Pelham November 17th 1869.

My darling Harry—

I was at Cambridge last week when your letters came to your father & Willy, from Florence, giving an account of your health & spirits that went to my heart. To think that you should be ill & depressed so far away, just when I was congratulating myself that you, at all events, were well & happy, if nobody else was—Well, my dearest Harry, we all have our troubles in this world—I only hope that yours are counterbalanced by some true happiness, which Heaven sends most of us, thro’ some means or other—I think the best comes thro’ a blind hanging on to some conviction, never mind what, that God has put deepest into our souls, and the comforting love a of a few chosen friends, which comes to us “all along of” said “hanging on” & not & because we have an eternal right to it, & not a mere arbitrary desire for it—Don’t you think so?—I had a delightful visit in Cambridge. Your people were all most kind to me—& I am uncommon glad I went—I saw those photographs you sent out. Lewes & Swinburne are both “pretty things” in their own way. To think that my adored George Eliot should have of am, found[,] among all the human creatures she knew, the most comfort & sympathy from that one—I saw many friends in Cambridge—I lunched twice with Lizzie Boott, & met ,there, [,] both times, Miss Bessie Gray, sister of J. G—whom I found a handsome woman, cordial & attractive—I only saw John Gray himself once, as he came ,went[,] to New-York shortly after my arrival to be groomsman to Mr. Jim. Higginson—I saw
Sargie Perry twice—ditto A. Sedgwick. Sargie has improved—and I liked him much—
Arthur did not thrill my soul—but why should he?—Miss Dixwell came to see me. I was
out. I went to see her—She was to hum, & was satisfactory to me—She giv me one of
her embroideries; a good one, representing night & morning—This mark of favor
aroused Willy’s jealousy—he said she meant it for him, & would fain have taken it from
me—but I bore it off triumphantly—When I told W. Holmes that she had given it to me
he remarked “Good lick”—accompanied by the old familiar twinkle of the eye—I had
never chanced to hear this elegant expression of approbation before—but you perceive
from it, that his style has not radically changed. He looked well & handsome, & seems to
derive much comfort in life from Willy’s society. John Gray made us a little visit, at
Pelham, not long ago—it rained all the time—He I took him out in a pony-wagon
between the showers, & shook him up, & splashed his clothes, & treated him generally as
he had never been treated before—in return, he kissed the baby, at parting, as it had never
been kissed before—that is when, with none of that lingering & caressing fondness that
one is apt to indulge in, in kissing babies, but with Libby Gourlay’s kiss, exaggerated
ten-fold—but you will readily imagine how he did it—but he is a most noble gentleman,
in spite of his not knowing how to kiss!—The foregoing has a depraved sound. But I do
indeed like him much-better as I know him better. Elly & Temple are safely settled in
San-Francisco. It is quite within possibility that I may set sail, next Saturday, to join
them. The voyage would take three weeks—horrible thought! but on the other side
would be soft air & mild climate, & fruits & flowers awaiting me—The baby is too
enchanting—By the way, Elly Van Buren Morris has a fine daughter. She is doing
also the babe—Babe’s name is Bessie Marshall—after Steve’s sister. Think of me, over the continent.

“When shall we meet again,

Dearest & best,

Thou going Easterly,

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

Your loving Cousin

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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