

BEATRIX FARRAND
LANDSCAPE GARDENER
REEF POINT
BAR HARBOR, MAINE

August 23, 1944

4254

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

My ever so dearest Mildred:

Your great epistolary effort came yesterday morning accompanied by the day letter to which a reply was sent later in the day lamenting poor Robert's phlebitis which at the best of times is a tiresome and disagreeable complaint but in the hot weather and when he must want to be actively on foot it is - as the British charwomen say - "cruel hard". Our best love to him and our deep sympathy.

The excitement in Santa Barbara comes across the continent by air-mail in waves of happiness and relief. Your generosity in giving not only what you had originally suggested to me but adding another considerable sum to the amount has evidently not only assured Van Rensselaer to the Garden but he says he thinks it has added years to the General's life. As a matter of fact the gift came at a crucial moment as Van Rensselaer told me that the day before it was announced he had had an inquiry from the Beverly Hills Park Commission as to whether or not he would consider the appointment as Superintendent - and he added happily that he was now going to answer he was not interested. Evidently things have not been too easy this summer as he says his wife has not been well and anxieties have worn them both, so with a sign of happy relief he is now settling down to his real work which he means to make more important than ever. You and I must have a word or two on projects for the future so that the Garden really takes its place as an honored scientific institution. You have far too much to do to bother with Van Rensselaer's proposed pamphlet reviewing the needs of the Garden and so on, so send it on to me and I will have a crack at it and dispatch it from here if you will give me your blessing.

If my letter to you implied that I had sent a telegram to the General regarding your gift it must have been completely twisted in transmission as I have been as mum as a clam about the whole enterprise since it seemed to me fitting that you only should speak of it. What I intended to say was that Max and I both read your letter to the General and approved it without reservation. Of course the Garden and all concerned with its welfare must know that your recent great gift to it is the limit of your generosity except for certain small occasional contributions. If we need a \$5.00 this or that I shall come to you without hesitation but shall keep all of the Board as far as possible from bothering you with Garden friction and only tell you of work in which you are likely to be interested. There is no need to burden your mind with other details.

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Now as to the letter from Radcliffe. Both Max and I feel that you would do wisely to keep completely out of that problem as they should have advice from a professional and this question is all interwoven with the Harvard point of view as to campus planting and grounds care. In fact Max wrinkled up his nose and said with a gleam in his eye that he saw an undercurrent in the Dean's letter of desire to draw you into a problem in which they would use you -whether for funds or advice. It will be easy for you to keep out of the question by saying that you have neither time nor training to attempt to solve their problem. The letter from the Dean is re-enclosed to you.

Thank you for telling me about Mrs. Cameron's death. A letter will go to Elizabeth as it will mean a real break for her as she adored her aunt who was one of the strange creatures who delighted in torturing people to whom she was deeply attached. In her youth how lovely and enchanting Mrs. Cameron was but it seems rather a sombre old age.

Now as to the book question for Dumbarton Oaks. The \$75. fund for Miss Sweeney is to come out of the regular Beatrix Farrand Agent account and you will not have to be bled for this. The only amount needed is the \$25. which you are going to send Miss Sweeney.

You don't know with what a sigh of relief your commendation of the Dumbarton Oaks notes was received. They have seemed to me so much less good than the place deserves that I had been fearful lest you would agree with me too heartily. Now I shall go on with fresh courage to try and straighten out some of the grammar and uncurl some of the sentences.

It is glorious news to hear that you and Waterman are again at work on additions to living quarters for "S" Street, more exhibition space on 32nd Street, and more library space in the big house itself. It seems as though I could hardly wait to see even preliminary sketches as every brick or stone that goes into or out of Dumbarton has a vivid and thrilling interest for me. So you know with what keen eagerness I shall hope to see the paper dream of what is in your mind. Clearly a power house will have to be placed somewhere down the hill and if the little rest house is a convenient site certainly a high stack could be discreetly veiled from most points of view.

Thanks for speaking of the full list of inscriptions. I think I now have them all so put this off your mind.

The only hesitation I had about coming to Dumbarton this autumn was lest my being there might add another burden to the whole establishment, but Mr. Thacher says he thinks it as desirable as I to make a visit and therefore plans are being made not only to make one visit but two, the first one for chores, reviewing of notes, etc, perhaps during your holiday, and the second one for work with you after the sweeping of the chores has been disposed of.

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We are in entire agreement as to the smallness of the north vista. Individually it seems as though the whole unit ought to be stepped up in scale and I am only sorry that I was not obstinate and as pig-headed as usual in clinging to the big preliminary sketches which seemed monumental to us all when we tried them out in the dummy. Probably we shall have to go back and push the whole scale up which should be not too difficult to do as the bones seem fairly right.

Yes, I do know *Lonicera Korolkowi* and it is a lovely thing but I fear it would hardly stand the heat and dampness of a Washington summer. It grows well here as it is a plant from the mountains of Turkestan and as for plants some mysterious reason this climate seems to agree with a whole group from the Northern Asiatic mountains.

As usual you and I are in complete accord as to the delights of the "small place near Woodshole" but if you can rest and swim the general dullness of the surroundings will be forgotten under water, but I should think it almost impossible for you to tear yourself away from Washington in these days.

The news of North Duane's death came some short time ago and I well knew what it would mean to you and Robert, and of course to Anne it is a fresh opening of an unhealed wound left by the death of his wife.

Again my dearest dear such a big and grateful hug goes to you for all that your Garden gift means to the group at Santa Barbara. You must know that what you have done actually has straightened the path for the Van Rensselaers as I imagine they were both nearly at the end of their rope. Am I right in keeping the copy of the letter sent you by the General, or shall I return it - silence on your part will mean that it will go into the Santa Barbara files for future use.

Today's report of the liberation of Paris makes life look entirely differently from even a few days ago. How I wish we could be together and what it means to all the life of the spirit.

Yours with ever so much love,

Trix

We did so hope your "leave" would
mean a few breaths of this life - giving
northern air - if still it might be - whole
joy to
Your Max & I