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

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

(Concluded)

In the spring of 1884 two tercentenary celebrations claimed the presence of the American Minister, that of the University of Edinburgh in April, where he received his fourth honorary degree, and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in June, where he was the guest of honor at the commemoration banquet, though the principal speaker was Charles Eliot Norton, official delegate from John Harvard's university to John Harvard's college. With four gowns, Lowell remarked, he should be able to keep himself warm 'without Harvard.' Actually both Child and he were made L.L.D. at the Harvard Commencement of this year, as becomes apparent in subsequent letters of Child's.

Legation of the United States
London

9th April, 1884.

Dear Clarli,

do, please come over & go with me to Emmanuel (Don't take me for a captain in the Salvation Army). Come straight to my house, 31 Lowndes Square) & we will rejoice together. I have just accepted an invitation from the Master & Fellows.

I say this provided I get back from Edinbro' alive. Thither I go next Monday, & such a round of speechifying & junketing as they have in preparation was never heard of on this planet. It is as if all the 4th July's from the first were rolled into one as Dante proposed with the two planets. I write in great haste just to say that I will never forgive you if you don't come, but shall love you always whether you come or not.

Affectionately yours
J. R. L.

By April of 1884 the tensions of one of the most fiercely fought presidential campaigns in American history were mounting. Child was then thinking of a Republican victory, and of President Arthur or

* Letter to George Putnam, 8 April 1884 (Letters of James Russell Lowell, III, 111). Lowell's third honorary degree, also in this year, had been from St Andrews.
Senator George F. Edmunds, of Vermont, the reform candidate, as the 'lucky Jerry.' Yet it was Blaine who actually received the Republican nomination in June.

Child had to wait another ten years for the Sharpe ballads. They were finally sold in 1893 to Child's indefatigable friend, William Macm-- of Edinburgh, who promptly copied out transcripts for Child in his own hand.40

April 27 [1884]

Things impossible are all the more to be believed, my dear Jamie, sed de rerum faciendis eadem non est ratio! — Why do you tantalise me by saying come, and we will rejoice together, when I can't any way come. If you asked Vincentius Bellovacensis to drop his Speculum Historiale just as his vacation was coming, or his trettals all sung, his novices all school'd & swung, his pen fresh nibbled and his parchement spread, what would Vincent Bell answer? — I can conceive of nothing more precious than to go to Emmanuel with you and talk it over afterwards at Lowndes Sq, but all the three fates are against it — Atropos, because I have not the time to turn about in — Lachesis, because I lack as, and Clotho because I have not wedding garments. The big, invincible reason of all is that I can work in vacation and can do little in term. Just to go & come in a month, I am too old for, and if I used my month so I could not give a fortnight to my family, as promised, or go on a pilgrimage to Stockbridge, now a village of the dead, as I have vowed. I say nothing of 300 roses which are to bloom in June-July, or of other trivial reasons. (Mrs. Lowell will think that not so very bad, and it would not be were not seeing you in question.)

The democrats are so maddened by the gods that I think we shall have a Republican President and that means your staying for years more — I know it. Perhaps Arthurian prays Anne, erit prays futurum. Ex contrario erit Edmundus fortasse Jeremiadus juvandus, or the lucky Jerry. But any decent President will go on his knees to you to stay, and since the life keeps you young & makes you happy, you adorn it, & we the people profit thereby. I must wish against wish. —

Sir Hugh Campbell wrote me two or three days since that he had received back his volumes "with a most courteous note from your minister." Thrice kind of you. No note was rigorously required, but he will think the better of me ever after on account of your note. My mind is much easier for the things being on the right side of the water. I know of only one more parcel of ballads to get, & these were among the papers of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe. Mr Allardyce, who is writing Sharpe's Life, has them and by and by I think he will conceive a copy to me. I am in relations with him. Percy's collections, or sweepings of his study, are to be sold the coming 29th and the college will buy all that is worth anything, unless something goes wrong.

* As explained in the advertisement to Part IX of the Ballads.
I imagine that there is little or nothing in the way of ballads which would concern anything but a general gathering like mine.

Man to call—

P.S. He staid from 4 to 10! Eque mans pulsat professorum tugurium legatorumque turres.41 Farewell with a million of thanks & love

Ciarli

In the next letter, in opposing Cleveland to Blaine, Child was anticipating, for the Democratic convention had not yet assembled. Cleveland was nominated July 11.

Richard Claverhouse Jebb, the editor of Sophocles, was another recipient of an honorary degree at the Harvard Commencement of 1884, along with Child and Lowell.

Cambridge,
July 1. [1884]

My dear Jamie,

The ocean cable has been really useful of late, by giving rather frequent reports of you. I have been wondering whether gout would ever come again, and was ready to insure you in any office. I hope it is a gout serene, and not one of the grander sort, and that it will be under subjection longer. If it be of the higher style, I know that even the thought that somebody was writing you a letter would give you a twinge: the contact is too close. There is comfort in the thought that, once through, you can't collect enough argols, red bire, or whatever the secretion be, for another bout till near the end of Cleveland's (Blaine's?) administration. I do not mean to speak with that levity which the unexperienced think the proper tone for such cases. Es in arctiulato ego! I wish the news had come by letter rather than by telegraph, so that I might think of the crisis as well over already.

