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August 30, 1928

Mrs. Charles Bennett Smith
Lake Placid, N. Y.

My dear Mrs. Smith:

I wired you this morning, thanking you for your telegram, and now I will dictate the letter suggested.

I am glad that you wired me for I felt just a little uneasy about my letter, fearing that you might have felt that it was a matter on which you did not want to talk and on which I ought not to have asked you to talk even confidentially. When I saw you at the DeWitt Clinton the evening of Governor Smith's notification speech and you told me that your sister was so ill, I felt that it was not even proper to ask you if you had received my letter. Anxieties such as yours should release one from all outside matters of this sort, so I did not try to see you the next morning as I had suggested to Mr. Maher during the day that I would do.

It is good of you to suggest that I go to Lake Placid. It is impossible for me to leave here now or indeed for ten days or two weeks, and I don't know that it really is necessary for the piece of work I have on hand. This is the case. Of course this is confidential.

As I think I told you, I am to do an article for Collier's Weekly on the case of Mrs. Knapp. I wanted to get, for my own guidance and not for quotation, your candid feeling about the whole matter. I confess that the more I get into the thing the more sorry the case seems to me for Mrs. Knapp. Many of her acts were out and out dishonest; and what is still worse, that she used people in your Department and in her own to carry out her purposes. On what basis she justified her acts at the time I don't know. I am inclined to think that she was a vain, ambitious woman, without any clear sense of political ethics - one who had accepted the lowest machine standards as the way to get on. If I don't mistake, Mrs. Knapp has always loved not actual achievement but activities - sitting at the head of committees, making speeches, being seen. She wanted to be a leader, and if she was a leader that seemed somehow to her as being important.

This seems to have come out in her school, club and

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This seems to have come out in her school, club and political political work in Syracuse. 2 When she came to Albany, she had in her own eyes, and in the eyes of many of her satelites, reached a great height, and she played the part of the dominant, conquering woman. And there was so strong a feeling among subordinate women that she had done a great thing for her sex in getting elected that they were willing to play up to her. If Mrs. Knapp said so then it must be all right.

I am right, am I not, in thinking that you warned her about the necessity of ordering all her work in exact accordance with the Civil Service requirements? And I am right, too, am I not, in believing that Mrs. Knapp was not a woman friendly to advice or to counsel from those more experienced than herself? Several things that have come to my attention make me feel that she was very 'high hat' from the start with everybody.

She seems to me to have had an entirely exaggerated idea of the importance of entertainment, fine dressing, display of various kinds, and from the start to have lived in Albany beyond her means. The argument that the position requires it is of course a common one with both men and women to justify expenditures over and above one's income.

It is curious that self-respect, sense of dignity and fitness do not hold people back from this kind of performance, but I have been reluctantly forced to the conclusion that Mrs. Knapp had no necessity for an inner self-respect - possibly didn't know what it meant, that she saw only the outside of things.

Her effort to bluff the thing through at the start, her continued lying, the tragic way in which she has involved her stepdaughter, Mrs. Mind, who, from all I can learn, is a fine and honest woman, completely deluded by the idea that Mrs. Knapp was a very su=erior and wonderful person.

And the way she is trying to escape punishment. If she would come up to the scratch and take her medicine, I could forgive her much.

I feel very seriously about this whole thing, dear Mrs. Smith. There are other women like Mrs. Knapp, not trained to a strict sense of responsibility about money. Our training in money matters in the past has been so bad, ~~deceptive about~~ what really is important

To care not

in public service, that it is achievement, actual results in work done, not titles and ceremony and applause that really matters.

Then there is the difficulty that comes from inexperience in working with other departments. I am shocked at the idea that she should not at first have sought your advice and asked the help of the Commission in so ticklish a thing as taking a census, with all its past history. If she had done that she would not have trapped Maher and Julia Ryan as she seems to have done.

I should not, I am afraid, have troubled you with all this long dissertation on Mrs. Knapp. But I want to get her right, and to do that I have got to have the help of those who came in contact with her, those who were embarrassed by her. If you at your convenience - and I well understand, dear Mrs. Smith, that, under the circumstances, convenience may not be now - will correct, confidentially, any misapprehensions, wrong tacks that I seem to be on, I shall be greatly obliged. Also, if you will give me any hints.

You can see from this letter whether you really think I should go up to Lake Placid. You are so kind as to suggest that I be your guest. I could not do that, under the circumstances, dear Mrs. Smith. I would find a place somewhere in the neighborhood and run in to have a talk with you when you are free. But, as I say, I cannot tell now when I could go, and I am not at all sure that it is necessary. If you think I am on the right track, tell me, and I will not trouble you further.

With all good wishes and with deepest sympathy for your anxiety about your sister. I hope your feeling that her case is hopeless is wrong.

Very sincerely yours

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