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## A Henry James Centenary Exhibition

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# Colby Library Quarterly

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Series I

June 1943

Number 3

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## A HENRY JAMES CENTENARY EXHIBITION

**H**ENRY JAMES was born on April 15, 1843. One hundred years later the Colby Library Associates met to listen to an address about the novelist, given by his nephew who is also named Henry James. The speaker on this centennial occasion, the son of William James, is the grandson of yet another Henry James. All three have written books. The easiest way to distinguish these writers with the same name is to give their dates. The author of *The Secret of Swedenborg* was Henry James, 1811-1882. The novelist was Henry James, 1843-1916. The author of *Charles W. Eliot*, 1930, is Henry James, 1879-.

On the centenary of the novelist's birth the Colby Library opened an exhibition of his books. In the reading room on the old campus, two score and more of the first editions, or of the first American editions, of his works were exhibited, beginning with the hard-to-find first book, *A Passionate Pilgrim*, 1875, and continuing down to the posthumous publications of only a few years ago. In the Women's Union on the new campus, a set of the sumptuous Collected Edition of his works was shown,—Colby's being No. 112 of the 156 sets printed. Henry James complained that this edition had been financially unprofitable; no one who examined these costly volumes had any difficulty in understanding why there was no profit.

Also shown were more than a dozen original autograph letters by Henry James, none of them previously published. They are here put into print for the first time.\*

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## 34 Colby Library Quarterly

Born in America, Henry James went to Europe in 1875 with the clear intention of staying for good. He went first to Paris, but before the end of 1876 he moved to London and settled in rooms at 3 Bolton Street, just off Piccadilly. Two years later he "made a hit" with *Daisy Miller*. He was still enjoying the fame that this work brought him, when, in the autumn of 1881, he returned to America for a visit. He spent the winter of 1881-2 in Boston, New York, and Washington. The autograph hunters soon spotted him, and to one of them he wrote as follows:

DEAR MADAM: Boston, March 11th, 1882

I don't remember to have received from you any of those seven or eight requests for my autograph, and I respond without delay to the present one, thanking you kindly for the value you attach to the poor signature of

Yours very truly  
HENRY JAMES

George Henschel was a music composer who, in 1895, proposed that Henry James write a libretto to be set to music by Henschel. Their friendship had begun more than a decade earlier.

DEAR HENSCHEL March 1st [1884]

I shall be delighted to see you at any moment Wednesday morning.

Yours ever  
HENRY JAMES

3 Bolton St. [London] W.

Edwin A. Abbey and Alfred Parsons were artists. In the late summer of 1886 Henry James joined them and John S. Sargent (who afterwards painted James's portrait) for a month at Broadway, Worcestershire, England.

HENRY JAMES begs to excuse himself to Messrs. E. A. Abbey & Alfred Parsons for his accidental delay in accepting (delightedly) their invitations to dine at the Continental on Thursday April 3d.

3 Bolton St. W. March 14th [1884]

Colby Library Quarterly 35

Mrs. Hill, of the following letter, has not been identified, nor has "the lovely Mrs. Perugini."

3 Bolton St. W.

April 5th [1884]

DEAR MRS. HILL,

Would you very kindly direct & cause to be posted, the enclosed to Mrs. Perugini (whose name I do not find with a certainty of identity in the Red-book)? I am *very* sorry to say that the purport of it is to beg for a postponement of our party of Monday p.m. I have had for a week an engagement on that day (and that hour) to go down to Epsom to dine & spend the night. I know not why—save in the flurry of the charming prospect—I failed to remember it. I have offered the lovely Mrs. P. every facility for taking some other day on which I hope you too will find yourself able to agree. Very faithfully yours HENRY JAMES

Lawrence Barrett was a once-celebrated American actor.

DEAR MR. BARRETT,

3 Bolton St. W.

I am just back from three days in the country to find your note. I shall be *very* happy to dine with you on May 4th, Sunday, at 7.

