

April 14. 1932

21 - T. Swackhamer, H. to Marie-Victorin, B

My dear Professor Victorin :

I received your kind letter yesterday and I appreciate very deeply your kind attitude. If never anything else develops from our meeting in New York, at least it has brought me in contact with you, and I shall certainly always cherish your friendship.

I will confess that, though I had meant my letter to be final, deep in my heart I had hoped that you would not take it as final.

I will also confess that during all the time, since I have seen you, I have not been able to put your botanical garden scheme out of my mind. I should have been glad - and I still uphold this offer - to make a design for your garden entirely free of cost to you, simply, because the problem attracts me. You see, it has been my dream, for ever since in 1910 I first worked as a gardeners assistant in the Berlin Botanical Garden and came to know this garden intimately, to sometime get a chance to lay out a new botanical garden in the way in which I think it should be layed out. Since then I have had opportunities to see and know many botanical gardens, but I have not seen one yet that even approached my ideal. And I know pretty well what is wrong with all of them.

It takes a rare combination to make a real good botanical garden. Firstly : There must be a scientist at the head of it who has vision and broadmindedness, and who is not so engrossed in his scientific problems that he overlooks or neglects the horticultural side of the problem which to the general public is of much greater importance than pure botanical science.

This requirement I feel sure you fill admirably.

Secondly : There must be a piece of land of sufficient size to make the establishment of a botanical garden worth while.

This you also have.

Thirdly : There must be sufficient funds available, since the establishment of a large botanical garden is a very costly undertaking. Or, if real large funds are not available - \$ 100000 a year for the beginning is quite good - there must be assurance that this allowance can be increased later, and that the financial support will always remain sufficient to allow of perfect maintenance.

Fourthly : The garden should - of course, in close cooperation with the scientist in charge - be designed, layed out and superintended by one and the same man. And here is the crux of many a failure that I have seen. Usually the garden is designed by some prominent landscapearchitekt of the city who knows little if anything about the special problems of a botanical garden. The scientist in charge can do little about it, because he has to confess that he knows little about landscapegardening. The two talk a different language and do not understand each other. Besides the landscapearchitekt has acquired a reputation and with it a certain independence and he will not tolerate much interference. Usually the landscapearchitekt designs at least the roads and paths and certain landscapefeatures and later on is restricted to slowly decreasing interference, until finally he leaves in disgust, waving all responsibility.

Then the job to lay out the garden in detail is turned over to some gardener who has probably been a headgardener of some botanical garden before. He usually is a good gardener but has had little general education and knows nothing about landscape architecture. The landscapearchitekt looks down on him, and the two seldom agree and hardly ever cooperate. The result can be imagined. Frequently also the man who has started to lay out the garden

is discharged before he is half through, because of his disagreement with the landscapearchitekt, and a third man who disagrees with all the work the two have done before him is engaged as superintendent of the garden. That, of course, is the worst that can happen, but it is amazing to see, how frequently it has happened.

As to myself, I am enclosing for your perusal an account of my training and experience, from which it appears as if I had worked all my life to fit myself for just such an opportunity.

You will see from it that I have received the training of a landscape-architekt, and I can assure you, that there is absolutely nothing what an experienced landscapearchitekt can do, which I can not do.

Besides that I am a horticulturist. That is, I am thoroughly familiar with the requirements of plants in cultivation, the methods to propagate and raise them, their diseases etc. etc. soiltesting, plant-breeding etc.

Furthermore I am a botanist in so far, as I have received a thorough training in all the fundamentals of botanical science, am able to determine any plant that I do not know, if it ever has been named, to describe it in latin, if it is new, or to trace its horticultural history through the literature. There would surely never be a misspelled name or an odd synonym on any plant in a garden of which I would be in charge. Besides it has always been my hobby to know plants, and I had even as a student a reputation for having an unusual wide knowledge of plants in general.

I do not outline all these abilities to impress you or to boast, but only to explain to you why I considered the salary which you offered to me as inadequate, and also - since I know that you mean well - to put in your hands the facts with which you might be able to impress the city authorities.

It is absolutely distasteful to me to barter about a salary, nor do I propose to do that, but perhaps it will further our understanding, if I explain to you how I look at the matter. You see, there is a humane side also to the question of salary.

Firstly that of pride. Though, I myself never judge people according to the salary which they are able to earn, I must say, that I feel humiliated, if I am forced to live on a salary which barely enables me to make both ends meet and which never gives me the least freedom from worry, while I am doing work which others who have a comfortable income can not do.

Secondly I feel that the long and expensive training which I had to undergo to fit myself for this very special kind of work should entitle me to a fair salary on which I can live in moderate comfort. I do not expect anything else.

I do hope that you will pardon this quite unpardonably long letter. It seemed so important to me that you should understand me.

I beg to remain

very sincerely yours

H. Teuscher

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