

December 4, 1945

Dear Mrs. Farrand,

Thank you very much for your long and interesting letter of November 29th which I received today and which must have crossed the air with the outburst which I sent you a few days ago. I will make an attempt to answer the various questions you bring up in the order which you present them.

1. The situation in regard to the gardens has upset me just as much as it has upset you, - that is, just as much as it could bother me as a layman in proportion to the way it must bother you as a professional.

The crux of the situation is, of course, Bryce. It is hard for me to express as clearly as I should like, my feelings about him as a superintendent, so I trust that you will interpret what I have to say rather than take my statements on their literal basis. I am not at all convinced and in fact I seriously doubt whether it would be wise if other arrangements can be made to have Bryce continue his supervision of the buildings and of the indoor staff which maintains them. (It was a great relief to me to have Bryce take this over during the war and I am deeply grateful to him for assuming this responsibility).

I do not consider that the buildings are maintained in the order in which they should as to cleanliness, or that Bryce has either the time or ability to supervise the work of the janitors, guards, etc. At this very moment I am having a struggle to find out exactly what the duties and functions of the indoor staff are supposed to be. All I can say is that the place is not kept up and everything is done in a very slipshod and disorganized fashion. These same faults hold for the interiors of what I call exterior buildings, such as the orangery, the swimming pool, loggia and dressing rooms, the basement of the garage and the Fellows' Building, the general orderliness of the greenhouse and storage buildings.

Early this autumn I asked Bryce if he would kindly designate someone on his staff who could be responsible to me for keeping the orangery, etc., in order so that I may explain to the man how the furniture should be placed at the swimming pool loggia, in the orangery and so on. Thus far the victim has not appeared for my instructions.

From all I can gather I do not think that Bryce's staff receive his orders kindly or with affection. They do what they are told if they have to but they do not seem to have the regard or respect for him that is necessary in a closely-knit organization.

Bryce, in turn is very good about carrying out a specific request, such as moving a plant or putting up an awning, but when it comes to carrying out plans over a period of time, I find they are usually forgotten or neglected, so that it means constant checking up, which is always tiresome and in this particular case it is sometimes unpleasant owing to Bryce's contrary nature. I often find that he will assure me of carrying out certain instructions, but when the time comes for the instructions to be carried out they will have been forgotten.

The hardest thing for me, who by force of circumstances has been a city creature, is to judge Bryce as a superintendent of the gardens, which is the position he should occupy. In other words, I have no idea whether the ten men on his staff are working as efficiently as they should. I personally doubt it, but I am not in a position to judge.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, Bryce has no artistic judgment as to flowers in the house or in the gardens. He has to be constantly watched, although, I would have complete confidence in his judgment as to when is the best moment to move a shrub or plant, I would have no confidence that he would recommend moving the proper shrub or that he would recommend the proper place to put it.

Probably many of the difficulties which we have encountered with Bryce have been due to our long absences from Dumbarton Oaks. If I had been here every day during the past three years and if it had been possible for you to have made more frequent visits, I have no doubt but what between us we could have had a much more efficient garden staff which would have assured that the gardens would be kept up as they should be and also we would have had a very pleasant personal relationship with Bryce.

There is no question but what his head has been turned, and taking his character into consideration, I believe it will be difficult to remove from him some of the responsibilities which he has assumed without ill feeling. After this long preamble my conclusion is that if Bryce can be convinced that the superintendency of the gardens is a full time job and that it is his obligation to carry out to the letter, and without too much discussion, the instructions given him by you and by me, that we can live happily with Bryce, and be assured that the gardens will be well cared for. Frankly, I question whether this can be done, on account of Bryce's peculiar nature.

Certainly the gardens and their appurtenances must not be allowed to deteriorate the way they have been doing during the last two or three years. I do not believe that the fault is lack of manpower. My suggestion is that we do nothing in regard to Bryce's situation until your visit here in the spring, which I trust can be a long and early one. If at that time Bryce shows the same uncooperative spirit that he has this autumn, and if it is not remedied by next autumn then we should take a definite stand and make other arrangements.

I realize how very difficult the change has been for Bryce from running a private estate to trying to operate the same estate under the restrictions that an institution demands. I know that he has tried very hard to see things from an institutional angle, but he really does not want to see it this way and tries, with his Scottish tenacity to hang on to any vestige of the former regime. In other words he does not realize fully that he is now being asked to operate under very different circumstances.

2. You were quite right, that I asked you if you would be kind enough to obtain prices on the four postcards of approximately 5000 each. I would suggest that you communicate with Miss Sweeney about the negatives.

3. The azaleas are not to be moved until spring, and in the meantime you are to ascertain the type and cost of plants which you would recommend for replanting.
4. I would be glad to have the walk from the east entrance road to the orangery completed during the coming months, if you feel that you can relay the directions from photographs or plans, as it would be an advantage to have this work done before the spring crowds descend upon us.
5. The vegetable garden is very definitely out, for next year at least, and I have so informed Bryce.
6. By all means Miss Sweeney is to get a couple of kodachromes for you when she can. Colored photographs of the garden will have to wait until spring.

The question of using the orangery as a garden center was, I think, referred to in my last letter to you.

I shall keep my eye out for any broken bricks, but I would like to point out that this is a very good example of matters which I have brought to Bryce's attention, but which have never been carried out. There is a broken piece of paving outside Bryce's house, which I have spoken to him about for three years!

7. The box on the beech terrace should be moved and it will be done when you decide where and when it should be transplanted. I am very sorry about the Torreya and hope this matter can be remedied.
8. I look forward to receiving the guide book on the Huntington Library and Gardens, and I shall return it to you when I have finished with it.
9. I have forwarded your letter to Mr. Thompson.
10. I am most interested to hear that the Huntington Library has found something for you to do on Mr. Farrand's Franklin. I can well imagine how gratifying it must be for you to feel that you can take an active part in bringing his last work into the world.

I feel that what I have written in this letter may be in part a duplication of what I have put in my last letter to you, but please forgive me if I have been long winded in my attempt to make myself clear.

I know that you do not misunderstand my feeling about Bryce, because I am deeply grateful of all that he has done to relieve burdens from my shoulders, but on the other hand one cannot be personal about this matter as we should only consider what is best for the gardens.

Ever yours sincerely,

Mrs. Beatrice Farrand
The Valley Club of Montecito
P O Box 1140
Santa Barbara, California