With kind remembrances to Mrs. Barrett,

Very truly yours

April 16th [1884]

HENRY JAMES

In 1884 James was occupied in writing *The Bostonians*. This novel was published in the *Century Magazine*, and James later told Edmund Gosse that "R. W. Gilder of that periodical wrote me at the time that they had never published anything that appeared so little to interest their readers." In order to free himself from social interruptions while writing this novel, James went to Dover, where he spent August and September working on his manuscript. The following fragment is apparently part of a letter written to Mrs. Hill in August, 1884.

Dover is a place of limited resources, but it suits my present unsociable necessities better than a better one would do.—Your allusion to the situation of some of our friends made me wish to ask you for a little light in some directions; but I won't trouble you to illuminate me by letter.

## 36 Colby Library Quarterly

I devoutly hope Mrs. Rogerson is being subjected to some sanative process at Grunnden—which for the moment has the merit, for her, at any rate, of not being London. London the fearful, London the indispensable & unendurable! Poor Dilke appears to be destined to pay a heavy bill—but somehow even his expiation—if expiation it is—doesn't appear edifying. When I read in the *Telegraph* (for once a year that I look at it) that Mrs. Pattison has made public, in India, her desire to marry him, I became confused & took the clue—though not the interest! In short everything seems to me to [be] a warning “to be good”!—On this sentiment I ought to close. I hope your holiday, now, was not discounted by your wretched week in Paris, & that you are *en vert* (except that the green is yellow this year) in some pleasant [spot].

In the following letter two persons are named who are easily identified. Mrs. Procter was the widow of the poet, “Barry Cornwall,” and James's reference to having sent her a photograph calls to mind a note in Thomas Hardy's journal: “Lunched with Mrs. Procter. She showed me . . . a photo of Henry James. She says he has made her an offer of marriage. Can it be so?” In 1885 James was 42; Mrs. Procter was 85. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff (1830-1908), a member of the privy council, was dispatched in August, 1885, on a special mission to Constantinople, to discuss with the Turkish government the future of Egypt. In October he concluded an agreement with Turkey.

29 Rue Cambon

Paris: Sept 24th [1885]

DEAR MRS. HILL,

Your brief sketch of your finding yourself in a lovely Cornish inn, “in a state of nervous despondency” is a picture of such tragic tints that I am moved to send you without delay a sympathetic line; all the more, that your note which followed me hither this morning, is more deserving of thanks than my insipid photograph. (If I remember rightly, the one I sent to Mrs. Procter was of a more glossy type, so that I understand its having failed to satisfy a person who prefers the *facies* of life. She hasn't even thanked me for it—though she *has* thanked me for some-

## Colby Library Quarterly 37

thing else! This sounds mysterious—so I had better close my parenthesis.) I hope that by this time the Cornish mood has subsided, though Sir Drummond Wolff is still at Constantinople and the world, generally, a little more mad even than it was last month.

I came to this place a fortnight ago, & hope to spend a couple of months here; though there is a very considerable possibility of my being called back to London before that. Paris is empty & unprosperous-looking, but filled (except to-day, the first rain) with lovely, warm, hazy, golden September weather, which suggests ripening vines on Gascon & Burgundian slopes. It is filled, as well, for me, with a great many pleasant old associations & impressions, & with the interest constantly arising from the curious spectacle of the manner in which this ingenious French people unite their faculties of composition and *decomposition*. They seem to me to be the people in the world upon whom providence has lavished the greatest number of reasons for being happy; and yet they seem most bent upon taking the prize for national & social discomfort. Why is this thus? I suppose Matthew Arnold informs us, somewhere; but I forget the place.

I knew Mrs. Pattison was to arrive here but I didn't know that it was to be the scene of her ingenuous nuptials. They have not invited me to witness them, & if they did I think I should feel bound to protest by my absence, as the doings of the pair seem to me altogether remarkably queer.

There is a friend of ours whom I should like much to know something about, as she doesn't seem to me altogether a *quantité négligeable*. My imagination hovers about her with anxiety & compassion (I don't even know whether she is still at Grunnden) & I am "kind of prepared," as I might say in the U. S., to get, any morning, some violent, startling news of her. One would like to write to her, but one can't, as one doesn't know what tone to take: that is, at least, *I* can't. Very likely you have done so—but you are a woman—excuse the remarkable statement!