I know that you have seen Charles Norton and the cable again tells us that you produced a marked effect on the dons at Cambridge. I am now to tell you that you were a very prominent interest of our commencement. The President insisted that I should say something at the dinner. It was in vain for me to write: he would have it so. He told me that I was to have a degree, with you, and must say a word for you. I was thoroughly wretched at the prospect of being called upon. I know I shall never be able to make a speech. The arena swarms before me and the inhuman shouts or claps of the wretches who sit safe around only complete the paralysis of my mind. The President said something very good about you when he conferred the degree. I begged him to send me the words for transmission, but he has forgotten or neglected to do so. An allusion to you by Jebb was

"Cf. Horace, Odes, I. 4;
Pallida Mors acque pulsat pede paupertatum tabernae
regumque turres."
warmly received at the dinner, and another to our beloved Lowell by Lodge. I am ashamed to confess to you that I could say almost nothing, even with you for a theme (and what I said got badly deranged in reporting: here it is)."

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—It was conceded, for reasons pertaining to the general advantage, that if the president of the alumni should chance to lay his hand on my shoulder and pronounce the awful words, "You're wanted," a simply formal response should suffice. It was indeed intimated to me that if I could not say anything for myself, I might say a word or two for Mr. Lowell. It could not but be a great pleasure to me to be associated with Mr. Lowell, in any way, and however accidentally. I will say that all the admiration and applause which have fallen to him in these half dozen years of his absence and which we at home have been so happy to see him win, would fail to give him a cordial satisfaction, would play round his head and not come to his heart, unless he were assured of the continued attachment of his fellow-students, as well as of their approbation and that of his countrymen. I believe that all present will be ready to give him that assurance in full measure.

I shall send you Part II of Ballads this week, I suppose. I have no manuscript ballads to get hold of now but a parcel of Kirkpatrick Sharpe's. We got everything that Bishop Percy had accumulated for 4th volume of the Reliques. A drearful poor volume it would have been. Among all the papers there are not eight or ten traditional ballads. Having been gathered about 1775, or earlier, they ought to be a good deal better. But ballads should have been collected as early as 1600; then there would have been such a nice crop; the aftermath is very weedy,—

People hereabout doubt whether we can beat Blaine. We all wait anxiously for the Democratic nomination. Your friends Charles Saunders & Chapman have reluctantly decided to support Blaine (won't that bring Cambridge back to you! — and Alfred Wood has retired from business, & Wm. Kimball, who of late seemed to do none.) Best love to Mrs. Lowell. Ever your faithful & affectionate,

Charlie

Cambridge, July 24, [1884]

Dearest Jamie,

Eliot sent me your laudes, which may be nothing to what you get over there, but will have a home-fed flavor.

I sent you Part II the other day, not expecting that you would have in the height of the season more than a minute to give to it. Look at Tam Lin, if anything; that or Young Beichan is as good as any for a specimen.

"At this point Child has pasted to the letter clippings of his remarks and of parts of the remarks by Jebb and Lodge, taken from the Boston Advertiser of 16 June 1884. The clipping of his own remarks he has emended heavily in pen-and-ink; a transcription of the emended version follows in the text.

Harvard University - Houghton Library / Harvard University. Harvard Library bulletin. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Library. Volume VI, Number 2 (Spring 1952)
Edwin Abbott, a Harvard College man, who has done me kind services of much importance, (tried to improve the state of my dilapidated investments) asked me to give him letters to my friends in England. He is coming over for a month or two of rest, being a hard-worked Railway man. I told him that I had hardly a friend in England. I could think only of Sara Darwin, & ventured also on our Glasgow man. He wants to see the Universities & Westminster especially. I don’t know that you can help him by any ambassadorial recommendation. You will be engaged, I know, from night to morning. But not to fail to do the utmost I could for a true friend, I shall write a line to you, and if you can help him to what he wants in any way (possibly you can get him a better view of the Tower than he would have with a mob) I know you will.

Having to go to Boston today, I tore out an article from an old North American and soon saw that I had you in hand. Nothing so pleasant have I read for years. Your affectionate

P. Ciarli

I tell Abbot how devoured you are

Lowell’s supposition in his Christmas note of 1884 was correct: he was supplanted as Minister in the early spring of 1885 by Edward J. Phelps, Vermont lawyer and Democrat.

The good report of Mrs Lowell was the last. Exactly two months later death closed her long course of suffering that had begun in Spain nearly six years before.

Legation of the United States
London

19th Dec 1884.

Dear Ciarli,

I saw in the Daily News tother day a quotation from another version of the Du Maurier ballad I sent you. I at once wrote to the editor asking for a copy to be sent to you. I have just received & enclose it.

