The scholar-friends: Francis James Child and James Russell Lowell (continued II)

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The Scholar-Friends: Francis James Child and James Russell Lowell

(Continued)

Child's birthday letter of 1880 salutes the new Minister to the Court of St James's. Lowell's appointment to the highest post in the United States diplomatic service had come, unsought, in January. The ensuing five years in England were the high point of his public career.

Lowell was actually still in Madrid when Child wrote, but made a preliminary visit to England in March, leaving Mrs Lowell in the care of the Fields. Though she had a serious relapse during his absence, he was able to escort her to London the following month.

The sonnet mentioned by Child was included in Heartsease and Rue (1888), the last volume of Lowell's verse to appear within his lifetime, but the other set of verses has not been traced.

Feb. 22, 1880.

My dear Jamie,

Though my head is spinning with some hepatic disturbance, I am not going to let the 22d pass without making my bow at the legation. But under which king, Bezonian? Are you in London or in Madrid? The newspapers, that knew all your privacy a month ago, tell us nothing now. We know that the nobility & gentry were arranging receptions for you throughout England — that you had taken a place in the Isle of Wight — & had had an audience appointed at Osborne — but we do not know where you are. So it is to be Hyde Park & not Cambridge Common — Rotten Row & not Harvard Row — and the earliest sight we shall have of you will be a year and a half from now. Yet you cannot like it — I tell everybody you do not — and when you come back you will say, mutum fuit inclo anima mea. But I will whine no more. — Your last letter was written in the hey-day of youth, and today you will scarce be more than one and twenty. If I thought you felt older than in 79, I could not write to you so cheerfully. But your life is rejuvenated even by your coming out of the shadow which lay along your path for six long months. To have you write as you did seemed almost to atone for your long suffering; and no doubt the last half year in Madrid may be sweet to remember by and by. But how terrible was the reality! Even here, 4000 miles and fourteen days off, the oppression to
our spirits was dreadful — our ignorance, our inability to come to you, to help you any way: and when I say you, I mean both of you. —

Well, we have not much to say of ourselves. In comparison with your experiences, ours have been of no account. Charles N. has had a great deal of trouble with his head from overworking. He gives two lectures extemporaneous three a week, and the strain is great. Then come a host of examination books. He bears all with his habitual patience & pluck. — The best sign in you was your beginning to relish versing. I thought the sonnet to the young English girl playing on the cittern very charming, and wished you had made your secretary write out the verses on the stolen turkey [17]. —

I suppose you have not kept any sort of a journal in Spain: I wish you would in England — even if you jot down mere anecdotes. The other day, happening to take up Gillies’ Memoirs, I found in the first pages your favorite brand of “nae wale o wigs.” There was another story of the same lard which I wanted to share with you. Perhaps you know it. He had been having a heavy rouse, and the servant, when he came in the next morning, told him it was an awful morning, & he had better not get up. “Is it an awful morning.” “Ay, that it is.” “Well, make up the fire in the parlor, shake the shutters, put the punch bowl on the table, etc. etc. and we’ll see what kind o’ nght it will make. —

Adieu, dear man. I’m verra glad, since you are to stay, that it is to be in England. Indeed I ought to care for nothing now that you are once more in hope. May there be a strait course to health. Love to the ambassadress. I wish I could have something chanted for her in a cathedral — se fossi io amico del Re dell’ universo! — oh! oh!

Ever your loving
F. Ciarli.

When the correspondence is resumed, after an interval of more than a year, Lowell answers a letter of Child’s which apparently has disappeared. As Minister, Lowell was of course in a strategic position to further Child’s unwatered pursuit of ballads, and we have here some of the early moves in a transatlantic game that is played with zest on both sides for the next three and a half years. The second Earl Granville, once again Minister for Foreign Affairs, and John Francis Campbell of Islay, author of Popular Tales of the West Highlands, prove themselves valuable intermedias.

* Cf. note 19 above. In the Memoirs the phrase reads ‘nae wale o’ wigs.’

* Cf. Paolo and Francesca to Dante, Inferno, V, 91–93:

Se fosse amico il re de l’universo,

Non pregheremo lui de la tua pace,

Poi c’hai pietà del nostro mal perverso.
Harvard Library Bulletin

The 'gloomy telegrams' are concerned with President Garfield's precarious state; shot by Guiteau on July 2, he lingered on until September 19.

Legation of the United States
London

17th August, 1881.

