. It has still to be done at Newcastle, Liverpool, etc. (was done this past week three times at Glasgow. Of course on tour three times in a week is the most they can give a play in a minor city.) But my great point is that preparations, rehearsals, *lavishments* of anxious time over it (after completely re-writing it and improving it to begin with) have represented a sacrifice of days and weeks to them that have direfully devoured my scant margin—thus making my intense nervousness (about them) doubly nervous. I left home on the 17th last and rehearsed hard (every blessed day) at Manchester, and at Edinburgh till the production—having already, three weeks before that in London, given up a whole week to the same. I came back to town a week ago to-night (saw a second night in Edinburgh, which confirmed the impression of the first,) and return to L.H. to-morrow, after a very decent *huitaine de jours* here during which I have had quiet mornings, and even evenings, of work. I go to Paris about the 20th to stay *10* days, at the most, with Mrs Wharton, and shall be back by May 1st. I yearn to know positively that your Dad and

Mother arrive definitely on the Oxford job then. I have had to be horribly inhuman to them in respect to the fond or repeated *expression* of that yearning—but they will more than understand why, "druv" as I've been, and also understand how the prospect of having them with me, and being with them, for a while, has been all these last months as the immediate jewel of my spur. Read them this letter and let it convey to them, all tenderly, that I *live* in the hope of their operative advent, and shall bleed half to death if there be any hitch.

But I embrace you all in spirit and am ever your fond old Uncle,

HENRY JAMES.

To W. D. Howells

The "lucubrations" are of course the prefaces written for the collected edition. The number of volumes was eventually raised to twenty-four, but *The Bostonians* was not included. The "one thing" referred to, towards the end of this letter, as likely to involve another visit to America would seem to be the possible production there of one of his plays; while the further reason for wishing to return was doubtless connected with his project of writing a novel of which the scene was to be laid in America—the novel that finally became *The Ivory Tower*.

Dictated.

Lamb House, Rye.
17th August, 1908.

My dear Howells,

A great pleasure to me is your good and generous letter just received—with its luxurious implied licence for me of seeking this aid to prompt response; at a time when a pressure of complications (this is the complicated time of the year even in my small green garden) defeats too much and too often the genial impulse. But so far as compunction started and guided your pen, I really rub my eyes for vision of where it may—save as most misguidedly—have come in. You were so far from having distilled any indigestible drop for me on that pleasant

ultimissimo Sunday, that I parted from you with a taste, in my mouth, absolutely saccharine—sated with sweetness, or with sweet reasonableness, so to speak; and aching, or wincing, in no single fibre. Extravagant and licentious, almost, your delicacy of fear of the contrary; so much so, in fact, that I didn't remember we had even spoken of the heavy lucubrations in question, or that you had had any time or opportunity, since their "inception," to look at one. However your fond mistake is all to the good, since it has brought me your charming letter and so appreciative remarks you therein make. My actual attitude about the Lucubrations is almost only, and quite inevitably, that they make, to me, for weariness; by reason of their number and extent—I've now but a couple more to write. This staleness of sensibility, in connection with them, blocks out for the hour every aspect but that of their being all done, and of their perhaps helping the Edition to sell two or three copies more! They will have represented much labour to this latter end—though in that they will have differed indeed from no other of their fellow-manifestations (in general) whatever; and the resemblance will be even increased if the two or three copies *don't*, in the form of an extra figure or two, mingle with my withered laurels. They are, in general, a sort of plea for Criticism, for Discrimination, for Appreciation on other than infantile lines—as against the so almost universal Anglo-Saxon absence of these things; which tends so, in our general trade, it seems to me, to break the heart. However, I am afraid I'm too sick of the mere doing of them, and of the general

strain of the effort to avoid the deadly danger of repetition, to say much to the purpose about them. They ought, collected together, none the less, to form a sort of comprehensive manual or *vade-mecum* for aspirants in our arduous profession. Still, it will be long before I shall want to collect them together for that purpose and furnish *them* with a final Preface. I've done with prefaces for ever. As for the Edition itself, it has racked me a little that I've had to leave out so many things that would have helped to make for rather a more vivid completeness. I don't at all regret the things, pretty numerous, that I've omitted from deep-seated preference and design; but I do a little those that are crowded out by want of space and by the rigour of the 23 vols., and 23 only, which were the condition of my being able to arrange the matter with the Scribners at all. Twenty-three do seem a fairly blatant array—and yet I rather surmise that there may have to be a couple of supplementary volumes for certain too marked omissions; such being, on the whole, detrimental to an all professedly comprehensive presentation of one's stuff. Only these, I pray God, without Prefaces! And I have even, in addition, a dim vague view of re-introducing, with a good deal of titivation and cancellation, the too-diffuse but, I somehow feel, tolerably full and good "Bostonians" of nearly a quarter of a century ago; that production never having, even to my much-disciplined patience, received any sort of justice. But it will take, doubtless, a great deal of artful re-doing—and I haven't, now, had the courage or time for anything so formidable as touching

