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BEATRIX FARRAND  
LANDSCAPE GARDENER  
REEF POINT  
BAR HARBOR, MAINE

August 18, 1944

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss  
1537 28th Street  
Washington, 7, D. C.

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Dearest Mildred:

Ever since you and I spoke of the possibility of a low wall around the ellipse instead of a high enclosure I have been thinking of it with the best brains these hot days have permitted. The only reason I am bothering you with a note now is that Miss Havey hopes to come to Reef Point next week to work on ellipse sketches as it seems to me important to have them ready to review at the end of September, if my visit during the Conference is not inconvenient.

In writing Miss Havey to think over the question I tried to put the subject before her so that she would think my mind entirely open on the possibility of a total change in the surroundings to the ellipse. Somewhat to my surprise Miss Havey answered that of course she was looking forward as she always did to work for Dumbarton, but that she could not see the ellipse opened to the world - so to speak - and a part of the distant landscape, the Catalogue House, the Forsythia Dell and the big maple. Her opinion coincides completely with my growing conviction that the enclosure is a very large part of the sense of remoteness and peace which the ellipse has always given me.

Perhaps I got the wrong impression from you but I thought we were speaking of the possibility of a low wall punctuated by columns carrying an architrave rather than a solid wall delicately and gracefully planted, perhaps open on the east and west as well as on the north and south. Don't think that this note is intended to be anything except a quest for information. It by no means is an insistence on a point of view as I am honestly trying to be as open minded as you are but so far I have not been able to "see" an open ellipse rather than the classic quiet of the enclosure you helped me to create. Could you send me a telegram as I don't want to waste time in fruitless sketches of what you also may have decided is an unwise point of view for the future of the ellipse. Needless to say Miss Havey and I will try one or two sketches of the low wall and see if we can see the problem from the point of view you and I discussed last June. One reason I don't particularly fancy the low wall and openness is that it would seem almost a repetition of the low wall, columns and lattice of the Lovers Lane Pool, so please set me right.

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Van Rensselaer's excitement and enthusiasm is touching, as a letter that came from him only a day or two before the good news reached Santa Barbara was even more low-spirited than I told you, and I have a sort of feeling as though your gift had just come in time to save a severence of his relation to the Botanic Garden. No report has yet come of last Friday's meeting. It is hard to wait patiently to hear how the good news was received. Of course you

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and I hope that the Board will back Van Rensselaer more consistently than it has in the past and that its make-up will be increasingly favorable rather than unfavorable to what he is trying to do.

You will like to hear that last week we had a visit from Mr. Judd of the Arnold Arboretum and Robert Cameron the former head of the Cambridge-Harvard Botanic Garden. Both were greatly interested in Reef Point and what we are trying to do, and both spoke with enthusiasm of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden and of Van Rensselaer. Mr. Judd reminded me that you had been interested in a suggestion he made to you some time ago at Casa Dorinda regarding the desirability of preparing a book for the Pacific states which would correspond to Rehder's invaluable Manual of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs for the eastern states. Judd is convinced that such a book is horticulturally and botanically needed and while its preparation is going to be a slow business, stretching over a considerable number of years, and the work of a good many collaborators, it is just the sort of scientific and horticultural enterprise which the Botanic Garden could participate in with credit to itself and to the benefit of botany and horticulture - of this - more when we meet as it will be very useful to know what you think about an enterprise of this sort as a project for the Garden to work over for a number of years.

We think we have had it hot here as it has climbed to 90 for a few days but when we think of what you are going through we feel as though we sat in the shadow of an iceberg.

Yours ever with affection and admiration,

Trix

The Master of the House gains from day to day in spite of heat & general stickiness - It's glorious to think that (unless Mr. Thacher says he can spare no time for me in conference days) we'll see each other again in about a month -