

Charles Eliot Norton to Henry James, 23 March 1873, from London

ALS Houghton, bMS Am 1094 (378)

1 33 Cleveland Square. W.

2 March 23, 1873.

3 My dear Harry

4 Ruskin has been spending a great part of the day with me, in one of
5 his sweetest moods.

6 I read to him what you say of Tintoret, which had greatly pleased me when I first
7 read it yesterday, in the Nation of March 6th—It would have been pleasant to you to see
8 the cordial admiration he felt for your work, and to hear his warm expressions of the
9 good it did him, to find such sympathies & such appreciations, and to know that you were
10 to be added to the little list of those who really, & intelligently & earnestly care for the
11 same things that have touched him most deeply, & influenced his life most powerfully.—
12 You may be pleased from your heart to have given not merely pleasure, but stimulus, to a
13 man of genius very solitary, & with very few friends who care for what he cares for.

14 He amused me by his indignation against the choice of Mr. Colvin as
15 Professor of the Fine Arts at Cambridge, & his eager that you could have been put there
16 in his place!

17 ———

18 I hope that you are having as perfect days as Rome can give. At their best
19 they are perfect.—Here rain, & sleet, & chill winds prevail, but the primroses, and, with
20 them; all the poetry of spring have come. I cannot yet get out freely, but we all are well.

21 I am the nearest to a real ghost of any man you have ever seen, leading one real
22 life, and another unreal but visible one. But a ghost's life is not without its good. And I
23 am in all reality Affectionately Yours

24 C. E. Norton.

25 Your last letter to me, & mine to you passed each other on the way. Yours was very
26 welcome & very pleasant.

27 I have known Story—and all the potential tragedies of Nero—for years. It
28 is a comic spectacle, not without its sadness.

Notes

6-7 what you say of Tintoret [...] in the Nation of March 6th • Much of Henry James's 6 March 1873 article for the *Nation*, "A European Summer. VII. From Venice to Strassburg" (163-65), is devoted to praising works by Tintoretto exhibited in Venice

14 Mr. Colvin • British professor, writer, editor, and art critic, Sir Sidney Colvin (1845-1927)

29 Your last letter to me • Henry James to Charles Eliot Norton, 13 March 1873

29 & mine to you • Charles Eliot Norton to Henry James, 13 March 1873

27 Story—and all the potential tragedies of Nero • In his 13 March 1873 letter to Norton, Henry James describes attending a private reading by William Wetmore Story (1819-1895) of the first three acts of a tragedy about Nero; Story published *Nero: An Historical Play* in 1875 (London: Blackwood; New York: Scribner)

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