and re-touching it. I feel at the same time how the series suffers commercially from its having been dropped so completely out. *Basta pure—basta!*

I am charmed to hear of your Roman book and beg you very kindly to send it me directly it bounds into the ring. I rejoice, moreover, with much envy, and also a certain yearning and impotent non-intelligence, at your being moved to-day to Roman utterance—I mean in presence of the so bedrenched and vulgarised (I mean more particularly *commonised*) and transformed City (as well as, alas, more or less, Suburbs) of our current time. There was nothing, I felt, to myself, I could *less* do than write again, in the whole presence—when I was there some fifteen months agone. The idea of doing so (even had any periodical wanted my stuff, much less bid for it) would have affected me as a sort of give-away of my ancient and other reactions in presence of all the unutterable old Rome I originally found and adored. It would have come over me that if those ancient emotions of my own meant anything, no others on the new basis could mean much; or if any on the new basis should pretend to sense, it would be at the cost of all imputable coherency and sincerity on the part of my prime infatuation. In spite, all the same, of which doubtless too pedantic view—it only means, I fear, that I am, to my great disadvantage, utterly bereft of any convenient journalistic ease—I am just beginning to re-do … certain little old Italian papers, with titivations and expansions, in form to match with a volume of "English Hours" re-fabricated

three or four years ago on the same system. In this little job I shall meet again my not much more than scant, yet still appreciable, old Roman stuff in my path—and shall have to commit myself about it, or about its general subject, somehow or other. I shall trick it out again to my best ability, at any rate—and to the cost, I fear, of your thinking I have retitivation on the brain. I haven't —I only have it on (to the end that I may then have it a little consequently *in*) the flat pocket-book. The system has succeeded a little with "English Hours"; which have sold quite vulgarly—for wares of mine; whereas the previous and original untitivated had long since dropped almost to nothing. In spite of which I could really shed salt tears of impatience and yearning to get back, after so prolonged a blocking of traffic, to too dreadfully postponed and neglected "creative" work; an accumulated store of ideas and reachings-out for which even now clogs my brain.

We are having here so bland and beautiful a summer that when I receive the waft of your furnace-mouth, blown upon my breakfast-table every few days through the cornucopia, or improvised resounding trumpet, of the Times, I groan across at my brother William (now happily domesticated with me:) "Ah why *did* they, poor infatuated dears? why *did* they?"—and he always knows I mean Why did you three hie you home from one of the most beautiful seasons of splendid cool summer, or splendid summery cool, that ever was, just to swoon in the arms of your Kittery *genius loci* (genius of perspiration!)—to whose terrific embrace you saw me four years ago, or whatever

terrible time it was, almost utterly succumb. In my small green garden here the elements have been, ever since you left, quite enchantingly mixed; and I have been quite happy and proud to show my brother and his wife and two of his children, who have been more or less collectively and individually with me, what a decent English season can be....

Let me thank you again for your allusion to the slightly glamour-tinged, but more completely and consistently forbidding and forbidden, lecture possibility. I refer to it in these terms because in the first place I shouldn't have waited till now for it, but should have waked up to it eleven years ago; and because in the second there are other, and really stouter things too, definite ones, I want to do, with which it would formidably interfere, and which are better worth my resolutely attempting. I never have had such a sense of almost bursting, late in the day though it be, with violent and lately too much repressed creative (again!) intention. I *may* burst before this intention fairly or completely flowers, of course; but in that case, even, I shall probably explode to a less distressing effect than I should do, under stress of a fatal puncture, on the too personally and physically arduous, and above all too gregariously-assaulted (which is what makes it most arduous) lecture-platform. There is one thing which may conceivably (if it comes within a couple of years) take me again to the *contorni* of Kittery; and on the spot, once more, one doesn't know what might happen. *Then* I should take grateful counsel of you with all the appreciation in the world. And I *want* very much

