

Enjoying the Presidency

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

To Maria Longworth Storer

Personal

Washington, December 8, 1902

Dear Maria:

Just at this time I could have received no other present which would have appealed to me so much as the picture by Encke, and I thank you for it with all my heart. I took an immense fancy to the picture. I cannot say that I think it looks particularly like me; but most emphatically it *does* look the way I should like to have my children and possibly grandchildren *think* that I looked! I have always wanted to have a picture taken in uniform, although I have felt shamefaced about sitting for such a picture in view of my very brief military career. So I wish you to feel that you have given me the very thing of all others I wanted.

Please tell Bellamy to give my most cordial regards to the King of the Belgians if or when he sees him. I was much interested in your description of your last meeting with him. I have always followed his career, especially after you had told me all about him, at close range, so to speak. What an extraordinary thing it has been, the way Belgium has played her part in the international development of Africa and to a certain extent of Asia. I have always felt that the Belgian experiment was one which through the coming centuries would assume the most far-reaching proportions and importance as a precedent no less than in itself.

Well, I have been President for a year and a quarter, and whatever the future may hold I think I may say that during that year and a quarter I have been as successful as I had any right to hope or expect. Of course political life in a position such as this is one long strain on the temper, one long acceptance of the second best, one long experiment of checking one's impulses with an iron hand and learning to subordinate

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one's own desires to what some hundreds of associates can be forced or cajoled or led into desiring. Every day, almost every hour, I have to decide very big as well as very little questions, and in almost each of them I must determine just how far it is safe to go in forcing others to accept my views and standards and just how far I must subordinate what I deem expedient, and indeed occasionally what I deem morally desirable, to what it is possible under the given conditions to achieve. Hay and Nicolay's *Life of Lincoln* has been to me a great comfort and aid. I have read it and profited by it, and often when dealing with some puzzling affair I find myself thinking what Lincoln would have done. It has been very wearing, but I have thoroughly enjoyed it, for it is fine to feel one's hand guiding great machinery, with at least the purpose, and I hope the effect, of guiding it for the best interests of the nation as a whole.

Edith has enjoyed it too. I do not think my eyes are blinded by affection when I say that she has combined to a degree I have never seen in any other woman the power of being the best of wives and mothers, the wisest manager of the household, and at the same time the ideal great lady and mistress of the White House.

The children are as well and happy as possible. Groton has been a great thing both for Ted and for Kermit; and Archie is doing excellently at the public school. The changes in the White House have transformed it from a shabby likeness to the ground floor of the Astor House into a simple and dignified dwelling for the head of a great republic. I am very much pleased with it.

With love to Bellamy, and renewed thanks, *Faithfully yours*

To Archibald Roosevelt

Washington, April 11, 1908

Dearest Archie:

Ethel has bought on trial an eight-months' bulldog pup. He is very cunning, very friendly, and wriggles all over in a frantic desire to be petted.

Quentin really seems to be getting on pretty well with his baseball. In each of the last two games he made a base hit and a run. I have just had to give him and three of his associates a dressing down — one of the three being Charlie Taft. Yesterday afternoon was rainy, and the four of them played five hours inside the White House. They were very boisterous and were all the time on the verge of mischief, and finally they made spitballs and deliberately put them on the portraits. I did not discover it until after dinner, and then pulled Quentin out of bed and had him take them all off the portraits, and this morning required him to bring in the three other culprits before me. I explained to them that they had acted like boors; that it would have been a disgrace to have behaved so in any gentleman's house, but that it was a double disgrace in the house of the Nation; that Quentin could have no friend to see him, and the other three could not come inside the White House until I felt that a sufficient time had elapsed to serve as a punishment. They were four very sheepish small boys when I got thru with them! *Your loving father*