

**RECORDS OF A LIFELONG
FRIENDSHIP, 1807-1882:
RALPH WALDO EMERSON AND
WILLIAM HENRY FURNESS**

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Records of a Lifelong Friendship, 1807-1882: Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Henry
Furness by Horace Howard Furness

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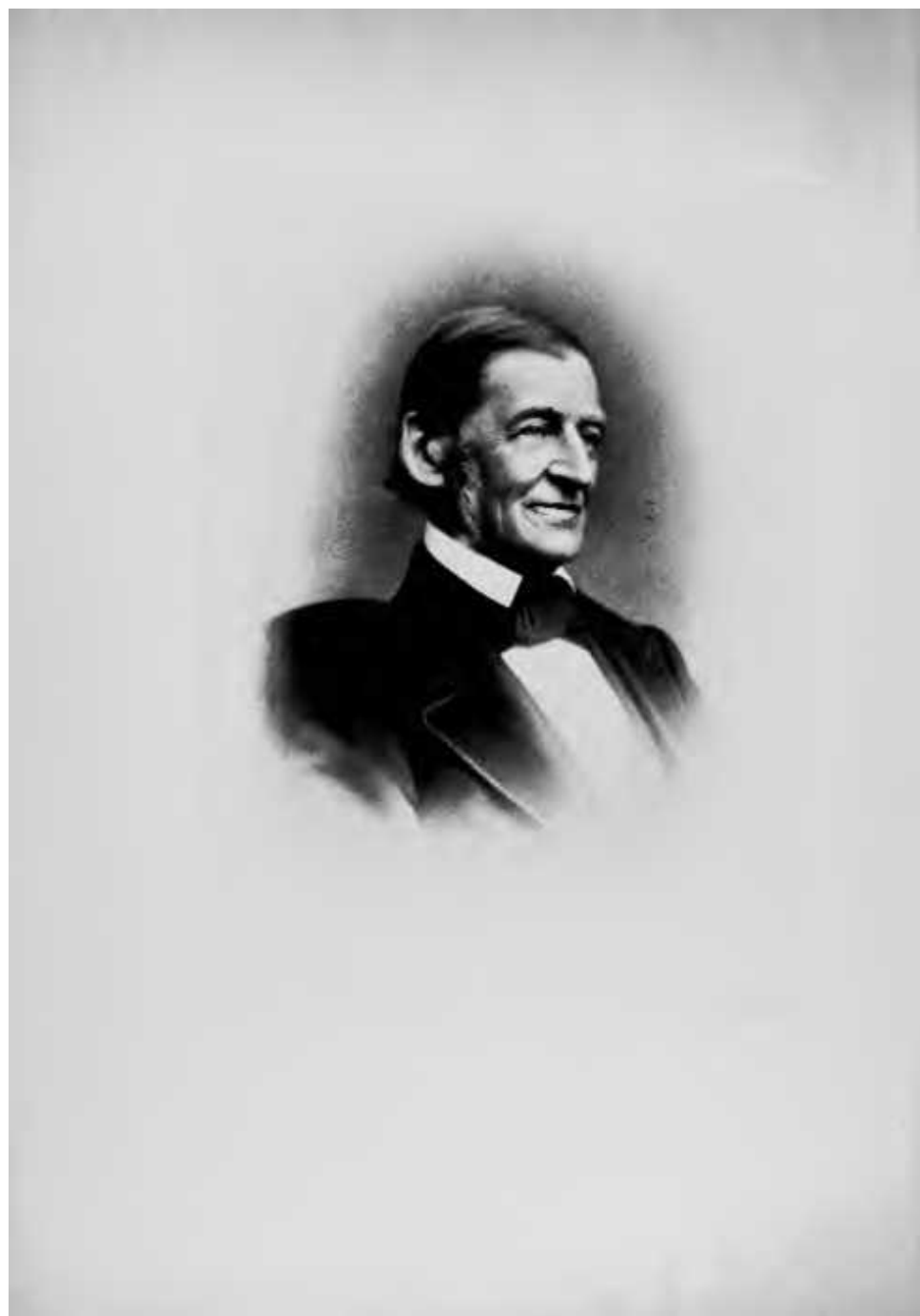
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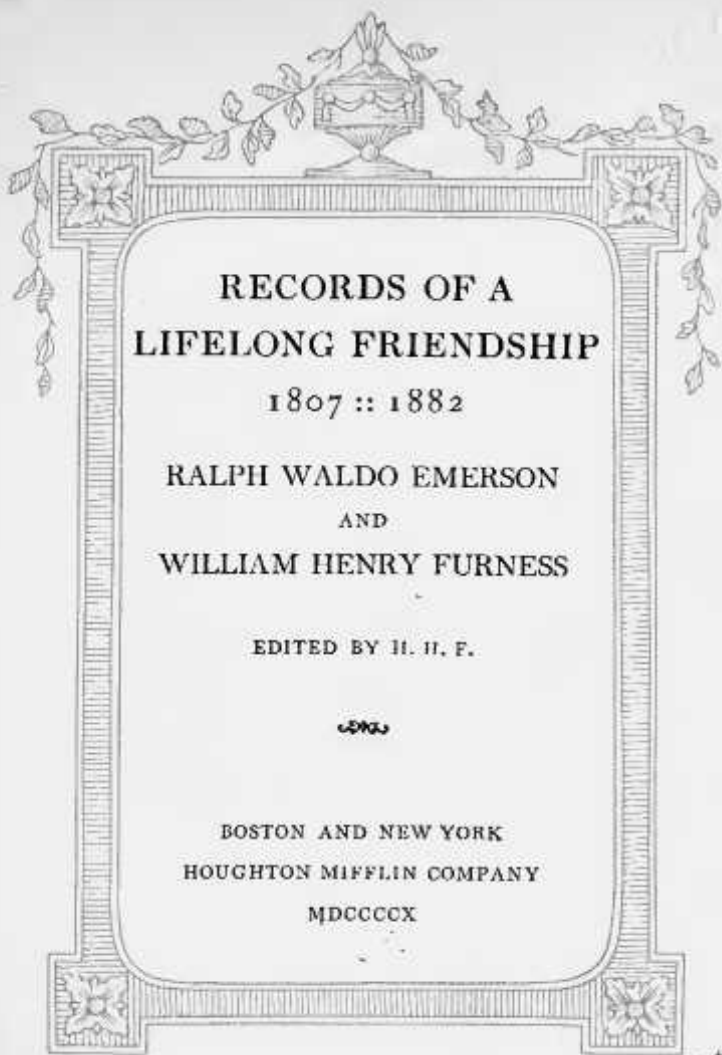
HORACE HOWARD FURNESS