to go back for a certain thoroughly practical and special "artistic" reason; which would depend, however, on my being able to pass my time in an ideal combination of freedom and quiet, rather than in a luridly real one of involved and exasperated exposure and motion. But I may still have to talk to you of this more categorically; and won't worry you with it till then. You wring my heart with your report of your collective Dental pilgrimage to Boston in Mrs Howells' distressful interest. I read of it from your page, somehow, as I read of Siberian or Armenian or Macedonian monstrosities, through a merciful attenuating veil of Distance and Difference, in a column of the Times. The distance is half the globe—and the difference (for me, from the dear lady's active afflictedness) that of having when in America undergone, myself, so prolonged and elaborate a torture, in the Chair of Anguish, that I am now on t'other side of Jordan altogether, with every ghost, even, of a wincing nerve extinct and a horrible inhuman acheless void installed as a substitute. Void or not, however, I hope Mrs Howells, and you all, are now acheless at least, and am yours, my dear Howells, ever so faithfully,

HENRY JAMES.

P.S. With all of which I catch myself up on not having told you, decently and gratefully, of the always sympathetic attention with which I have read the "Fennel and Rue" you so gracefully dropped into my lap at that last hour, and which I had afterwards to toy with a little distractedly before getting the right peaceful moments and right retrospective mood (this in order to remount

the stream of time to the very Fontaine de Jouvence of your subject-matter) down here. For what comes out of it to me more than anything else is the charming freshness of it, and the general miracle of your being capable of this under the supposedly more or less heavy bloom of a rich maturity. There are places in it in which you recover, absolutely, your first fine rapture. You confound and dazzle me; so go on recovering—it will make each of your next things a new document on immortal freshness! I can't remount—but can only drift on with the thicker and darker tide: wherefore pray for me, as who knows what may be at the end?

To Mrs. Wharton

Lamb House, Rye.
October 13th, 1908.

My very dear Friend,

I cabled you an hour ago my earnest hope that you *may* see your way to sailing … on the 20th—and if you *do* manage that, this won't catch you before you start. Nevertheless I can't not write to you—however briefly (I mean on the chance of my letter being useless)—after receiving your two last, of rapprochées dates, which have come within a very few days of each other—that of Oct. 5th only to-day. I am deeply distressed at the situation you describe and as to which my power to suggest or enlighten now quite miserably fails me. I move in darkness; I rack my brain; I gnash my teeth; I don't pretend to understand or to imagine.... Only sit tight yourself *and go through the movements of life*. That keeps up our connection with life—I mean of the immediate and apparent life; behind which, all the while, the deeper and darker and unapparent, in which things *really* happen to us, learns, under that hygiene, to stay in its place. Let it get out of its place and it swamps the scene; besides which its place, God knows, is enough for it! Live it all through, every inch of it—out of it something valuable will come—but live it ever so quietly; and—*je maintiens mon dire*—waitingly!… What I am really hoping is that you'll be on your voyage when this reaches the Mount. If you're not,

you'll be so very soon afterwards, won't you?—and you'll come down and see me here and we'll talk à perte de vue, and there will be something in that for both of us.... Believe meanwhile and always in the aboundingly tender friendship—the understanding, the participation, the *princely* (though I say it who shouldn't) hospitality of spirit and soul of yours more than ever,

HENRY JAMES.

To J.B. Pinker

By this time the monthly issue of the volumes of the "New York" edition was well under way—with the discouraging results to be inferred from the following letter.

Lamb House, Rye.
October 23rd, 1908.

My dear Pinker,

All thanks for your letter this a.m. received. I have picked myself up considerably since Tuesday a.m., the hour of the shock, but I think it would ease off my nerves not a little to see you, and should be glad if you could come down on Monday next, 26th, say—by the 4.25, and dine and spend the night. If Monday *isn't* convenient to you, I must wait to indicate some other near subsequent day till I have heard from a person who is to come down on one of those dates and whom I wish to be free of. I am afraid my anticlimax *has* come from the fact that since the publication of the Series began no dimmest light or "lead" as to its actualities or possibilities of profit has reached me—whereby, in the absence of special warning, I found myself concluding in the sense of some probable fair return—beguiled thereto also by the measure, known only to myself, of the treasures of ingenuity and labour I have lavished on the ameliorations of every page of the thing, and as to which I felt that they couldn't *not* somehow "tell." I warned *myself* indeed, and kept down my hopes—said

