

June 18th, 1938.

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss,
Dumbarton Oaks,
3203 S. Street,
Washington, D.C.

Dearest Dumbarton Twin:

Your long letter of the 13th, with its enclosed letters from Mrs. Reid, and the memorandum of June 15th, has come. Naturally, the first and most poignant fact was the question of your anxiety about Robert as you and I know better than most what this means to the yoke-fellow. Do ask Dorothy to let me know the result of the further medical examinations, as I know you will be "swamped in Swedes" in the course of the next few days. My Max is well, but tense, and shifting to the new Board of Trustees is not easy. He and I had hoped to get away to the East this week until Dr. Millikan announced two days ago that he himself was going East for three weeks and therefore there could be no more meetings until his return. I do not know how things are going to work out, and it is a bitter disappointment to both Max and me to be missing not only so much rest together, but so much Reef Point together. However, such things must be faced in ones job.

Also, I was greatly distressed to hear about Elisina's illness; as she seemed so peculiarly tight and to have herself so well in hand, I could not imagine even a troublesome purchaser could have so wrecked her. And as to the old butler having made serious inroads on Edith's funds, leaving an indebtedness to the heir of 250,000 fr., is to me completely amazing, as I know White had been with Edith for nearly 50 years and was completely and utterly trusted in every relation.

Telegrams with regard to the legal matters have gone to and from Mr. Delafield during the last few days, and he promises a letter which probably will give me the news of Elisina's illness, of which you have already warned me. A letter from Edith's old secretary said that Elisina had been in the South until comparatively recently. I suppose by this time she is at Antigny as she seems to love that place next best to Bill and Royall. I am truly sorry for him as it means an added heavy burden to have her ill and to worry over her. You must have had a lovely time with him, and I know how delightful he can be from having seen him also quite at his best at Edith's. His professional business, ^{sounds} by your account as though it had advanced, and one can but hope foreign relations in such capable hands will be allowed to go forward.

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And now as to replying to your "paragraph by paragraph" with regard to our loved work:

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ORION AND BOOTES:

Let me know whether you want me to go ahead on the change or whether you would prefer to do it yourself. I stand ready to take this detail off your hands if you want me to.

LILAC CIRCLE:

The seat made for the Lilac Circle, the precise whereabouts of which I do not remember, was first made on the arc of the Lilac Circle itself. It had a back made of small, diamond-shaped lath, square-cornered ends of the back, and wooden arms. The last time I saw this bench it was sitting in the Lilac Circle in the place for which it was originally designed. The back was not particularly high, and there was a certain fragility and delicacy in the design which seemed to go well with the lily-of-the-valley. I think, however, this seat if used should have slightly stronger arms. As to your suggestion for a part stone and part wooden seat, we went into this question some time ago and I shall have to excavate from my drawing folders the ones made, which were partly doria and part wood. The semi-circular seat I fear would not marry in very well with the lines of the wall, unless the seat is made so big that it might seem out of scale. However, when the little curved walls are built and fuzzed over, the dominant object is likely to be the doria vase and its pedestal.

UNICORN LADY:

How nice that she seems to have found her right place. I shall see that the lava is forthcoming. will

FORSYTHIA ARCH:

Doubtless I have got muddled about this, as to me the gate one sees indicates the name of the place in which one happens to be at that moment; but the consensus of opinion is that you are right in thinking that the name should indicate the place into which one is going. Therefore, "Dumbarton Oaks" should be on the park side, and "Dumbarton Oaks Park" on your own side.

DESIGNING:

It is a comfort to know that you have decided definitely as to the procedure, and know you will notify me if Miss Havey is needed for any work that seems of her particular type.

What do you think about the design of the Curlicue Seat for the "Terrior"?

Was anything definite settled with regard to the changes in the Iris Garden?

You have doubtless come to the wise conclusion in deciding not to go on with the Sculpture Gallery at present, but how sickening to have taken down the Oak and removed all the Box. We can, of course

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replace the Box, but I fear the Oak is beyond us! Nothing of course can be done for the immediate moment, as no transplanting is possible until autumn. Shall you make any effort at all to exhibit the sculpture before the definite gallery is built, or is it to remain in its cases? But this detail, after all, does not pertain to gardening.

STAR LANTERN:

By all means, let us put the Star Lantern and its designs in camphor for the moment.

"TERRIOR" SEAT:

Already spoken of, and you will decide who is to attack it.

IRON WORK COLORS:

As usual, I made myself totally unclear. What is on the gate at present is a light Japan, hardly more than a varnish, and this is so thin that the pitting shows through, whereas with even the thinnest of paint materials the pitting would be filled by the lead thickening in the paint. Davis seems to think that any paint would fill the pits more than the present Japan.