Dear Ciarli,

Your letter, as you can well conceive, brought me pain & pleasure. I was glad to see your handwriting again & to hear that you were well & had not forgotten me as I deserved or seemed to deserve. I have owed you a letter I know not how long, but it is harder than ever to write here. So many people write to me that during the season I have sometimes had twenty five notes to answer before I went out of a morning & half as many more when I came home in the afternoon. Even were I not dining out, I cannot write in the evening on account of my eyes, which are as old — as I am. Never mind, I am writing to you now & loving you as always. . . .

I wrote to Lord Granville this morning (he is Campbell of Islay's brother-in-law) asking him to use his benevolence in the matter of your letter & to give my pledge for you. I do not remember to have met Mr Campbell. He has sold Islay to a distiller, by the way.

We are in the midst & at the mercy of gloomy telegrams again. I still cling to hope — encouraged by my dreadful experience in Madrid. Once we had a wholly innumerable pulse. I hate to remember it. Write again when you feel like it & be sure that you are always the dear Ciarli of so many years. Fanny has gone to North Wales. She cannot yet walk as well as could be wished, but otherwise is well & happy. I suppose a new Administration would mean my recall, but I should stay here till next summer at any rate.

Your affectionate old friend
J. R. L.

In the birthday letter for 1882 begins the patient stalking of the Scottish baronet who turns out to be Sir Hugh Hume Campbell, and whose 'two manuscript vols. of ballads' ultimately make a significant contribution to Child's magnum opus — the publication of which is now finally contracted for.

The 'mortal season' had carried away Mrs Henry James, mother of William and Henry, William Henry Bellows, the minister, and Richard Henry Dana the younger, who, ironically, had failed of Senate confirmation for the post now occupied by Lowell when appointed by Grant six years before.

James G. Blaine had resigned as Secretary of State following Presi-
dent Garfield's death, but had continued to serve, at the request of the new President, Arthur, until December. During the remainder of Lowell's ministeryship his chief was Frederick T. Frelinghuysen.

Feb. 22, 1882.

Dearest Jamie,

I wonder whether they leave you your birth-day to yourself. Owing to snow-bondage, I have seen none of those who are wont to celebrate the 22d on this side; but I have little doubt that Charles, though he is all but knocked up with the epidemic cold, has written you a word. Were professors what they should be, we should have had all the cables to ourselves and might have sent you living messages instead of dead letters. — Here's a bumper — dulci digne meru! — and may you be feeling as immortal as you always have looked, when you have not had twinges in your chest — and of those we have heard nothing for years.

I must tell you that you did me a real service by speaking to Lord Granville: for his brother in law, Campbell of Islay, immediately began to be interested in my affairs. He wrote me from Mull, from Edinburgh, London, from everywhere, and both sent me a few things which he had and tried to get something from other folk. I have let him alone for the winter — he always go[sic] to some end of the world, Scandaroon, Boothia Felix, or Mountains of the Moon: but when he returns to Niddry Lodge, then I must beat him up: for his last word was that he had found a Scottish gentleman who possessed a fine old house & two manuscript vols. of ballads! This Scot would not let me know his name — did not wish to be persecuted by "collectors"; but would have a judge look over his MSS., and if they would suit me, perhaps let me have what I wanted. I am very sorry he did not give the name, for I should have asked my country's representative, in case of his coming in contact with this baronet, and finding a molle tempus, to recommend me to his grace, and have no doubt that my ambassador would prevail. — After many postponements, I came to terms with Houghton three or four months ago, and they should even now be setting up the everlasting old truck: but first it was type & then it was paper, and they have not begun.

Do you know, my dear boy, what a mortal season this has been? Four names of good old Boston, were in the column of Deaths in one morning of last week! And here we have lost Mrs. James, who was to me & mine beyond all price and is beyond all replacing. In New York Bellows — the old minister of my wife's family, and in Rome, Dana. — Had you been here you would have been beset to go to Chicago to the Harvard Club dinner; Eliot went and took three men with him. Straight upon that followed invitations to New York & Philadelphia. You don't have to go quite a thousand miles, but then you do go to a thousand dinners. And my heart fails if I am asked to one. I faint too before half a dozen letters — and you cope calmly with two dozen a day . . .

Your President, Arthur, has done unexpectedly well so far, and really
seems to have assumed dignity and conscience with his high office. I suppose Blaine leaves you lots of sequelae of trouble. Here politics are very quiet. The President's death hushed all the more boisterous passions, and still operates perhaps.

