

PRESIDENT'S ROOM,
COLUMBIA COLLEGE.

New York, April 27th, 1892.

The Hon. John Bigelow,
21 Gramercy Park,
New York City.

My dear Mr. Bigelow:

Since learning from you the other day of the practical adjustment of all questions arising under the Tilden will, I have been giving some reflection to the situation which I suppose now to exist, in the hope that it might prove possible in some way to bring about cooperation between the Tilden Trustees and Columbia College for the advantage of the city. I am sure that you will not misunderstand the spirit in which I write and that if I am mistaken in my assumptions you will not hesitate to tell me so. I assume that it was Mr. Tilden's object through the creation of the trust which he aimed to establish to provide a great public library for New York City, which should stand as a memorial of him and of his public spirit. I assume that the result of the litigation concerning his will is to leave the Trustees with a sum of money at their command, large certainly from certain points of view and yet inadequate for the fulfilment of Mr. Tilden's desire to found a great public library in New York on a comprehensive scale. I assume, therefore, that the problem now before the Tilden Trustees is to use

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the funds which are available in such a way as to make the noblest memorial of Mr. Tilden as nearly as possible along the lines originally marked out by him.

Making these assumptions, I venture to make the following suggestions for such consideration as you may think them worth. A library by itself is in a certain sense a passive factor in the equipment of the city. If the library can be made a centre for research and for ^{education} instruction, it becomes at once a great positive force. I have thought that such a result may be ensured by the Tilden Trustees, in the direction of science for example, by fitting the Tilden library in with the existing resources of the city in such a way as to develop and encourage the maximum amount of cooperation. If the Tilden Trustees were to set before themselves the idea of developing in the city a great library of science, and should house that library in a building so planned as to give accommodations not only to the books but to the various scientific societies of New York, now existing or hereafter to be formed, they would secure the advantage of drawing to the library under favorable conditions the great body of people most likely to use it advantageously. If the Tilden Trustees should find it possible to provide certain funds for scientific publications by these various societies a still stronger bond of union might be developed. I do not see

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why the Tilden Institute might not hope to stand related to science in New York, under such a system wisely developed, very much as the Royal Institute stands to London. A considerable proportion of the members of all these societies inevitably will be men connected with Columbia, if the programme goes no further than this; but I think there would be added advantage if the Tilden Trustees should be willing to go so far as to give the Tilden Institute a recognized place in the university system of Columbia College. This need not imply its merger in the corporation of Columbia nor in any way interfere with its independent management, if that is deemed to be important. It would, however, tend very strongly to develop cooperation between the Institute and the University, and secure for the Institute the third element of usefulness to which I alluded in the beginning of my letter, - that is to say, the element of instruction which should convert the library into a positive force in the community. If you will examine the formation of the University of Vienna, for example, you will find that almost everything within the city at all germane to its work has been included in the university system, and I certainly need waste no words in endeavoring to show to you the advantages to accrue to New York through cooperation on the part of those interested in similar things. The University would contribute to such an enterprise

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the element of permanency and of the highest scientific ideal.
It is not important at this time to enter into details nor would
it be becoming unless I should learn from you that the Tilden
Trustees are willing to consider such a project. If such be
the case, I will be glad to confer with you at your convenience.

I am, My dear Mr. Bigelow,

Yours faithfully,

Lester Low.

6/21/1892
to Mr. Bigelow
Lester Low

President Low

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John Bagelow

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Yours faithfully,

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