

Robert (Bob) Temple to Henry James, 17 September 1869, from Cambridge

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1094 (439)

1 Cambridge. Mass. Sept. 17. 1869

2 My dear Harry. I don't know how you may receive another effusion from my once
3 welcome pen. You owe me two or three letters, & hence I infer that my late attempts
4 have been not altogether favorably received, that, in fact, you wished to drop the
5 correspondence, bored by the increasing vacuity & imbecility of my productions. But I
6 am here, in your father's house, with nothing to do. Wilky left yesterday for Florida, to
7 go to work once more on his Plantation, (happy man, to have a Plantation to go to work
8 on!), Robby is in New York negotiating for a Position on a Texan Railroad, (& destined,
9 ere long, to become one of the true Aristocracy of our Land, viz, a Railroad King), Willy
10 is gone off to sleep, fatigued doubtless, by my flippant conversation, & I know not what
11 else to do than pen another line to one whom I could once grasp by the hand in amity,
12 whose first efforts I am still proud to remember, I, as it were, fostered, in a Union Square
13 Brown Stone Front, (or Red Brick, was it?—no matter.)—, in point of fact to you, to the
14 Brilliant Young American Novelist, the—the Pet of Boston—Do not cast this aside with
15 a Pish, or an impatient Pshaw.—that is, if people out of novels ever do say Pshaw—, but
16 respond—when you have a leisure moment, send a line to me; it will be treasured as an
17 Heirloom: at all events it will be welcome, when it finds me in one of our vast American
18 Solitudes, or on the Summit of the Rocky mountains. For I expect shortly to go out on a
19 Railroad in Oregon—Yes, I am going Railroading. Elly, our little gentle, girlish Elly,
20 was yesterday married to a RailRoad King! He is a large, fat, old bald-headed, grey-

21 whiskered, red-faced, substantial, solid, portly, opulent, not to say affluent, person—& he
22 has promised me a berth, a humble situation, on his Oregon Road. I am not without
23 hopes of becoming, at some future day, an Aristocrat, for our Country's Aristocracy
24 really consists of but These mighty classes, the Railroad Kings, the Steamboat Captains,
25 & the Hotel clerks.—I am at present in a dependent position. I have been discharged
26 from the Army, & am in hopes of doing something better than my past 6 years' drudgery.
27 Meanwhile I am subsisting on the Bounty of my friends, & eating the bread of
28 dependence. One gives me a shirt, another a coat: all I really need now is a good pair of
29 shoes, which I hope to pick up shortly. The once Brilliant R. T. is sadly, sadly reduced.
30 Your kind father has been more kind than ever. I have enjoyed an asylum in his house
31 for the past few days, & trust I have not been too obtrusive. I hope I feel my place. I try
32 to.—'Tis useless looking at the Past. Look ahead! I say to myself. I intend to devote
33 myself heart & soul to whatever I find to do—the further away the better from this stilted,
34 fashion governed East—.—Away, away to the West, the Free Untrammelled West!—My
35 army life has done me good. It has taught me that there are other people in the world, &
36 a precious sight better ones than the vaunted upper classes. My hopes & fears, my
37 aspirations, & my life, are henceforth among the lower bodies. I deserve no more than to
38 do my duty in a Subordinate Position, on a RailRoad, & out west: & there I hope soon to
39 be.

40 I have found great changes in the Family since my departure from Newport 6 years ago.
41 Kitty is happily married to a prosy man, & has a fat Baby, named after his Gentleman
42 Uncle, William J. Temple. Minny looks & talks older; she is the best one of the Family,
43 & at any rate will never sell herself for Gold. Of Elly I know not what to think. The idea

44 of that young & lovely girl tied down to a man, 28 years her senior, is to me simply
45 revolting. She says she is in love. So be it. She is now a RailRoad Queen: may she be
46 happy!—Henrietta is prettier than she used to be, & very lively. There is another elderly
47 unmarried Emmet, & it is popularly supposed that she is waiting for him. I visited
48 Newport the other day, & received a frigid kiss from Mrs. Tweedy. Edmund was
49 inexorable, & spoke not. Aunt Charlotte is very ill; confined to her room, & will
50 probably never leave it but for her final Resting place. Your Family are all well. They
51 doubtless keep you well informed of everything relating to themselves. Wilky looks
52 portly, & responsible; like a flourishing Planter. Willy seems thin and sickly. And now,
53 how are you yourself? You are in Venice—on the Bridge of Sighs—&c—Oh! Happy
54 youth! How I envy you! Some day I may revisit the dear European scenes—; but, if
55 ever, it will be some 20 years hence, when I shall have become a RailRoad King, &
56 married a young & lovely consort. Vain, vain Dreams!!—When I want to go to Europe, I
57 must live in the Past. Memory must serve in place of the Cunarder. My Life henceforth
58 lies among far different scenes.—Do write to me. Address care of your father, & he will
59 forward the letter to distant Oregon, or wherever I may choose to be. Wherever it may
60 be, be assured I shall never forget you. The Bridegroom may forget the Bride was made
61 his wedded wife yestereve, the Monarch may forget the crown that on his head an hour
62 hath been. The Mother may forget the Babe that smiles so sweetly on her knees—But I'll
63 remember Thee, Glen James, & all that thou hast done for me!

64 Farewell. Ever Sincerely Yours R. T.—

65 (Tear this.)

Notes

19-20 Elly, was yesterday married to a RailRoad King • Ellen (Elly) Temple married Christopher Temple

Emmet

41 a prosy man • Richard Stockton Emmet (Christopher Temple Emmet's brother)

41 a fat Baby • William Temple Emmet

46 Henrietta • Henrietta Temple

48 Edmund • Edmund Tweedy

49 Aunt Charlotte • Charlotte Green Temple

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