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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.

5 Feb. 1945.

from Oliver

Dear Miss Curtis,

Egypt

Your friendly gift - of a part of jam Shley arrived
has been distributed to the satisfaction of drivers;
also the fabric casing was much admired by me.
I shd. have found the patience to put that job
through.

Sometimes I shd. like to hear some
thing about Jas.

Presently you will be more
in the way than Kitheto, if your husband has
good ^{dockyard} equipment there shd. be R.V. units coming in
to refit. Generally they spread themselves all
about in the intervals between operations for
refitting & dockyard workmen -

- We have been having lovely rains this winter,
& a month hence shd. have a bumper flora.

Only abt. once in 7 years does our flora justify
its reputation. Here around, excepting, is

as green as England in Apr./May - ^{times} - thing
other ~~times~~ and landscape is pure desert.

- There is a small experimental garden
near by where they sometimes experiment
with new things - propagate Olives, figs,
Carrots, etc. to encourage the Bedouins. But
actually Egypt's officials hate the desert & never
persist with long-term plans, so their efforts
language & meet a lingering death -

For the moment they are experimenting with Russian Dandelions.
In Russia they yield 6% carotene on the
dry weight of the crop. The yield per acre in Russia is only
30 lb. per acre, & they are stated to have 2 millions acres

of this crop under cultivation? What a vast labour! According to ² Sq^{rs} informed - these Dandelions are yielding 10-11% camptolene on the dry weight - a testimony to one maricet soils - wh. any way are immensely fertile when sufficient water is forthcoming. But it is unlikely that they will carry the matter much further. Apart from barley - the Besonians' staple - another - the fig-gardens do well. The strain is an excellent fig (the Sultani), large, succulent, & a tough enough skin to market without damage. These are grown on the more fixed part of one Dunes - wh. are white oolite limestone. Below, sweet-water from rain-fall accumulates & the figs are in bearing from middle July to end Sept^r. Merchants' Tories pass daily to take the baskets. On Besonians, with whom I deal, to me I took this season more than £400 from his narrow strip about 500 yds. long. All the labour is provided by the farmer, so the money taken is mainly net profit. The Sultani fails to sun-dry properly, so I have been finding out about drying strains from Cyprus & Smyrna, for introduction. Some strains (but not the Sultani) are rather tricky about "caprification" & this may prove the Besonians at first. The first year we sh^d. need to import a specialist to attend to this job -

Footnote # It reminds me of an incident of 50 years ago, when climbing in the Italian Graia alps (N. of Coire). We were staying at a high-pasture some days during a series of climbs. Below in a stretch of alpine valley was a vast flock of sheep, as large as I have ever seen with the job of feeding their lambs. The shepherd (who was a cretin) used to bring us up every evening to a gallon of milk, the result of a full day's milking effort. At the end of the sheep had run dry & each could milk no more than a few drops. I will say the labour was well-spent, as the milk was of a richness & flavour - (unparalleled)

You introduced the Solicitor and appointed Director of New when A.W.H. died? Pearshall has now succeeded him at V.C.L. (A good appointment). J.G. now was ago, has been kept in the job she has filled. Has retired 2 yrs. ago by reason of age. So Pearshall will have plenty on his hands. It appears that during the evacuation of V.C.L. after bombing it was decided to remove the equipment of the B.R. Dept. (which had not been touched) to a country place. In transit, apparently, a lot of a physicist's appo. eqs. recording instruments & clockwork, were stolen - also other things.

Anything with any sense should have anticipated the menace of such a move by irreparable means, & have put the job into proper hands: e.g. Smith might have been recalled from his retirement to take charge. The office was once a skeleton staff are pretty useless -

Six months ago the keys of my car were stolen on a moonless night & I haven't been able to re-insure them. So I have to walk everywhere. The culprit was a Russian & the matter was eventually traced to him. However, the police official who interviewed him said "We shall not be taking further action against you if you will give us information about X, Y & Z - being the thefts of greater importance - of course I get no reward. About 2 months following the taking of the keys, a message reached me by a sort of underground channel, "Would Prof. Oliver sell the carcass of his car for £40?" I sent "Go to Glasgow. 6 wks. later a reversed offer - for £60 - came from the same source. I told them to tell him to go to hell! This man, who occupies a sort of public position is a bad character, & I should have £500 if he offered it. I have little doubt it was he who investigated the

original theft of the types, so that he could
 achieve better at a cheap rate the car itself.
 His job is precisely one where a hire with 2-seater
 would help him a lot. But it's no use at all
 chasing these people with any expectation
 of getting justice done. I don't see more than a
 full time job! Moreover the whole country
 is leagued together with the same general
 objective. Now that most things that can be
 stolen in the district have gone, they are
 attending with troops. Entering houses &
 grabbing what they can in a few moments
 - often I expect, with a collaborator in the house.
 At Victoria College they took from a lobby the
 collective evening dress of most of the teachers;
 in another case ran up stairs & stole all the
 lady's frocks for a wardrobe. Or, if nothing better
 is showing they are content to take an armful
 of washing, drying on a line. One ought to keep
 fire-arms & suppress: I don't, as I should be sure
 to shoot the wrong person!

You will be amused at Abdul's "basic English".
 He is my friend's nephew - nearly 16 yrs. in my service.
 We decided for the first to learn him English & took some
 little trouble. So he leaves the premises on a household chore
 he will tell me at last. Thus, "Go keep water, come".
 This means he is going to the pipe-line with a trolley
 & bring me back for the purpose - that is what I mean.
 i.e. "Keep" with Abdul always means fetch & come
 = will return home promptly. I had correct Urdu Abdulisms
 & c. with an amusing character sketch, magazine article
 on him. He has many admirers & a wonderful sense of
 humor (I unconsciously) who see him through.

This is a very good example of the kind of English that is spoken in the district. It is a mixture of Urdu and English, and is very colloquial.