All year Charles had “been conscious of growing old,” but Ashfield’s restorative powers softened the grip of age. His brood clustered round (except for Eliot, in nearby Amherst at “Dr. Saveur’s summer school of languages”), the girls playing with visiting cousins, Rupie and Dick with the poultry. Their father read, wrote, made an occasional trip to Cambridge, and lounged on the grass watching Jupe fetch sticks thrown in the pond. George Curtis supplied a rejuvenative daily companion; as usual, friends like Frank Child came for a few days now and then. With Curtis only a summer comrade, Godkin back in New York, and Lowell in Madrid, Child alone among his intimates did Charles still see in everyday life. And Child and Norton, without at all cooling in their affection, seemed in middle age to navigate life on slightly different bearings.¹

Charles hardly lacked friends, but he kept up with them mostly by letter. Not Ruskin; as he drifted in and out of sanity, his letters dwindled in apparent number and grew in eccentricity. The old affection shone through; sometimes the old give-and-take about books and buildings resurfaced; but Ruskin had become more worry than companion. Ned Burne-Jones made a poor correspondent, writing warmly but rarely and briefly. John Simon’s letters did “efface the Atlantic with wonderful success,” even more Leslie Stephen’s—sinewy things, sharing news of intellectual affairs, personal life, politics. Yet the best letters hardly provide much of a matrix for an animating friendship: the give-and-take of daily intercourse, the burnishing that results from rubbing opinion against opinion, habit against habit, personality against personality.²

This being said, Norton’s transatlantic links remained remarkably dense and supple. Longfellow wanted news of Fanny Lowell in Madrid: Norton forwarded a “letter from John Field which I received from Leslie Stephen this morning.” His correspondents extended well beyond real friends such as Mountstuart Grant-Duff, Donald MacKay, and Edward Fitzgerald to ac-
quaintances ranging from the philologist F. Max Müller to the Master of Balliol Benjamin Jowett, from Sir Frederick Pollock, the Dentist, to Arthur Stanley, the dean of Westminster. Their letters left Norton longing for Europe but also kept him fixed near the center of Victorian high culture. Correspondence, though, was chiefly a summer pleasure; the college year left little leisure for writing chatty letters.3

In 1878–79, with Lowell gone, Norton now handled instruction in Dante, meeting on Tuesday evenings with eight “young graduates” and seniors. This “picked set” studied “the Interpretation of the Divina Commedia, chiefly by means of Dante’s Prose Works and the Commentators of the Fourteenth Century.” Norton listed this colloquium among the new graduate courses in the catalogue: one more step toward realizing his father’s dream of grafting advanced study on to Harvard.4

His art history courses had grown so popular that probably a majority of undergraduates now enrolled in one at some time during their four years. In response, Norton retuned the courses to different levels of interest. Two broad surveys—one covering ancient art, the other medieval and Renaissance art—led up to a pair of more specialized offerings, one in Greek art and one in Romanesque and Gothic art, a survey and a higher-level course to be given each year. All four still demanded “ability to use a German textbook,” though for what the typical student used it makes a nice question, since football and drinking left Harvard undergraduates few hours for foreign languages. Norton had no real alternative, since the new field of art history lacked respectable texts in English. Before spring semester ended, he found a partial remedy, arranging with Harpers to publish a translation of Franz Reber’s history of ancient art. One of Norton’s bright young graduates, Joseph Thacher Clarke, agreed to do the job under his mentor’s supervision.5

This was the least of Norton’s contributions to the new American universities that spring. He stood ready to launch an academic design of heroic proportions: the “large plan for work in Greece” of which he had hinted the previous June. The more deeply antiquity cast its spell on Norton, the more irritated he grew that the United States took no part “in the vast and stimulating increase of knowledge of early times.” It grated on his patriotic nerve that the “explorations of English, Italian, French, and German investigators” were “rapidly changing the face of the ancient world” while American scholars sat with their noses pressed against the window. Norton could understand “lack of original work” in classical philology and art, given the inadequacy of American libraries and museums. But archaeology—a field
that had fascinated him for thirty years—was another matter; it had become an “exact science” only within his own lifetime. Here, America “might labor on equal footing with others”; here, “she might do her part in the common interest of learning.”

Norton meant to egg her on. In 1878 he had asked the Greek government to allow a few recent Harvard graduates to excavate Delphi, then still buried. Happily for Delphi, the Greeks turned him down, while suggesting that other sites might be available to Harvard shovels. At this point, Norton’s long experience with projects like the Loyal Publication Society showed itself. After mulling things over for several months, he enlisted a number of names resonant around Boston to promote the scheme. His old friend (and Loyal Publication Society collaborator) Martin Brimmer, president of the young Museum of Fine Arts, together with C. C. Perkins, the city’s most visible entrepreneur of culture, helped to attach the local arts community. Augustus Lowell and Thomas Gold Appleton brought on board other monied Bostonians with no special interest in old statues. President Eliot and Dean Gurney gave Harvard’s stamp. F. W. Putnam, curator of the Peabody Museum of Ethnology at Harvard, and William Watson Goodwin, Eliot Professor of Greek, provided a patina of expertise. These men, and a few others picked with equal finesse, put their names to a printed circular letter proposing a “Society for Archaeological Research.”

