November 9, 1918

To His Excellency,
The Governor of Montana.

Sir:

I want to put before you, and ask your interest in, the case of a young man, now confined at Deer Lodge prison, who, I am convinced, is the victim of a mistake in the administration of the law in your State.

The name of this young man is Fred J. Wills. He is about twenty-two years of age, and his home is in Bridgeport, Conn. His mother and the family have been known to me for a number of years. Fred, since boyhood, has been threatened with tuberculosis and at intervals has had hemorrhages from the lungs. This has made it necessary for him to change frequently the climate in which he lived and has made it impossible for him to continue very long any any one kind of work.

Last winter he ran a jitney in Bridgeport, and in the spring, when drafted, sold his car for $325.00, which he deposited in a Bridgeport Bank. The examiners in the town passed him, but two days after he went to camp he was turned back because of the condition of his lungs. Almost immediately on returning home he had a hemorrhage, and, in the end of June, started for Montanna, where he had spent at least one summer before at work on a farm, and with good results.

According to the story which he writes his mother, and which, from what I know of the boy, I believe to be true, the night before he reached Montana, he and an acquaintance he had made on the train were asked by a drunken man, who claimed he had considerable money on his person, to take care of him.

In the morning the boys left the train at or near Deer Lodge. The man, who was still under the influence of liquor, gave each of them $20. and told them to get their breakfast. They then left him. Later in the day the man seems to have conceived the idea that the boys had robbed him, and he had Fred arrested. The other boy had already left town.

Although Fred protested his innocence, and later, when the man had come to his senses he asked for Fred's release, the

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sheriff refused to let him go. The man who caused his arrest left the town, and the boy was kept in jail. He had another hemorrhage of the lungs, and when he asked for a physician, he was told by the sheriff he could have one only if he pleaded guilty. Much frightened, the boy finally consented to do this.

The upshot of his pleading guilty was that he was sentenced to two years. Several months of the term have already passed.

Now, my dear Governor, from what I know of Fred Ellis and his family, I am convinced, as I said, that he is the victim of what looks to me like a stupid administration of the law.

The boy's mother is an admirable woman. For many months she was a nurse in our family. She has brought up five children, with intelligence and devotion, alone, for her husband died years ago. They all have been steady and honest. Fred himself has always been a good boy. He had no reason for stealing money as he had in his pocket a bankbook showing a deposit of $383.

I am asking your interest in the case, hoping that you not only can see your way to releasing him but to take some steps towards taking the stain from his heretofore good record. Will you not be good enough to assure me of your interest in the case?

Respectfully yours,

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