Understand, my dear friend, that I expect no letters from you. I hope to live to see you come back. I wish I could come to Europe and see you in Switzerland on a vacation. But I don't look to any such pleasure. — I am sure that if you see Campbell you will prod him a bit, to keep up his benevolence in my behalf. The next time I speak to you of Ballads, I ought to have a good bit printed. — Give faithful love & remembrance to Mrs. Lowell, and continue your kindness ever to your affectionate

Ciarli.

The first of the ultimately ten parts of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* was published late in December 1882, with a dedication to Frederick J. Furnivall which was a graceful rejoinder to the dedication to Child of the Hales and Furnivall edition of the Percy folio fifteen years earlier. Lowell's presentation copy, with an inscription that he found too formal, reached him promptly, as the following letter shows.

Photographs of the scholar friends as they appeared in these later years are shown in Plate VII, reproduced from originals in the Harvard Archives: Lowell's description of himself is well substantiated.

The 'revulsion in our politics' was the revulsion against the abuses of the long Republican domination that was to culminate in the election of Cleveland in 1884. Early marks of the revulsion were the Democratic landslide in the off-year of 1882 and the subsequent passage by a chastened Congress in 'lame duck' session of the Pendleton Act for the regulation of civil service. Implicit in Lowell's writing here is a position which received its definitive expression in his Reform Club address of 1888, 'The Place of the Independent in Politics.'

10, Lowndes Square.

S. W.

2nd Feb: 1883.

Dear Ciarli,

thank you over & over again for your beautiful book, the only fault I can find with which is the "Esq" you have added to my name & which seems to hold me at arm's length from you, as it were. But I won't be held there, do what you will!

I have been reading it with delight & wonder. The former you will understand better than anybody; the latter, called forth by the enormous labour you have spent on it you will be modestly incredulous about. You
have really built an imperishable monument & I rejoice as heartily as the love I bear you gives me the right in having lived to see its completion. I did not know you were to begin printing so soon & I wish my name to appear on the list of subscribers as it ought. I hope it is not too late. I am particularly gratified with the dedication which will delight Furnivall & which he in all ways so truly deserved.

I am getting old & my beard has now more white than brown in it, but I on the whole enjoy my life here & feel that in some ways I have been & am useful. London I like beyond measure. The wonderful movement of life here acts as a constant stimulus — & I am beginning to need one. The climate also suits me better than any I ever lived in. I have only to walk a hundred yards from my door to see green grass & hear the thrushes sing all winter long. These are a constant delight & I sometimes shudder to think of the poor dead weeds & grasses I have seen shivering in the castiron earth at home. But I shall come back to them to comfort them out of my own store of warmth with as hearty a sympathy as ever.

I need not tell you how glad I was of the revulsion in our politics. I think we shall keep all the ground we have won & before long bring the country forward or back to better ways. If not, I see no hope. Spain shows us to what a civil service precisely like our own will bring a country that ought to be powerful & prosperous. It wasn't the Inquisition, nor the expulsion of Jews or Moriscoes, but simply the Boss System that has landed Spain where she is.

Give my love to all who care for it & be sure that I am always as I have always been

Most affectionately yours

J. R. L.

Feb. 22, 1883.

My dear Jamie,

I have no thought of keeping at arm's length from you, nor even a suspicion that you wished such a thing, and if I said Esq it was for those that might stand by. I was much refreshed by your note of twenty days ago. Any praise which you think it right to give me, on any score, is enjoyed as much as it is valued. I feared and fear that the book must be accounted very dull, for my spirits have been much worse than that for a long time. The mass of matter was very oppressive when I thought how little time might be left me, and if I had not been afraid to wait, I would have pushed into the Slavic territory and have forestalled some just criticism. But now I am going on to finish the other seven parts as well as I can in the shortest practicable time. I must not be careless, but must still less be fussy. Many is the time when I should like to have you by to answer me a question.

Your note to Lord Granville on my behalf was of great service. Campbell of Islay immediately began to show a considerable interest in my objects.
I think he is a good fellow. He wrote me, it is now all but a year, that he knew a Scotch baronet who had a fine house and two manuscript volumes of ballads, and this Scotchman had said that he would have his ballads looked at, & if they suited my purpose would perhaps let me have them. But not a hair have we advanced since then. The baronet would not have his name known, for fear of "collectors"! I tell you this just because it may accidentally transpire who the man is. If I knew his name, I would have him addressed through others whom he might heed.

Campbell of Islay sent me a very good modern ballad, almost as well done as Old Robin Gray, very unaffectedly simple, beginning

O Randal was a bonnie lad
When he gae'd awa,
A bonnie, bonnie lad was he
When he gae'd awa.