to myself that any present payments would be moderate and fragmentary—very; but this didn't prevent my rather building on something that at the end of a very frequented and invaded and hospitable summer might make such a difference as would outweigh—a little—my so disconcerting failure to get anything from –. The non-response of *both* sources has left me rather high and dry—though not so much so as when I first read Scribner's letter. I have recovered the perspective and proportion of things —I have committed, thank God, no anticipatory *follies* (the worst is having made out my income-tax return at a distinctly higher than at all warranted figure!—whereby I shall have early in 1909 to pay—as I even did last year—on parts of an income I have never received!)—and, above all, am aching in every bone to get back to out-and-out "creative" work, the long interruption of which has fairly sickened and poisoned me. (*That* is the real hitch!) I am afraid that moreover in my stupidity before those unexplained—though so grim-looking!—figure-lists of Scribner's I even seemed to make out that a certain $211 (a phrase in his letter seeming also to point to that interpretation) *is*, all the same, owing me. But as you say nothing about this I see that I am probably again deluded and that the mystic screed meant it is still owing *them*! Which is all that is wanted, verily, to my sad rectification! However, I am now, as it were, prepared for the worst, and as soon as I can get my desk *absolutely* clear (for, like the convolutions of a vast smothering boa-constrictor, *such* voluminosities of Proof—of the Edition—to be carefully read

—still keep rolling in,) that mere fact will by itself considerably relieve me. And I have *such* visions and arrears of inspiration—! But of these we will speak—and, as I say, I shall be very glad if you can come Monday. Believe me, yours ever,

HENRY JAMES.

To Miss Ellen Emmet

H. J.'s interest in the work of this "paintress-cousin" (afterwards Mrs. Blanchard Rand) has already appeared in a letter to her mother, Mrs. George Hunter (vol. i, p. 258).

Lamb House, Rye.
November 2d, 1908.

I have taken moments, beloved Bay, to weep, yes to bedew my pillow with tears, over the foul wrong I was doing *you* and the generous and delightful letter I so long ago had from you—and in respect to whose noble bounty your present letter, received only this evening and already moving me to this feverish response, is a heaping, on my unworthy head, of coals of fire. It is delightful at any rate, dearest Bay, to be in relation with you again, and to hear your sweet voice, as it were, and to smell your glorious paint and turpentine—to inhale, in a word, both your goodness and your glory; and I shall never again consent to be deprived of the luxury of you (long enough to notice it) on any terms whatever....

November 3d. I had to break off last night and go to bed—and as it is now much past mid-night again I shall almost surely not finish, but only scrawl you a few lines more and then take you up to London with me and go on with you there, as I am obliged to make that move, for a few days, by the 9.30 a.m. Among the things I have to do is to go to see my portrait by

Jacques Blanche at the Private View of the New Gallery autumn show—he having "done" me in Paris last May (he is now quite the Bay Emmet of the London—in particular—portrait world, and does all the billionaires and such like: that's where *I* come in—very big and fat and uncanny and "brainy" and awful when I last saw myself—so that I now quite tremble at the prospect, though he has done a rather wondrous thing of Thomas Hardy—who, however, lends himself. I will add a word to this after I have been to the N.G., and if I *am* as unnatural as I fear, you must settle, really, to come out and avenge me.) … When you see William, to get on again with *his* portrait—in which I am infinitely and yearningly interested—as I am in every invisible stroke of your brush, over which I ache for baffled curiosity or wonderment—when you *do* go on to Cambridge (sooner, I trust, than later) he and Alice and Peggy will have much to tell you about their quite long summer here, lately brought to a close, and about poor little old Lamb House and its corpulent, slowly-circulating and slowly-masticating master. It was an infinite interest to have them here for a good many weeks—they are such endlessly interesting people, and Alice such a heroine of devotion and of everything. We have had a wondrous season—a real golden one, for weeks and weeks—and still it goes on, bland and breathless and changeless—the rarest autumn (and summer, from June on) known for years: a proof of what this much-abused climate is capable of for benignity and convenience. Dear little old Lamb House and garden have really become very pleasant

and developed through being much (and virtuously) lived in, and I do wish you would come out and add another flourish to its happy sequel. But I *must* go to bed, dearest Bay—I'm ashamed to tell you what sort of hour it is. But I've not done with you yet.