Over a hundred recipients—few hampered by poverty—showed interest; and a substantial fraction of them met in Boston’s financial district on the morning of 10 May 1879 to organize the society. Its “chief objects,” Norton told them, were “to increase the interest in Classical Studies by enabling competent persons to make investigations in Greece, Egypt and other countries and to stimulate interest in antiquity and the arts, which proceeded from it.” But neither did Norton mean to ignore America’s own antiquities. His youthful ardor for the Mound Builders possibly still flickered; and, anyway, Francis Parkman and F. W. Putnam stood at his elbow speaking up for American Indian archaeology. Norton wished across the board “to increase the knowledge of the early history of mankind, to quicken the interest in classical and biblical studies, to promote an acquaintance with the prehistoric antiquities of our own country, and to enlarge the resources of our universities and museums.”

He envisioned ratcheting archaeological work in all spheres up to a level of serious research unknown in the United States. The new organization would assume the role of promoter and director of “archaeological investigation and research”: sending out its own expeditions, assisting “indepen-
dent explorers,” publishing scholarly reports of these researches, seizing upon “any other means which may from time to time appear practicable.” “Plenty” of people stood ready to pitch right in, Norton assured the meeting. His enthusiasm conjured up “several trained archaeologists” to lead the (more realistic) band of Harvard youngsters “who would prepare themselves with the best classical teachers for the work.” If all this sounded slightly breathless, the veteran organizer revealed himself when it came to money: the first requisite was a rock-solid foundation. Norton wanted 250 members, ten thousand dollars in the bank to start, and five thousand dollars a year thereafter. Then the new society might consider its first project.

Norton had one in mind. Joseph Clarke, the young translator of Reber’s art history textbook, and his friend Francis Bacon, both trained as architects, had already set off in their own sailboat “to examine all the Doric ruins in Greece and its neighboring countries,” hoping with charming naivete “to throw light on the many still unsettled questions of Doric Art.” It says much about their commitment to classical archaeology that Clarke and Bacon’s initial plan had been to raft down the Mississippi together.

A week later, a second meeting adopted a constitution and unanimously elected Norton himself, who had at least published an article on Greek temples, as president. Parkman, Goodwin, and the architect William Ware (who taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) brought to the executive committee the puny archaeological competence Boston had to offer. And the committee was very much a local one, seven of the nine members having graduated from Harvard within several years of Norton. Yet their president already aspired to something larger.

For Norton grasped the decisive fact that American scholarship of all sorts was drifting away from its old local moorings into new national and international seas. Any “narrow local interest” would capsize his aspirations. It was probably he who broke with the Boston elite’s persistent inward-looking orientation and baptized the organization the Archaeological Institute of America; with that name, he argued, “our agents would then be considered as representing a national and not merely a local Society.” Besides, he pointed out, “similar Societies abroad had similar titles.” In succeeding months Norton strove to make the name a reality, while a broadside went out stressing the founders’ desire to “include associates from all parts of the country.” No American had a national network of acquaintance better suited to that purpose than Norton. Yet not only had Norton’s friendships grown far beyond Boston, the center of gravity of American intellectual life had also begun to shift: it was college and university officers that Norton
strove especially to enlist. Scores of letters added to Norton’s other obligations, slowing his writing on medieval church building. Normally, summer provided uninterrupted hours for scholarship, but the work of building up the AIA disturbed this one.\(^\text{10}\)

So, too, did another recently assumed duty: that of helping to sustain Ashfield as a viable little republican community by supporting its revived Sanderson Academy. With Curtis’s help, Norton organized a fund-raising dinner to coincide with the opening of the school year in early September, soliciting Massachusetts luminaries to lend their oratorical talents to the cause. The thing turned out so successful that George and Charles decided to repeat the dinner the next year. What began as a one-off affair of local interest soon grew into an annual forum for political and social criticism by renowned speakers, an event covered on the front pages of the New York dailies.\(^\text{11}\)

Behind the public activism personal anxieties built up. In Madrid typhus struck Fanny Lowell; she almost died, rallied, then went violently mad. Charles helplessly longed to join James—and would have but for Catharine’s state. In early August his mother took “a decided change for the worst”; she grew confused, suffered hallucinations, and in lucid moments wept in “anguish at her own mental weakness.” By early September, wildly delirious, she no longer recognized her children; only opiates kept her manageable. Somehow in the midst of all this Norton found time to peck away at his scholarship; and, in mid-September, finally, he contracted with Harper to publish *Historical Studies of Church-Building in the Middle Ages*.\(^\text{12}\) Shortly afterward, Charles and Grace brought their mother home to Shady Hill, though she was long past knowing where she was. Just after midnight on the twenty-fifth, her breathing quietly stopped. Everyone recognized it as a “great blessing.”\(^\text{13}\)

His mother’s death made Charles think how much of his own life had slipped into the past, “on its way to dust.” The children were growing up: Eliot taller than his father, looking forward to college; Sally wearing a woman’s full-length dress; even Richard a schoolboy in long trousers. Nor could Charles long stave off the breaking up of the Shady Hill estate. Rising expenses strained “much reduced” means; hawking pieces of his art collection only postponed the inevitable. Norton still found comfort in the “cherishing of ideal aims, in the clear recognition of the rarity and preciousness of beauty and of joy”; but on the other side of that coin he saw as clearly “the solitude, the weariness, the prosaic course of daily life”—life without Susan, life without the reassurance of religion. Giving up hope of a life after death
left him, he thought, “gladder than other men in the gladness of the earth.” But he knew this gladness to be fleeting and that in the end “life can afford no consolation.”

