copied and mailed

Apl. 12" 1890. 1

Benjamin Harrison
President –

Sir:
I suppose I do not need to assure you that I ~~have the utmost in three~~ two ~~things; first, the security of the rights of colored men in his right~~
~~& of free ballot and free speech at the South~~.

take the utmost interest in ~~the~~ securing a free-ballot with its essential pre-requisite free-speech at the South.

I trust ~~that~~ you will also ~~have no doubt~~ credit me with ~~the~~ a most sincere desire that the Republican party may succeed in holding the House of Representatives this Fall, ~~since~~ which is all the more intense, because I regard it as a peculiarly critical ~~moment~~ juncture, ~~for~~ not only for the Party but for the ideas to which I have devoted my strength for a score of years with a pertinacity and absence of ~~all~~ hope of personal advantage which will attest the accuracy of my own description of myself as a "Fool". I am not unaware that this ~~and~~ pertinacity puts me in the category of "cranks" and my refusal to seek to attain political ends by candidacy for political office or entering the race for partisan control, no doubt

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2018

lends color to this belief.

I do not complain: one must take the consequences of his own action and whether right or wrong, there is no question but my course was of my own election. What I would like you to consider, however, is whether the views of one who with the training of the lawyer, the experience of the practitioner and the judge, for fifteen years and who by almost yearly observation and continuous study for ten years more, has ~~sought to make~~ made himself familiar with every phase of a subject, is not worthy of special consideration ~~as an element~~ in regard to it as an element of party policy.

No doubt many of our party leaders regard me as insubordinate and I will not deny that me might almost as well try to drive out leviathan with a hook as to lead me against my conviction of right. At the same time I have always surrendered my conviction when the majority of the party on its representatives, decided against me, studiously refraining from all allusion or action which could impair success, and sometimes contributing towards it by action ex-

ection, under circumstances to say the least, very irritating.

There is a very general impression among them two, no doubt, that I think more of the establishment of personal liberty, and free speech, free assembly and a free ballot at the South than I do of the Republican Party. And this is quite true. I prize the Republican Party only as an instrument by which the welfare of the Republic may be secured, and I could not hesitate in making choice between the object and the instrument. Indeed I am the more attached to that party, however, because I regard it as the surest and most fitting instrument for the attainment of these particular ends as well as subserving other interests of the country. It is not, of course, essential to these results — no party is ever essential to the attainment of a great purpose. It may hinder, delay and impede by inaction or opposition — it may even throw away its claims or give them to an enemy — but the end comes all the same. The Whig Party

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

was afraid to espouse the cause of personal liberty and right and insisted that every one who sought to divert attention from its pet doctrine of "protection to American labor," and fix it on the condition of American laborers, was a traitor to its interests. Yet there came a time when every intelligent man saw that the ruling Party died from sheer lack of nerve to take advantage of its opportunities and follow out its own tendencies. I do not say this will be the case with the Republican Party and certainly do not desire it; but I do not hesitate to say, as one looking over the political field with somewhat clearer of that personal bias than the politician whose eyes are fixed on his own chances or harm, that the opportunity is favorable for such a mistake and the chances are not so very much great against its occurrence.

I suppose no one will deny that the odds are with the enemy in the impending conflict. Not that it is at all certain that they will win, but that the present House of Representatives is the result of a supreme effort of the Republican Party with everything in

its favor except patronage. Even in this respect, we had the hope which fires every aspirant to do his utmost. This year this hope will be eliminated. The offices worth having have been filled. Instead of that there are some disappointed aspirants. I do not care to strike a balance between gratitude and discomfiture as elements of strength. Viewing the whole field, however, I am of the opinion that unless there is some new issue, some inspiring and attractive thought which will compell public attention and form discussion along a new line as well as the old one, injected into this campaign the Democratic gain in the House will be more than enough to overcome our present majority. I give this opinion after a careful study of each district and due consideration of the conditions so far as they are known or can be ascertained.

I do not say this to object to what has been done or proposed. I have a profound contempt for the man who fails merely because he cannot have his own way. I have not forgotten either Thier's aphorism "There will always be an issue — because there will always be money;" but I wish to suggest that even the argental "issue" has always proved less available and effective in an off-year than in

so far as the Rep. Party is concerned, a presidential campaign. These are hard, cold facts. They ought not to be shirked or ~~denied~~ hidden. The real question is how they can be avoided and a different result secured. To accomplish this is successful state=craft: to accomplish it along with a great public good, is the highest triumph of statesmanship.