105 Pall Mall. November 6th. I've been in town a couple of days without having a moment to return to this—for the London tangle immediately begins. What it will perhaps most interest you to know is that I "attended" yesterday the Private View of the Society of Portrait Painters' Exhibition and saw Blanche's "big" portrait of poor H. J. (His two exhibits are that one and one of himself—the latter very flattered, the former not.) The "funny thing about it" is that whereas I sat in almost full face, and left it on the canvas in that bloated aspect when I quitted Paris in June, it is now a splendid Profile, and with the body (and *more* of the body) in a quite different attitude; a wonderful *tour de force* (the sort of thing *you* ought to do if you understand your real interest!)—consisting of course of his having begun the whole thing afresh on a new canvas after I had gone, and worked out the profile, in my absence, by the aid of fond memory ("secret notes" on my silhouette, he also says, surreptitiously taken by him) and several photographs (also secretly taken at that angle while I sat there with my whole beauty, as I supposed, turned on. The result is wonderfully "fine" (for *me*)—*considering*! I think one sees a little that it's a *chic'd* thing, but ever so much less than you'd have supposed. He dines with me to-night and I will get him to give me two or three photographs (of the picture,

not of *me*) and send them to you, for curiosity's sake. But I really think that (for a certain *style*—of presentation of H.J.—that it has, a certain dignity of intention and of indication—of who and what, poor creature, he *is*!) it ought to be seen in the U.S. He (Blanche) wants to go there himself—so put in all your own triumphs first. However, it would *kill* him—so his triumphs would be brief; and yours would then begin again. Meanwhile he was almost as agreeable and charming and beguiling to sit to, as *you*, dear Bay, in your own attaching person—which somebody once remarked to me explained *half* the "run" on you!… Dear Gaillard Lapsley (I hope immensely you'll see *him* on his way to Colorado or wherever) has given me occasional news of Eleanor and Elizabeth—in which I have rejoiced—seeming to hear their nurseries ring with the echo of their prosperity. As they must now have children enough for them to take care of *each other* (haven't they?) I hope they are thinking of profiting by it to come out here again—where they are greatly desired.... *But*, beloved Bay, I must get this off now. I send tenderest love to the Mother and the Sister; I beseech you not to let your waiting laurel, here, wither ungathered, and am ever your fondest,

HENRY JAMES.

To George Abbot James

This refers to the death of Mrs. G. A. James, sister of the Hon. H. Cabot Lodge, Senior Senator for Massachusetts. H. J.'s friendship with his correspondent, dating from early years, is commemorated in *Notes of a Son and Brother*.

Lamb House, Rye.
Nov. 26th, 1908.

My dear old Friend,

Mrs. Lodge has written to me, and I have answered her letter, but I long very particularly to hold out my hand to you in person, and take your own and keep it a moment ever so tenderly and faithfully. All these months I haven't known of the blow that has descended on you or I'm sure you feel that I would have made you some sign. My communications with Boston are few and faint in these days—though what I do hear has in general more or less the tragic note. You must have been through much darkness and living on now in a changed world. I hadn't seen her, you know, for long years, and as I have just said to Mrs. Lodge, always thought of her, or remembered her, as I saw her in youth—charming and young and bright, animated and eager, with life all before her. Great must be your alteration. I wonder about you and yet spend my wonder in vain, and somehow think we were meant not so to miss—during long years—sight and knowledge of each other. But life does strange and incalculable things with us all—

life which I myself still find interesting. I have a hope that you do—in spite of everything. I wish I hadn't so awkwardly failed, practically, of seeing you when I was in America; then I should be better able to write to you now. Make me some sign—wonderful above all would be the sign that in great freedom you might come again at last to *these* regions of the earth. How I should hold out my hands to you! But perhaps you stick, as it were, to your past.... I don't *know*, you see, and I can only make you these uncertain, yet all affectionate motions. The best thing I can tell you about myself is that I have no second self to part with—having lived always deprived! But I've had other things, and may you still find you have—a few! Don't fail of feeling me at any rate, my dear George, ever so tenderly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

To Hugh Walpole

Lamb House, Rye.
December 13th, 1908.

