

Official Papers of M. Carey Thomas

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October 12, 1918.

Dear Mr. Taft:-

As I said to the secretary who spoke for Mrs. Taft over the telephone this morning, and as I telegraphed you later in the day, we are afraid that Helen may have influenza. On Monday night she went to bed with a temperature and has been in bed since then. Her temperature was about 101 yesterday and to-day is a little higher, over 102, but she is very much more comfortable. Our Physician-in-Chief, Dr. Thomas F. Branson of Rosemont, Pa. (telephone number, 5 Bryn Mawr) says that he is not yet sure that she has influenza, and thinks that this is a rather unusually strong reaction from vaccination. She has been vaccinated with "influenza combined" three times, and if she has influenza he says that it will be the first case in his practice after three vaccinations. In any case he fully expects her temperature to be down tomorrow. She is now being taken care of by a nurses's assistant who is living in the house and looking after her during the night, as well as during the day, following in every way the doctor's orders and communicating with him two or three times a day by telephone. Dr. Branson asked me to say to you that the shortage of nurses is so great that he does not wish to get a trained nurse for your daughter unless he thinks that she needs it. He says that if you will trust him he will promise that if he sees the least necessity he will take an excellent nurse away from one of his patients who is so ill that it will not make any very great difference and put her in charge of Miss

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Taft's case. If, however, you feel anxious and will telegraph him he will do this at once.

As the head of our Health Department, Helen has been perfectly indefatigable and has managed the exceedingly difficult situation in which we have been and still are with the utmost firmness and ability. She has worked over it day and night, telegraphing and telephoning anxious parents, meeting them when they come and following each case. We believe now that the worst is over, as no new cases have developed within the last two days. Unfortunately while she was doing all this one of her maids was ill with influenza and Miss Noyes, as well as some one else whose name I have forgotten, whom she had invited to stay with her. Apparently the cook and Helen herself took care of them. I had not the slightest idea of this or I never should have allowed it, and we would of course have sent her one of our nurses' aids.

I shall be away on Sunday, but I have arranged to have the acting head of our Health Department, Miss Or Lady, the Secretary of the college, telegraph you tomorrow exactly how Helen is.

As I am leaving my office I have asked my stenographer to sign this for me.

With very kind regards,

Sincerely yours,

William Howard Taft, Esq.,
2029 Connecticut Avenue,
Washington, D.C.