I have time only for these few lines. A couple of hundred diplomas of the Birmingham & Midland Institute await my signature. I have already signed about seven hundred. I wish they were banknotes for £1000 each which we were to divide between us! But my autograph is not yet worth quite so much.

I don’t know yet whether I am coming home or not, but suppose that Democratic notions of Civil Service Reform will require my recall.

Fanny is very well & would send her love were she here. I wish you a Merry Xmas & Happy New Year with all my heart.

Affectionately yours

Jamie.

F. J. Child, Esq.
Dearest Jamie

We have known for two days that we must soon hear what now we have heard. Before that I had thought that all was well.

I feel now as if you must be alone in another sense than if you were here, but this is perhaps only our own feeling reflected upon you. Surely a thousand hearts are feeling for you there as here; surely among those there are those who are deeply attached to you; and surely neither there nor here is there any immediate consolation. My only comfort in your case is still a great one. Were you without any belief, and were I without any belief, this winter day would be summer compared with my thoughts, this sinking sun high noon. You believe, you know; you will help others more than they can help you. Sympathy can only make this day darker if it means fellow[?] grief that all is over. Love, if it can perish, only makes us more forlorn. You have never thought so, you have never sung that; such despair will never have your voice or your assent.

We were very much troubled about your future before, seeing no way to our wishes; but this was not among my apprehensions. Our love will attend anxiously upon you, now & henceforth. Ever your most affectionate,

Carli

February 22 [1885]

Dearest Jamie

I was looking forward with pleasure to writing to you today; the only question was whether to write a greeting to arrive on the 22d. I am very glad to have been saved from that. Considering how short our term is, and with what mortal misgivings our best hopes are mixed, even a birth-day under the happiest circumstances is shaded with a thought. You have loved this world and have known how to get the happiness out of it. I know by my own exquisite pleasure in seeing the crocuses and columbines shoot, and hailing the first robin, that yours must be too sweet to relinquish or to have her whom you love relinquish. For myself, if not subject to decay of body & mind, I could see a thousand changes of the seasons with undiminishing delight. I am now looking forward to one more, but alas, count those that at best can be left. Another life must be better than this. So far as nature goes — with those that lead a tranquil rural life — one hardly wants a better. But indeed most men sadly need life to be bettered. Another life is to be better even than this was for you when your rich hair was all of one tint. Credo quia impossible est. This often used to be my thought: it has not entered into man’s heart to conceive what is preparing; a life to which this is exile; a delight beyond all that poetry, roses, skies can give; and this is not strange, it is the simplest thing in the world; this is what we have been all along saying when we called God infinitely good & loving, not knowing what the words meant; the power that can do for us beyond what we ask
or think. It is a necessity as plain as mathematics. And all that have breathed
are to come to this. Another impossibility that must be. This or nothing:
and who that is not blinded and deafened by misery or grief believes that
the insubstantial pageant is to dissolve & fade? What, the man that wrote
those words? or better, the man that suffered on the cross? or the sweet
pure souls we have known?

I don't know how to think of you. I have never seen you when grief was
fresh. But I have a kind of confidence, not in the strength of your spirit,
but in the clearness of your vision. I believe that you believe the things you
have sung, and your kind. Wört gehalten wird in jenen Räumen is one of
the sayings that has given me most solace. And as for another — nur so lang
sie lieben, waren sie. I want no better assurance of deathlessness. — I am
writing, as I feel, dearest Jamie, and not writing at you. Your loneliness
oppresses my thoughts dreadfully. I hope you have some very tender friends
as well as admirers there. I know you must have. Ever your faithful affectionate

Ciarli

Legation of the United States
London

16th April, 1885.

Dear Ciarli,

your letter was very sweet & dear to me & all the more that Fanny was
always fond of you & often spoke of you with affection. You were one of
the friends whom we looked forward to meeting with most pleasure. As it
is. I look forward to nothing. She was planning a rivalry with you in roses
& meant to have her garden prettier than ever. The last walk I took with her
(on the Sunday before she was taken ill) the shrubs in Kensington Gardens
were some of them giving hints of Spring & she spoke of trying whether
they would not stand our climate. She was always planning about her gar-
den. And now the Spring has come & she who gave it all its sweetness will
never come again. But she is surely with God, for never was there a soul
regrier for him or that would have been more welcome. She was nobly
religious, as she was noble in all things. A more beautiful nature, so rare a
mixture of strength & sweetness, never was known to me.

I have taken my passage by the Scythia which sails for Boston on the 10th
of June. I would come sooner if I could, but am not yet quite sure when my
successor will arrive. I shall have to stay & coach him a little. I am glad to
hear excellent accounts of him & feel quite sure that he will be acceptable
here. I think I am glad to be relieved. I look forward to seeing my old haunt
again with a poignant pathos.

Goodbye & God bless you till I take you by the hand.

Always your affectionate

Jami.