My dear young friend Hugh Walpole,

I had from you some days ago a very kind and touching letter, which greatly charmed me, but which now that I wish to read it over again before belatedly thanking you for it I find I have stupidly and inexplicably mislaid—at any rate I can't to-night put my hand on it. But the extremely pleasant and interesting impression of it abides with me; I rejoice that you were moved to write it and that you didn't resist the generous movement—since I always find myself (when the rare and blest revelation—once in a blue moon—takes place) the happier for the thought that I enjoy the sympathy of the gallant and intelligent young. I shall send this to Arthur Benson with the request that he will kindly transmit it to you—since I fail thus, provokingly, of having your address before me. I gather that you are about to hurl yourself into the deep sea of journalism—the more treacherous currents of which (and they strike me as numerous) I hope you may safely breast. Give me more news of this at some convenient hour, and let me believe that at some propitious one I may have the pleasure of seeing you. I never see A.C.B. in these days, to my loss and sorrow—and if this continues I shall have to depend on you considerably to give me tidings of him. However, my

appeal to him (my only resource) to put you in possession of this will perhaps strike a welcome spark—so you see you are already something of a link. Believe me very truly yours,

HENRY JAMES.

To George Abbot James

Lamb House, Rye.
Dec. 21st, 1908.

My dear dear George—

How I wish I might for a while be with you, or that you were here a little with me! I am deeply touched by your letter, which makes me feel all your desolation. Clearly you have lived for long years in a union so close and unbroken that what has happened is like a violent and unnatural mutilation and as if a part of your very self had been cut off, leaving you to go through the movements of life without it—movements for which it had become to you indispensable. Your case is rare and wonderful—the suppression of the *other* relations and complications and contacts of our common condition, for the most part—and such as no example of seems possible in *this* more infringing and insisting world, over here—which creates all sorts of *inevitabilities* of life round about one; perhaps for props and crutches when the great thing falls—perhaps rather toward making any one and absorbing relation less intense—I don't pretend to say! But you sound to me so lonely—and I wish I could read more human furniture, as it were, into your void. And I can't even speak as if I might plan for seeing you—or dream of it with any confidence. The roaring, rushing world seems to me myself—with its brutal and vulgar racket—all the

while a less and less enticing place for moving about in—and I ask myself how one can think of your turning to it at this late hour, and after the long luxury, as it were, of your so united and protected independence. Still, what those we so love have done *for* us doesn't wholly fail us with their presence—isn't that true? and you are feeling it at times, I'm sure, even while your ache is keenest. In fact their so making us ache is one way for us of their being with us, of our holding on to them after a fashion. But I talk, my dear George, for mere tenderness—and so I say vain words—with only the *fact* of my tenderness a small thing to touch you. I have known you from so far back—and your image is vivid and charming to me through everything—through everything. Things abide—*good* things—for that time: and we hold together even across the grey wintry sea, near which perhaps we both of us are to-night. I should have a lonely Christmas here were not a young nephew just come to me from his Oxford tutor's. You don't seem to have even that. But you have the affectionate thought of yours always,

HENRY JAMES.

To W.E. Norris

Lamb House, Rye.
December 23rd, 1908.

My dear Norris,

I have immensely rejoiced to hear from you to-night, though I swear on my honour that that has nothing to do with this inveterate—isn't it?—and essentially pious pleasure, belonging to the date, of making you myself a sign. I have had the sad sense, for too long past, of being horrid, however (of never having acknowledged—at the psychological moment—your beautiful and interesting last;) and it has been for me as if I should get no more than my deserts were you to refuse altogether any more commerce with me. Your noble magnanimity lifting that shadow from my spirit, I perform *this* friendly function now, with a lighter heart and a restored confidence. Being horrid (in those ways,) none the less, seems to announce itself as my final doom and settled attitude: I grow horrider and horrider (as a correspondent) as I grow more aged and more obese, without at the same time finding that my social air clears itself as completely as those vices or disfigurements would seem properly to guarantee. Most of my friends and relatives are dead, and a due proportion of the others seem to be dying; in spite of which my daily prospect, these many months past, has bristled almost overwhelmingly with People, and to People more or less on the

