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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

14 July 1947

from Oliver

Dear Mrs Curtis,

furniture book

I was glad to find that furniture OK.
reached; it seemed rather speculative just to
attach a stamp & hand it to the local Station.
Master - In country farms, etc. in Tas. There
must be a lot of domestic furniture of sorts
- made by amateur carpenters - for memory -
as such things are too bulky for emigrants
to export. Anyway, I have watched hundreds
of emigrants for S. America climbing about
at, e.g. Che Bowry - but they never brought furniture
- only bedding, kitchen utensils, babies & musi-
cal instruments - perhaps babies are only just
another sort of musical instrument!

It is difficult to know just what is brewing in
England. Doubtless, foreigners will be let remain on
terms; e.g. that all their property shall be
transferred to this country. The purpose of this wd.
be obviously to tax it when they wd. be
to taking it out of the country again. But if one
don't stand for that, & would quit. I can sell only
died quit & sold one's house on the terms
of my freehold (12 years ago) I can sell only
to a name approved by the Government. At the
time I asked the then Governor, what this signified?
He said, it's just a formality & so on. On the other hand
I am free to bequeath it to anybody, but of course to

wd. be useless to any member of the family -
~~But~~ I wd. sell it tomorrow - a slow sale
but probably the cash wd. be inconvertible from the
country. Moreover, even if one wd. take it to
England, you might say this is capital, therefore
not liable to taxation. But the money wh.
paid for the loan was earned in Egypt &
wd. have deducted from it, say, $5\frac{1}{2}\%$ is the L.
which at the same time (say in 1934) British
Income Tax was $4\frac{1}{6}\%$ in the L. So as an investor, I
am if the money ch. is transferred, it wd. be up to me
to pay the Brit. Treasury more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the £1000
I might get for the loan. This is just
the sort of fiddle that accounts about happy-go-lucky
people like me! At the ~~least~~ ^{best} then, I think
of money wh. is to remain invested in Egypt
& all I wd. get wd. be the interest thereon.

Meanwhile as things are nationalized at
home - railways, gas, & later probabll water,
I get my £1000 & returned with the offer to
re-issue me at $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ instead of the 4, 5, 7,
or occasionally, 9% wh. they have been paying.
My grandfather was careful always to invest in
monopolies - after 14 years paying 0, 1, 2
or 0% till it reached the maximum. Sacrifices
were made wh. made no appeal to the blood-
thirsty scoundrel's nose in power! Well - this
may illustrate the problems one has to cope with!
And if one quits Egypt - where to go? I don't
think I shd. wd. be able to run Bellard's Barn
except at a loss - though it is easy to let, furnished.

3rd to sell it - ^{to Curtis 14-VII-7947} There are
lots of offers. As we can't it cost £3700 after
brilliant stockings, the garden. It wd. cost sell
for double today. The sister, at Salisbury,
has just sold her ~~her~~ too large house, wh. cost
perhaps £1700 25 yrs. ago, for £3700, & have
bought at New (once more!) the best of a
convenient house, with 30 years to run, for £2500
or thereabouts -

Is a puzzle where to turn -
Tasmania is too remote; W. Australia has
its floral attractions, but is also remote.
There are possibilities in S. Africa - fls,
intus. & deserts here & there. But the people
- Africans, British, Blacks, & some Indian
tribes. Unstable equilibria - when Smuts goes,
England with her over-population seems doomed
as it cannot import food to live. Too much
to go, & even with stockings, & some other
I hear from Ridley lately, & a senior detective
Bourne (act. 92) - He lives in Cumberland Road, New,
& reports that every house in that road has been
burned, & some more than once. On the bright

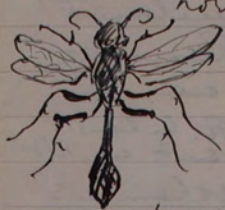
side; my upper garden is full of melons & etc. so will
on desert dust if watered copiously. One pulls them
just when an abscess large & swollen - & then in a day or
two, in the dark, they turn yellow - just like gold.

Encl. is a small sample of soil from round the
roots of *Caesalpinia gilliesii* - it might provide the
insects. [Will send this next time, a thing
in. beech - Gae. etc. - are a bit dried up at the moment.]
This has for first time in my experience here. There
has been no rain, no barley, no grazing - & all stored
acquired to the Delta - only flowers in wetland garden -
A few toughs remain some here. "No flowers, by night"
- so to speak - All most interesting from home & hear,
"Hurry up, quickly, or you'll be too late for the flowers!"

4 Oliver to Curtis 14-VII-1947

Indian wasps - I want to call them

hornets - (Sphex wasps)



cutting my stuff & build
their nests on the molding
of my fire place.

They bring dust & water

into with enormous diligence,
burrowing & searching in dense timber
spiracles (perhaps not to spill their honey)
out to look, as before, & return

fairly far to work.



← 1st day



← 2nd day



← 3rd day



← 4th day



← 5th day

- so many chambers,

so many insects for food

& 1 egg to each chamber

3rd day fill up with sawdust

insects, lay 1 egg & close hole.

& start on the next story

For weeks sometimes they enter one
during my work while I have my back
spinal dorsum a joint skin crawling
the surface. I take no notice of them,
nor they of me.

Reciprocal human's elegant & the
a minute - Technically, as masons,
they are at least up to human standards.
I leave their work to my till tomorrow.

They are
generally placed in concealment
in the hidden pits of burrows, etc.
I find them building even in
cave tombs 20 - 30 ft. below
ground level. But not an art
"social" - the string of chambers
is a one-man, or rather one-twoman
shop. The insect-population of
the desert is vast, all doing
the same things differently. But
I give them special full marks
for technique & not wasting labor.
Occasionally they are at a loss to
negotiate the place - rooms & back-
ways are so much alike.
But they put up on foraging with
gentle staccato till they negotiate the
place. Very low, they work and
aimlessly about - like moths, e.g.
deaths heads do at night.
Ants mentally is quite different;
they succeed by numbers. Much of their
aimless wandering is carried with & somehow
it is commensurate with the palatialness of
cabinets of the nest. However they are almost the

the form
section
8 or 10 ft. I find them
in a
form, smiling, standing
in a
in the
in the
in the