His personality was stiffening. The carapace he had exuded after Susan’s death was now hardened by age and circumstance. Old friends were fading from his life: Ruskin erratically mad, Mr. Longfellow past seventy and ailing, Lowell (transferred in January 1880 from Madrid to the Court of St. James) far distant. New ones played nothing like the same roles; increasingly protégés and disciples surrounded Norton. Only Child remained as a daily close friend; only Grace challenged him at home. The ever adaptable and endlessly befriending young Charles Norton was becoming Professor Norton, crustier, less resilient, less able to listen. As sweet as ever to those who knew him best, the professor still helped many others with money, with books, with his fabled connections; but some generosity of spirit had slipped away. Accustomed now to accepting admiration, to speaking from authority, he became in his judgments a bit harsher, less pliant. Among people who remembered Andrews, Charles began to remind them of his father.

His activities had likewise settled into a pattern more defined, less fluid, than in earlier years. He still wrote for the Nation but only about art, classical studies, and Dante; tracts on foreign policy and unhealthy tenements vanished in favor of an annotated Michelangelo bibliography. In October 1879, Norton mounted in a local gallery an exhibition of Ruskin’s drawings (successful enough to move to the Museum of Fine Arts in February and then on to New York); in November he went to New York himself to lecture to the American Institute of Architects. This potpourri hardly qualified as academic specialization auf Deutsch; far from it. Yet Charles now spent almost all of his own time nursing scholarship and high culture.

For he had little faith left in politics or any other short-term hope for humankind. Culture had for Norton largely—not entirely—subsumed politics. One begins to see in him in parvo the detached scholars and alienated critics who came to dominate American intellectual life in the twentieth century. Aside from teaching, he poured most of his energy in the fall and winter of 1879–80 into the new AIA: in October pushing the executive committee to recruit young men from several colleges for an expedition to Greece, in December starting a long correspondence with the foremost American anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan, to get guidance for research into American Indian antiquities. Norton had not abandoned more traditional forms of citizenship; good republicans could yet plant the seeds of distant hope. In April 1880 he went to his district convention to elect
delegates to the Republican National Convention, and he joined other reform-minded Independent Republicans in distributing tracts aimed at scotching the presidential candidacies of Grant and Blaine. But only leftover scraps of time went into politics.

With one revealing exception. Frederick Olmsted, still a good friend from the Nation’s early days, had for a decade agitated to get the New York state government to protect Niagara Falls. Pulp mills and factories, hotels, signboards, and hucksters despoiled more of its environs each year. At last in January 1879 an official inquiry began on both sides of the border, and the New York investigatory commission enlisted Olmsted to help draft a plan. In October he wrote asking Norton to aid in collecting names of “the really notable men of the time of all countries” on a petition in support of Niagara’s preservation. Sheer weight of eminence, Olmsted hoped, would cow the Canadian and American authorities into submission. 16

Few projects could have attracted Norton more strongly. The strategy fitted his belief in the power of cultural and social leaders; the assigned task exploited his organizing talent and his web of international acquaintance; the falls themselves had awed him since young manhood. Their preservation appealed not only to his love of nature but also to his anxiety about the moral health of his countrymen. At a time “when wealth easily acquired is vulgarizing and impoverishing the spirit of the community,” the Niagara campaign crackled with moral electricity. Forming the collective will to save this beauty from rapacious capitalism would amass some counterweight to materialism and hyperindividualism, striking a blow for the things of the spirit and the spirit of community. Politics could invigorate culture and culture assist a healthier politics. Norton put his pen to work; he scoured Massachusetts himself; he enlisted Mountstuart Grant Duff to collect names in London, Edward Childe to collect them in Paris, and Littre to collect them from the Académie Française. One thread in his transatlantic web led to another. Darwin asked Lord Derby; Derby suggested canvassing the House of Lords; it was done. Norton found himself as deeply involved as Olmsted. 17

Meanwhile, the research begun nearly a decade before in the Sienese archives reached its end. In May, Norton put the final touches on Historical Studies of Church-Building in the Middle Ages: Venice, Siena, Florence, though Harpers withheld publication till fall. “If I have the leisure during the following year I mean to follow it up with further studies of the same sort of Cluny, St. Denis, and Chartres, for which I have most of the material ready.”
In the event, the following year stretched into nine, and the study of Cluny never did appear.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Church-Building} itself confirmed a decisive turning both in Norton's life and in American erudition. For Norton, publication perfected his self-identification as a university-based scholar. He stopped pretending that research and writing served mainly to dull the pain of Susan's loss, tacitly conceded that the work itself had become a vocation. For American scholarship, the book, together with Henry C. Lea's studies in church history, established serious, document-based research in medieval history. \textit{Church-Building}, moreover, broke with the institutional approach favored in Lea's work and in medievalist scholarship in Europe; its approach resembled more nearly that of a book just translated into English (though once assigned in Fine Arts 3 in the original German), the pathbreaking \textit{Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy} (1860) by the Swiss scholar Jacob Burckhardt. Norton perceived in Italy's medieval cities "a close parallel" among the evolution of language, the development of literature and the arts, and political and social change. Uniting political and institutional developments, social and cultural history, art and literature, he staked out a broad field that a twentieth-century scholar might recognize as "medieval studies."\textsuperscript{19}

