

18, Norham Gardens  
Oxford, England  
xii. 1. 33.

Dec. 12, 1933

Dear Abe:

I rejoice to infer that you have been thoroughly restored to health. That's most important.

And no less do I rejoice that the Institute is prospering in the only way in which prosperity means anything for the Institute, namely, that men who really care about learning and scholarship are drawn to it and that they are working as authentic individuals devoted to the common enterprise of extending the area of knowledge and gaining insight into its meaning. Evidently the mathematical school is all and more than you could have hoped for. You have brought together a first-rate orchestra.

Of course the School of Politics and Economics will present wholly different problems. So far as I can gather from the Minutes and from your letter, I should find myself in agreement with Stewart that fruitful endeavor by that School implies work by "younger men of promise" rather than any of the men, so far as I know them, of stabilized reputation. Such <sup>younger</sup> men are as scarce as white crows, so far as I know the field both here and with us. In economics there are some coming unknown men at Oxford and I think at Cambridge, also in political science. I will know better about such things at the end of my stay than I do now. I am clearer than ever that I care very little for what - I am speaking very frankly - the Taussigs and the Schumpeters think. Brandeis makes them all seem like little children - and vain little children at that. One of these days someone

will write on the arrogance and the humorlessness of the distinguished economists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

About Mitrany I have no doubt. I am sure he is a good bet. I have been seeing him, of course, but not very often because for the present neither of us has a car. Naturally you're uneasy about Ena - so are we. Indeed, things have been so doubtful about her recently, we have preferred not to talk much about her to Mit.

It's idle to say anything about Oxford to you, except that you have left a wide circle of friends behind you. I see a number of them every time I get to All Souls, and the two people whom perhaps Marion and I like most are Sir Michael Sadler and Adams. They seem to me to have the breadth and imagination and awareness of the world, without any compromise with learning, or rather with every sense of the indispensable function of learning to civilization, that are the attributes of the greatest of academicians - Whitehead and Acton and Maitland, though of course neither Sadler or Adams are of the intellectual stature of Whitehead or Acton or Maitland. Life is very pleasant and variegated, and we enjoy it in all sorts of ways. The first term is over, and vac work and pleasure is ahead. I spent a weekend at Cambridge, and I'm going again next week to stay with Keynes. I need much experience with Cambridge to have any adequate basis of judgment between the two places.

Yes, I know Lowe of old and have seen a good deal of Chapman. What a great institution the Press is.

With warm regards,

Ever yours,

Dr. Abraham Flexner

VF

P.S. As to Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. The  
place for him is Balliol - that would  
be his preference on many counts, and  
Balliol is very anxious to have him.  
Money is the rub. Evidently Mendel-  
ssohn is totally bereft, except what-  
ever he will be able to salvage by sell-  
ing his grandfather's musical Mss., and  
between you and me, Balliol is very, very  
hard up. It gets down to a matter of  
a few hundred pounds for three years.  
I am almost incapable of raising money,  
but I'll take a try with you. I think  
that in all sorts of ways it would be a  
fine thing if I could tell Lindsay that  
A<sub>m</sub>erican friends would like to contribute  
towards Mendelssohn's call a thousand  
dollars a year for the next three years.  
Would you feel inclined to ask the Bam-  
bergers for that, or have you some other

angel who would like to make that contribution in money towards learning and the promotion of international good feeling and practical ways of realizing it. I know it would bring fruit out of all proportion to that annual thousand dollars.

If you can, I wish you would send me a cable.

Frankfurter  
Oxford

is ample address.

December 16, 1933

Dear Felix:

Many thanks for your kind letter of the first. I sent it to Ben immediately because I knew that he was in touch with the Rockefeller Foundation, and he at once telephoned me that he had spoken to Gregg and would send you a radiogram. He was very hopeful that the Foundation would furnish Belliol the money needed to add Mendelssohn-Bartholdy to their staff. If such proves not to be the case, let me know and I will explore in some other direction.

I wish very much that you might have been on this side during these first months of the Institute. What has happened is not exactly what I planned but is much better than I planned. I have frequently used the phrase, "paradise for scholars", without any very distinct notion of just how a paradise would be created. What has happened is the following: we have five mathematicians of great eminence, each with his own work to do. We have admitted to the Institute about twenty persons who have shown capacity for independent work - persons who have already attained the rank of assistant professor or associate professor in American universities or abroad. They have been turned loose in Fine Hall without any regulations whatsoever. The professors know of course what they want to do and are doing it. The students shop around in order to find the man who can be most helpful to them. They make their individual arrangements, sometimes meeting them once a week for fifteen minutes or a couple of hours, sometimes oftener, if there is occasion.

F.F.

December 16, 1933

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Every afternoon tea is served informally and there is, to my astonishment, an attendance of about sixty, comprising both the advanced workers and the staff of Princeton and our own folks. They talk mathematics but not only mathematics and drift in and out without explanation or ascertainable reason. Then once a week there is a Mathematics Club meeting, at which some member of one of the two institutions presents a paper. Students and professors attend, and after the paper there is informal discussion, and I should defy anyone to make out whether the persons participating are professors or workers. Inasmuch as our workers have all been teachers working under a heavy routine for some years, they are as happy as birds, doing precisely the things which they have wanted to do. I feel sure that after a year or two spent in this way they will be enormously more useful to their respective institutions and to the science of mathematics than they would otherwise have been. I had rather thought the workers would be recent Ph.D.'s, but this has not proved to be the case, and very fortunately, as I should think. They are Ph.D.'s who have been seasoned and matured by responsibility. Many of them have wives, and one of them has four children.

I am searching about, as I hope you are, for persons who will start the School of Politics and Economics. Perhaps we shall have to begin that more embryonically and let the men find themselves for a year or two before doing much in the way of attaching workers to them. Time is really of no importance.

I am delighted that you and Marion love Oxford and that you are more and more persuaded that we bet right when we chose Mitrany. I am worried about Ems and the effect upon him, but I say nothing. The men whom you mention - Whitehead, Acton, Maitland, Adams - represent the type of person whom we want to assemble.

Perhaps I ought to add in conclusion that there is absolutely no organization. We have no record of anything beyond a list of names and a list of persons to notify in case of emergency.

F.F.

December 16, 1933

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When you go to Cambridge, I hope you will see one of the great men there - Sir William B. Hardy, 5 Grange Road. All you need to do is to write him a note, telling him you are my friend, and ask to see him. He is one of the glorious men.

Give our love to Marion and to all our Oxford friends.

Though we are living in paradise, for Princeton is a charming, intelligent, and hospitable place, which has received us with open arms, we have never ceased to yearn for Oxford.

Ever affectionately,

ABRAHAM FLEXNER

Professor Felix Frankfurter  
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AF:ESB