He learned it from the singing of Lady Archibald Campbell. You may hear of it some day when you are visiting. I want to secure the notes extremely, and if I ever do shall send them & the words to our friend Mrs. Webb of Portland. Keep an ear open, and should there be a molle tempus fandi perhaps some charming Mollie[?] will write the notes off for you — for what use they not do for you, Jamie!

You will like the ballad very much.

We have had a hard winter. C. N. has had much to bear, I some rheumatism. Your thrushes I am heartening for. The hardy sparrows have not felt the penalty of Adam. Now the sun has a springy motion in his gait, & we can see till almost six in the afternoon, & while I listen for a bird I spair for a snow drop. But when you think of the contrast of the Februarys, how can you think of coming back to ours!

But this 2d is a little conscious of what it ought to be. There is no summer bird singing in the hunch of winter, but the clouds take on gay tints and the world has a look of hope. I expect to keep two or three more before I see you. Perhaps I shall have all my seven Parts out of the way and have nothing to do but bring up these years with you.

Why do you think of becoming a subscriber? You can find room for two copies of so big a book in your house. Be content. Thou owest me no subscription, I never gave thee kingdoms, nor even a poor volume.

What you say of white in your beard is hardest of all to imagine. It must be fashion, there is no other way of accounting for it. I see by your writing that you are still of no age, of Adam's years. Give my faithful remembrances to Mrs. Lowell, and continue to be my good lord, as I am thy loving servant ever,

Giarli

In June 1883, as will be seen, the campaign for the Campbell ballads was brought to a triumphant conclusion, in a great convergence of 'influences' involving Lord Granville, the eleventh Baron Reay, Camp-
bell of Islay, and Charles Eliot Norton, who was in England for the summer.

Adee, the parcel-literary man, is Alvey Augustus Adee, Assistant Secretary of State from 1882 until his death in 1924. It was he who turned over the Madrid legation to Lowell in 1877 and who wrote an introduction for a selection from Lowell's Spanish dispatches published in 1899.

Legation of the United States
London

11th June, 1883.

Dear Child,

A day or two ago I got a note from Lord Granville to say that you could have the Hugh Campbell collection of Ballads. This morning Lord Ray brought them to my house, & it appears that Charles Norton had written to him about it & that being a neighbour of Sir Hugh's he had asked for & got them. So I know not what share Campbell of Isla had in the matter, but I believe you are in correspondence with him & can thank him as if nothing bad happened in the way of other intervention. I have asked Lord G. to thank him in the meanwhile. Whoever got 'em, I am heartily glad for your sake, dear old fellow.

I send them by our bag tomorrow to Washington as the safest method & as avoiding all question of Custom Houses. I shall write to Adee who is in the State Department & is a parcel-literary man, asking him to forward it to you & warn you of its coming. This is the only advantage I have yet reaped from being in the Diplomatic Service of my Country.

Fanny is better than she has ever been since our arrival in England. She doesn't go out except when she is obliged to be present in gilded palaces at the ceremonies of the crowned ghoules who devour this unhappy people. I am as well as a minister can be at the height of the season when the milk-waters are going over him which is a worse lot than the prophet's. But there is much that I really enjoy & much that amuses me.

I am become a sort of public institution here & hardly a week passes that I am not asked to preside at a meeting, to distribute prizes & the like. These are the hardships of my lot. I will not say what kind of public institution I liken myself to, lest you should think of Swift.

Most affectionately

Yours always

J. R. L.
Care caput!

/ tantum minister quantum ministellus /

Those two volumes slipped into my hands at last — after eighteen months of waiting — with no more trouble than a falling blossom. I almost felt that I was the American nation personified. Adee was most kind, & wished even that I would send the books back by him, which strikes me however as no kindness to you. Campbell of Isla had the MSS in his hands for some days, but would not wait for me to send him word what to do with them. I had written to him meanwhile, & to Sir Hugh Hume Campbell.

The ballads are not what they would have been two hundred years ago, but could not possibly be dispensed with now that I have undertaken to make a browse[?] of every rag the wild Muss ever wore. —

The good things you write of Mrs Lowell are cordial to my heart, which has been sorely depressed by loss of friends and calamities to friends.

I have been pumping Harry James, when I have met him, for the means of forming a conception how you live over there. He has helped me a little. I see something of your public existence in the reprints of the Advertiser, but not so much as I should like. Just now, being tired excessively, I fancy how fine it would be, when the season is over in London, to be with you for a month on some mountain top to which couriers & couriers would not climb.