spot, or just off it, in motors (and preparing to be more than ever on it again,) or, most of all haling me up to town for feverish and expensive dashes, in the name of damnable and more than questionable duties, interests, profits and pleasures—to such unaccountable and irrepressible hordes, I say, I keep having to sacrifice heavily. The world, to my great inconvenience—that is the London aggregation of it—insists on treating me as suburban—which gives me thus the complication without my having any of the corresponding ease (if ease there be) of the state; and appalling is the immense incitement to that sort of invasion or expectation that the universal motor-use (hereabouts) compels one to reckon with. But this is a profitless groan—drawn from me by a particularly ravaged summer and autumn, as it happens—and at a season of existence and in general conditions in which one had fixed one's confidence on precious simplifications. A house and a little garden and a little possible hospitality, in a little supposedly picturesque place 60 miles from London are, in short, stiff final facts that (in our more and more awful age) utterly decline to be simplified—and here I sit in the midst of them and exhale to you (to you almost only!) my helpless plaint. Fortunately, for the moment, I take the worst to be over. I've a young—a very young—American nephew who has come to me from his Oxford tutor to spend Xmas, and I have, in order to amuse him, engaged to go with him to-morrow and remain till Saturday with some friends six miles hence; but after that I cling to the vision of a great stretch of undevastated time here till

April, or better still May, when I may go up to town for a month. Absorbing occupations—the only ones I really care for—await me in abysmal arrears—but I spare you my further overflow.

It has kept me really all this time from saying to you what I had infinitely more on my mind—how my sense of your Torquay life, with all that violent sadness, that great gust of extinction, breathed upon it, has kept you before me as a subject of much affectionate speculation. Of course you've picked up your life after a fashion; but we never pick up *all*—too much of it lies there broken and ended. But I seem to see you going on, as you're so gallantly capable of doing, in the manner of one for whom nothing more has happened than you were naturally prepared for in a world that you decently abstain from characterizing—and I congratulate you again on your mastery of the art of life—of the Torquay variety of it in particular. (We have to decide on the kind we will master—but I haven't mastered this kind!) I at any rate saw Gosse in town some three weeks ago, and he spoke of having seen you not long previous and of the excellent figure you made to him. (I didn't know you were there—but indeed a certain turmoil about me here—speaking as a man loving his own hours and his own company—must have been then, I think, at its thickest.) … I hope something or other pleasant has brushed you with its wing—and even that you've been able to put forth a quick hand and seize it. If so, keep tight hold of it—nurse it in your bosom—for 1909—and believe me, my dear Norris, yours always and ever,

To Mrs. Henry White

Mr. White was at this time American Ambassador in Paris.

Lamb House, Rye.
Dec. 29, 1908.

Dearest Margaret White,

I sit here to-night, I quite crouch by my homely little fireside, muffled in soundless snow—where the loud tick of the clock is the *only* sound—and give myself up to the charmed sense that in your complicated career, amid all the more immediate claims of the *bonne année*, you have been moved to this delightful sign of remembrance of an old friend who is on the whole, and has always been, condemned to lose so much more of you (through divergence of ways!) than he has been privileged to enjoy. Snatches, snatches, and happy and grateful moments—and then great empty yearning intervals only—and under all the great ebbing, melting, and irrecoverableness of life! But this is almost a happy and grateful moment—almost a *real* one, I mean—though again with bristling frontiers, long miles of land and water, doing their best to make it vain and fruitless. You live on the crest of the wave, and I deep down in the hollow—and your waves seem to be all crests, just as mine are only concave formations! I feel at any rate very much in the hollow these winter months—when great adventures, like Paris, look far and formidable, and

I see a domestic reason for sitting tight wherever I turn my eyes. That reads as if I had thirteen children—or thirty wives—instead of being so lone and lorn; but what it means is that I have, in profusion, modest, backward labours. We have been having here lately the great and glorious pendulum in person, Mrs. Wharton, on her return oscillation, spending several weeks in England, for almost the first time ever and having immense success—so that I think she might fairly fix herself here—if she could stand it! But she is to be at 58 Rue de Varenne again from the New Year and you will see her and she will give you details. *My* detail is that though she has kindly asked me to come to them again there this month or spring I have had to plead simple abject terror—terror of the pendulous life. I am a *stopped* clock—and I strike (that is I caper about) only when very much wound up. Now I don't have to be wound up at all to tell you what a yearning I have to see you all back *here*—and what a kind of sturdy faith that I absolutely shall. Then your crest will be much nearer my hollow, and vice versa, and you will be able to look down quite *straight* at me, and we shall be almost together again—as we really must manage to be for these interesting times to come. I don't want to miss any more Harry's freshness of return from the great country —with the golden apples of his impression still there on the tree. I have always only tasted them plucked by other hands and—baked! I want to munch these *with* you—en famille. Therefore I confidently await and evoke you. I delight in these proofs of strength of your own and am yours always and ever,

To W. D. Howells

H. J.'s tribute to the memory of his old friend, Professor C. E. Norton, is included in *Notes on Novelists*.

Lamb House, Rye.
New Year's Eve, 1908.

