

LXXV

Washington, D. C.,
January 23d, 1909.

MY DEAR CLARA:

Friday, that is, last night, we had another large dinner at the White House, of over thirty covers, and the President was apparently in good humour again. After dinner the women went into the Green Room to drink coffee and to gossip, and the men into the private dining room to drink *liqueurs* and to gossip also. The President was at the large table with the German Ambassador on his right and Senator Carter on his left. I gathered a small table in the corner with Stumm, Prittwitz of the German Embassy, Billy Phillips, and Straight, and one or two foreigners without any special attributes to remember them by.

Stumm is most charming, very handsome, and has something about him which an American or an Englishman can comprehend and get hold of. I was so struck by this that I asked him what it was about him that was not Teuton. He laughed and said his grandmother was a Miss Grimes, either of Virginia or South Carolina, that he always felt at home with a Southern man in spite of the fact that he usually hid the fact of his American blood, preferring to be considered all German for political and other reasons. The Stumms, from what I gather, have in Germany a position similar to that held in this country by Carnegie and other big steel folk. I know he is very wealthy, but yet very simple, direct, and possesses great charm. . . .

Well, I am rather getting off the track; for I wanted to follow the President's humour. During the dance he occasionally came to the Blue Room to receive with Mrs. Roosevelt and was certainly not at ease. Finally he said:

"I am going to my study, but if Senator Clark [of Wyoming, I think the state was] comes in I wish to know at once."

Here is where I am a poor chronicler, for I could easily find out what state this particular Senator Clark is from by looking it up in the Congressional Directory, but I prefer to be vague and uncertain rather than take the trouble to go downstairs for a book, which would involve hunting for matches and lighting lights and possibly getting in a bad humour before I returned.

It was a half hour later when Senator Clark came in and as soon as I presented him to Mrs. Roosevelt I sent a junior aide to notify the President that Senator Clark had come.

The President came down, passed in and out of the rooms, waltzed once with Mrs. Richardson, once with Miss Ethel and then "chanced" to run across Senator Clark. They talked in the Green Room for a few minutes, and then I saw the President take him by the arm and lead him away, I presume to his study. Later in the evening, when he appeared, he was his old self again. He joked, petted his wife's hand, and he and Alice sat in the Blue Room, and laughed and talked for a half hour.

The dance was not quite as brilliant as the first one, I may mention in passing, but far nicer than the second.

Well, to continue to camp on the President's trail: When I reached the White House office this morning at 9:45 he had not come in, and only Assistant Secretary of State Bacon¹ and I were waiting for him. When he did arrive it was with a rush, and we stood ready to see if there was anything he wanted and to leave as soon as possible.

¹Rotber Bacon, member of the firm of J. P. Morgan & Co., 1894-1903, Assistant Secretary of State, 1905-1909, Secretary of State, 1909, in active service in the World War, died May 29, 1919.

He made us both sit down until he had looked over his engagements and then said:

“Do you know I am glad I learned to play poker when I was young. If you two do not know poker, learn it even if costs some money, for it may stand you in good stead some time. The Senate through Clark laid down its hand last night, and I am inclined to think my bluff went. However, I am inclined to keep my pistol ready, for sometimes after the cards are on the table the stakes are still in danger.

“I have really had a very disagreeable two days. The Senate called for certain papers in the Bureau of Corporations this week and on Thursday ordered Herbert Knox Smith to transmit all papers on a certain subject in his office. He came to see me and to tell me that most of the papers were given in a confidential way; that if they were made public no end of trouble would ensue. I ordered Smith to get a decision from the Attorney-General that these papers should not be made public, and yesterday the Committee on Judiciary of the Senate summoned Herbert Knox Smith before it and informed him that if he did not at once transmit these papers the Senate would order his imprisonment at once or the committee would. As soon as he reported this to me I ordered him in writing to turn over to me all the papers in the case, so that I could assist the Senate in the prosecution of its investigation.

“I have those papers in my possession, and last night I informed Senator Clark of the Judiciary Committee what I had done. I told him also that the Senate should not have those papers and that Herbert Knox Smith had turned them over to me. The only way the Senate or the committee can get those papers now is through my impeachment, and I so informed Senator Clark last night.

“The Senator informed me that the Senate was only

anxious to exercise its prerogatives and that if the papers were of such a nature that they should not be made public the committee was ready to indorse my views. But, as I say, it is just as well to take no chances with a man like Culberson, who is behind this thing, so I will retain those papers until the 3d of March at least. Some of these facts which they want, for what purposes I hardly know, were given to the Government under the seal of secrecy and cannot be divulged, and I will see to it that the word of this Government to the individual is kept sacred."

We did have such a nice dinner this evening at the White House. The President and I were the only men and the women were all intimate friends of Mrs. Roosevelt. . . .