Charles Norton will bring some tidings of you soon. With love to Mrs Lowell, and begging you to keep many years for America, Ever yours, faithfully & affectionately,

F. J. C.

J. R. Lowell Esq. Legation of the U. S. A.
at London.

The search for a copy of Les visions d'Oger, set off by Paul Meyer of Romania, and figuring conspicuously in several ensuing letters, finally concluded successfully in one sense, in that the copy reported by Brunet to be in the Bibliothèque Nationale turned out to be there after all, in spite of Léopold Delisle and the Due d'Aumale. Yet, on examination, the Visions contained nothing to clarify the relations between Thomas Rhymer and Ogier. This we learn from a supplementary note in the last part of the Ballads, published posthumously. In Part II, published in the summer of 1884, and containing 'Thomas Rhymer,' Child had been forced to report that none of his inquiries,
‘though most courteously aided in France,’ had resulted in the finding of a copy.33

On 22 November 1883 Lowell had been elected by the students Rector of the University of St Andrews, for the usual three-year term. Duties consisted largely of attending an installation and delivering an inaugural address. However, as the subsequent letter of Lowell suggests, the legality of the election was challenged by the supporters of the defeated candidate, and the victor thereon withdrew, regretting, so he said, that ‘Univ. Sanct. Andr. Sco. Dom. Rect.’ would never appear after his name in the Quinquennial Catalogue. In his place the students elected Lord Reay, who had secured the Campbell ballads.34

At the time of Child’s present letter Matthew Arnold had recently arrived for his first visit to the United States.

Carissimum caput!

I did not mean that Ballads should give you any more trouble, lest you should think them worse than Paddy. This morning Paul Meyer sent me the enclosed, or one of the enclosed, and I could not very well help writing the other. If the Duc d’Aumale concedes the request, there will be no more bother for you than just to let me know. The chances I thought much greater if you seemed to vouch for me, by sending on my note with just one line saying that you know who I am.

The romance is that of Thomas of Erceldoun, from which comes our ballad of Thomas Rymer. It will be very singular if Ogier turns out to be a prophet, and Thomas is one only at second hand. (The book is Les visions d’Ogier au royaume de Fairie (Le premier, second et troisième livre des visions d’Ogier le Danoys, etc. Paris, 1542)

I have begun printing Part II, and can hardly at best get a copy in time for anything but an appendix. It may also turn out that Ogier’s visions are nought to Thomas. But I ought to look into the matter.

This morning I hear that you are to be rector of St Andrew’s. It will not surprise us to see you primate, chancellor and “Lord High” of all England. Was there ever such a series of conquests, triumphs, sports, since Caesar? And legitimate too.

As Rector of St Andrews, thou art naturally lord of all Scotland. Let thy first decree be that every ballad known to any lady, maidservant, fishwife,

*The English and Scottish Popular Ballads (Boston, 1881-98), I, 319, n.4 V, 100. It was Professor W. H. Schofield who finally furnished Child with an abstract of the Visions.

dairywoman or nurse be given up under penalties of misprision & praemunire to all that shall be art & part in the withholding of the same. We have Matthew Arnold reading his poems all about. He has not many lectures & was melancholy about his voice, but they say he has drawn well. Hoping that I do not annoy thee overmuch

Ever thine faithfully

F. J. C.


Child’s pleasure in the Du Maurier version of ‘The Golden Vanity’ fully justified the trouble taken by the busy Minister in copying it off at the head of the following letter. The version duly found its place among the variants of the ballad in the published work, ‘as sung by Mr George Du Maurier, sent me by J. R. Lowell.’

Lowell’s perennial vigilance on behalf of the College Library was in the case of Ferguson’s book unnecessary: the Library had purchased a copy of the second edition in 1876.

The great Cambridge scholar Henry Bradshaw, in some respects an English counterpart of Child himself, but whose career lacked a similar crown of tangible accomplishment, has already appeared in the correspondence, in connection with the Chaucerian discussions of 1870.

The conclusion of Lowell’s note of December 20 suggests that he was feeling premonitions of the Cleveland victory then still nearly a year in the future.

10, Lowndes Square,

S. W.

[December 1883]

There was a gallant ship, a gallant ship was she,
Hic dilledes for the Lowlands low,
And she went by the name of the Golden Vanity,
As she sailed for the Lowlands low,
And she had a sailed a league, a league or barely three,
When she fell in with the French Gallese.
Then up spoke the cabinboy & up spoke he,
Hic &c
“What’ll ye gie me an I sink the French gallese?”
As she &c

5 Printed, without the ballad and with other omissions, in Letters of James Russell Lowell, III, 116–117, as from ‘3; Lowndes Square, 1884.’

