
This volume is the third and last installment of the correspondence between the two eldest sons of Henry James, Sr. Of the 740 known letters between William and Henry, 274 appear in this volume which covers thirteen years preceding William's death. Over 9,200 letters of William have been recorded; the publication of the correspondence between the brothers now complete the editors plans are as follows:

from this point forward, the intention of this project is to publish the remaining correspondence of William James in nine volumes, arranged chronologically, and having to do with members of his immediate and extended family as well as with friends and professional colleagues. (xv)

The years covered in this volume were for both brothers productive, successful and satisfying. As Robert Daviddoff notes in his Introduction, by the mid 1890s William clearly understood himself to be a philosopher, a very public one at that. During this period nearly all of his philosophical volumes were published including The Will to Believe, The Varieties of Religious Experience, Pragmatism, A Pluralistic Universe, The Meaning of Truth and Some Problems of Philosophy plus several important essays and other works. For his part, during this period, Henry produced much of his most noted and well regarded fiction, including The Wings of the Dove, The Ambassadors, The Golden Bowl and The American Scene. Interestingly neither brother says much about his own writing, though they certainly share frank opinions (mostly William about Henry's style and theme) and enthusiastic endorsement (notably Henry's ringing approval of Pragmatism and The Meaning of Truth). Beyond reporting about work on projects and reactions to each others publication, this volume reveals interesting commentary by William about his difficulties with preparing the lectures that became The Varieties of Religious Experience. William writes:

The absurd Gifford lectures are a bad element. I ought to have done them up brown in six months but, trailing as they now do, I begin to sicken of the subject, and am tired as a man might tire of holding out a weight forever, without being allowed either to actively raise it any higher, or to set it down. (154)

Writing Pragmatism and A Pluralistic Universe went much smoother and rapidly. Indeed William eagerly awaited the opportunity to deliver the lectures. With regard to the latter, in April 1908
William comments, "I have been sleeping like a top, and feel in
good fighting trim again eager for the scalp of the Absolute. My
lectures will put his wretched clerical defenders fairly on the
defensive" (360).

In 1906 William's visiting professor stint at Stanford was
interrupted by the terrible earthquake. His letters of 22 April
and 9 May, 1906 are fascinating first drafts of three sections of
his "On Some Mental Effects of the Earthquake" published in June
1906 by Youth's Companion. Jamesian scholars will want to com­
pare the letter-draft and the magazine version of this popular
essay.

Both brothers letters about their travels stand out:
Henry's 1905 tour of America as well as numerous trips to the
Continent, especially his visits to Paris and Rome; William's
train ride to California (via Banff and the Canadian Rockies) and
his journeys to England and Europe. Both brothers enjoy their
homes and relish sharing details about remodeling, repairs,
gardening, tree felling and planting and decorating. Henry pur­
chased Lamb House in 1899 after getting all sorts of advice from
William that he should not become a home owner; William, already
owner of 19 Irving Street, bought the summer retreat at Chocurua
and extravagantly expanded and remodeled it. As to be expected
in any family correspondence there is much talk about the weather.
Note how Henry's memorable account of the English gloom and
doom: "This whole October has capped the climax with diluvian &
unceasing rains... horrible roaring tempest & brutal polar
cold! One doesn't know how one 'is' in such conditions--one is
simple beaten & laid low. And still goes on" (403) compares with
William's wonderful account of New Hampshire leaves and Indian
Summers in which he describes the spectacular fall foliage as, "a
short of chromatic frenzy, as if fireworks, jewelry, rainbows,
glitter, could go no farther" (401). Much talk too about ill­
nesses, medicine, doctors and cures; about children, relatives,
friends. World events, notably the Dreyfus affair and American
imperialisms, received attention from both siblings.

Above all, as I noted in my review of Volumes 1 and 2 of the
Correspondence (see SAAP Newsletter #68 (June 1994): 41-45)
readers of these letters are privileged to study a life-long
exchange of impressions, opinions and reflections of these two
exceptional, literate and brilliant brothers. Three volumes of
The Correspondence of William James whets the appetite for the
remaining nine volumes. All in all this series is an invaluable
aid to philosophical (and literary) scholarship, more so given
the textual diligence, informative notes and comprehensive indexes
which we have simply come to expect from these dedicated and
painsstaking editors.

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