Professor Child.
With Lowell's return to America there was less reason for correspondence with such a Cambridge friend as Child. Yet Lowell did not go back to Elmwood at once; it was rented, and for him too full of painful memories. He lived at first with his daughter, Mrs Burnett, in Southborough, or, for shorter stretches, with his sister, Mrs Putnam, at 68 Beacon Street, Boston. And he went abroad each spring and summer for the four successive years 1886-89, returning finally to Elmwood in November of 1889, with less than two years to live.

Yet he must have been often in Cambridge before that. He did not become Smith Professor Emeritus until Commencement 1886, reading Dante in a seminar for some weeks the preceding winter, and was an Overseer of the College from 1887 until his death.

In any case, after a gap of nearly two years, the correspondence resumes with Lowell's thank-you note for a copy of The Child of Bristow, printed by Child in his modernized version for Christmas 1886. The copy given Lowell has not been traced, but there is in the Harvard Library a copy bound, in colored and blind-tooled leather, by Miss Emily Tuckerman, the 'Young Lady' of the Scholar's Letters published in 1920. This copy, which has bound with it Child's Debate of the Body and Soul, 1888 (inscribed by Child to Miss Tuckerman), was bequeathed by Miss Tuckerman to the Child Memorial Library.

Deerfoot Farm,  
Southborough, Mass.  
27th Dec: 1886.

Dear Ciarli,

thanks thick & threefold for your delightful little Xmas gift. It is all the sweeter to me that you recited parts of it to me once. There never was a better Child than he of Bristow but one, & I know where he lives, though you don't.

I enclose in return the lease of my love renewed for another year & all loving wishes for your happiness during ever so many more. With love to Mrs Child,

Affectionately yours

J. R. Lowell.

F. J. Child, Esq.

Deerfoot Farm,  
Southborough, Mass.  
11th Jan: 1887.

Dear Ciarli,

I shipped to you this morning by express two boxes of cigars which I hope will reach you safely. One is for you & one for Grace, which latter I beg
you to deliver with my love. Of course they won't turn out so good as I said they were (such is the perverse nature of things) — but with your lips to help 'em they ought to be tolerable company.

Affectionately yours

J. R. L.

Professor Child.

With Lowell in England in the spring of 1887, Child wrote to support the plea of the Furnesses, father and son, that Lowell present a poem at the centennial celebration of the United States Constitution to be held in Philadelphia the following September. The younger Furness was then a student at Harvard, preparatory to following his father in the Shakespeare Variorum. The plea, as Lowell's reply shows, was unavailing, in spite of Child's telling quotation from the beautiful romance of Conde Arnaldos. At the memorial exercises in Independence Hall, on September 17, a new national hymn was recited by Francis Marion Crawford.

Sara Sedgwick, it will be remembered, had married William Darwin, son of Charles. The ballad 'Adam Bell, Clim of the Clough, and William of Cloudsley' appears in Part V of the Ballads, published in the spring of 1888.

Cambridge, May 17, 1887

Dearest Jamie

By the way in which William & Sara Darwin are enjoying May, one would think that you could not have changed skies to advantage. We never had such a May, and we want a poet to express our delight. It is to the June you have sung as a squash before it is a peascod. I have been limping and limping about among my rose-bushes, a Vulcan with 400 Venus, but no Mars as yet, though 400 Mars are coming. I shall never be free to go to Europe or to go anywhere if I keep on so, and at last cold wisdom has conquered superfluous folly, and I have taken out Adam Bell to polish him up for court. But before I go to work I must keep word with Horace Furness, who, as well as his father, has written to you, to entreat a poem from you for next September. The occasion is of course a very great one, and were you this side of the lake I think you would be persuaded. I had some remorse, bethinking myself how you went away tired with lectures, and how all birds had a right to sing for themselves, or for the folks of their own tree, in summer. Tal respuesta le fue a dar: Yo no digo esta canción sino a quien comigas va! And you don't want S. P. Q. A. at your heels in summer. But when I think that you have solely sovereign[?] sung and are the dean[?]

"See Child's Christmas letter of 1877."
among our poets, it seems as great a lack to have you away from such a ceremony as Cleveland himself. You would be the man of the occasion, and the nation, not merely a rabble of Congressmen, will be present. You would do what I most of all things wish, make yourself known, in your person I mean, to West & South; you would say something which would improve the Constitution's chance of getting through another hundred years; the occasion would be equally good for your name & credit and for patriotism and good government, I feel this very strongly, but will not preach from the text. (Furness intimatet to me, what he did not wish to say to you, that your expenses would be paid to & fro.) Clearly your concession would be a great sacrifice. Everybody (except politicians) would feel that. If you can make the sacrifice, you shall never be asked to make such another (I speak for the 50 millions.) When I think what unspeakable service such verses as yours about Virginia, spoken before the nation, would do, I feel that you had better consent even if death were the price to you. But it would not be. You would be stronger and happier for a score of years to come. You shall not be obliged to read more. I hope you are well and young.

Ever your loving

F. Gairli.


2, Radnor Place,
Hyde Park, W.
16th June, 1887.