The President had to go to another dinner at the Shoreham at 10:00, given by the New York delegation to Vice-President-elect Sherman, but we had about an hour all together in the library. We all sat round in a circle and Miss Tuckerman began by saying:

"Mr. President, tell us some state secrets."

"Emily," he said, "I have never been asked in quite so open a way before to betray my country, but go ahead. I will answer any question which you have a mind to put. . . ."

"Mr. President, do you really think the German Emperor gave out those interviews to Hale¹ and others about the English which it was reported he gave out?" asked Miss Tuckerman.

"I am sure of it," said the President.

¹William Bayard Hale sent to the *Century Magazine* an interview with the Kaiser which was mysteriously suppressed. Hale, who was originally a clergyman, became later a confidant of President Wilson, achieved some notoriety for his pro-Germanism in the World War, and recently died, an expatriate, in Europe.

"How do you account for it?"

"He had a brain storm—that is all. He has said practically the same thing to me. He once wrote to me of those 'filthy English lies.' There was never a better expression than that of brain storm to describe certain conditions which sometimes arise in perfectly sane men."

Mrs. Lowndes said she felt very apprehensive about the coming cabinet on account of the appointment of Knox as Secretary of State. Each took a turn at him. Miss Tuckerman said he could not be a big man, because several years ago he took her out to dinner one evening and showed considerable agitation because he had not gone out according to his place in line, and that when they got up from the table he said to her: "Come with me, my place is ahead of the Postmaster-General, and I do not like to waive my prerogatives."

Finally they all agreed that Mr. Roosevelt should be consulted in the formation of a cabinet and so said. He laughed heartily and said:

"Some say I have not been altogether successful in regard to cabinet-making. I am sure, Mrs. Hopkins, that from your elevated post you must have condemned some of my selections at times."

"Yes, at times," she murmured bravely, "but you always had a great Secretary of State, and that after all is what we want to be well made."

"If Mr. Taft were to ask my advice as to his cabinet I would not know what to say. I would possibly suggest to him to retain the present Cabinet and to make changes as he saw fit, but he cannot ask me and I cannot volunteer advice in the matter. If he should ask my advice he would feel compelled to take it, whereas if he asks Root's advice he can take it or not as he chooses."

"No, Taft is going about this thing just as I would do,

and while I retained McKinley's cabinet the conditions were quite different. I cannot find any fault in Taft's attitude to me," he said most seriously.

"It is a difficult thing to find a Secretary of State. There are not many Roots lying above ground to be picked up at random. Knox is a great lawyer, and I think he will be a splendid cabinet officer. I say this, too, recognizing also that he is not a man of the world and limited in his knowledge of other countries and the affairs of other governments.

"Taft will also have trouble finding someone for the Court of St. James's. Everyone is trying to get my indorsement for President Eliot, who has just retired from the presidency of Harvard, but I cannot take any part in it. In spite of my own feelings toward Whitelaw Reid, I should like to see a very poor but cultured man succeed him. We have all the prestige abroad which money gives, and what I should be proud to see now is a very strong contrast. I am getting tired of seeing our Ambassadors entertain. I want to see them entertained instead, but this discussion would lead me into criticism of the Reids, which I am not willing to be led into, however much I desire to see education and culture made the standards for preferment. I cannot forget, either, while possessing great admiration for Eliot, that he did not support Cleveland in his Venezuelan message, which to my mind showed a great want of judgment, certainly a lack of breadth of character, which a successful Ambassador should always possess."

Just then the usher announced that the President's secretary had come to accompany him to the Sherman dinner, and he said:

"Oh, how I hate to go! I am having such a good time gossiping with you dear people. I have been as indiscreet

as the German Emperor, but if you feel repaid I have no regrets."

I don't think I told you that the diplomat whose attentions to one of the "Court Circle" shocked Mrs. Roosevelt stopped in front of the President, at the judiciary reception, and informed him that he had asked to be relieved. The President did not take it in at first, but grasped his hand again and told him how very sorry he would be to see him go and that he hoped the request would not be complied with. Mrs. Roosevelt, who had heard the President's remarks, straightened it out by saying, as he shook hands with her, that she would hate to see him go, but that she felt he was acting most wisely. The lady in the case wrote declining the reception and the dance, but Mrs. Roosevelt got me to tell her that it was her wish for her to appear at the reception, as she would have to appear some time, and that if she did not come she might cause comment.

After I delivered the message I also reminded her what Madame de Staël had said—that a good fitting gown was more support than a good conscience—so to be sure and wear her most becoming frock, which she did. As she came down the line Mrs. Roosevelt held her hand quite a time and asked her to remain for the supper, which promptly gave her cachet in the eyes of fashionable Washington which was gathered behind the lines. . . .

ARCHIBALD.

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Washington, D. C.,
January 25 [1909].

DEAR CLARA:

The other day John L. Sullivan, who was in town, called on the President and presented him with a gold-mounted rabbit's foot, and the President brought him to luncheon.