For this was not the dabbling of a gentlemanly amateur. The chapter on Venice, relying on printed documents rather than archival research, was thinner than those on Siena and Florence; but in general Norton's footnotes evinced firm command of primary materials as well as of specialized scholarly literature in English, German, French, Italian, and Latin. In contrast to Ruskin, who believed himself able as "a gleaner and guesser" to comprehend intuitively an ancient Greek's mind, Norton swore allegiance to his father's philological ideal of expert erudition. (Now in a lucid period, Ruskin said that he "felt a chill from the tone" of \textit{Church-Building}.) But neither did Norton succumb to the temptation to assimilate all science to natural science, which seduced Victorians as eminent as Herbert Spencer and Henry Adams. He distinguished sharply between the human sciences, with their interpretative approach and philological roots, and the very different methods fitted to the natural sciences seeking general laws. While admiring natural science, he disdained the fashion for explaining human affairs in terms of Darwinian evolution or thermodynamics. Such analogies "consist merely in terms, and not in any real similarity of relations," and only lead to "confusion of thought."\textsuperscript{20}

At the same time, his philological approach opened a vista wide enough
to satisfy any longing for breadth of vision. Believing that an "intrinsic similarity of spirit" had united medieval Europe, Norton thought the historian able to illuminate the whole by elucidating any part. (This contrast between medieval unity and modern fragmentation appealed to Henry Adams, who a quarter century later made it the mainspring of his great *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres.*) No scholar could adequately interpret the duomo of Siena without knowing the history of the city, but the duomo's story in turn helped to explain the city's. Forms of art—Gothic architectural structures, for instance—expressed deep cultural traits that resurfaced "in remote and varied fields of thought and of action"; studying its art therefore illumined a culture at large. But by the same token a student could not penetrate any art without knowing the culture that produced it. Here reappeared in different dress the hermeneutic circle basic to Andrews's scholarship and to all textual philology. Norton approached "church-building, not merely as a study of separate edifices, but as a clear and brilliant illustration of the general conditions of society, and especially of its moral and intellectual dispositions."

And he argued that these "moral and intellectual dispositions" merited close attention from modern Americans. The medieval church's ideals of human equality and of reciprocal aid, however impotent in preventing the "oppression of the weak, the misery of the poor," still offered a salutary lesson to Americans besotted with social climbing and self-seeking. Likewise, the civic spirit of a proudly independent community, asserted in the cathedrals of Florence and Siena, might remind Americans of the republican virtue they, too, had once cherished. The vaunted individualism of the Renaissance became, in Norton's telling, a fatal expression of the "pride and wealth of special families or individuals," signaling the death of "the spirit and devotion of the whole community."

Above all, Norton wanted his readers to observe the corrosion that material motives worked on a community. The engine of change in his story was the rise of wealth and luxury, depressing faith and art. When the "new thought of the Renaissance" sapped the "ancient faith," when the desire for "material prosperity" overwhelmed higher motives, the Italian city-states lost their communal spirit, their morality, their liberty, and in the end their artistic greatness—for art could not long survive the death of the ideal. The historian refrained from openly mounting the pulpit; Norton hardly needed to ape Savonarola to make his point.

Having a moral point did not reduce *Church-Building* to a polemic, yet the melding of ethical sensitivity with advanced scholarship did suggest how
the book carried the anima of the *North American Review* into the burgeoning domain of the research university. Norton's potential audience embraced New Englanders of literary bent, wanting amusement and instruction; but it stretched far beyond to include professors in Berkeley and Oxford, historians in Saint Louis and London, equipped to weigh and make use of his work. His own university now boasted a faculty of 150, six times larger than when he had gone to college, three times larger than when Charles Eliot had taken the helm a decade ago. And that faculty now taught graduate students, awarded the Ph.D. for demonstrated competence in research, and was itself increasingly apt to be judged on its own capacities to advance knowledge.

Norton grasped as fully as anyone this shift toward the research university, applauded it, promoted it. When he sent Ruskin the first volume of Francis Child's great *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Charles called it "a masterpiece of pleasant scholarship and character"; but he also warned him that it was "not a book for boys & girls, or for amusement, but a learned book, and it may not suit your fancy." Yet to say that Norton grasped as fully as anyone the character of the new university is not to say a great deal. Its character slipped and undulated, very much in flux, formless if not void, awaiting shaping hands. Even the distinction between graduate and undergraduate students remained foggy, the definition and boundaries of "research" unclear.

Norton's reputation and connections put him near the heart of this inchoate complex of institutions and scholars. His Anglo-American intellectual network overlapped the newer scholarly one; and, despite its international scope, the academic nexus remained personal. Young scholars seeking advice or jobs "naturally" turned to Norton (as one wrote), while senior administrators wrote him for help in filling posts. Waldo Pratt illustrates the emergent system. In 1879 he applied for a graduate fellowship at Johns Hopkins University to pursue "aesthetic & archaeological studies." Its president, Gilman, forwarded Pratt's dossier to Norton with the gloss "We know of no one in this country so capable of advising him as you." Pratt’s writing impressed Norton, and Hopkins duly awarded him a fellowship. On this fellowship Gilman sent Pratt to study for a few months under Norton. After Pratt returned to Baltimore, Norton loaned him books, sponsored publication of his essays, and probably helped him obtain a job at the Metropolitan Museum in New York in 1880. Norton's relation with Pratt resembled that with Woodberry, though far briefer; but, where Woodberry had met the professor in the traditional way, the new national university system
had channeled Pratt to Norton. For all its novelty, nationalized scholarship absorbed older personal networks rather than devising new bureaucratic ones.  

The same pattern revealed itself in Norton’s work for the Archaeological Institute, which ate up more and more of his time. By the time of the AIA’s first annual meeting on 15 May 1880, Norton had given the Americanist work a strong initial shove, commissioning from Lewis Henry Morgan a survey of “the Houses of the American Aborigines” and, on Morgan’s advice, engaging the anthropologist Adolph Bandelier to undertake investigations in New Mexico. Norton also persuaded the celebrated Western explorer John Wesley Powell, who had recently completed his influential Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States and now directed the Smithsonian’s Bureau of Ethnology, to address the annual meeting itself.

