July 17, 1920

This letter has a number 6 up at the top, but starts in the middle of a sentence, so I think there must have been more pages that are now missing.

“17 July – arrival of Roig’s secretary”

“ . . . . my unexpected guests. If they followed their noses they’d have to land in the living room. I told them to go straight ahead and I meant it more emphatically than one usually does. I followed them and told them to be seated and said she (“Miss O’C”) would be with them in a few minutes. Before they could turn around I beat it down a little hallway at right angles to the main one and into my bedroom. I decided that the “person” in blue negligee and cap who led the visitors in would have to pass as the maid. Say Pal, did I make a lightning change! Never got dressed so fast before. Did it in five minutes, my hair too, and since the “maid” was dressed in blue, I emerged in pink with my most dignified, grand lady air. I appeared with a questioning and slightly surprised look at finding two male visitors in my drawing room (we’ll call it that to meet the requirements of the part I was acting up to). And it worked by Jove! They bowed low to the Doctor and then Mr. Secretary introduced himself all over again. I expressed my polite regrets at having kept them waiting and there was just a suggestion in my voice that I had been engaged when he came. (Yes, you bet I was engaged – getting dressed). He informed me that Dr. Sanchez – he didn’t call him Roig – had arrived in the country and desired the honor of being allowed to call, which was why Mr. Secretary had come to gain my permission. Gee whiz! The formality of the proceedings nearly sent me off. But I listened with the utmost gravity – like the Queen of England holding court – and when Mr. Secretary had finished his spiel I told him that Dr. Sanchez might come tomorrow evening at eight. The diplomatic arrangements being thus satisfactorily completed, Mr. Secretary said “That is all I came for. I’ll go now.” With much bowing he went having, I am sure, exhausted all his English. I showed them out myself, not bothering to call the maid.

Isn’t apartment house life the dickens? You are so at the mercy of callers if you don’t have a maid. What would my visitors have thought if they had come an hour earlier and found me doing the washing? They’d have hustled back to Dr. Sanchez and told him that a laundress had been identifying ammonites and that he’d been buncoed. One could pass off a situation like that with an American as a joke and say “come in and see me washing,” but foreigners are so formal and they seem to have an idea that ladies live in state and always have means and maids. What would Dr. Sanchez think if he knew I was on my last ten dollars? But he won’t know anymore than anyone else does. This game of keeping up appearances is fun. I know so many little tricks and if there’s any way of making an old dress or waist or hat look fresh and new I think I know it. I haven’t had a new summer dress in three years yet I manage to look cool and summery, and I’ve had a lot of compliments on a faded old blouse which I dyed and which folks think is new. I can make a penny work like a ten dollar bill and as for a dress! I wear it inside and outside and upside down and wrong side to and have it dyed and make it over till it finally falls to pieces all over before I kiss it good-bye and begin to send up prayers for another one.

So tomorrow evening I receive Dr. Sanchez in state. I wish you might be here. You never saw me play la grande mademoiselle. Edna used to say that on occasion I put it all over Lady Vere de Vere. I can be very good and dignified and proper but you never saw me that way. I guess it’s when I’m the Doctor I’m all right; you know only Marjorie Daw who’d rather sit on her feet than stand on them. But the Doctor is a good asset to have – she upholds the dignity and honor of the family. She keeps a straight face when Marjorie Daw would go rippling off into laughter; she does the correct thing when M.D. is tempted to kick over the traces. It’s really sort of comfy to have the Doctor to fall back on.

Well, “nightie night” (that’s the name of a play. I got the combination of words from a bill-board). Next time I’ll tell you about Dr. Sanchez alias Roig. Dear old Pal, good night.