Dearest Gairli,

Surely I would, if I could, but they hurry me so that I can't find out my own mind. I have done so many involuntaries that I have little left to say, but I had begun to see my way to something when they beset me & upset me with telegrams—so I said "no!" Who can hold counsel with the Muse when he feels that the cable is laying wait for him & may give him an electric shock at any minute—"how are you getting on? have you begun it yet?" & the Devil knows what. Other men may have composure under such a harrow, but I am a poor read.

I think of you in your Rose-garden, my dear Saadi, with a longing love. You went near my heart with your quotation from my favourite Conde Amaldos. 'Tis the best lecture on the Ars Poetica known to me. But quin et hubicse cal ventura? Not I with the Constitution, which is by no means the cancion he was blessed with hearing.

This is my tenth epistle today & I am tired. But you will know that all the paper I leave blank wouldn't hold the affection I feel for you.

Always your loving

Jamie.

F. J. Child, Esq.
Lowell was still in England when he wrote the following note on behalf of Phillips Smalley, son of his close friend George Washburn Smalley, the noted journalist and war correspondent, who had been living in England for many years as European representative of the New York Tribune.

2, Radnor Place,
Hyde Park, W.
9th Sept. 1887.

Dear Carlil,

be kind to Phillips Smalley for my sake & you will be kind to me. He is going to enter the Harvard Law School & never having been separated from his own people before, will be as lonely as Mungo Park in Africa. Be as good to him as the black women were to the Scot, though not for the same reason — since he will find plenty of ways to have his corns ground in a new country.

Affectionately yours
J. R. Lowell.

Professor Child.

We come now to the last interchange. Lowell was nearing the date, April 13, of his address before the Reform Club of New York, on 'The Place of the Independent in Politics,' and had apparently sought Child's help in selecting an appropriate passage from The Advancement of Learning for quotation. The 'little book,' a copy of W. A. Wright's edition, 1880, is in the Harvard Library, with Child's stars at all the passages mentioned. The volume, apparently returned after all by Lowell, was presented to the Library by Child's daughter, Mrs Scoggin. Lowell actually used the first of the marked passages, '12 (3),' in his address.

In rendering thanks for the just published Heartsease and Rue, Child is the true amicus musarum, appreciating his poet-friend to the last. The copy given Child came to the Harvard Library with the other gifts of Mrs Scoggin, and has only pasted in the slip cut from Lowell's note of March 26, with the inscription 'To F. J. Child with the love of J. R. L. 7th March, 1888.' It is interesting to note that the presentation copies to Norton, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich, at Harvard, are all dated March 7.

To the list of poems in Heartsease and Rue (including, by implication, 'Franciscus de Verulamio sic cogitavit') Child adds the still later 'Turner's Old Téméraire,' which made its first appearance in the April 1888 Atlantic, and was included by Norton in the posthumous Last
Poems, 1895. Child alludes also to other current literary activities, such as the introduction to a new edition of Walton's Angler, published by Little Brown in 1889, which is one of Lowell's finest essays. On other evidence, the introduction for The History of the World's Progress, inserted in the second edition of 1888, should have been written in the winter of 1886-87, but perhaps Lowell had not yet finished it.

March 24, [1888]

Dearest Jamie,

I don't hear of your coming this way, and suppose you resolutely set to write your preface to Walton's Angler, and perhaps to The World's Progress, or whatever that other book may be. I note, after writing my date, that we are nigh the end of the month, and remember that you were to make the speech in New York, and that I was to send you a passage in Bacon's Advancement, quomodo cogitavit F. B. de V. There are two or three passages, as to which I would have you refresh your recollection, and you will do so more handily if I send the little book (which I do not wish to have returned.) I have starred some of the best, on pp. 12 (3), 16 (8), 19 (2), 22 (6), 40 (6), 73 (7). The one I had most in mind was 16 (8). But they are all noble or charming, and so are many more. What can be more felicitous than his last paragraph 73 (7)?

You have not yet had my thanks for Heartscase & Rue. I could not read it through at a sitting, like Calverley's rhymes. I have read most of it aloud, and much of it more than once. Not only will it bear reading more than once, but one reading—unless the reader be quicker far than I—will never take in the beauty of either thought or phrase. It seems to me that this must be your best book, though I am aware that of good things the last is apt to seem best. I am not sure that I could say what I like best, even of these last. Some things in Agassiz, some things in G. Curtis, some things in Lindyman, E. G. de R., Poe(!), etc. Some passages, some pages of Letters, Forboding, The Lesson!, Sea Shell, Credidimus j. r., In an Album; that is not quite all the volume after all. The Ténèbreux follows, not inferior to any. Should you (over God's forbidding) make no more volumes, this would be a good ending. Amen, par charite, god beginning make thy god ending, quoth Hendyng. Hoping that you are blither than when I last saw you, ever your loving

Clarii

Lowell's rejoinder thanks Child in turn for his recent gift, a copy of the privately printed Debate of the Body and Soul which Child had modernized from one of the Middle English versions printed by Thomas Wright in his edition of Walter Map, Camden Society, 1841. As in

March 27

Dear Sonny,

From 1 of your boy,

I am just about through. I am not sure that it is exactly what I meant; the fact that I can't see him in the picture is to me a bit disappointing. I am sure that I am not healthy, but I am sure that he is. I am sure that it is better for him in the picture than in reality. I am sure that I am not healthy, but I am sure that he is.