## 38 Colby Library Quarterly

I spend a large part of my time at the *chevet* [bed-side] of the dying—as I have 2 old friends here whose days are closely numbered. One of them is poor old Huntington whose life is prolonged through the most interminable weariness & pain. Fortunately he is excellently nursed & considerably visited & he has passed into a phase in which the suffering is less & which I hope denotes the approach of the end. The last time I was in Paris one of my oldest friends was in extremes, too, so that my visits here have a sad flavour of mortality. The theatres are terribly hot, but I go to them a little—though I only enjoy the Comédie Nati[onale] & not always that. I hope your husband is well, in spite of the questions of the day, & send him my friendly greeting. Look for me with the fog, the first fine brown one!

Ever very faithfully yours

HENRY JAMES

*A Little Tour in France*, mentioned in the following letter, was originally published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, 1883-84, under the title "En Provence." As a book it was first published in Boston in 1885.

34 De Vere Gardens [London] W.

Feb. 12th 1890

DEAR LAWRENCE BARRETT.

This is sad news—that you are at Pau for [your] health, & that the commonest luxuries are unprocurable there. Ask the "English Bookseller" to get you *A Little Tour in France* in the Tauchnitz form. It exists in that shape, but it has never been republished in this country—I don't possess a copy of it, or you would be welcome to it. If I only had the little Tauchnitz volume here I would write something handsome for you on the fly-leaf. As it is, let me thank you for your interest in that well-meaning but superficial little record of very idle impressions. Let me at the same time hope that a Southern winter is bringing you back health & cheer. If you don't feel quite as you desire still remember that there are people so much worse off as to envy you quite bitterly. In the front line is

Yours very truly HENRY JAMES

## Colby Library Quarterly 39

Richard Watson Gilder (1844-1909) was editor of the *Century Magazine* in which James's novel *The Bostonians* was serialized. His brother Joseph B. Gilder and their sister, Jeannette L. Gilder (1849-1916), were the founders (1881) of *The Critic*. Rhoda Broughton (1840-1920) was a novelist who, when she began to write, a decade before James's arrival in London, acquired a reputation for audacity, of which a younger generation deprived her. Her best known novels were *Not Wisely but too Well* (1867) and *Doctor Cupid* (1886).

34, De Vere Gardens, W.

April 5th 1898.

MY DEAR GILDER,

Mrs. Broughton, sister-in-law of my old & distinguished friend Miss Rhoda Broughton, has written a paper on an old house inhabited by some descendents of William Penn, in illustration of which she has prepared other photographs of the place & its objects & interesting Penn relics, associations, &c.—as I understand it. She w[oul]d be very glad if she could obtain your consideration for it—The *Century* seeming both to her & to me a magazine that would give the thing a natural hospitality. I send this to Mrs. Broughton to send to you with her pictures & sh[ou]ld be glad if it obtains from you a friendly attention to her interesting appeal.

Believe me

Yours ever

HENRY JAMES

Richard Watson Gilder, Esq.

Apparently Gilder declined to print Mrs. Broughton's article in the *Century*, but she seems to have been more successful with other editors. An anonymous article, entitled "The Early Homes of William and Gulielma Penn" appeared in London in *Temple Bar* (115: 104-119), September, 1898; it was reprinted in New York in the *Eclectic Magazine* (131: 553-562), October, 1898. The article begins: "It may interest some of those dwellers in the great colony which William Penn founded across the seas . . . to know that within half an hour's journey of London may be seen several spots closely associated with his name." It seems likely that the letter of Henry James, now in the Colby Library, has made it possible, after nearly half a century, to identify the author of this article. [Bibliographical details by N. Orwin Rush.]

After a long absence from America, James sailed from England in August, 1904, and spent the next ten months in the United States.

## 40 Colby Library Quarterly

Visits and public lectures carried him south to Florida and west as far as California. Walter Wyckoff to whom the following letter was written, was a Princeton friend who died in 1908.

University Club, Chicago

March 19th 1905.

