

**LETTERS OF JAMES  
RUSSELL LOWELL.  
VOL. I, PART I**

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Letters of James Russell Lowell. Vol. I, Part I by Charles Eliot Norton

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**CHARLES ELIOT NORTON**

**LETTERS OF JAMES  
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VOL. I, PART I**





LETTERS  
OF  
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

EDITED BY  
CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

VOL. I, PART I  
*(Bound for Horatio N. Fraser)*



NEW YORK  
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1894

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

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IN making the following selection from the great mass of Mr. Lowell's letters which was in my hands, my attempt was to secure for it, so far as possible, an autobiographic character. And, in the main, this has not been difficult, for few writers have given in their letters a more faithful representation of themselves, and of few men is the epistolary record more complete from youth to age. But portions of every man's life are essentially private, and knowledge of them belongs by right only to those intimates whom he himself may see fit to trust with his entire confidence. Vulgar curiosity is, indeed, always alert to spy into these sanctities, and is too often gratified, as in some memorable and mournful instances in recent years, by the infidelities of untrustworthy friends. There was nothing in Mr. Lowell's life to be concealed or excused. But he had the reserves of a high and delicate nature, reserves to be no less respected after death than during life, and nothing will, I hope, be found in these volumes which he himself might have regretted to see in print. Mr. Lowell, indeed, made to the public in his poetry such revelation of his inward experiences and emotions as he alone had the right to make, and such as may well suffice to



satisfy all legitimate interest in the spiritual development of the poet and in the nature of his most intimate and sacred human relations. Read together, his poems and his letters show him with rare completeness as he truly was.

So many of his friends and correspondents have put me under obligations by intrusting to me the letters he had addressed to them, that I will not undertake to name them all. I beg them each to accept my thanks. One difficulty only I have felt in regard to the use of these letters. Some of them contained such expressions of affection for those to whom they were addressed, or of admiration for their work, as might seem intended for their eyes alone. And yet these expressions were so characteristic of their writer's nature and of the regard in which he held his friends, that to omit them all would be to leave an imperfect and maimed impression of the quickness and warmth of his sympathies and the charm of his intercourse. If I have printed any letter which the person to whom it was addressed may regret to see in type, I beg him to pardon me for the indiscretion, on the ground of its exhibition of traits essential to the likeness of the self-drawn portrait of his friend.

To one of my own as well as of Mr. Lowell's nearest friends, Mr. Leslie Stephen, I am glad to owe so much as makes indispensable a special acknowledgment of my debt. The letter with which he has favored me, describing Lowell as he knew him, is a sketch which for its vital resemblance no other hand could have drawn.

Some letters which I should have been glad to use

have reached me too late; others have perished or are not now to be found. But it is a satisfaction to believe that, however much they might have added to the interest of these volumes, they would have afforded no new aspect of their writer.

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

SHADY HILL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

*July, 1893.*