The love that I find...
The Scholar-Friends

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the case of The Child of Bristowe, the copy given Lowell has not come
to light, but, as was pointed out in connection with the gift of that earlier
opusculum, a copy bound with The Child by Miss Tuckerman
is in the Harvard Library.46 Lowells had shown his familiarity with
Walter Mapes, of Goliardic fame, when in 1885 he wrote to
William D. Howells, president of the newly formed Tavern Club in
Boston, assenting to his election as an honorary member, and quoting
the four lines beginning 'Menum est propositum in taberna mori.' These
lines were adopted and are still used as the Tavern Club song.46

The first pages of this letter and of Child's of the next day (Child's
last letter) are reproduced in Plate VIII, from the originals at Harvard.

Deerfoot Farm,
26th March, 1888.

Dearest Ciarli,

a thousand thanks for your letter & for the book. I had already acted on
your hint & had what I thought the fittest passage copied for me, but am
glad to enrich my little library here with the A. of L. as my Bacon is at
Elmwood.

I am glad you find something to like in my book for I love to please you.
Nothing is ever so good as it should be (except a rose now & then) — it is
so hard to make anything right, & one is apt to despair too soon.

This reminds me that I have never thanked you for your little book which
pleased me more than I can say. I happened to have Walter Mapes here &
could therefore compare as I read. I think you have shown wonderful
seamanship in hitting the channel (& on a leeside too, as such things always
are) between the bristling reef of archaism & the mudflats of newspaper-
English. I had quite forgotten how good the poem was.

I write something on the opposite leaf for you to paste into your book.

Affectionately yours
J. R. Lowell,

Professor Child.

March 27, [1888]

Dearest Jamie,

Yours of yesterday having just come to hand (I didn't mean to have you
write — the friend that makes us write notes is but little less bad than the
one that makes us sign them) I can't help finishing an incomplete stanza
which I find in your shame-fast disclaimer:

46 See Lowell's note to Child of 27 December 1886.
46 M. A. De Wolfe Hano, A Partial (and Not Imperial) Semi-Centennial History
of the Tavern Club 1834-1934 (Boston, 1934), pp. 40-41.
Nothing is good as it should be—
'Cept now and then a rose'—
And now & then your poetry—
And now & then your prose
(And mostly, women, as witness your verses. I thought I had known almost as many perfections as anybody, but now I see that my world has been small.)

To think that some youngster will presently send your book to a girl, and tell her that she will find his case pretty well, but imperfectly, hit off in the Seashell!

I was telling you what I liked best, not what I liked. "Find something to like" indeed!

Ever your most affectionate
F. C.

Lowell's 'crossing into the seventies' was celebrated by one of the most distinguished of Tavern Club dinners. The Club archives show that Child was forced to decline an invitation to attend, because of 'an unfavorable state of health.' His greeting to Lowell, apparently not preserved, brought the following response.

68 Beacon Street,
23rd Feb: 1889.

Dearest Carl,

whatever you do is well done &. whether your accidents were at the dinner or not, I knew that your real presence was there in love & good wishes. I feel no sensible change in crossing into the seventies — least of all could I have expected to find any in the warmth of my affection for you. I shall look for a little more deference on the part of youngsters like you after this my promotion, but shall try not to be uppish. Hoping to see you soon — & the wish is partly selfish for it always does me good,

Affectionately yours
J. R. Lowell.

Professor Child.

Lowell's return to Elmwood in the autumn of 1889, after an absence of more than ten years, reduced still further the occasion for letters between the two friends. There remain three brief notes from Lowell, which are given below, but of the late meetings face to face, and of the final parting, we should know nothing but for the Scholar's Letters to a Young Lady. The correspondence of the scholar-friends is therefore concluded with a series of passages relating to Lowell taken bodily from
Child's letters to his younger correspondent. The three notes from Lowell himself have been interspersed according to date.

The 'first severe illness' of Lowell's life, as he called it, occurred in the spring of 1890, when he was confined to his bed for six weeks, attended by his old friend Morrill Wyman. This was the true beginning of the end, for he never really recovered, though the final end did not come until 12 August 1891. We learn from incidental references in the Letters to a Young Lady that during these last months Child paid regular visits to Elmwood, often covering the four miles from Kirkland Street and return on foot. Child's own death took place just five years later, on 11 September 1896, with his great work all but finished.

Tuesday, 12th November, 1890.

... In the afternoon James Lowell looked in, and now that he is established at Elmwood I shall see him often as of old — which makes the world look more friendly. Who says that literature is ill-paid? He had written a little poem, a very short one, I think, not to order, but for his own amusement, or perhaps because he could not help. A newspaper sends him a thousand dollars and asks only that he will send something, and he sends off his little poem. Going back to the house where he used to be happy makes him grave. His daughter is with him and has changed things just enough to have them not too familiar. ...