Norton had expected Major Powell to inspire the troops with zeal for American archaeology; instead, his talk nearly provoked mutiny. Charles Perkins, a leader in the Museum of Fine Arts, rose to insist that the pressing need to buy classical antiquities for museums required postponing Americanist research indefinitely. Francis Parkman shot back that the AIA aimed at “the acquisition of Knowledge and not the acquisition of objects or works of art.” The knowledge wanted, another member retorted to Parkman, “was not that of barbarians but that of cultivated races which had preceded us”; it would do no good to collect “all the pottery ware, kitchen utensils, and tomahawks” that the Indians ever made. This last gentleman, Parkman drily observed, “failed to comprehend the bearing of Ethnological investigation,” which illuminated “the evolution of the human race” and “its civilization.” Norton hastily lathered on soothing words; seeing “no reason for jealousy or division in the Society,” he proposed raising eight thousand dollars immediately for two expeditions. The first would study pueblo life in New Mexico, a subcommittee chaired by Parkman being named to arrange this. The second would excavate either Epidaurus, in the Peloponnesus, or Assos, a Greek city in Asia Minor south of Troy; Crete appeared a third possibility.

And, in truth, these last were the prospects that tickled the hairs on Norton’s nape. “The occupied & the ruined Pueblos, & the Cliff dwellings” of the American Southwest did fascinate him; but the ancient Greek world commanded his attention. By July he had settled on Assos and decided to put Joseph Clarke, conveniently on the spot with his shipmate Francis Bacon, in charge of the excavation; by August, Norton was enlisting volunteers among the country’s classically minded young college graduates. One of them, a Virginian with a recent Munich Ph.D. in philology, actually had
qualifications. Charles also enrolled his old friend William Stillman from Newport days, now United States consul in Crete and an avid amateur archaeologist, as AIA “agent” to explore the unexcavated ruins at Knossos. Now remained only raising the money and securing permission from the Ottoman authorities. Norton was an old hand at fund-raising; dealing with Turkish ministers and pashas to get the required firman (official authorization) supplied a new and protracted agony. Month by month Norton’s administrative correspondence swelled in volume; few college presidents handled more.

Smaller jobs abounded, too, even after Norton reached the Locusts in early June. George Woodberry needed help with a history of wood engraving he was writing. (“For a wonder,” said Woodberry several months later, “I have no favor to ask of you.”) The English publisher Macmillan was bringing out an edition of Lowell’s poems, and Charles advised James on selections, wielding the ax relentlessly: “The student of you will always be able to find the omitted pieces, the lover of the best in poetry will be thankful to you [or to Norton] for selecting your best for him.” Only of Dante and Shakespeare, Charles judged, was “a part not better than the whole!” The annual Ashfield Academy Dinner came on 19 August; a couple of weeks later severe headaches began to torment Norton, hounding him back to Cambridge. There seemed no recourse but to abandon teaching that autumn. Finally, his physician relented, allowing Norton to offer his courses “on condition of giving up all other work.”

“All other work” had to exclude the AIA. The Assos expedition could scarcely await Norton’s recovery, especially since his son Eliot had “caught the enthusiasm for the classics” and decided to join it. On 28 December a special meeting of the executive committee, with Joseph Clarke present, voted the expedition’s funds and fixed its goal. Norton said “that the Committee laid no weight upon the prospect of finds”—so much for Perkins and the Museum of Fine Arts—but wanted “a more scientific result, giving us a distinct knowledge of the general characteristics of a site of Greek occupancy.” A party at Shady Hill that same evening honored the young men setting out for Assos. Everything stood ready save for permission to dig. When Eliot boarded the Rhein in New York harbor in February, on his way to rendezvous with Clarke in Munich, a promised firman still eluded documentary reality.

Norton’s health had by that time improved enough for him to take on other projects. One had simmered for some time. Norton having spoken to the students in his advanced Dante course about the good work that an
association to promote Dante studies might do, some of them offered to pitch in. Mr. Longfellow, though too decrepit for heavy duty, agreed to accept the presidency; and, at his home, Craigie House, he presided over the Dante Society’s first meeting on 11 February 1881. Norton expected no great things; encouraging “a few of the better class of students” in the next generation to cherish Dante seemed justification enough.31

Only six days before the meeting, a dear friend and fellow-admirer of Dante, Thomas Carlyle, died. Charles helped to arrange a memorial meeting at Harvard, then handled the bequest of Carlyle’s books to the college library arranged by Emerson and Norton a decade before. He had scarcely begun to sort out this business when a storm broke in England over the publication, within weeks of the death, of Carlyle’s *Reminiscences* by his friend James Anthony Froude, a man whose character and judgment Norton had always suspected. The *Reminiscences* depicted Carlyle’s troubled marriage all too clearly, outraged his niece, and incited (so Darwin told Charles) “more talk here than any book which has been published for many years.” Norton, holding the privacy of intimate relations almost sacred, found Carlyle’s frankness “honorable and precious” but troubling. He could hardly foresee how deeply he would be drawn into this storm.32

For now he got himself marginally involved in an extraordinary dramatic production. The previous fall, inspired by an Oxford performance of *Agamemnon*, a group of Harvard professors and students decided to stage *Oedipus Tyrannos* in Sophocles’s Greek. Norton’s health kept him from an active part; but he thought it “a great gain for culture that this interest in a classic work should be so strong” and opened his study at Shady Hill to a semipublic Saturday evening rehearsal on 29 January.33

The general enthusiasm for “the Greek Play,” as it came simply to be called, says much about the resonance of Greek antiquity in Victorian culture. That classical Athens appeared the archetype of modern democracy supplied only a minor reason for Greece’s appeal: republican Rome seemed closer to American institutions. Nor does the centrality of classical languages in education go far to explain it: Latin tags tripped off English-speaking tongues far more easily than Greek ones.