Then up spoke the Captain & up spoke he,
"I'll gie ye an estate in the North Countree."

"Then roll me up tight in a black bull skin,
And throw me overboard, sink or swim!"

They rolled him up tight in a black bull skin,
And threw him overboard, sink or swim.

And awa' & awa' & awa' swam he
Till he swam up to the French Galle.

And some were playing cards & some were playing dice
He just took out a gimlet & bored sixty holes & thrice.

And some they ran with cloaks & some they ran with caps
But they couldn'a run awa' from the saltwater drops.

Then awa' & awa' & awa' swam he
Till he swam back to the Gowden Vanitee.

"Now throw me o'er a rope & pull me up aboard,
And prove unto me as good as your word!"

"I'ld na throw ye o'er a rope, I'ld na pull ye up aboard,
I'ld na prove unto thee as good as my word!"

"An ye na throw me o'er a rope, an ye na pull me up aboard,
I'ld just sink ye as I sank the French Galle!"

So they throw him o'er a rope & they pulled him up aboard.

Hic &c

And they proved unto him as good as their word.
As they sailed &c

Dear Ciarl,

the foregoing is a ballad that du Maurier sings with grand pathos & expression. It occurred to me that it might be useful to you as an illustration in some odd corner, so I asked him for a copy & there it is. I could not bear to part with his ms, because he had illustrated it with a humourous drawing having a personal reference in it. I hope the ballad may be of some good to you & that you do not know it by heart already as you do all the rest.

When I got up this morning it was snowing & I had been lying for some time watching the flakes fluttering up & down like the ghosts of moths seeking vainly the flowers they used to pillage, & thinking of home as I always do when it snows. Almost my earliest recollection is of a snowstorm & putting crumbs on the windowsill for the redbreasts that never came. Yesterday there was one singing cheerily in Kensington Gardens. A thrush, too, was piping now & then & the grass was as green as May. I think the climate more than anything else keeps me here. It is the best I have ever seen — at any
rate the best for me, & the vapoury atmosphere is divine in its way — always luminous & always giving the distance that makes things tolerable. But I have pangs sometimes.

Will you ask Mr Winsor if they have in the College Library Ferguson's book on Serpent Worship published by the India Office. I have two copies to dispose of & if they haven't it, shall send one of them thicker.

I have no news except that my official extraterritoriality will perhaps prevent my being rector at St Andrew's, because it puts me beyond the reach of the Scottish Courts in case of malversation in office. How to rob a Scottish University suggests a serious problem. I was pleased with the election & the pleasant way it was spoken of here, though I did not want the place. Had I known what I know now, I should not have allowed myself to be put up. But I was in Paris & had forgotten among the bookstalls that I was an Excellency. I have been writing necessary notes all the morning & am tired as you see, but I shall never be tired of loving you as you deserve.

Affectionately always
Jamie.

We have to move into a new house at the end of the month. It is 31 in this same square. It is larger than this & there will be a bed for you when you come as I wish you would with all my heart & Fanny too — who is very well.

I saw Bradshaw at Cambridge the other day & we embraced over you. He is looking wonderfully well & young.

[seal of Foreign Office]

10th Decr, 1883.

Dear Clarli,

I am waiting at the Foreign Office (faute d'être Ambassadeur) till the Russian Ambassador has finished boring Lord Granville. He is the Baron de Mohrenheim & we call him Bohrenheim, that is, being translated, Bore 'em home, for short.

I take the occasion to say that I have written to the Duc d'Atumale in the most aggravating terms (see Bottom) enclosing your letter.

10 Lowndes Square, 6.30 p.m. Here came in Old Musurus the Turkish Ambassador, but as I had an appointment & he hadn't, I went in first — whether rightly or not Lord Granville didn't know, but thought I was right. But M. is a dear amiable old fellow & was quite content. Lord G. says the Russ is the last diplomate he knows who is like the diplomates on the stage which is very true & strictly confidential. You see how my life goes. I am woefully tired, & write this that you may know all the sooner how prompt I was in executing your commission. My letter to S. A. R. went off in half an hour after I got yours. I wrote to you the other day with a copy of du
Maurier's ballad. I forgot to say (I think) that it is genuine & not a manufacture of Bromwichham. Indeed, so says internal evidence.

Affectionately yours always

Jamie.

