



4-16-1918

Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to William H. Burnham, April 16, 1918

Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson

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Recommended Citation

Huntington-Wilson, Francis Mairs, "Letter From Francis Mairs Huntington-Wilson to William H. Burnham, April 16, 1918" (1918). *World War I Era Documents, 1914-1918*. 97.

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THE LINCOLN
Locust and 13th Streets
Philadelphia, Pa.

April 16th, 1918.

My dear Professor Burnham:-

Returning from a visit to Washington I find your letter of April 8th and hasten to reply upon the points which you raise therein:

Things like this necessarily move slowly and one has to do a good deal of work before one can feel sure that results will ultimately come. My hope is that in the course of the next couple of months, say, four sections of the pamphlet may be completed,- if that period of time is sufficient for your convenience.

I am quite ready to accept your suggestion that the writer of each section be responsible solely for that section. From the materials I have already sent you, you will see well enough what my own point of view and my own interest is in this matter. I hope to see the pamphlet go out as a measure of preparedness in the highest sense and as such, with the backing for example of the National Council of Defense. I hope that it may show upon its face that each of its sections has the backing of an adequate amount of weighty, professional authority as well as that of the branches of Government specifically interested in each subject. As for the material itself, my own feeling is that it must be above all frank, striking and practical.

I am glad to tell you that Dr. Putnam, of Providence, has now agreed to write upon the subject of "Children's Well-being".

With reference to your query whether there should not be included a brief statement of the aims and the need of mental hygiene, let me make this remark: I myself am very much impressed with the idea that a presentation of the subjects of early education and children's well-being, along the lines of scientific principles of psychology and physiology practically set forth, for example with the simple elucidity that Professor James used in his "Talks to Teachers", must necessarily by implication show quite clearly what grown people are to strive to do for their own bodily health and in the effort to control their minds and emotions and to educate themselves. If I am right in this I should hope that our pamphlet would be certain by clear implication to cover the fields of adult physical

hygiene and of mental and moral hygiene, without requiring separate sections for this purpose. Of course, each section may be not one, but two or three thousand words, if that shall prove necessary even with the maximum effort at terse, striking statements.

As to your last question, I can't guarantee anything as to the pamphlet at this stage, my feeling being that if one considers it a worth-while project, one must take a chance upon its ultimate practicability. If under these circumstances, authorities like these are willing to make the sacrifice necessary to produce a tentative pamphlet, then I should think that a conference between the four authorities who had produced the four sections, and myself, might result in a definite line of action for calling the various kinds of backing which I think you will agree with me will be necessary to success.

Dr. Putnam made the good suggestion that the United States Public Health Service was very likely indeed to be interested and to be willing to publish a pamphlet in its Bulletin and perhaps arrange for reprints from the Government press office for distribution through other channels.

Given the number of organizations now inspired by the war to work for the public good, I can hardly doubt that if we succeed in producing a pamphlet of real, practical value and scientific soundness along the lines indicated, and presented in a striking, popular manner, we shall not fail to find funds and a suitable channel for its distribution, nor shall we fail, I think, to gain for it the cachet of official support.

Trusting that your point of view and mine are in accord as to the kind of pamphlet that is desirable and that you will think it worth while as a patriotic work to contribute to the possibility of its success, I am, dear Professor Burnham,

Yours very faithfully,

Professor William H. Burnham,
Department of Pedagogy,
Clark University,
Worcester, Mass.