

Mary (Minny) Temple to Henry James, 15, 22 August 1869, from Pelham, New York

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1094 (436, 438)

1           Pelham August 15<sup>th</sup> 1869.

2   Dear Harry—

3                           I have been for some time on the point of writing to you, but the  
4 truth is, that, of late, so many things have happened to take up my time & attention that I  
5 have found no fitting opportunity till now—You have no doubt heard before this thro’  
6 your own family of the stirring events that have been happening in my particular  
7 family—namely, the birth of Kitty’s son, nearly three weeks ago, & Elly’s engagement,  
8 which really occurred four or five weeks ago, but which they did not see fit to announce  
9 till a week ago—Elly’s engagement being the more startling event, let us consider that  
10 somewhat, ere we turn to the babe. I don’t know whether you know Mr. Temple Emmet,  
11 who is to be Elly’s husband. He looks a good deal like all the rest of the Emmets, and  
12 partakes of the excellent characteristics of the family—He is 28 years older than Elly—  
13 being forty-seven. We were all a good deal astonished by her engagement—I never  
14 dreamt that she would marry him, although he is a most estimable man, & will make her  
15 a kind & devoted husband, I have no doubt. She is very happy, & they are both,  
16 apparently, very much in love with each other—so I suppose it must be all right—altho’ I  
17 must confess my imagination had taken higher flights in the way of a spouse for Elly—  
18 But as long as she loves him, & they are both happy, what more could one wish? Kitty’s  
19 little venture in the way of marrying one’s grandfather has turned out so well, that I ought  
20 to ~~be~~ feel quite safe about Elly—But I have quite determined that the line must be drawn

21 here—Henrietta shall not marry Tom, tho' he bring all the fascinations of Cupid himself,  
22 to win her young affections—Elly is to be married on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September. Temple  
23 may have to go to California in the Autumn—in which case she will, of course, go with  
24 him—but we are in hopes that he may be able to stay here for the winter. So much for  
25 Elly's affairs—now for Kitty—This lady is doing well—likewise her infant, who is a  
26 most remarkable child—with an intellectual head, & square little brows, & curly brown  
27 hair—his eyes are dark & twinkling; his nose very decided & high between the eyes—  
28 his mouth rather capacious—altogether, he is a fine, handsome little boy—His name is to  
29 be William Temple—I have been at Pelham all summer—engrossed in these domestic  
30 events—while you have been wandering among the mountains of Switzerland, without a  
31 link or a tie to bind you—sich is life!—I suppose you have heard ~~how~~ about the Bootts'  
32 stay in Pomfret—Lizzie is charmed with your family—They seem to have been a new &  
33 delightful sensation to her. In her last letter, from Lenox, she said Messrs. Gray &  
34 Holmes were at Pomfret for a few days—I was much interested in your account of  
35 George Eliot—I want to go abroad, & I mean to think deeply about it, & try to get  
36 there—The “hook” & “crook” that I mentioned ~~may be called~~ are Mr. & Mrs. Jones,  
37 though I have no desire to apply opprobrious epithets to them—Mrs. J. most kindly offers  
38 to take me with her to Rome next winter, & by all that is blissful, if I can manage it  
39 pecuniarily, I shall go!—I am going to write to Mrs. Jones, & ask her what the expense  
40 would be, and if it is at all reasonable for me to think of going, I shall make my  
41 arrangements to go for a year at least—Think, my dear of the pleasure we would have  
42 together in Rome—I am crazy at the mere thought—It would be a strange step & a  
43 sudden for me to take, but Kitty & Elly are doing queer things and why should I be

44 behind-hand? I am not very strong now-a-days, altho' it is summer, & I am a little afraid  
45 that another winter might go far toward finishing me up—& I would give anything to  
46 have a winter in Italy. We must trust in Heaven, & wait patiently—Then too, I feel that I  
47 must flee this spot, unless I wish to become the prey of a bald-headed Emmet—There  
48 seems to be a fatality about it, which I would fain escape—Kitty & Elly send much  
49 love—Write soon—& believe me, dearest Harry, as ever, Your loving M. Temple.

50 August 22<sup>nd</sup>—

51 I wrote this letter to you a week ago, & according to my usual habit of forgetfulness have  
52 left it until now lying in my desk—In this last week nothing of importance has  
53 happened—The baby has picked up wonderfully, and Kitty has come down stairs & is  
54 quite well again—I have taken no steps about the European trip, & truth to tell, dear, I  
55 have not the heart for it—The evening I wrote to you I was enchanted with the project,  
56 but by the next morning I was disenchanted—~~I~~ I am really not strong enough to go  
57 abroad with even the kindest friends, since they be not relatives, or ~~somebody~~ <sup>people</sup> [^]  
58 upon whom I have some special claim—I have been ill nearly all the week with a kind of  
59 pleurisy, which makes me clearly perceive that it would never do for me to be ill away  
60 from home, on the bounty of strangers for my nursing—see'st thou?—My dearest Harry  
61 what a charming tale is Gabrielle de Bergerac!—Just as pretty as ever it can be==I am  
62 proud of you, my dear, as well as fond—have you any special objections?  
63 Good-bye—all send love—Write soon—& believe me as ever your loving

64 M. Temple—

## Notes

- 12 the birth of Kitty's son • William Temple Emmet
- 12 Elly's engagement • Minny's younger sister Elly became engaged to her brother-in-law and cousin, Christopher Temple Emmet (1822-1882) and would marry him in the fall
- 24 marrying one's grandfather • Kitty Temple, Minny's older sister, had married Christopher Temple Emmet's older brother, Richard Stockton Emmet (1821-1902), in 1868
- 26 Henrietta • Henrietta Temple, Minny's youngest sister
- 66 Gabrielle de Bergerac • "Gabrielle de Bergerac," *Atlantic Monthly* July, August, September 1869: 55-71, 231-41, 352-61

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