Rather, the secret lay in culture. Many of the political, epistemological, logical, and even artistic categories in which Europeans and Americans thought originated in classical Greece. True, the profoundly alien character of ancient Greece, especially its religion, was beginning to be glimpsed by a few. Nevertheless, Greece appeared *fons et origo* of what people such as
Norton were starting to conceive as the coherent intellectual and artistic tradition of European civilization, running from Herodotus to Harvard Yard. Norton tended to think of Greek architecture or statuary as embodying canons of taste rising above time and place, norms that expressed themselves again, more or less imperfectly, in later cultures that history produced in Florence and Rome, in London and Boston. The classical bias of education did certainly foster this way of thinking (and the tutelage of Rome to Greece directed the spotlight toward Hellas); but schools had for centuries dosed students with Homer. What changed in the nineteenth century was the larger cultural context. Christianity was contracting as a defining element in intellectual culture. Victorians looked for spirituality and timeless values elsewhere and nowhere more naturally than to the supposed source of their civilization.

Six thousand of them jammed the performances of Oedipos Tyrannos in Harvard’s Sanders Theatre. Almost no one understood the words, yet scalped tickets sold for ten times their original price. New England’s literary pantheon blessed opening night; every major American newspaper carried an account; telegraphed reports crossed the Atlantic. Norton thought the play “the most interesting event in College life and studies for years.” In such a climate, an organization like the Archaeological Institute began life with cachet.34

Yet, while the AIA shared this general enthusiasm for Greek culture, it also advocated a specific scholarly approach to the ancient world, long established in Europe but novel in America. Hoping to “raise the scientific character” of American work on North American as well as European antiquity, Norton took as model for archaeological work such German expeditions as those to Samothrace and Pergamon. Classical texts—the “traditional modes of investigation”—had now to take second place to excavated artifacts; for “the fine arts” gave insight into “the life and thought of the ancient world” more “vivid, precise, and comprehensive” than the written word.35

The Ottoman government barred one source of insight in March when it refused a firman for Knossos (insuring that the discovery of Minoan civilization would await the excavations of Sir Arthur Evans two decades later). Norton barely kept his irritation under control. At last the sun broke through in May, the Turkish authorities granting the AIA permission to dig for two seasons at Assos. Clarke’s “admirably made up expedition” already waited on the ground, Eliot included. His Papa dared not dream of “such
magnificent discoveries” as the Germans had made at Pergamon; but he did expect “results of considerable interest” from “the thorough study of the temple, the theatre, the walls, and the tombs of the city.”

A scheme grander and more enduring than the dig at Assos now preoccupied Norton. From the institute’s founding he had seen in his mind’s eye “a permanent corps” of American classicists in the Aegean, a vision that soon developed into a concrete proposal for “an American School of Classical Literature, Art and Antiquities at Athens.” The AIA annual meeting in May 1881 approved a committee to seek the cooperation of American universities in establishing such an entity. Professors composed a majority of its members. Norton never meant the Athens school as a place solely to train archaeologists and to mount expeditions, for he never conceived archaeology as an isolated discipline. Only one “branch of the study of antiquity,” classical archaeology “could not be properly pursued without corresponding pursuit of the other great branch of the study,” ancient languages and literature. Budding American scholars needed broad advanced training in the “single indivisible whole” of classical studies.

Within weeks Norton and his associates had plotted their approach. He would try to raise twenty-five thousand dollars from the usual philanthropic individuals, while the institute would solicit leading Eastern universities—Harvard, Yale, Brown, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, Columbia—to support the school for an experimental decade, each supplying in rotation a professor of Greek to direct it. The AIA had by no means sidelined its enthusiastic amateurs, but even they could not miss the decisive shift of its center of gravity to an academic core: one more signal of the changing structure of knowledge in the United States and the rising power of university-based research in intellectual life.

The AIA, though certainly dominating Norton’s horizon, did not blot out all other interests. Backed by the infant Dante Society, Charles had dusted off his almost twenty-year-old plan to publish Benvenuto da Imola’s fourteenth-century *Comment on the Divina Commedia*; in early June he arranged for Marsh in Florence to have the Laurentian Library manuscript copied and himself began soliciting subscribers on both sides of the Atlantic to bear the cost of publication. Niagara, too, thundered for attention: New York’s governor came out against preserving the falls, and Olmsted nearly lost hope. Norton superintended a last-ditch publicity campaign to last through the autumn, hiring a fluent former student to flood the press with articles and letters to the editor (shades of the Loyal Publication Society).
Charles had both Dante and Niagara in hand by 28 June, when George Curtis arrived to receive an honorary LL.D. at Harvard commencement, “an honor that pleased him greatly” and that his friend presumably played a part in arranging.38

At last the Locusts and exhausted relief. Norton had, as usual, to put some effort into signing up orators for the annual Academy Dinner (a little easier now that the platform had achieved national recognition); but he spent a good deal of time lounging with George Curtis and chatting with George Woodberry, come for his annual visit. There were two family homecomings—Eliot from his summer in Assos, Lily from a full year with Aunt Sara Darwin in England—and one unpleasant surprise.

