

BEATRIX FARRAND  
THE VALLEY CLUB OF MONTECITO  
P. O. BOX 1140  
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

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Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss  
Shoreham Hotel  
Washington, D. C.

My very dearest:

Such a volume from you has made you almost seem nearby and therefore warmed and delighted our affectionate hearts. Maxtrix wish they could send a slice of their sunshine and beauty, as day after day we have delicious warmth and the miraculous beauty of sea, olive trees, and distant islands and mountains. How lucky we two are to be here in such a nourishing and refreshing place! Max's "Franklin" goes slowly on, but, of course, neither he nor I can work as long hours as a few years ago, but he is interested and his mind is working well, and although he may not finish his copy ready for the printers this spring, he will at least have made very distinct progress on the manuscript. One of the innumerable things for which Maxtrix is everlastingly grateful to you is the invention of this cottage, which gives the Max part of the family the quiet and entire isolation which he apparently now craves.

Anne seems well and we both grieve over your absence and say to each other that the lack of you has made a great difference in the "feel" of the place here. The General beamed when your message was given to him, and as you have apparently transformed the whole method of thinking of the trustees of the Botanic Garden, they now are a much more malleable lot than they were two years ago before you had begun your "treatments."

Santa Barbara Botanic Garden

Again, today, your playmate goes to the Garden to work on staking off road possibilities for the entrance and parking space, as the trustees want some sort of a sketch-map for their next meeting on March 11th, and to this end Anne, and good Van Rensselaer, and I, will toil. We think we shall have something that will not be too discouraging to the trustees, although they won't be as excited about it as you and I.

The survey is practically finished and a blue print is spread out on the library table and will be scribbled over this afternoon. Almost the entire fund has been subscribed, as Mr. McCoy has added \$10.00, and we are now only short another \$10.00 to make up the full hundred, as I am counting on the arrival of your \$25.00.



The trustees were really deeply pleased that you would allow the tablet to be placed in the library as they suggested, - and the only thing for which I shall have to ask your further opinion is whether to put your mother's name in full (as seems to me proper considering the Naval eclipse of Casa Dorinda); and the other, as to whether you wish your name to appear as Mildred Bliss, or Mildred Barnes Bliss. Although realizing that you have no desire for your name to appear, it seems to me right that it should from the viewpoint of the Garden as records of this personal sort are the stimuli which often incite further gifts, either as memorials or as personal tributes. Therefore, it seems to me right and proper that your name should appear, and in order to make certain of my own point of view I have consulted Max, and he simply added and said without hesitation, "By all means, Mildred's name should appear." Therefore, I am afraid you will have to accept the wish of the trustees and the opinion of Max-trix. It may take a little time to have the tablet made but the first moves have already been made, and the trustees said to each other with beaming smiles: "This tablet is going to be a gift from us as a group of trustees to the Garden and to its generous donor." As this was an outburst in chorus from the Board, it should have been heartwarming to you, even at a distance of three thousand miles. Probably the tablet cannot be ready and in place before the lecture on "A Gardener's Garden", which is to be given on March 7th, but the invitations to the lecture are going out to all the members, inviting them to "The Blaksley Library."

#### Casa Dorinda

To the outsider, it is impossible to imagine how the Navy could ever accomplish anything as they seem so much like the Matthew Arnold lady who was "turning, turning, in maze of heat and sound," as they seem to travel in concentric circles, sideways rather than forward. As you already know, the young man by the name of Harold Vaile who is working for the contractors at Casa Dorinda is a former architect draftsman aide of mine from Pasadena, so that he and I are on the best of terms possible. He wants to push the work and to get the place in order--not only for the sake of Casa Dorinda and the Navy, but for his own sake as his company is wasting time and energy in treading water and getting nowhere. A talk with him by telephone last night said that his contractor's work was between 80 and 90 percent finished, but that much of the needed kitchen equipment and some of the other furnishings for the new establishment had not arrived nor was there any immediate news of their likely arrival. He told me that the contractors are now paying the men on the place as the Navy has not yet either appointed a Commanding Officer (as far as he knows) nor have they made any arrangements as to running the place. He told me, moreover, that he understood the budget



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had been most unmercifully cut and that therefore the salaries paid would have to be quite materially reduced. Lucking has been told about this and made no particular comment in any way.

