

Mary (Minnie) Temple to Henry James, 17 November 1869, from Pelham, New York

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1094 (437)

1 Pelham November 17th 1869.

2 My darling Harry—

3 I was at Cambridge last week when your letters came to
4 your father & Willy, from Florence, giving an account of your health & spirits that went
5 to my heart. To think that you should be ill & depressed so far away, just when I was
6 congratulating myself that you, at all events, were well & happy, if nobody else was—
7 Well, my dearest Harry, we all have our troubles in this world—I only hope that yours
8 are counterbalanced by some true happiness, which Heaven sends most of us, thro' some
9 means or other—I think the best comes thro' a blind hanging on to some conviction,
10 never mind what, that God has put deepest into our souls, and the comforting love a of a
11 few chosen friends, which comes to us “all along of” said “hanging on” ~~& not~~ & because
12 we have an eternal right to it, & not a mere arbitrary desire for it—Don't you think so?—
13 I had a delightful visit in Cambridge. Your people were all most kind to me—& I am
14 uncommon glad I went—I saw those photographs you sent out. Lewes & Swinburne are
15 both “pretty things” in their own way. To think that my adored George Eliot should have
16 ~~of am~~ ^found,[^] among all the human creatures she knew, the most comfort & sympathy
17 from that one—I saw many friends in Cambridge—I lunched twice with Lizzie Boott, &
18 met ^there, [^] both times, Miss Bessie Gray, sister of J. G—whom I found a handsome
19 woman, cordial & attractive—I only saw John Gray himself once, as he ~~came~~ ^went[^] to
20 New-York shortly after my arrival to be groomsman to Mr. Jim. Higginson—I saw

21 Sargie Perry twice—ditto A. Sedgwick. Sargie has improved—& I liked him much—
22 Arthur did not thrill my soul—but why should he?—Miss Dixwell came to see me. I was
23 out. I went to see her—She was to hum, & was satisfactory to me—She giv me one of
24 her embroideries; a good one, representing night & morning—This mark of favor
25 aroused Willy’s jealousy—he said she meant it for him, & would fain have taken it from
26 me—but I bore it off triumphantly—When I told W. Holmes that she had given it to me
27 he remarked “Good lick”—accompanied by the old familiar twinkle of the eye—I had
28 never chanced to hear this elegant expression of approbation before—But you perceive
29 from it, that his style has not radically changed. He looked well & handsome, & seems to
30 derive much comfort in life from Willy’s society. John Gray made us a little visit, at
31 Pelham, not long ago—it rained all the time—~~He~~ I took him out in a pony-wagon
32 between the showers, & shook him up, & splashed his clothes, & treated him generally as
33 he had never been treated before—in return, he kissed the baby, at parting, as it had never
34 been kissed before—that is ~~when~~ ^{when} ^{with} with^[\^] none of that lingering & caressing fondness that
35 one is apt to indulge in ⁱⁿ in kissing babies, ^[\^] but with Libby Gourlay’s kiss, exaggerated
36 ten-fold—but you will readily imagine how he did it—But he is a most noble gentleman,
37 in spite of his not knowing how to kiss!—The foregoing has a depraved sound. But I do
38 indeed like him much-better as I know him better. Elly & Temple are safely settled in
39 San-Francisco. It is quite within possibility that I may set sail, next Saturday, to join
40 them. The voyage would take three weeks—horrible thought! but on the other side
41 would be soft air & mild climate, & fruits & flowers awaiting me—The baby is too
42 enchanting—By the way, Elly Van Buren Morris has a fine daughter. She is doing

43 well—also the babe—Babe’s name is Bessie Marshall—after Steve’s sister. Think of
44 me, over the ~~wa~~ continent.

45 “When shall we meet again,

46 Dearest & best,

47 Thou going Easterly,

48 I, to the West?” as the song saith. It will be fun when we do meet again—Write
49 to me, to [^]here[.] & if I am at San-Francisco, it will be sent to me—Two engagements
50 have just been announced—My friend, Fred. Jones to miss Minnie Rawle, of
51 Philadelphia, a handsome & brilliant young lady—and Miss Minna Craven, of New-York
52 to Sydney de Kay!—Picture it, think of it!—Sydney is just beginning the study of the
53 Law, from which he hopes to gain a livelihood for himself & beloved—So the nuptials
54 will probably be indefinitely postponed—But what can years of waiting be to Miss
55 Craven, with Sydney at last, for a reward—Sich is life—My dear, I hope you may
56 henceforth live in Gondolas, since Gondolas sometimes make you think of me—So “keep
57 a doin’ of it” if it comes “natural”. I “guess” it ~~isn’t~~ is all right, & even expedient, once
58 in a while—I have had a very good photograph taken of myself lately, [^]one of[.] which I
59 meant to send you—but they have all been taken by somebody, & I shall have to wait till
60 some more are struck off. I do hope you are better than when you wrote—& that you
61 will keep on to Rome, & enjoy yourself—I feel much better, now-a-days—Good-bye,
62 dear Harry—“words is wanting” to tell you all the affection & sympathy I feel for you—
63 Take care of yourself—Write soon—God bless you—

64 Your loving Cousin

65 Mary Temple—

Notes

3-4 your letters came to your father & Willy, from Florence, giving an account of your health • Henry James's 16, [17], 19 October and 26 October [1869] letters to William James and his 24, 25, [26] October [1869] one to Henry James, Sr.

22 Miss Dixwell • Fanny Bowditch Dixwell, who would marry Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., in 1872

33 the baby • Kitty Temple Emmet's son, William Temple Emmet

35 Libby Gourlay • Henry James, Sr.'s, first cousin (see Mary Walsh James to Henry James, 8 August [1869])

42-43 Elly Van Buren Morris has a fine daughter.[...] Babe's name is Bessie Marshall—after Steve's sister • See Catharine Walsh to Henry James, 1 November [1869] for the first mention of the birth on 4 October to Ellen Van Buren Morris and Stuyvesant Fish Morris of Elizabeth (Bessie) Marshall Morris (1869-1919), their first child

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