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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.

18 May, 49 ~

from Oliver

Dear Miss Curtis,

eggh

I was almost in the act of writing to you when your a-t dated 9 May fetched up in Egypt on the 16th - and here I have been since that evening and I live in Cairo. Monday your letter came postmarked 10 May i.e. 6 days in transit. Similarly, I exchanged air-letters with Billy Roman recently [Edmonton in the wilds of Canada] his answer came within 12 days of my letter being posted.

The moral of all this is that long-distance air-transport of letters is much better organized than short-distance, as A-L's Egypt-England + England-Egypt are like 5, or generally 6, days to reach the 1-way destination - formerly by surface this was 12 or more. Some time, today a surface letter takes 14 to 18 days - maybe censorship is partly responsible. Ep^l Curator, I know, loathe the job, though the priests earn an income: so there may be motive behind these delays!

But to return to the matter I was to write about. Back in 1923 I had decided that Spartine Dorendin ought to have proper tryout as an agent in silencing prior to reclaiming land from the sea (poldering). I found the Ministry of Agriculture at home quite useless for the purpose of any large-scale experiment in England: so got in touch with the Dutch, who have a better understanding of such matters -

So I invited Lotey to come over & have a look-see. He, of course, was a leading hybridist, & I featured that point in relation to *Spartina* is a non-segregating hybrid - later explained as a polyploid by Stucklin. When I parted with Lotey I remembered - "Is it possible this plant might be useful to your country in holding silt on ground to be reclaimed?" I asked. He replied, "The same idea has entered my mind." So I realized that the seed had fallen in good ground. A few months later he revisited our *Spartina* marshes with Verhoeven, then expert polyploid for Zealand - now C. in C. for reclamations at the Hague. Lotey & Verhoeven, with Dutch partners, took home with them 50 sets of *Spartina* & planted them in a line across the Sloe. Trust you there are so pleased with *Spartina's* behavior that they imported tens, even hundreds (thousand), of sets from Bob Catridge & planted them - and a few saw on your visit to Haddo Castle later on. I had kept in touch by visits in 1928, 30, 33 & 38 & was always that *Spartina* in was imminent. Ideas came the best, & now Holland is one more right side up. A few days ago I heard from Verhoeven (Lotey died in 1932 or 33) reporting that last month (April) he had started banding in a *Spartina* patch of circa 2 sq. miles & hoped to complete it by the winter. Incidentally, I mentioned your name & enquired your whereabouts!

A very important point I mentioned is that they had carefully investigated these silt collected by *Spartina*, & find them to be equal to, or even better than, the best reclaimed soils in Holland - that is high praise. Of course all credit goes

to Vethoven for his last & courage in putting
the job through. He took a big risk with his
large scale experiment. Naturally, at all
stages I refrained from pressing the matter, as of
course the Dutch with their centuries of reformation-
experience, must quite reasonably react outside inter-
ference. As I shall probably be settled in
England this autumn, I shall try to get ^{next year} to view
the new policy: as you, probably, will be in the
you may care to come along also? Of course it
means a fresh campaign in politics - employing
spartan & the agent - possibly my old dream
may ultimately be fulfilled - viz. reformation all along
the NE coast of Holland so that the water in
islands from Texel to Borkum (off the Ems) may
ultimately be joined up to the mainland - The water
there cannot be very deep, as there is a dyke or
dam at the point of Ameland to Helder, a
high trail W. of the latter, & on the N. coast of
Dierland.

Yes, I knew the Spence Watson family well 60 or 70
years ago. Ruth has charming other calls, I think
there was much regretted by her friends. Ruth
Sister - Evelyn - married Weiss; others I remember
are dead. The Spence Watson house at Letchworth
was famous social centre in those bygone days.

This season's flowering in *Marcellia* was
different from any I have known. Good rains
early other deficiency in Jan to Feb. The effect was
that the perianth, with the fold on the ground, did not
withstand - largely because they were far from competi-
tion by the annuals, which were disappointed of their rains.
Usually these latter carpet the ground continuously for
hundreds of miles; but this year they had no effect on the
landscape - being represented mainly by separate
specimens - lucky to flower & produce a few seeds - (over

My home address with the house named
- Ballant's Barn, Limsfield Common,
Bury. I am hoping to get across
to August - but of course Egypt is Egypt
there are many hurdles to cross -
I shall take away little or no furniture, but books,
pictures & rugs, with tea & coffee service, including
glassware. ~~More~~ ^{More} ~~breaks~~ ^{nothing}, so this
additional ~~sh. make good~~ ^{the classical} ~~brackets~~
of light hearted, but heavy fingered, ~~tenants~~ ^{tenants} of there
last 20 years! ~~Finally~~, after I left on my autumn
visit, at the end of 1947 I had the house "redecorated" though-
out, ~~and the children~~ ^{in much of repairs to attend to}
even in the ~~attic~~ ^{attic} I got a rough deal. In the autumn
of 1947 I had an estimate for my ~~car~~ ^{car} for £120 - but
the Ministry ~~involves~~ ^{involves} in ~~grant~~ ^{grant} so ~~license~~ ^{license}. After that
two or three years they ~~valued~~ ^{valued} - but by that time wages
had risen in the ~~building-trade~~ ^{building-trade}. I had to pay £150
for the same job of work!

Yours sincerely J.H. Stiles