Legation of the United States
London

20th Decr., 1883.

Dear Charlie,

I have just received a note from the Duc d'Aumale in which, I am sorry to tell you, he says, "Sur les indications données par Mr Child j'ai non seulement fouillé mes armoires, mais consulté l'homme de France le plus compétent en ces matières, Mr Delisle, membre de l'Institut et directeur de la Bibliothèque Nationale. Il nous a été impossible de retrouver la trace du poème signalé par Mr Child." This is all he says but as he goes on to indulge me with some very kind personal assurances of &c &c &c signs himself with the most "affectueux sentiments," I suppose he means to imply that he would have done what you wished had it been in his power. I shall thank him in your name accordingly.

This will come too late to wish you a merry Xmas, but in time enough to say "Happy Newyear!" perhaps. How heartily I wish you both verstehst sich.

I suppose the Democrats will be calling me home all in good time, but in the meanwhile why couldn't you run over? Your chamber in our new house awaits you with as glad a welcome as Elmwood had to give you.

Affectionately yours

J. R. Lowell.

In the next letters, Child's incidental reference to Thackeray's 'Little Bilee' barely anticipates Lowell's transmission of a copy of the ballad sent to Child by Leslie Stephen, Thackeray's son-in-law. It is interesting to observe that in a note to the 'coach and three' of 'Young Beichan' Child practically paraphrases the remarks on 'Little Bilee' here expressed to Lowell. And it might be added that the 'proud porter' of a later paragraph in this same letter is an echo from 'Young Beichan.'

The year 1883 marked the height of the agitation over the project for opening Shakespeare's grave. Nothing came of the project at the last, but feeling ran high on both sides, much ink was spilled, and to Child, an ocean away, the threat seemed very real.

"English and Scottish Popular Ballads, I, 457, n. 'Little Bilee' had been published, under title of 'The Three Sailors,' as long ago as 1849, in Samuel Bovon's Sand and Canvas."
Evangelinna Apostolides Sophocles, University Professor of Ancient, Byzantine, and Modern Greek, had died on December 17. The Harris family referred to must be that of Thaddaus William Harris, M.D. and Librarian of Harvard College. Dr Harris had died in 1856.

Dec. 31. [1883]

My dear Jamie,

To think of my owing an Excellency three letters! I might say five, for I owe you two for d'Amante, I shall think the better both of thee & of him henceforth — of thee for a true poet, and him for a true prince. Gracious as he was, I have no doubt that I have done him a favor, for I procured him two letters which he knew how to value. I am sorry that Les Visions d'Oger should be beyond finding. I shall always think that these same visions were of things to be & like True Thomas's prophecies. But the very utmost has been done, and I thank you infinitely.

I have copies of Du Maurier's ballad, but none, I think, so good as his. Had he noted where he got it, it would have been well; but some day I will write and ask him. Had it been the twentieth version I should have wanted it. By the way, I have often thought how wonderfully Thackeray hit off the ballad of low degree. There are no serious imitations, as you know, of the romantic ballad that are in the least like. It is not that they fall short, but they are fundamentally different. But Little Billee is really like the ballad fallen from its high estate. The captain of a — seventy-three!!! is a most capital stroke of genius, and I don't know a line that has more rejoiced the cockles of my heart. Well see now what was sent me for Young Beichan:

She came to me on a horse & saddle,
She may go back in a coach and three!

I fear the Democrats. They may yet cut their own throats, but, if you will permit me to make the remark, our President plays into their hands by interceding for concessions[?] under their compulsion. A politician never dares do the thing that would make him. We need not fear the Democrats, if we would act with independence about silver money, civil-service and the Irish.

You have given more satisfaction to your countryman than any minister I have lived to see. I wish you could have heard my brother in law Butler (former senior partner to Evarts) speak of our minister on Christmas Day. Every honor that you get is felt as an honor done. — Now I have a thing on my mind that I want you to do. The recent talk of violating Shakespeare's grave has caused a strong feeling in America. We don't want his bones to be threatened, as they will be as long as the rector of Stratford may any day give permission to dig the dust enclosed there. If he would win a curse that stirs those stones, so he shall win a blessing that secures the everlasting immortality of them. I don't know how the interference and prohibition could be conducted. Parliament has all power, I suppose. Lord Granville could tell you. Matthew Arnold is now too far off to be reached by
The Scholar-Friends

voice. Had I thought in time I would have urged him to join with you in getting in motion a petition or what not for the perpetual inviolability of Shakspere's bones. — If you think well of such a step, I would undertake a memorial to be signed by everybody this side of the water: but I should not want America to take the pas of England. It would be best to have a paper drawn up in England and signed over here. But first one needs to know what is feasible, then the best way of going to work. I feel sure that you will want something effectual done. Do think and talk the matter over, will you, and let me know your conclusion.

