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Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to Philander C. Knox, September 1, 1910

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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September 1, 1910.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Hereewith I submit for your signature a letter to the President about the Mexican Flags. I also enclose copy of Mr. O'Brien's interesting despatch of July 14th on Japan's interpretation of the new Russo-Japanese Convention rather indicating that the Japanese Government would not feel embarrassed thereby from participation in the Chin-Ai project; also copy, for your information, of the message we sent from Valley Forge the other day on the Nicaraguan situation. The representatives of Estrada at once telegraphed exactly as suggested, and they are expecting favorable response.

Mr. Conant's examination of the bankers' project for Honduras left so many points in doubt that I have this afternoon sent Mr. Dawson to New York with the papers to confer separately with Jennings and with Conant, who appears reluctant to appear in the matter at this stage, in order that in a couple of days we may be ready to make the final draft. My idea is to ask you then to see whether the Morgans will accept it in the form we decide, with Mr. Conant's expert advice, to be just and equitable to Honduras. I hope
hope you will be willing to do this when you pass through
New York on your way back from Belgrade Lakes.

Recalling my earnest opinion that for the good of
our diplomacy you ought to let the banking group see you
in New York (to touch upon China, Honduras, Liberia, Nic-
aragua, the Pan-American Bank, etc.), will you authorize
me casually to give Davison a word of encouragement about
China and to let him know that you will be glad to see
him when you pass through New York about a fortnight hence
on the way back from Maine? I should be grateful for an
early reply to this inquiry. Meanwhile, possibly you
would care to see them a few minutes in New York Saturday,
merely as a preliminary to the latter meeting with the
Group. About when, by the way, do you think you will pass
through New York on your way home?

I presume you will wish your copies of telegrams,
daily bulletins of outgoing and incoming important despatches,
information series, copies of extra important despatches
and my letters (the briefer the better!) to be sent you
as usual even during your fishing trip? If you do not
wish this done, please let me know:

Adverting to our conversation about my leave I was
very
very anxious to discover precisely what you preferred, but I appreciated your reluctance to express a preference which you knew I should regard as mandatory. After thinking it over, in view of the number of pending matters of importance which it has been my duty to handle during the two months since you left, it has seemed to me best to remain here until the 23rd instant. In this way when you return on the 25th I shall be able to leave matters in such a way that during the remaining fortnight or so that you expect to be at Valley Forge the more important affairs can, without much inconvenience, receive your personal attention and direction to a degree which will abridge the remaining short interval until your final return to Washington without leaving any real interim, greater continuity and uniformity of direction being thus assured. It is my idea to go to Europe, and I shall be very glad to undertake during the last ten days or two weeks before starting home a confidential mission to Constantinople. I am now getting the work of preparing the estimates and the foreign relations' part of the Message in hand, so that by arranging to be back here, say, ten days before Congress meets, that is about November 24th, I should be on hand to help in any way I could in
in the final preparation of these things. Unless this plan is in any way unsatisfactory to you I shall proceed accordingly.

Mr. Norton has been writing me very earnestly desiring this Department to find some brief employment in Europe for Mr. Forster, who, he says, "has worked sixteen hours a day for five presidents". Mr. Forster is now in London. The only legitimate thing I could think of would be this. Mr. Jay, who is about to go abroad, could take to London a trunk full of the new cipher and Mr. Forster, who is in London, could visit the different capitals delivering them, say three or four weeks, the Department paying his actual and necessary expenses. This distribution would have to be paid for somehow in any case, and it is important. It would not cost much. Do you favor doing it? Please answer soon.

Senator Warner is still moving heaven and earth to get you to speak at the Trans-Mississippi Commercial Congress about November 22nd. Relying on Mr. Charles Wilson's letter to Mr. Hale, I have reiterated that it will be impossible for you to do so. I had wondered somewhat whether that was a good occasion for an important speech.
8:30 p.m. After dictating this letter I received from the White House, by direction from Beverly, copy of the President’s telegram sent you at Valley Forge. I think there can be no doubt that I left at Valley Forge copy of Calhoun’s important telegram. The gist of it was that the Regent was sending a Special Confidential Mission to this country and to Germany with a view to aligning Germany, Austria and the United States for the "open door" in Manchuria; that China would take on an American Financial Adviser and reform its currency; that the Chinese Government desired to float a large loan in the United States; and that the Special Mission would bear an autograph letter to the President with a view to close consultation between the two governments as to the Chinese situation. The fact that Tong-Shai-Yi, the original protagonist of American cooperation, has been placed in charge of Chinese railway matters; the persistent and entirely plausible rumors that Yuan-Hsi-Kai, a friend of this country, the most powerful man in China, and the patron of Tong-Shai-Yi, is about to return to power, as well as the recent changes in the Chinese Foreign Office,—all point the same way,—that is, to especially favorable relations between the United States and China. The inference from Mr. O’Brien’s reports that Japan’s view of the Russo-Japanese Convention is not unfavorable to that country’s acquiescence in the Chin-Ai...
project, the very real possibilities of German cooperation, the increasing clamor in Great Britain for a different Far Eastern policy and the many reasons there are for believing that the Russian bluff can be called, all create a posture of affairs in which it would be madness for the American bankers or for this Government to feel impatient or pessimistic. The Morgans should remember the black eye they dealt their country apropos of the Hankow-Canton line. It is to be hoped that American bankers will realize, as American manufacturers are beginning to do, that although the foreign field may now be more trouble than it is worth, nevertheless, unless they are wholly improvident and opportunistic, they will see that to fail at present to seize the splendid opportunities to create for themselves a powerful position in the foreign field will mean that when they really want it it will have been preempted, - to say nothing of the world-wide loss of prestige incidental to a pusillanimous and hot and cold weak policy in the foreign field before the world. Even their large domestic transactions and interests are so interlaced with those of European bankers that I should think, even from a purely business viewpoint, this prestige would have a real cash value.

I intended to make this an addition of a line or two but have been carried away with the subject. I should think
think that with such points as these and an emphasis of the fact that we look to the bankers to avail of increasingly numerous opportunities up and down Latin America as well as in the Far East, it would be easy to restore their enthusiasm and insure its duration. I recall that Straight’s idea was that they were going to close up their Agency to save expense and let the International Bank represent them. One would think they would forthwith buy up and galvanize that bank. As for Straight, I want to say in justice to him that I believe him to be entirely sincere and not self-seeking as to China matters.

Don’t forget Latin America and the Pan American Bank; and please forgive the length of these notes.

With the best regards and hoping you will have a delightful trip, I remain always,

Yours very sincerely,

Huntington Wilson.

The Honorable P. C. Knox,

The Waldorf-Astoria,

New York City.