My dear Howells,

I have a beautiful Xmas letter from you and I respond to it on the spot. It tells me charming things of you—such as your moving majestically from one beautiful home to another, apparently still more beautiful; such as the flow of your inspiration never having been more various and more torrential—and all so deliciously remunerated an inspiration; such as your having been on to dear C. E. N.'S obsequies—what a Cambridge *date* that, even for you and me—and having also found time to see and "appreciate" my dear collaterals, of the two generations (aren't they extraordinarily good and precious collaterals?); such, finally, as your recognising, with so fine a charity, a "message" in the poor little old "Siege of London," which, in all candour, affects me as pretty dim and rococo, though I did lately find, in going over it, that it holds quite well together, and I touched it up where I could. I have but just come to the end of my really very insidious and ingenious labour on behalf of all that series—though it has just been rather a blow to me to find that I've come (as yet) to no reward whatever. I've just had the pleasure

of hearing from the Scribners that though the Edition began to appear some 13 or 14 months ago, there is, on the volumes already out, no penny of profit owing me—of that profit to which I had partly been looking to pay my New Year's bills! It will have landed me in Bankruptcy—unless it picks up; for it has prevented my doing any other work whatever; which indeed must now begin. I have fortunately broken ground on an American novel, but when you draw my ear to the liquid current of your own promiscuous abundance and facility—a flood of many affluents —I seem to myself to wander by contrast in desert sands. And I find our art, all the while, more difficult of practice, and want, with that, to do it in a more and more difficult way; it being really, at bottom, only difficulty that interests me. Which is a most accursed way to be constituted. I should be passing a very—or a rather—inhuman little Xmas if the youngest of my nephews (William's *minore*—aged 18—hadn't come to me from the tutor's at Oxford with whom he is a little woefully coaching. But he is a dear young presence and worthy of the rest of the brood, and I've just packed him off to the little Rye annual subscription ball of New Year's Eve—at the old Monastery— with a part of the "county" doubtless coming in to keep up the tradition—under the sternest injunction as to his not coming back to me "engaged" to a quadragenarian hack or a military widow—the mature women being here the greatest dancers.— You tell me of your "Roman book," but you don't tell me you've sent it me, and I very earnestly wish you *would*—though not

without suiting the action to the word. And *anything* you put forth anywhere or anyhow that looks my way in the least, I should be tenderly grateful for.... I should like immensely to come over to you again—really like it and for uses still (!!) to be possible. But it's practically, materially, physically impossible. Too late—too late! The long years have betrayed me—but I am none the less constantly yours all,

HENRY JAMES.

To Edward Lee Childe

Lamb House, Rye.
[Jan. 8, 1909.]

My dear old Friend,

Please don't take my slight delay in thanking you for your last remembrance as representing any limit to the degree in which it touches me. You are faithful and *courtois* and gallant, in this unceremonious age, to the point of the exemplary and the authoritative—in the sense that *vous y faites autorité*, and only the multitudinous waves of the Christmastide and the New Year's high tide, as all that matter lets itself loose in this country, have kept me from landing (correspondentially speaking) straight at your door. I like to know that you so admirably keep up your tone and your temper, and even your interest, and perhaps even as much your general faith (as I try for that matter to do myself), in spite of disconcerting years and discouraging sensations—once in a way perhaps; in spite, briefly, of earthquakes and newspapers and motor-cars and aeroplanes. I myself, frankly, have lost the desire to live in a situation (by which I mean in a world) in which I can be invaded from so many sides at once. I go in fear, I sit exposed, and when the German Emperor carries the next war (hideous thought) into this country, my chimney-pots, visible to a certain distance out at sea, may be his very first objective. You may say that that is just a good reason for my coming to Paris

again all promptly and before he arrives—and indeed reasons for coming to Paris, as for doing any other luxurious or licentious thing, never fail me: the drawback is that they are all of the sophisticating sort against which I have much to brace myself. If you were to see *from* what you summon me, it would be brought home to you that a small rude Sussex burgher *must* feel the strain of your Parisian high pitch, haute élégance, general glittering life and conversation; the strain of keeping up with it all and mingling in the fray....

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.