A few weeks ago I tried repeatedly to catch Johnnie Weeks by telephone but his house was completely silent and I therefore had to leave a message for him with Lucking. This evidently irritated him as when he called me his voice sounded distinctly sharp, and he said he had no orders to put up the tree protection fence and therefore proposed to do nothing until the Commanding Officer was installed. He sounded to me quite disturbed and grumpy, which in a way is not surprising as I fancy the shift has not been an easy one for anyone on the place, and perhaps he also knows about the possible reduction in salary.

Mr. Vaile told me that he thought there was no danger to the trees as the house was not being occupied and that he thought it probably was wise to wait before installing their protective surroundings until the official Navy man comes to take charge. It was explained to Mr. Vaile that in your absence I was trying to see to certain things you had in mind for Casa Dorinda, and that as I was leaving in little more than a month it seemed urgent to get these matters settled while some direct representative of yours was here in Santa Barbara.

In writing to Mr. Vaile, I enclosed a copy of the brief report made for the benefit of the Commanding Officer, and a copy goes to you herewith so that you may strike out, rewrite, and correct the parts of it that are ill-expressed or not to your liking. The report was purposely made as brief and non-technical as possible, and while Mr. Vaile says that no official has as yet received the report he has it in hand and mind and will see that it reaches the proper person when he is assigned to the place.

In the last fortnight or three weeks I have not again been at Casa Dorinda, but expect to go back there before long, just to see how things are running. The rift between Johnnie and Lucking increases rather than decreases, and if both of them are materially cut in salary, the rift is likely to become even more troublesome. However, with the extraordinary slowness of the Navy's progress, it does not seem as though there were any imminent emergency. Naturally, one realizes that the Solomon Islands and the convoys are more important even than Casa Dorinda, but I confess to being interested in Casa Dorinda as well as the distant Pacific!



Dumbarton Oaks

Perhaps the destroyed Cedar on the east lawn was the one to which you have always so violently objected, and if so I know your mourning is mitigated! The reason an evergreen in that neighborhood seems important from the viewpoint of accent is that in the leafless months (which are now as important for Dumbarton Oaks as the leafy ones) it is essential to keep some sort of strong dark color on the whole lower line of the east lawn. It may be that a holly would be too much grilled by the sun, and if so would it be possible to add another Deodara so that there would be one for the future when the lovely plummy one perhaps may have yielded to time. The present position of the Bride has always seemed perfectly chosen, because one has the joy of seeing her from below as one enters the east gate, and the intimate charm of seeing her closely from the walk leading along the south side of the Orangery. The position near the destroyed Cedar of Lebanon seems less favorable on both these counts, but another Bride, perhaps, near the somewhat second-rate Cercidiphyllum might be wise and could replace this tree in time. Individually, I should suggest planting a Magnolia, not much more than 5 or 6 foot high and allowing it to develop in its own way as the bigger trees are not too easy to move and are often grumpy for a number of years after transplanting.

The cards seem to be laid so that we leave here six weeks hence, on Monday, March 29th, to go to Pasadena for a couple of days, and to leave on the 1st of April for Chicago. This should bring me to dear Dumbarton on Saturday, April 10th, in some sort of afternoon train, and I hope to stay in Washington at least until Wednesday, the 14th, and possibly longer. The reason the weekend has been chosen is not just pernickety on my part this time, but because Mr. Thacher has more freedom on the Saturdays and Sundays than the other days of the week.

You can tell as well as I whether or not you think the Havey-let is likely to be useful and needed during any part of these days. It might be that she could come on for one day, but I hardly see why she would be needed for much longer, unless you mean to tackle the wall dial and other items which to me seem unlikely for the moment.

What a tiresome trial it is to have to wait so long before moving in to the 28th street house. Bryce tells me you find the garden a little over-elaborate, which of course is true, but it is so much easier to simplify than elaborate that one can, without difficulty, take out some of the complications in the way of little hedges and silly curlicues and mosaic pools. And, by the way, just as a matter of manners, I am writing a note to Miss Rose Greeley, who designed the garden, telling her that I am sure she will understand that I am trying to do the work for you and Robert as we had such happy association for so many years at Dumbarton Oaks. Also that I hope she will not think I am doing professional violence to her design.

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As the days shorten between us, as usual I find my heart leap up in thinking of our being together at D.O. A good deal of what remains to be done is chiefly routine and organization, but the Melissande wall is one on which I desperately need your help and also on the hideout shed which is to conceal the ugly work-yard from the north side of the quarters.

This might go on forever if even one-tenth of the things were told you which come to mind every day. You are never far away in our thoughts, and we both know that the affection between us is deep and strong and growing.

Yours ever, with tenderest love,

*Your very own*

*Tr. Xi*