Friday, 14 March, 1890.

... Nothing has happened. The only thing we have to think of is James Lowell. I saw him this morning. He looks white, and very noble, I think. Our good doctor, who is close upon 60, spent two nights with him. I saw him, and he speaks with some comfort of the case. Still there is no security though J. L. is much more comfortable. The doctor speaks with admiration of J. L.'s courage and serenity. He must live. He reads light things, and he told me this morning that he had both heard and seen the robins, from his bed. I, who have been out every day, have seen no robin. They come to him first, and he has eyes which see many things that come late to me, or not at all. Life would be much grayer without J. L. ...

Sunday, May 11, 1890.

... Harry James wrote to Grace Norton the other day expressing the most earnest wish that Lowell would never show himself in London in a state of declining health. The glittering society would no more mind him than a cavalry man minds the friend that lies in his way. So I gathered from what

* Reprinted with the kind permission of the Atlantic Company (formerly the Atlantic Monthly Press), publishers of the Scholar's Letters.
* Scudder, James Russell Lowell, II, 397.
H. J. said: the cavalry man would, I fancy, if he could, so I apologize to him, and H. J. did not bring him in. But what a world! Who cares for its flattery or its fondling then? . . .

Leslie Stephen, an intimate friend of Lowell's English years, who had visited Elmwood as early as 1863, spent several weeks there in the summer of 1890, at the same time receiving an honorary degree at the Harvard Commencement. This was Thomas Wentworth Higginson's first summer in Dublin, New Hampshire, which was to be his summer headquarters for the rest of his life.

Elmwood,
Cambridge, Mass.

20th June, 1890.

Dear Carlili,

when I proposed to myself the rather desperate venture of having some people to meet Stephen at dinner tonight I naturally wanted you among the first if not sooner. But I heard you were abed with gout & so didn't trouble you with a note. When it was too late I heard you were ingame again.

Now T. W. H. whom I had asked is in Dublin & can't come, & I wish you to take the place originally meant for you. I want you very much. At 7 o'clock.

Affectionately yours
J. R. Lowell.

Professor Child

Elmwood,
Cambridge, Mass.

1st July, 1890.

Dear Carlili,

come dine with me & be my love on Thursday at 1/2 past seven. Morning dress for the greater ease of all concerned.

Affectionately yours
J. R. Lowell.

F. J. C.

Wednesday, 23rd October, 1889 [i.e., 1890?], 6 P.M.

. . . I found J[ames] L[owell] downstairs, and he said below all the afternoon. He looked haggard, I must own. . . . There are two comfortable signs of his mending: he had come back to a pipe and he liked to talk of old Boston. How he, being a Cambridge boy, should know the wharves, as I, born close to salt water, I don't know. I found that he used to board the East Indiamen (for we had ships in plenty then) and they would give him rattans and fishing-poles (bamboos). But I thought he would not come
up to me on one point: "Did you ever lick molasses on the wharves?" "Yes, and go in from Cambridge to do it!"

Now I have materials for his biography which no other man can possess. — Well, though he had not regained his strength, he was like himself, and I was greatly comforted. . . .

Then Lowell's last note to Child — from 'the modern Job.'

Elmwood,
Cambridge.

18th March, 1891.

Carissimo Carli,

haud ignarus mali, I learn, if not to succor, at least to sympathize. I had a sharp bout of it, but the enemy is now in full retreat. I shudder to think of you clattering over to College on crutches. You must be careful. A cox, I think, would be more suitable to your needs & to your dignity. I am far beyond any need of them. I could dance, I could caper, were it not that I have another bother which disables me. Wyman says it's of no consequence, but, like poverty it is d—d inconvenient. Old Age is forgetful & leaves doors ajar through which all the maladies Caliban invoked on Prospero have taken the chance to slip in upon me. But in every other way I feel the better for my goot.

The moment I get rid of this, I shall come to colloque with you. I sent back your frame this afternoon. It was a great medicine.

Tu0 affettuosissimo
Il Giobbe moderno.

F. J. C.

August 4, 1891.

. . . You hope that J. L. may be better. I fear that there is no hope of anything but a short rally, and the hope of that is but slight. I think much of my parting with him the day before I went to Stockbridge. It was very possible that something might happen; still I really expected to find him in his study again. He was put to bed — and he does not like a bed — three or four days after, and it is most doubtful whether he will ever leave it. His good-bye sounded sad that Friday. I assumed a cheerfulness which I did not feel, . . . When he goes he will take off a great castle of my world. He has been a good friend for many years and always hold and treu. And a very good man too, simple, faithful, with a nobleness quite his own. I fear that we shall never exchange words again, and I know that he will never come into this room again for a pleasant hour. . . .

August 13, 1891.