GRAY'S MEMORIAL:

I am rather waiting for what you had in mind for the inscription for the N.G.A. tablet. This of course determines the size of the tablet as letters seem very unyielding.

(A letter went to good Mrs. Gray, to reach her before she left Dumbarton, asking for her new address as I want to keep in touch with her and Freddy).

As to the N.G.A. tablet, Bryce seemed to think that he would like to dedicate it about the time of Gray's death--toward Christmas or the New Year--and when we know what you would like in the way of inscription, we will start designing the slate tablet which Bryce agrees with me would be appropriate, and he and I thought we would work out the seat and its little arbor this coming autumn.

MUSIC ROOM WALL:

Naturally I shall be eager to know what comes in your next letter with regard to this. Thank you for the letter from Mrs. Reid with the offer of Nerines. I am writing to a friend and client in Delaware to see whether any are desired, and would be glad to hear from you whether they are of the Pink or Flaming Red sort, and also as to their cost. It occurred to me that possibly Mrs. Cutting's gardener might know of something for Mrs. Reid's head man, as I think they were friends. Mrs. Reid's man had the reputation of being a first rate grower, particularly in the greenhouse. How sad that they feel obliged to do away with what the elder Mrs. Reid had assembled. I know that Mrs. Cutting would particularly care for the Nerines and some of the greenhouse plants.

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I grovel at having been so stupid about the Eversole soil chemicals. My admiration for your quick grasp of technical problems is so hearty and deep that I imagined you would have gleaned from Dr. Eversole's own account of what he is doing exactly the technical data which slipped past my inaccurate mind. You would have made a charming and accurate statement out of what he told you, whereas my mind grasped only a few of his points. I quite agree with you that the brief, sketchy outlines of an enterprise are often far more vital than the deep scientific jaw-breaking data.

A good deal of work is being done in this quartz chemical plant growing, so that some of these days it would no doubt interest you to discuss it with some one who is knowledgeable. Eversole is by no means the only person who is experimenting on these lines.

Certainly the proposed scheme for the George^{town} Garden Club for next year sounds most amusing, with its pictures of various natural types of gardens, and probably their little accompanying histories.

How pleased good Miss Sweeney must have been to tell of her fondly loved child, the Catalogue House. She really is working so well and so hard, and doing such a first rate job, that it does ones heart good.

CASA DORINDA

The journey to Casa Dorinda probably will come next week. I imagine the reason that Lucking has let the extra man go at the moment is that no particular flower garden is needed, and during this time of the year no transplanting can be done in this hot and dry neighborhood. So I fancy he can get along with his "old steadies" until more plant moving may be thought advisable. I should very much question his having had more help than he needed, as the grounds are quite large and there is a good deal of diversified work to be attended to. While the mowing is of course less, the weeding and watering are essential to establish the new plantations. A more valid report will go to you after I have seen Lucking and the conditions at Casa Dorinda.

The promised itinerary evidently did not get into the letter as a diligent search has failed to reveal it.

MEMORANDUM OF JUNE 15th

1. The Coles dummy of the Gray Memorial on the northwest chamfered wall of the Potting House is most exciting. Is it then to be in the inside of the Potting Shed? I thought you had originally imagined it as being near the Potting Shed door.

2. Finalities accepted. Good.

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3. First rate that Davis has been told to reline the frames in the Catalogue House.

4. I look forward to the F.S.D. of the Garage Lantern.

5. Excellent that the bases for the terra cotta urns are ordered.

6. It sounds a difficult nut to crack to do the grading around the perspective trellis at the Lilac Circle, but it will be interesting. I am not surprised that a step is needed at the South end, and ^{more} on the North; and that dry walling is needed on the East end of the South, and high dry walling on the East end of the North; but feel it will be safe in your hands.

7. You are quite right; stepping stones should be added to the Lilac Circle arrangement.

8. Is the summer growth on the South wall of Dumbarton actually covering the wall you so resent? I suppose the polychroming of the flowers in the finials and the quatrifoil ^{gate} must await your decision as to whether or not to paint.

9. I suppose the "pocket" of which you speak at the Northeast corner of the Music Room is the one on the West side of the wall. We must see whether we can get the big pocket you want without interfering with the priceless big Oak.

10. It is not surprising that the Rangoon Umbrellas have yielded in Washington's tropic sun. But how sad to have them dilequesce.

11. I shall see whether I have here, or in Bar Harbor, the Terza Rime which Caroline gave you. If it be here, it will be enclosed in this letter. ^{if not} I shall try to explain to Miss Fulkerson what is wanted, so that she may seek it in the Dumbarton folders.

(I find the Terza Rime are not here, and I have written to Miss Fulkerson with regard to them).

P.S. Please forgive the "rumpled" look of this letter, which was taken in great haste by a stenographer who does not understand my lingo.

Your, in much concern over Robert, always devoted