“8” at top; continuation of previous letter.

16 August 1920

Dear Pal,

Here comes the trailer! No letter of mine is complete without an after-thought. I was going to mail this letter this morning but the postman brought me a letter that I just must tell you about.

It was a reply from David White to the letter I wrote him in June. I thought sure as anything I was in his black books for refusing his offer of a position but I find that he understood my viewpoint perfectly and agreed with me. He told me something that astonished me and made my head swell for a few minutes but it’s gone down to normal size again.

It seems that the Chinese Government appealed to the U.S. Government asking for a palaeontologist of experience, training etc. etc. to be chief of all palaeontological work in China under Dr. Ting, Director of the Geological Survey of China. The person appointed was also to be Professor in the Government University at Peking and general advisor to the Chinese President on the methods to be adopted throughout the vast educational system of that country for the advancement of science, and adviser also on the ways and means of opening up the resources of China. Dr. Ting appealed to Dr. White to recommend someone for the position and the choice practically lay in Dr. White’s hands, subject of course, to Dr. Ting’s approval. When Dr. White wrote to me in June asking if I would consider a palaeontological position I naturally inferred that he had meant on the Survey, but today I learned from him that he had already recommended me to Dr. Ting for the Chinese position. I wrote and refused what I thought to be a position on the Survey whereas it was really that $600 a month position in Peking!!!

I can’t get over it that Dr. White should have thought me worthy to hold such a position. Of course, I’m nowhere near big enough for a task like that, I don’t consider it at all the kind of a thing for a woman – not for this woman anyway. Even had I known what the offer was I’d have refused just the same. But it does make me feel a little set-up to think that the Chief Geologist of the U.S. Survey should have thought of recommending me. It would be quite an event in the “suffrage cause” for a woman to land a high diplomatic and scientific position like that.

Thus you see that the position was not offered to Prof. G. until after I refused it, though I doubt not that Dr. White probably recommended us both at the same time; it isn’t likely that he proposed me first. But this I know: I refused Dr. White’s offer towards the end of June and Prof. G did not receive the offer until the middle of July.

Pal, you will surely understand my feeling when I ask you never to mention to anyone that Dr. White recommended me to the Chinese position. I shall not tell a soul except you. I’m telling you because it’s a triumph for the Doctor and I like to share pleasant news with my Pal, but just you put what I’ve told you away in that good safe deposit vault where you keep my other secrets. You see, Prof. G. has been wonderfully set up over the appointment; it has put a new life into him to receive what he rightly looks upon as a call of unusual importance. It is a big thing to be summoned to so high a position by a foreign government; he looks upon it as one of the rare chances of a life-time and feels that there is an almost unlimited field for development for carrying out his ideas on a grand scale. It is indeed a magnificent call and a great honor. I want his enjoyment of the honor to be complete. And so I want him to continue to feel that he was first and only choice. I wouldn’t for the world have him know that I too was recommended. So you’ll never say anything about it to anyone will you? Dr. Ting would most certainly have chosen Prof. G. in preference to me anyway because he would hardly have wanted a woman.

Dr. White in his last letter to me makes an offer which I won’t refuse. He recommends that I take the Civil Service Exam for palaeontologists to do expert jobs of a temporary nature primarily research in character. The salary ranges from $150 to $200 a month and I would be considered a member of the Survey, have field expenses paid, papers published, etc., without having to take up permanent residence in Washington. Dr. White says that for several years past [beginning of p. 9] he’s been wishing to have me connected with the survey to examine and report on certain special collections. He could give me a position at once for $2,000 a year if I cared to take it. But I want to do your ammonites, and although the Museum position is only for five months, while that on the Survey would be permanent, I’m going to the Mus. and take a sporting chance that I’ll get something to do next January. The Civil Service Exam is different from the usual written kind; it is based solely on the amount of education possessed, the length of experience and the amount of published matter. Only an A.B. is required, 4 years’ experience, and some original papers. I have my Ph.D., eleven years training and experience and nearly 700 pages in print so I won’t have any difficulty getting on the eligible list. That means that from time to time I will be given chances which I may accept or refuse as I see fit. I must, of course, plan for something for the future and there’d be no particular incentive to stay at the Museum after I’d worked up your material. I’m beginning to think too about earning a better salary; I want some of the comforts of life – I’m tired of being poor – and most of all I want to travel.

It’s a little unfortunate for me that I care so little about a career. I should have been a Madame Curie or someone like that who cared for fame. I have had about everything that a scientific woman could care to have within her grasp, yet somehow I never feel the desire to take them. I have never applied to anyone, or any institution for a scientific position, yet the most wonderful offers have been made to me. I have sought to bury myself in my little home far from the learned world but folks seek me out and offer me all sorts of gifts. I seem to have gone too far to escape my career. I don’t deny that I like certain kinds of honors – quiet, unobtrusive ones like election to Phi Beta Kappa or Sigma Xi or to learned societies – but when it comes to taking a high and mighty position in the lime-light, I just retreat. I’m like a blinky, half-blind stage struck mole in the lime-light; I don’t get nervous or stage struck but I just always feel that as a woman I’m out of place.

Dear Boy Blue, I wish I could just once see myself as other folks see the Doctor. Somehow she seems quite detached and far away from the person whom I think of as me-myself. When I’m at home all by myself I feel just like a little girl. Sometimes I wear my hair down my back in curls and I usually wear informal smocks and feel as though I were about fifteen. I’m likely to drape myself more or less artistically over the furniture wherever I happen to land – on the corner of a table, or the back of a chair, or on a cushion in the middle of the floor. Sometimes I stretch out flat on my tum on the floor to enjoy the jokes in “Life” or to talk to a newly-arrived beetle. I have heaps of fun by myself. I read poetry aloud or play with Elizabeth or crochet or embroider or best of all I write to you. Of course some nights are given to the Doctor but they seem less natural than the Marjorie Daw nights. The Doctor has to read many separates (?) which she receives in order to keep abreast with current literature; she has to keep up her scientific correspondence with scores of people in all parts of the world but she’s been very, very remiss lately, the major part of her correspondence all going to one scientist. Pal I’m beginning to wonder what the Lord really intended me to be; he seems to be thrusting a career upon me mighty hard but I always wriggle and squirm till I escape. I could wish I’d been born with fewer brains and a great number of certain other kinds of attractions. I wish I had a perfectly adorable dimple in the middle of my chin which all men would fall in love with.

Speaking of love, I came across a quotation today which sums up exactly my ideas about marriage. My discovery of the quotation seemed to have a peculiar fitness and appropriateness. I was glancing through one of those calendars which are made with a sheet for each week in the year and a quotation at the top of every sheet. I turned to the sheet which was devoted to the week of August 15th, that is the week beginning with my birthday, and I found these words which seem in a way to sanctify and justify the past and to sustain me in the stand I have taken about marriage. “True marriage means love between mate and mate – nothing more and nothing less. Where love is there is marriage. Where love is not there is prostitution. Love must be the corner-stone of the home, it must be the threshold of the door, it must be the fire upon the hearth, it must be the light in the eyes and in the heart of husband and wife.” Don’t you think that’s a pretty good conception of love and marriage? It’s late, so I must say good-night, dear Pal.

Marjorie Daw