

Henry James, Sr., to Henry James, [26 December 1869], from [Cambridge]

TLC fragment, Houghton, bMS Am 1092.9 (4192)

1 It was very good to get your first impressions of Rome, and I can sympathize with
2 you very fully. I feel that I myself should be horribly affected there by the historical
3 picturesque. I should be extremely sensitive to it objectively, and would therefore all the
4 more revolt from it subjectively, as hearing underneath it all the pent-up moaning and
5 groaning soul of the race, struggling to be free or to come to consciousness. I am glad on
6 the whole that my lot is cast in a land where life doesn't wait on death, and where
7 consequently no natural but only an artificial picturesque is possible. The historical
8 consciousness rules to such a distorted excess in Europe that I have always been restless
9 there and ended by pining for the land of the future exclusively. Condemned to remain
10 there I should stifle in a jiffy—especially on Roman soil and with that foul wart of the
11 Papacy forever affronting the sense!

Notes

[26 December 1869] • Assigned date based on Houghton Library records

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