I cannot come to that give in your new house. I must keep at my pund of tow. But your twice mentioning it gives me almost a feeling of having been there, and of your sending me back in your coach & three. (Wasn't I afraid of your proud porter!)

I suppose you have seen Sophocles's death noticed. I shall miss him very much. He was himself to the last. He made a generous provision for Dr Harris's family, and left the rest of his money to our Library for Greek books — but in the name of the uncle that educated him, not his own.

Lady (if that's his spelling) wrote me that he would send back the Campbell MSS in the diplomatic pouch. I had determined not to do this, but am so nervous about their being meddled with at the Custom House, and so fearful of the express here not paying through, that I now will beg you just to let them come to the Legation, & have them sent to Ellis & White, 29 New Bond St. I can rely upon E. & W. paying all expenses to Berwickshire.

I was charmed to have you wandering about the book-stalls of Paris. This very day I received your Romania for October. It always seems to come direct from you.

I am now within a very short time of your New Year. So Heaven keep & bless you, & bring you back in due time. We want you here but need you there, and since you are happy here's to a respectable new President! Love and New Year's wishes to Mrs Lowell, and thanks once more for all you have done.

Ever your affectionate

Ciarli

James Russell Lowell, Esq.
London
31, Lowndes Square.
S. W.

17th January, 1884.

Dear Ciarli,

I was going to write to you today — your delightful letter wouldn't let me rest. But alas, the Atlantic Cable is the trouble-fête of diplomatists. I have just got a cypher telegram which I can't read here because the key is

* i.e., Adee.
at the Legation & I must hasten thither to find out what I am to do. So I barely enclose my love & a copy of “Little Billee” which Stephen sent me for you. It may interest you & perhaps be of use to you, for it seems to be the first draught — but seems also (to me, at least) a less sprightly running than the last. I remember a variant which Thackeray used to sing in select circles in which little Billee’s terror is expressed more graphically by the verse

“Into his trousers he did p—”

but you can hardly use it.

Goodbye.

Your affectionate
Jamie.

The birthday letter of 1884 reflects the heated controversy over the teaching of the classical languages, and more particularly of Greek, which had reached a Cambridge peak in the Phi Beta Kappa address, ‘A College Fetish,’ by Charles Francis Adams at the Harvard Commencement of 1883. Actually, Adams’s valuation of Plato in the matter of hiccoughs had been borrowed from a letter of his great-grandfather written to Thomas Jefferson.

Dearest Jamie,

I have had to keep the day through continuous work, till now past four, and could make no other holiday than wishing you well unusually much and often.

I hope some sort of festival may have been held in London. Mrs Lowell has her way of honoring the day of course. Perhaps you write verses every twenty second of February, and show yourself invulnerable to time. Your last letters have the full sound of youth, youth without greenhead, as Chaucer says, but green youth still. I always thought you maintained the tide of life at perfect fulness with no sign of an ebb. When you began to complain of gout in the thorax I had a fear that a turn was coming. But no — you needed only a larger sphere. You were a little cramped, and your verge being widened so that you could draw a full breath, you were the same ambrosial being that you ever had been. And that I see you continue to be. Wherefore another birthday is no loss. How much good life you have had the last year, and how much you have amassed for years to come. You are to have at least one more year in England, and I shall give my voice for any President whose policy it shall be to keep you where you wish to be.

Add to your glories this year the securing of Shakspere’s everlasting rest. Don’t let that consummation be hazarded. I want you to have a chief hand in bringing it about.

Feb 22, 1884.
I can tell you, we need you here now. The chemists are in conspiracy to oust Greek, and then Latin; and would have us claver[?] with learned[?] fellows who can only analyse coctar. They want to cut loose from the old world completely. Charles Adams has persuaded them that there is nothing to be found in Plato but the art of stopping hiccuph. Our President's dogma is that a man is "liberally educated" who knows any one thing well and can use his own language — that is, write intelligibly! This will not be your doctrine when you speak to the Scotch students.

The bells are ringing their third & last peal for Washington & you. Benedicite for another year. Love to Mrs Lowell.

Ever your affectionate Ciarli.

M. A. DeWolfe Howe
G. W. Cottrell, Jr

(To be continued)
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