Ever since Catharine’s death, Grace had roamed restlessly, sometimes staying at the Locusts or Shady Hill, at other times visiting friends across the Northeast. In August she decided to move into her own house; “she has,” her brother wrote to Lowell, “painful associations with the old home, and she fancies she will be happier in a new one.” Charles thought not; separation from his children would merely bring her unhappiness—even though the distance totaled only several hundred yards down to the Kirkland Street edge of Shady Hill, next to the Childs. Separation from Grace certainly made her brother unhappy; more than ever the master of Shady Hill felt old and alone. That fall Eliot started college, at Harvard of course.39

Fortunately for his father there was rarely time to mope. Besides classes and committee meetings, the work of creating the American School of Classical Studies at Athens began in earnest. The organizing committee, chaired by Norton’s colleague John Williams White, a professor of Greek at Harvard, met in early October. By then Norton had already commenced the arduous and familiar tasks of prying funds from wealthy pockets and cajoling university presidents into cooperation. He started to see, too, some results from his work for archaeology. A special general meeting of the AIA on 5 November heard reports on Bandelier’s New Mexican expedition and on the first season at Assos. Clarke, back from Turkey for the winter, was invited to address the American Institute of Architects on his work. Maybe most satisfying of all to Norton’s patriotism, the London Athenaeum held up the American work at Assos as an example for the English.

If archaeology satisfied, Dante frustrated. On 1 November a letter arrived from an English colleague warning that “another design is on foot” for printing Benvenuto’s Comment. Baron Vernon (brother of the Dantist whom Norton had met in London in 1869), hearing of the Dante Society’s
project, had peevishly resurrected his late father’s plan of publishing the manuscript: the very scheme that had scotched Norton’s earlier attempt to print the *Comment* in 1864. Given the debt that Dante scholarship owed to Lord Vernon’s father, Norton and Longfellow felt it “unbecoming” to interfere with a work in “honor of his memory,” even with the copying of the Laurentian manuscript already under way. James Lowell in London railed; Vernon had robbed Charles “of the just honour of being the first to print what has so long been so great a desideratum.” Norton was resigned. At least the thing would be in print, and Harvard would have an exact copy of the manuscript.40

A storm swirling around the AIA blew away these comparatively small Dante clouds. In November attacks on Joseph Clarke’s management of the Assos excavation from members of the expedition began to flood Shady Hill. Clarke was a mere digger, no scientist; he managed supplies badly; Frank Bacon really ran the show while Clarke played his banjo. He was “a libertine of the lowest tastes”; he abused his dog; he nearly drilled a co-worker with a pistol shot. William Stillman, by now at Athens, heard the tales, and with his wonted impetuosity joined the assault. That Clarke offended several of the Harvard boys is clear; that he was an untrained amateur, learning on the job, is equally sure; beyond that, the story grows obscure.41

Norton read all the letters, heard Clarke’s defense, consulted with the other members of the executive committee. Eliot Norton supported his boss. And the excavation had, after all, succeeded: the temple completely uncovered, its ground plan and elevation deciphered, eleven new pieces of sculpture found. “An important addition to the knowledge of Greek art in one of its most interesting monuments has thus been made,” Charles informed John Simon, “beside the acquisition of a considerable number of inscriptions and minor antiquities.” Clarke would remain at the helm for the second season of the dig.42

Still, no wonder that by January 1882 Norton’s head was “grumbling” again, making it difficult to work. He found relief in a friend from happier days: Henry James had come back to visit Cambridge for several months, dropping in often at Shady Hill. A less welcome visitor from England also showed up. Oscar Wilde had returned to Boston after touring the United States, “affectations” undamaged by contact with America, and was hunting Norton, a letter of introduction from Burne-Jones in his hand. Happily for Norton if not for his son, Charles had engaged himself to give four lectures
on ancient and medieval architecture at Princeton University. At the end of January he dumped Wilde on a bemused and not exactly hospitable Eliot and fled south.\textsuperscript{43}

“Heterodox as I am,” Norton found himself “most kindly received” at staunchly Calvinist Princeton. His prime motive for accepting the invitation, he explained to Simon, sprang from

my sense of the importance of binding together our Universities with a stronger sympathy than now exists in their common work as the chief nourishers and maintainers of the intellectual interests of the country, and as the strongest bulwarks against the tide of materialism which has risen of late years so fast and so high in the new world and in the old.

He also “succeeded beyond my hopes” in a secondary intention, enrolling the university as an underwriter of the American School at Athens. Even so, he felt glad to reach home. “I am too old to enjoy travel in America.”\textsuperscript{44}

He was, in fact, fifty-four; but ever larger chunks of his life were undeniably crumbling around him. Ruskin’s memories mingled the actuality of Charles with “delirious dreams, and unkind hallucinations.” Mr. Longfellow had grown so feeble that he had to spend his days in his chamber; on 24 March the tolling of the meetinghouse bell told Cambridge of his passing. Charles still treasured gifts Longfellow had given him “when I was younger than my own Richard.” At the funeral Charles met Emerson, “his memory gone, his mind wavering”; a month later he too was dead. Between the two burials news arrived of Darwin’s death. Charles told George Woodberry that he felt “suddenly old.” The suddenness rings false; he often felt old now. He had long ago steeled himself to soldier on.\textsuperscript{45}

The School at Athens required constant nurturing. In March it had run headlong into the skepticism of Columbia’s old-fashioned president, Frederick Barnard. The \textit{New York Times} hooted at Barnard (oh, yes, “American Greek” was “good enough for Americans”); but Norton still had to travel to New York in early April to mend fences, returning the next day sure of the support of all the “leading Colleges” and “chief classical scholars.” He now expected the American School to open, ready to receive students, in the fall. European classical archaeologists were welcoming the American initiative. Norton pushed to get the Assos report through the press in time for the annual meeting in May, and the reaction to it proved just as gratifying. Adolf Michaelis, a leading younger German archaeologist, wrote to commend “the high interest and the thoroughness of Mr. Clarke’s investigations.” No
wonder that Frederick Olmsted applauded Norton’s “Grecian work” as a “real lift for the scholarship of the country—putting us on a higher plane.”

