

August 1, 1938

My very dearest:

Your letter of the 23rd of July has come and I am rushing off a piecemeal letter to you in order that it may reach you before you leave for the west where a blessed epistolary silence will descend upon you. As it is not going to be possible to answer the whole of your letter in one bite I shall start with the first part of your communication and follow it along.

The Millikan illness was a sudden day of judgment on a long neglected series of attacks of gall stones. Robert Millikan had never been ill in his life and when he had repeated indigestion and pains, which are symptoms of the malady, he deliberately neglected them till finally, in Bismarck, North Dakota, where he was working over his cosmic ray-stratosphere balloons, he was obliged to yield to the intense pains and after a day or two in the Bismarck Hospital was bundled off to the Mayo Clinic where his wife and eldest son joined him in time for the quite serious gall stone operation. Neither the public nor his friends realize how seriously ill he was for two or three days but his magnificent constitution has pulled him around and Greta writes me that the doctors are entirely satisfied with his progress and she, I fancy, will have now the most difficult part of her task keeping him from overexerting himself and from nervous strain until the recovery is complete. It is thought that he will be back at his work this autumn. It has meant a long and heavy strain for Max as the new trustees, William Muir and Edward Hubbell, have both of them had to be trained into taking more actual responsibility on account of Dr. Millikan's illness than would have otherwise been necessary. Like all other institutions the Library must tighten its financial belt slightly and all of these negotiations mean added work and strain for Max. It has been impossible for him to leave the Library except for about a ten days outing in northern California (which did him much good) until the very last days of July. He may have reached here before this starts to you and if so you will know it carries his affection as well as mine to you both. It seems rather unlikely that he will be able to give us more than two or three weeks but we are not discussing this until the actual day must be fixed.

As it may not be possible to finish the answer to the letter all in one cut let us do the Casa Dorinda, and before we start the business end of it let me say how delighted I am that the bed rest is not just another thing to be put away, but that it works.

Thank you for telling me about Mrs. Reed and the nerines. A fifty cents apiece price for them seems to me rather high. I will write to Mrs. Reed directly about them and suggest the possibility of their being useful to one or the other of my clients. There is no question of any one



or even any group needing the whole fifteen hundred. Bryce will undoubtedly tell me whether or not one hundred would seem useful at <sup>D</sup>umbarton.

How to leap across the continent to Casa Dorinda:

Your first question as to the misplaced oak at the front door. The tree is better than it was a couple of years ago and is more healthy, but nothing will ever make it a handsome specimen and no amount of health will ever prevent its being entirely misplaced. I should therefore strongly advise cutting it down and forgetting about its murder and accepting the handsome improvement its absence will make in the appearance of the north front of the house. It is a stubby tree and nothing will give the grace of one which has grown naturally and uninterruptedly like some of those in the grove.

As to the planting of the knoll. The \$550. to \$600. for pipe placing etc. remains unchanged. The Armstrong Nurseries have written me what seems to me a very favorable suggestion that they can supply small oaks in gallon cans for \$40. a hundred. I should think it might be wise to order four hundred of these trees and I think we can count on a hundred fifty, two hundred or even two hundred fifty seedlings from Casa Dorinda. This would bring the whole cost of the enterprise to well under \$700. or \$800. and it would seem to me a thoroughly worth while venture. If you feel it as wise an investment as I do give me your consent if you can, even by wire, before you leave for the west so that I can earmark the four hundred oaks at Armstrongs. These four hundred I think very inexpensive as this includes the delivery to Casa Dorinda. As the cost of the Armstrong oaks is nothing like as high as I feared it might be, it would seem to me wise to proceed even without the advice of the real estate agent.

Lucking will be told well in advance so that he may plan for your possible three months next summer at the Casa - July, August and September. At present nothing is needed as to a younger man on the place as Bebout will be of real use to Lucking and is as pleased as Punch to have steady work.

As to the echium seed, I think the question is going to settle itself since we are not going to be able to get any.

As to the roofing conditions, Johnny has been away on his holiday and I have asked for no report but will write him at once and see what condition he finds.

Thank you and Robert for your niceness in being willing to pay for half the repairs on the Dodge. Lucking will be told to pass on this arrangement to them.

Thank you also for your consent as to the fertilizers.

Johnny will be told to exercise the Cadillac from time to time.

And now to answer the July 29th part of your letter.

Naturally I shall await with impatient interest the ground plans of the new technical group, and until this comes no comments can be made as to the planting, axes, etc.



Quite frankly the question of the tree card at Dumbarton has been much in my mind for the last year or two and Bryce spoke of this with Robert not long after my last visit. It is a real satisfaction to know that you and Bryce have come to the conclusion with regard to San Yahres. I think the tree care question is one that we three should take up in the autumn as it is vital for Dumbarton. In the meantime I will try my best to assemble whatever information seems possible with regard to the wise methods of looking after the trees.

As to the autumn plans. In all likelihood Max will not be able to stay here very long and whether or not he comes back in the late autumn remains to be seen. Dartington is unceasing in its wanting me to come there and while not listening to them with any acuteness, I have not closed my ear definitely to them. It is not possible to make very definite plans with all of Max's uncertainty and my topmost wish is to be to him whatever and whenever it best serves him. Fairly definitely I can not leave here before the fifteenth of September as my niece chief at Malt comes for his annual visit which lasts over Labor Day week. I should think that certain Dumbartons would have to await our togetherness before they can be decided. This applies to the:

Lilac Circle  
The "Territor" seat  
The Polychroming of the iron  
Lovers' Lane trellis

I should also hope possibly to be at Pittsfield for Mrs. Coolidge's silver anniversary music days but this is frankly doubtful.

Continuing as to the work: Coles will be written to immediately to see where the delay on the forsythia arch F.S.D. lies.

Forsythia Seats. It is almost unbelievable how your mind and mine work exactly on parallel lines in so many ways. The quotation on the forsythia seat has been bothering me ever since we discussed it and I can not at all make up my mind to divide this tertsa rime in this patched-up fashion. Do you suppose we must put a whole three line quotation on each side?

"Territor" seat. I think I will try a few suggestions with regard to this, possibly without the Haveylet.

The N.G.A. Gray tablet can now be attacked if the inscription is what Bryce and the N.G.A. want. Perhaps you will give us the help of an occasional criticism so that we are sure Dumbarton will be pleased.

Gray's tablet on the greenhouse. Your suggestion to put the tablet on the exterior southwest angle is obviously right.

The catalogue house. The catalogue house and the good Sweeney sound to me as though they were progressing wisely and thoroughly as everything she does. I must have another epistolary crack at her to see in what way she may need a further boost.