Dear Walter Wyckoff —

Your kind note finds me far away & on the point of going further, as I start tomorrow for a (very brief) visit to California. I haven't been in New York since a very cramped & crowded visit of 3 weeks that I made there early in the winter, breaking it off prematurely by reason [of] the then dire discomfort & rigour (to my unaccustomed sense) of all the winter, & so many of the local conditions. I fled, frankly, in terror & dismay & have wandered rather far (to the South, &c.) since then. But I shall come back (I don't sail for England till July 4th) & shall then be far from wishing to forget that you are so hospitably accessible. I thank you for your friendly reminder of it; I keep Princeton well in my eye; & I am yours & your wife's

Very cordially

HENRY JAMES

In 1910 James again returned to America, this time accompanying his brother William, who returned home to New Hampshire only to die. Henry James remained in America through the winter of 1910-11. The next four letters were written during this stay. Mr. LaRose has not been identified. G. T. L. was Gaillard T. Lapsley, whom James had known many years before this, in London. Lapsley had later resided in California, but in 1906 settled in Cambridge, England.

95 Irving St.

Cambridge [Mass.],

Jan. 12th 1911

DEAR MR. LAROSE,

I thank you kindly for your note & shall very gladly listen to your news of G.T.L. But I have lately been having difficult days again — a relapse into an old & very trying and interminable illness; which makes engagements or appointments precarious & uncertain for me just at present. I go by reason of this to New York tomorrow — to see

Colby Library Quarterly 41

a particular physician; but I will on my return a few days hence & with pleasure make you a sign. If you are communicating meanwhile with Lapsley be so good as to give him this no very brilliant news of me—it will help to explain my silence.

Believe me faithfully yours

HENRY JAMES.

On his arrival in New York, he wrote to an unidentified Mrs. ——. Mrs. Cadwalader Jones was the sister-in-law of Mrs. Wharton. In the spring of 1907, James had enjoyed a delightful motor tour in France with Mr. and Mrs. Wharton.

21, East Eleventh Street [New York].

Wednesday Jan: 18th 1911.

MY DEAR ELIZABETH,

It is delightful to hear from you in this so generously hospitable way, & I should be very sorry to depart again without having all fortunately & comfortably (as comfortably) seen you both. It is only the alarmingly thick complications or confusion of this great city that has stayed my hand for a few hours in answering your beautiful letter—& furthermore the fact that I have been changing my quarters—having come this a.m. to stay with another friend (Mrs. Cadwalader Jones). I will come to *tea* next Sunday with greatest pleasure—say at 4.30 or 4.45, if I may: my hostess has told me she counts upon me for luncheon here that day. Then we will talk! and do invite—or “secure!” dear Louis Shipman, whom I had a year ago to treat so inhospitably—in England; having been then in the act of laying out for myself a long & dismal illness—a thing of atrocity, out of my embarrassed & interrupted convalescence from which I am only now emerging. But, as I say, we will greatly discourse—not lacking topics, & I am with cordial regards to your husband, yours, dear Elizabeth, all faithfully

HENRY JAMES.

At the Sunday tea, Shipman and James apparently talked about *The Saloon*, James's four-act play then being produced in London.

42 Colby Library Quarterly

21, East Eleventh Street, New York.

Jan: 26: 1911

Louis E. Shipman, Esq

The Players

16 Grammercy Park

New York City

DEAR LOUIS SHIPMAN,

I am very sorry you should have taken time & trouble so kindly to search the "records"—I only wanted to know what your informer had *seen* (however little, & I knew it couldn't be much,) & I hoped he could easily tell you. I was moved by a certain—in fact a lively—impatience to know whether, so terribly far from my eye, the mechanism on which my whole little climax hangs had effectively worked & played up—& if the newspaper mention didn't say it hadn't the presumption would be that it *had!* However, if the thing you refer to wasn't a cable it proves nothing—& I shall know in time, probably in 3 or 4 days, though I am now more & more in a funk as to the peril of certitude. You shall share my knowledge when it comes, since you have so kindly shared my suspense. I will lunch with you with pleasure—& preferably *alone*—if *Monday next at 1.45* will suit you; & please let me frankly say that the quietest corner of the Players' (or of any discreet) Club will better consort with my age, infirmities & habits than any glittering pot house. Only make me a sign & believe me

Yours ever,

HENRY JAMES

A month later Shipman had moved to New Hampshire and James was back in Cambridge. On Washington's birthday he wrote:

95 Irving Street

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Louis Shipman, Esq.

