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BEATRIX FARRAND
LANDSCAPE GARDENER
REEF POINT
BAR HARBOR, MAINE

Dumbarton

May 26, 1947

Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss
1537 28th Street
Washington, D. C.

My ever so dear:

The months lie long between us, and I miss you more than you can even gauge by yourself. There have been many hours and days of enforced rest and idleness which are now beginning to bear fruit, partly owing to good counsel faithfully followed and in part due to understanding patience and help on the part of those closest: faithful and devoted Clementine and the two Garlands. In another compartment comes the steady support and encouragement of Mr. Patterson, to whom is due the passage of the Reef Point Gardens bill; then comes the legal counsel of Lawrence Morris with whom the details of the whole scheme have been carefully discussed. The result is distinct improvement so that more hours may be given to creative thinking as opposed to physical and mental resting.

You do not need to be told that in many hours of quiet, thoughts have not only flown Milrob-ward, but to their growing child Dumbarton Oaks. Oakdom is a part of me also and what happens to it is a vital part of the days ahead as well as of happy creative past years. So a part of this letter will speak to you of thoughts long latent, and very close to us both. Although I shall cease to be the landscape gardener for Dumbarton at the end of next month, there never will be the possibility that its future and interests will not be a part of my life, as they are of Milrob's. As to the Museum and Library end, there is deep interest, but that is not my line. It seems, however, increasingly clear to me that the gardens and their influence on the community is as potentially strong as the other and historically scholarly side. The gardens and their supporting surroundings can increasingly touch many to whom the collections may less forcibly appeal. In order to give the gardens the place they might occupy, there should be a background and a reservoir which will not only help them and those in charge of them, but will spread their influence in widening circles.

This preface brings the latent thoughts forward to discuss with you. The physical gardens should, as we agree, be kept up well, tended and continued in beauty, but alongside them and a part of them the cultural and intellectual basis on which they have been developed should be at hand for gardeners of various ranks of ability and also for students of the art. Dumbarton has an opportunity to serve its community and visitors as no other place has. It combines the human and artistic side with the possibility of lifting the level of outdoor art in its whole neighbourhood.

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This implies more than the actual gardens - it means a reading room where current and useful magazines, catalogues and books may be freely consulted, a small but well chosen collection of really first rate books on the development of the art of gardening. This second group would appeal to the student rather than to the casual visitor or the exclusively delphinium-minded Garden Club member. The current literature and the older source books should be supported by prints, monographs, and plans of well designed gardens. Record files of the Dumbarton plantations should be at hand telling of individual plants, their planting, care and development. The student would gain and could consult not only books covering local and present conditions, but the foundation books and prints underlying garden philosophy and design. The community is ready for such a centre; it might give a fuller mental diet than the successful and well administered popular Garden Centre at Cleveland. It might be as useful as the Arnold Arboretum and appeal to lovers of garden flowers as well as those interested in trees and shrubs. Its very smallness of acreage gives it a human quality. Its usefulness to those whose gardens are limited would naturally be proportionately greater than a vast arboretum or great botanic garden.

You see where your Catalogue House has led me: to a series of garden rooms, for books, for casual reference and more profound study. It seems hardly possible that you have not thought on the same line as we have so usually played our hands from the same point of departure, so probably you will answer that this is all thought out already and that i's are dotted, t's crossed, the building placed and planned and the library well started. It is a real chance for Dumbarton to give the lives of others a little of what it has given us in our different and yet similar points of view.

Forgive such a long pent-up outburst from

Your Garden Twin

Trix