

New York. Nov 18<sup>th</sup>, 1881.

Hon. Chester A. Arthur.

You are again in the Capital. Hawweight is off the minds of those who wish you well. In Washington, you stand on your dignity - & while doing so, appear admirable in the eyes of the nation & the world. In New York you have very little to stand upon, & make that little less, by your own carelessness. When you arrived here, some was offered you, but you kicked it from under your feet, as if it were not of the slightest value. Excuse me for saying this, but it is true - & I am not sure that any of the friends about you will bring it to your notice. The quietness of the campaign & the fact that "the machine" made no victory, relieved you from all suspicion of meddling in the dees.

tion. You might have added to your "political capital" easily, instead of which you have been wasting it. When you came, the talk of the city was a ball - the grandest affair of many seasons - to be given in honor of our foreign guests. It was in a degree a state occasion - & it was taken for granted that you would be present. If you had been in Washington & had excused yourself on the plea of public business, your excuse would have been valid. But to be in New York & not appear, was a decided mistake. It was a want of courtesy to "the guests of the nation" - & something of a slight to the best society of the city, under whose auspices the ball was given. Now "the best society of New York" is not a thing to be bowed down before &

worshipped - under a gorgeous glamour of semi-intellectual refinement, it is governed, for the most part, by very vulgar ideas - still it represents "our highest civilization". And there is society where the vulgar ideas dominate, without disguise of any kind. Possibly you prefer this - pardon the suspicion, but you provoke it! - yet really it is best for you to be on good terms with the highest civilization. There is a report afloat that you have rather graceful manners - most of our public men have not; if you can shine in society, by all means do it. And if you can take "the best society of New York" to Washington with you, you will add very much to the brilliancy of your court. But such little vanities aside, when a man is in a prominent position,

a natural question, all the world over, is: "How does he stand at home?" And whether we take the largest or the smallest view of the matter, it certainly sounds better to say, "Socially, in the best society, rather than," "Politically in the worst." Besides flippant fashionables, there may have been many at the ball who wished to meet you - ladies of high station & culture, who, if acquainted, would gladly have opened their houses for your entertainment - men, who have been politically opposed to you but now hope well of you, who cannot publicly proclaim themselves your friends, until you have given them good reason for it, yet who, meeting you on the neutral ground of social intercourse, would gladly assure you of their earnest sympathy. Such it would be well for

you to know... But you had no time for them - only an abominable dinner of it for - you know the list. When you did have leisure to dine, it was with Mr Platt - of all people in the universe! In the whole political arena, is there a more absolute ninny? - a man for whom the public has a more cordial contempt? The way he apes Mr Conkling, without possessing an atom of that individual's peculiarity, is comical. Doubtless you laughed as much as anyone, when you heard of his saying: "We must crush that man Arthur!" I believe there is a lazy good nature in you, which makes it easier for you to pardon, than punish such offences. But even so, why need you go to the ~~other~~ extreme? Do you not see, in dining with him, what you have done? You have cancelled your power to confer

a compliment on any man by accepting his invitation. There is only one more step for you to take in this direction - be as indiscriminate in your own hospitality, & during your administration, it will be no more of an honor to dine at the White House, than at a wayside inn. Now do not be angry with me - I only tell you what I hear in a hundred respectable homesteads, as I skim through the country, riding my broomstick, on moonlight nights. You cannot make your association with that crew acceptable to your fellow citizens. For Grant, on account of his war services, there is a lingering regard, but the rest of that set the people despise. If they are thought of as your chosen advisers, there is a growl of wrath - if only as your dear & intimate friends,

then there is a groan of despair. "What can we hope of a man who has such friends?" Ah, if I could think of them as your friends, in any sense that was not a slander to the name of friendship, I would say to you, stand by them through thick & thin, & care nothing whether this generation understands or misunderstands your motives. But reflect on your whole connection with them & answer to yourself if they are your friends. Has any one of them inspired you to a noble action, or added to your life one beautiful idea. And what is their attachment to you? - if they did not hope to use you, how long would it last? If tomorrow the bullet of an assassin were in the air, flying towards you, would any one of them step between you & it? And yet

you have hundreds of friends, who have never seen you, who would do that for you unhesitatingly— with the same loyalty that a soldier on the battle-field would spring forward to rescue his General, deeming his own life well lost in saving one that his country needed. And will you, to conciliate a handful of miserable politicians, throw away the love + respect of the whole people?