. . . Well, dear child, all is over, as you know, and many letters have been called for in consequence. As I shall not fail to have said before — for I have been repeating it to myself in a reproachful way — I had my last
hour and my last word with him the day before I came to Stockbridge, and did not know it. And it could not have been better had I known it, the wise may say; but I wish I had had a little more fear and had put a secret farewell into my good-bye. He had only three days of rational life after that. Now we know the precise cause of his sufferings, it is a wonder that he didn't suffer much more. Poor Mabel's behavior was exactly fit: all tenderness and affection, some tears, but no abandonment. I became much attached to her in the course of a few weeks and she seems to have been drawn to me. The decline was very rapid in the last few days. Mabel has one smile to hear which he gave her on Monday. I have been looking over his letters today. He sometimes had a woman's fond way of phrasing, though he was not effusive. Even as ambassador he sometimes signs himself "Jamie." It is certain that somewhat most precious is gone from my world.

... I am not uncheerful. Just now I feel my loss, our loss. I am glad to have him released from pain and the inability to do what he had in hand or thought. But he would have liked to live, and his mind was in excellent working order. He was not of the sceptic sort, neither was he of the blind believers. He was a poet and had his revelations as such. I believe that he lives on. Think always thus. Can we imagine a possible happiness that the divinity cannot conceive? Can we wish more than he to effectuate the happiness we can conceive? He does not lack power; that you may know by looking at the skies. For the present we are in the dark. If light can deceive, wherefore not life? My dearest M., you are one of my evidences. James L. was another.

This was written on the day before Lowell's funeral. In the Letters of William James a note written by him on the next day is found: "Aug. 14. "Lowell's funeral at mid-day. . . . Went to Child's to say good-bye, and found Walcott, Howells, Cranch, etc. Poor dear old Child! We drank a glass standing to the hope of seeing Lowell again." 46

And now once more to Child:

Sunday, August 24, 1891.

. . . The world will never be the same again without J. R. L. It was not such a loss as you had in . . . . . But it is a loss that I feel all the time. I could resort to him for a certain kind of sympathy which I could have from no other man. Some day when we are together I will show you some of his letters. They are mostly brief ones, but they are so kind. I love to look at them. . . .

There is a thing which I regret, and that is J. R. L. did not die in his full mind. Could I have sat by his bed or his chair, his lamp slowly declining, and could we have talked of the other life, in which we both believed, could I have read him cherished places from the Bible, there would have been much happiness to remember from the last days. But there is much from

"The Letters of William James, ed. Henry James (Boston, 1910), I, 315, n."
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early days. He was a man without stain, no meanness, no cruelty, no vileness, no littleness, noble and good and innocent. I wish I could be with you two or three days to talk all this over, with love and blessing, and what it all points to.

I am going on with my work in an easy way. I can't say that I care so much about it without J. R. L., who has done much for me. He would have been so much pleased to have it all nicely finished up. He could take the fine points in a ballad. They seem stale. I go back to the fine once at times and sing them and cry over them like the old world. ... 

December 17, 1891.

... The 22nd of February I am planning to have a solemn music in the afternoon in memory of J. R. L. There will perhaps be a choir of 50 boys, besides a fine choir of men's voices. So far I have chosen the most exquisite of Cherubini's Requiem, with the Kyrie pertaining to the same mass, a very beautiful Sanctus of Gounod, and perhaps Handel's famous Largo (with proper words). It will be a public performance, but I shall send tickets to all the nice people about here, and friends of the College. Now if you were making a visit northward at that time... 

... I will tell you more about the commemorative service by and by. I wish it were right to have a whole Mass of Cherubini's. My dear J. R. L. was no unbeliever, but he was not of Rome. If anything could carry me over it would be the Masses. They ought to be true; they must be true to something that cannot be lightly esteemed. ... 

Wednesday Morning, February 3, 1892.

... A few minutes ago our choir-master was here to consult about one piece more for the 22nd. Great pains have been taken, and the music is very good... I think I gave you a list of the pieces. Anyway I will give you the whole programme, as we have it now, fixed.

Requiem — Cherubini — C Minor Mass.
Miserere — Allegri (part).
Pie Jesu, Agnus Dei, Cherubini — D Minor Mass.
Palestrina, Omnes animi.
Mendelssohn — Beati mortui.
Christopher Bach — Motet.
Gounod — Sanctus.
Mendelssohn — Periti aetem.
Schubert — Great is Jehovah.

I do not doubt that the music will be lovely, the performance I mean, for the music is of the highest style. ... 

Wednesday Evening, March 2, 1892.

... We have heard a great deal of satisfaction and approbation expressed about our commemoration of James Lowell. To me it was a very serious
thing, and therefore when friends have declared it a “success” or the like, I have not felt entirely in harmony with them. But people generally have been more felicitous in their terms, and really have exceeded every expectation. The absolute silence from the first note of the organ to the last of the Sanctus showed where their thoughts and what their moods were. I have been much pleased by many saying that the service was the most fitting thing that could be, and much the more that not a word was said.

So let this story of the scholar-friends come to its end. Surely it is another fitting thing that not a word more is now to be said.

M. A. DeWolfe Howe
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