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RALPH WALDO EMERSON
AND
WILLIAM HENRY FURNESS

EDITED BY H. H. F.

LONG

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INTRODUCTION

*In the invaluable Journals of Mr. Emerson, now issuing from the press under the excellent editing of his son, there occur, now and again, regretful assertions by Mr. Emerson, when introspectively analyzing his own mind, of the coldness of his temperament. At the early age of twenty he taxes himself with this lack of geniality, and asserts, that 'What is called a warm heart, I have not.'*¹ — *Again, 'It seems I am cold, and when shall I kindle? I was born cold. My bodily habit is cold. I shiver in and out; don't heat to the good purposes called enthusiasm a quarter so quick and kindly as my neighbours.'*² — *Again, 'I am cold and solitary.'*³ — *Again, 'Most of the persons whom I see in my own house I see across a gulf. I cannot go to them nor they come to me. Nothing can exceed the frigidity and labour of my speech with such.'*⁴

In all these reflections, we must bear in mind, however, that they are his own judgements on himself, confided to a private Journal, and, therefore, likely to be too severe. Indeed, his son asserts it to be certain that he 'greatly magnified his supposed lack of sympathetic quali-

¹ Vol. i, p. 366.

² Vol. ii, p. 166.

³ Vol. ii, p. 123.

⁴ *Ib.* i, p. 361.

ties.'¹ It is not for one instant to be supposed that this coldness included his domestic relations. Within the sacred circle of home his love was unconfined. This cold reserve existed only outside, in the world; the nearer the approach to the warmth of home and hearth, the more this coldness thawed. Nay, this is intimated by himself in a letter to Margaret Fuller, written in 1843, whereof the following extract may not unfitly introduce the present collection of letters: —

'In Philadelphia I had great pleasure in chatting with Furness, for we had ten or a dozen years to go over and compare notes upon. . . . And he is the happiest companion. Those are good companions to whom we have the keys. . . . Furness is my dear gossip, almost a gossip for the gods, there is such a repose and honour in the man. He is a hero-worshipper, and so collects the finest anecdotes, and told very good stories of Mrs. Butler [Mrs. Fanny Kemble], Dr. Channing, etc. I meant to add, a few lines above, that the tie of schoolfellow and playmate from the nursery onward is the true clanship and key that cannot be given to another.'

It is Mr. Emerson's correspondence with this 'Furness' that is here printed. I cannot but believe that it will serve to lighten the severity of the criticisms recorded by Mr. Emerson himself on the coldness of his own temperament, and also to show that, in its final analysis,

¹ EMERSON IN CONCORD, p. 212.

this coldness was merely a shrinking sensitiveness that only needed to be dissipated through the assurance afforded by a proved or lifelong friendship.

Dr. Holmes says that Mr. Emerson was 'constitutionally fastidious.'¹ This might account for his reserve, but possibly might not have been likely to escape the 'searchlight' which Mr. Emerson himself was wont to turn so mercilessly upon all recesses in his own mind.

In speaking of Mr. Emerson's dignified deportment, Dr. Holmes asks, 'What man was he who could lay his hand familiarly upon his shoulder and call him Waldo?'² I am very certain that my father would not have hesitated on any fit occasion to lay his hand familiarly on his old friend's shoulder, but he would not, possibly, have called him 'Waldo'—it would have been, very probably, 'Ralph.' It was not until College days that 'Waldo' was adopted, and my father's admiration and love originated in boyhood, and in them 'Ralph' was imbedded. He tried to change to 'Waldo,' but never with complete success. I have heard him when talking to Mr. Emerson, use both names indifferently.

My father was never careful in the preservation of letters. There is many a gap in the present collection due to loss and to the importunities of autograph hunters. In several cases the dates are conjectural; some have been

¹ RALPH WALDO EMERSON, p. 366.

² *Ib.* p. 368.