Olmsted’s commendation would hardly have impressed an archaeologist; but it did suggest how the mantle of cultural leadership, until recently draped over Longfellow and Emerson, had fallen onto Norton’s shoulders—and it also indicated how severely that garment had been retailored. The criticism that brought Emerson fame, the meditations on history that Longfellow essayed, now wore academic robes. When Norton turned away from planning the second season of the Assos dig, it was to attend the first meeting of a new Harvard faculty Committee on the Regulation of Athletic Sports and to work the academic network in hope (vain as it turned out) of landing George Woodberry a professorship at the University of California. Yet Norton’s letter of recommendation for Woodberry showed that academic professionalism had not gelled into disciplinary molds. Woodberry’s qualifications for a “chair of English literature” included not only competency in Early English and Anglo-Saxon but also “strong convictions” and the “tastes” of “a man of letters.” “He has a remarkable gift of literary expression, fine critical faculties, and a wide acquaintance with literature. He has a solid judgment in matters of literary taste, and a keen appreciation of excellence.” Cultural leadership and academic intellect could still walk hand in hand.

Indeed, very soon Norton found himself again in the thick of the fight to save Niagara Falls—or rather “not so much to save the falls, as to save our own souls.” “The growth of wealth and of the selfish individualism which accompanies it, (and corrupts many who are not rich), seems to weaken all properly social motives and efforts.” Norton was helping to coordinate another press campaign; this time he enlisted his old protégé Jonathan Baxter Harrison. Harrison, now eking out a living as pastor of a little New Hampshire church, would get a much needed salary for two months of travel and writing; Niagara would get a well-schooled propagandist.

July had arrived before Charles joined his children at the Locusts, and even Ashfield seemed an extension of his Cambridge study. The annual chore of the Academy Dinner loomed, this year luckily scheduled rather late in the dog days of August. Whatever the effort, Norton never doubted Ashfield worth it, for America needed examples of an older republic: “Men in cities & towns feel much less relation with their neighbors than of old; there is less civic patriotism; less sense of a spiritual & moral community.”

In Ashfield he began and largely finished a work of a new character for
him. Years earlier, Emerson had handed over to Norton his letters from Carlyle, a decision seconded by Carlyle. Now, the two friends dead, their families wished Charles to edit both sides of the correspondence for publication. Norton meant to edit lightly (a "brief preface" and "a few explanatory notes"), the letters being interesting enough in themselves without dressing up. Still, it made a big job for one summer. Norton deleted matter he judged boring, excised comments apt to offend living persons, cleaned up vulgarisms, repaired punctuation, corrected spelling—did all that a Victorian editor normally did. But he did it with abnormal honesty and clarity, even marking deletions, foreshadowing new standards of editorial rigor. (Two reviewers criticized Norton for not bowdlerizing enough.) Tracking down personal details and missing letters required sheaves of correspondence—the search for one batch of early Emerson letters devolving into an English mystery, with Emerson's old disciple Moncure Conway playing detective in London for Norton. Then there were American and English publishers to negotiate with; an old hand at that, Norton struck a good deal for the heirs. By September insomnia and headaches had returned, always a sign of overwork, but the bulk of the job was over.50

And it had not kept him from his children; work never did. While Charles pored over manuscript, fifteen-year-old Rupert sat at a table close at hand working on Virgil (though "not yet finding much delight" in it), ten-year-old Dick across from him puzzling over fractions, twelve-year-old Margaret busy with her French. Eliot curled up nearby with Matthew Arnold's essays, while Sally and Lily (their German governess with them this summer) were "amusing themselves" with Freitag's *Aus einer kleinen Stadt*. Aunt Grace came to visit; she was finding "her independent life much to her taste," while Sally was "acquit[ting] herself admirably" at the head of the household. In the evenings Charles read aloud from Scott—his perennial favorite—and Dickens. Norton set his children a high standard; while protecting the special domain of childhood that he recalled so fondly, he never forgot that children were incipient adults.51

So he puzzled over child-rearing, especially the difficulty of nurturing intellectual and moral imagination: an anxiety that proved consequential for later generations. The friends his boys brought home seemed to talk of nothing but sports. Norton talked this over with a former student, G. H. Browne (class of 1878), who was interested in education; and at Norton's urging—initially "to provide opportunities for his own boys," Browne recalled—Browne started the Browne and Nichols School in Cambridge,
intended to foster the culture of the imagination. One school made a good start, but merely a start. Colleges could only work with the raw material they received. Norton continued to ponder.\textsuperscript{52}

As the autumn of 1882 approached, more immediate matters pressed. William Watson Goodwin, Norton’s Harvard colleague, had already arrived in Athens to set up the American School; bookshelves were rising, chairs and tables entering the library. Goodwin visited Assos, where the work done on such small means astonished him. The handful of men still digging had about forty dollars left but expected a remittance from Norton any day. Goodwin loaned them ten pounds.\textsuperscript{53}