Your visit to New York has injured you. Just before that a warm feeling of confidence was growing up in your favor, & you have given it a severe check. A feeling of suspense prevails, which renders people nervous, anxious, irritable. Every man is ready to snap out: "There, I told you so!" — only there is nothing, as yet, to snap at. So he takes it out in

scolding the office boy, for leaving the door open, or upbraiding his wife for buying too much lace. (Just see what wide-spread misery you cause, when you fail to do right!) The truth is, ugly rumors are started as to what you intend to do, & your associating with the wrong people gives them weight. It is said, in New York you will do so & so. Consider carefully all your actions in this quarter. By what you do in New York, you will stand or fall. It will be the measure of the sincerity or insincerity, the force or feebleness of all your protestations. Hitherto your influence here has been - excuse me for saying it - abominable. Guiteau, instigated or free, is the natural outgrowth of such politics as you & Mr. Conkling have been cultivating. If there are ten Guiteaus on your

track today, they are of your own making. If there is true nobleness in your nature, it will be the deepest wish of your life to undo the harm you have done. If there is true greatness in you, you will accomplish it. But it will be no easy task. To reform New York, would be almost like reforming the devil. Possibly you have not sufficient force of character for the work. However, you can make it a matter of conscience to do all the good in your power - & not, in a weak moment, be guilty of any of those equivocal actions which will arouse against you the suspicion of treachery. That would cast a slur on your wisest deeds & bring to naught your best endeavors.

Your Cabinet, of course, weighs on our minds terribly. And there is

no dearth of rumors regarding it. They say that Mr Blaine is to leave you. Is that so? Would it not be better to keep that old fox just where you can put your hand on him? It has been said, that one of the problems before you, was "to cut off that gentleman's head, without letting him know it." Can you do it more effectually than by keeping him just where he is? In the Cabinet, he is out of mischief. Out of the Cabinet, there is no knowing what he would be in. If you hold a dog by the tail, he may turn around & bite you - if you hold him by the ear, he may want to, but he can't. If you gave him twenty other offices, he would merely feel that you were following your policy & he was free to follow his. But if you keep him in the one that Garfield gave him, you have a hold on all that is best in his nature. If his affection for his friend



was half what he professes, the events of last summer must have told on him deeply. Any deathbed is solemn - but the patient heroism of Garfield's would move the hardest heart. The people worship the memory of our late President - all that he did is sacred in their eyes. And while Blaine holds his present position, his loyalty to the dead binds him to a higher sense of duty towards the living. If not, so much the worse for him. If he misused his power, or played you false in any way, the injury would recoil upon himself. So far as you can, govern men through their virtues, not their vices. It is much more difficult, but when you succeed, it is better for them, for you & for the whole community. I did not like B's appointment, when it was made, but I think he is a fitter man now, than he was then. He has a certain amount of ability - if

4.  
it were run for high & large aims,  
instead of small & selfish ones, would  
he not make something of a states-  
man?

It is said, also, that you are  
to have a Southerner in your Cabinet.  
By all means, do - but dont let  
Sen Mahone choose him for you.  
That Lynchburg Postmaster was enough  
for the public - & ought to be for you.  
You may fool the North, but not  
the South, by picking up any sort  
of a Southerner. Cannot you find  
some man who has become promi-  
nent since the war - who will not  
shock our prejudices, & yet has the  
confidence of the people about him?