Perhaps before considering the means, I may be allowed to refer to one particular danger in regard to which I am ~~perhaps~~ better informed than most politicians — better perhaps than any. The colored people of the United States are more generally awake to the opportunity for securing their rights as citizens which ~~lies before~~ presents itself to the present Congress — and also more determined to use the power they have, to secure those rights, than ever before. You may have observed, also, that the power of the old political leader among them has greatly decreased. Kew men, young men and ~~men determined~~ men less fully committed to thick and thin allegiance to the

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

Republican party are coming to the front.
I think their power as an electoral element of the next House of Representatives at the North, has been ~~so~~ quite neglected. As I estimate it, after a careful study of their distribution, I am inclined to think that by merely refraining from voting they can change the complexion of the next ~~House~~ House by merely refraining from voting their Rep. vital. I do not know that they will do this, but you know as well as I, that if they were white men they would (and I trust you realize that they are growing more like white men every year, both in color and character) if the Republican party failed to ~~secure~~ exercise its power to secure them in the ~~exercise of the~~ free exercise of their political rights.

It would require too much space to go into the details of their distribution in Congressional Districts at the North but the following summary of their distribution in states, will show you the probability of my estimate. — The number of colored voters in each of the states mentioned will, for reasons it is unnecessary to specify, somewhat exceed the numbers here given:

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Now, what the colored man North and South believes, is that a Republican President, a Republican House and a Republican Senate, are able to do something to secure ~~a free ballot the~~ a free speech, a free ballot and fair returns of votes at the South.

The first step in this direction is to secure a free and fair vote for Members of Congress. This may be all that will ever be necessary. The ~~result~~ immediate effect of such a measure will be to unify ~~and~~ ~~and~~ the colored vote of the North and to awaken to unusual activity the Republicans of the South. This fact alone, avoids ~~the~~ the danger of loss at the North which might arise from organized inaction, and offers a reasonable hope of sufficient gain at the South to more than meet the loss from Democratic gerrymanders at the North.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

But this is only a part, and as I believe much the smaller part of the advantage to be gained by such a measure. The following facts remain to be taken into account:

1— At the South the law will either be evaded with or openly and bloodily resisted, since its success is practically impossible if the law be carefully drawn. Either alternative will be to the advantage of the Republican party. The country is in no mood to trifle with such things and a new reign of the Ku Klux would as certainly secure Republican victory as a strict enforcement of the law.

2— The effect would also, in my opinion, be to strengthen us at the North. It is a mistake to regard Protection and personal liberty as antagonistic ideas. I have received more than 5,000 letters from all parts of the Union, on the subject within a year or so, and I know that a measure designed to protect the Southern voter would awaken a great deal of enthusiasm and give unquestioned satisfaction to our party. It should be remembered that we cannot be hurt by a little more "nigger". The time to annoy him is over and the result of such a bill will be to put the Democrats in a bad predicament — to oppose the

bill will be dangerous. It is either necessary or unnecessary and the claim that it is unnecessary opens the whole subject.

3 – There is unquestionably a strong public sentiment throughout the North in favor of purer election methods, which it would be dangerous for the Democracy to ~~oppose~~ antagonize. This sentiment has not been cloyed by disappointment and is almost every where a most patent ~~sentiment~~ thought except among politicians who believe only in the effectiveness of financial agencies to carry an election.

The accompanying bill (H. R. No —) introduced by Mr. Kelley of Kansas, is the result of many weeks of application on my part. In the fitting of legal means to desired ends, I have had not only some experience but recognized success. The Constitution and Code of North Carolina, both mainly my work as ~~[illegible]~~ draftsman, have stood the test of hostile legal criticism with unusual success. I believe this act is not only constitutional, but practical. Acceptance or resistance is the

only alternative. It fastens responsibility and makes crime almost certain of detection. I believe the measure necessary to Republican success this year and in 1872 also.

I consulted with members of both Houses of Congress during my stay in Washington and from them as well as the general sentiment in regard to the administration, I am fully convinced of two things:

1- That a special message upon the subject, terse, pertinent and original, like one of your campaign speeches, would secure the passage of such a law.

2- That it would strengthen the administration throughout the country. By this I mean that it would be an effectual answer to the unscrupulous slanders of Republican malcontents. It would constitute that touch of personal individuality which coming after so long silence would thrill like an electric flash — especially if it came unburdened as your own personal act.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2012

I do ~~not~~ not mean to say that you ought to ~~not~~ prepare such a Message. I do not know or pretend to know what one in your position ought to be. You should know much better than I and you must take the responsibility. I only send you my views because I occupy a somewhat unique position ~~as~~ in regard to such questions, and give you my reasons for them, which you can judge for yourself.

~~I send you this~~ I send you also by ~~to-day's~~ same mail a copy of Mr. Kelley's Bill with my remarks upon the same before the Committee of the House. I quite understand that you do not need a dictionary in examining a project of law, but long consideration of the question may have taught me some things you might

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2015

not catch in a hurried examination.

With sincere regards I remain

Yours very truly.

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013