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Memorandum From Margaret M. Hanna to Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson, June 19, 1911

Margaret M. Hanna

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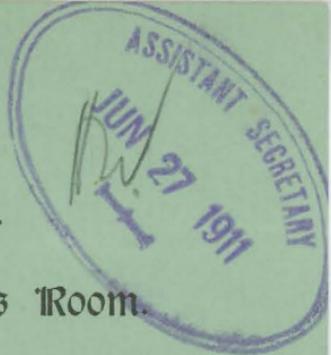
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

Second Assistant Secretary's Room.

MEMORANDUM.

June 19, 1911.

Dear Mr. Wilson:

Complying with your request, I examined the voluminous reports upon precedence. They will not afford the Department much suggestion in arranging its own precedence. A few countries have precedence fixed by law, but most of them face our own problem of finding it difficult to draw up general rules of priority as regards the heads of entirely distinct and independent branches of the Government. I submit a brief synopsis of the reports, having selected only a few of the typical countries.

After reading the reports I am satisfied we can get no material help by consulting the foreign practice, because, first, such practice is not at all uniform, differing in each country; and second, our own institutions being on a democratic and different basis from those of any other, even republican, country, their practice would not help us much. On the whole our list of precedence in its important points, (especially with regard to the Diplomatic Corps and the placing of the Secretary of State) does not differ especially from other countries.

The only way for a fixed set of rules to be determined upon, would be I think for a Board representing the Executive, Legislative and Judicial ^{branches} to draw them up. The material already at hand, with the exception of a few minor points, would afford such a board full information regarding foreign practice.

Respectfully,

M. M. Hanna

P.S. As a preliminary step, it possibly might be helpful to transmit to our Missions abroad our tentative list and request a report as to the comparative precedence of the officers most nearly like those on our list. I doubt however if such request will elicit much more information than we already have.