

March 14, 1938

Dearest Mildred:

Ever since your letter came with regard to dear Gray's illness and death I have waited for the quiet hour in which I might sit and talk with you, through Miss Fulkerson's understanding hand, of all the implications of our common association.

The rare beauty of Gray's character, his sensitive understanding and his kind wisdom have made Dumbarton what it is in our hearts as well as in its physical aspects. Gray checked me on many a problem with the quiet wisdom and sanity which were a part of his make-up. As you well say, Dumbarton will not be the same again to any of us, but I have the feeling that his heart will remain with us and will help us to work out the rest of the place in a fitting manner. His whole approach to the problem, his quiet understanding of your point of view, his patience and his open mindedness have made possible the best things in Oakdom. He understood how slowly the modeling was done and how the ideas developed as the place itself grew into its own declared form.

Your letter of the third of January will be one I shall always keep. It speaks as though directly from Gray himself, with his warmth of heart, his consideration, his deep affection for you and for Oakdom, and of his entire selflessness. The letter has been read and reread a dozen times and I shall never cease to be grateful to you for having sent the little forgetmenot to the cemetery with yours. If only I had been with you at that time I should have added one more of his "family." Of course the tablet in his memory belongs as a part of Dumbarton where he spent what he knew were the happiest years of his life.

It will be hard for the three boys to adjust themselves to the loss of their father's guiding hand. Edmund has matured in the last few years and as Gray himself told me, understands his responsibilities as he did not a few years ago. The other two boys, Harry and Freddie, were much on Gray's mind and I have wondered during these past weeks what their future would be.

Mr. Russell writes that you have very wisely given Bryce the headship of the place and that Bryce means to carry on as nearly as may be on the old lines. It is almost impossible to think of the service court or of the whole place without Gray's kindly presence and without realizing how much of its design as well as its execution came from Gray and from our long association.

It is a great joy to Max and me to know that you and Robert like Lantern Slides and its little orange jacket. The delicately turned phrases, the feeling of intimacy and reticence, the play of wit and mind, and the distinction are all that Mrs. Mudski herself was, and how rarely it seems to have been possible for a writer to translate these qualities into words. We are glad to know that the people who have seen it really like it.

The whole Elisina question has been a very difficult one. Robert and Max had a good talk, to Max's great satisfaction. It is a very difficult position in every way. I know that Elisina is financially uneasy and I remember your saying that you thought the inheritance of Ste. Claire would be a burden rather than a benefit.

The Dumbarton notes are late in being answered and the group of letters make me realize how tardy this letter is. It is good news that Miss Sweeney is back at the Catalogue House work. Indeed I had a letter from her saying that she is plugging along on the enterprise and realizes how slow you must think it and her. Miss Havey has sent me sketches for the herb garden and lantern and drawings which I have forwarded to Davis with comments. A question comes up in my mind as to the forsythia arch; whether or not this heavy construction may ultimately be advisable. You possibly will remember that both Gray and I felt that this should not be a particularly important or imposing gate as the Caroline and William seats are a part of the scheme and the double scheme is really one unit.

The news of the new sculpture gallery on the west end of the music room is breathlessly exciting. I shall be thrilled to see the design for it and of course lament the destruction of the big oak tree which we have so long cherished; but if it does what the new gallery wants this must be paramount and you and I will both be conscious that we are working over still another idea of Gray's as it was his opinion that the gallery might be built in this place. It is going to make the whole west end of the music room an entirely different picture from the former one and doubtless most attractive. I can not imagine the box bushes taken away, the magnolia moved and a building going up.

The suggestion of a stone wall around the parking space in front of the front door seems excellent and one which should be possible to make without great difficulty.

As plans now seem to be formulating themselves for Max and me we hope to be leaving here together on the first of April and it looks as though I should be in the neighbourhood of Washington about the sixth or seventh. It is of course unlikely that you will be able to see me at that time and the question in mind is whether it would not be wise for me to come to Dumbarton to see Bryce briefly and to catch up with some of the odds and ends of the last four months. The news of you implies that you are likely to be away the end of the first week of April, which might mean delaying my coming until considerably later in the month. Of course you and I would not touch the silver and pearl anniversaries on April 23rd, and I will fit my time into your plans as nearly as possible.

The Casa Dorinda notes went to Miss Kingsford some time ago and as they should have been accompanied by a letter I asked Miss Kingsford

please to delay giving them to you until a letter should reach you, and I am therefore asking her solemnly to give them to you as though they had just arrived. In going north to San Francisco I stopped for an hour at Casa Dorinda and found everything going well. Notes of this more recent visit will follow in the course of a few days, but there is nothing untoward to report. All is going smoothly, Lucking busy and the spirit of the place excellent. Lucking of course keenly wants to know whether there is any likelihood of your being there this summer as he wants the authorization to buy the seeds which he should start this month if you are coming out this summer or autumn. Will you think this over and let him know whether he may spend the five or six dollars the seeds would cost on the off chance of your coming?

The letters from Mrs. Gray and Russell are returned to you. What gallant spirits they both are! and you, dear Milrob, have the quality of transferring your spirit and your heart to those who try to serve you. Although nearly three thousand miles separate us the thought of you both is constantly with me and the mere idea of being on the same side of the continent with you gives a spring to the day and joy to the heart of

Your more than ever fond

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss
Dumbarton Oaks
Washington, D.C.

Hamsher has just made his report on the condition of the olives at Casa Dorinda. He has already sent a man to inspect them and says the holes were so full of water that it was impossible to drain them at the moment but he will send back a crew of his men who will dig trenches around the trees and Hamsher himself will watch them and prune them and look after them so that they will have every chance of succeeding. He is confident that they can be saved.