October 12, 1939

Dear V R:

How thoughtful you are. The package of Bemax came this morning and I have already taken a dose with my morning fruit, as I always do. As a matter of fact I emptied my last can yesterday so you came in the nick of time. It was very good of you.

You spoke of the Liver and Iron Tablets. I used liver tablets for a year and thought I got good results, but dropped them as I began to feel better. But when I came home from my visit with you I ordered a bottle. Between them and the Bemax I expect to keep as normal as is proper for one almost eighty two.

And thank you for recalling to my mind that note of John Hay about the Lincoln party which heard Booth in The Marble Heart. I knew that I had lost it, was sure that he had heard him some time but could not locate it.

I have been working on an article on him which I call The Making of an Assassin. The truth is to make it anything of real moment it ought to be a little book. You see I have stirred up what I think is a significant and interesting episode, neglected by all his biographers - the time he spent in 1864 in Franklin, Pennsylvania, looking after an oil well which he with some friends were drilling. What happened of importance to my mind there was that he came into a strong Copperhead community. It was there, too, that he got his idea of kidnapping Lincoln, I am convinced, born of the anger of the North that the administration refused to exchange prisoners. He saw in Lincoln great kidnap value and once he had the idea, which I am sure was his alone - I do not

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believe he had any Confederates in the Oil Region - he lost no time in going to work on his scheme. It took him seven months. It was not until the very end that he had any idea of assassination. I do not think I have got a very good article, but so far as it goes it is sound. I am such a slave to facts, dates and things, I mean, that I fail to see the greater facts often.

You always bring me back to them and give me a sense of my ~~inaccuracy~~ inadequacy - good for my soul, no doubt, but sometimes very humiliating.

It was good to see you the other day. Some time before you are buried in snow and I am quite incapaciated I am coming down again.

Always affectionately

P.S. One thing you say in your letter I have said more than once in things I have written about the life in the White House, and that is what a gift of God Hay was to Lincoln. It was awful, the life of the White House, and poor Mary Lincoln could not do much to brighten it. Do you notice that Hay speaks of her as "the hell cat." And he tells two or three damning stories of her influence to wheedle money out of people.

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