And dont be too intimate with  
those Radquarters. Be satisfied with  
belonging to a disreputable crowd  
in your own state, & dont go hunting  
them up all over the country! You  
are clever undoubtedly, but there are  
some things you cannot do. You

cannot be on the wrong side of everything in state politics, & on the right side of everything nationally. Twice two make four, & not even a Readjuster can twist them into three or five. When I heard Grant praising them, I thought there must be something wrong about these Readjusters, so I mounted my broomstick immediately & went down to Virginia to investigate. And it was just as I supposed - all the respectable business men, who are building up the prosperity of the community, were opposed to them violently. Readjuster is merely a more euphonious name for repuditor - as if we in New York should politely take to calling pickpockets, prettifiers, digitateurs. Repudiation is directly in violation of the principles of the Republican party - & for that party to take it up, in any form whatever, is simply disgraceful. So

dont let the party do anything disgraceful, while you are taking care of it - please.

And when you find your Southerner dont give him charge of the army or navy. There is no use in putting the South into temptation. Do you recall, in '60, how noiselessly munitions of war were moved from one end of the country to the other? It is not at all likely that the Southern people will ever again rise against the government, yet it should be remembered that there is a faction the exact size of which it is difficult to ascertain, which has never given up the rebel cause as lost. Also, that Jeff Davis is still alive - that from time to time he has made speeches, very daring for one in his position, & quite absurd, if not be followed ever by actions - that persons, not related to him, have died & left him

fortunes - that funds belonging to the South are said to be in Europe - that recently there has been a sudden & unaccountable demand for Confederate bonds. If they ever mean to strike again, now is their time & a sudden dash at Washington, the capture of yourself & Cabinet & a few Republican Senators would throw the government into confusion & the Senate in hands of the Democrats. If anything of this kind is to happen, it will not be, as of old, a rebellion, prefaced by legislative acts - it will be a conspiracy - the springing of a trap & armed men rising out of the ground. The thing may not be probable, but you can make it impossible, by recognizing it as a possibility. A few detectives in the South & a few more troops around Washington, would render any such scheme hopeless.

In regard to the Navy & War <sup>5.</sup>  
Departments, why could you not choose  
as Secretaries an Admiral & a General  
— men of unquestioned character &  
ability, whom the country believes  
in? That would be an easy way  
of ignoring political distinctions  
& of giving wide-spread satisfaction.  
Or is there any law that the Cabinet  
must be governed by the same  
principles as a jury — each man  
being able to swear that he knows  
nothing whatever about the  
matters he is called upon to  
decide? One might think so  
sometimes. What a list of nobodies  
the newspapers set up for you  
to select from. Do not hurry your-  
self, but put us out of our misery  
as soon as you conveniently can.  
We are growing desperately impatient  
to find out what sort of a man  
you are — & you may as well let us  
know first as last. Your Cabinet

will throw a strong light on the subject. There is a sad dearth of great men in this great country of ours - but can you not, by diligent searching, find a few who have some spark of greatness in them? Remember, your name remains - those you write around it, will add to, or dim its lustre - & a constellation is always brighter in the heavens than a lone star.

What an absurdly long letter I have written you - quite a little hurricane of "fresh air", is it not? But you have not caught cold, I am sure - you know too well how to take care of yourself.

And yet, if by any chance - the chance of skipping ten pages - you have got as far as this, I must say one thing more before closing. It pained me so to read of your going about with detectives around you.

- it gave such a mournful glimpse of your life. What does it mean? Is it only a precaution? - or are you really in danger? So often I have thought it might be so, & then have shut the idea out of my mind - it seemed too unlike all that we believed & boasted of in our free & law-loving country. What a wearisome strain it must be upon you - no wonder you take little pleasure in going about - to need protection must be almost like being a prisoner. Yet, will you understand what I mean, when I ask you not to regret it? It gives you keener sense, than anything else could, of the condition of the country, of the absolute need of political reform. More than that, danger is ennobling. When we look death in the face, we are ashamed of the wretched trifles on which we have wasted our time & strength - then, first, we realize what life is, how few,

how simple & how grand are its  
purposes. When I think of you in  
danger, my faith in you is perfect.  
May you live to act out all your  
good aims & to serve your country  
lastingly. — Goodbye.

Yours Sincerely,

J. J. P.

[Julia J. Park]

[11/6/20]  
[15938]



(Open !!)  
(To be taken in small doses.)