Brook Place

Plainfield, New Hampshire

DEAR LOUIS SHIPMAN,

All thanks for your kind note. I had a bad physical collapse just after seeing you in that pleasant way & among those so ingenious & ardent young spirits at the Players—

Colby Library Quarterly 43

I mean [I] had to go to bed for five days & summon the doctor, & then scramble to my feet only to come back here. But I return to N. Y. next month for a better stay (as I hope) & perhaps you then may be able yourself to turn up there. I was very sorry to fail of profiting by Percy McKaye's invitation to go & see his play — & to fail at the 11th hour; but I was miserably unfit — & if you have (as I seem perhaps erratically — to believe) the opportunity of neighbourhood to him I beg you kindly to mention this regret. Apropos of which sort of matters I thank you for the newspaper-bits about *The Saloon* — as to which I am now fully enlightened. It seems to be in itself as much of a go as a one-act play may be, but I fear there is no doubt that it is in the most important particular damnably acted. The "production" side of it has availed itself of my absence & helplessness, clearly, to go extremely astray. But as I frankly took that risk it no doubt serves me right. I am very glad to hear you again brandish the scenic pen. You must give me a nearer glimpse of the resulting flourishes. Your title is very neat, but so many things come first! I am almost sorry you re-read "Owen Wingrave" — the little play is save for the essential subject & names so wholly independent & "on its own." But let us indeed meet again, & believe me

Most truly yours

HENRY JAMES

The last letter in the Colby collection also deals with James's theatrical ventures. The *Daisy Miller* date which he had forgotten was 1878. *The American* opened in London on September 26, 1891; *Guy Domville*, on January 5, 1895. It was met with "hoots and jeers and catcalls": so Henry James wrote his brother William, calling the first night a "cruel ordeal." The play has never been published. *The High Bid* opened in Edinburgh on March 26, 1908. Henry James died on February 28, 1916.

The Reform Club, Pall Mall London, S.W.

Novr. 28: 1911

DEAR SIR,

*Daisy Miller* appeared\* in the late "70's," I forget exactly which — as a Tale in 2 Parts — which was afterwards repub-

\* In the *Cornhill Magazine* [H. J.'s note].

## 44 Colby Library Quarterly

lished, with 2 or 3 other short things, as a volume. The little dramatization was an experiment of several years later & was never acted. I have produced but 4 plays:

The American (dramatised from the Novel of that name) in 4 acts.

Guy Domville, in 3 acts.

The High Bid, 3 acts.

The Saloon, 4 acts.

All these were performed in London—none of them in America.

There are two volumes, further, of "Theatricals" (entitled respectively "1st Series" & "2d series")—published by Harper & Brothers.

Yours very truly

HENRY JAMES



### HENRY JAMES ON ZOLA

BY CORNELIA PULSIFER KELLEY\*

ANY admirer of Henry James who is in possession of LeRoy Phillips' excellent *Bibliography of the Writings of Henry James* (New York, Coward-McCann, 1930) can ferret out, if he has the patience and access to a well-

\* Miss Kelley, a native of Waterville and a graduate of Colby College (B.A., 1918), is known to all students of Henry James as the author of *The Early Development of Henry James* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1930). When Lyon N. Richardson published his *Henry James* in 1941, he provided a discriminating and critical bibliography, in which Miss Kelley's work was described as "indispensable, careful, elaborate, sound, authoritative." The same note of authority will be heard in the article here printed. In *The Early Development* Miss Kelley wrote: "It is doubtful if any American novelist of recent years has stimulated more interest than Henry James. . . . In the early period . . . James as a critic outweighed James as a writer of original fiction. . . . This influenced his stories. . . . He . . . made himself into a writer of tales and novels. His only genius was that which is the most dependable of all—a genius for work." —*Editor*.