This letter has the number “9” written at the top, and seems to have been written in the days before September 12, 1920, as that date is listed half-way through, but there aren’t any other pages of this letter. It is labelled as “September 11” here for our purposes.

I might come to know you through letters if you had the time or inclination to show me the unveneered man beneath the formal exterior which you generally present. Letters are, I believe, among the most perfect of media for communion between two persons. One may be more sincere, honest and open in letters than in a vis-à-vis conversation. I know, for instance, that your Pal has come to feel that she may talk to you on terms of greatest intimacy in her letters, an intimacy which she does not by any means feel when she is actually with you. It is because in my letters I get right down to a fundamental, primitive sincerity without the shams and conventionalities with which one is almost inevitably hedged in the ordinary daily encounters. Letters, if written at frequent intervals, reflect the inner life and thought of the individual like a mirror held to the soul. One cannot be consistently insincere in letters for any length of time, but one may for years hide one’s true character behind a role which is assumed for the brief duration of daily encounters with another individual. For, if you had remained at the Museum every day during the last two years, I might have seen you nearly every day, have bowed to you, perhaps stopped to talk to you for a few minutes once in a while and have remained completely hidden behind the Doctor’s mask. There would have been little more temptation to reveal my inner self to you than there is to reveal it to any of my other casual acquaintances, nor, if the impulse for revelation had come to me, would there have been any way of making it. I well remember when you first noticed that I had something on my mind, and you asked me if you could help; I was wholly uncommunicative and told you that you couldn’t help at all. You must have thought me very reticent. It never occurred to me that I could take you into my confidence, that I could speak to anyone about my inner, personal life. And I doubt if I would have breathed a word to you that winter about my spiritual conflict had I been seeing you every day. It was the letters alone which made the intimate communion possible. I have written to you frankly and freely always – perhaps too freely. My thoughts have tumbled out in quick succession just as they passed through my mind and I have dared to let them come to you uncensored, unrevised, because I so early learned that you didn’t take any advantage of my unconventional freedom of thought and expression. I’ve written to you a large part of the time as though we were both men or both women; oftentimes, I know, I have said things which were susceptible of double meanings, but I always felt confident that you’d read in what I said only that which was in my own mind. And Pal if you had ever once purposely misunderstood anything I said, if you’d tried to make capital out of it, I’d have shut up tight like a clam and you never, never could have gotten another word out of me.

Sunday, 12 September, 1920

And so, to continue, I wish that you were more given to letter writing. There are heaps of things I want to know about you – your thoughts and opinions on different subjects, your beliefs, your ambitions, ideals and the things that are dear to you. Now don’t take to your heels figuratively or begin to withdraw into your shell or think “There she goes! Just like all the women, trying to worm my secrets out of me.” Indeed, you must know better than that; I’m not hunting around for your secrets but I’d just like to feel that our spiritual communion were more complete. For so long I’ve just imagined what your beliefs must be, what your philosophy is, how you would meet certain situations, but as a matter of fact I don’t really know at all. But perhaps, dear Sphinx, you prefer to remain a complete mystery; if you do, all right, then I’ll go on imagining agreeable things about you. For instance, there are so many topics of the times, social, moral, educational and political questions and I’ve expressed my views to you quite frankly on all these things but I have no slightest idea what your views are. I’d really like to know, both because I’m interested in what you think and because I’d profit by exchanging views with you. I am too much of a solitary thinker; I don’t get enough of the corners of my thoughts rubbed off; my mind is altogether too near to the unmodified, original, primitive condition. I need a lot of taming down, polishing, and general fixing up. There’s a good chance for you, Pal, to help me to become a good, orthodox, conventional member of society instead of the unruly, heterodox, obstreperous wild Indian that I am.